



He ara aupiki, he ara auheke

Aotearoa New Zealand patient experience survey



**Health Quality &
Safety Commission**
Te Tāhū Hauora

UPDATE: Amended questions on accessing care: adult primary care patient experience survey

The adult primary care patient experience survey provides information about the experience of care received by a selection of adults aged 15 years and over who were enrolled with and had a consultation or other contact with their general practice during the survey period. There are questions about communication, partnership, physical and emotional needs, cultural safety and access to primary health care.

As part of the ongoing review and improvements to the survey questionnaire, in May 2025 we added further questions on how patients access care. This was to better understand why survey respondents couldn't access care at their usual practice and what happened as a result. Additional questions include:

- whether the appointment was with their usual general practice
- whether it was for urgent or non-urgent health care
- what alternatives their usual general practice offered if respondents were unable to get an appointment within the timeframe they wanted or the person they wanted to see.

Amendments were made to the response options for:

- how long it took to get an appointment: combining same and next day, addition of more than two weeks' wait time
- the reasons why people could not care from their GP or nurse when they wanted.

Results for accessing primary health care, May and August 2025

These results include the findings from the questions added to the survey in May 2025.

Barriers to accessing care

- Around 20 percent of respondents reported a time when they were unable to access care from a GP or nurse when they wanted, within the last 12 months. For 79 percent of those respondents, the difficulty accessing care was with their enrolled practice.
- The most common barrier to access health care for survey respondents remains waiting times, followed by not being able to see the GP or nurse they wanted to see, the clinic being closed and being unable to get through to the clinic. Of all respondents:
 - 16 percent reported the wait time to get an appointment was the reason why they could not get care when they wanted it in the last 12 months (it's probable they were

thinking of the wait time to see their usual GP; one-third who selected long wait times also reported being able to see their usual GP was a barrier)

- 7 percent reported the GP or nurse they wanted to see was not available
- 3 percent reported the clinic was closed (for example, after hours, in the weekend, public holiday)
- 2 percent were unable to get through to the clinic to make an appointment.

The finding that 7 percent of respondents couldn't get care due to their preferred GP or nurse not being available suggests patients value continuity of care. Seventy-one percent of all respondents have one health care professional they usually see and, of those with a usual health care professional, most (84%) saw that person at their most recent appointment.

Reason for seeking care

- For respondents who reported a time when they were unable to get health care from a GP or nurse when they wanted, in the last 12 months:
 - 54 percent had a perceived urgent health need
 - 32 percent were seeking advice or treatment for a non-urgent health issue
 - 9 percent were seeking a prescription
 - 5 percent selected 'something else'.
- Of those with an urgent health need who reported the barrier of either wait time being too long or preferred GP / nurse not being available, 67 percent were offered one or more alternatives by their practice:
 - 22 percent had a GP or nurse talk to them
 - 25 percent were offered an appointment with another GP or nurse
 - 25 percent were referred elsewhere
 - 9 percent were offered something else
 - 33 percent were not offered any of the above.
- The results were similar for those with a perceived non-urgent health need, with 63 percent being offered at least one alternative. The main difference was lower rates of being referred elsewhere (12 percent).

Wait times to get an appointment

- In 2025, 61 percent of respondents reported being able to get an appointment within a week, including 23 percent who could get an appointment on the same or next working day. This represents a significant decrease from August 2020, when 90 percent could get an appointment within a week, including 45 percent on the same or next working day.
- Between August 2020 and 2025, the proportion of respondents waiting more than a week for an appointment increased from 11 percent to 31 percent. Among those waiting more than a week, 19 percent waited between 1 and 2 weeks and 12 percent waited over two weeks.
- Those respondents who booked in advance or had a regular appointment can select 'not applicable', which 8 percent did.

Continuity of care and type of consultation

- Sixty-four percent of respondents have been enrolled in the same clinic for more than 5 years.
- Seventy-one percent of respondents have one health care professional they usually see. This has reduced significantly since 2020 (78%).
- Of those with a usual health care professional, 84 percent saw that person at their most recent appointment.
- At a respondent's most recent consultation:
 - 94 percent was in person, 5.6 percent was a phone call and 0.7 percent a video call
 - 78 percent saw a GP and 19 percent saw a nurse or nurse practitioner.

Patient portal use since August 2020

Patient portals are another way patients can access care, however the level of functionality available to patients depends on their practice. This can range from viewing lab test results and ordering repeat scripts through to booking appointments online and viewing their clinical notes (open notes).

- In August 2025, 60 percent of respondents had heard of and were using a GP online service or patient portal. Rates have steadily increased since August 2020, where 48 percent of respondents had heard of and were using these.
- There are notable differences in portal uptake.
 - Significantly higher in females (64%) than males (55%).
 - Rates are highest for European/Other (64%), followed by Māori (55%), Asian (54%) and lowest for Pacific peoples (41%).
 - There is wide district variation of between 39 and 75 percent in respondents being aware of and using patient portals.

For more detailed results, go to the adult primary care patient experience explorer:

<https://reports.hqsc.govt.nz/APC-explorer>

Appendix 1: Questionnaire changes

New questions on how patients access care are highlighted. Note that people are only asked a question if their answers to previous questions require it.

Access in previous 12 months

These next questions are about your experiences with health care in general over the last 12 months. This could be at <practice name> or somewhere else.

- a. In the last 12 months, was there ever a time when you wanted health care from a GP or nurse, but you couldn't get it? (yes, no)
- b. **[new question]** And in the last 12 months, was it ever at <practice name> that you couldn't get health care? (yes, no)

- c. Why could you not get health care from a GP or nurse when you wanted it during the last 12 months?
- Waiting time to get an appointment too long
 - **[new option]** The clinic was closed (e.g. after hours, in the weekend, or a public holiday)
 - **[new option]** The GP or nurse I wanted to see was not available
 - **[new option]** Could not get through to the clinic to make an appointment
 - The appointment was too expensive
 - Owed money to the clinic
 - Difficult to take time off work
 - Had no transport to get there
 - Out of town or away from home
 - Other (please tell us why)
- d. **[new question and answer selection]** What was your **main** reason for wanting health care?
- Get advice or treatment for an urgent health issue
 - Get advice or treatment for a health issue that was not urgent
 - Get a prescription
 - Something else
- e. **[new question and answer selection]** When you were unable to get an appointment, did <practice name> do any of the following things?
- A GP or nurse talked to you to assess your need
 - Offered you an appointment with another GP or nurse, different from the one(s) you wanted to see
 - Referred you somewhere else, e.g. an urgent care clinic or emergency department
 - Something else (Please tell us what)
 - None of the above [Exclusive choice]

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