

New Brunswickers' Experiences with Primary Health Services

Results from the New Brunswick Health Council's
2014 Primary Health Survey

Executive Summary

February 2015



New Brunswickers have a right to be aware of the decisions being made, to be part of the decision-making process, and to be aware of the outcomes delivered by the health system and its cost.

The New Brunswick Health Council will foster this transparency, engagement, and accountability by engaging citizens in a meaningful dialogue, measuring, monitoring, and evaluating population health and health service quality, informing citizens on health system's performance and recommending improvements to health system partners.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New Brunswick Health Council (NBHC) has released the results of its second primary health survey. The objective of this report is to provide data at the provincial, regional and community level in order to measure, monitor and evaluate the quality and experience of primary health services.

Primary health services are usually provided at the first point of contact with the health care system, such as services from personal family doctors, nurse practitioners, community health centres and after-hours clinics.

For the first time in New Brunswick, comparisons can be made between survey results (2014 and 2011) to see if any improvements have been made for key indicators:

- Communication with family doctors and satisfaction with their services have improved, however some key indicators under accessibility have not improved over the last three years.
- After-hours clinics and hospital emergency departments continue to be places where some New Brunswickers go most often when sick or in need of care, and visits to the hospital emergency department have remained at the same level over the last three years.
- The NBHC's 2011 primary health survey revealed considerable variation across communities for several indicators measuring the quality of primary health services. These large variations continue to exist in 2014 across 33 New Brunswick communities.

Health care systems with a strong foundation of primary health services are recognized for improving the overall health of populations.^{1,2,3} The challenge facing our province is how we will redesign health services to achieve improved health outcomes for New Brunswick's population while being fiscally responsible and citizen-centred.

Key indicators measuring primary health services	2011	2014	2014 variability across NB*
Has a personal family doctor	92.6%	92.1%	76.6% to 98.7%
Family doctor has after-hour arrangement when office is closed	21.6%	18.2%	5.4% to 31.9%
Can get appointment with family doctor on same day or next day	30.3%	30.1%	12.0% to 63.5%
Where do you go most often when sick or in need of care?			
- Family doctor	61.9%	62.9%	21.5% to 85.9%
- After-hours clinic or walk-in clinic	18.4%	17.0%	4.2% to 40.8%
- Hospital emergency department	12.0%	11.5%	3.5% to 60.6%
- Other	7.7%	8.6%	4.2% to 20.8%
Visited hospital emergency department in the last year	42.0%	41.3%	27.8% to 64.6%

* Variation across 33 New Brunswick communities from lowest to highest, within 2014 survey results

Trends in the following tables are identified if there is a statistically significant difference at the 95% level of confidence. The variability across NB represents the variation across 33 NB communities from lowest to highest, within 2014 survey results.

ACCESSIBILITY	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
Citizens who have a personal family doctor	92.6%	92.1%		76.6% to 98.7%
Citizens who can get an appointment with their family doctor:				
• On the same day or next day	30.3%	30.1%		12.0% to 63.5%
• Within 5 days	57.9%	60.3%	Better	21.8% to 88.8%
Citizens who reported that a nurse working with their family doctor is regularly involved in their health care	28.9%	27.5%		14.1% to 49.0%
Citizens who “always” receive services in the language of their choice:				
• Among those who prefer English	95.3%	95.2%		73.5% to 100%
• Among those who prefer French	78.9%	72.6%	Worse	36.2% to 94.2%*

* Due to some communities with results too unreliable to be published, this variability only includes 19 of the 33 communities

APPROPRIATENESS	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
Citizens with one or more of four select chronic health conditions* who had a test or measurement in the last year:				
• Test or measurement for blood pressure	93.3%	91.3%	Worse	73.6% to 98.3%
• Test or measurement for cholesterol	79.8%	76.3%	Worse	63.7% to 93.2%
• Test or measurement for blood sugar	76.6%	73.9%	Worse	56.8% to 85.7%
• Test or measurement for body weight	64.3%	59.3%	Worse	41.8% to 83.8%
Citizens 65 years and over who received a flu shot	--**	70.6%	--**	46.2% to 81.7%

* Diabetes, heart disease, stroke or high blood pressure

** This indicator was not available in 2011

EFFECTIVENESS	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
Citizens with at least one of twelve select chronic health conditions* who reported that they are “very confident” in controlling and managing their health condition	39.3%	42.2%	Better	31.8% to 52.4%

* Arthritis, asthma, chronic pain, cancer, diabetes, depression, mood disorder other than depression, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), stroke, heart disease, high blood pressure or gastric reflux

SAFETY	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
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Citizens with at least one of twelve select chronic health conditions* who “strongly agree” in knowing what their medications do	46.7%	47.7%		18.4% to 63.6%
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Citizens who were harmed because of a medical error or mistake as a result of health services received in the last 12 months	3.4%	2.7%	Better	1.7% to 9.0%**
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* Arthritis, asthma, chronic pain, cancer, diabetes, depression, mood disorder other than depression, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), stroke, heart disease, high blood pressure or gastric reflux

** Due to some communities with results too unreliable to be published, this variability only includes 18 of the 33 communities

EFFICIENCY	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
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Citizens who said the hospital emergency department is the place they go most often when sick or in need of care from a health professional	12.0%	11.5%		3.5% to 60.6%
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USE OF SERVICES	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
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Citizens who visited a hospital emergency department in the last year	42.0%	41.3%		27.8% to 64.6%
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Citizens who visited a nurse practitioner in the last year	5.1%	7.7%	Higher	2.5% to 19.7%
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Citizens with at least one of twelve select chronic health conditions* who reported that a pharmacist helps them the most when they need help in understanding how to take their medications	--**	70.1%	--**	57.8% to 80.2%
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* Arthritis, asthma, chronic pain, cancer, diabetes, depression, mood disorder other than depression, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), stroke, heart disease, high blood pressure or gastric reflux

** This indicator was not available in 2011

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY DOCTOR	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
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Citizens who reported that their family doctor “always” explains things in a way that is easy to understand	77.3%	80.2%	Better	67.5% to 85.2%
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Citizens who reported that their family doctor “always” involves them in decisions about their health care	64.2%	68.2%	Better	43.7% to 79.3%
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Citizens who reported that their family doctor “always” gives them enough time to discuss feelings, fears and concerns about their health	68.6%	71.9%	Better	53.5% to 79.0%
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SATISFACTION WITH PRIMARY HEALTH SERVICES	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
Citizens who rated overall health services in New Brunswick favourably*	61.5%	67.9%	Better	57.0% to 83.6%
Citizens who rated services from their family doctor favourably*	81.3%	83.9%	Better	78.7% to 92.1%
Of citizens who talked to a health professional about their mental or emotional health in the last 12 months, the percentage of citizens who reported that the services they received were “very or somewhat helpful”	93.5%	90.8%	Worse	77.5% to 100%

* By giving an 8, 9 or 10 on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst services possible and 10 is the best

HEALTH PROFILE	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
Citizens who reported that their overall health was “very good or excellent”	53.3%	50.5%	Worse	32.0% to 65.3%
Citizens who reported that a health professional had diagnosed them or treated them for at least one of twelve select chronic health conditions*	59.2%	61.6%	Worse	51.4% to 70.9%
Citizens who “strongly agree” that their health largely depends on how well they take care of themselves	54.3%	55.2%		32.6% to 64.3%
Citizens who answered “yes, often” or “yes, sometimes” when asked if they are limited in the kinds or amount of activity they can do at home, work or otherwise because of a physical or mental condition, or a health problem	--**	22.1%	--**	15.3% to 35.2%

* Arthritis, asthma, chronic pain, cancer, diabetes, depression, a mood disorder other than depression, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), stroke, heart disease, high blood pressure or gastric reflux

** This indicator was not available in 2011

MEMORY LOSS	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
The proportion of New Brunswick households with someone who has problems with memory loss	--*	1 in 5	--*	--**

* This indicator was not available in 2011

** Not available

HEALTH BEHAVIOURS	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
Citizens with unhealthy weight (obese) based on self-reported height and weight provided by survey respondents	--*	30.8%	--*	20.8% to 51.4%

* This indicator was not available in 2011

HEALTH SERVICES BARRIERS AND STRESSORS	2011	2014	Trend	2014 variability across NB
Citizens who reported that health services were not available in their area at the time they needed it	21.2%	17.4%	Better	8.8% to 35.6%
Citizens who reported that the following things contribute a lot to feelings of stress:				
• Time pressures / Not enough time	--*	40.9%	--*	28.3% to 52.9%
• Health of family members	--*	38.1%	--*	31.3% to 47.3%
• Work situation	--*	34.2%	--*	21.5% to 41.6%
• Financial situation	--*	33.5%	--*	27.1% to 43.7%
Citizens who reported that it is “always or usually” hard to understand written information when they want to learn about a medical condition or a prescription	13.5%	9.4%	Better	4.5% to 16.6%

* This indicator was not available in 2011

Understandably, New Brunswickers want to know how primary health services in their community compare to the rest of the province. The NBHC encourages New Brunswickers to visit the NBHC website, where an interactive map will help citizens locate the results at the provincial level, by health zone, and by community. The map can be located at www.nbhc.ca.

REFERENCES

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