

TARGET

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Shorter stays in emergency departments

95% of patients to be admitted, discharged, or transferred from an emergency department within six hours.

LEAD MINISTER

Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health

LEAD AGENCIES

Ministry of Health, Director-General of Health, Audrey Sonerson

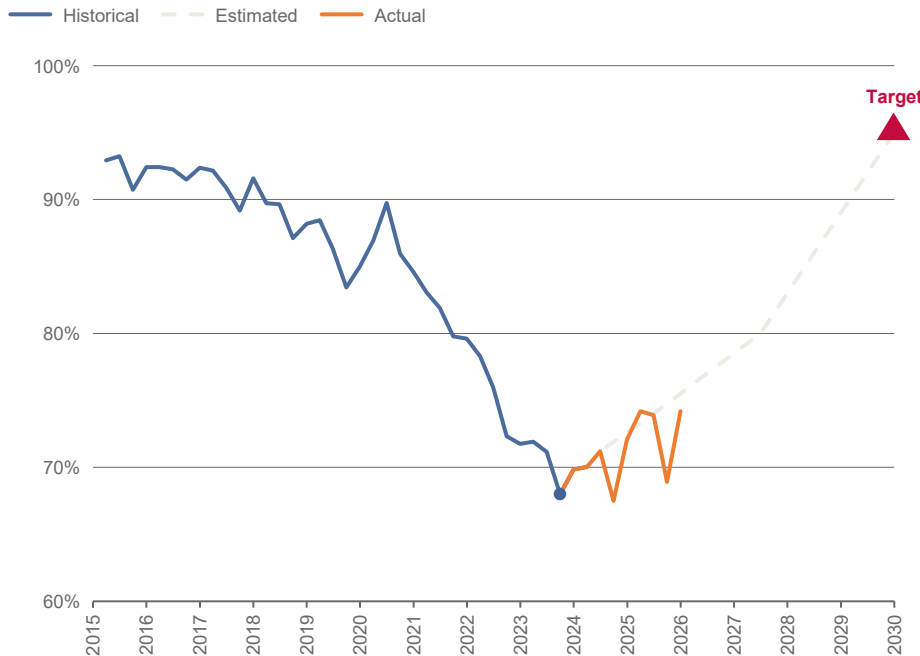
Health New Zealand, Chief Executive, Dr Dale Bramley

TARGET DELIVERY PERFORMANCE - QUARTER ENDING MARCH 2026

Target	Baseline (September 2023)	Current (December 2025)	Status
95%	68.0%	74.2%	Feasible

PROGRESS TOWARDS TARGET

Proportion of patients to be admitted, discharged, or transferred from an emergency department within six hours



TARGET DELIVERY ACTIONS

The Government is committed to providing timely, high-quality healthcare for all New Zealanders. Results have improved compared with the previous quarter, and compared with the same quarter in the prior year.

Patient demand is increasing. In the quarter ending December 2025, 74.2% of patients who attended an emergency department were admitted, treated, or discharged within six hours - an increase on the same quarter last year (72.1%). Despite demand continuing to increase, doctors and nurses are getting patients seen faster than the same quarter in the previous year.

The Minister of Health is focused on driving action to ensure that all New Zealanders have access to timely high-quality healthcare. Improvements across the whole system of care are needed to reduce the unacceptable wait times at emergency departments.

Initiatives to help improve results for this target include:

- An additional \$25 million announced in March 2026 to prepare the health system for higher demand over the busy winter months. This includes up to 378 additional full-time equivalent staff across the country, 71 extra winter hospital beds, up to 567 short stay beds through aged residential care facilities, and expansion of Hospital in the Home services.
- Fully operational from April 2026, Dunedin Hospital's new Surgical Assessment Unit (SAU) provides a dedicated space where patients with acute surgical conditions can be assessed and commence treatment earlier. This means patients avoid unnecessary waits while freeing up emergency department capacity for those who need it most.
- The expansion of Nelson Hospital's emergency department includes additional clinical spaces, improved triage areas, dedicated mental health rooms, and new fast-track assessment zones. Work is underway to expand Palmerston North Hospital's emergency department with expected completion in June 2026.
- \$164 million over four years (Budget 2025) for new and improved urgent and after-hours healthcare, which aims for 98% of New Zealanders to live within a one-hour drive of in-person urgent care. New and enhanced urgent care services are now operating in Lower Hutt, Dunedin, South Auckland, East Auckland and Whakatane.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

Health agencies will report on progress each quarter. National and regional results will be published so New Zealanders will be able to see how their local hospital is performing.

Performance information about the health system is available at the Health New Zealand and Ministry of Health websites www.tewhatauora.govt.nz and www.health.govt.nz

For more information on the Government Targets go to www.dpmc.govt.nz

* This report uses static data for health target results (as published at the time) which may differ from other sources that contain revised and updated data.