



Satisfaction and Experience with Health Care Services: A Survey of Albertans 2010

DECEMBER 2010

Why did we do the survey?

The Health Quality Council of Alberta (HQCA) conducted our first population-based survey in 2003. Additional surveys followed in 2004, 2006 and 2008. Each survey looked at overall quality, access and satisfaction with specific health services at both the provincial level and within each of the nine former health regions.

The 2010 survey again measures satisfaction, access and other experiences with health care services through the eyes of Albertans who actually experienced the system in 2009. Where possible, it compares the 2010 results with those from previous years.

What did we want to learn?

Survey findings show how Albertans rate their health care experience in terms of access, satisfaction and quality. This information can help Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Health Services, the health professions and providers as well as other stakeholders responsible for health care service delivery by identifying those issues most important to Albertans.

Our 2008 survey was conducted prior to amalgamation of Alberta's former nine health regions. The 2010 edition is significant as it is the first to indicate the impact of the new Alberta Health Services' model introduced in May 2008.

How did we do the survey?

Population Research Laboratory at the University of Alberta conducted the 2010 survey. They did 5,010 telephone interviews with Albertans aged 18 years and older between February 24 and May 11, 2010.

With previous surveys, analysis was done according to the nine former health regions. For comparison purposes in 2010, we recategorized the health regions into Alberta Health Services' five new zones: South, Calgary, Central, Edmonton and North.

The 2010 response rate was 38% and the margin of error was comparable to previous years at $\pm 1.5\%$ 19 times out of 20.

Historical survey timelines

YEAR	SATISFACTION AND EXPERIENCE WITH HEALTH CARE SERVICES: A SURVEY OF ALBERTANS OVERVIEW
2003-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Inaugural survey 2003; 2004; 2006 > 9 health regions
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > March 10–May 27: survey interviews conducted – last measure of previous health region structure > May 15: Alberta Health Services created
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > February 24–May 11: survey interviews conducted > first measure of patient satisfaction and experience with new Alberta Health Services structure

What are some of the key findings?

In the majority of areas surveyed in 2010, results have remained stable and are comparable to those of 2008. Results reflect Albertans' actual experiences with the health care system between February 24, 2009 and May 11, 2010.

48% OF ALBERTANS RATED ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES AS EASY (4 OR 5 OUT OF 5) IN 2010. THIS IS RELATIVELY UNCHANGED FROM 46% IN 2008 AND SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN 42% IN 2003.

62% OF ALBERTANS WERE SATISFIED (4 OR 5 OUT OF 5) WITH THE HEALTH CARE SERVICES THEY RECEIVED IN 2010. THIS IS RELATIVELY UNCHANGED FROM 60% IN 2008 BUT SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN 58% IN 2006 AND 52% IN 2004.

59% REPORTED THEIR FAMILY DOCTOR WAS LOCATED IN AN OFFICE WHERE THEY MIGHT SEE OTHER DOCTORS OR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AND MEDICAL FILES ARE SHARED AMONG PRACTITIONERS. THIS IS UP FROM 48% IN 2008.

54% OF RESPONDENTS WHO VISITED AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT RATED ACCESS AS EASY (4 OR 5 OUT OF 5) IN 2010. THIS IS RELATIVELY UNCHANGED FROM 51% IN 2008 AND SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN 48% IN 2006 AND 46% IN 2003.

62% OF THOSE THAT OBTAINED SPECIALIST SERVICES RATED ACCESS AS EASY, SIMILAR TO 2008 (59%) AND 2006 (56%) AND SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN 2004 (47%) AND 2003 (42%).

9% OF RESPONDENTS REPORTED THEY OR AN IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBER EXPERIENCED UNEXPECTED HARM. THIS IS DOWN FROM 10% IN 2008 AND SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN IN 2006 (13%), 2004 (13%) AND 2003 (14%).

61% OF THOSE THAT HAD A COMPLAINT WITH HEALTH CARE SERVICES RECEIVED WERE DISSATISFIED WITH HOW THE COMPLAINT WAS HANDLED. THIS IS RELATIVELY UNCHANGED FROM 61% IN 2008 AND 57% IN 2006.

Access

48% of Albertans rated access to health care services as easy (4 or 5 out of 5) in 2010. This is relatively unchanged from 46% in 2008 and significantly higher than 42% in 2003.

From the public’s perspective, ease of obtaining emergency department services is the factor most strongly associated with overall ease of access to health care services. Other factors associated with ease of access to health care services include:

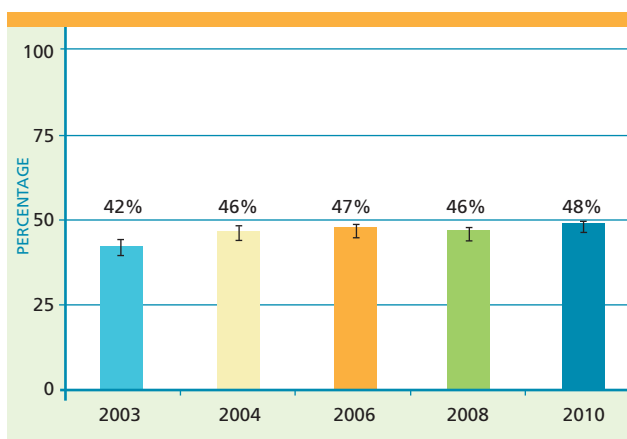
- Ease of access to a personal family doctor
- Excellent or very good coordination of efforts of health care professionals to provide health care services

- Ease of access to specialist services

Factors associated with difficulty in overall access to health care services are:

- Difficulty accessing services from personal family doctors
- Good, fair or poor coordination of efforts of health care professionals to provide health care services

Percentage of Albertans who found it easy to access health care services (4 or 5 out of 5)*



*The vertical lines in the middle of each bar are confidence intervals that gauge statistically significant differences between numbers. Vertical lines that do not overlap with each other mean differences are statistically significant. Overlapping lines indicate no significant differences.

Ease of access to specific health care services

HEALTH CARE SERVICE AREA	% EASY ACCESS (4 OR 5 OUT OF 5)				
	2010	2008	2006	2004	2003
Family doctor	72	73	74	NA	NA
Community walk-in clinics	56	53	60	60	54
Emergency department services	54	51	48*	50	46*
Specialists	62	59	56	47*	42*
Mental health	78	79	74	66*	NA
MRIs (publicly funded)	58	59	56	51	NA
Diagnostic imaging	80	79	92*	89*	NA

*Denotes statistically significant difference compared to the 2010 survey year. NA denotes a new or revised question or trending is not available.

Satisfaction

62% of Albertans were satisfied (4 or 5 out of 5) with the health care services they received in 2010. This is relatively unchanged from 60% in 2008 but significantly higher than 58% in 2006 and 52% in 2004.

From the public’s perspective, access – the ease of obtaining health care services – continues to be the most important factor associated with their overall satisfaction with health care services received.

In addition to access, other priority themes emerge as associated with overall satisfaction with health care services received:

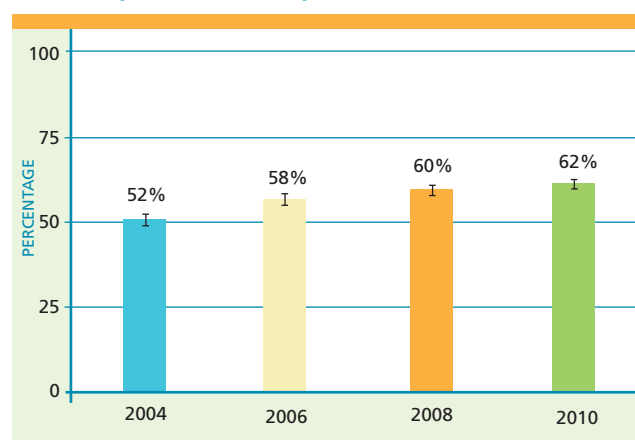
- Excellent or very good overall quality of health services received
- Satisfaction with personal family doctors
- Excellent or very good coordination of overall efforts of health care professionals to provide health care services

Factors associated with dissatisfaction include:

- Difficult overall access to health care services
- Fair or poor overall quality of health care services
- Dissatisfaction with services received from a family doctor



Percentage of Albertans satisfied with health care services (4 or 5 out of 5)*



*The vertical lines in the middle of each bar are confidence intervals that gauge statistically significant differences between numbers. Vertical lines that do not overlap with each other mean differences are statistically significant. Overlapping lines indicate no significant differences.

Satisfaction with specific health care services received

HEALTH CARE SERVICE AREA	% SATISFIED (4 OR 5 OUT OF 5)				
	2010	2008	2006	2004	2003
Family doctor	83	83	84	84	81
Community walk-in clinics	58	56	57	60	55
Emergency department services	59	58	51*	50*	50*
Specialists	79	81	81	74*	70*
Mental health	78	74	72	70	NA
MRIs (publicly funded)	85	89	79	76	NA
Diagnostic imaging	87	89	88	85	NA
Serious complaint handling	20	19	24	15	21

*Denotes statistically significant difference compared to the 2010 survey year. NA denotes a new or revised question or trending is not available.

Other Findings

Family Doctors

- Major changes have occurred in the past two years when it comes to Albertans' family doctor practice setting. 59% reported their family doctor was located in an office where they might see other doctors or health care professionals and medical files are shared among practitioners. This is up from 48% in 2008.
- The same reasons for not having a family doctor exist in 2010 as in 2008. They include personal family doctor not taking new patients, family doctor left/retired, and people feeling they don't need one.
- For the most part, those without a personal family doctor use community walk-in clinics (56%) for the kind of care most people get from a family doctor. 7% said they used the emergency department.

Preventive Care

- 45% of Albertans who had visited their personal family doctor in the past year said they and their doctor had talked about a healthy diet and healthy eating habits. This is similar to 46% in 2008.
- 54% said they had spoken with their doctor about their exercise or physical activity compared to 58% in 2008.

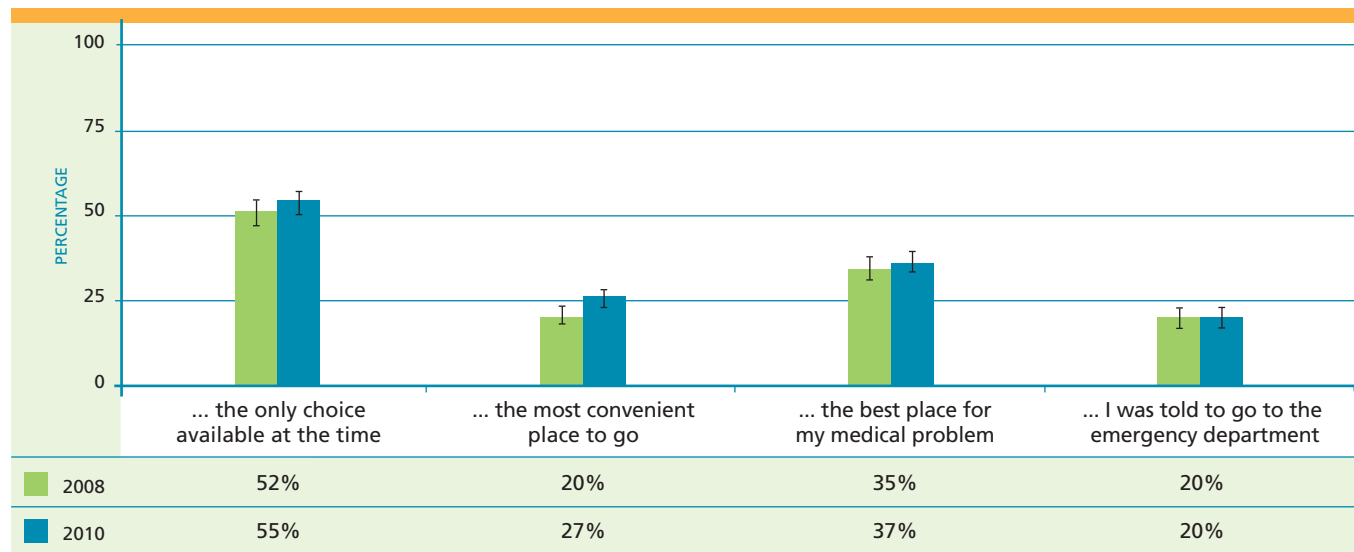
Community Walk-in Clinics

- 56% of respondents reported it was easy (4 or 5 out of 5) to obtain health care services from a community walk-in clinic. This is unchanged compared to 2008 and similar to 2006, 2004 and 2003.
- 40% said the quality of care received from a walk-in clinic doctor seen most recently was very good or excellent.
- Satisfaction with health care services received from a walk-in clinic has not changed between 2010 (58%) and 2003 (55%). 59% of respondents who visited a walk-in clinic were satisfied (4 or 5 out of 5) with the ultimate impact the care received had on their health and lives. This has improved significantly from 49% in 2003.

Emergency Department

- 54% of respondents who visited an emergency department rated access as easy (4 or 5 out of 5) in 2010. This is relatively unchanged from 51% in 2008 and significantly higher than 48% in 2006 and 46% in 2003.
- In 2010, like 2008, 55% of respondents said they had gone to the emergency department for themselves because it was the only choice available.
- Significantly more respondents said they chose to go to the emergency department because it was the most convenient place to go in 2010 (27%) versus 2008 (20%).

Why respondents went to the emergency department instead of somewhere else*



*The vertical lines in the middle of each bar are confidence intervals that gauge statistically significant differences between numbers. Vertical lines that do not overlap with each other mean differences are statistically significant. Overlapping lines indicate no significant differences.

- 30% of respondents considered leaving the emergency department before being seen and treated compared to 31% in 2008. 8% said they left before seeing the doctor or before care and treatment was finished.
- Some of the best predictors of why a person leaves or stays in the emergency department are staff checking on patients every 15 minutes and staff being available to help.

MRI

- The number of respondents receiving an MRI has increased since 2004. In 2010, 10% said they received an MRI compared to 10% in 2008, 8% in 2006 and 6% in 2004. This is significantly higher than 2006 and 2004 and unchanged from 2008.
- 58% of respondents rated access as easy (4 or 5 out of 5) in 2010. The results have not changed significantly since 2004.

Public Health

- 56% of Albertans said they definitely washed their hands more often in the past year because of concerns about the flu or H1N1.
- 89% said they saw health care workers either put on new gloves or wash their hands before they touched or treated them. 11% said they did not see this occur.

Mental Health Services

- 78% of those respondents who obtained mental health services in the past year said they were satisfied (4 or 5 out of 5) with the services they received. While this number has fluctuated over the years, the differences are not significant.
- 78% reported obtaining mental health services was easy (4 or 5 out of 5). This number has remained stable over the years.

Specialist Services

- 62% of Albertans said it was easy (4 or 5 out of 5) to obtain specialist services, similar to 2008 (59%) and 2006 (56%) and significantly higher than 2004 (47%) and 2003 (42%).

- There has been little change in satisfaction across the survey years regarding the amount of time respondents had to wait after booking an appointment to see the specialist (2010: 55%; 2008: 54%; 2006: 52%).
- All attributes of specialist services (e.g., treating patients with courtesy and respect, spending enough time with patients, specialist’s knowledge and competence) remained stable compared to 2008.

Coordination of Care

- Regardless of survey year, less than 50% of respondents felt the coordination of health care professionals to serve their needs was very good or excellent.
- Coordination of care is associated with ease and difficulty of access as well as satisfaction and dissatisfaction with health care services.

Coordination of care

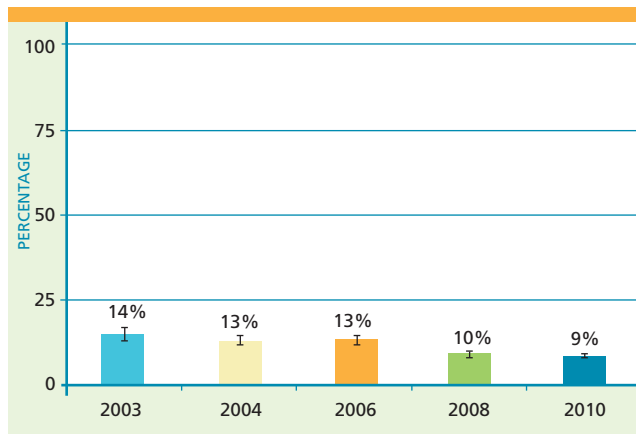
RATING	2010 (%)	2008 (%)	2006 (%)	2004 (%)	2003 (%)
Excellent or very good	48	49	46	48	48
Good, fair or poor	52	51	54	52	52



Patient Safety

- In 2010, 9% of Albertans reported they or an immediate family member experienced unexpected harm. This is down from 10% in 2008 and significantly lower than in 2006 (13%), 2004 (13%) or 2003 (14%). There appears to be a downward trend in terms of those experiencing unexpected harm.
- 34% reported they were told by their health care provider about the harm. This is the same as 2008 and down from 40% in 2006.

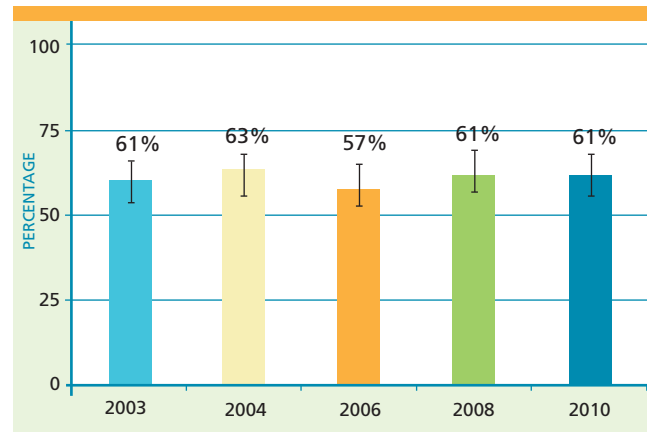
Percentage of respondents who experienced unexpected harm (either themselves or an immediate family member)*



*The vertical lines in the middle of each bar are confidence intervals that gauge statistically significant differences between numbers. Vertical lines that do not overlap with each other mean differences are statistically significant. Overlapping lines indicate no significant differences.



Dissatisfaction with how complaints were handled*



*The vertical lines in the middle of each bar are confidence intervals that gauge statistically significant differences between numbers. Vertical lines that do not overlap with each other mean differences are statistically significant. Overlapping lines indicate no significant differences.

Serious Complaints

- 13% of Albertans had a serious complaint about health care services they received. This is unchanged from 2008 and similar to 2006, 2004 and 2003.
- 61% of those that had a complaint were dissatisfied (1 or 2 out of 5) with how the complaint was handled compared to 61% in 2008 and 57% in 2006. Overall, the results have remained stable since 2003.

Health Link

- There is an increasing trend in the number of respondents who said they were aware of Health Link. Year-over-year increases are statistically significant from 2006 to 2010 (66% versus 75%).
- Satisfaction with Health Link appears to be declining. In 2004, 77% were satisfied with the service compared to 72% in 2010.

Access, satisfaction and quality scores by Alberta Health Services' zone

		OVERALL ACCESS	OVERALL SATISFACTION	ED SERVICES	FAMILY DOCTORS	WALK-IN CLINICS	SPECIALIST SERVICES	DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING	MRI
ALBERTA	% Easy access	48		54	72	56	62	80	58
	% Satisfied		62	59	83	58	79	87	85
	% Excellent/Very good quality			51	75	40	71	—	—
SOUTH ZONE	% Easy access	54		57	78	57	58	78	54
	% Satisfied		66	59	87	62	77	88	74
	% Excellent/Very good quality			47	78	48	72	—	—
CALGARY ZONE	% Easy access	46		53	75	53	57	80	55
	% Satisfied		60	61	81	55	77	85	88
	% Excellent/Very good quality			57	73	38	67	—	—
CENTRAL ZONE	% Easy access	53		63	72	77	64	75	59
	% Satisfied		66	63	85	76	80	86	83
	% Excellent/Very good quality			54	75	49	71	—	—
EDMONTON ZONE	% Easy access	50		51	71	53	67	83	58
	% Satisfied		65	55	85	55	83	91	83
	% Excellent/Very good quality			46	79	38	77	—	—
NORTH ZONE	% Easy access	41		56	64	55	64	74	67
	% Satisfied		53	58	80	59	79	84	88
	% Excellent/Very good quality			48	71	44	64	—	—

Note: the margin of error between Alberta Health Services' zones may be greater than the variation. See technical report for specific details.

Other ratings by Alberta Health Services' zone

	UNEXPECTED HARM (% EXPERIENCING)	SERIOUS COMPLAINT (% YES)	COORDINATION OF CARE (% EXCELLENT/VERY GOOD)	HEALTH LINK (% AWARE)
ALBERTA	9	13	48	75
SOUTH ZONE	8	12	53	69
CALGARY ZONE	10	14	45	75
CENTRAL ZONE	8	11	54	77
EDMONTON ZONE	9	13	51	75
NORTH ZONE	8	13	43	74

Note: the margin of error between Alberta Health Services' zones may be greater than the variation. See technical report for specific details.



In summary

From 2003 to 2008, the HQCA survey findings showed signs of improvement in several areas. The 2010 results are relatively unchanged from 2008.

The key factors Albertans associate with overall difficulty or ease of access to the health care system are how easy or difficult it is to access emergency department services and family doctors as well as how well their care is coordinated.

Overall access and quality of care and satisfaction with family doctors are the key factors influencing Albertan's overall satisfaction. Clearly from the perspective of Albertans, improving access and coordination of care will improve their overall health care experience.

What happens next?

As we do every time we conduct a survey, we provide a detailed technical report to Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Health Services and the regulated health professions so they can see how Albertans rate overall quality, access and satisfaction in terms of their health care experience. In addition, we will continue to work with our stakeholders to use the survey results to determine provincewide initiatives that focus on areas of safety and quality improvement.

Acknowledgements

The HQCA thanks those Albertans who participated in this survey and provided us with valuable information.

Want more details about the survey? For a copy of the technical report go to www.hqca.ca.

Tell us what you think

You may also do this online at www.hqca.ca.

1. How did you hear about the survey?

2. Did you find the information useful?

3. How could we improve future publications?

4. What other topics would you like to see the HQCA focus on?

5. Other comments?

Fax your comments to us at **403.297.8258** or mail to: HQCA, 210, 811-14 Street NW Calgary, AB T2N 2A4.
Email your comments to info@hqca.ca. Thank you for completing this survey.