

Research into Unmet Need for Elective Surgery

Executive Summary

Who is waiting?

- There are more than 350,000 New Zealanders aged over 18 who have some form of Elective Surgery each year – around half public and half private.
- There are an additional 280,000 who have been told they require some form of Elective Surgery, however of these, only 110,000 have been formally placed on a waiting list.
- The remaining 170,000 are not on a waiting list because the issue isn't perceived to be so significant as to require them to be immediately placed on a waiting list, however this group still suffer quality of life reductions and require assistance.
- Those aged over 70 and from low income households contribute disproportionately to these figures.

How long are they waiting?

- Overall waiting times are increasing, for those who have had surgery and for those still waiting.
- For those still waiting, the average wait is up 80 days to an average 304 days, with virtually all of those waiting for public surgery.
- For those who have had surgery wait times up 30 days to an average 144 days, although private wait times much shorter than public, with a difference of 100 days on average.
- More than half of New Zealanders think that public waiting lists will lengthen in the next ten years.

What is the cost of waiting?

- More than half of the 280,000 who require Elective Surgery but haven't had it say that their quality of life is worse than it was five years ago, with almost a quarter stating that their quality of life is a lot worse driven by a lack of mobility not allowing them to do what they used to and higher levels of pain.
- In addition, almost one third of those who require Elective Surgery have had to make significant changes to their lifestyle.
- 15 percent of the 280,000 who require Elective Surgery but haven't had it have had to take time off work due to the issue.
- 30 percent have received unpaid care or assistance, generally from family members or friends, while 19 percent received publicly funded care or assistance.

Does private care make a difference?

- For those who had surgery, private wait times were much shorter than public, with a difference of 100 days on average.
- Over half of privately funded surgeries were completed within a month (54%) compared with 23% of surgeries in the public health system.
- Private surgeries resulted in less time in lost productivity with 24% of people taking no time off work, compared with 14% in the public system.
- This is positive as half of those who had been through Elective Surgery said it had a large positive impact upon the quality of their lives.

About HFANZ:

- The Health Funds Association of New Zealand (HFANZ) is the industry body representing health insurers within New Zealand. Health insurers cover around 29 percent of New Zealanders and fund more than \$1 billion annually in healthcare, mainly for elective surgery.

About NZPSHA:

- NZPSHA is the industry body representing private surgical hospitals. Its 37 member hospitals provide around half of all elective surgery in New Zealand.

About the methodology:

- The TNS research provides an estimate for total need for elective surgery – and includes those who GPs have referred to specialists as well as those who GPs have not referred, despite their needing elective surgery (often because they know they will not meet the threshold for treatment, or will simply be referred back to the GP).
- It is a more comprehensive measure than the Ministry of Health's tracking of referred unmet need – which seeks to measure a subset of those who are referred by GPs.
- It involves a survey of 1800 New Zealanders over the age of 18, and has a margin of error at this level of 3 percent.
- It has been carried out in a manner consistent with the September 2013 research by TNS to enable comparisons of results.