

Interpreting ACT Health Services Quarterly Performance Reports

Data presented in each quarterly report is a snapshot of the latest health system information available for the quarter, as at the date of reporting. Each quarterly report publishes results across two quarters:

- The current quarter (in this example, April to June 2019); and
- The previous quarter (in this example, January to March 2019).

The result for a particular metric for the same quarter, as presented in two successive quarterly reports, may change because the data has been updated in the period between the two reporting dates.

In interpreting the ACT Public Health Services Quarterly Performance Reports, it is important to take into account issues like data maturity, how data is presented, and other contextual factors.

Data Maturity

Data collection for health services is complex. It is based on clinical coding and validation and quality assurance processes which, in some cases, will not be complete as at a reporting date. The data provided in each report is a snapshot of the latest health activity information available at the time.

As a result of this, some data in subsequent quarterly reports may vary slightly from the data previously presented, as the information is updated and finalised.

This is an accepted characteristic of health data, and affects all entities and agencies collecting health data for publication. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, the National Health Funding Body and the Productivity Commission acknowledge this reality, and have established processes allowing agencies to re-submit updated health data in subsequent reporting cycles to ensure most up-to-date information is always made available.

Why does this happen? Here's an example:

Quarterly Report 3 (January to March)	Quarterly Report 4 (April to June)	Explanation
<p>In this report, the total number of admitted patient episodes of care in the January to March quarter was 28,437.</p>	<p>In this report, the total number of admitted patient episodes of care in the January to March quarter was 28,439.</p>	<p>In a busy clinical environment, often an administrative record regarding an admitted patient episode of care is not processed until the patient's care is completed.</p> <p>In this case, the time lag for processing all aspects of the validity and quality of the data for the additional two admitted patient episodes did not make it in time for the reporting window for the Quarterly Report 3.</p> <p>Once processed, this new data must be reflected in the January to March quarter data because that is the appropriate dataset for those admitted patient episodes.</p>

How data is presented

A number of metrics in the quarterly reports show the change in activity or performance between the previous quarter and the current quarter. How these changes are calculated depends on whether the particular metric is shown as a **percentage** or as a **number**. This is explained in more detail in the sections below, with examples.

Data by percentages

When a metric is presented as a percentage, the variance is the absolute difference (i.e. the current quarter minus the previous quarter).

Example

In Table 1 below, the percentage of emergency department patients starting treatment on time in the April to June quarter was 71% compared with 72% in the January to March quarter. The change between the current (71%) and previous quarter (72%) is the difference between the two, which is a change of -1%.

Table 1: Emergency Department Performance

	March quarter 2019 (%)	June quarter 2019 (%)	2018-19 Target (%)	Change from last quarter (%)
Emergency department performance				
Patients starting treatment on time				
Resuscitation	100%	100%	100%	0%
Emergency	72%	71%	80%	-1%
Urgent	30%	28%	75%	-2%
Semi-urgent	46%	44%	70%	-2%
Non-urgent	82%	80%	70%	-2%

Data by numbers

When a metric is presented as a number, the variance is the difference between the current quarter and previous quarter, divided by the previous quarter number. The result is presented as the percentage increase or decrease in that number.

Example

In Table 2 below, the number of presentations to the Belconnen Walk-In Centre in the April to June quarter was 6,044 compared with 5,716 in the January to March quarter.

To calculate the how much presentations increased or decreased in the current quarter compared with the previous quarter:

$$6,044 - 5,716 = [328 \div 5,716] = 5.7\%$$

The calculation above shows that the difference between the current quarter and previous quarter (328) is divided by the previous quarter’s number (5,716) to get 5.7%. This result is then rounded to 6% for reporting purposes.

Table 2: Walk-in Centres Activity and Performance

	March quarter 2019	June quarter 2019	Change from last quarter (%)
Walk-in Centre activity			
Presentations at Tuggeranong	5,522	5,994	9%
Presentations at Belconnen	5,716	6,044	6%

Additional information about the activity and performance of the health system can be found on the [data and publications](#) section of our website.

Contextual Factors

When using or reviewing the data presented in quarterly reports, it is important to consider external contextual factors that can influence health service activity and performance, and the resulting data that is published. For example:

- Seasonality
 - A particularly bad flu season can significantly impact demand for hospital and community health services in certain quarters.
- Structural or Infrastructure developments
 - The commissioning of a new hospital or walk-in centre may result in activity changes in other components or services in the public health system.

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