

Patient Activation

Patient self-management, or “patient activation”, is a patient’s knowledge, skill and confidence to take on the role of managing their health and healthcare. Increasing patient activation is internationally recognised as a means of achieving positive patient outcomes and improving resource efficiency in healthcare.

This research was undertaken to examine patient activation in an Australian context to identify how it can inform Government policy and influence patients with chronic illnesses to better self-manage. These findings will contribute to the evidence base informing how patients and health professionals can “choose wisely” the best treatment and communication practises to improve patient health outcomes.

Method

A survey was developed using Insignia Health’s PAM® tool that drew on previous surveys into consumer health measures including the *South East Sydney LHD PAM® Survey Report 2015*, the *ABS Patient Experience Survey 2017–18* and the *CHF Consumer Sentiment Survey 2018*. Potential respondents were excluded if they were under the age of 18, did not reside in Australia, did not possess two or more chronic illnesses or were not eligible to be given a PAM® score based on their responses. This resulted in a sample of n=1703 respondents completing the survey.

Descriptive analysis was used to understand the level of patient activation, care utilisation, care experience and health literacy amongst Australians with two or more chronic illnesses. Chi-square testing was used to determine if patient activation affected the healthcare status and experience of Australians with chronic illness.



Acknowledgements

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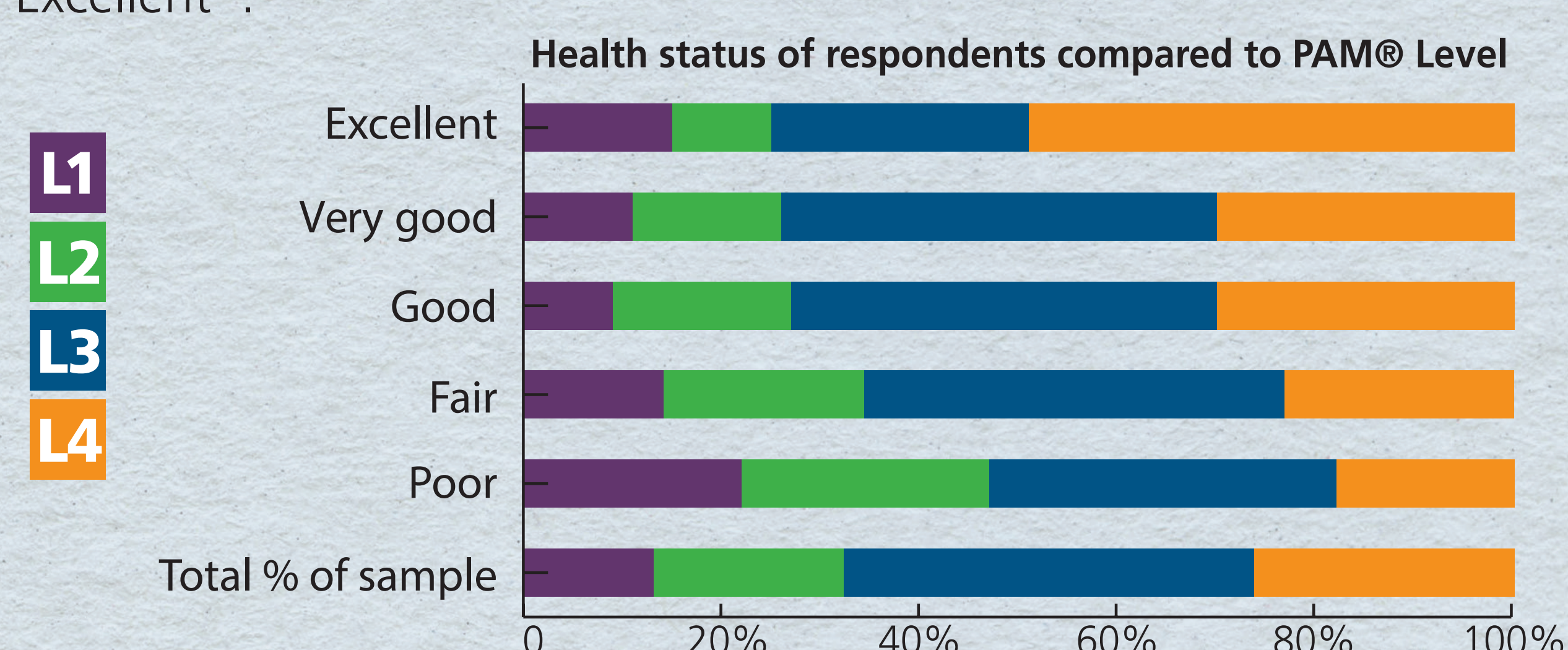
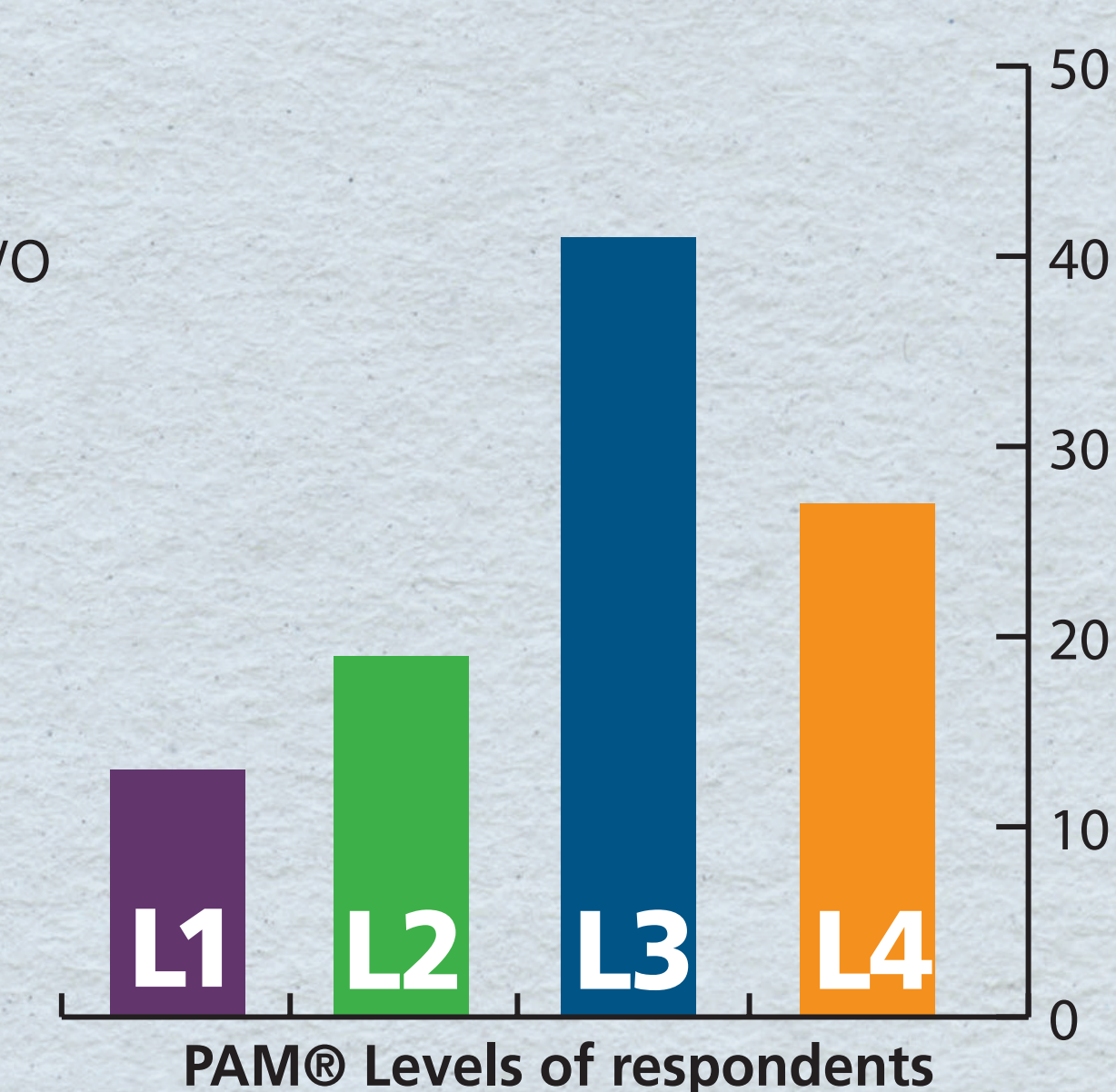
Results

- Results suggest that Australian consumers with two or more chronic illnesses are mostly engaged in their healthcare, with the majority (2/3) of survey respondents falling into the Level 3 or Level 4 PAM® categories.

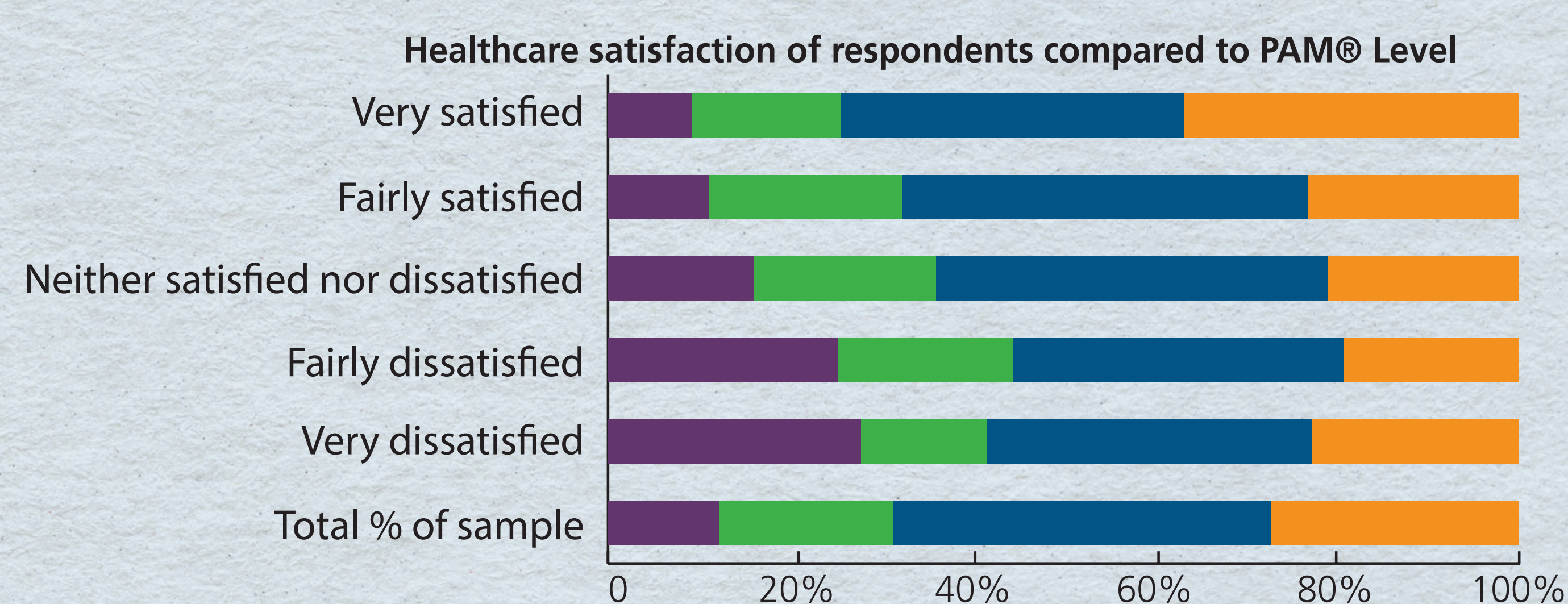
- There was no association between PAM® levels and any demographic characteristic- indicating that there are no particular groups requiring specific focus to increase activation levels

- Positive consumer experience appears associated with increased levels of patient activation. Respondents who reported greater satisfaction with healthcare, greater involvement in decision making, more listening from healthcare professionals and increases discussion of specific healthcare goals typically had a higher PAM® score.

- There was a significant relationship between patient activation and overall health status, with Level 1 respondents being disproportionately likely to rate their health status as “Poor” while Level 4 respondents were disproportionately likely to rate their health as “Excellent”.



- Similarly Level 1 patients were disproportionately likely to resort being “Very dissatisfied” with the care received in the previous 12 months while Level 4 respondents were disproportionately likely to report being “Very satisfied”.



- There was no significant association with visits to GPs, GP nurses, dentists, pharmacists, specialist doctors outside of hospitals, community based health services, allied health services, alternative therapies or usage of public hospitals.
- There was a significant association between PAM® level and the need for assistance to understand written materials provided by a GP or pharmacist, using a private hospital and visiting a psychologist or counsellor.

Policy Implications & Conclusions

- Evidence that chronically ill patients with high levels of patient activation have improved healthcare experiences and outcomes
- Given the high levels of Patient Activation amongst Australians with chronic illnesses, healthcare practitioners should be well placed to use treatment management and communication strategies that utilise this activation to improve both healthcare outcomes and satisfaction with healthcare.
- Health literacy resources such as *Choosing Wisely Australia’s ‘Five Questions to Ask Your Doctor’* are likely to be valued and utilised by patients with high activation, but less likely to be used by those with lower activation.
- Investing in measures to assist general practices and patients navigate the range of services they need to exercise choice and control in their healthcare as part of a comprehensive national primary health care reform strategy would deliver high value care and leverage the high level of activation among people with chronic conditions. Measures could include shared decision-making tools, evidence-based self-management services, social prescribing and service coordinators.