

Public satisfaction with the NHS at a record high, says expert

March 22 2011

Public satisfaction with the NHS is at a record high, says John Appleby, Chief Economist at the King's Fund, in an article published in the British Medical Journal today.

It follows a report in the Observer newspaper accusing England's [Health Secretary](#) Andrew Lansley of "burying" similar survey results because they undermine his case for urgent radical reforms.

The latest British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey reports that 64% of the British public are either very or quite satisfied with the NHS - the highest level of satisfaction since the survey began in 1983, and part of a continuous upward trend since 2002.

The figures also show that satisfaction with GPs has now reached 80% - 3% short of its highest level in the early 1990s.

Satisfaction with inpatient services fell - by one percentage point - over the decade to 2009, despite year on year rises since 2006 following a long run decline since 1983. But the public now seems much more satisfied with outpatient and accident and [emergency services](#) than in 1999, writes Appleby.

Furthermore, analysis of respondents by political party shows that the rising satisfaction with the NHS over the last ten years or so has also been shared by Conservatives, whose satisfaction is also now the highest since the survey began.

Appleby acknowledges that interpreting responses (and their trends) to questions about satisfaction can be difficult, but says that surveys such as the BSA "provide a useful indicator of the public's general views about the NHS and its services."

He concludes: "Over the last decade the NHS must presumably have been doing something right to earn this extra [satisfaction](#) - something even Conservative supporters have noticed - and something probably not unadjacent to the large rise in funding since 2000. Future BSA surveys will reveal how satisfied the public will be as funding for the NHS is squeezed and the government's proposed reforms take shape on the ground."

Provided by British Medical Journal

Citation: Public satisfaction with the NHS at a record high, says expert (2011, March 22)
retrieved 23 April 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-03-satisfaction-nhs-high-expert.html>

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