

# Signs of Capacity Pressure in Acute Care Hospitals in Newfoundland and Labrador

## Objective

To assess (1) whether acute care hospitals in Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) exhibit signs of capacity pressure revealed by high occupancy rates and (2) the role of high alternate level of care (ALC) use in causing capacity pressure.

## Practice Points

1. Severe hospital capacity pressures, revealed by high occupancy rates, lead to an increase in emergency room wait times and high numbers of patients waiting for a hospital bed.
2. The lack of alternatives to hospital care for patients who are ready for discharge have been labelled an ALC issue.
3. ALC– a term used in hospitals to describe patients who occupy a bed but do not require the intensity of services provided in that care setting (as defined by the Canadian Institute for Health Information).
4. ALC is an inefficient and inappropriate use of hospitals but can occur because of deficits in access to long-term care (LTC), personal care, home care, rehabilitation, or tertiary care.

## Methods

1. Data for 2021/22 occupancy rates were obtained from the NL Department of Health and Community Services. ALC data for 2021/22 was obtained from NL Health Services. Data relating to cost and stays were obtained from the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI).
2. The Waterford and Janeway Hospitals were excluded from the analysis.

## Results

Table 1. Measures of Hospital Usage in NL, 2021/22

	Location	Stays	Beds	Occupancy (%)	Cost/Stay (\$)	ALC (%)
<b>Large Hospitals</b>						
St. Clare's	St. John's	6,047	169	90.3	6,989	22
Health Sciences Centre	St. John's	18,222	357	81.1	6,888	10
James Paton Memorial	Gander	2,566	85	88	8,142	27
Central NL Regional	Grand Falls-Windsor	3,379	96	85.6	6,774	34
Western Memorial	Corner Brook	6,095	155	79.7	7,048	31
<b>Small Hospitals</b>						
Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre	Burin	1,299	35	52.7	12,077	14
Dr. G.B. Cross Memorial	Clareville	1,568	41	68.1	8,737	17
Carbonear General	Carbonear	1,927	56	69.7	9,143	21
Sir Thomas Roddick	Stephenville	1,023	51	82.7	7,125	23
Charles S. Curtis Memorial	St. Anthony	1,119	42	78.6	9,751	24
Labrador Health Centre	Happy Valley-Goose Bay	1,411	25	95.8	8,091	29
Labrador West Health Centre	Labrador City	661	15	81.4	10,472	21
<b>Acute Care Health Centres</b>						
Eastern Health	Eastern Health	485	24	50.7	10,159	18
Central Health	Central Health	747	40	89.8	7,381	42
Western Health	Western Health	243	17	43.5	10,280	47

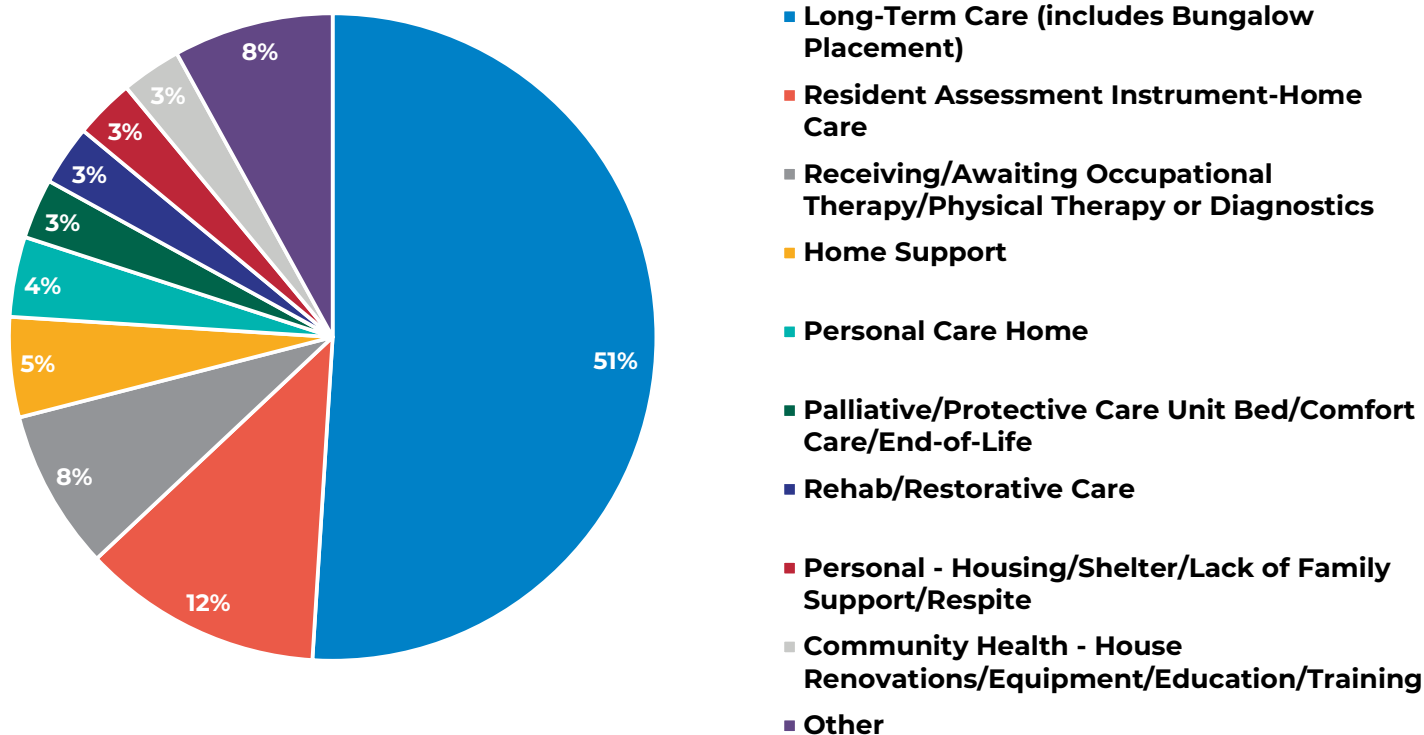


Figure 1. Proportion of Total ALC Length of Stay by Type of Care Needed, 2021/22

## Conclusions

1. With occupancy rates of >85%, capacity stress exists in four hospitals (St. John's [St. Clare's], Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, and Happy Valley-Goose Bay) and the acute care centres in Central Health (not large or small hospitals). All of these facilities have an ALC percentage greater than 20%.
2. The majority of ALC days are for patients awaiting a LTC bed.
3. Reducing the number of acute care beds in NL will require improvements in the LTC sector.