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INTRODUCTION

Best practice recommendations published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), and reflected in the National Clinical Programme for Self-Harm and Suicide-related Ideation (NCP SHI), Model of Care states that biopsychosocial assessments in Emergency Department (ED) settings must be carried out in a private, designated room where it is possible to speak in confidence without being overheard.^{1,2}

Given that the reconfiguration of ED pathways to manage Covid and non-Covid patients has impacted substantially on the structure and nature of work in the ED settings³, it was timely to re-audit the mental health assessment rooms within the EDs which implement the NCP SHI, following the original audit in 2018.

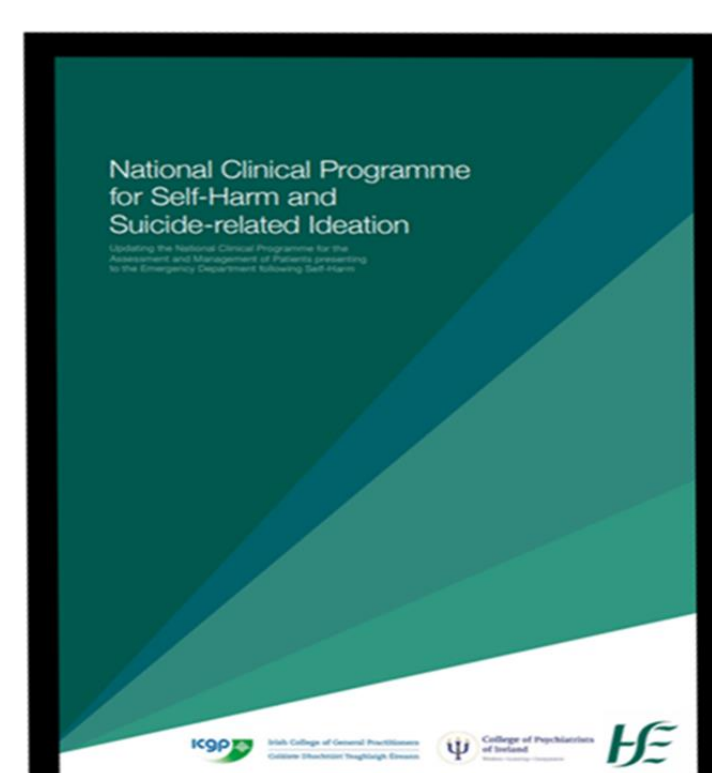


AIMS

To explore the impact of COVID-19 related reconfiguration of care pathways on mental health assessment rooms within Irish hospital emergency departments.

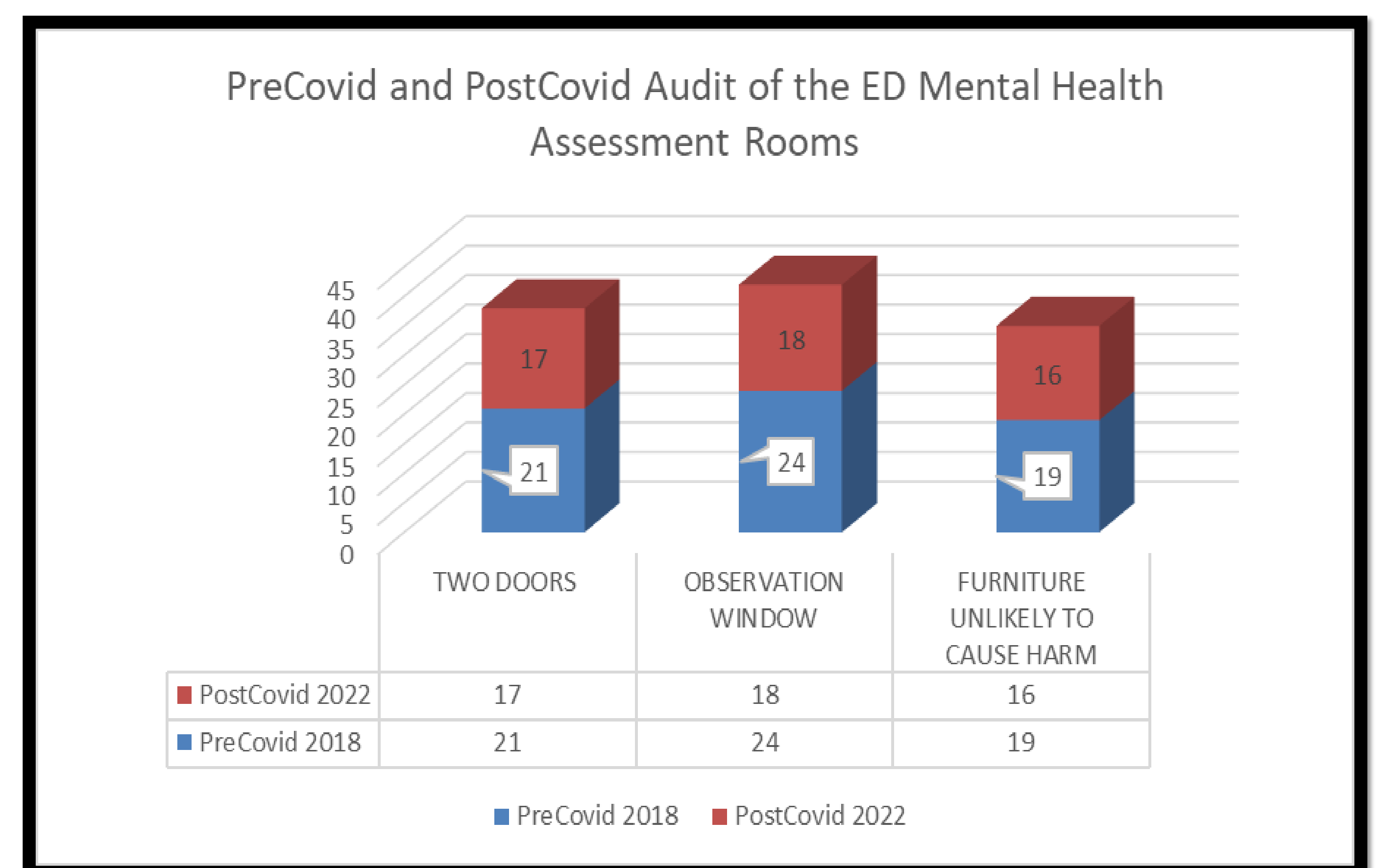
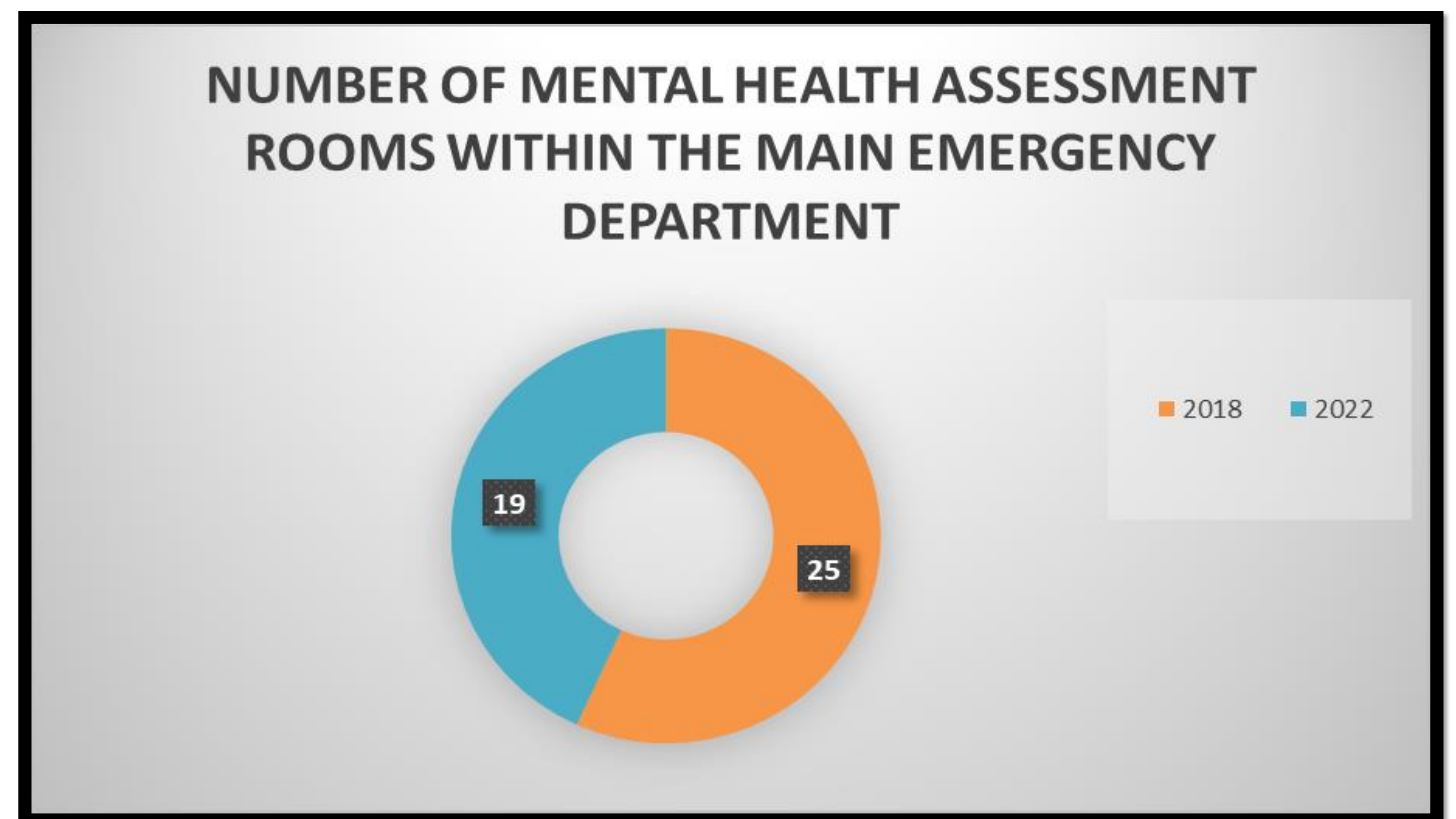
METHODOLOGY

- A Self-assessment audit was completed by 27 hospital emergency departments using the Psychiatric Liaison Accreditation Network (PLAN) clinical standards in Q4 of 2022.
- There are currently a total of 125 standards in the PLAN, 2022 document, of which 12 directly relate to the ED mental health assessment room.
- Supplementary telephone calls and direct observations of the mental health assessment rooms were conducted to confirm accuracy of responses.
- Descriptive analyses were presented based on 2018 and 2022 audit responses and McNemar's uncorrected test was used with significance set at 0.05 and 95% confidence intervals (CIs).



RESULTS

- ❑ A dedicated room for mental health assessments was found to be no longer present in eight (30%) hospital EDs, in 2022, which had met this standard at the time of the initial audit in 2018.



DISCUSSION

Our findings reveal a deterioration in the quality of the physical environment for mental health assessments in Irish ED settings, between 2018 and 2022. This change occurred during a period of major reconfiguration of care pathways and physical redesign in response to the Covid 19 pandemic. Our study identifies the need to better integrate mental health care in planning the service response to future public health emergencies. Ensuring the quality of the environment for urgent mental health assessments in ED settings align with Recommendation 22 of Sharing the Vision for better patient outcomes.

1. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2022) Self-harm: assessment, management and preventing recurrence. Nice guideline [NG225]. NICE. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng225/resources/selfharm-assessment-management-and-preventing-recurrence-pdf-66143837346757>

2. Health Service Executive (2022) National Clinical Programme for Self-Harm and Suicidal-related Ideation; Updating the National Clinical Programmes for the Assessment and Management of Patients presenting to the Emergency Department following Self-Harm. Dublin, HSE Clinical, Design and Innovation Office. <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/cspd/hcps/self-harm-suicide-related-ideation/moc/mhncp-self-harm-model-of-care.pdf>

3. McAndrew J, O'Leary J, Cotter D, et al. (2021) Impact of initial COVID-19 restrictions on psychiatry presentations to the emergency department of a large academic teaching hospital. Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine. 2021; 38(2):108-115. doi:10.1017/ipm.2020.115