

North Somerset GP Practice Survey Report

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Contents

Background to the Report.....	4
Healthwatch North Somerset’s statutory duty.....	5
Setting up the survey / methodology	6
List of North Somerset GP Practices	8
NORTH SOMERSET GP SURVEY RESULTS	9
Introduction	9
Key points.....	9
RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY QUESTIONS	11
Section 1:	12
APPOINTMENTS	12
Section 2.....	37
OPENING HOURS	37
Section 3.....	41
PATIENT EXPERIENCE	41
Section 4.....	55
WAITING ROOM	55
Section 5.....	62
QUALITY OF SERVICE - GPs	62
Section 6.....	74
QUALITY OF SERVICE –	74
STAFF (E.G. RECEPTION STAFF / PRACTICE MANAGER / PRACTICE NURSE)	74
Section 7.....	78
OUTSIDE OF SURGERY OPENING HOURS	78
Section 8.....	84
COMPLAINTS	84
Section 9.....	87
ABOUT YOU (OPTIONAL, BUT REALLY USEFUL FOR US)	87
Conclusion.....	92

Recommendations 93
Distribution of the Report..... 94
Appendix 1 95
Stakeholder Responses to the Report 95
Appendix 2 102
Further Information: 102



North Somerset GP Practice Survey Results

Background to the Report

We know from extensive public feedback that for local people their most important and valued health and social care service is the primary care service provided by GPs. During our public engagement work through the year we asked local people what issues they would like Healthwatch North Somerset to focus its attention on and they told us that they wanted us to focus attention on their experiences of GP Practices.

Access to GP services was included in Healthwatch North Somerset Strategic Work Plan for 2014/2015 and during the year we also reviewed GP websites. The survey sought to provide a good overview of patient experience and views of GP services in North Somerset.

GPs are the first point of contact for most patients for their general NHS healthcare needs. The majority of patients see their GP during consultations in the surgery and home visits where GPs assess not only health problems, but physical, psychological and social issues are also taken into account before individual intervention is provided which comprises of treatment, prevention, education and/or promotion of health.

Most GPs are independent contractors to the NHS which means that in most cases, they are responsible for providing adequate premises from which to practice and for employing their own staff which can include practice managers, nurses, receptionists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, midwives, district nurses etc.

GPs provide services which are defined under the General Medical Services Contract. They have Essential or Core Services which they must provide (these include GP consultations and some clinics). There are also Additional Services which they can choose to provide such as maternity, contraceptive, vaccinations and minor injuries) and Enhanced Services which are more specialised services such as dementia and influenza.

(You can read more about the role and functions of GPs in the RCGP Booklet 'It's Your Practice: A patient guide to GP services').

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) estimates that nationally 90% of all NHS patient contacts are carried out in general practice and that there are an ever growing number of patient consultations. This, combined with a decrease in funding for general practice, is creating pressure on the system resulting in inevitable 'longer waits for appointments, fewer

services and more difficulty for patients in getting to see the GP of their choice' (<http://www.rcgp.org.uk/campaign-home/about.aspx>).

In 2013 North Somerset, along with Bristol, Somerset and South Gloucestershire, formed the One Care Consortium which is a collaboration of 24 GP practices and two local GP-led provider organisations (GP Care and BrisDoc) to create an integrated approach in the delivery of primary care. The consortium seeks to share standards, ideas, processes and resources to improve the interface between General Practices leading to improved clinical outcomes and improvements in the Out of Hours service through the sharing of patients' records.

Healthwatch North Somerset's statutory duty

Healthwatch North Somerset's statutory duty and remit, which is laid out in The Health and Social Care Act 2012, is to provide a voice for people who use health and adult social care services, by:

Influencing

- Giving people an opportunity to have a say about their local health and social care services, including those whose voice isn't usually heard.
- Taking public views to the people who make decisions - including having a representative on the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Feeding issues back to government via Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Signposting

- Providing information about health and social care services in the local area.
- Advising people on where to go for specialist help or information (signposting).
- Helping people make choices and decisions about their care.
- Working closely with other groups and organisations in the local area.

Under the Health and Social Care Act (2012) Healthwatch North Somerset has the following powers and functions:

- A duty on service providers and commissioners to respond to requests of information within 20 working days.
- A duty on service providers and commissioners to respond to recommendations made by Healthwatch North Somerset within 20 working days.
- Make reports and recommendations about services known to commissioners, providers and regulators of health and social care services in North Somerset
- A duty on service providers to allow entry to authorised Healthwatch North Somerset members to conduct announced or unannounced 'enter and view' visits to assess services.
- A seat on North Somerset's Health and Wellbeing Board (People and Communities Board), to promote health improvements and tackle health inequalities.
- A mechanism to make recommendations to Healthwatch England, which may include advising the Care Quality Commission about special reviews or investigations to conduct.

Healthwatch North Somerset GP Practice Survey: Summary

The Healthwatch North Somerset GP Practice Survey took place between October 2014 and January 2015 and gathered almost 700 responses over the 25 GP Practices in North Somerset.

Analysis of the survey found that the majority of respondents were largely happy with the service their GP practice provided but there were pockets of dissatisfaction. These areas are highlighted in this report and include better access to online bookings, getting through more easily to book appointments, patient confidentiality in the reception area and greater satisfaction with the GP - these are all specific things for which changes can be made in the way GP Practices function to improve patient experiences and manage patient expectations.

Views of GP reception services are mixed whilst there were many positive comments about the service, there were some comments of concern. A large number also responded that there was insufficient facility to speak confidentially at the reception area.

Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) are useful and effective ways to link with patients and provide a lay perspective on the practice. A large number of respondents were unaware of a PPG in their GP Practice.

Healthwatch North Somerset recommendations are included on Page 93 of this report.

Setting up the survey / methodology

Our aim was to gather independent information about the experiences of people in North Somerset and to see if there was room for service improvements.

The survey, which was a random sample survey, was devised to ensure that as many aspects of the patient experience of GP practice services could be reviewed as possible. The survey questions and structure was reviewed and edited by the Healthwatch North Somerset Health Group of volunteers. Patients are asked to complete numerous surveys for GP practices and we knew that survey fatigue could be problematic. We found that the survey we developed as being primarily an electronic survey subsequently needed to be made widely available in paper format which provided the attendant challenges of data input.

We acknowledge that a survey of the length and type utilised can be challenging for the respondents to complete.

This report captures and reflects upon the valuable information we received from our survey on North Somerset GP Practices and identifies recommendations for improvements which include access, appointments, privacy at reception, complaints and waiting rooms.

Our recommendations do not sit in isolation and should be considered against the national context. The Mori GP Patient satisfaction survey results of individual practices can be found on GP Patient Survey website <https://gp-patient.co.uk>

Our hope is that the residents of North Somerset, PPG representatives and the North Somerset Health Community take on board the experiences and views expressed and work towards resolving the issues that created difficulties for patients. There are many areas of

patient satisfaction and positive experiences but, as with any report it cannot answer every question and will inevitably raise more.

The survey was conducted between October 2014 and January 2015. It was started primarily as an electronic survey with a small run of printed surveys for those North Somerset residents who did not have access to a computer or who required the survey in another format. The demand for printed copies of the survey was higher than anticipated and three print runs were made for a total of 1500 paper copies. The survey was also promoted on the Healthwatch North Somerset website, newsletter, emailed to the membership and disseminated amongst the wider voluntary sector.

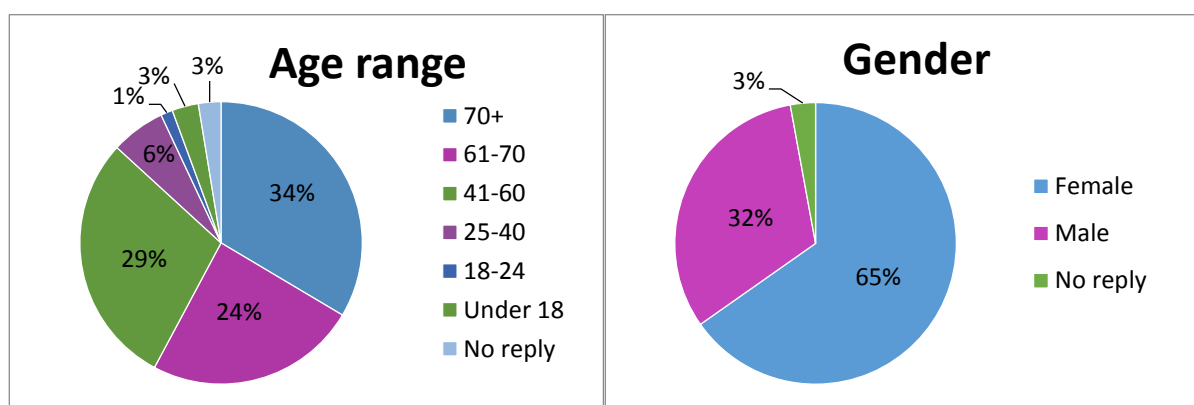
To gather a wide spectrum of views it was essential to speak with as many patients as possible and the most practical and consistent way to do so was the use of a patient survey in the form of a questionnaire. This would ensure that the same questions were asked of all patients and that the responses could be assessed fairly and equally. A questionnaire has the benefit that it can be completed confidentially and anonymously.

The survey was advertised in the local press - Weston Mercury and North Somerset Times, and was widely advertised through local community websites, community newsletters, social networks and Eventbrite. The survey was emailed to all Healthwatch North Somerset's members and contacts and via Voluntary Action North Somerset's database of over 800 contacts and was made available on the Healthwatch North Somerset website and taken to voluntary sector groups including the Senior Community Link groups.

The survey was taken to all events and meetings attended by Healthwatch North Somerset during the survey period for distribution. Almost 700 surveys were completed and returned.

Responses were received for all GP practices in North Somerset, although the count varied considerably, ranging from 4 to 109 responses for individual practices. It is not therefore possible to draw conclusions about all the individual practices, but rather to gain a general insight into GP practices across the county, or at a geographical or cluster level.

The people who completed our survey were a self-selected sample of the population and are a self-selected group. The demographic profile for North Somerset indicates that we spoke to fewer young people (under 25) and higher percentage of older people than if we had captured a representative sample. The survey does, however, provide feedback from a good cross section of the population.



Further profile information can be found on Page 87.

List of North Somerset GP Practices

- Backwell and Nailsea Medical Group
- Cedars Surgery
- Clarence Park Surgery
- Clevedon Riverside Group
- Graham Road Surgery
- Green Practice
- Harbourside Family Practice
- Heywood Family Practice
- Locality Health Centre
- Long Ashton Surgery
- Longton Grove Surgery
- Milton Surgery
- Nailsea Family Practice
- New Court Surgery
- Portishead Medical Group
- Riverbank Medical Centre
- Stafford Medical Group
- St Georges Medical Practice
- Sunnyside Surgery
- Tudor Lodge Surgery
- Village Surgery
- Winscombe and Banwell Family Practice
- Worle Medical Practice
- Wrington Vale Medical Practice
- Yeo Vale Medical Practice

NORTH SOMERSET GP SURVEY RESULTS

Introduction

A total of 671 people in North Somerset completed and submitted a GP Survey questionnaire, however 3 did not answer any questions at all, 3 indicated that they had never had an appointment at their GP surgery, 1 said “I moved from Paris so I don't have one yet” and 5 attend GP surgeries outside the county. These 12 people have therefore been excluded from the results, giving a respondent base of **659**.

Unless specified otherwise, all percentages in this report are out of 659, e.g. 100 people = 15%. Please note that percentages have been rounded to whole numbers, therefore some of the quoted percentages may add to 99% or 101% rather than 100% due to rounding.

All answers, including respondents' full comments, are available in a separate Excel spreadsheet which is available to download from the HWNS website. The spreadsheet can be filtered by GP surgery to view the responses for each surgery individually. Please note that the comments in the Excel spreadsheet have not been spellchecked, but they have been edited to preserve anonymity and to remove personalised comments.

Key points

General questions

- 70% rated their GP surgery as excellent or good.
- 77% rated the GPs at their surgery excellent, very good or good.
- 73% rated the staff at their surgery (e.g. reception staff, practice manager, practice nurse) excellent, very good or good.
- 81% are happy overall with the care, treatment and service they receive at their surgery.

Specific issues

The selection below is based on questions in which the highest proportion of respondents gave responses which indicated dissatisfaction or highlighted areas for improvement.

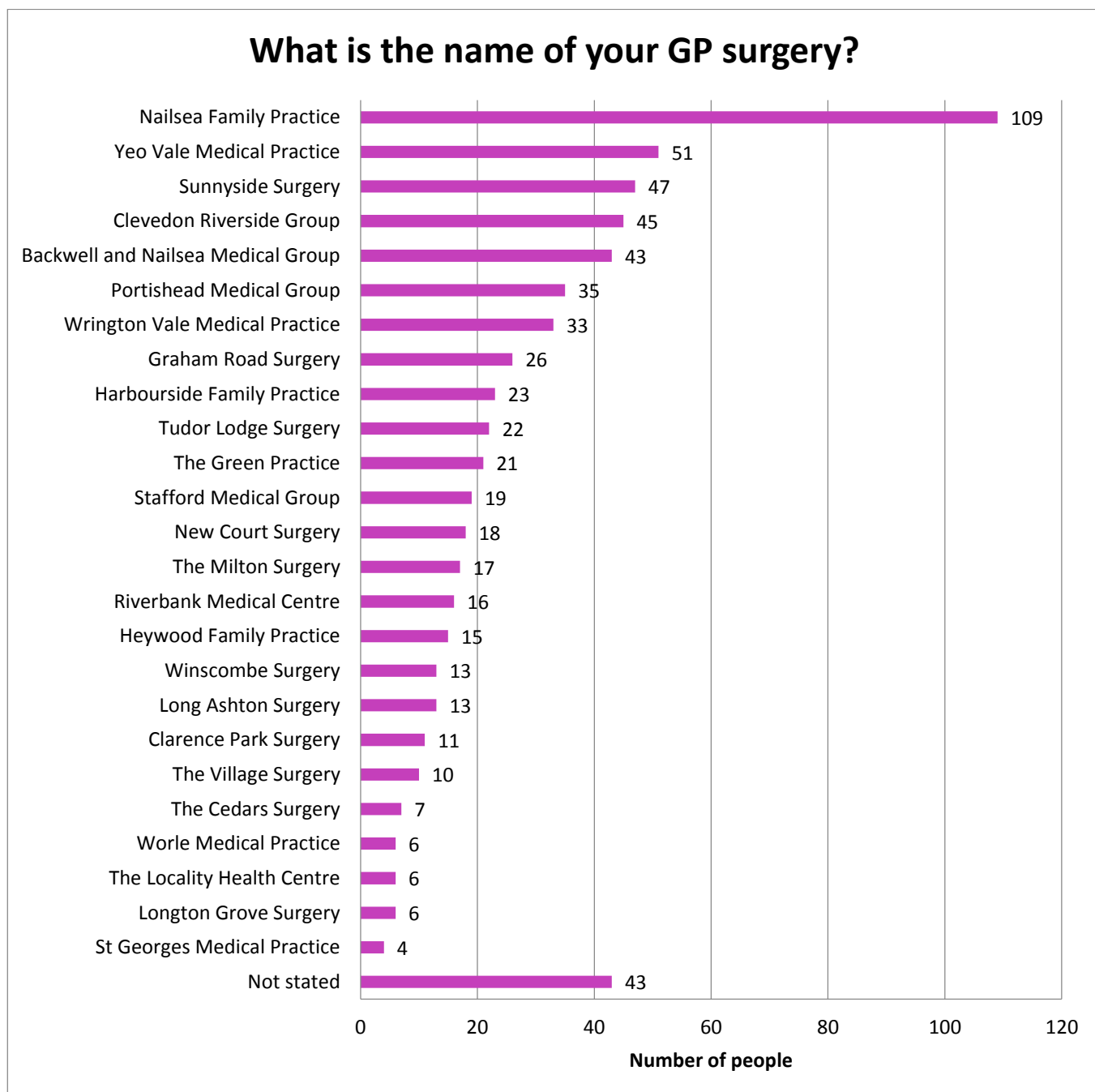
- 39% of respondents said that when they call their GP surgery they are generally on hold for up to 5 minutes, or often have to hang up, or get disconnected, or timed out.
- 35% said they cannot get an appointment when they need it. The most common reasons for being unable to get an appointment (or being offered an appointment that was not convenient) were that there were no appointments on the day they wanted or they could not see their preferred GP.
- 27% said they are unable to see a GP of their choice at their surgery.

- 28% said they avoid certain GPs at their surgery. Reasons given by respondents include rudeness, lack of bedside manner, unsympathetic, not listening, dismissive of patient/patient not taken seriously, not having confidence in them and previous misdiagnosis.
- 22% do not feel they have enough time with their GP.
- 60% said there isn't enough privacy to talk to reception in confidence.
- 40% said they normally have to wait more than 15 minutes after their appointment time to be seen by their GP, 49% for 5-15 minutes and 5% less than 5 minutes. Only 1% said their appointments are always on time.
- 68% of those who are within the relevant age group have not taken up the opportunity to have a free NHS Health Check (available to those between the ages of 40 and 74). The most common reason was that they didn't know about it or had not been offered one, while others said they already receive regular check-ups due to a health condition such as diabetes.
- 34% do not know how to contact an out of hours GP.
- 44% do not understand the difference between the 111 service and the out of hours GP service.
- 29% would not feel comfortable making a complaint against the GP service or the out of hours service, the main reason being fear of repercussions e.g. being viewed as a trouble maker, blacklisted, de-registered or that their future treatment would be affected.
- Respondents were given the opportunity to make comments at several points during the survey. Common themes arising from the comments included the difficulty in getting an appointment when required (both in terms of availability and the booking system itself), not always being able to see their chosen GP, lack of continuity arising from not seeing the same GP each time, and appointment times being too short/feeling rushed during appointments.

RESPONSES TO THE SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of your GP surgery?

- The surgery from which we received the greatest number of responses was Nailsea Family Practice, accounting for 109 (17%) of the 659 respondents.
- Six surgeries account for 50% of respondents, while 43% attend one of the other 19 surgeries and 7% did not name their GP surgery.



Section 1:

APPOINTMENTS

People require GP services at times when they can access them and flexibility in the system is clearly needed. A detailed comparison of the appointment opening hours of individual practices, or at a cluster level would enable further analysis and could offer some insight into whether services are meeting local needs and whether needs differ across different patches and communities.

The Guardian newspaper has provided information on appointment opening times and created a map, using data from NHS Choices, to illustrate surgery opening hours at the weekend across England.

(<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1YRNI4eSZ0w2i29jpX3wlZt4N6tOoGrARUjwBoZhvRg4/edit?pli=1#gid=0>). This data indicates that weekend opening hours are the exception rather than the rule in North Somerset. The accuracy of this data has not been tested.

Respondents to the Healthwatch North Somerset (HWNS) GP Survey across the age groups indicated there was broad consensus that appointment hours were Good, Very Good or Excellent, although older respondents were generally more satisfied with the hours and those of working age generally rated the opening hours as less satisfactory than other age groups.

Respondents were asked how quickly they are able to get a routine GP appointment. The subjectivity of rating the speed of getting an appointment and respondents' general frustration with this aspect of accessing their GP are perhaps reflected in the answers which show that 60% rate the speed of getting an appointment as Very Poor, Poor or Fair.

Respondents are generally unhappy with the speed at which they can get an appointment with their GP. This question is a subjective one and the answers received reflect this. One person's perception of waiting time for an appointment as Very Poor is another's excellent service, despite both getting an appointment for the next day.

Having made an appointment, respondents were asked about the length of wait in the waiting room when they attended the appointment; were they seen promptly? These results indicate that the majority have to wait beyond their appointment time once they get to the surgery.

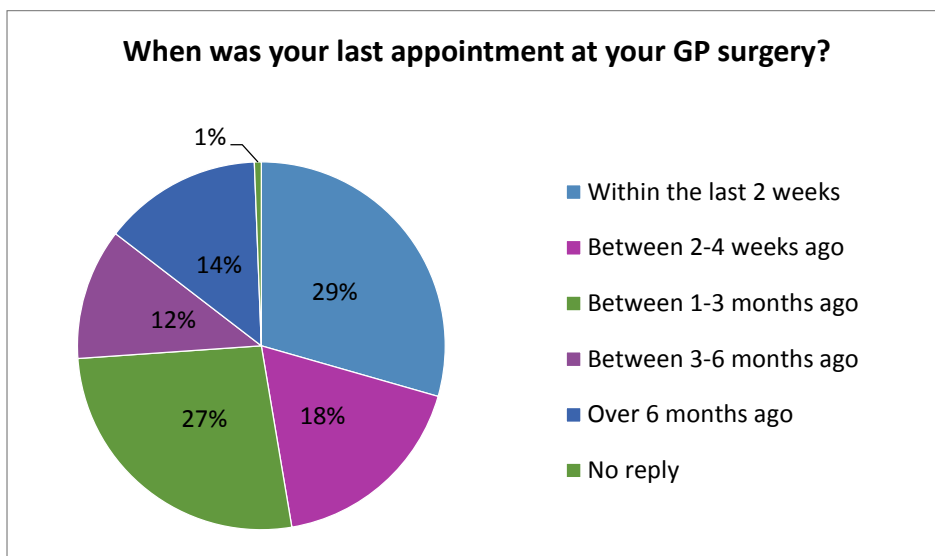
Reasons for the appointments running behind schedule are numerous and varied and might be caused by the patient, the GP, systems errors, or a combination of both. It is interesting to note that while some patients missing their appointment slot reported being refused another appointment and not seen by the GP on that day, when the GP is running late all patients may be kept waiting. This unequal balance can be a source of frustration amongst patients and impact upon service satisfaction. For some patients a wait of any length is an issue.

The responses identified the use of visual appointment display screens without audio caused patients with visual impairments some difficulties in the waiting rooms. A simple system modification would assist visually impaired patients in being aware when it is their turn to see the GP, thereby causing fewer delays in the appointment flow.

Respondents were unaware of the ability to speak to their GP by phone, or had not tried to do so. The low take-up and/or awareness might relate to the difficulty of getting through to the surgery by phone generally and a fuller analysis of this may be helpful.

2. When was your last appointment at your GP surgery?

- 85% of respondents had their most recent appointment at their GP surgery in the 6 months preceding the survey and 14% had an appointment more than 6 months before completing the survey.



	No. of people	% of 659
Within the last 2 weeks	194	29%
Between 2-4 weeks ago	118	18%
Between 1-3 months ago	175	27%
Between 3-6 months ago	76	12%
Over 6 months ago	92	14%
No reply	4	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

3. Generally, how long do you have to wait on the telephone before you speak to someone when calling your GP surgery?

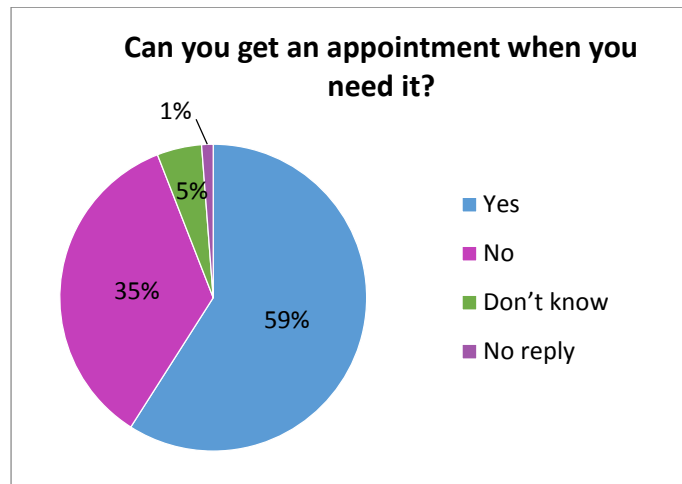
- 58% of respondents said the phone is generally answered within 10 rings (i.e. immediately, within 3 rings or within 10 rings).
- However 39% said they are generally on hold for up to 5 minutes or often have to hang up or get disconnected or timed out.



	No. of people	% of 659
Answered immediately	28	4%
Answered within 3 rings	103	16%
Answered within 10 rings	250	38%
On hold for up to 5 minutes	174	26%
I often have to hang up or get disconnected or timed out	84	13%
No reply	20	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

4. Can you get an appointment when you need it?

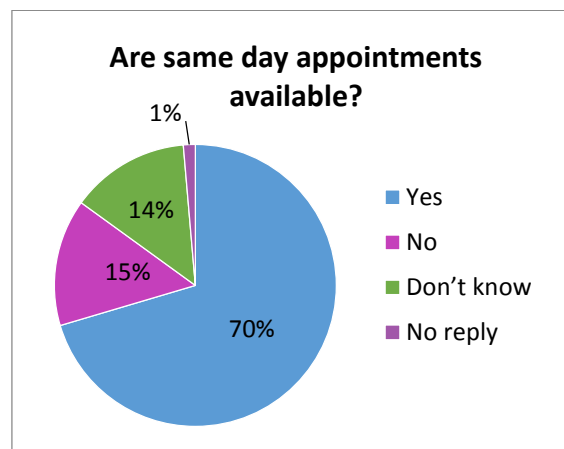
- 59% of respondents said they can get an appointment when they need it but 35% said they cannot. (The remainder did not know or did not reply.)



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	389	59%
No	231	35%
Don't know	31	5%
No reply	8	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

5. Are same day appointments available?

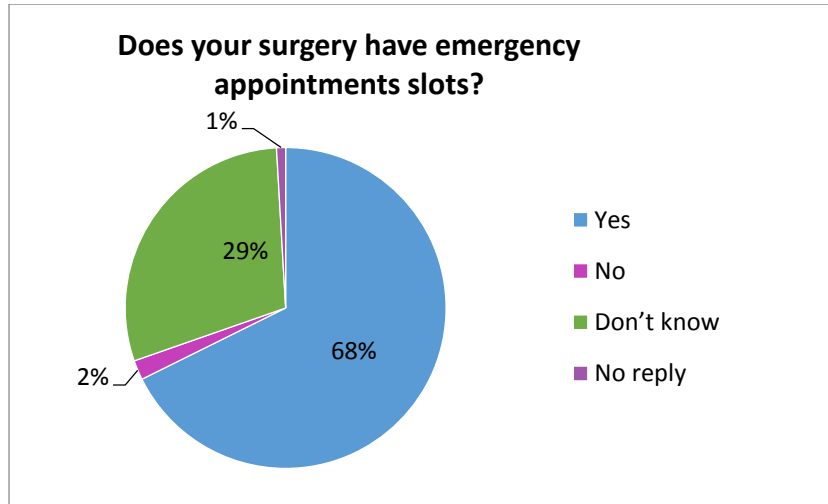
- 70% of respondents said that same day appointments are available but 15% said they are not and 14% did not know.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	464	70%
No	96	15%
Don't know	90	14%
No reply	9	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

6. Does your surgery have emergency appointments slots?

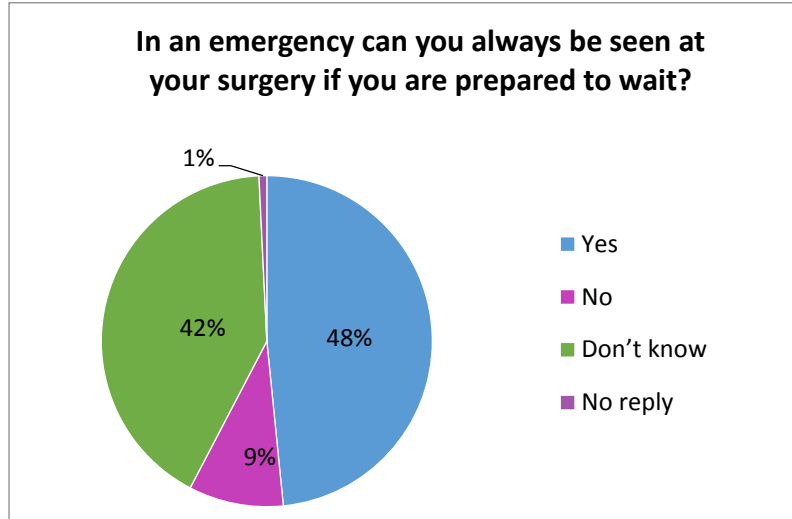
- 68% of respondents said their surgery has emergency appointment slots, 2% said no and 29% did not know.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	446	68%
No	13	2%
Don't know	194	29%
No reply	6	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

7. In an emergency can you always be seen at your surgery if you are prepared to wait?

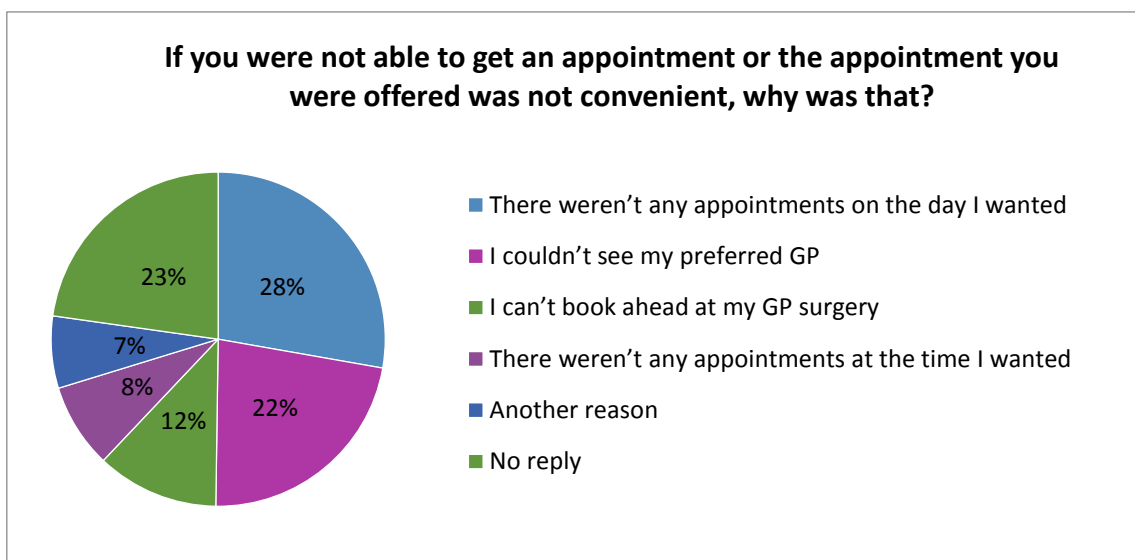
- 48% of respondents said they can always be seen at their surgery if they are prepared to wait, 9% said no and 42% did not know.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	319	48%
No	61	9%
Don't know	274	42%
No reply	5	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

8. If you were not able to get an appointment or the appointment you were offered was not convenient, why was that?

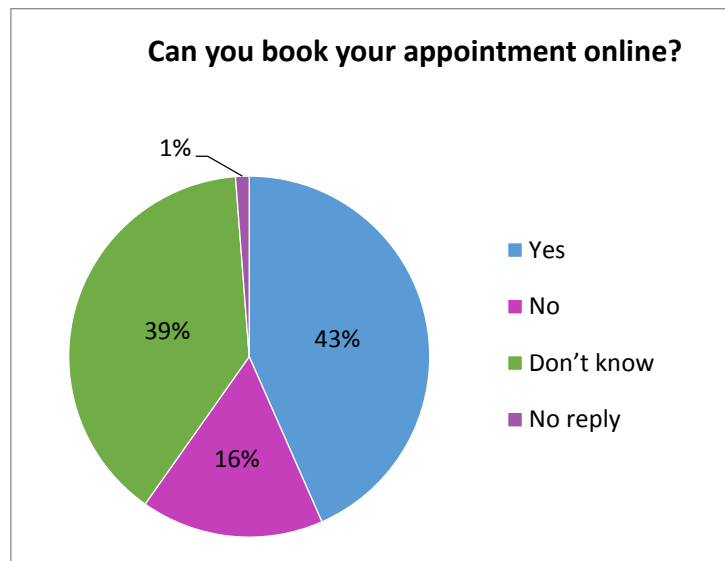
- The two most common reasons for being unable to obtain a suitable appointment were not being able to get an appointment on their chosen day or not being able to see their preferred GP.
- 50% of the 659 respondents gave one of these two answers, and if the number of people who did not reply to the question are factored out, they account for 65% of all the reasons given.



	No. of people	% of 659
There weren't any appointments on the day I wanted	183	28%
I couldn't see my preferred GP	148	22%
I can't book ahead at my GP surgery	78	12%
There weren't any appointments at the time I wanted	54	8%
Another reason	46	7%
No reply	150	23%
TOTAL	659	100%

9. Can you book your appointment online?

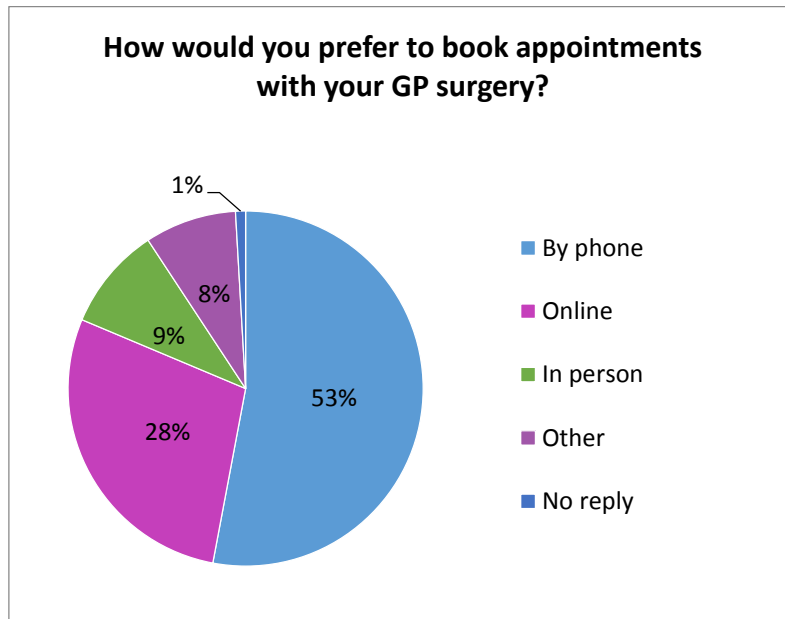
- 43% of respondents said they can book their appointment online, 16% said they cannot and 39% did not know.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	286	43%
No	108	16%
Don't know	257	39%
No reply	8	1%

10. How would you prefer to book appointments with your GP surgery?

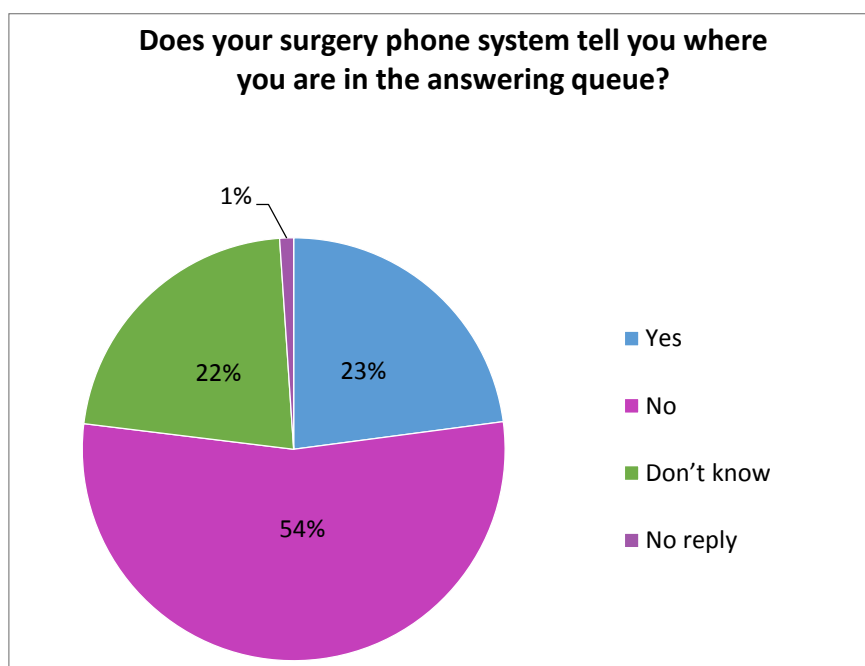
- 53% of respondents would prefer to book appointments over the phone, 28% online, 9% in person and 8% gave other answers.
- Most of those who gave other answers said indicated they would like to use more than one method (e.g. by phone and online, or in person and by phone) or that it would depend on the urgency of the situation (e.g. phone for urgent, online for routine), while some said they did not have a preference.



	No. of people	% of 659
By phone	349	53%
Online	187	28%
In person	62	9%
Other	55	8%
No reply	6	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

11. Does your surgery phone system tell you where you are in the answering queue?

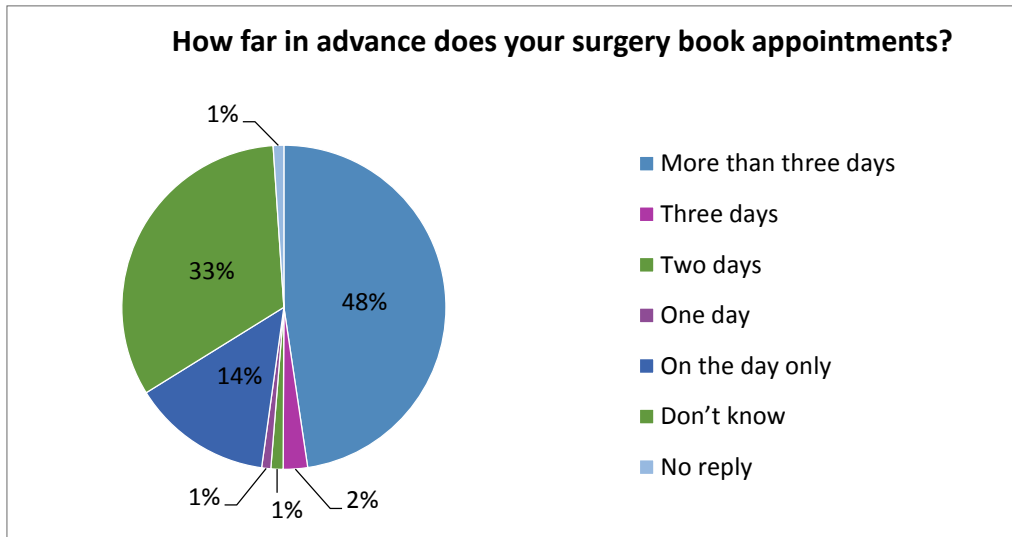
- 23% said their surgery phone system tells them where they are in the answering queue, 54% said it does not and 22% did not know.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	151	23%
No	356	54%
Don't know	145	22%
No reply	7	1%
TOTAL	659	100 %

12. How far in advance does your surgery book appointments?

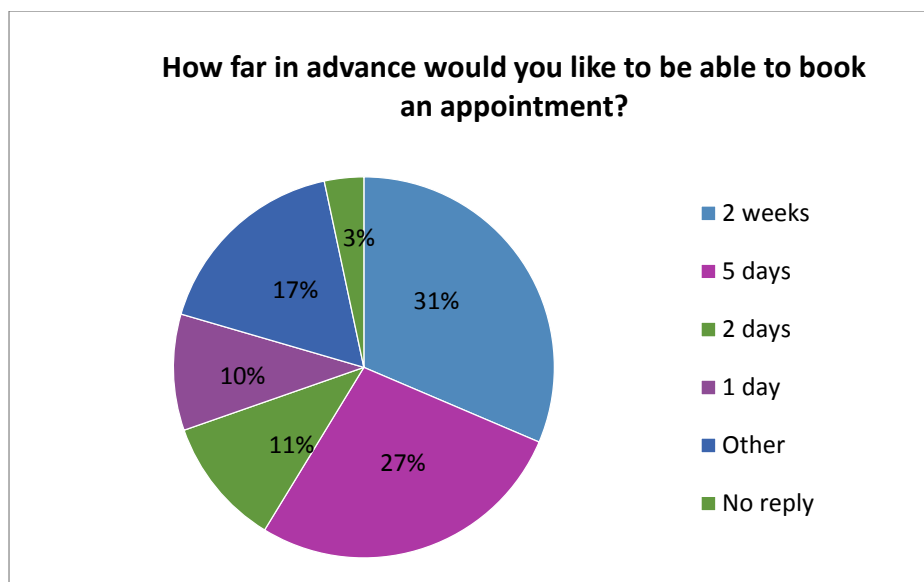
- Respondents most commonly said that their surgery allows them to book more than three days in advance (48%).
- 14% can only book on the day, 4% between one and three days ahead and 33% did not know.



	No. of people	% of 659
More than three days	314	48%
Three days	16	2%
Two days	8	1%
One day	6	1%
On the day only	92	14%
Don't know	216	33%
No reply	7	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

13. How far in advance would you like to be able to book an appointment?

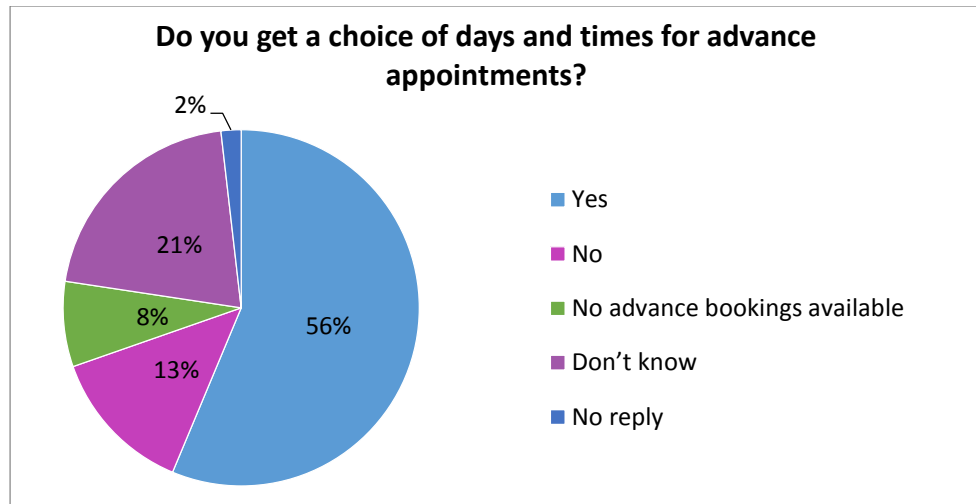
- Respondents would most commonly like to be able to book an appointment 2 weeks in advance (31%) or 5 days in advance (27%), while 21% would like to book 1 or 2 days in advance and 17% gave other answers such as longer durations (e.g. a month or 6 weeks) or that it would depend on the situation.



	No. of people	% of 659
2 weeks	207	31%
5 days	180	27%
2 days	72	11%
1 day	65	10%
Other	113	17%
No reply	22	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

14. Do you get a choice of days and times for advance appointments?

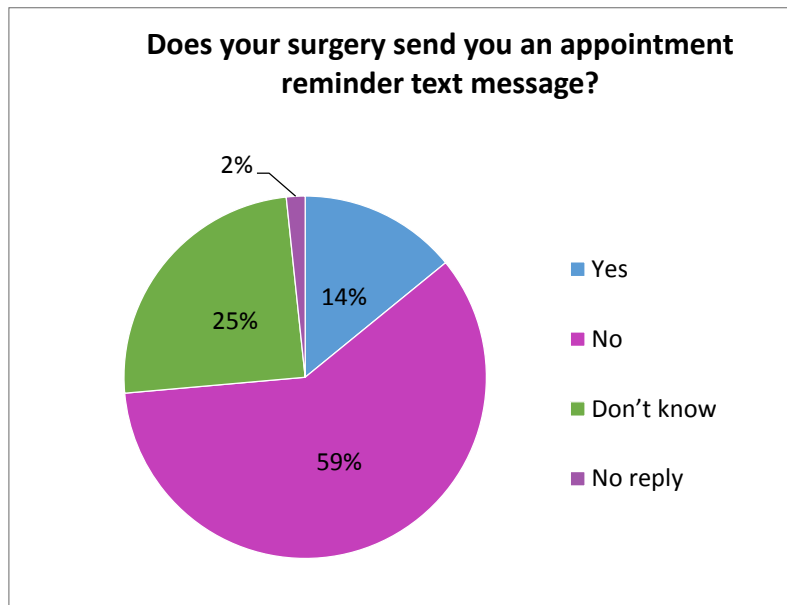
- 56% of respondents said they get a choice of days and times for advance appointments, 13% said no, 8% said that advance bookings are not available and 21% did not know.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	371	56%
No	88	13%
No advance bookings available	51	8%
Don't know	137	21%
No reply	12	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

15. Does your surgery send you an appointment reminder text message?

- 14% said their surgery sends an appointment reminder text message, 59% said it does not and 25% did not know.

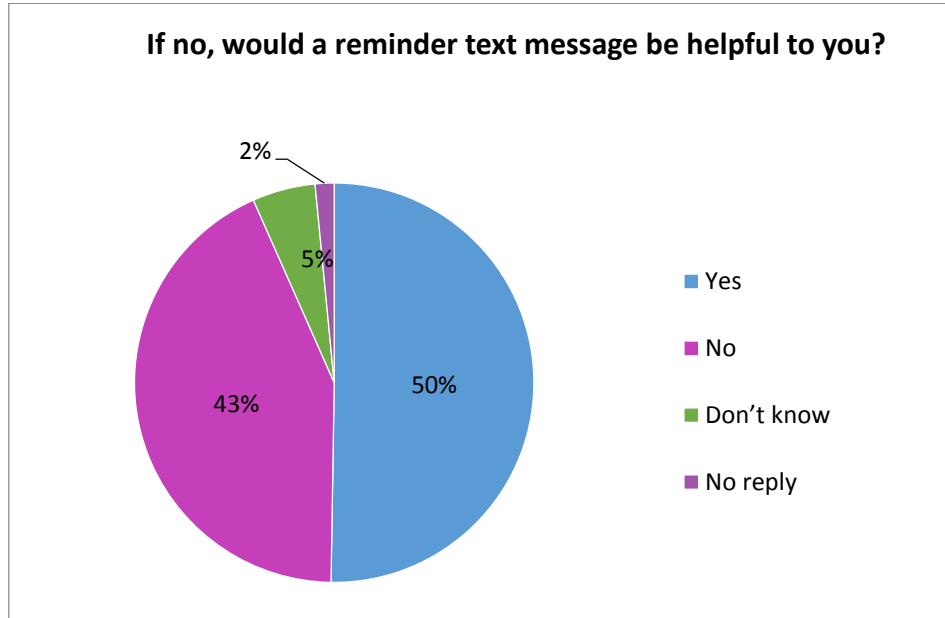


	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	93	14%
No	392	59%
Don't know	163	25%
No reply	11	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

16. If no, would a reminder text message be helpful to you?

The results for this question are out of the 392 people who ticked 'No' to Q15.

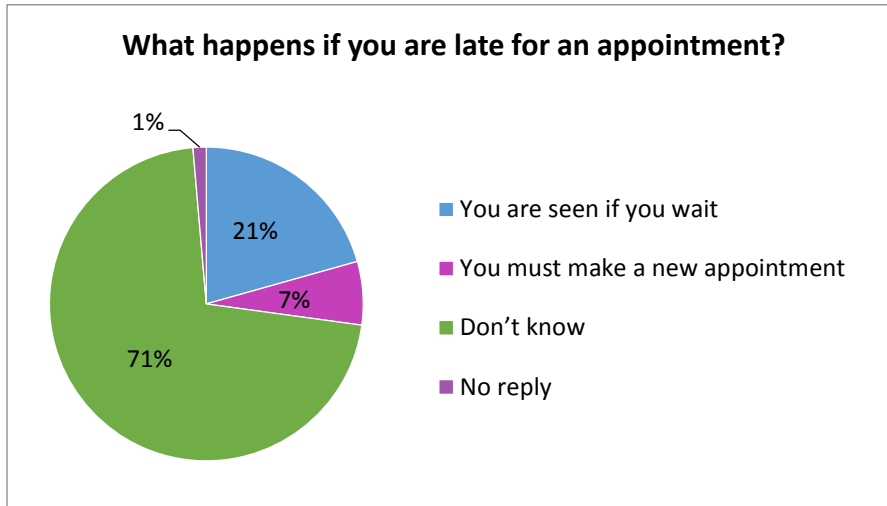
- 50% of those who said that their surgery does not send appointment reminder text messages said they would find this service helpful.



	No. of people	% of 392
Yes	197	50%
No	169	43%
Don't know	20	5%
No reply	6	2%
TOTAL	392	100%

17. What happens if you are late for an appointment?

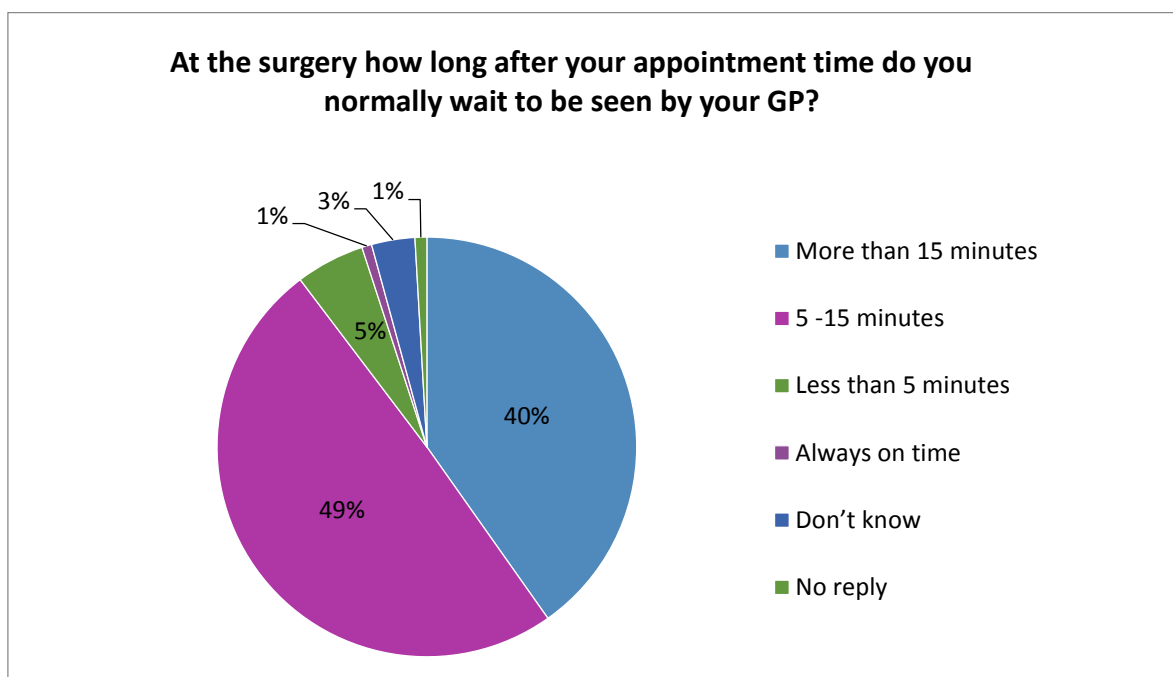
- Most respondents did not know what would happen if they were late for an appointment, but of those who did know, three times as many said that they are seen if they wait as said they must make a new appointment.



	No. of people	% of 659
You are seen if you wait	136	21%
You must make a new appointment	43	7%
Don't know	471	71%
No reply	9	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

18. At the surgery how long after your appointment time do you normally wait to be seen by your GP?

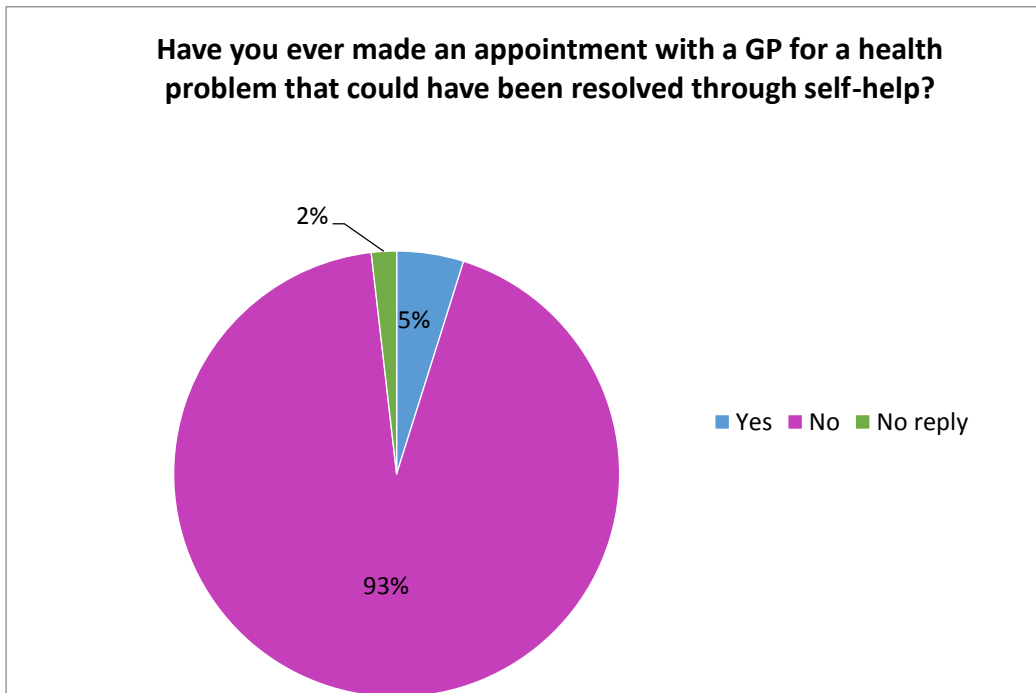
- 40% said they normally have to wait more than 15 minutes after their appointment time to be seen by their GP, 49% for 5-15 minutes and 5% less than 5 minutes.
- Only 1% said their appointments are always on time.



	No. of people	% of 659
More than 15 minutes	265	40%
5 -15 minutes	326	49%
Less than 5 minutes	35	5%
Always on time	5	1%
Don't know	22	3%
No reply	6	1%
TOTAL	659	100 %

19. Have you ever made an appointment with a GP for a health problem that could have been resolved through self-help?

- 32 people (5%) said they have made an appointment with a GP for a health problem that could have been resolved through self-help.



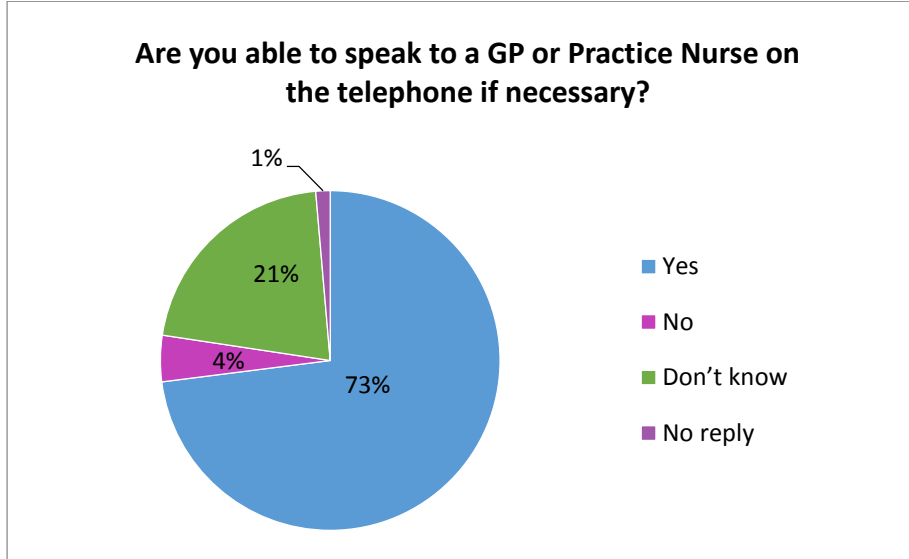
	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	32	5%
No	615	93%
No reply	12	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

If yes, why did you choose to visit your GP for this health problem?

The most common reason given for visiting the GP for a health problem that could have been resolved through self-help was to check/to be reassured that it wasn't something more serious. Others said that it was only after seeing the GP that they discovered the problem could have been dealt with through self-help, and a few said that the health problem related to their baby or young child so they wanted additional reassurance that there was nothing seriously wrong.

20. Are you able to speak to a GP or Practice Nurse on the telephone if necessary?

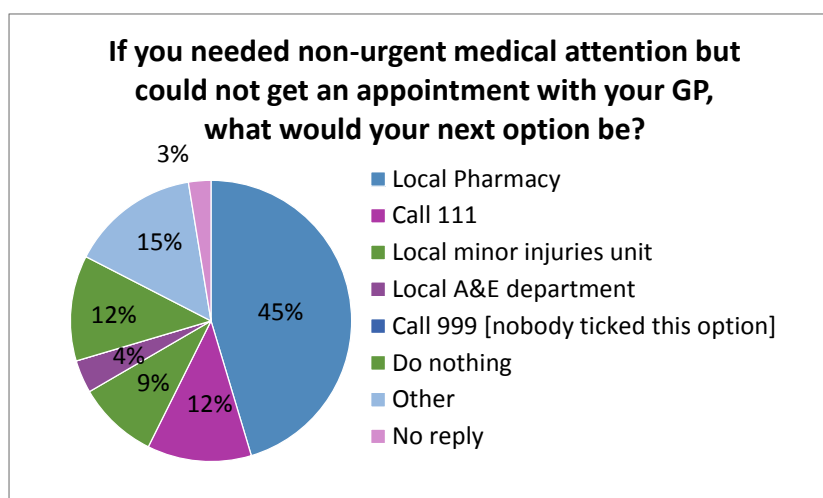
- 73% said they are able to speak to a GP or Practice Nurse on the telephone if necessary, 4% said they cannot and 21% did not know.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	481	73%
No	29	4%
Don't know	140	21%
No reply	9	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

21. If you needed non-urgent medical attention but could not get an appointment with your GP, what would your next option be?

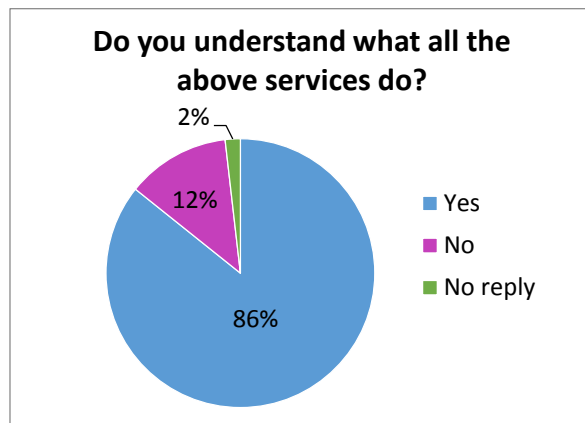
- If they needed non-urgent medical help but could not get an appointment with their GP, respondents would most commonly visit their local pharmacy (45%).
- 12% would call 111, 9% would visit the local minor injuries unit and 4% (25 people) would go to A&E.
- 12% would do nothing and 15% gave other responses e.g. that it would depend on the condition, they would wait until a GP appointment was available, they would administer self-help or they would look online.
- None said they would call 999.



	No. of people	% of 659
Local Pharmacy	299	45%
Call 111	79	12%
Local minor injuries unit	61	9%
Local A&E department	25	4%
Call 999	0	0%
Do nothing	80	12%
Other	98	15%
No reply	17	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

22. Do you understand what all the above services do?

- 86% said they understood what all the above services do, however 12% said they did not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	565	86%
No	82	12%
No reply	12	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

23. Do you have other comments on booking appointments at your GP surgery?

Around half the respondents made comments in relation to this question.

Issues included the difficulty in getting an appointment when required (particularly same-day appointments but also advance appointments) and the difficulty in obtaining an appointment with their doctor of choice or with the same GP each time for continuity. Comments about booking appointments included issues around availability as well as the booking system/process itself.

There were also many positive comments, with several respondents saying the system works well or that they have not encountered problems.

There were a number of comments about the attitude of reception staff when booking appointments, some positive (e.g. helpful or patient), others negative (e.g. unhelpful or rude).

Several people commented on difficulties encountered when using the online booking system or said they would find online booking helpful. The popularity of online booking facility was not universal. Some people have a good and long-standing relationship with the receptionists and feel the benefit of attending the surgery in person or calling to make an appointment.

Others do not use the internet, and there can be concerns that implementation of online booking systems may exclude groups of people, particularly those in the older community. Online booking is a useful option for many and is of added relevance to those with hearing difficulties or deafness, and particularly where the telephone or receptionist-run booking systems leave patients feeling frustrated and unable to get an appointment when needed.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) 2022 vision indicates the move towards services that are more accessible to patients, one of which is to offer online booking and make people aware of the facility.

A small selection of comments about difficulties encountered when booking appointments is provided below to give an idea of the types of problems experienced.

Same day appointments

- It's near on impossible to book for the same day. You are asked to call at 8am. When you do it is nearly always immediately engaged as soon as it turns 8am. You get no hold option, just an engaged tone so you have to hang up and redial again and again. When you finally get through they will often say all the appointments for that day are gone. It's an absolutely ridiculous system.
- It is incredibly difficult and frustrating trying to get an appointment. A telephone queuing system would be an improvement. I had to continuously press redial for 1.5 hours on my last try, just to get through - and then get told all the appointments for the day have gone.
- It's almost impossible to get an on the day appointment and you can't make one for the next day (you have to phone on the morning of the next day) so when the next day comes you have to start all over again only to find there are no appointments left (who

gets them and how?) and you can't make an appointment for the next day (you have to phone on the morning of the next day) etc. etc.

- It would be nice to have an appointment on the day you phone but if there are no available slots then at least be able to book one for the next day. As it is one has to phone again the next day and take pot luck. It can be very frustrating and could be made worse depending on which receptionist you happen to be speaking to.
- Only way to get appointment is to go to the surgery before 8 o'clock to queue up outside in the cold, wind and rain (although staff are visible inside) till eventually let in to then ask for a same day one. However some days no Doctor is available so then told to try again tomorrow.

Advance appointments

- Advance appointments are VERY difficult to get. I have been told in the past on a few occasions I would have to wait 4/6 weeks to get an appointment, which in my opinion is too long to wait.
- Whilst you can book in advance, the choice often begins more than 7-10 days away, and that's not being fussy about which GP. Then if you want to see the same GP for continuity, options become more restricted.
- Yes, you can book several weeks in advance and if urgent, on the day, but I think you should be able to ring and if nothing available that day, you should be able to book in advance for the next day or day after that instead of being told to ring back for on the day appointments.

GP of choice/same GP each time

- Can wait up to 3 weeks to see GP of choice.
- Cannot, typically, advance book an appointment to see preferred GP (who is part time) for one month. If all slots on that day are taken, told to ring back a week later (on the specific day one month in advance). Most often cannot get an appointment between 2-30 days except by attending emergencies surgery on the day of phoning, which is then taking up a valuable slot designed for patients with real emergencies that need attention without delay.
- In order to receive continuity of care it is usual to wait in excess of 4 weeks to see a named GP even though I can be very flexible about day and time and are prepared to re-arrange other things to accommodate an appointment. I have a long standing chronic health condition and continuity of care is very important to me as otherwise I spend valuable appointment time explaining history.
- Booking appointments is always a challenge. There are not enough doctors or nurses for the number of patients and therefore not enough appointments. You can almost never get the GP you want, which is problematic when you need to see for a continuation of initial problem.

Online booking

- Not always many online appointments available. Not always able to book very far in advance.
- You can easily book online for advance appointments but nothing is available if you need 1-2 days in advance.

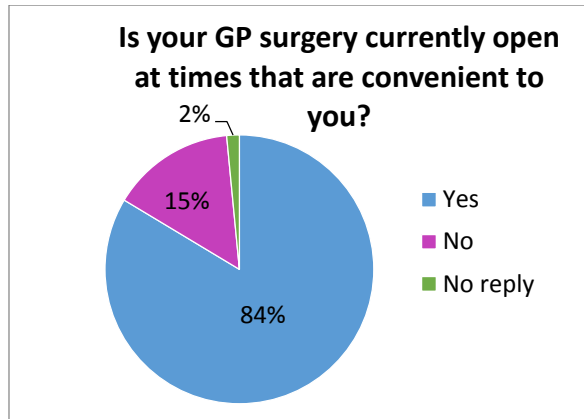
- Not all doctors appear on the online bookings.
- Theoretically, the surgery runs online appointments, which is great. In practice however, I have tried to register for online bookings twice. Both times I have been given incorrect paperwork by the staff, who appear to have no idea at all what they are meant to be giving to me. The website registration process is all but incomprehensible. My husband managed to register for online appointment booking, only to discover that there were no available appointment slots that could be booked online, seemingly ever! What a joke, since when you phone the surgery, they tell you to book online!!! The result is that neither of us can actually book any kind of non-urgent appointment without physically attending the surgery.
- I can't book the practice nurse appointments online.

Section 2

OPENING HOURS

24. Is your GP surgery currently open at times that are convenient to you?

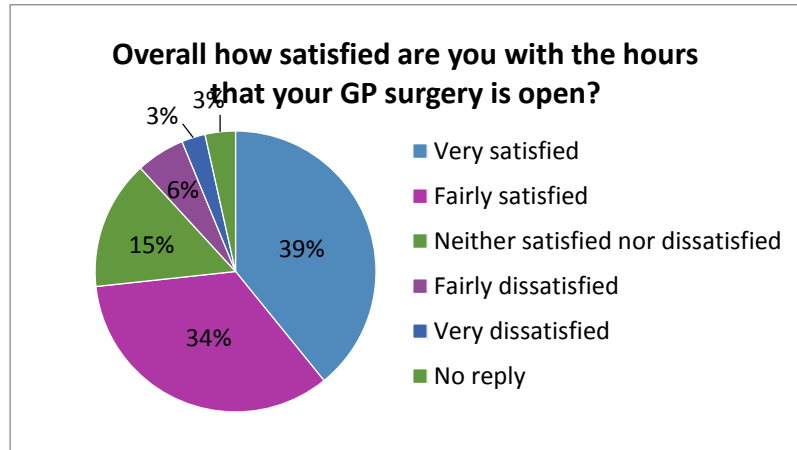
- 84% of respondents said their GP surgery is open at times that are convenient to them but 15% said it is not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	551	84%
No	98	15%
No reply	10	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

25. Overall how satisfied are you with the hours that your GP surgery is open?

- 73% of respondents are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the hours their GP surgery is open, 9% are very dissatisfied or fairly dissatisfied and the remainder are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (15%) or did not reply (3%).



	No. of people	% of 659
Very satisfied	258	39%
Fairly satisfied	225	34%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	98	15%
Fairly dissatisfied	37	6%
Very dissatisfied	18	3%
No reply	23	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

26. Which additional surgery opening times would make it easier for you to see or speak to someone?

This was a free-text question.

- Around half the respondents specified additional surgery opening times, most commonly Saturdays (18%), weekends (14%) and evenings (12%) (n.b. these percentages are out of all 659 respondents).
- Altogether, around a third of respondents said they would like their surgery to be open at weekends - i.e. Saturdays, Sundays or 'weekends'.

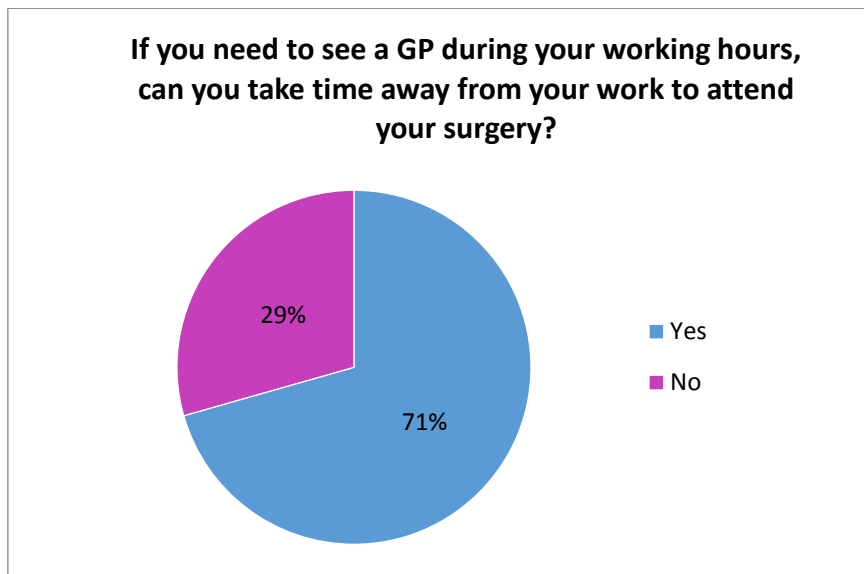
Top 5 answers	No. of people	% of 659
Saturdays*	116	18%
Weekends	94	14%
Evenings	76	12%
Early mornings	11	2%
Sundays	11	2%

* of which 52 people specified Saturday mornings.

27. If you need to see a GP during your working hours, can you take time away from your work to attend your surgery?

The options for this question were Yes, No and Not applicable. 255 people ticked either Yes or No; 390 ticked Not applicable and 14 did not reply. Due to the nature of the question, only those who ticked Yes or No are included in the results below and the percentages are out of 255. It has been assumed that these are the only respondents to whom the question is applicable.

- 71% of the 255 people to whom the question is applicable (see note above) said they can take time away from their work to attend their surgery and 29% said they cannot.



	No. of people	% of 255
Yes	180	71%
No	75	29%
TOTAL	255	100%

28. Do you have other comments on opening hours at your GP surgery?

Most of the comments reiterated the views expressed in Q26 about wanting the surgery to be open weekends/ Saturdays/evenings/early mornings etc.

Section 3

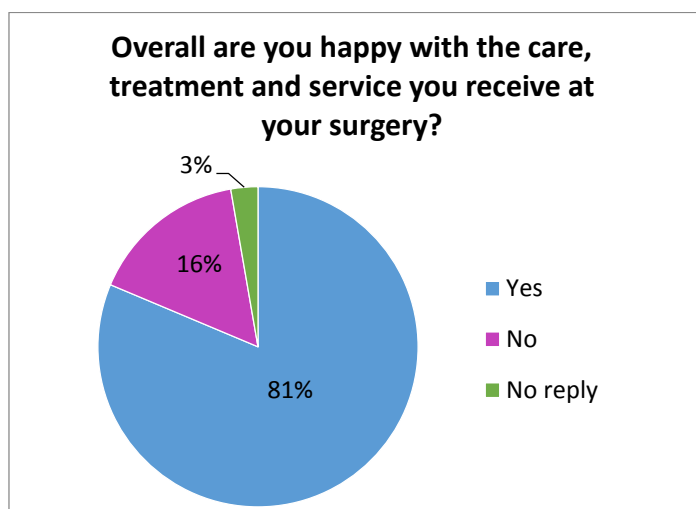
PATIENT EXPERIENCE

In this series of questions people were asked to think about how their GP rated on four aspects of quality of care: listening; involving patients in the decision making; explaining treatments; and the amount of time spent with patients. Many commented that it was hard to assess this because they did not see the same GP at each appointment and the GPs they did see varied considerably in their manner. Many of the “improvement” comments we received expanded upon this theme, reflecting on continuity of care as an issue.

Patients value and appreciate good communication and customer service and dislike hard to access poorly planned systems and customer care. People recognise and appreciate an appointments system that works well and allows access to appointments when needed and as conveniently and swiftly as possible. Difficulties getting through on the phone were common difficulties as was lack of flexibility.

29. Overall are you happy with the care, treatment and service you receive at your surgery?

- 81% of respondents are happy overall with the care, treatment and service they receive at their surgery, however 16% (105 people) are not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	536	81%
No	105	16%
No reply	18	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

If no, please give details

- 84 of the 105 people who ticked 'No' to Q29 made comments. The top 3 answers were the difficulty in getting an appointment when required (12 people), being unable to see the same GP each time (11 people) and reception staff being unfriendly, unhelpful or rude (6 people).

Most common answers (summary)	No. of people	% of 659
Difficult to get appointment when required	12	2%
Can't see same GP each time	11	2%
Reception staff unfriendly/unhelpful/rude	6	1%
Poor service [unspecified]	5	1%
Appointment times too short	4	1%
GPs don't listen	4	1%
Long waiting time on arrival	4	1%
Slow to diagnose condition	3	<1%
Can't see GP of choice	3	<1%

N.B. Please note that there are specific questions about some of the above issues elsewhere in this survey which show the overall number of people who indicated dissatisfaction in these areas:

- Q4: 231 people (35%) said they cannot get an appointment when they need it
- Q53: 147 people (22%) do not feel they have enough time with their GP
- Q51: 44 people (7%) did not feel their GP listened to them and considered their opinions their during their last appointment
- Q18: 265 people (40%) said they normally have to wait more than 15 minutes after their appointment time to be seen by their GP
- Q46: 178 people (27%) said they cannot see a GP of their choice

Sample of comments for top 3 answers

Difficult to get appointment when required

- Appointments are rarely available at less than 10 days' notice, both for doctors and nurses.
- Doctors are ok if you can ever get to see them, and at this surgery this problem is escalating out of control.
- Cannot get an appointment when I want one. Cannot see my own doctor easily. Very slow to refer me to a consultant in spite of debilitating and worsening symptoms leading me to go for private consultations.
- Just fed up with never being able to make an appointment - I work shift work and my surgery never allows you to book that far ahead. I have been trying to make a free flu

jab appointment and am told that the appointments have not been set up yet and are only on a Saturday which I can't always do. I may as well pay for it instead!!

- Sometimes the service can be good but overall it's incredibly difficult to make an appointment at a time convenient and near on impossible to book in on the day. The staff can be rude and the telephone message when you call the surgery is very unfriendly and gives a list of dos and don'ts. I am reluctant to call at times because you are treated like you are a nuisance.
- Very difficult to get through on the phone then no available appointments and if there are they are in working hours.
- Difficulty with getting through to book appointment, availability of appointments, attitude of reception staff, waiting times to see doctor and general lack of consideration for elderly patients

Can't see same GP each time

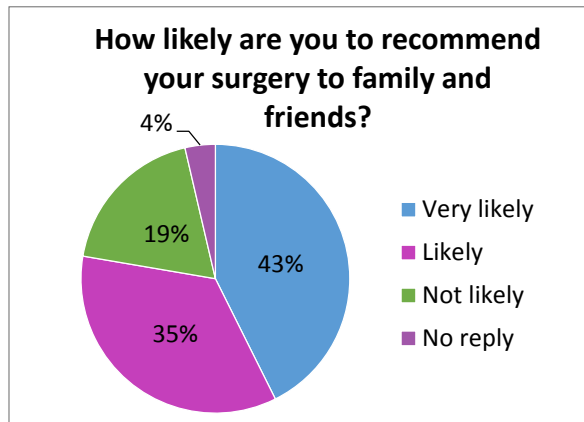
- Because of a rapid turnover of doctors I have not seen the same person for the last few appointments. With short appointment times it is hard to have to continually make new relationships with a fresh doctor.
- I rarely see the same doctor twice, and I never feel as though the doctor really is interested in my complaint, it feels as though the doctor just wants to get me out in the shortest possible time, the exception to this was when I saw a locum who was very good and attentive.
- Never get to see the same doctor twice - the place is run by locums.
- Would be good to have a more consistent GP so that they get to know the history of the patient rather than seeing a different person every time.

Reception staff unfriendly/unhelpful/rude

- The main receptionist is very intimidating and too dictatorial. She is also very indiscreet, making comments about other local services in a detrimental fashion (i.e. poor blood clinic!). I find it extraordinary that she should make such comments to a patient.
- Reception has got to get better with prescriptions, answering phones and attitude to patients which can be very rude.
- Appalled at how the receptionist always asks what you need treatment for when trying to make appointment, this is just nosey and rude and I find them very obstructive.

30. How likely are you to recommend your surgery to family and friends?

- 78% said they would be very likely or likely to recommend their surgery to family and friends, 19% said they were not likely to and 4% did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Very likely	281	43%
Likely	231	35%
Not likely	123	19%
No reply	24	4%
TOTAL	659	100%

Not likely - please tell us why

Respondents who had ticked 'Not likely' to Q30 were asked to say why this was.

114 of these 123 people made comments. Many referred to their comments to Q29 and in general the comments broadly reflected the same common themes e.g. the difficulty in getting an appointment when required or the inability to see the same GP each time. A few said that the reason for their answer of 'Not likely' was that they do not have family or friends in the vicinity or that they do not like making recommendations.

Sample of comments

- Almost impossible to contact by phone, appalling appointments system and uninterested doctors.
- So difficult to get through on the phone to get an appointment when ill.
- You cannot get an advance appointment to suit you.
- Opening hours and lack of availability of appointments.

- Poor in terms of appointment availability unless you are able to get to the surgery at any point from 9.00am-5.00pm.
- It is almost impossible to get an appointment and when you do you are often made to feel like you are an inconvenience.
- Shortage of GPs recently has made booking an appointment more difficult. Service is disorganised with receptionists giving contradictory messages about how to get test results, how to get a telephone consultation etc. Complaints procedure is not adhered to.
- There is a 3 week wait for any appointment with a GP or a nurse. Some GPs don't "listen" to what you are saying before making a diagnosis. A major problem could easily be missed.
- Cannot see the GP you want.
- No continuity of doctor. Lots of locums. Inconsistent quality of doctor.
- Because of the difficulty in securing continuity of care.
- The GPs do not have enough time to listen properly or don't want to listen properly.
- Because reception staff are extremely rude, I have witnessed this and have been on the receiving end. The doctors are good when you get to see them.

31. If you are aged between 40 and 74 have you taken up the opportunity for a free NHS Health Check?

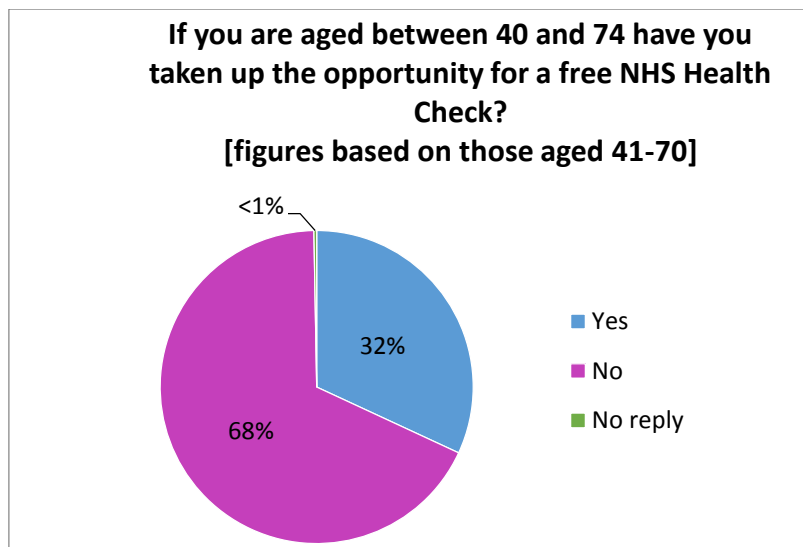
The wording of Q31 indicates that it is only relevant to people aged 40 to 74, however it is not possible to analyse the question based only on people aged 40-74 because the age groups in Q71 (which asks respondents to state their age group) are Under 18, 18-24, 25-40, 41-60, 61-70 and 70+, so there could be potentially be some people in the 25-40 age band to whom the question is relevant (i.e. aged 40), while at the other end of the spectrum it will not be relevant to all those in the 70+ age group.

In order to provide results which definitely only include people who fall within the relevant age group it has been decided to base the results on those who identified themselves in Q71 as being aged 41-70, i.e. those in the 41-60 or 61-70 age bands, as it is felt that this will give the best approximation of the true results.

Since 12 of the 29 respondents who are aged 18-24 or under 18 (i.e. definitely not 40-74) answered Yes (3) or No (9) to the question, it is felt that the above approach is justified because it is clear that some people to whom the question does not apply have nevertheless answered it.

351 of the 659 respondents are aged 41-70 so 351 has been used as the respondent base for Q31. 350 of these 351 people answered either Yes or No to the question and 1 did not reply.

- 68% of those aged 41-70 (see notes above) have not taken up the opportunity for a free NHS Health Check.



	No. of people	% of 351
Yes	112	32%
No	238	68%
No reply	1	<1%
TOTAL	351	100%

If no, please tell us why?

- 114 of the 238 people who have not had the free health check said they didn't know about it or had not been offered one; this equates to 32% of all 351 respondents aged 41-70.
- Another common reason for not having had the health check was that they already receive regular checkups due to health condition such as diabetes (27 people).

Most common reasons	No. of people	% of 351
Didn't know about it	74	21%
Haven't been offered one	40	11%
Already receive regular checkups due to health condition (e.g. diabetes)	27	8%
I'm healthy	7	2%
Lack of time	6	2%
Healthcheck not available*	6	2%
Concerns about the healthcheck**	5	1%
Haven't got round to it yet	4	1%

Full comments for the asterixed items:

*Healthcheck not available

- Receptionist has said our GP doesn't run the checks.
- Was informed they are not yet available at my surgery.
- Because I understood from the practice that there is no health check clinic, only clinics for checking blood pressure as there isn't enough available trained nurse appointments.
- Tried - can't book for it.
- I didn't know I could have one after 40 and my family member who requested one at 50 was shouted at by the Nurse for wasting their time when they have 1400 patients who are ill, why do some surgeries offer these checks and not [name of GP surgery].
- I tried to make an appointment but was told this check is done in multiples of 5 years and I should have had it done at age 55. I am 56 and told them I had not been invited to have the check the previous year to which I heard nothing. In the meantime, I had it done at Tesco because I was concerned due to family history of diabetes. I was not pleased with the response from the surgery, as I highlighted this problem three times and said I did not want to wait for a further 4 years until I was 60 to receive the health check.

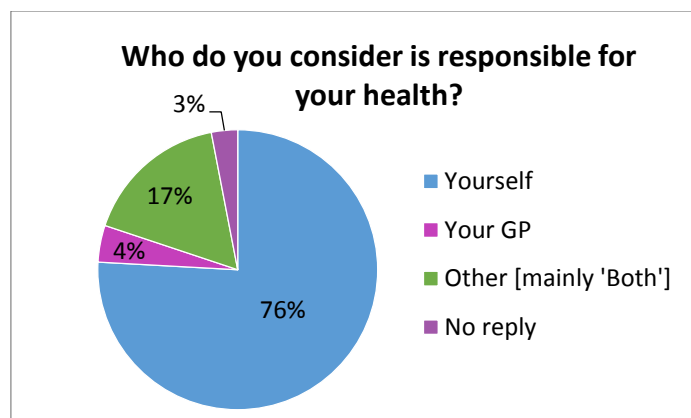
**Concerns about the healthcheck

- The surgery requires those accepting a health check to attend the surgery twice and use a blood pressure device situated in the waiting room before they can book an appointment. I find this unacceptable due to the public nature and lack of privacy associated with this machine, also the potential for infection.

- Because the staff are too busy, and I don't like to be weighed.
- Other people in my family gave found it unhelpful and patronising!
- Don't want to find out the worst.
- Because I'm concerned about being put on a drugs like satins that will 'manage' a symptom without treating the condition, sacrificing my health for pharmaceutical corporations profits and bankrupting the NHS in the process.

32. Who do you consider is responsible for your health?

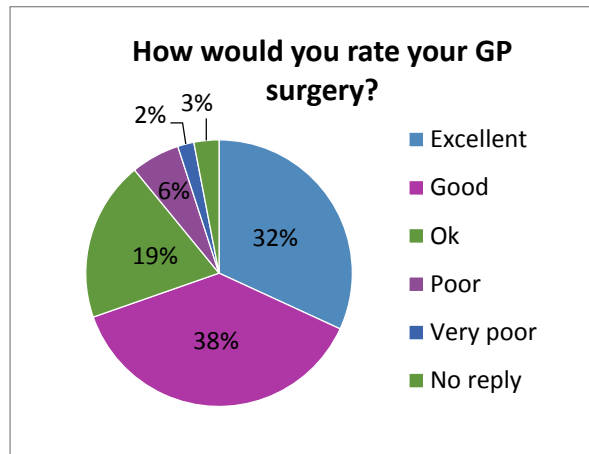
- 76% of respondents said they consider that they are responsible for their health, 4% their GP and 17% (111 people) gave other answers, 98 of which were along the lines of 'Both' or 'Joint responsibility'.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yourself	500	76%
Your GP	28	4%
Other [98 said 'Both']	111	17%
No reply	20	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

33. How would you rate your GP surgery?

- 70% rated their GP surgery excellent or good, 19% ok, 8% poor or very poor and 3% did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Excellent	210	32%
Good	249	38%
Ok	128	19%
Poor	39	6%
Very poor	13	2%
No reply	20	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

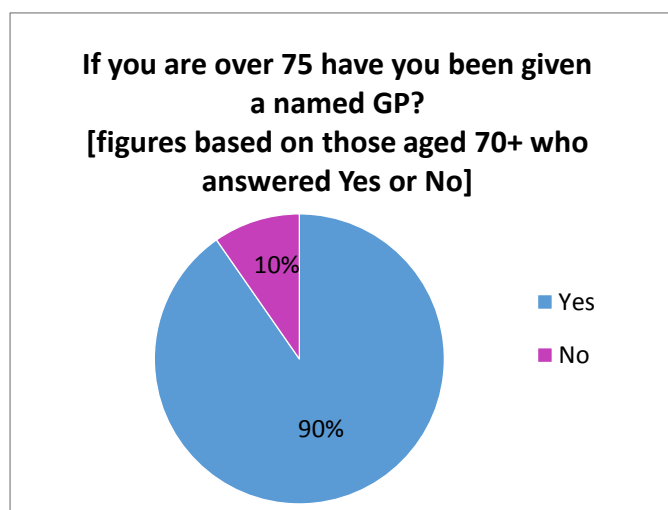
34. If you are over 75 have you been given a named GP?

The wording of Q34 indicates that it is only relevant to people aged over 75. However it is not possible to analyse the question based only on people aged over 75 because the upper age group in Q71 (which asks respondents to state their age group) is 70+, so there will be people within that age group to whom the question is not relevant.

It cannot be assumed that only those who are over 75 will have answered the question, based on the fact that 49 people in the younger age groups also answered this question, 6 of whom said 'Yes'. Whilst it also cannot be assumed that all non-responses among those aged 70+ will be from people who are not aged over 75, it seems more likely that people to whom the question is not relevant will be more likely to have not responded, so in order to provide the most accurate figures possible in the circumstances, those in the 70+ age group who left Q34 blank will be excluded from the respondent base.

Therefore the respondent base which has been used for Q34 is those who are in the 70+ age group and ticked 'Yes' or No' to Q34. This figure is 155. (For reference, the total number of people in the 70+ age group is 221.)

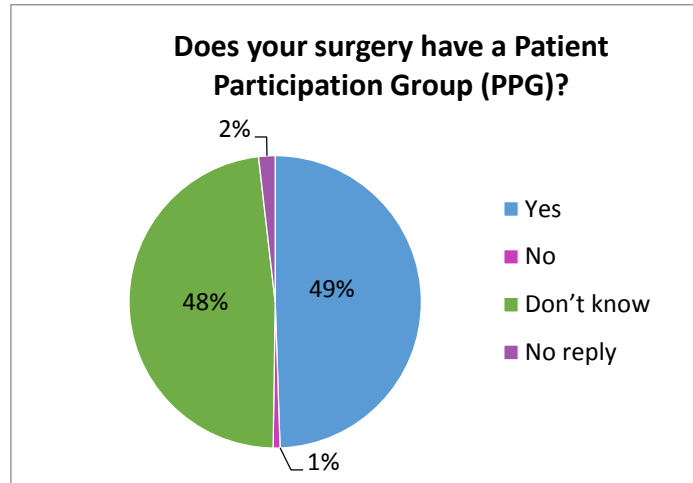
- In response to the question 'If you are over 75 have you been given a named GP?' and based on the 155 people in the 70+ age group who answered the question, 90% said 'Yes' and 10% said 'No'.



	No. of people	% of 155
Yes	140	90%
No	15	10%
TOTAL	155	100%

35. Does your surgery have a Patient Participation Group (PPG)?

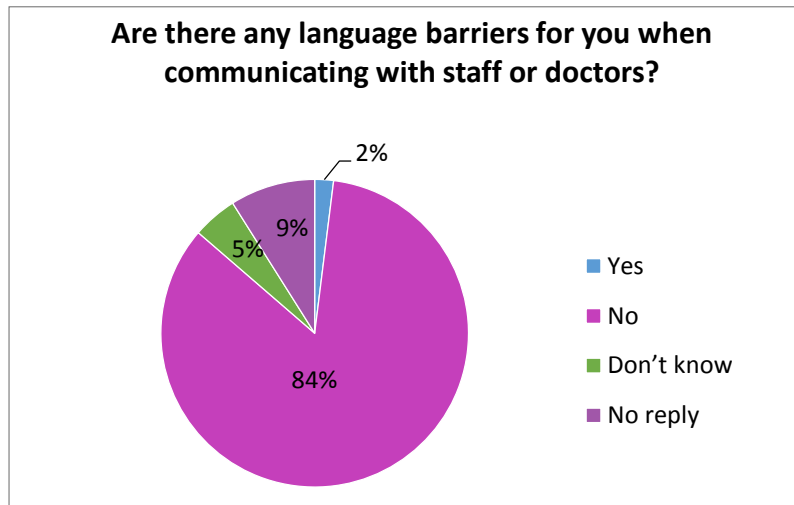
- 49% said their surgery has a Patient Participation Group (PPG), 1% said it does not, 48% did not know and 2% did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	326	49%
No	5	1%
Don't know	316	48%
No reply	12	2%
TOTAL	659	100 %

36. Are there any language barriers for you when communicating with staff or doctors?

- 2% (13 people) said there are language barriers for them when communicating with staff or doctors.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	13	2%
No	556	84%
Don't know	31	5%
No reply	59	9%
TOTAL	659	100%

37. Do you have other comments on your experience at your GP surgery?

190 people commented on their experience, of which 58 comments were positive, 15 mixed and 117 negative. Issues included appointment times too short/feeling rushed during appointments, the difficulty in getting an appointment when required (both in terms of availability and the booking system), lack of continuity due to the inability to see the same GP each time and the attitude of receptionists.

Sample of comments

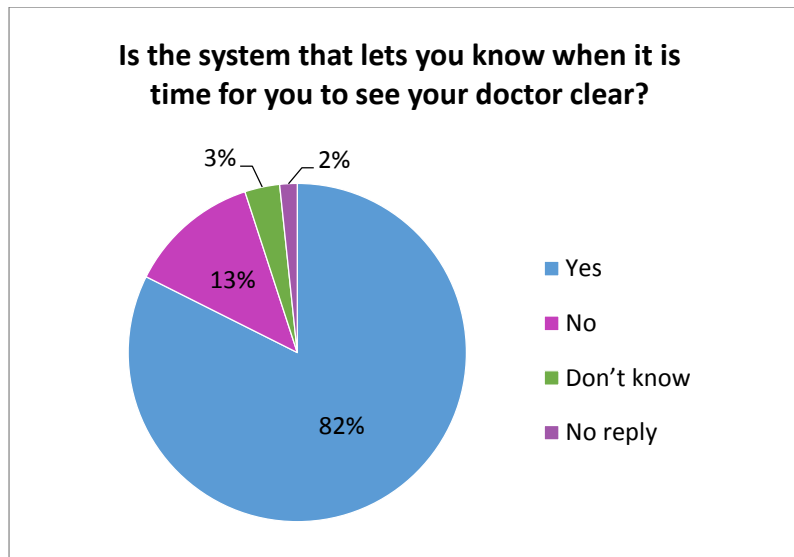
- The 10 minute allowance for appointments creates a distinct feeling of the GP wanting to get me out and get on to the next patient. He appears to have no real recollection of my previous visits or treatment, i.e. no benefit of continuity with the same GP.
- 10 minute appointments are sometimes not long enough, but my GP never makes me feel rushed and I can ask for an extended appointment.
- Some doctors can be in a bit of a hurry to get you out of the door sometimes.
- Rarely if ever see same doctor.
- Its good when you get seen, it's just getting to be seen that's the problem! - Everyone has to call at 8.30am to get an appointment for the same day which is daft.
- Friendly receptionists would be nice. Being able to book online and in advance. Not having to wait a long time to have the telephone answered.
- Sometimes the receptionists can appear to be rude/insensitive - but I guess that is because they work under tremendous pressure.
- The comments received about receptionists focussed on customer service and communication skills, which many people felt there was some poor bad practice. As the first point of contact for most patients they were also seen as the guardians of the appointment booking system and frustration with that system could be transferred to the receptionist.
- Patients indicated they value and appreciate good communication and customer service and dislike hard to access poorly planned systems and poor customer care. People recognise and appreciate an appointments system that works well and allows access to appointments when needed and as conveniently and swiftly as possible. Difficulties getting through on the phone were common difficulties as was lack of flexibility. For the majority additional opening hours to enable access to appointments was identified as being beneficial.

Section 4

WAITING ROOM

38. Is the system that lets you know when it is time for you to see your doctor clear?

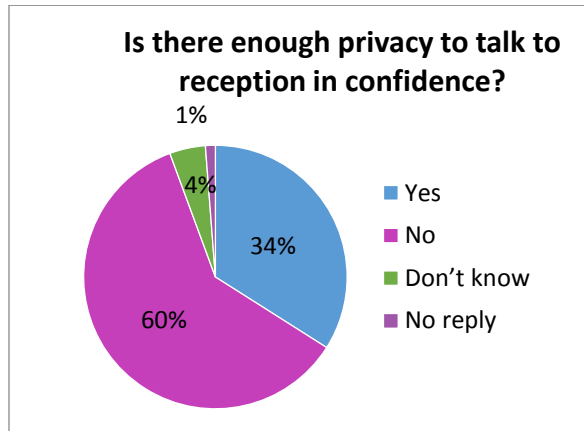
- 82% of respondents said the system that lets them know when it is time for them to see their doctor is clear, 13% said it was not and the other 5% did not know or did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	543	82%
No	83	13%
Don't know	22	3%
No reply	11	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

39. Is there enough privacy to talk to reception in confidence?

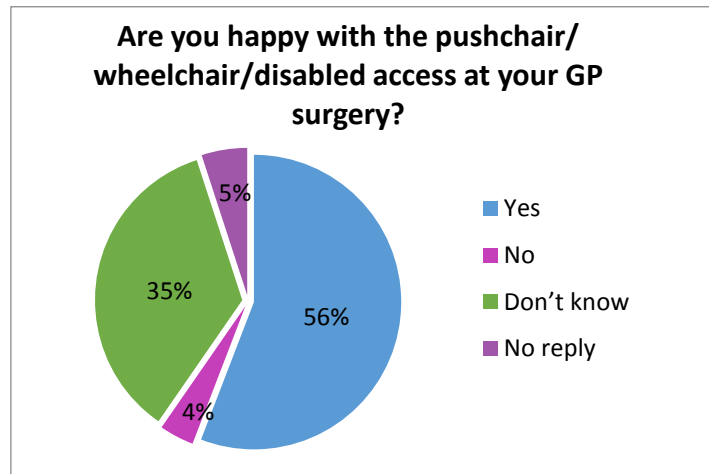
- 60% said there is not enough privacy to talk to reception in confidence.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	224	34%
No	398	60%
Don't know	29	4%
No reply	8	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

40. Are you happy with the pushchair/wheelchair/disabled access at your GP surgery?

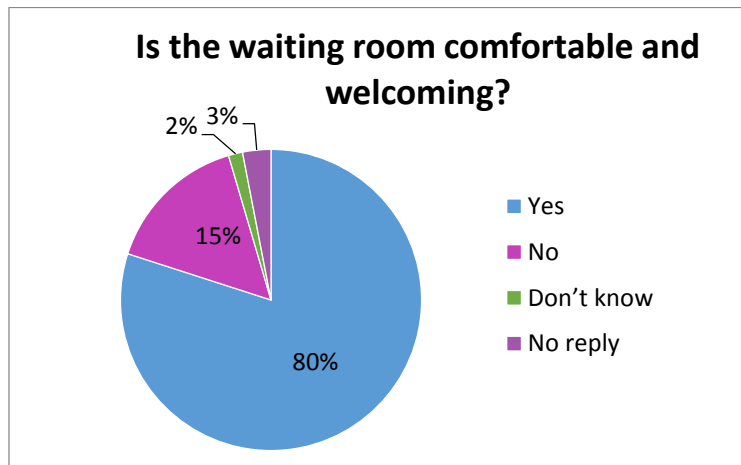
- 4% (25 people) are not happy with the pushchair/wheelchair/disabled access at their GP surgery.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	368	56%
No	25	4%
Don't know	233	35%
No reply	33	5%
TOTAL	659	100%

41. Is the waiting room comfortable and welcoming?

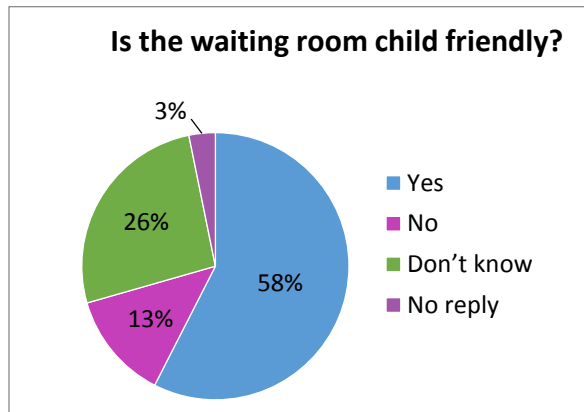
- 80% said the waiting room was comfortable and welcoming, 15% said it was not and the other 5% said they did not know or did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	527	80%
No	102	15%
Don't know	10	2%
No reply	20	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

42. Is the waiting room child friendly?

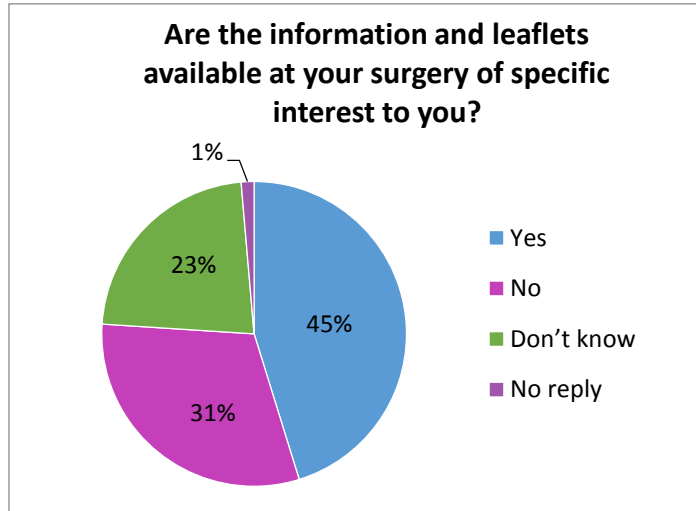
- 58% think the waiting room is child friendly, 13% do not, 26% said they did not know and 3% did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	379	58%
No	86	13%
Don't know	173	26%
No reply	21	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

43. Are the information and leaflets available at your surgery of specific interest to you?

45% said the leaflets available at their surgery are of specific interest to them.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	298	45%
No	203	31%
Don't know	149	23%
No reply	9	1%
TOTAL	659	100%

44. Do you have other comments about the waiting room at your GP surgery?

174 people made comments about the waiting room at their GP surgery. The most common topics are summarised in the table below.

Most common answers	No. of people
Cramped/crowded/too small	13
Hard to hear name being called*	12
Too hot/too hot in summer	10
No children's toys available	9
Chairs uncomfortable/unsuitable**	9
No magazines available	8
Don't like full name being called/shown on screen (privacy)	7
Would like more leaflets***	7
Don't like TV	5

* e.g. tannoy too quiet, GP voices too quiet, waiting room too noisy with radio on, respondent is hard of hearing

** e.g. too small, springy backs, too low, no arms

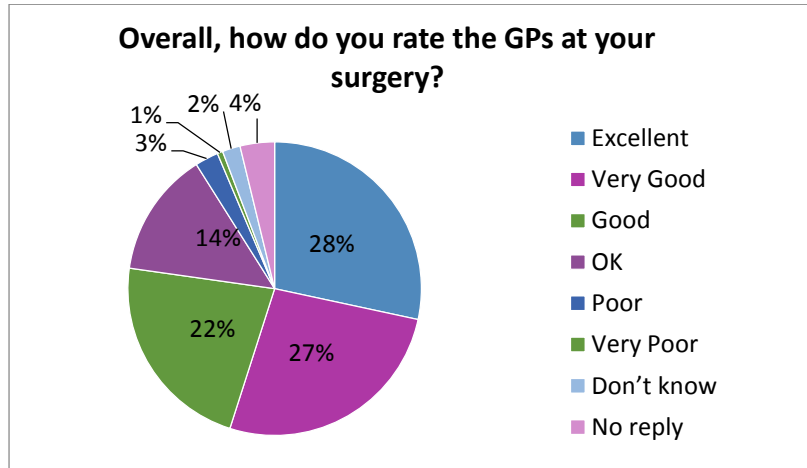
*** e.g. alternative therapies, mental health, fibromyalgia, more up to date

Section 5

QUALITY OF SERVICE - GPs

45. Overall, how do you rate the GPs at your surgery?

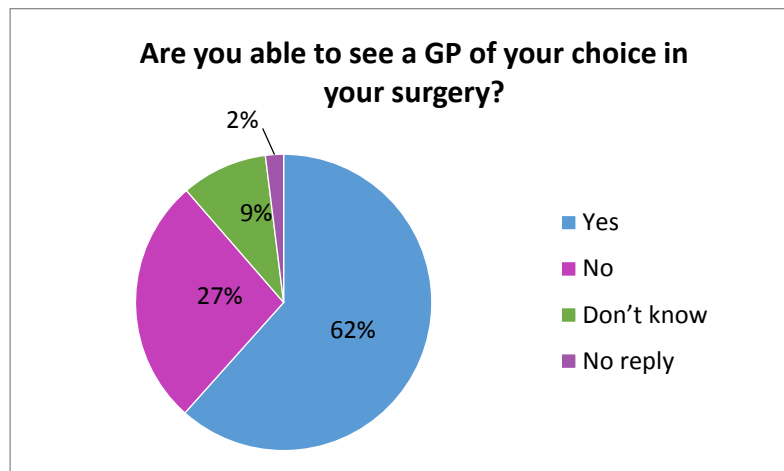
- 77% of respondents rated the GPs at their surgery excellent, very good or good, 14% ok, 4% poor or very poor and 6% said they did not know or did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Excellent	187	28%
Very Good	175	27%
Good	147	22%
OK	91	14%
Poor	17	3%
Very Poor	4	1%
Don't know	13	2%
No reply	25	4%
TOTAL	659	100%

46. Are you able to see a GP of your choice in your surgery?

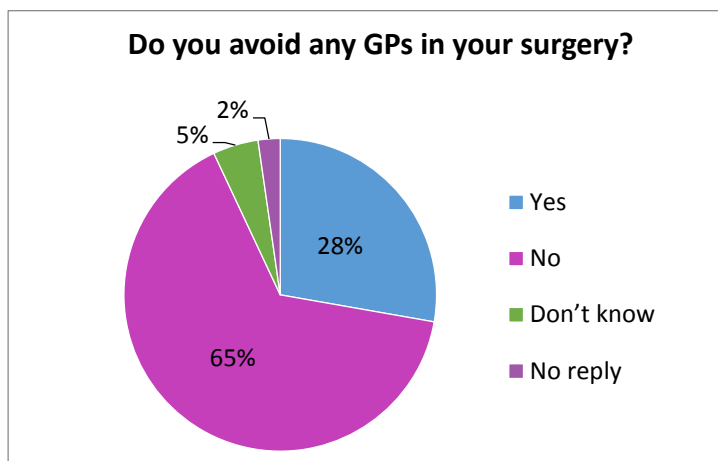
- 27% said they are unable to see a GP of their choice at their surgery.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	406	62%
No	178	27%
Don't know	62	9%
No reply	13	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

47. Do you avoid any GPs in your surgery?

- 28% said they avoid certain GPs in their surgery.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	183	28%
No	430	65%
Don't know	31	5%
No reply	15	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

If yes, please explain why

152 of the 183 people who answered 'Yes' to Q47 above made comments.

Reasons included rudeness (12), lack of bedside manner (7), unsympathetic (5), abrupt (4), unfriendly (3), not listening* (10), dismissive/patient not taken seriously (8), no confidence in them* (8), previous misdiagnosis (7), previous bad experience (6), unhelpful (5), inexperienced (5), prefer to see own GP (6), prefer a female GP (5), prefer not to have a locum (5) and poor reputation (4).

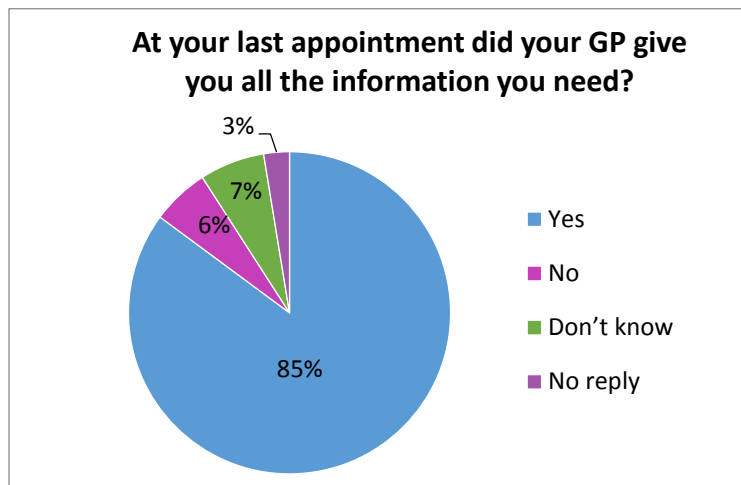
Sample of comments

- Very unsympathetic and rude.
- One GP is arrogant, quite facetious, quite rude at times and can be bullying.
- One GP was rude on the phone, stating that weighing 200lbs was a lot in a very sarcastic tone, actually laughing. Without acknowledging that I have lost 50lbs in 5 months without NHS help!
- They are rude and snappy, overworked and some seem to lack experience. When you do find a good one guess what..... the receptionist refuses to let you see them again!!!!

- On one occasion on entering doctor's room I said politely to the doctor that I had 3 small things I wished to mention, she looked at her watch and said "Well you had better hurry up then because you only have 7 minutes". I thought that quite rude and I honestly was not aware of the only one problem at a time rule.
- Very unfriendly and told me I only had 7 minutes. I now ask for female doctors to avoid him.
- Don't listen to you, too much of a rush to get you out of the room.
- One has the compassion and bedside manner of a Rottweiler, I would rather have my spleen removed.
- Does not listen. Twice misdiagnosed my husband's condition & once it was life threatening.
- Lack of confidence in their abilities e.g. trainee GPs but also a more experienced one who gave wrong information.
- Because I've been made to feel a nuisance and a waste of their time, there is no friendliness or empathy.
- After 2 appointments with one locum, I would avoid him if he was available again as he was very swift and a bit dismissive of my concerns.

48. At your last appointment did your GP give you all the information you need?

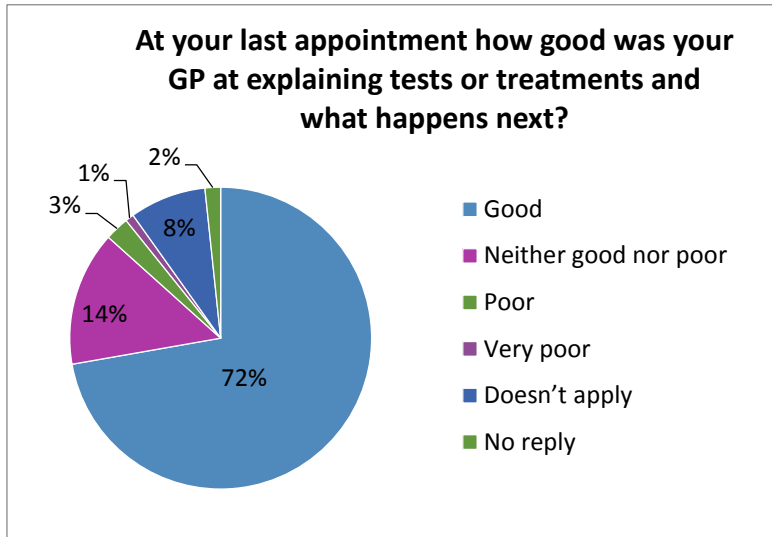
- 85% of respondents said that at their last appointment their GP gave them all the information they needed but 6% (38 people) said they did not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	561	85%
No	38	6%
Don't know	43	7%
No reply	17	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

49. At your last appointment how good was your GP at explaining tests or treatments and what happens next?

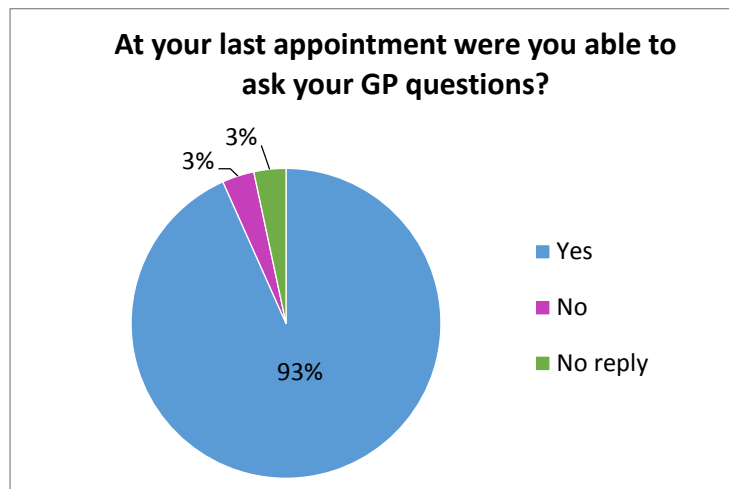
- 72% of respondents said that at their last appointment their GP was good at explaining tests or treatments and what happens next, 14% said the GP was neither good nor poor and 4% said they were poor or very poor.



	No. of people	% of 659
Good	476	72%
Neither good nor poor	95	14%
Poor	17	3%
Very poor	6	1%
Doesn't apply	54	8%
No reply	11	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

50. At your last appointment were you able to ask your GP questions?

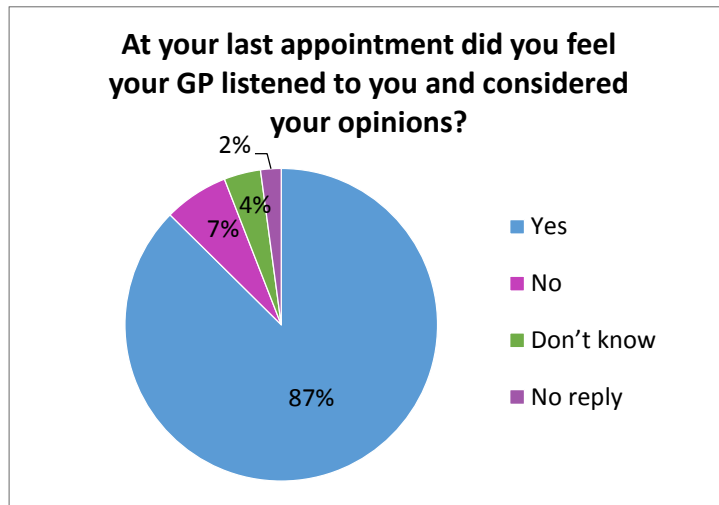
- 93% of respondents said that at their last appointment they were able to ask their GP questions but 3% said they were not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	615	93%
No	22	3%
No reply	22	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

51. At your last appointment did you feel your GP listened to you and considered your opinions?

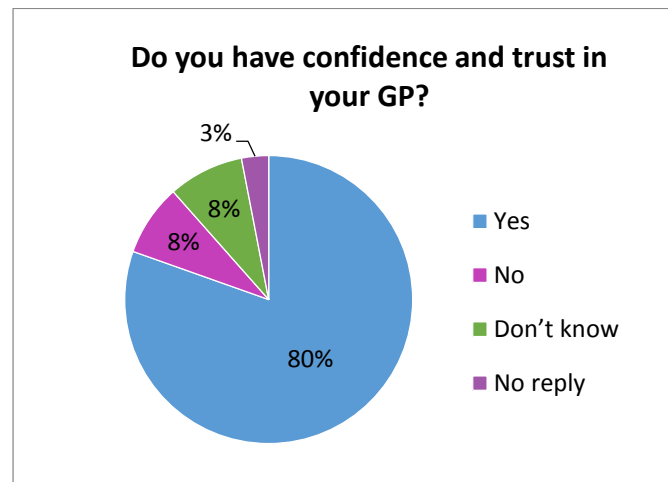
- 87% of respondents said that at their last appointment they felt their GP listened to them and considered their opinions but 7% did not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	576	87%
No	44	7%
Don't know	25	4%
No reply	14	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

52. Do you have confidence and trust in your GP?

- 80% said they have confidence and trust in their GP but 8% said they do not, while another 8% did not know and 3% did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	530	80%
No	53	8%
Don't know	56	8%
No reply	20	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

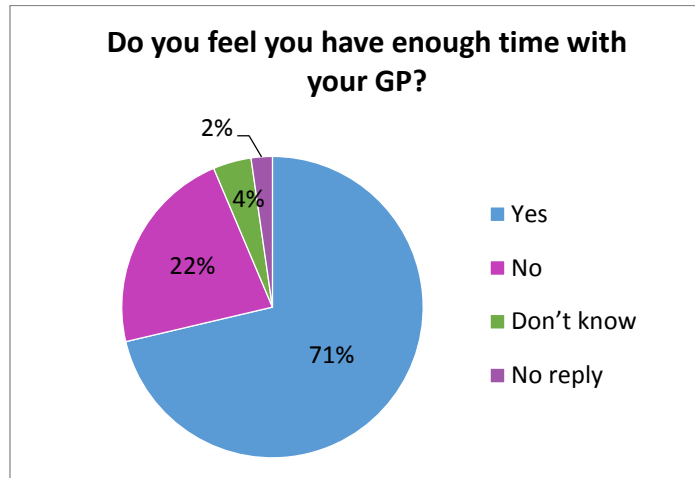
If no please give details

41 of the 53 people who answered 'No' to Q52 made comments.

The most common reasons for lacking confidence and trust in their GP were feeling rushed during the appointment (5), not having a named GP/not being able to see one's own GP (4), not knowing the GP (3) and feeling that the GP just wants to prescribe medication (3).

53. Do you feel you have enough time with your GP?

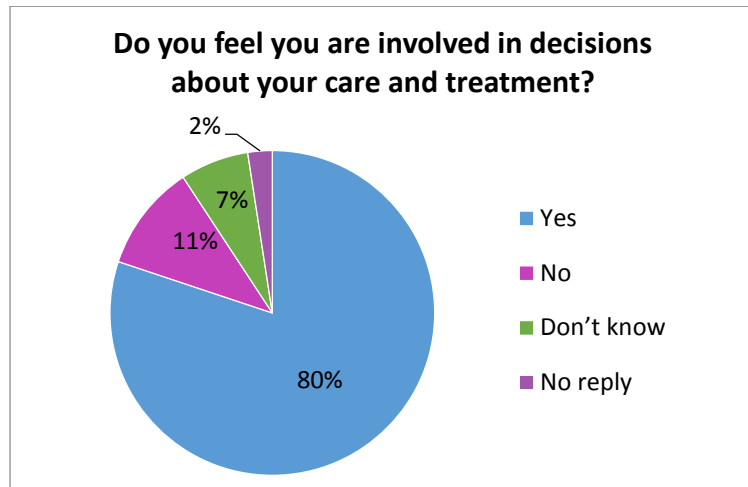
- 22% (147 people) do not feel they have enough time with their GP, however 71% do feel they have enough time.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	470	71%
No	147	22%
Don't know	27	4%
No reply	15	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

54. Do you feel you are involved in decisions about your care and treatment?

- 80% of respondents feel they are involved in decisions about their care and treatment, but 11% do not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	528	80%
No	70	11%
Don't know	45	7%
No reply	16	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

55. Do you have other comments about the GPs at your GP surgery?

179 people made comments, of which around a third were positive, a third negative and a third mixed/neutral.

Positive sentiments included excellent/brilliant/marvellous (14) and caring (7).

The main area of dissatisfaction was the difficulty in seeing their chosen GP/their own GP/the same GP each time (42). Other common issues were the variability of GPs at the practice i.e. some good, others less so (20) and feeling rushed during the appointment/appointments too short (18).

Note that in Q46, 178 people (27%) said they are unable to see a GP of their choice and in Q53, 147 people (22%) do not feel they have enough time with their GP.

Sample of comments

Seeing preferred GP/same GP

- I like to see the same GP as they know my situation. It is very difficult to get an appointment with my own GP and it is usually in a few weeks' time - not always suitable - have to see any GP in the practice then which I do not like unless it is an emergency situation.
- It can be very difficult to see my preferred G.P. and I feel the others don't always know my history.
- Because it is usually a different GP I feel I have to rush and not explain my symptoms properly.
- Can't often see preferred GP because everyone likes him so much.
- I can only see the GP of my choice if I wait a month.

Variability

- It depends on which GP you get as to the quality of service.
- It's a pick and mix as to whether you get someone that cares or is interested and polite.
- Most are really good. Just one muppet.
- My GP is excellent but others don't come up to her level.
- Some are better than others. Some avoided at all costs.

Appointment times too short/feeling rushed

- Clearly need more "allocated" time per appointment. Always feel guilty if you need more than the allotted 10 minutes.
- Always feel rushed. I was once asked what was wrong while I was still closing the door on the way in with my back to the GP. Sometimes can be patronising.

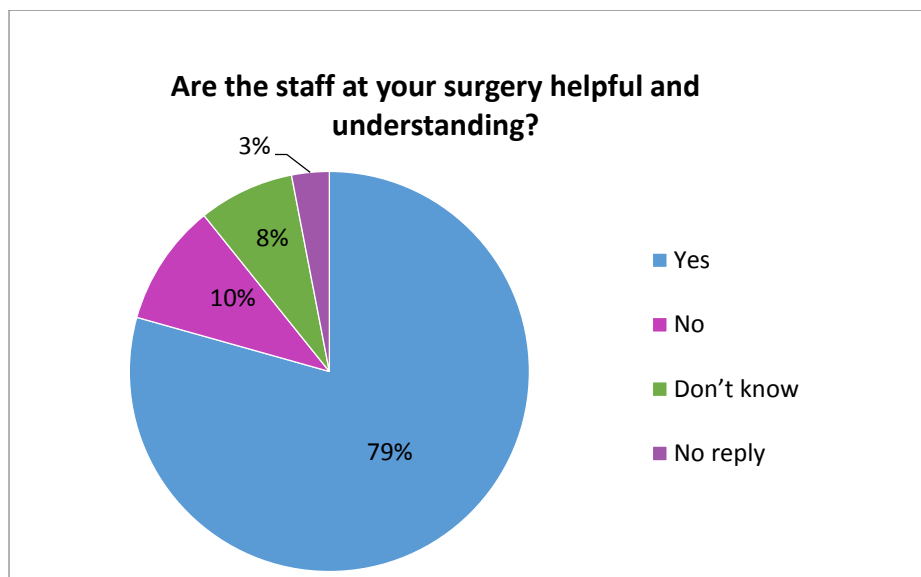
Section 6

QUALITY OF SERVICE -

STAFF (E.G. RECEPTION STAFF / PRACTICE MANAGER / PRACTICE NURSE)

56. Are the staff at your surgery helpful and understanding?

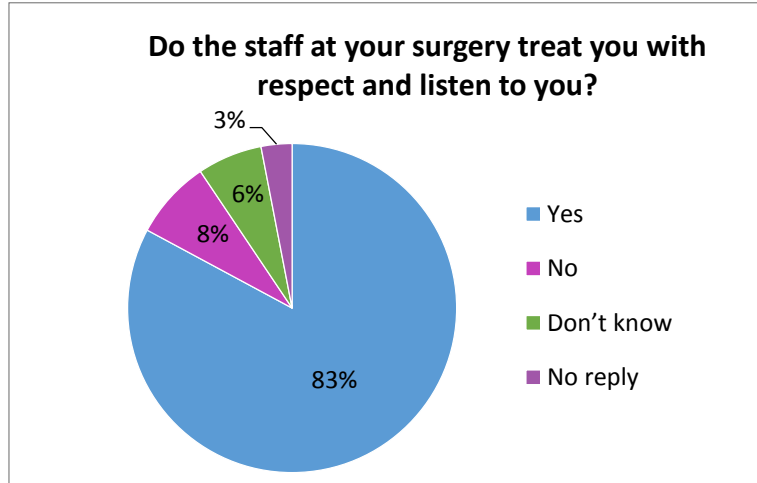
- 79% of respondents said the staff at their surgery were helpful and understanding but 10% said they were not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	523	79%
No	65	10%
Don't know	51	8%
No reply	20	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

57. Do the staff at your surgery treat you with respect and listen to you?

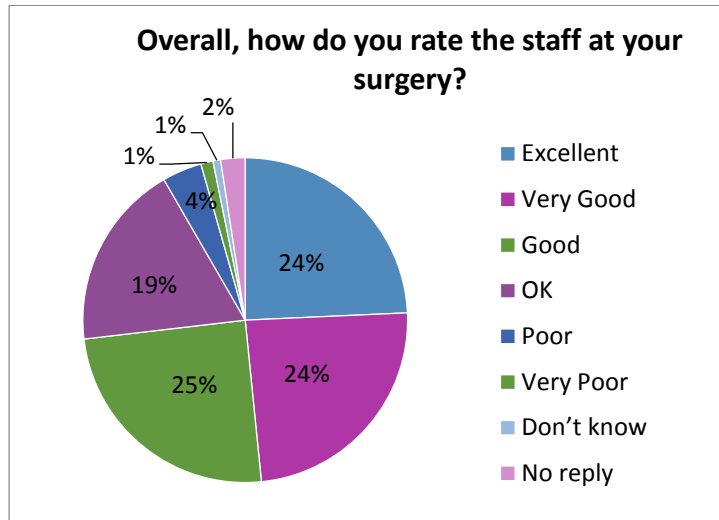
- 83% of respondents feel the staff treat them with respect and listen to them but 8% said they do not.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	546	83%
No	51	8%
Don't know	42	6%
No reply	20	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

58. Overall, how do you rate the staff at your surgery?

- 73% of respondents rated the staff at the surgery excellent, very good or good, 19% OK, 5% poor or very poor and 3% said they did not know or did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Excellent	160	24%
Very Good	159	24%
Good	163	25%
OK	122	19%
Poor	26	4%
Very Poor	8	1%
Don't know	5	1%
No reply	16	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

59. Do you have other comments about the staff at your GP surgery?

164 people made comments.

Most did not specify which type of staff they were referring to, but 47 specifically commented on reception staff, 20 nurses and 2 the practice manager:

- Reception staff: 3 positive comments, 6 mixed and 38 negative. Negative comments about reception staff included rude (6), unhelpful (6), unfriendly (4) and officious (3).
- Nurses: 17 positive comments (e.g. excellent, brilliant, great), 1 mixed and 2 negative.
- Practice manager: 1 positive comment (“great”), 1 negative comment (“inaccessible”).

Sample of comments

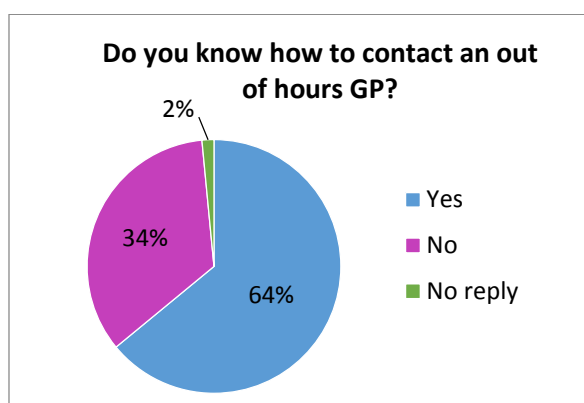
- You have lumped all staff in together which makes it difficult to answer fairly - the reception staff are rude, I don't know the new practice manager and the practice nurses are lovely.
- Practice nurse great. Practice manager great. Receptionists leave a lot to be desired. One of them is great but not the rest. Can be obstructive, difficult and totally unhelpful.
- Reception staff are very mixed. Some are really helpful, nothing is too much trouble. Others are brusque, officious and off-hand. Nurse clinician is brilliant. She always has time for you, your silly questions, makes you believe you are the only patient she is there to look after you. Always explains the details and listens to your views. It is a healthcare partnership. That is the model to copy elsewhere.
- The problem I have is with the receptionists. Some of them are very abrupt and do not consider our difficulties with getting time off. The nurses are all fine.
- One of the receptionists NEVER smiles however pleasant I am to her.
- Reception staff could be more helpful and cheerful.
- Reception and admin staff can be rude.
- The receptionists can be very unhelpful. They sometimes get stressed and take it out on other patients.
- Receptionists should not ask medical questions.
- The reception staff are absolutely brilliant - they are always really helpful and friendly.

Section 7

OUTSIDE OF SURGERY OPENING HOURS

60. Do you know how to contact an out of hours GP?

- 34% of respondents do not know how to contact an out of hours GP.



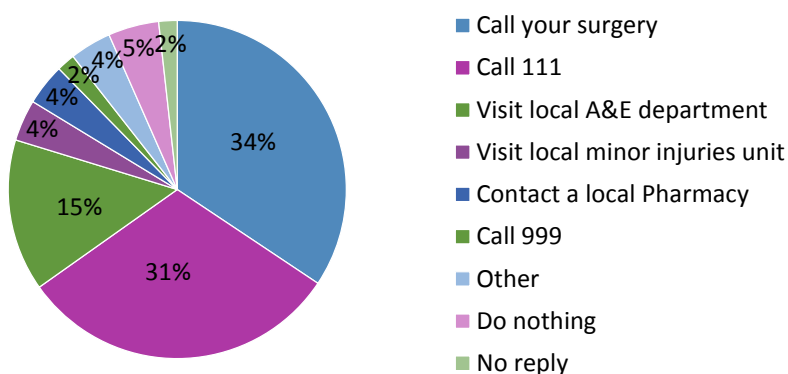
	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	422	64%
No	227	34%
No reply	10	2%
TOTAL	659	100%

61. If you answered no, what would you do if you needed a GP service outside of surgery hours?

The results for this question are based on the 227 people who answered 'No' to Q60, so the percentages are out of 227. (N.B. 64 of the 422 people who answered 'Yes' to Q60 also replied to Q61, as did 3 of the 10 who had not replied to Q60, but these 67 respondents are not included in the results for Q61 because the question was addressed at those who had ticked 'No' to Q60.)

- The majority of those who indicated in Q60 that they do not know how to contact an out of hours GP said that if they needed a GP service outside of surgery hours they would call their surgery (34%) or call 111 (31%); together these two answers account for 65% of the 227 respondents.
- 15% would visit their local A&E department, 4% the local minor injuries unit, 4% would contact a local pharmacy and 2% would call 999.

If you answered no, what would you do if you needed a GP service outside of surgery hours?

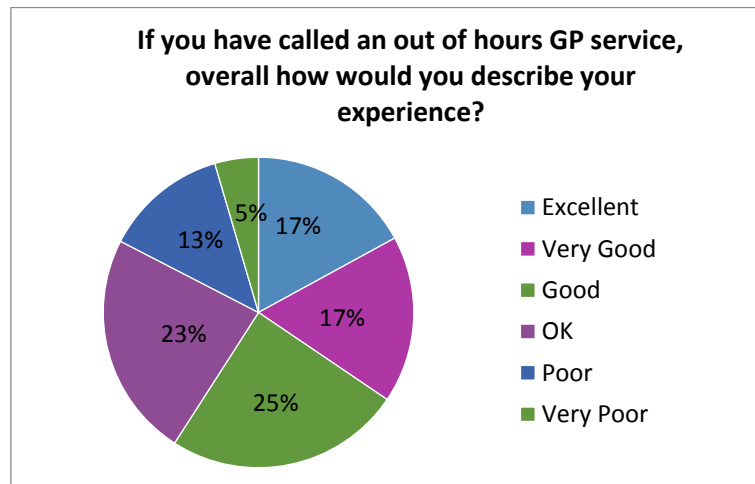


	No. of people	% of 227
Call your surgery	78	34%
Call 111	70	31%
Visit local A&E department	33	15%
Visit local minor injuries unit	9	4%
Contact a local Pharmacy	9	4%
Call 999	4	2%
Other	9	4%
Do nothing	11	5%
No reply	4	2%
TOTAL	227	100%

62. If you have called an out of hours GP service, overall how would you describe your experience?

Only 264 (40%) of the 659 respondents gave a rating in response to this question, presumably because not all will have called an out of hours GP service. Therefore the percentages for the question are based only on these 264 people. The 113 people who said 'Don't know' and the 282 who did not reply are excluded.

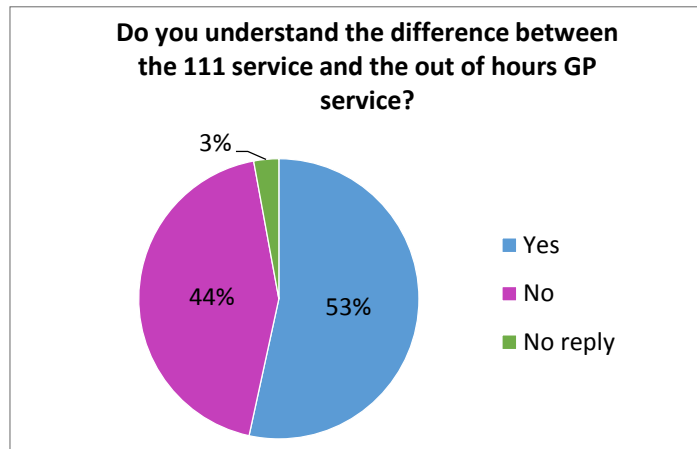
- Of the 264 people who gave a rating for the out of hours GP service, 59% said it was excellent, very good or good, 23% said it was OK and 18% said it was poor or very poor.



	No. of people	% of 264
Excellent	45	17%
Very Good	46	17%
Good	65	25%
OK	62	23%
Poor	34	13%
Very Poor	12	5%
TOTAL	264	100%

63. Do you understand the difference between the 111 service and the out of hours GP service?

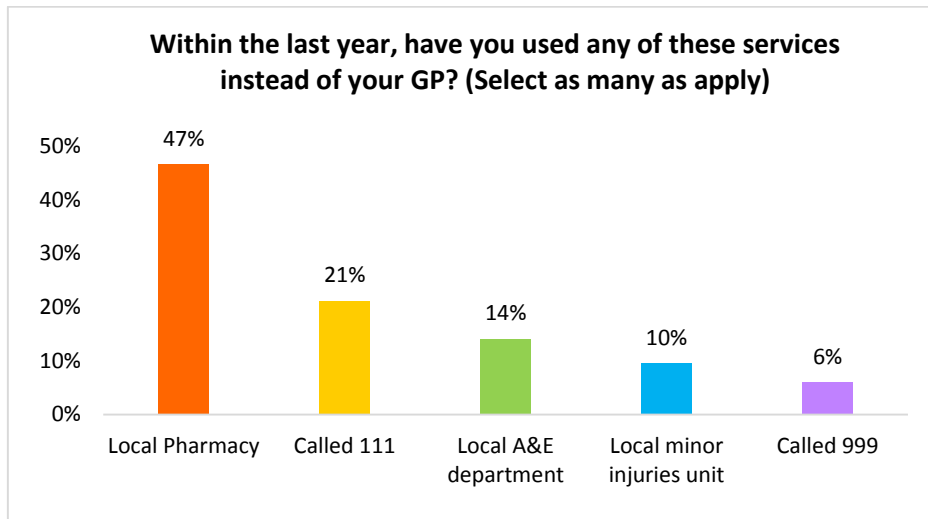
- 44% do not understand the difference between the 111 service and the out of hours GP service.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	352	53%
No	288	44%
No reply	19	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

64. Within the last year, have you used any of these services instead of your GP? (Select as many as apply)

- Within the last year, 66% of the 659 respondents have used at least one of the services below instead of their GP, most commonly their local pharmacy.



	No. of people	% of 659
Local Pharmacy	307	47%
Called 111	140	21%
Local A&E department	93	14%
Local minor injuries unit	63	10%
Called 999	40	6%

65. Do you have other comments about the Out of Hours service?

- 118 people commented on the out of hours service. Many said they do not have enough information on the out of hours service or are unsure what is available or how to access it, and several said they would prefer to see a GP.
- Many respondents did not specify which aspect of the out of hours service their comment related to, but 22 explicitly mentioned the 111 service. 6 of these 22 comments were positive e.g. excellent, efficient, met our needs; and 16 were negative e.g. unqualified staff reading a list of options from a screen, useless, waste of time, not helpful, led to unnecessary hospital visit, wrong information given.

Sample of comments about the 111 service

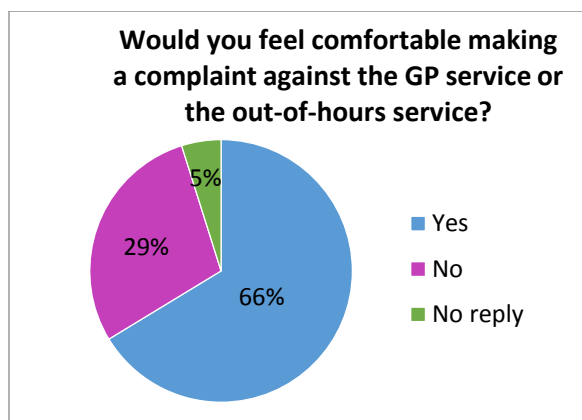
- The 111 service needs to be run with qualified people to assess - NOT drop down screens.
- 111 service appear to have staff who read off a check list and ask pointless repetitive questions - is this service necessary when we had an excellent local out of hours service run by local doctors?
- Dialling 111 is a complete waste of time. After 10 minutes of ridiculous questions, I rang off and dialled 999 who were superb. It is very unsatisfactory and does not give me any confidence. I have even been to a NHS drop in centre 20 miles away to avoid using 111.
- On dialling 111, I was twice put through to 999, which was very disconcerting - I didn't want to waste their time.
- When caring for my elderly mother we had the ambulance service out unnecessarily 2 x due to the lack of GPs able to come within half an hour, on the first occasion it also led to an unnecessary visit to hospital. Have always been put through to the 111 service when calling the GP out of hours numbers, it's a frustrating waste of time.
- Surgery recorded message says "Use 111 to contact out-of-hours GP". Has met our needs on the few occasions we have called.
- I have rung 111 and been made an appointment with the out of hours GPs which was very good.
- The 111 service is brilliant, I have used them on several occasions for advice.

Section 8

COMPLAINTS

66. Would you feel comfortable making a complaint against the GP service or the out-of-hours service?

- 29% of respondents would not feel comfortable making a complaint against the GP service or the out-of-hours service.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	437	66%
No	190	29%
No reply	32	5%
TOTAL	659	100%

If no, please give details

116 of the 190 who answered 'No' to the above question made comments.

The most common reason (46 people) was concern about the repercussions e.g. being viewed as a trouble maker, blacklisted, de-registered or that it would affect how they were treated in future or would be put on their record.

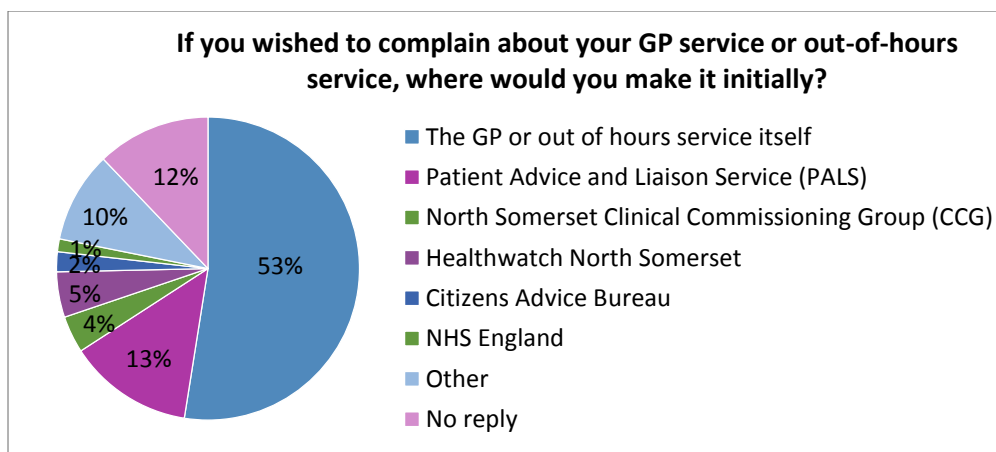
11 said they don't know how to go about it, 7 said they didn't think it would make any difference and 6 said they had complained in the past and nothing changed as a result or they had received a poor reaction.

7 said they would feel uncomfortable or awkward about making a complaint or that it was not in their nature to complain and 3 said they would change surgery rather than complain.

5 said that the reason for their answer of 'No' to Q66 was that they didn't have cause for complaint.

67. If you wished to complain about your GP service or out-of-hours service, where would you make it initially?

- Respondents would most commonly initially make a complaint to the GP service or out-of-hours service itself.



	No. of people	% of 659
The GP or out of hours service itself	346	53%
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)	88	13%
North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)	26	4%
Healthwatch North Somerset	32	5%
Citizens Advice Bureau	14	2%
NHS England	9	1%
Other	64	10%
No reply	80	12%
TOTAL	659	100%

69. Is there anything else you wish to tell us about your GP surgery?

110 people made comments, of which 36 were positive, 10 mixed and 64 negative.

A wide variety of issues were mentioned, the most common being the difficulty in obtaining an appointment at the required time or with the patient's choice of GP/the same GP each time for continuity; and that there are not enough GPs at the surgery or that the surgery is too busy or too small for the number of patients.

Sample of comments

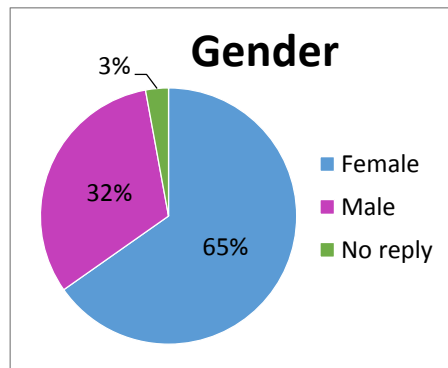
- Always busy. Telephone appointments a good idea but just had to wait 2 weeks to get one when needing to speak to one of the two GPs who know situation.
- It would be good to see your own doctor as you build up trust, and if you see a different doctor all the time you have to sit there going over all your health needs again and again.
- In the main they are excellent and we appreciate the care they have given us but there are problems with getting appointment to see the doctor you prefer.
- Could do with evening and weekend appointments and new receptionists.
- By and large a very good surgery and better than any other I have experienced BUT they are getting so busy and the doctors must be under tremendous pressure.
- If new housing is built how will they cope? Not only are the GPs and other staff flat out, their rooms are pretty much fully booked.
- It needs more doctors and a better telephone service.

Section 9

ABOUT YOU (OPTIONAL, BUT REALLY USEFUL FOR US)

70. Gender

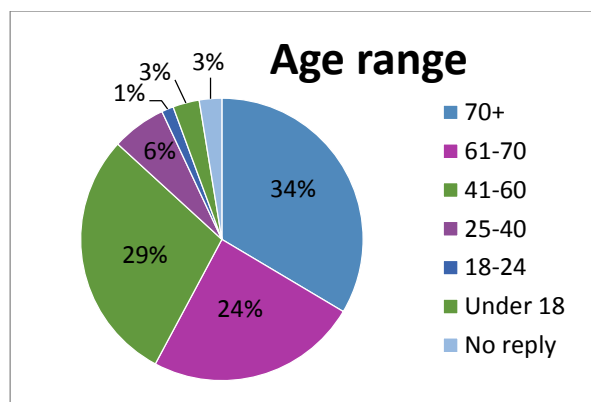
- 65% of respondents were female, 32% male and 3% did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
Female	430	65%
Male	210	32%
No reply	19	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

71. Age range

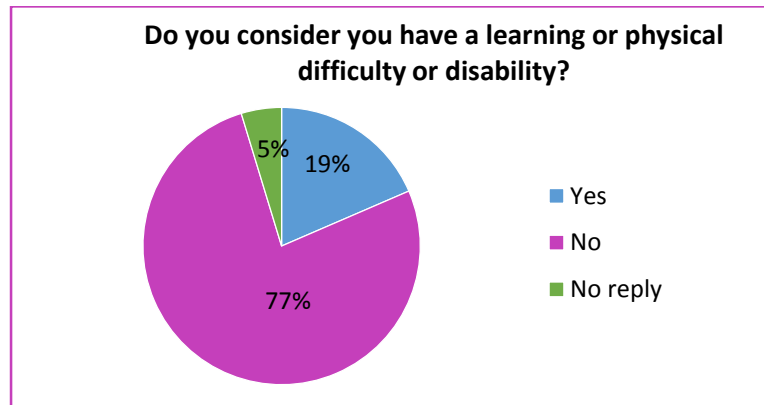
- 58% of respondents were over the age of 60, 35% aged 25-60, 4% were under 25 and 3% did not reply.



	No. of people	% of 659
70+	221	34%
61-70	160	24%
41-60	191	29%
25-40	41	6%
18-24	9	1%
Under 18	20	3%
No reply	17	3%
TOTAL	659	100%

72. Do you consider you have a learning or physical difficulty or disability?

- 19% (nearly 1 in 5) respondents consider they have a learning or physical difficulty or disability.



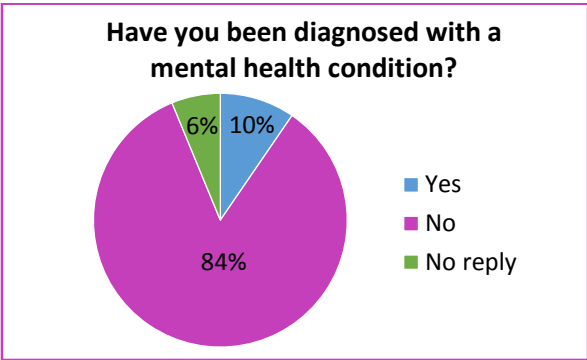
	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	122	19%
No	506	77%
No reply	31	5%
TOTAL	659	100%

If yes, please give details

The most common answers were arthritis or osteoarthritis (23 people), mobility issues (15), deaf or hard of hearing (14) and blind or partially sighted (7).

73. Have you been diagnosed with a mental health condition?

- 10% of respondents said they have been diagnosed with a mental health condition.



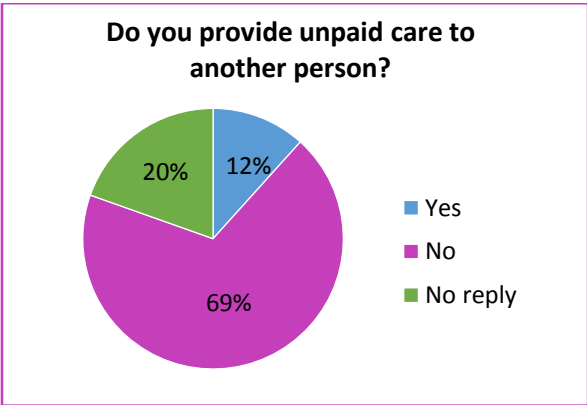
	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	63	10%
No	555	84%
No reply	41	6%
TOTAL	659	100%

If yes, please give details

The most common answer was depression (44 people), although 5 of these said it was in the past or was now under control.

74. Do you provide unpaid care to another person?

- 12% of respondents said they provide unpaid care to another person.



	No. of people	% of 659
Yes	77	12%
No	453	69%
No reply	129	20%
TOTAL	659	100%

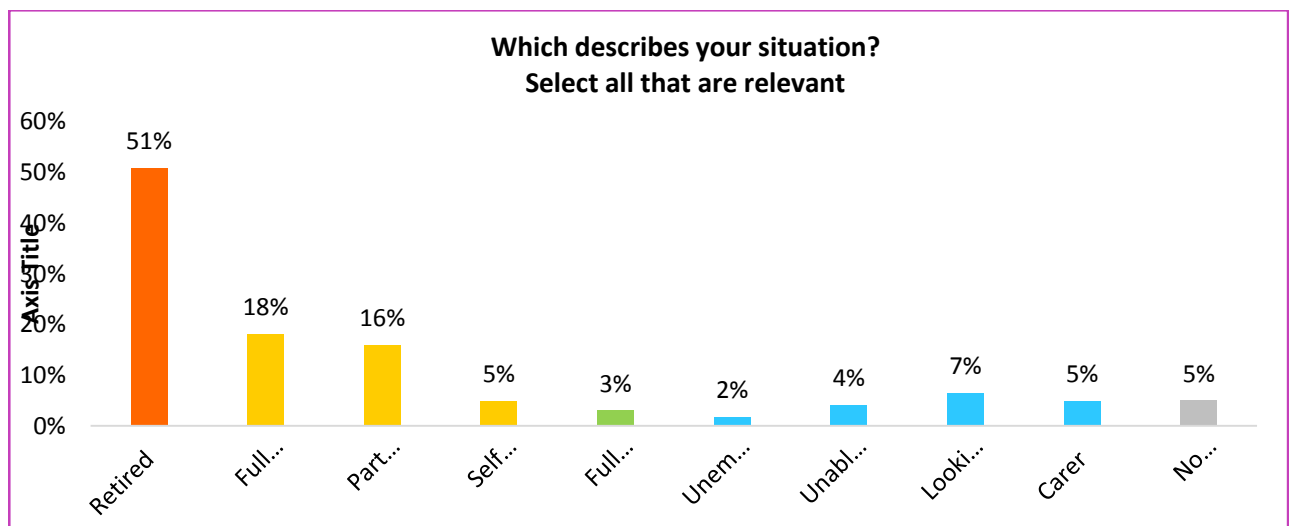
If yes, please give details

The most common answers were an elderly parent or parent-in-law (19), spouse (18) and children (10) (including grown up children with physical or mental health difficulties). Other answers included grandchildren (3) and a neighbour (2).

75. Which describes your situation? Select all that are relevant

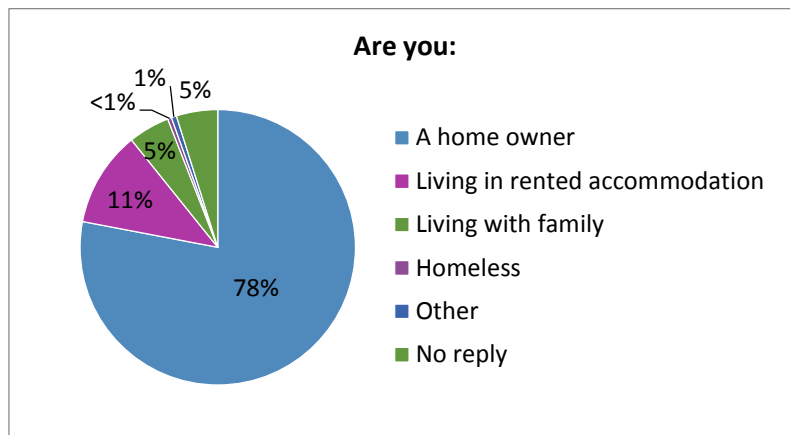
N.B. Respondents were able to tick more than one option in response to Q75, and over 10% did so.

- 51% described themselves as retired, while 38% said they work full time, part time or are self-employed (a few people ticked part time and self employed which is why the figure is 38% not 39% as might be expected from adding up the individual percentages).



	No. of people	% of 659
Retired	335	51%
Full time work	119	18%
Part time work	105	16%
Self employed	32	5%
Full time education	20	3%
Unemployed	12	2%
Unable to work	27	4%
Looking after family or home	43	7%
Carer	32	5%
No reply	33	5%

76. Are you:



	No. of people	% of 659
A home owner	514	78%
Living in rented accommodation	74	11%
Living with family	32	5%
Homeless	3	1%
Other	4	1%
No reply	32	5%
TOTAL	659	100%

77. What is your ethnic group?

This was an open question, with no tick boxes. The answers have been summarised/categorised as far as possible and arranged in descending order of frequency.

	No. of people
White British	368
British	119
White	14
Caucasian	8
White European	3
White Irish	2
Mixed race	3
White other*	2
Jewish	1
Latin American	1
Asian	1
Not specified	137

* n.b. 'White other' was the exact wording used by these 2 respondents and they did not specify what 'other' was.

Conclusion

The Healthwatch North Somerset GP Survey has provided a good overview of the public experience and perception of their individual GP Practices. In undertaking this survey and report in North Somerset, Healthwatch North Somerset has been able to identify issues that create problems for the public in accessing GP appointments. This is a pattern witnessed not just locally, but nationally.

This survey provides an independent reflection of those views. There are many areas of patient satisfaction and positive experiences but there are a number of areas which create pockets of patient dissatisfaction. Healthwatch North Somerset hopes is that the residents of North Somerset, PPG representatives and the North Somerset Health Community take on board the experiences and views expressed in this report and work towards resolving the issues that create difficulties for patients.

Recommendations

Healthwatch North Somerset recommends the following based on the feedback received by the public in North Somerset:

- 1.** A review of GP Practice opening hours with the Patient Participation Group (PPG) and the wider patient list to explore options and preferences for additional opening hours. To ensure additional opening hours are widely available to suit the needs of the patients in the GP practice area.
- 2.** Consultation with patients to identify the most suitable and popular methods of booking an appointment and adopt a variety of accessible methods so that patients have choice in how they can book an appointment: including in person, by phone, by text and online booking. The particular needs of those, for example with visual impairment or deafness, should be adequately accommodated for within these options.
- 3.** A review and overhaul of telephone booking systems including providing the patient with information about their place in the queue. Good practice should be identified and widely adopted, with accessibility for patients the key consideration.
- 4.** A review of appointment booking systems to consider whether they adequately provide access to booking ahead of non-urgent, routine or follow-up appointments.
- 5.** A review of patient's ability to access appointments with their preferred GP.
- 6.** Increase awareness of out of hours services so that patients understand the system, including how and when to access emergency care appropriately.
- 7.** The provision of increased patient privacy at the reception area.
- 8.** A review of reception staff training to ensure they possess adequate skills, knowledge and support to manage patient contact effectively and efficiently.
- 9.** Reception staff to develop ways of prominently displaying information in the surgery waiting room about current wait times for appointments and the reasons for any delays.
- 10.** Increase awareness of Patient Participation Groups (PPG) and encourage active involvement.
- 11.** The development of fair, open and accessible complaints service which assures patients that they can raise issues without concerns of retribution.

Distribution of the Report

This Healthwatch North Somerset GP Survey Report was forwarded for comments to North Somerset GP Practice Managers, North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), North Somerset Council, NHS England, The Care Quality Commission (CQC), Care UK (111 Service), BrisDoc, Avon Local Medical Committee(ALMC) and Healthwatch England.

Responses received to the report can be found below in Appendix 1. The report will be made available to the public on the Healthwatch North Somerset website and in paper format. Please contact Healthwatch North Somerset if you require this report in any other format.

Appendix 1

Stakeholder Responses to the Report

Response from North Somerset Council

Overall I thought the survey showed GPs doing well, but some particular points are:

- Survey not in balance with male/female views - if these can be split out as contrast it might help focus on men's health and the issues they have. If the survey is re-run at some point an effort to even things up would be good.
- Are the results skewed by high participation in a couple of surgeries.
- Lots of 'don't knows' so it would be good to know why this was.
- Probably ought to recommend standards of telephony and web services so patients experience is the same.
- Recommendation about the Free Health Checks needed, not least to GP's!
- Recommendation about checking GP quality for CCG?
- Opening Hours - be helpful to follow this up in practices where they have more working age clients.

Shaun Fitzpatrick

Supporting People Manager

People and Communities Department



Response from North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group

Thank you for providing the Clinical Commissioning Group this opportunity to comment on the GP survey undertaken by Healthwatch Oct 14 - Jan 15.

General Practitioner Services for North Somerset are commissioned by NHS England. The Clinical Commissioning Group works closely with both NHS England and its 25 member practices.

We are pleased to see that most people are happy with the services that they receive from their practice but note the pockets of dissatisfaction. We welcome the recommendations made by the report. Most of the practices have Patient Participation Groups. We would encourage practices to continue to work closely with their PPGs in review these recommendations and how they can continue to improve services for patients. The issue of difficulty with access to GP services is a national problem and work is being done the address this. Communication about how to access services both in hours and out of hours needs to continue to improve.

Dr Mary Backhouse
Chief Clinical Officer,
NHS North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group
GP, Nailsea Family Practice

Response from North Somerset Community Partnership

It is good to see that over 70% of patients rated their GP practices as Good or Excellent although note many practices are facing capacity issues with increased demand. NSCP will continue to work closely with GP practices to set up services and groups in local communities that offer alternatives to GP appointments. This should relieve some of the pressures on capacity, particularly for those patients who feel able to care for themselves with support, and also enable patients to meet others with similar conditions.

Penny Brown
Chief Executive



Response from Care UK

Care UK have read the report and acknowledge the findings. If Healthwatch and the CCG feel its appropriate Care UK would be happy to work in partnership with stakeholders to raise awareness of the NHS 111 service through targeted work streams.

Caroline Pike
Business and Relationship Manager
Southwest NHS111 Service, Care UK

Response from Avon Local Medical Committee

Thank you for sending the LMC and Practices a copy of your survey. We read the report with interest and having discussed it with North Somerset Practices, Practices and the LMC agreed to make a single feedback via the LMC and we have the following comments to make.

Practices welcome this information which they will view alongside the information they already use, for example, the national GP surveys' 2990 responses for the county from January 2015's quarterly report, as part of Practices' on-going review of their services to the public. It is important to recognise that GP Practices, as individual providers, have no influence over provision made outside of their core services but do work with the CCG and NHSE to reflect patient wishes back to commissioners. Practices value the support of all local providers of primary care and value the support particularly of the community nurses and pharmacies in providing care to the public.

Practices are not funded on an equal or even equitable basis so some Practices are trying to provide good access and services on much less funding than others and all handle the impact of working in a wider NHS where allocation and resource availability is variable between areas and different providers.

Whilst Practices take note of all feedback from patients, it is important to remember that these responses represent a very small sample of the population.

We understand that Practices receive good numbers of responses to the friends and family test each month with very high satisfaction rates and they are therefore getting consistently excellent feedback.

We are concerned about the general lack of understanding exhibited in the responses, and this seems to suggest that there is an issue about a lack of knowledge amongst patients. There would appear to be some lack of understanding in some of the questions and the interpretation of the answers - e.g. around the use of 111 to contact the out of hours GP, even though Practices have tried to educate through booklets and websites (also see Section 6). This may have led patients to give answers suggesting a lack of knowledge which is greater than expected. It is important that this survey is viewed against what is actually happening in Practices. These results suggest that patients have not read or taken in information which is currently available. We would also point out that the information relating to most of the questions is explained on Practices' websites, in Practice leaflets and in posters displayed in the Practice. Practices do offer pre-bookable appointments, late night appointments and early evening ones etc. and they do seek to make them as widely known as possible to patients.

Practices have seen a massive increase in demand for appointments over the last few years from all sections of their Practice population. The demand for same day appointments has significantly increased as people do not want to wait for even 24 - 48 hours for a routine appointment.

GPs already work long days and improved access is not humanly possible with the same number of clinical staff available. More resources are required in Primary Care so that the number of clinicians can be increased. Any increase in funding in the NHS has gone into secondary care despite 90% of the contacts being in Primary Care

1. A review of GP Practice opening hours with the Patient Participation Group (PPG) and the wider patient list to explore options and preferences for additional opening hours. To ensure additional opening hours are widely available to suit the needs of the patients in the GP practice area.

Practices work with commissioners in ensuring the overall availability of services 24/7 and would welcome any support Healthwatch could offer looking at ways services could be funded and resourcing the extending of opening hours. This is something which both the LMC and Practices would support. As you will be aware, there is a national shortage of GPs and Practices and the LMC have been raising concerns about workforce planning both with NHSE and commissioners for a long time.

GPs are independent contractors to the NHS which means that in most cases, they operate from their own premises, for which they are responsible. They also employ their own staff ranging from Practice Managers, Practice Nurses, HCAs, and receptionists, etc. They do not employ District Nurses or directly provide midwives etc. although they may host them in their surgeries (or share premises with them) but they are not provided or controlled by Practices.

We recognise that in 2013 North Somerset, along with Bristol, Somerset and South Gloucestershire, the One Care Consortium has been formed, which is a collaboration of 24 GP practices and two local GP-led provider organisations (GP Care and BrisDoc) in order to create an integrated approach to the delivery of primary care. It is also useful to note that all Practices implemented EMIS web in order that they might share data. Following this, the OOH and community nursing opted to work with Practices and recognised the benefit of having an integrated approach to data and patient care.

Many Practices have been reviewing how they can deliver services and meet patients' needs and this has included broadening clinical responsibility from GP's to prescribing nurses and prescribing pharmacists. We believe this will also provide more appropriate patient care. However this needs to be met with a broader campaign to encourage people to take greater self-responsibility for their care and making better use of existing resources such as pharmacies.

2. Consultation with patients to identify the most suitable and popular methods of booking an appointment and adopt a variety of accessible methods so that patients have choice in how they can book an appointment: including in person, by phone, by text and online booking. The particular needs of those, for example with visual impairment or deafness, should be adequately accommodated for within these options.

On line booking is being encouraged by many Practices. At a very local level, Practices are trying to balance the funding constraints of the NHS against the needs and wishes of individuals and trying to ensure the best balance is achieved so that they can serve communities with the services they are contracted to provide within available resources. If Practices had more resources, they could offer more.

We all want to see excellent continuity of care and patient choice and we want patients to see as far as possible health professionals of their choice at a time of their choosing. This however is expensive and not affordable. Health professionals also cannot be providing face to face patient care the whole time as paperwork, results, referrals, dealing with commissioners, audits, and clinical reviews all take time and are a vital part of care. It is also important that we ensure safe delivery of care and this risks being compromised if GPs are expected to do more than is possible.

3. A review and overhaul of telephone booking systems including providing the patient with information about their place in the queue. Good practice should be identified and widely adopted, with accessibility for patients the key consideration.

Whilst we accept this, it is important to note that some Practices neither own the buildings nor the telephone systems in the buildings from which they provide a service and which they may share with a variety of other tenants. In these types of circumstances, they have no control over the capabilities of the telephone system provided even though they may want to make changes and improvements.

Some practices may be able to consider additional telephone lines. However, they would also need to employ additional resources to enable calls to be answered and for many Practices, budgets would not allow this.

Telephone systems that tell patients their place in the queue are expensive, and this is an investment which is unlikely to be affordable at present for Practices. Telephone systems are expensive items with Practices being generally tied in to contracts over a number of years, so even if they have control over their systems, they can often be behind the latest technological solutions.

4. A review of appointment booking systems to consider whether they adequately provide access to booking ahead of non-urgent, routine or follow-up appointments.

Practice in North Somerset review capacity on a daily basis and they try a range of different models to balance pre-bookable appointments with on the day demand for appointments. Practices spend an enormous amount of effort trying to meet demand.

Practices review their appointment systems and their access on an ongoing basis

5. A review of patient's ability to access appointments with their preferred GP.

Practices would undoubtedly like to see real continuity with a GP, this works best for patients and GPs alike. However it must be recognised that no GP works more than 4 days a week (in clinic time) and the majority working 3 days a week. Therefore continuity is something that becomes more and more challenging and this issue is around working with patients to develop realistic expectations, particularly in the light of the government's 7 day a week intention. This will result in there being more days when their GP does not work, rather than does work.

We have to bear in mind that many GPs are now part time because they either have family commitments or they hold portfolio careers. This means that their preferred GP may not be in the surgery each day. This is an increasing trend.

6. Increase awareness of out of hours services so that patients understand the system, including how and when to access emergency care appropriately.

Access could be improved if self-care or use of alternative services were championed - e.g. speaking to Pharmacists regarding medication queries.

We support this recommendation and Practices and the LMC have long worked with commissioners over this. Practices are working with other providers so that they have more commonality with their clinical systems so they can treat patients better outside of core hours.

You may want to clarify some aspects of your report before publication so you ensure you understand how patients are supposed to be using 111 to access care out of hours

For example, page 78 - of the 34% who said they didn't know how to contact out of hours, actually did (call the surgery - answerphone says 111 or call 111 who'll advise and put you to OOH if needed) so actually you could say $64\% + (34\% * 65\%) = 86.1\%$. Contacting pharmacy and MIU may also be perfectly reasonable to provide services a GP might provide in hours.....

We agree that 4% who go to A&E or 2% who would call 999 for non-urgent care is worrying but should perhaps also be viewed in the light of the sometimes very acutely unwell patients who present 'inappropriately' at GP surgeries.

7. The provision of increased patient privacy at the reception area.

We recognise that patients require privacy and Practices continue to identify ways that this can be achieved. It is important that patients realise that Practices will always seek to make provision for this when required.

Many Practices already have notices on display to this effect. Many practices are operating from premises which have limited space and are therefore impossible to modify to the degree which would make this feasible. Practices do recognise the importance of reception staff understanding that this should be offered to patients.

8. A review of reception staff training to ensure they possess adequate skills, knowledge and support to manage patient contact effectively and efficiently.

Training is important for all staff in Practices and they try their best to make interactions pleasurable, effective and efficient. All Practice staff have opportunities to attend a comprehensive range of training courses and amongst these, confidentiality is included.

9. Reception staff to develop ways of prominently displaying information in the surgery waiting room about current wait times for appointments and the reasons for any delays.

10 years ago the average consultation length was 7 minutes and it is now 12 - 13 minutes due to the complexity of the consultations with much of the paperwork being done outside of the consultation itself. The increase in time spent with patients has all been absorbed within the same level of funding.

Keeping patients' appointments to 10 minutes is becoming increasingly challenging and another factor is that patients also often use their appointment to raise a number of different issues

10. Increase awareness of Patient Participation Groups (PPG) and encourage active involvement.

Practices value all comments from patients and welcomes new members to join their Patient Participation Groups to support ongoing improvements in services. This is reflected in Patient Participation Group reports, which show the active involvement in patients identifying areas of improvement over the next 12 months. This is available on Practices' websites.

11. The development of fair, open and accessible complaints service which assures patients that they can raise issues without concerns of retribution.

Complaints are a learning process and Practices are keen to develop positively from them. Due to the complexity of the wider health and social care system within which GP surgeries provide patients, either directly or indirectly, with services, there are a multiplicity of potential channels which patients are expected to complain through.

All North Somerset surgeries are proud of the role of GPs for being responsible for overall patient care at the Practice. Practices' complaints procedures include always being happy to listen to complaints. They either deal with issues directly or help to direct a patient to the most appropriate complaints organisation or help signpost them to an independent advocate who can support them. Practices would always encourage patients to complain to them about their services as this is how they learn and improve.

We hope these comments are helpful.

Yours sincerely

Philip Kirby




Chief Executive

Avon Local Medical Committee

Appendix 2

Further Information:

- **Avon Local Medical Committee**
www.almc.co.uk/
- **BrisDoc - Out of Hours GP service**
www.bristoldoctorsoncall.nhs.uk/
- **Care Quality Commission**
www.cqc.org.uk/
- **Guardian Newspaper - GP opening times data**
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1YRNI4eSZ0w2i29jpX3wLZt4N6tOoGrARUjwBoZhVrg4/edit?pli=1#gid=0>
- **GP Care**
www.gpcare.org.uk/
- **NHS 111**
www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/AboutNHSservices/Emergencyandurgentcareservices/Pages/NHS-111.aspx
- **GP Patient Survey**
<https://gp-patient.co.uk>
- **NHS Choices**
www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/GP/North-Somerset/Results/4/-2.794/51.389/4/15757?distance=25
- **NHS England**
www.england.nhs.uk/
- **GP Contracts**
www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/gp-contract/
- **NHS Challenge Fund**
www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/qual-clin-lead/calltoaction/pm-ext-access/pm-about/#pil4
- **NHS Constitution**
www.nhs.uk/choiceintheNHS/Rightsandpledges/NHSConstitution/Documents/2013/handbook-to-the-nhs-constitution.pdf
- **North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group**
www.northsomersetccg.nhs.uk/
- **North Somerset Community Partnership**
www.nscphealth.co.uk

- 
North Somerset Council
www.n-somerset.gov.uk
- 
One Care Consortium
<http://onecareconsortium.co.uk/>
- 
Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)
'It's Your Practice: A patient guide to GP services'
www.rcgp.org.uk/~media/Files/Misc/rcgp_iyp_full_booklet_web_version.ashx
Put Patients First Campaign www.rcgp.org.uk/campaign-home/about.aspx
The 2022 GP: A Vision for General Practice in the future NHS
www.rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/~media/Files/Policy/A-Z-policy/The-2022-GP-A-Vision-for-General-Practice-in-the-Future-NHS.ashx



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