



Patient Survey:

Access to Non-Urgent GP  
Appointments

Analysis of survey results  
February 2017



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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Healthwatch Gloucestershire

Healthwatch Gloucestershire (HWG) was established in April 2013 as part of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and is the local independent champion for health and social care in Gloucestershire, giving adults, children and young people a powerful voice in helping to challenge and influence the way health and social care services are planned and delivered locally.

One of the primary functions of Healthwatch is to gather local people's views and experiences of health and social care. These are passed on to those who plan and deliver services in Gloucestershire, to the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and to Healthwatch England, to help them identify national trends.

### *Local Healthwatch address*

Healthwatch Gloucestershire, Community House, 15 College Green, Gloucester GL1 2LZ

## 1.2 About the survey

Healthwatch Gloucestershire receives a substantial amount of feedback from the public relating to access to non-urgent GP appointments. As part of the HWG annual work plan it was decided to look into this issue in more depth, by way of a survey.

The survey began in December 2016 and ran until mid-January 2017. It was available online and open to anyone in Gloucestershire. A separate survey for English-resident patients with a Welsh-based GP is planned for spring 2017.

The survey contained questions about patients' experiences, opinions, preferences and priorities. In total, there were **131 responses**. Results are provided in section 4 on a question-by-question basis. Unless specified otherwise, all percentages are out of 131. Please note that percentages have been rounded and so may not sum to 100.

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## 2. Background to the Survey

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Access to non-urgent GP appointments has been a recurring theme in patient feedback since the inception of HWG in 2013.

Particular issues relating to GP appointments arising in patient feedback are:

- **Long waits for non-urgent appointments**

Long waits for GP appointments is the single most frequently raised topic received by HWG. Over time, patients are becoming much more accepting of the fact that they have to wait for a non-emergency appointment. It is also clear from feedback that some GP surgeries are instigating new appointment/triage systems. There have been both positive and negative reactions to these innovations.

*“I made the appointment on 4<sup>th</sup> November to see a GP at my surgery and I have to wait 3 and a half weeks to see a GP (and this isn’t a named GP it’s the first one available). I don’t think a three and a half week wait is acceptable.”*

*“My Surgery tends to carry out a lot of telephone consultations. When I do contact them, I would like to have a face to face appointment. It didn’t used to be like that.”*

- **Being able to see named GP**

Concerns in this area are often expressed by patients with long term conditions who require continuity of care. Waits for an appointment with a named GP are significantly longer than without a GP preference.

*“I have been with my GP practice for 40 years and they are very good. However over the years, it has been harder to get an appointment with my own GP. I have a heart condition and would preferably like to see my own GP because of his knowledge of my health problems and continuity of care, however the wait for an appointment is so long!”*

- **Pressure on GP resources**

Patients are very aware of the pressure that GPs are under and will often mention this when giving feedback in relation to access to appointments. Reference is made to the number of GPs retiring, leaving the profession, working part-time or generally about the shortage of GPs. An area of concern that is being raised more and more frequently from most districts of the county is the impact of proposed housing developments on GP resources.

*“I am sure that the GPs are under pressure because of the increased housing developments in the area meaning the local population is growing and they require healthcare provision.”*

- **Emergency Appointments**

Feedback reveals that in most cases, when required, an emergency appointment is available.

The issues in Gloucestershire are reflected in the national picture:

- Healthwatch England’s annual survey of health and social care priorities revealed that Primary Care Services, with particular reference to access to GPs and NHS dentists, was second only to Mental Health Services as a key issue for 2016. The top five health and care issues for 2016 can be found here:

<http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/peoples-top-five-health-and-care-issues-2016>

- The NHS England GP Patient Survey 2016 reflects the overall positive view of GPs and GP surgeries indicated in comments received by HWG. 85% of people have had a good overall experience of their GP surgery. However, only 70% of patients find it easy to get through to their practice by phone (down from 78% in 2011-12), and only 85% of people were able to get an appointment the last time that they tried. Although 49% of patients have a GP they prefer to see, only 35% of these always or almost always get to see their preferred GP. The headline findings of the GP survey can be found here:  
<http://gp-survey-production.s3.amazonaws.com/archive/2016/July/July2016GPPatientSurveyNationalInfographic.pdf>
- The 2015 Healthwatch England report “Local Healthwatch Investigate: Access to Primary Care” highlighted the issues raised by local Healthwatch across the country as a result of the gathering of views and experiences of over 11,000 patients. These included issues raised by people with disabilities in terms of physically accessing appointments, the difficulty patients have in making appointments with their own GP, and the information that one in five patients, faced with a long waiting time to see their GP, go to A&E instead. The report can be found here:  
[http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/healthwatch\\_england\\_primary\\_care\\_report\\_13032015.pdf](http://www.healthwatch.co.uk/sites/healthwatch.co.uk/files/healthwatch_england_primary_care_report_13032015.pdf)

### 3. Key Findings

Some key findings from the survey are shown below. Please note that all percentages are rounded and so may not sum exactly to 100.

#### About the respondents

- Respondents were predominantly female (57% female, 33% male, 10% no reply)
- 81% were White British, with another 2% of respondents White: Irish or another White background. 17% of respondents did not answer this question
- Only 2% of respondents were under the age of 25. Otherwise there was a reasonable spread of ages, although over half (56%) were aged between 56 and 75
- 11% of respondents considered themselves to be disabled
- 83% of respondents were heterosexual/straight, 1% were gay women/lesbian, 2% bisexual, and 4% preferred not to say. 11% of respondents did not answer this question
- 72% of respondents have had an appointment with a GP within the last six months, with another 13% having had an appointment within the last year. 10% had last seen a GP more than a year ago
- 41% lived in rural areas, 17% lived in semi-rural areas, and 34% lived in urban areas

#### Booking priorities

- The key priorities for patients booking a non-urgent GP appointment for themselves were the length of the wait (38%) and being able to see a preferred GP (37%). When booking an appointment for a child or for someone the respondent was Carer for, the length of wait was the clear priority with 34% in the case of children and 22% for someone being cared for (47% said booking for children did not apply to them; 60% said booking for someone they cared for did not apply in their case)
- Where a preference was expressed, day time appointments (25%) were preferred, with early morning (19%) and evening (17%) following. However, 33% of respondents indicated that they had no preference for appointment times
- A clear preference for booking appointments by telephone was indicated (56%), although more than a third (34%) preferred to book appointments online
- 36% of respondents did not think their GP surgery took their long-term health condition into consideration when offering an appointment, compared with 18% who did think this was taken into account
- 45% did not think their surgery took into consideration that the patient worked full time compared with 14% who think their surgery did take this into account
- 20% did not think their surgery took their disability into consideration, compared with 8% who did think it was considered
- 18% did not think that their GP surgery took the fact of their being a Carer into account, compared with 6% who think it was taken into account
- Respondents' comments centred around the flexibility of their GP surgery, choice of appointment times, and the surgery's attempts to be responsive to the patient's needs

## Waiting times

- 27% of respondents considered up to two weeks to be an acceptable wait for a non-urgent appointment, while 63% considered up to one week to be acceptable. Only 5% regarded two to three weeks to be an acceptable wait; no respondents considered a wait of three weeks or more to be acceptable
- 22% of respondents said they waited less than a week for a non-urgent appointment, including 8% who would usually be able to make a same-day or next day appointment. A further 27% said they would usually be able to make an appointment within a fortnight. However 34% would usually be able to make an appointment within a month whilst another 11% would find an appointment was available after a month or more

## Alternative options

- 48% of respondents said they were not offered an alternative appointment at a different surgery or location if there were no same day appointments available at their GP surgery. 24% said they were offered an alternative appointment, although 22% did not know if they would be offered an alternative
- 52% of respondents, if offered, would accept a same day appointment at a different surgery or location, with 25% saying they did not know if they would accept and 18% saying no. The most common reason given for uncertainty or declining was the lack of continuity of care and concern as to whether the alternative location would have access to the patient's medical records (16 comments). The location of the alternative appointment and the patient's reason for wanting an appointment received an equal number of comments (11 each)
- 63% of respondents said they considered other options to seek advice about their illness or injury before making an appointment with their GP's surgery, although 13% said this was not an applicable option for their condition
  - 17 comments referred to seeing a pharmacist
  - 13 comments referred to considering other options ahead of the GP for minor problems
  - 14 comments in total referred to NHS Choices/online services, the Minor Illness and Injuries Unit, and ASAP. However, some respondents had not heard of either NHS Choices or ASAP, and the majority of comments about ASAP were not positive

## Location

- The largest number of comments (25) overtly stated that the respondent's location had no effect on their ability to get a non-urgent GP appointment; 10 comments were from urban residents, 9 from rural residents, and 6 from semi-rural residents. 2 rural residents and 1 semi-rural resident indicated their location had a positive effect on getting an appointment; only 1 rural resident made a comment that their location had a negative effect
- Other comments referred to high patient demand (6 urban, 4 rural, 1 semi-rural), limited local service provision (1 urban, 1 rural, 3 semi-rural), and transport (2 urban, 5 rural, 2 semi-rural), with the majority stating that their location had no impact because they were able to drive and had access to a car

## 4. Analysis

### Q1. Which surgery are you registered with?

Respondents' GP surgeries are summarised below in descending order of frequency. If a practice or health centre includes more than one surgery the breakdown has been shown if known.

Surgery	Number of people	Surgery	Number of people
Highnam Surgery	8	Minchinhampton Surgery	2
Painswick Surgery	6	Mythe Surgery	2
Heathville Surgery	6	<b>Partners in Health:</b>	2
<b>Cotswold Medical Practice:</b>	6	- St James Family Doctors	1
- Moore Health Centre	2	- Pavilion Family Doctors	1
- Westwoods Surgery	3	Regent Street Surgery	2
- Not identified	1	Romney House Surgery	2
<b>Rosebank Health:</b>	5	Severbank Surgery	2
- Severnvale Surgery	2	St George's Surgery	2
- Rosebank Surgery	2	Barnwood Medical Practice	1
- Not identified	1	Bartongate Surgery	1
Sixways Clinic	5	Berkeley Place Surgery	1
Phoenix Surgery	4	Bredon Hill Surgery	1
Royal Crescent Surgery	4	Brockworth Surgery	1
Staunton Surgery	4	Churchdown Surgery	1
Crescent Bakery Surgery	3	Coleford Health Centre	1
High Street Medical Centre	3	Frampton Surgery	1
Hucclecote Surgery	3	Frithwood Surgery	1
Leckhampton Surgery	3	Gloucester Health Access Centre	1
Marybrook Medical Centre	3	Hatherley Surgery	1
Price's Mill Surgery	3	Newent Doctors Practice	1
Stow Surgery	3	Newnham Surgery	1
Beeches Green Surgery	2	Overton Park Surgery	1
Brunston Surgery	2	Royal Well Surgery	1
Cheltenham Road Surgery	2	Saintbridge Surgery	1
Church Street Practice	2	Seven Posts Surgery	1
<b>Cinderford Health Centre:</b>	2	St Catherine's Surgery	1
- Dockham Road Surgery	1	Stoke Road Surgery	1
- Forest Health Care	1	Underwood Surgery	1
<b>Hadwen Medical Practice:</b>	2	Walnut Tree Surgery	1
- Glevum Way Surgery	1	Watledge Surgery	1
- Not identified	1	White House Surgery	1
Kingsholm Surgery	2	Yorkley Health Centre	1

In addition, three respondents referred to GP surgeries outside Gloucestershire, and a single respondent did not name their GP surgery.



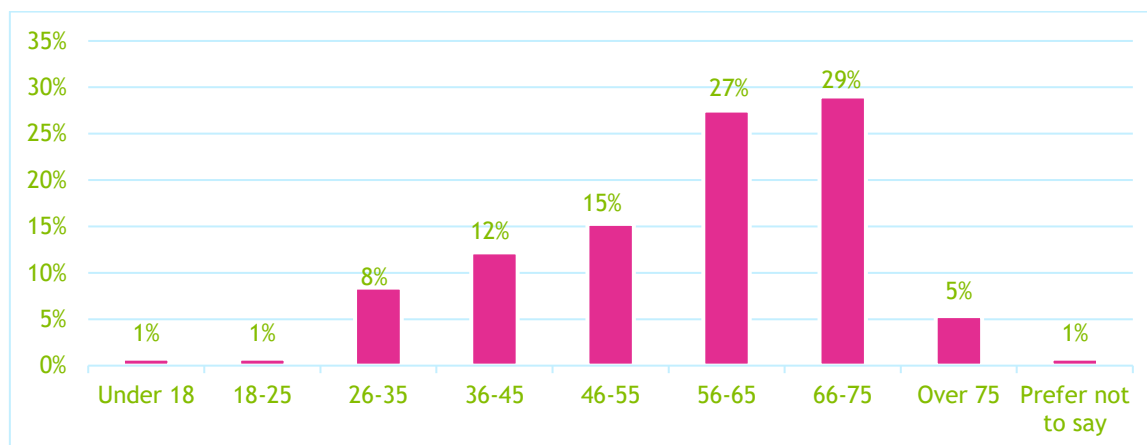


Those listed outside the county were:

- Town Gate Practice, Monmouthshire - 1 respondent
- Wychwood Surgery, Oxfordshire - 2 respondents

### Q2. What is your age?

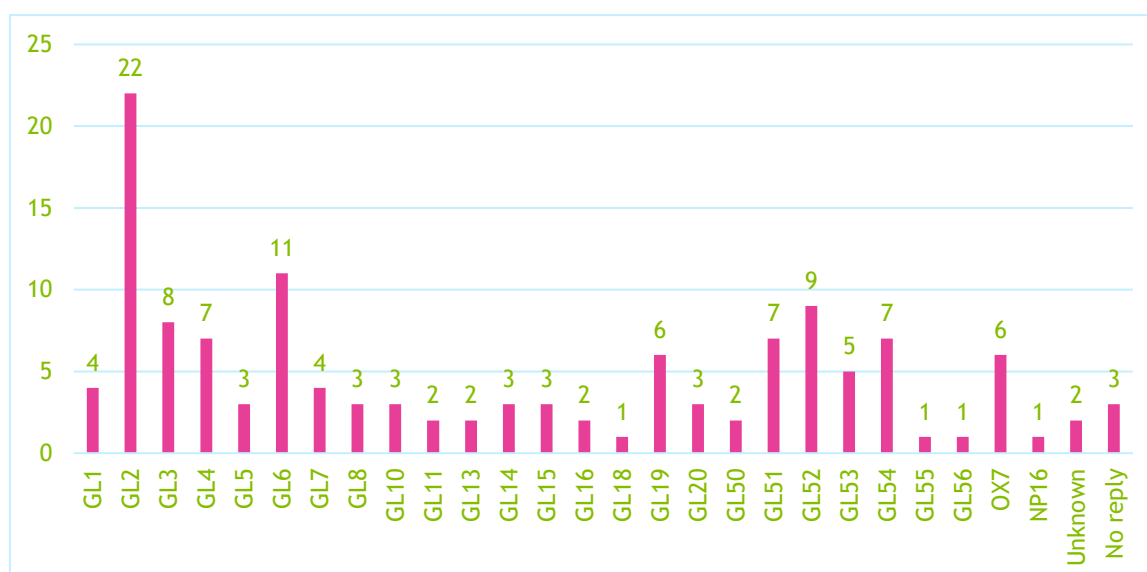
All age groups were represented, from under 18s to over 75s, although 94 respondents (72%) were aged between 46 and 75.



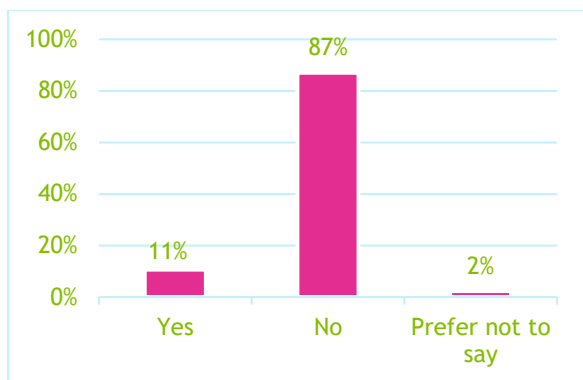
Age	Responses	Percentages
Under 18	1	1
18-25	1	1
26-35	11	8
36-45	16	12
46-55	20	15
56-65	36	27
66-75	38	29
Over 75	7	5
Prefer not to say	1	1

### Q3. What is the first part of your postcode?

Of the 131 who took part in the survey, 3 did not respond to this question and another 2 gave unclear answers. The single largest postcode represented is GL2 with 22 respondents, followed by GL6 with 11 and GL52 with 9.



#### Q4. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

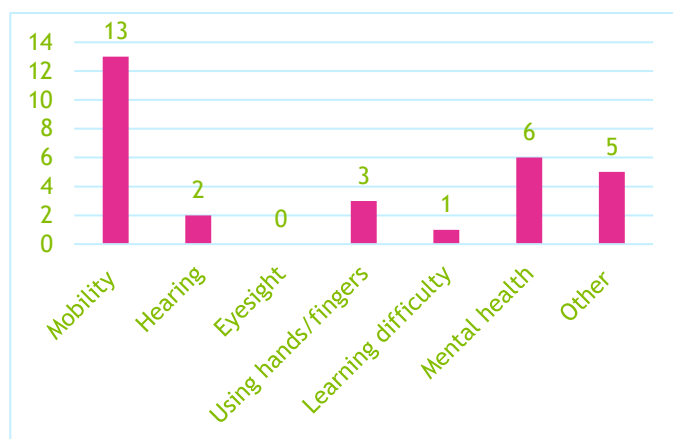


Options	Responses	Percentages
Yes	14	11
No	114	87
Prefer not to say	3	2

#### Q5. Disability type - please provide additional information by selecting the box(es) that apply.

Although only 14 people had indicated they considered themselves to be disabled in response to Q4, 19 people answered this question. Percentages below are out of 19 and have been rounded.

Options	Responses	Percentages
Mobility (getting around)	13	68
Hearing	2	10
Eyesight	0	0
Using hands/fingers	3	16
Learning difficulty	1	5
Mental health	6	32
Other	5	26

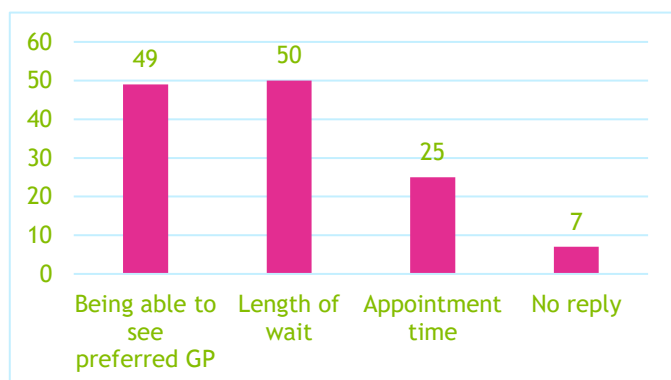


Other disabilities listed by respondents were:

- PTSD
- Have had cancer (which is considered as a disability) but I am not physically disabled.
- Coronary heart disease
- Also involved with autism and OCD
- I have two rare syndromes, which result in London Consultant appointments & other health issues but I don't consider myself disabled

#### Q6. What is your priority when booking a non-urgent GP appointment for yourself?

124 people answered this question. Nearly equal numbers of respondents gave 'Being able to see a preferred GP' (49) and 'Length of wait' (50) as their priority when booking a non-urgent appointment.

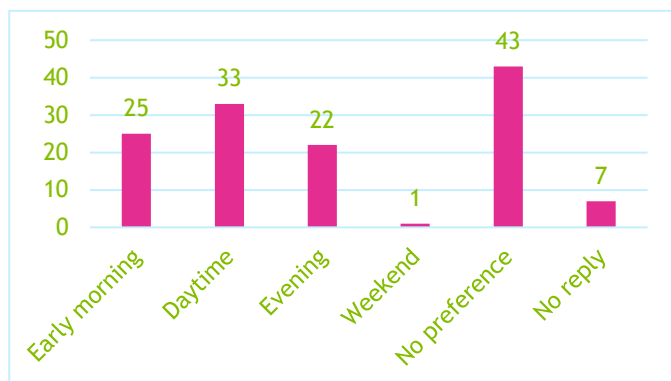


Options	Responses	Percentages
Being able to see a preferred GP	49	37
Length of wait	50	38
Appointment time	25	19
No reply	7	5



### Q7. What is your preferred appointment time?

124 people answered this question. The highest number of responders (33%) said they had no preference for an appointment time, while only 1% said they preferred a weekend appointment.

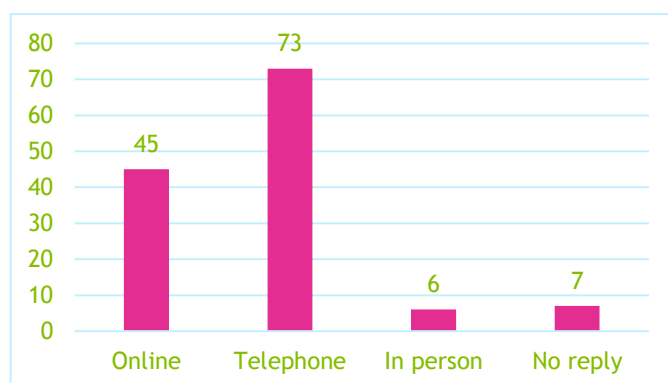


Options	Responses	Percentages
Early morning	25	19
Day time	33	25
Evening	22	17
Weekend	1	1
No preference	43	33
No reply	7	5

### Q8. What would be your preferred appointment booking method?

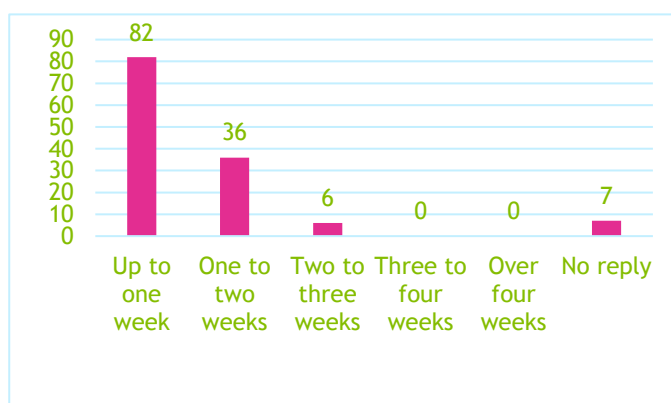
124 people answered this question, with 56% saying they preferred to book an appointment by telephone rather than online or in person. 34% preferred to book an appointment online

Options	Responses	Percentages
Online	45	34
Telephone	73	56
In Person	6	5
No reply	7	5



### Q9. What do you consider an acceptable wait for a non-urgent appointment?

124 people answered this question. The majority of responders (63%) felt that up to one week was an acceptable wait for a non-urgent appointment. No responders considered three to four weeks or more to be acceptable.

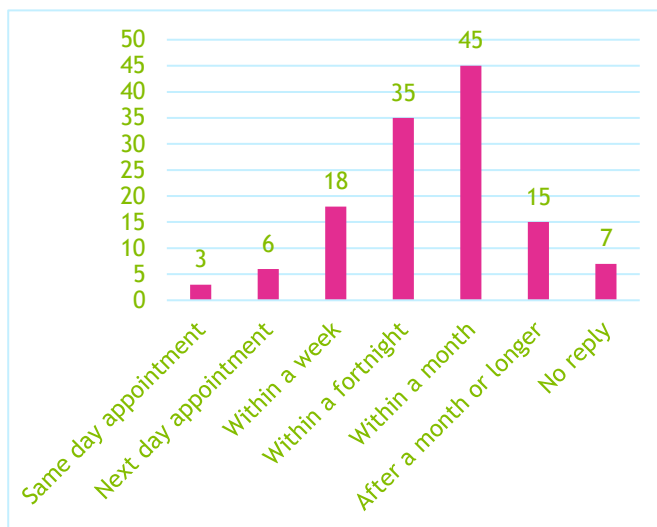


Options	Responses	Percentages
Up to one week	82	63
One to two weeks	36	27
Two to three weeks	6	5
Three to four weeks	0	0
Over four weeks	0	0
No reply	7	5

### Q10. How long do you usually have to wait for a non-urgent appointment?

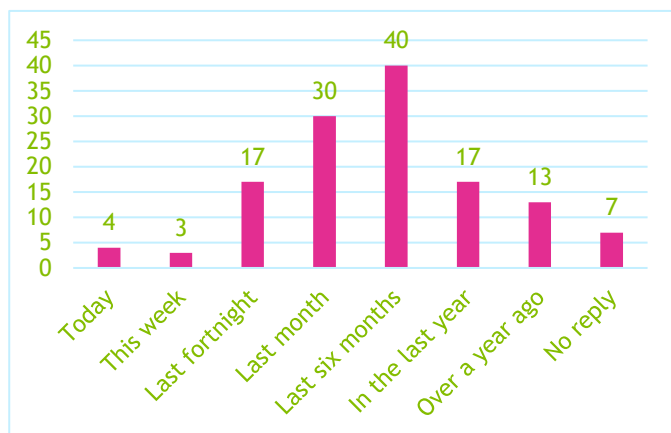
124 people answered this question. Although in total 22% said they usually waited less than a week for a non-urgent appointment, including same day (2%) and next day (6%) appointments, more than a third (34%) said an appointment was usually available within a month, while 11% said an appointment was usually available after a month or more.

Options	Responses	Percentages
Appointment usually available the same day	3	2
Appointment usually available the next day	8	6
Appointment usually available within a week	18	14
Appointment usually available within a fortnight	35	27
Appointment usually available within a month	45	34
Appointment usually available after a month or more	15	11
No reply	7	5



### Q11. When was the last time you saw a GP?

124 people answered this question. Over 70% of responders had seen a GP within the last six months, including 5% who had seen a GP within the last week.

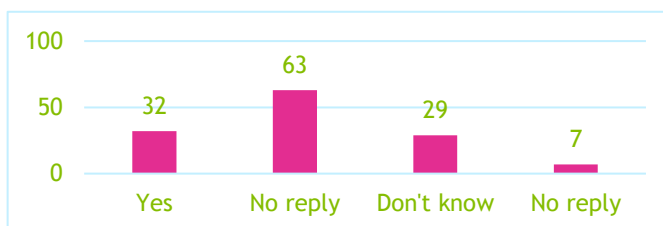


Options	Responses	Percentages
Today	4	3
This week	3	2
Within the last fortnight	17	13
Within the last month	30	23
Within the last six months	40	31
Within the last year	17	13
Over a year ago	13	10
No reply	7	5

### Q12. If you ring your GP to ask for a same day appointment, but none are available, does your surgery offer an alternative appointment at a different surgery/location?

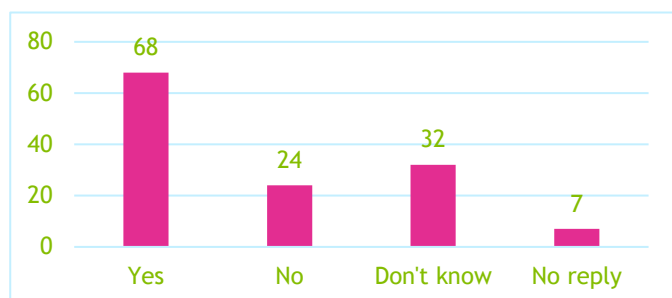
124 people answered this question, with nearly half (48%) saying they were not offered an alternative. 22% did not know if their surgery would offer an alternative.

Options	Responses	Percentages
Yes	32	24
No	63	48
Don't know	29	22
No reply	7	5



### Q13. If you were offered a same day appointment, but at a different surgery/location, would you accept it?

124 people answered this question, with 52% saying they would accept a same day appointment at a different surgery or location. 24% said they did not know if they would accept.



Options	Responses	Percentages
Yes	68	52
No	24	18
Don't know	32	24
No reply	7	5

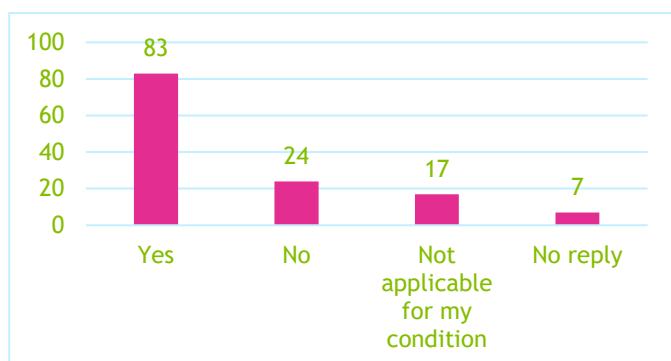
Respondents answering 'No' or 'Don't know' were asked for their reasons. 48 comments were received and analysed. Where appropriate, comments have been divided across categories, so for example if a response covered transport and concerns about continuity of care then the answer would be split between the two. Sample comments are included below.

- 16 comments: Access to medical records and continuity of care
  - *I am fairly familiar with the GPs at the surgery and do not feel comfortable dealing with a totally unknown/unfamiliar GP*
  - *Already there is no continuity of care as I have seen 3 different GPs for one problem. This would be worse if other surgeries/clinics were involved too*
  - *I prefer to see my own GP, who knows me and my medical history, which is a bit complicated and which I don't want to have to keep explaining*
- 11 comments: Location
  - *Would depend on location and journey time. I would have no knowledge of the GPs and their reputation*
  - *Depends where it is*
  - *It would depend upon the reason for my appointment and the convenience of the location of the alternative surgery, but I see little point changing surgeries if the appointment is non-urgent*
- 11 comments: Reason for wanting an appointment
  - *Depends what it was for*
  - *It would depend on how easy it was to get to and why the appointment was needed. If an alternative was offered though I would look to take it up*
  - *It would depend on the reason for wanting a same day appointment*
  - *It would depend how urgent the problem was - would only accept for something very urgent*
  - *It would depend on where ... and why I sought an appointment (degree of urgency)*
- 8 comments: Transport
  - *Also the location of the different surgery may prevent me accepting an appointment. As I have no access to a car, I would have to travel by bus and therefore distance and cost would be a consideration because I may have to change buses to get to the preferred GP practice*
  - *Rural location and transport is not brilliant*
  - *I am reliant on public transport and may not be able to reach the other venue*

- 4 comments: There is no alternative available
  - *I have no other surgeries close to me*
  - *Wouldn't happen, they are not in touch with other surgeries*
- 3 comments: Past experience unsatisfactory
  - *I was once sent to see a GP at St Paul's but they did not have access to my notes. They just told me to make an appt with my own practice*
  - *Have been to an emergency appointment at Stroud hospital but it was a very unsatisfactory appointment*
- 2 comments: Other
  - *Churchdown surgery puts priority on same day appointments so I have never been made to wait. If I need a same day appointment I get one. It is sometimes more difficult to make a 'book-ahead' appointment with a particular doctor than to be seen the same day*
  - *Depends on time*

**Q14. Before you make an appointment with your GP surgery, would you consider other options to seek advice about your illness or injury - e.g. CCG App (ASAP), NHS Choices, Pharmacy or Minor Injury Illness Unit?**

124 people answered this question. 63% said they considered other options before making an appointment with their GP surgery, although a further 13% said this was not applicable for their condition.



Options	Responses	Percentages
Yes	83	63
No	24	18
Not applicable for my condition	17	13
No reply	7	5

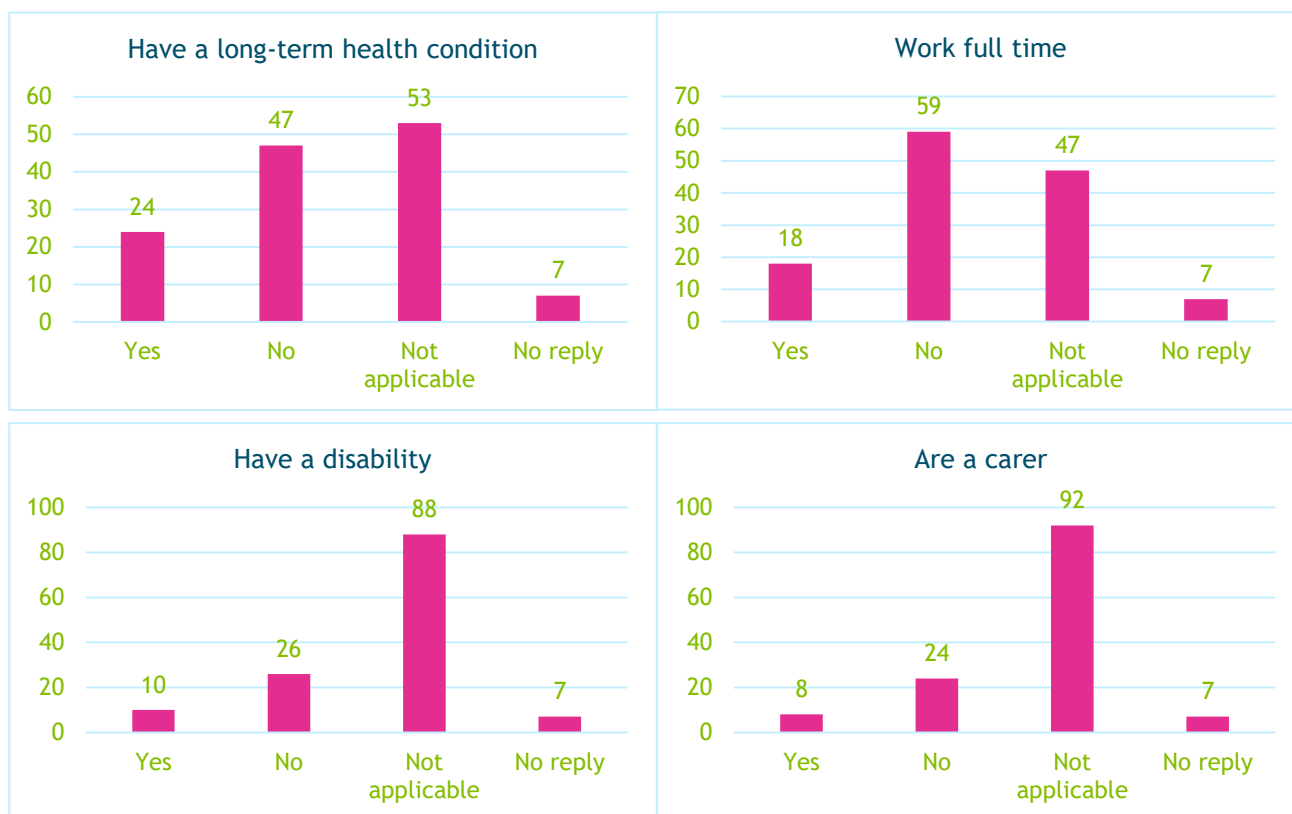
Respondents who answered 'Yes' were asked under what circumstances they would use an alternative option. 56 comments were made, which are divided into the following categories. Some answers may have been split across several categories. Sample comments are included below:

- 17 comments: Pharmacy
  - *I always consider the Pharmacy first, also I look online. I then only book with the surgery if I think I need to see a Dr*
  - *I use NHS Choices or the local pharmacy etc to avoid troubling the doctor when I think it appropriate (such as for advice rather than treatment)*
  - *For colds and minor injuries I would self-medicate or ask a pharmacy in Gloucester for advice*
  - *Pharmacy usually very good but will refer to GP if necessary. Not much use if GP not available*
- 16 comments: General/other
  - *Any instance I thought it appropriate, it's a big hassle and my time is precious so I only see the GP if I absolutely have to!*



- *I am a healthcare professional myself, and I manage most minor illnesses in our family without needing to see our GP. If I or a family member needs to see the GP, they need to see the GP*
- *If I believe they can give me the same information and care as the doctors*
- *When it was appropriate. If advice given from other sources was appropriate and relevant, there would be no need to see the GP. It needs to be clear what level of advice is appropriate, I don't want to be running round in circles. As you see, I rarely see a Dr, however when I do, I would like to be taken seriously. Far too many people see GPs for minor problems*
- **13 comments: For minor problems**
  - *Minor ailments where I basically know the problem and simply need medication*
  - *Common ailments such as a cold or a bad cough or a headache*
  - *If it wasn't a long term condition or something urgent*
- **5 comments: Minor Illness and Injuries Unit**
  - *I only see my GP if I am due a routine check-up or if I have different/new symptoms. I use my common sense in deciding what treatment option is necessary for different ailments. I recently sprained my ankle. I knew it needed to be seen by a professional so I attended a Minor Injury Unit rather than A&E*
  - *Depends on the problem. I would try the Pharmacists for general health problems or go to The Vale Hospital if it was an injury*
- **5 comments: NHS Choices/online**
  - *I use NHS Choices or the local pharmacy etc to avoid troubling the doctor when I think it appropriate (such as for advice rather than treatment)*
- **5 comments: Out of hours**
  - *Only if it was an emergency and out of hours. If it is an emergency in the day my GP will always fit me in*
  - *At weekends where only locum cover is available, or where I have a physical injury*
- **4 comments: ASAP**
  - *But I've never heard of ASAP or NHS Choices*
  - *If it was minor - but the CCG app is pretty useless*
- **4 comment: Self-medicating**
  - *I use every possible way to self-remedy rather than make an appointment as I don't want to waste anyone's time - mine or the GP's*
  - *For colds and minor injuries I would self-medicate or ask a pharmacy in Gloucester for advice*
- **3 comments: NHS111**
  - *If it was simply cough or cold related I would use my pharmacy or if more worrying, NHS 111*
  - *On the one occasion I used 111 I was given completely inappropriate advice and sent on a wild goose chase to a minor injuries unit for a condition that was not treatable without an X ray and doctor's opinion. I hope never to have to use them again!*

### Q15. When offering you appointments, do you think your surgery takes into consideration if you:



124 people answered this question. 36% felt that their GP surgery did not take their long-term health condition into account when offering appointments; 20% thought that their disability was not taken into account; 45% felt their GP surgery did not take the fact that the respondent worked full time into account, and 18% thought that the surgery did not take into account that they were carers when offering appointments.

When offering you appointments, do you think your surgery takes into consideration if you:	Yes	No	N/A	No reply
Have a long-term health condition	24 (18%)	47 (36%)	53 (40%)	7 (5%)
Work full time	18 (14%)	59 (45%)	47 (39%)	7 (5%)
Have a disability	10 (8%)	26 (20%)	88 (67%)	7 (5%)
Are a Carer	8 (6%)	24 (18%)	92 (70%)	7 (5%)

### If yes, how does your surgery support you?

29 comments were made, which are divided into categories below:

- 7 comments: Responsive to patient’s needs
  - *Listens to your request and acts appropriately*
  - *They are always supportive and try to be as accommodating as possible*
  - *My surgery has an excellent asthma protocol and I can usually be seen quickly if there’s a problem*
  - *Mother has secondary breast cancer and appointments have been made same day as a priority*





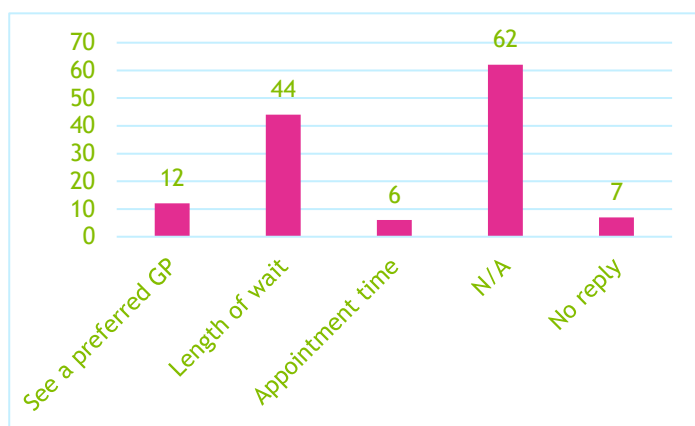
- *If I explain the issue, and it demands quick action, then the surgery normally responds appropriately*
- *After a discussion with the excellent reception team they will always be supportive*
- *Sympathetic reception staff*
- **8 comments: Flexibility around work**
  - *Try to fit appointments around work commitments*
  - *I've generally found that the receptionists do try to find a date and time that fits around your existing arrangements but this isn't always possible. Booking well in advance for non-urgent items does help*
  - *It provides early morning appointments from 7.30am*
  - *I find that they really do try their best to offer after or before work appointments. They offer alternatives such as 'phone again at X time as we usually have cancellations by then' or they arrange for a telephone appointment with the doctor*
  - *Early morning appointments - though I've recently found they have late afternoon ones too*
  - *They try to give me an appointment outside my working hours*
  - *Understanding about appointments before work*
  - *When I was working, appointments were made early in a morning, or late in the day. However I haven't worked for two years and things may have changed*
- **3 comments: Choice**
  - *Surgery usually offers a large choice of appointment times, especially if booking online*
  - *They can be flexible when offering appointments and offer other GPs within the surgery if my preferred doctor is not available*
  - *Possible phone consultation or appointment with practice nurse*
- **3 comments: Triage**
  - *I can speak to a GP in the same practice by 'phone as someone will ring me and it may be my own GP on the day I make the request*
  - *If I need to be triaged the same day then my surgery will always endeavour to have a health professional phone me first*
  - *They triage well*
- **5 comments: Not supportive**
  - *They don't*
  - *They don't at all. Very rude and abrupt*
  - *It doesn't. It only lets me book an appointment for the day so I have to take a day off work and hope they can fit me in which they can't always. I want to be able to book an appointment several days in advance so I can arrange work around it*
  - *They generally don't. They are a complete block to progress. They do their level best to get you out of the surgery before you have even gone through the door. It is not clear how their funding works and how they try to limit referring you. They look for excuses such as alcohol and obesity. All they do is take blood tests that continually come back negative and when you are still ill, don't bother to think of anything else but send you on your way. Useless*
  - *Treat me like an aging idiot!*

- 3 comments: Other

- Administration staff have developed deep relationships with patients as this is a local surgery in a close-knit community
- It depends on how my health is affecting me on a day to day basis and it also depends on the Receptionist, some are more accommodating than others
- I have high blood pressure or at least would have high blood pressure without medication so the doctor does a blood pressure test every 2-3 months

**Q16. If booking a non-urgent appointment for a child, what would be your priority?**

124 people answered this question, although nearly half indicated this question was not applicable to them. The priority for just over a third of respondents was the length of wait.

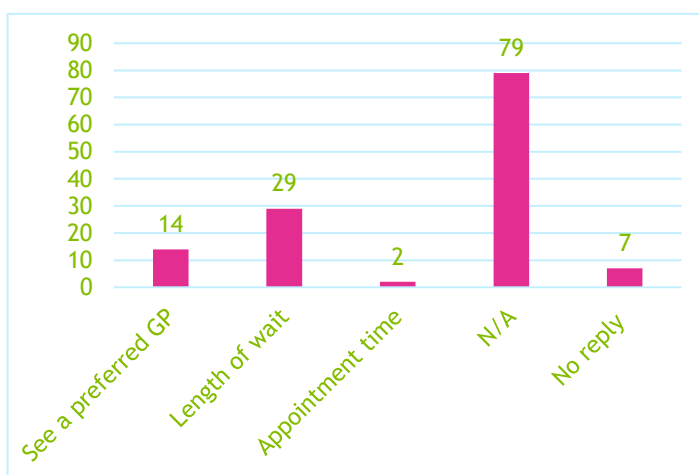


Options	Responses	Percentages
Being able to see a preferred GP	12	9
Length of wait	44	34
Appointment time	6	5
N/A	62	47
No reply	7	5

**Q17. If booking a non-urgent appointment, as a Carer for someone you care for, what would be your priority?**

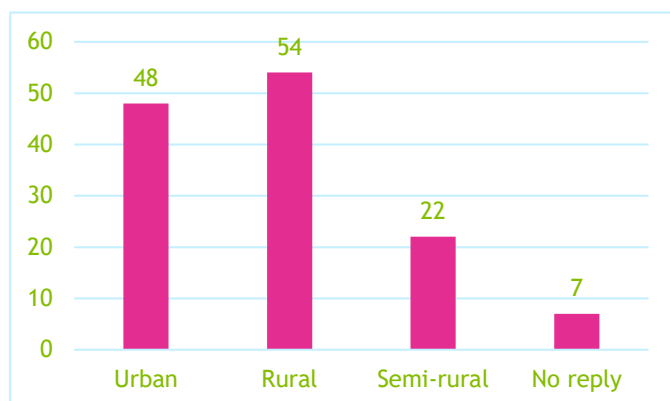
124 people answered this question, although 60% indicated it was not applicable to them. The key priority was the length of wait for 22% of respondents.

Options	Responses	Percentages
Being able to see a preferred GP	14	11
Length of wait	29	22
Appointment time	2	2
N/A	79	60
No reply	7	5



## Q18. Do you live in an urban or rural area?

124 people answered this question. Just over a third lived in urban areas, 41% were in rural areas, whilst 17% described the areas where they live as semi-rural.



Options	Responses	Percentages
Urban	48	34
Rural	54	41
Semi-rural	22	17
No reply	7	5

Respondents were asked how this affected their ability to get a non-urgent appointment. 59 comments were received, which have been divided into categories and a selection of answers included below.

Although the largest number of responses suggest that the respondents' location had no effect on their ability to get a non-urgent appointment, comments relating to transport suggest that the ability to drive and access to a car may be a factor in the ease of accessing a non-urgent appointment from a rural area:

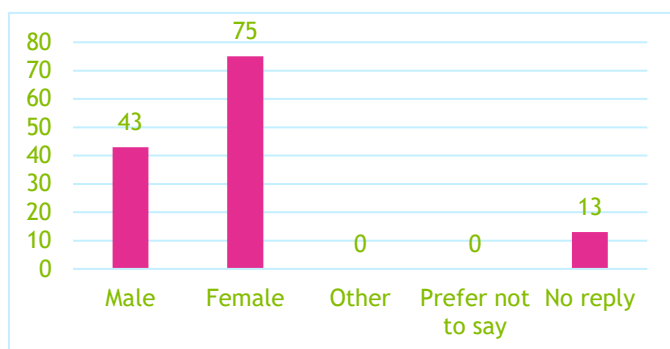
- The biggest number of respondents (25) said their location had no effect on their ability to get a non-urgent appointment. Of these, 10 lived in an urban location, 9 in a rural location, and 6 semi-rurally.
  - *I do not think it has an effect*
  - *I don't think it makes a difference*
- 3 comments suggested the respondents' location had a positive effect. Of these, 2 were rural and 1 was semi-rural.
  - *If anything it is positively better compared with experiences having lived in major cities in the past*
  - *Easier to make an appointment as my surgery recently merged with another surgery and there seems to be plenty of GP cover, although with unfamiliar GPs*
- Only one respondent overtly stated that their rural location had a negative impact on getting a non-urgent appointment.
  - *Greatly as I will need to allow travel time either side and if they are running late I may be late for school run so I prefer my appointments in the morning. For the children after school (depending on why we are there). PS I have no qualms if the Dr are running late, one day I may be the patient that needs the extra time and tlc. I wish others would understand that*
- 11 comments referred to high patient demand. Of these, 6 were urban, 4 rural, and 1 semi-rural.
  - *The practices that I've visited are normally really busy so you do need to plan ahead if you want to be able to pick up something on the day. I usually try to book something in at least 3-4 weeks ahead of when I need it where possible*
  - *Within Brockworth due to an increase in population via new housing development the surgery is over subscribed*

- *We have an aging demographic in our area and our surgery is always busy and appointments do get booked up very quickly*
- 9 comments related to transport. Of these, 2 were urban, 5 were rural, and 2 were semi-rural.
  - *Just getting a non-urgent appointment is hard enough but this surgery is difficult to get to by bus due to limited time table*
  - *It does not while I am still driving*
  - *It doesn't have any bearing, as I am able to access the surgery by car*
- 5 comments suggested there was a limited local service provision. Of these, 1 was urban, 1 was rural, and 3 were semi-rural.
  - *Yes!!! I live in a new build housing estate with thousands of people and the promised new GP surgery has yet to materialise (I've lived here about 8 years)*
  - *Small surgery so more limited resources available*
  - *A new surgery is needed on the Homelands estate with plenty of parking. The village surgeries are not coping with what they've got, but MUST stay open!*
- The 4 other comments were from 2 urban and 2 semi-rural residents. Only one commented specifically on their location.
  - *I live round the corner from the GP surgery*

## 5. Demographics

### Q20. Gender

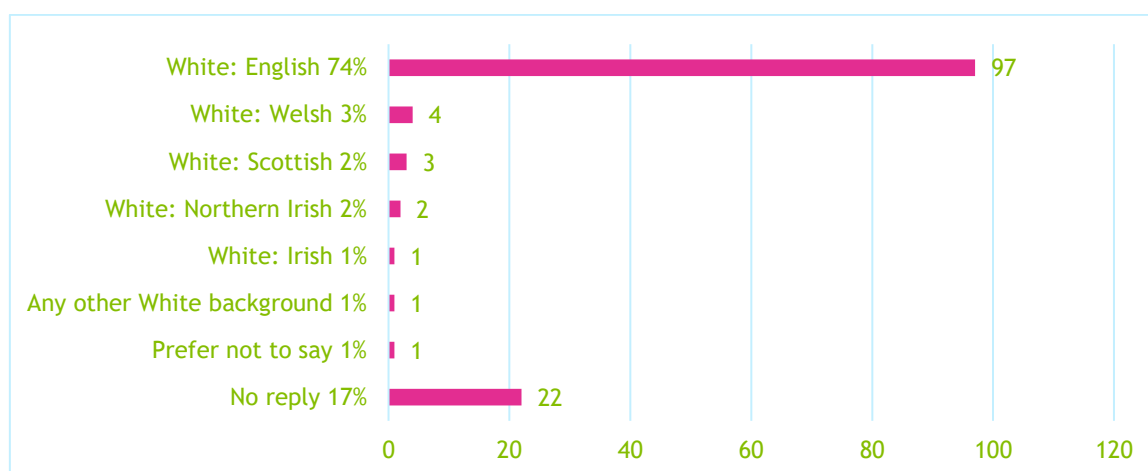
118 people answered this question.



Options	Responses	Percentages
Male	43	33
Female	75	57
Other	0	0
Prefer not to say	0	0
No reply	13	10

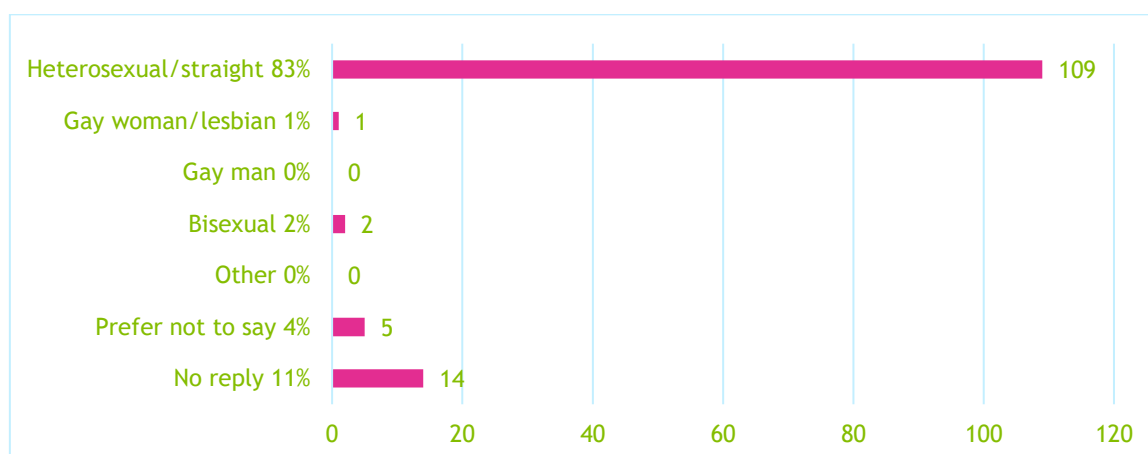
### Q21. Ethnicity

109 people answered this question. 19 ethnic origin categories and ‘prefer not to say’ were offered as options. Only seven options were selected by those respondents who answered this question. These seven options and the number of no replies are shown below.



### Q22. Sexual orientation

117 people answered this question.



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## 6. Conclusions

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Patient responses to the survey were in broad agreement with both the feedback which Healthwatch Gloucestershire has received and the findings of national surveys into patient priorities:

- Long waits for non-urgent appointments

This is the single, most frequently raised topic in patient feedback received by HWG. The long wait for non-urgent appointments was illustrated in the experiences of the survey respondents, where 34% of patients waited up to a month and another 11% waited for over a month before getting an appointment.

Lengthy waiting times are not considered acceptable to patients - the survey results indicate that the majority (63%) considered up to one week to be an acceptable wait time. No respondents considered a wait of three or more weeks to be acceptable.

38% of those taking part in the survey gave the length of the wait for an appointment as their key priority.

- Being able to see named GP

The survey results placed seeing a named GP as a close second in terms of patient priorities, with 37% indicating that this was key for them. When asked if they would accept a same day appointment at a different surgery, nearly 43% said they would not or did not know if they would accept. The largest number of comments (16) giving reasons for not accepting or not knowing if they would accept related to concerns over continuity of care and access to medical records. 11 comments indicated their decision would depend on their reason for wanting to see their GP.

NHS England's GP Patient Survey 2016 showed that 49% of patients nationally had a GP they preferred to see, but only 35% of these were always or almost always able to see their preferred GP. It is not known how Gloucestershire compares with this, but it is noted that 52% of survey respondents would accept a same day appointment at a surgery other than their own.

- Availability of evening and weekend appointments

This was not an issue that was reflected in the survey results, where 57% of respondents either had no preference for an appointment time or preferred a day time appointment. 17% expressed a preference for evening appointments, and less than 1% for weekend appointments.

This may in part be related to the age profile of respondents; 34% of those taking part were aged 66 and over and so more likely to have retired. Another 27% were aged between 56 and 65 which could also potentially include several retirees, although the survey did not explicitly ask about whether or not respondents were in employment.

- Alternative appointments

Nearly half of respondents said they were not offered an alternative appointment at a different surgery or location if their own GP surgery had no same day appointments and a further 22% did not know if the surgery offered alternative appointments. However, over 50% of respondents said they would accept a same day appointment at a different surgery or location if it was offered.

- Pressure on GP resources

Both the local survey and the national reports indicate that patients were aware of potential pressures on GP surgeries. Locally, patients in rural areas did not appear to consider themselves

disadvantaged in being able to make a non-urgent GP appointment by their location. Instead, comments from patients in rural, urban and semi-urban locations referred to high levels of patient demand alongside limited service provision, partly resulting from an ageing demographic and partly from the amount of new housing built in their area.

In conclusion, the findings from the survey supports much of the intelligence already known by the health system, but draws out some key elements around perceived acceptable waits for GP appointments together with the importance of continuity, particularly in the case of Long Term Conditions. It is hoped that these issues will be taken into consideration in the future planning processes for the county.