



# **Whiston A&E Watch**

**13 January 2020**

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# Introduction

## What is A&E Watch?

A&E Watch is designed to gain a snapshot view of the NHS Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments in across Cheshire & Merseyside. On 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020, local Healthwatch from across the area visited their local A&E departments to gain experiences of patients and understand why they attended and how they thought services could be improved.

## Background

The visit to A&E at Whiston Hospital took place on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020. It was conducted from 9.00am until 5.00pm.

Staff and volunteers from Healthwatch Knowsley covered A&E from 9.00am to 11.00am, Healthwatch St Helens covered from 11.00am to 2.00pm and Healthwatch Halton from 2.00pm to 5.00pm

58 people took part in the A&E Watch survey.

# Summary of findings

- The majority of people (62%) had tried to access another service before attending A&E
- Of the people who had tried to go elsewhere before attending A&E at Whiston Hospital, 53% had been or attempted to go to their GP Practice first. More than one in four (28%) had visited a Walk-in or Urgent Care centre first. Over one in five (22%) people had also tried NHS 111 prior to visiting A&E.
- Most of the people we spoke to who had tried elsewhere before visiting A&E were advised to attend by a GP.
- The most common reason people gave for attending A&E without going elsewhere first was that 'It was too urgent / it was an emergency' (55%). The second most common answer was 'because it's more convenient'
- 41% of respondents were driven to A&E by a friend or family member. Just over one in five respondents drove to A&E themselves.
- Seven people we spoke to were brought to A&E by ambulance. They all rated the service as 'Excellent'.
- Eleven people completed part two of our survey, after they had been treated at A&E. Eight (72%) were treated and discharged in under four hours. Two patients were more than five hours in A&E, one told us they were 12 hours before being admitted to a ward.
- The majority of people (63%) we spoke to said they weren't being kept informed of timings or delays.
- Most of those people who told us they were kept informed on any delays or timings said they got the information from the large TV screen in the waiting area.
- On the day we visited, 94% of the people we spoke with rated their experience as being at least 3 out of 5. 54% rated their experience as excellent (5 out of 5). Positive comments focussed on the staff and their attitudes and efforts even though A&E was busy.
- Of the people who then completed and returned part two of the survey, 80% rated their experience as being at least a 3 out of 5. Again, positive comments focussed on the helpful nature and positive attitudes of the staff
- When asking people what could be improved, the main area highlighted was waiting times, followed by improved communication about delays and treatment.
- There was a relatively low response rate (11) to part two of the survey, 'After your A&E visit'.

# Survey results

Note that in some cases patients chose more than one response to the questions or didn't answer certain questions.

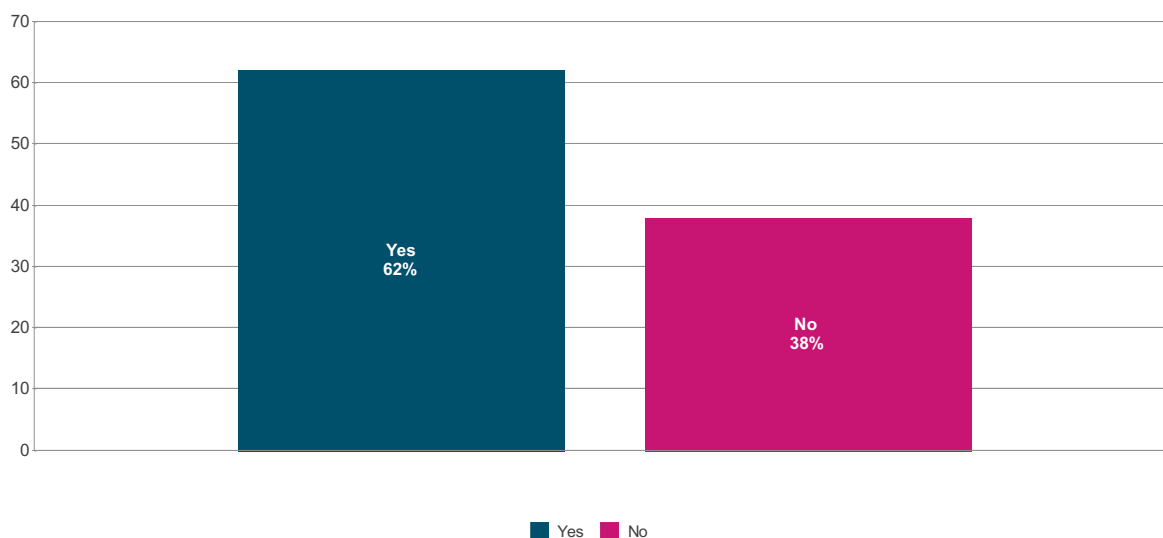
## What made you come to A&E today?

This question was intended to gather the different reasons why people attended A&E on this day.

The reasons included:

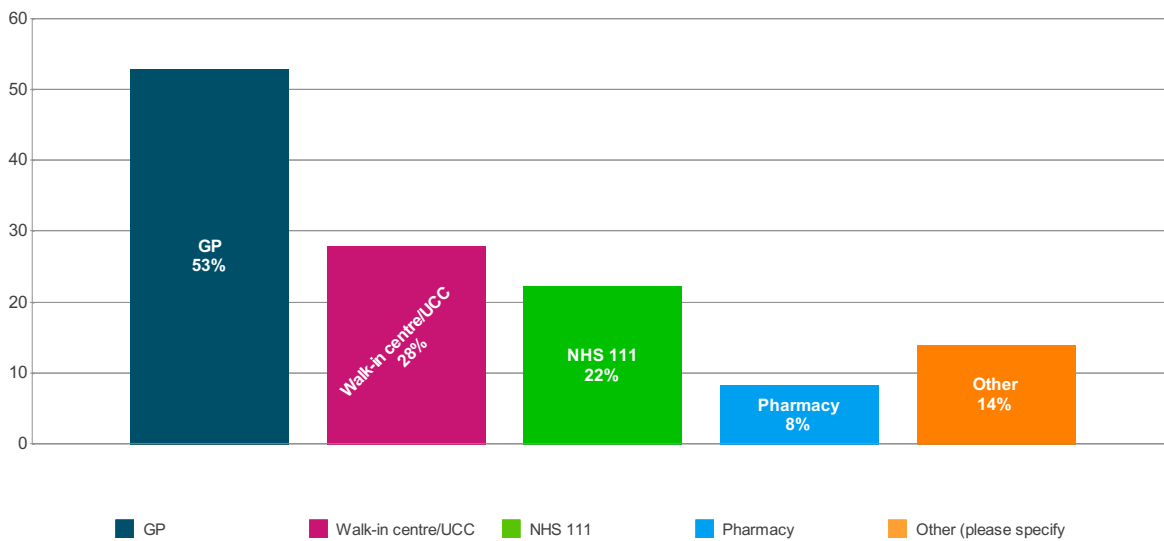
- People generally feeling unwell
- Suspected fractures or injuries to leg, knee, ankle, foot, nose, hand
- Dizziness and falls
- Chest, abdominal and back pains
- People who had breathing difficulties
- Car accidents
- Referrals by GPs
- Needing a tooth out

## Did you seek help, advice or treatment from anywhere else before coming to A&E? (58 responses)



62% of people told us they had tried to access help advice or treatment somewhere else before attending Whiston A&E. This still left more than one in three people attending A&E as a first choice

## Where did you contact before A&E? (36 responses)



- Of the people who had tried to go elsewhere before attending Whiston A&E, over half (53%) had been, or attempted to go to their GP Practice first
- Over one in five people (22%) told us they had rung NHS 111 for advice / help
- Just over one in four (28%) had tried a walk-in centre / urgent care centre

## Why did you end up coming to A&E after trying elsewhere? (34 responses)

- Four people told us they attended A&E as they couldn't get a GP appointment. The vast majority of people (30) told us they were advised to attend A&E.
- Four people were advised to attend A&E by NHS111
- Four people were advised to attend A&E by their GP. Another three people said they had contacted their GP but decided for themselves A&E was the best place to attend
- Four people said they were sent from the Walk-in Centre / Urgent Care Centres
- Other people listed being advised by:
  - a physiotherapist
  - a pharmacist
  - A&E at Warrington Hospital (as the patient had skin graft surgery at Whiston and was attending A&E to do with that)

### If you didn't try anywhere else instead of A&E, why not? (22 respondents)

We asked this question to find out the reasons why some people attend A&E instead of looking at other options first.

It was too urgent / it was an emergency	I've been here before	A friend or family member thought I should come	I was advised to come back here by A&E previously if my problem continued	Because it's more convenient	Other
12 54.5%	1 4.5%	2 9.1%	1 4.5%	3 13.6%	5 22.7%

- The most common reason people gave was they felt 'it was too urgent / it was an emergency' (54%)
- Two of the five people who answered 'other' thought they would need an x-ray

### Do you have any difficulties in accessing health care at places other than A&E?

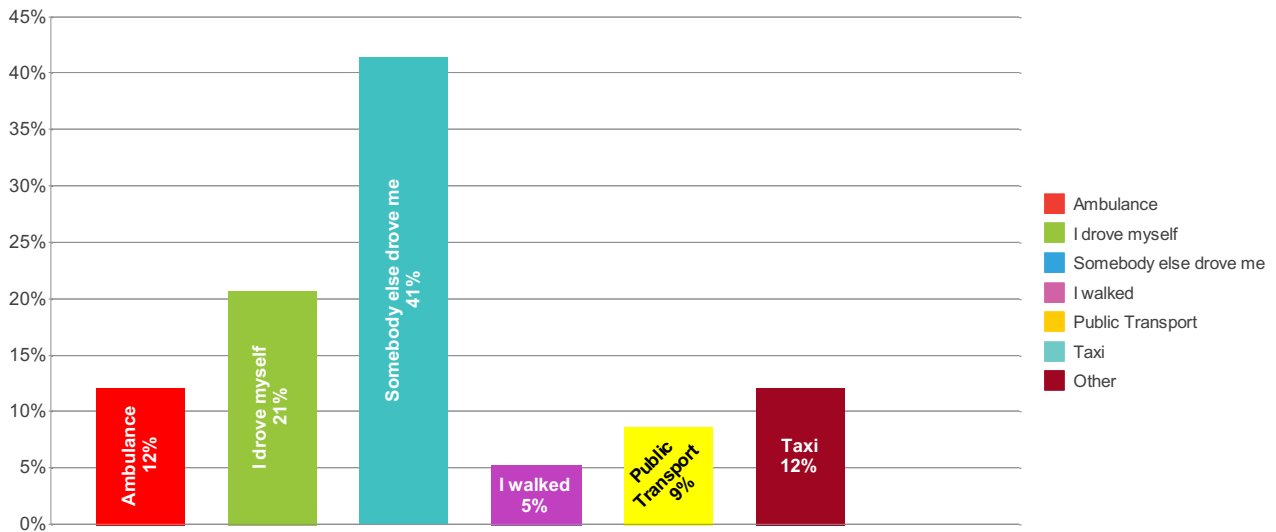
We asked this question to find if there were any issues in the wider health system that may be impacting on A&E attendance.

All bar one person we spoke with were currently registered with a GP.

The majority of respondents said they didn't have any issues. Of those people who did have issues they were almost all related to access to GP appointments. One person had difficulties accessing dental services.

- Only at the GP. It's difficult to get appointments. I rang 57 times to get through to the practice and then it was two weeks before they had an appointment available. I'm planning to switch to another GP practice
- Yes, my dentist was fully booked
- Yes. They often don't have appointments even when you call at 8am but I got a cancellation in the end today.
- Yes, no appointments were available in my GP. The emergency call backs are not suitable for actual emergencies.
- I couldn't get an appointment but as I work as cabin crew. I have an app where I can facetime with a GP but they cannot refer to NHS services, so I called the eye clinic.
- Yes, no appointments but can go on an emergency list but you do not know when they will call you back and I am in a lot of pain.
- I have received conflicting advice from GP/A&E.
- I can get an appointment, but I don't get the treatment I would like
- I can't get an appointment and avoid the GP if it's for myself. If it was easier to get an appointment I would have went there. All the GP's are locums.
- Yes, my GP you can wait 2 weeks for an appointment
- Can wait a week for a GP appointment but I can always go to the walk in
- It is difficult to get an appointment especially working around my job. Sometimes at the surgery
- I find it is difficult to get an appointment at the GP. You are advised to call at 8am but you can't get through so just turn up. I need a sick note but I am unable to get an appointment.
- Couldn't get in at the GP. I had a telephone consultancy at first. My chest infection isn't clearing up.
- Yes. I can never get an appointment at my GP. Also not being able to get tetanus and hepatitis B injections.

## How did you get to A&E today? (58 responses)



This question was useful in establishing how people travelled to A&E. All 58 people answered this question.

- The most common means of getting to A&E when we visited was to be driven by a friend or family member, accounting for 41% of replies.
- Slightly over one in five people (21%) had driven themselves.
- Seven people we spoke with had arrived by ambulance.

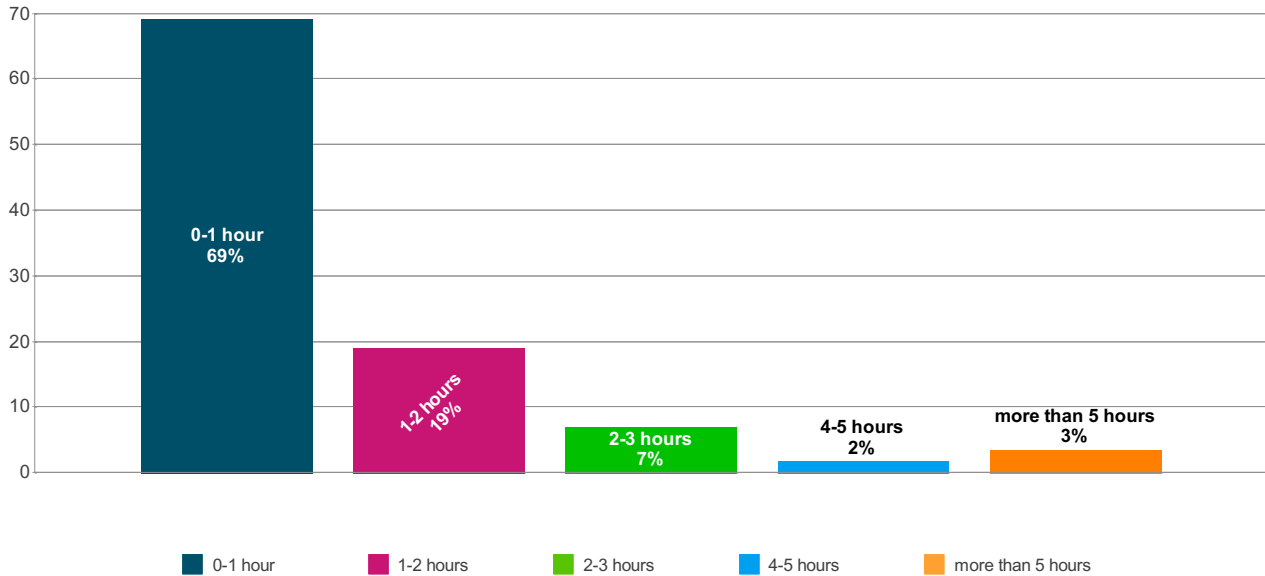
## If you came by ambulance, how would you rate the care you received? (7 responses)

- All seven people who told us they arrived by ambulance rated the care they received as 'Very Good' or five out of five.
- None of the patients arriving by ambulance said they had to wait in the ambulance because A&E was unable to admit them
- We asked people for feedback on why they gave those rating to the ambulance service. They told us:
  - They were very were quick and very helpful
  - I was kept informed. They were very chatty. They brought me right in to A and E
  - Very helpful
  - Fantastic
  - Staff were really good
  - They were brilliant



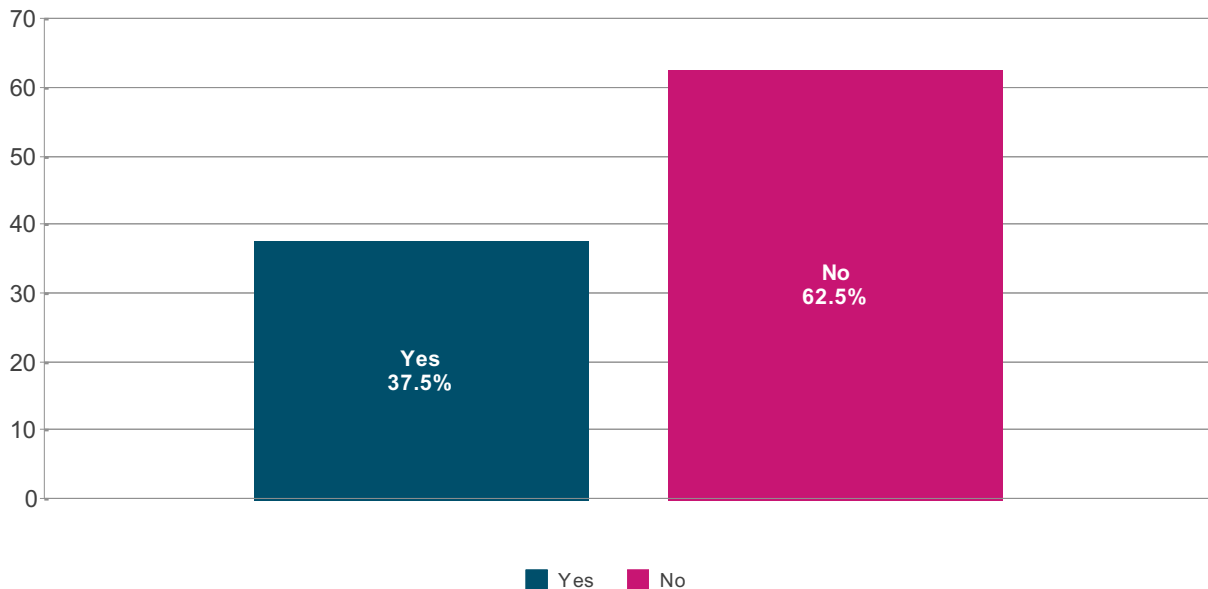
### Roughly how long have you been waiting since arriving at A&E? (58 responses)

This question does not reflect the total length of time before being seen and treated at A&E, as a good percentage of people were surveyed while in the main A&E waiting area. This graph is not necessarily reflective of total waiting times but does indicate how long people had been waiting at the time we spoke to them.



- 69% of people had been waiting for less than one hour, which largely reflects the time at which we spoke with them.
- The number of people waiting generally reduced as time elapsed, although 3 people had been waiting for more than four hours

### Are you being kept informed of timings or any delays at each stage? (56 responses)



This question is important in contributing to a view of the patient experience, i.e. to what extent they are kept informed as they wait. Slightly over 60% of the people who answered, told us ‘No’ they weren’t being kept informed.

If they answered ‘Yes’ to this question, we also asked how they were being informed of delays:

They told us:

- *I was told it is 1 hour to see the triage nurse*
- *The staff have triaged my mother and taken her through for observations.*
- *On the TV screen on the wall (8 people)*
- *Only info I've had on waiting times is from the TV screen - nothing directly.*
- *It says 3 hours on the screen*
- *I have been seen 3 times. Had blood tests done and need to wait for results which is least an hour.*
- *We have seen triage already and had bloods taken*
- *I have been told there is about a 6 hour wait*
- *Advice from reception about how minors is operating today*
- *Been triaged and waiting now*
- *The receptionist told me there was a wait of 45 minutes*

Some people said they had been informed by a member of staff. Most people said they were kept up to date from the information on the TV screen. We did note that due to the location of the screen not everyone in A&E was able to directly see the screen.

### **Do you know why you've been waiting this amount of time?**

Most people said they didn't know the reason they had been waiting. Thirteen people told us they had only been waiting a very short time, or had just arrived at A&E.

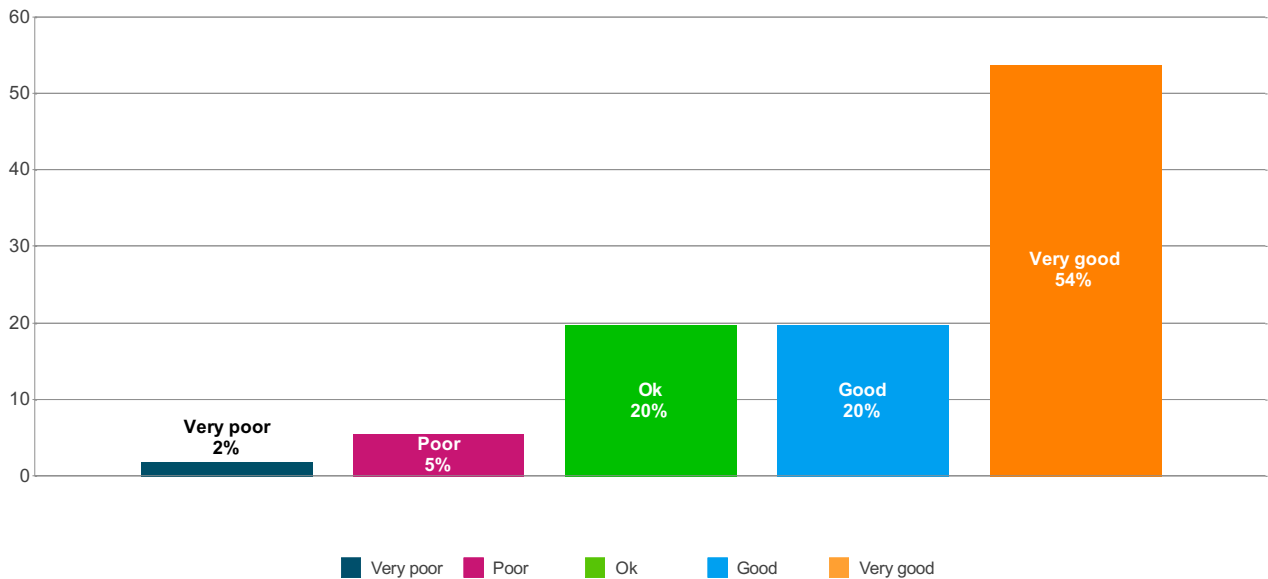
Eight people didn't know but thought the waiting times they had experienced were due to the fact it was a busy day in A&E.

Four people said they were waiting for the results of blood tests or x-rays

Other comments included:

- *No, I had to ask and they couldn't give me an answer and that was after 4 hours. My son suffers with PTSD.*
- *My mum was triaged at 8:45 last night and seen a doctor at 12:50 and was given painkillers. She was then moved into a waiting room and they didn't even come back to see if they had worked. A physio came to see her at 9am and said it was sciatica and gave her crutches, co-codamol and naproxen*
- *Told I would be seen straight away by my GP but he must be mistaken as I am being triaged with everyone else.*

## How would you rate the service you have received so far in A&E? (58 responses)



It is worth noting that for this question when surveyed people were at different stages in their A&E journey. Of the three people who had been waiting more than 5 hours, one rated the service up to that point as poor. A second person rated it as very poor, while the remaining person rated the service as very good! Just under 94% of respondents rated the service as 'Ok to Very Good' or 3 to 5 stars.

We asked people to tell us why they gave those ratings. They told us:

### 5 star ratings

- *We prefer Whiston Hospital to going to the Royal. It's much better*
- *The staff have been very polite and I've been kept up to date on what's happening to me. I can see the waiting times on the big TV screen*
- *The staff have been really helpful even though it is very busy.*
- *They have been really thorough with me.*
- *There are helpful people here.*
- *I didn't wait long for triage.*
- *Booking in was ok, not been here long yet.*
- *Always helpful.*
- *Great service.*
- *No problems at all.*
- *Reception were good*
- *I have been in a few times and receive good care and treatment and am looked after.*
- *Good so far but I have not long got here.*
- *Very professional*
- *Everyone has been great and I haven't had to wait.*
- *No problems so far.*
- *It has been quite quick*
- *No messing*
- *Its been fine*
- *I have just arrived - advice so far and staff really helpful*

- *No fuss it is simple and straight forward. Everyone is pleasant and the volunteers are really good - good service.*
- *All good so far, reception were good.*
- *I was seen in a reasonable time, the staff are fantastic, first class service cannot fault them at all.*
- *All as expected.*
- *Very helpful staff*
- *Very good*
- *The doctor was very good with me and informed me what was going on with my injuries. He had a good attitude.*

#### **4 star ratings**

- *So far all seems to be fine*
- *Been seen quickly so far*
- *I have only just arrived*
- *Up to now I have not had to wait long*
- *It could be better as you can be waiting a while*
- *Parking is a struggle*
- *Always room for improvement*
- *Ok but not given the wait times but I don't mind really.*
- *They are busy.kept*
- *Expect to be waiting around anyway.*
- *Service is good*

#### **3 star ratings**

- *Not knowing when I'm going to be seen, plus I have my young baby with me.*
- *It is busy and the waiting feels longer if you are not feeling well.*
- *Waits are long. I do not feel listened to. I feel like I am on a conveyer belt. I am in and out.*
- *Waiting when told I would go straight in by GP.*
- *The introduction when we came in - reception were a bit rude, took details and move you along. They also finished their conversation with their colleague first. The volunteer in the red top is really good.*
- *The triage nurse wasn't nice and her attitude wasn't great. Reception were ok.*
- *Waiting to be seen.*
- *Waiting times*
- *They are people but do some people have to actually be here.*
- *Can't really comment as only been here 10 mins.*
- *I've not been anywhere since I've seen the receptionist.*

#### **2 star ratings**

- *They have just sat me in the waiting room after getting out of the ambulance and I don't know why I am sitting here.*
- *The waiting time as my son was in agony*
- *Waiting times/ queues at reception*

#### **1 star rating**

- *Such a long wait and no reason given as to why*

## What could be improved about your experience in A&E?

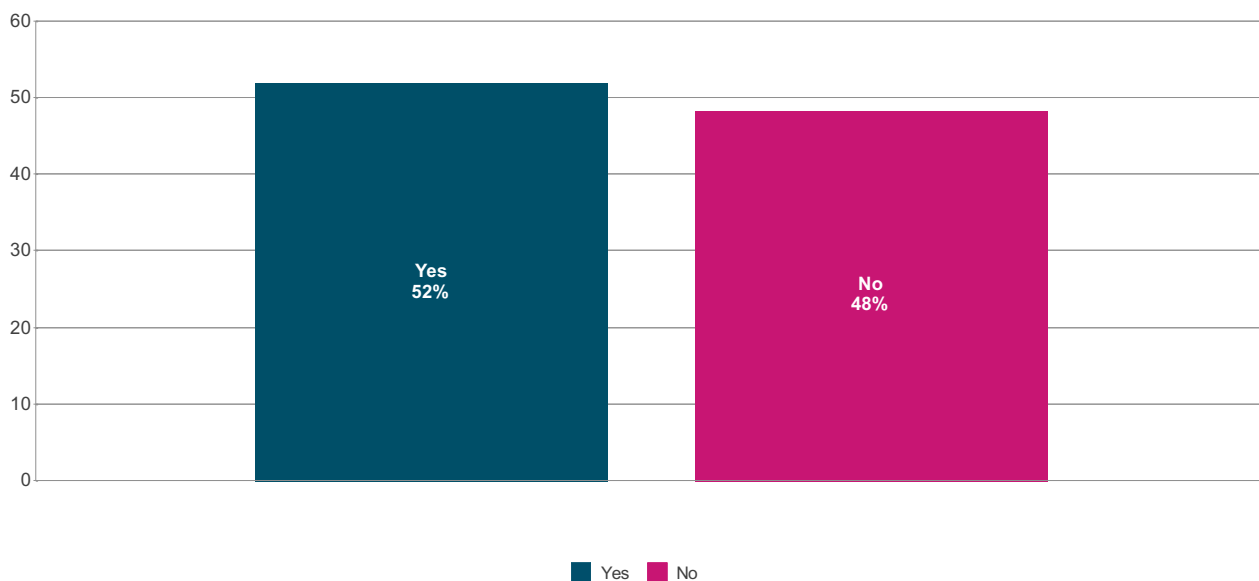
People were asked to think about anything they felt that could be improved about their experience at A&E.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering how busy A&E was during our visit, improvements in waiting times was highlighted as the most required improvement. Better communication was requested by many people too. This seemed to relate in particular to being kept informed about treatment times and any delays.

- Waiting times x 10
- Quicker triage x 2
- When I was sent to radiology I got lost and had to ask where it was. I hadn't realised about the colour coding. I still think signage could be improved.
- They could listen more and give pain killers. The nurse mentioned pain killers to me but did not give me and I am in a lot of pain.
- Split people into minor injuries and seen within half an hour. Also consider people who are full-time carers as I have had to get a babysitter.
- On a personal level because I'm partially deaf it is difficult to hear names being called out. However, staff do come looking for you if you haven't answered.
- Being kept informed about delays.
- I was told I could have painkillers. I've been waiting quite a while now for them
- I can see a lot of people waiting at reception. It seems to take a long time to book everyone in.
- The reception staff could tell if symptoms change or worsen to please come back
- We could be informed whether we are waiting to be seen or be triaged.
- Communication could be improved. I would like more information like why I was moved and how long will I be here for.
- Waiting areas could be better when you are in pain. I have been brought in on trolleys in the past by ambulance, when I have been really not well but they take you off and sit you on a chair to wait and it is not good when you are very ill.
- Waiting times. A&E layout is much better since they made the improvements.
- There is a sign saying if you have chest pains you should tell the triage nurse - where is the triage nurse? I said to the receptionist that I had back and chest pain and she made me specify one but I have both.
- I didn't know whether I could park in A&E so have parked in the multi story and had to walk over
- Communication - being informed, it felt like no one around.
- More staff
- More personalised and polite
- Parking x 4
- The car park. It is 1 in 1 out at the moment.
- They should give information on what to do if your symptoms worsen, whilst waiting in A and E, at the check in desk.
- Give them more money!
- Letting me know sooner about where to go next and what to do.
- Better seating. They're uncomfortable for a long wait

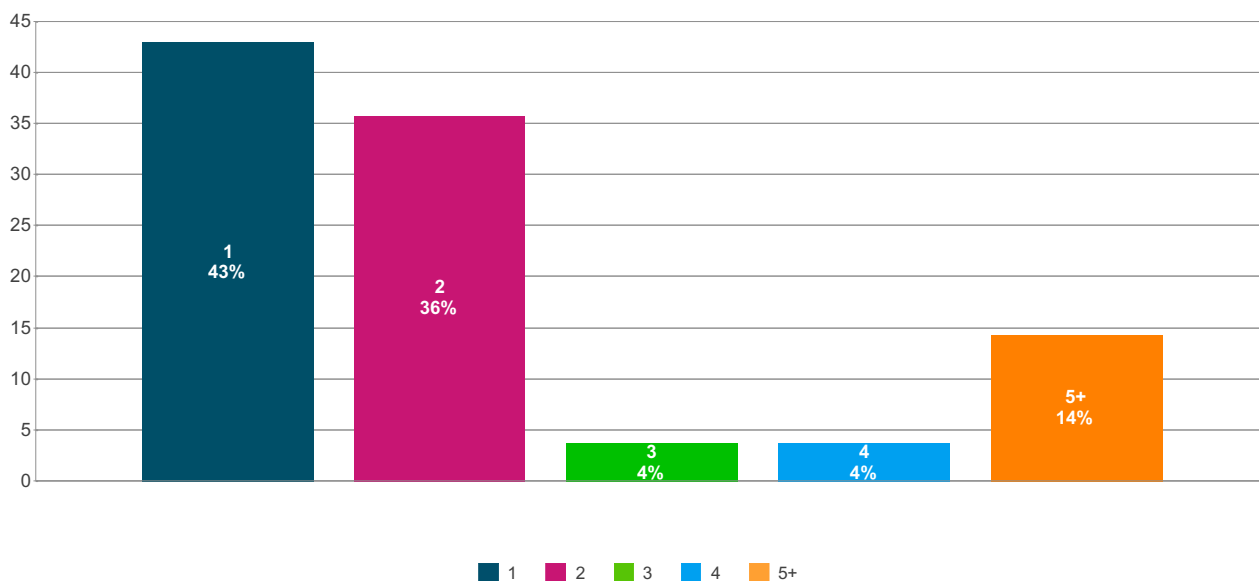
One patient mentioned having difficulty hearing names being called out as they were partially deaf. While we were in A&E we also noted that not everyone heard their names being called out, which caused some delays for treatment and also distress for some patients. This system didn't seem to help the flow of patients in a busy unit.

## Have you used A&E in the past 12 months before today?



Of those people who responded (56), it was a very close split for those who had been to A&E before and those who were paying their first visit in a year or more.

## Number of visits to A&E in the past 12 months



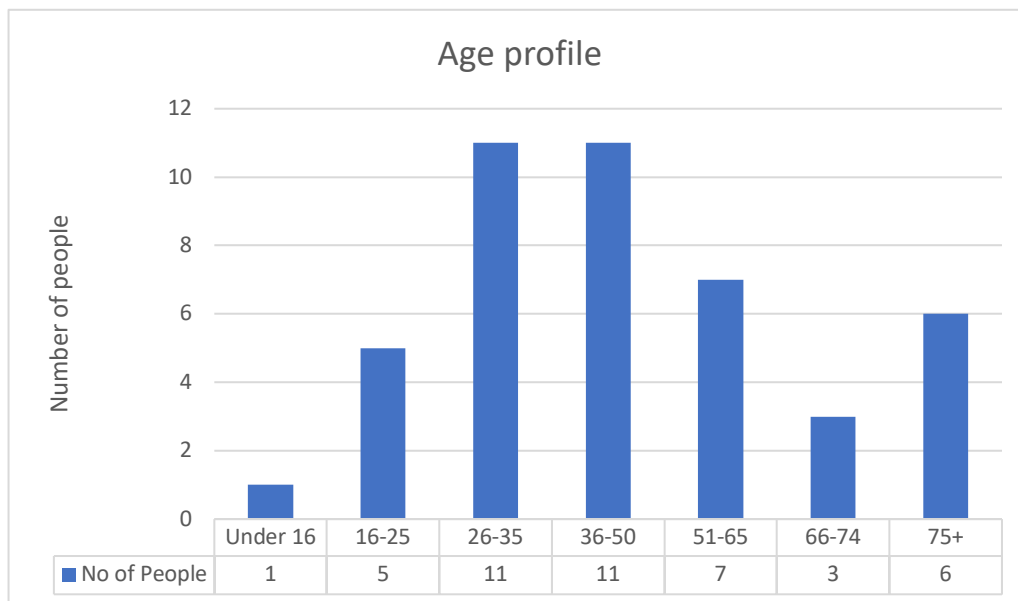
We also asked respondents to tell us how often they had visited in the previous 12 months.

- The most common was those who had visited A&E once before (43%)
- 57% of people had visited two or more times, with 14% having attended A&E at least 5 times.

## Demographic questions

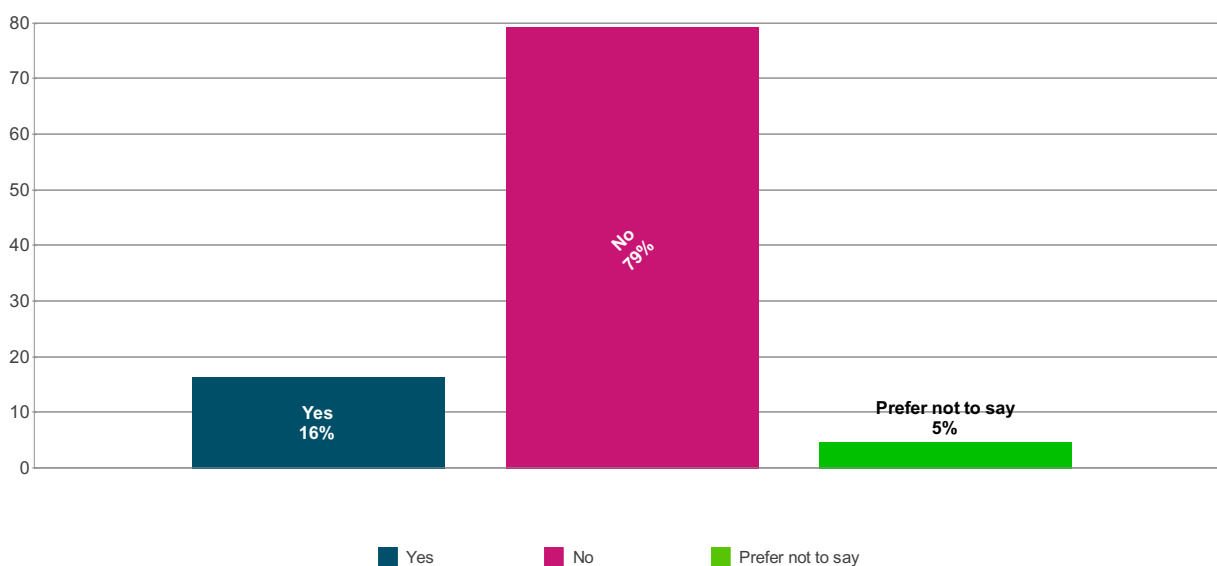
57% of respondents to our survey were Women and 43% Men.

We asked people their age. 44 people out of 58 provided this information.



The youngest person, who responded with permission from their parents, was 15 years old. The oldest person was 92 years old.

### Do you consider yourself to have a disability? (43 responses)



16% considered themselves to have a disability.

Just over 50% of people were in employment, either full-time, part-time or self employed. 24% said they were retired

53% told us they had a religion or belief

We also asked if people felt they were treated fairly and with the same dignity and respect as other people. All respondents replied 'Yes'

## Any other comments?

Finally for Part 1 of the survey, people were given the opportunity to make additional comments.

- *Over this weekend alone I have been at A&E / health professional x3. On each occasion my antibiotics have been changed.*
- *The service here is good, it's just the waiting time but that is everywhere*
- *I came the first week in January with my daughter who had collapsed on the train. The staff there rang myself and an ambulance and when I got there the ambulance had not turned up yet so I brought her to this A&E to have her checked out after collapsing. They presumed because she said she was a student that she would have an associated lifestyle and drink a lot. They insisted on doing a pregnancy test even though she is a lesbian. I mentioned to the doctor who seen her she had had really bad period pain and could that be the reason. Days after the A&E visit we received a letter from the GP surgery saying that she had wasted A&E time. This has made me anxious about coming today and wasting time. It puts you off. The seats here are not comfortable and when you have back pain it makes it worse. The car parking here is horrendous, there are not enough staff spaces (I work here) and couldn't find anywhere close to A&E. There should be a multi-storey at this end.*
- *It is one of the best. My husband had a stroke 2.5 years ago and they were excellent from start to finish, he made a full recovery. He would have been a lot worse if he had been left waiting. We came to Whiston as it is a bit closer than the Royal.*
- *Also any other minor injuries to be treated at the walk-in centre. I wouldn't be here if Huyton Walk-in did tetanus injections. There is also no X-Ray facility at Huyton either.*
- *I tried 111 2 weeks ago. Also went to GP and Walk-in. My knee is still painful so made the decision to come to A & E myself.*

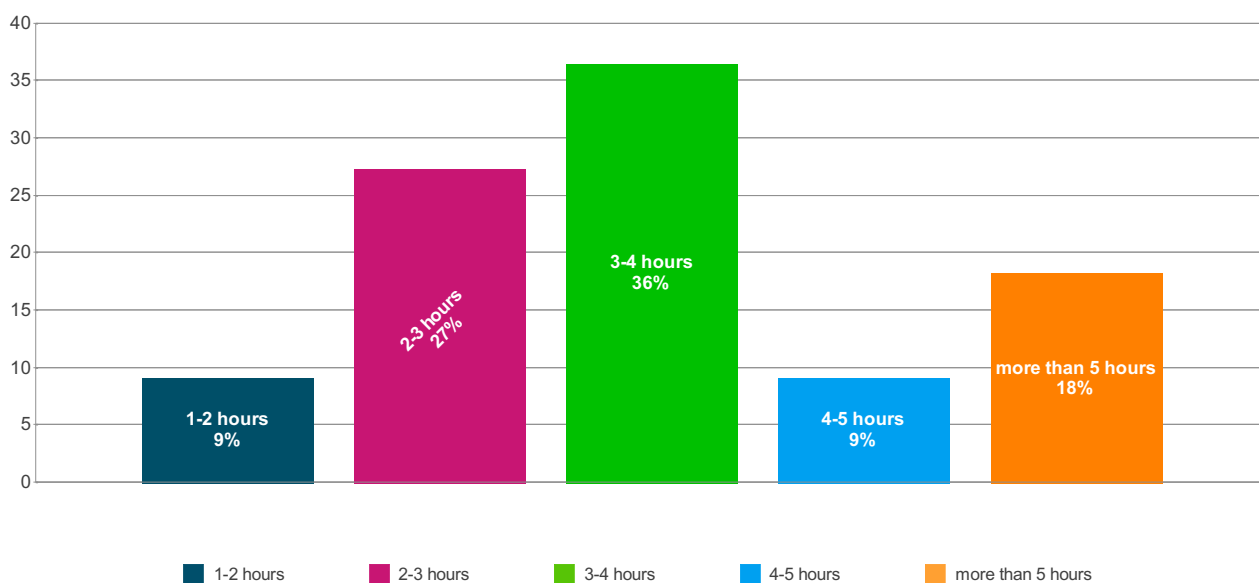


## Part 2 Survey results - After your A&E Visit

Everyone taking part in the first part of the survey was given a second part to be completed after they had been treated and discharged from A&E. There were 11 respondents to Part 2 of the survey, 'After your A&E visit'. This was a response rate of just under 20% of the 58 people who completed Part 1.

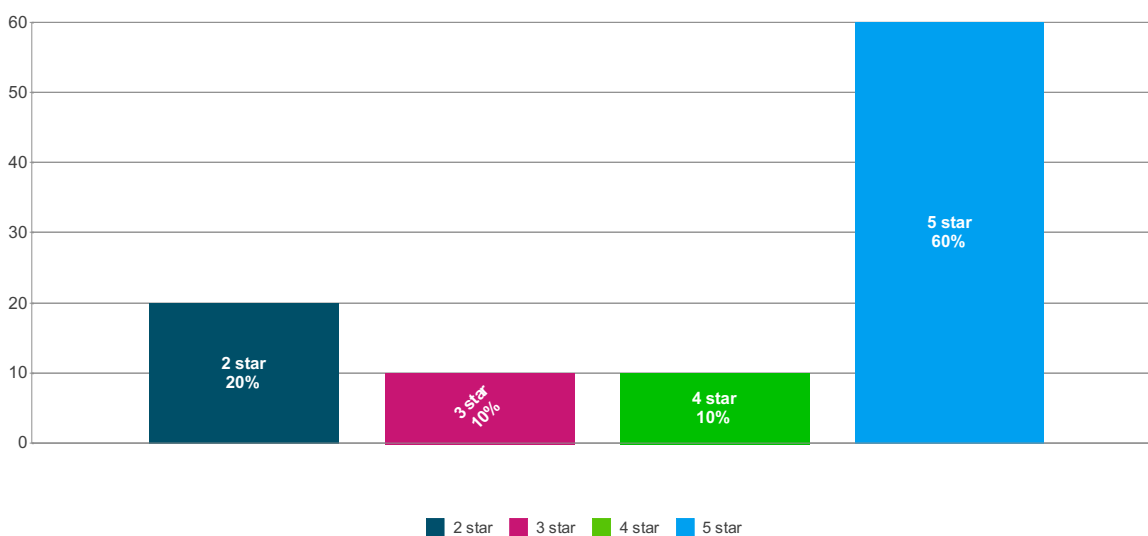
While not a large enough sample for any definite conclusions it does provide a 'snapshot' of the experiences of people using A&E on the day.

### How long has it taken from your arrival at A&E to being treated and discharged? (11 responses)



From the people responding we can see that eight people (72%) were treated and discharged in less than 4 hours. Three people told us they had waited for longer than 4 hours, with one person saying they had been 12 hours before being admitted to a ward.

### How would you rate your overall experience at A&E? (10 responses)



When looking at the responses to this question, we see very slightly lower satisfaction scores than those given by people in Part 1, with 80% giving a rating of at least three out of five.

We looked to see if there was a correlation between the time people spent in A&E and their satisfaction ratings. Those patients that waited longer than four hours gave lower satisfaction scores but for waits up to four hours patient satisfaction scores didn't seem to be affected.

### Do you have any comments you'd like to share about your experience at A&E? (9 responses)

#### What was good:

- The Registrar that treated me restored my faith back in the NHS service. He had a lovely bedside manner and very efficient. He ensured I was pain free and comfortable before I was told to go back to the waiting room, as they were short of rooms.
- Lovely, helpful staff / doctors / nurses.
- I was sent to another department rather than a ward, as I had a suspected blood clot.
- Very good - the staff. It would be better if not there so long.

#### What could be improved:

- The waiting and non-communication is not good. The staff are busy.
- I feel staff are reticent to use MRIs or other scans to diagnose patients' problems.
- Waiting times
- Waiting times and seeing if people are OK in between waiting times.
- Diagnosing/assessing people while they are sitting waiting to see how serious the injury is.

# Summary

## Why do people attend A&E?

Our survey found that the majority of people had tried to get help somewhere else before attending A&E, at 63% of people overall.

The most common reason people gave for attending without trying somewhere else was 'It was urgent / it was an emergency' (54%).

There was a perception from some of the people we talked with that they would end up in A&E anyway. Two people felt they would need x-rays and would have been sent to A&E anyway.

## How often do people attend A&E?

Of the people we surveyed, just over half (52%) had visited A&E in the previous 12 months. Of these people, 43% had visited once and 36 % had been twice. 14% had visited 5 or more times.

The majority of respondents were driven to A&E by a friend or family member or had driven themselves (62%).

50% of people who responded were aged between 26 and 50. The vast majority of people taking part in our survey were in the working age bracket, which may suggest that A&E was seen as a quicker way of accessing healthcare for that age group.

## Waiting times

During our time at A&E waiting times increased during the day, reaching a peak of over 6 hours by 4pm.

At one point the queues for the reception desk reached back to the entrance to A&E. We received some negative comments regarding the length of time taken to book in at busy times.

Over 60% told us they hadn't been kept informed of timings and delays by staff.

Of those who said they'd been kept informed on timings and delays, most told us they'd just checked the A&E waiting times which were displayed on the information screen in A&E.

## Patient Experience

On the day we visited, 94% of the people we spoke for part 1 of our survey, with rated their experience as being at least 3 out of 5. 54% rated their experience as excellent (5 out of 5). Positive comments focussed on the staff and their attitudes and efforts even though A&E was busy.

Overall, people's experiences at A&E were positive. Drops in ratings were almost all due to long waits and lack of communication.

Long waiting times may be more difficult to improve on as the recent pressures on A&E continue. We do feel that communication to the patient about delays and timings could be improved on. Most of the people we've talked with at A&E and on our previous visits to the hospital, tell us they'd be more understanding of long waiting times if they were kept more informed on the reasons for them.

## **Acknowledgements**

Healthwatch Halton, Healthwatch Knowsley and Healthwatch St Helens would like to thank the staff and patients at A&E for their time and consideration during our visit. We'd also like to thank our volunteers who gave their valuable time to help us on the day.

## **Provider response**

To be added at future date