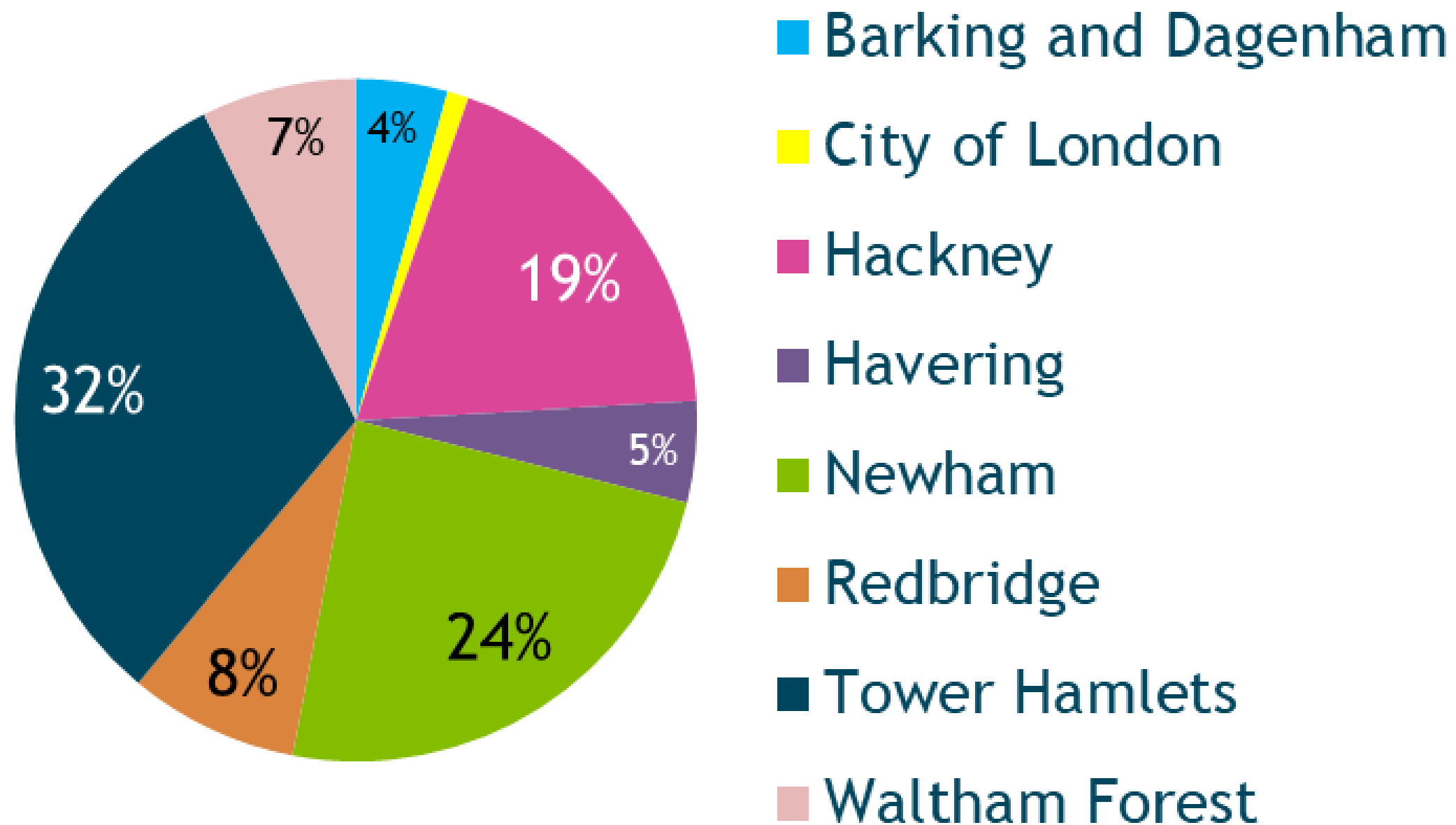


GP surgeries in North East London

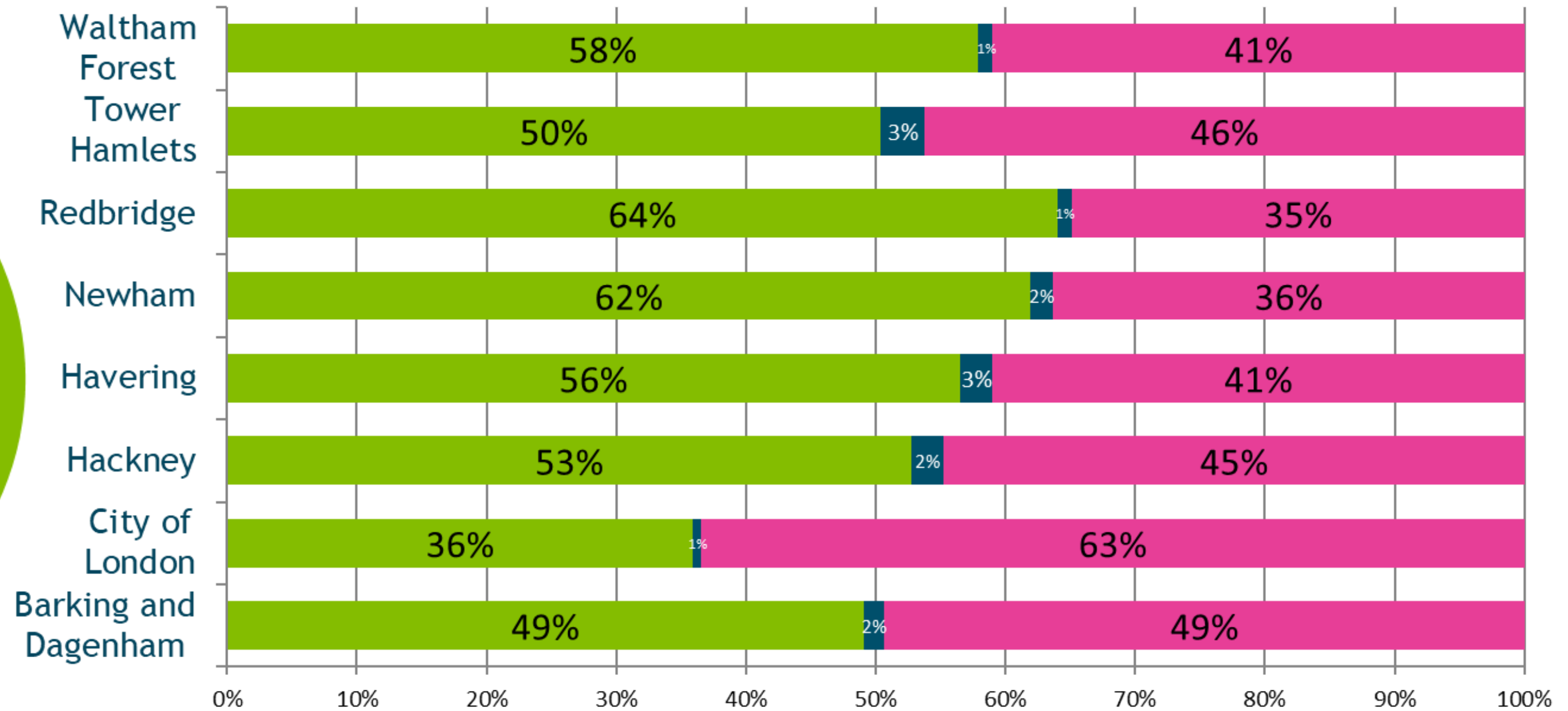
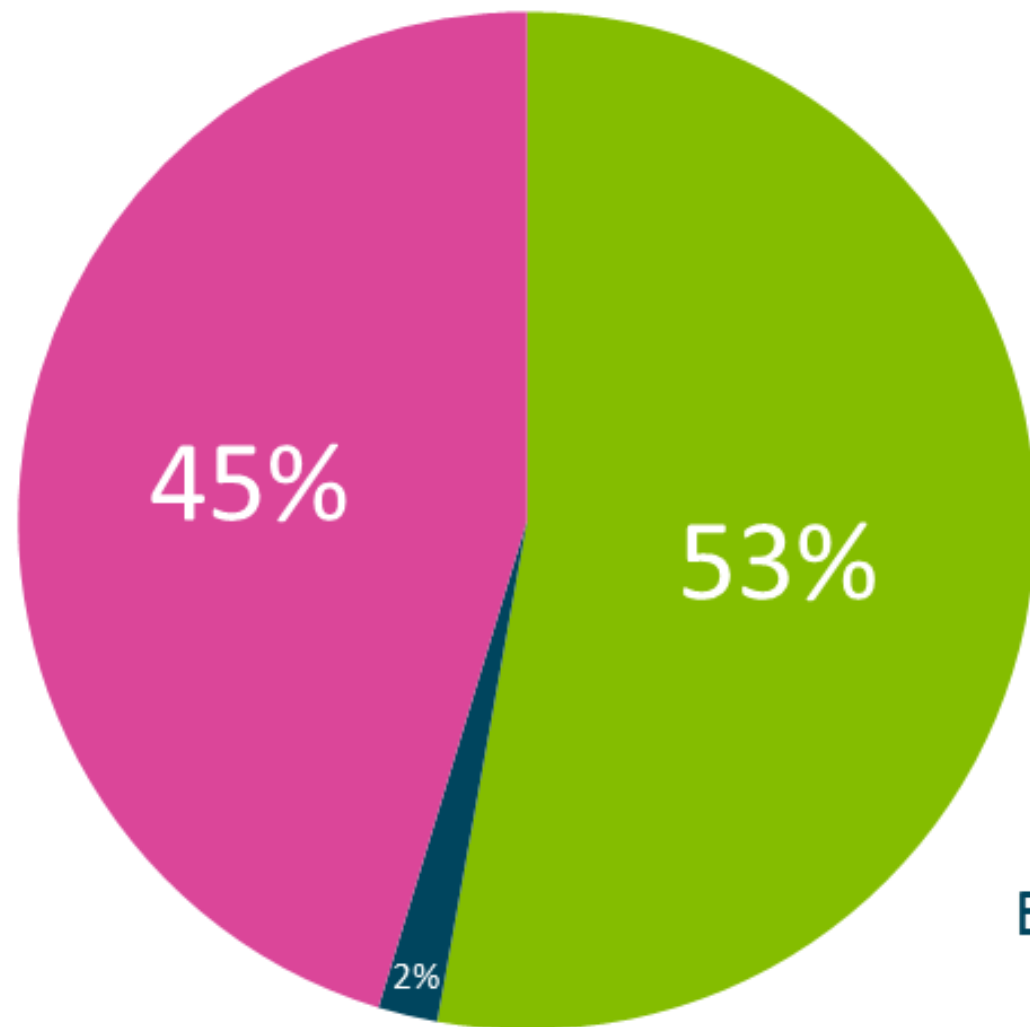
March 2020–October 2021



We have analysed 6,049 comments received by eight local Healthwatch between March 2020 and November 2021, identifying 28,302 issues.



How do people feel about GPs, overall?



■ positive ■ neutral ■ negative

How did opinion of GPs change over time?

Beginning of the pandemic, first lockdown. Solidarity with NHS staff in public opinion/ media. GP practices adapt quickly to new changes, while providing information and support in uncertain times.

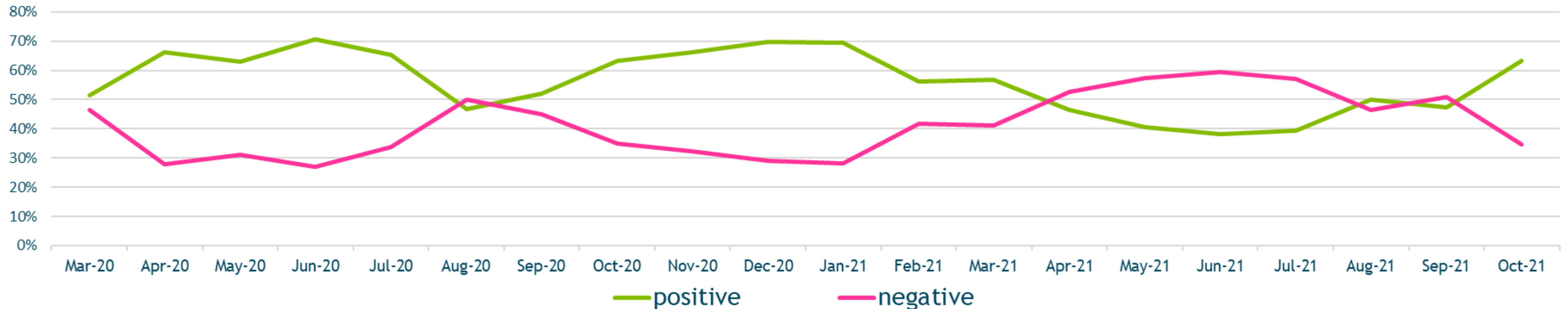
End of first lockdown, restrictions are eased. GPs have implemented new booking systems that work well for many patients, but not everyone. Those who could not get routine care in lockdown are now backlogged.

Second lockdown, vaccine rollout begins. GP practices continue to respond to the new conditions and to provide support to communities, adapting to operating under lockdown,

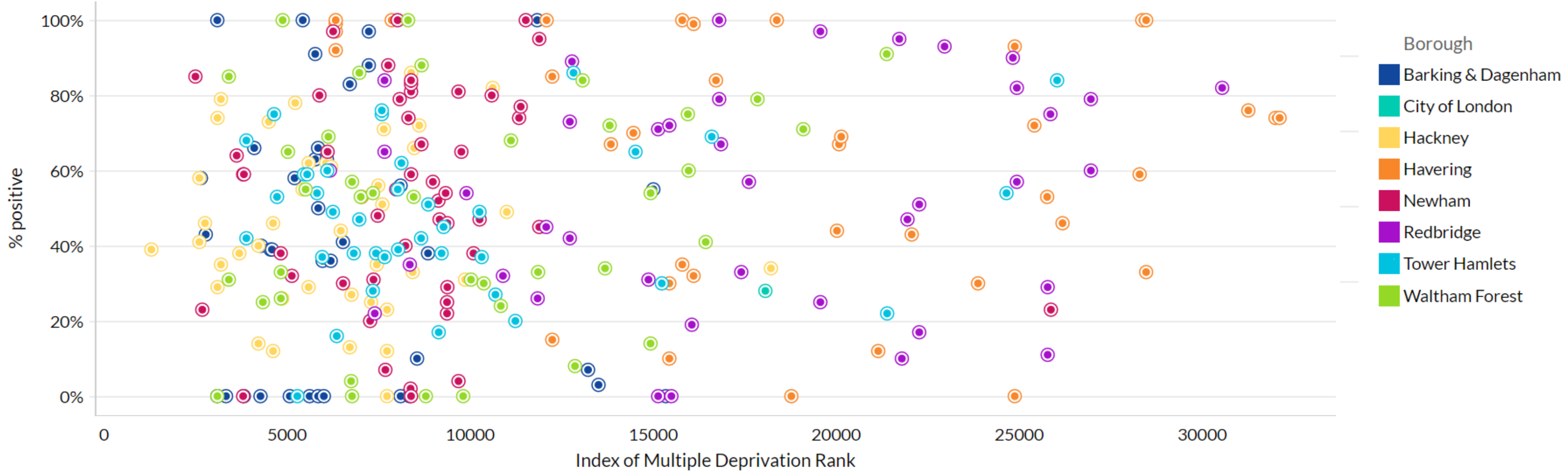
Lockdown restrictions are lifted again; backlog of patients who were unable to get routine care during lockdown keeps increasing. Public opinion/ media discourse divided on telemedicine.

GP practices respond to the challenges they have experienced, implementing quality improvement measures.

Are things getting better again and, if so, is it sustainable?



While overall patients in Redbrige and Newham gave more positive feedback, there is no clear association between a surgery's location and the feedback it receives.



more deprived

less deprived

What works well and what needs improvement?

Positive feedback

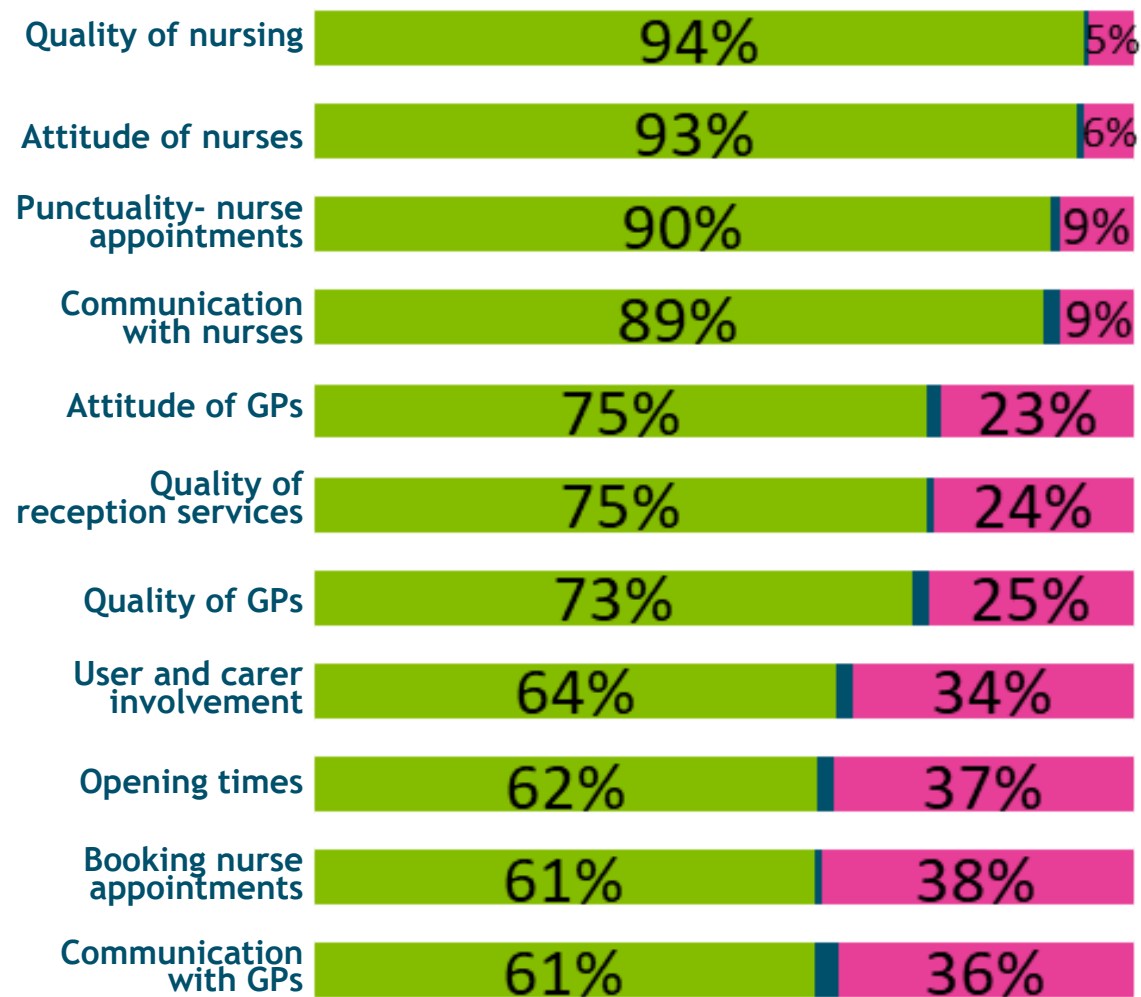
- Nurses are praised for the quality of service they offer, their pleasant attitude and punctuality.
- Nurses appointments are easy to book.
- GPs are trusted; they are seen as professional, knowledgeable and kind; they communicate well with patients.
- The quality of reception services is good and opening times are convenient.
- Patients feel involved in their own care.

Negative feedback

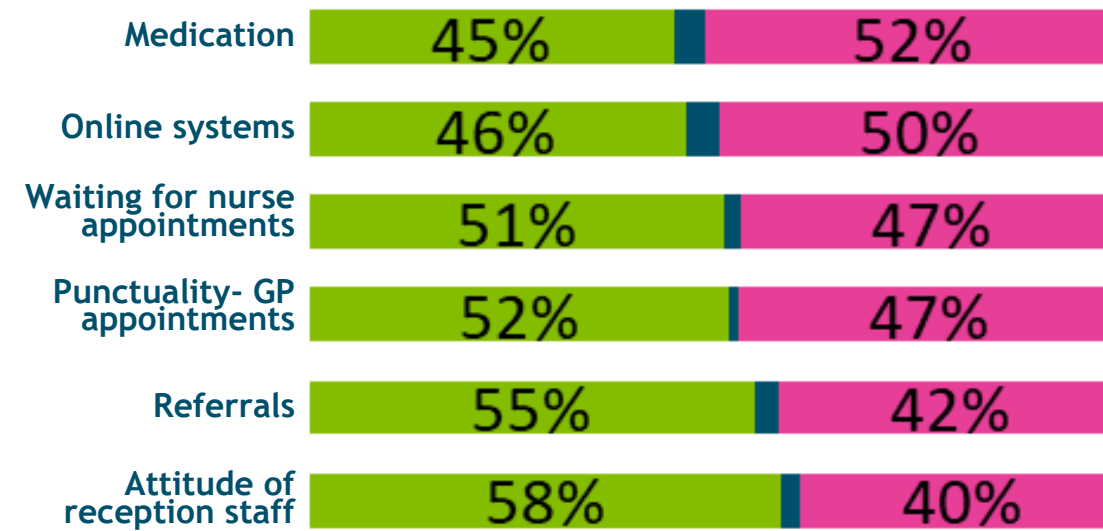
- It is difficult to contact practices by phone, with lines always busy.
- Booking GP appointments is difficult and waiting lists are unreasonable.
- Patients feel they have little choice in how and where they receive care.
- Communication with reception staff is poor. Admin errors make it difficult for patients to access care.
- It is difficult for new patients to register with a GP.

What works well and what needs improvement?

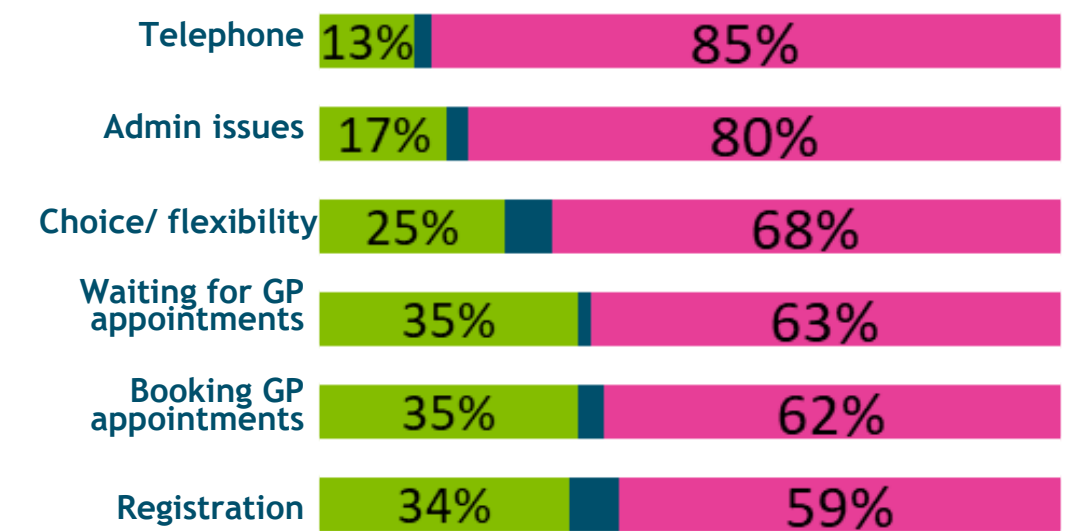
Positive feedback



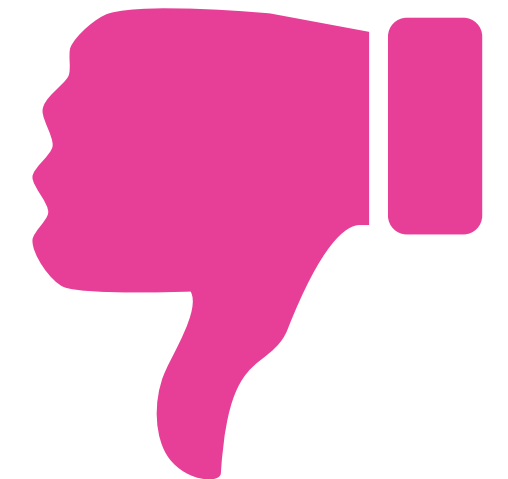
Mixed feedback



Negative feedback



■ positive ■ neutral ■ negative



How do different groups have different experiences?

Most satisfied



Patients seeking routine vaccinations
80% positive, 17% negative



Patients with diabetes
57% positive, 39% negative



Children and young people aged under 25, including parents accessing GP services for their children
52% positive, 46% negative

■ positive ■ neutral ■ negative

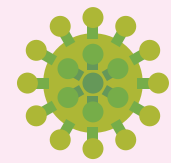
Least satisfied



Patients with digestive issues
15% positive, 84% negative



Patients with respiratory issues
37% positive, 61% negative



Patients with Covid
38% positive, 58% negative



Patients with neurological issues
38% positive, 57% negative



Maternity patients
42% positive, 54% negative



Patients with mental health issues
42% positive, 52% negative



Patients with impaired hearing
14% positive, 82% negative



Autistic patients
28% positive, 67% negative



Patients with mobility issues, musculoskeletal problems, chronic pain
39% positive, 56% negative



Patients with impaired sight
42% positive, 56% negative




Patients with learning disabilities
43% positive, 54% negative



Ethnic minorities
39% positive, 53% negative

How do different groups have different experiences?


These two quotes are fictional, but are based on the aggregated experience of patients we have heard from.

A simple green stick figure with a white smile, representing a patient with Type 1 diabetes.

I have been diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes a few years ago. It's well managed, but I need insulin for life. I also have a child aged 6.

During lockdown, I was able to keep in touch with doctors and nurses in my surgery via telephone and online forms about my health and my child's health; when I needed to self-isolate they sent my prescription to a pharmacy that can deliver at home.

They also contacted me about my child's jabs promptly, by text.

A simple pink stick figure with a white smile, representing a Deaf sign language user.

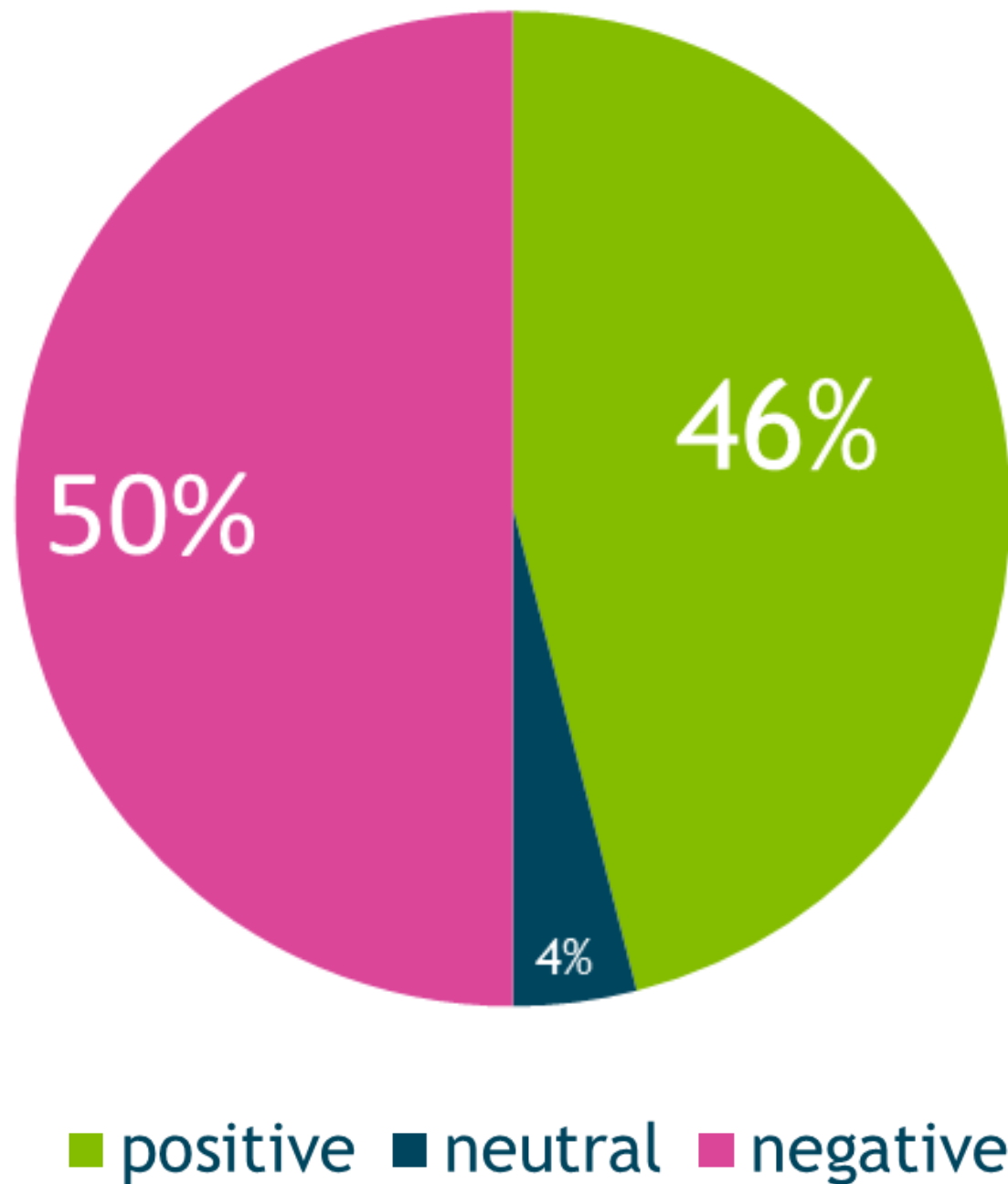
I am a Deaf sign language user. I struggle with written English. I also don't have internet at home- I'm on a low income and can't afford it.

I have been having severe stomach pain for the past few months- I don't know where it's coming from and I'm very worried, but I can't see a GP.

I can't make appointments anymore- I would have to wait for a doctor to call and triage me- who would interpret for me? I can't even arrange an interpreter because I don't know when they would call me back!

Focus on online services

Overall opinion of online services



Most satisfied

- People of White non-British ethnicities
- People aged 50 to 64
- Women

Least satisfied

- People of Black and Asian ethnicities
- Children and their parents
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mental health issues



Focus on online services

Feedback from people satisfied with online GP access

Online consultations work well 80 mentions

E-consult works well 62 mentions

Booking online works well 53 mentions

Faster than being seen in person 50 mentions

Convenient to access test results, medical records, routine services. 39 mentions

Appropriate support to start using online services 32 mentions

User-friendly- apps work well 22 mentions

Safer during Covid 7 mentions

Prefer to avoid travelling to the surgery 6 mentions

Good communication with the practice by email 5 mentions

As good as being seen in person; should be used in the long run regardless of pandemic. 5 mentions

I have been with this practice for over ten years and have seen the changes it went through- online consultations are the best invention!

In the beginning I found it hard to do online consult, but now it's very easy and time-saving.

Using e-consult rather than phoning the surgery for appointments suits me much better.

There is a bit of a wait on the phone, bit you can book appointments almost instantly using the patient access app.

Dr IQ is amazing! Before I didn't like it, but the lovely gentleman who did my flu vaccine helped me with it.

Feedback from people dissatisfied with online GP access

Booking online isn't available or functional 96 mentions

Waiting too long for e-consult reply/for online consult 88 mentions

User-unfriendly system/ website 60 mentions

E-consult doesn't work/ is difficult to use 54 mentions

Digitally excluded/ would prefer in person. 36 mentions

Poor communication w. reception about online access 34 mentions

Accessibility issues 14 mentions

Technical issues 13 mentions

Quality of online consult is poor 12 mentions

I received an online appointment when I needed to be seen in person 10 mentions

Concerns about privacy 6 mentions

More services should be available online 6 mentions

It takes four days for a doctor to call back following e-consult and if you happen to miss the call they refuse to call back the same day.

My baby had a high temperature. The surgery is no longer allowing appointments for face to face consultations, I needed to use e-consult. After answering 30 questions and getting nowhere, we went to A&E.

They encourage the use of the app to book appointments, but there are no appointments actually available online. and getting help over the phone is very hard.

I tried using the e-consult service but no-one gets back to me.

I have a lump on my back, but they're not seeing patients! They expect me to just send a picture of it.


Sometimes you can book appointments by email, sometimes they tell you it can't be done. There is no consistency.

Focus on online services

These quotes are fictional, but are based on the aggregated experience of patients we have heard from.

WHEN THINGS WORK WELL

WHEN THINGS DON'T WORK WELL



I am entirely comfortable using online GP services and would like to do as many things online as possible.

I am able to book routine GP and nurse appointments online rather than having to wait on the phone queue; when I need to be seen urgently I use e-consult and get a reply promptly, either by telephone or video call. I can also use automated forms to order repeat prescriptions, view my test results and medical records.

My mobility is impaired; it's easier for me to not travel to the surgery, and during the Covid-19 pandemic I feel safer. I believe we should keep doing this after the pandemic ends.

Booking online appointments is no longer available. When I try to use the e-consult form, I answer 30 questions, only to be unable to send it: instead, I am told to call the surgery. The phone queue is very long and frustrating. If I manage to send the e-consult form, I wait multiple days for the doctor to get back to me by telephone. I don't have the option of an online consultation instead, so I can't show anything visual to my doctor without physically coming in.

The website is often down and there are technical issues.



I don't know that much about online GP services. I have some reservations, but with the right advice I could use at least some.

Reception staff helped me set up my online account, and showed me how to use online services, so I am more confident. The applications are simple, straightforward and user-friendly. As a result, I started using online access regularly and I am happy with it.

I have a sensory disability, but the website is optimised for accessibility software and I have support from surgery staff, so I am able to use it.

I don't understand how to register for online access and no one tells me anything. I tried doing it once, but it required some paperwork that I was never able to communicate with reception about- they don't have time for me.

The appointments are very confusing and there are no tutorials explaining what to do. I have a sensory disability, and there is no support for people like me to access them.



I never use the Internet at all. I need to be able to access all the GP services I need without going online.

Because a lot of other people use online services, the telephone lines are less busy than in other surgeries. I can book appointments, request repeat prescriptions or receive my test results over the telephone or in person.

I can't book an appointment over the phone- they keep telling me to use the e-consult form. Because I don't have internet and can't do that, I started calling 111 or going to A&E when what I really need is a GP appointment.

Even when I clearly need to be seen in person and physically examined, I'm still only given online appointments.

Focus on online services

Feedback from people satisfied with online GP access

I used an e-consult form. Very efficient - completed the e-consult form and had a call back within two hours. Had to provide a sample to the practice and had initial results within another two hours. Would be happy with this service in normal life as well!

(Tower Hamlets patient)

Made an online booking and received a call from the GP, who then set up an online consultation through a text message. Everything happened very quickly and I am very pleased with it.

(Hackney patient)

While it's overall harder than before to access my GP, I have noticed some improvements- booking blood tests online for example.

(Havering patient)

Feedback from people dissatisfied with online GP access

The e-consult facility is often a waste of time. I have completed endless e-consults and half the time I get nowhere because they ask me to ring the surgery instead. When I ring the surgery they ask me to complete an e-consult. Many times I have gone round and round in circles getting nowhere.

(Redbridge patient)

Had my annual diabetic review virtually, it is impossible to do feet checks that way.

(Tower Hamlets patient)

E-consult is very difficult to complete with a visual impairment. Telephone lines are extremely busy.

(Tower Hamlets patient)

I have had to contact the surgery six times in last two months for my 8 year old son .. they can't offer a face to face appointment which I find so strange! I have been told this is how the surgery will continue to be.

(Tower Hamlets patient)

Focus on booking and waiting times

Nurse appointments are more accessible than GP appointments

BOOKING PROCESS



WAITING TIMES



When booking works well:

It was time for my B12 injection which I get every 3 months. I called the GP to see if I could book an appointment as I start to feel very tired and exhausted without the injection. I had a telephone appointment with a doctor and, after I explained the situation to the GP, they gave me an in-person appointment with a nurse at my GP for the B12 injection. It was an easy process to book the appointment as they were understanding of my situation.

(Tower Hamlets patient)

When booking doesn't work well:

To get any kind of appointment is near impossible . They send you texts to make appt then there no appointments available .

(Newham patient)

Phones are never answered when you call for an appointment. I went in and was told there were no appointments available for a month.

(Newham patient)