



A&E

Listening Event

Whiston Hospital

13 December 2023

healthwatch
Halton

healthwatch
Knowsley

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Introduction

What is Healthwatch

Healthwatch is your champion for health and social care services.

Wherever you live in England, you'll have a local Healthwatch nearby (there are over 150 across the country). Healthwatch is here to listen to the issues that really matter to local communities and to hear about your experiences of using health and social care services. We're entirely independent and impartial, and any information you share with us is confidential.

What is a Healthwatch A&E Listening Event?

A&E Listening Events are designed to gain a snapshot view of the Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments at our local hospitals.

Healthwatch Halton & Healthwatch Knowsley undertake Listening Events periodically to gain the experiences of patients, to understand why they attended, and how they thought services could be improved. The purpose of these visits is to explore any themes emerging from comments made and feed these back to the hospitals, and service commissioners, to help improve services in the future.

A&E Listening Event – Whiston Hospital A&E Department, 13 December 2023

This visit was arranged in advance and took place primarily to understand the reasons why people were attending, specifically whether they had attempted to access any other services prior to going to A&E.

Listening Events allows Healthwatch to gather the experiences of individuals, which provides additional rich and detailed information, enhancing the statistics regarding A&E attendance.

When was the Listening Event?

The visit took place to Whiston Hospital A&E department on Wednesday 13 December between 9.00am and 3.00pm.

Our Approach

Building on the established relationships both Healthwatch Halton and Healthwatch Knowsley have with Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, we made contact with the Trust's Deputy Director of Governance to help arrange the visit.

Four members from the Healthwatch Halton and Healthwatch Knowsley teams took part in the visit, held conversations and completed surveys with people whilst they were waiting to be seen.

Throughout the visit, we were made to feel welcome by Trust Staff and Managers.

Who will this report be shared with?

This report has been produced based on the responses from the 44 people who completed our survey.

A copy of the final report will be published on the websites of Healthwatch Halton and Healthwatch Knowsley, and will be sent to the Trust, Healthwatch England, CQC and various stakeholders covering Halton, Knowsley and St Helens.

Summary of findings

The findings are based on analysis of the results of **44 survey responses** Healthwatch gathered during our time at the Whiston Hospital A&E.

Why people attended A&E rather than other services

- **38 people, (86%), had looked for help elsewhere before attending A&E.** Most had spoken to their GP practice or NHS 111.
- Of these 38 people, **12 had spoken to someone for advice or treatment on the same day as attending A&E and eight the day before.** Other respondents had spoken to someone two to seven days previously and some had tried to access numerous services before attending.
- **24 people** who sought help or advice prior to attending A&E **had then been advised to attend A&E.** Seven people said an ambulance had been sent to bring them to A&E. One person said they had been brought to A&E by a paramedic.
- Half of the people who were told to attend A&E weren't sure or didn't know if they would be expecting them.
- Of the six people who chose not to seek help elsewhere before attending A&E, **three felt it was too urgent to go elsewhere** and two had been previously advised to come to A&E by another medical professional. One person suspected they needed a scan / xray.
- 22 people had been brought to A&E by a friend or relative, nine drove themselves to A&E. Seven arrived by ambulance, with one person being brought by a paramedic. Three people arrived by taxi, one via public transport and one person walked to A&E.

People's experiences of attending A&E

- The **care** provided by **staff was highlighted as the main positive experience.**
- Of those who arrived by ambulance, one person waited between one and two hours for it to arrive, while three people had a wait of more than four hours. **Everyone (100%) rated the care they received from the ambulance service as 'excellent'.**
- **Three quarters of all respondents (33) waiting at A&E said they had not been kept regularly informed** about waiting times or delays with their treatment and care.
- **30 people (68%) said they had been treated with dignity and respect all the time at A&E** and 35 (80%) felt their privacy had been maintained as much as possible.
- **Half of all respondents (50%) thought the service they received in A&E was good or excellent.** Just under one in three (30%) rated their experience as being poor or very poor.
- **Negative themes** included **long waiting times** and **lack of communication.**
- **23 people (52%) had been to A&E more than once in the previous 12 months.** 12 people had been to A&E once or twice and seven (31%) had been four times or more.
- Age demographics varied with 41% of people being aged between 25 and 49, 19% being aged between 50 and 79. 12% of people were over 80 and 10% aged between 16 and 24.
- **19% of people considered themselves to be a carer** and 62% said they had a disability or long-term health condition.

Observations

During our visit our team made the following observations:

A&E was extremely busy throughout our visit.

We noted that one hand gel dispenser in the main entrance was empty.

One lady was very pleased that a Doctor had taken time to come out to the waiting room to tell her that her brain scan was all clear. This eased her worry as she waited for her next examination.

The waiting time shown on the display screen said eight to nine hours wait, but some people told us they had been waiting longer than this. A printed sign displayed at reception stated waiting times as 12 to 13 hours and was dated 12 December, the previous day.

There was no direct communication to patients around how long the wait was for triage. One gentleman asked us if we could ask reception how long it would be for his friend to be triaged as this had not been communicated to them.

Several people told us they didn't know what they were waiting for. They had been seen and sometimes had a test of some kind but didn't know what their current wait was for or how long to expect to wait.

A lady commented around a lack of privacy, her daughter was vomiting and was having to go into the toilet as she felt uncomfortable in the waiting area.

A lady on a trolley was concerned about not wearing a mask as she waited to go to a ward. She was near to the toilet and several people went past her with sick bowls looking very unwell.

There seemed to only be one toilet available for the A and E area.

People on the trolleys didn't appear to have a way of calling for help if they needed to use the toilet or anything else, apart from calling, but sometimes staff didn't go by very often.

Another lady mentioned to us that there were no sandwiches in the vending machine, there only seemed to be crisps, chocolate etc.

All staff we encountered during our visit were polite. They all wore name badges. We observed them being helpful, courteous, and caring to patients, friends and family.

Recommendations

We are aware that there are increasing pressures on all hospitals and A&E departments due to staffing levels and increasing demand.

- 1.** Results from our survey show that patients really appreciate the care and dedication of the staff who work in often difficult circumstances. We ask that the Trust continue to do all it can to support staffing levels and staff wellbeing.
- 2.** A&E patients should be given regular updates, where possible, about how long they might have to wait to be seen. Feedback from our survey shows that a lack of information about waiting times is a source of frustration and anxiety for patients.
- 3.** We ask that the Hospital Trust and service commissioners show how patient feedback has been used to help make decisions about planning and improving service, possibly in the form of regular 'You said, we did' updates.

Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust response

Thank you for providing us with the outcome of the listening event that took place in December. The positive feedback has been shared with the staff through the daily huddles. In terms of regularly updating patients on the waiting times, the Department has a patient announcement system in the waiting room designed to update patients each hour, however there have been a number of technical issues which are being addressed with the company. The importance of regularly updating patients will be highlighted in the daily nursing huddle and the importance of informing patients of the triage wait time will be fed back to reception staff as this is not able to be uploaded to the patient announcement system. The 'You said, We did posters' are displayed on the patient information board in the waiting room, however, the team will review the position of the board to ensure it is more visible to patients, as well as displaying this in the SDEC area.

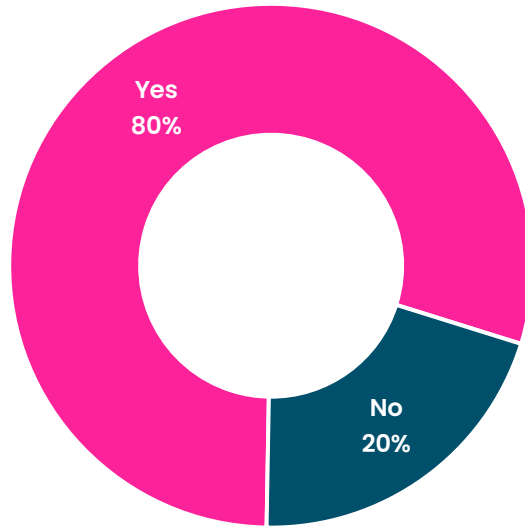
The senior team continue to review staffing levels and are proactive in offering support to staff working in this challenging area, through the Trust's Health, Work and Wellbeing Service, with specific wellbeing events held within the department and regular matron surgeries for staff to attend.

Anne Rosbotham-Williams

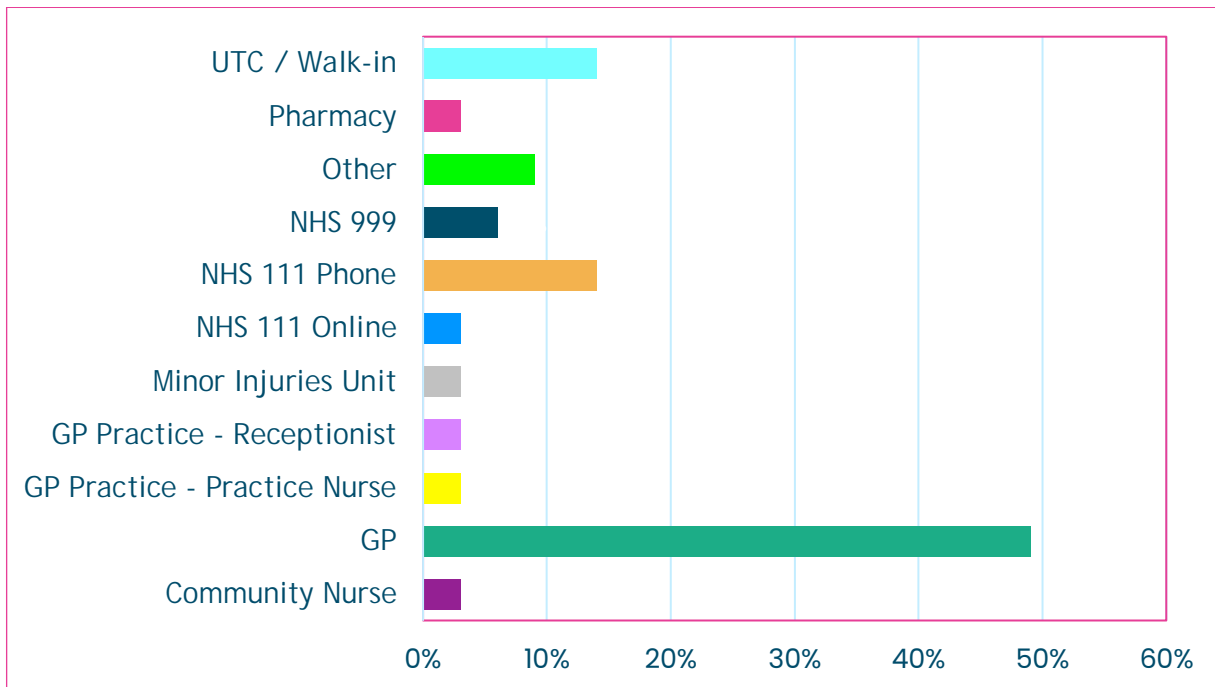
Deputy Director of Governance - Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

Survey Results

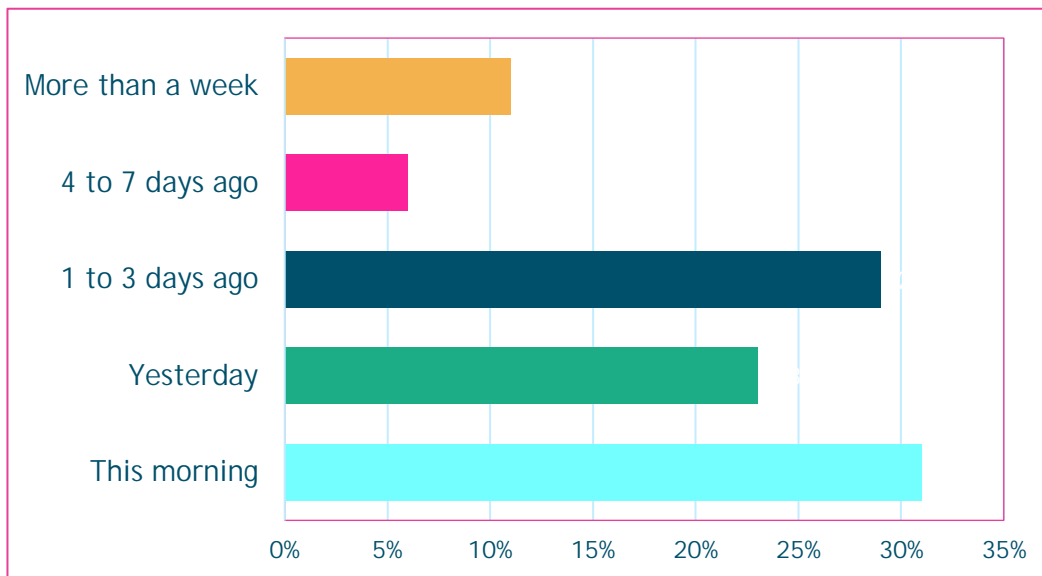
1. Before coming to A&E today, did you try speaking to anyone else, or try to go somewhere else for advice or treatment?



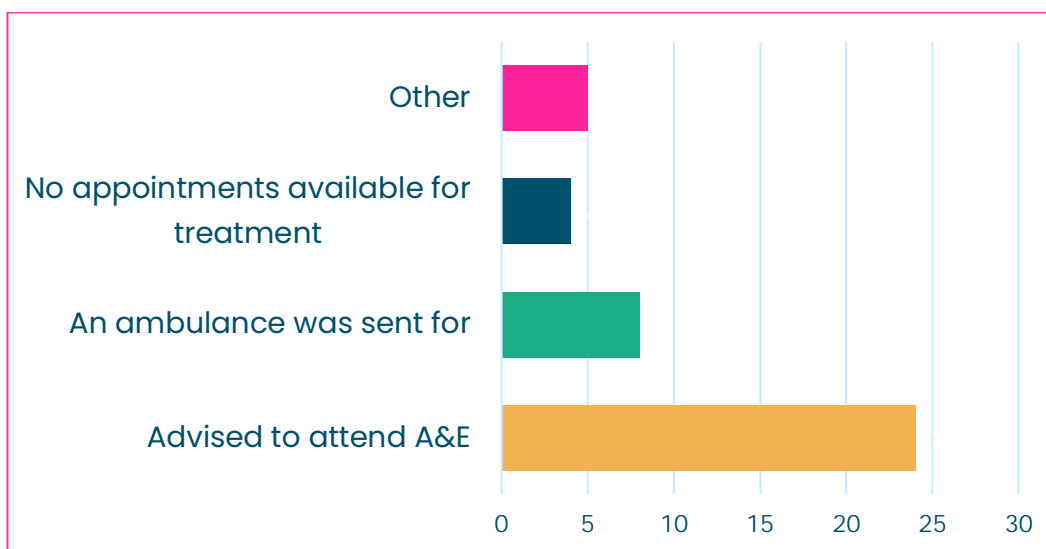
2. If yes, who/where? (Please tick all that apply)



3. When did you try speaking to anyone else, or try to go somewhere else for advice?



4. What was the outcome?

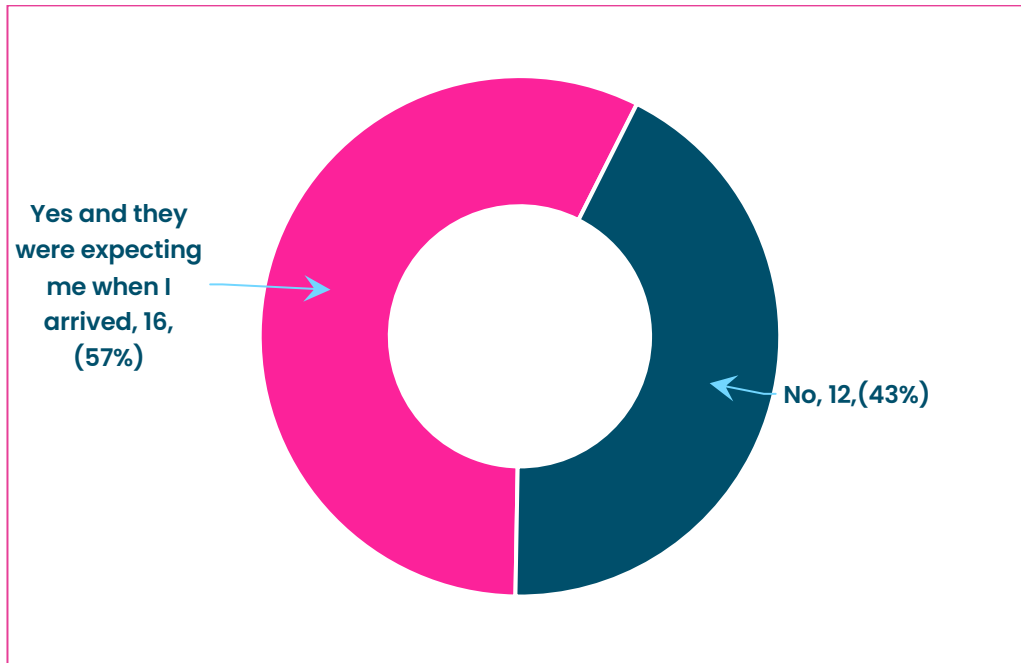


Comments

- *The Police said I had to come after a violent assault.*
- *I called my carers in.*
- *I was sent to hospital as my obs were bad at home. I was also at A&E last night.*

- *I was in a car accident, so the traffic officers suggested I come to A&E.*
- *I tried 999, my pharmacy and GP.*
- *NHS 111 sent me to A and E for assessment and an ECG*
- *They were going to dispatch an ambulance, but there was a 2.5 hour wait so it was quicker to come by car.*
- *I was told to drive while on to 999. I came into hospital still on the phone to them. Ambulance wait was 12 hours with chest pains.*
- *I knew I needed to come to A and E.*
- *I was told go to A and E to follow up, may need an MRI scan.*
- *No answer at GP. NHS 111 advised an ambulance, but I walked because I live near.*
- *The nurse was going to make me an appointment for a scan, but I had pain in the night so that is why I am attending A&E*
- *I was told that I had an appointment at a specialist clinic (in A&E) at 9.15am but am still waiting at 9.55am.*
- *There were no appointments at my GP, and I was told that I could not go in and wait, so I told them I would go to A&E.*
- *Given a letter from GP and I attend A&E.*
- *I'd spoken with NHS 111 but I got worse fast so came to A&E.*
- *I saw my GP two days ago and he suspected a broken jaw. He told me to get an x-ray but gave me no referral or paperwork.*
- *Advised to call 999.*

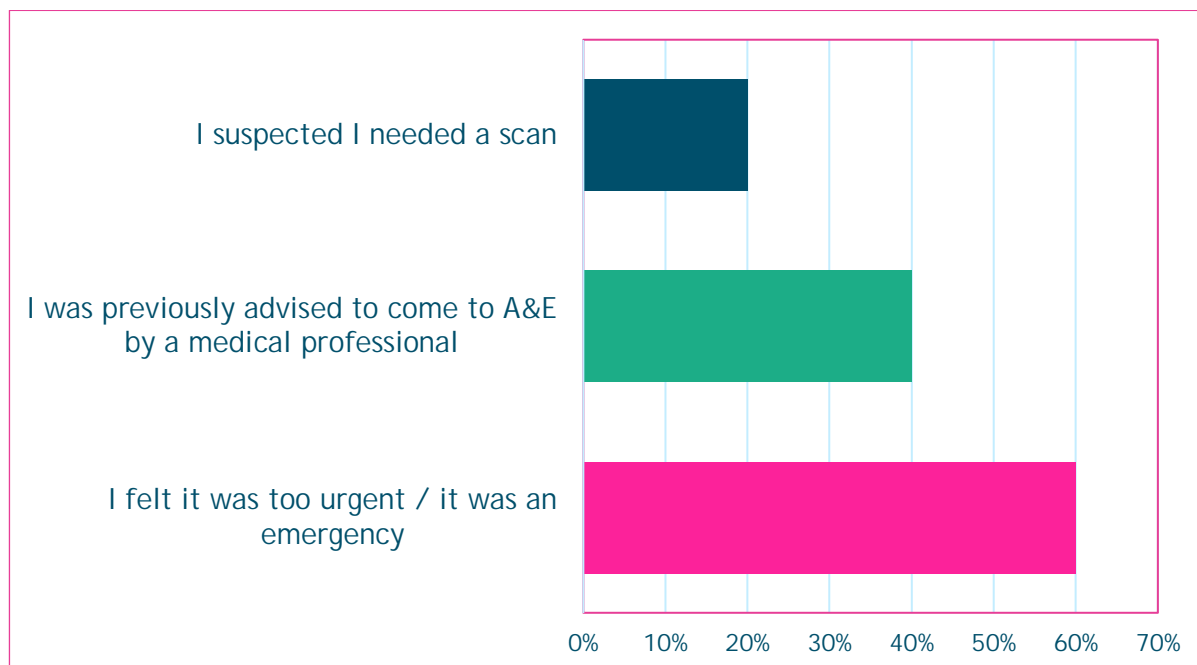
5. If you were told to attend A&E, were you advised that A&E knew you were coming?



Comments

- *I was sent from the walk in for an apt. at 9.45am.*
- *A and E called me back in urgently after I left last night as the wait was too long.*

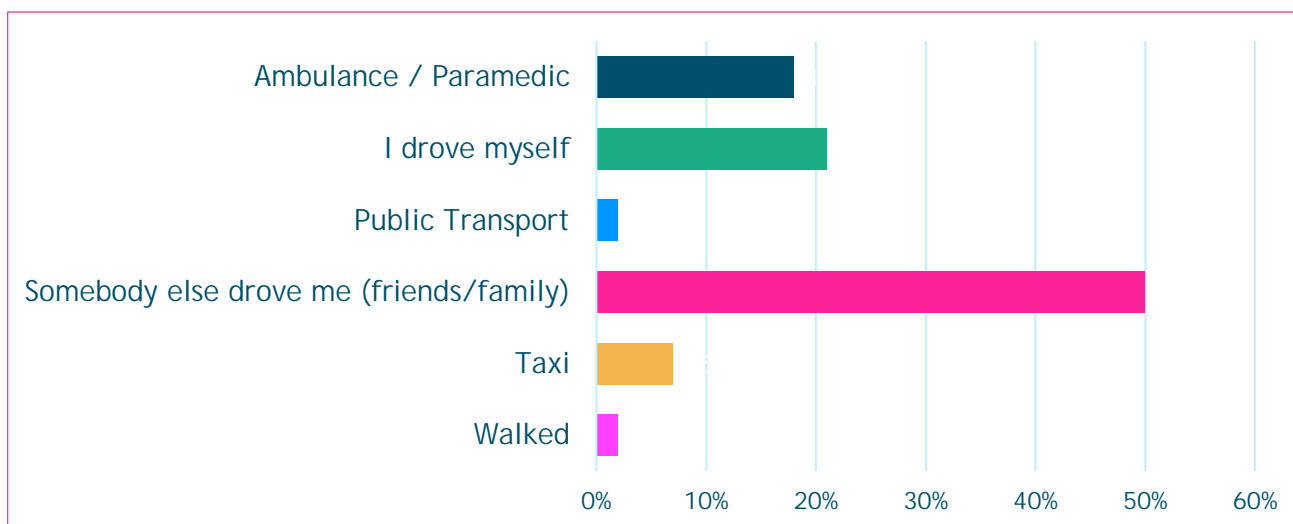
6. If you didn't try going anywhere else instead of A&E, why not?



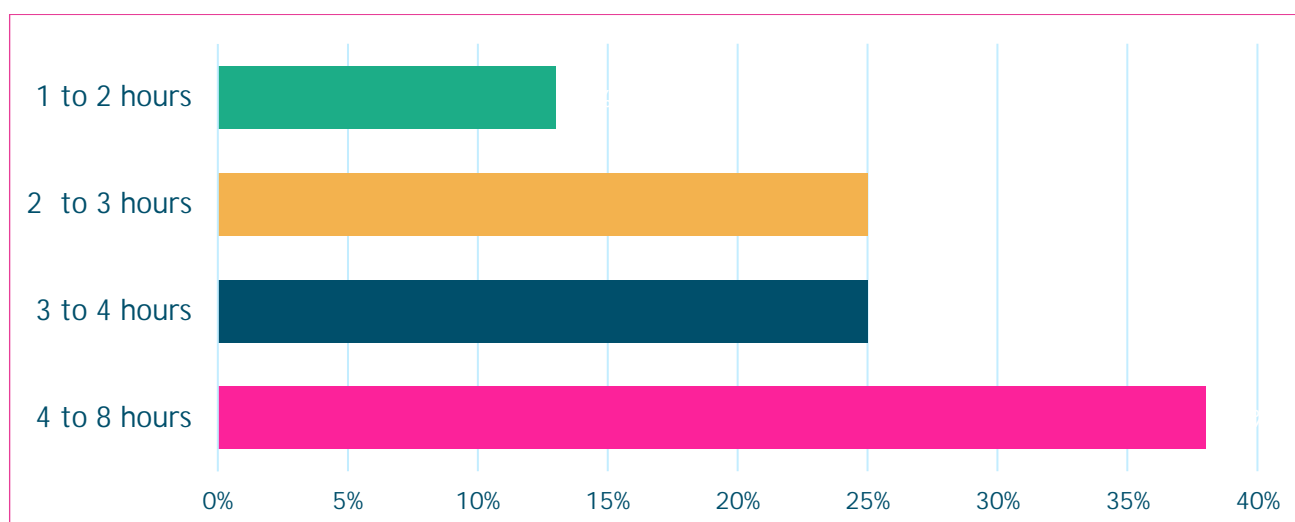
7. Why was this the case?

- *Last time I went to the UTC and waited 4 hours and was then sent to A&E - so thought I would come straight to A&E.*
- *I have Endometriosis. I know it is a flair up, I am in terrible pain.*
- *My jaw dislocates a lot and I have been told to always come to A&E*
- *I have an open head wound.*

8. How did you travel here today?



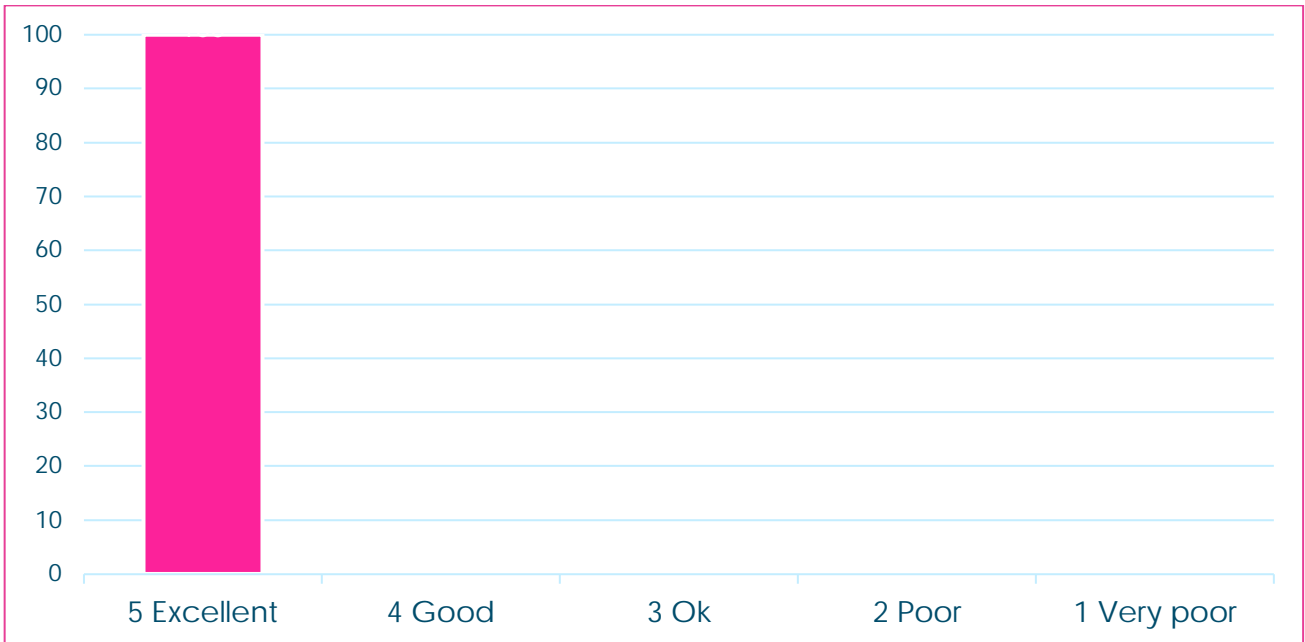
9. If you came to A&E by ambulance, how long did you wait?



Comments

- *I arrived by ambulance. It was very good, I was kept on the ambulance for 2.5 hours and told that if I had a wheelchair I would have a better chance of being seen quickly.*
- *I waited two and a half hours for the ambulance.*
- *After two hours we called the ambulance again and they put an urgent maker on and then they arrived. We waited outside A and E for 4 hours. We were 10th in a line.*
- *Was told that the wait is usually 45 minutes, but it took four hours to arrive.*
- *There was a miscommunication from the trainee doctor at the surgery. We were waiting seven hours for the ambulance but when we called them, they arrived in 20 minutes.*

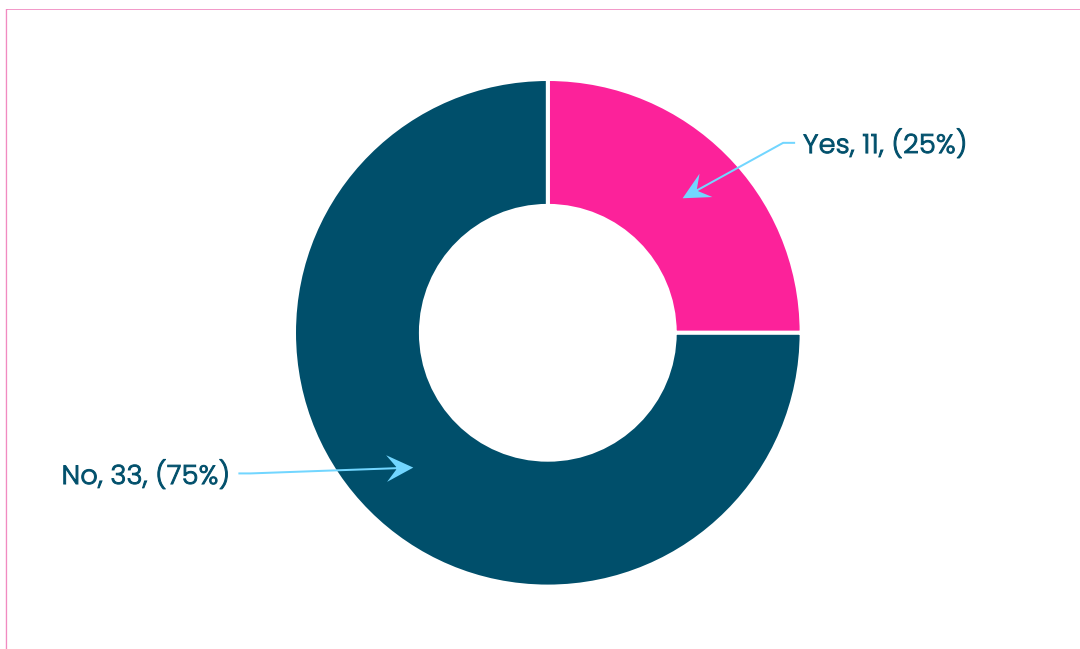
10. If you came by ambulance, how would you rate the care you received (1 star being poor and 5 star being excellent)?



Comments

- *The staff were lovely we had a laugh and fun.*
- *Paramedics were brilliant. Got tea and food too.*

11. Whilst in A&E, are you being/have you been kept regularly informed about waiting times or delays?



Not been at A&E long

- *I have not been here long.*
- *I have only just arrived.*
- *I have been informed about waiting times.*

Information screen

- *I can see the board says 8 to 9 hours, but I have been here since 4pm yesterday (Time is now 10.00am). It was so busy when I arrived there was nowhere to sit, and the ambulance driver had to ask someone to stand up for me.*
- *The screen tells us how many hours we need to wait but we have been here more than the 9 hours now.*
- *Only on the screen which says 8-9 hours.*
- *It is a 9 hour wait.*
- *Only by information on the screen.*

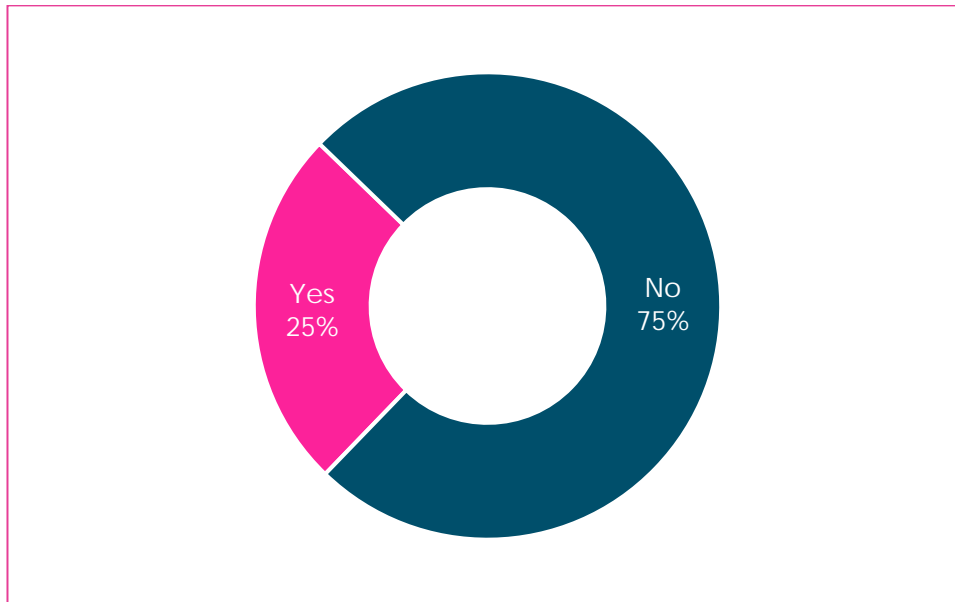
Staff informed them of waiting times / delays

- *Waiting for a bed on the ward. The nurse checks on me at my trolley sometimes.*
- *We were kept regularly informed last night, I would give that 5 stars but we haven't been kept informed today, I wouldn't rate it at all. The medical team don't talk to us. It is like being in 2 different hospitals.*

Nobody informed them of waiting times / delays

- *I am waiting for my full examination, but I do not know when it will be.*
- *After my blood test at 4.30 I have no word or updates. I don't know what I am waiting for now.*
- *Not really but I take it as it comes.*
- *I got my bloods taken and have no info since then. I have not been spoken to since 6.30am (about 4.5 hours ago).*
- *I came in at 11pm. I was seen not long ago at about 11am.*
- *I have had a blood test and have been left in reception for 13 hours.*
- *I have been here for 1 hour and 45 mins.*

12. Whilst in A&E, are you being/have you been kept up to date regarding your treatment and care?



Not had treatment yet

- *I haven't seen anyone yet, but I have only been here 40 minutes.*

Having treatment and aware of next steps

- *I have been triaged and had a scan. The doctor kindly came out to tell me my scan was all clear.*
- *I have been told I need to stay in and check my eating. A doctor will come tomorrow to see me. I am waiting for a bed on a ward.*
- *I have been triaged.*
- *I have had my bloods taken.*

Having treatment but unaware of next steps

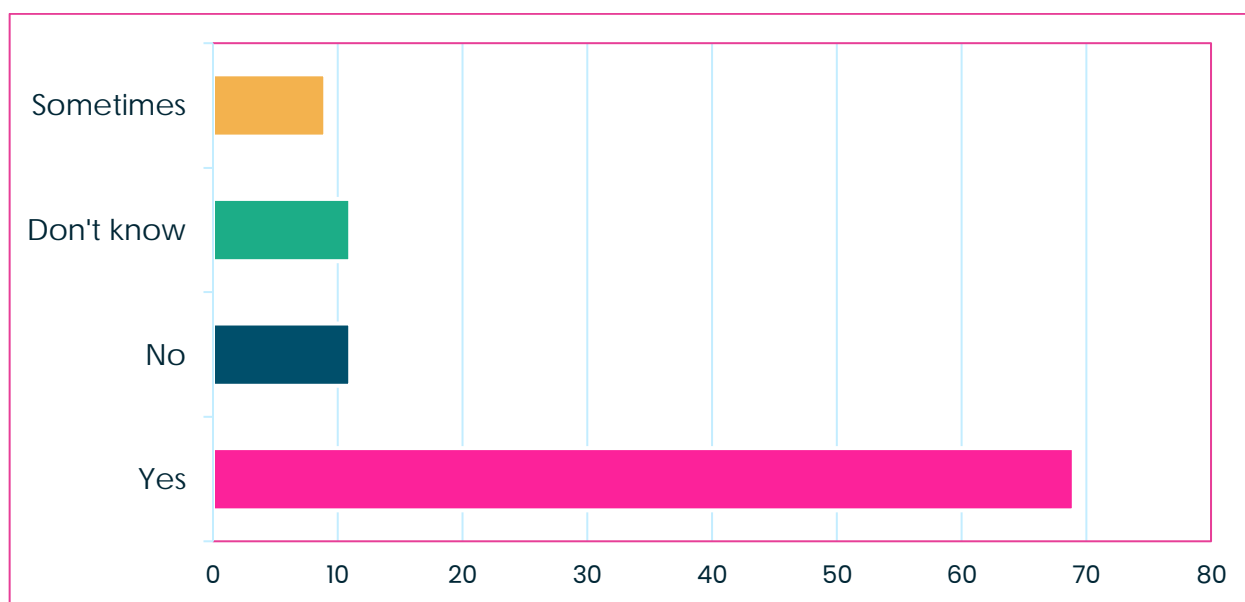
- *I do not know what is happening now. I know I am waiting for a bed, I was told this at 11pm last night, and they did take my obs early this morning.*

Unaware of what's happening with treatment and care

- *We have been here since 10.00pm last night and I don't know when we will be seen or be able to go home.*

- *No idea what is happening. No pain relief given. I don't know if I should leave and go elsewhere. No communication at all.*
- *I have had to ask and chase what is happening. I came in yesterday at 3.00pm.*
- *I have been here for six hours and there has been no offer of a drink. I have had to ask for painkillers four times. There has been no communication, I haven't seen anyone.*
- *No-one has spoken to me.*
- *I was advised that they would get me a canular, but they haven't.*

13. Do you feel you have been treated with dignity and respect during your time at A&E?

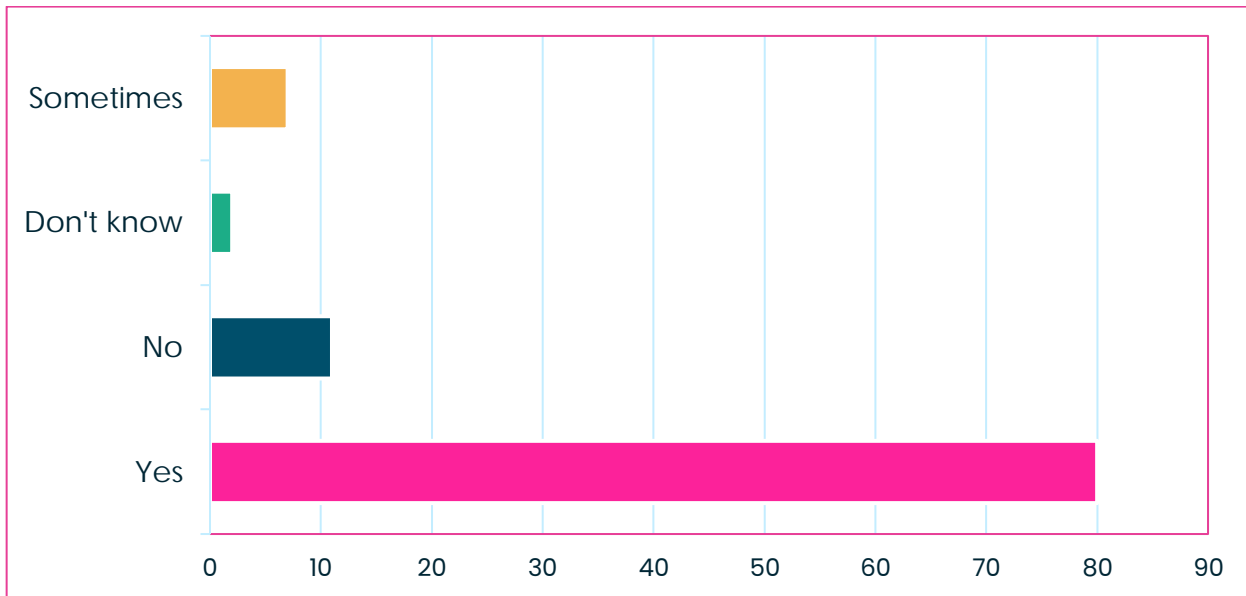


Additional comments

- *I am autistic, so I don't know how people should be with me.*
- *I love this hospital, it is fantastic.*
- *I would like to be told if I need to wait as I have an appointment time. Just want to know what is happening.*
- *I've not been seen yet.*
- *I haven't seen anybody, I am having to chase.*

- *I have only been here for 30 mins, so not seen anyone yet.*
- *Only been here about 20 mins.*
- *You can hear people being spoken to at reception.*

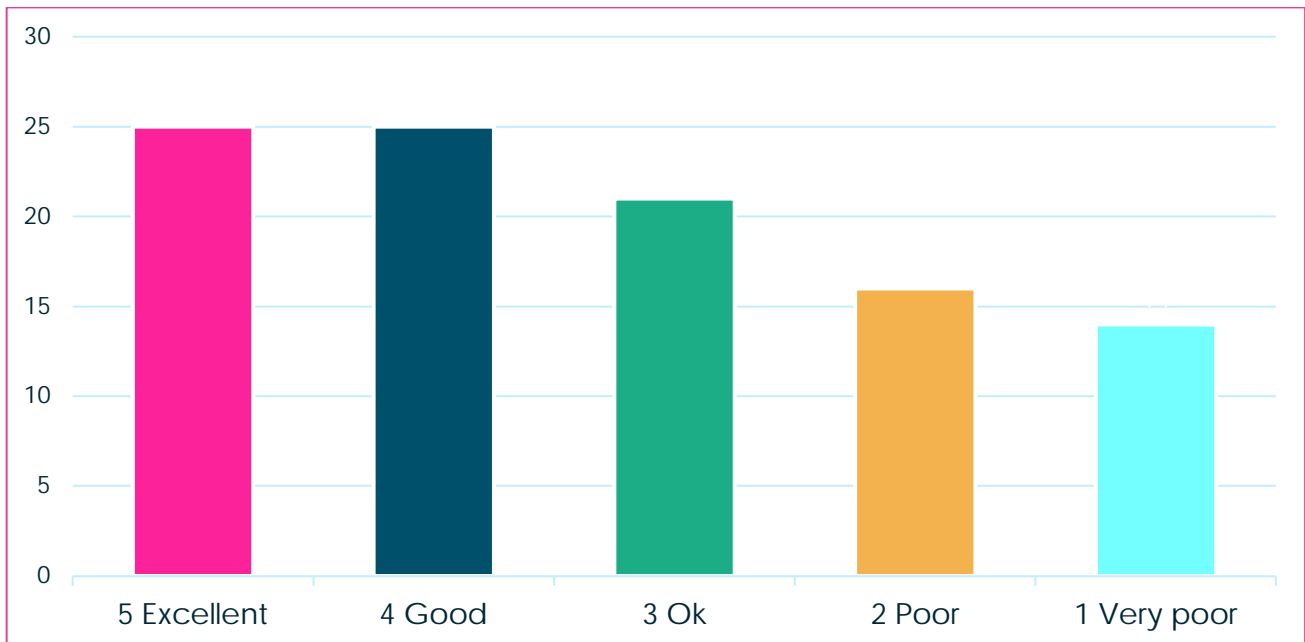
14. Do you feel your privacy has been maintain as much as possible, during your time at A&E?



Additional comments

- *I had to be examined on the trolley in front of people because it was busy, but it didn't bother me.*
- *I was sick and in agony of the floor in the waiting area but there is nowhere to go, and the toilet was full. In the back room I am still sat with other people in pain and on a drip. I understand they are busy however.*
- *No private area is available. Everyone has to sit together, and many are distressed.*
- *It is so busy, I had to go to the toilet as feels conscious as I was vomiting.*

15. How would you rate the service you have received so far in A&E (1 being poor and 5 being excellent)?



16. How have you found your experience in A&E? Positives

Staff

- *The nurse handled me well.*
- *Staff do the best they can with what they have.*
- *They couldn't do any better they are hammered.*
- *They have looked after me well so far.*
- *Nurses and Dr's are fantastic. I have been given tea.*
- *I'm glad this is here. Reception is fine.*
- *With what they are working with they do a great job.*
- *The nurse was nice.*
- *Called us back when needed.*
- *Dr's do all they can.*
- *Staff are good when seen. I will see the mental health team but no idea when.*
- *The staff are great (This patient was spoken to on the corridor).*
- *The night staff were positive. From 7pm last night the staff were brilliant, they were on the ball, fantastic.*

Treatment

- *I was seen by Triage quickly (x2 comments)*
- *Good outcomes*

Additional comments

- *Have not spoken to anyone yet.*
- *Can't comment as nothing has happened yet.*
- *I haven't been here long enough to comment.*
- *Not been here long enough.*
- *I have not seen anyone yet so cannot comment.*
- *Staff have been nice.*
- *I am satisfied.*
- *They are doing their best.*
- *Informative, polite, professional*
- *Stressful and worrying*
- *staff have been good.*
- *As good as it can be.*
- *Not yet been seen by triage after 90 minutes.*

17. How have you found your experience in A&E? Negatives

Waiting times

- *The NHS does not have enough money or staff. The staff are too busy. There is no bed or trolley for me, so I am extremely tired on this chair as it has been about 18 hours.*
- *The waiting time is very long. Communication is bad we have no idea what is happening next or when.*
- *Not knowing when I may be seen.*
- *Waits are bad and I have not been kept informed of what is happening.*

- *I don't know if I will be seen. Told to come at a certain time but sat here waiting with walk in emergencies.*
- *Waiting Times are very excessive.*
- *Waiting times really long.*
- *Waiting times are too long no one keeps you informed*
- *Long waits.*
- *Waiting too long in pain, 2 hours to be triaged.*
- *Waiting too long.*
- *Too long to wait.*
- *Wait times.*
- *Waiting times.*
- *Long wait times lack of updates on the time taken to be triaged.*

Treatment and care

- *They are failing in their duty of care for my wife who is 80 years old and has Dementia. The duty of care is far below the standard I would expect from a medical team.*
- *No communication. The screen states 8-9 hour wait but a sign on reception says 12-14 hours dated from yesterday. Which is it? Ask if I can eat or drink but I don't know because I have been here for so long without any.*
- *It is manic in here and was bad last night.*
- *No beds. Just told I might get one. No comfort or privacy.*
- *Long waits but can't be helped. No private space.*

A&E management and system pressures

- *There are not enough staff.*
- *They need more funding.*
- *They are very busy.*

Staff - general

- *A few times my daughter went up to ask for help and the staff weren't very pleasant with her.*

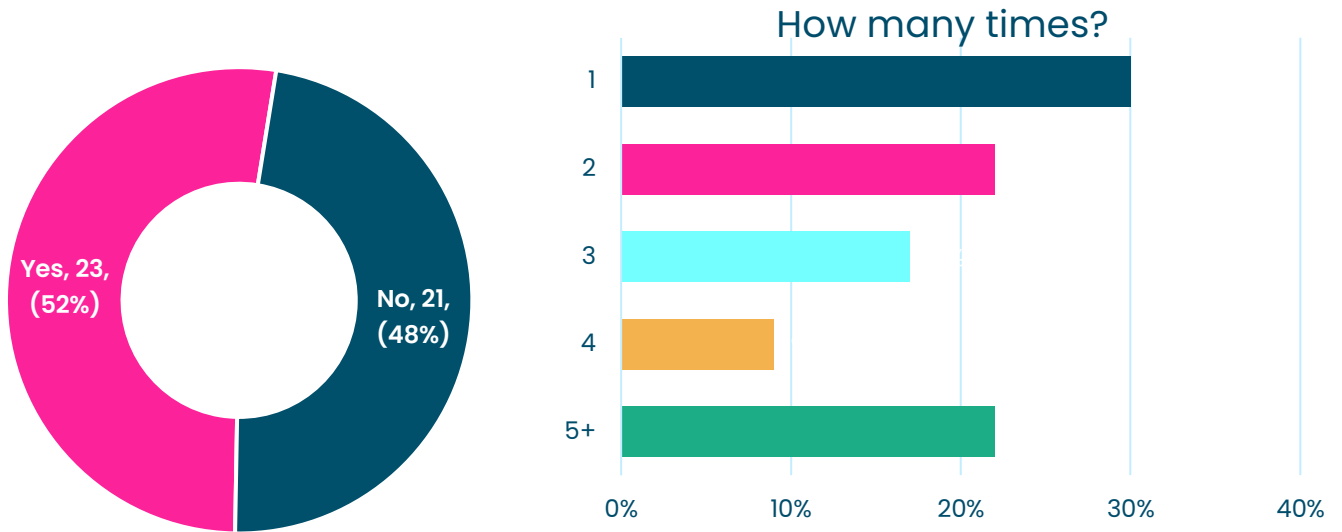
Communication

- *I don't know what is happening no update since 4.30am.*
- *From 7.00am, no-one has spoken to us - There is a distinct lack of communication from medical staff.*
- *I have been left, lack of communication and had to bring my own painkillers.*
- *Lack of communication, have had to ask for medication 4 times, long waiting times and rude staff.*
- *Lack of communication.*
- *No time in admissions and no advice on when will be seen.*
- *No idea when I will be seen.*

Additional comments

- *No sandwiches available in the vending machine and I am really hungry - only crisps and chocolate available.*
- *The trolley is uncomfortable.*
- *Can't comment as nothing has happened yet.*
- *I haven't been here long enough to comment.*
- *Not been here long enough.*
- *No people to talk to.*
- *Would like more drinks but happy overall.*
- *No negatives.*

18. Have you used A&E in the past 12 months and if so, how many times?



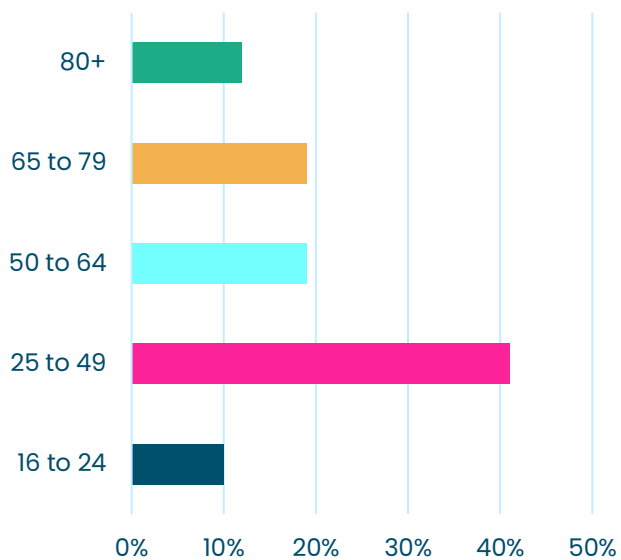
19. Which GP Practice are you registered with?

GP Practice	Patients
Aston - Knowsley Village	2
Beaconsfield	1
Beeches Medical Centre - Widnes	2
Bethany Medical Centre, St Helens	1
Bryncross surgery, Ashton-in-Makerfield	1
Castlefields Medical Centre, Runcorn	1
Cedar Cross Medical Centre	1
Cornerways, Huyton	1
Eccleston Medical Centre, St Helens	2
Fir Park Medical Centre, Widnes	1
Garswood Surgery	1
Hall Street Medical Centre, St Helens	1
Haydock Medical Centre	2
Longton Lane - Rainhill	1
Margaret Thompson Medical Centre, Speke	1
Marshall's Cross, St Helens	1
Murdishaw Medical Centre, Runcorn	1
Newton Medical Centre, Widnes	1
Oaks Place, Widnes	3

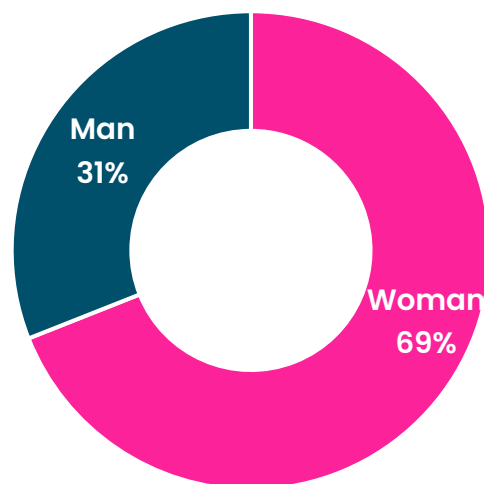
Oakvale Medical Centre, Childwall	1
Orrell Park Medical Centre	1
Park Centre - St. Helens	1
Parkfield Surgery, St Helens	1
Patterdale Lodge, Newton-le-Willows	2
Peel House Plaza, Widnes	3
Phoenix Medical Centre - St Helens	1
Prescot Medical Centre	1
Private GP	1
Rainbow Medical Centre, St Helens	1
Rainford Health Centre	1
Speke Health Centre	1
The Hollies, Halewood	1
The Spinney Medical Centre, St Helens	1
Tower House, Runcorn	1
West Derby Medical Centre	1

Demographic questions

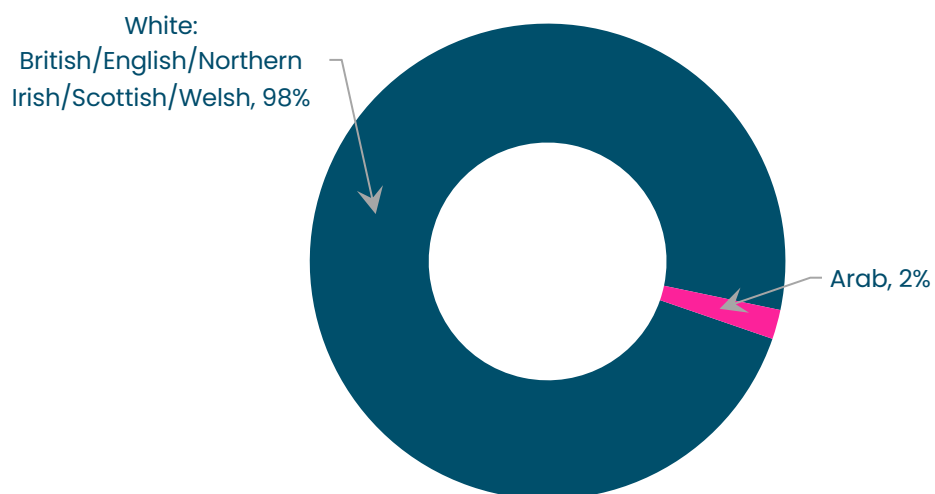
Age ranges



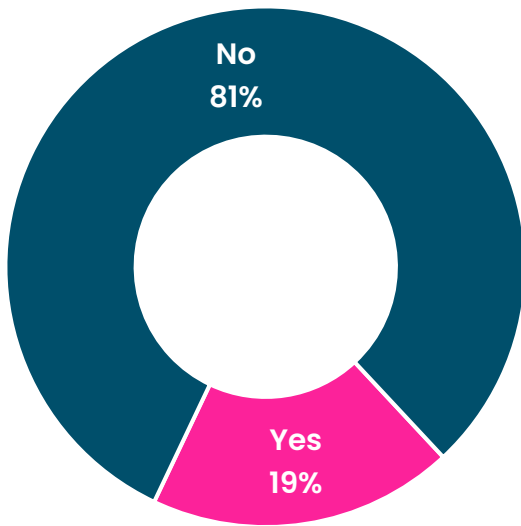
Gender



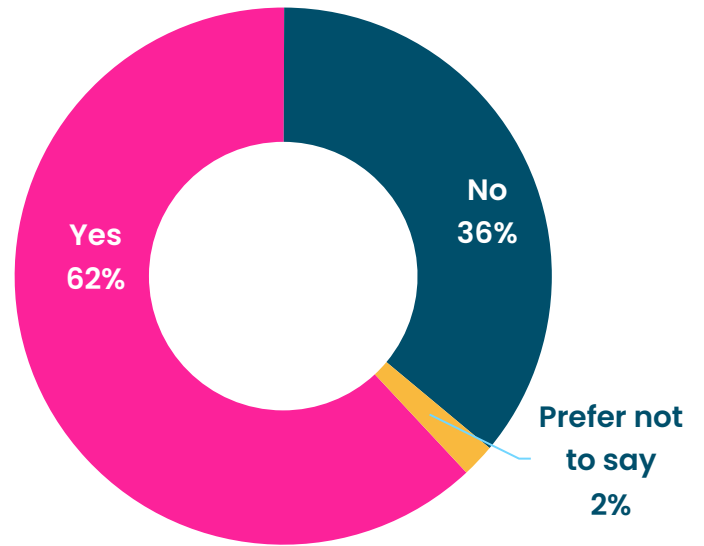
Ethnicity



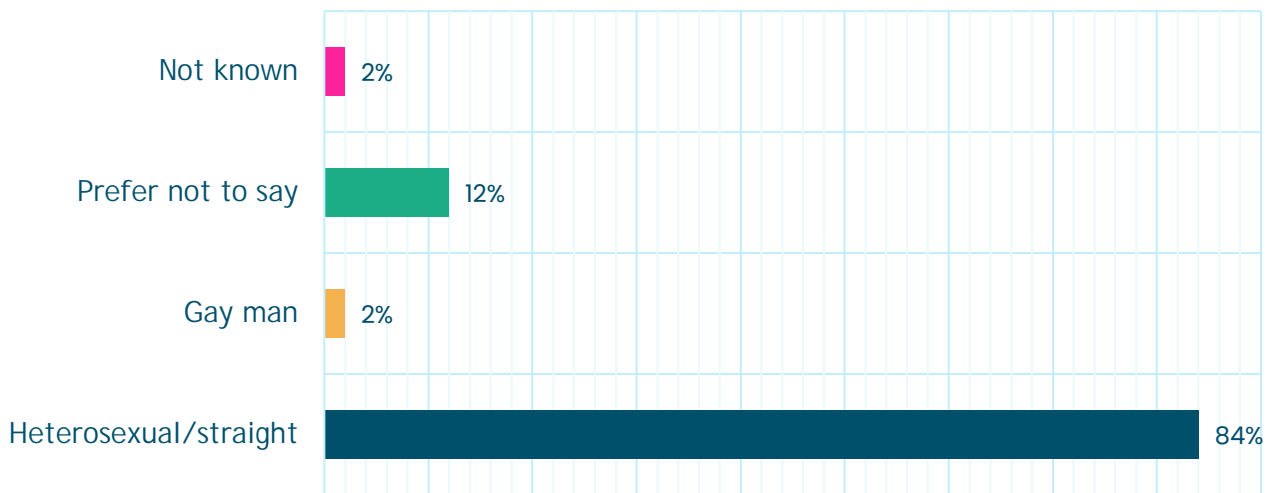
Do you consider yourself to be a carer?



Do you consider yourself to have a disability or long term health condition?



What sexual orientation do you identify with?



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Halton

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healthwatch
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