



**healthwatch**  
North Tyneside

## **Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment in North Tyneside**

Views of residents report

May 2025

## Background

Healthwatch North Tyneside was asked by North Tyneside's Health and Wellbeing board to gather evidence of resident's experiences of pharmacy services in the borough to inform a review of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA). The PNA is produced every 3 years, with the last PNA being written and published in 2022. Feedback from residents is an important part of the PNA.

The engagement has produced a rich source of information about pharmacy services in North Tyneside. Much of this information has wider implications than the review of the PNA. We are working with partners to ensure that people's views are heard and actions are taken where they are outside of the scope of the PNA.

We would like to thank all of the local pharmacy services, GP practices and partners who helped share this survey with residents. Thank you also to the residents of North Tyneside who took the time to share their views.

## Method

We gathered feedback using a survey, available both online and in paper format. It was circulated through our stakeholders (including North Tyneside Council's Our North Tyneside Voice engagement panel, social media, Voluntary and Community Sector partners and NHS partners). Flyers and paper surveys were also distributed to local pharmacies so they could share with their service users. We also promoted this research through our Healthwatch community engagement activities.

The survey ran from 26 February to 6 April 2025. Analysis of the data gathered was undertaken by Healthwatch North Tyneside in April 2025 and this report provides the detailed findings.

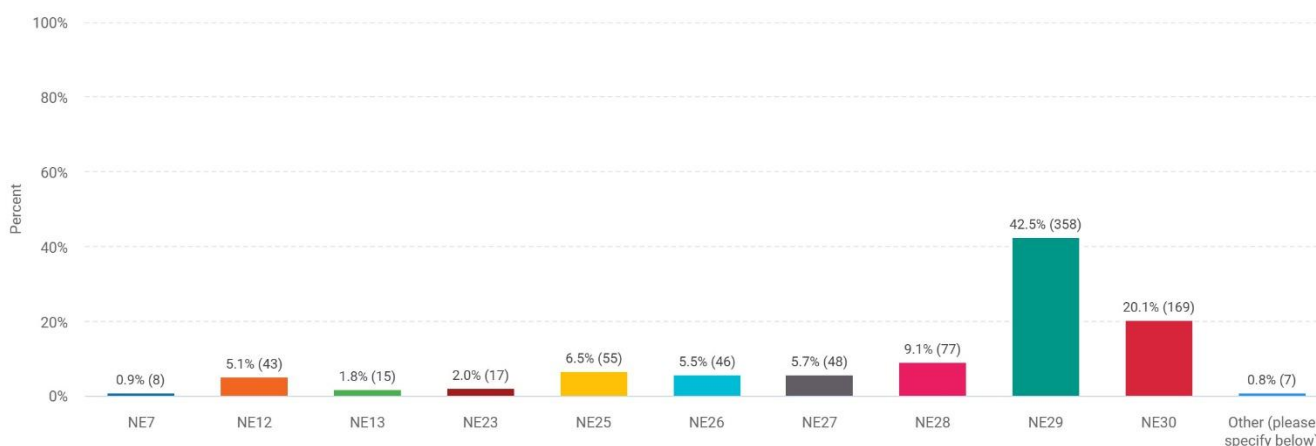
In this report, we have highlighted where we have identified significant differences between the responses to this survey and the PNA survey we conducted in 2022. Please note the questions asked are not always directly comparable.

## Who we heard from

843 people responded to our survey. Since it was not required to answer every question, the number of responses for each varies.

In questions where people could select more than one answer, the percentages reflect how many people selected that option.

### Q1. First part of postcode (843 responses)



We had a significantly larger response from the North Shields/Tynemouth area (NE29 and NE30). This is likely a result of large scale sharing of the survey by GP practices in that area. To address this, we have looked at data across four subdivisions of North Tyneside to enable comparison with the overall findings. These will only be included where they differ significantly from the wider picture.

The four areas of North Tyneside we used are:

- North West (NE7, NE12, NE13, NE23, NE27)
- Wallsend (NE28)
- North Shields and Tynemouth (NE29, NE30)
- Whitley Bay (NE25, NE26)

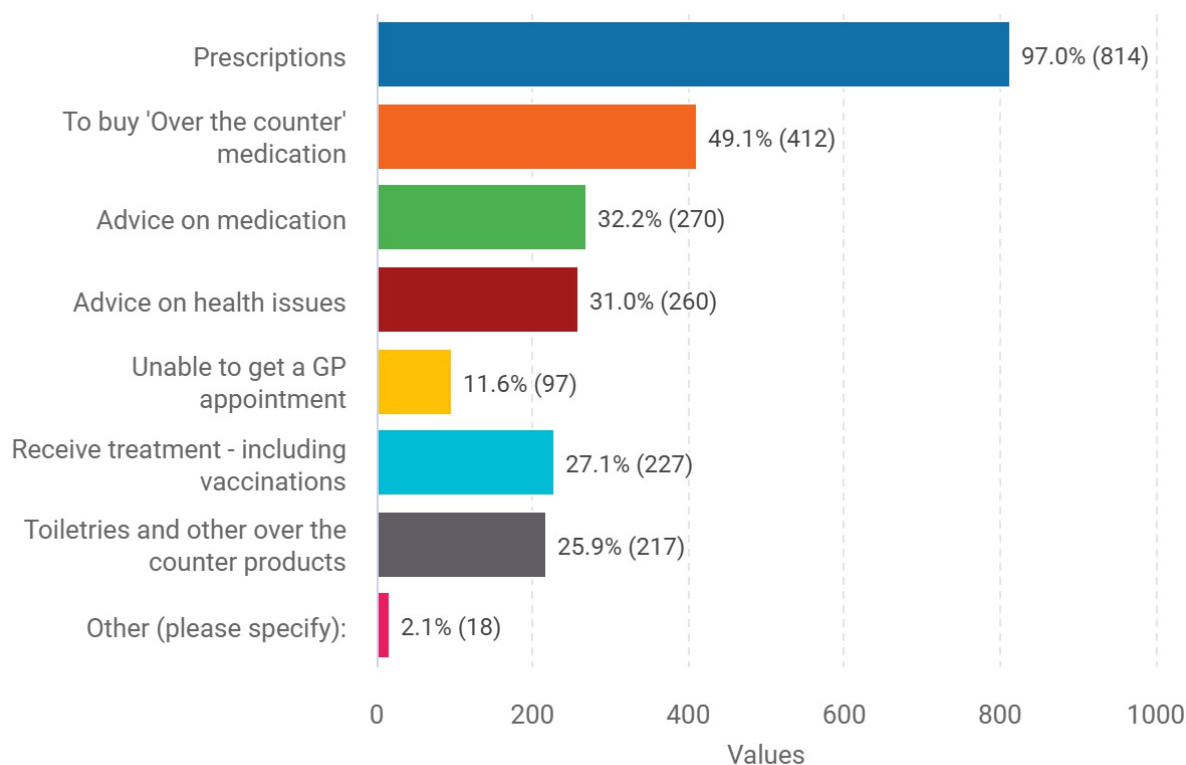
Demographic information about the responses we received is provided in Annex 1 at the end of this report.

## What we heard

### How people use pharmacies

#### Q2. Why do you use your local pharmacy? (839 responses)

People could select as many responses as were applicable. Responses are similar to what we heard in 2022.



'Other' responses included:

Blood pressure check	4	Prescription delivered from another pharmacy	1	Services	1
Collecting for another person	3	Health checks	1	Convenience	1
Don't really use	3	Pill check	1		
Click and collect	1	Pharmacy First	1		

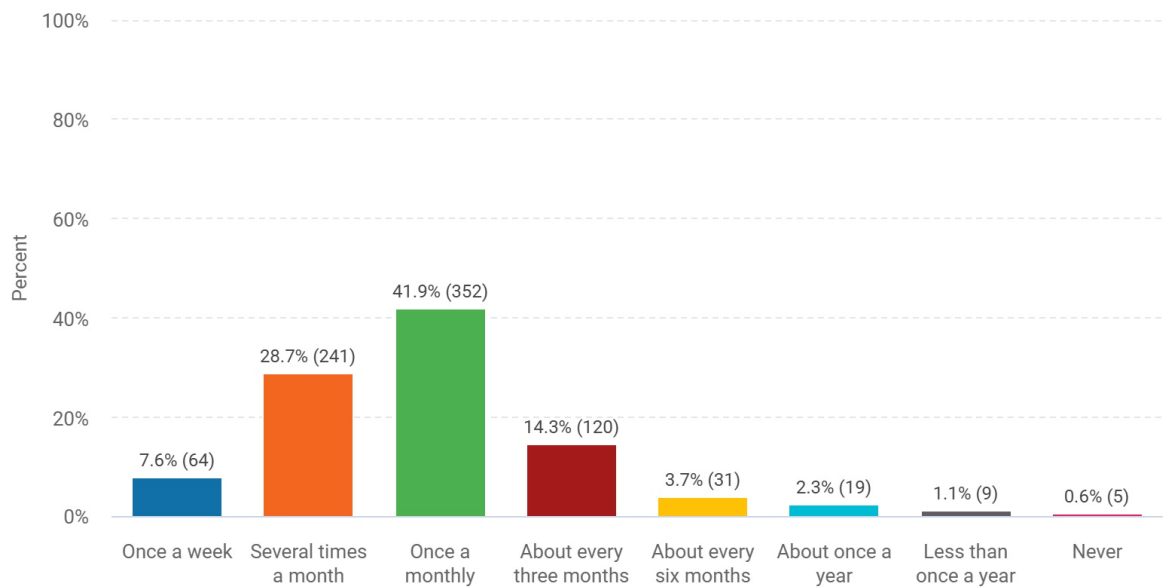
#### Q3. Have you used a pharmacy in the last 12 months? (841 responses)

98% (823) of respondents reported having used a pharmacy in the last 12 months.

#### Q4. How often do you use pharmacy services in North Tyneside? (841 responses)

Over three quarters of respondents use pharmacy services at least once a month. In the North West there is a much higher proportion of people who use pharmacy services once a week (17.6%) compared to the average (7.6%), and a much lower proportion in Whitley Bay (2%).

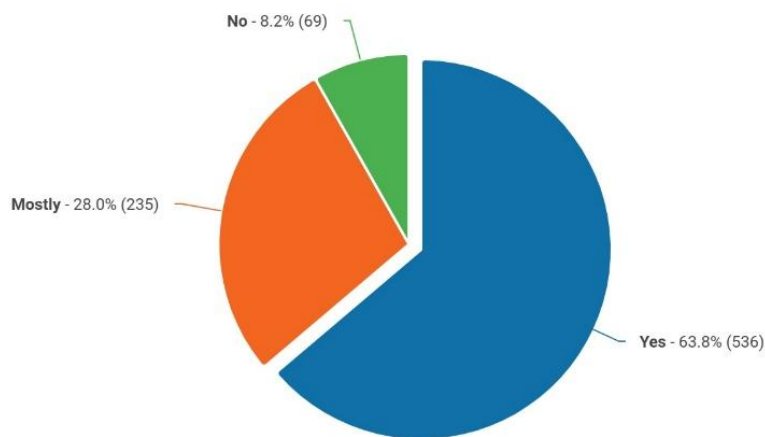
It is clear from our data that many of the people who gave feedback are relatively frequent users of pharmacies, with the exception of the North Shields/Tynemouth area where the survey was promoted differently.



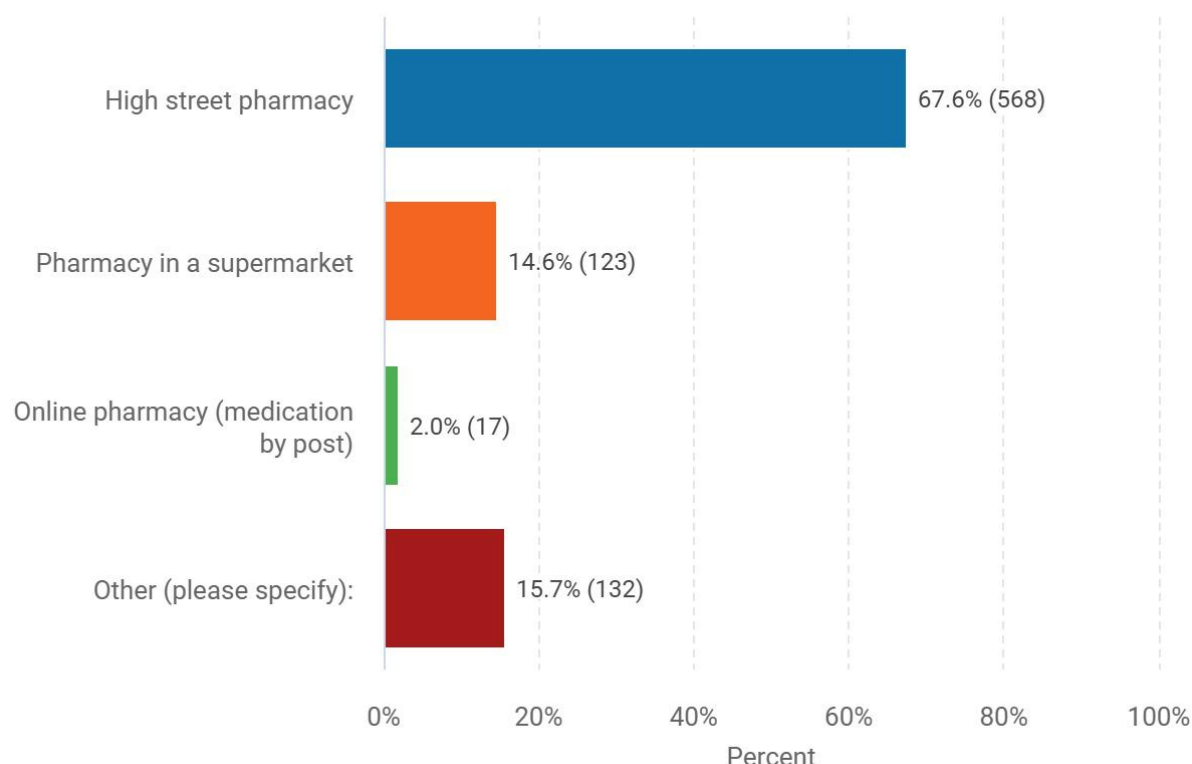
**Q5. Do you always use the same pharmacy? (840 responses)**

Between 60.6% and 74.6% of respondents use the same pharmacy, the lower figure in North Shields/Tynemouth and the higher in the North West of the borough.

These figures are similar to the last PNA in 2022 where 69% always used the same pharmacy, 23% mostly used the same pharmacy and 8% did not use the same pharmacy.



**Q6. Thinking about the pharmacy you use most often, what type of pharmacy is it?**  
(840 responses)



There was significant variation across North Tyneside in numbers who use a high street pharmacy as their main pharmacy. Figures were lower in North Shields/Tynemouth (61.1%) compared to in Whitley Bay (82.2%). North Tyneside West and Wallsend were 77.1% and 75.3% respectively. Compared to the previous PNA, there appears to be an increase in people using a high street pharmacy as their main pharmacy (54% in 2022).

Use of a pharmacy based in a supermarket also varied, ranging from 5.2% (Wallsend) to 18.9% (North Shields/Tynemouth). In 2022, overall figures were 17%.

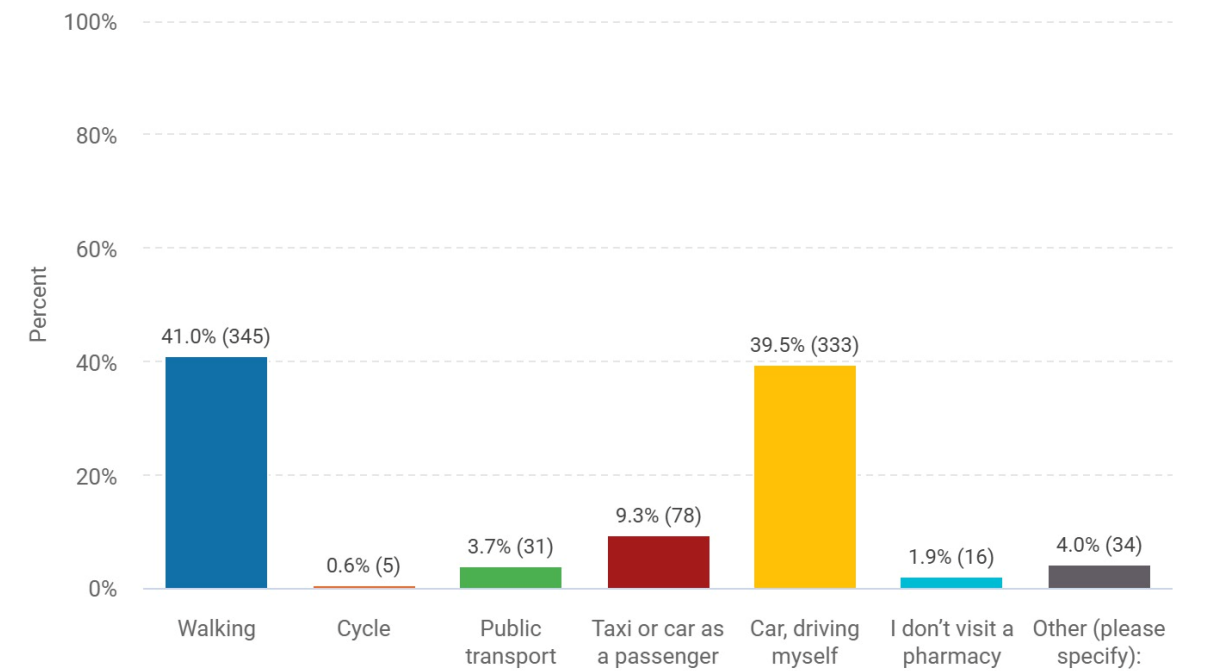
The large proportion of 'Other' responses appears to indicate a misunderstanding about the question as many people responded with 'local', 'private', 'independent' or the name/location of their pharmacy. 93 of the 132 'Other' responses came from the North Shields/Tynemouth area and included 42 specifying a pharmacy attached to or next to a GP surgery.



## Getting to the pharmacy

### Q7. How do you usually get to the pharmacy? (842 responses)

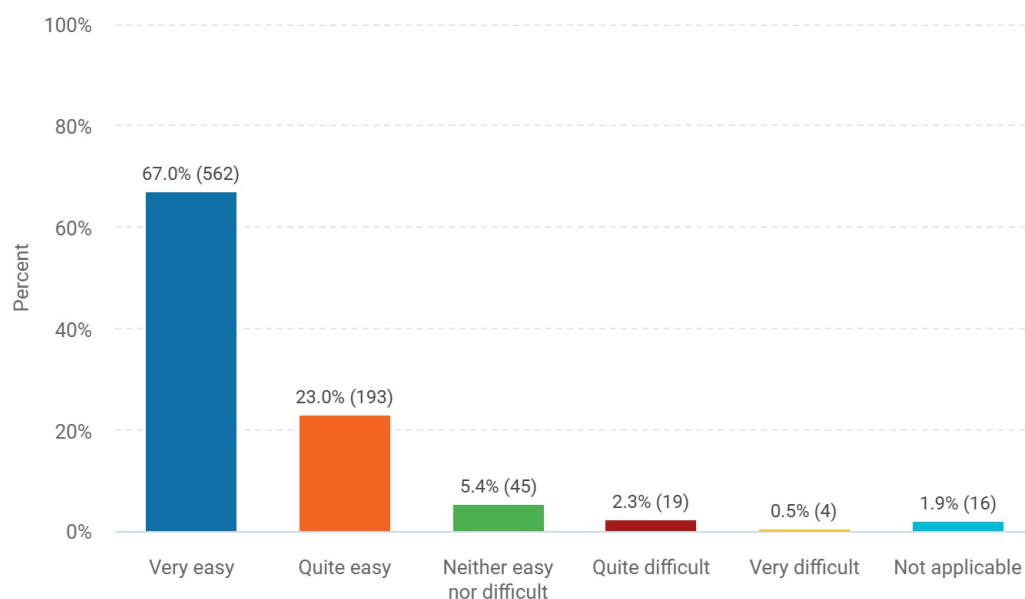
Similar proportions of respondents walk to the pharmacy as drive at around 40%. Again, this is similar to responses in 2022.



34 'Other' responses included:

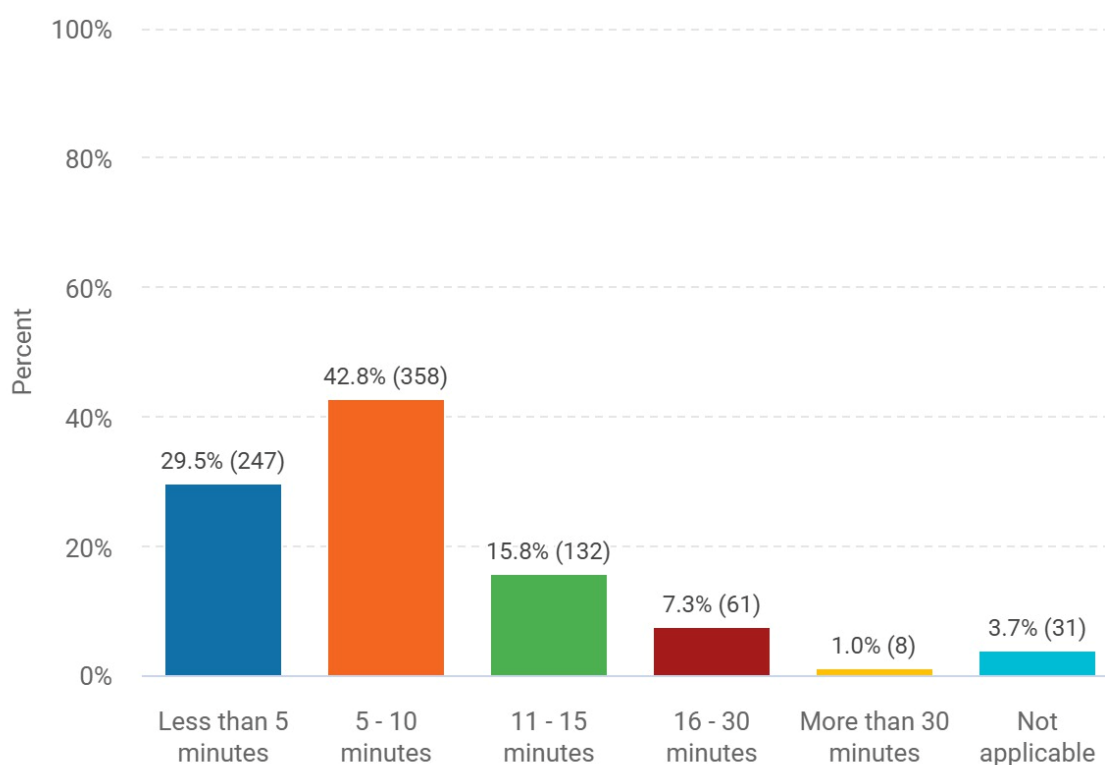
Multiple options given	6	Mobility scooter	2
Prescriptions delivered	15	Ordered online	2
Collected by someone else	5	Use disabled parking	1
Car as a passenger	2	Wheelchair	1

### Q8. How long does it usually take you to get there? (837 responses)



The majority of people are able to get to their pharmacy within 10 minutes (72.3%). Adjusting this figure by removing those who responded as 'Not applicable' raises this to 75.1%.

### Q9. How easy is it to get to a pharmacy? (839 responses)





Across all responses, **parking** was mentioned as a factor in determining how easy it is to get to the pharmacy. In total, 28 people commented on problems finding a parking space. Others, particularly those rating their pharmacy as 'Very easy' to get to, commented on the ease of parking.

**Mobility or health issues making travel difficult** has been highlighted as a barrier to access. Some people note that they would find it a problem without a car. 3 people said they can struggle to get to the pharmacy due to caring responsibilities.

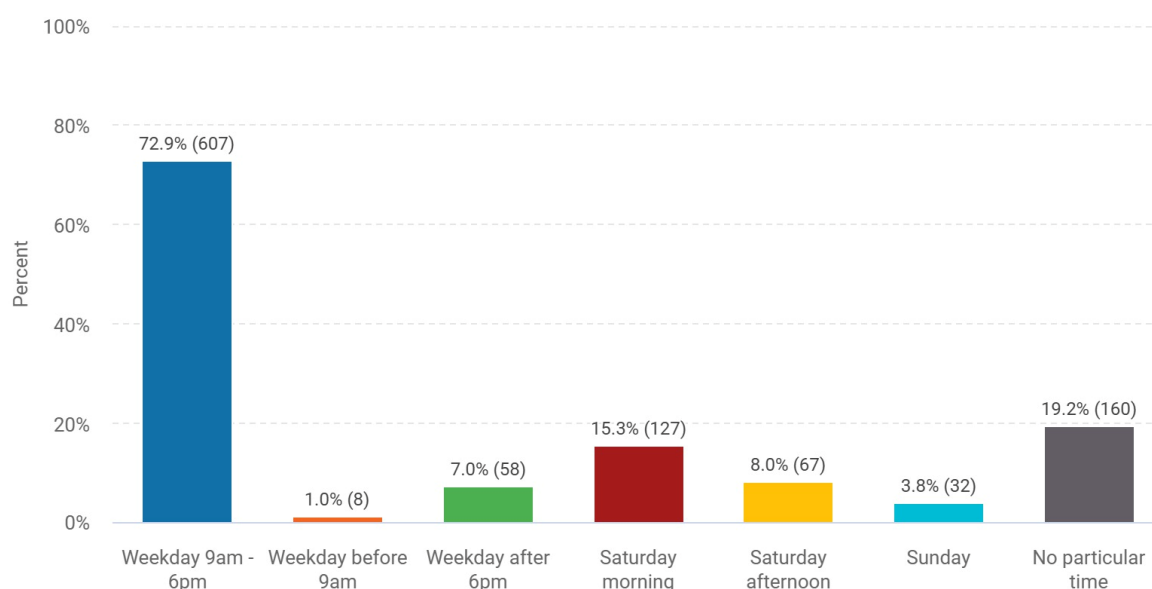
Others noted the awkwardness of **public transport**, particularly if feeling unwell, being unable to walk far or having to take a wheelchair user with them.

A number of people commented that they **appreciated having a pharmacy within walking distance** as an opportunity for fresh air and exercise. Others said they particularly **chose a pharmacy** that was more distant to fit in with work, shopping, visits to parents or to avoid queues at a more local one. A few said they were restricted by where the services they needed were provided e.g. delivery, dosette boxes or stop smoking support.

Two people noted that closure of their local pharmacy now made it 'Quite difficult' for them. People also highlighted areas such West Moor that are not within an easy walk of a local high street.

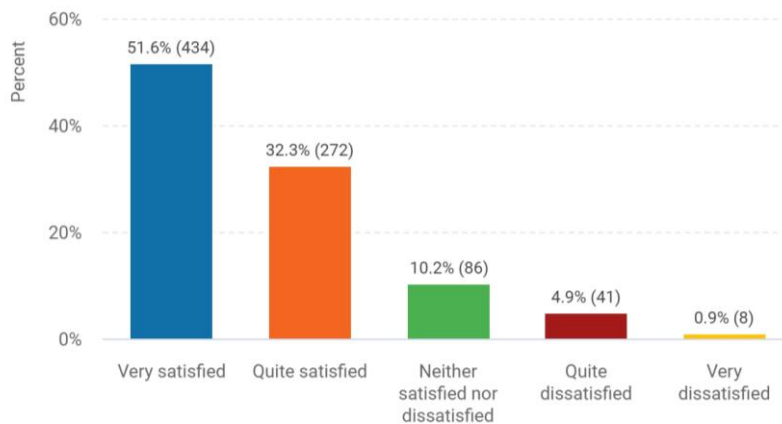
#### **Q10. When are you more likely to use the pharmacy? (833 responses)**

People could select as many responses as were applicable.



Most respondents said they would tend to use a pharmacy on weekdays between 9am and 6pm. Almost 20% said there was not a particular time when they would be more likely to go.

**Q11. How satisfied are you with the opening hours of pharmacy services? (841 responses)**

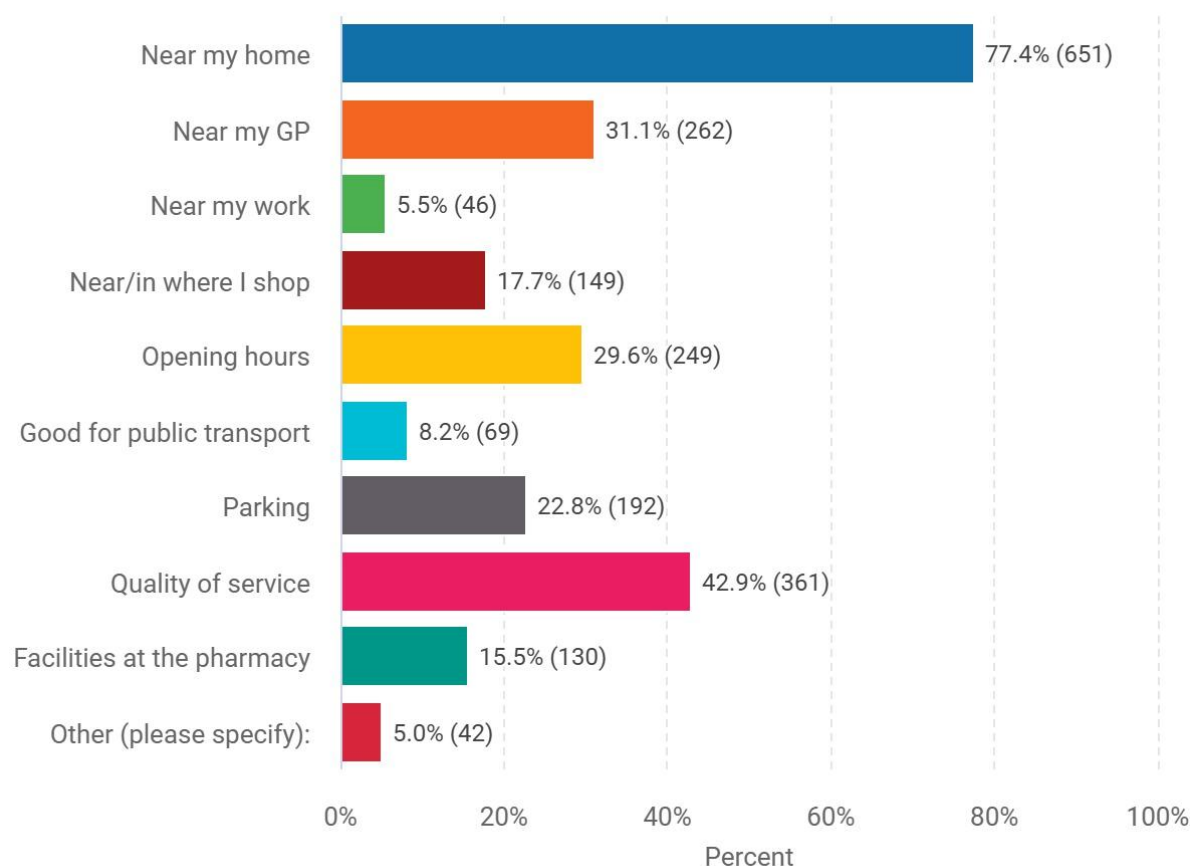


Over half of respondents told us they are 'Very satisfied' with the opening hours of pharmacy services. These responses are an improvement on the 2022 data with people being more satisfied with opening hours, however, In the free text comments across all responses, whether satisfied or dissatisfied, people talked about:

- **Opening hours were not well suited to working people.** Many people said they want later opening, at least on certain days, weekend opening and fewer lunchtime closures. Not all employers offer the flexibility to go within the working day and not everyone has someone who can go on their behalf.
- Further options were suggested **to make prescription collection more accessible** e.g. collection lockers, extended opening for collection purposes or an out of hours collection point.
- **Weekend closures** make access to antibiotics difficult.
- "If you go to walk in centre and the appointment is **after 8pm there are no pharmacies open in North Tyneside**" – this means a wait until the next day or after if a weekend.
- Promotion of 'Your local pharmacist' as first line defence rather than GP or A&E is not compatible with **recent pharmacy closures**.
- Comments were also made about the **closure of a supermarket based pharmacy** that had longer opening hours and was very convenient for its users.
- Some people commented that recent closures created **pressures in other local pharmacies** and they felt they noticed a decline in their service.

## Q12. What is most important to you about your choice of pharmacy? (841 responses)

People could select as many responses as were applicable.



A key variation between the four areas of North Tyneside is the importance attributed to closeness to home:

- North West 85.5%
- Wallsend 61.0%
- North Shields/Tynemouth 76.8%
- Whitley Bay 84.0%

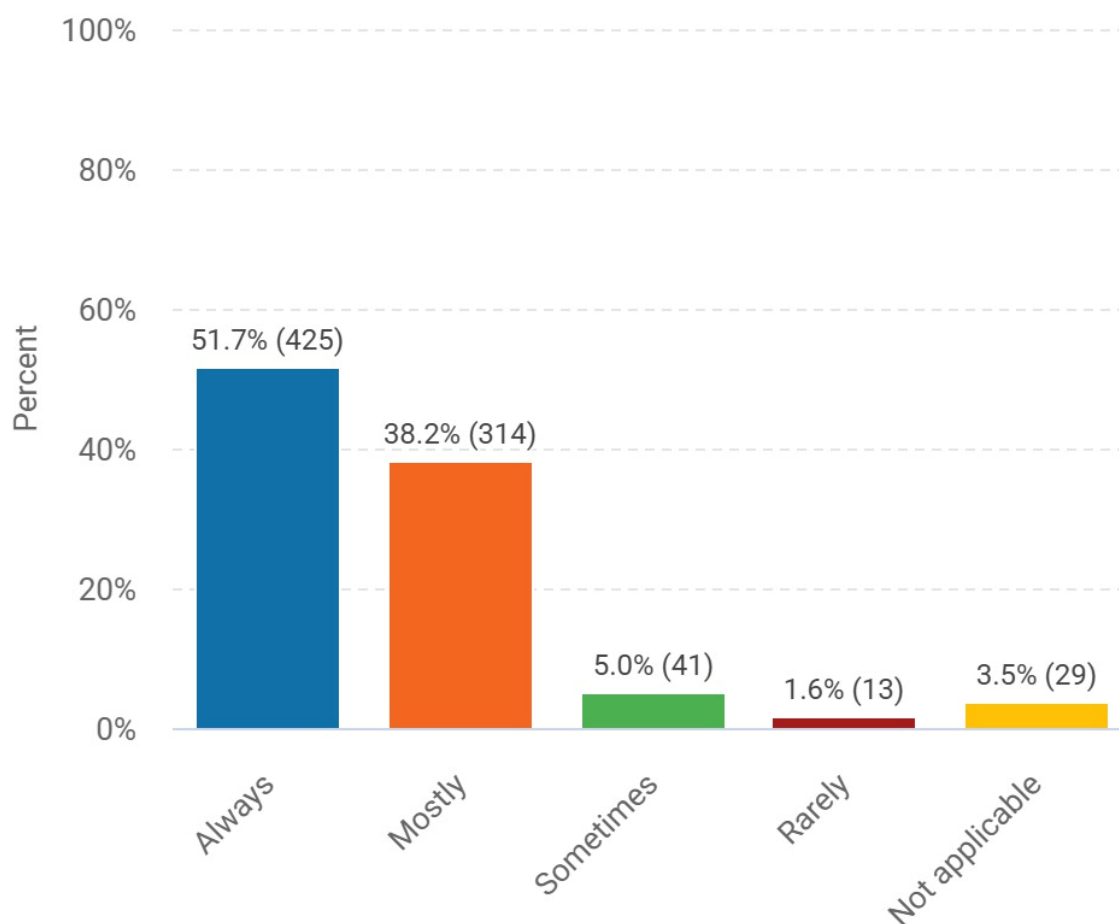
For those respondents who selected 'Other', the following were among the reasons given for their choice of pharmacy:

Medication in stock	6	Supporting local business	1
Staff	4	Online ordering	1
Delivery option	3	Nearest pharmacy to collect app order	1
Near school	1	Limited by link to GP	1

## Getting a prescription

Within this section we wanted to understand people's experiences of getting a prescription. The results are generally positive about their experiences but issues with availability of some medications are highlighted as well as feedback about the process of ordering prescriptions (a process controlled by GP practices) and the way some pharmacies charge for services that others provide for free.

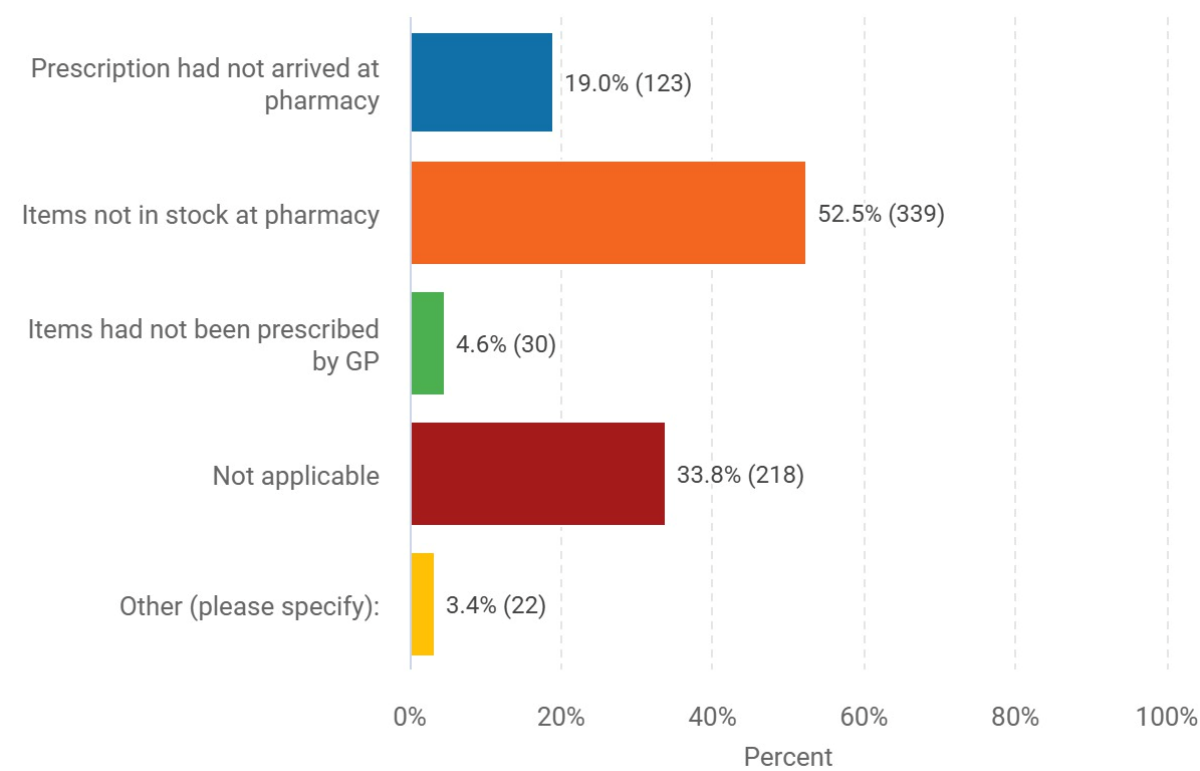
**Q13. If you have had a prescription in the last 12 months, have you been able to get all the items you needed?** (822 responses)



It should be noted that removing the 'Not applicable' responses pushes the level of satisfaction to 53.6% for 'Always' and 40.0% for 'Mostly'.

**Q14. If you were not able to get the items you needed, what was the reason?**  
(646 responses)

People could select as many responses as were applicable.



Removing the large number of ‘Not applicable’ responses provides a more representative picture with 79.2% having problems with items not in stock and 28.7% with the prescription not having arrived at the pharmacy.

Of the 22 ‘Other’ responses:

Stock issue	16	Medication not ordered by pharmacy	1
GP issue	1	Prescription not downloaded	1
Wrong prescription	2	Use online pharmacy	1

When there is a problem with stock it can be a real challenge for residents and create gaps in medication.

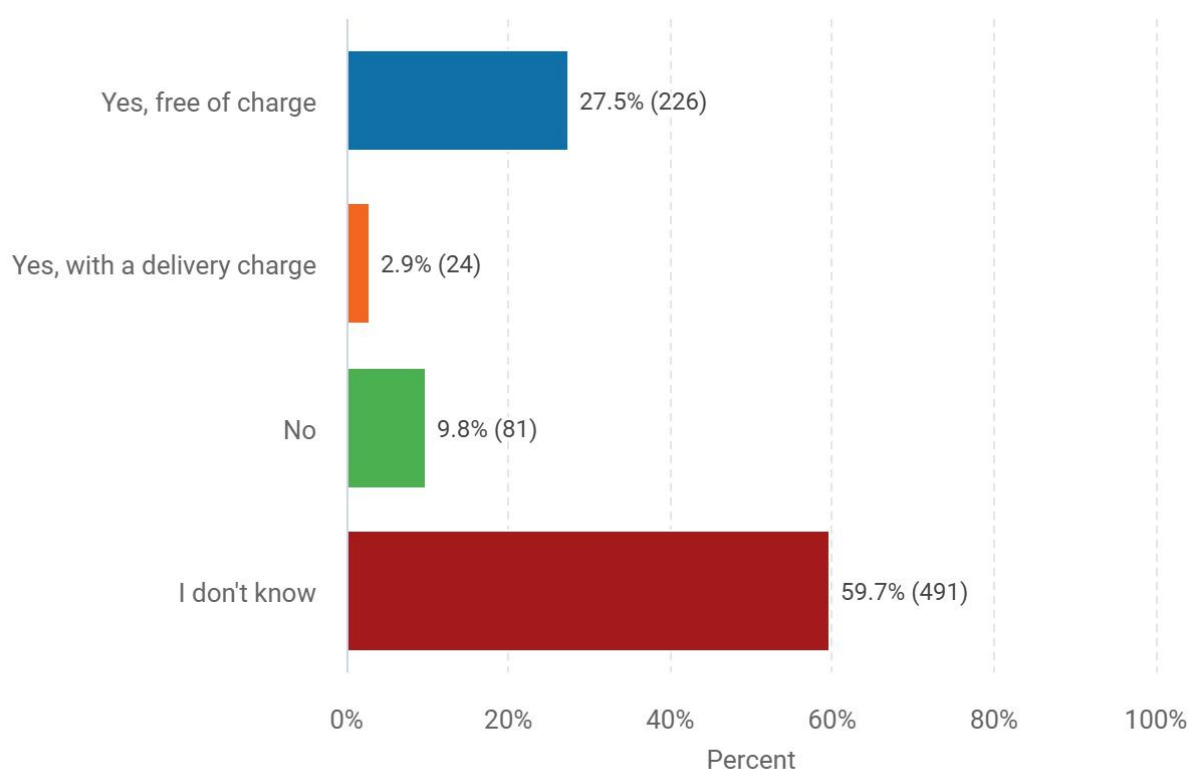
People tell us they sometimes have to return to the pharmacy multiple times and it can take weeks to get all the items.

Others told us they called around different pharmacies to see if they had the stock needed. People who had multiple items on one prescription said the electronic prescription system made it harder to 'shop around for the missing items' as a new prescription had to be created by the practice so that items could be issued separately – creating extra work for the resident, GP practice and different pharmacies involved.

A small amount of feedback suggested having prescriptions delivered removed the worry about stock and could be received sooner than if collecting.

**Sending notifications about when a prescription is ready** was felt to be a useful addition to text and app communications. People who ring to check their prescription is fully dispensed before collecting don't have the inconvenience of multiple visits but being able to access this detail online or on the app would be helpful.

**Q15. Does your pharmacy deliver prescriptions to your home if you are unable to collect them? (822 responses)**



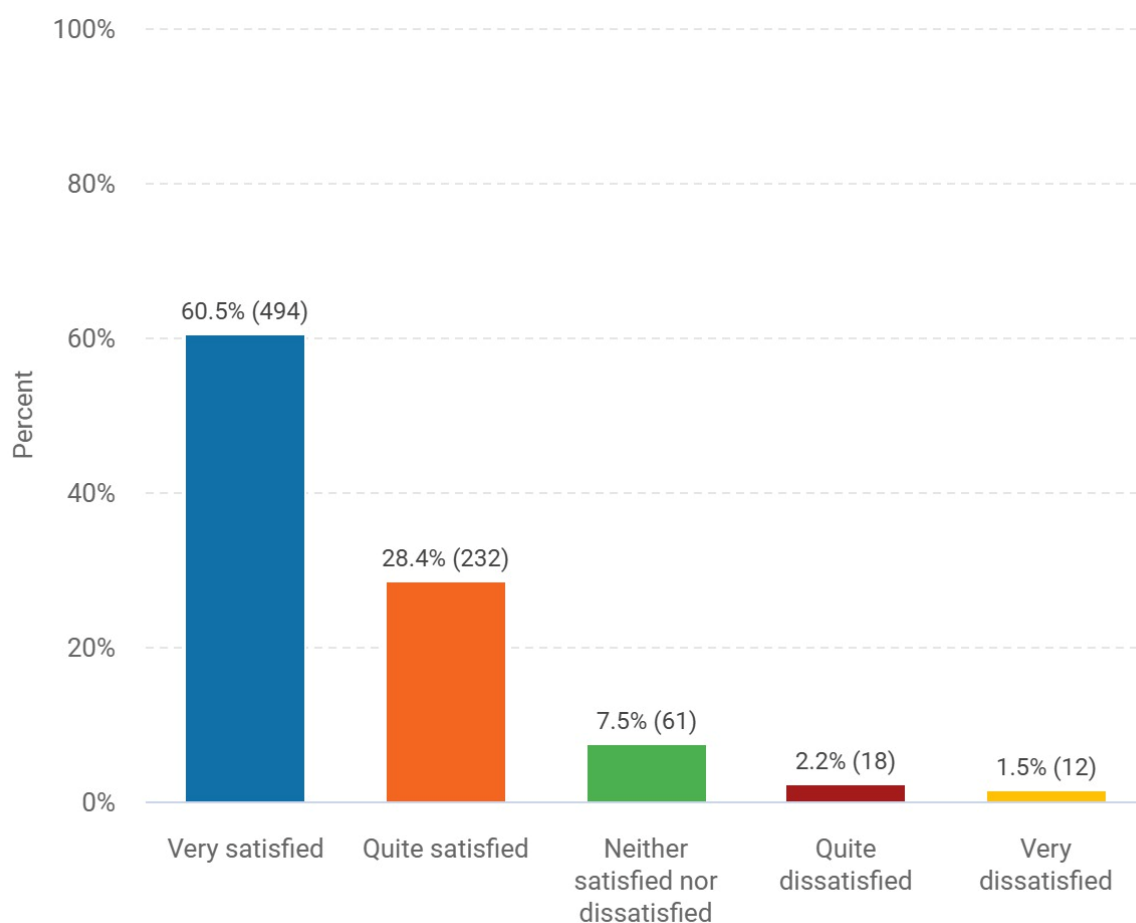
Feedback suggests a difference in access to free delivery in different areas of North Tyneside:

- North West 36.9%
- Wallsend 47.9%
- North Shields/Tynemouth 20.9%
- Whitley Bay 32.0%

The high percentage who 'Don't know' about delivery suggests an opportunity to promote this service.

A few people said they would appreciate free delivery. Some who use delivery services said that on occasion they have been asked to collect when their pharmacy was unable to deliver or when delivery failed when no one was home.

**Q16. Overall, how satisfied are you with access to prescriptions?** (817 responses)



Almost 90% of respondents are 'Very satisfied' or 'Quite satisfied' with their access to prescriptions.



Within the free text comments of all responses people highlighted:

- That the process from seeing the GP or ordering a repeat prescription to receiving the complete prescription **takes longer than it used to**.
- **Choice of how you order a repeat prescription** is important. Many people like the option to order online or via an app. Some people feel pressured to move online and are unable/unwilling to do this and prefer to take their prescription slip in person to the practice or use the automated phone line.
- We heard about the benefits of **text and app notifications** from pharmacies, both from those who appreciated being kept informed and people who wished they were. Communication certainly appears to ease the process. Having said that there were instances where there was mismatch between a notification, or the lack of one, and the reality which caused frustration.
- People also told us about **stock problems**, suggesting that improvements in the system could help; for example, greater communication between pharmacies and giving pharmacists more freedom to prescribe alternatives.

## Getting advice

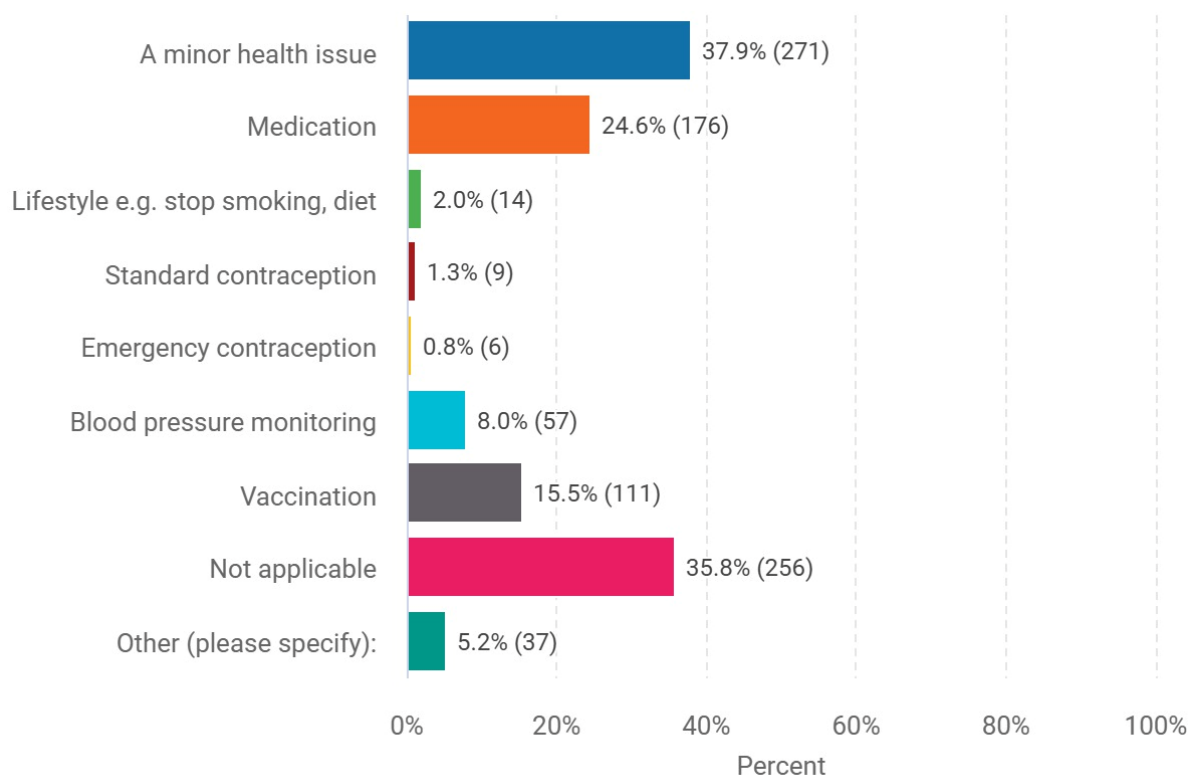
### Q17. Have you had a consultation with a pharmacist or asked their advice within the last 12 months? (810 responses)

On average, 54.7% of respondents had consulted with their pharmacist in the last 12 months but responses varied significantly across the areas of North Tyneside. The data from North Shields/Tynemouth may be different due to the way the survey was distributed to a wider population in that area.

Area	Yes, had consultation or advice	No, not had consultation or advice
North West	72.3%	27.7%
Wallsend	63.0%	37.0%
North Shields/ Tynemouth	48.6%	51.4%
Whitley Bay	57.0%	43.0%

### Q18. What were you seeking advice about? (715 responses)

People could select as many responses as were applicable.

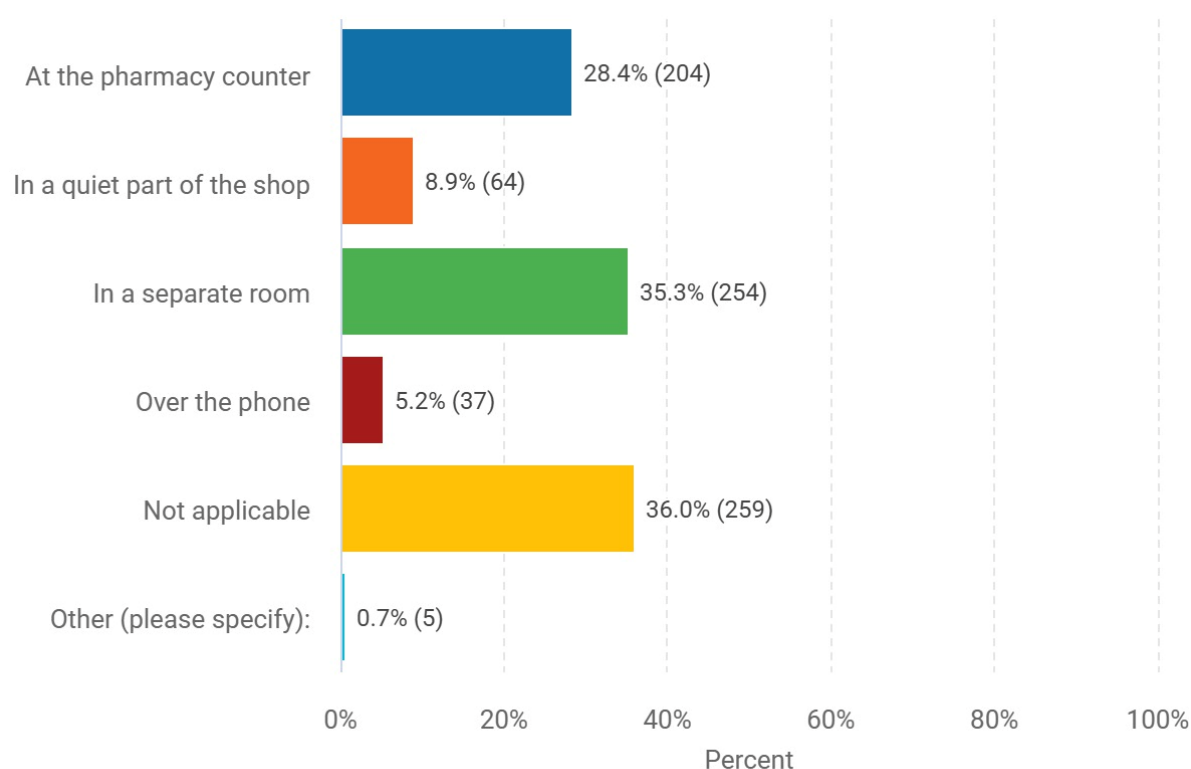


'Other' responses included:

Minor health issue including infections	19	Referred by NHS111 as no GP available/out of hours	2
Medication	1	Blood pressure	1
Children's health	3	Long term condition	1
Vaccination	2	Ear syringe	1
Vitamins	1		

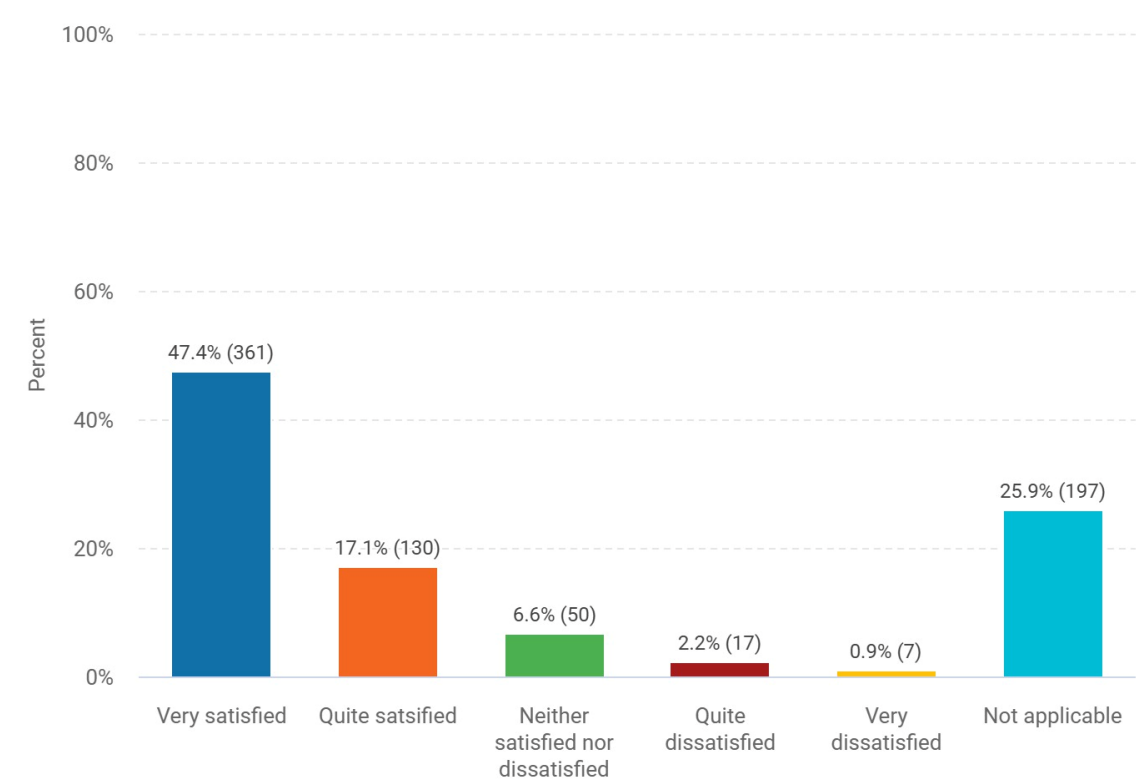
### Q19. Where did you have your consultations with the pharmacist? (719 responses)

People could select as many responses as were applicable.



The only notable 'Other' response involved the assistant relaying the issue to the pharmacist rather than the pharmacist coming in person.

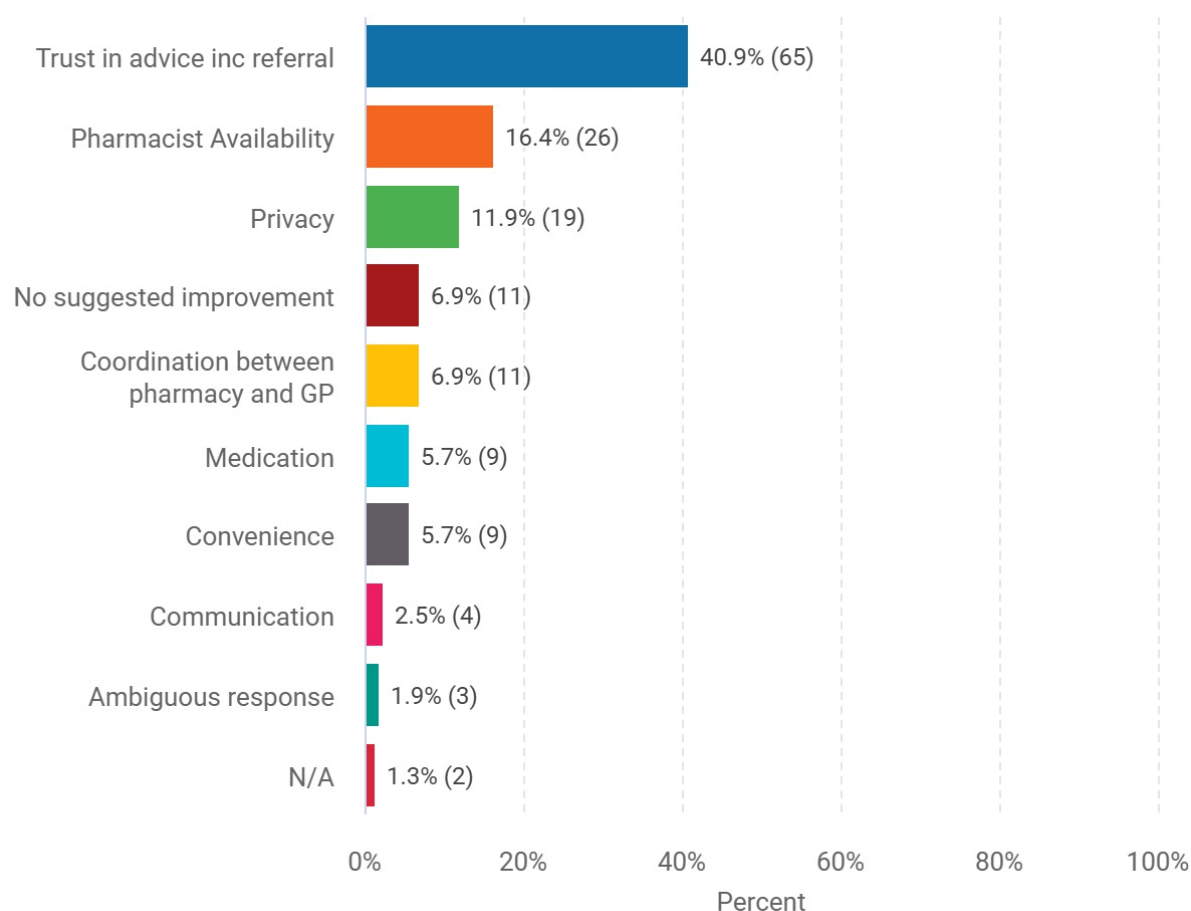
**Q20. How satisfied are you with access to advice from a pharmacist?**  
(762 responses)



The graph is skewed by the large number of ‘Not applicable’ responses. Removing these increases the percentage values significantly, raising the figure for ‘Very satisfied’ from 47.4% to 63.9%.

Very satisfied	361	63.9%
Quite satisfied	130	23.0%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	50	8.8%
Quite dissatisfied	17	3.0%
Very dissatisfied	7	1.2%

126 respondents made additional comments about what was important to them with regard to taking advice from a pharmacist. Our analysis of these free text comments are categorised and totalled below:



There was a lot of positive feedback about people's experiences of getting advice, including:

"The pharmacist was very thorough, very informative and I found the service excellent."

"They can give an answer to the majority of questions, if they can't they will tell us where to go for the answer."

"The pharmacist is always available for health advice. I have waited a maximum of 5 minutes and I often prefer to do this than book an appointment with the GP as they are very knowledgeable and helpful."

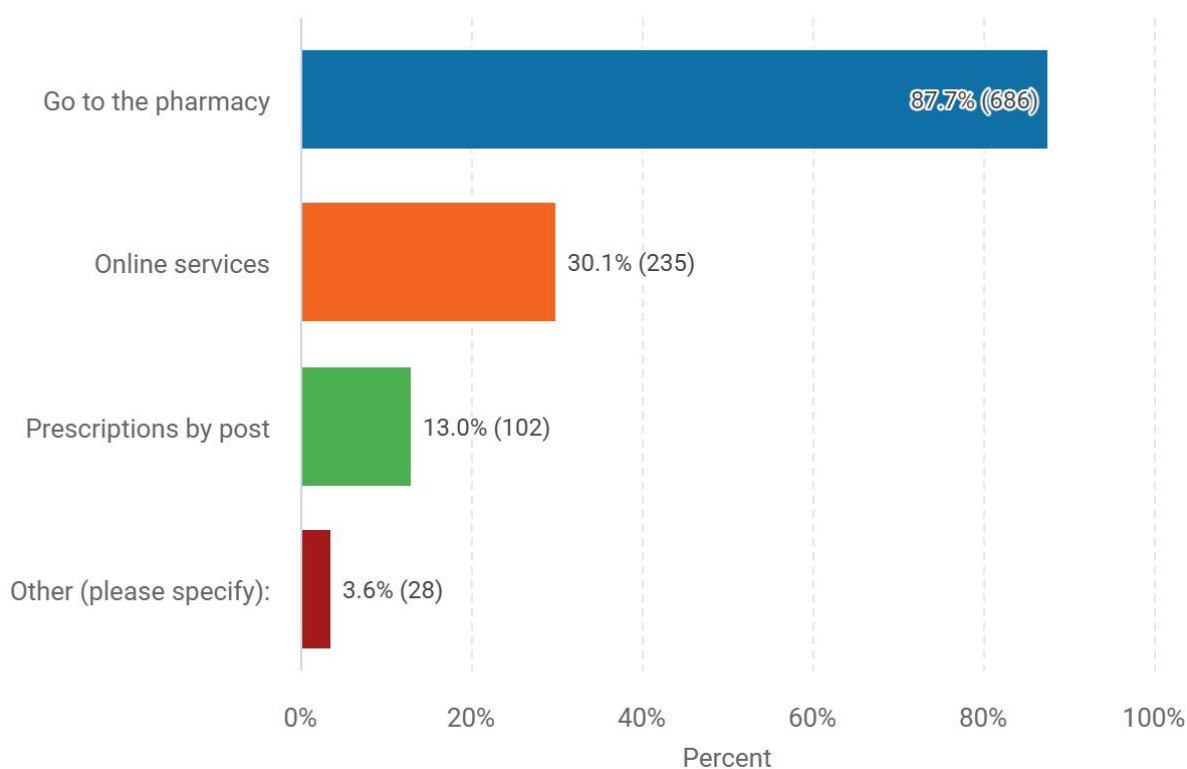
"No matter how busy they are they never turn you away and always happy to help."

In the free text people also commented on:

- The need for privacy to discuss some issues – comments that some pharmacies do not have adequate private space.
- A small number of people said they were less confident in the pharmacists' medical knowledge and ability to spot issues.
- People suggested they would like to be able to book an appointment with a pharmacist to get advice rather than waiting. It appears some pharmacies currently offer this.
- A small number of people were frustrated with pharmacy closures over lunch time and that being a barrier to access.

**Q21. How would you like to access pharmacy services in the future?** (782 responses)

People could select as many responses as were applicable.



The majority of 'Other' responses were about delivery (17), although a mix of options, app and telephone consultations were also noted.

**Q22. Use this space to tell us what services you would like pharmacies to provide in the future or what could improve pharmacy services.** (266 responses)

The following suggestions were made about possible future services or extensions to service:

- Text alerts for progress of prescriptions
- Pharmacies directly prescribing medication, including antibiotics
- Wound checks prior to attending A&E
- Routine tests that may otherwise require a hospital visit
- Blood testing
- Cholesterol and allergy checks
- Wound dressing
- B12 injections
- More health leaflets including for self checks
- Personalised online information
- Social prescribing
- Use of volunteers to support staffing
- Opportunity to pick up prescriptions out of hours e.g. locker
- Sharps collection
- Prescriptions by post
- Free home delivery
- Ways to reduce drug waste, particularly from repeat prescriptions that are not needed
- Recycling facilities for tablet blister packs
- A nurse attending for certain tasks
- Retired nurses to give health advice

Possible areas of improvement included:

- Better communication regarding prescription processing – including options for reminders about ordering repeat prescriptions, and calls or alerts when items are out of stock.
- Addressing issues with stock availability. Feedback that problems with stock can cause delays at the counter.
- Interest in broader range of stock.
- More trained pharmacists and extra staffing at busy times
- Fast track or self-check out to manage prescription queues



- Access to consistent information and signposting about which services are available, where and when, including out of hours emergency dispensing.
- Interest in more flexible opening, including lunchtime, evening and weekend.
- Coordination across similar and linked services e.g. other pharmacies, GP surgery, hospital pharmacies, NHS111. For example:  
hospital prescriptions can only be dispensed in hospital pharmacies. Having the option for more routine medications to be dispensed in the community could speed up discharge. Sharing information across systems would facilitate prescription changes.

In addition, a number of concerns were expressed:

- Uncertainty about the services pharmacies are able to provide, both from customers and services. Evidence that people are gradually finding out about services on offer as their needs arise. Sometimes this is a result of difficulty accessing (real or perceived) a GP appointment.
- Some feeling that only minor issues should be taken to the pharmacist. Important to reinforce messages regarding appropriate issues for consultation.
- Concern about extra pressure on pharmacies when GP waiting rooms appear empty. Reports of long queues and staff being constantly stretched.
- Some pharmacies lack space to provide additional services.
- Keeping a focus on accessibility – remembering the needs of those who are older, less mobile and more vulnerable, and most likely to require pharmacy services. In addition, retaining face to face options as well as offering other choices including online. Ensuring wheelchair accessibility and seating.
- Concern about pharmacy closures and the impact on access. Some customers who were able to walk to the pharmacy now have to find transport. Preference expressed for pharmacies located near GPs and in shopping centres.
- Concern over privacy, not just about having to explain an issue but also having to confirm address over the counter to receive the prescription. Confirming date of birth or phone number was suggested as an alternative, or writing down the address.
- Feeling that more responsibility is being placed on the customer when there are stock issues.

**Q23. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the pharmacy that you use or pharmacy services in general? (244 responses)**

There was a clear feeling that people appreciate their local pharmacy and the services it provides. Pharmacies are regarded as a friendly and safe place where people can walk in off the street to access professional advice and support.

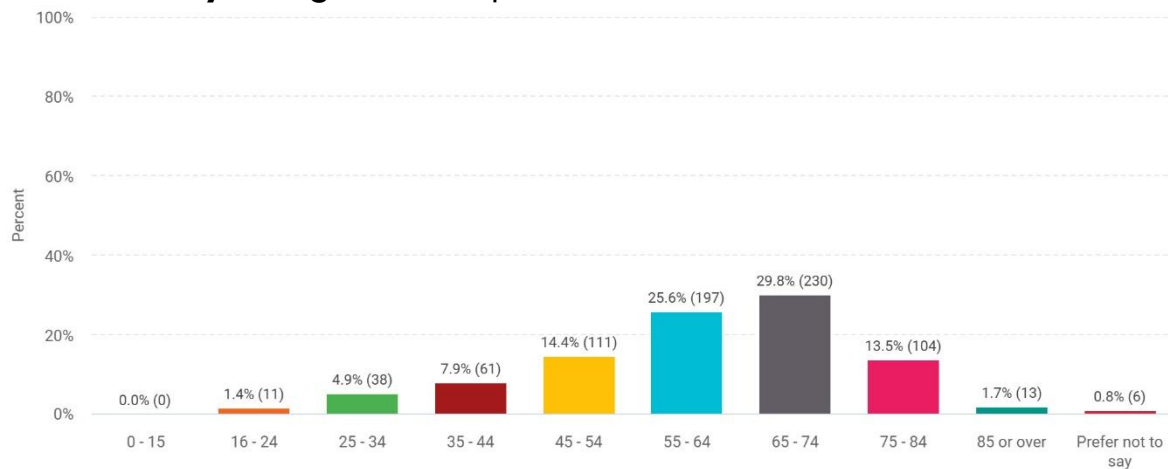
However, there are significant concerns that the addition of extra services, that can be critical for those struggling to access support elsewhere, could undermine the level and quality of service available at the pharmacy.

"Keep the small friendly local pharmacy as it's very important to the area to have a safe place to go."

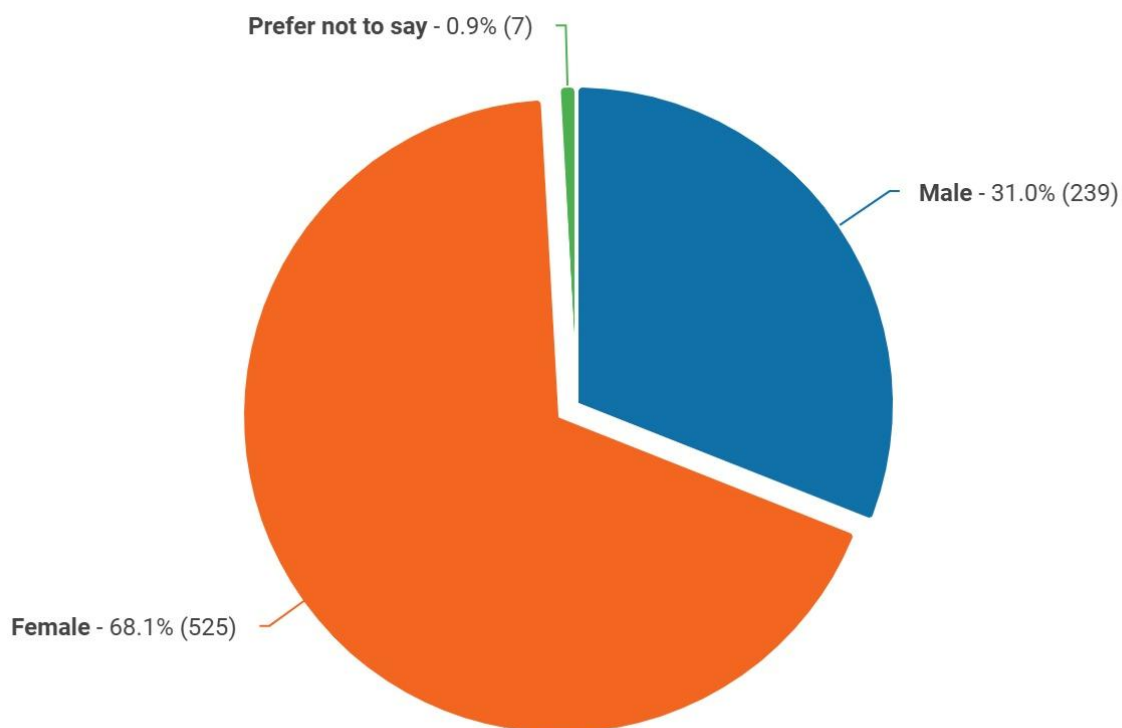
"The pharmacy is very precious and must be protected at all costs"

## Annex 1 – Demographics

### Q25. What is your age? (771 responses)



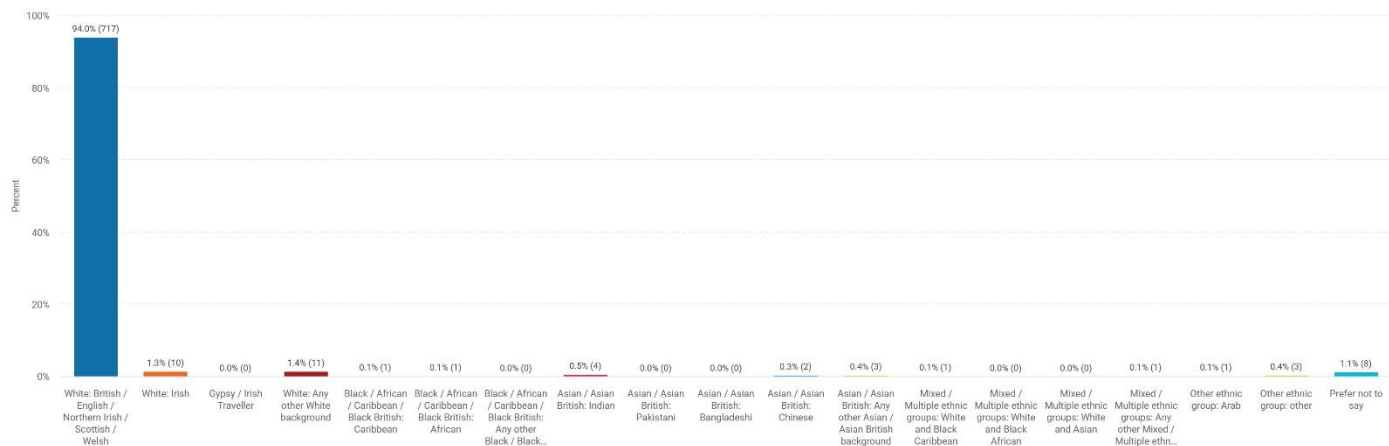
### Q26. What is your sex? (771 responses)



### Q27. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? (765 responses)

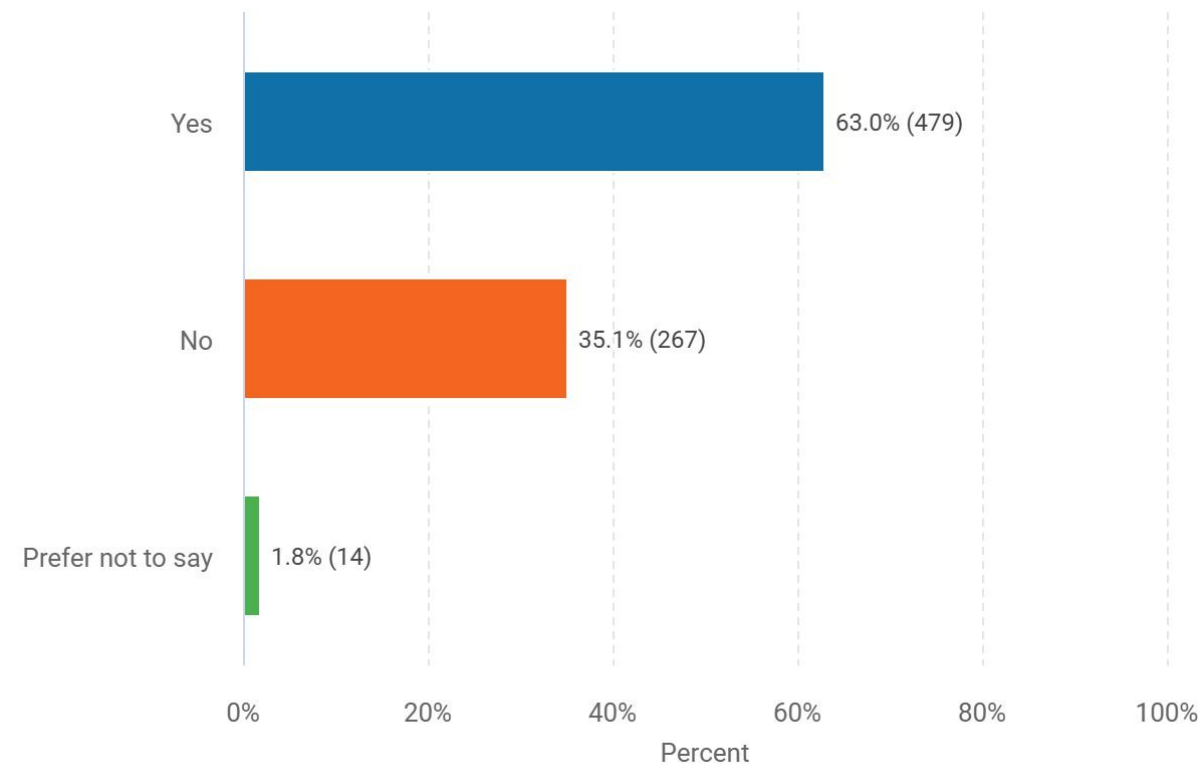
98.7% (755) identified their gender as the same as their sex registered at birth. 0.7% (5) identified it as different and 0.7% (5) chose not to say.

Q28. What is your ethnic group? (763 responses)

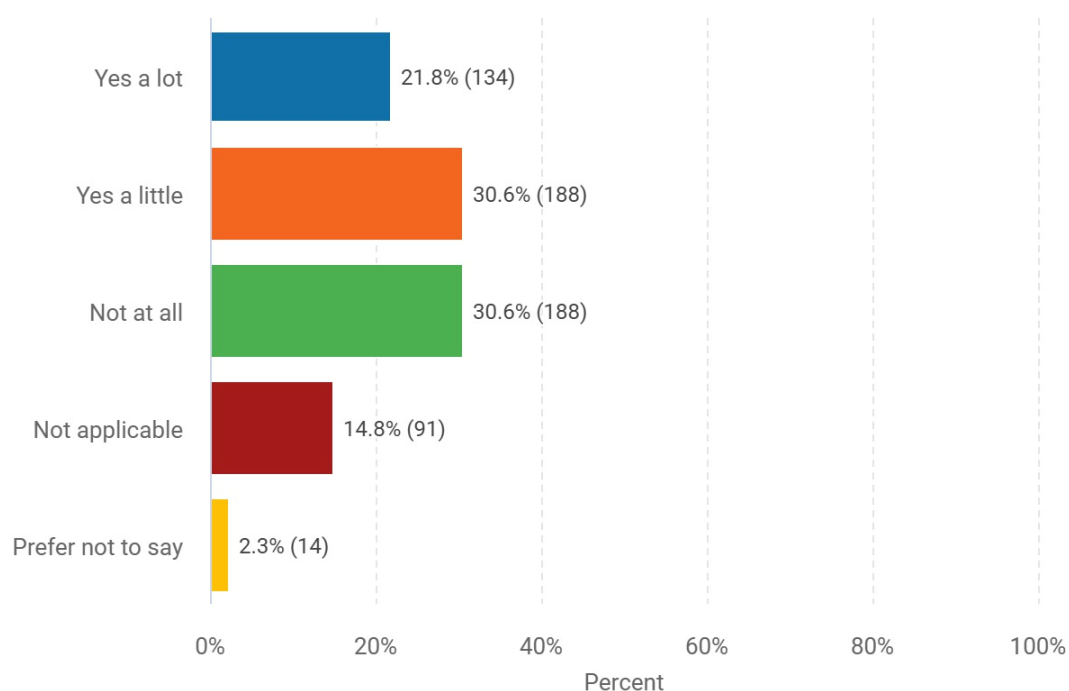


94.0% (717) respondents classed themselves as ‘White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh’.

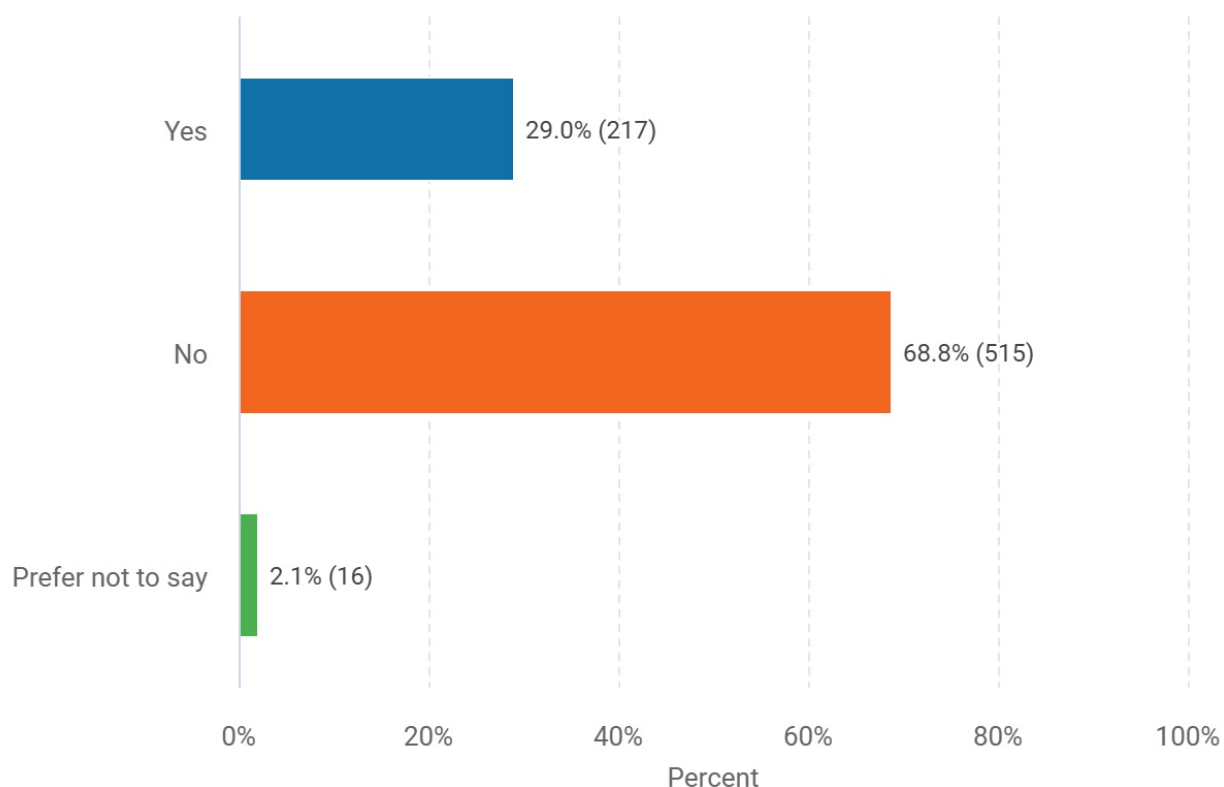
Q29. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more? (760 responses)



**Q30. If yes, do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities? (615 responses)**



**Q31. Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age?(exclude anything you do as part of your paid employment) (748 responses)**





Healthwatch North Tyneside  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Wallsend Community Hub and Library  
16 The Forum  
Wallsend  
NE28 8JR

[www.hwnt.co.uk](http://www.hwnt.co.uk)  
t: 0191 263 5321  
e: [info@hwnt.co.uk](mailto:info@hwnt.co.uk)  
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