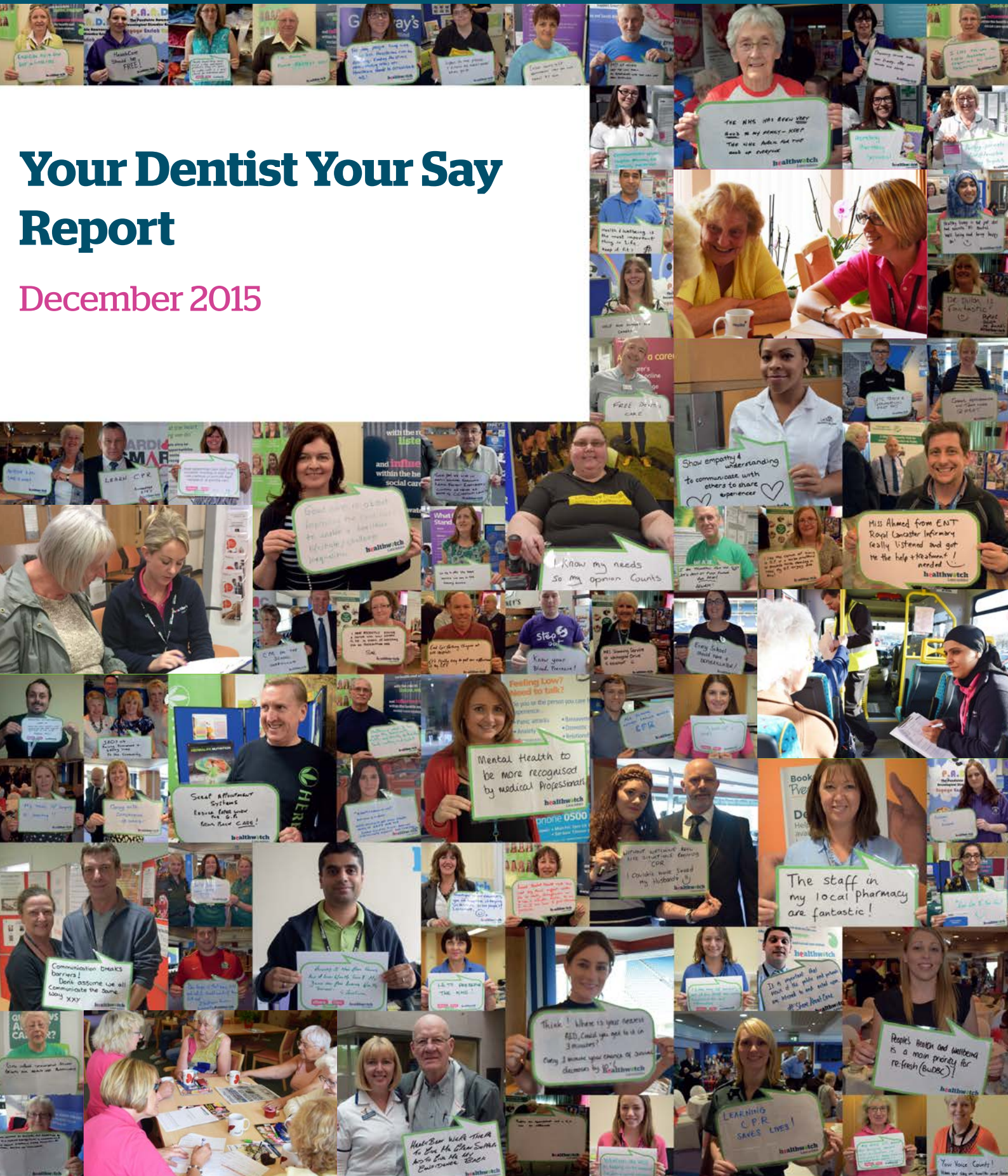


Your Dentist Your Say Report

December 2015



V26

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Introduction and context

NHS dental services in Lancashire are commissioned by NHS England.

In July and August 2015 Healthwatch Lancashire undertook a research study with residents of Lancashire to identify issues relating to access to NHS dental services.

The remit of the research was to engage with local residents across Lancashire with a short survey to find out whether or not people are registered with a NHS dentist and to identify how people would like to be able to access dental services in the future.

This research has been conducted with the aim to share the findings with NHS England and those who manage and run dental services so that it can help inform future commissioning decisions and dental service provision.

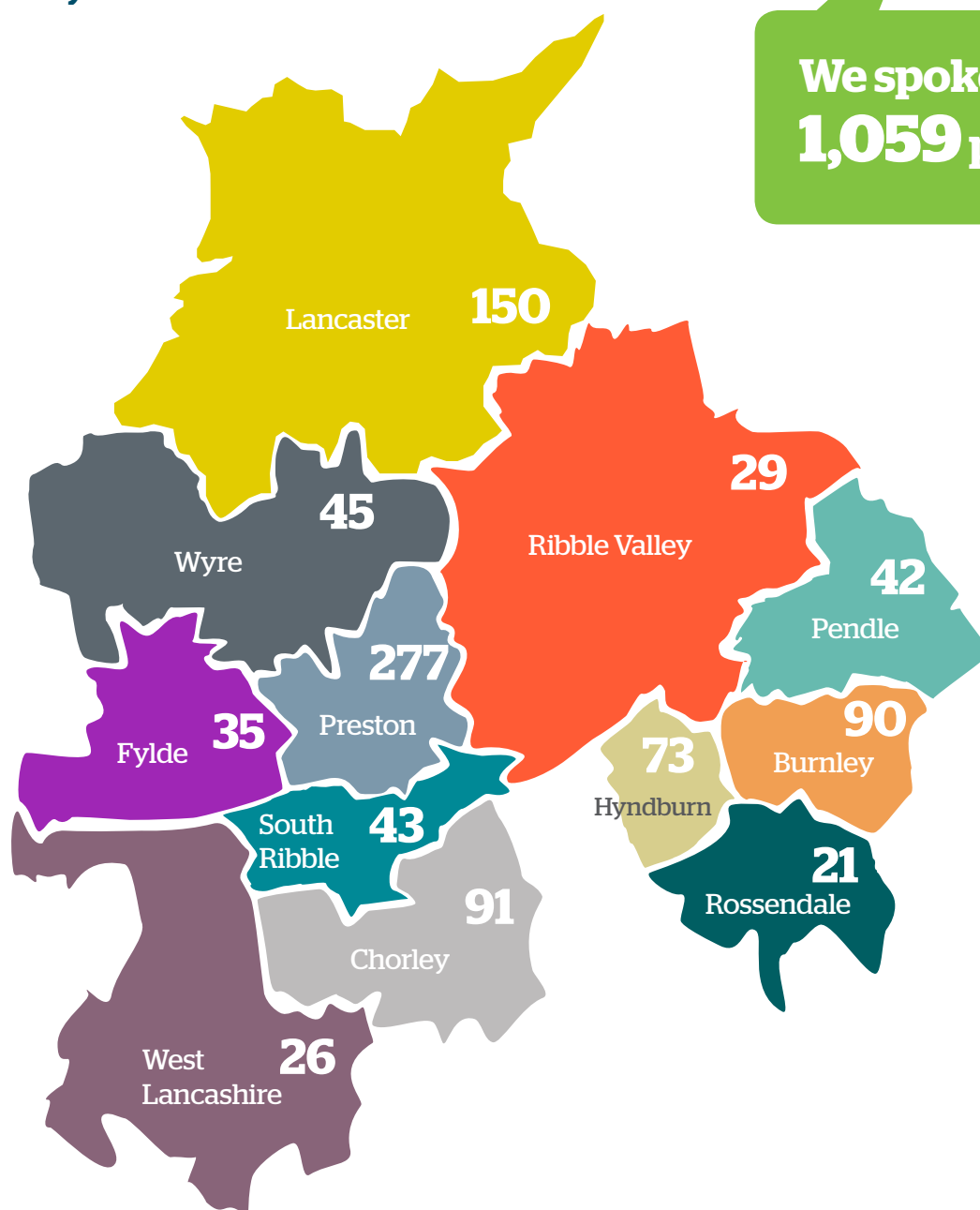
Methodology

This study was undertaken by Healthwatch Lancashire staff and volunteers in a variety of locations in Lancashire at public events, in GP practices, hospitals, pharmacies and with community groups.

The survey was also made available to complete on the Healthwatch Lancashire website and was supported by communications activity which received coverage in regional newspapers, radio and social media.



Responses by location



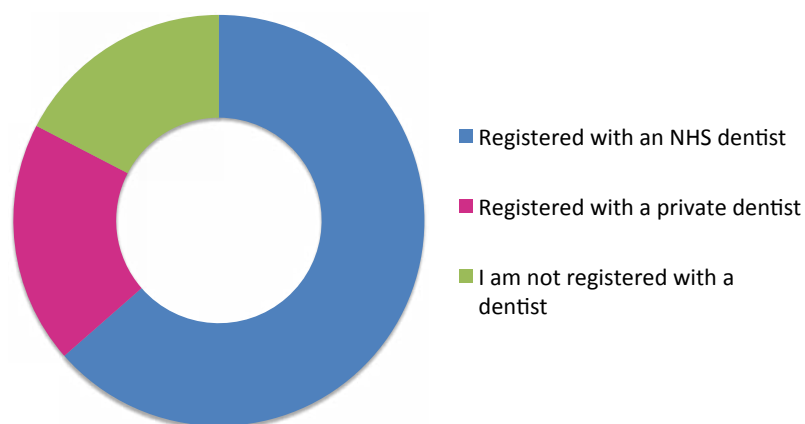
Region	Responses
Blackburn with Darwen	69
Blackpool	64
Burnley	90
Chorley	91
Fylde	35
Hyndburn	73
Lancaster	150
Pendle	42

Region	Responses
Preston	277
Ribble Valley	29
Rossendale	21
South Ribble	43
Undisclosed	4
West Lancashire	26
Wyre	45
Total	1,059

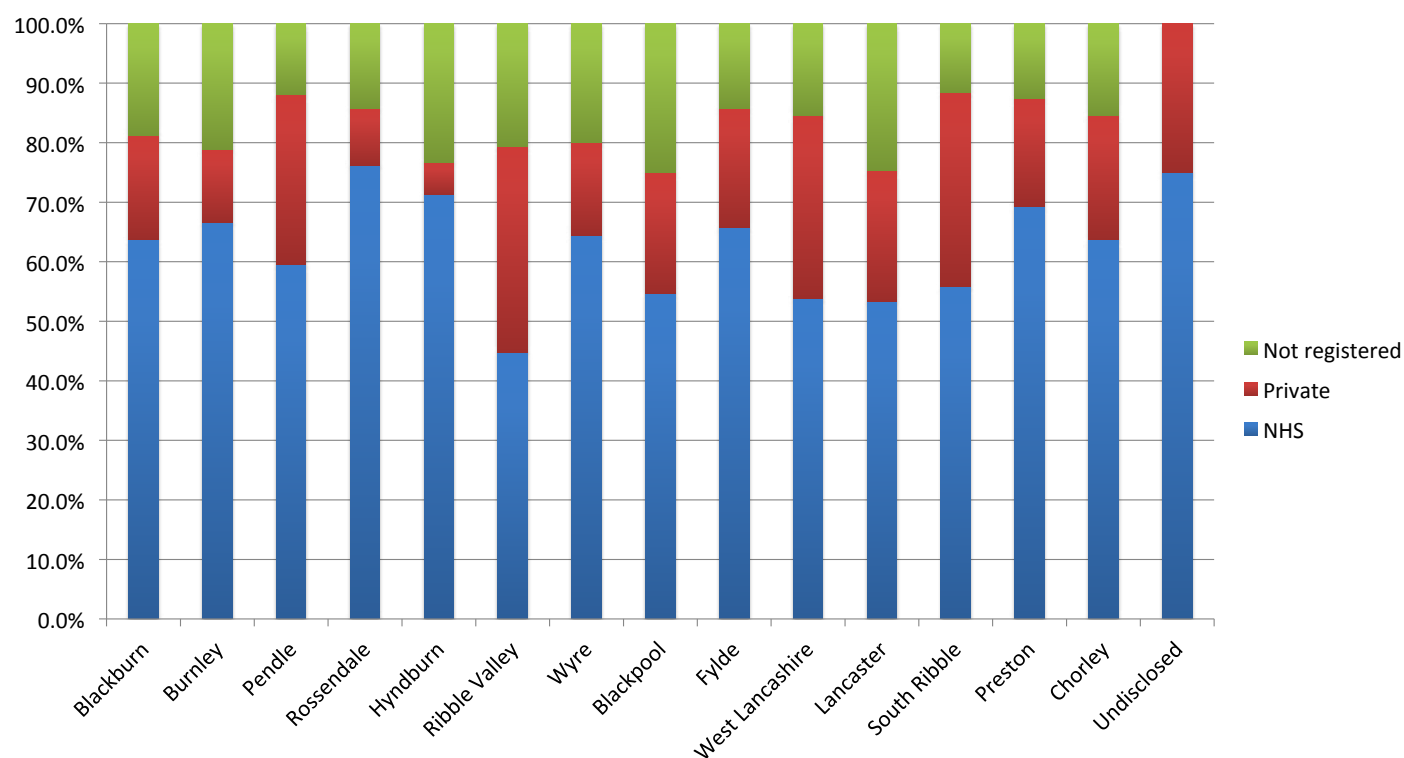
Registration with a dentist

We asked all participants if they were registered with a NHS dentist, a private dentist or whether they were not registered.

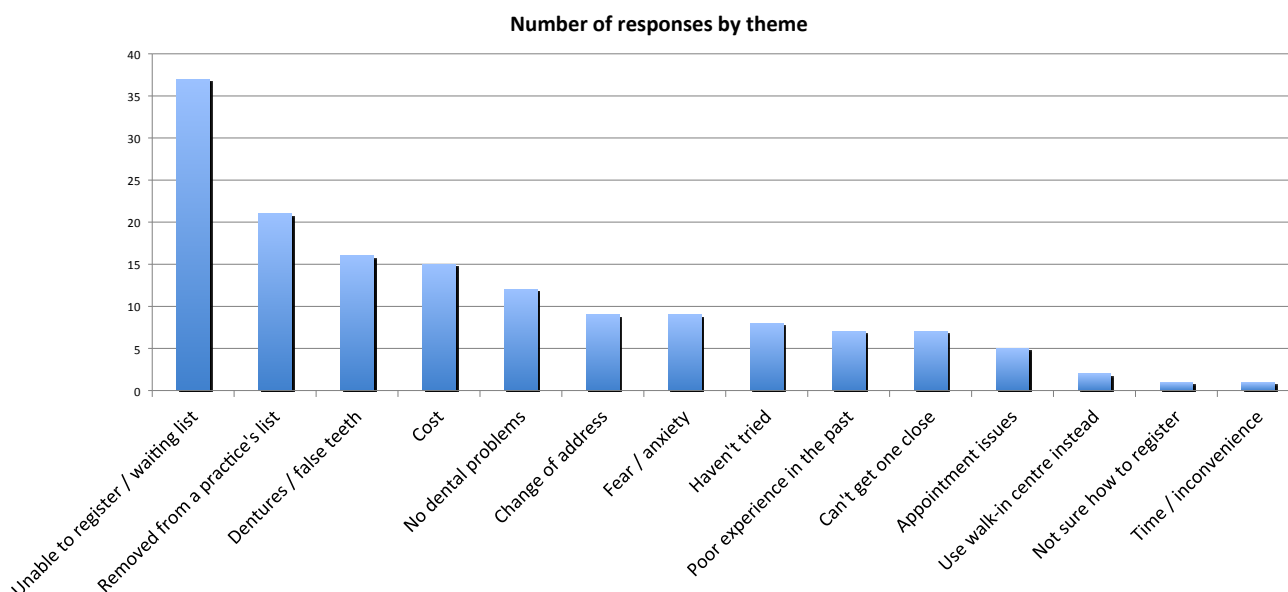
Registered with an NHS dentist	63%
Registered with a private dentist	19%
I am not registered with a dentist	18%



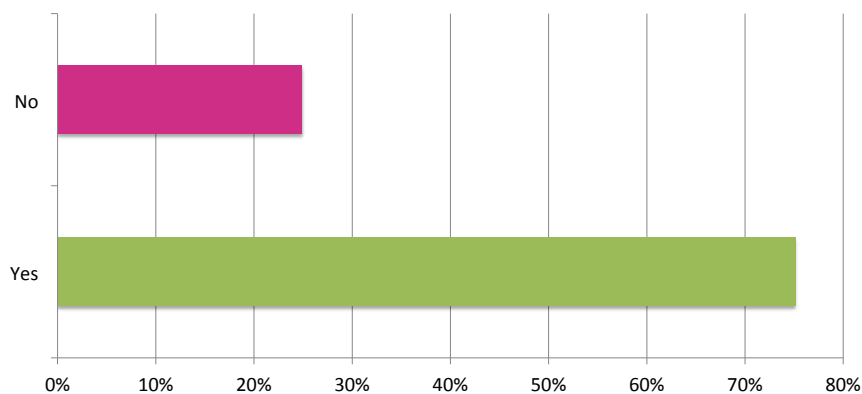
The chart below shows the responses by location to the question **“Are you registered with a NHS dentist, private dentist or not registered?”**



Those who said that they were not registered with a dentist were asked **'Why are you not registered with a dentist?'** The chart below shows the responses segmented into themes.

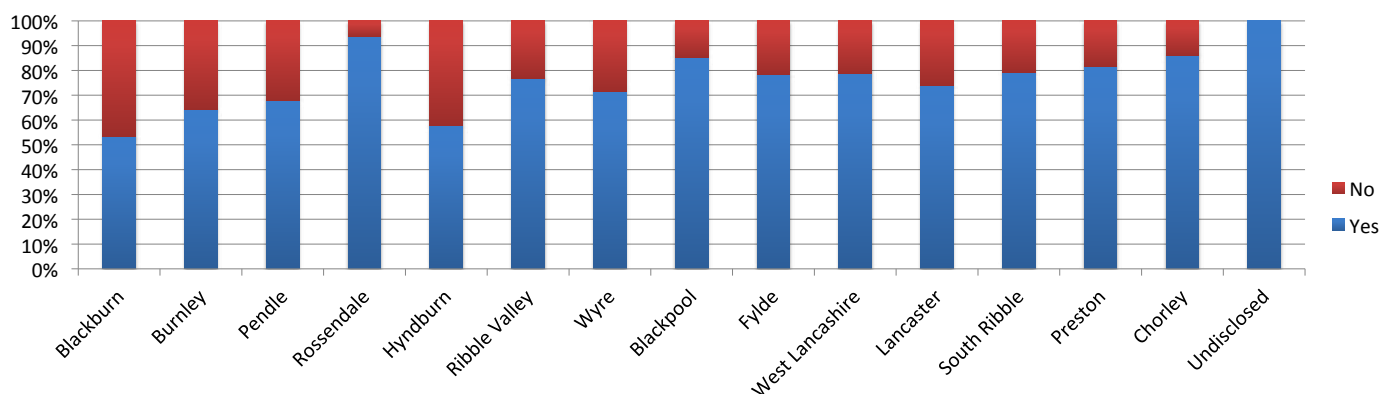


Those who said that they were registered with a NHS dentist were asked **'Do you normally pay for NHS treatment?'** The chart below shows the responses.



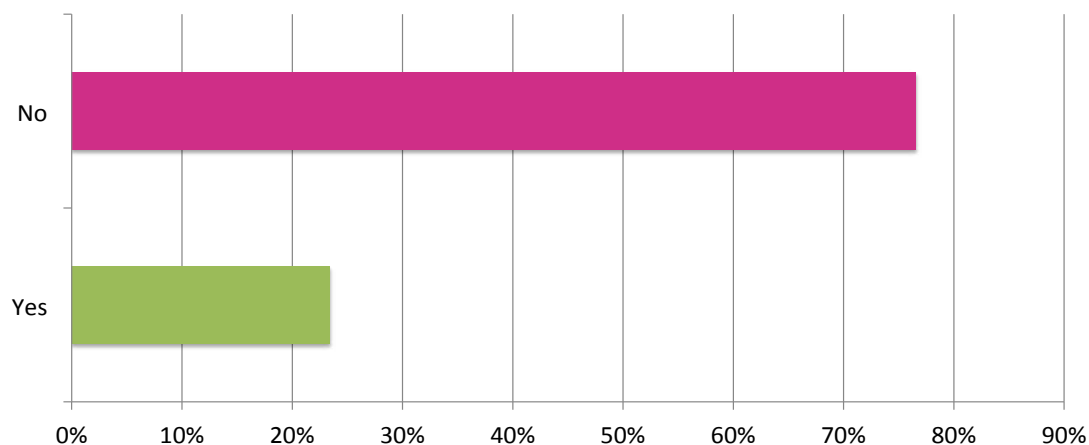
	Responses	%
Yes	496	74.9%
No	166	25.1%

The chart below shows the responses by location to whether or not they pay for NHS treatment.

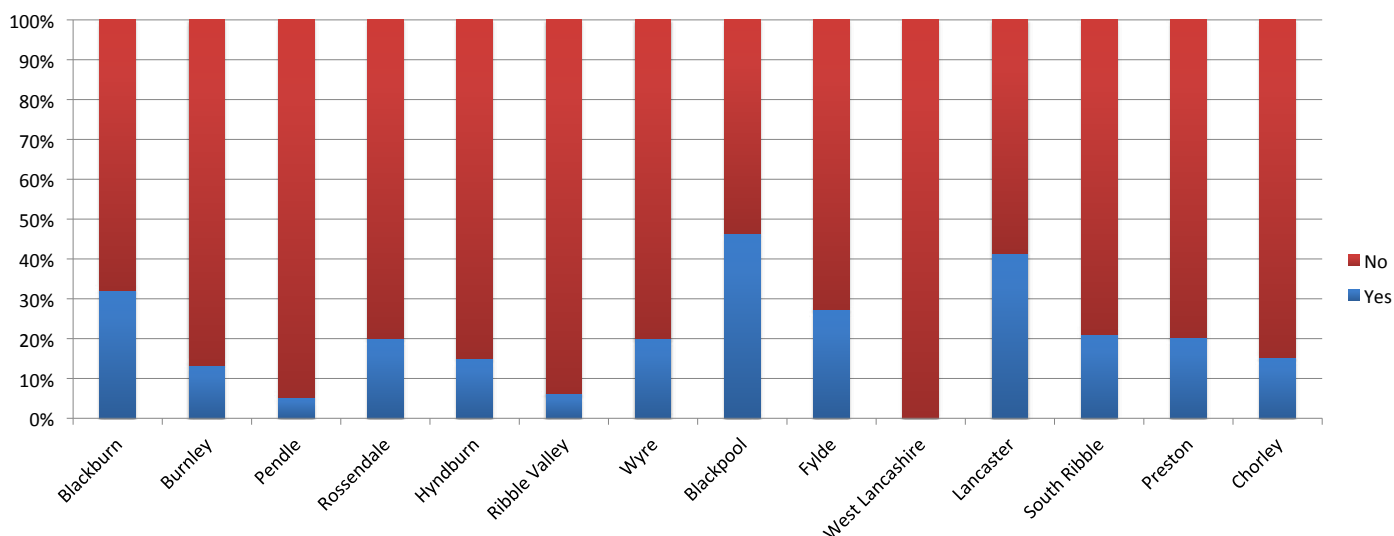


Accessing NHS dental services

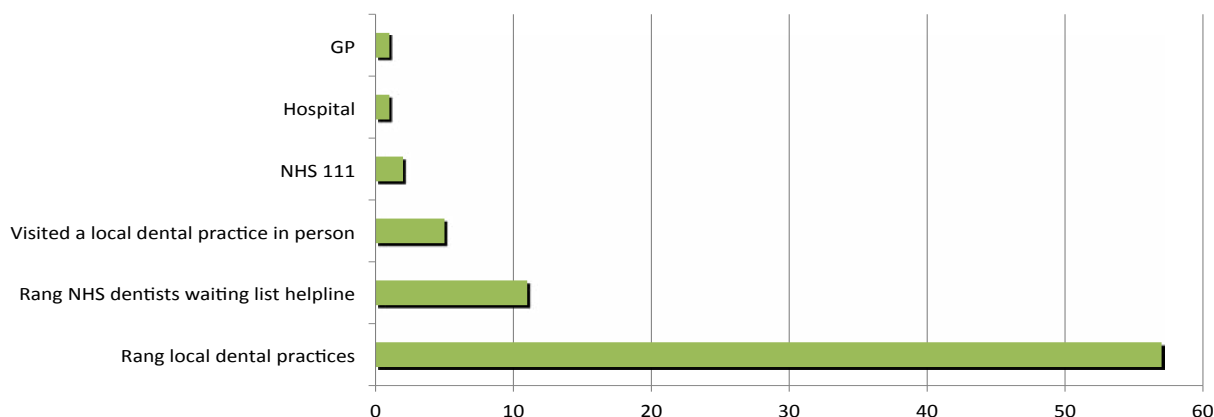
We asked those who were 'Registered with a private dentist' and those 'Not registered with a dentist':
Have you tried to get NHS dental treatment in the past 12 months but were unsuccessful?



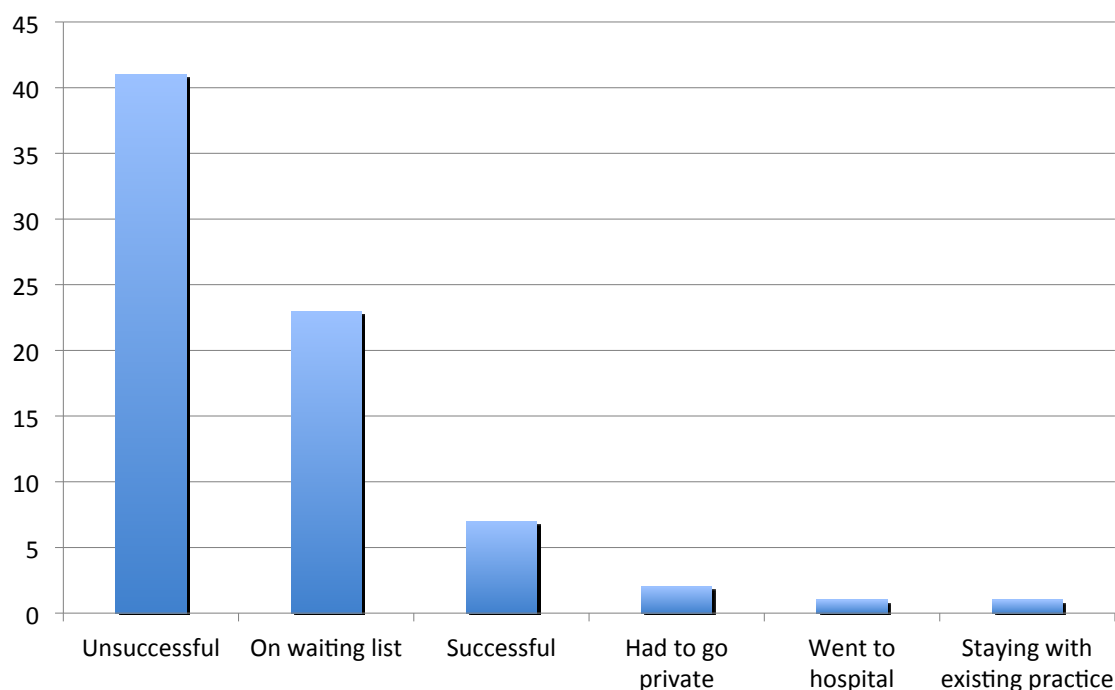
The chart below shows the responses to the question **Have you tried to get NHS dental treatment in the past 12 months but were unsuccessful?** by location.



Those who answered 'Yes' were asked **How did you try to do this?** The chart below shows the number of responses for each method.



We asked those who answered 'Yes' to 'Attempting to get NHS treatment in the past 12 months': **What the outcome?** The chart below shows the number of responses categorised into themes.



Here are some of the responses we received relating to the outcome of trying to get a NHS dentist in the past 12 months:

“Took 12 months to get a NHS dentist, in the meantime I had to go to a private practice.”

“They said they don’t accept disabled people as the surgery was upstairs.”

“They referred me to two dentists, one of which was in my area so I went to this one.”

“No outcome and I am still waiting for a NHS dentist.”

“Not very helpful, advised to wait and put name on a waiting list.”

“Told there is a long waiting list.”

“Charges similar to private so decided to stay with existing practice. No cost advantage.”

“Put on the waiting list but haven’t heard anything.”

“Dentist allocated was 15 miles away, much too far for me to travel.”

“Got appointment quickly.”

“Could not find anywhere and have been waiting for six months.”

“Gave up.”

“Long waiting list and nothing near to me.”

“I went to the hospital who sent me to an emergency dentist.”

“Long waiting list and ones available I had to travel long distance.”

“Been on a waiting list for 12 months now.”

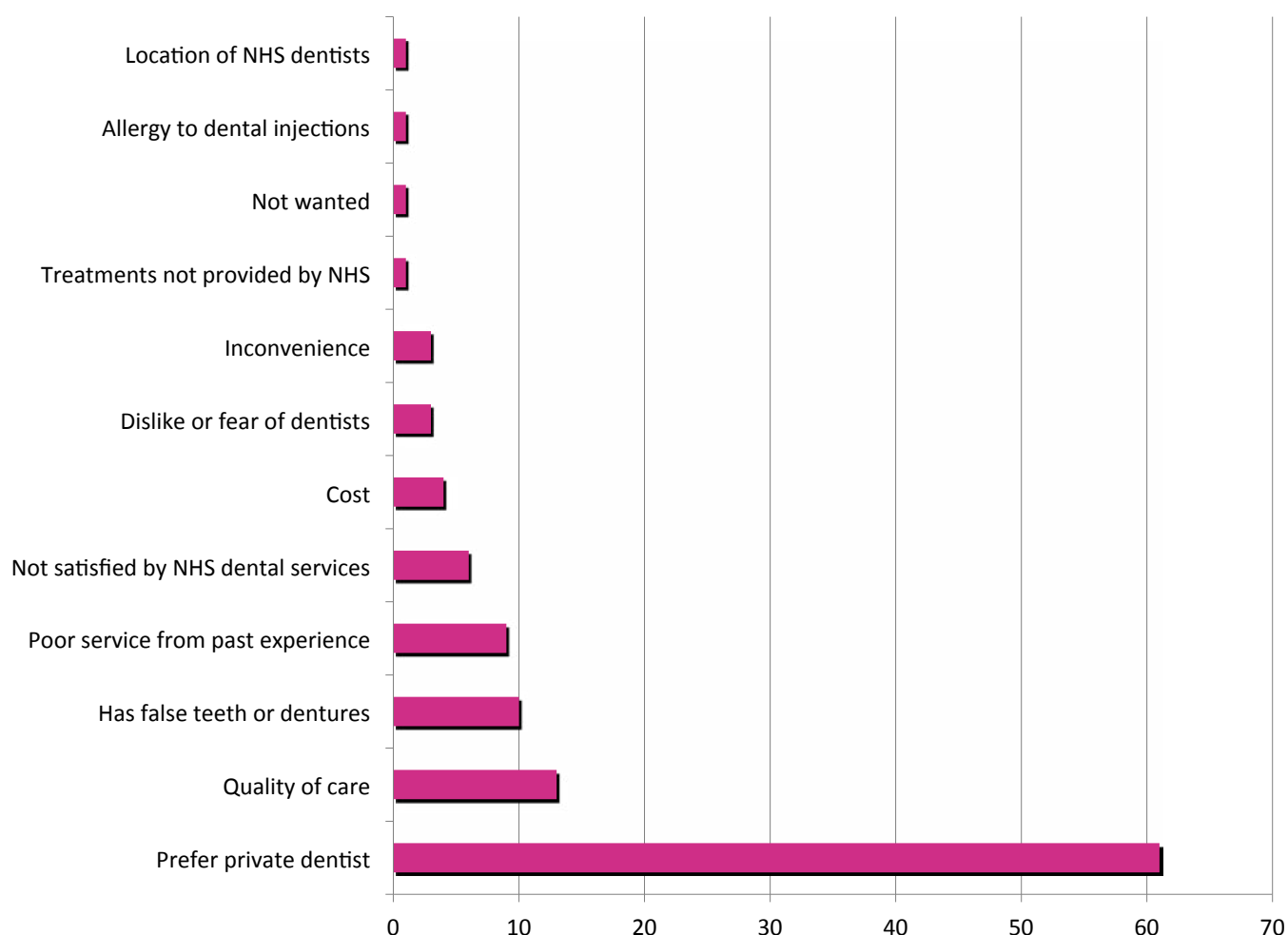
“Had to use a private dentist.”

We asked those who were registered with a private dentist and those not registered **Do you want to be registered with a NHS dentist?**

	Responses	%
Yes	157	50.2%
No	156	49.8%



We asked those who answered no to the question above **“Why don’t you want to be registered with a NHS dentist?”** The chart below shows the number of responses categorised by theme.



Below are some of the responses we received relating to why respondents did not want to be registered with a NHS dentist:

“Current dentist is excellent. Very much into preventative treatment and have been with him for 20 years. He was originally NHS.”

“Happy with service at current dentist.”

“I don’t think I need a dentist as I have dentures.”

“First class service with private dentist.”

“I’m petrified of dentists.”

“It suits me being private as I don’t want to go for regular appointments.”

“Happy with existing dentist, he turned private and I stayed with him.”

“Currently on a dental plan and am quite happy.”

“Unable to afford treatment.”

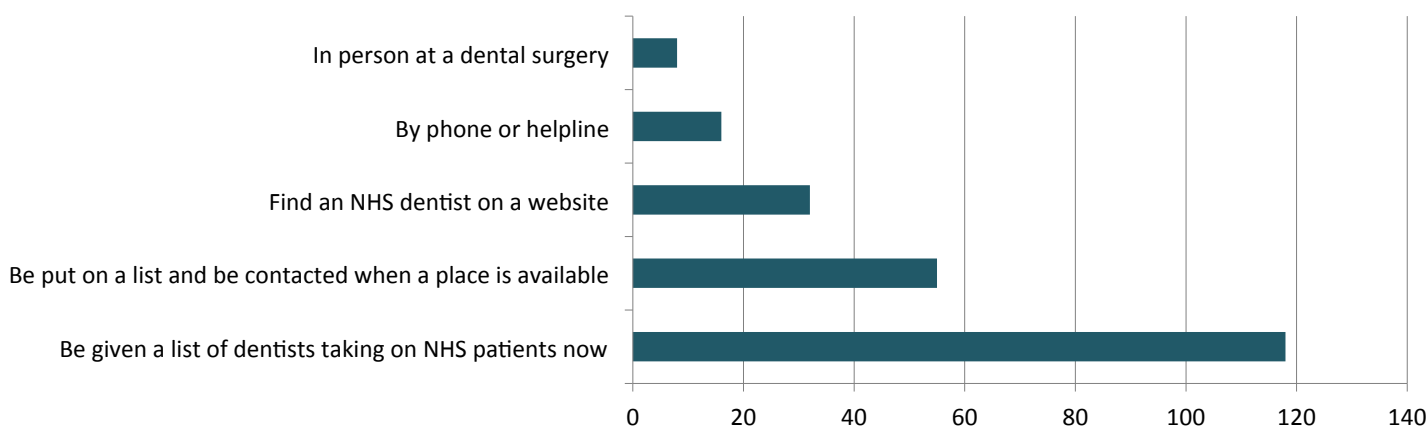
“No dentists close to my home.”

“Had a bad experience with a dentist on the NHS.”

“I would want a reliable service.”

“I’ve known my dentist for a long time.”

We asked those who were registered with a private dentist and those not registered **‘How would you like to find an NHS dentist?’** The chart below shows the number of responses to the question.



Additional comments were gathered when asking respondents **‘How would you like to find a NHS dentist?’** Here are some of the responses:

“Ideally I would prefer for my own dentist to return to being a NHS dentist.”

“Want one close by and want to contact them myself.”

“I would like to attend where my children go.”

“Would like a dentist who specialises in bridgework and re-alignment.”

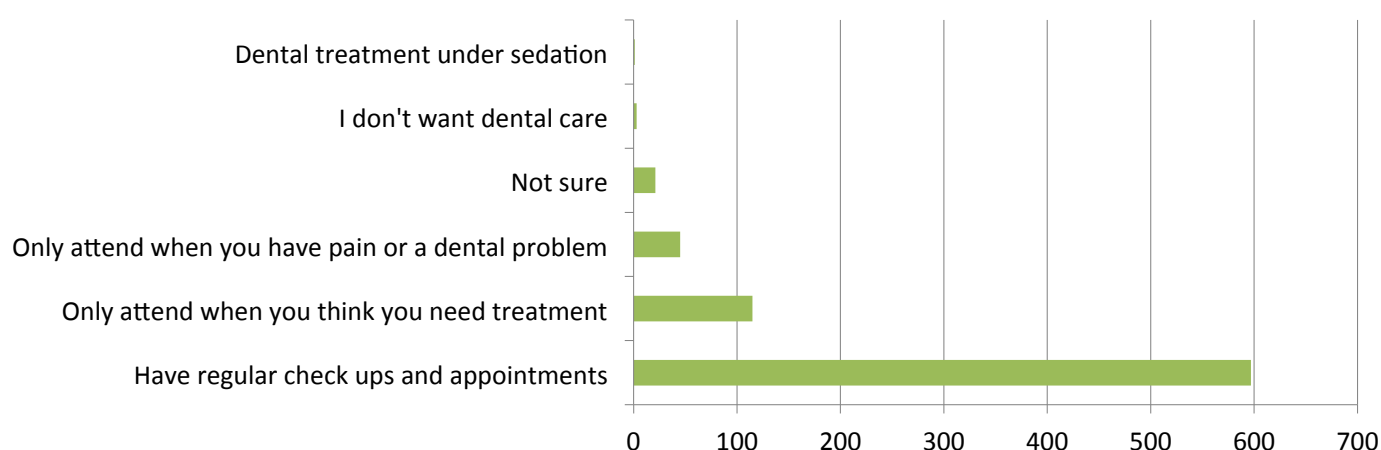
“It is important an online service can give you an appointment there and then.”

“All my family members have different dentists - it’s a real pain to travel between Lancaster and Morecambe. We should all be under one local dentist.”

Dental care and treatment

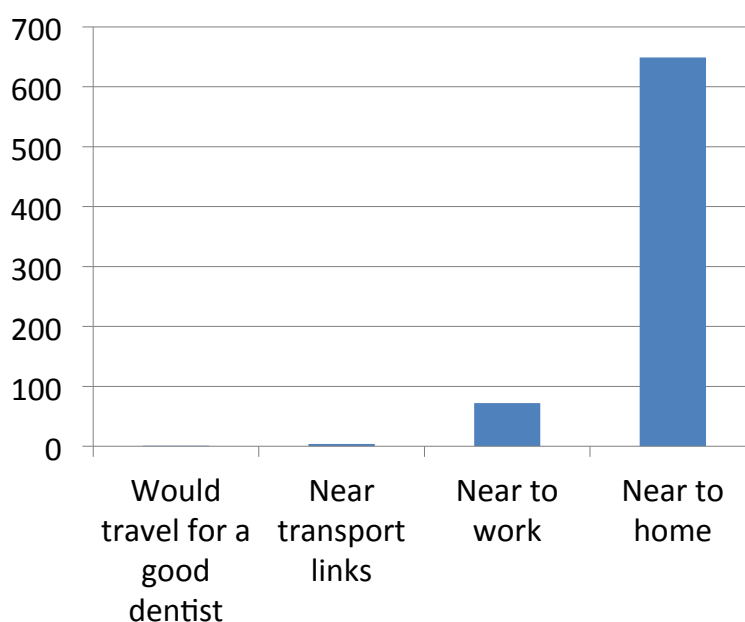
We asked all participants of the research 'What sort of dental care do you want?' The chart below shows the responses to this question.

	Responses	%
Have regular check ups and appointments	597	76.3%
Only attend when you think you need treatment	115	14.7%
Only attend when you have pain or a dental problem	45	5.8%
Not sure	21	2.7%
I don't want dental care	3	0.4%
Dental treatment under sedation	1	0.1%

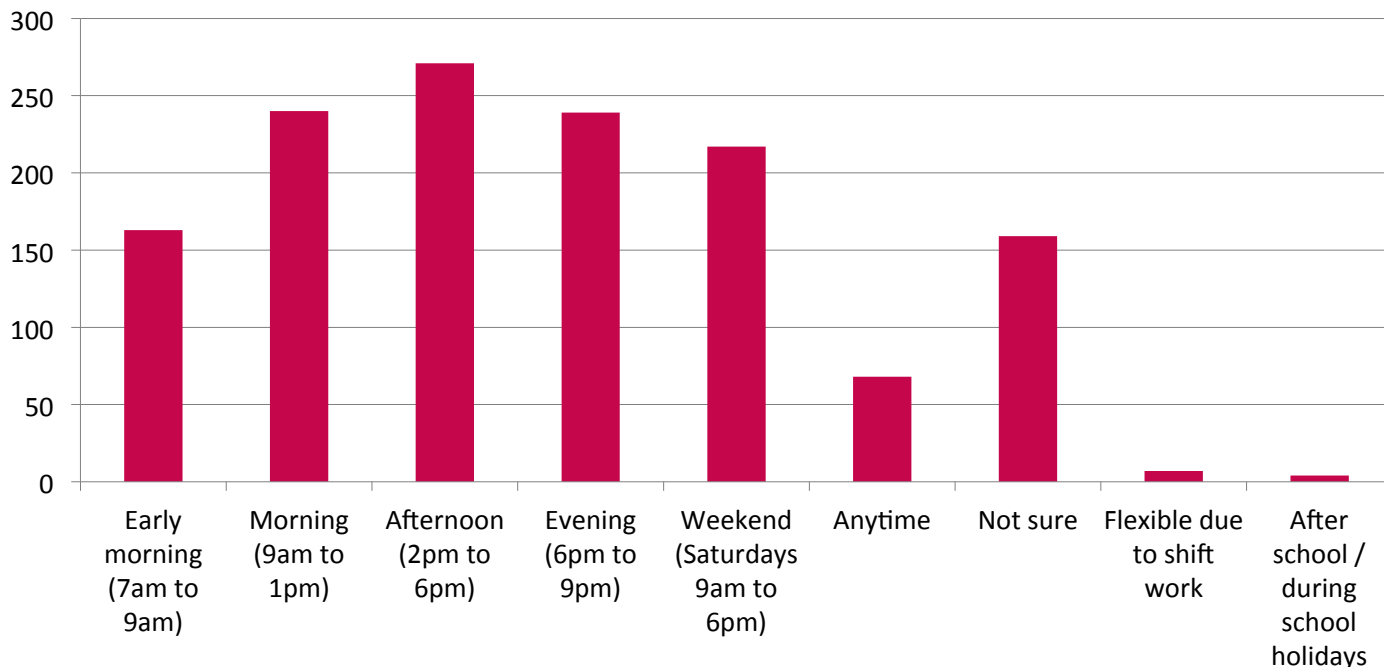


Respondents were asked 'Where would you prefer to have your dental care?'

	Responses	%
Near to home	649	89.4%
Near to work	75	9.9%
Near transport links	4	0.6%
Would travel for a good dentist	1	0.1%



All respondents were asked **'What times of the day/week would be best for you to visit the dentist?'**
Respondents were able to choose multiple options.



Additional comments received for this question included:

“During half-term school holidays.”

“Outside peak times, so 11am to 3pm, when the buses are quieter.”

“I require flexible appointments to fit in with my carer duties.”

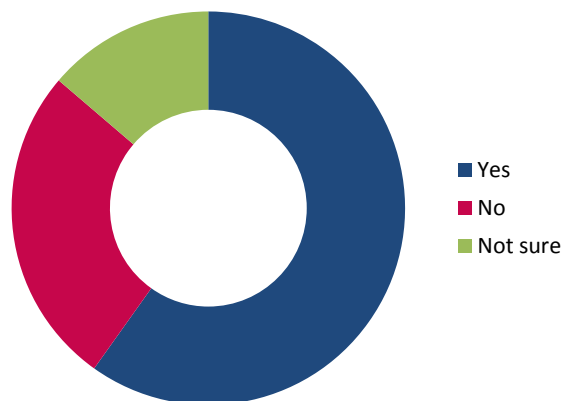
“Depends on work shifts.”

“I struggle with times as I am a full time carer for my mum.”

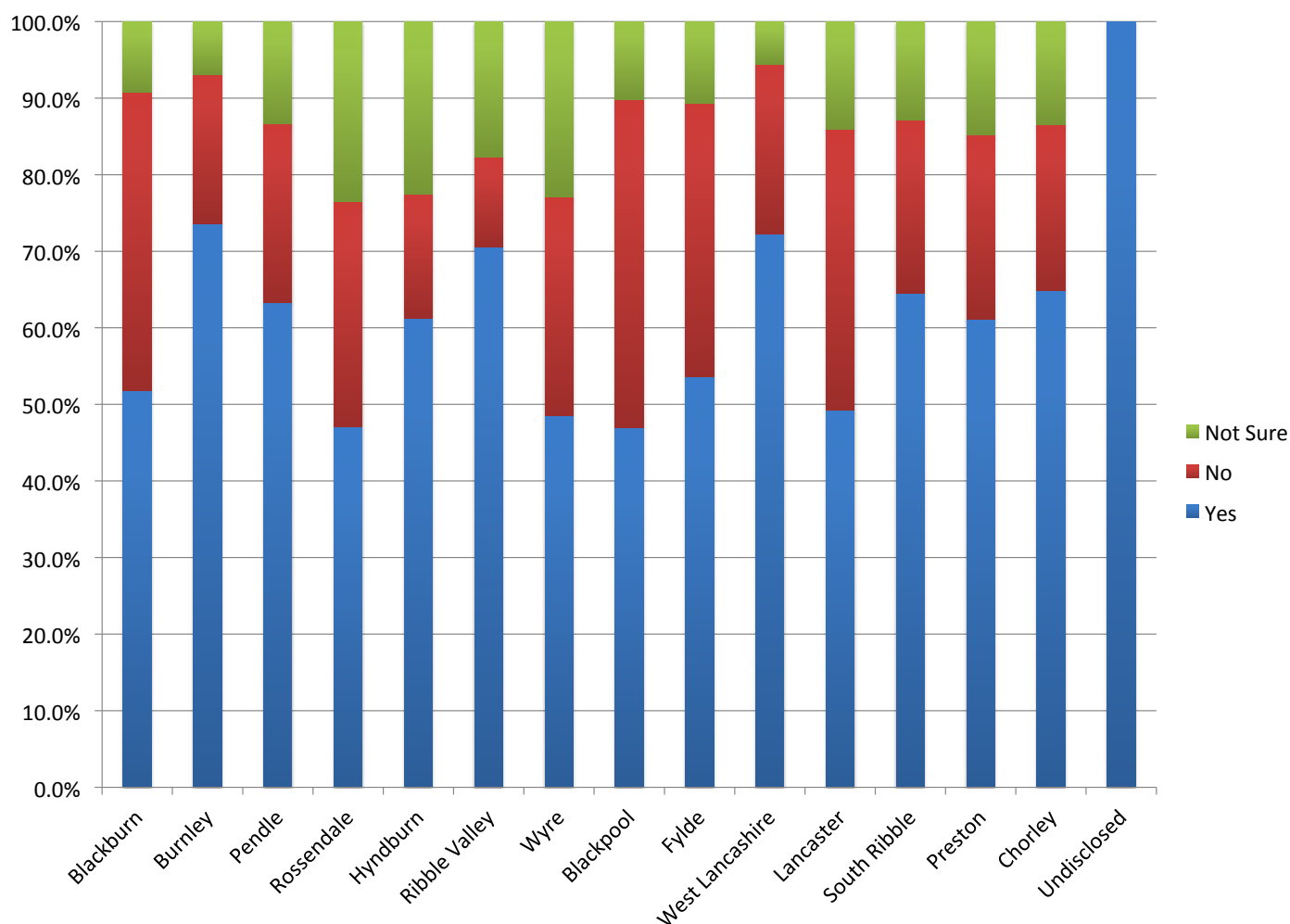
“As long as it fits in with my shift work.”

All respondents were asked **'Would you be prepared to be treated by a dental student under the supervision of an experienced dentist?'**

	Responses	%
Yes	501	59%
No	229	27%
Not sure	117	14%



The chart below shows the responses to the question **'Would you be prepared to be treated by a dental student under the supervision of an experienced dentist?'** by location.



Patient stories and additional comments

The table below shows a summary of the comments that were shared with Healthwatch Lancashire in response to the survey.

Theme	Summary of comments
Access	A large number of people commented that they have found it difficult to register with a NHS dentist locally although some did say that they were able to based on recommendations or where communication was clear from the dentist. Some respondents commented that it was not made clear to them that missing appointments or not attending regular check-ups would result in them being removed from their local dentist's list. People also highlighted the need for more NHS dentists and that appointments are difficult to fit around work. Some service users described experiences where their dentist had cancelled appointments a number of times which had caused them distress. A small number of comments were received referencing a lack of dental care being available in care homes. One comment described an elderly relative with Alzheimer's who refused treatment and their struggle to get her to a dental appointment. Some comments were received from people who had experienced good or excellent service at their dental practice. Reasons for this centred around ease of making appointments and good forms of communication such as text message reminders. A number of people said that they are unsure if they need to attend or they feel that they do not need to attend regular appointments as they are satisfied with their dental health. Other comments received show that some people who are not registered with a dentist are unsure how they would try to get a dental appointment if they needed one.
Attitudes towards dentists	A number of people commented on their dislike of attending dental appointments and some described this as their biggest fear. Some service users claimed that they have a positive long term relationship with their dentist. Some comments stated that people are happy to travel to their dentist if because of the service provided or a relationship with their dentist.
Costs	A large number of people commented on the high cost of dental treatments and some claim that they feel people suffer because of the lack of affordable dental care. Some service users questioned the costs of emergency dental appointments which require follow up treatments which will have an additional cost.

Theme	Responses
Private dentistry	A large number of comments received showed that people feel that although there is an expense to being registered with a private dentist they feel they get an excellent service with one service user commenting on their dentist's "flexible appointment times". A number of these comments stated that they received better treatment at a private dentist. Comments were made about the benefit of choosing filling materials and better quality crowns with private dentists which are not available with NHS dentists. Some service users are unhappy with their dental practices changing from NHS provision to private.
Student dental nurse treatment	Overall people said that they are happy to be treated by a dental student providing they are well supervised and know what they are doing. Some said that this would depend on the treatment they are receiving and others said that they would be nervous of being treated by a student.
Transport	A large number of comments were provided relating to transport to dental services that people are registered with or ones which they have been directed to. Many commented on the long distance to their nearest NHS dentist with some service users referencing journeys up to 14 miles and that they would prefer to have services located closer to their homes. Some comments were received about people's reliance on family members to travel to appointments and recommended that this should be considered when arranging appointments.

Response from NHS England

The purpose of the survey was to gain further feedback from service users and supplement existing intelligence relating to NHS Primary Care dental access and patient experience to improve access to primary dental care services.

The survey was developed by a group of NHS dentists who treat patients on a daily basis. The survey can be broadly broken down into two main focusses of enquiry:

- For those patients who do not routinely access an NHS Dentist, to understand more about why they don't or can't
- For those patients who do or want to access NHS dental services, to understand what type of care they want to receive and how best for them to access it.

This survey helps us understand more about the unmet need and demand for dental care. It also informs us where changes to services and referral pathways may be required to ensure that patients access dental services in the most appropriate setting to receive the best advice to getting the right care as soon as possible.

In working through the responses contained in the survey it is clear that there are some things we can do immediately, whilst others will require more time.

Actions already undertaken

All participants in the survey were asked about:

- What sort of care would you like to receive from an NHS Dentist?
- Where would you like to receive care?
- What times of day would you like to be able to visit a dentist?
- Would you be prepared to be treated by a student under supervision?

The information garnered from the above questions has already been used to change the opening times of a new practice being procured in Lancaster. In addition new funding being invested in the county on dental access has been used to fund existing practices to open earlier, for longer hours or at the weekend.

Actions being considered

The feedback has also been used to start to pilot a new care pathway for patients who want care from a dentist but don't necessarily want an ongoing relationship with the dentist. This relates to understanding that not all patients want to access the same type of provision.

From the responses, we can see that sections of the population are happy with the private care that they receive. However, there are a number of patients who do want to access NHS dental care and have been unsuccessful in doing so. In Lancashire, NHS England is investing close to £1.7 million in widening dental access for patients, by opening a new practice in an area where demand from patients is greatest, whilst also enabling existing practices to take on more NHS patients in other areas of the county.

NHS England Lancashire will continue to engage with the public and service users to ensure that care being provided for patients not only meets their needs but is of a high quality and responsive to their demands.

NHS England would like to thank Healthwatch Lancashire for an excellent project.

Following this piece of research, NHS England invited Healthwatch Lancashire to have two positions on the evaluation panel for the Lancashire Dental Enhanced Training Practice Procurement which have been accepted.



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