

GP Access Survey 2026

A report by Healthwatch Harrow



April 2026

“For people who are less well off, have mental health or cognitive issues or are simply old, I feel moving everything to online is discriminating and creates health inequalities.”

Local GP Patient

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1. Introduction

Healthwatch Harrow is a statutory organisation that exists to make sure that the views of Harrow residents on health and social care services are heard and fed back to the people who commission services to ensure they improve. We listen, report, feedback and challenge.

2. Background

According to local, regional and national research, the ability to obtain a timely appointment to see a GP or Practice Nurse is becoming ever more difficult. This is due largely to unprecedented demand, with fewer clinicians available to see a growing number of patients.

To help with this, many services have switched to a remote (telephone or online) setting, rather than in-person. While this does help to manage demand, research also shows that a large number of people, including older or disabled patients, and those from ethnic minority communities, are now at a disadvantage when accessing services through these new systems.

We designed this survey as we wanted to know if patients are being treated fairly and equally, and whether any support meets the wide variety of needs and circumstances.

3. Methodology

Participants who were already on our mailing list were sent the link for the survey. In addition, those who required paper copies were given the opportunity to be sent paper copies on request.

The survey run for three months.

4. Strengths & Limitations

We were able to target existing mailing lists and encouraged people to forward onto their contacts to increase take up.

The survey was developed in English and was not translated into any other language.

5. Executive Summary of Findings

During February - April 2026, 91 local people completed our survey on access to GP services in Harrow.

This section summarises key findings - see section 6 for findings in full.

Survey Response - In Summary

Appointment Booking

- Half of respondents (49%) usually book their appointment by phone, with 43% booking online, and 8% preferring in-person.
- Fewer than half (46%) find it 'easy' to book appointments, while a significantly larger 54% do not.
- A broad majority of respondents (81%) usually feel respected and supported when booking their appointments.
- A quarter (26%) can usually make telephone contact within one minute. A third (32%) usually wait five minutes and a sizeable 42% wait for 'at least' ten minutes, when phoning.
- Around two thirds of respondents (64%) can 'easily' find the online form.
- A marginal majority (53%) find the form easy to complete.

Waiting Times

- Around half of respondents (53%) are usually seen the same day for emergency appointments. A quarter (28%) say they have waited 3 days or longer.
- For routine appointments, over half of respondents (57%) wait 4 days, or more.

Consultations

- When booking, two thirds of respondents (69%) have been offered a choice of consultation method (in-person, telephone, video) while a sizeable number (31%) have not.
- Just 31% are able to see their preferred GP or nurse.
- A broad majority of respondents (84%) have experienced a remote appointment.
- Half (51%) feel that remote consultations have fully met their needs, while almost equally, 49% feel they have not.
- A clear majority (86%) say they are usually called back within the expected time. 14% of respondents say they are not.
- A broad majority of respondents (79%) express satisfaction with their practice, on the whole. A fifth (21%) are not satisfied.

Survey Response - In Summary

What has changed since last year?

In the Spring of 2025 we conducted a very similar survey, with 59 responses.

We have compared the response for each question. to establish what has improved, and what has not.

What has improved, since 2025?

Compared with last year, respondents are seen quicker for routine appointments (a 14% improvement is recorded) and there is now greater choice of consultation method (in-person or remote) - marking an 11% improvement.

What has deteriorated, since 2025?

On most indicators however, satisfaction has dropped - compared with a year ago:

- Respondents feel that online forms are more difficult to find (9% decrease) and use (22%).
- There are longer waits for emergency appointments (14% decrease).
- Remote consultations are not as effective at meeting needs (14% decrease).
- Appointments are generally more difficult to book (8% decrease) and respondents are less able to book in-person (6%).
- It is also more difficult to see a preferred GP or nurse (5% decrease).
- Overall satisfaction has decreased by 6%.

What else has changed?

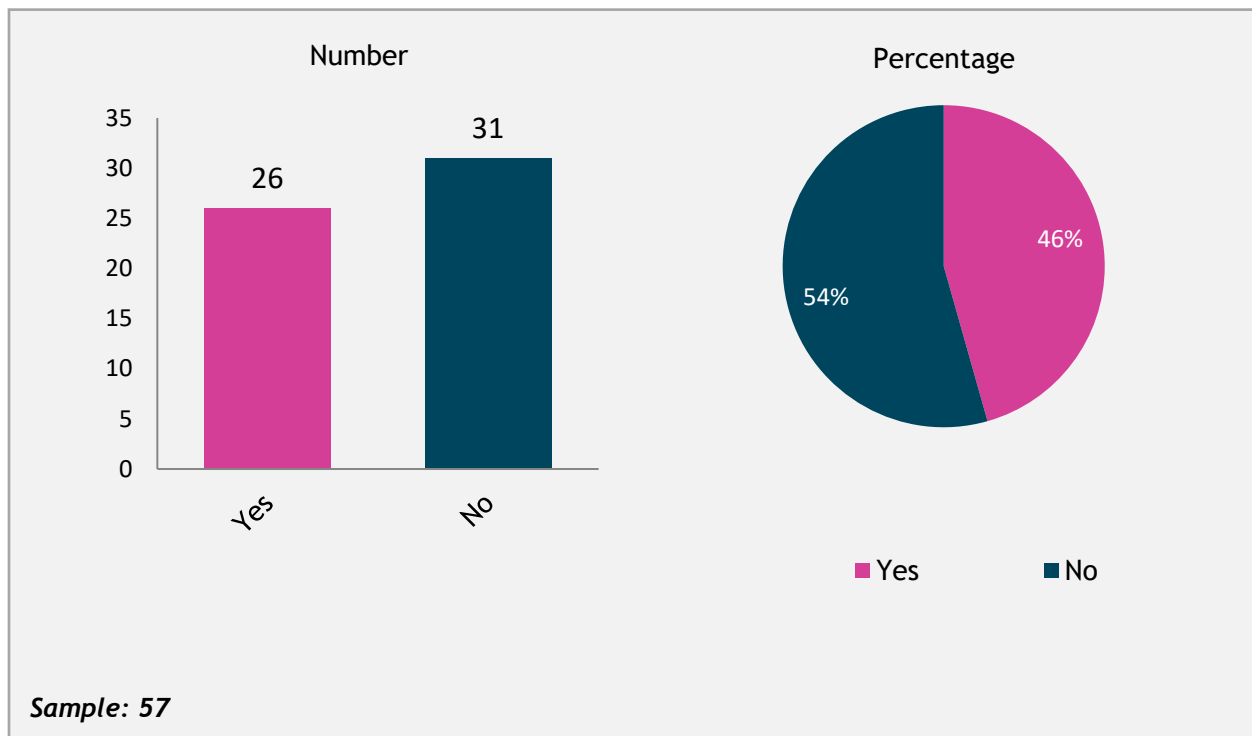
Respondents are more likely this year to book by phone, despite moves towards online systems. Rates of remote (telephone) triage have also dropped, slightly.

6. Our Survey - Analysis of Feedback

During February - April 2026, 91 local people completed our survey on access to GP services in Harrow.

We asked questions on ability to book appointments including telephone, online and in-person access, waiting times, experience of reception services, choice and quality of consultation, and whether issues related to disability, physical or mental health, the move towards online/remote services, or language have presented any barriers.

6.1 Is it easy to book appointments, to see a GP, Nurse or other professional?



Fewer than half of respondents (46%) find it 'easy' to book appointments, while a significantly larger 54% do not.

When asking for feedback, some respondents express general satisfaction, while a much larger number highlight difficulties. In particular, booking options have become restricted - with patients being directed to use online facilities. We receive accounts of inconvenience, frustration and in cases, anxiety.

Other issues include congestion in the mornings (8am) and afternoons (3pm) and a lack of privacy (receptionists asking 'unnecessary questions').

Selected Feedback

General Comments

"If health issues are straightforward it is effective. For more complex needs it could be difficult."

Positives

"They offer appointments at my doctors."

"Booking appointments with the nurses is easy."

Negatives

"I'd like a personal service - speaking to a human."

"Keep the options open - online booking and either telephone or face-to-face booking."

"One young receptionist was rude and told me that I would have to use the online booking in the future."

"Why make it so difficult for seniors?"

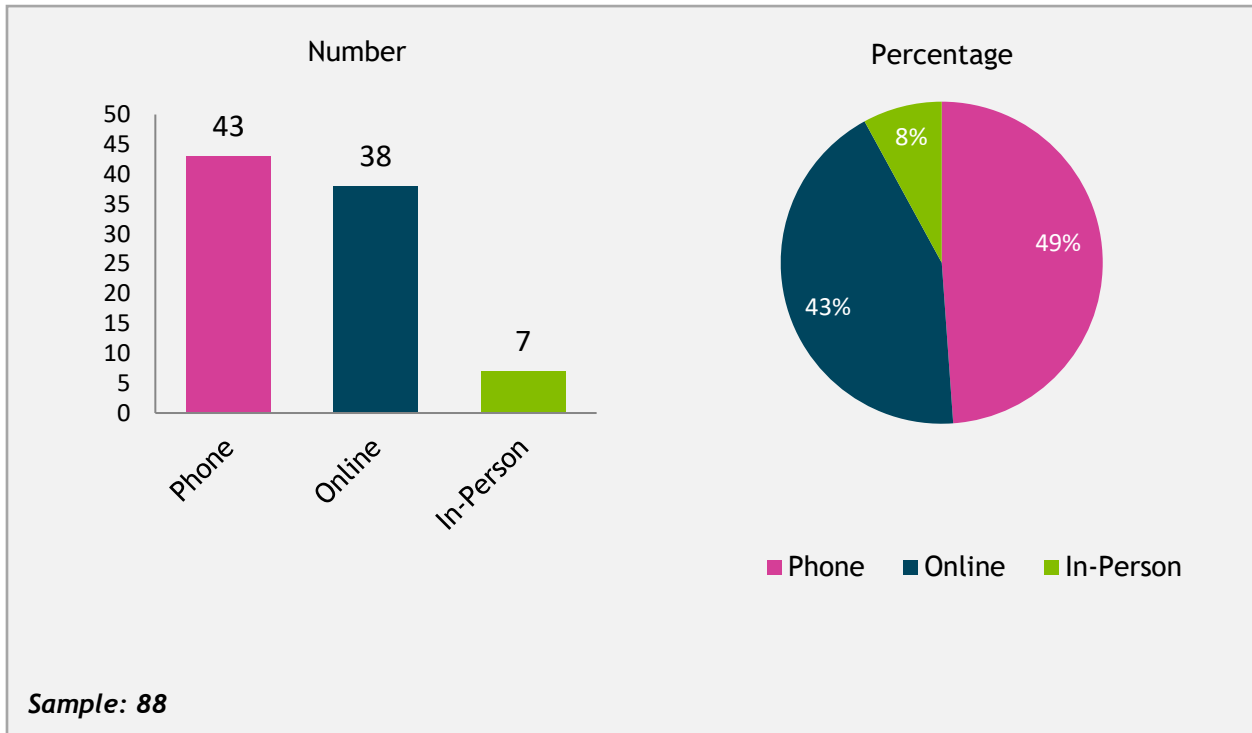
"The surgery should have a system to identify and highlight the patients who are apprehensive about and have limitations in using modern technological methods as online appointments booking. This will avert the stressful encounter I face every time I tried to make an appointment to see a doctor where I am questioned as to why I cannot or did not book the appointment via internet or why I did not seek some other capable person's assistance to book an appointment rather than calling the GP surgery."

"It is difficult to make an appointment. Reception staff ask unnecessary questions."

"The 8am and 3pm windows to book appointments makes it difficult."

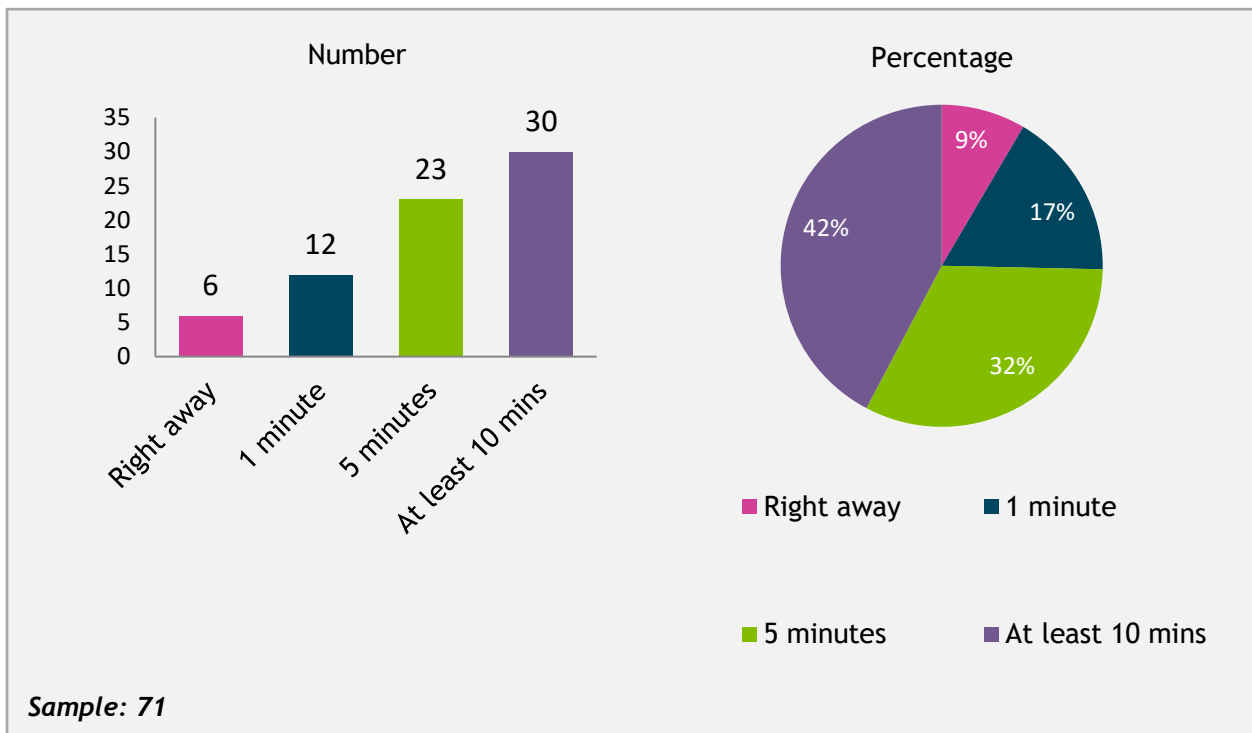
"Improve the NHS 111 service for trying to book an appointment."

6.2 How do you usually book your appointments?



Half of respondents (49%) usually book their appointment by phone, with 43% booking online, and 8% preferring in-person.

6.3 If by phone, do you usually get through right away? If not, how long does it take to speak with someone?



A quarter of respondents (26%) can usually make telephone contact within one minute. A third (32%) usually wait five minutes and a sizeable 42% wait for ‘at least’ ten minutes, when phoning.

While some find it ‘easy’ to make telephone contact, others experience congested lines, long queues, and faults (such as being disconnected).

Selected Feedback

Positives

“I get through fairly easily, and they get back to me as well.”

“The staff answer the phone in a timely way. Also when waiting to be contacted you are told where you are in the queue.”

Negatives

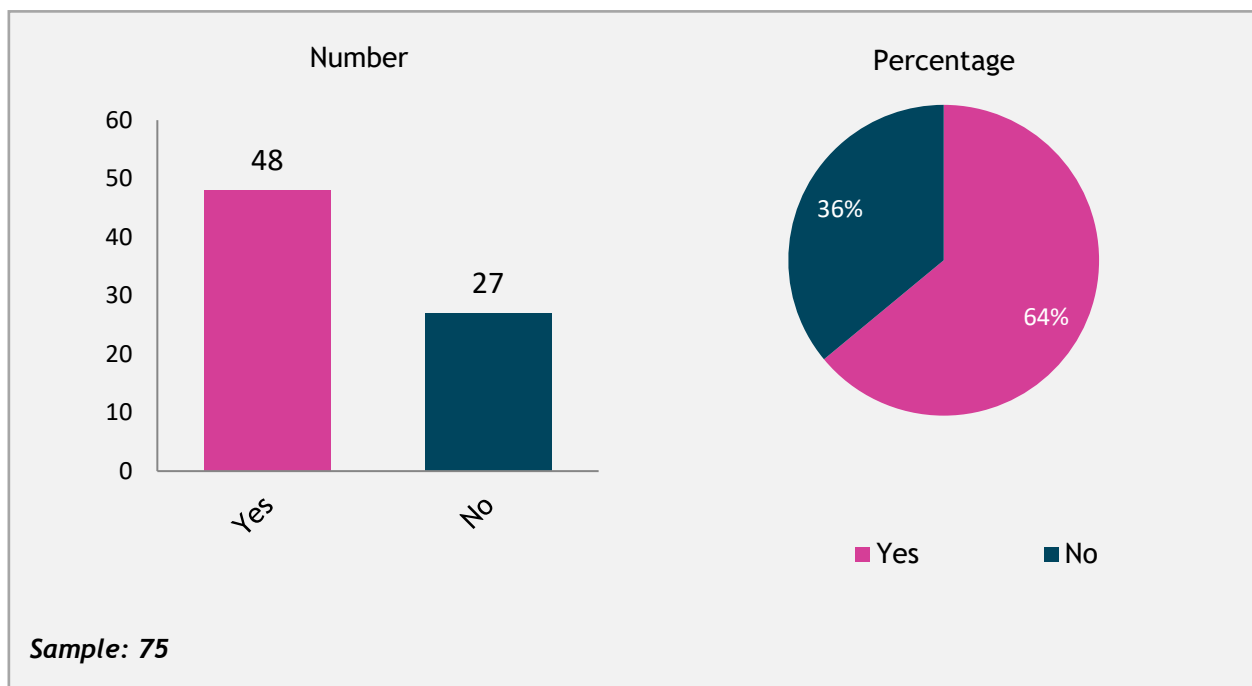
“I am frustrated many times, for not being able to get through. A few times, I have held the line for 40 minutes, only to be disconnected. It's very vital that the surgery should have a good telephone service. Other surgeries answer immediately.”

“Answer the phone.”

“I'd like shorter waits when contacting the surgery by phone.”

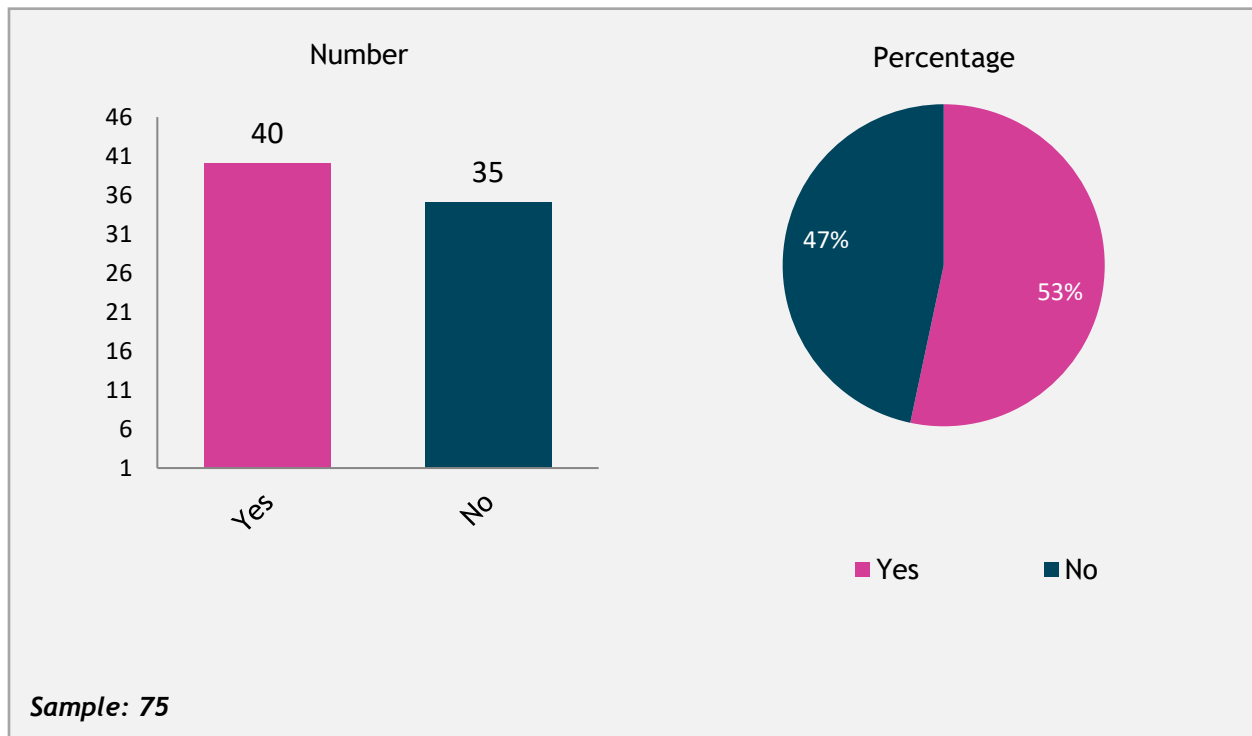
“The phone seems to be constantly busy. Do we need more receptionists?”

6.4a If online, can you find the online form easily?



Around two thirds of respondents (64%) can 'easily' find the online form.

6.4b Is the online form easy to complete?



A marginal majority (53%) find the form easy to complete.

It is commented that the link is 'easy to find' and that the system overall is 'quite good'. On ease of use, feedback tends to be more critical - the form is 'not intuitive', questions can be 'random' and 'unnecessary', and there is no specific facility (or box/field) - to summarise the appointment request.

Selected Feedback

General Comments

"I don't like booking online but that's the way things are now."

"Booking online works well for me, but I prefer to talk to someone when booking."

"Some elderly people don't have access to computers so need to make appointments via the receptionists."

Positives

"The link is easy to find."

"The online booking system is easy to use."

“The online response is quite good, I think.”

“Quick response to online forms.”

“Responsiveness is excellent provided the PATCHS scheme can be accessed.”

PATCHS is an excellent online service.

Negatives

“I’d like one box on PATCHS to say what you need to say. Not random questions that don’t work for you. It gets frustrating. And, the GP asks what’s wrong with you anyway.”

“If the form online had places to tick or complete when sections don’t apply. It’s too standard and can’t be changed to fit some circumstances.”

“For people who are less well off, have mental health or cognitive issues or are simply old I feel moving everything to online is discriminating and creates health inequalities.”

“I would prefer not to have to give details of my problem beforehand, but that is not possible in the online appointment system, which is the only one available.”

A lack of inclusivity and privacy is noted.

Selected Feedback

Negatives

“For people who are less well off, have mental health or cognitive issues or are simply old I feel moving everything to online is discriminating and creates health inequalities.”

“I would prefer not to have to give details of my problem beforehand, but that is not possible in the online appointment system, which is the only one available.”

We hear that online systems are not always accessible, or available even.

Selected Feedback

Negatives

“PATCHS is usually all booked within 30 minutes.”

“There’s no online booking option.”

There is poor or limited connectivity with other NHS systems, an experience suggests.

Selected Feedback

Negatives

“PATCHS booking system - does not link well with the NHS app, I have tried so many times to resolve it. My husband now has to book for me.”

On repeat prescriptions, feedback is mixed.

Selected Feedback

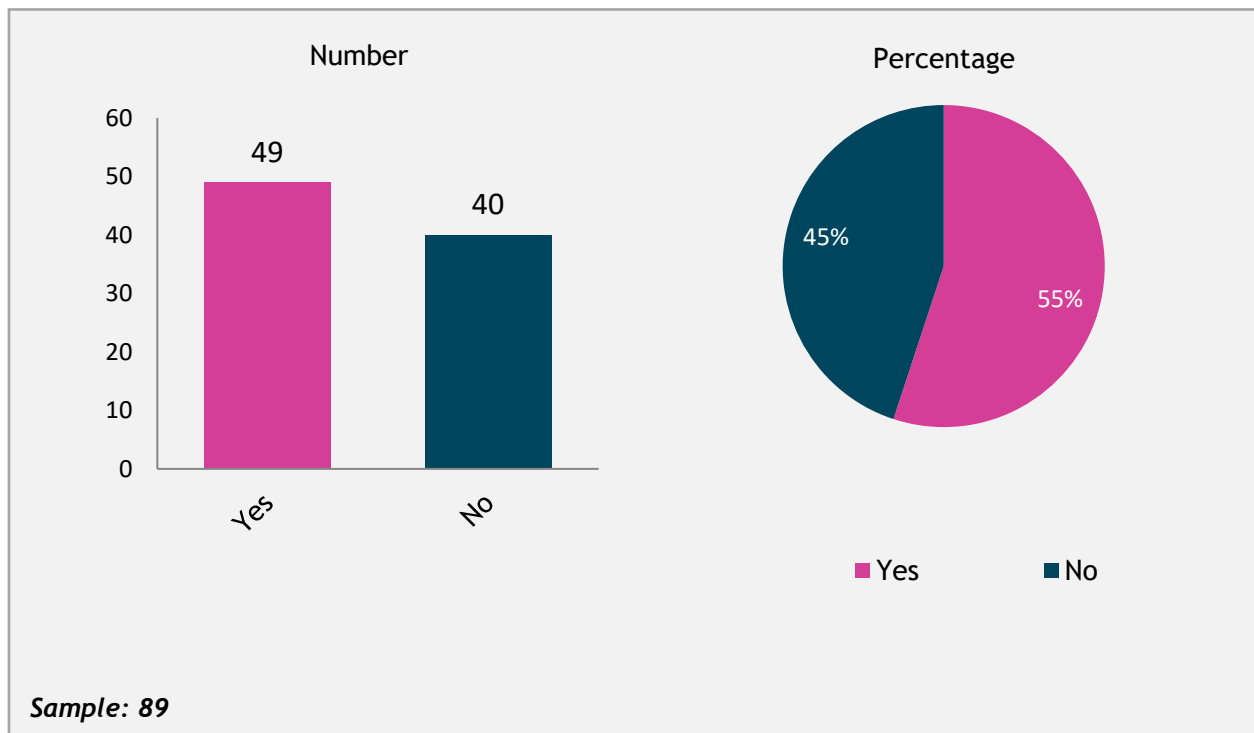
Positives

“Repeat prescriptions via the app work well.”

Negatives

“Make it easier for me to order repeat prescriptions on the app.”

6.5 Can you make an appointment in-person?



A marginal majority of respondents (55%) are able to book appointments in-person.

The feedback received varies. Lack of in-person booking is ‘unacceptable’ for one person.

Selected Feedback

Positives

"I'm able to make an appointment in-person at reception."

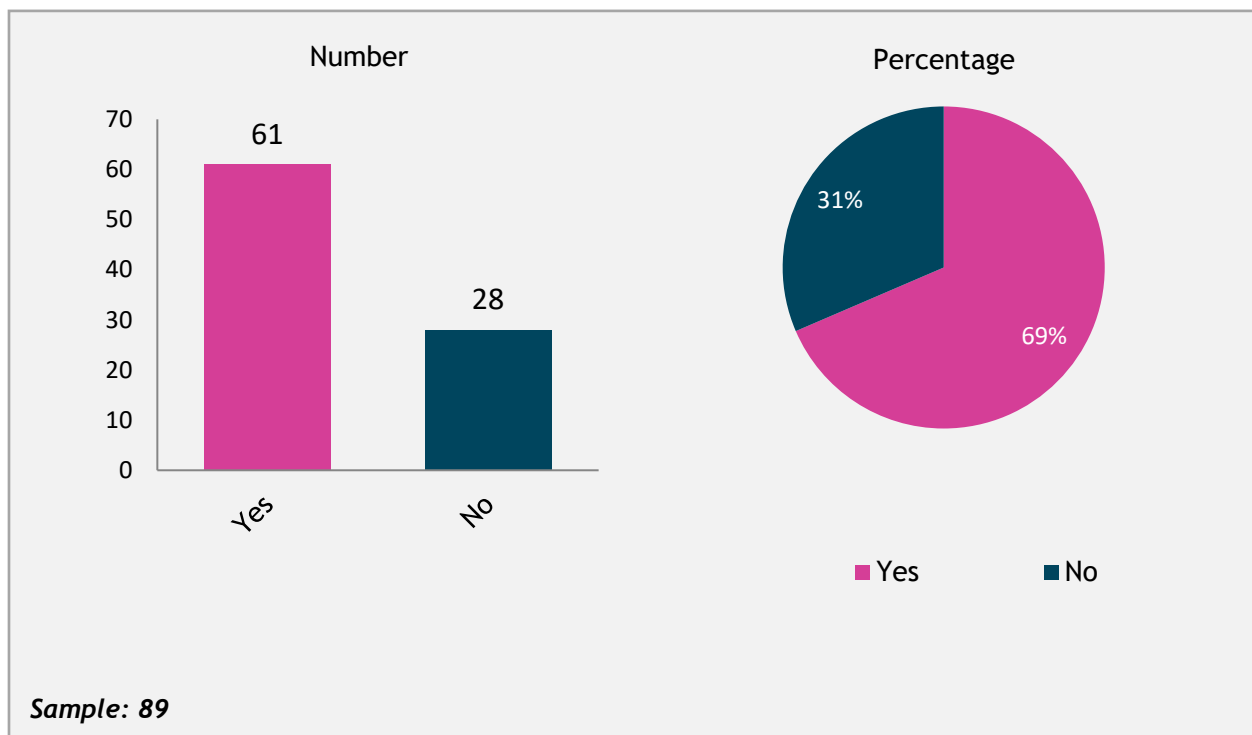
Negatives

"Being able to book appointments at the surgery rather than having to ring."

"Walk-in appointments to be made as before, phone calls are a nightmare."

"It is unacceptable to be told by reception staff that you cannot book appointments in person."

6.6 Are you usually offered a choice of appointment method (in-person, telephone or video consultation)?



When booking, two thirds of respondents (69%) have been offered a choice of consultation method (in-person, telephone, video) while a sizeable number (31%) have not.

In-person appointments are not always available, or timely, according to responses.

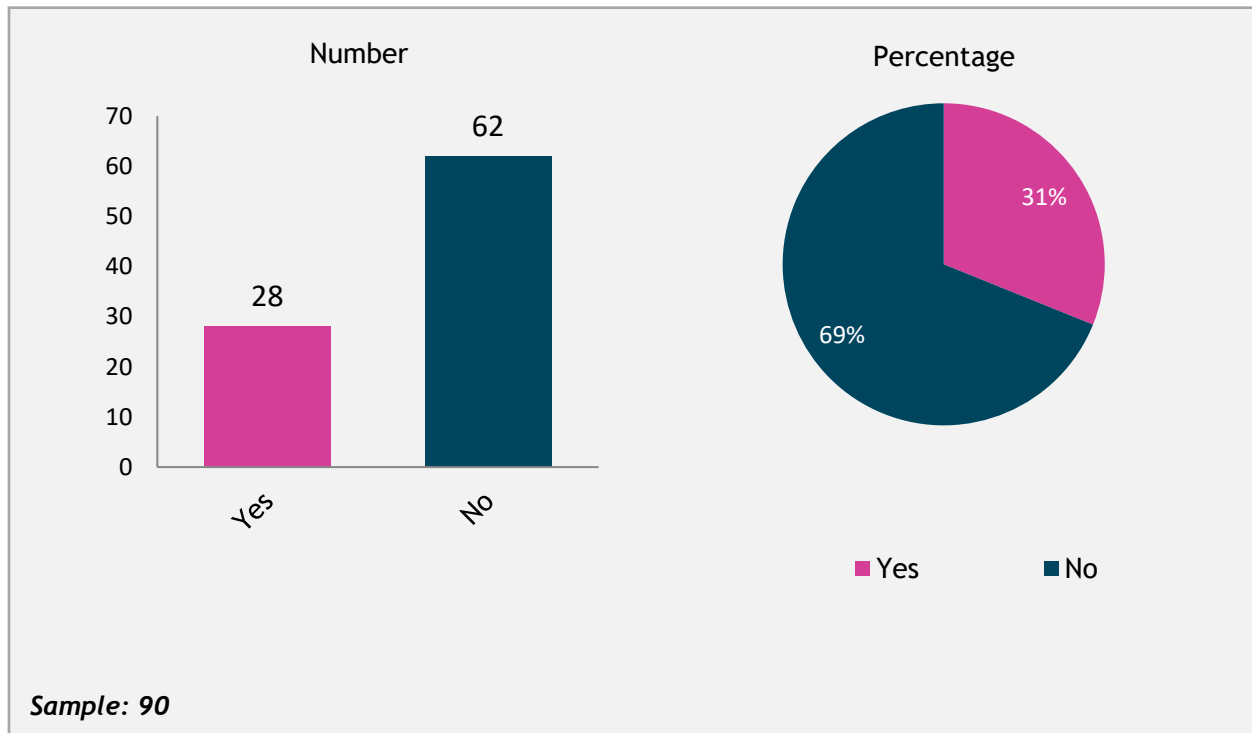
Selected Feedback

Negatives

"I'd like to actually see a doctor face-to-face (not currently the case)."

"More face-to-face appointments please."

6.7 Is your appointment usually to see your own GP or preferred Nurse?



Just 31% of respondents are able to see their preferred GP or nurse.

We hear that continuity of care is important - especially for those with long-term conditions. Those requesting to see their own doctor, can expect to wait longer.

There is disappointment - at being allocated a locum, physician associate, pharmacist or a nurse, instead of a GP.

Selected Feedback

General Comments

"They are clinically very good, when you actually get to see the right person."

Negatives

"I'd like a named GP."

"Getting to see one GP who knows me well, often they haven't a clue about past issues or other relevant issues!"

"I need to see the same GP, so I don't have to explain my condition every time."

"Usually I have to wait for at least 2 weeks to see the doctor that I see regularly. Due to my autism I don't want to see any doctor as am not comfortable. I never get an appointment when I am in need."

"Being able to see your own doctor would be a nice change."

"I'd like to see the same GP - not a locum."

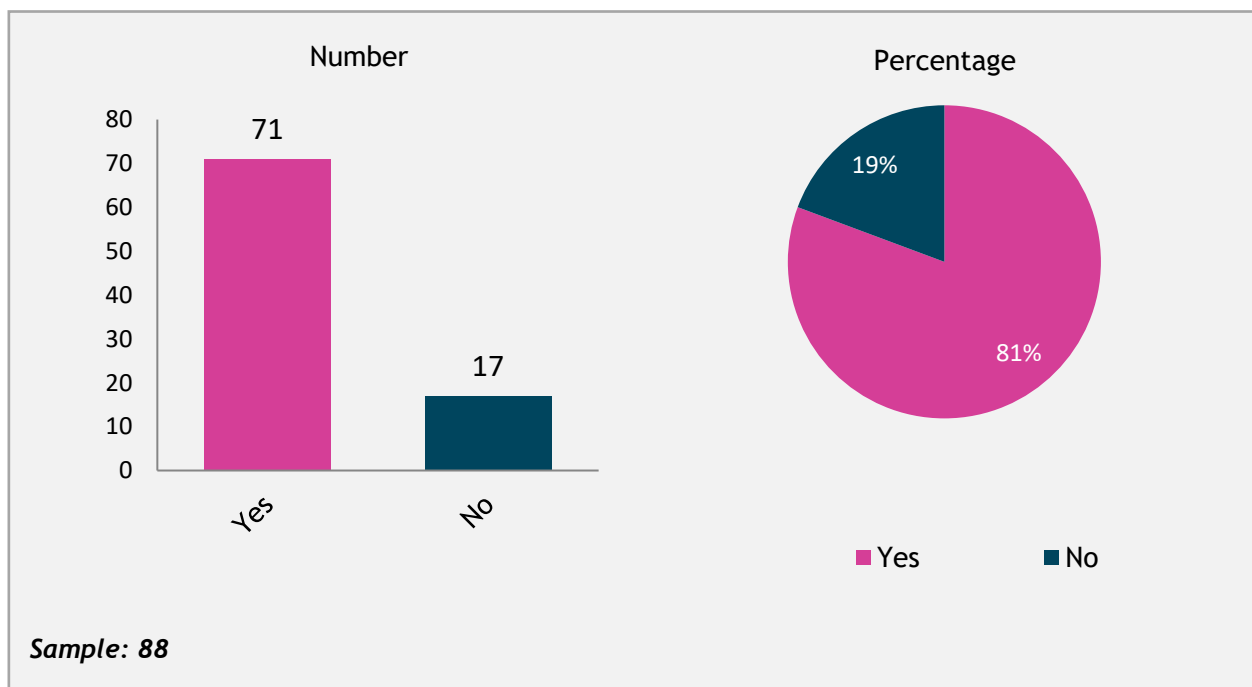
"It's not like it used to be, you just have to take who they give you. Not always seeing a doctor - but a physician assistant."

"I'm offered a choice of telephone or face-to-face follow-up appointment with a GP, but in practice this never happens. Instead I get a telephone call from the surgery's pharmacist."

"I'd like to be able to phone or pop into surgery to make an appointment. Not to be grilled about why you wish to see a GP and then given an appointment with the practice nurse."

Continuity of care and ability to see a GP and not a physician's assistant.

6.8 When booking, how are you generally treated by staff members? Do you feel respected and supported?



A broad majority of respondents (81%) usually feel respected and supported when booking their appointments.

When booking, reception staff are generally considered to be polite, supportive and responsive, with good levels of interaction.

Selected Feedback

Positives

“Amenable and helpful reception staff.”

“Quick reception help.”

“People want to help me there, I feel the support.”

“Good interaction with the reception staff.”

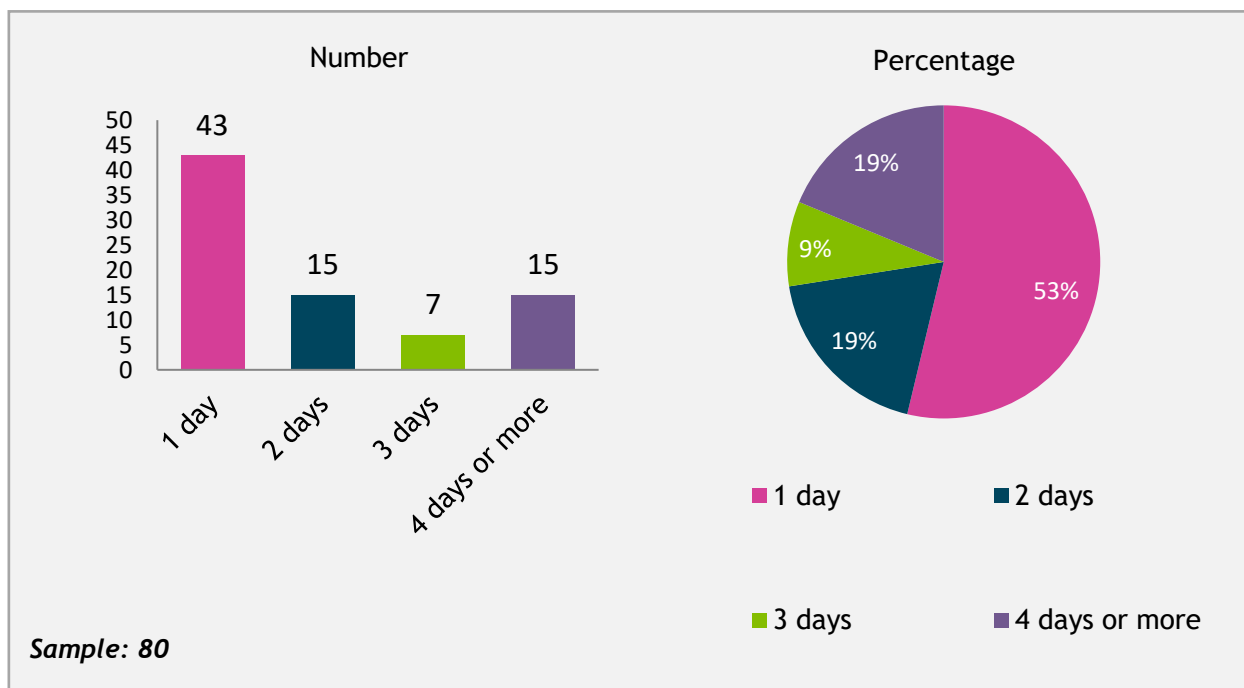
“You can see the receptionist is very busy but is able to talk to you and book an appointment.”

Negatives

“Receptionists are rude, when they actually answer the phone.”

“I’d like more empathy from reception staff.”

6.9 For urgent appointments, how long do you usually wait?



Around half of respondents (53%) are usually seen the same day for emergency appointments. A quarter (28%) say they have waited 3 days or longer.

The feedback received is generally complimentary - comments reflect timely services.

Selected Feedback

Positives

“Any request is quickly triaged and a same day appointment offered if the GP believes it is necessary.”

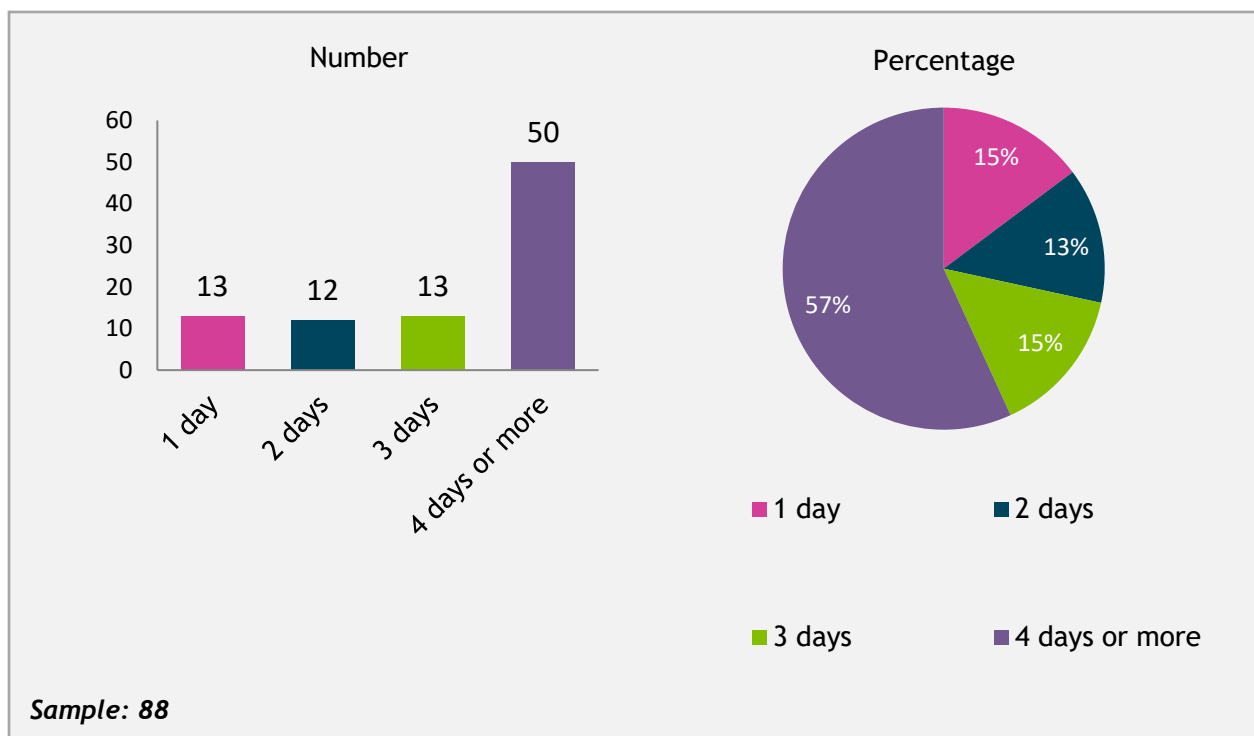
“Urgent appointments can be done on the day.”

“Appointment sent in an hour.”

Negatives

“Urgent appointments should be within in 24 hours.”

6.10 And for routine appointments, how long do you usually wait?



For routine appointments, over half of respondents (57%) wait 4 days, or more.

Comments reflect long waits, and also inflexible booking systems (especially for routine appointments).

Selected Feedback

Positives

“Quick appointments, usually.”

Negatives

“Appointments are not readily available.”

“When I have health issues, I would be grateful for an appointment to see the doctor the same day, not 3 or 4 days after.”

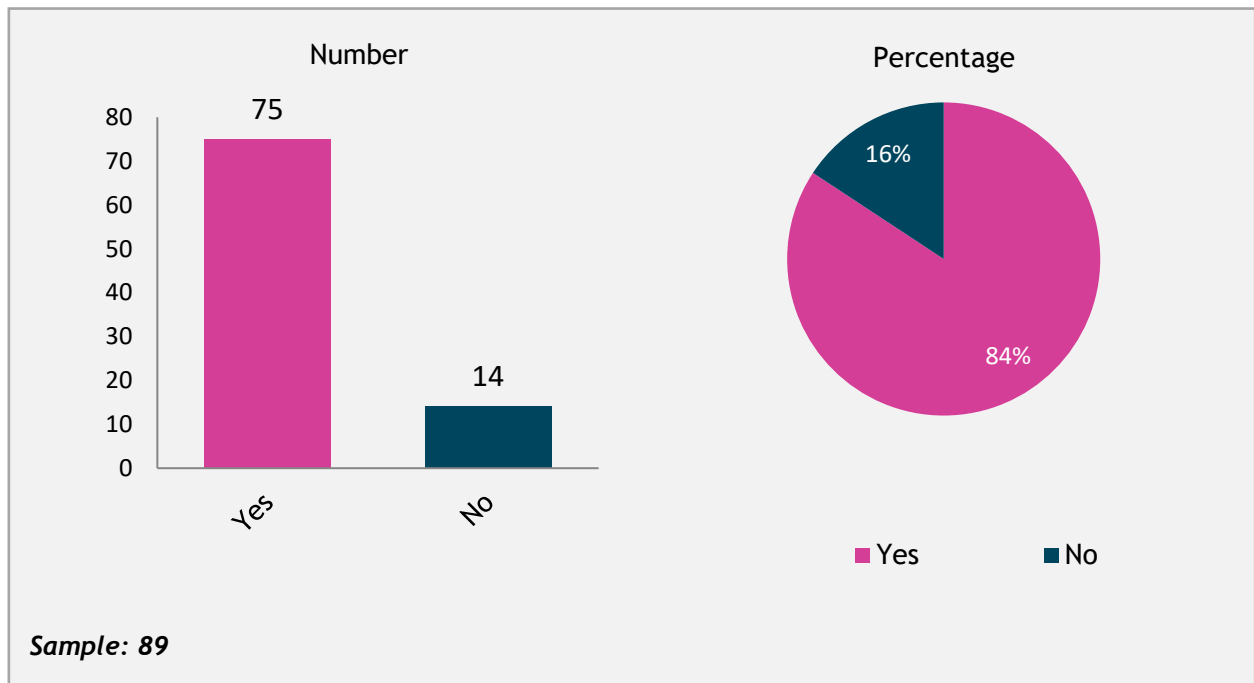
“The receptionist will ask you questions (some irrelevant) and then tell you the earliest appointment will be in 2 to 6 weeks.”

“For people who have autism and learning disabilities it’s better to be seen face-to-face and should not have to wait for more than a week to be seen.”

“For routine appointments there’s no choice.”

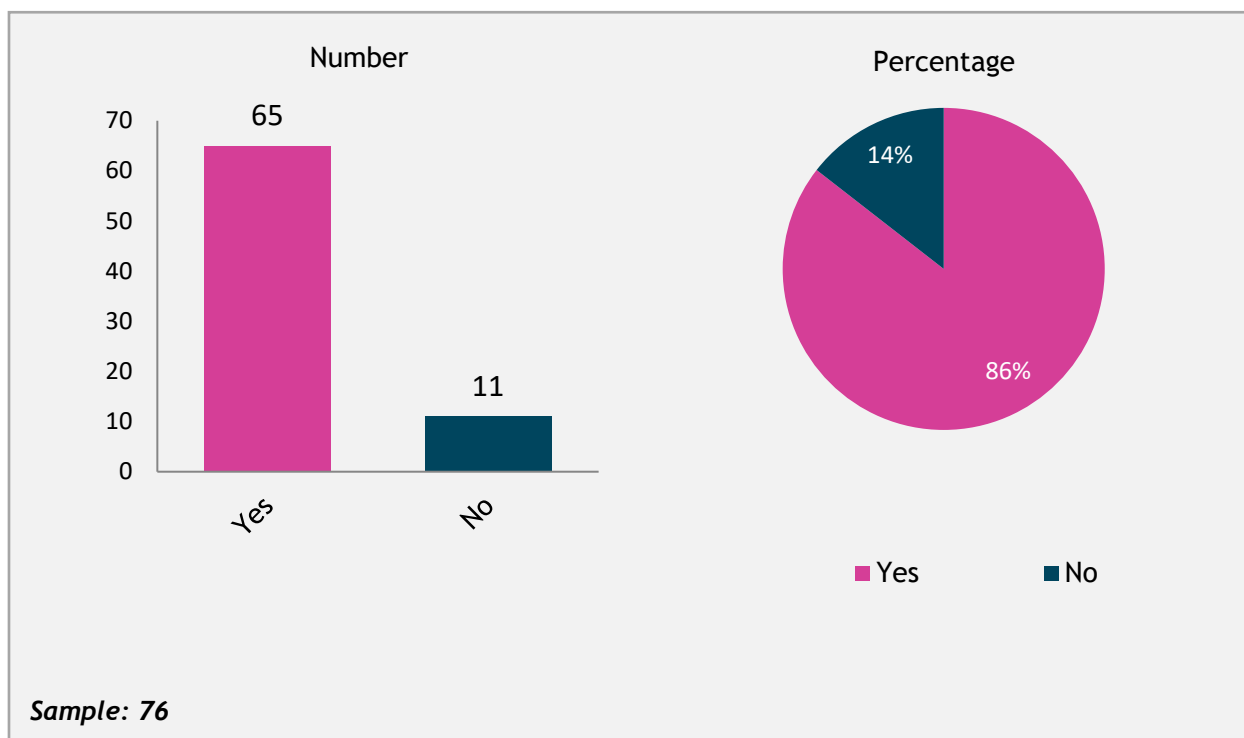
“You cannot book a routine appointment even if the doctor has texted you to book an appointment. The only option is to try for an emergency appointment at 8am.”

6.11 Have you had a ‘telephone triage’ or online appointment in the past?



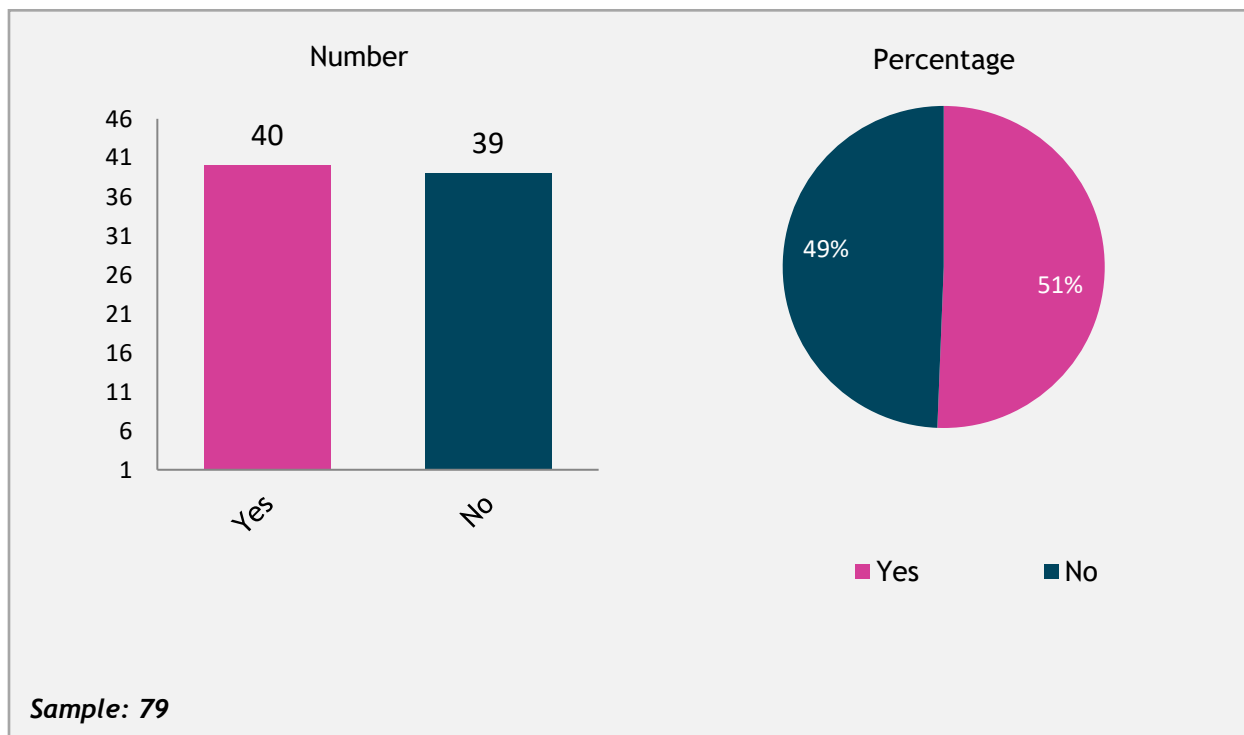
A broad majority of respondents (84%) have experienced a remote appointment.

6.12 If so, does the doctor (or other staff member) usually call you back, when you expected them to?



A clear majority (86%) say they are usually called back within the expected time. 14% of respondents say they are not.

6.13 If you had a doctor's consultation, does it usually meet your needs? Do you feel the doctor is able to diagnose accurately on the phone or online?



Half of respondents (51%) feel that remote consultations have fully met their needs, while almost equally, 49% feel they have not.

While remote consultations are ‘easy and convenient’, it is suggested they should only be used for follow-ups or medication reviews (not diagnosis).

Selected Feedback

Positives

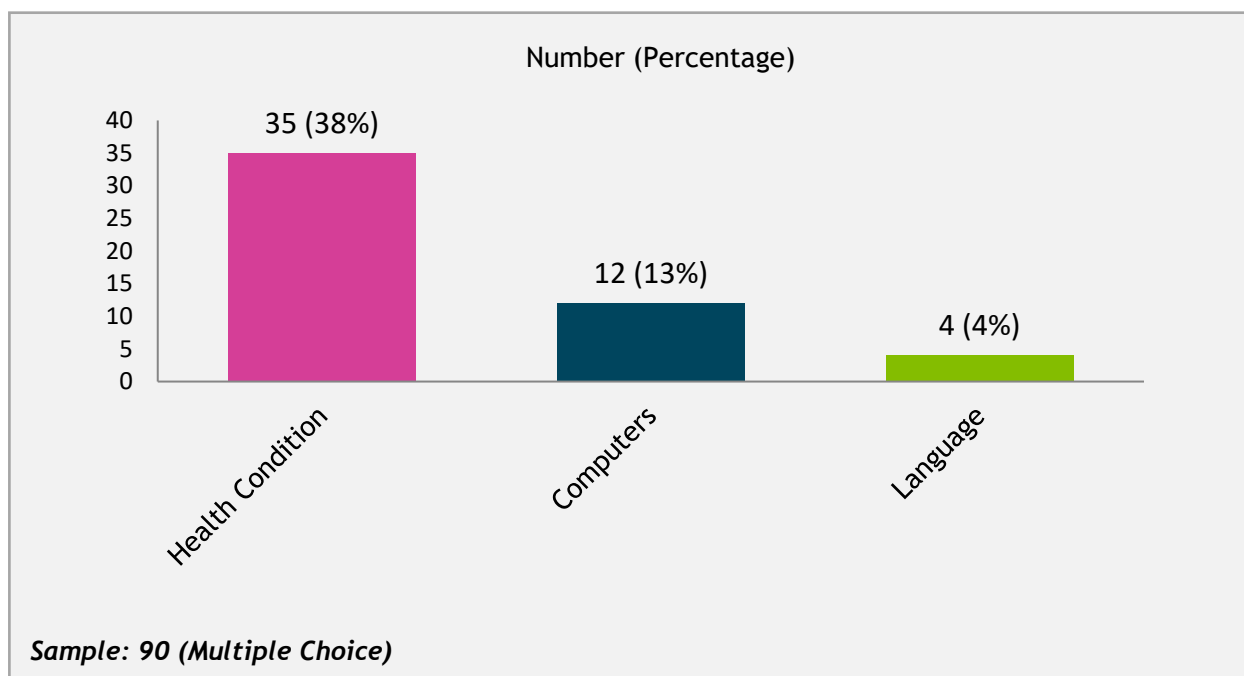
“Talking to the doctor on the phone works.”

“It is easier and more convenient to have a telephone consultation.”

Negatives

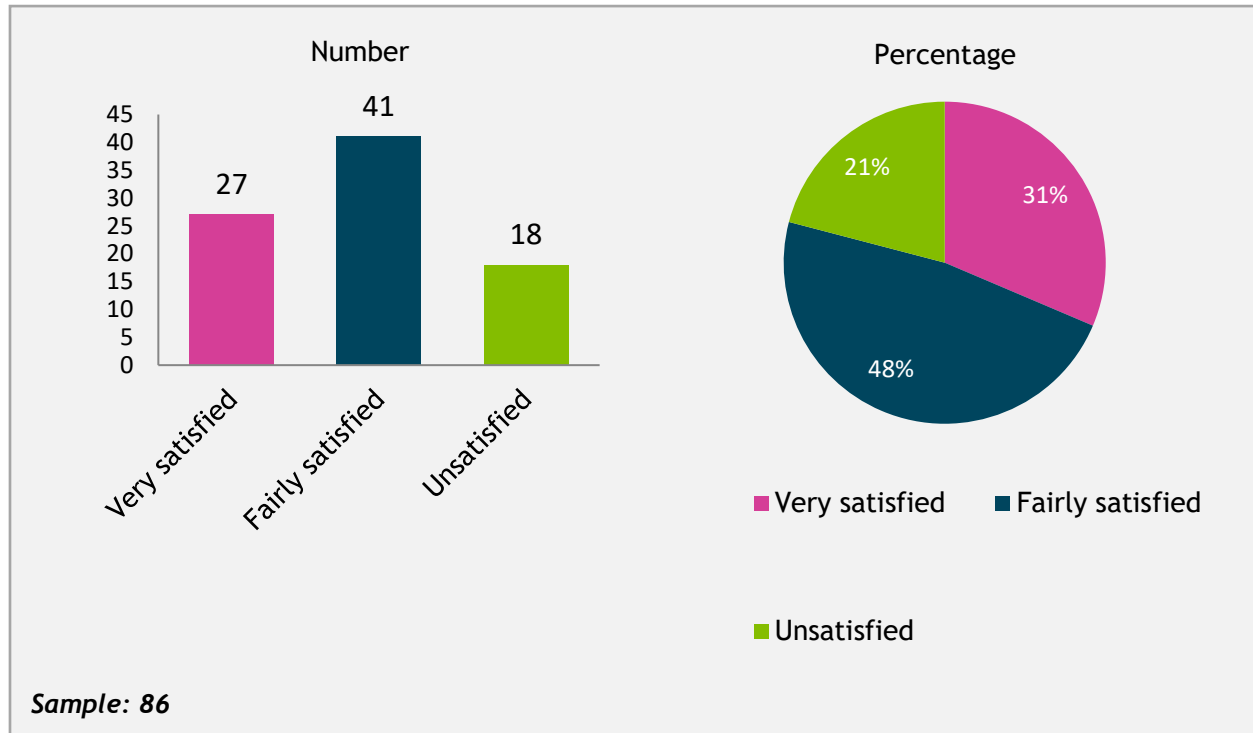
“Phone appointments only work well for routine follow-ups or medication reviews. I don't agree to them for urgent or new issues.”

6.14 Potential Barriers: Do you have difficulties using computers, smart-phones or the internet? Do you have a disability or long term (health or mental health) condition? Is English not your first language?



Over a third of respondents (38%) have a health condition or disability. 13% cite computers as a barrier, while 4% mention language.

6.15 How satisfied are you with your GP Practice and the services they offer?



A broad majority of respondents (79%) express satisfaction with their practice, on the whole. A fifth (21%) are not satisfied.

We receive comments about practices generally, consultations, and about services such as phlebotomy.

Positive feedback is summarised below:

Selected Feedback, Positives

General Comments

“My surgery is brilliant.”

“Once you can make an appointment the surgery and team are great.”

“A very professional, well-run practice.”

“Everything works well.”

“Staff are very friendly and helpful.”

“Polite staff and doctors.”

“Reception staff and the actual nurses are easy to deal with for routine appointments.”

Consultations

“The doctors and nurses are all pleasant and helpful.”

“The practice nurses do a good job.”

“They listen to me.”

Practice Services

“Ordering repeat prescriptions works.”

“I deal mainly with the phlebotomists, they are always friendly and efficient.”

“They are good at providing pre-emptive care based on my age (such as vaccinations).”

“Good for my annual mental health check-up.”

... and negative feedback:

Selected Feedback, Negatives

General Comments

“They don’t respond to messages. We need better administration.”

“Still waiting for a reply from an email sent last week and again this week.”

“Difficult to register.”

“I’d like a cleaner waiting room.”

“If they put health leaflets in the reception, and if the receptionists stopped asking why you need the appointment.”

“It would be better if the doctors and nurses call us from the waiting area.”

“Parking is an issue - needs to be better.”

“Would love weekend opening. We usually use a private doctor if I feel one is needed on a weekend.”

Consultations

“Both staff and doctors are good.”

“Doctor to spend more time with patients.”

Practice Services

“Repeat prescriptions don’t work well.”

“Not good at following up on tests and recommendations.”

“They do not review medication as a matter of course - despite instructions from consultants.”

6.16 Any other comments about your GP Practice (prescriptions, referrals etc)?

Finally, we asked participants to share any other comments about their practice. We detect themes on booking and waiting times, general practice, prescriptions and referrals.

Selected Feedback

Booking and Waiting Times

- Takes too long to get what you need.
- I would like to be able to see the same GP for my consultation - this is not possible without a long wait for an appointment.
- Due to my autism and severe learning disability I prefer the nurse to do my blood test at home and I have difficulty in getting that done. The receptionists are not very understanding and helpful.
- Availability of physiotherapist appointments.
- The PATCHS system is not easy to navigate and the questions are generic and do not allow for individuality.
- Don’t see why we have to tell the person who answers the phone what you want to see the doctor about. That is personal between you and the doctor.

General Practice

- Overall our surgery is very good indeed.
- I found out last December that I’m in the menopause and I have been for two years, yet the doctors failed to inform me of this.
- I have long term medical conditions and it doesn't always seem that the doctor I 'get' has read my notes or will value my experience and knowledge with my conditions.
- The GP is fine, receptionists are unnecessarily rude or awkward. I work in healthcare so always treat them with respect but it’s not always given to me or my family.
- Never hear about test results, always have to chase up by phone.
- Difficult to get to see your own GP.
- Interested about the practice not the patients.
- All done in order.
- It would be good to actually have a GP. Different every time.
- The main 2 doctors are rarely there.
- All staff are great.
- Superb practice - we are very lucky.
- I have been at this surgery for over 35 years; no plans to change.
- Very helpful receptionists, doctors and nurses.

Prescriptions

- The only thing that works is repeat prescriptions.
- Prescription requests work well through the NHS App.
- Online prescriptions with the nominated pharmacy facility are excellent.
- Prescriptions ordered online sent direct to chemist.

Referrals

- I don't know if my referral was made, and didn't hear back about it. I haven't had an acknowledgement or response to my last two emails, both of which the doctor asked me to send with information.
- Referrals are made late.
- Referrals need to be followed up.

6.16 Comparison with our 2025 Survey

In the Spring of 2025 we conducted a very similar survey, with 59 responses.

We have compared the response for each question. to establish what has improved, and what has not.

6.16.1 What has improved, since 2025?

	% 2025	% 2026
Wait 4 days or more, for routine appointments	71%	57%
Offered a choice of consultation method	58%	69%
Felt respected by staff, when booking	81%	81%

Compared with last year, respondents are seen quicker for routine appointments (a 14% improvement is recorded) and there is now greater choice of consultation method (in-person or remote) - marking an 11% improvement.

6.16.2 What has deteriorated, since 2025?

	% 2025	% 2026
Found the online form 'easy to complete'	75%	53%
Seen the same day, for emergencies	67%	53%
Remote consultation (telephone triage) has met needs	65%	51%
Found the online form 'easily'	73%	64%
Found it 'easy' to book appointments	54%	46%
Can make an appointment in-person	61%	55%
Satisfied with GP services, overall	85%	79%
Appointment with preferred doctor or nurse	36%	31%
Got through (on the phone) within five minutes	60%	58%

On most indicators however, satisfaction has dropped - compared with a year ago:

- Respondents feel that online forms are more difficult to find (9% decrease) and use (22%).
- There are longer waits for emergency appointments (14% decrease).
- Remote consultations are not as effective at meeting needs (14% decrease).

- Appointments are generally more difficult to book (8% decrease) and respondents are less able to book in-person (6%).
- It is also more difficult to see a preferred GP or nurse (5% decrease).
- Overall satisfaction has decreased by 6%.

6.16.3 What else has changed?

	% 2025	% 2026
Book appointments by phone	42%	49%
Book appointments online	49%	43%
Have had a telephone triage	86%	84%

Respondents are more likely this year to book by phone, despite moves towards online systems. Rates of remote (telephone) triage have also dropped, slightly.

7. Glossary of Terms

This report does not contain acronyms.

8. Distribution and Comment

This report is available to the general public and is shared with our statutory and community partners. Accessible formats are available.

If you have any comments on this report or wish to share your views and experiences, please contact us.

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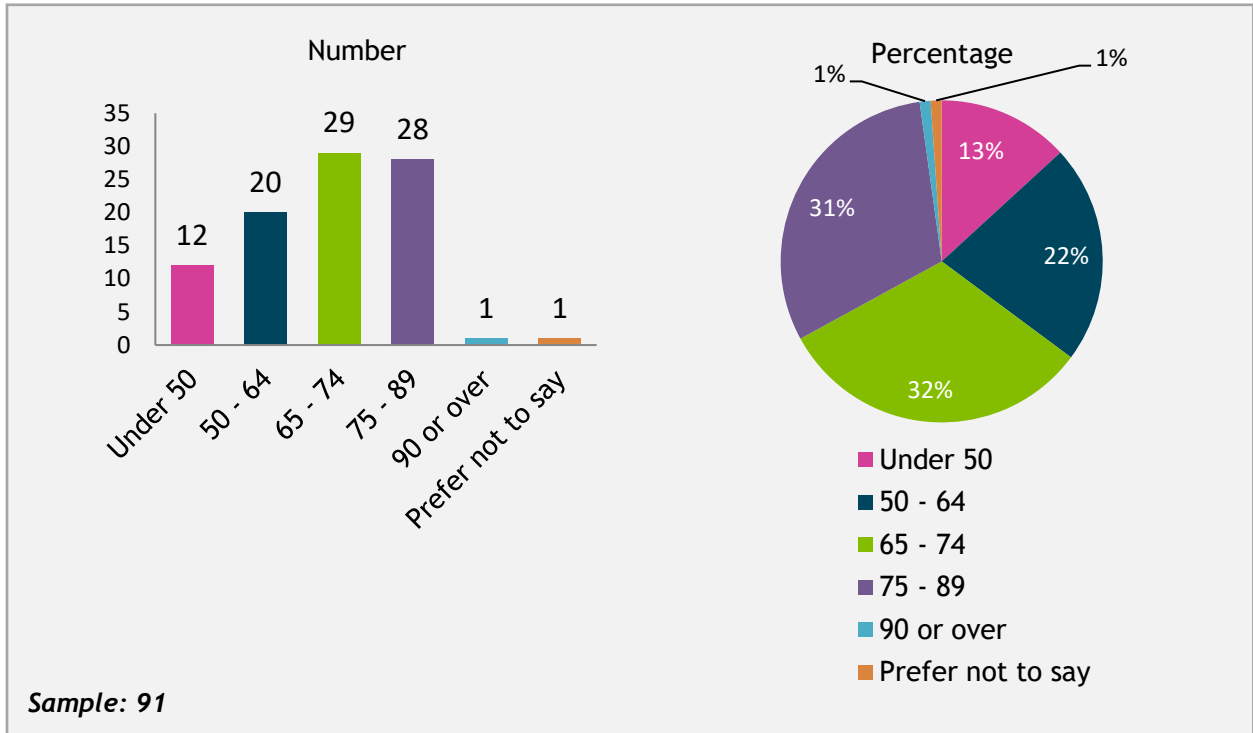
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HWHarrow/>

Instagram: healthwatchharrow

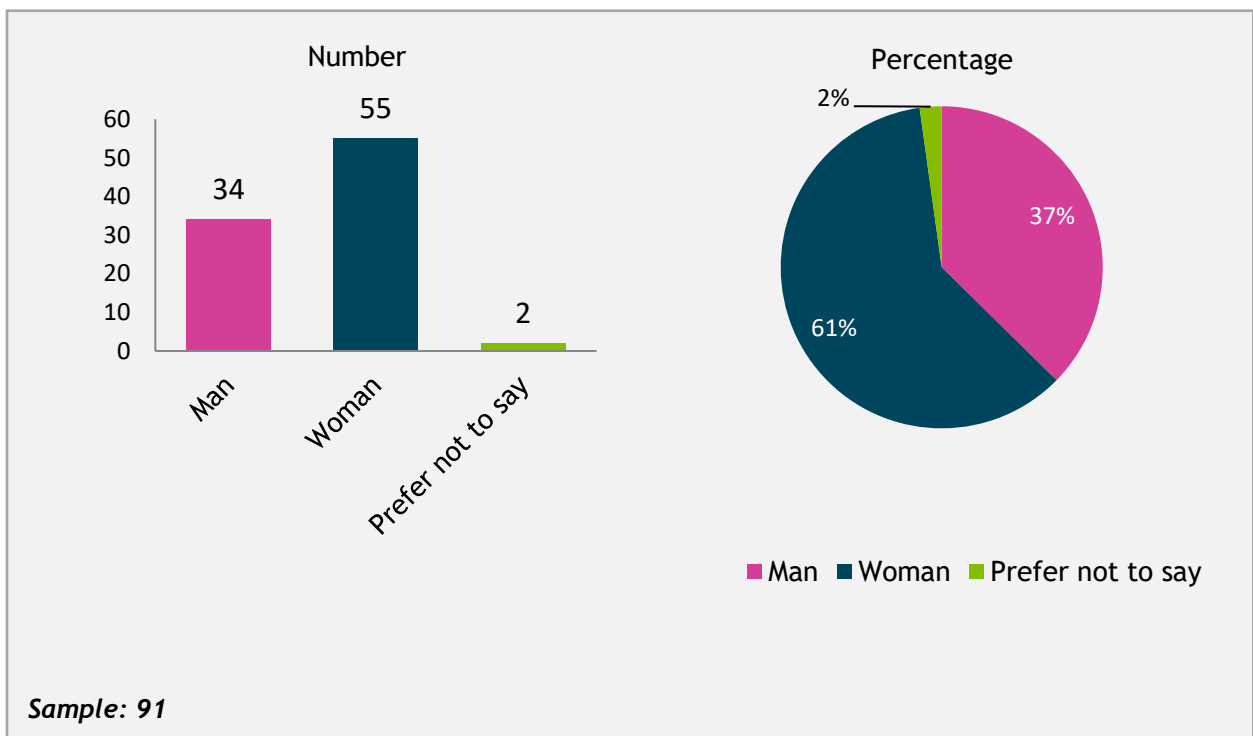
Appendix - Demographics

The demographics of participants are stated as follows:

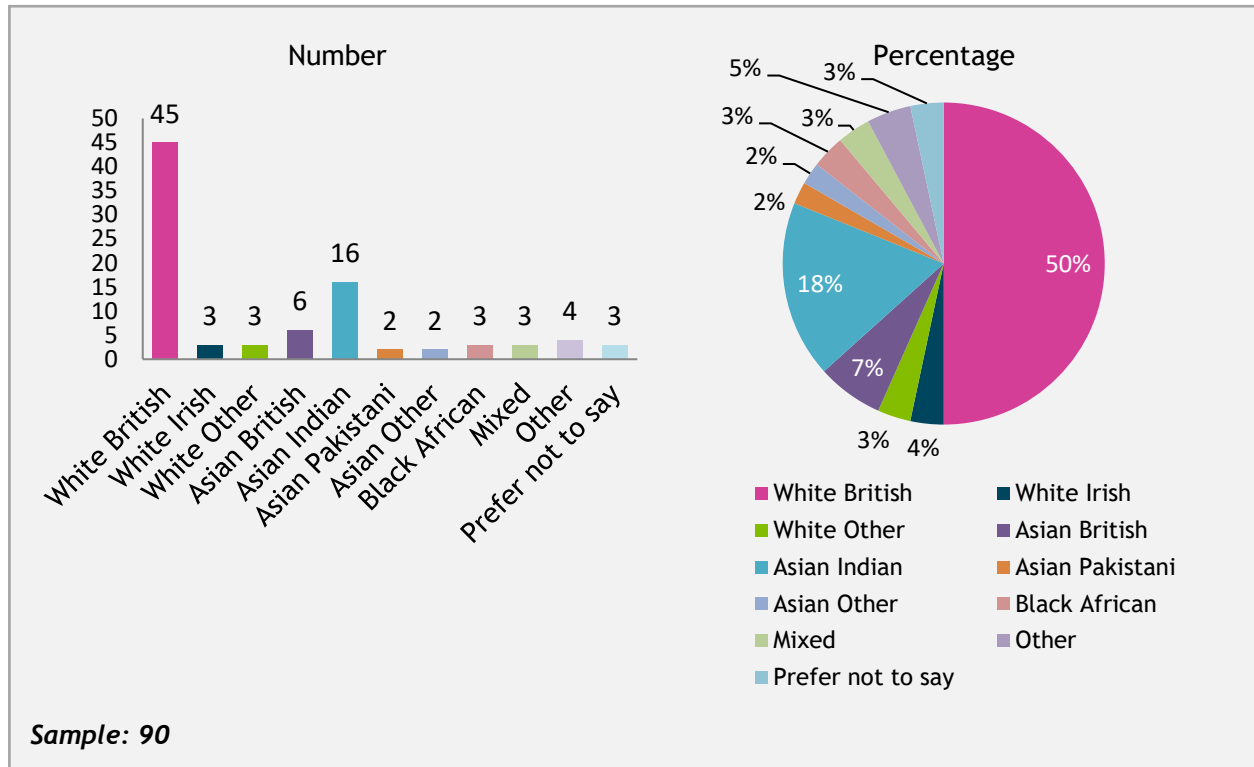
Age



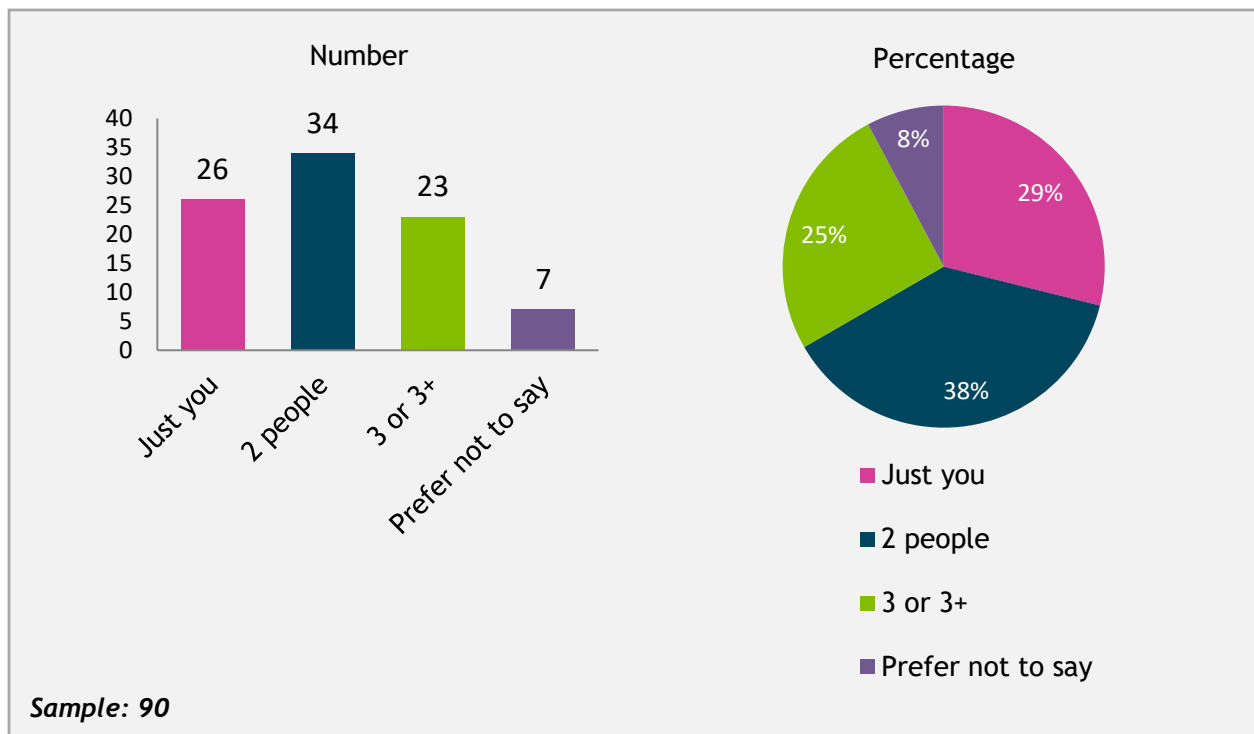
Gender



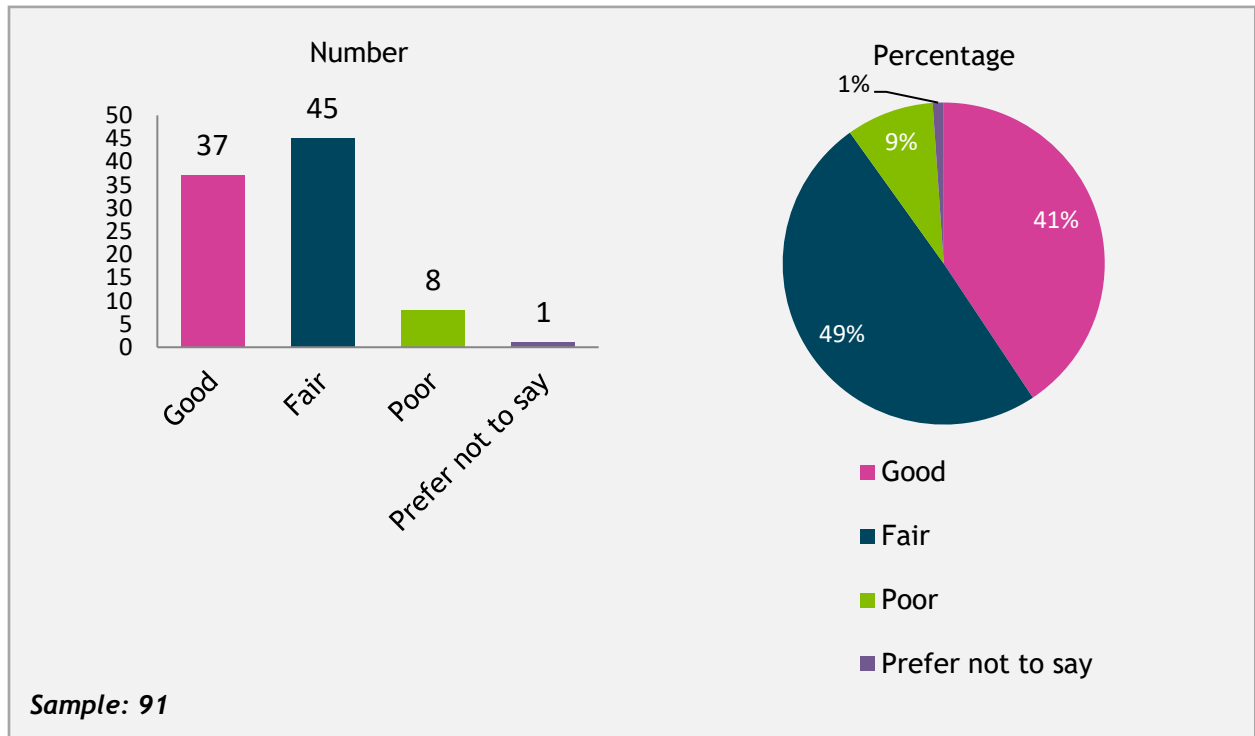
Ethnicity



Household



Health



“I’d like a personal service - speaking to a human.”

Local GP Patient