

RCGP Briefing: GP Patient Survey 2022



Royal College of
General Practitioners

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The new [Official Statistics from the GP Patient Survey](#), highlights the need to introduce a bold new plan to tackle the crisis in general practice.

The new GP Patient Survey found that:

- 73% of patients in the new survey had an overall good experience with their general practice a 10% drop from last year 10%
- 90% of patients surveyed felt that their needs were met during their consultation.
- 93% of patients continue to have confidence and trust in the healthcare professional they saw.

Last year, general practice in England carried out almost 370 million consultations, this is 18.5% more than in 2019. Over that time, the number of clinical administration tasks delivered by GPs in England rose by 28%, up to 107 million in 2021

Despite an agreement from Government that we need 6,000 extra GPs the number of FTE fully qualified GPs has fallen by 1,622 between September 2015 and 2021. With a falling number of GPs looking after a growing population, on average each GP looks after 10% more patients than in 2015.

Despite this incredible pressure on general practice a 73% of patients in the new survey had an overall good experience with their general practice. This however is a 10% drop in patients' overall experience showing how the extra demand on GPs is impacting patient care.

Put simply, GPs don't have the time, resources, or capacity to deliver the type of care they want to deliver for their patients.

The new GP Patient Survey found that:

- *Just over two in five patients (43.4%) have a GP they prefer to see or speak to. Of these patients, 38.2% said they saw them always, almost always or a lot of the time.*

The latest [Relationship-Based Care report](#) by the RCGP sets out the importance relational care. **Relationship-based care** enables GPs to build good relationships which lead to improved patient experience, better health outcomes and reduced mortality.

For clinicians it means greater job satisfaction while for the wider health system it means reduced costs resulting from fewer prescriptions and unplanned hospital admissions, more appropriate referrals and investigations, and greater adherence to medical advice.

However, key statistics from our recent survey of GPs shows that:

- 68% of GPs say they don't have enough time to adequately assess and treat patients during appointments.
- 64% of GPs say they don't have enough time during appointments to build the patient relationships they need to deliver quality care.

- 65% of GPs say that patient safety is being compromised due to appointments being too short.

Fundamentally, we need to see a shift in the debate around GP access to emphasise quality as well as speed. Good access means seeing the right clinician – where necessary a clinician whom the patient knows - and the right consultation length to facilitate the building of rapport and trust. Relational care must, ultimately, be central to the future of general practice.

General practice teams must be given the resources and support required to deliver relationship-based care effectively. This means:

- Ensuring relationship-based care is fully integrated within medical curricula and teaching
- Ensuring there are enough GPs to meet rising demand
- Making relationship-based care a national priority in primary care
- Developing IT infrastructure to support relational care and continuity
- Freeing up staff time for patient care
- Incentivising relationship-based care
- Engaging and inform patients about getting the care they need

The new GP Patient Survey found that:

- **56.6% of patients said they had a good overall experience when making an appointment. This is down from 70.6% in 2021.**
- **Of patients who had tried, around half (52.7%) said it was easy to get through to their GP practice on the phone, a decrease of 14.9 percentage points compared with 2021 (67.6%).**

There is also an urgent need to **improve the front door of general practice**. One of the biggest complaints is that patients struggle to get in contact with their GP. Most of this is because demand massively outstrips supply, but the problems are exacerbated because many GPs do not have the right technology 34% of GPs say that the IT for their booking systems is not good enough. for call handling or online booking and a lack of organisational support to improve the way patients access the service.

An improved booking system could also help with continuity of care for patients. For example, we believe all booking systems and processes should allow patients to express a preference between taking the next available appointment or potentially waiting longer to see the GP of their choice.

The current pressure on GPs from politicians, NHS England and even the press is to focus on speed of access. Our members have risen to this challenge: significantly cutting waiting times so that in 2021 over 45% of all patients had an appointment on the day that they contacted their practice and 76% were seen within a week. While speed is important, we also need to consider quality issues such as ensuring patients and practice staff can build a supportive relationship.

From the recent RCGP survey of our members

- 34% of GPs say that the IT for their booking systems is not good enough.
- 64% of GPs said their computer systems were not able to properly share information with hospitals.
- 75% of GPs said that encouraging specialists to refer patients to other specialists themselves where appropriate rather asking GPs to re-refer them would make a significant difference to GP workloads.
- 68% of GPs said that making back-office functions more efficient would make a significant difference to GP workloads.

What do we want?

General practice is in crisis, and these pressures are ultimately damaging patient care. Patients deserve better, and this is why we are **calling for a bold new plan to improve general practice in England**, as set out in our [Fit for the Future campaign](#).

To address the spiralling workload and workforce pressures in general practice, and ensure it becomes sustainable for the future, we are calling on the Government and NHS England to commit to:

- A new recruitment and retention strategy that allows us to go beyond the target of 6000 more GPs
- An NHS wide campaign to free up GPs to spend more time with patients by cutting unnecessary workload and bureaucracy
- Improving patients' experience of accessing care by investing in a new suite of IT products and support for practices, making it easier for patients to choose to see the same GP or the next available member of the team.
- Returning funding for general practice to 11% of total health spend, including £1 billion additional investment in GP premises.

These findings must spur the Government and policy makers to take heed of our campaign asks, and sufficiently support GPs and their teams to deliver safe, timely and personalised care to all patients.