

Healthwatch Tameside Transport to medical appointments report

Survey data collected
April 2021 to July 2021

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Introduction

Healthwatch Tameside is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in Tameside.

We listen to local people, and gather information about their experiences of using health and social care services.

We use this information to talk to the people who arrange (commission) the services and the people who provide the services. We can influence changes which will make these services better for everyone. If we hear about good practice, we encourage this to be shared. If you tell us about something that could be improved, we will talk to the people in charge about this too.

Any information we are given will remain anonymous. We are careful to share ideas in a way which will not identify any individuals.

In this report we are looking at transport to medical appointments. We know that during the COVID-19 lockdowns, patient transport services were not operating. We wanted to find out whether people are now able to get to medical appointments when they need to.

We launched our survey at the end of April 2021, and it stayed open until the end of July 2021.

The second part of the survey asked for feedback about using health and care services, and these responses will be included in a separate report.

We want to give as many people as possible an opportunity to complete our surveys. They are available online, on paper, and we offer to complete them over the phone with people.

We received 66 completed responses to this survey, broken down as follows:

Online	-	7 (11%)
On paper	-	41 (62%)
By phone	-	18 (27%)

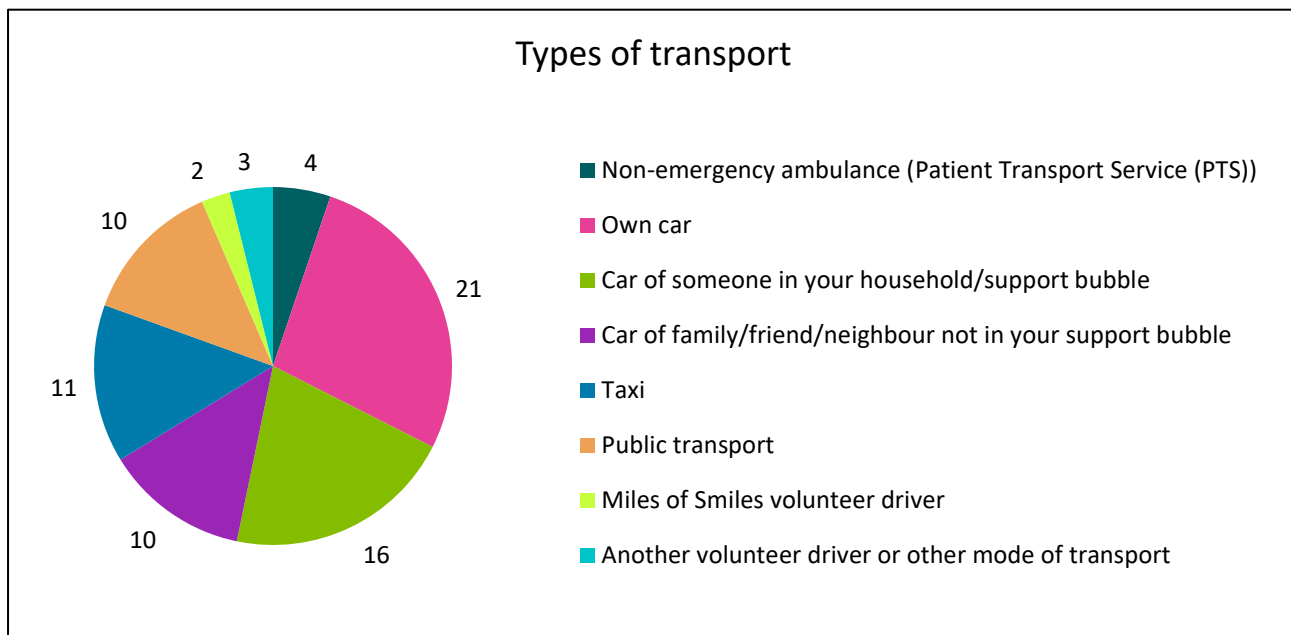
Many of the people who use patient transport are older people, and we know from our COVID-19 survey that these are also the people who often do not use technology. It is not surprising that most of the completed surveys for this topic are on paper or by telephone.

Some of the questions have tick-box responses, and some ask for people to write what they think in their own words.

Here is what we were told.

Question 1 - Have you used any of the following recently to go to a planned medical appointment or urgent healthcare? Please tick all that apply.

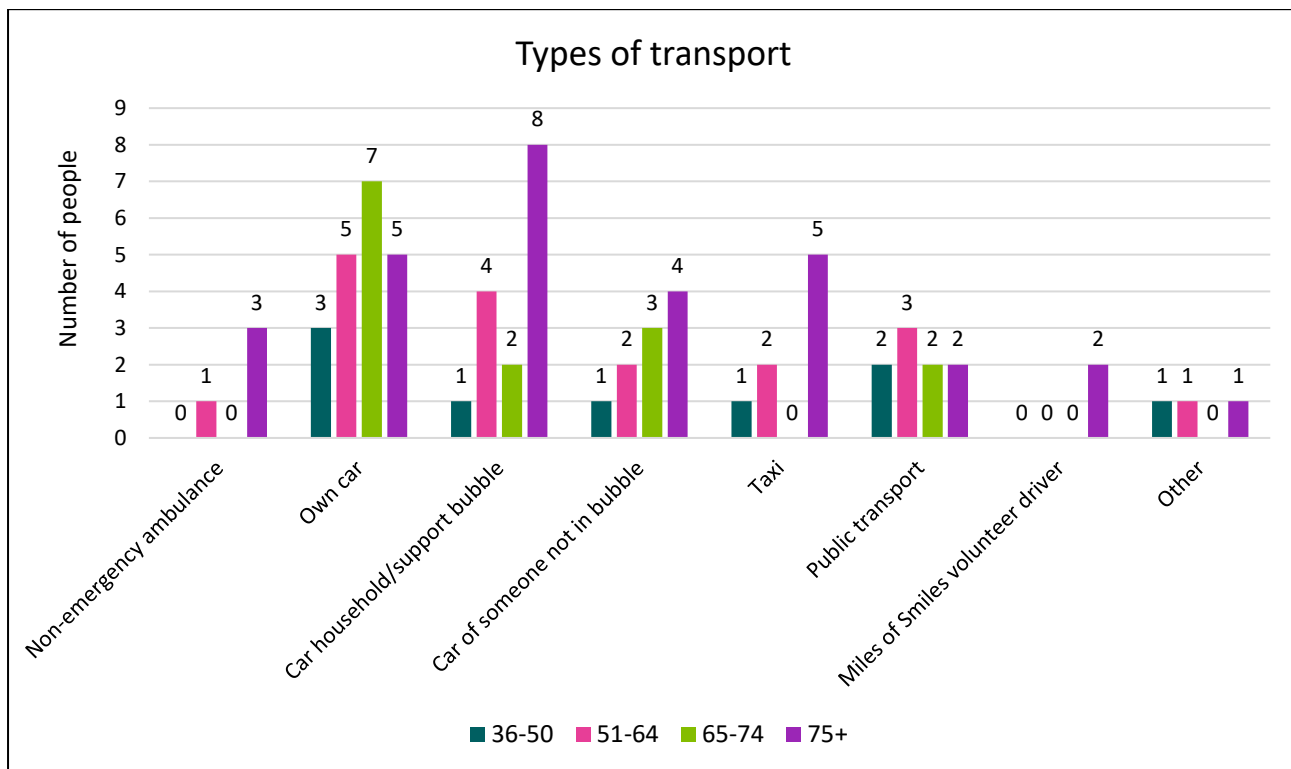
56 people answered this question.



3 people ticked 'other'. These types of transport included:

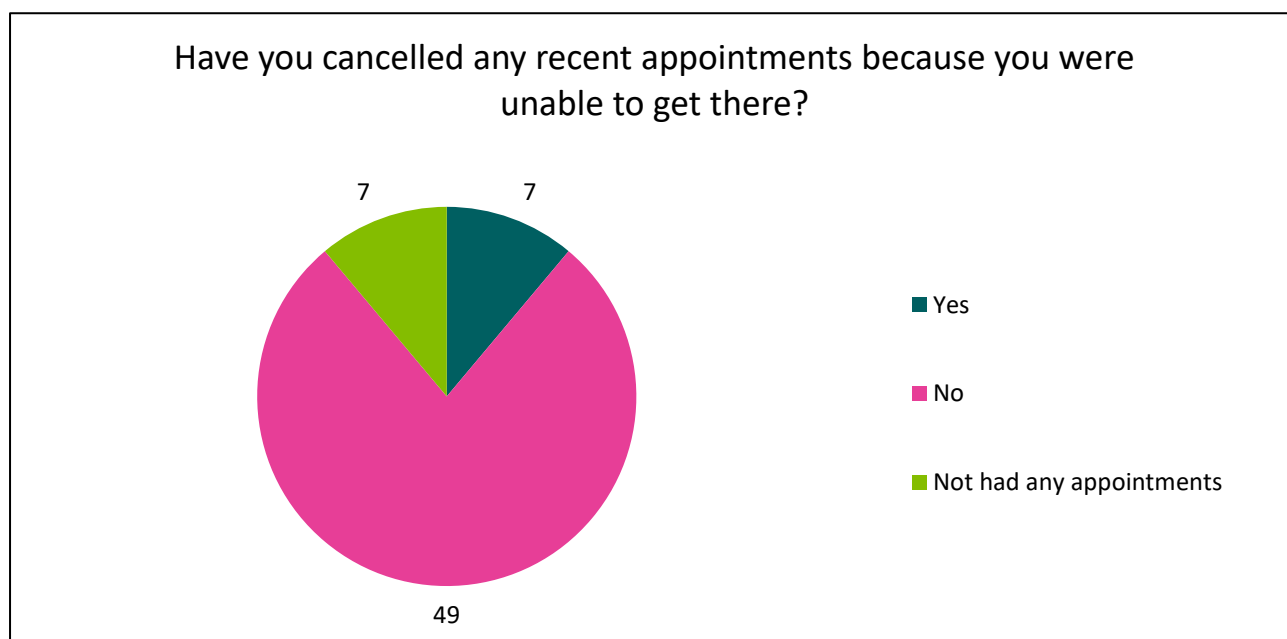
- Own scooter
- Medical health team for COVID vaccination
- Shared Lives permanent carer (of person with a learning disability)

We have looked at the answers to question 1 broken down between different ages. Not everyone answered the question about age. This is shown in the next graph.



Question 2 - Have you cancelled any recent appointments because you were unable to get there?

63 people answered this question.



Question 3 - If you answered 'Yes' to question 2), what sort of appointment was it, and where should it have been? Has it been re-arranged?

One person couldn't remember which appointment it was.

The responses about medical appointments were:

- Needed to attend Salford Royal 3 times in a week. Patient Transport not available and I cannot use public transport. My daughter had to take time off work to take me so I had to re-arrange the appointment.
- Blood test - the appointment was done the week after.
- Diabetic eye test. I needed someone to bring me home so had to rearrange away from the school holidays.
- Manchester Royal Eye Hospital - got another appointment with going to the Diabetic eye screening.
- Covid injection Hyde Leisure. Yes completed now.

Question 4 - Is there anything else you would like to tell us about getting to medical appointments, either for yourself or another family member?

36 people provided feedback to this question. Of these, 11 people said they had nothing to tell us. 2 people said they were happy, but nothing more.

Other comments included:

- Assistance by family members:
 - Can be difficult if family member not available.
 - I am on long term oxygen therapy and do not drive. My partner has to take a day's annual leave whenever I have an appointment at Wythenshawe as I am not entitled to PTS (Patient Transport Service) because he can drive me. My oxygen cylinder lasts about 1.5 - 1.75 hours. Not long enough to get to Wythenshawe on public transport, never mind getting to the department, attending the appointment and getting home again.
 - I have family members that would help me.
 - On a good day when my husband is feeling well enough he can drive us to GP appointments, but this is not often.
- Buses and taxis:
 - A close friend needed to attend a clinic for his first Covid vaccination. He was told to go to a clinic three miles away from his home and had to take a taxi - a return journey for which he was charged £24. I feel a better arrangement should have been made for him.
 - Manchester Royal is hard to get to on the bus. I would have liked to go back to Tameside where I have had many things done such as scans and other things, even eyes tested.
 - Reinstate our buses. It costs a fortune in taxi fares and I have no other way of getting there as I am bad on my feet and made worse by not being able to access pain relief due to doctor's surgery and hospitals refusing to see patients.
 - The use of taxis expensive.
- Information:
 - More information should have been offered (for someone lives alone) at pre-op appointments etc. about transport e.g. Miles of Smiles, voluntary drivers?
 - Quite often if you're younger then OAP age transport is denied you. Also hospital staff don't outline if any transport options are available (they just presume you have a car or can afford a taxi).
- Positive comments:
 - All appointments have been by telephone.
 - I am happy that most of my appointments are done at home.
 - Rearranging hasn't been an issue.
 - We use Miles of Smiles that are very good if I have needed them.

Conclusion

It would appear that getting to medical appointments can be an issue for some people.

Many older people are asking family and friends to give them a lift to appointments. This can mean family having to take time out of work.

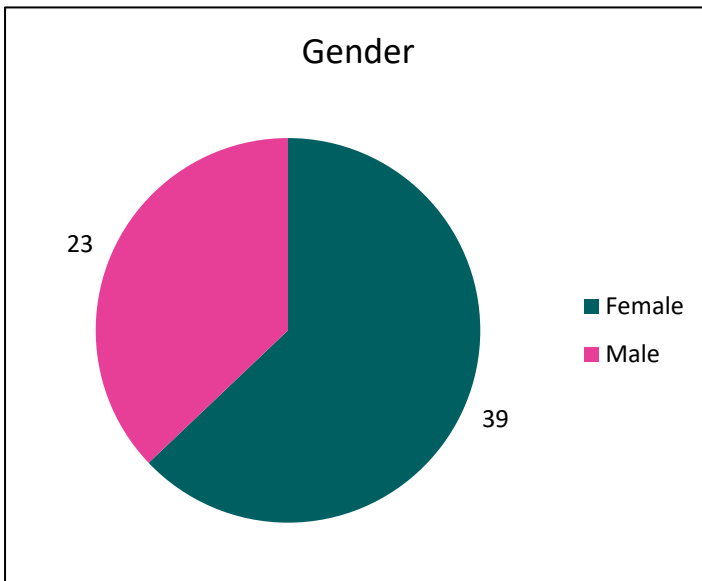
This same group of people are also the highest users of taxis. Some say they find public transport too difficult, others that there isn't a bus service they can use. Many complained about the cost.

We were told in one response that a patient is not eligible for non-emergency Patient Transport (provided by North West Ambulance Service), because they have a family member who can provide transport, even though this means that person taking time out of work.

People told us that they were not aware of services such as Miles of Smiles.

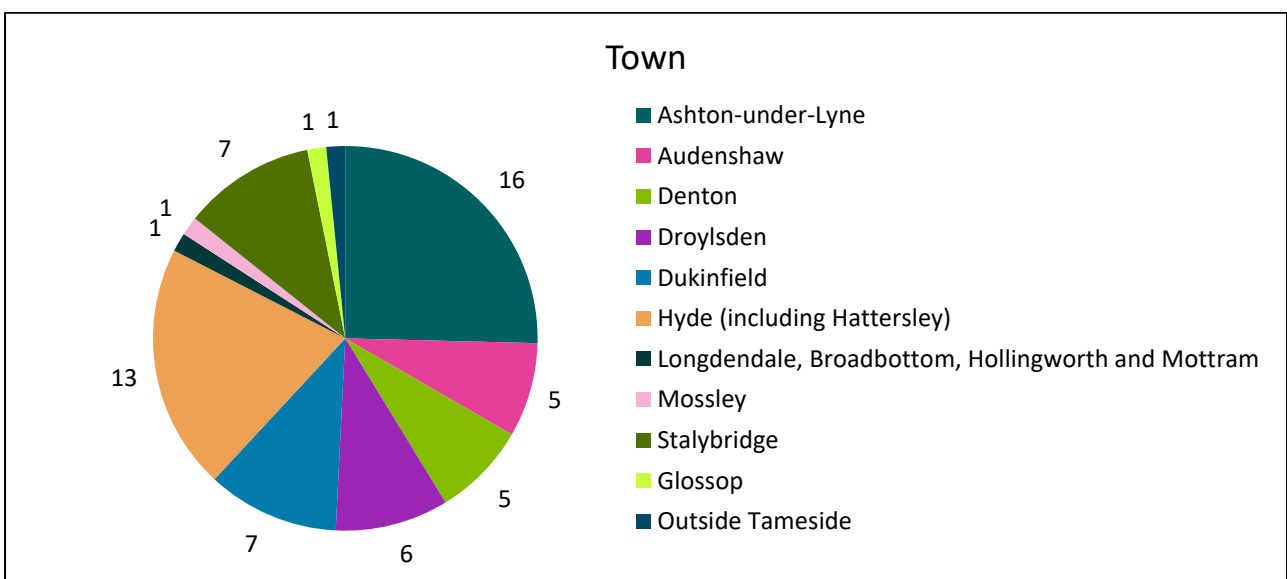
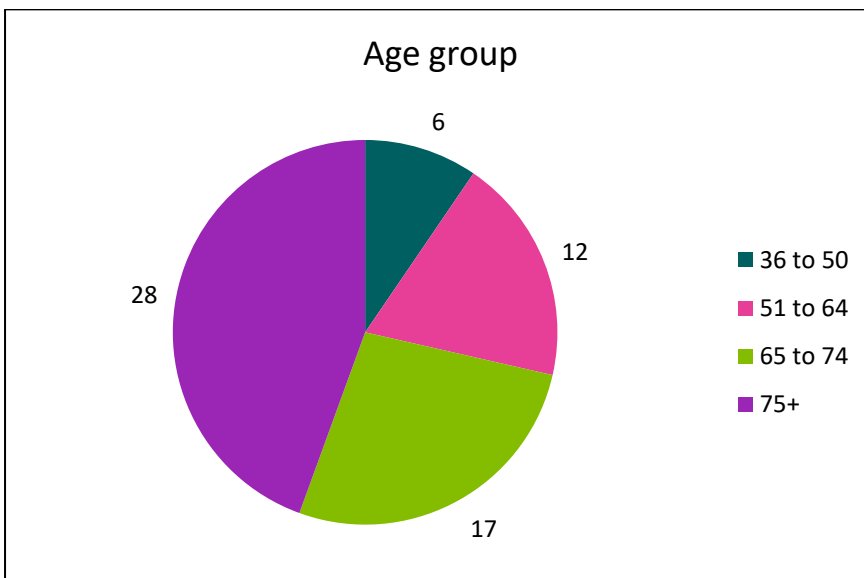
- Recommendation - doctors, nurses, hospitals, etc. to give consideration to travel arrangements when appointments are being made, especially if the patient is unable to drive themselves. Are patients aware of all the options available? Are they eligible for a service they may not be aware of?

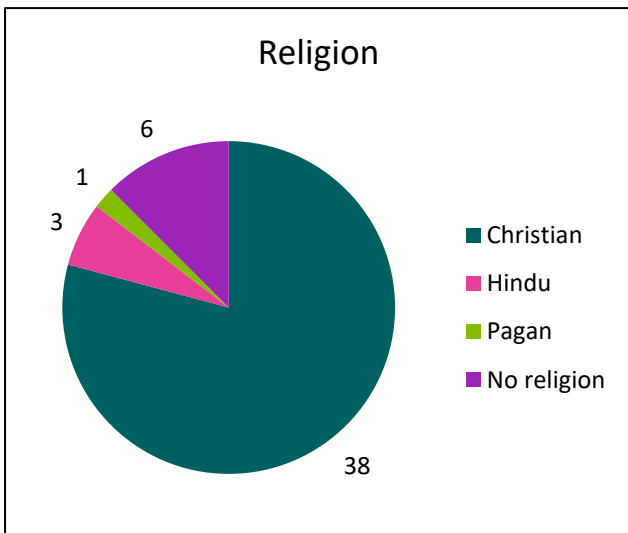
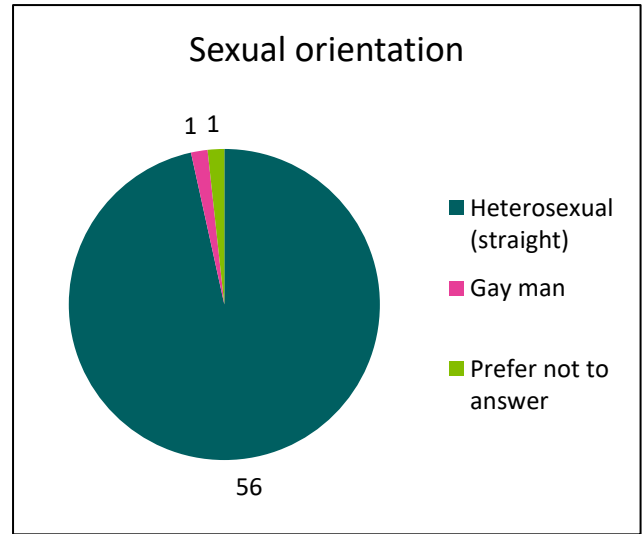
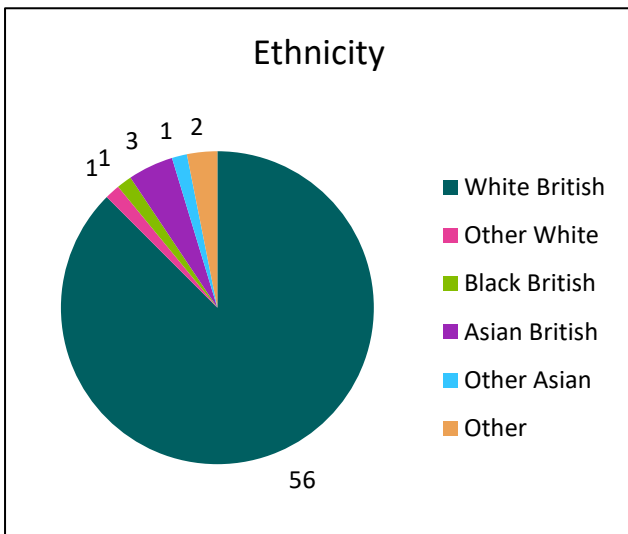
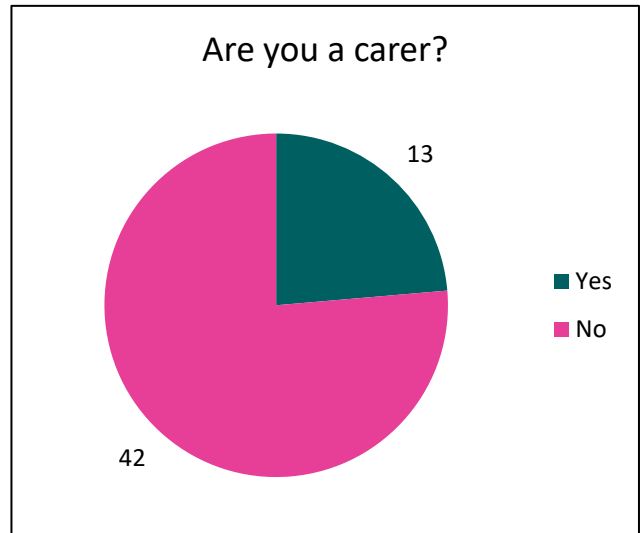
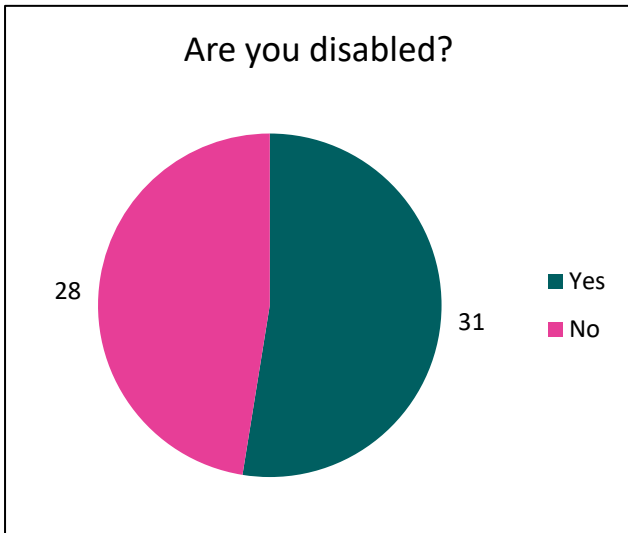
Demographics



Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?

58 people (100%) answered 'Yes' to this question.





Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Tameside would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who have shared our survey links with others. This includes statutory partners, community groups and charities, as well as members of the public and our volunteers.

Without your help, we would struggle to complete our projects.