

Self care with over-the-counter medicines
Survey Results**Background**

NHS England (NHSE) ran a consultation on reducing prescribing of over-the-counter medicines for minor, short-term health concerns, (December 2017 to March 2018), to produce a consistent, national framework for CCGs to use. Following NHSE's consultation, Wolverhampton CCG's Governing Body requested that we engage with our local population on their thoughts around implementing the actions from the consultation.

We set up a survey to ask people their views on whether medications that are available to buy over the counter should continue to be available on prescription. The survey (**see Appendix 1**) comprised of 11 questions and its complete results are shown in Appendix 1.

Methods of engagement with Wolverhampton public

We promoted the survey to members of the public by emailing our Patient Partners and stakeholders, putting the link on our website and Twitter account and posting paper surveys with a freepost envelope for return. Healthwatch Wolverhampton also shared the survey through their social media channels.

The survey also went out to our staff and GPs via our newsletters.

We visited two groups across the city to do some targeted engagement.

The survey was open for a four week period from 25 August – 25 September.

180 people completed the survey.

Some respondents who returned the survey by post left additional comments. These are listed in **Appendix 2**.

Results**Medications for minor, short-term skin conditions**

Q1. The following medications for minor, short-term skin conditions are widely available and can be bought from your local chemist/pharmacy or supermarket. Do you think they should continue to be prescribed by a GP or a nurse at your doctors surgery?

- A. An overwhelming majority of respondents said the following should not continue to be prescribed by a GP or nurse:
- Dandruff shampoo (91%)
 - Creams for mild dry skin/sunburn (88%)
 - Insect bites and stings (84%)

Out of all the treatments listed, people were most unsure about removing treatment for ringworm and athletes foot from prescription. 55 people out of 180 said this should remain on prescription and 21 people said they are unsure.

Q2. The following medications for minor, short-term conditions in children are widely available and can be bought from your local chemist/pharmacy or supermarket. Do you think they should continue to be prescribed by a GP or a nurse at your doctors surgery?

- A. The majority of respondents agreed that teething gels (79%), treatments for head lice (75%) and treatments for nappy rash (68%) should not continue to be prescribed.

Although the majority of respondents said that treatments for cradle cap and coughs and colds should no longer be prescribed, less people shared this view compared to the treatments above (60% and 62% respectively).

There is most mixed opinion with regards to infant colic, 34% of people said treatments should still be available on prescription and 46% said they should not.

Q3. The following medications for minor, short-term conditions are widely available and can be bought from your local chemist/pharmacy or supermarket. Do you think they should continue to be prescribed by a GP or a nurse at your doctors surgery?

- A. Over 80% of respondents said that treatments for coughs and colds and nasal congestion, sore throat, cold sores, infrequent constipation, mouth ulcers, vitamins and minerals should not continue to be prescribed.

Respondents were less favourable to removing treatments for indigestion and heartburn – with 51 people either saying treatment should either continue to be prescribed, or that they were unsure whether it should still be prescribed.

Out of all the ailments people were asked about, respondents were most unsure about treatment for diarrhoea in adults, with 21 people selecting this answer.

Q4. Were you aware that treatments for the following minor, short-term conditions can be bought from the supermarket or chemist/pharmacy?

- A. At least 87% of respondents were aware that listed treatments are available over the counter for all short-term conditions specified.

Q5. Were you aware that getting medicine on prescription costs the NHS much more than buying over the counter?

- A. Out of the 180 who completed the survey, 160 people were aware that prescription medication costs more than buying over the counter.

Q6. Would you buy treatments from the chemist/pharmacy or supermarket for minor, short-term conditions rather than booking an appointment with your GP?

- A. 91% of people asked said they would buy treatments for short-term conditions rather than booking an appointment with their GP.

Q7. Please tick your age group

- A. 22 (12%) respondents were aged 19-45
- 42 (24%) respondents were aged 46-59
- 80 (46%) respondents were aged 60-74
- 31 (18%) respondents were aged 75+

A good spread of ages, with 36% likely to pay for their prescriptions.

Q8. Where were the respondents from?

The first part of the survey respondent's postcode:

WV1	35
WV2	4
WV3	17
WV4	16
WV5	4
WV6	19
WV8	4
WV9	6
WV10	27
WV11	17
WV12	1
WV13	1
WV14	3

We had a good spread of survey respondents, with all respondents from Wolverhampton. The top two postcodes represented are WV1 and WV10.

Q9. Do you consider yourself to have a long term condition?

- A. 125 people (74%) who completed the survey consider themselves to have a long term condition.

Q10. What is your current employment status?

- A. We asked people their employment status to give an indication if they are likely to pay for their prescription, and if this has an impact on their views on removing treatments from prescription.

Most people who completed the survey are either employed (37%) or retired (58%). Three respondents are self-employed and seven are not in employment.

The results don't show a specific trend with regards to the views of those who are retired and don't have to pay for their prescription and those who are employed.

Q11. Are you a carer?

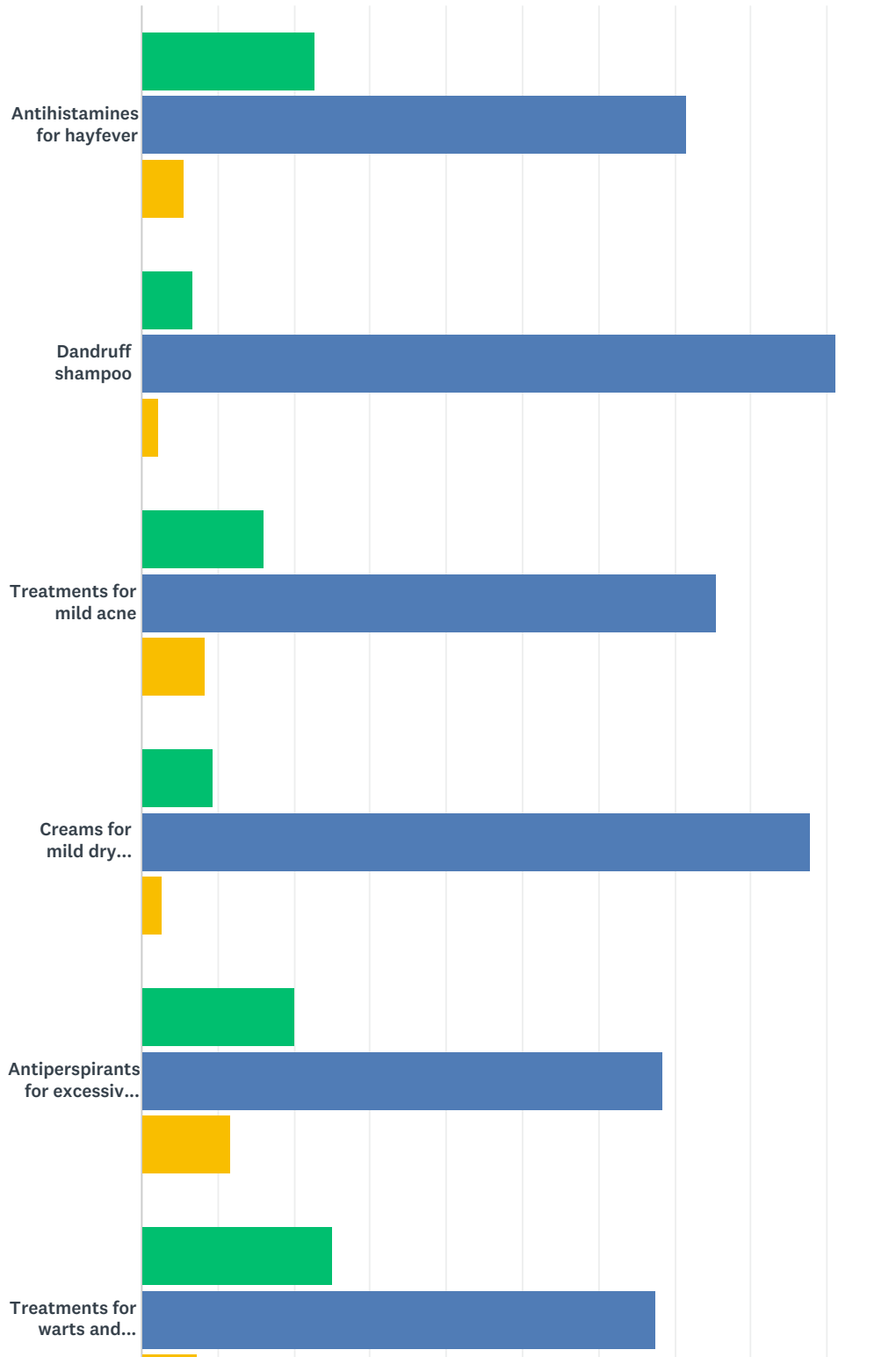
- A. 16% of respondents said that they are a carer.

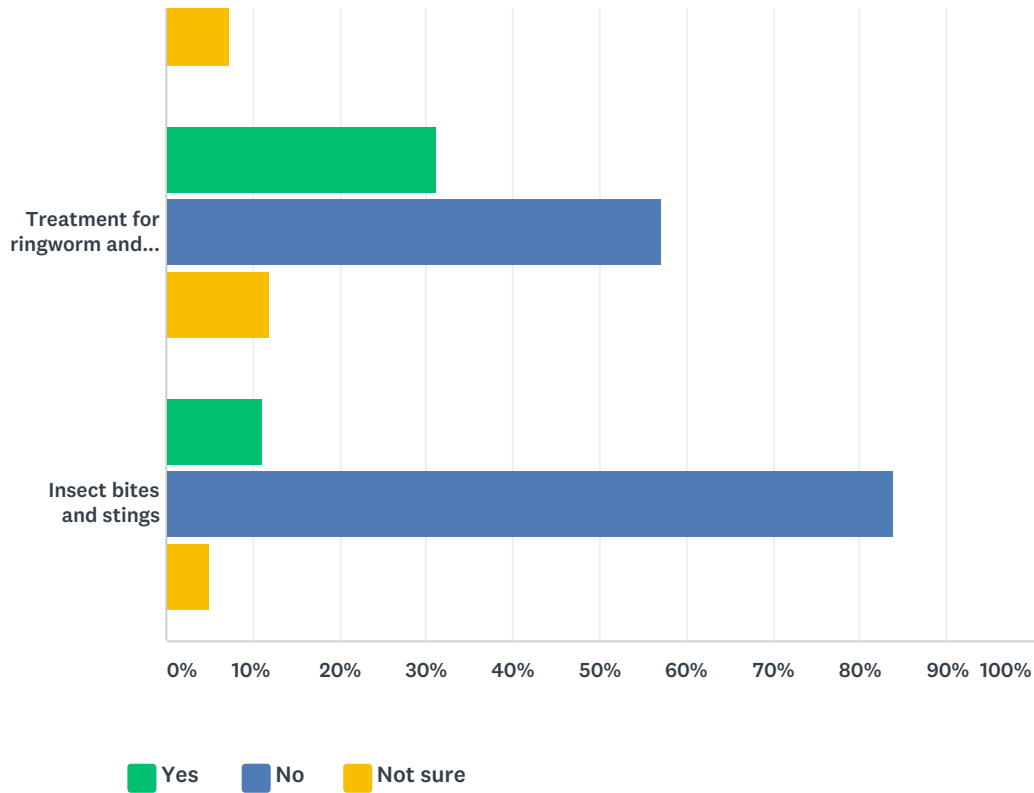
Appendix 1

Question summaries

Q1 The following medications for minor, short-term skin conditions are widely available and can be bought from your local chemist/pharmacy or supermarket. Do you think they should continue to be prescribed by a GP or a nurse at your doctors surgery?

Answered: 180 Skipped: 0

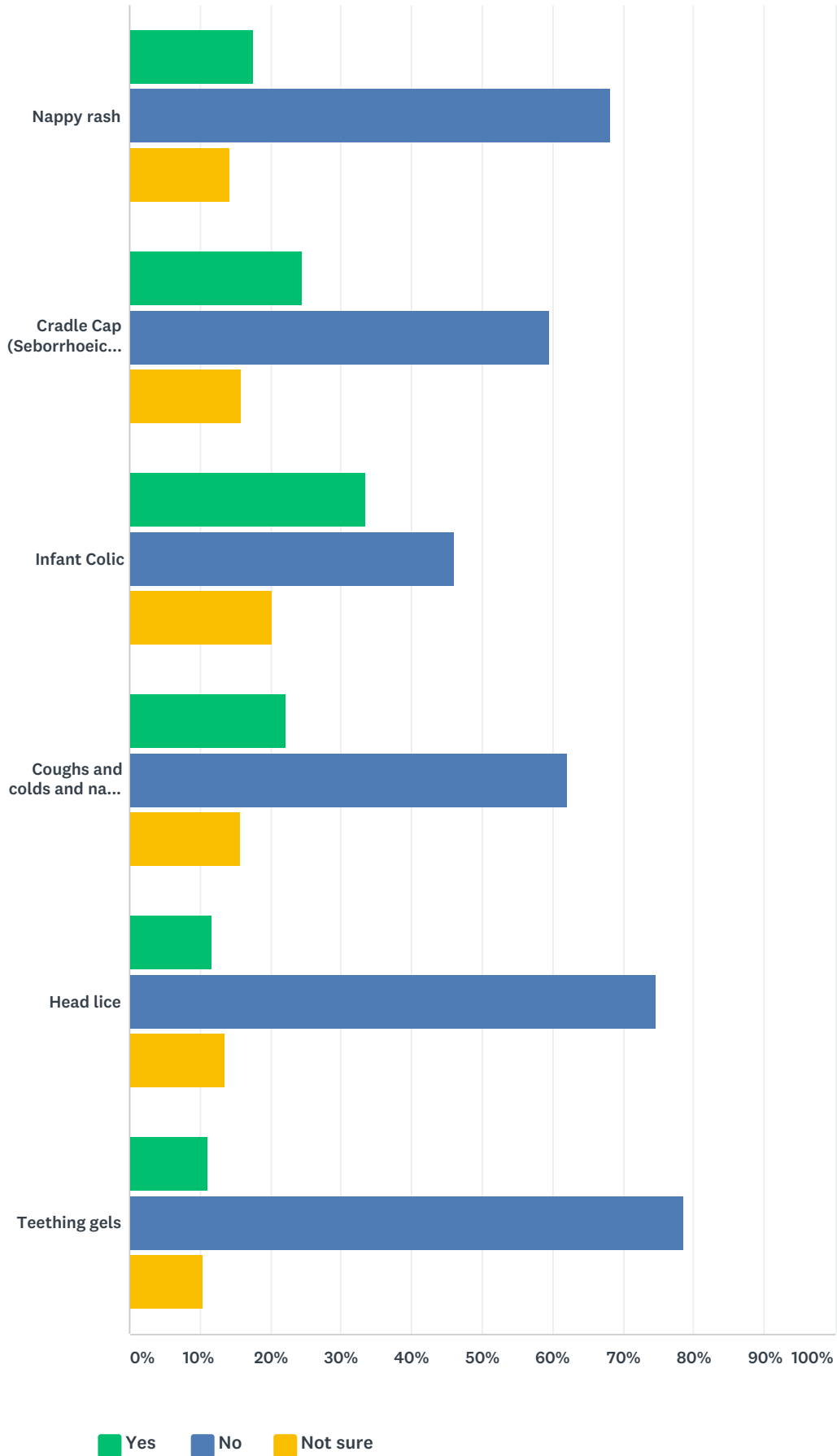




	YES	NO	NOT SURE	TOTAL
Antihistamines for hayfever	22.91% 41	71.51% 128	5.59% 10	179
Dandruff shampoo	6.67% 12	91.11% 164	2.22% 4	180
Treatments for mild acne	16.20% 29	75.42% 135	8.38% 15	179
Creams for mild dry skin/sunburn	9.44% 17	87.78% 158	2.78% 5	180
Antiperspirants for excessive sweating	20.00% 36	68.33% 123	11.67% 21	180
Treatments for warts and verrucae	25.14% 45	67.60% 121	7.26% 13	179
Treatment for ringworm and athlete's foot	31.07% 55	57.06% 101	11.86% 21	177
Insect bites and stings	11.17% 20	83.80% 150	5.03% 9	179

Q2 The following medications for minor, short-term conditions in children are widely available and can be bought from your local chemist/pharmacy or supermarket. Do you think they should continue to be prescribed by a GP or a nurse at your doctors surgery?

Answered: 154 Skipped: 26



	YES	NO	NOT SURE	TOTAL
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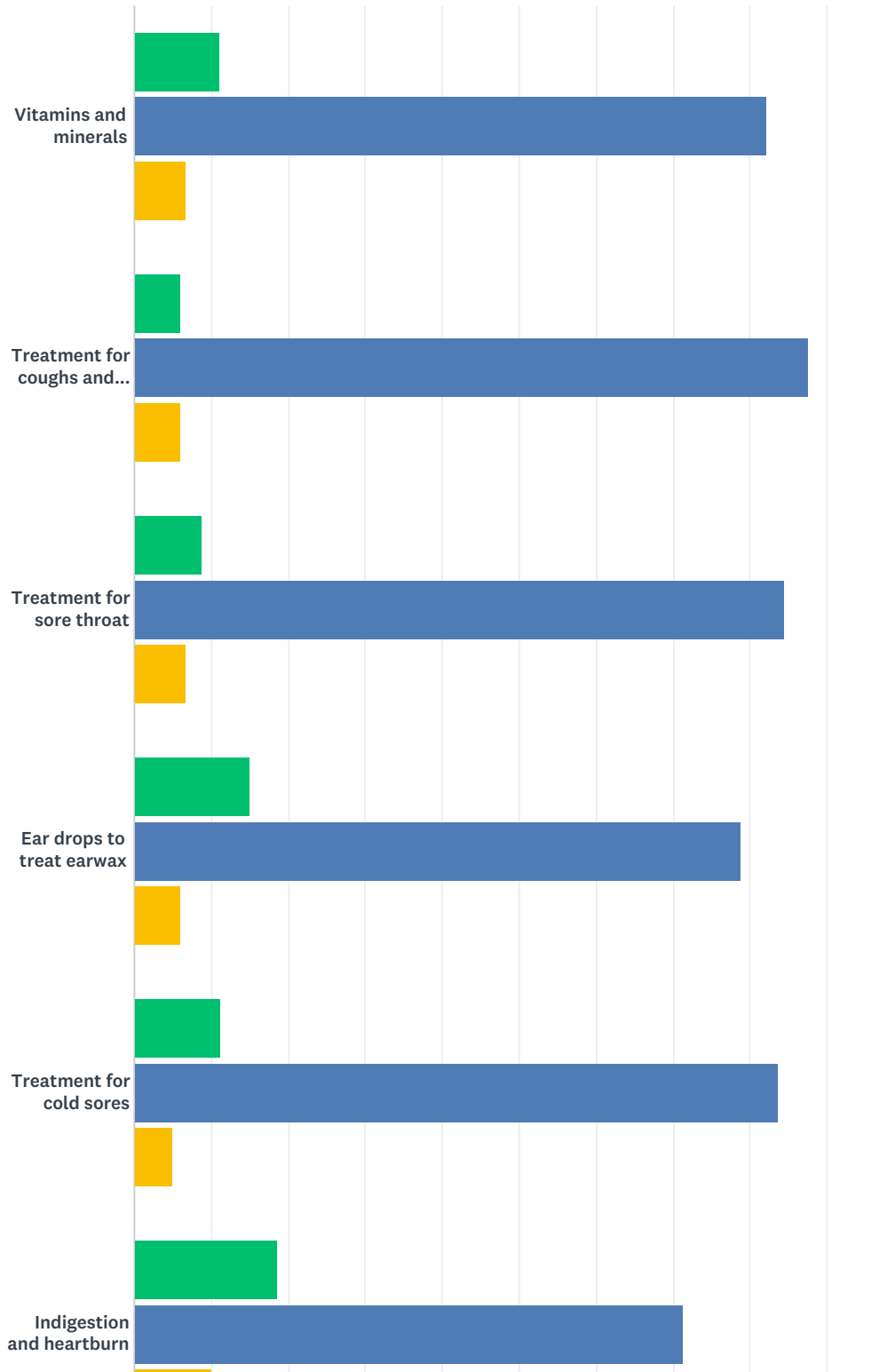
WCCG Self care with over-the-counter medicines

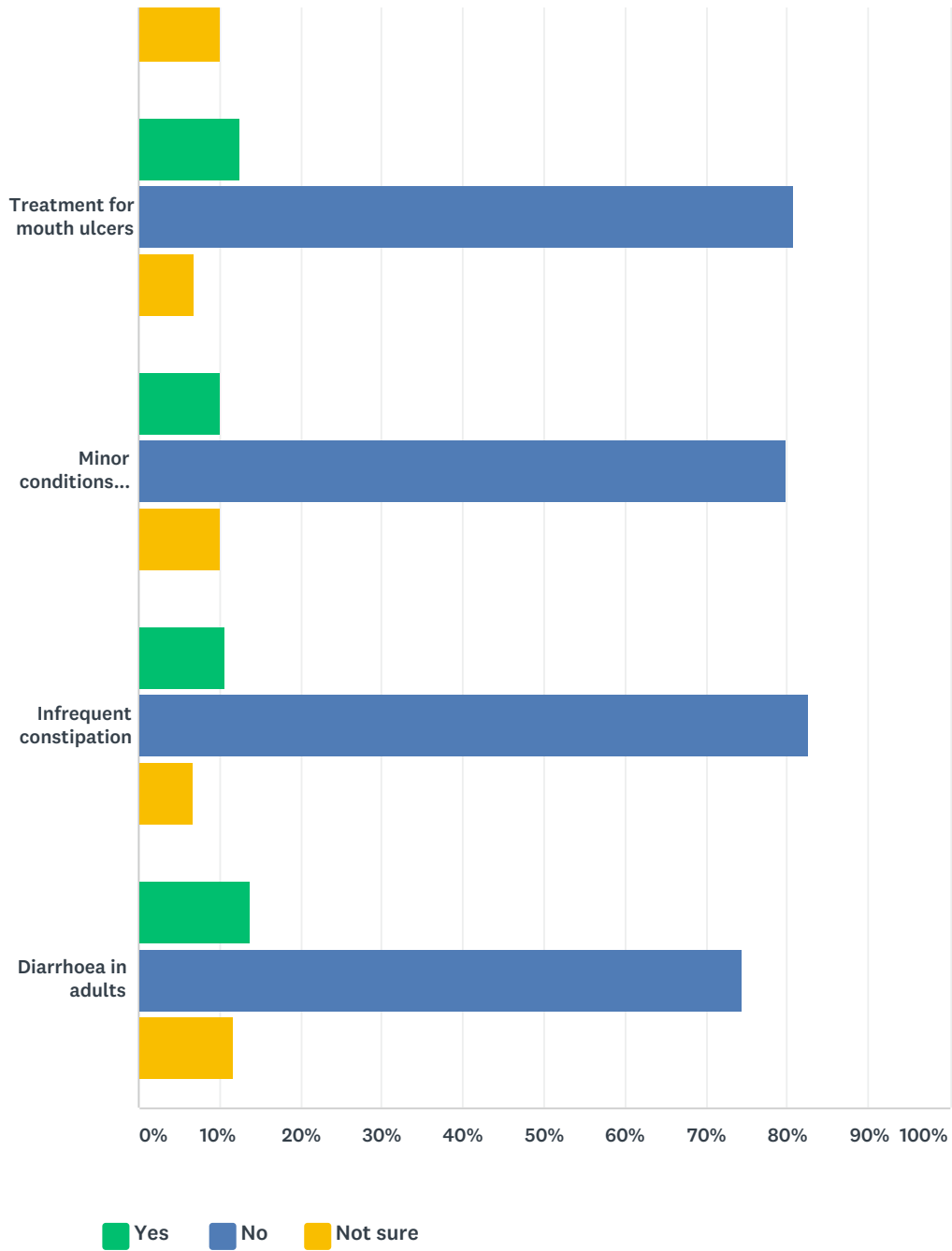
SurveyMonkey

Nappy rash	17.53% 27	68.18% 105	14.29% 22	154
Cradle Cap (Seborrhoeic dermatitis – infants)	24.50% 37	59.60% 90	15.89% 24	151
Infant Colic	33.55% 51	46.05% 70	20.39% 31	152
Coughs and colds and nasal congestion	22.22% 34	62.09% 95	15.69% 24	153
Head lice	11.69% 18	74.68% 115	13.64% 21	154
Teething gels	11.04% 17	78.57% 121	10.39% 16	154

Q3 The following medications for minor, short-term conditions are widely available and can be bought from your local chemist/pharmacy or supermarket. Do you think they should continue to be prescribed by a GP or a nurse at your doctors surgery?

Answered: 180 Skipped: 0



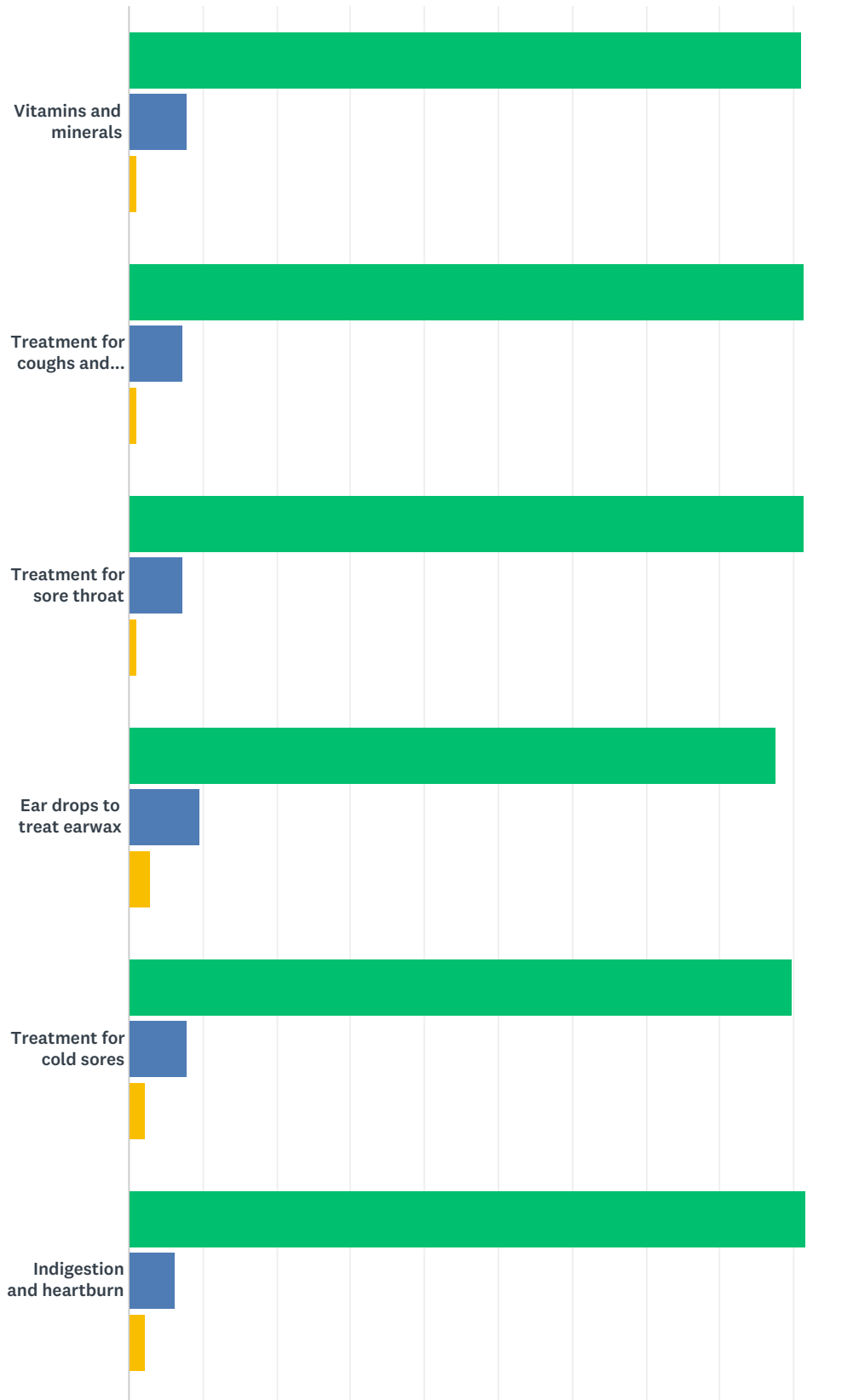


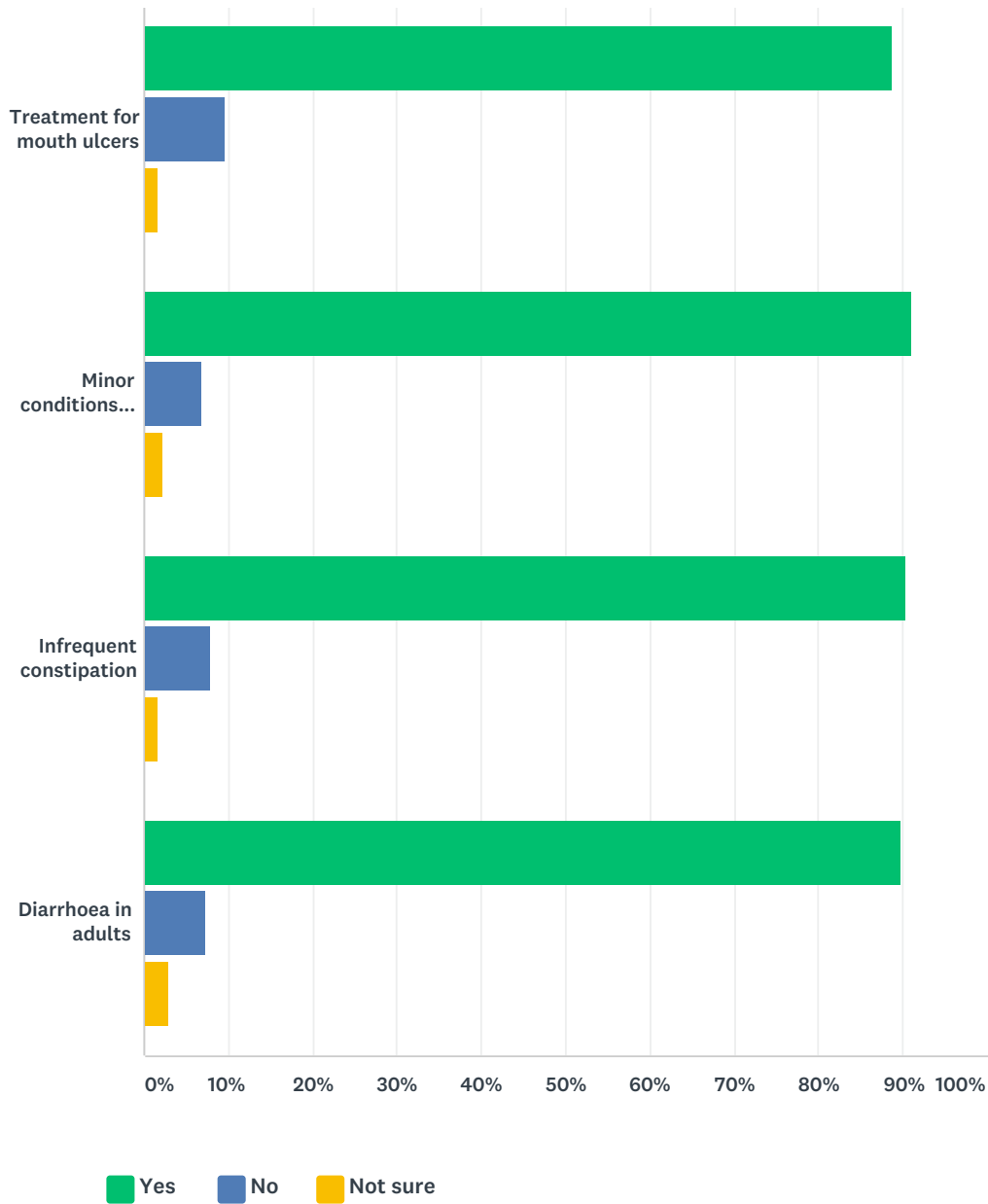
	YES	NO	NOT SURE	TOTAL
Vitamins and minerals	11.11% 20	82.22% 148	6.67% 12	180
Treatment for coughs and colds and nasal congestion	6.15% 11	87.71% 157	6.15% 11	179
Treatment for sore throat	8.89% 16	84.44% 152	6.67% 12	180
Ear drops to treat earwax	15.08% 27	78.77% 141	6.15% 11	179
Treatment for cold sores	11.24% 20	83.71% 149	5.06% 9	178

Indigestion and heartburn	18.54% 33	71.35% 127	10.11% 18	178
Treatment for mouth ulcers	12.50% 22	80.68% 142	6.82% 12	176
Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/fever. (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)	10.06% 18	79.89% 143	10.06% 18	179
Infrequent constipation	10.61% 19	82.68% 148	6.70% 12	179
Diarrhoea in adults	13.89% 25	74.44% 134	11.67% 21	180

Q4 Were you aware that treatments for the following minor, short-term conditions can be bought from the supermarket or chemist/pharmacy?

Answered: 178 Skipped: 2



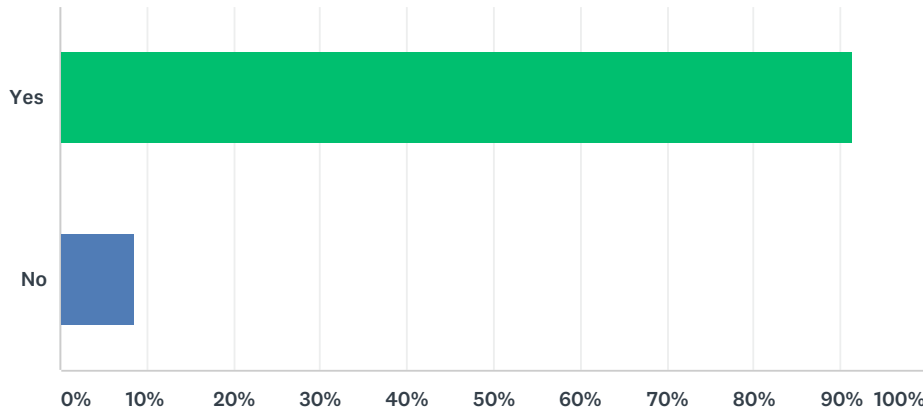


	YES	NO	NOT SURE	TOTAL
Vitamins and minerals	90.96% 161	7.91% 14	1.13% 2	177
Treatment for coughs and colds and nasal congestion	91.48% 161	7.39% 13	1.14% 2	176
Treatment for sore throat	91.53% 162	7.34% 13	1.13% 2	177
Ear drops to treat earwax	87.57% 155	9.60% 17	2.82% 5	177
Treatment for cold sores	89.77% 158	7.95% 14	2.27% 4	176
Indigestion and heartburn	91.57% 163	6.18% 11	2.25% 4	178
Treatment for mouth ulcers	88.70% 157	9.60% 17	1.69% 3	177

Minor conditions associated with pain, discomfort and/fever. (e.g. aches and sprains, headache, period pain, back pain)	90.91% 160	6.82% 12	2.27% 4	176
Infrequent constipation	90.34% 159	7.95% 14	1.70% 3	176
Diarrhoea in adults	89.83% 159	7.34% 13	2.82% 5	177

Q5 Were you aware that getting medicine on prescription costs the NHS much more than buying over the counter?

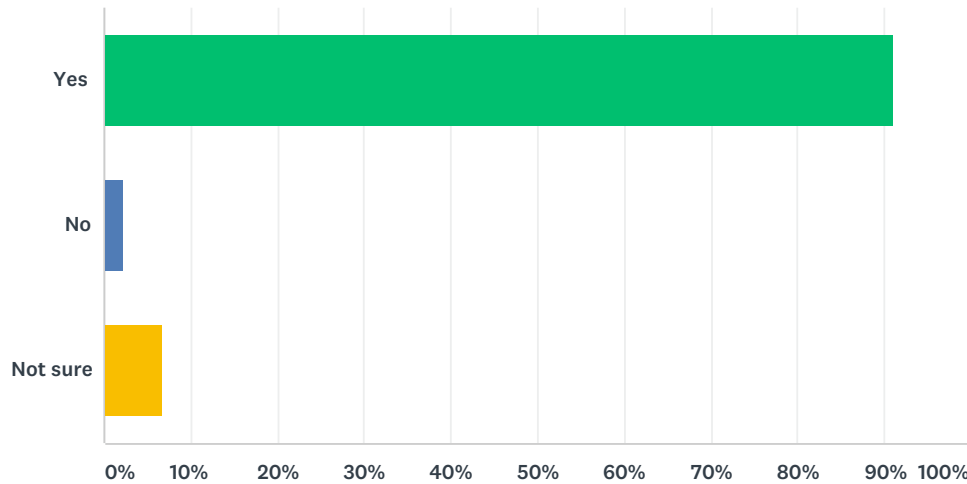
Answered: 175 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	91.43%	160
No	8.57%	15
TOTAL		175

Q6 Would you buy treatments from the chemist/pharmacy or supermarket for minor, short-term conditions rather than booking an appointment with your GP?

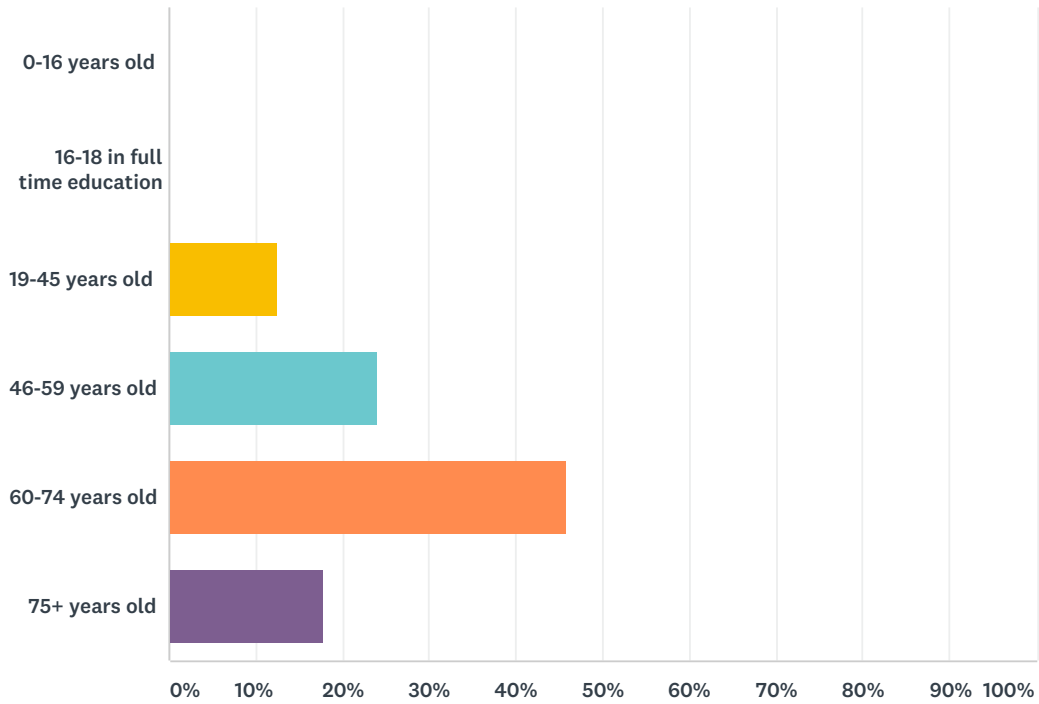
Answered: 178 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	91.01%	162
No	2.25%	4
Not sure	6.74%	12
TOTAL		178

Q7 Please tick your age group.

Answered: 175 Skipped: 5



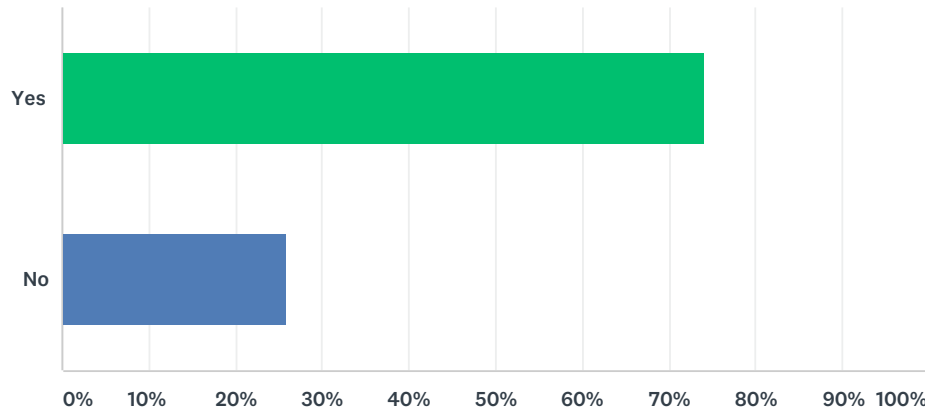
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-16 years old	0.00%	0
16-18 in full time education	0.00%	0
19-45 years old	12.57%	22
46-59 years old	24.00%	42
60-74 years old	45.71%	80
75+ years old	17.71%	31
TOTAL		175

Q8 Please enter the first three digits of your postcode. e.g WV1

Answered: 158 Skipped: 22

Q9 Do you consider yourself to have a long term condition?

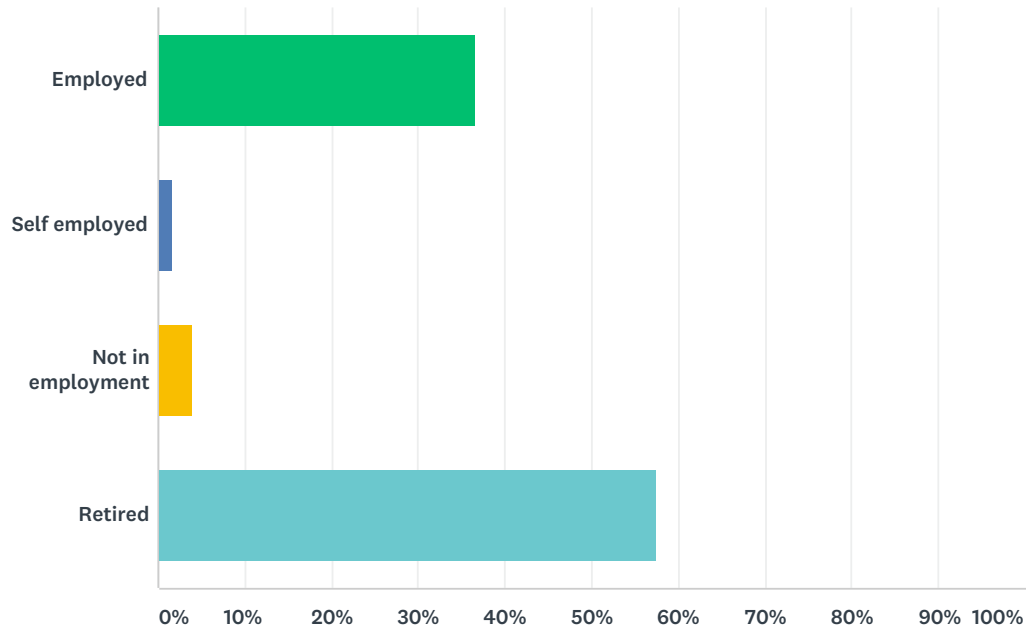
Answered: 169 Skipped: 11



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	73.96%	125
No	26.04%	44
TOTAL		169

Q10 What is your current employment status?

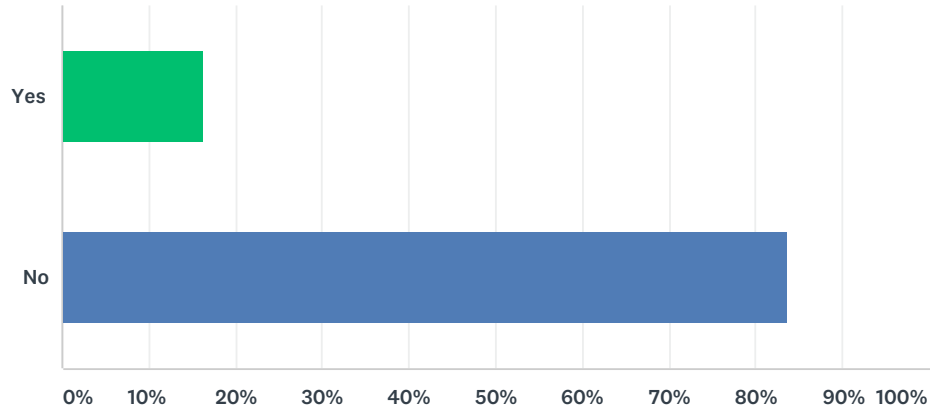
Answered: 172 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Employed	36.63%	63
Self employed	1.74%	3
Not in employment	4.07%	7
Retired	57.56%	99
TOTAL		172

Q11 Are you a carer?

Answered: 165 Skipped: 15



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	16.36%	27
No	83.64%	138
TOTAL		165

Appendix 2

Additional comments from survey respondents

Whether medication should continue to be prescribed depends on the severity of symptoms. Some over the counter medications are not as strong and therefore not as effective. Whilst I would be prepared to pay for medications over the counter, many low income families would struggle to afford them.

I think you need to consider making head lice and verruca treatment available for under 16s and also infant colic treatment. (If they are not free, parents may not be able to afford them and the children would have to suffer the consequences!)

Pensioners visit their GP for some of their conditions because, obviously, they are exempt from paying for the item. Also, unsure now, but do children and young children have to pay for prescriptions? If not they are not going to pay over the counter, as this could have a detrimental effect on their income.

Whether treatments should continue to be prescribed for indigestion depends on the cause. For example, may be due to cytotoxic therapy.

Antiperspirants for excessive sweating, treatment for ringworm and athlete's foot and treatments for insect bites should be prescribed by a doctor (not a nurse).

In some cases getting medicine on prescription costs the NHS more money than buying over the counter, but this is not always the case.

Not aware that getting medication on prescription costs the NHS more money than buying over the counter due to the CCG's purchasing policy.

Would not buy treatments from the chemist/pharmacy or supermarket for minor, short-term conditions as treatments treatment should be free to patients (free at the point of delivery).

Treatments for minor, short-term skin conditions should not continue to be prescribed by a GP or nurse, unless the patient is of limited income.

Not sure whether would buy treatments from the chemist/pharmacy or supermarket for minor, short-term conditions rather than booking a GP appointment. It depends on how severe and how long it takes to heal and if affordable.

Whether medication should continue to be prescribed depends on the severity of the condition, affordability and availability.