

# Cancer awareness in North Yorkshire



**Humber and North Yorkshire**  
Cancer Alliance

Est.  
1841

YORK  
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**healthwatch**  
North Yorkshire

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## **Introduction**

The Humber and North Yorkshire Cancer Alliance is one of 20 in England and brings together different hospitals, GP surgeries and other health and social care organisations to coordinate and transform cancer care in this region. It wanted to understand more about the cancer awareness, understanding of symptoms and health decisions of people living in this region.

### **The main aims were to:**

- Measure the public's awareness of the symptoms and risk factors of cancer as well as the barriers to seeking help and take up of cancer screening.
- Benchmark the region's varied populations in terms of their cancer awareness and understanding of symptoms.

### **Next steps**

The Humber & North Yorkshire Cancer Alliance will use these findings for North Yorkshire, along with those for the rest of the Humber and North Yorkshire population, to inform and guide their strategy to drive earlier diagnosis of cancers and better outcomes for patients. The findings will feed the priorities and help identify the key areas of activity for the Cancer Alliance's future work plans to improve the awareness of cancer screening and cancer signs and symptoms in our population.

## **What we did**

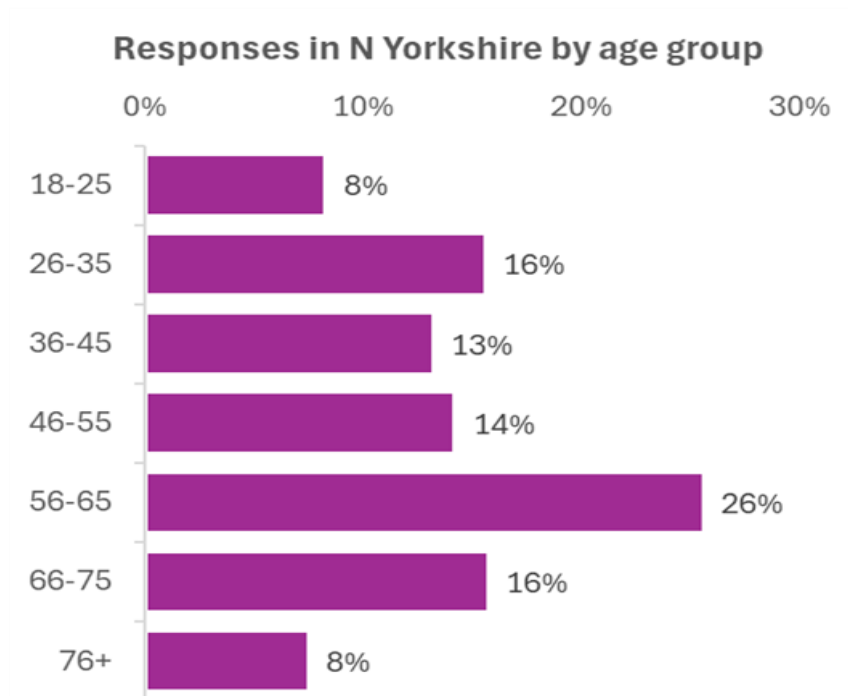
York St John University and Healthwatch undertook a survey of people across Humber and North Yorkshire, via phone interviews, online panels and an online survey of communities who are harder to engage with. The survey used the questionnaire developed by Cancer Research UK that they run nationally each year.

Additionally, Healthwatch and voluntary organisations spoke to people who would not usually complete a survey (including people who were homeless and people with learning disabilities).

**Thank you** to all of the voluntary organisations who contributed to this research, either by recruiting people to complete the survey or by holding one-to-one conversations with a wide range of people.

## Who we heard from

A total of 6,167 people across the region of Humber and North Yorkshire responded to the survey, including 1,818 who live in North Yorkshire (29.5%), and there were 98 individual one-to-one conversations in total.



55% of respondents in North Yorkshire were female and 45% were male, 92% were White and 38% had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more.

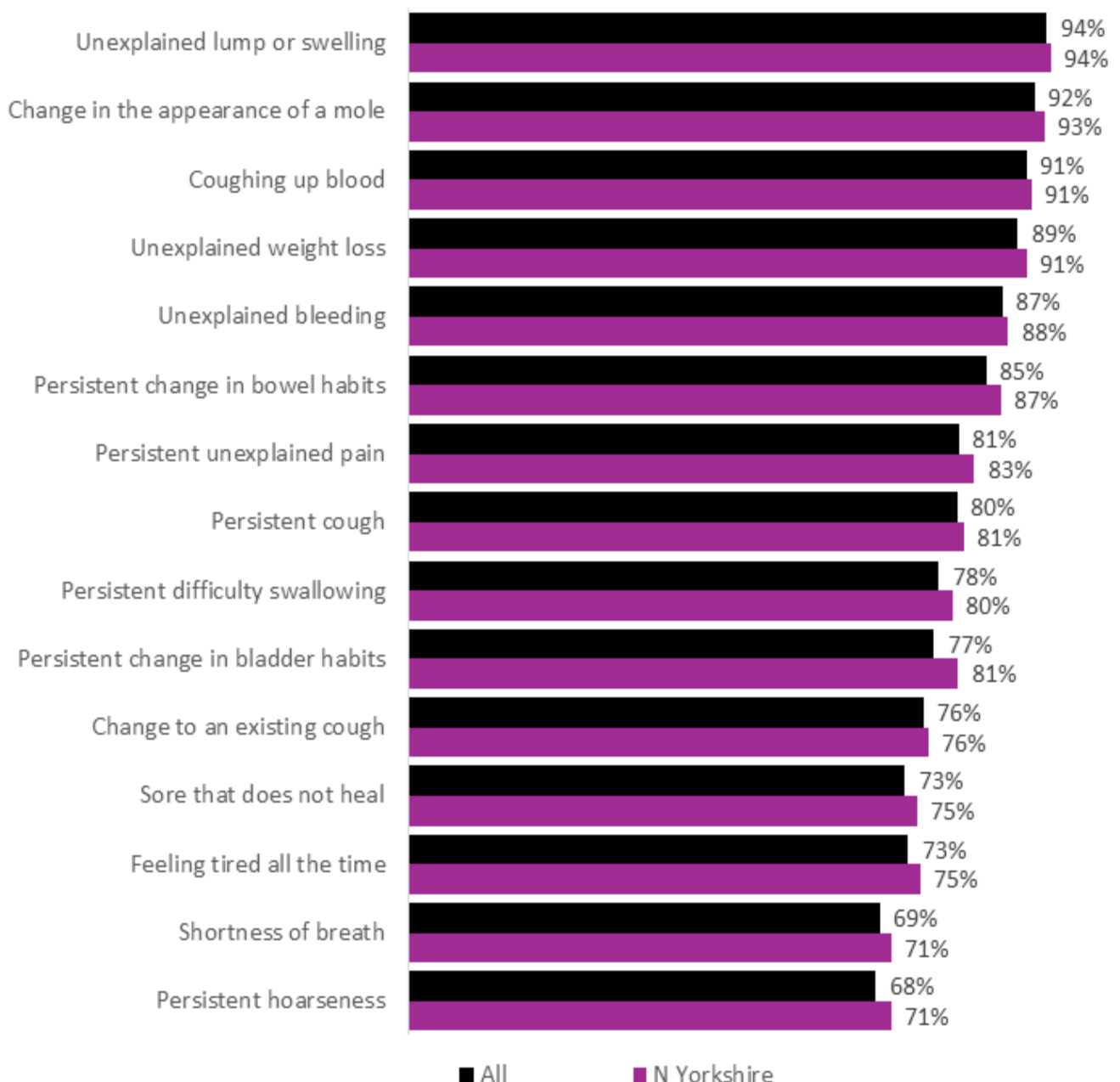
14% lived in coastal areas, 44% live in rural areas and just 5% lived in the 20% most deprived areas of the region.

# Key findings

## Awareness of cancer symptoms

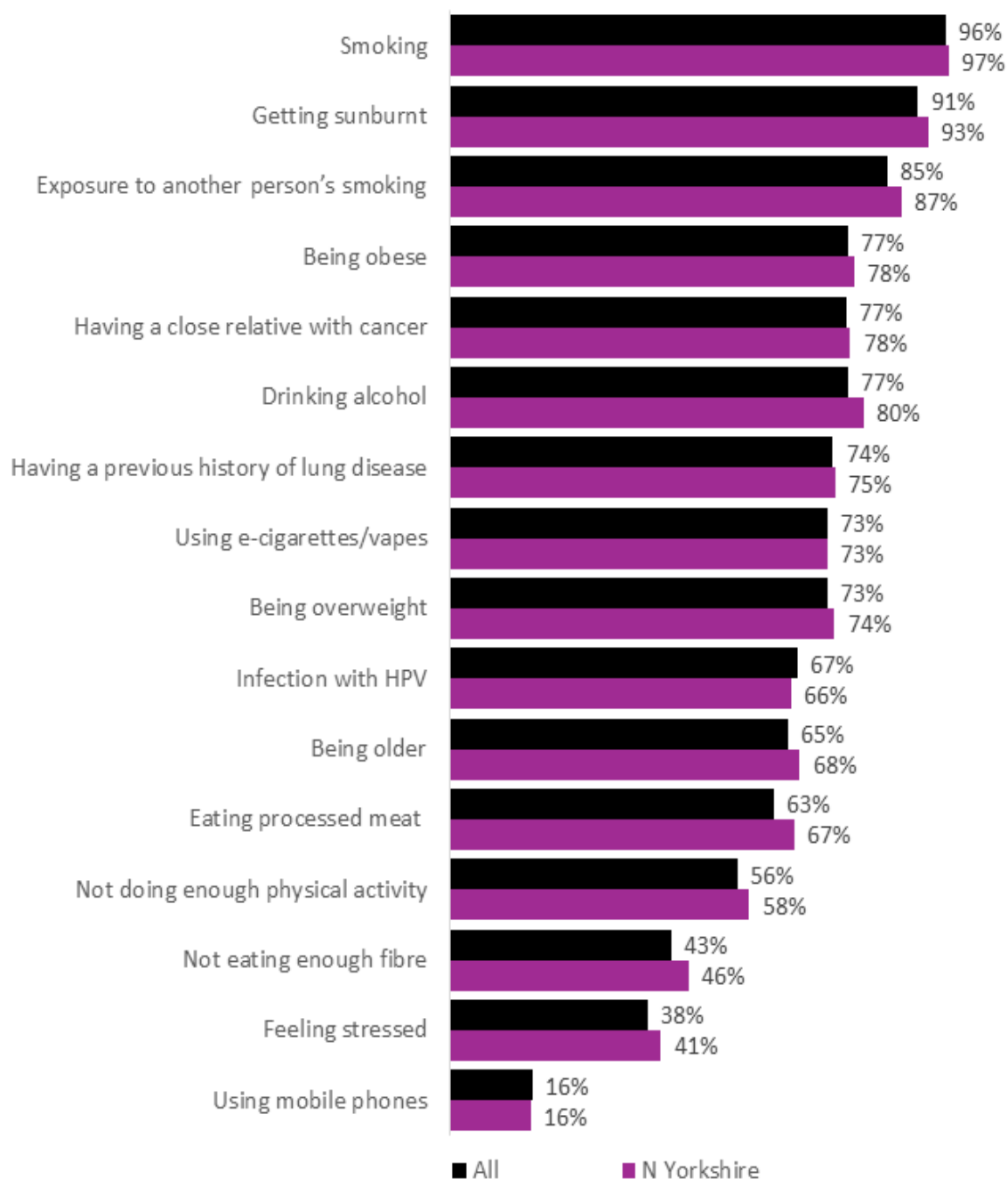
Respondents in North Yorkshire have a similar prompted recall of symptoms to that of all respondents in Humber & North Yorkshire, except more were aware of persistent change in bladder habits.

The top three symptoms respondents were aware of were an unexplained lump or swelling, a change in the appearance of a mole and coughing up blood.



## Awareness of risk factors

Respondents in North Yorkshire have a similar prompted awareness of risk factors to all respondents in Humber & North Yorkshire. The top three risk factors that respondents were aware of were smoking, getting sunburnt and exposure to another person's smoking.



## Experience of symptoms

Respondents were asked if they had experienced any of these symptoms in the last 6 months and 55% of respondents in North Yorkshire reported experiencing any symptoms in the list.

Non-specific symptoms
Persistent change in bowel habits
Persistent change in bladder habits
Tired all the time
Persistent unexplained pain
Unexplained weight loss

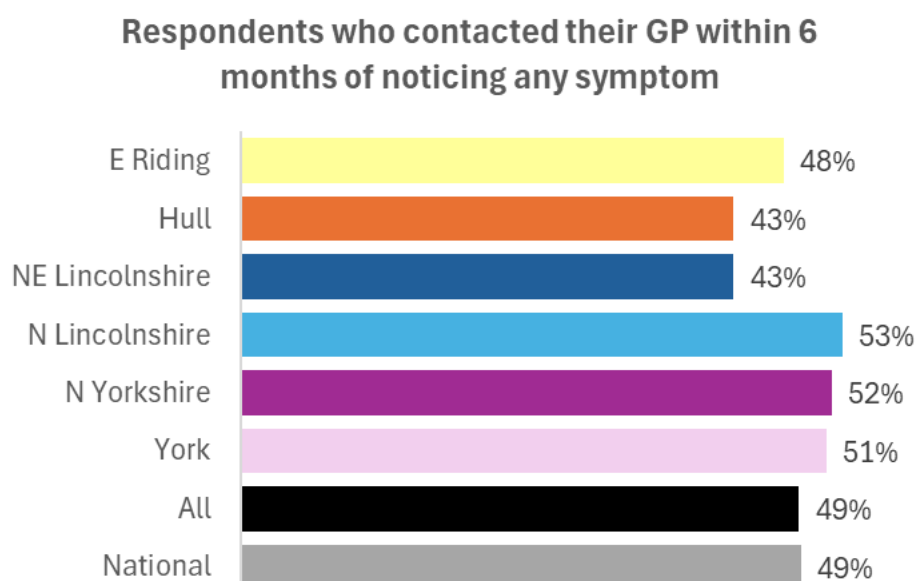
Lung-specific symptoms
Shortness of breath
Persistent hoarseness
Persistent cough
Change in an existing cough
Coughing up blood

Red flag symptoms
Change in the appearance of a mole
Unexplained lump or swelling
Unexplained bleeding
Persistent difficulty swallowing
Sore that does not heal
Unexplained weight loss
Coughing up blood

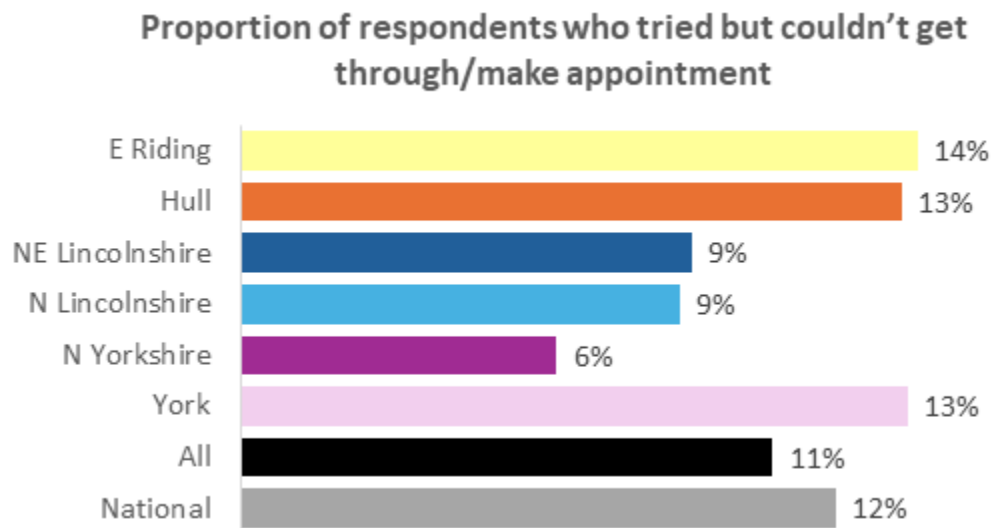
Oral-specific symptoms
Red/white patches in mouth
Ulcer in the mouth that does not heal
Persistent difficulty swallowing
Persistent unexplained pain
Unexplained weight loss

## Seeking help

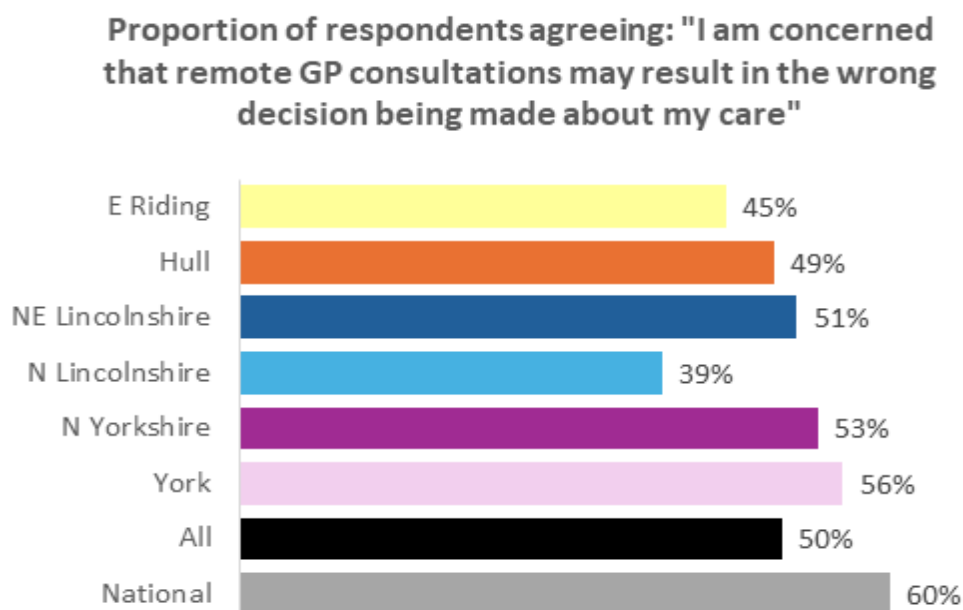
52% of respondents in North Yorkshire said they contacted their GP within six months of noticing any of the list of symptoms.



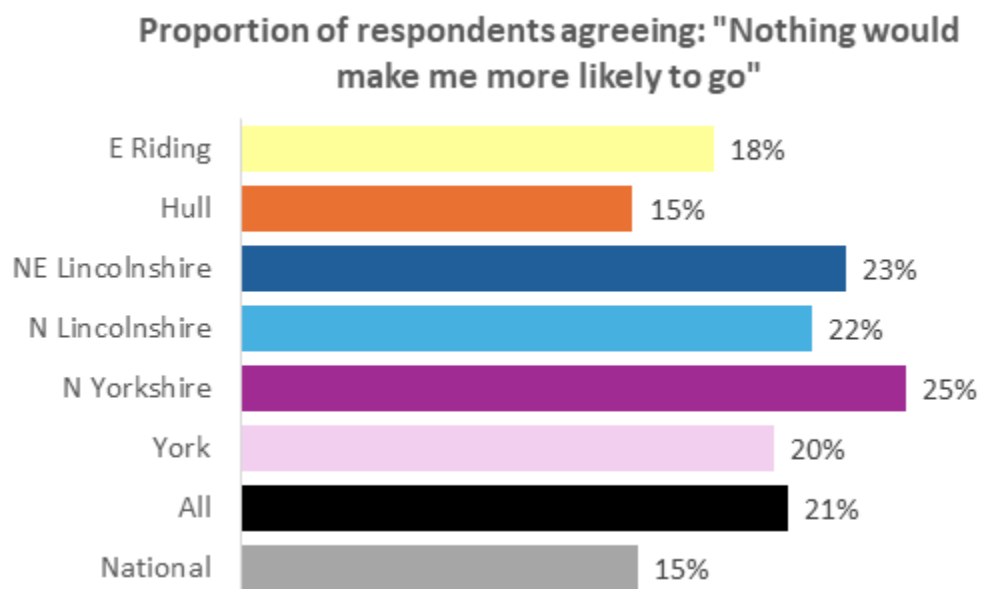
89% said they got an appointment with their GP after contacting them to discuss a health concern and just 6% said they tried but couldn't get through/make an appointment.



73% of respondents in North Yorkshire spoke to someone in person (rather than having a virtual/remote appointment). 53% of respondents in North Yorkshire said that they were concerned about wrong decisions due to remote consultations.



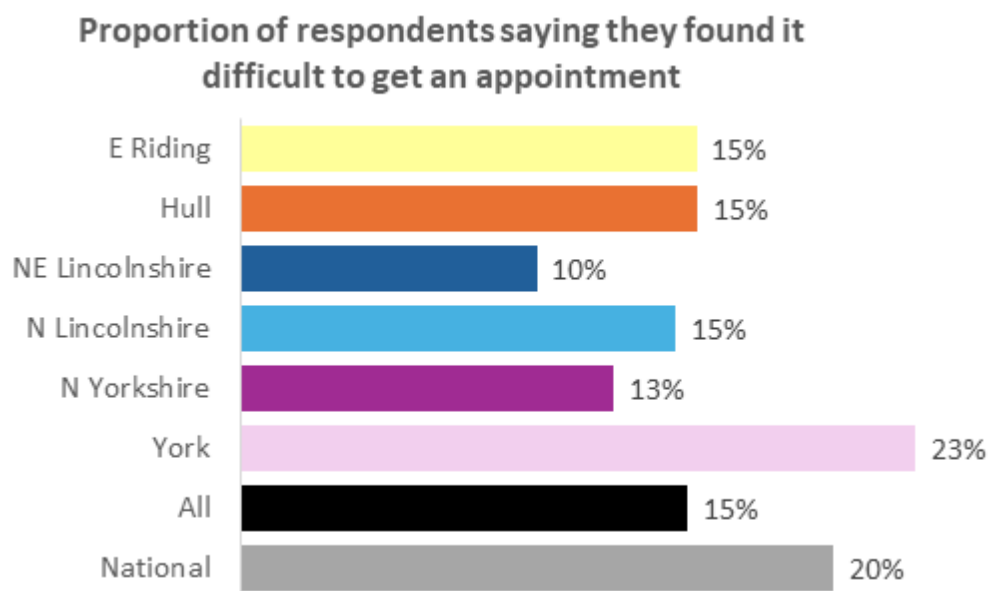
The most popular motivations to attend a doctor-recommended hospital test were having a specific day/time for the test and choice over the day/time of the test. Other motivations were receiving reminders, receiving more information about what is involved and making it easier to get to the hospital. 25% of respondents in North Yorkshire said that there was nothing that would make them more likely to attend a doctor-recommended hospital test, the highest proportion in the region.



Respondents were asked which factors played a role in their decision the last time they saw or spoke to a medical professional about their health. The most common reasons for seeking medical help were symptoms that were persistent, bothersome or unusual for the respondent. This was followed by having an existing appointment already, having a painful symptom, a feeling something was not right or not knowing what was causing a symptom. Respondents in North Yorkshire were slightly less likely

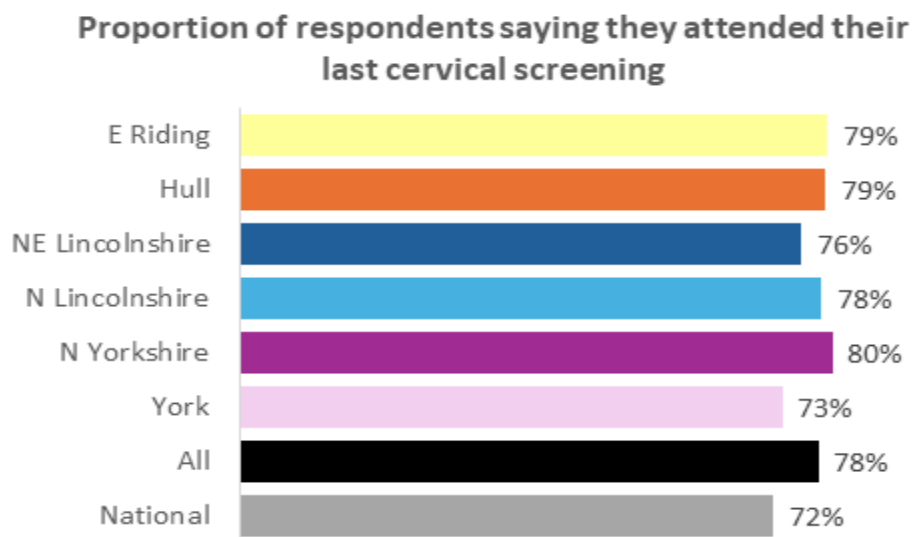
to say that they wanted a specific time/day to go for a hospital test (26% compared to 29%).

The main reasons given for respondents putting off/delaying seeking medical attention were difficulty in getting an appointment, thinking the symptom was related to an existing illness/condition and not wanting to talk to a receptionist. 29% of those in North Yorkshire said that nothing put them off seeking medical attention, the highest in the region. 13% of respondents in North Yorkshire found it difficult to get an appointment.

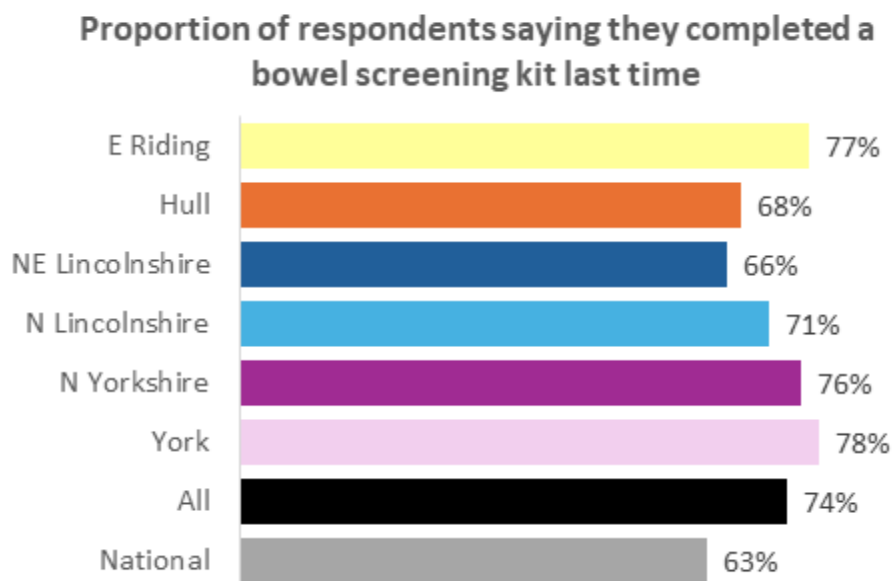


## Cancer screening

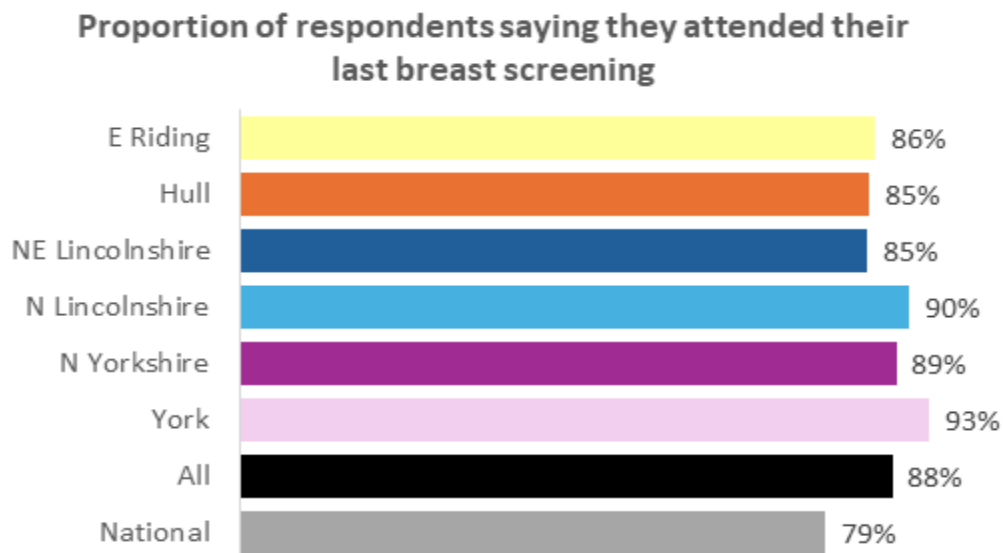
80% of all those eligible in North Yorkshire attended their last cervical cancer screening and 89% said they intended to attend their next screening.



76% of those eligible in North Yorkshire completed their last bowel cancer screening kit and 93% said they intended to complete a kit next time.



89% of those eligible in North Yorkshire attended their last breast cancer screening while 94% said they intend to attend their next breast screening.



## Conclusion

Respondents in North Yorkshire were slightly more likely to have contacted their GP within six months of noticing any of the list of symptoms (52% compared to 49% of all respondents in Humber & North Yorkshire). They were more likely to get an appointment after contacting their GP practice to discuss a health concern (89% compared to 85%). They had the highest proportion saying that there was nothing that would make them more likely to attend a doctor-recommended hospital test (25% compared to 21%) and had the highest proportion saying that nothing put them off seeking medical attention (29% compared to 22%).