



# Mystery shop of Croydon's GP websites

June 2023

**healthwatch**  
Croydon

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# Insight

We reviewed 46 websites and none met our highest criteria of 'extremely useful', for a surgery to have been viewed as extremely useful they would have to have met all of our standards.

We found 15 websites to be very useful, this category will have met almost all of our criteria, including being a safe surgery or similar.

We reviewed 30 websites which were described as 'somewhat useful' reflecting the need to make improvements.

One website was not useful at all.

Read more details within page 12 and 48.

All of this was undertaken in June and July 2022.

All surgeries should adhere to the principles of safe surgeries:

<https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/safesurgeries/>

## Recommendations

- Out of hours information and details of the duty doctor should be on all websites.
- All websites should have the access to translation in various languages and information on how to receive interpreting services and easily show how to screen read. Some websites need to check their use of English to ensure it is understandable to the whole community.
- Since every surgery should have a Patient Participation Group (PPG), they should be referencing these including information on how to join and when meetings are. If they don't have one that is effective, work with local community organisations to develop their knowledge, skills and experience.
- Most surgeries who currently show Patient Participation Groups need to put up minutes of recent meeting and any activity the group has taken to support the practice in their work.
- Utilise the resource of the PPG if one is available, or, outsource this to a community organisation for checking the tone of complaints processes and wording.

# Recommendations

- Every website needs to show an effective complaints policy and process which is easy to access from the home page.
- A feedback process should also be easy to find with multiple ways of feeding back from telephone, email and webform. Evidence of feedback changing services would be welcome – you said we did.
- How to register should be easy to find on every website using the standard GSM1 form and no requirement for ID or home address – the surgeries address can be used.
- All GP practices should consider becoming safe surgeries to reduce health barriers for those who are transient, asylum seekers, refugees and homeless population groups.
- More websites should be showing information about asking for double appointments. Half of all websites need a symptom checker as this helps reduce unnecessary calls.
- Every website should have a page about social prescribing – what it is and where it can be accessed.



## A selection of GP comments

“I would like to start by thanking you for the attached documentation and for providing us with such valuable feedback. We do make every effort to ensure that the information that we make available on our website is both comprehensive and up to date, however we accept that we don't always get this right.

“I have to confess that I hadn't realised that we had not provided information on extended appointments (question 5) or on how to access an interpreter (question 6 & 15), both of which are available. I will ensure that this is rectified as a matter of urgency. In terms of question 10 relating to having a 'translate or language option', we will be liaising with our website provider to see if this can be introduced, which I hope will be the case.

“In respect of our PPG and question 18, please accept my apologies as it is entirely my fault that this information hasn't been updated.

Once again, please accept my sincere thanks for your feedback which will certainly help us to make some much needed changes and improvements to our website. thanks so much”

Parkside Group Practice





## A selection of GP comments

“Thank you so much for providing this. I will be reviewing the comments and ensuring that we implement things which have been highlighted in your report”. **North Croydon Medical Centre**

“Very useful feedback, many Practices in our PCN use the same website provider so we will try and get this sorted across the PCN.

“Thank you for carrying out this research and for compiling a report on our websites. The feedback is very useful and I will look at implementing changes based on your findings.” **Country Park**

We are currently in the process of changing our website provider and have just received a demo of the new site. Our staff will go through your list of requirement very carefully to make sure we meet all requirements before the new site goes live. Thank you for you input.”

**London Road Medical Practice**

“Thank you for your very helpful feedback and sending the presentation. We will share this information with our practice team and the PPG next month and implement the changes recommended to improve patient experience for our practice.”

**Norbury Medical Practice**

“

## Next steps and thanks

- Healthwatch Croydon has produced an individual report for each GP surgery and will continue to work with local GPs to improve their websites.
- We have presented our data at relevant Primary Care meetings.
- Our insight helped us shape the NHS Croydon's top tips which we attach with this report
- We thank Helen Goodrum, Lead Primary Care Quality Manager – Croydon who has worked with us to ensure it was relevant and impactful for GPs.
- We also thank our team of volunteers who spent their time critically assessing the websites from the patient perspective.



# Background

Building on our previous GP work 'How do I register?' ([How-do-I-register-March-2019-Healthwatch-Croydon.pdf \(healthwatchcroydon.co.uk\)](#)) coupled with the nationally changing health and social care landscape and shift to online services, we revisited Croydon's GP websites.

As GP's are increasingly using telephone and video appointments we wanted to learn more about Croydon GP's digital offer. We measured this by undertaking a systematic website review, focussing on criteria that represent the diverse needs of Croydon residents.

Healthwatch Croydon aligned our work with the South West London NHS, with our focus on patient experience. Please see document they produced using our insight along with their own : GP Websites – Accessibility.

# Our research

## Limitations

Our six researchers were a diverse group aged 16-70+ with a mix of ethnicities, experiences and abilities. Two males and four females undertook the work, supported by a member of the Healthwatch Croydon team.

We used a variety of quantitative questions with comment boxes to provide more information. Commentary was not uniform, and varied in length and depth, according to the researcher's style.

The reports generated are a snapshot of what our researchers found on the day, if links were broken on that day, that would be recorded. If our researcher could not find a piece of information, that was captured, although the information may have been within the website, the view was taken that if it was not searchable by our team, a Croydon resident was also unlikely to find this.

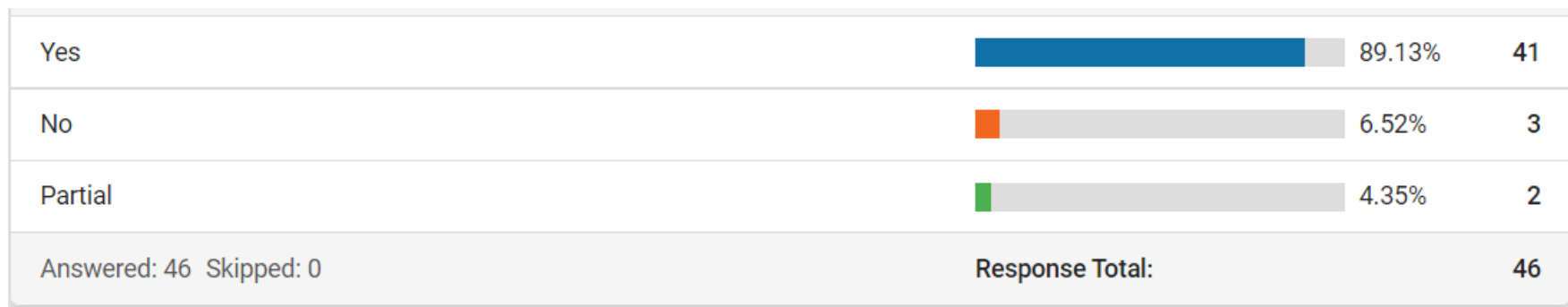
# Our method

The websites were reviewed independently and systematically. We measured across the following eight categories:

- **General** (Out of hours, extended consultation, interpreter, registration, search bar)
- **Access** (Translate, screen reader, mobile access, basic English)
- **Patient Participation Group** (What it is, joining information, who is involved, up to date minutes)
- **Complaints** (Policy and procedure, ease, option to feedback to GP)
- **Duty Doctor** (Access)
- **Digital offer** (Symptom check tool, appointments, prescriptions, overall)
- **Social prescribing** (Information on what it is, and how to access)
- **Overall feel** (Extremely, very or somewhat useful, not so useful, not useful)

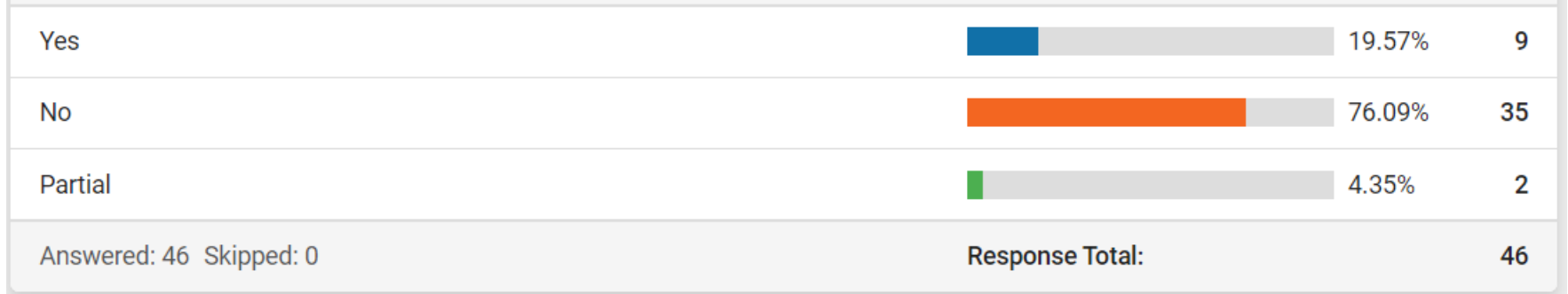
# 1. Is there out of hours information?

Out of hours information was displayed on 41 websites.



## 2. Is there information on getting an extended consultation?

Carers and those with complex health issues can request a double appointment. Nine websites offered this.



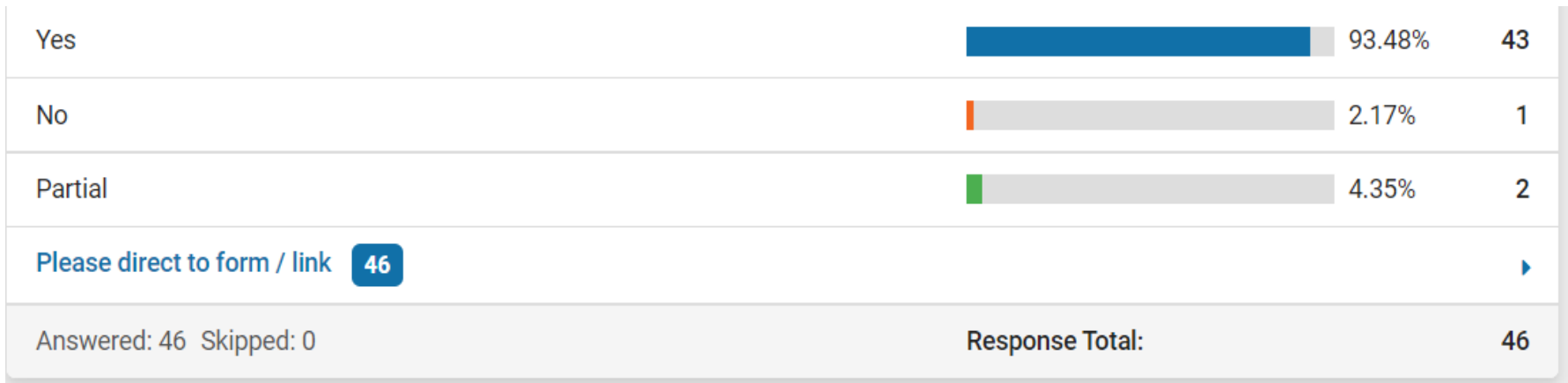
### 3. Is there information on accessing interpreting services?

Information on interpreting services was available at 29 surgery websites.



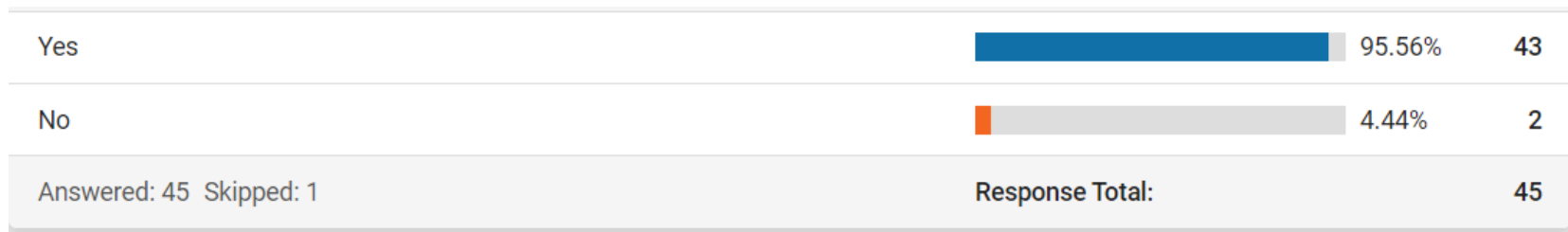
## 4. Is there information on registering as a new patient?

New patient registration information was available on 43 of 46 of the websites we surveyed.



## 5. Is there search bar access?

A search bar was available on 43 websites.





## 6 General findings – Registration

Although 43 surgeries had information on new patient registration, we found four surgeries that made it clear that you do not need identification. We pasted the below text from Croydon GP websites.

“All are Welcome. Your nationality or immigration status do not affect your right to register here”.

“Everyone in England has the right to free care for a GP“ “Ask for an interpreter if you find it difficult to communicate in English“

“Our receptionist wont ask you about your immigration status”

“If you are worried about giving us your address, please let us know. Your information is safe with us.“

“If you live within our practice area you are welcome to register with us and our reception staff will be happy to guide you through the procedure. Eligibility can be quickly confirmed from a photo identification document (egg passport, driving licence) and your address (egg a recent utility bill, bank statement). If you cannot provide either of these please speak to reception.”

“We are open to registration and we register all patients. No boundaries are identified and no documentation is required. Please enquire at reception”.

## 6 Comments on registration

“Website states patients who cannot provide ID should speak to reception about this. This is good, at least there is an option, albeit tentative, for those who would be excluded from getting a GP.”

“The contact us page starts with a history of the GP, various buildings etc. its not relevant to this page. Confusing for those who just want to contact the doctor and may be unwell, in a hurry, or using translation services. It is not clear that you can get an interpreter, It is buried in the practice charter.”

“On registration page there are downloadable details for getting an interpreter in 20 languages.”

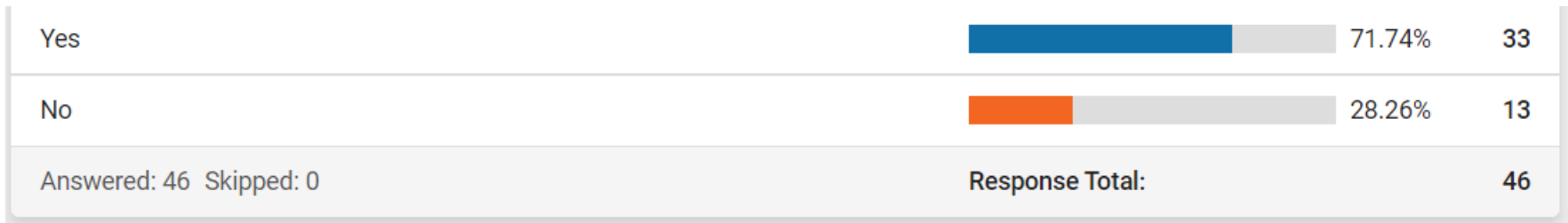
No link to registration form on ‘join the practice’s page despite the page stating you can register on-line.”

“Registration does ask if English is not your fist language, nothing about interpreter though. Some of the registration is prohibitive for homeless people.”

“Accommodating homeless patients.”

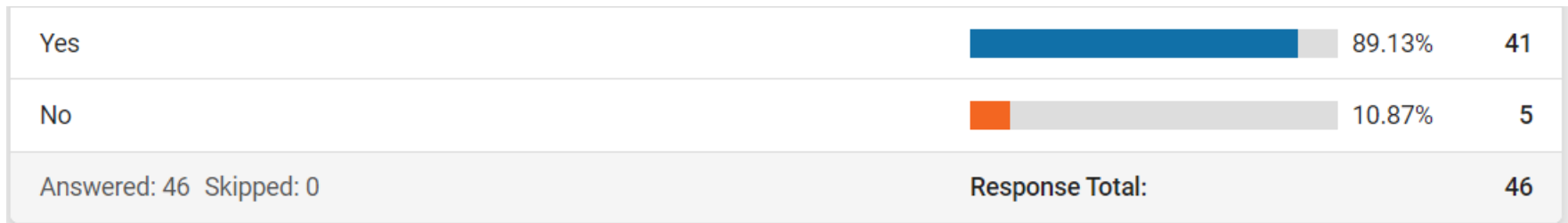
## 6. Is there a translate or language option?

Translate or language toolbar options were found on 33 of the websites reviewed.



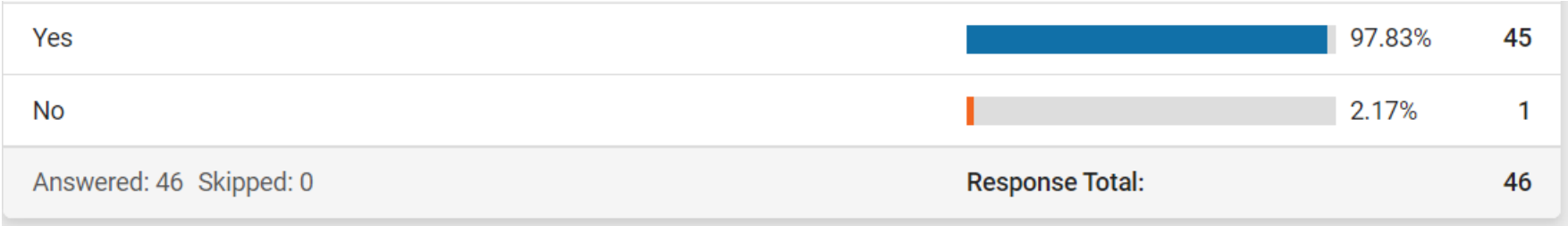
## 7. Is there screen reader compatibility?

We reviewed 41 websites which had screen reader compatibility



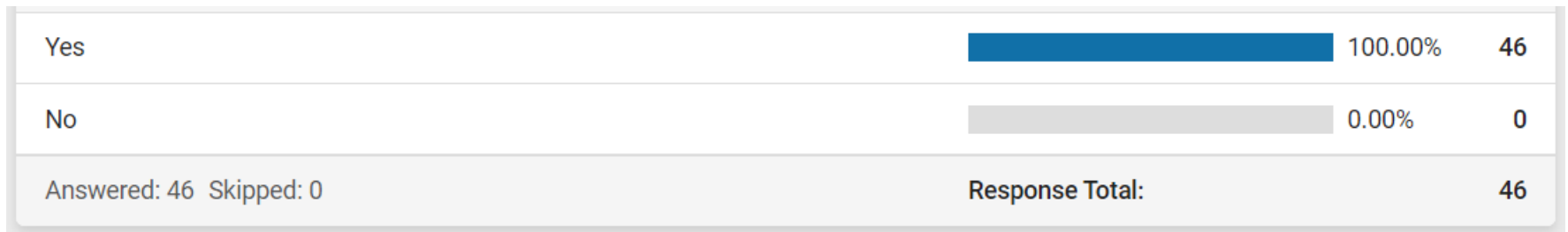
# 8. Is it easy to access via mobile phone

A single surgery was not easily accessible via mobile phone.



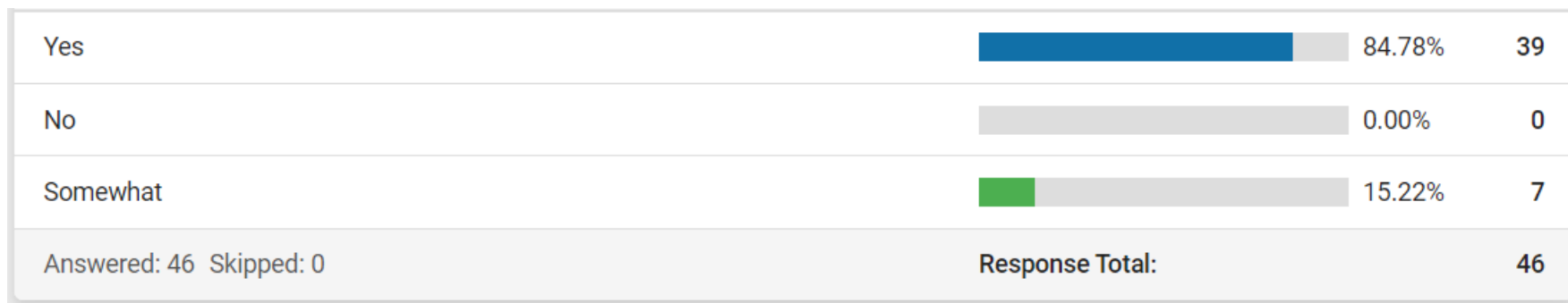
## 9. Is the full website available via mobile phone?

All surgeries had full website access via mobile phone.



## 10. Is there basic English reading level / is the website understandable?

We found consistent, clear, basic English used throughout 39 websites.



Level 1 text (no bullets)

- Level 2 text (bullets)




## Comments on accessibility

“Error 500 on practice policies tab and every tab I tried on that page. If it was working it would be a good offer, I think. So far two of the pages have links that are not working. Four options are ‘temporarily removed by the surgery’. Fact sheets for speakers of other languages are good but I am unable to view.”

“User friendly, uncluttered, plain English. Translate option. Clear basic website. No accessibility widget.”

“Google translate has plenty of languages, interpreter information. Signposting to pharmacy services, using terms such as ‘you won’t look back’, feels unclear, and be unclear for translation. The website does not come over well on mobile phone it is very small. Had to turn the screen and then the cluttered feel is increased’ I would think this is disadvantageous to those with sight problems or those who are unfamiliar with IT. There is a pop up to cross out before you can access full functionality, and this is so small (the X) to cross out. Really frustrating.”





## Accessibility findings

Translate or language options were available on 33 of the websites we reviewed, this means one in four did not have this choice for speakers of other languages.

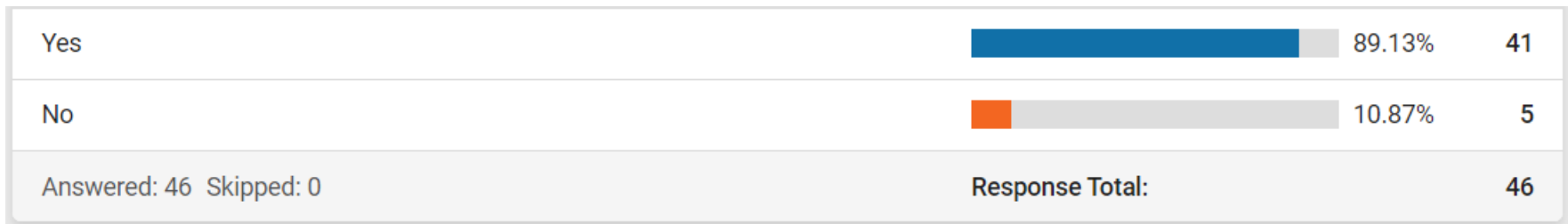
Screen reader compatibility was identified on 41 of the websites we surveyed.

The full website was available via mobile phone for all surgeries, and just one surgery website was not found to be easily accessible via mobile phone.

No websites were found that were not understandable, 39 used basic, plain English throughout, seven websites were recorded as having 'somewhat' basic English, this meant that acronyms, colloquialisms or medical jargon was used once or more

# 11. Is there information on what a PPG is and who is involved?

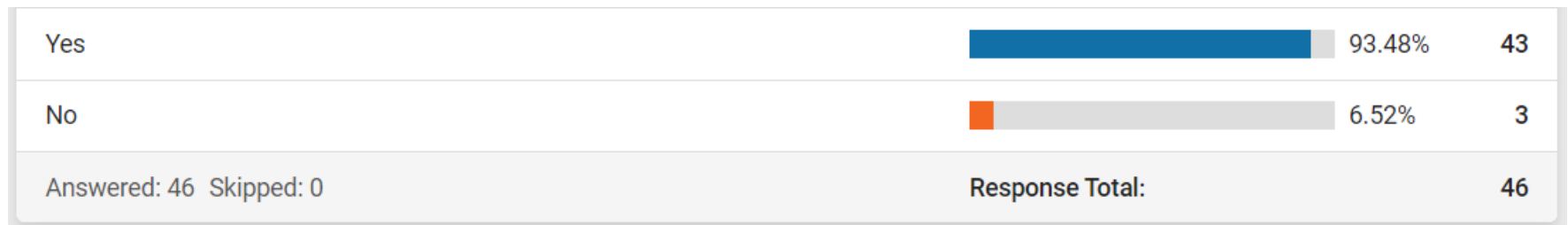
The purpose of a PPG and who participates was explained on 41 surgery websites.



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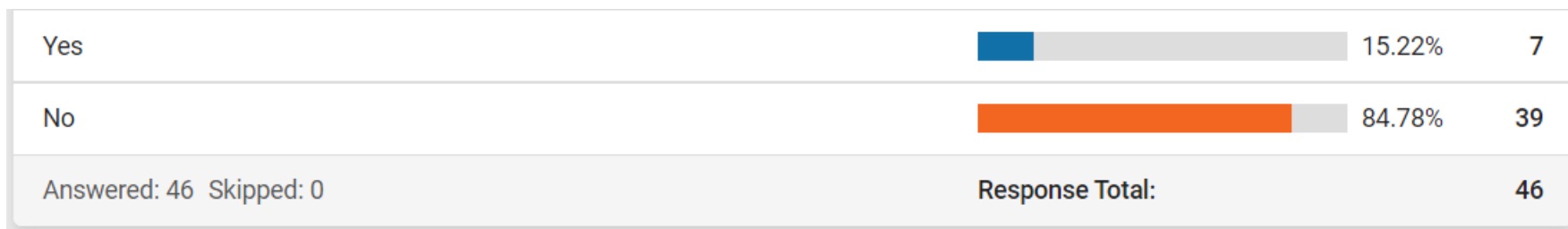
## 12. Is there information on how to join the PPG?

Joining information for the surgery's PPG was found on 43 websites.



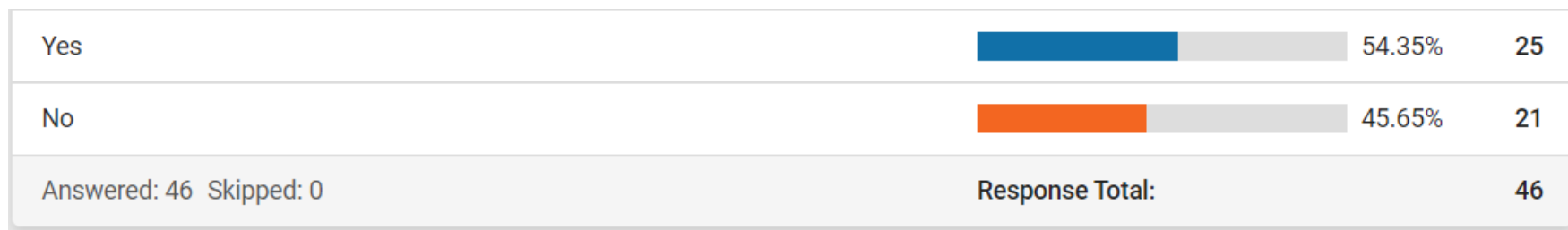
# 13. Is there up to date information on PPG meeting dates and times?

Up to date PPG meeting dates and times were displayed by seven websites, the others (39) did not display up to date meeting information.



## 14. Are the minutes from PPG meetings available?

Minutes from PPG meetings were displayed on 25 websites.



## PPG findings

Translate or language options were available on 33 of the websites we reviewed, this means one in four did not have this choice for speakers of other languages.

Screen reader compatibility was identified on 41 of the websites we surveyed.

The full website was available via mobile phone for all surgeries, and just one surgery website was not found to be easily accessible via mobile phone.

No websites were found that were not understandable, 39 used basic, plain English throughout, seven websites were recorded as having 'somewhat' basic English, this meant that acronyms, colloquialisms or medical jargon was used once or more.



## Comments of PPGs

A selection of comments from our researchers.

PPG minutes ‘coming soon’ dated 2019.”

PPG meeting times not available, but text announces, ‘The next PPG meeting is....’ then blank. Looks unfinished. Minutes are there but only until 2019.”

“Good to see an active PPG with recent minutes.”

“When on the page about the PPG, all that is said is ‘information coming soon....’ There is a form you can follow to sign up, and one set of minutes from 2019. Judging from this the PPG does not seem like it is active.”

“Minutes from 2017 & 2018 available. Not up to date. Explanation of the goals of the PPG- good feature.”

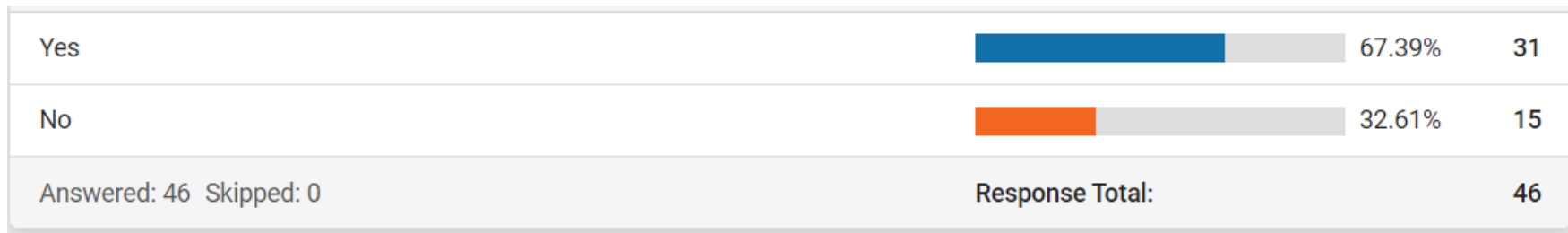
“In depth information on the PRG, including how to join, what the PPG does and up to date in depth minutes. This is very impressive and an area most surgeries fall short on.”

“PPG page is there but leads to ‘page not found’, the page has been moved or does not exist.”



# 15. Can you find the complaints policy and procedure?

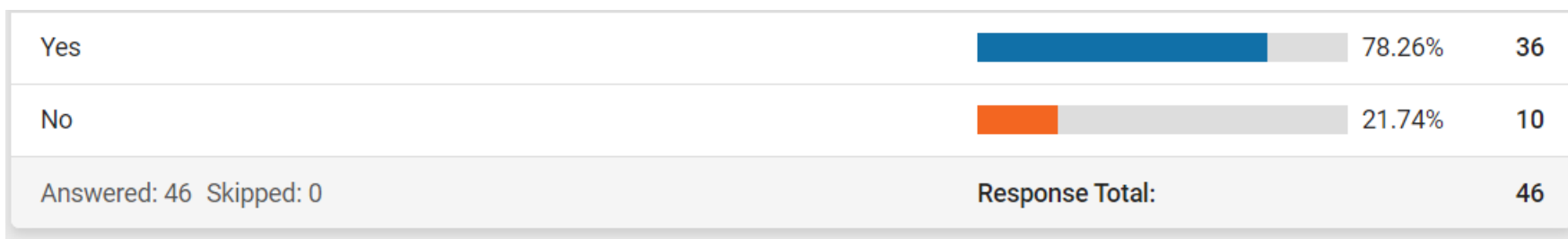
Complaints policy and procedure was displayed by 31 websites.





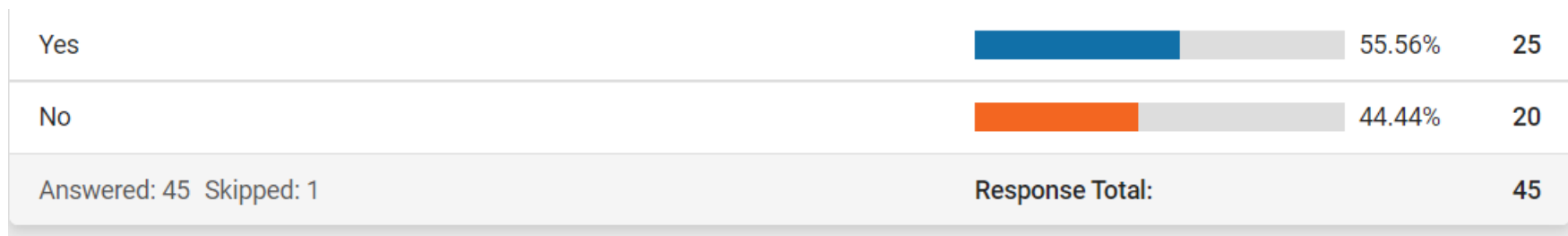
## 16. Is it easy to make complaints?

It was felt that the complaints process was easy for 36 GP surgeries.



## 17. Is there an option to feedback to the GP?

There was an option to feedback directly to the GP at 25 surgeries.



# Complaints findings

Although 31 surgery websites displayed a complaints policy and procedure, 15 did not.

It was felt that it was easy to make complaints for 36 surgeries 10 surgeries were recorded as difficult.

There was an option to feedback to the GP for 25 surgeries, 20 surgeries were not found to have an option to feedback to the GP.



## Comments on complaints

“The surgery aim to give a friendly and professional service'. 'speak to whomever you feel most comfortable – your GP, our Practice Manager or our reception staff will be happy to help'. They then signpost to the NHS if you feel they did not deal with the issues. The right amount of clear, relevant information. Its still keeping the friendly and open theme.”

"Discuss the matter verbally or by telephone with the practice manager or the deputy." (or) "Put your complaint in writing to the Practice" Allowing patients to raise issues over a telephone call makes this process more accessible, giving them options based on what suits them.”

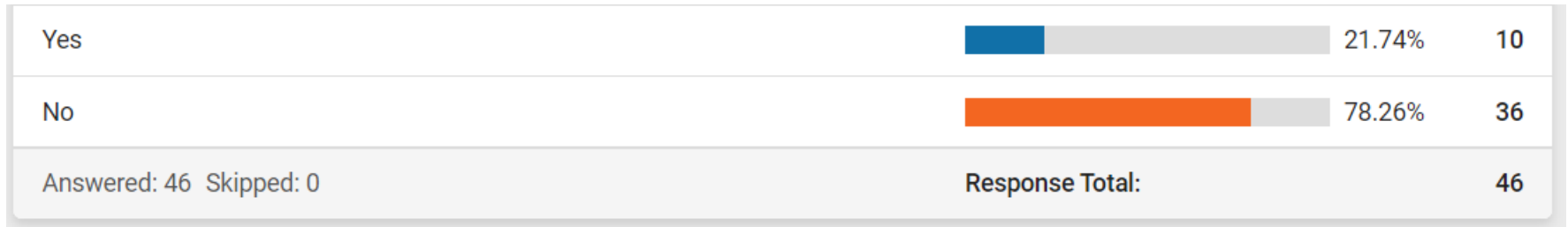
“Named person and clear procedure and options for complaints. Patient friendly introduction to this with a pre-emptive sorry if patients feel the surgery have failed in their care.”

“I clicked the complaints form....'The practice have temporarily removed this form. Please contact the practice for further information'. The suggestions form is working. I wonder if the website is still under construction.”



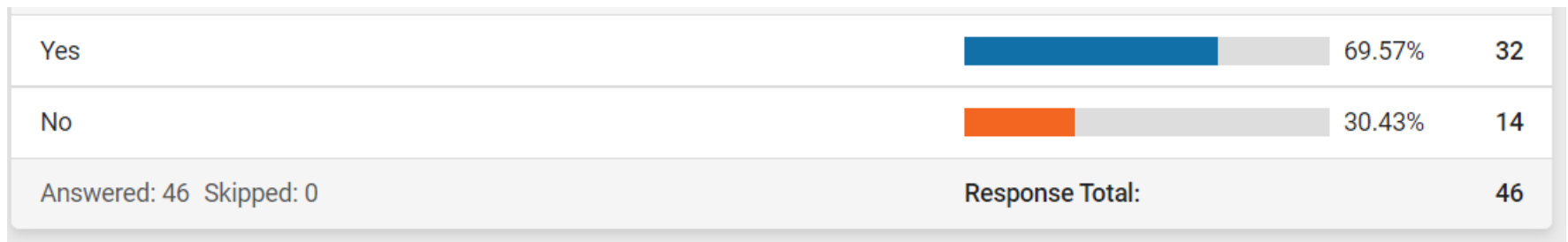
# 18. Is there information on how to access the duty doctor?

Information on accessing the duty doctor was displayed by 10 surgeries.



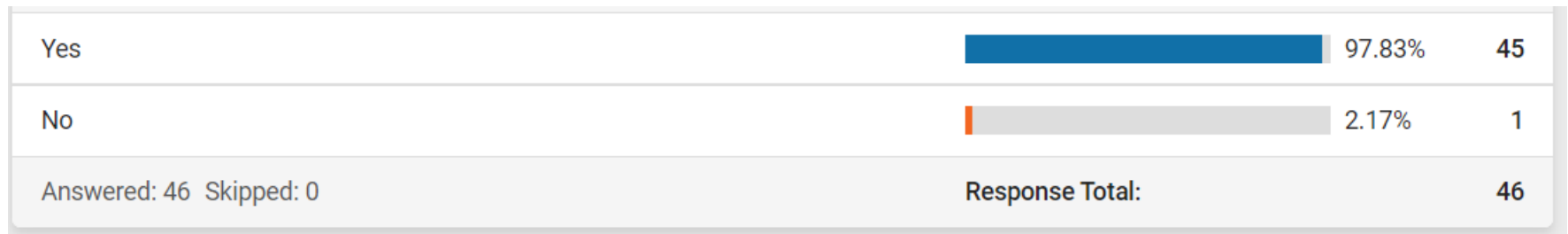
## 19. Is there a symptom check/assessment tool?

Symptom check tools were found on 32 surgery websites.



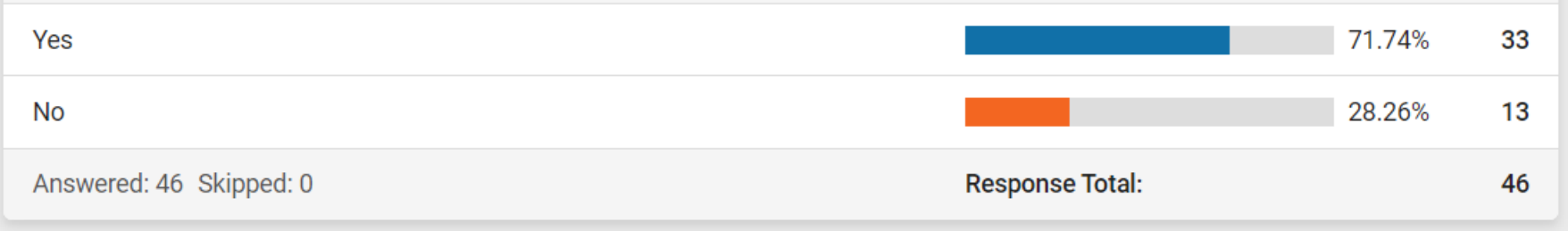
## 20. Can you book appointments online?

Of the 46 surgery websites we surveyed, a single surgery was found not to offer online appointment booking.



# 21. Can you have an online GP appointment?

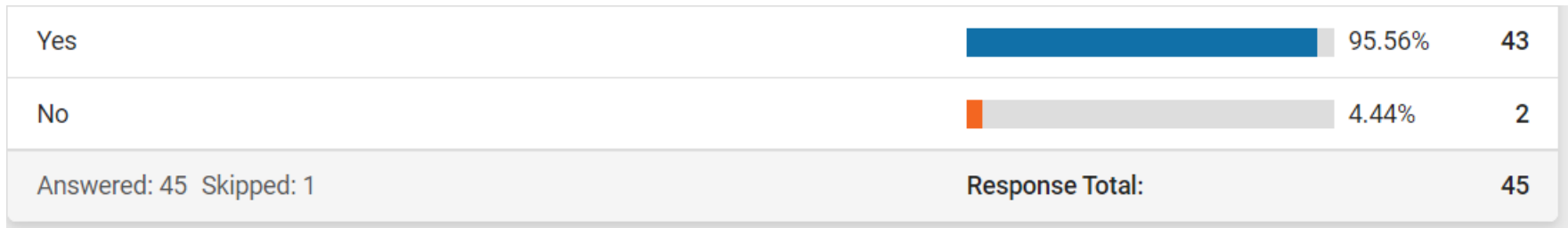
Online appointments were clearly offered at 33 surgeries.





## 22. Can you order repeat prescriptions online?

Repeat prescriptions were available to order at 43 of the 46 websites we surveyed.



## Digital offer findings

For patients who are digitally competent 32 websites had a symptom check or assessment tool.

Online appointment bookings were offered at 45 websites reviewed. Online appointments were offered at 33 of these.

Repeat prescriptions were offered online on 43 websites, 2 surgeries were not found to have an option to order repeat prescriptions online.



## Comments on digital offer

Everything is there, but not user friendly”

“Translate, search bar, plain English. User friendly. Uncluttered look and feel.”

“Symptom check links to NHS tool (external). Taking quite a long time to navigate the website. Finding more as I go along but it doesn't 'feel' particularly user friendly. You can ask the doctor a question, that's a good aspect.”

“Really good offers, lots on self help and wellbeing. bereavement, self help for minor ailments, age well, losing weight, help to choose the right service. Impressive.”

“Very little usefulness apart from basic contact information and opening times. not easy to find as they do not have their own website.”

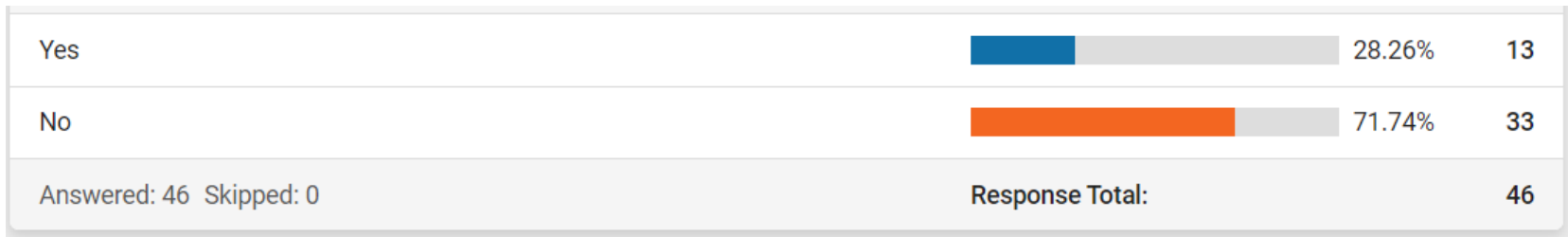
“Everything can be done online. This is good for those who are technologically literate.”

“NHS A-Z as a symptom checker. In depth information on repeat prescriptions and how to order them. Accessible, but informative.”



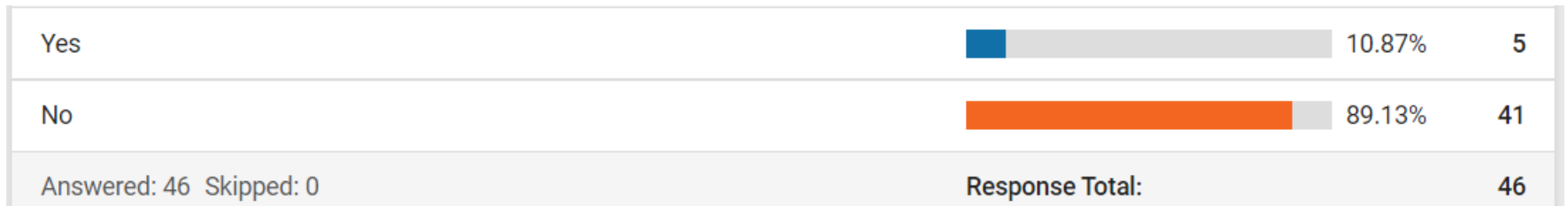
## 23. Is there information on what social prescribing is?

Social prescribing was outlined on 13 GP websites.



## 24. Is there information on how to access social prescribing?

Access to social prescribing was explained on five websites.




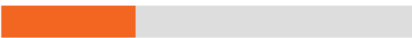


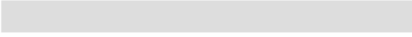
# Social prescribing findings

We reviewed 46 websites and 13 of these provided information on what social prescribing is

Five websites provided information on how to access social prescribing, this is approximately one in ten.

## 25. What is the overall rating for the website?

Extremely useful = all criteria would be met, very useful= most criteria, somewhat useful= basic criteria.

Extremely useful		0.00%	0
Very useful		32.61%	15
Somewhat useful		65.22%	30
Not so useful		2.17%	1
Not at all useful		0.00%	0

# Overall rating findings

We reviewed 46 websites and none met our highest criteria of 'extremely useful', for a surgery to have been viewed as extremely useful they would have to have met all of our standards.

We found 15 websites to be very useful, this category will have met almost all of our criteria, including being a safe surgery or similar see

<https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/safesurgeries/>



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