

NHS at 70: Public Perceptions

**Poll conducted for the Health Foundation in partnership with The King's Fund,
Nuffield Trust and the Institute for Fiscal Studies to mark the 70th Anniversary
of the NHS**

June 2018

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Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute

Executive summary

What does the future look like for the NHS?

- Only one in five people (20%) feel that the NHS will remain free at the point of use in 70 years' time, while 77% predict there will be some level of change – either having to pay for services, or predicting that the NHS won't exist at all.

Is more money needed for the NHS?

- The majority of people (79%) agree that the NHS is currently underfunded, and more than half (55%) strongly agree this is the case.
- There is no clear consensus among the general public as to how to fund an increase to NHS spending – just over half (54%) are in favour of either an additional tax earmarked specifically for the NHS, or an increase to existing taxation.

Are we expecting too much of the NHS?

- The public overwhelmingly feel the responsibility for staying healthy lies with the individual – 97% say this, compared with 75% who place similar levels of responsibility on the food and drinks industry, 67% with the NHS, and 62% with government.
- That being said, people do still support government interventions around public health – the most popular being the introduction of the smoking ban in public spaces (supported by 72%).

How do the public feel about social care funding?

- Overall the public are somewhat split regarding the current system for payment of social care – 44% feel means testing is unfair, while 38% say the opposite.
- If the government were to increase spending on social care then, as with NHS spending, the public are most likely to support this being done through tax increases (51% saying this).

How will new technology affect the NHS and healthcare?

- There is limited knowledge of how various organisations use anonymised health data for research – nearly two in five (37%) say they know either a great deal or a fair amount about how the NHS uses such data.
- There appears to be a fairly high level of scepticism about the benefits of a range of machine learning possibilities – for instance, while 44% believe the benefits of computers analysing medical records in diagnosing patients would outweigh the risks, three in ten (29%) feel the opposite.
- There is more positivity towards the use of video consultations when getting medical advice – this is the same whether it be a consultation with their own GP or with a GP they do not already know. Nearly two thirds of people (63%) are willing to use a video consultation with their own GP, compared with 71% if the GP was someone they didn't already know.

Technical details

- Fieldwork was carried out between 11th and 29th May 2018.
- In total 2,083 interviews were carried out with adults (aged 15+) in the UK.
- Data are weighted by gender, age, ethnicity, working status, social grade, housing tenure and Government Office Region to reflect the known population profile.
- Interviews were carried out face-to-face in people's homes using CAPIbus, Ipsos MORI's face to face omnibus.
- All sub-group differences mentioned in this report are considered statistically significant or indicative of a wider trend.

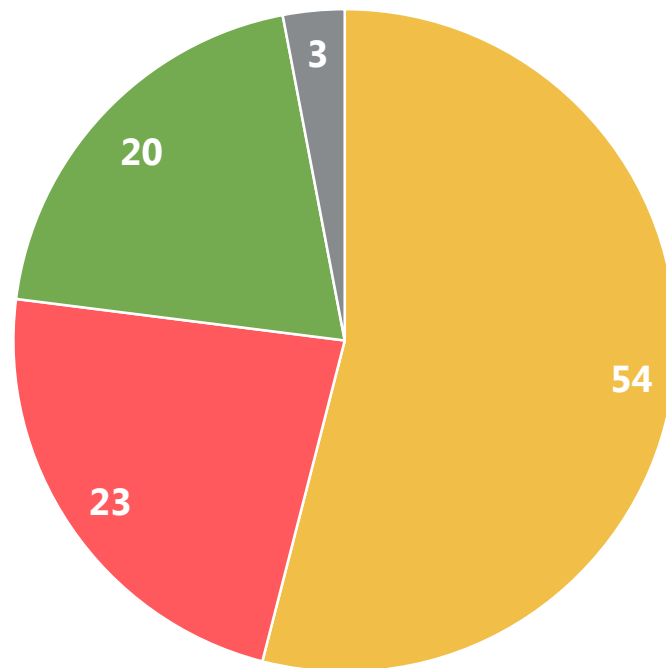
What does the future look like for the NHS?



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People foresee significant changes for the NHS over the next 70 years

Question: On 5 July, the NHS turns 70. Which of the following, if any, best describes what you think the NHS will be like in 70 years time from now?



- We will have to pay for services that are free at the point of use now
- It won't exist at all
- It will be generally free at the point of use as it is now
- Don't know

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

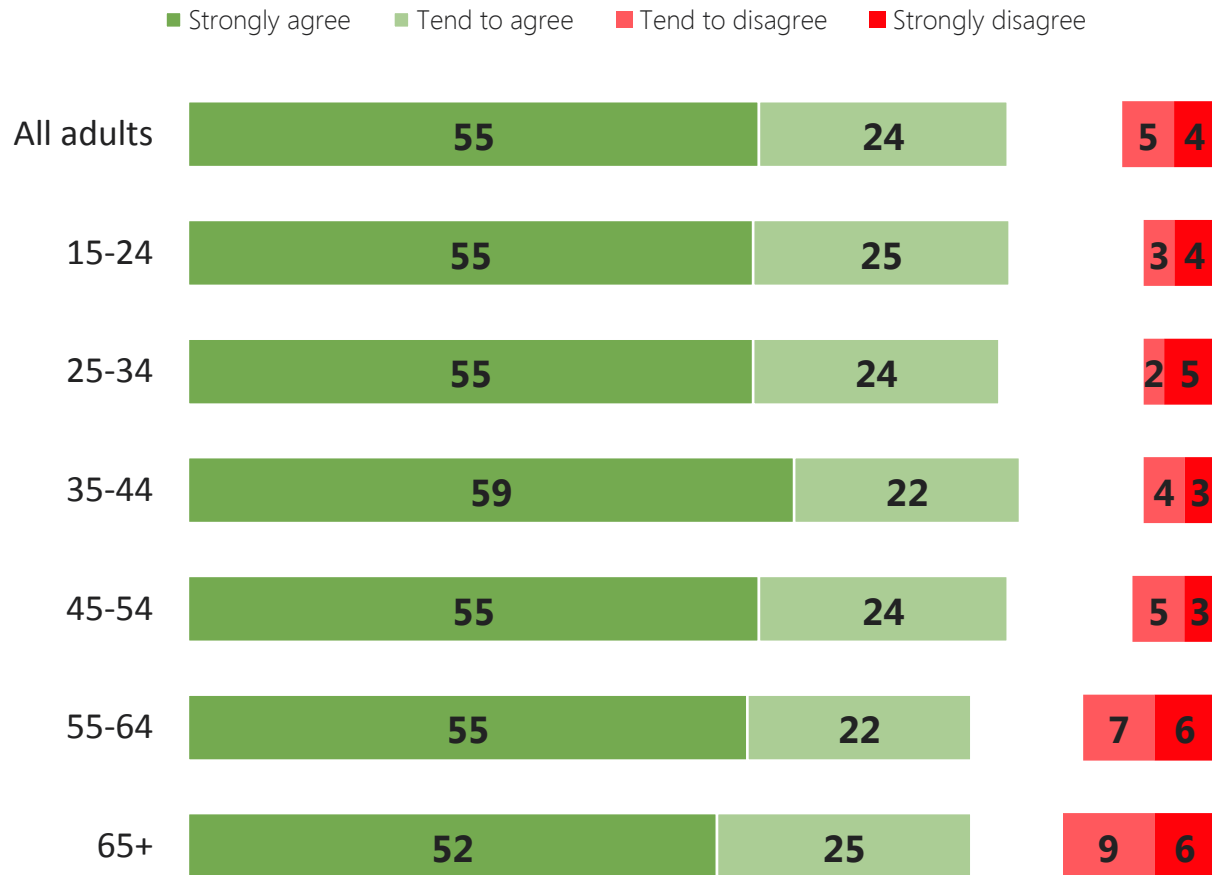
Only one in five people (20%) feel that the NHS will remain free at the point of use in 70 years' time.

Three quarters (77%), meanwhile, predict there will be some level of change. This is mostly made up of those who feel we will have to pay for services which are currently free at point of use (54%), while the remaining 23% predict that the NHS won't exist at all 70 years from now.

Is more money needed for the NHS?

People feel the NHS is currently underfunded, though older people are less likely to believe this is the case

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the NHS is currently underfunded?



The majority of people (79%) agree that the NHS is currently underfunded, and more than half (55%) *strongly* agree this is the case. Only one in ten people (10%) feel the opposite and disagree.

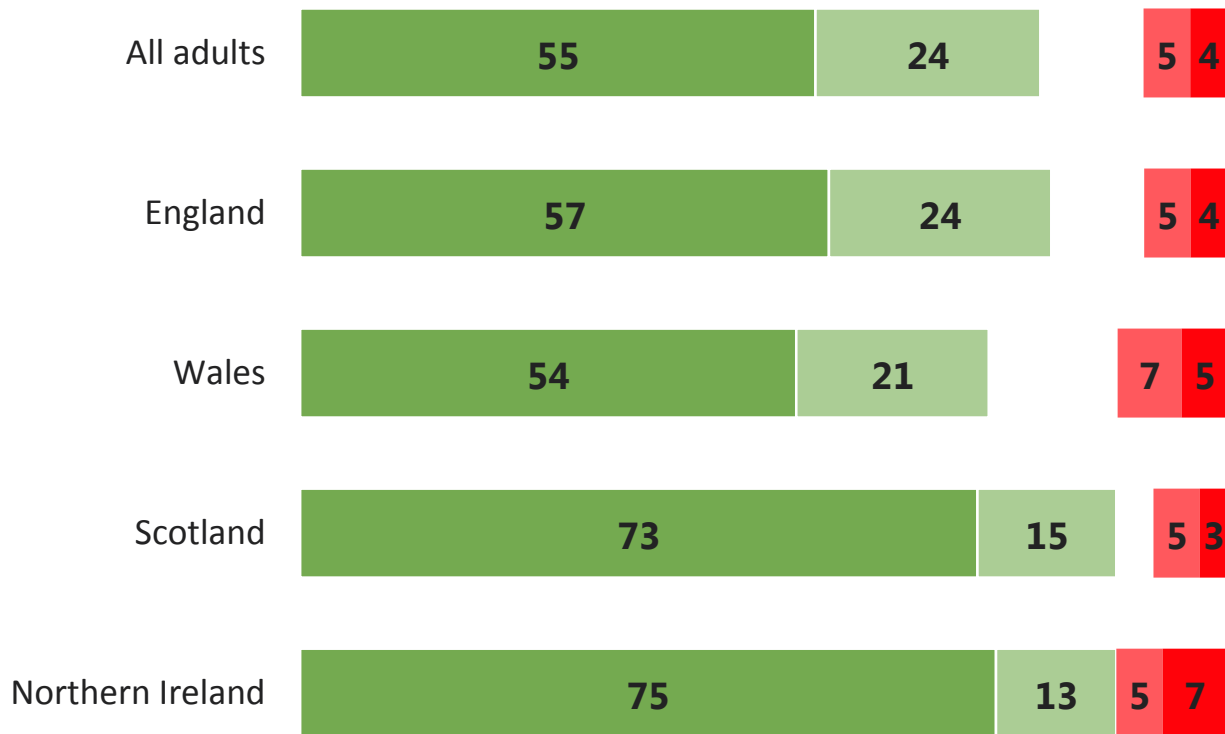
Results show that there are differing opinions by age, with those aged 55 and over significantly more likely to *disagree* that the NHS is underfunded than younger age groups.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK; 1,322 in England; 106 in Wales; 181 in Scotland; 60 in Northern Ireland

People in Scotland and Northern Ireland are most likely to see the NHS as being underfunded

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the NHS is currently underfunded?

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Tend to agree
 ■ Tend to disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree



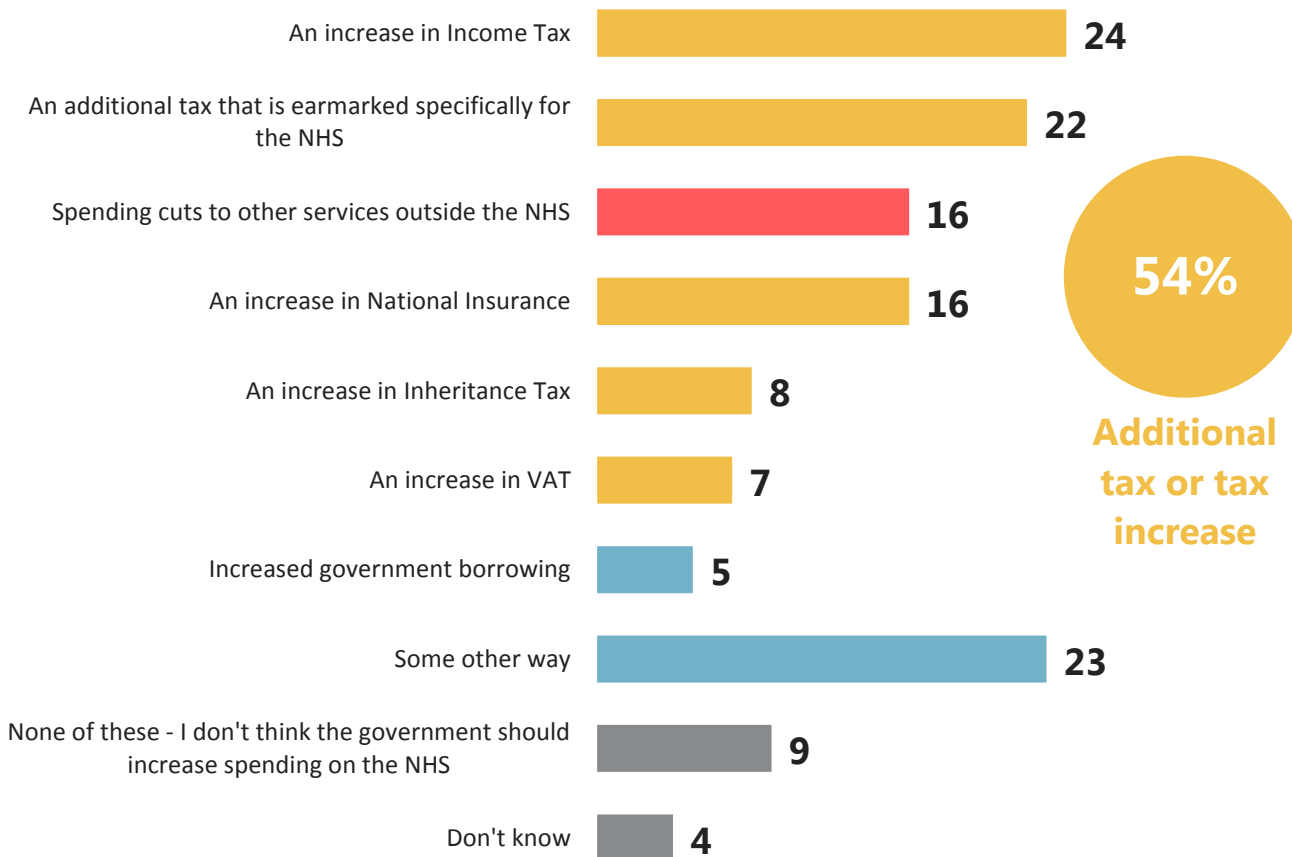
While the majority within each nation across the UK agree that the NHS is underfunded, there are some differences in the strength of opinion.

Almost nine in ten people in Scotland (89%) and Northern Ireland (88%) see the NHS as underfunded, which is significantly higher than the percentage saying the same in Wales (74%). In England, meanwhile, around four in five (82%) people feel this.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK; 1,322 in England; 106 in Wales; 181 in Scotland; 60 in Northern Ireland

While opinions differ, people are most likely to advocate additional taxation to fund an NHS spending increase

Question: If the government decided to increase spending on the NHS, how do you think this should be funded?



There is no clear consensus among the general public as to how to fund an increase to NHS spending.

Just over half (54%) are in favour of either an additional tax earmarked specifically for the NHS, or an increase to existing taxation. People are in no real agreement on which taxes should be increased – 24% suggest it should be income tax, while 22% advocate a tax earmarked for the NHS and 16% propose an increase in National Insurance.

Against this, 16% believe increased spending should be obtained through further cuts, and almost a quarter (23%) feel this should be funded in some other way.

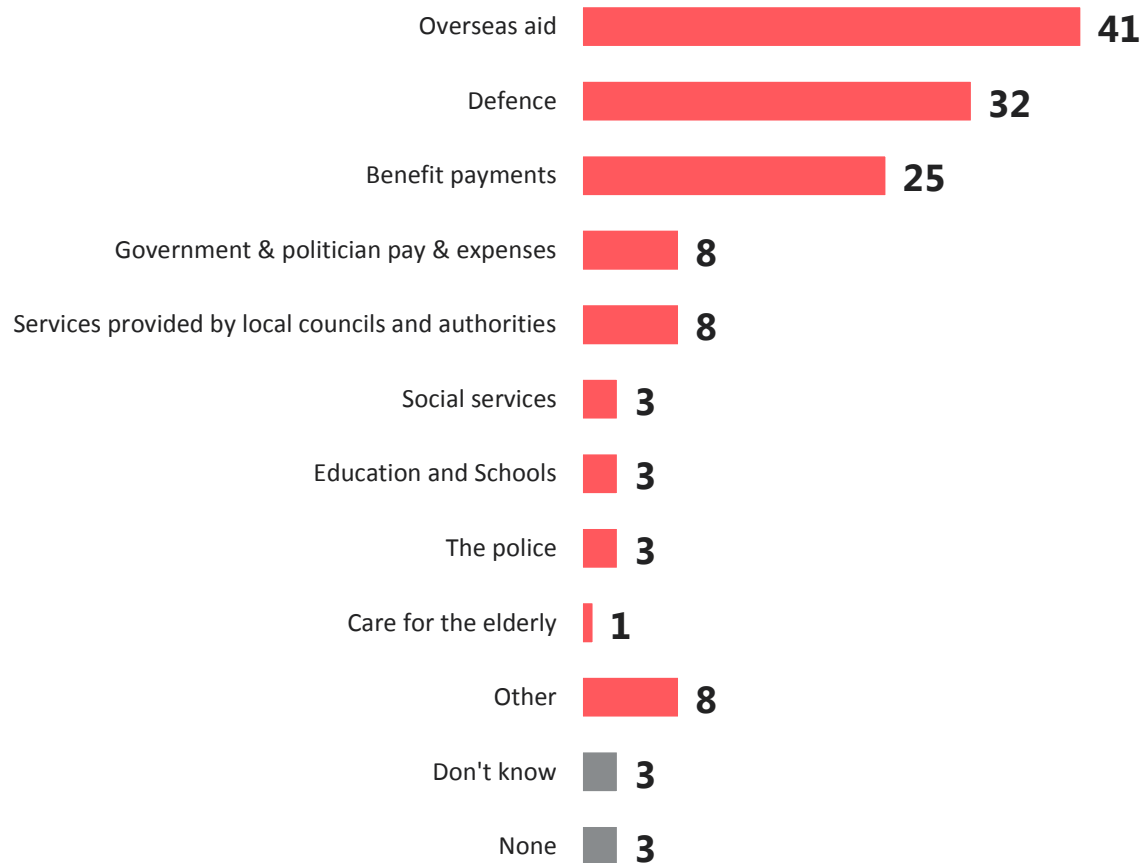
Looking at these in combination, just under half of people (49%) advocate tax increases but no cuts to spending on other services, while only five percent feel the two should be used together.

Again the results show some difference in views by age. People aged 55+ are more likely to advocate an additional tax or increase, with 62% of 55-64 year-olds saying this compared with 39% of 15-24-year-olds and 33% of those aged 25-34.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

Overseas aid and the defence budget are the main areas where people feel cuts could be made to fund an NHS spending increase

Question: If the government decided to increase spending on the NHS, how do you think this should be funded?



Of the people advocating spending cuts, two in five would like this to be achieved through reducing overseas aid (41%).

The next most popular area for cuts would be to reduce the defence budget (32%), followed by reductions to benefit payments which is mentioned by a quarter of people (25%).

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

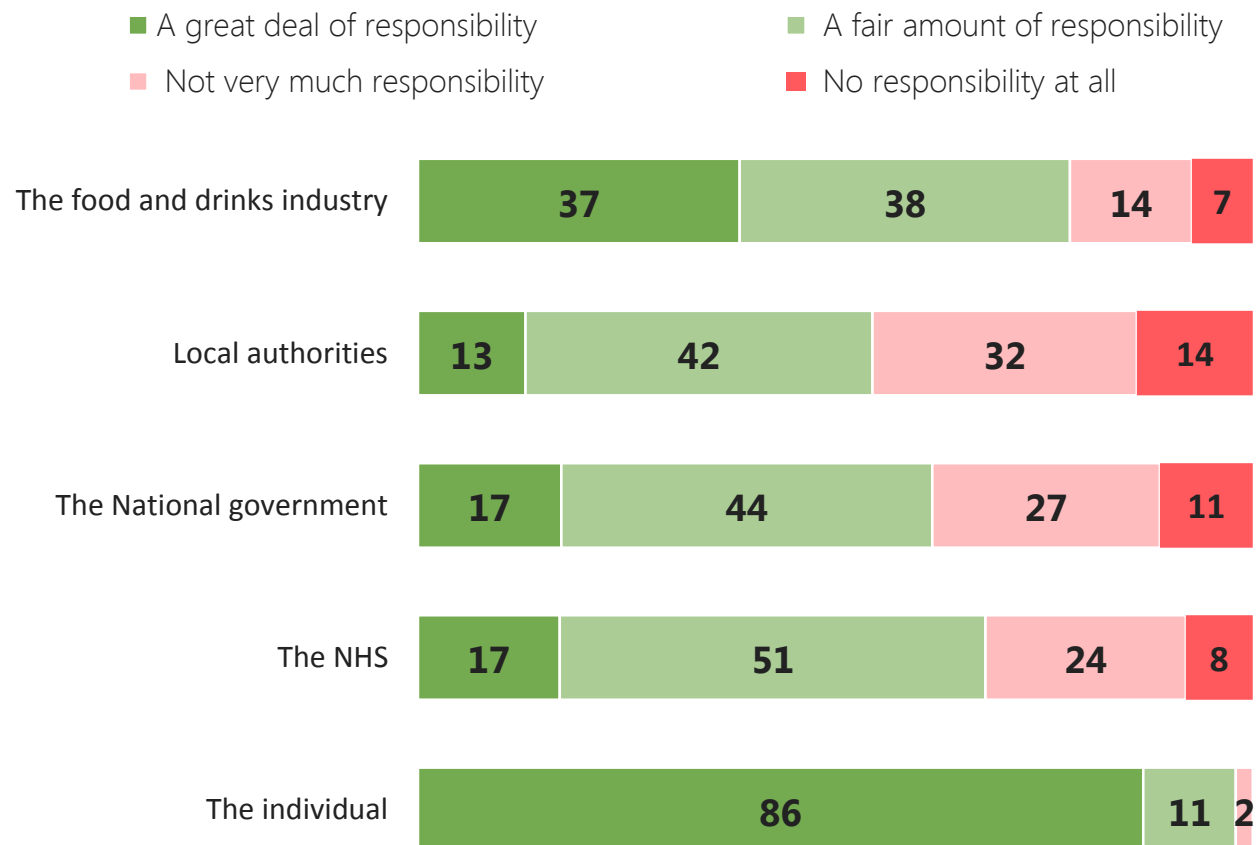
Are we expecting too much of the NHS?



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Individuals are seen as primarily responsible for their own health, rather than the NHS or any other organisation

Question: How much responsibility, if any, do you think that each of the following have for ensuring that people generally stay healthy?



When it comes to staying healthy, the public are far more likely to put responsibility on the individual than on any other body or organisation.

Almost all (97%) feel that individuals have a *great deal* or *fair amount* of responsibility for ensuring they stay healthy. This compares with three quarters of people (75%) who place similar levels of responsibility on the food and drinks industry.

Around two thirds (67%) feel the NHS holds at least a fair amount of responsibility for people staying healthy, which is similar to the proportion saying the same about the government (62%). Just over half (54%) believe local authorities have a *great deal* or *fair amount* of responsibility.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

The majority of the public feel it is easy to follow a 'healthy lifestyle'

Question: How easy or difficult is it for you to...

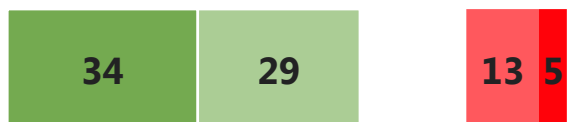
■ Very easy ■ Fairly easy ■ Fairly difficult ■ Very difficult

Limit how much alcohol you drink to 14 units per week



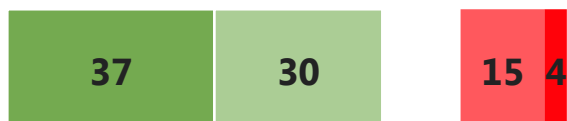
In general, the public seem to find it easy to adopt some of the key principles of a healthy lifestyle.

Eat no more than 6 grams of salt per day



Over two thirds of people (68%) find it easy to take at least 30 minutes of exercise per day.

Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day



A similar proportion of people find it easy to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day (66%) and to eat no more than 6 grams of salt per day (63%).

Take at least 30 minutes of exercise per day

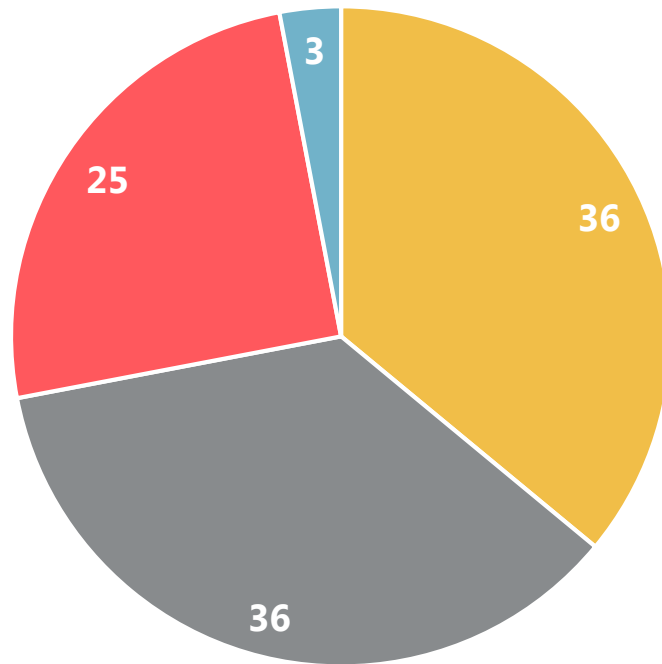


The majority of the public (83%) claim it is easy to limit their level of alcohol intake to 14 units per week, with 63% saying it is *very easy*.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

The public still expects a lot of the NHS – such as what it spends on drugs and treatments

Question: Which one of the following statements most closely matches your view?



- The NHS should provide the most effective drugs and treatments provided they represent good value for money
- The NHS should provide only the most effective drugs and treatments no matter how much they cost
- The NHS should provide all drugs and treatments, no matter how much they cost.
- Don't know

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

The public place fairly high expectations on the NHS and the level of service it provides, with 61% saying cost shouldn't be a factor when providing drugs and treatments.

This 61% figure is made up of 25% who feel that the NHS should be providing all drugs and treatments, no matter the cost, and 36% who agree that cost should not be a factor, but feel the NHS should provide only the most effective treatments.

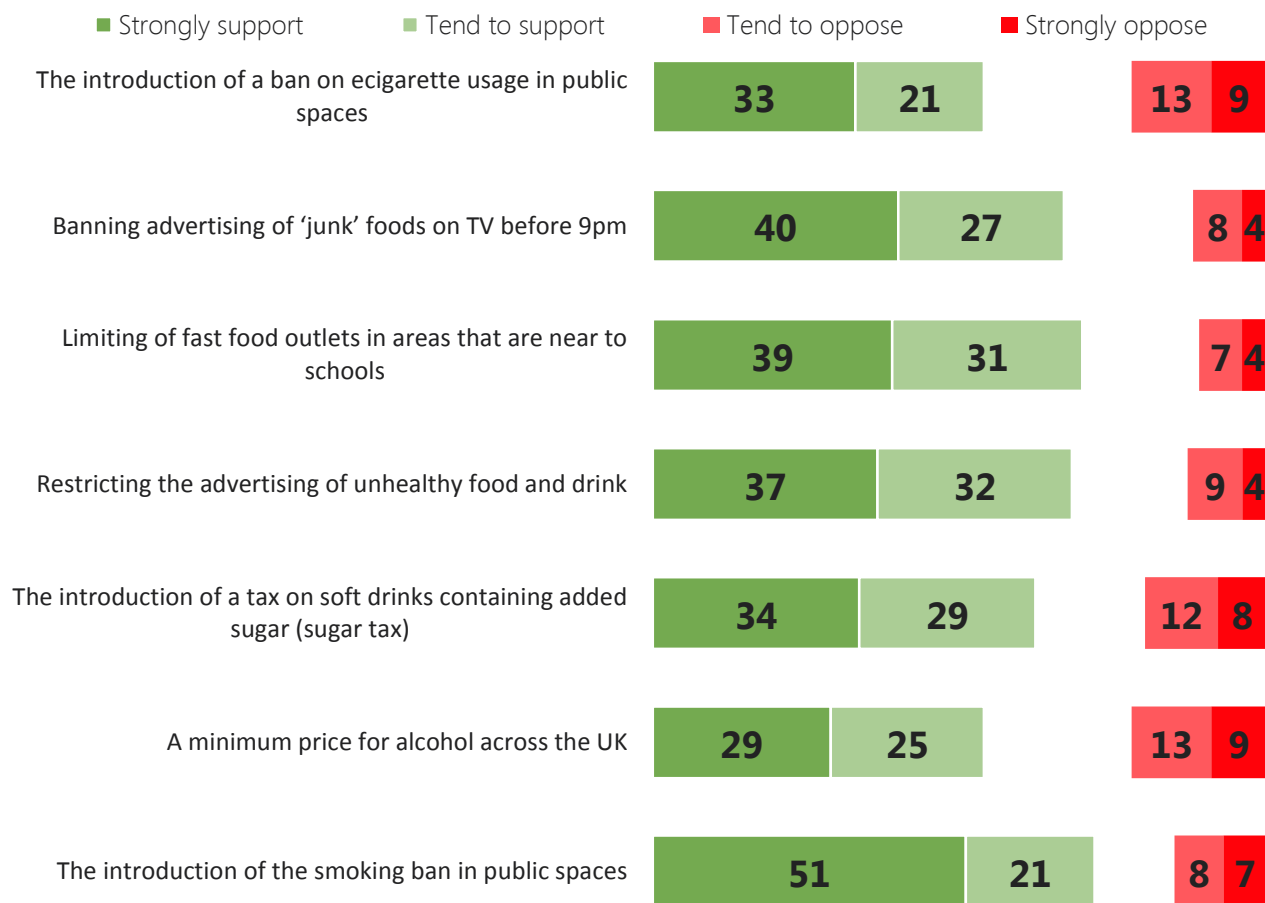
Meanwhile a further 36% argue that the NHS should provide the most effective drugs and treatments, but only so long as they represent value for money.

Women are more likely than men to feel the NHS should provide the most effective treatments no matter the cost (40% versus 33%), with men more likely to say value for money should be considered (40%, compared with 33% of women).

Data from 2006 indicates that spending expectations may have lessened slightly over time. Back then, 28% said value for money should be a key concern, while 40% said only the most effective treatments should be offered whatever the cost and a further 31% said the NHS should provide *all* drugs and treatments.

There is support for government intervention across a range of public health measures

Question: To what extent do you support or oppose government intervention in the following areas of public health?



While the individual is ultimately seen as being most responsible for ensuring their own health, people do still support government interventions which aim to improve public health.

When considering a range of such measures, the public are most supportive of the smoking ban in public spaces, with almost three quarters (72%) in favour of this. It appears that legislative change has had a significant impact on public support in this case – in 2007, polling showed that 46% of people in England supported the ban.

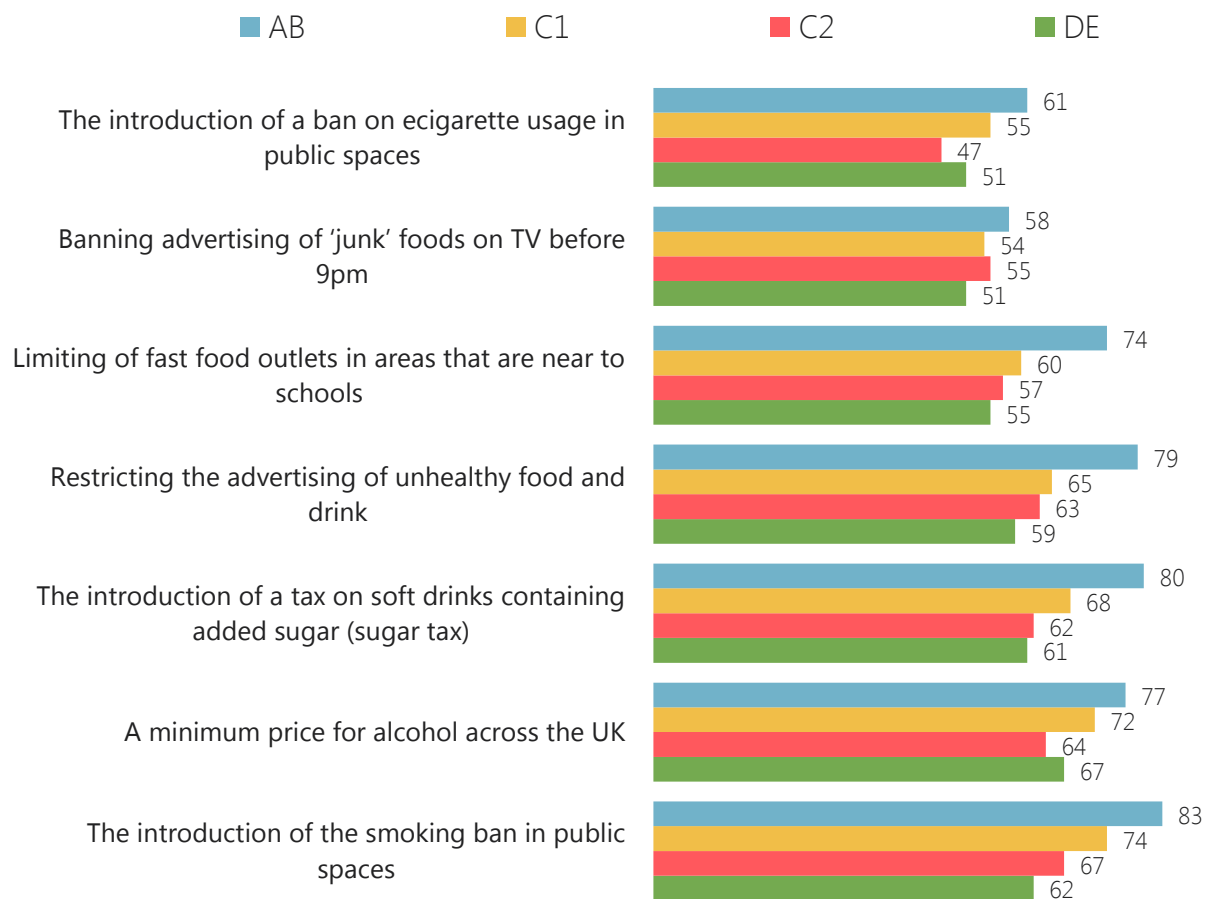
Similar numbers are in support of government involvement in a range of measures to encourage healthy eating, such as: limiting fast food outlets near schools (70%); restricting the advertising of unhealthy food and drink (68%); banning advertising of 'junk' foods before 9pm (67%); and a 'sugar tax' on soft drinks containing added sugar, which is supported by 62% of people.

Support is lower for initiatives in other areas, but still find that more than half of people support a minimum price for alcohol in the UK (54%) and the introduction of a ban on e-cigarettes in public spaces (55%).

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

There are differences in levels of support for government interventions by age and social grade

Question: To what extent do you support or oppose government intervention in the following areas of public health? - % support by social grade



Older people are significantly more likely to support all forms of government interventions – for instance, 73% of people 65+ support a ban of junk food adverts before 9pm, compared with just under half (48%) of 15-24-year-olds.

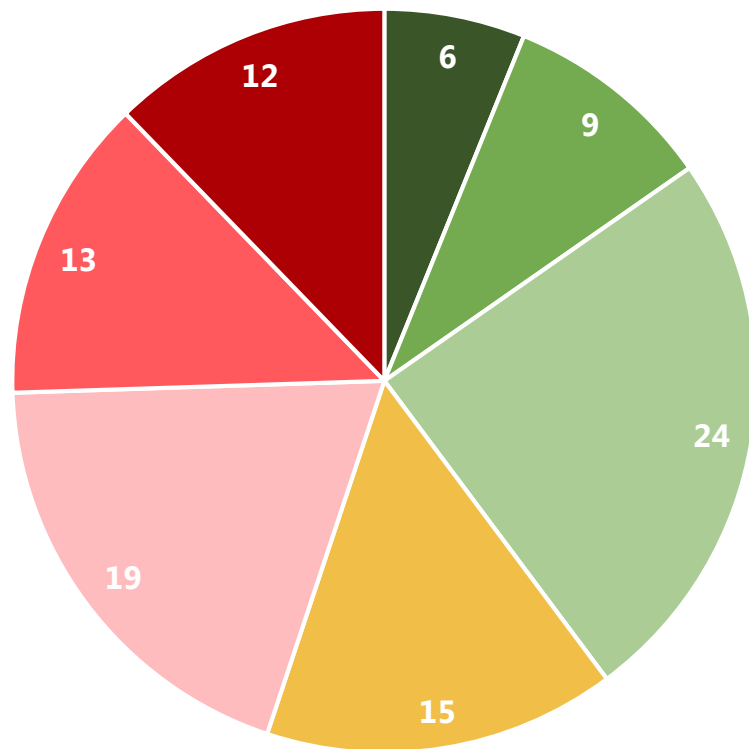
As the chart shows, there are also different levels of support by social grade. While there are no significant differences in support for a ban on e-cigarettes, people in social grades AB are significantly more likely to support all other interventions.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

How do the public feel about social care funding?

There is no real consensus over the fairness of the means testing system for social care

Question: Social care is largely means tested/Some elements of social care are means tested. How fair or unfair do you think this is?



- Completely fair
- Very fair
- Somewhat fair
- Neither fair nor unfair
- Somewhat unfair
- Very unfair
- Completely unfair

Overall the public are somewhat divided regarding the fairness of the current system for social care payment.

Over two in five people (44%) feel the system of means testing is unfair, which includes a quarter (25%) who view the current system as *completely* or *very unfair*.

The proportion who feel the opposite and say the current system is at least somewhat fair is slightly lower, at 38%.

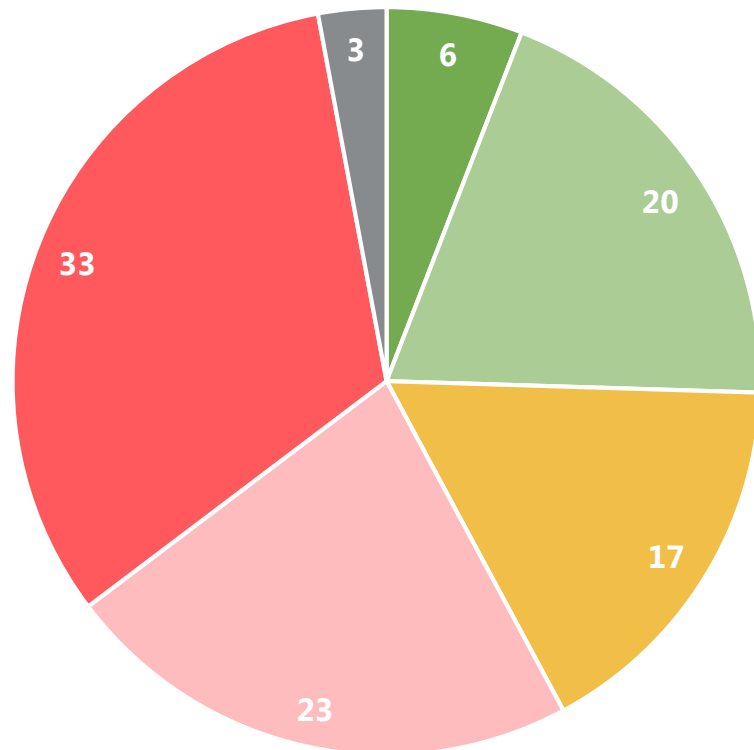
The results show no significant differences between countries, despite the systems for social care payment differing between them.

More than anything, the lack of consensus on the fairness of means testing may be a reflection of a lack of understanding about how the process actually works, as opposed to a real split in opinion.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

There is more resistance towards using the value of your home to help pay for social care

Question: To what extent, if at all, do you think it is acceptable or unacceptable that homeowners who need social care have to use some of the value of their home to pay for their social care?



- Completely acceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Neither acceptable nor unacceptable
- Somewhat unacceptable
- Completely unacceptable
- Don't know

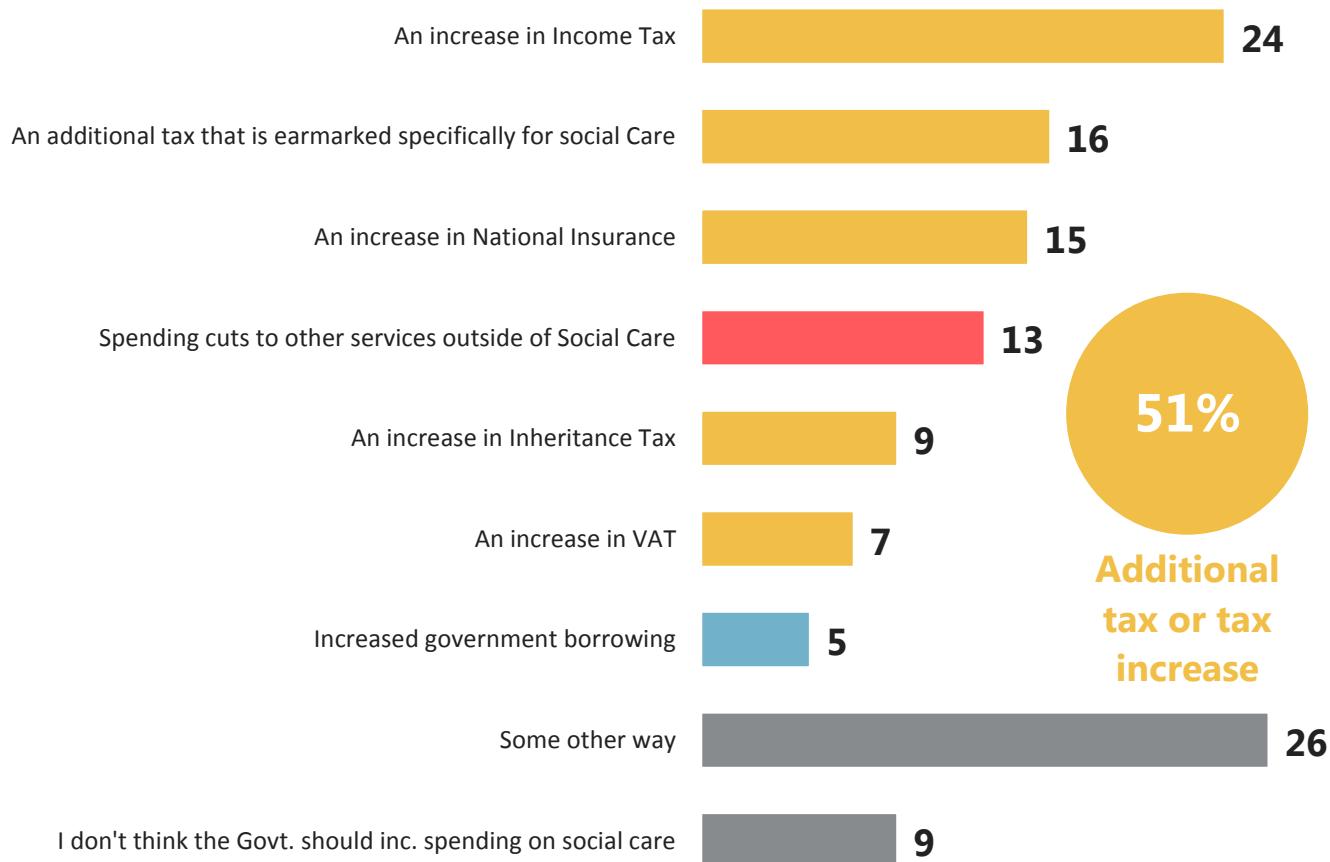
Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

While the public appears to be split on the fairness of paying for social care, once it is explained that homeowners may have to use their housing assets as part of this payment greater levels of opposition are seen.

More than half of people (56%) feel this situation is unacceptable – which includes 33% who find it *completely unacceptable* – while only a quarter (25%) believe the opposite.

Around half would be in favour of additional taxation to increase social care funding

Question: If the government decided to increase spending on social care, how do you think this should be funded?



If the government were to increase spending on social care then, as with NHS spending, the public are most likely to support this being done through tax increases.

Half of the public (51%) would favour either an additional tax earmarked specifically for this purpose, or an increase to existing taxation; this compares with just 13% who feel increased spending should be obtained through cuts in other areas.

Looking at these in combination, just under half (48%) advocate tax but no cuts to spending on other services, while only four per cent feel that increased taxation and cuts should be used together.

A quarter of people (26%), meanwhile, feel that increases to social care spending should be achieved in some other way.

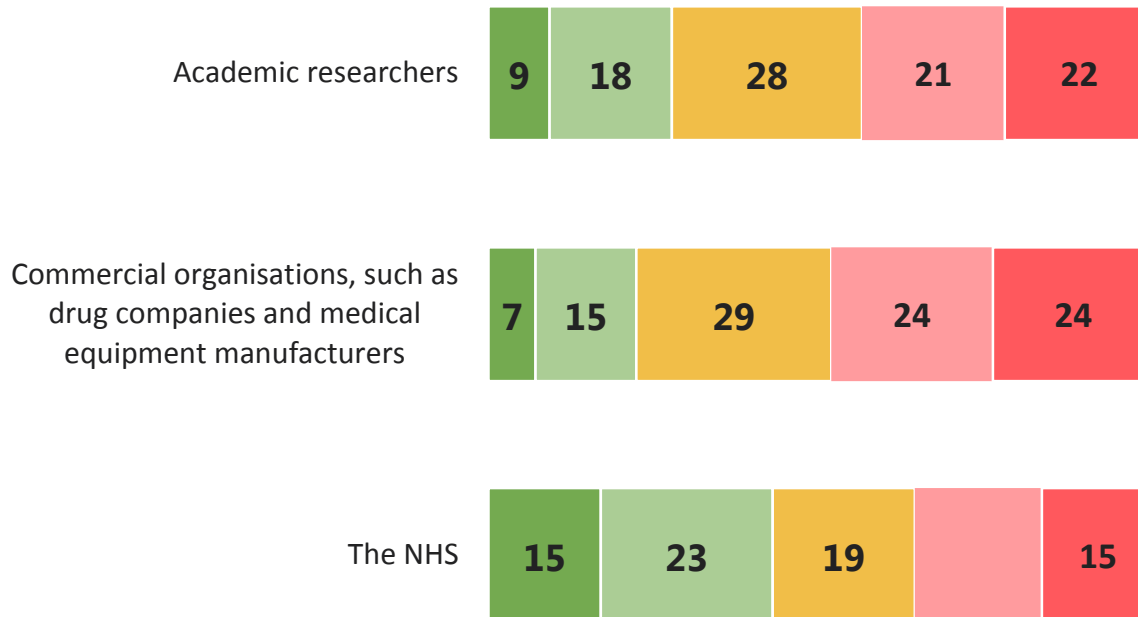
Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

How will technological developments affect the NHS and healthcare?

People are unclear about how organisations use health data

Question: How much, if anything, would you say you know about how the following organisations use health data for these purposes?

- A great deal
- A fair amount
- Just a little
- Heard of, know nothing about



There is limited knowledge of how various organisations use anonymised health data for research into diseases and treatments.

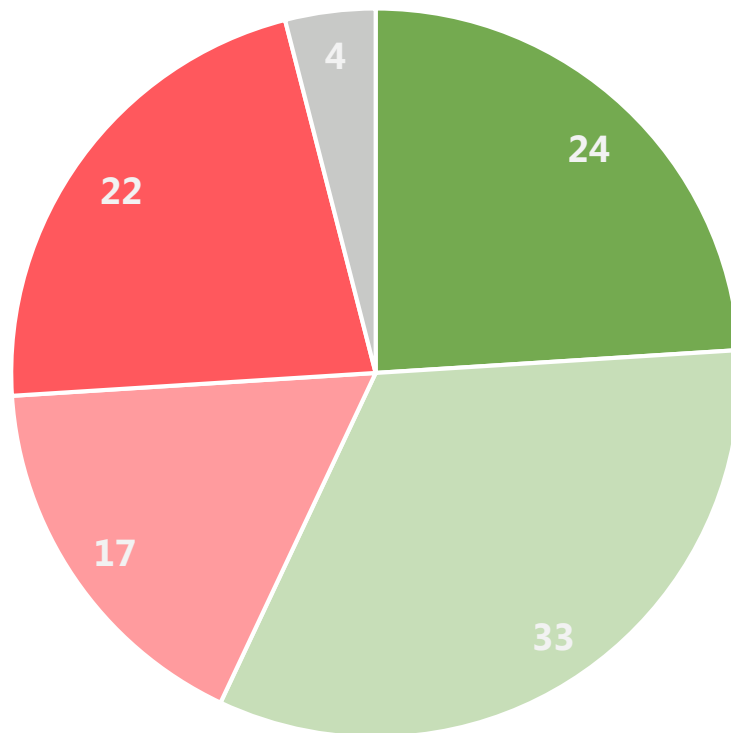
Only 37% of the public feel they know either a *great deal* or a *fair amount* about how the NHS uses such data, which is similar to the proportion saying they either *know nothing* or have *never heard* about this.

There is even less knowledge when it comes to the use of anonymised health data by academic researchers, with just over a quarter of the public (27%) saying they know a *great deal* or *fair amount*, and this falls to around one on five (22%) when it comes to uses by commercial organisations.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

This lack of knowledge may explain why views about NHS organisations accessing data are mixed

Question: How willing or unwilling would you be to allow NHS organisations access to lifestyle data you have collected yourself via an app or fitness tracker for the purposes of delivering care?



Opinions among the public differ when it comes to allowing NHS organisations access to lifestyle data which has been collected via an app or fitness tracker.

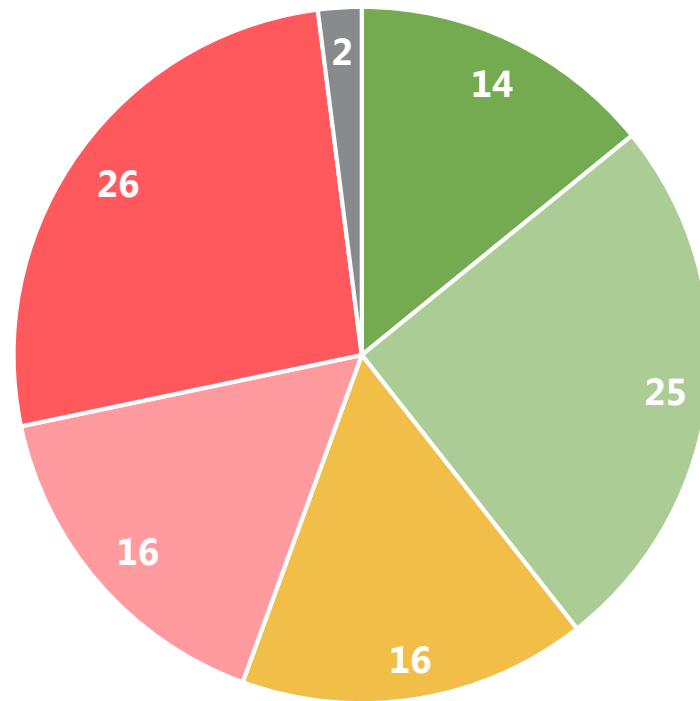
The majority (57%) are ultimately in favour of such access if it is ultimately used for delivering care, however a significant minority of almost two in five (39%) say they are unwilling to allow this.

■ Very willing ■ Fairly willing ■ Fairly unwilling ■ Very unwilling ■ Don't know

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

There is even less support for commercial organisations gaining access to health data

Question: To what extent, if at all, would you support your health data being accessed by commercial organisations if they are undertaking health research?



- Strongly support
- Tend to support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Tend to oppose
- Strongly oppose
- Don't know

Compared with NHS organisations, there is more opposition towards commercial organisations gaining access to health data which is routinely gathered by the NHS.

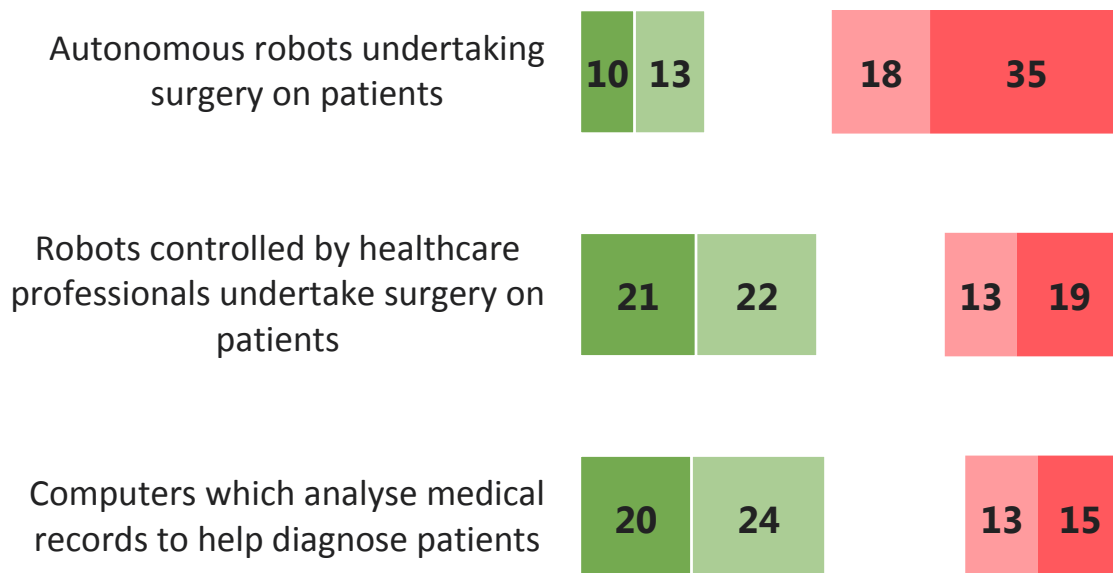
That being said, opinions are still split – two in four (39%) support the principle of commercial organisations having access, compared with 43% who either *strongly oppose* or *tend to oppose* this.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

The public are generally sceptical about the benefits of machine learning within healthcare

Question: For each of the below Machine Learning technologies, can you please tell me which of the following is closest to your view about the balance of risks and benefits with machines doing such tasks?

- The benefits are much bigger than the risks
- The benefits are slightly bigger than the risks
- The risks are slightly bigger than the benefits
- The risks are much bigger than the benefits



There appears to be a fairly high level of scepticism within the public about the benefits of a range of machine learning possibilities.

A significant minority (44%) believe that the benefits of computers analysing medical records in diagnosing patients would outweigh the risks, but three in ten (29%) feel that the risks are bigger than the benefits.

The use of robots as part of surgery is also viewed with some trepidation. Two in five (43%) see the benefits of robots controlled by healthcare professionals that undertake surgery on patients, while a third (33%) argue that the risks are either *much greater* or *slightly greater* than the benefits.

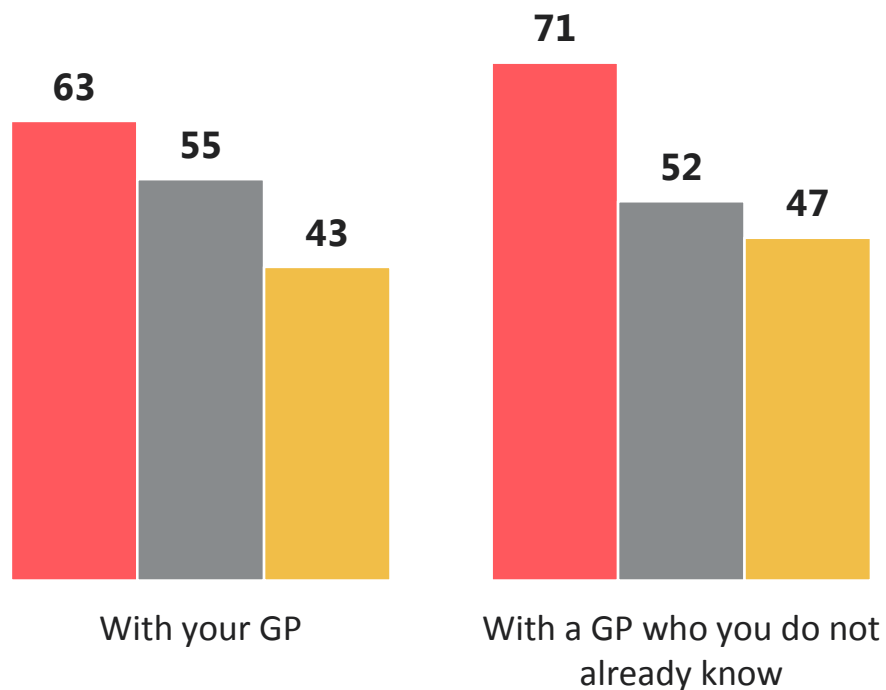
There is even more uncertainty over the benefits of autonomous robots undertaking surgery on patients; only one in five (22%) feel the benefits are bigger than the risks, which compares with just over half of people (52%) who feel the opposite.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

People are generally in favour of having video consultations, even where they do not already know that GP

Question: In which, if any, of the following circumstances would you be willing to use a video consultation?

- Advice on a minor ailment
- For advice on an ongoing problem or condition
- For immediate or emergency medical advice



The public are generally willing to use video consultations when getting medical advice, and interestingly this is the same whether it be a consultation with their own GP or with a GP they do not already know.

Nearly two thirds of people (63%) are willing to use a video consultation with their own GP for advice on a minor ailment. Just over half (55%) would be prepared to have a video consultation for advice on an ongoing problem or condition, while fewer (43%) would be willing to use it for immediate or emergency medical advice.

If the GP was someone they didn't already know, then seven in ten people (71%) would still use video consultations in such situations. Just over half (52%) would be prepared to use a video consultation for advice on an ongoing problem or condition, with slightly fewer people (47%) saying they would be happy with using a video consultation for immediate or emergency medical advice.

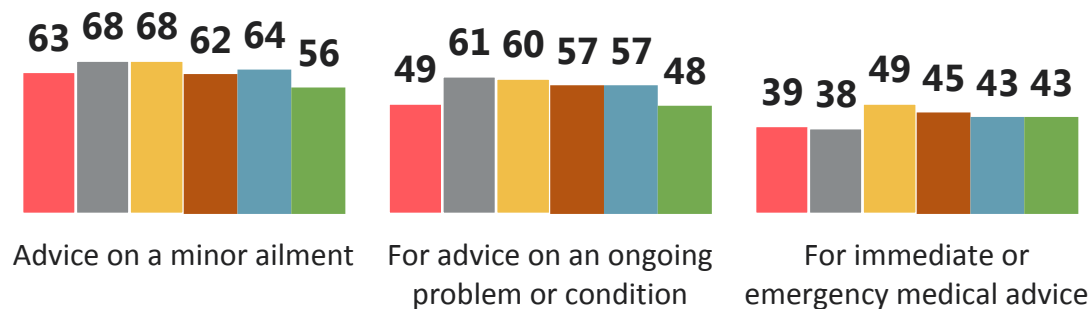
Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

The youngest and oldest age groups are less likely to use video consultations in certain settings

Question: In which, if any, of the following circumstances would you be willing to use a video consultation...

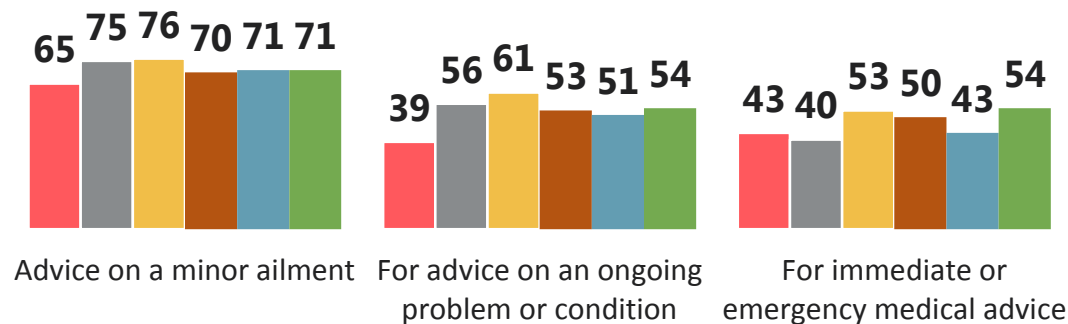
...with your GP

15-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+



Where it is with a known GP, the youngest and oldest age groups are less likely to use a video consultation for advice on an ongoing problem or condition, while as people get older they are more likely to say they would not use video consultations in any of the scenarios given.

...with a GP you do not already know



There are also differences in the results by age when the consultation is with an unknown GP, although the patterns are somewhat inconsistent. This time it is only the youngest age group that is less likely to use video consultations for advice on an ongoing problem or condition, while those aged 35-44 are most positive about using an unknown GP in a number of scenarios.

Base: 2,083 adults 15+ in the UK

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