



Northern Ireland

**Public Services**  
Ombudsman

“the lack of communication has led me to feel **forgotten**, worthless.”

“feel like no one wants to help me that I have been **forgotten** about and not important.”

“Actually, communication of any sort would be appreciated, you feel you make it on to a waiting list and are completely **forgotten** about.”

“Feel... are **forgotten** and a burden asking about you were entitled to.”

“Forgotten left in... wait...”

# 'Forgotten'

Key Findings on **HEALTHCARE WAITING LIST COMMUNICATIONS** from the General Public and General Practitioner Surveys

**OWN INITIATIVE**  
KEY STATISTICS

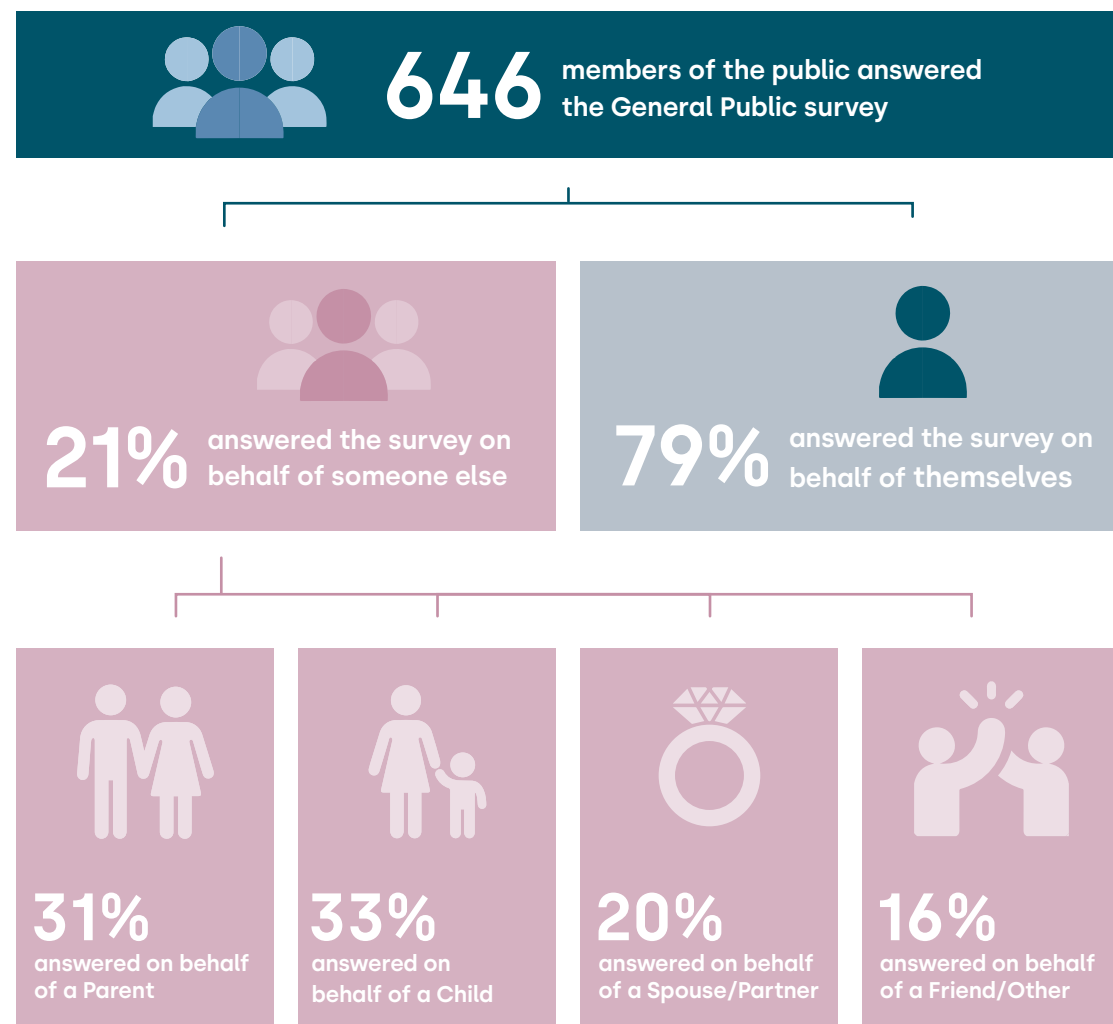
## Key Findings

This document highlights some of the significant findings from our General Practitioner and General Public surveys which illustrate a consistent, clear desire and, indeed, requirement for improved waiting list communications.

The full investigation report also draws upon the survey statistics to strengthen the Ombudsman’s findings and recommendations.

### General Public Survey Respondent Information

Figure 1.1 General Public survey response breakdown

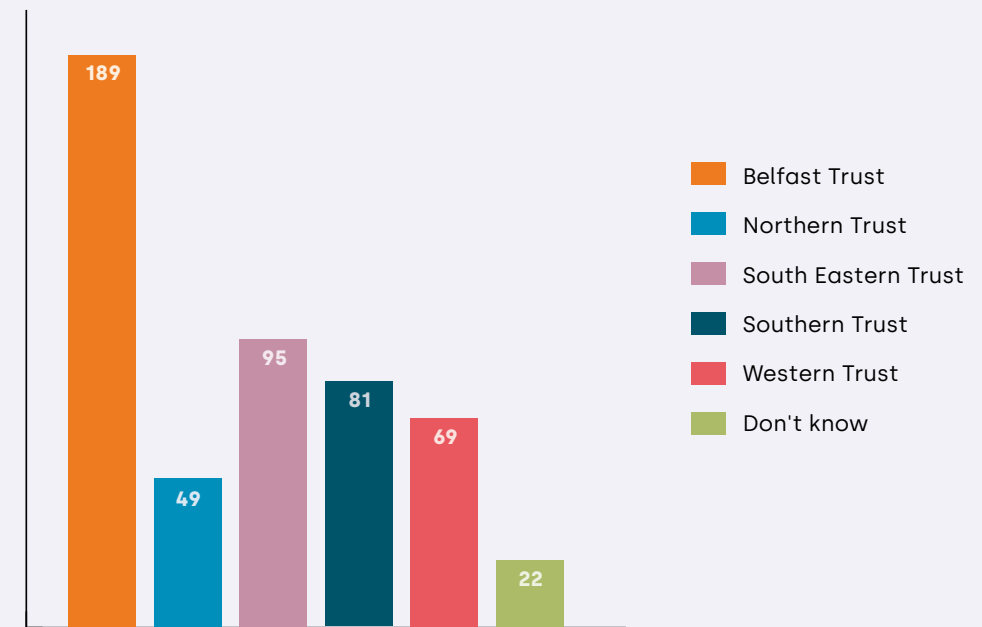


505 people answered the question about which H&SCT waiting list they had been or were currently on and how long they have been waiting/waited.

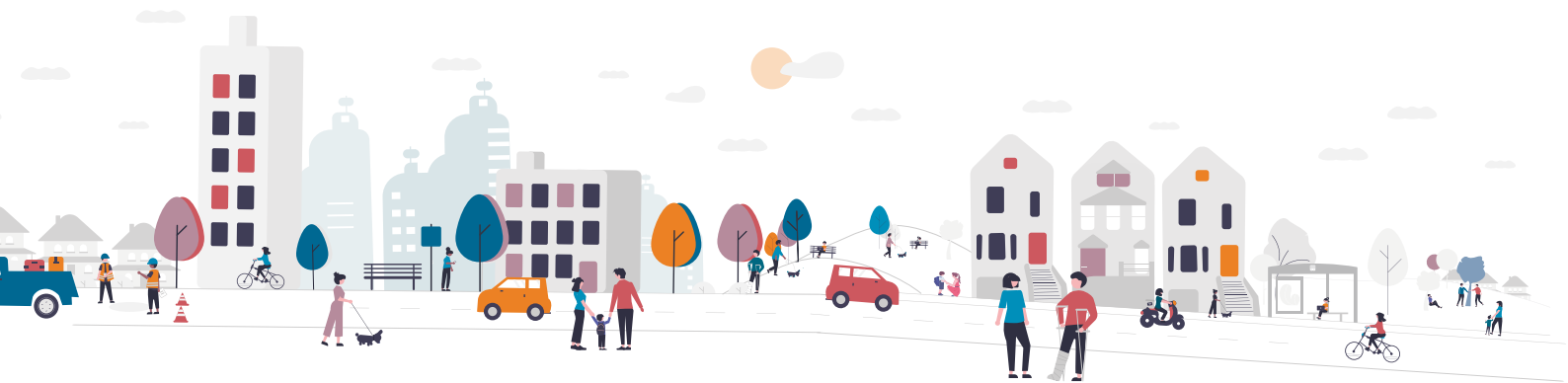
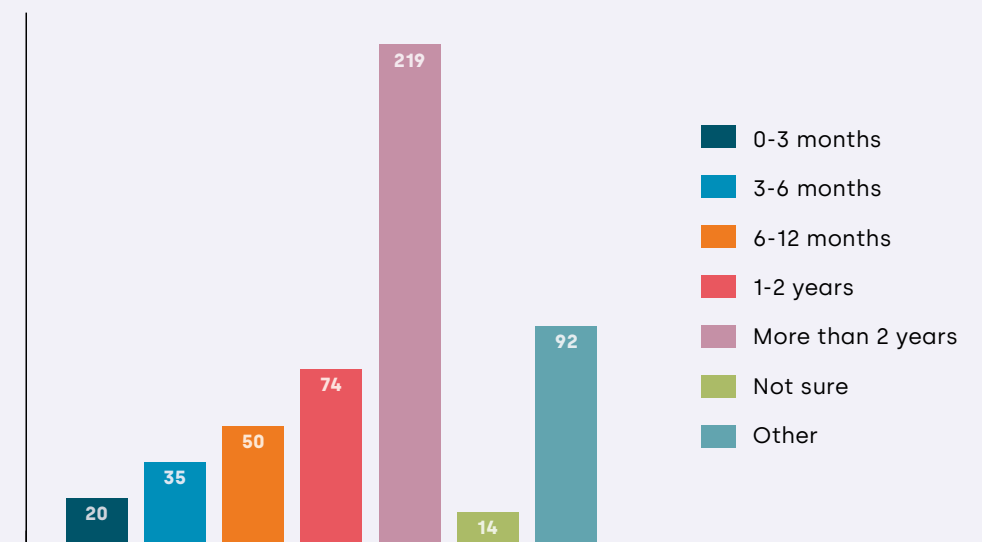
The response levels are illustrated below.

### Respondents by associated Trust

As the largest Trust servicing the biggest population, it is unsurprising that Belfast had the most respondents.



### Length of time on waiting list



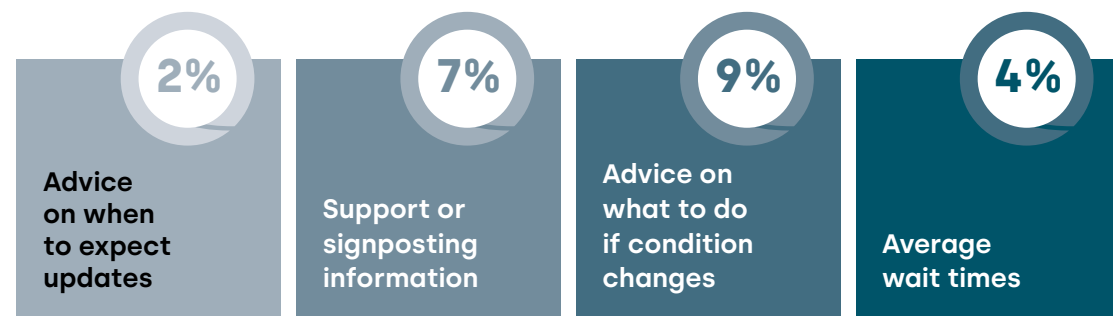
### General Practitioner Survey Respondent Information

321 General Practitioners responded to our survey.



### Waiting list communication when received, tends to be limited in content

Waiting list communications when received by respondents, did not contain the information people needed. Below shows the low percentage of responses confirming their waiting list communication contained the following:

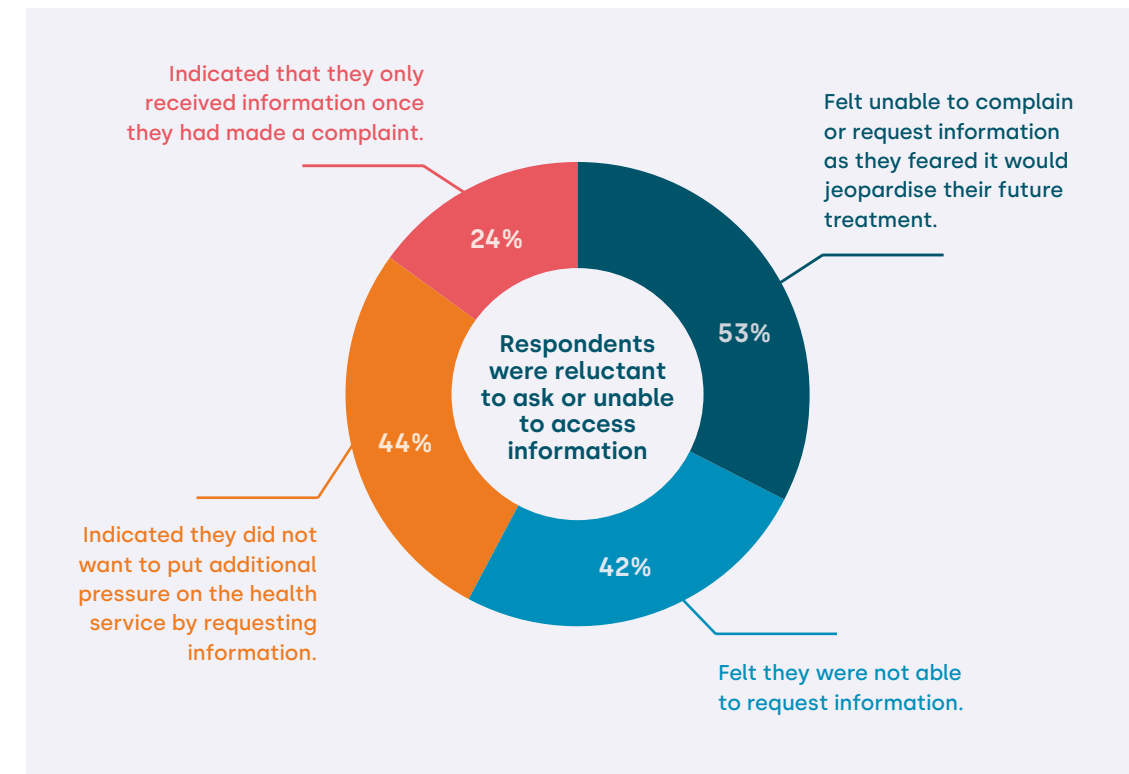


In Contrast...

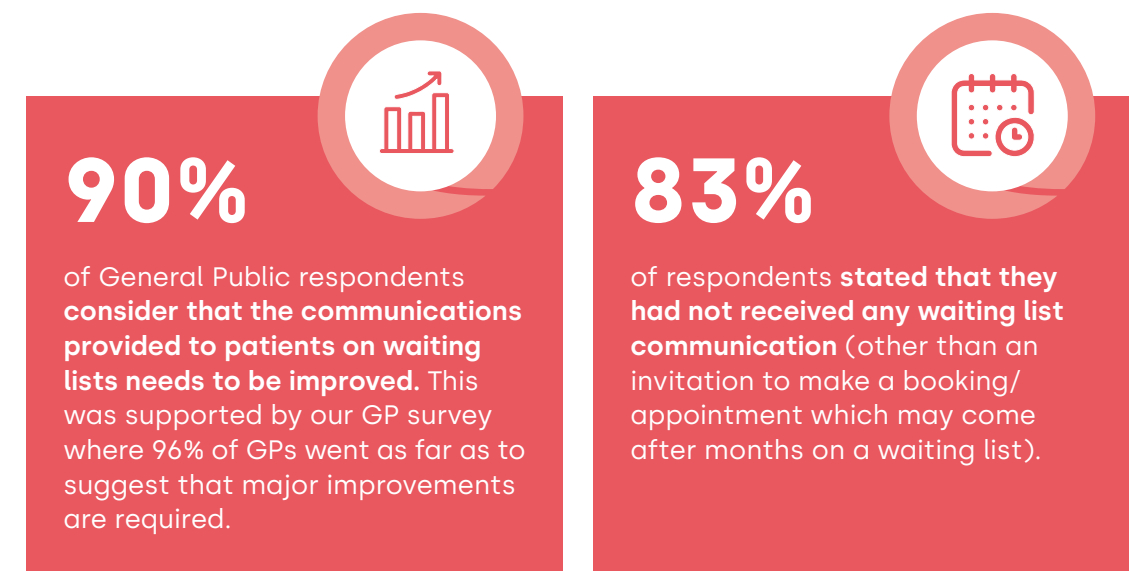


### Waiting List information is difficult to access

The General Public survey found a significant number of respondents were reluctant to ask or unable to access information. The majority of General Public Survey respondents who identified that they had contacted the Trusts, also suggested that waiting list information was not easily accessible.



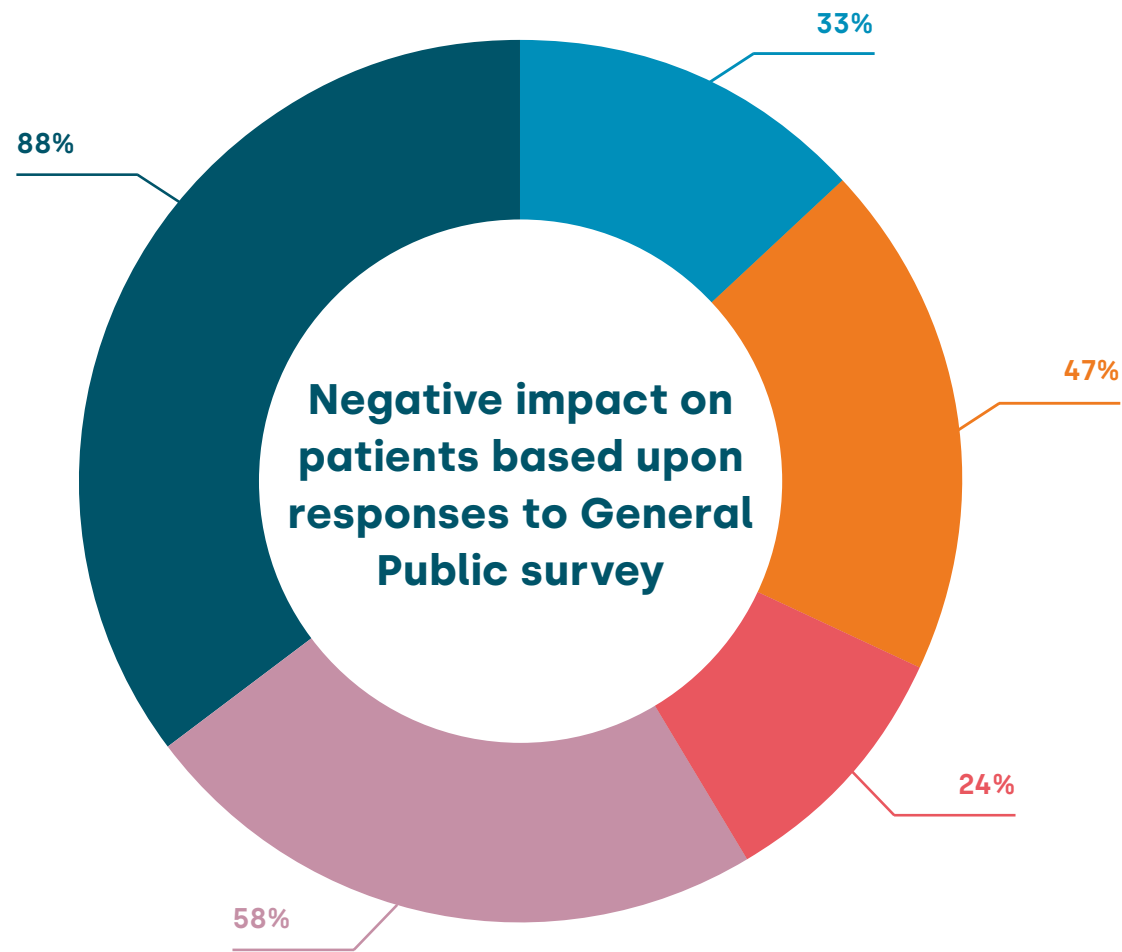
### Communications provided to patients on waiting lists needs to be improved





### Lack of communication has a negative impact

Our General Public survey identified that 92% of respondents reported a negative impact from the lack of communication.



- 33% Stated that their circumstances changed while waiting and they were unaware of whom to contact.
- 47% May have considered private treatment had they been informed about the extent of the waiting list.
- 88% Feel like they have been forgotten about.
- 24% Stated that a lack of information led to mismanagement of their care and treatment.
- 58% Were caused distress and frustration in attempting to access information.

### Lack of clarity around GP's role, responsibility and ability to provide waiting list information

As the investigation illustrates, the Department and the Trusts view GPs as a key partner in sharing waiting list (and other) communications with patients. However, our survey findings highlight a lack of coherence in how this works in practice.

**79% of GPs** agreed that their role includes provision of general waiting time information at the point of referral, but many highlighted that Trusts fail to provide this information which limits GP ability to share this with patients.

**Less than 4% of respondents** indicated that updates should be sent to the GP to then update the patient.

**95% of respondents** to our GP survey advised they were **not familiar** with the **Integrated Elective Access Protocol (IEAP)** – the key Department issued procedure on how waiting list are managed.

**94% of GPs** identified that providing waiting list information to patients places a **significant strain** on their resources.

**95% of respondents** to our General Public indicated that the Trusts should provide regular updates directly to patients.

**High numbers of GPs** indicated that Trusts fail to effectively provide them with waiting list information.

**Low percentage of responses**, to the types of waiting list information typically available to GPs, suggest accessibility is limited:

Trust	Percentage
Southern Trust	88%
Northern Trust	76%
South Eastern Trust	98%
Western Trust	99%
Belfast Trust	95%

Information Type	Percentage
Receipt of referral	51%
Confirmation patient added to waiting list	20%
General wait times	13%
Confirmation of Clinical Urgency	10%

Southern Trust
  Western Trust

Northern Trust
  Belfast Trust

South Eastern Trust

Receipt of referral
  General wait times

Confirmation patient added to waiting list
  Confirmation of Clinical Urgency



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