



# Vaccine literacy in the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets and the Pakistani, Black African and Black Caribbean communities in Waltham Forest

February 2024



# What we know about vaccines and vaccine hesitancy in Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest

**LOCAL VOICE**  
*in your community*

## Who are the vaccine hesitant residents?

- ▶ Aged under 50
- ▶ Ethnic minorities other than Bangladeshi- especially Pakistani and Black African
- ▶ Born in the UK
- ▶ Working class (C2DE)
- ▶ Feel poorly informed about vaccines in general.  
Less likely to want information about vaccines from GP;  
more likely to rely on online sources  
or friends/family; less likely to trust information from  
the NHS, scientists or the Government,
- ▶ May have experienced alarming vaccine side effects or  
may know/ have heard of people who did.



# What we know about vaccines and vaccine hesitancy in Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest



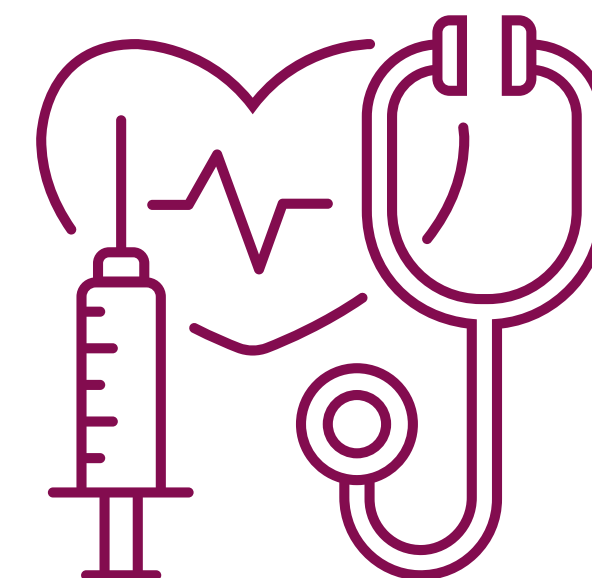
## GP surgeries- what makes a difference

Higher Covid vaccination rates in Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest GP practices were correlated with:

- ▶ Patients feeling **treated with care and concern**.
- ▶ Patients believing the appointments they get at their GP practices **meet their needs**.
- ▶ Patients feeling **listened to by** healthcare professionals.
- ▶ Patients feeling **involved in decisions** about their own care and treatment.
- ▶ Patients believing they are **given enough time** during medical appointments.
- ▶ Patients **trusting medical professionals** in the practice.
- ▶ Patients feeling that their **mental health needs are recognised**.
- ▶ Patients finding **reception staff helpful**.

All of these correlations were stronger in relation to the 2023 seasonal Covid vaccine booster than with initial Covid vaccines pre-2023; which indicates an **increasing importance** of these factors.

GP surgeries in more deprived areas also had lower rates of Covid vaccines than those in more affluent areas.



In 2023, as part of the **Big Conversation in North East London**, we developed a framework for what **good care** means to local people.



## What does this mean for a vaccine uptake strategy?



Acknowledge and address obstacles in accessing vaccines and information about them, including those relating to disability, neurodivergence, poverty and time.



Address local people's concerns, including those around side effects, in an evidence-based, easy to understand manner.



Understand that different groups have different communication needs and engage using different channels; tailor your messaging accordingly. Make it easy to get vaccines on an appointment or walk-in basis in different community locations (GPs, pharmacies, community centres etc.).



Identify "trusted influencers" for different groups; listen to local people's concerns and engage with them in an honest and specific manner.

# How to engage on vaccines

in an accessible, person-centred way that shows competence and builds trust

## Specific topics to engage on:

- ▶ Why seasonal boosters are still necessary for people who had the initial doses of Covid vaccines.
- ▶ Vaccine side effects- with a focus on those that may feel unpleasant or alarming, without necessarily being dangerous; as well as more serious symptoms that may be perceived as vaccine side effects even though they may be unrelated.
- ▶ How vaccines may be more effective at preventing the more severe form of a disease such as Covid than at preventing any infection at all.
- ▶ How vaccines are evolving/ responding to new strands of Covid and other diseases.



## What role can GP surgeries play?

They can be a crucial source of trusted information, especially for **the older generation** and patients who are **digitally excluded**.

However, it is important to note that:

- ▶ Local people who trust advice from their GP are more likely to already be convinced of the benefits of vaccination, while **those who are vaccine hesitant may put less weight on it**.
- ▶ Some local GPs may be more trusted than others; in surgeries where patients consistently feel well supported, listened to and involved in their care, **patients may be more likely to be influenced by GPs** encouraging them to get a vaccine than in those where they do not.

*“In my GP surgery they never have time for me when I need them... but they do have time to send me reminders about vaccines that I don’t want all the time!”*

*(Black African woman, Waltham Forest, decided against flu/vaccine booster)*

# How to engage on vaccines

in an accessible, person-centred way that shows competence and builds trust

## The Bangladeshi community

- Higher levels of trust in GPs, the NHS and scientists; less trust in online information.
- Levels of literacy and digital inclusion may vary, with a generational element- GPs especially important for those with lower levels, especially those perceived by patients as good and supportive.

## The Pakistani community

- Lower trust in GPs, more likely to seek information online or through friends/ family.
- People perceived as prestigious can be effective influencers (for example: someone running a successful local business)
- Government/WHO websites and BBC News are trusted sources of info.

## The African/Caribbean community

- High levels of trust in the NHS brand, but not necessarily individual local GPs.
- Likely to seek out information online.
- Some may prefer information NOT to be in writing. NHS-produced online videos or reels could be effective for engagement.

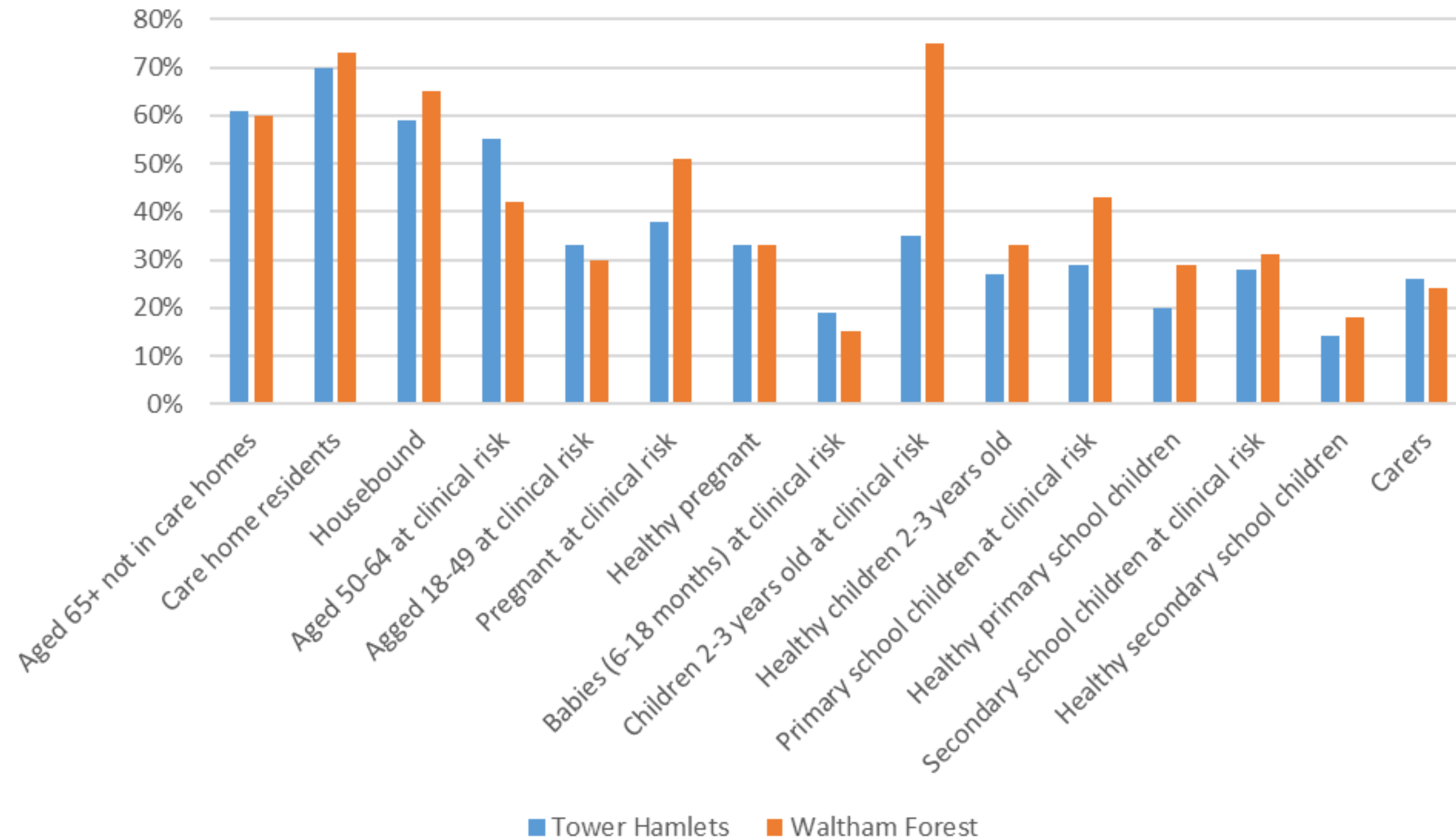
## Children and young people

- Reliant on parents or school for information; some may feel that decisions about vaccines are up to the school/parent, not them.
- For early childhood vaccinations, health visitors can play an important role in communicating with parents.

# Vaccination rates in Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest

As of October 2023

## Flu vaccine



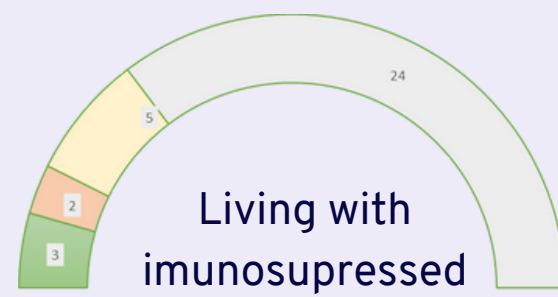
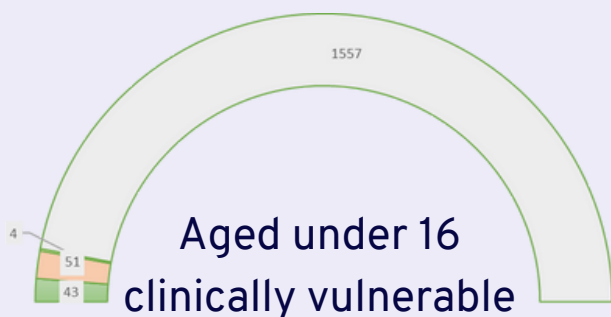
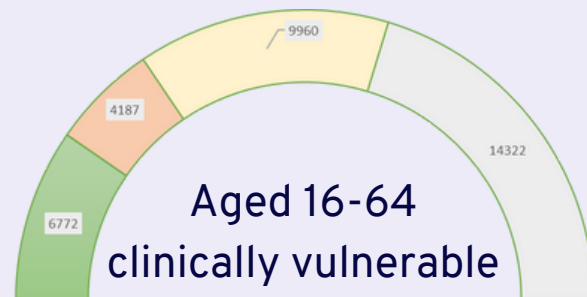
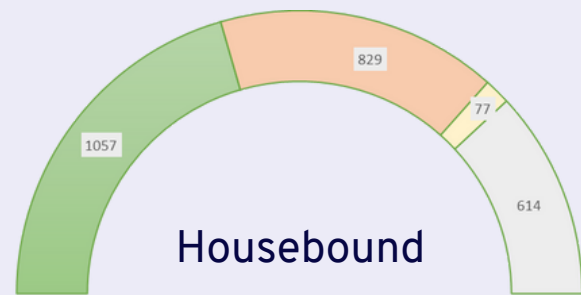
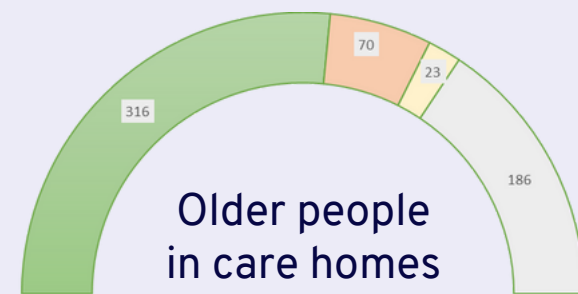
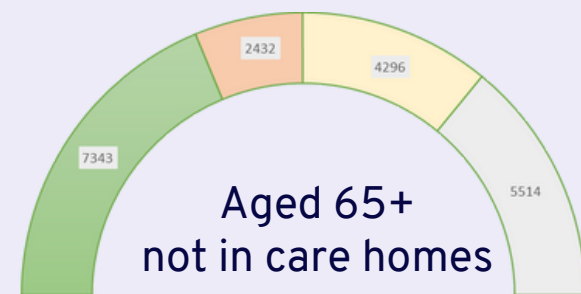
# Vaccination rates in Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest

As of October 2023

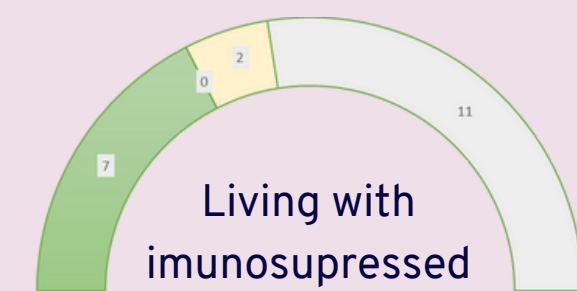
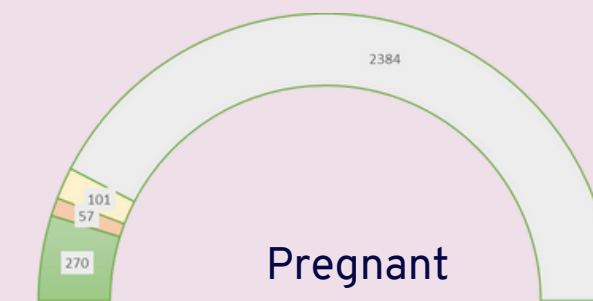
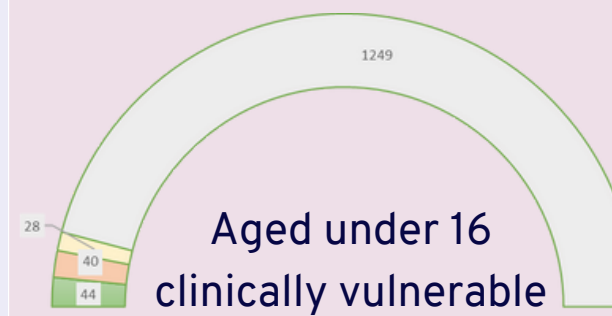
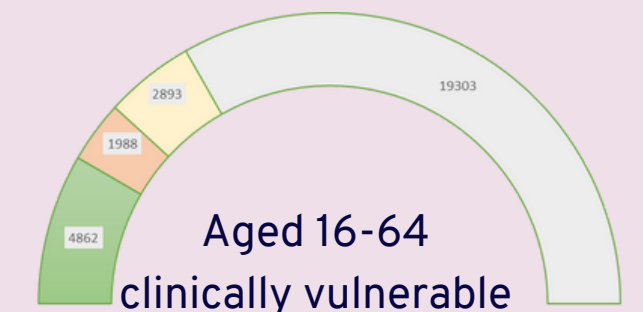
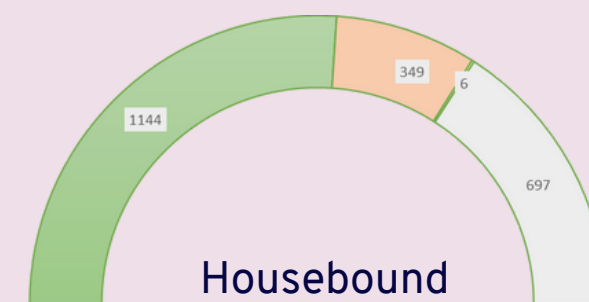
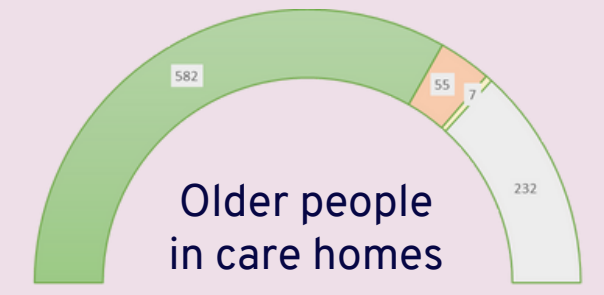
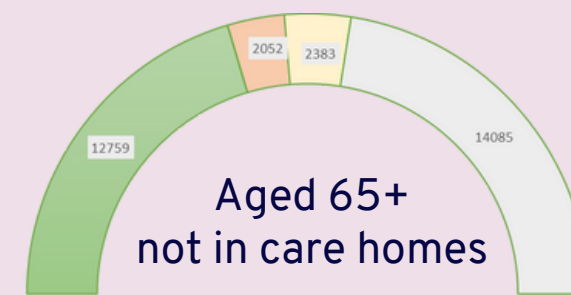
## Covid Vaccine - Autumn Booster

■ Vaccinated (Booster) ■ Declined ■ Invited ■ No contact coded

### Tower Hamlets



### Waltham Forest





# We organised:

**3** outreach events

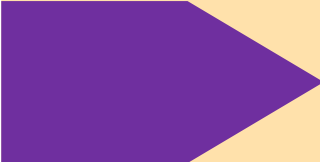
with

**84** participants

who were interviewed on video and using paper questionnaires

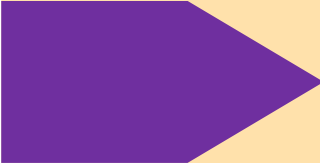
**1** online panel discussion

# Our outreach events:



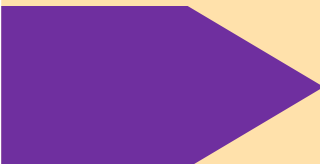
Tower Hamlets, focusing on the Bangladeshi community

45



Waltham Forest, focusing on the Black African and Caribbean community

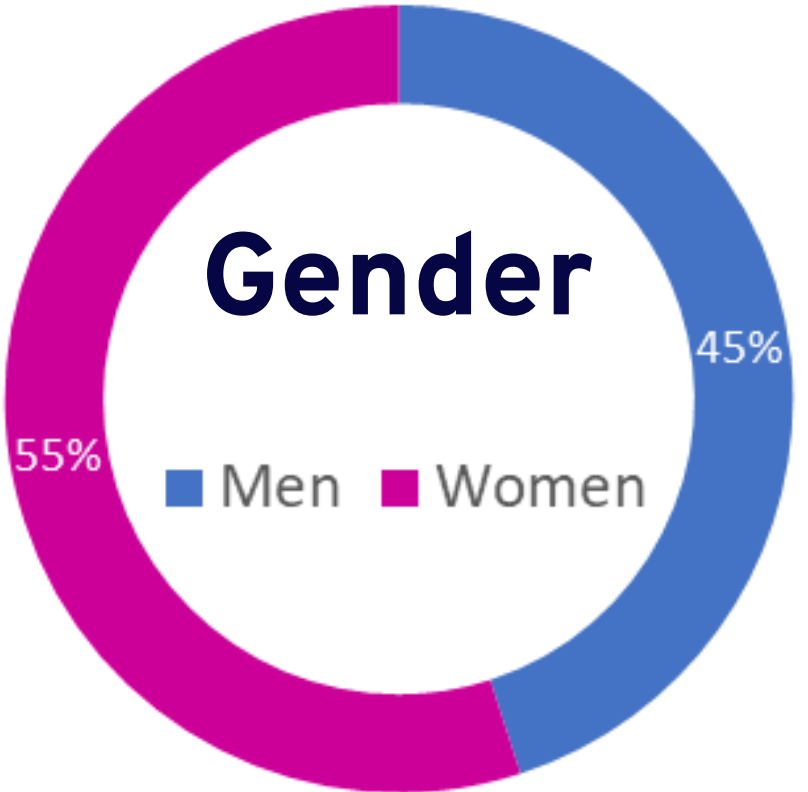
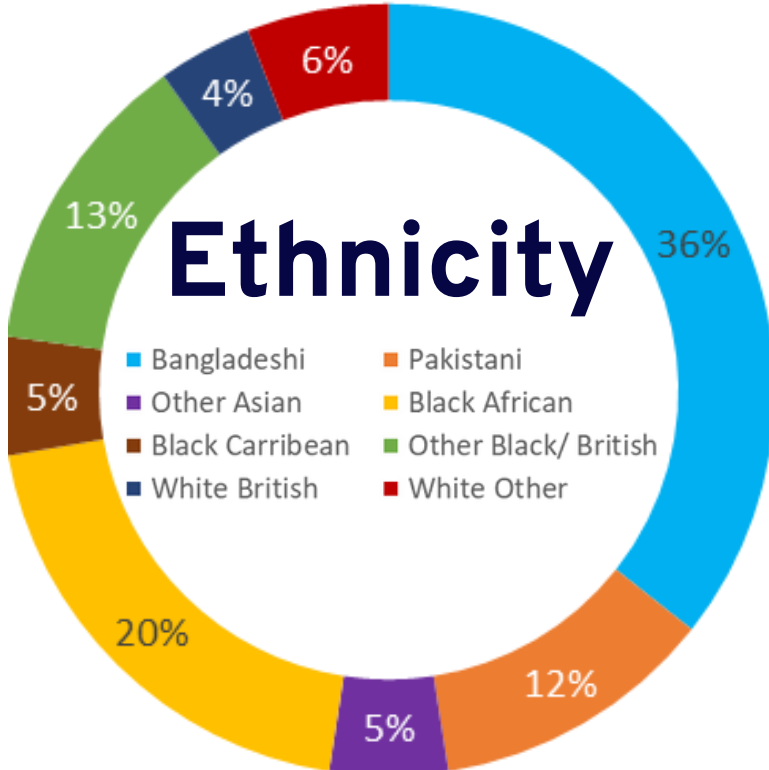
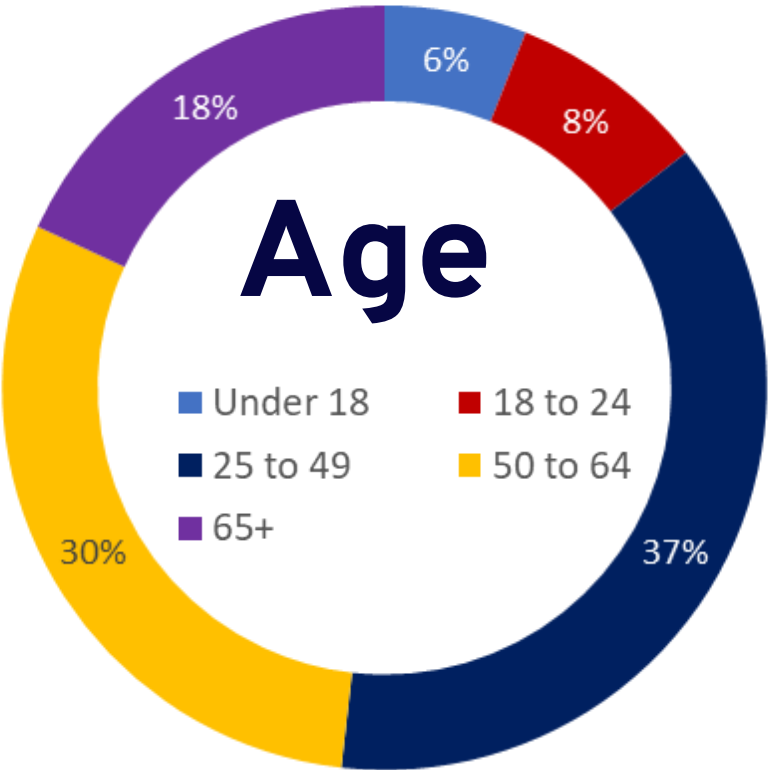
24



Waltham Forest, focusing on the Pakistani community

15

# Who took part in our outreach events?

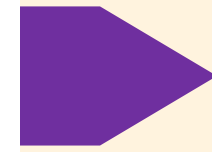
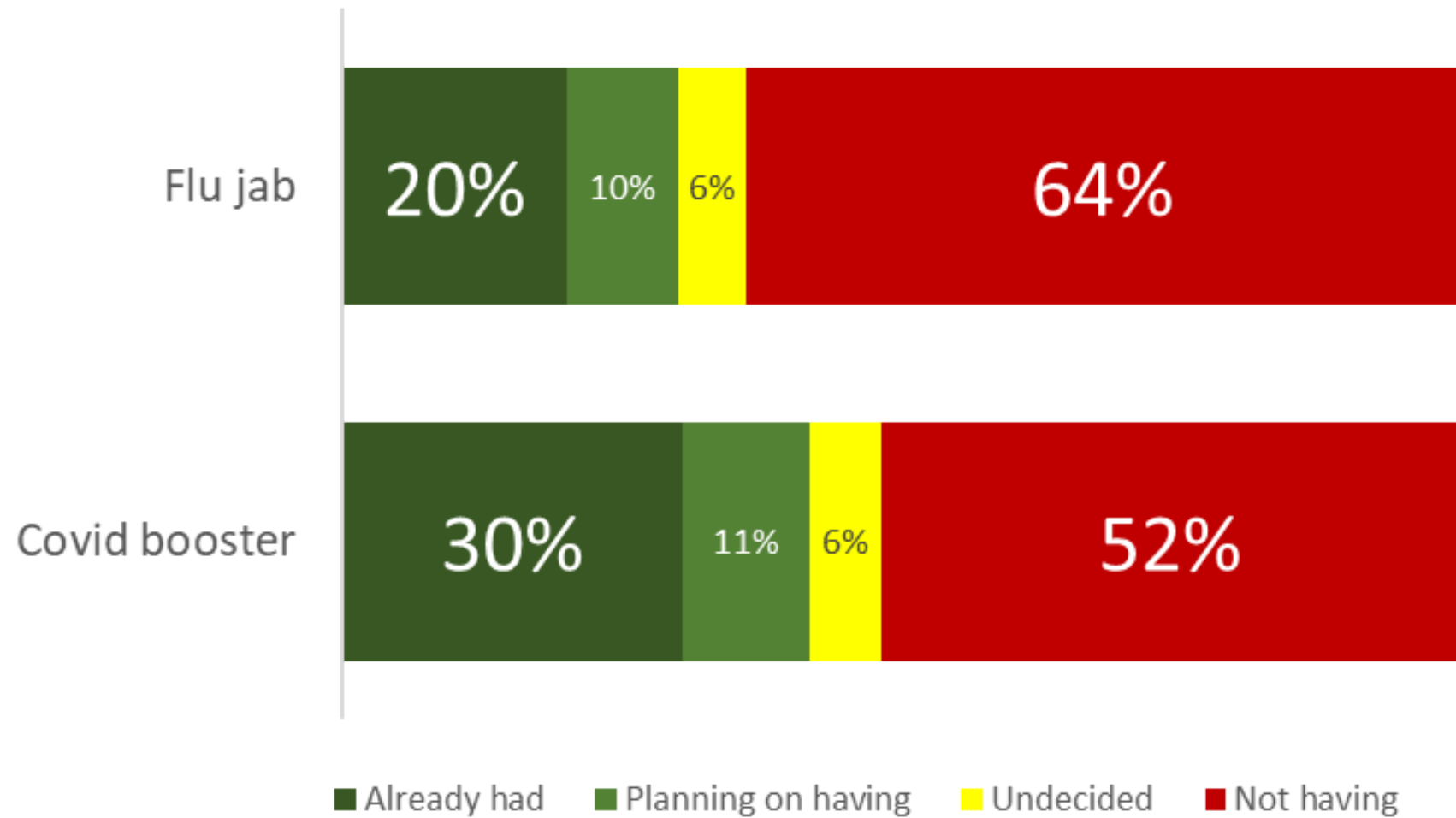


# 41%

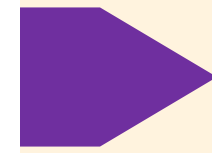
already had a Covid vaccine booster or were planning to have one.

# 30%

already had an annual flu jab or were planning to have one.

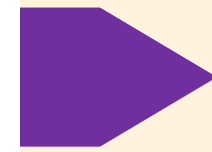


Respondents who had one of these were a lot more likely to also have the other.



27% of those who didn't take the Covid vaccine booster and didn't intend to take it mentioned taking at least one initial Covid vaccine.

*\* unprompted, so actual % may be larger*



Respondents less likely to want a vaccine:



Aged under 50



Pakistani or Black African ethnicity



Women



Experienced side effects from previous vaccinations.



Feel poorly informed about vaccines in general.

# 16%

of parents didn't give their children any vaccines.

# 10%

of parents gave their children some vaccines, but not others.

# What did local people tell us?

## Those who got seasonal vaccines

*I feel that I benefit from it. As a first line NHS worker I feel protected to treat my patients.*

*I'm pleased to say I have had my booster last week. I was really keen to take it. I do understand how it saves you.*

*My wife and I both took two vaccines this year, and we have not had any problems. I also took three Covid vaccines before coming from Bangladesh. I did not have any concerns, and I felt better because of the vaccines.*

*It's safer for me to have it than not have it and end up in hospital.*

## Those who didn't get seasonal vaccines, but wanted to get them

*I have not taken the seasonal winter vaccines. After contracting the COVID virus, I only took the COVID-related vaccine, but I did not take any other vaccine out of sheer laziness. I wanted to take it, but I was busy, the time was not right. I believe we should take the flu vaccine for better protection. We will depend on Allah for a cure, but our religious scriptures tell us to go to healthcare professionals for treatment.*

*I have not taken any vaccine this year yet. I have not received any text messages from my GP. I am waiting for them to contact me.*

*My GP has sent me a link to book it next week. Its a bit late this year.*

## Those who didn't get nor plan on getting seasonal vaccines

*Never had them. Because I don't believe in them. How can you inject someone with a Covid virus or a flu virus? The Covid or the flu virus doesn't make sense.*

*Not planning to this year. I think it definitely is going to save you from dying from it but not necessarily save you from having it.*

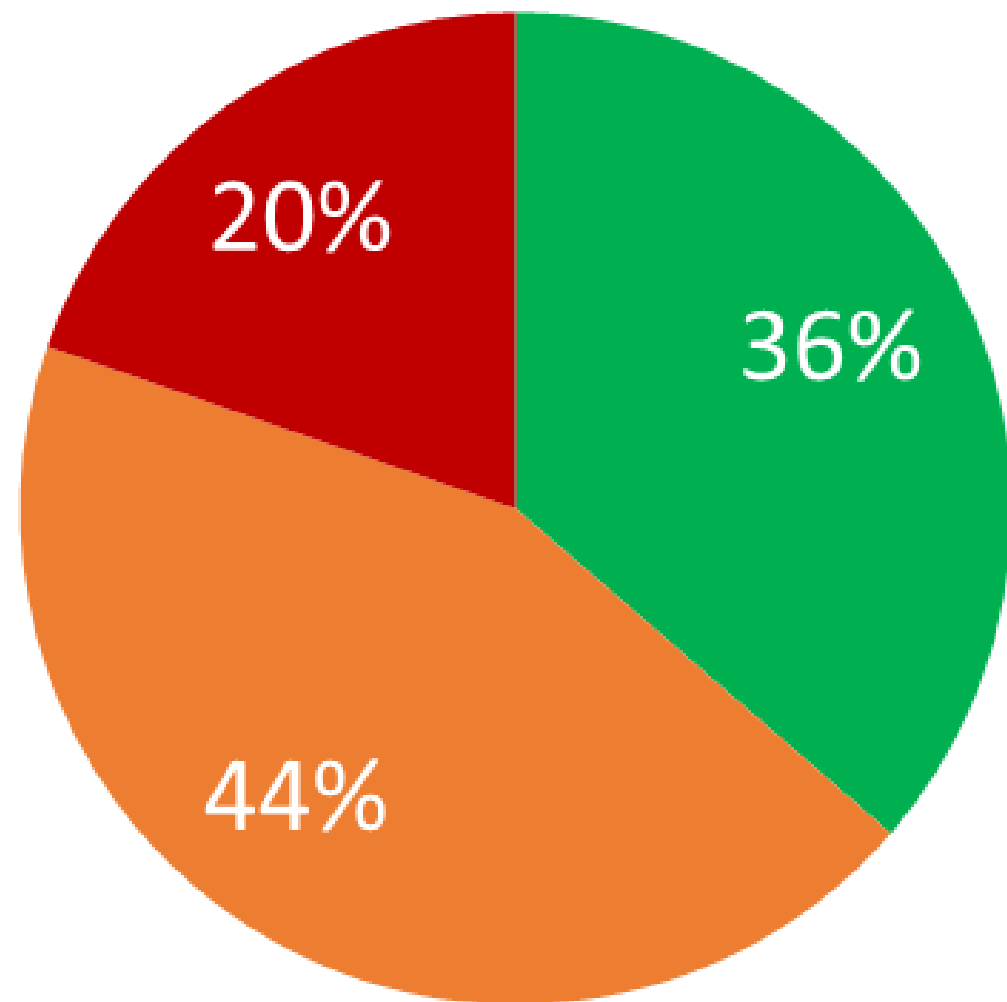
*I didn't want to take a risk.*

*Probably not, to be honest. No, it doesn't seem that important. [I took the initial vaccines but] COVID doesn't really seem like a big deal anymore.*

*I have already had a booster a few years back. I don't need another booster.*

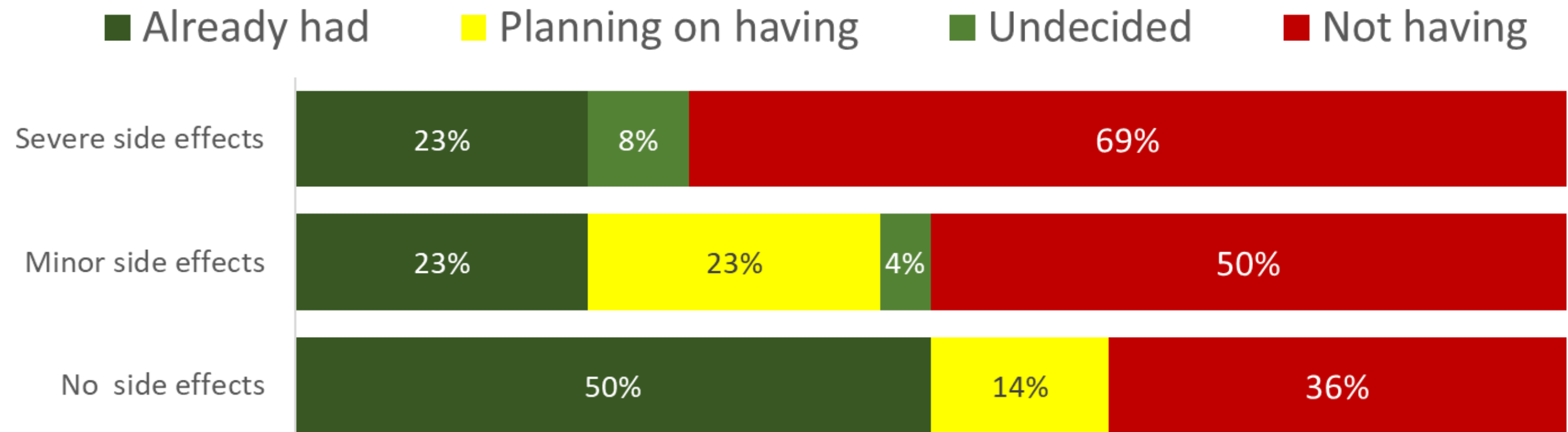
*I haven't had any vaccine at all because of religious beliefs.*

# Experience of side effects or hearing about other people experiencing side effects was a contributing factor to vaccine hesitancy, especially if the side effects felt severe to them at the time:



- No side effects
- Minor side effects
- Severe side effects

## Covid vaccine booster decision:



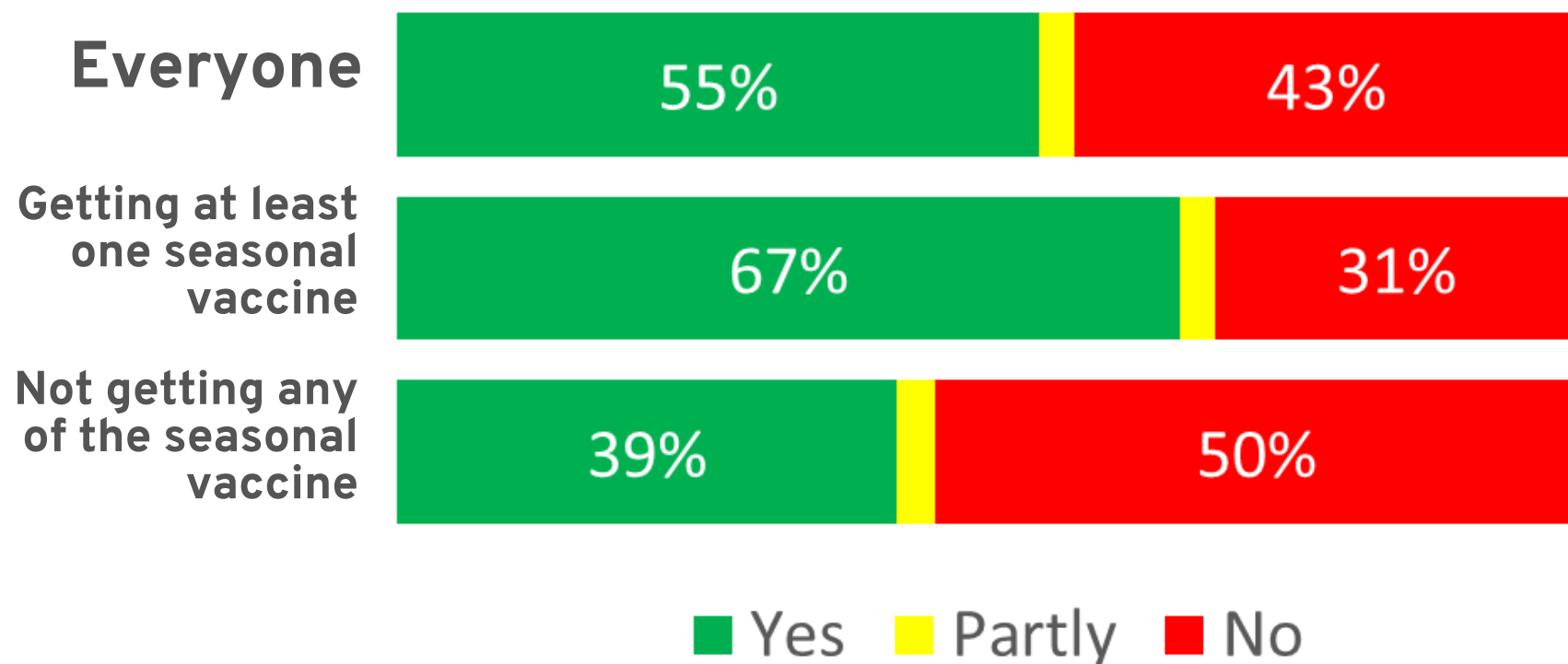
*Well, the first vaccine I had a sick fever and second vaccine, my hair started to fall out. I had two different experiences with vaccines.*

*What put me off last year was that I was very ill so I am in between. I had so much flu and sore throat and its the same one I take every year. Headache fever and it lasted for about a few days.*

*I saw people got sick and died after taking the vaccine so I didn't have it.*

*I had a flu vaccination and my experience was so bad that I actually was so ill that I thought that I was going to die so I decided not to ever have any vaccination.*

**Do you think you have had enough information about the vaccine to make your decision?**



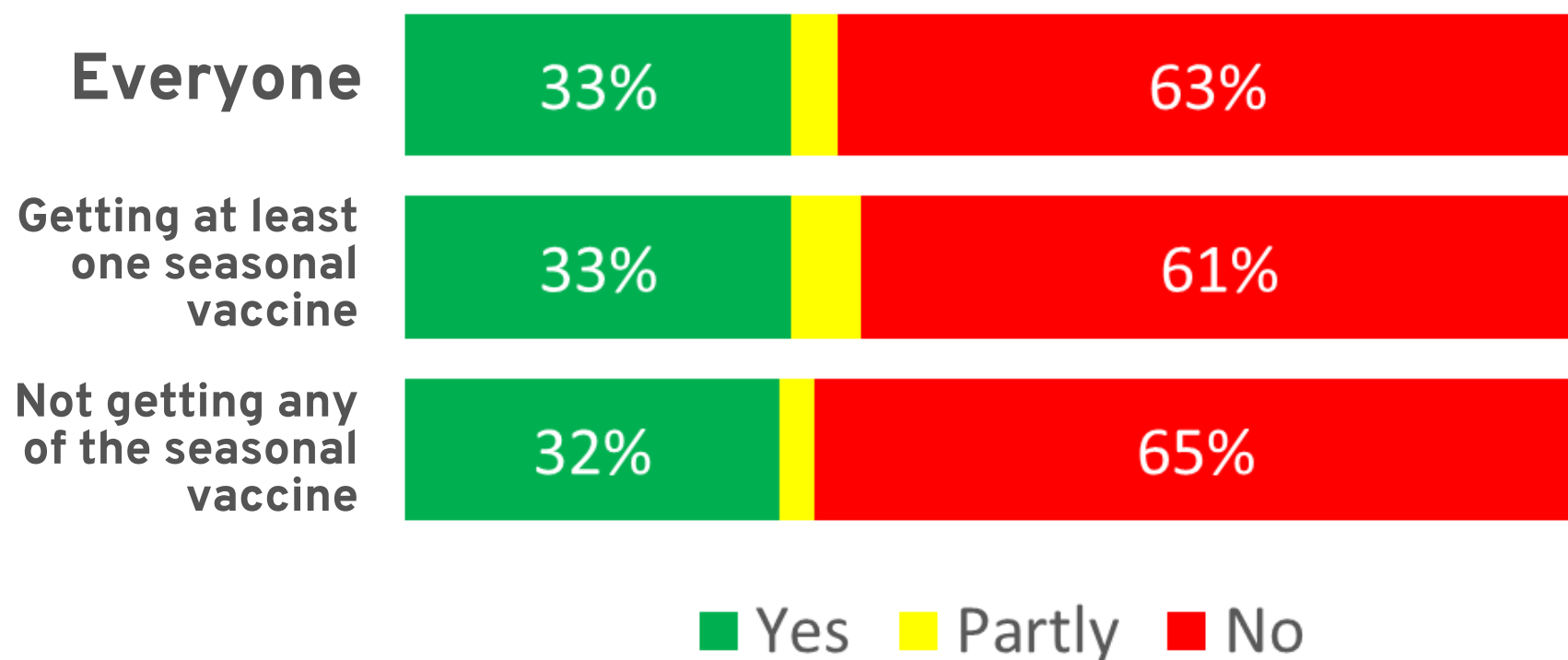
*No, I didn't ask the GP. I just asked before the vaccination, they just told me this vaccination is for COVID during the pandemic. I felt confident.*

*The GP has given some information, but nothing particularly special.*

*The GP, the internet and peer endorsement have provided me information. As trusted leaders we refer a lot to our GP. Even the imam had a lot of information. They are also trusted leaders.*

*Unfortunately not enough info from the GP, because they are not being fed the information by the council.*

**Do you think you have had enough information about the vaccine from your GP?**



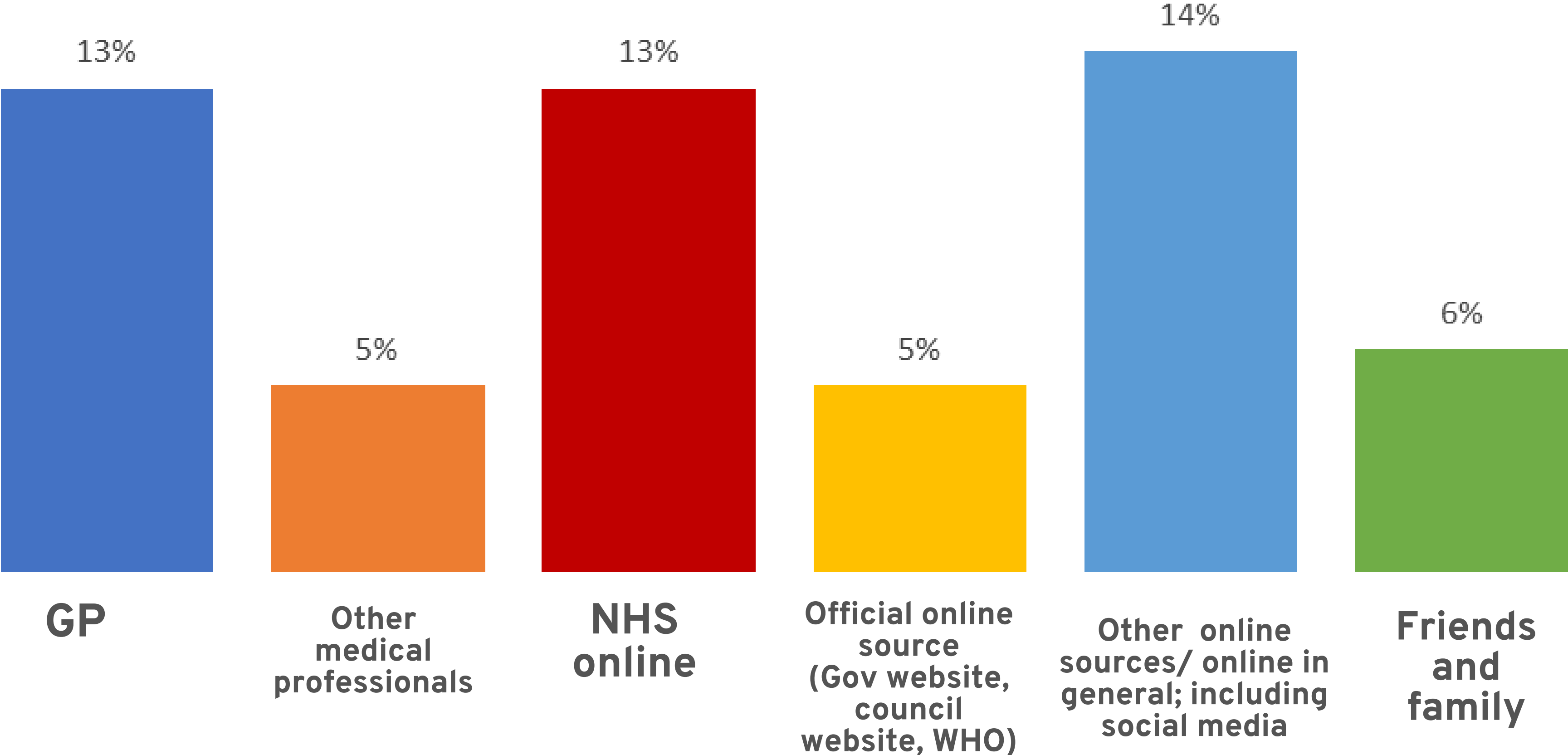
*I have received good information from my GP surgery. A few days ago, I went to the GP, and they offered me the flu vaccine on the same day. Following that, I took my wife for her flu vaccine next day.*

*All the information I got was from going to workshops and community champion meeting. I have had no leaflets or communication from the GP.*

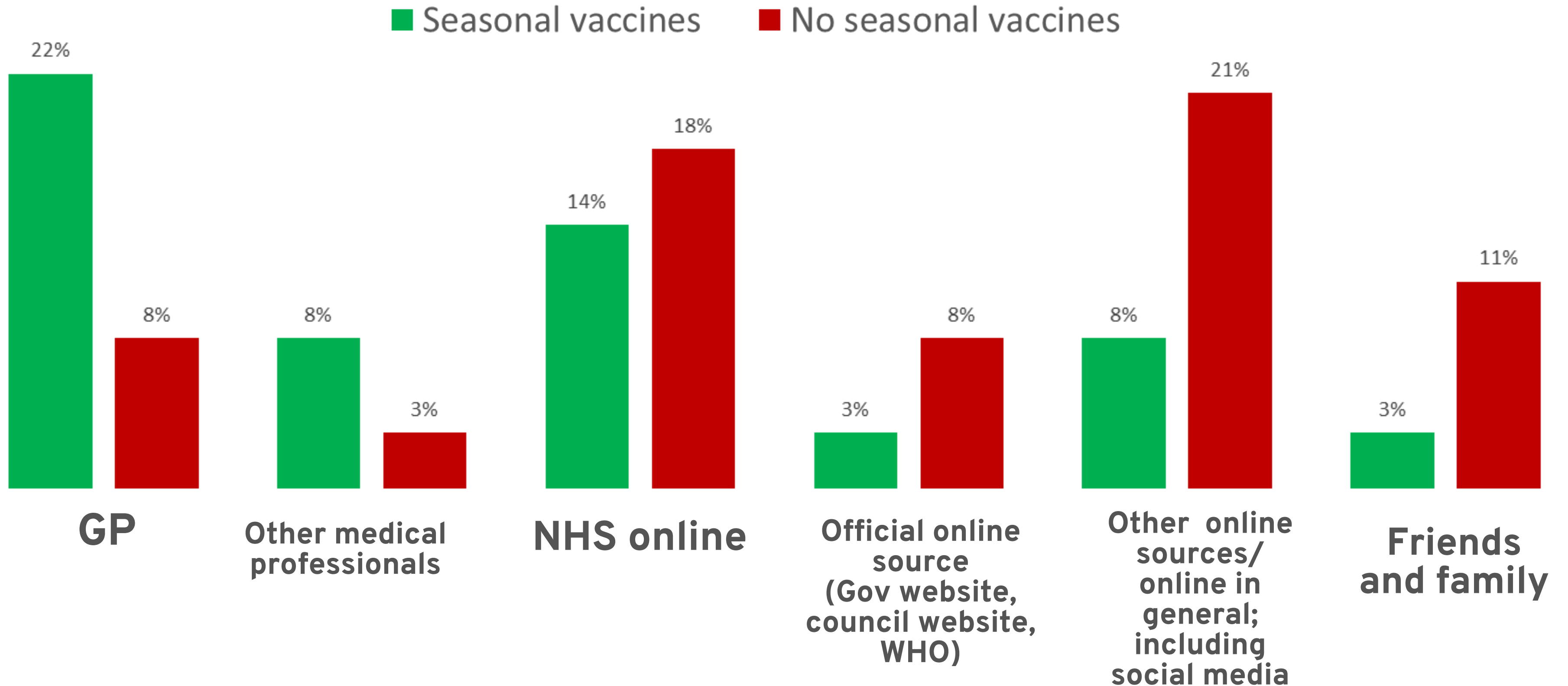
*GP did a fantastic job and continues to encourage me to take the vaccine.*

*In some cases I have raised questions that have not been answered like the effect of Covid on the whole body because you hear things and I want to reassure myself that there are no ill effects. Its good to get information to tackle what is circulating.*

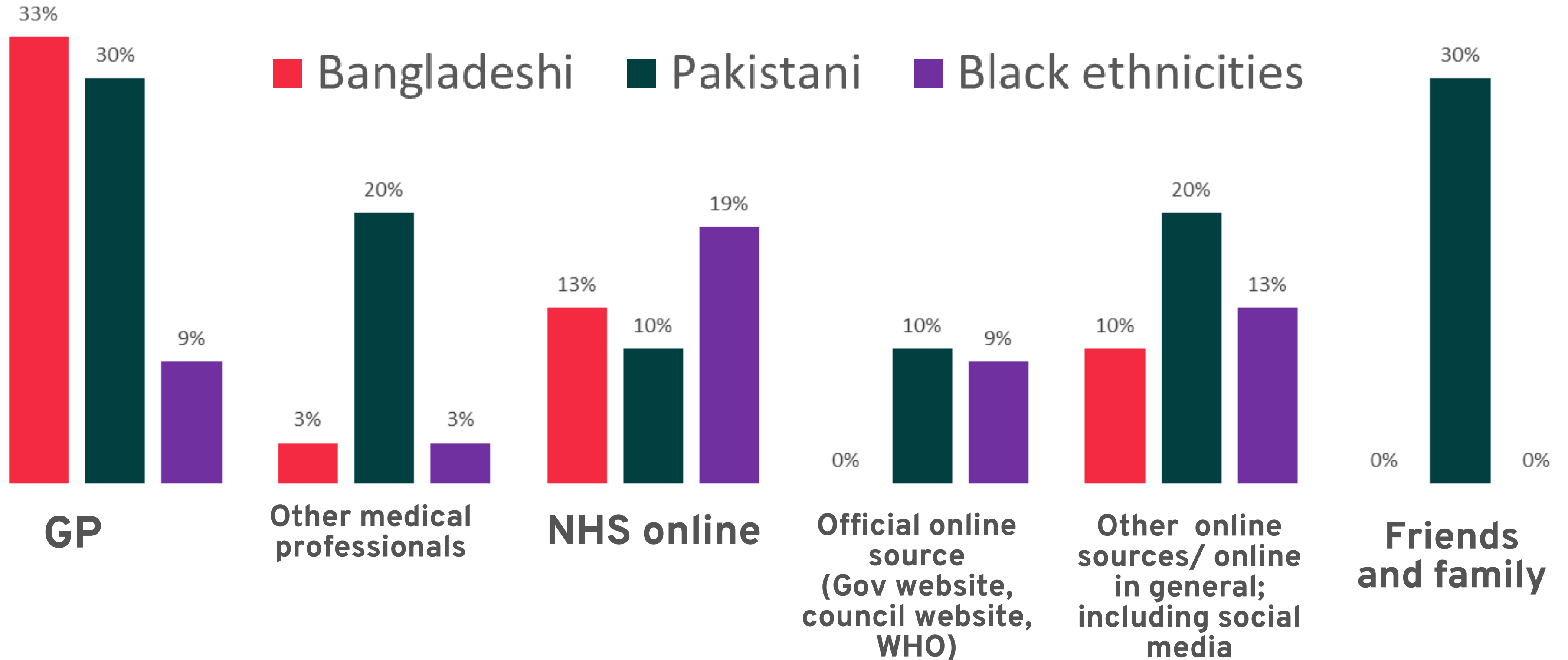
# Who would local people want more information from?



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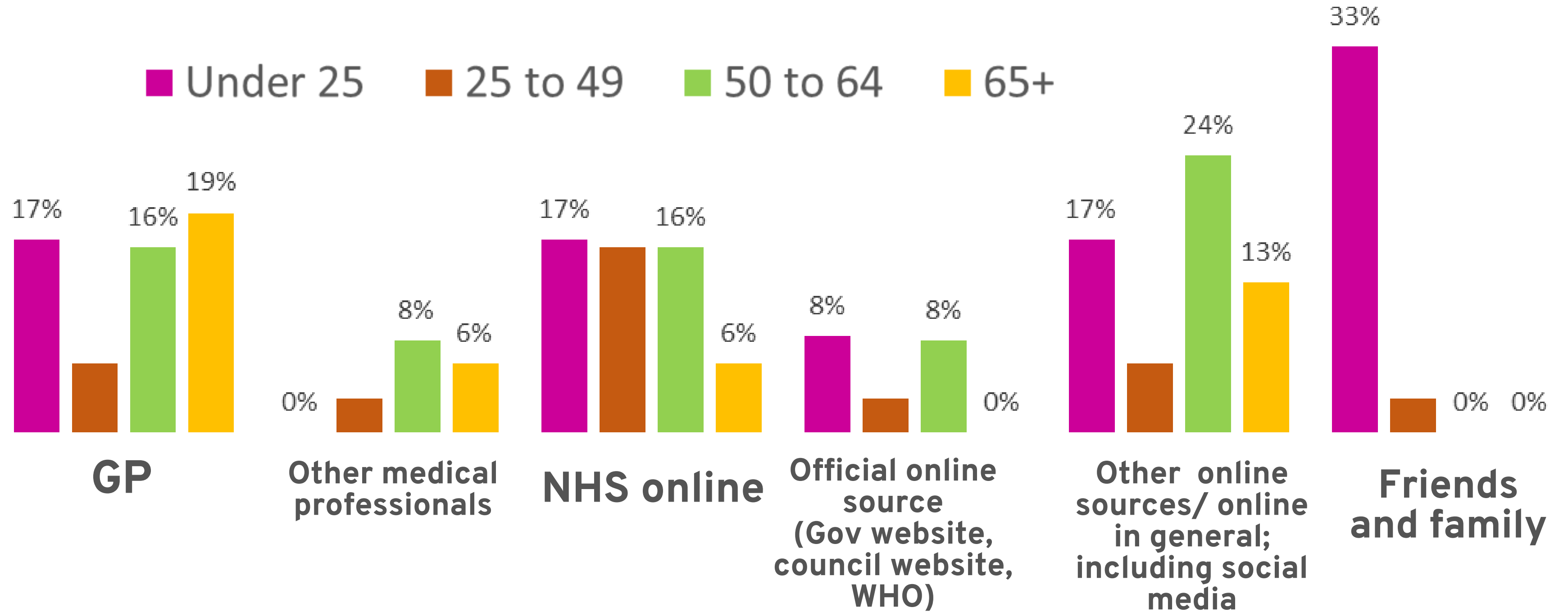


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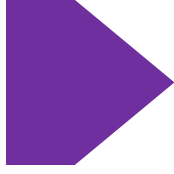




# Who would local people want more information from?


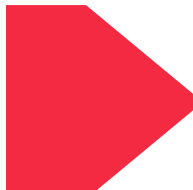


## The online panel discussion

**Questions addressed to experts from local people covered the following topics:**

-  **How are scientists dealing with new Covid variants?**
-  **Why are vaccine boosters necessary for people who already had their initial doses of the Covid vaccine?**
-  **Where can we find honest, trustworthy and easy to understand information about vaccine ingredients and side effects?**

**Participants also expressed a desire for:**

-  **Better accessibility for disabled and vulnerable local people wishing to get a vaccine, including those who are housebound; and those with disabilities or special access needs related to neurodivergence or mental health.**
-  **Better engagement from health visitors working with new parents on vaccines for both their children and themselves.**

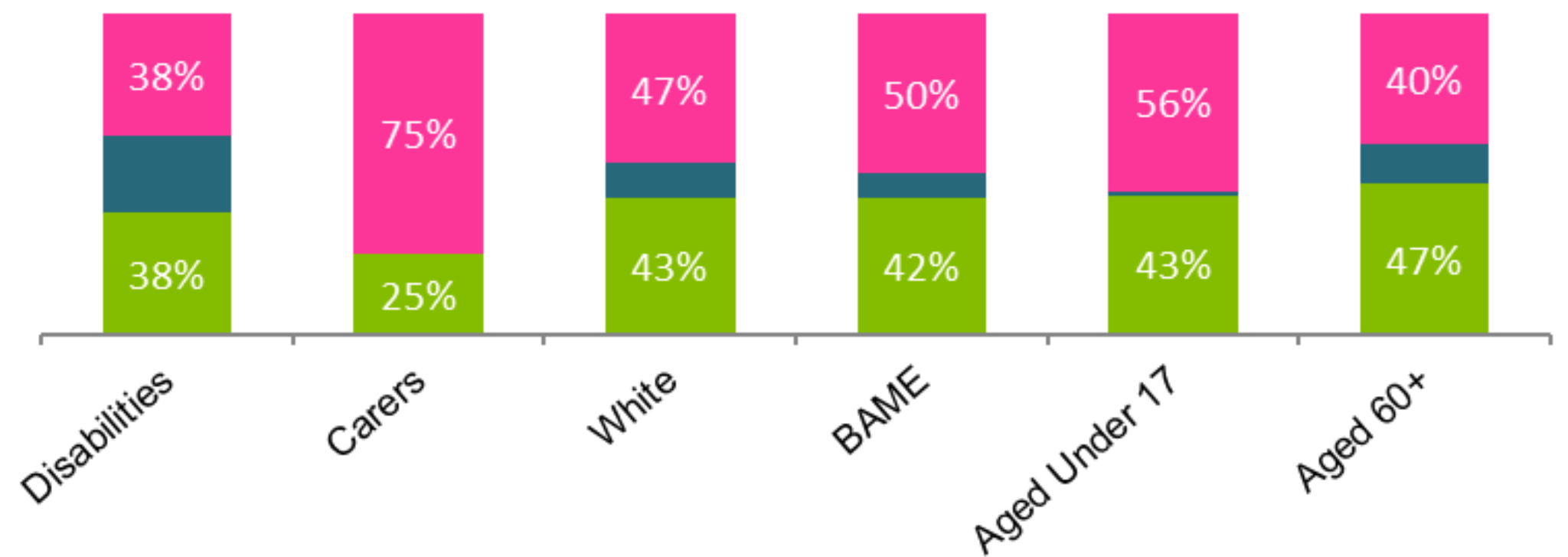
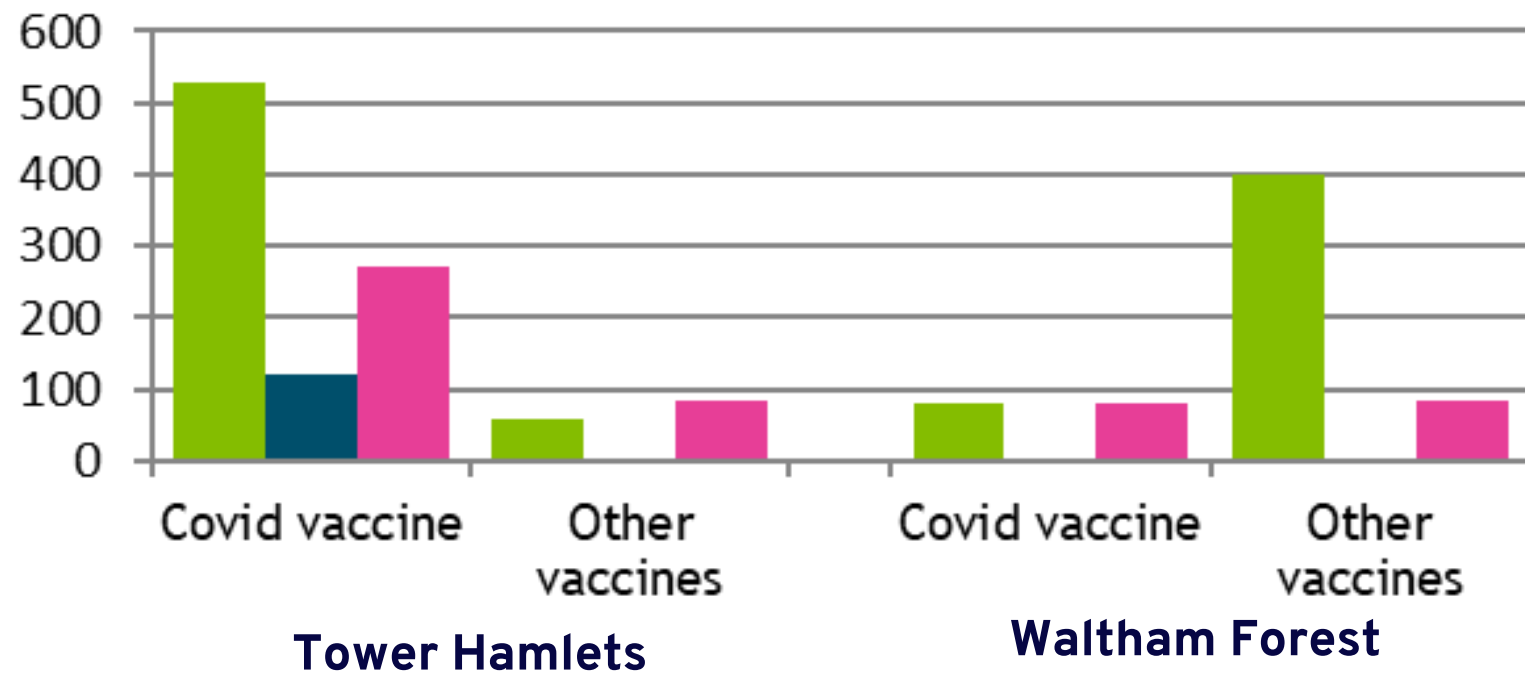
# Experience of vaccination- Healthwatch feedback 2017-2023

We received

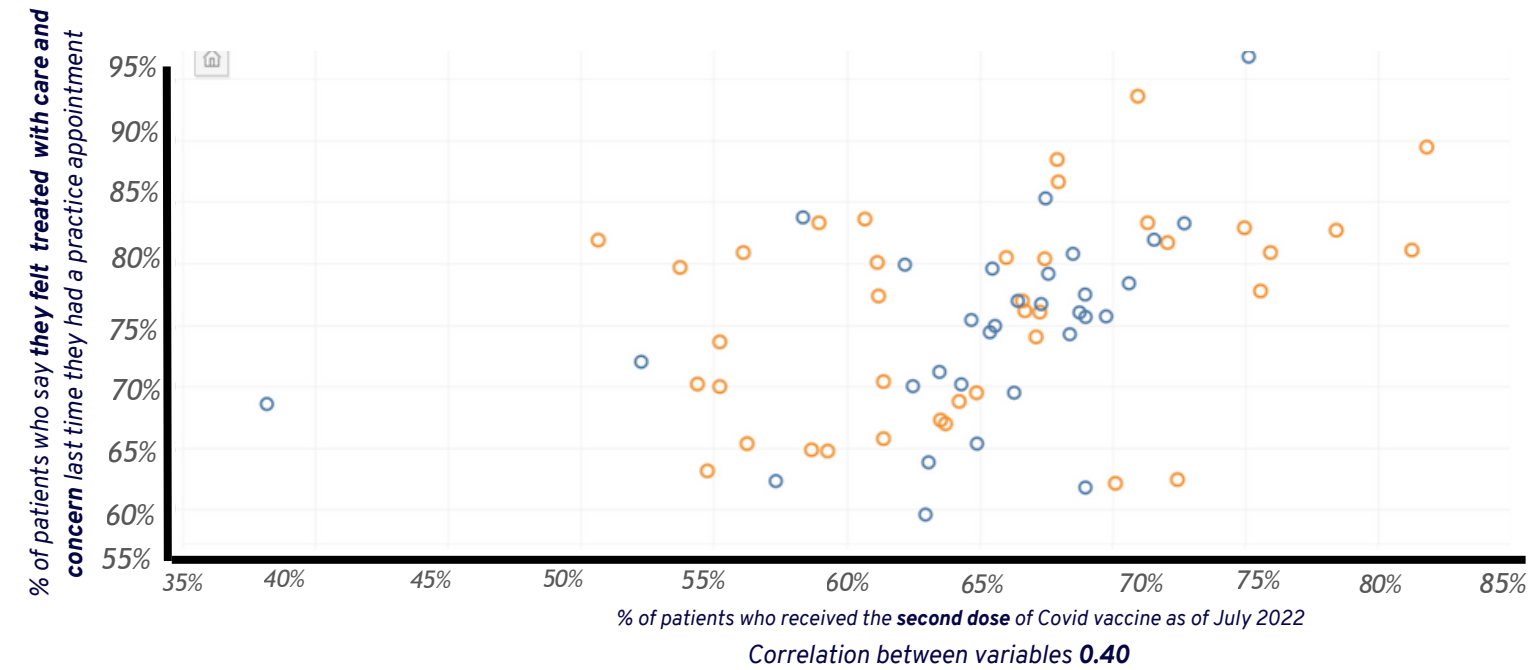
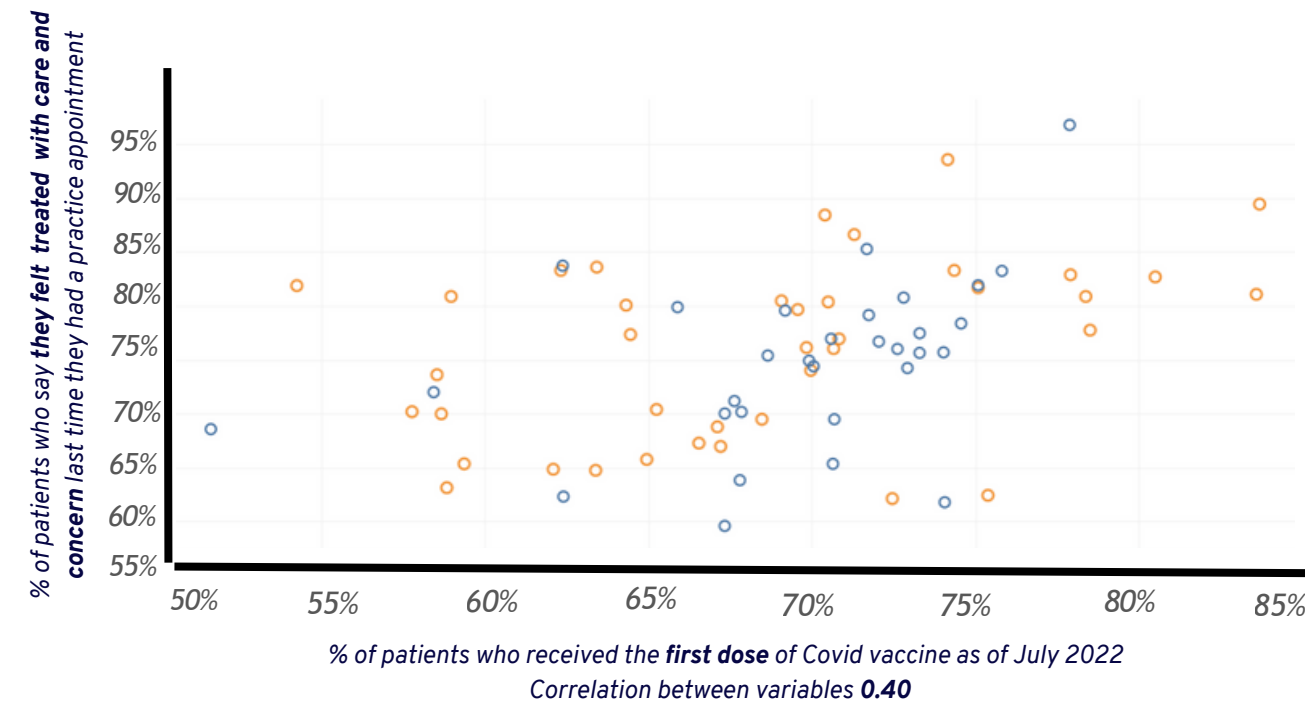
**448**

comments  
and identified  
1710 issues

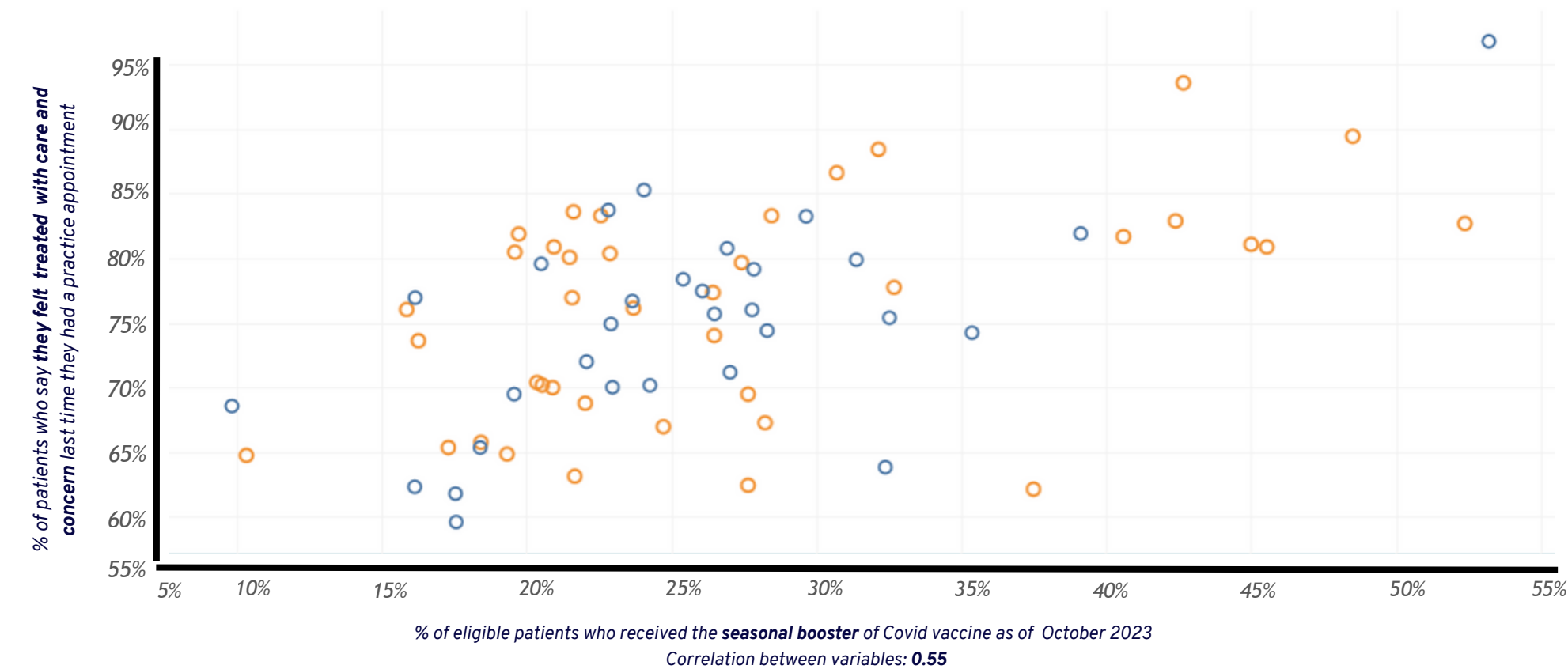
■ positive ■ neutral ■ negative



# The role of GP surgeries



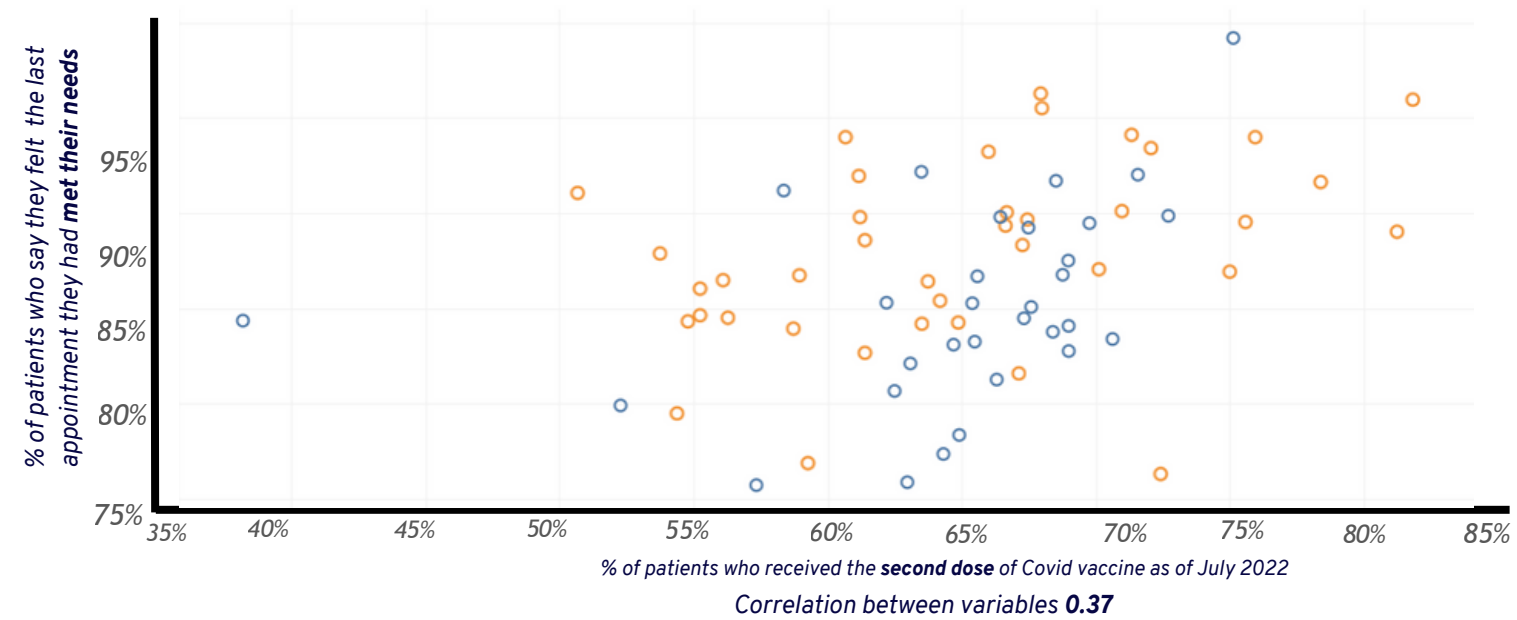
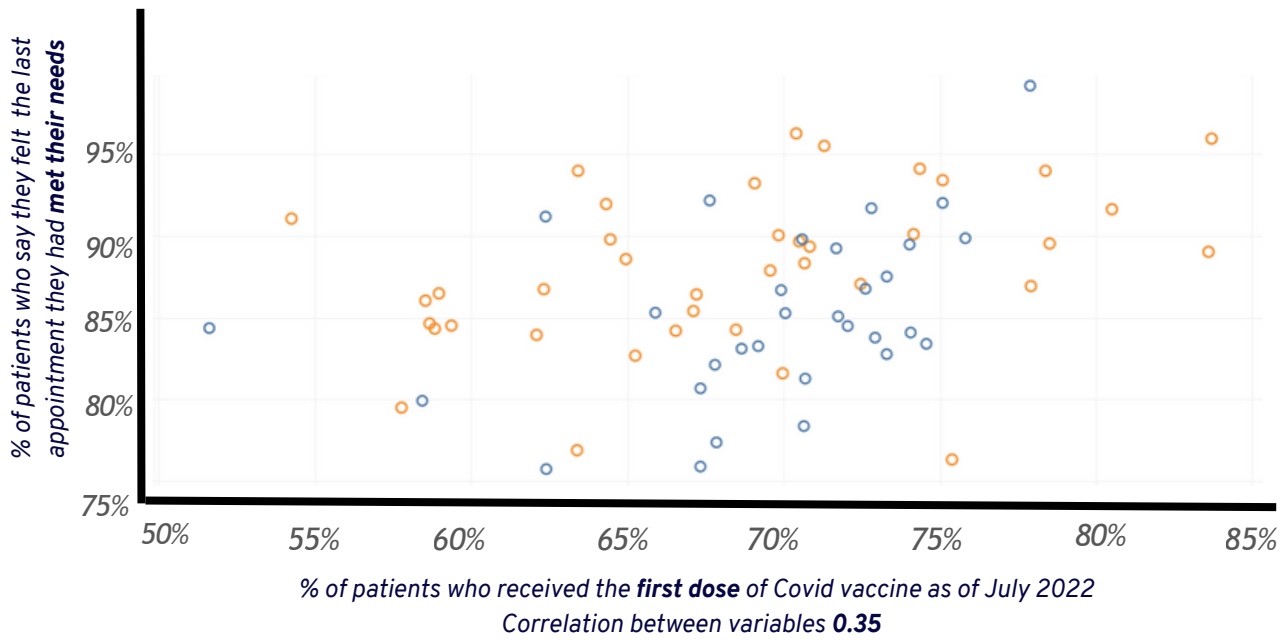
The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that last time they had an appointment they were **treated with care and concern**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccination**.



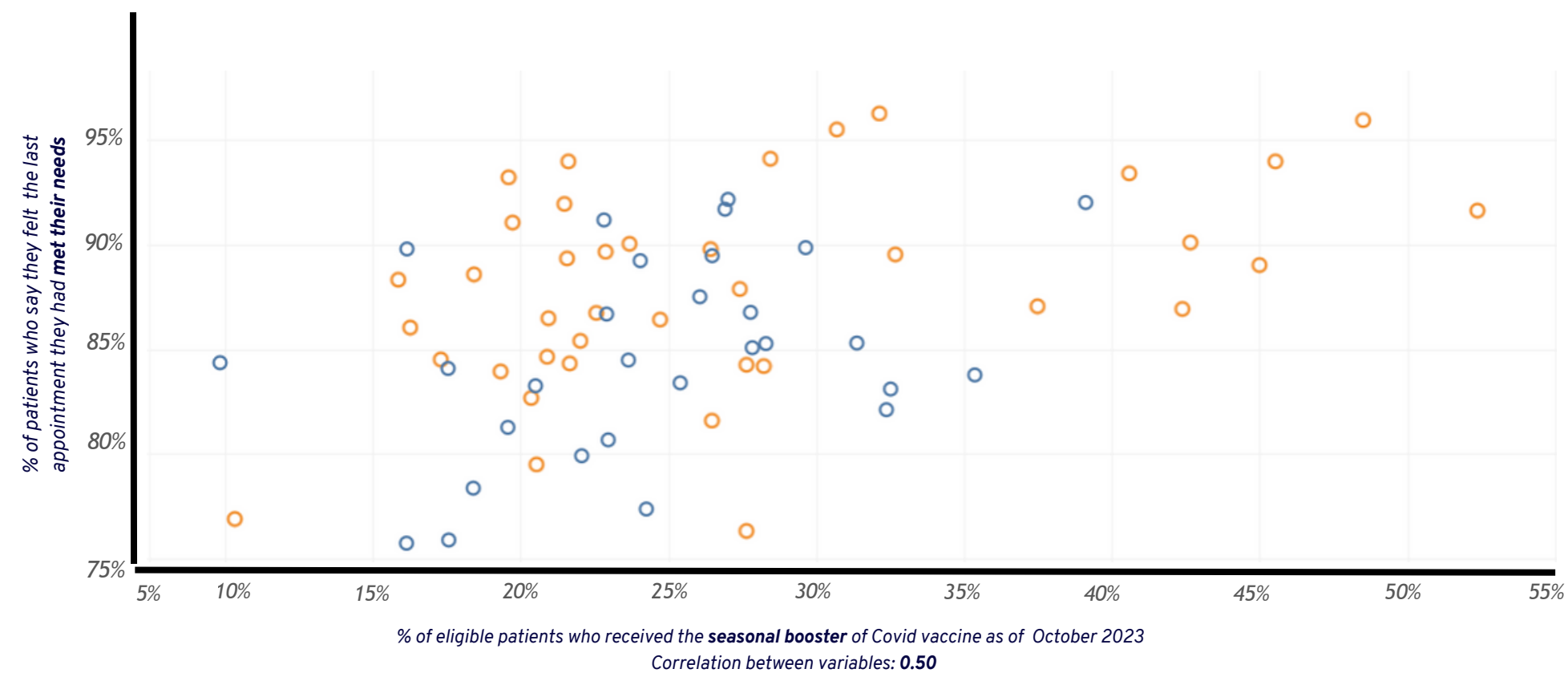
The correlation is stronger for **seasonal boosters** than for **initial vaccines**.

Data source: NEL GP practice dashboards/ GP Patient Survey Jan-Apr 2023. Each dot on the scatterplot graph represents one GP surgery.

# The role of GP surgeries



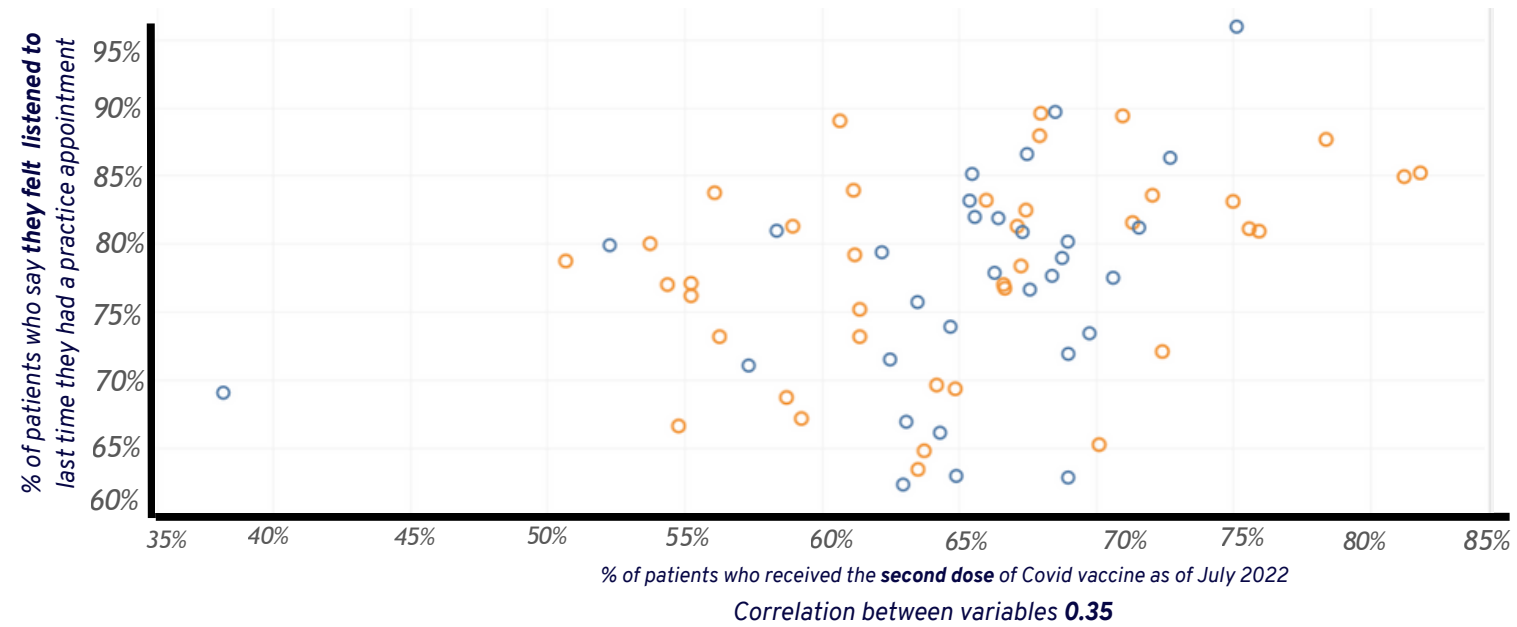
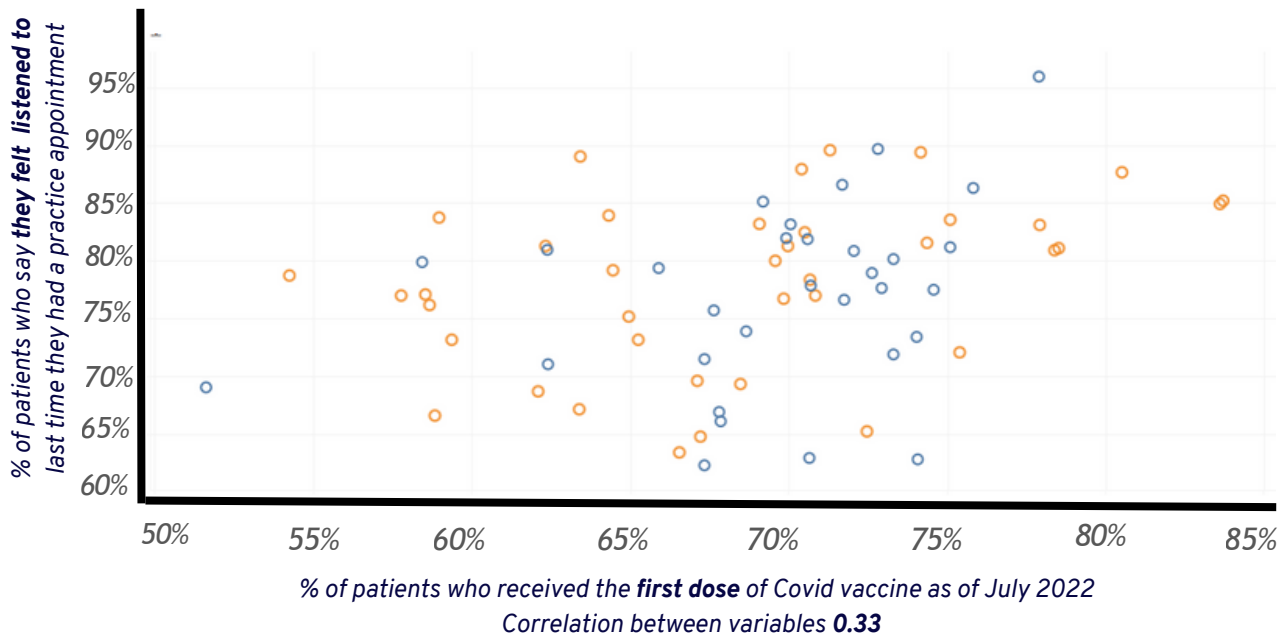
The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that the last appointment they had **met their needs**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccination**.



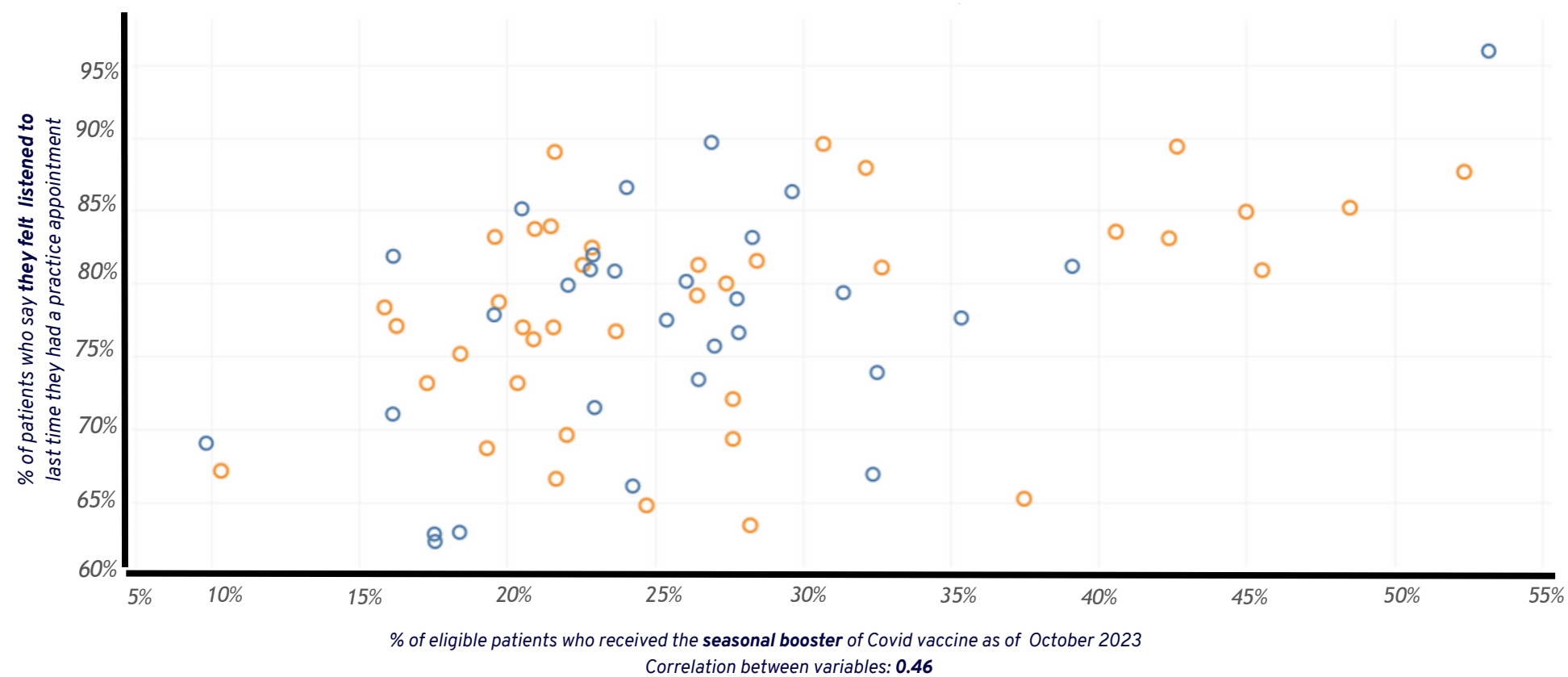
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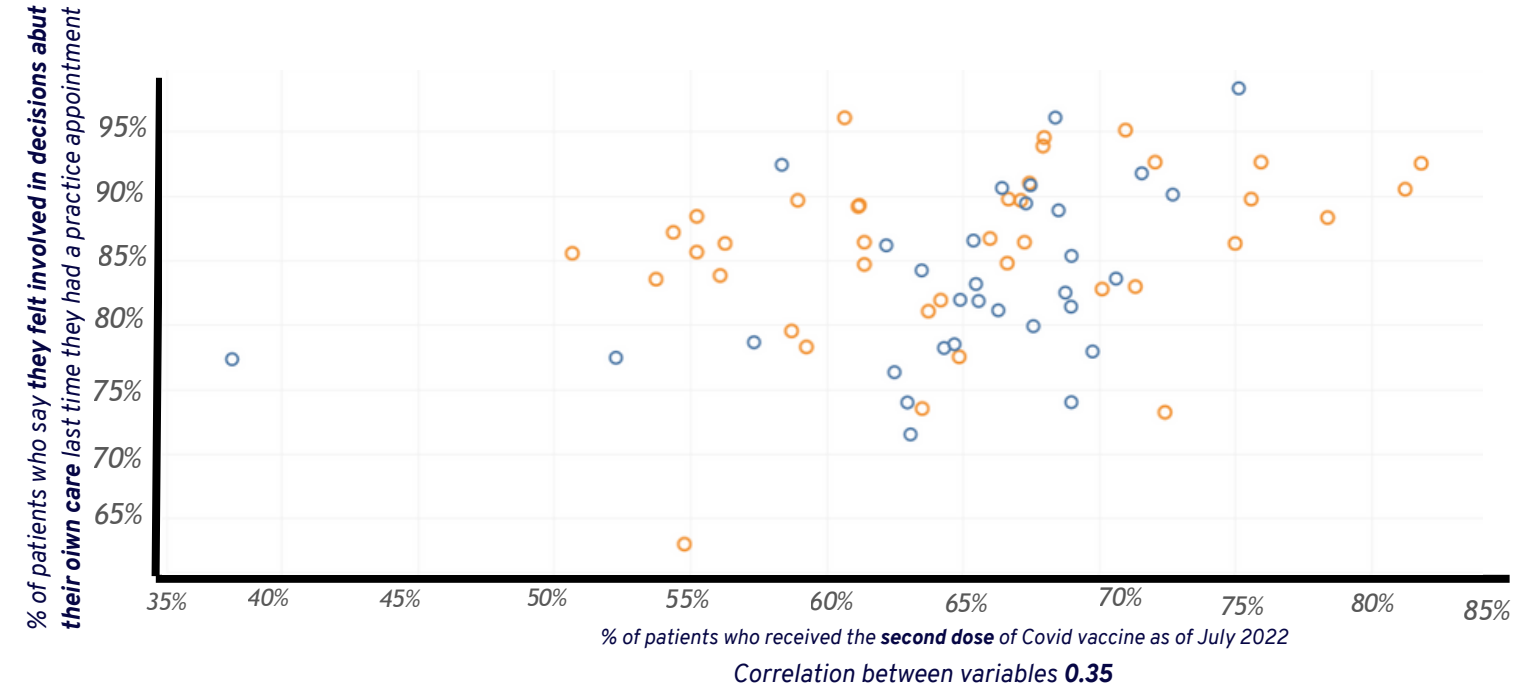
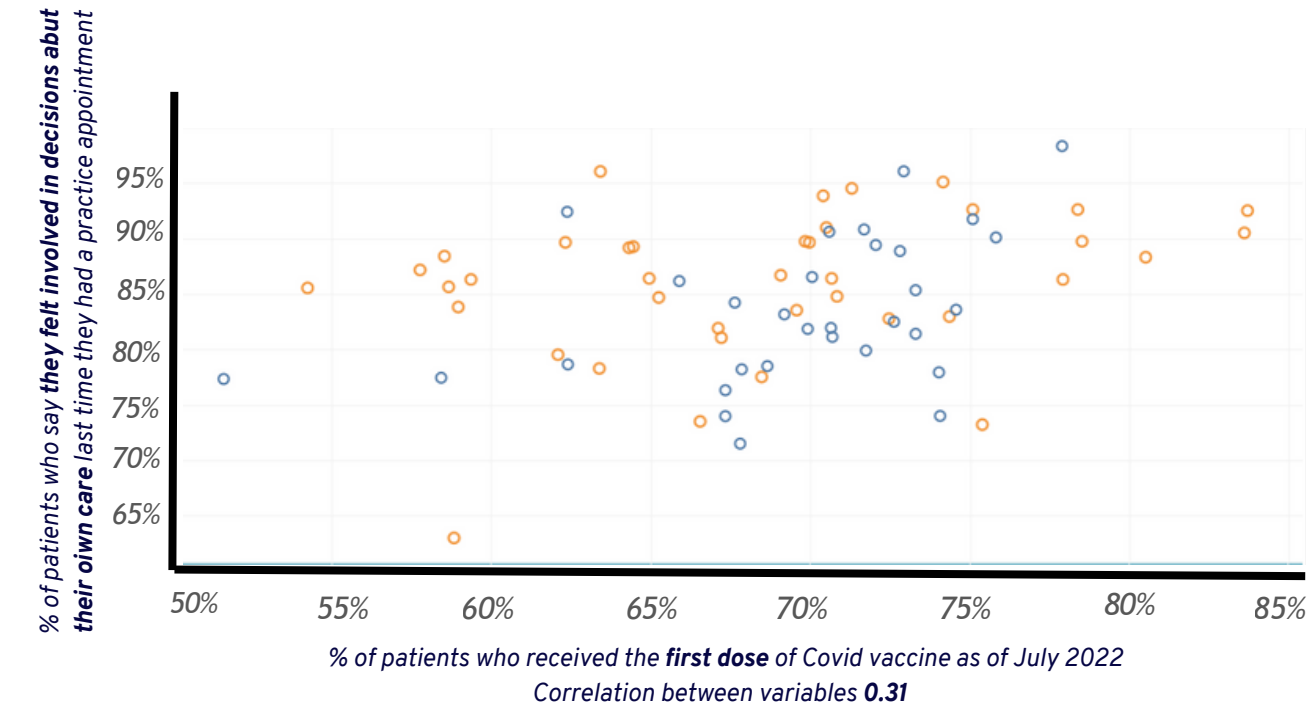
The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that last time they had an appointment they **felt listened to**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccination**.



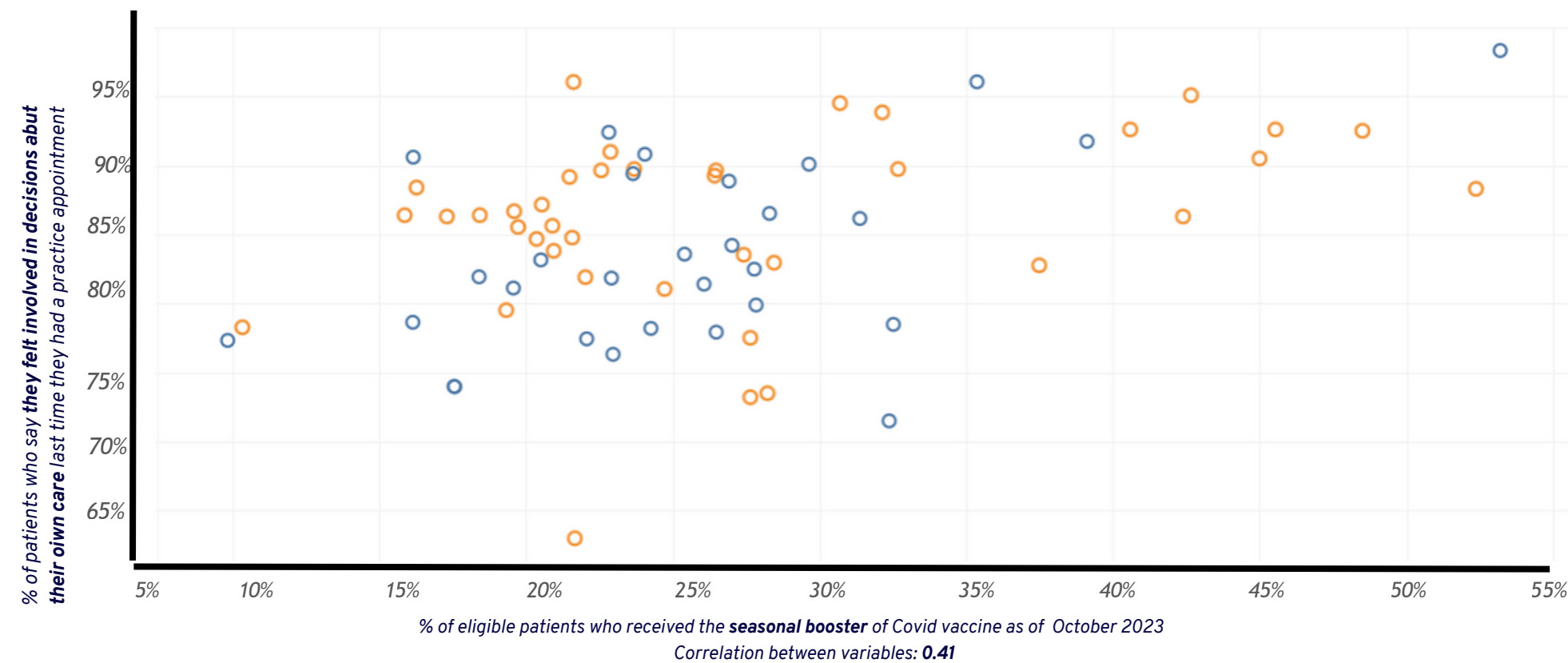
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# The role of GP surgeries



The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that last time they had an appointment they felt **involved in decisions about their own care**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccination**.

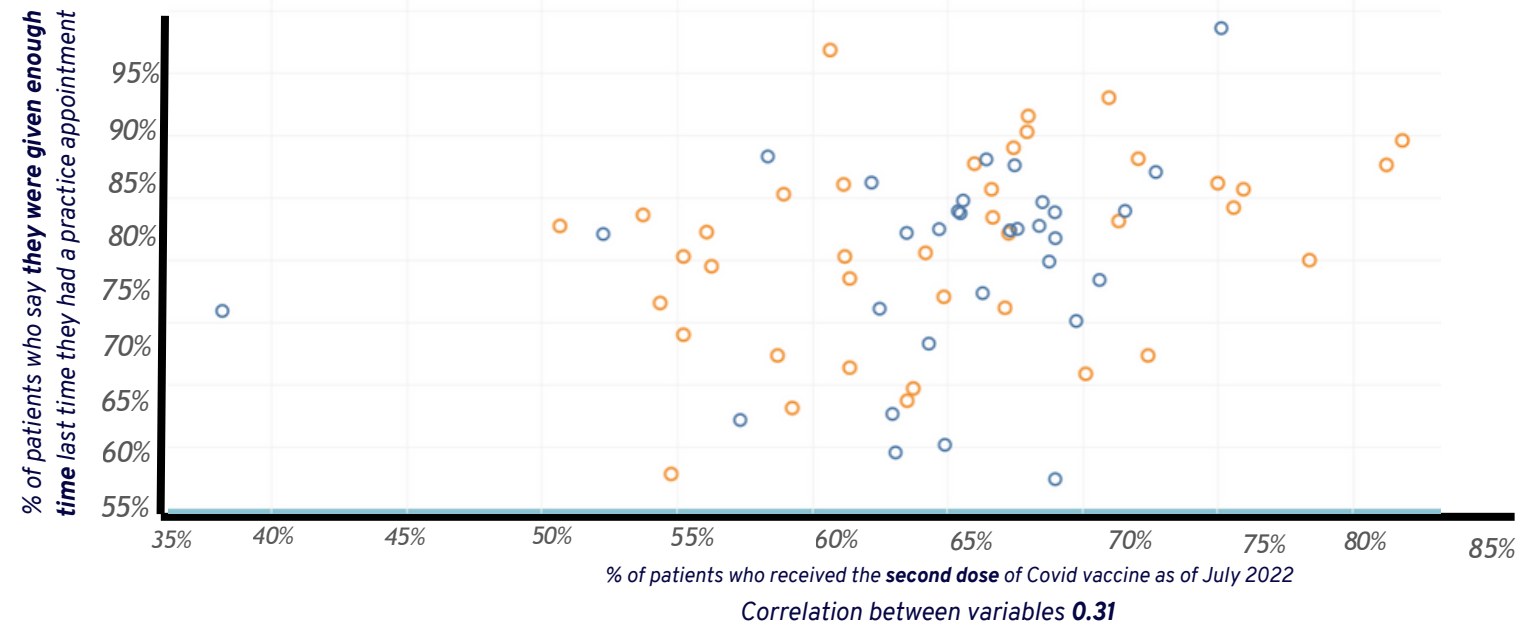
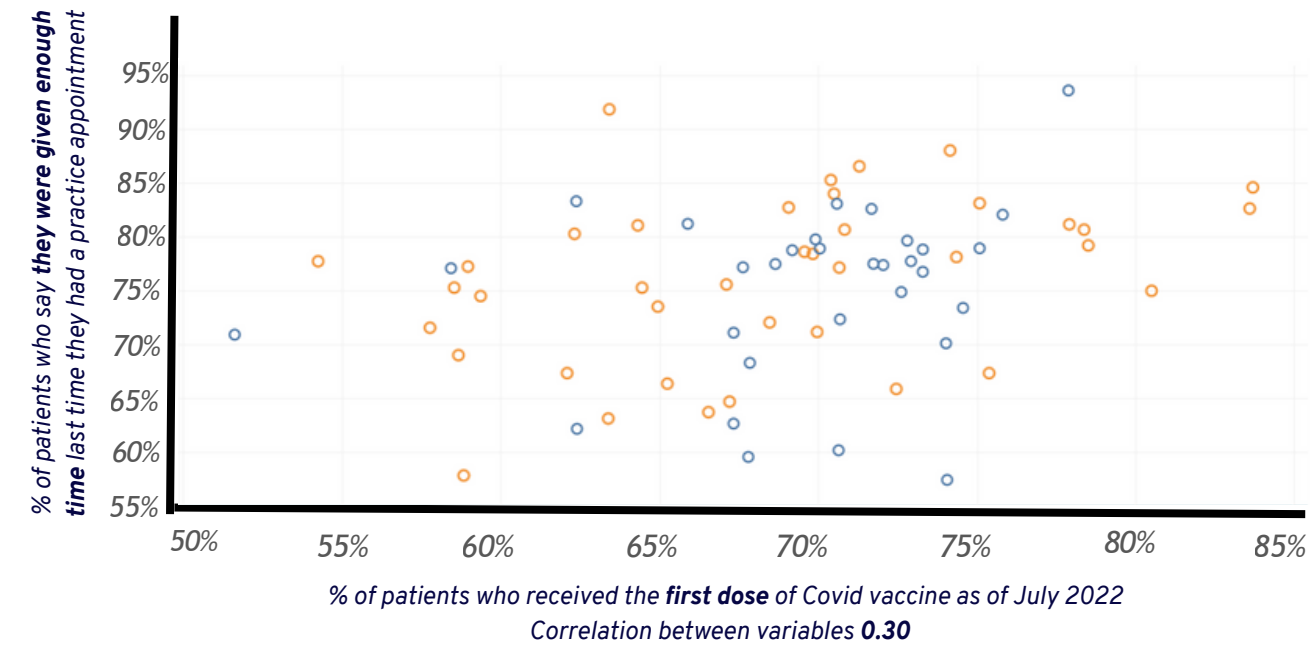


■ **Tower Hamlets**  
■ **Waltham Forest**

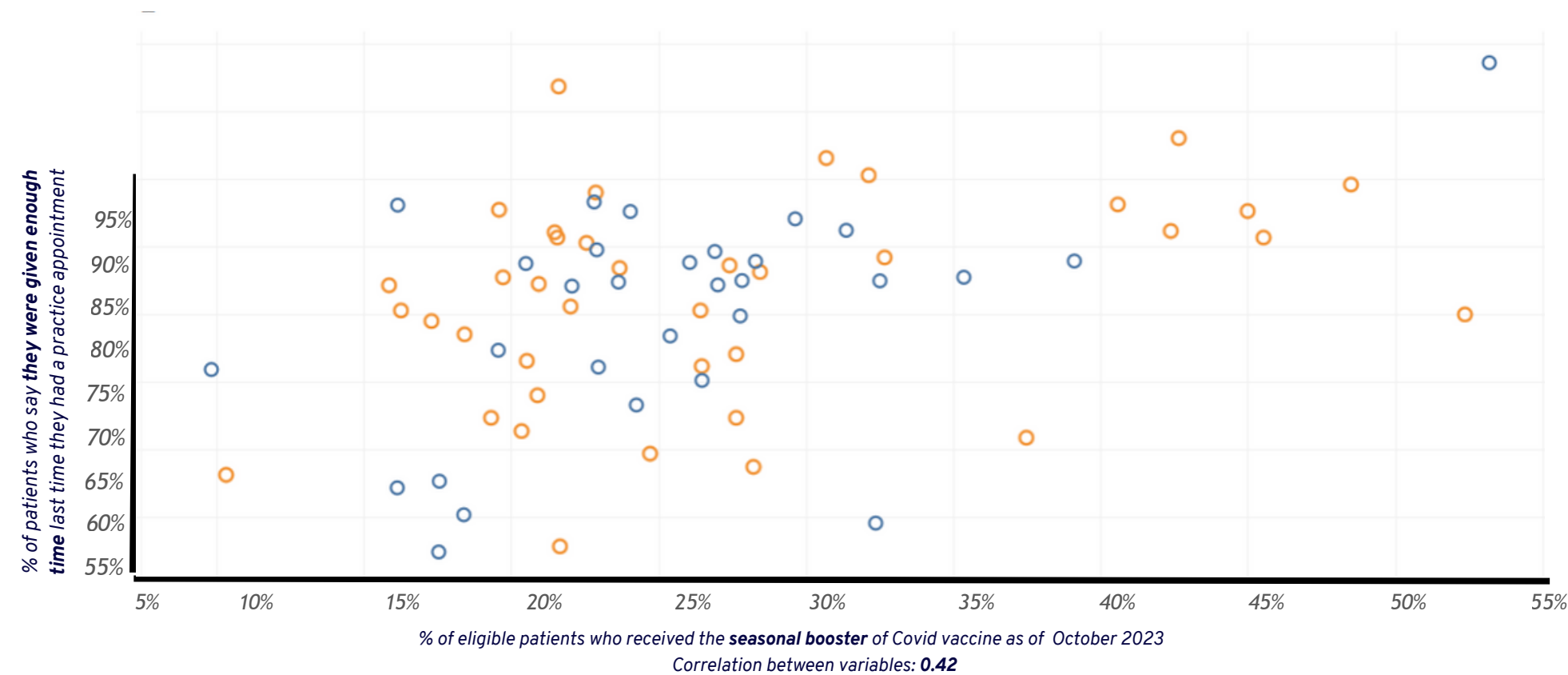
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# The role of GP surgeries



The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that last time they had an appointment they were **given enough time**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccination**.



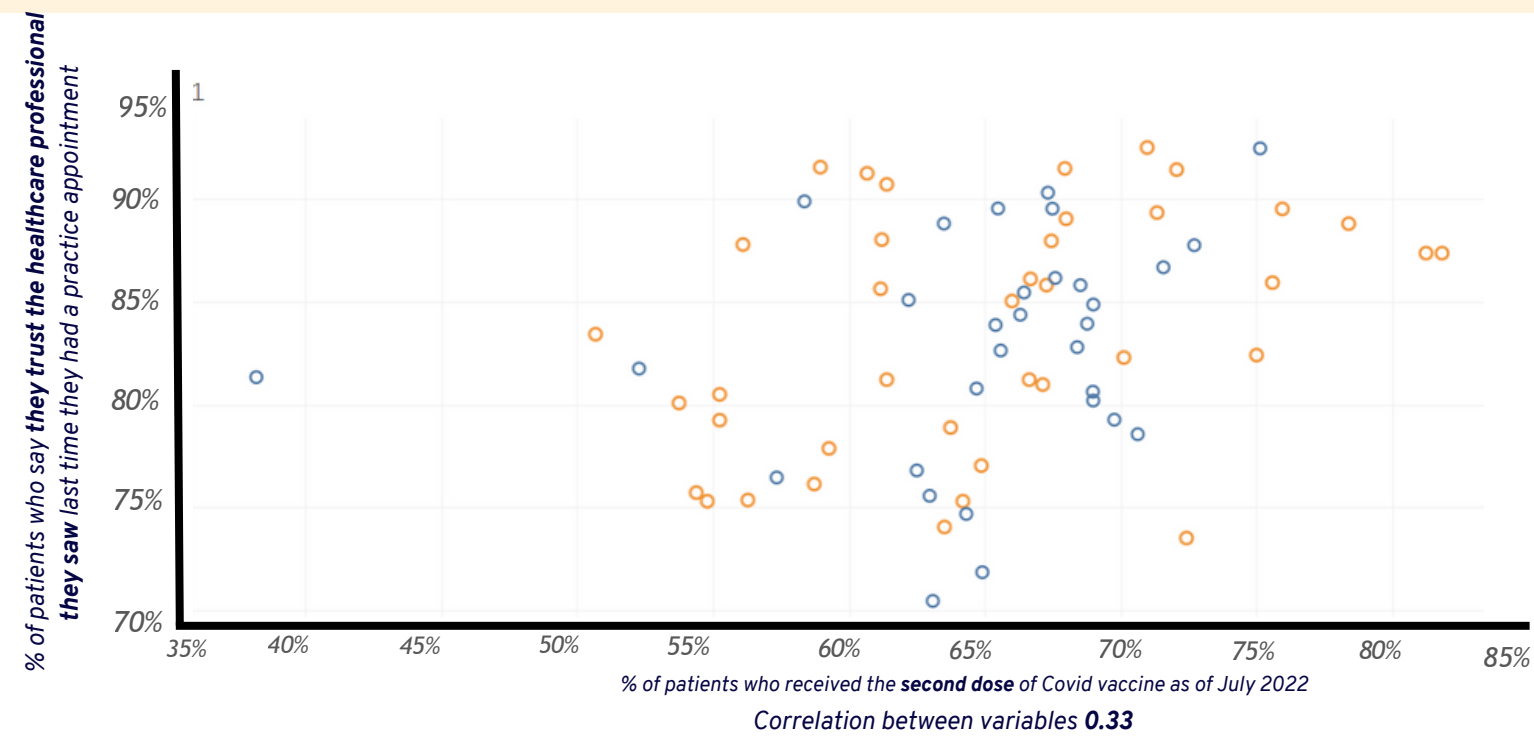
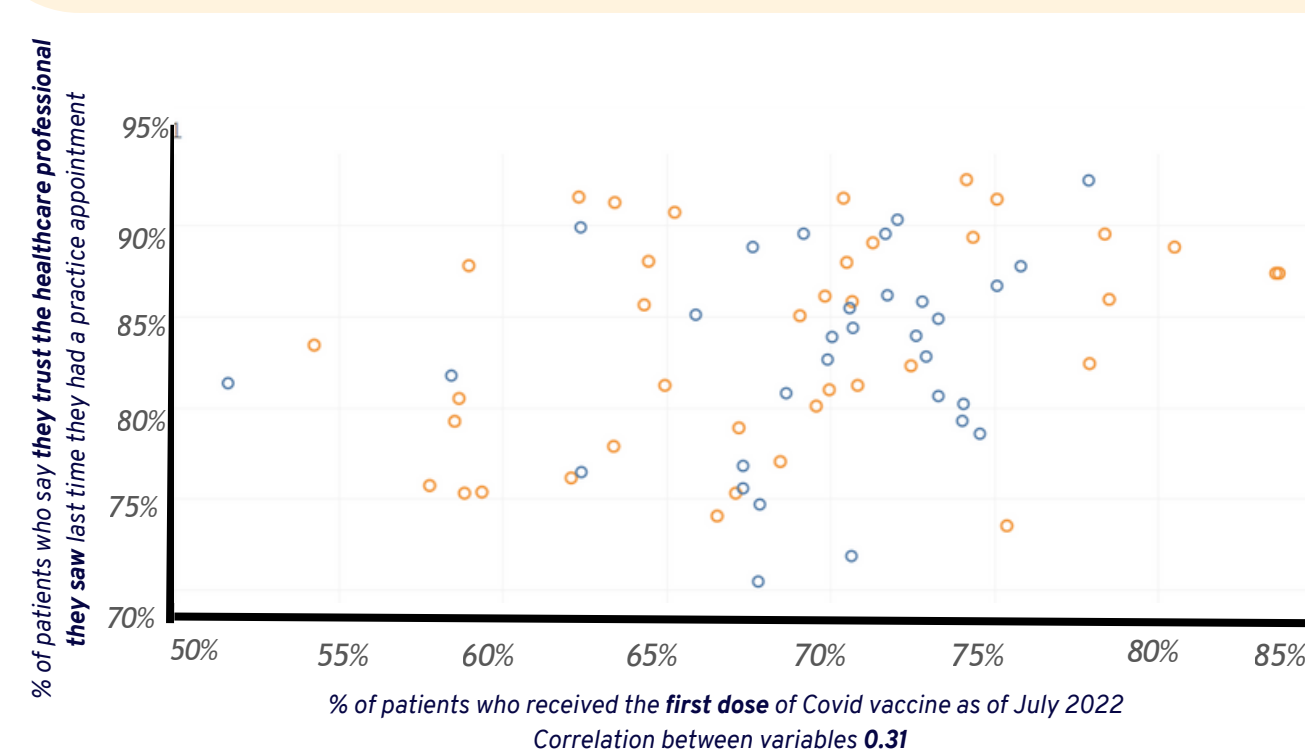
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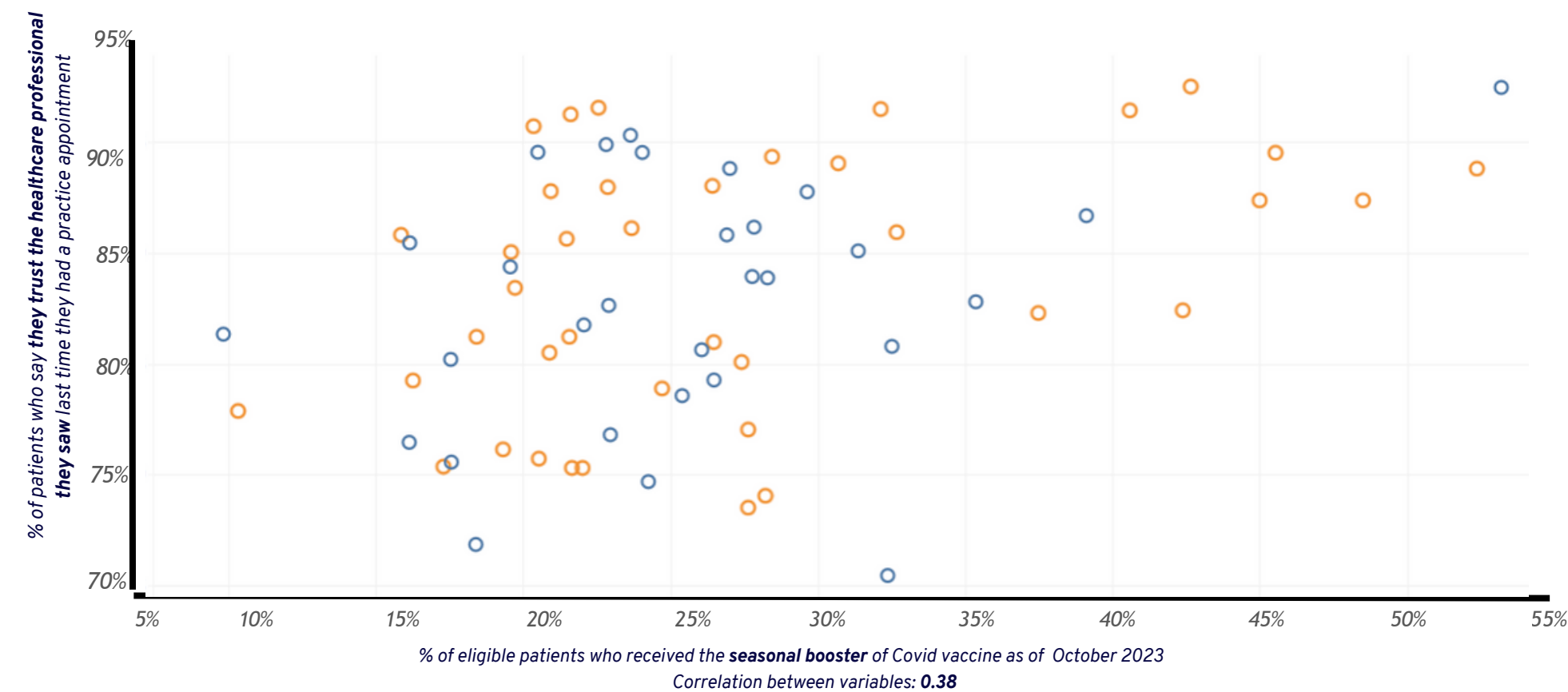
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# The role of GP surgeries



The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that last time they had an appointment they felt that they could **trust the medical professional seeing them**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccination**.

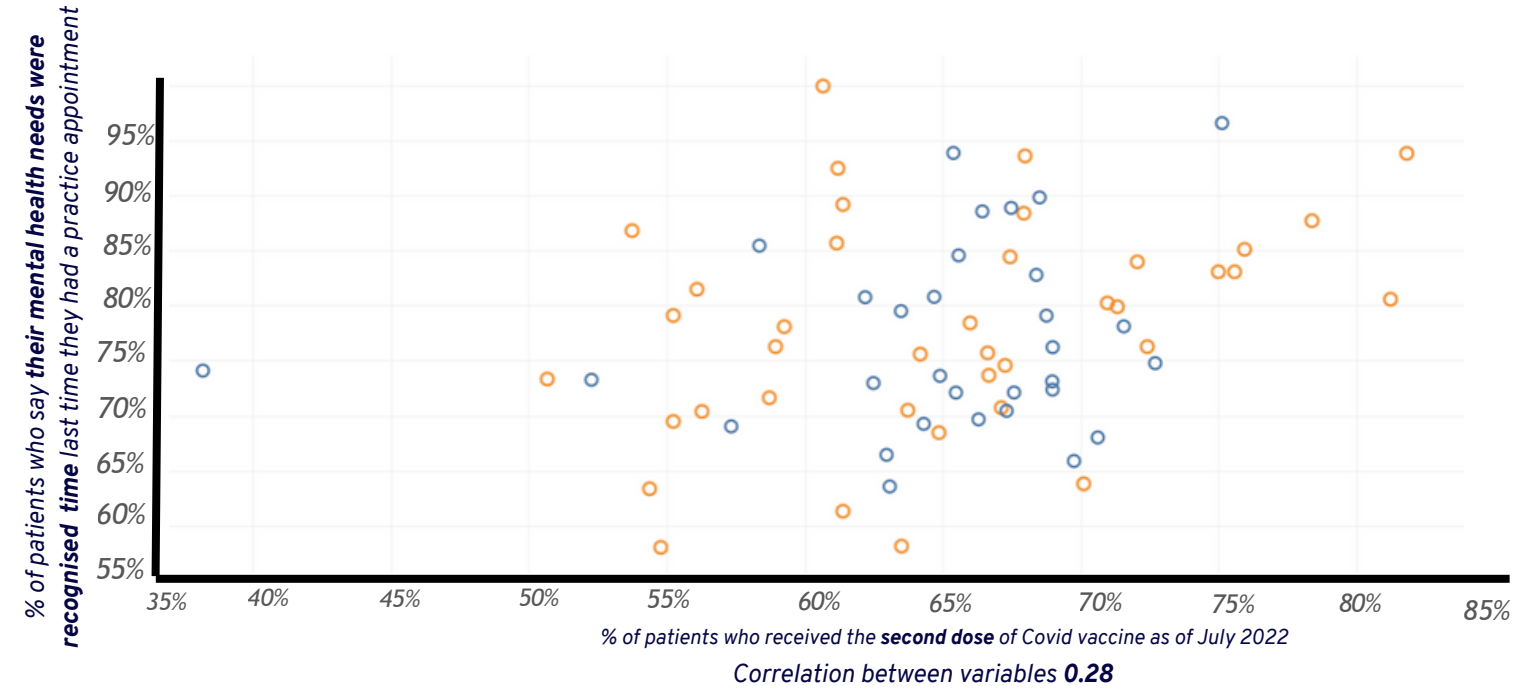
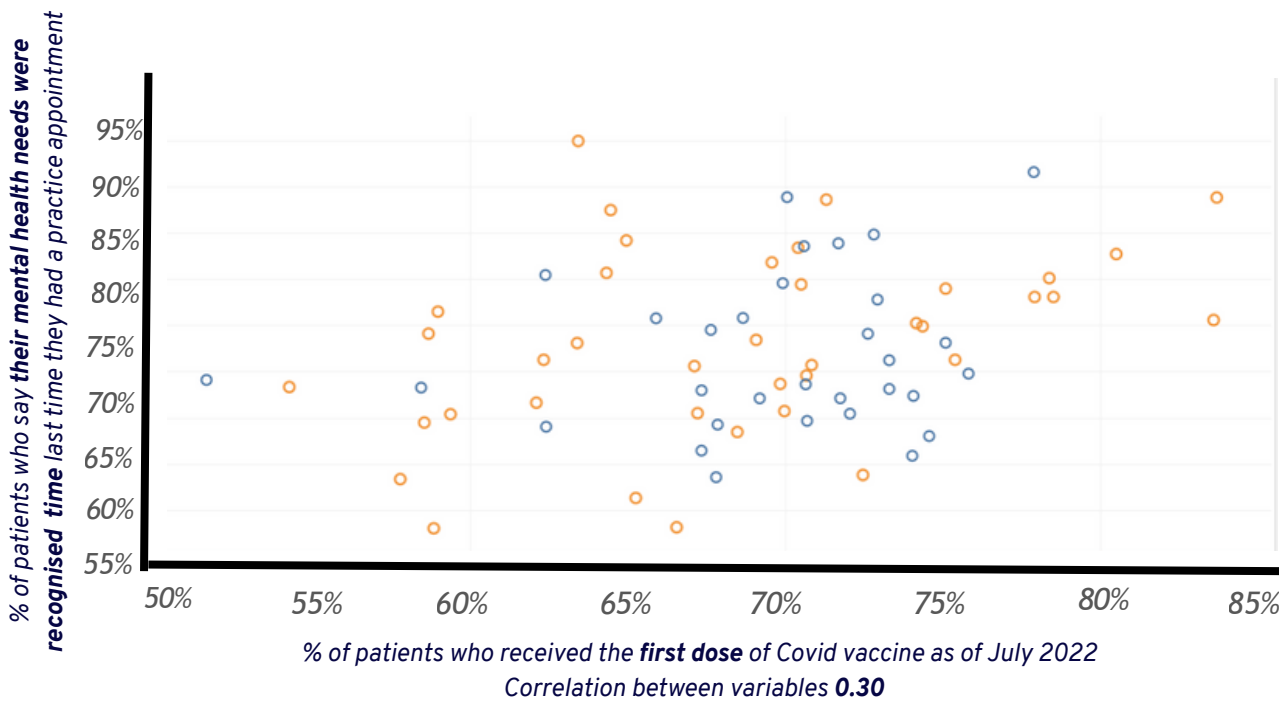


■ **Tower Hamlets**  
 ■ **Waltham Forest**

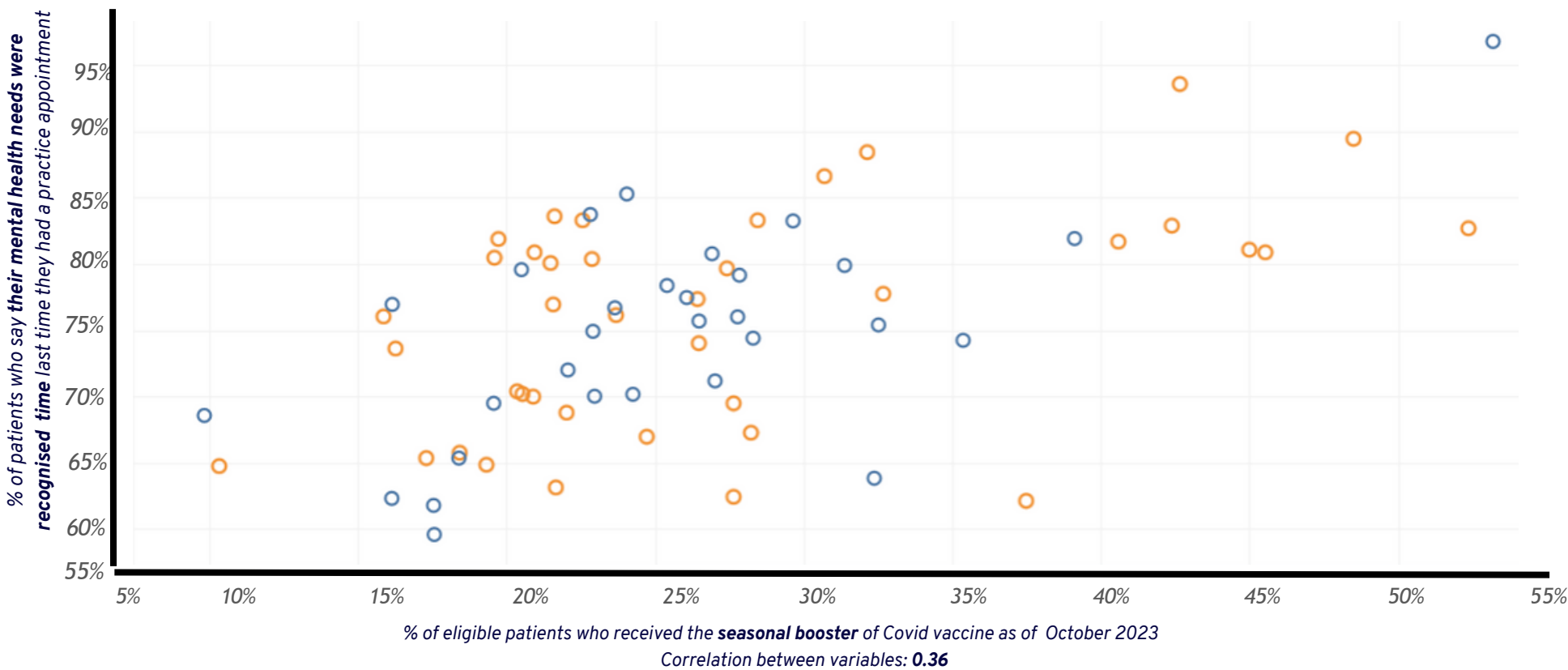
The correlation is stronger for **seasonal boosters** than for **initial vaccines**.

Data source: NEL GP practice dashboards/ GP Patient Survey Jan-Apr 2023. Each dot on the scatterplot graph represents one GP surgery.

# The role of GP surgeries



The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that last time they had an appointment their **mental health needs were recognised**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccination**.

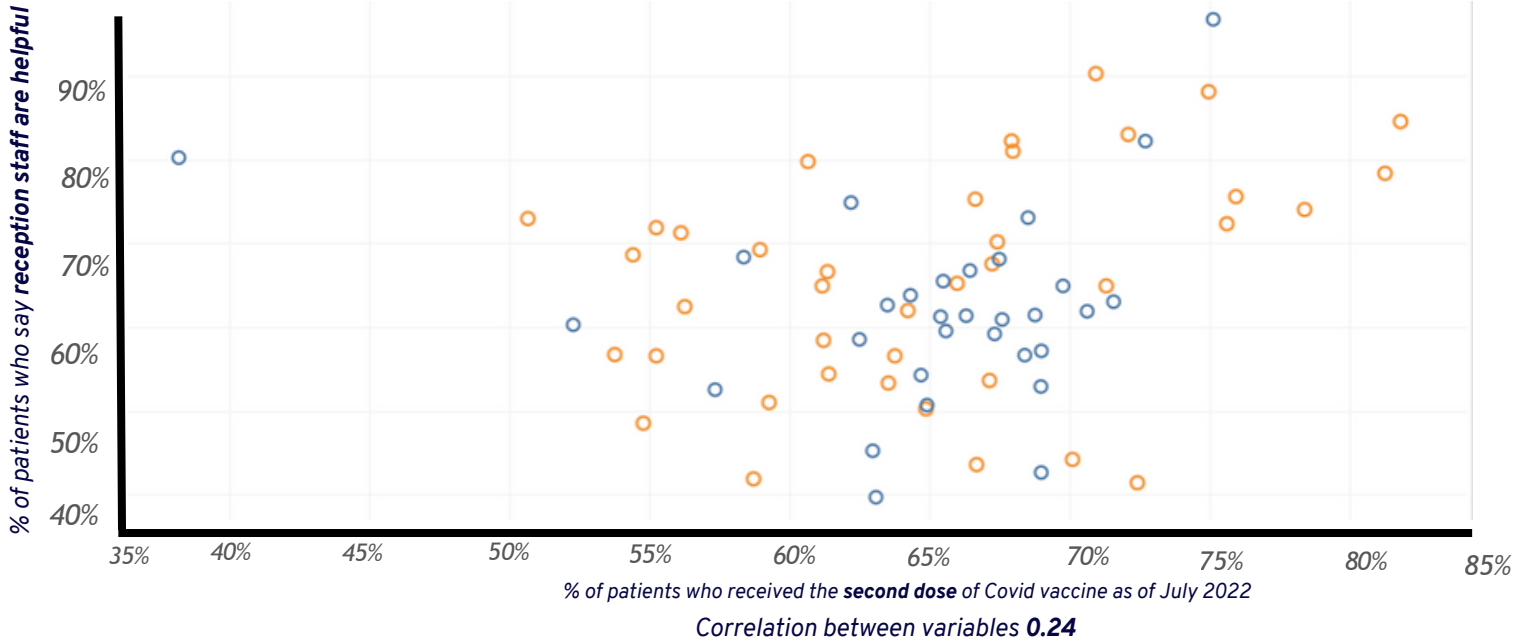
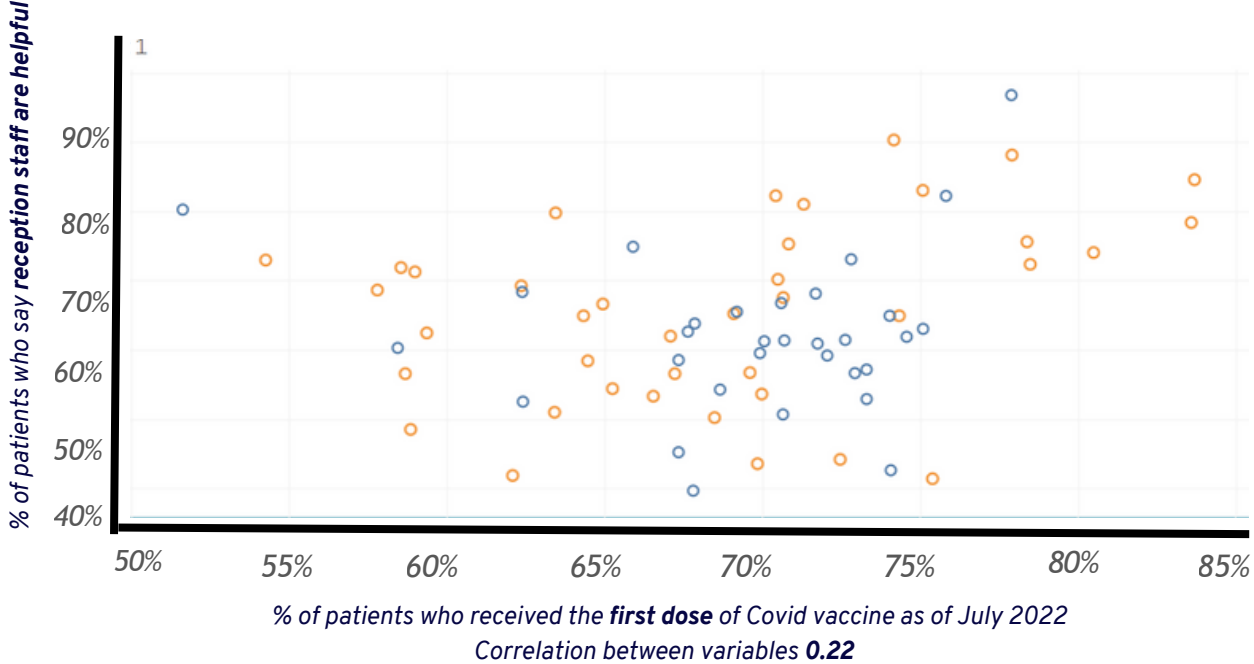


- **Tower Hamlets**
- **Waltham Forest**

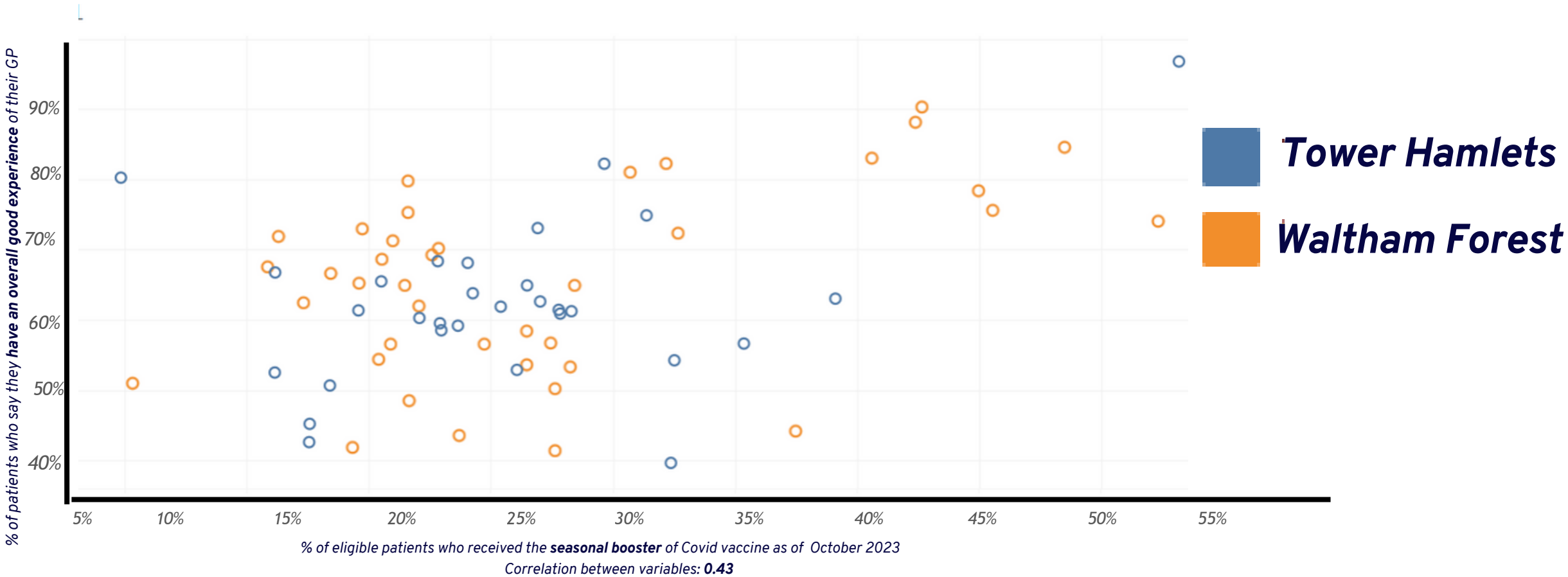
The correlation is stronger for **seasonal boosters** than for **initial vaccines**.

Data source: NEL GP practice dashboards/ GP Patient Survey Jan-Apr 2023. Each dot on the scatterplot graph represents one GP surgery.

# The role of GP surgeries



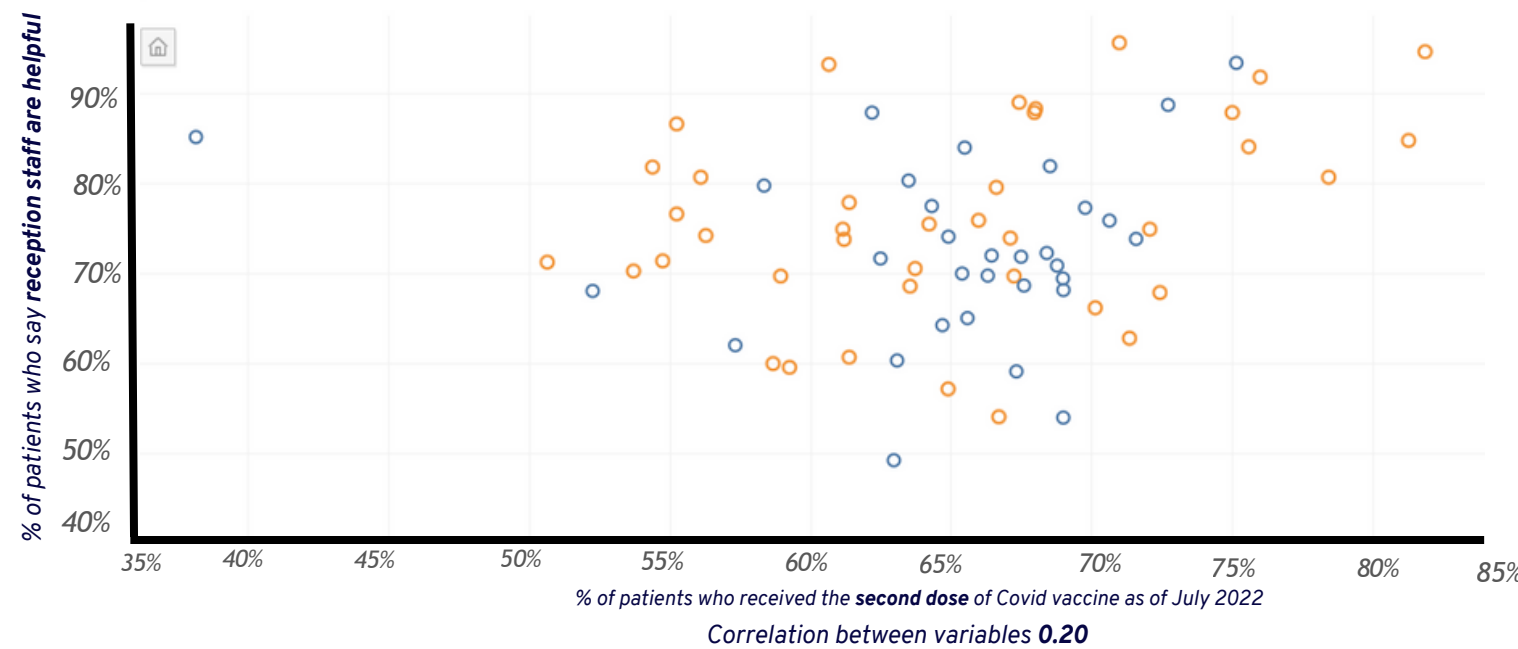
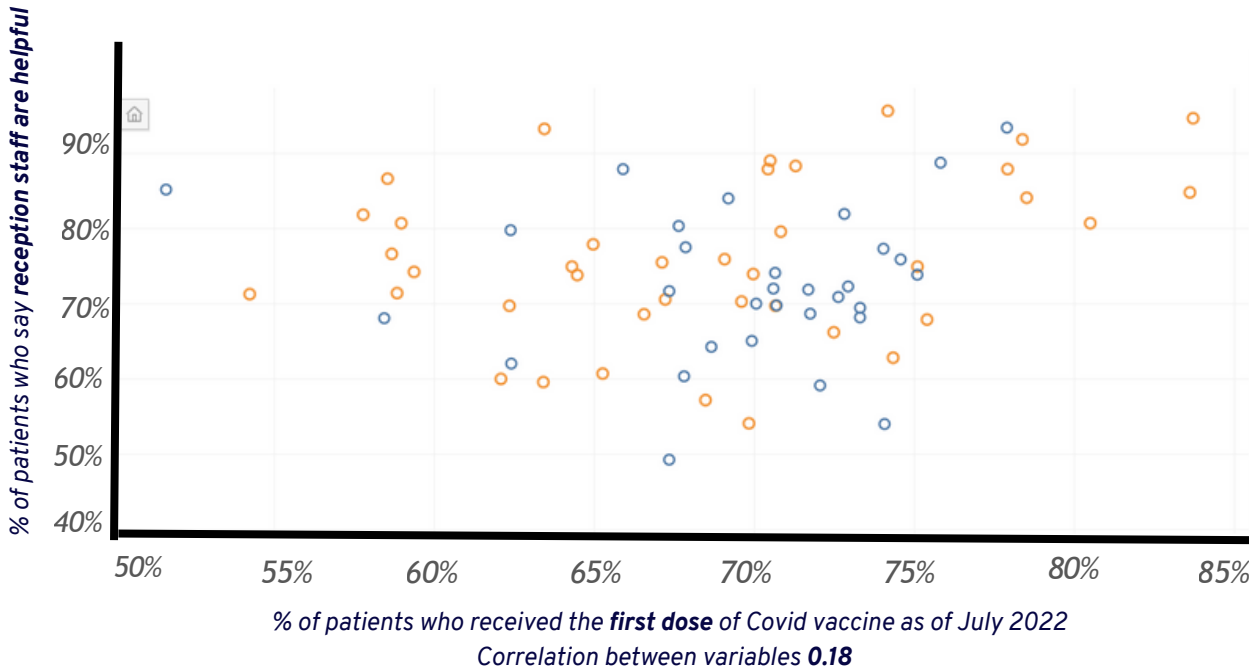
The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that **they have an overall good experience of the practice**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccine boosters**.



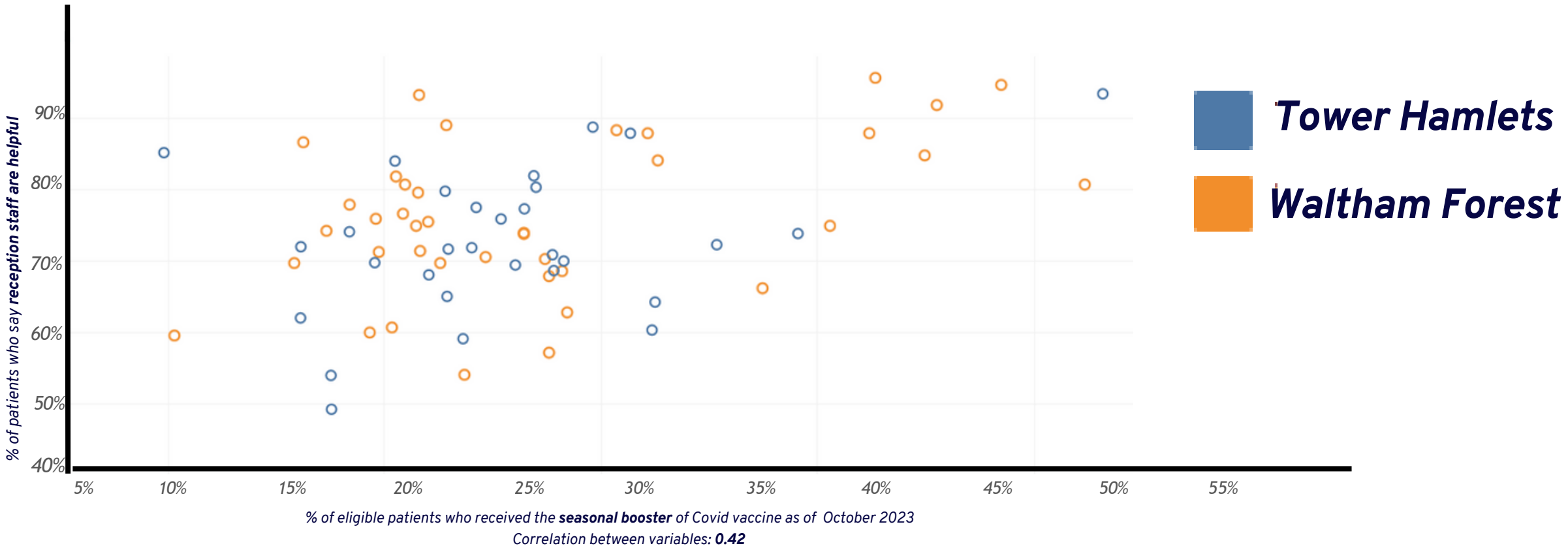
There is some correlation between reported satisfaction with the surgery and initial rates of Covid vaccines, but less strong.

Data source: NEL GP practice dashboards/ GP Patient Survey Jan-Apr 2023. Each dot on the scatterplot graph represents one GP surgery.

# The role of GP surgeries



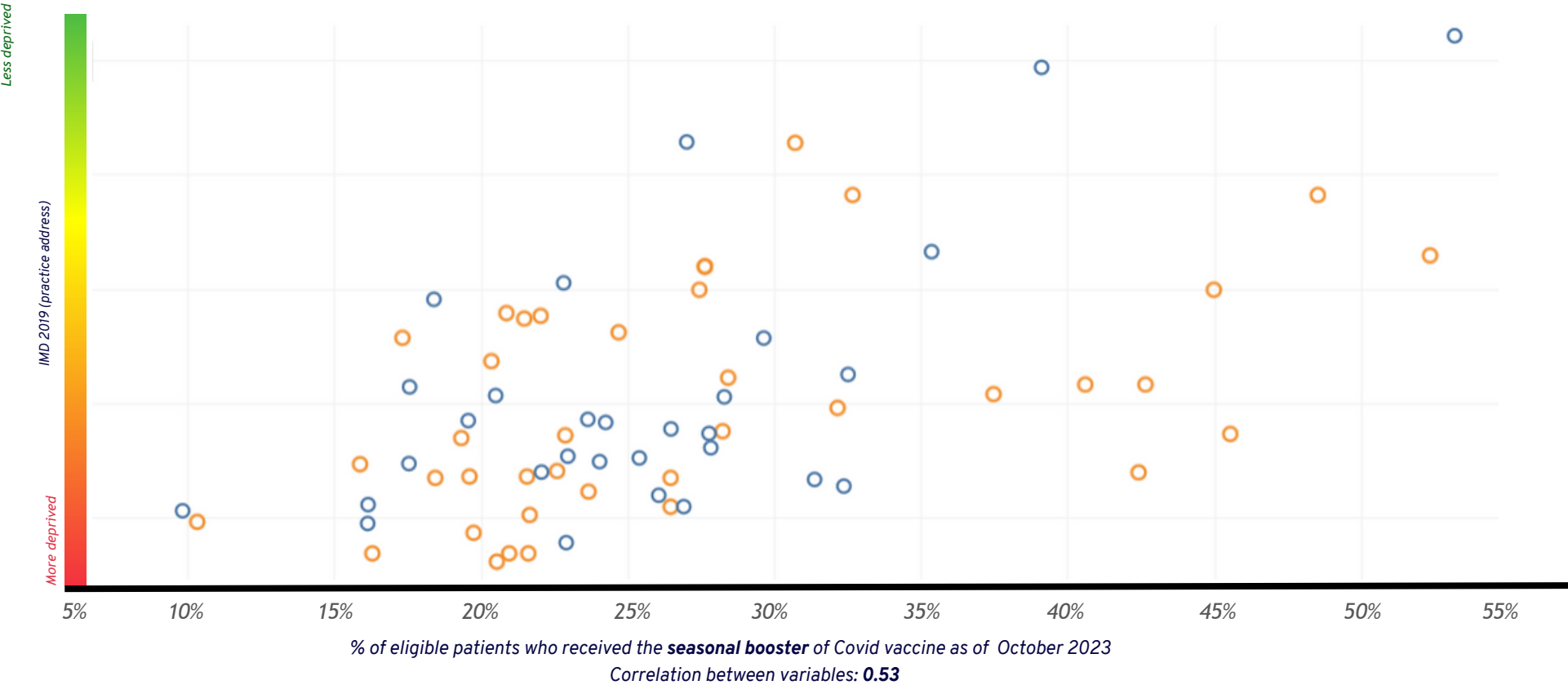
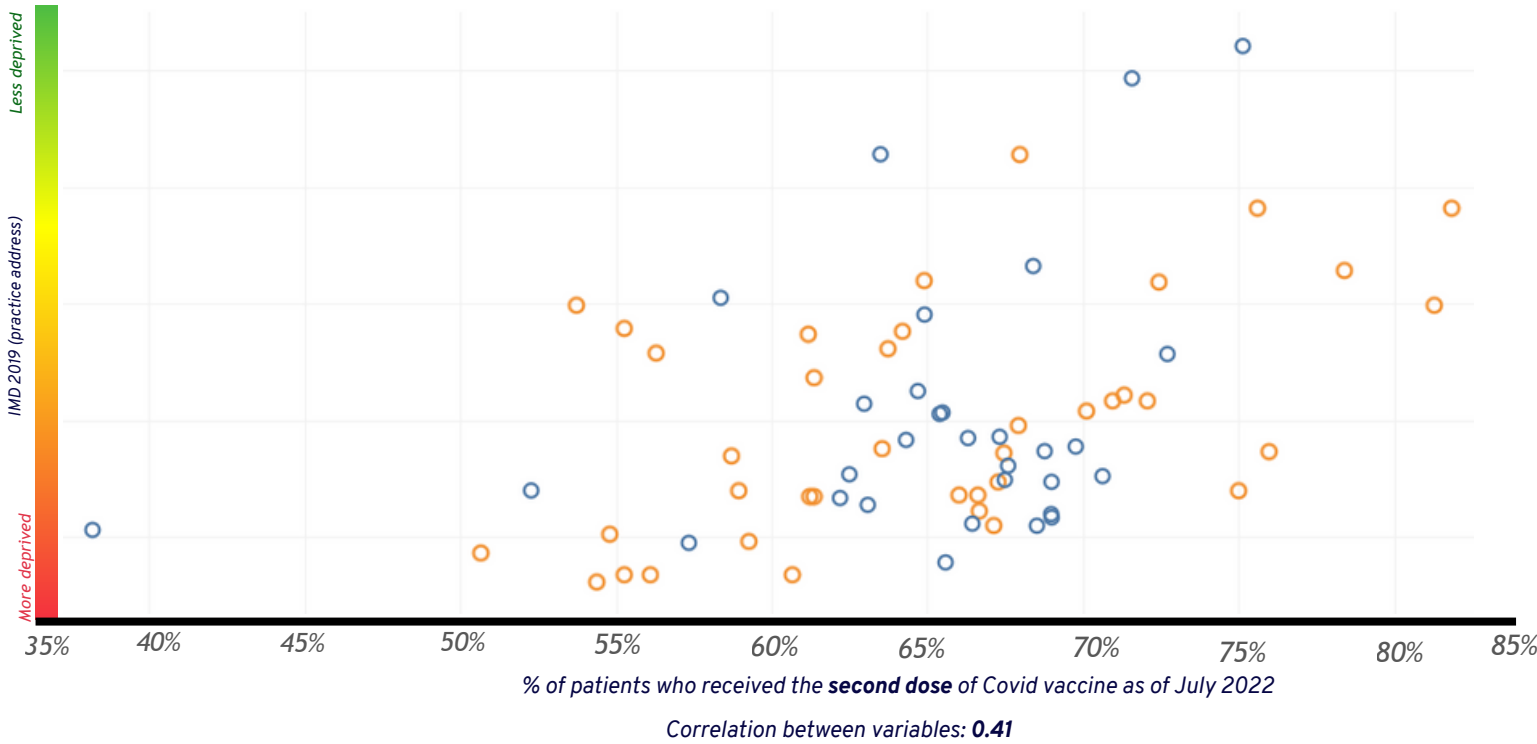
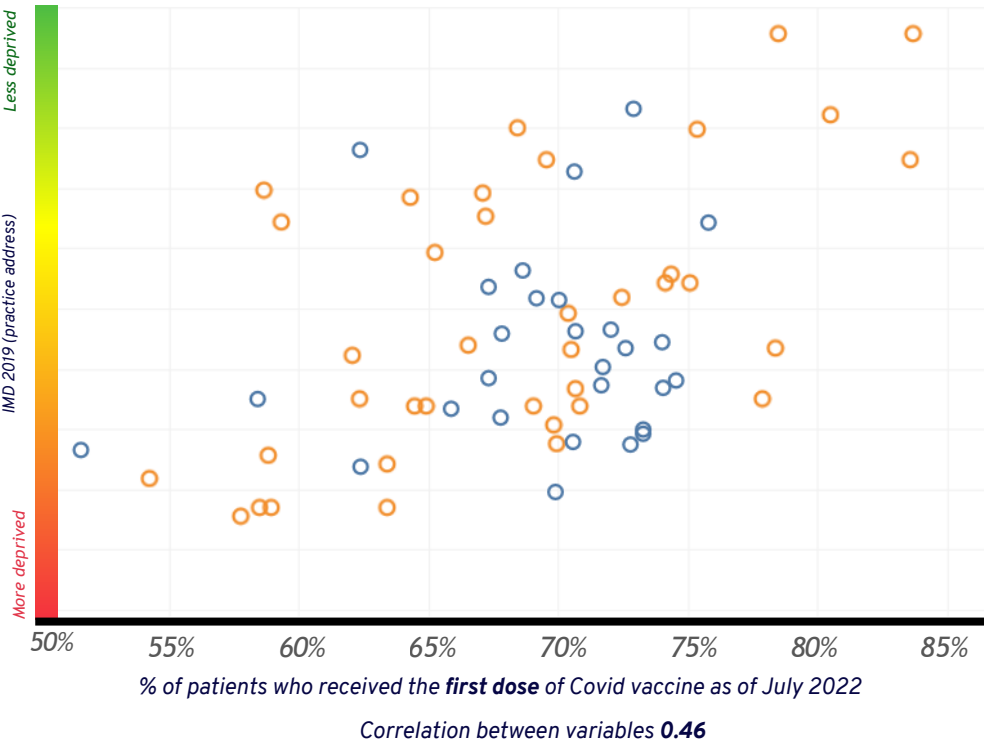
The more likely a surgery's patients were to say that **receptionists were helpful**, the higher the rates of **Covid vaccine boosters**.



There is some correlation between reported helpfulness of reception staff and initial rates of Covid vaccines, but less strong.

Data source: NEL GP practice dashboards/ GP Patient Survey Jan-Apr 2023. Each dot on the scatterplot graph represents one GP surgery.

# The role of GP surgeries



**Tower Hamlets**

**Waltham Forest**

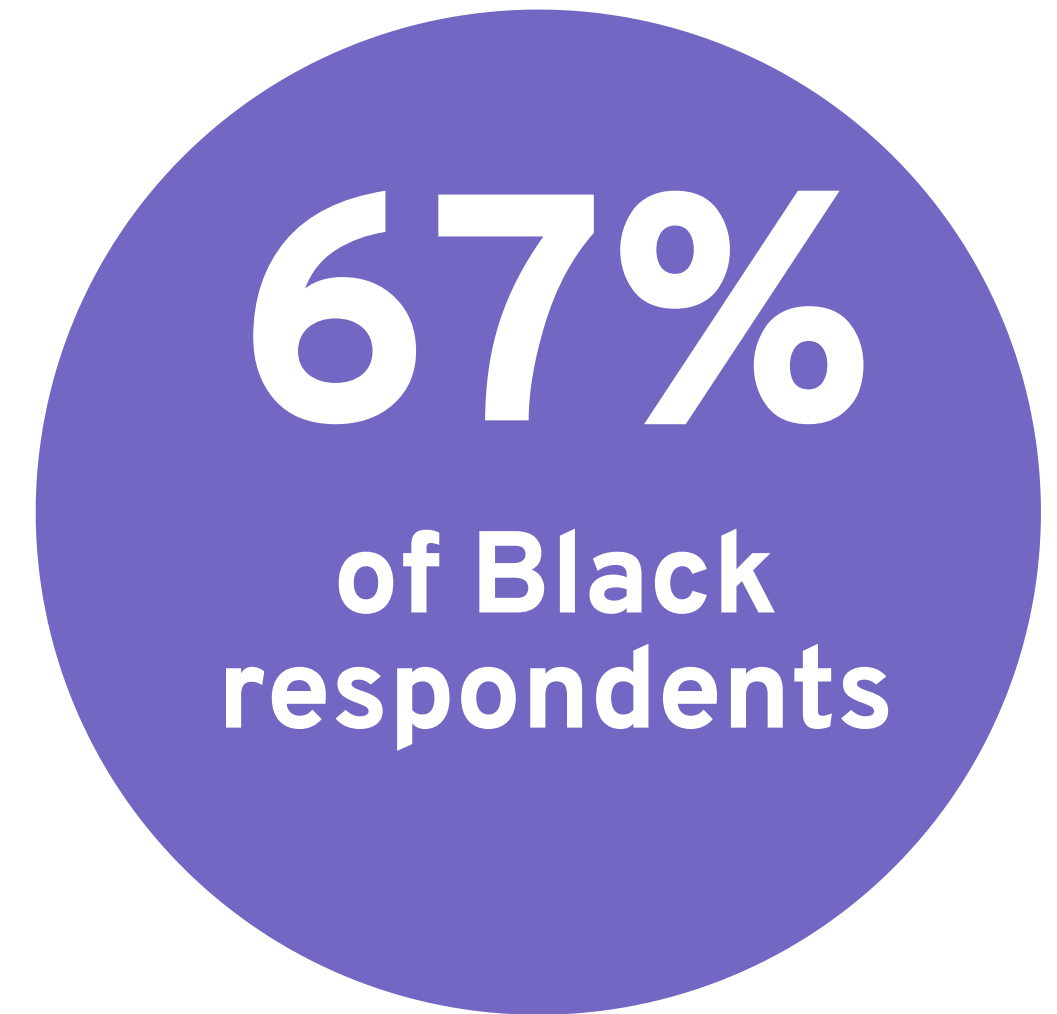
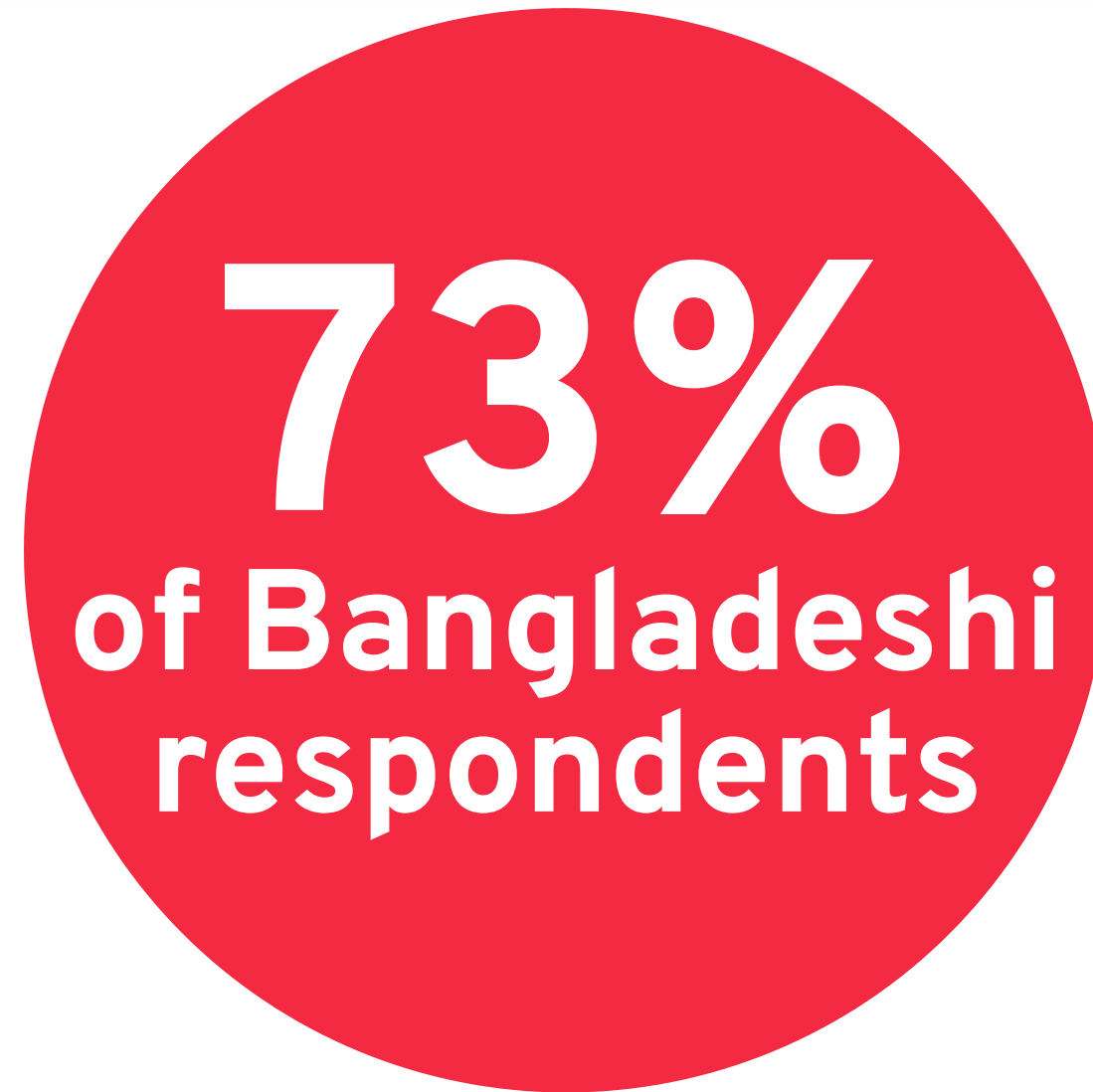
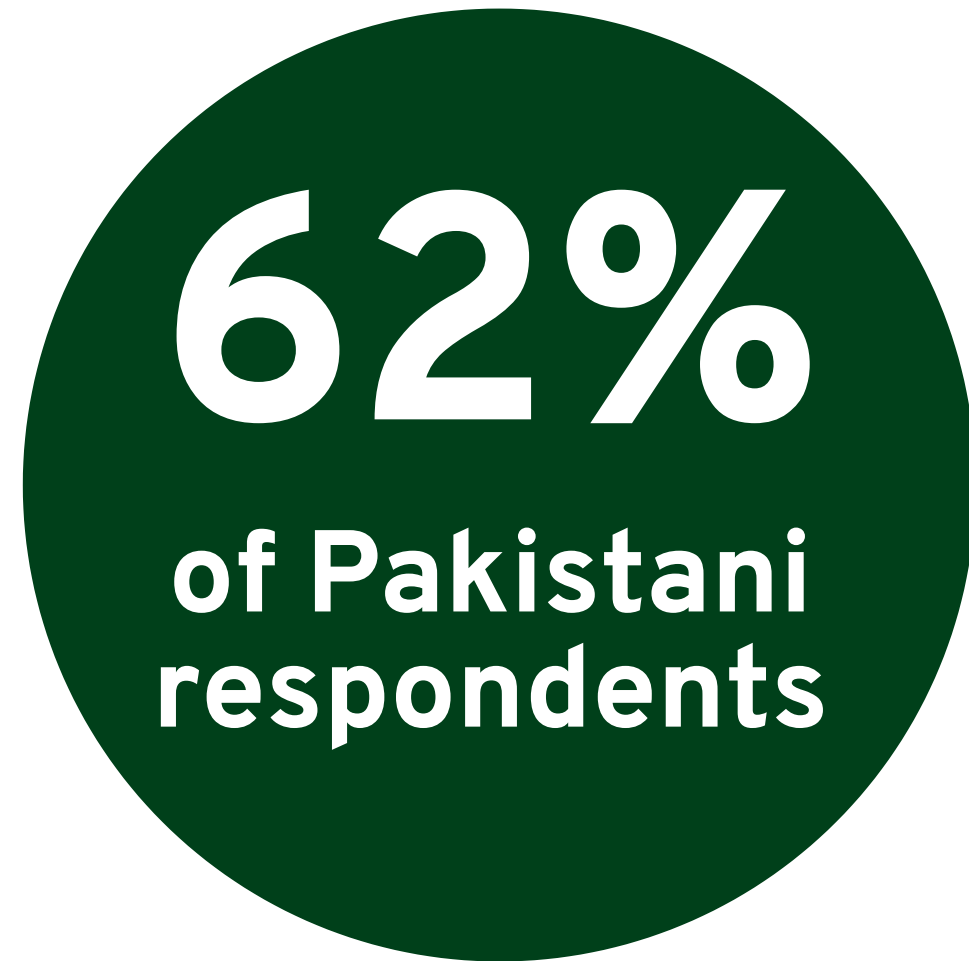
The **more deprived** the area where a GP surgery is located, the **lower the rates of Covid vaccine** among its patients.

The correlation is **stronger for seasonal boosters** than for **initial vaccines**.

Data source: NEL GP practice dashboards/ Open Data Communities. Each dot on the scatterplot graph represents one GP surgery.

# Attitudes towards vaccines- national data

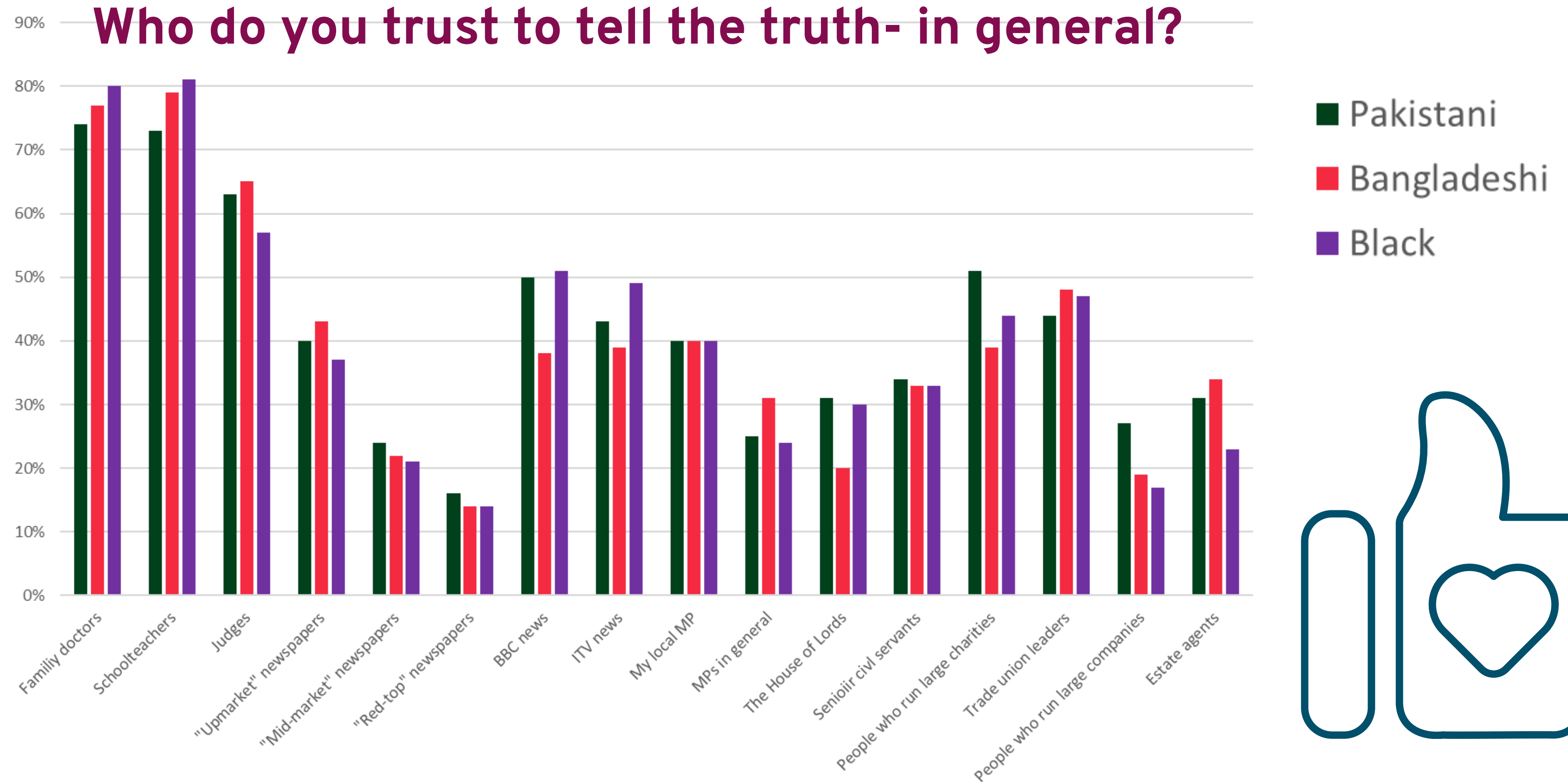
Source: YouGov poll of BAME adults on the topic of **Covid vaccines**, February 2021



**said either that they would have a Covid vaccine  
or already had one**

# Attitudes towards vaccines- national data

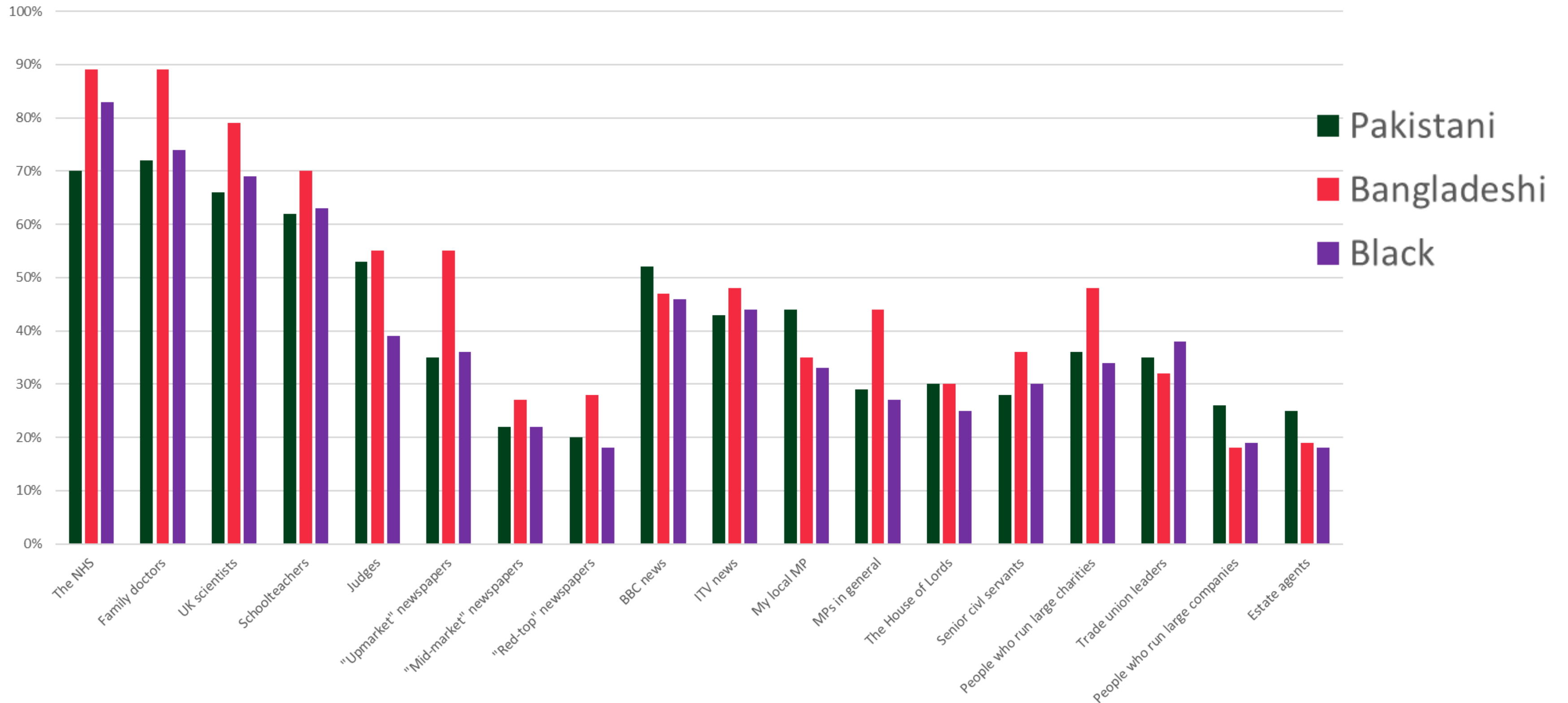
Source: YouGov poll of BAME adults on the topic of **Covid vaccines**, February 2021



# Attitudes towards vaccines- national data

Source: YouGov poll of BAME adults on the topic of **Covid vaccines**, February 2021

## Who do you trust about Covid specifically?

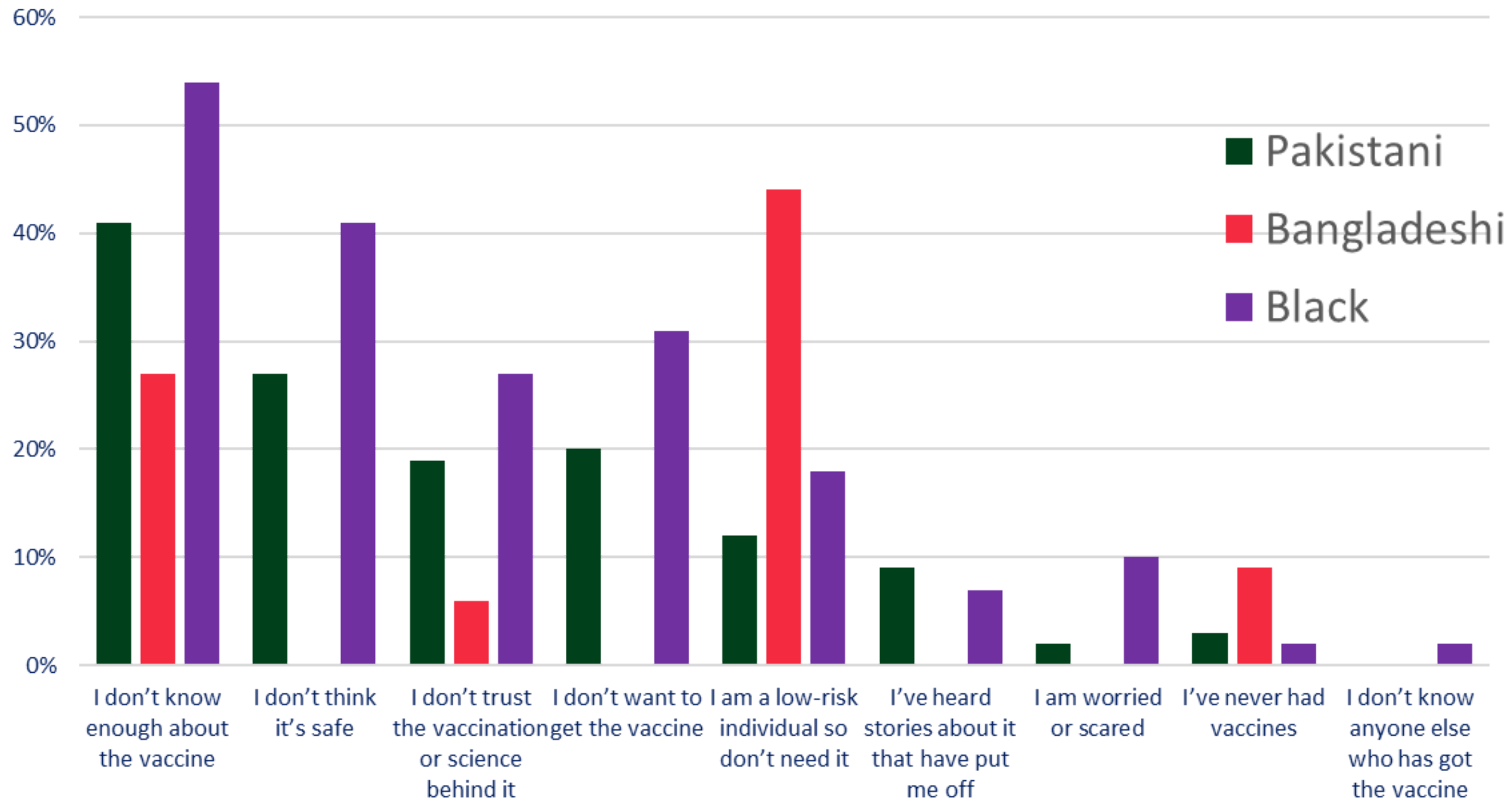




# Attitudes towards vaccines- national data

Source: YouGov poll of BAME adults on the topic of **Covid vaccines**, February 2021

## If you **WOULDN'T** have a Covid vaccine, why?



# What we know about BAME respondents who said they would not have the Covid vaccine

Source: YouGov poll of BAME adults on the topic of Covid vaccines, February 2021

## Less likely to trust as telling the truth (in general)

- Public sector professionals (Family doctors, schoolteachers, judges, civil servants)
- MPs (including own local MP)
- People who run large charities and trade union leaders
- Most of the media, including BBC, upmarket and mid-market newspapers; but not tabloid newspapers, which were equally distrusted by pro-vax and anti-vax respondents.

## Just as likely to trust as telling the truth (in general)

- Professionals from the business community, such as estate agents and people who run large companies.

 Family doctors and schoolteachers were still the most trusted professions- family doctors were trusted by 80% of all respondents and 55% of anti-vax respondents.

 They were more likely to believe the Government is **handling badly** issues including Covid, the economy and the environment.

 Biggest differences in trust between pro-vax and anti-vax respondents were about **trust in family doctors and in the NHS.**

## Less likely to trust in relation to Covid specifically

- The NHS and family doctors
- Scientists
- Public sector professionals (Schoolteachers, judges, civil servants)
- MPs (including own local MP)
- People who run large charities and trade union leaders
- Most of the media, including BBC and all types of newspaper.

## More likely to trust in relation to Covid specifically

- Professionals from the business community, such as estate agents and people who run large companies.

 The NHS, family doctors, scientists and schoolteachers were still the most trusted:

- The NHS was trusted by 82% of all respondents and 59% of anti-vax respondents.
- Family doctors were trusted by 77% of all respondents and 48% of anti-vax respondents.
- Schoolteachers were trusted by 65% of all respondents and 50% of anti-vax respondents.
- Scientists were trusted by 76% of all respondents and 43% of anti-vax respondents.

## What we know about BAME respondents who said they would not have the Covid vaccine

Source: YouGov poll of BAME adults on the topic of **Covid vaccines**, February 2021

- They were more likely to **have had Covid** previously, but less likely to **have a friend or family member diagnosed with Covid**.
- They were slightly more likely to be **women**.
- They were more likely to be **aged under 50**.
- They were more likely to **have been born in the UK**.



## What else we know about vaccine sceptics from other studies

Source: YouGov tracker poll asking “Would you give your child the **MMR vaccine**? (Aug 2023)

People who **didn't** or **wouldn't** give their child the MMR vaccine were:

- More likely to not vote for **mainstream political parties** and slightly more likely to have **voted for Brexit**.
- Slightly more likely to be **working class (C2DE occupations)**

Source: YouGov survey on Covid vaccine appointments, January 2021

People who **wouldn't** get a Covid vaccine were:

- More likely to be **working class (C2DE occupations)**
- More likely to be **younger** (likelihood of Covid vaccine acceptance increased with age)