

Cancer awareness in North East Lincolnshire



Humber and North Yorkshire
Cancer Alliance

Est.
1841

YORK
ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY

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 East Lincolnshire, 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

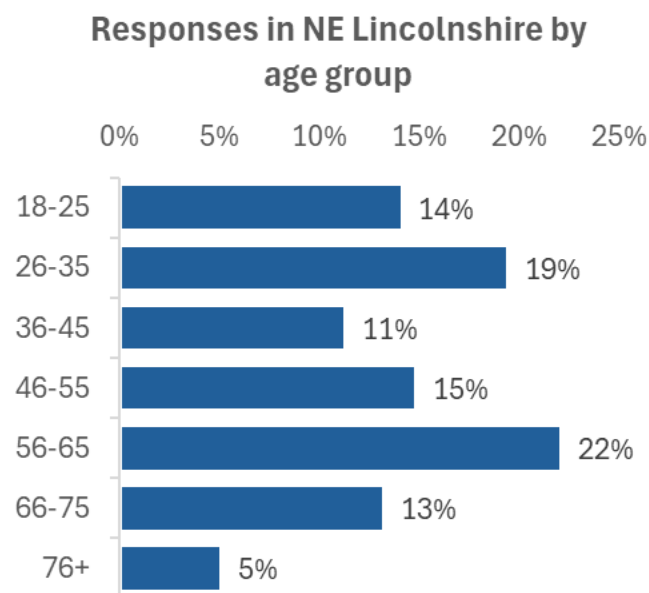
York St John University and Healthwatch undertook a survey of people across Humber and North Yorkshire, via phone interviews, online panels and an online survey of communities who are harder to engage with. The survey used the questionnaire developed by Cancer Research UK that they run nationally each 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 577 who live in North East Lincolnshire (9.4%), and there were 98 individual one-to-one conversations in total.



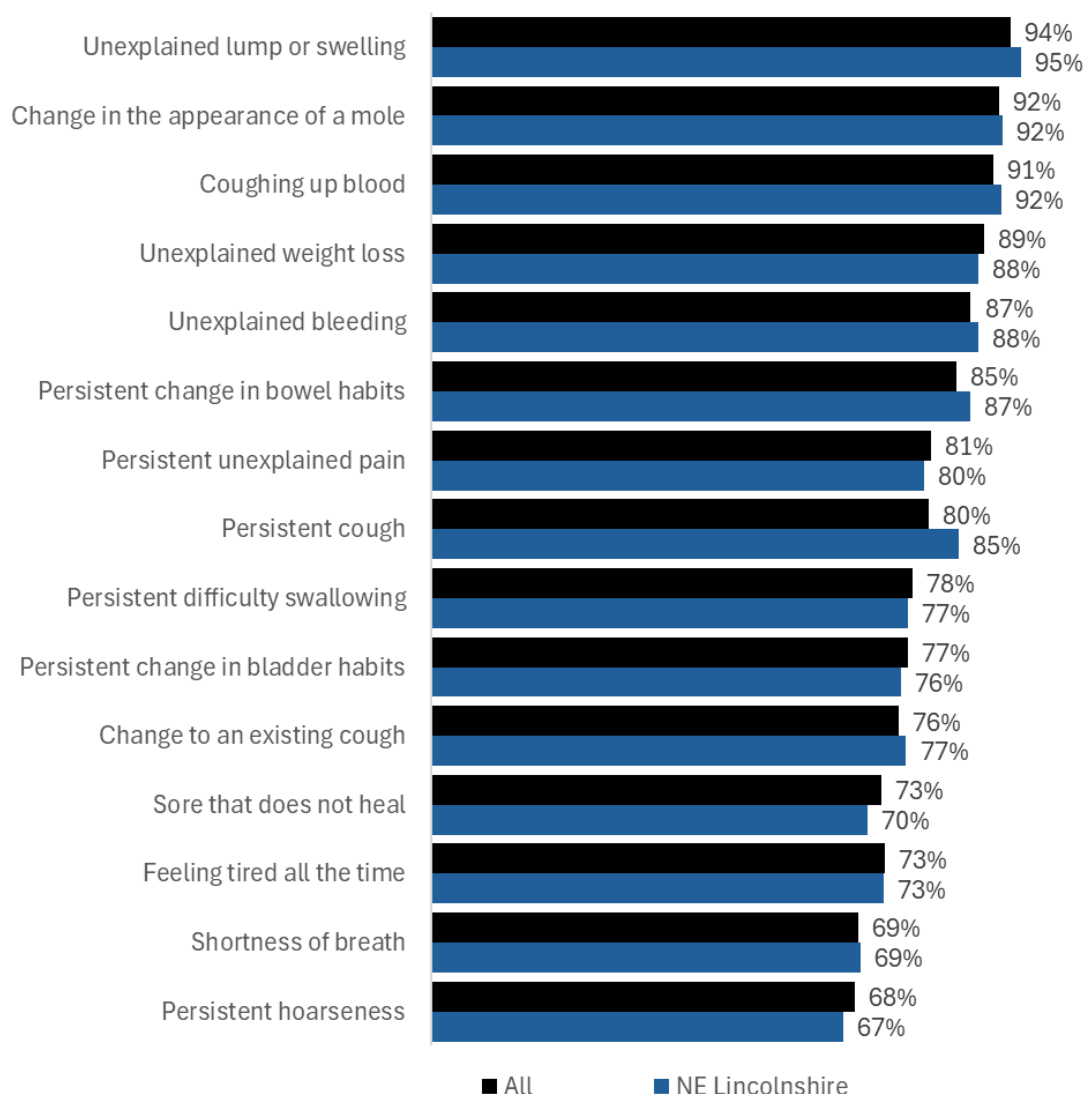
60% of respondents in North East Lincolnshire were female and 40% were male, 94% were White and 39% had a physical or mental health condition or illness lasting or expected to last 12 months or more.

10% lived in rural areas and 81% lived in coastal areas, while 33% lived in the 20% most deprived areas of the region.

Key findings

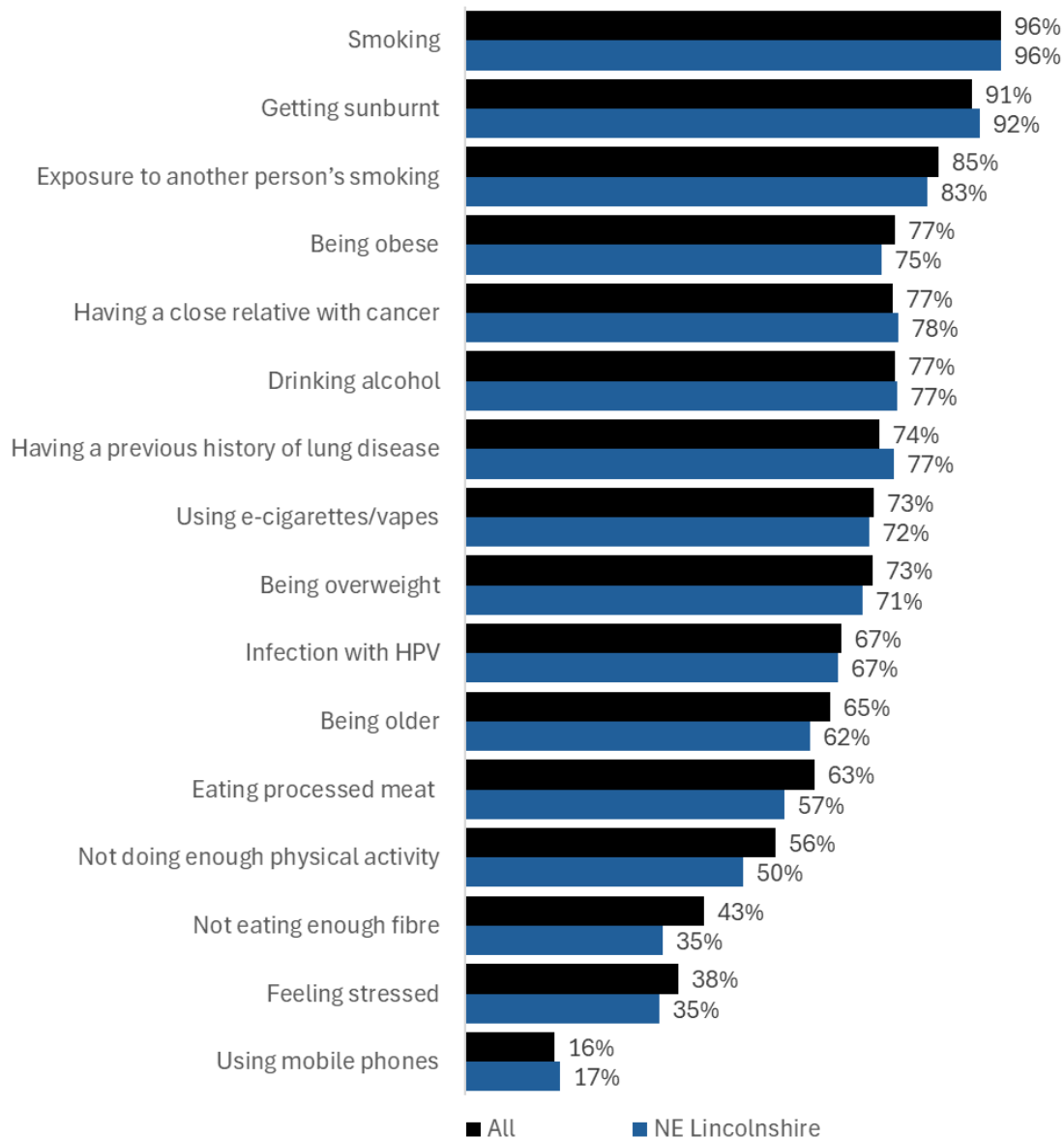
Awareness of cancer symptoms

Respondents in North East Lincolnshire have similar prompted recall of every symptom on the list to that of all respondents in Humber & North Yorkshire, except they have a slightly higher recall for a persistent cough. 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 East Lincolnshire have a similar prompted awareness of risk factors to all respondents in Humber & North Yorkshire, except they have a slightly lower recall of eating processed meat, not doing enough physical activity and not eating enough fibre. 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 61% of respondents in North East Lincolnshire 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

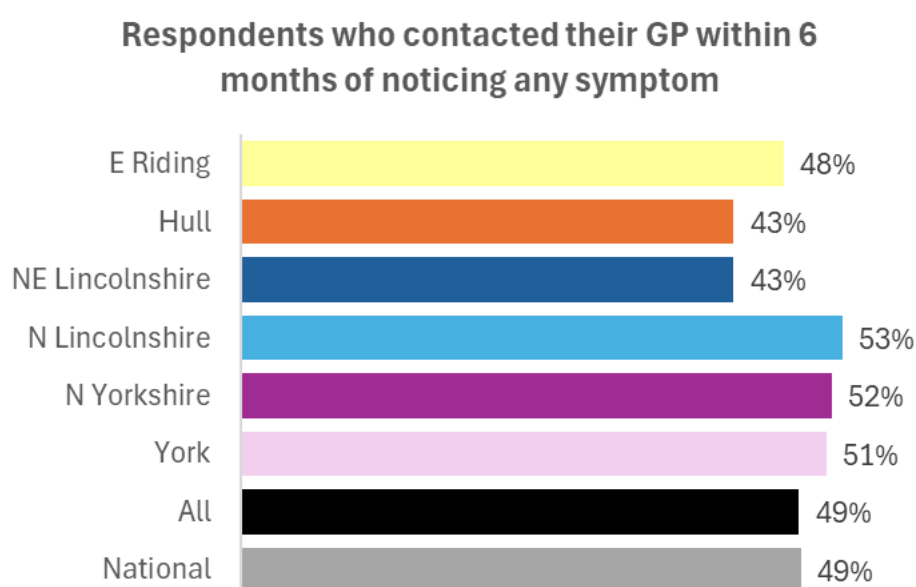
Lung-specific symptoms
Shortness of breath
Persistent hoarseness
Persistent cough
Change in an existing cough
Coughing up blood

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

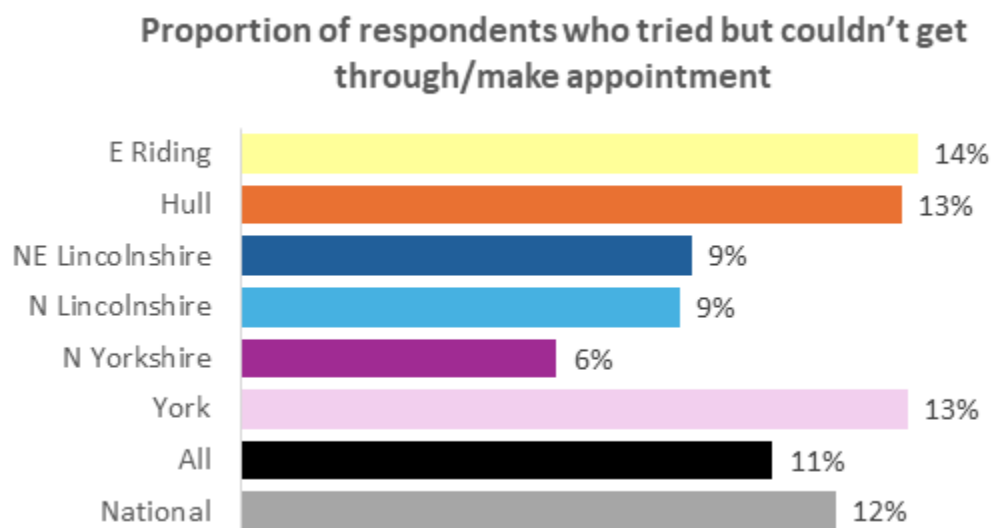
Oral-specific symptoms
Red/white patches in mouth
Ulcer in the mouth that does not heal
Persistent difficulty swallowing
Persistent unexplained pain
Unexplained weight loss

Seeking help

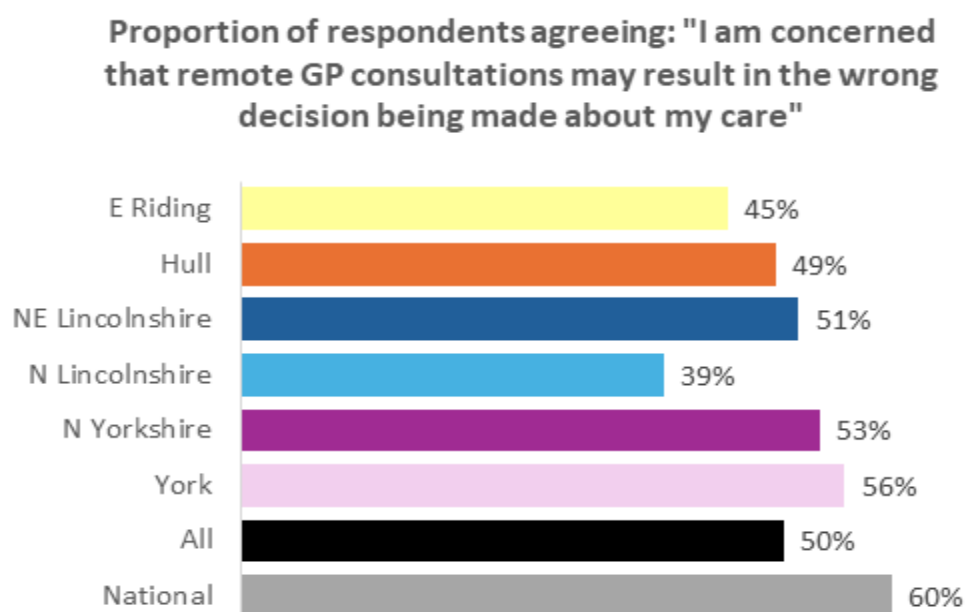
43% of respondents in North East Lincolnshire said they contacted their GP within six months of noticing any of the list of symptoms, slightly lower than the proportion of all respondents in Humber & North Yorkshire.



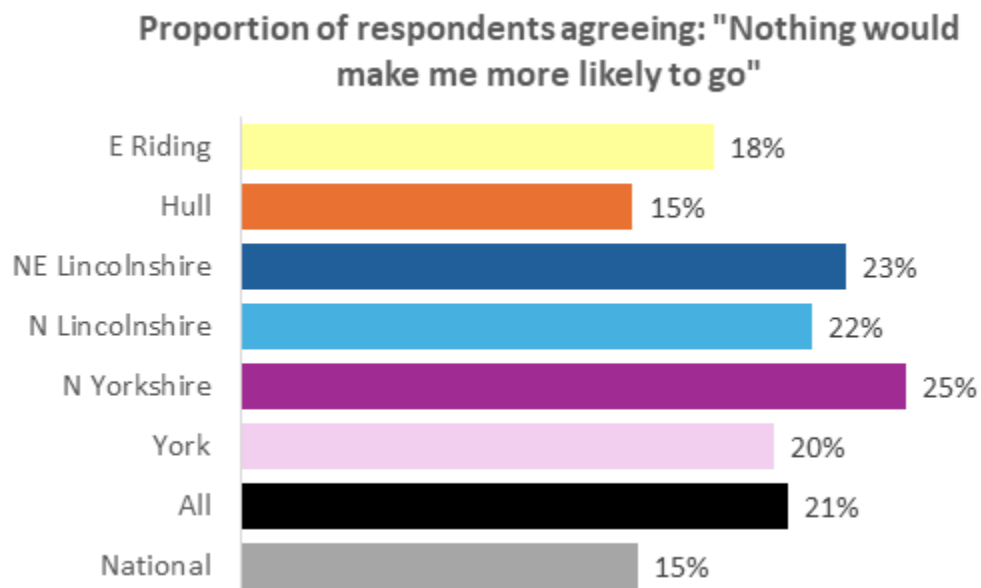
88% said they got an appointment with their GP after contacting them to discuss a health concern and 9% said they tried but couldn't get through/make an appointment.



70% of respondents in North East Lincolnshire spoke to someone in person and were slightly more likely to have had a virtual/remote appointment (28% compared to 23% of all respondents in the region). 51% of respondents in North East Lincolnshire said that they were concerned about wrong decisions due to remote consultations.

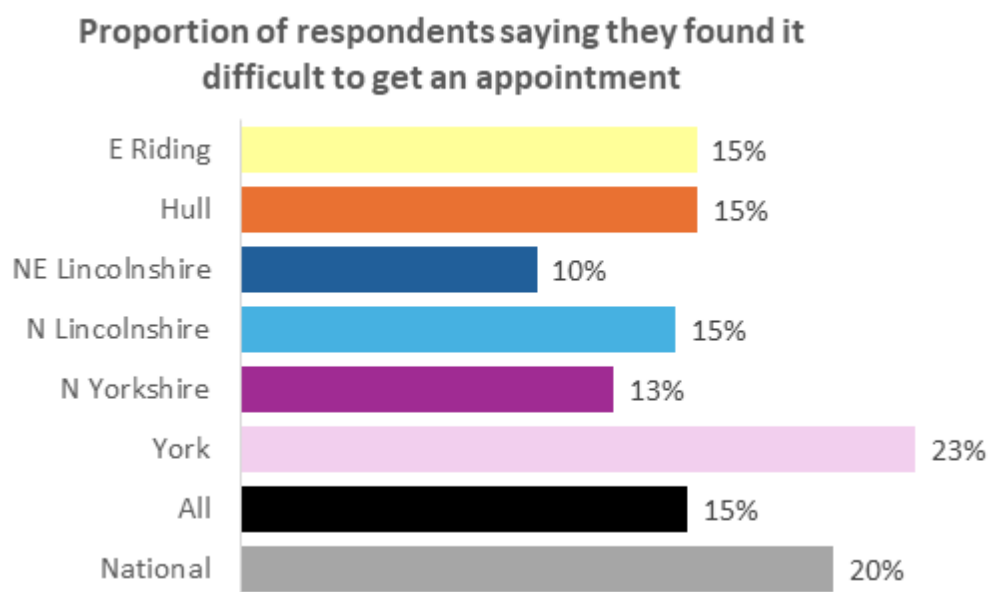


The most popular motivations to attend a doctor-recommended hospital test were having a specific day/time for the test and choice over the day/time of the test. Other motivations were receiving reminders, receiving more information about what is involved and making it easier to get to the hospital. 23% of respondents in North East Lincolnshire said that there was nothing that would make them more likely to attend a doctor-recommended hospital test.



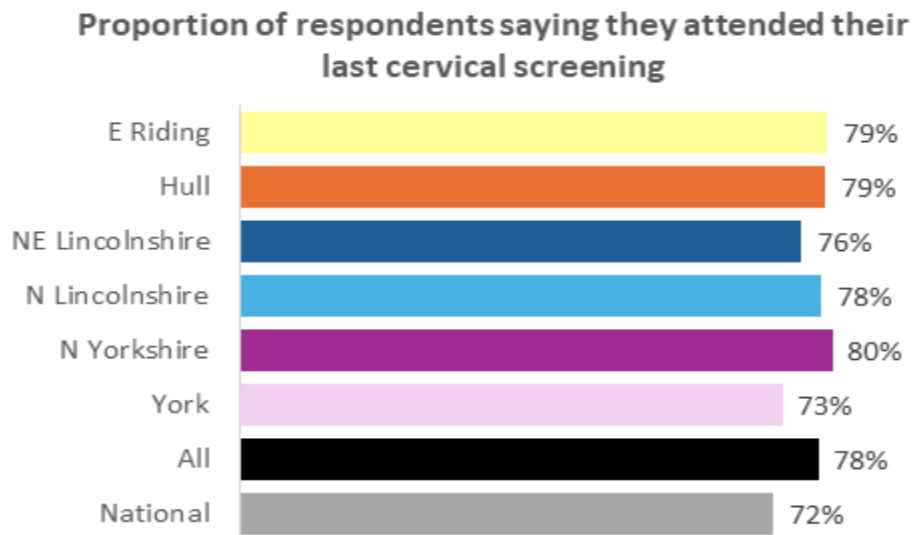
Respondents were asked which factors played a role in their decision the last time they saw or spoke to a medical professional about their health. The most common reasons for seeking medical help were symptoms that were persistent, bothersome or unusual for the respondent. This was followed by having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

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. 19% of those in North East Lincolnshire said that nothing put them off seeking medical attention, similar to the proportion of all respondents in the region (22%). 10% of respondents in North East Lincolnshire found it difficult to get an appointment, slightly less than all respondents in the region.

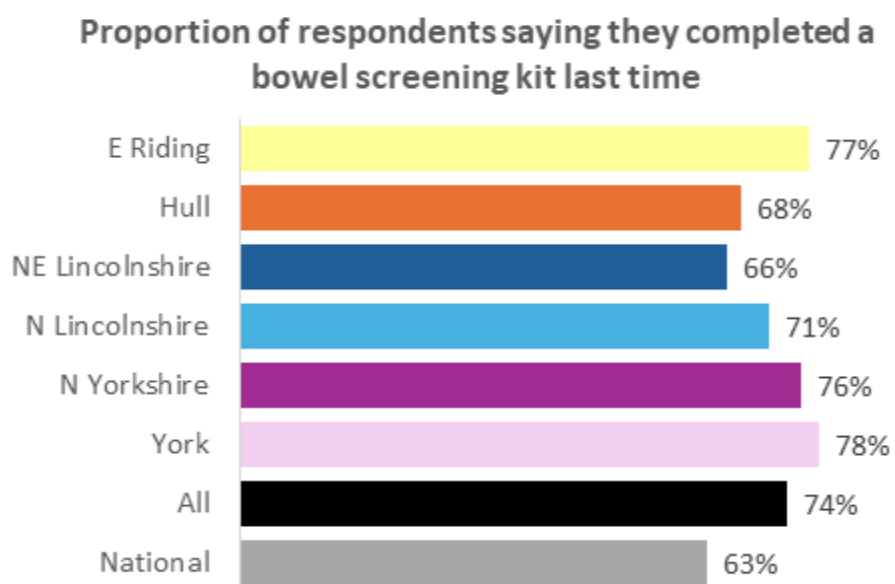


Cancer screening

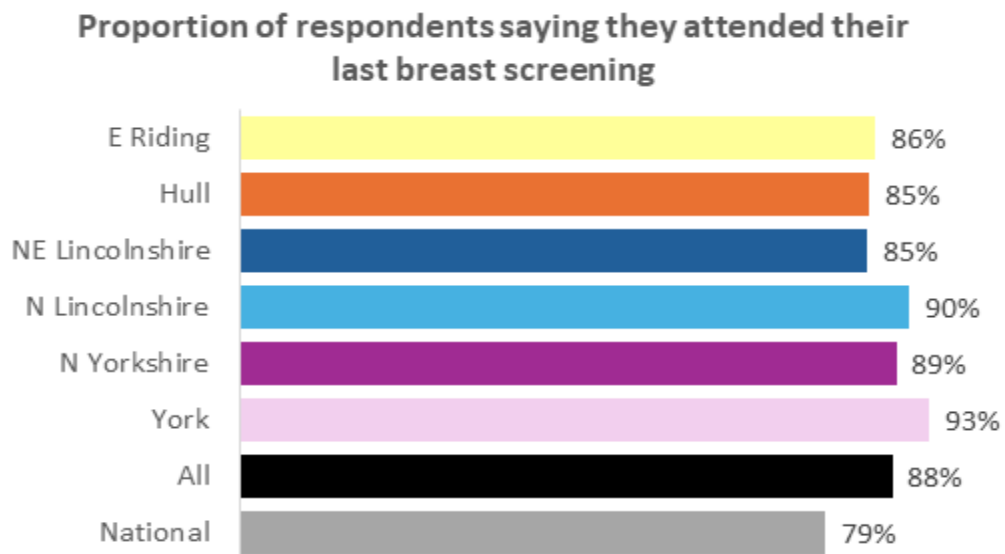
76% of all those eligible in North East Lincolnshire attended their last cervical cancer screening and 86% said they intended to attend their next screening.



66% of those eligible in North East Lincolnshire completed their last bowel cancer screening kit (slightly more than all respondents in the region) and 90% said they intended to complete a kit next time.



85% of those eligible in North East Lincolnshire attended their last breast cancer screening while 94% said they intend to attend their next breast screening.



Conclusion

Respondents in North East Lincolnshire had a slightly higher recall for a persistent cough as a warning sign/symptom of cancer. They were slightly less likely to have contacted their GP within six months of noticing any symptom (43% compared to 49% of all respondents). They were slightly more likely to have had a virtual/remote appointment (28% compared to 23%) and were slightly less likely to say they found it difficult to get an appointment (10% compared to 15%). They were less likely to have completed a bowel cancer screening kit (66% compared to 74%).