



**Knowledge of the Choose and Book Programme
Amongst GPs in England**

**An update of the 2004 Survey of GPs' Opinions for
the National Audit Office**

**Main Report
September 2005**

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1 Summary of Findings

1.1 2005 Survey

- The majority (61%) of respondents know something about Choose and Book.
- Nearly three quarters of respondents (72%) say they understand the benefits of Choose and Book.
- 74% of GPs are aware that there is a requirement to offer patients 4 or 5 choices at referral.
- The main opportunities that Choose and Book will offer were identified as:
 - Greater patient involvement in treatment decisions
 - Greater convenience for patients
 - Reduction in Do Not Attends.
- Almost a third (30%) of respondents could not identify any opportunities offered by Choose and Book.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents felt that the consultation on implementation of Choose and Book was inadequate – 93% of respondents felt this.
- The comparison of information required and perceived to be available showed that many GPs think patients would like information but feel that it is not available.
- Waiting time information was the item of information that GPs felt patients would most require to help in their choice of provider.
- Similarly there is a requirement for information for GPs to help in their recommendations, but a low perception that this is available.
- Waiting time information was also the information GPs would most like to be able to access as part of their referral recommendation.
- More than half (53%) of GPs say they do not currently offer patients a choice of healthcare provider.
- The majority of respondents say they are not willing to offer patients a choice of 4 or 5 providers in the future – 61% of respondents stated this.
- Very few respondents (8%) have prior experience of Choose and Book.
- A large proportion of GPs (61%) say they are likely to use Choose and Book when it is introduced.
- Most GPs (78%) were aware that they do not have to book the appointments themselves.
- Respondents did not feel that Choose and Book would have an overall impact on patient's experience of healthcare – 41% said it would be the same.
- 46% of participating GPs perceived that the introduction of Choose and Book will increase healthcare inequalities for disadvantaged patients.
- A significant proportion (41%) felt that Choose and Book would have no effect on healthcare inequalities.

- Three quarters (74%) of respondents felt that Choose and Book would require greater resources to help them manage the implementation of the service for disadvantaged patients.
- Almost half of the sample (47%) said they do not have the capacity to implement Choose and Book.
- The majority feel the service will require practices to work differently.
- Different work practices would cover
 - More consultation time
 - More administration
 - Need for reliable IT
- There is consensus the Choose and Book will lengthen consultation times in some way – 94% of respondents said this would be the case.
- There is also consensus that Choose and Book will increase workload – 93% of respondents indicated that they thought this would happen to some extent.
- The overall perception of Choose and Book was negative – 78% of respondents said the prospect of Choose and Book would be very negative or a little negative.
- There were few significant regional differences seen in the analysis.
- Similarly few major variations according to year of graduation were seen in the sample.
- Knowledge of Choose and Book does influence some of the perceptions of the service favourably, as does prior experience of the services (although this element of the sample is small and analyses using this group should be treated with caution).

1.2 Comparison of the 2004 and 2005 Surveys

- The degree of knowledge about Choose and Book has increased from 2004 to 2005. 50 % of respondents knew either a lot or something about it in 2004, whereas 76% now fall into this group.
- Similarly the proportion of GPs who understand the benefits has increased from 53% to 72%.
- 74% of GPs are now aware that the patient should be offered 4 or 5 choices when being referred. This has increased from 54% a year ago.
- GPs are identifying fewer specific benefits of Choose and Book this year compared to last.
- The vast majority of GPs think that the consultation process for Choose and Book has not been adequate, although the proportion has declined from 97% to 93%.
- More GPs now think that Choose and Book will have a negative impact (to some degree) on patient's experience of healthcare., although the percentage of those who think it will be the same is constant at around 40%.

- There have been no significant changes in GPs opinions with regard to the effect of Choose and Book on health equalities. The samples are fairly evenly split between “no effect” and “increase health equalities”.
- In 2005, even more GPs believe that Choose and Book will require greater resources to implement for disadvantaged patients than in 2004. The increase is from 69% to 74%.
- More GPs now think their practice has the resources to implement Choose and Book. This has risen from 19% to 29%, therefore the majority of GPs still are of the view that their resources are not adequate.
- The vast majority of GPs in both surveys feel that they will have to work differently when Choose and Book is implemented. The proportion has increased from 84% to 88% over the year.
- The majority of GPs continue to think that consultations will be a lot longer as a result of Choose and Book. (61% in 2004 and 58% in 2005. These differences are not statistically significant). However, the number of GPs who feel that consultations will be a little longer has increased, from 30% to 36%.
- 90% of GPs in both surveys think that their overall workload will increase to some extent . The change has been a slight decline in the number who believe it will increase a lot and an increase in those who believe it will increase a little.
- Overall, GPs feel more negative about the prospect of Choose and Book in 2005 than in 2004. 45% feel very negative compared with 34% in 2004. There has also been an increase in those who feel a little negative, form 27% to 33%.
- The pattern which has emerged is that GPs are better informed and more knowledgeable about Choose and Book this year compared to last but are generally less positive about the system.

2 Introduction

The Department of Health has a target to ensure that by the end of 2005 every hospital appointment in the National Health Service in England is booked for the convenience of the patient. This will be done by introducing a service which will make it easier for patients and their GP to choose the hospital and the consultant that best meet their needs.

In consultation with their GP, patients should be able to choose:

- Their healthcare provider
- Their preferred location for treatment
- The time and date of their initial outpatient appointment. The appointment should be within 24 hours of the decision to refer the patient for treatment.

The Department has chosen to link choice at referral with the e-booking project, part of the Connecting for Health initiative (previously known as the National Programme for IT – NPfIT). The combined policy is known as 'Choose and Book' and for the purposes of this survey the phrase 'Choose and Book' is used.

In October 2004 the NAO commissioned Doctors.net.uk to conduct a study covering the Department's preparations for the introduction of the Choose and Book project. The NAO now have a requirement to update their assessment of Choose and Book and will be reporting to Parliament in due course.

Doctors.net.uk have been asked to carry out the repeat study using on-line methodology with members of Doctors.net.uk who are GPs practising in England. All Doctors.net.uk members are GMC registered medical practitioners and have access to the Doctors.net.uk website through a user name and password. Doctors.net.uk have been contracted to conduct the fieldwork, collect all responses, analyse the information and prepare a summary report of the findings of this phase of the research. In addition, the results from the two surveys (2004 and 2005) will be compared.

3 Research Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of this phase of the research was primarily to:

- Update the results found in 2004
- To make a comparison with those results to understand to what extent GPs views on Choose and Book have changed.

The questionnaire used was broadly similar to that in the 2004 research. The areas covered were:

- The degree of understanding of Choose and Book
 - Its benefits
 - Requirements
 - Opportunities it offers
- Requirements to implement Choose and Book
 - Information required by patients and clinicians
 - Understanding of the level of choice that should be offered
- Usage of Choose and Book
 - Current usage
 - Future usage
- Impact on Patients
 - Patients' experience of healthcare
 - Considerations for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups
- Impact on GPs
 - Capacity
 - Work patterns
 - Lengthen of consultations
 - Overall workload
- Overall opinion of Choose and Book

The questionnaire for phase 2, including the definitions of the English regions, is provided in Appendix I.

The survey was conducted on-line between 1st and 16th September 2005. All members of Doctors.net.uk who are GPs practising in England were invited to participate. The survey was closed when 1501 completed responses had been obtained.

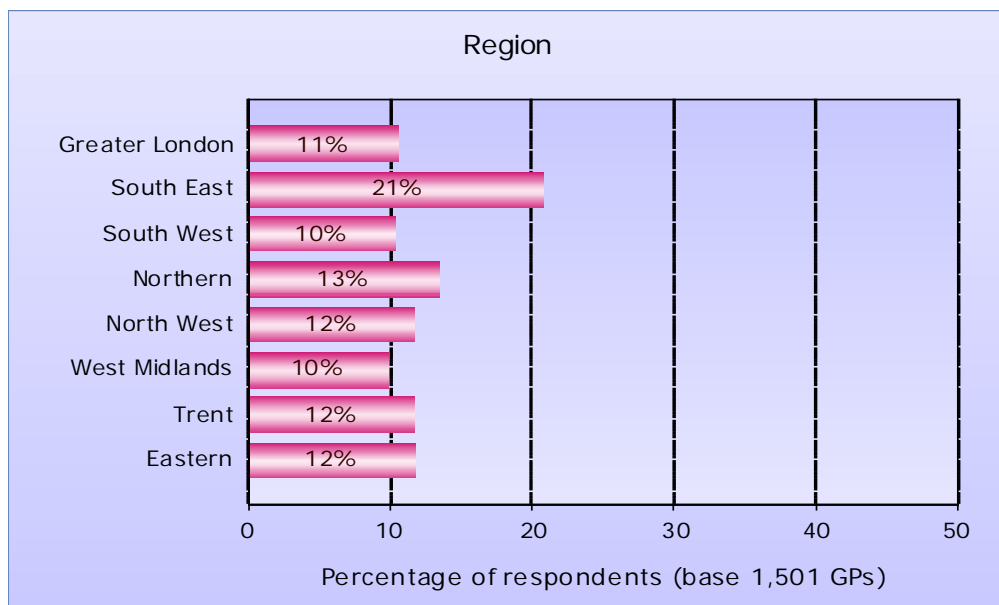
4 Results

The key findings from 1501 respondents surveyed are detailed in this section.

4.1 Sample Demographics

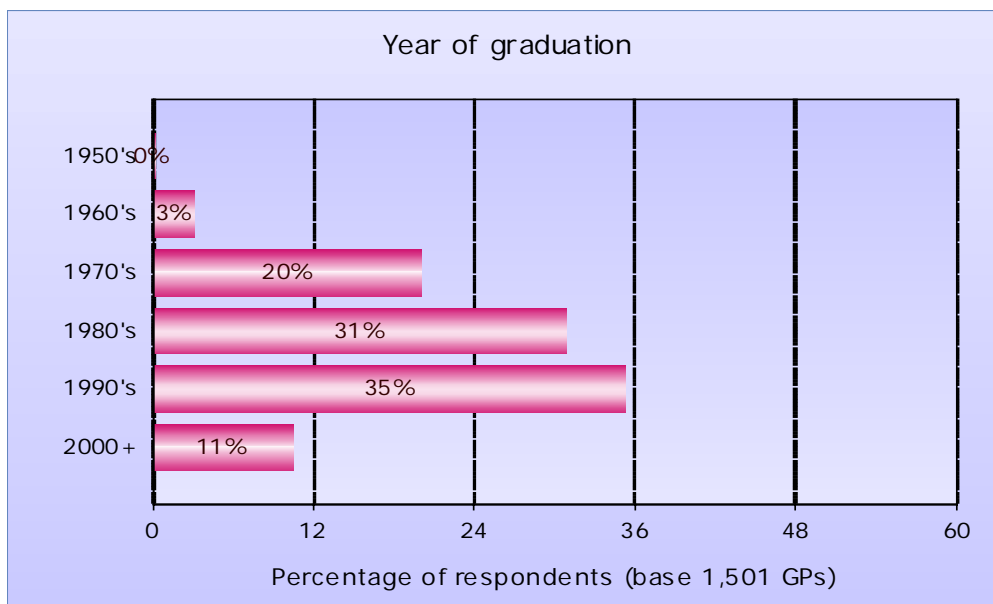
In terms of region, Figure 1 shows the split of respondents across the regions. All regions were represented in the survey. The largest proportion of respondents were in the South East region; which accounted for 21% of the sample. 32% of respondents were in the Greater London and South East regions combined.

Figure 1 : Distribution of the sample by English regions



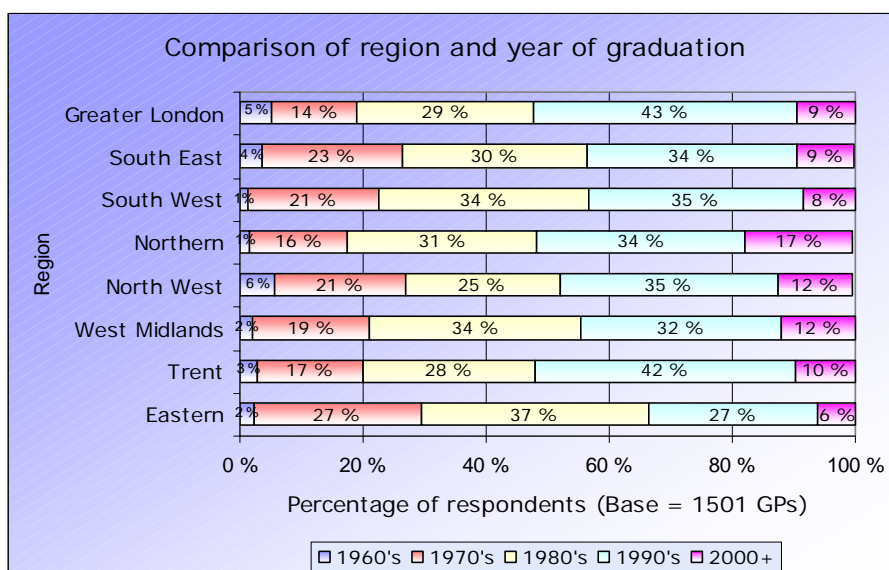
The majority of respondents qualified post 1970, 97% of GPs fall into this category. The largest proportion of participants qualified in the 1990s group.

Figure 2 : Distribution of sample by year of graduation



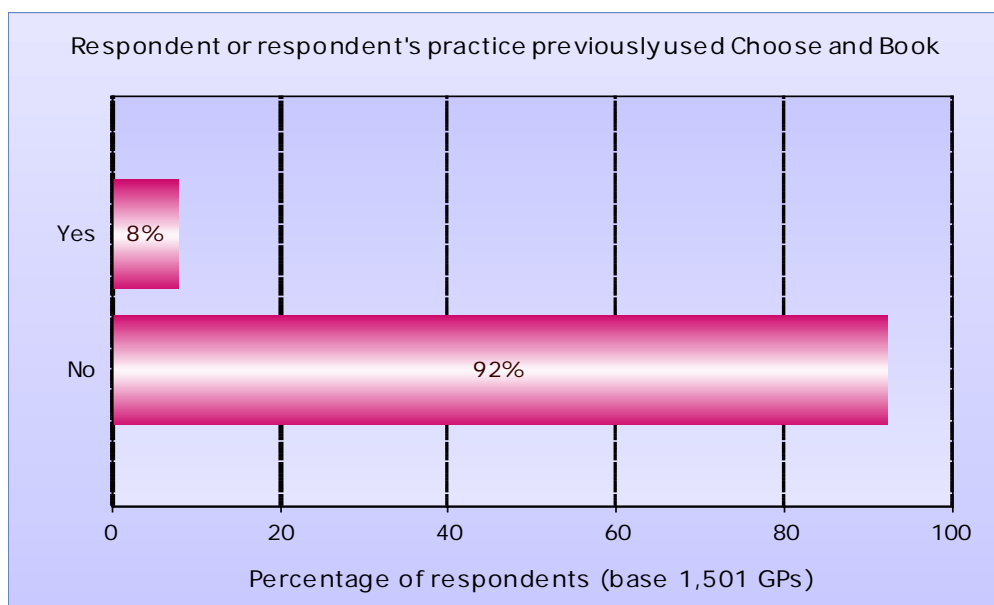
The comparison of year of qualification within region shows that each region has a distribution of year of qualification. The Eastern region has the highest proportion of GPs who qualified in the 70's and 80's, whereas Greater London and Trent have the highest proportion of GPs who qualified in the 90's, with 43% and 42% respectively. Northern region has the highest proportion of younger GPs who qualified post 2000, with 17%.

Figure 3 Comparison of regions with year of qualification



Respondents were also asked whether they, or their practice, had used Choose and Book. This question is covered in detail later in the survey, however it has also been used in the analysis of answers to the survey hence it has been included here. A very small section of the sample (8%) had used the facility at the time of the survey.

Figure 4 : Respondents who have used Choose and Book



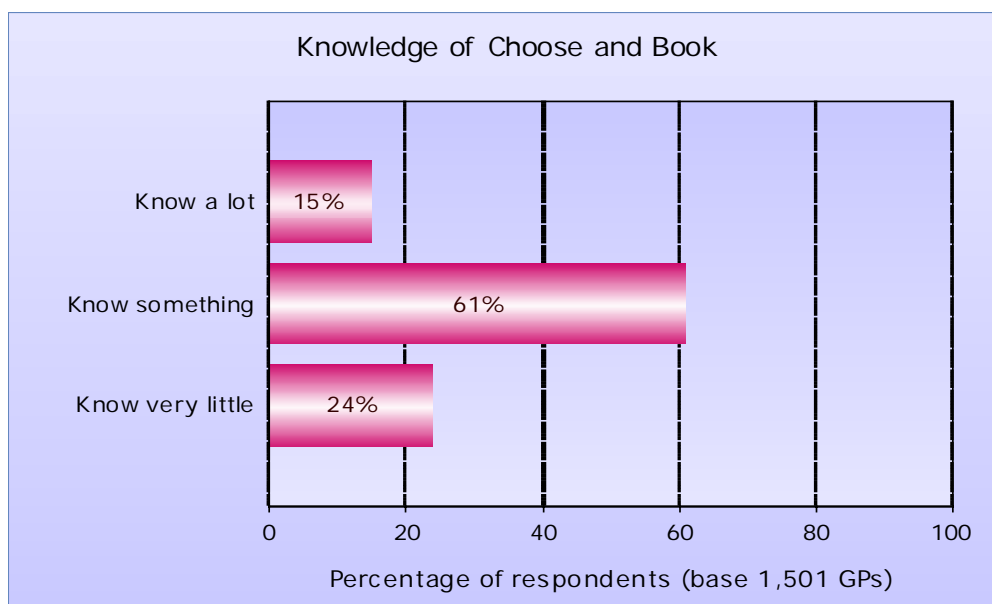
The sample size for those who have used Choose and Book is small (118 respondents) therefore caution should be used in interpreting these results. However, it does add a useful dimension. The greatest number of Choose and Book users was in the Trent region where 12% of respondents had used it. The lowest was in the South West where only 3% had experience of the service.

4.2 The Degree of Understanding of Choose and Book

4.2.1 Knowledge of Choose and Book

The majority of respondents know something about Choose and Book. 61% of respondents placed themselves in this category. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) said they know very little about Choose and Book. 15% of the sample said they know a lot about the service.

Figure 5 : Degree of knowledge about Choose and Book



The level of knowledge of Choose and Book across the regions was broadly similar. London has a lower proportion of respondents who say they know a lot about the service (11%). However, it has the highest level of respondents saying they know a something (69%). Overall London has the highest proportion of respondents who know something about Choose and Book. The lowest level of knowledge of the service was in the North West where 30% said they know very little about Choose and Book compared to the national average of 24%.

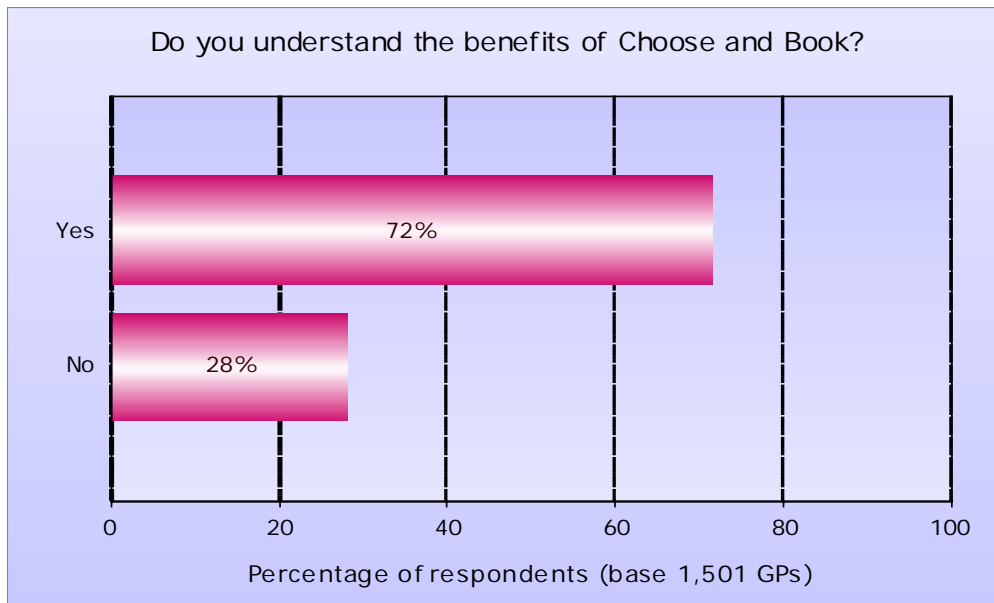
Respondents who qualified post 2000 know the least about Choose and Book. Only 5% said they know a lot and 30% said they know very little.

In the respondent group who had used Choose and Book the proportion who said they know a lot about it was 32%, over twice the national average. However, 6% of this group still know very little about it. This may be because the actual respondent had not used Choose and Book but that it had been used in their practice.

4.2.2 Benefits of Choose and Book

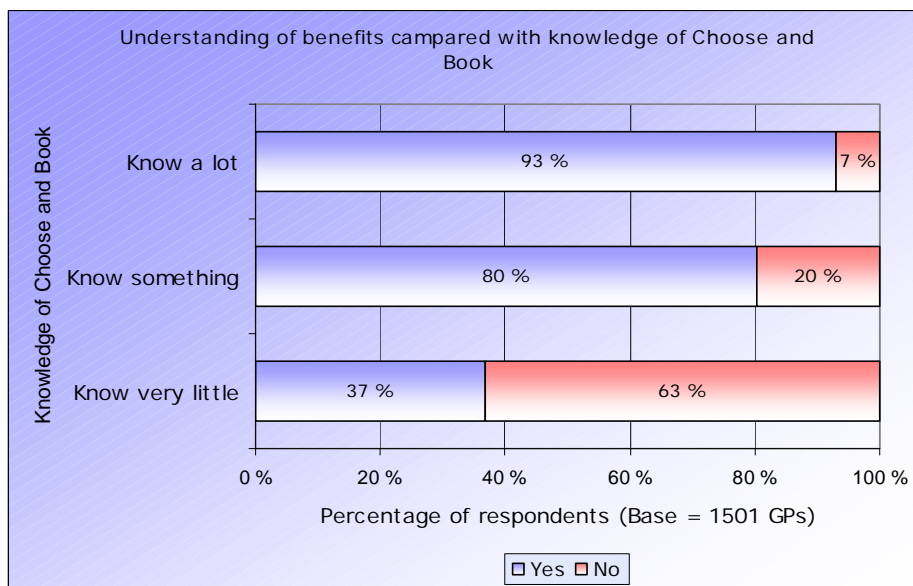
Three quarters of respondents (72%) said that they understood the benefits of Choose and Book.

Figure 6 : Degree of knowledge of Choose and Book



As Figure 7 demonstrates, understanding of the benefits of the service greatly influences the understanding of the benefits. 96% of respondents who know a lot about Choose and Book said they understood its benefits.

Figure 7 : Analysis of understanding of the benefits of Choose and Book compared with knowledge of the service

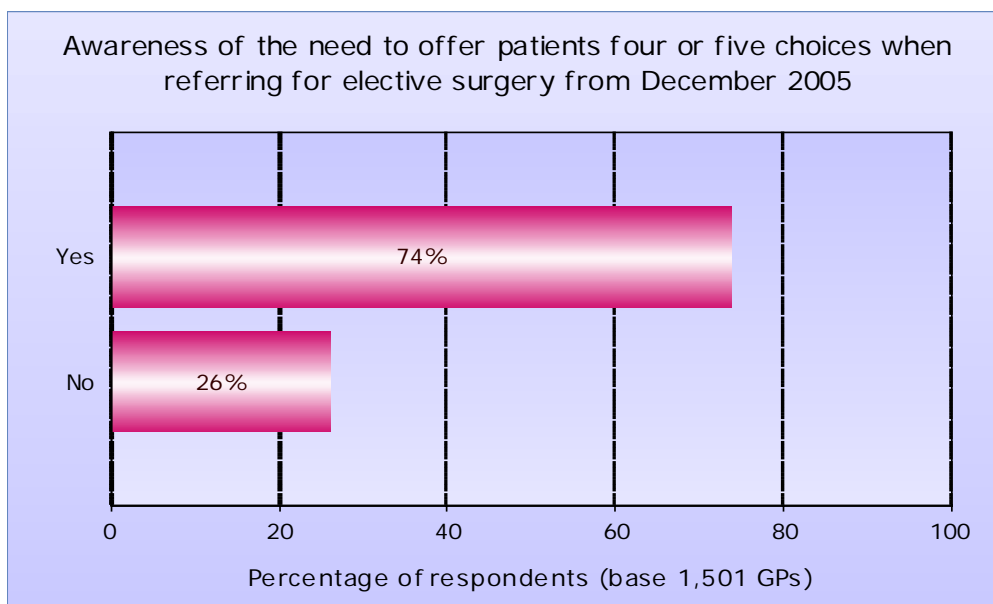


The split of those who understand the benefits of Choose and Book by year of qualification doesn't demonstrate any major variations. In terms of region the greatest recognition of benefits was in Greater London and the South East where 75% of GPs answered 'yes'. The lowest level of comprehension of the benefits was in the Eastern region (64% answered 'yes')

4.2.3 Requirements

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of the requirement to offer patients four or five choices when referring a patient. The majority of GPs (76%) were aware of this requirement.

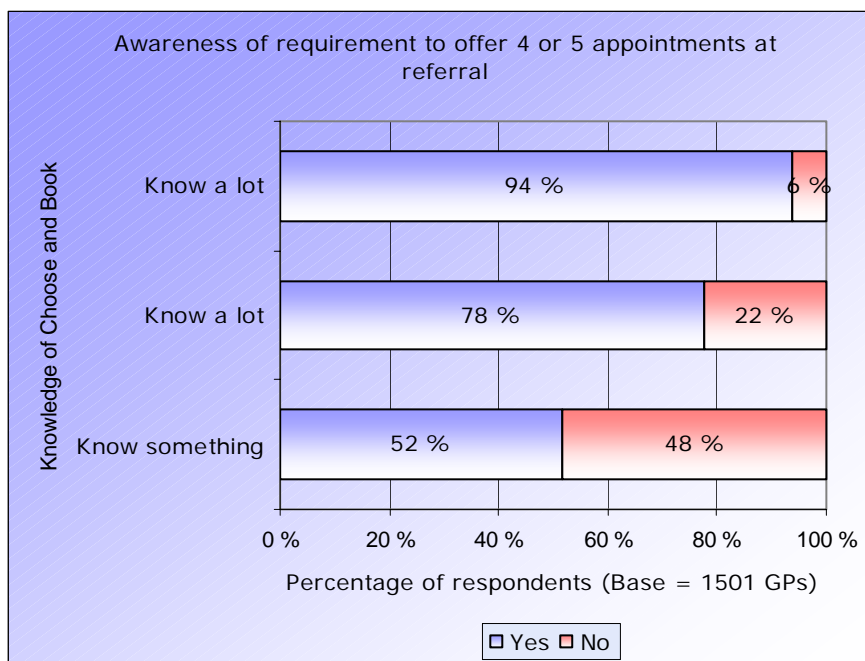
Figure 8 : Awareness of the requirement to offer patients 4 or 5 choices at referral



There was very little variance in this figure across in the year of qualification analysis or the regional analysis. Of note is that 83% of GPs who graduated in the 60's were aware of this requirement compared with 68% of this who graduated post 2000.

Perhaps as anticipated, the knowledge of this requirement is much higher amongst those GPs who say they know a lot about Choose and Book compared with those who say they know very little (94% compared to 52% respectively)

Figure 9 : Comparison of awareness of the requirement to offer 4 or 5 choices at referral with knowledge of Choose and Book



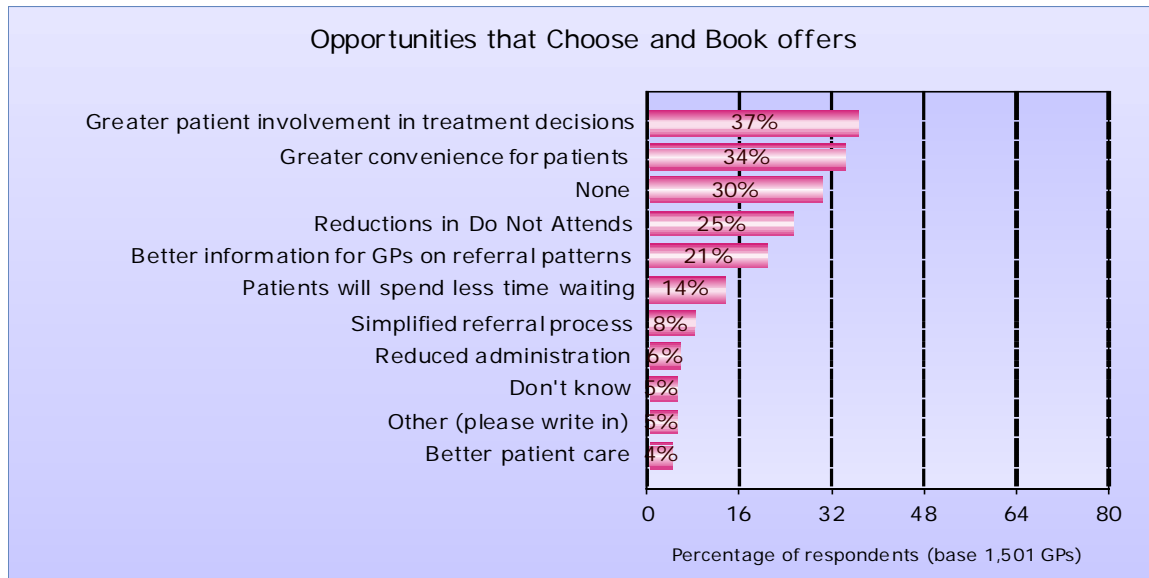
4.2.4 Opportunities Offered by Choose and Book

GPs were asked to select what opportunities, if any, they thought Choose and Book would offer. The top three positive opportunities selected by the respondent group were:

- Greater patient involvement in treatment decisions – 37%
- Greater convenience for patients – 35%
- Reductions in Do Not Attends – 24%

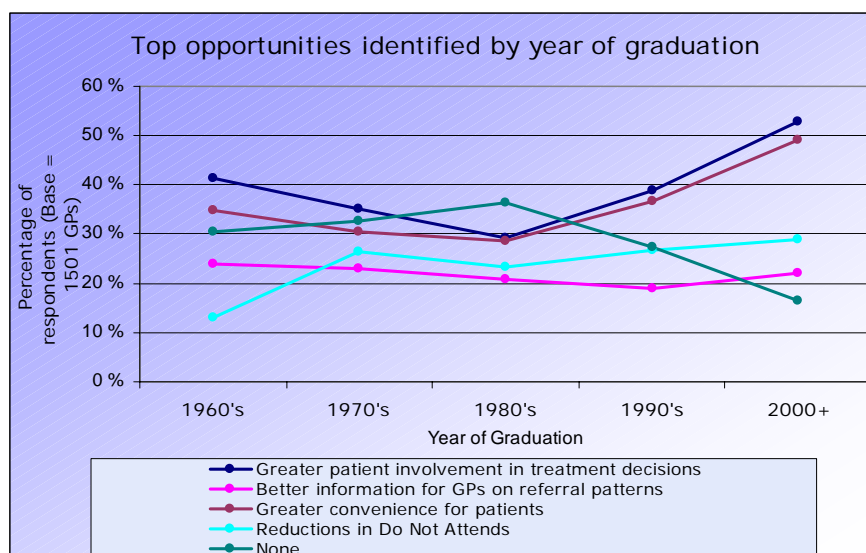
However, at 30%, the third most frequently selected answer was 'none'.

Figure 10 : Opportunities offered by Choose and Book



The figure below demonstrates the variance in opportunities identified by year of qualification. Those who qualified later seem to identify positive opportunities, with a lower incidence of 'none' in these groups.

Figure 11 : Comparison of top 5 opportunities by year of qualification



In terms of region respondents in the London region see more opportunities than those in the other regions. For example, 53% of respondents cite Choose and Book bringing 'Greater convenience for patients' in the London region compared with 35% overall.

There are no particularly negative regions. The split of responses is reasonably balanced.

Those GPs who had used Choose and Book tended to select positive opportunities offered by Choose and Book. The percentage choosing the top three positive responses was:

- Greater convenience for patients – 53% (compared with 34% overall)
- Greater patient involvement in treatment decisions – 40% (compared with 37% overall)
- Reductions in Do Not Attends – 36% (compared with 25% overall).

Those GPs who class themselves as knowing a lot about Choose and Book felt that the facility offered 'Better information for GPs on referral patterns' compared with the overall group (29% compared with 21% overall). However more of the same group also felt that Choose and Book didn't offer any opportunities (35% selected 'none' compared with 30% overall).

Some respondents (5%) selected the other categories and highlighted other opportunities such as:

- Better patient choice
- Less waiting
- Greater understanding by the patient.
- Ability to track referrals
- Improvements to GPs' IT

However, a large proportion of this group felt the opportunity was in shifting the burden of administration to the GP.

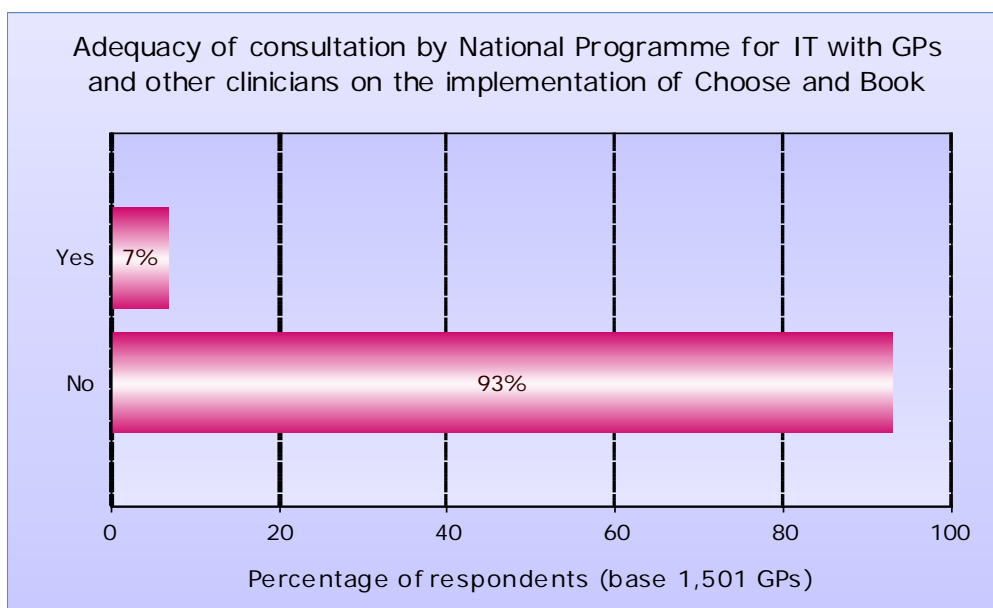
The verbatim listings are provided in Appendix II as a separate volume of the report.

4.3 The Consultation Process for Choose and Book

4.3.1 Adequacy of the consultation on the implementation timetable

GPs were asked if they felt that the National Programme for IT (now Connecting for Health) had consulted adequately on the implementation of Choose and Book. An overwhelming majority of respondents felt that this was not the case. 93% of respondents answered no to this question

Figure 12 : Adequacy of consultation on Choose and Book



The overall sentiment was uniformly expressed across the regions. Greater London and Eastern each had a slightly higher proportion of respondents indicating that the consultation had been adequate (10% and 11% respectively).

In terms of year of qualification a higher proportion of those who qualified post 2000 (11%) felt they had been adequately consulted.

Even the respondent group who categorise themselves as knowing a lot about Choose and Book felt that the consultation had not been adequate (92% answering 'no').

Looking at the group who have used Choose and Book, slightly more of this group felt that the consultation has been adequate (13% compared with 7% overall).

4.4 Information and Choice

4.4.1 Information required by patients and clinicians

4.4.1.1 Patients

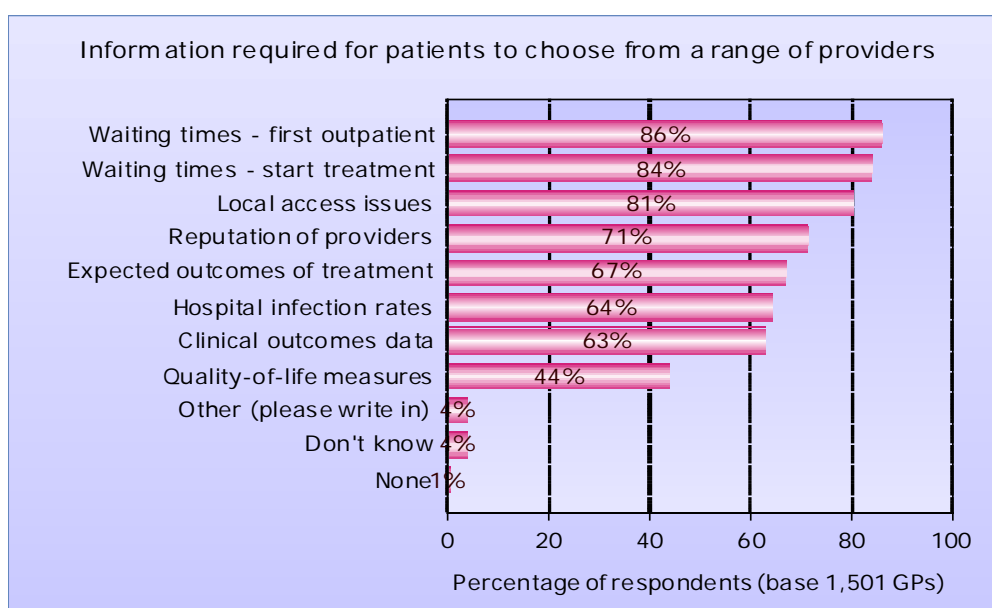
The respondents were asked firstly to select from a list the items of information that they felt would be *required by patients* to help them in their choice of healthcare provider.

Waiting time information, both to first appointment and to start of treatment, was top of the list of information required (86% and 84% respectively).

Local access issues (such as local transport routes, parking availability) were also deemed to be important with 81% of respondents selecting this item.

Indeed all of the items offered scored highly. The lowest ranked item was quality of life issues at 44%.

Figure 13 : Information required for patients to choose a provider

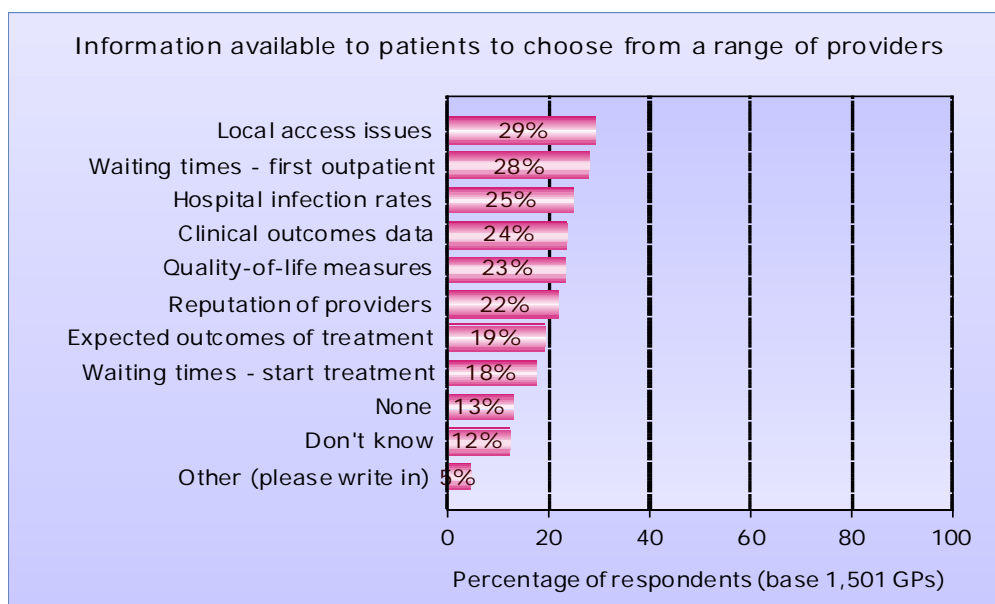


More GPs who qualified in the 1960's and 1970's selected both waiting time criteria and hospital infection rates, than average. There was little difference in the selections across the regions.

Respondents were then asked to tick the items of information that they thought were available. The selections in this section were much lower. The items of information most GPs felt were available were:

- Information on local access issues – 29%
- Waiting Times – to first outpatient visit – 28%
- Hospital infection rates – 25%.

Figure 14 : Information respondents think is available to patients



In total respondents could select from a list of 9 key areas for both required and available. The comparison the rankings for these items is as follows:

Figure 15 : Comparison of information respondents think patients would like vs what they think is available

	Position in information required	Position in information available
Local access issues	3	1
Expected outcomes of treatment	5	7
Waiting times - first outpatient	1	2
Waiting times - start treatment	2	8
Reputation of providers	4	6
Clinical outcomes data	7	4
Quality of life measures	8	5
Hospital infection rates	6	3
None	9	9

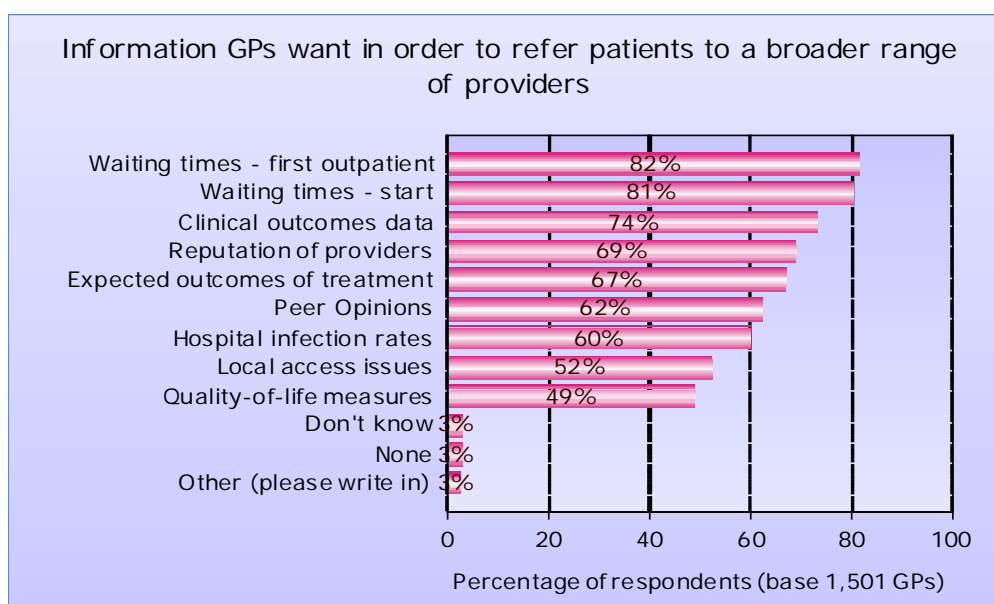
4.4.1.2 GPs

Following on from the previous question the respondents were asked to select from a list the information *they* would need in order to be able to refer patients to a particular provider.

Again the desire for information was high. Waiting times, both to first outpatient appointment and to start of treatment were the top ranked items, with 82% and 81% of respondents selecting these items.

GPs ranked clinical outcomes data as the third most selected item of information (74%). Quality of life measures was the least selected item; local access issues information was also deemed less important in terms of GP information criteria.

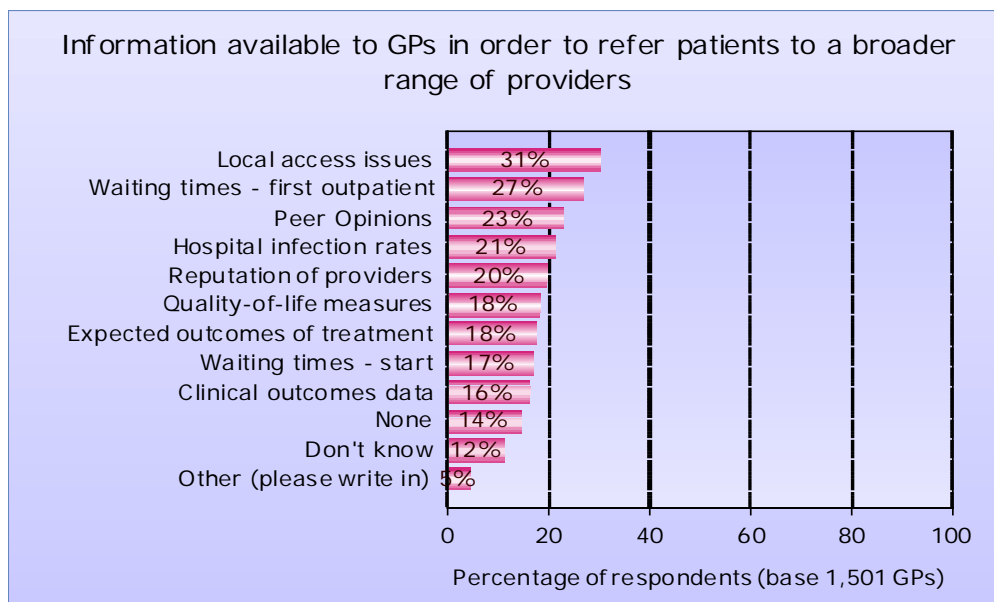
Figure 16 : Information required by GPs to refer patients



When asked which of the list of information items GPs thought were available again the numbers of respondents selecting items was much lower than for the previous selection. The top three items deemed to be available were:

- Local access issues – 31%
- Waiting times – first outpatient appointment – 27%
- Peer opinions – 23%.

Figure 17 : Information respondents feel is available when referring a patient to a provider



Making a similar comparison for information required and available to the GP the data is as follows.

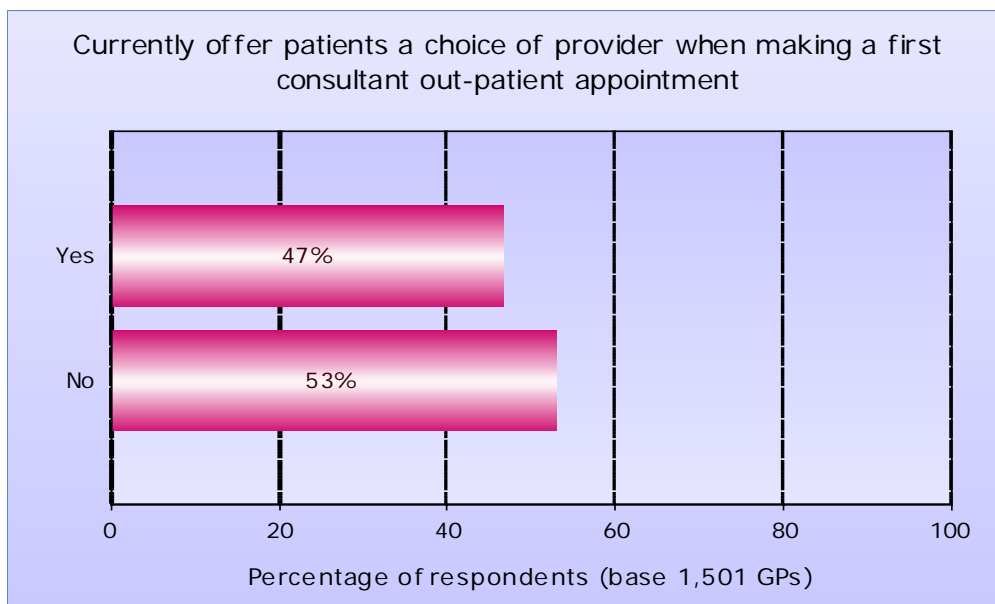
Figure 18 : Comparison of data respondents themselves would like vs what they think is available

	Position in information required	Position in information available
Local access issues	8	1
Expected outcomes of treatment	5	=6
Waiting times - first outpatient	1	2
Waiting times - start treatment	2	8
Reputation of providers	4	5
Clinical outcomes data	3	9
Quality of life measures	9	=6
Peer opinions	6	3
Hospital infection rates	7	4
None	10	10

4.4.2 Offers of choice of provider to patients

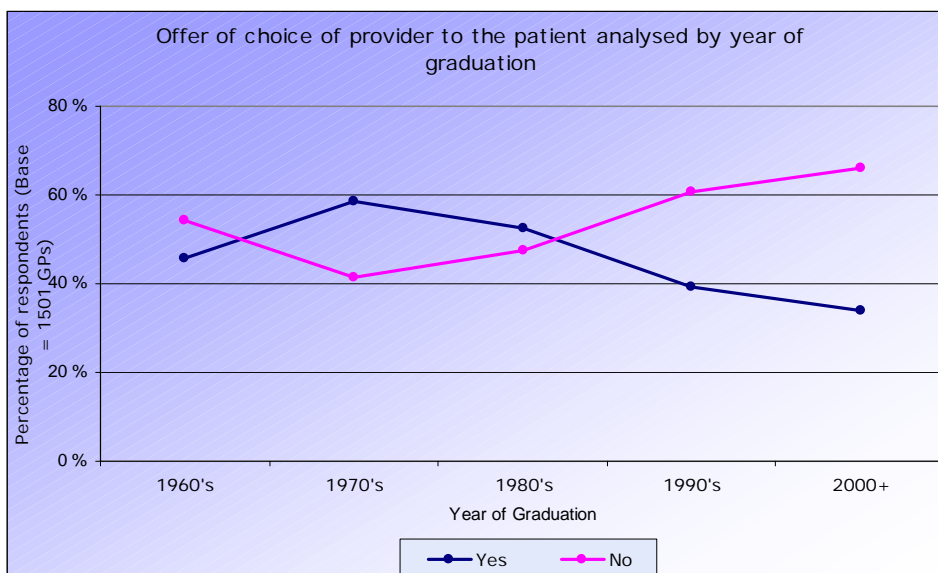
In this phase of the research the study covered the area of patient choice. Firstly do the respondents offer their patients a choice of provider when booking a first outpatient appointment? The sample was split with 47% saying the do offer the patient choice and 53% saying they don't.

Figure 19 : Split of respondents who offer patients a choice of provider



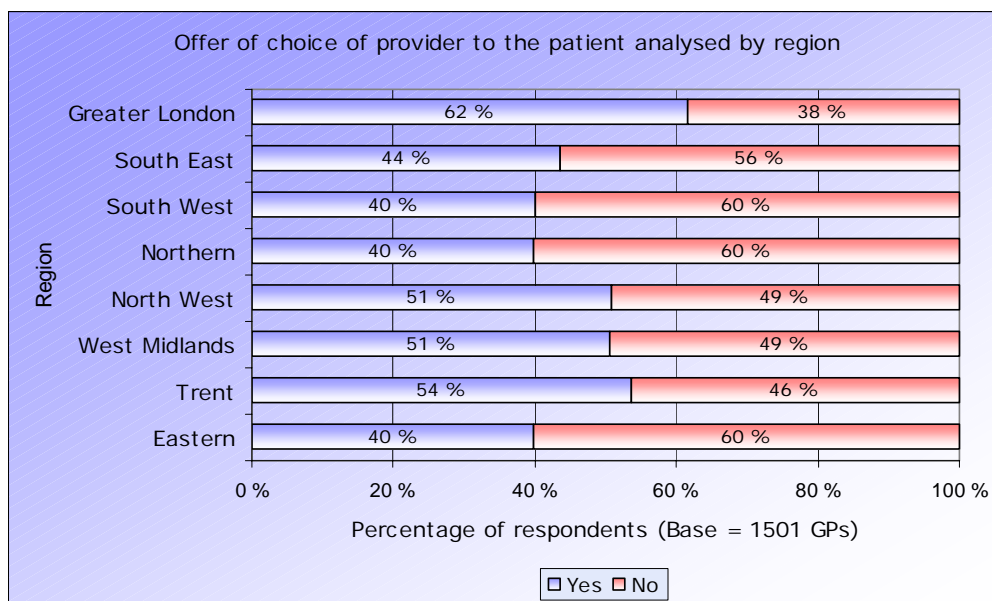
The propensity to offer patients a choice of provider does seem to vary according to the year of graduation of the respondent. The figure below shows the analysis of the data by this criterion demonstrating that GPs who qualified later were less likely to offer patients a choice.

Figure 20 : Analysis of patients offered choice by year of graduation



Similarly there are differences across the regions regarding their propensity to offer choice. 62% of respondents in Greater London will offer a choice whereas only 44% of respondents in the neighbouring South East region do so.

Figure 21 : Comparison of patients offered choice by region

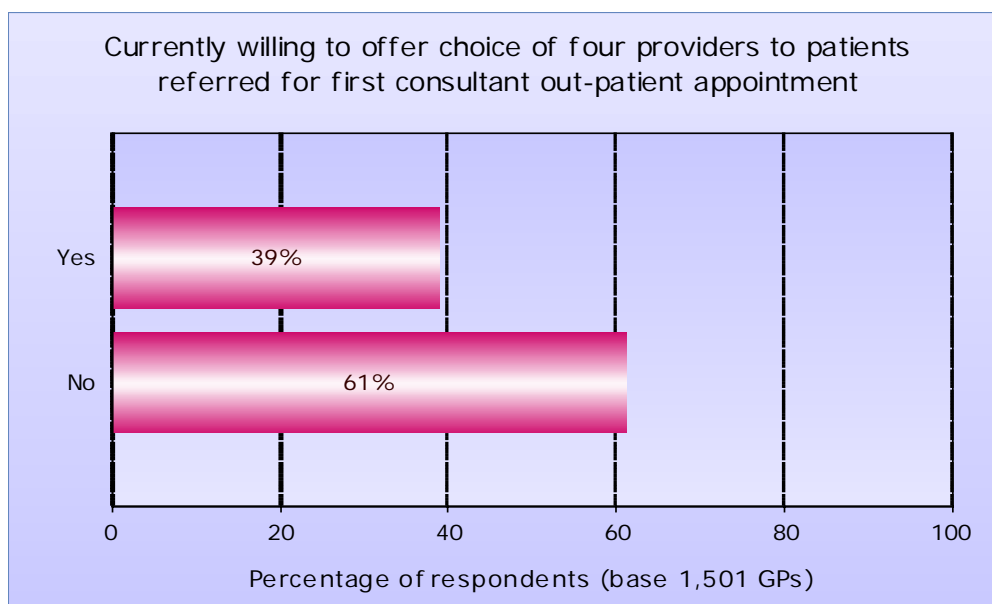


Those GPs who class themselves as knowing a lot about Choose and Book are more likely to offer patients a choice (56%), as do those who have had experience of Choose and Book (58%)

4.4.3 Willingness to offer a choice of 4 or 5 providers

In terms of willingness to offer patients a choice of 4 or 5 providers, almost two thirds of GPs (61%) say they are not willing to offer this level of choice.

Figure 22 : GP willingness to offer a wide choice of provider



GPs in Greater London and Eastern region are more willing than average to offer this level of choice with 44% and 45% of respondents in these regions answering yes to this question. In terms of year of qualification, in contrast to the previous question 47% of those GPs who qualified post 2000 said they were willing to offer patients a choice of 4 or 5 providers.

A similar proportion of respondents who either know a lot about Choose and Book or have used it are willing to offer this level of choice (45% and 46% respectively).

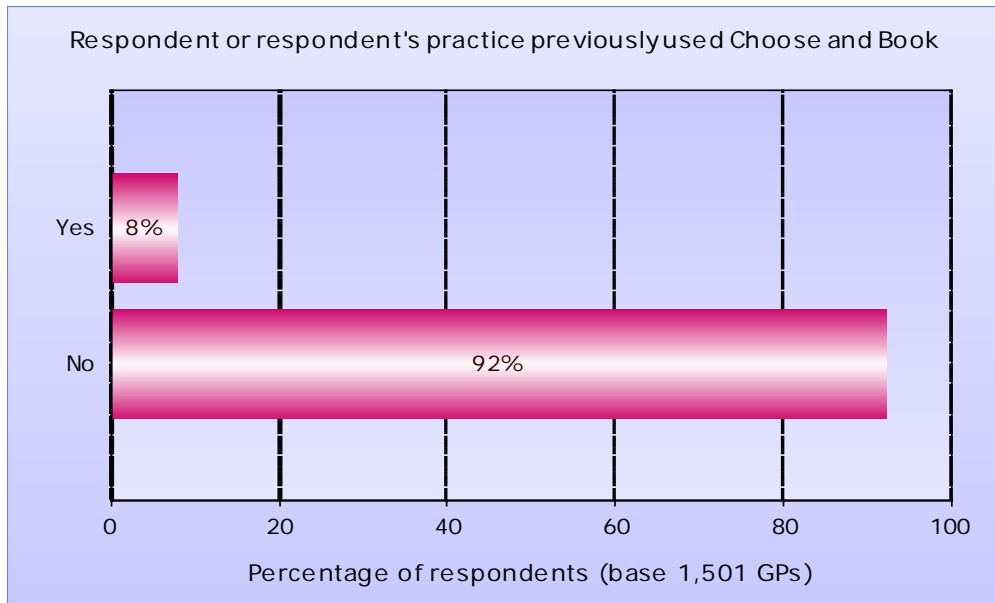
4.5 Experience of Choose and Book and Intentions to Use

In this section respondents were asked about their experience of Choose and Book and their future intention to use the facility.

4.5.1 Respondents experience of Choose and Book

As mentioned previously a small proportion of the sample (8%) have used Choose and Book either personally or in their practice. 17% of those who know a lot about Choose and Book have had experience of the system.

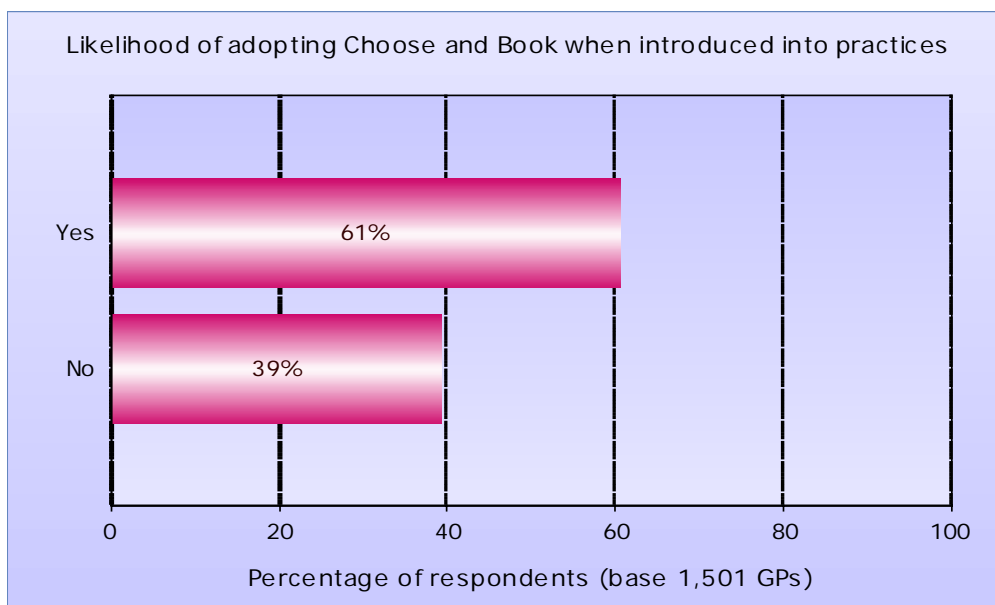
Figure 23 : Usage of Choose and Book



4.5.2 Likelihood of using Choose and Book

The majority of respondents (61%) said that they would use Choose and Book when it is introduced.

Figure 24 : GPs reaction to using Choose and Book when introduced

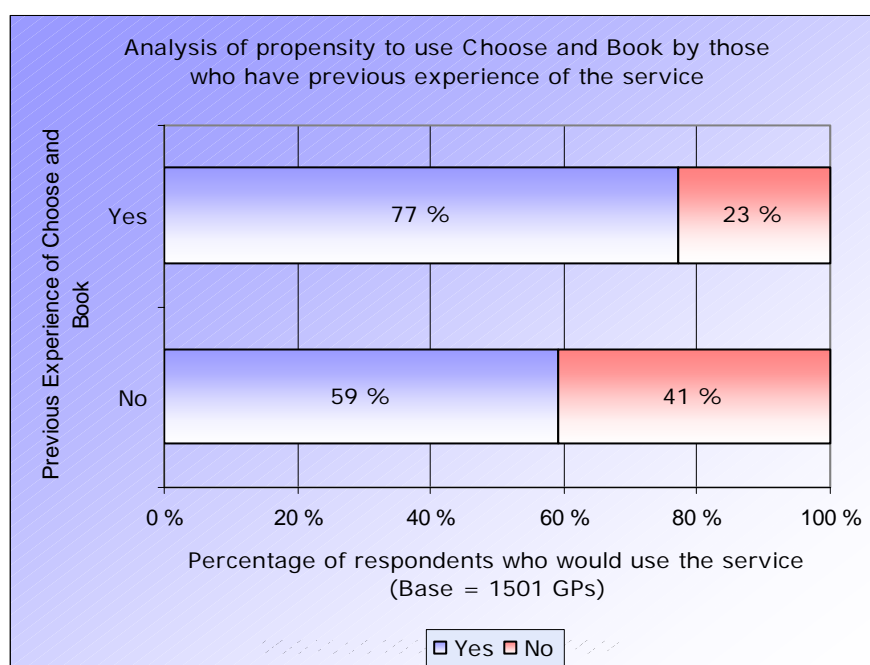


At 70% the likelihood of using the service is highest in the Greater London region. It is lowest in the Northern region, where 53% of respondents say they will adopt Choose and Book.

Those who know a lot or just something about Choose and Book are more likely to use the facility (63% and 61% respectively) than those who know very little. The anticipated level of usage was lower (59%) in this group.

Where respondents had experience of using Choose and Book (118 respondents) the propensity to use it further in the future was higher than the average. In this situation 77% of respondents said they would use it compared with the average of 61%.

Figure 25 : Comparison of likelihood of using Choose and Book compared



Those respondents who said they are not likely to use Choose and Book were asked to state what alternatives they would use.

The main response to this question was that GPs would like to continue to use the system in place now. They quite often offer patients a choice of hospitals and if the patient wants a specific hospital they would try and achieve that.

Local factors were very important. GPs felt that there shouldn't be a need to shop around but that local hospitals should all offer good, reliable services. GPs feel that mostly patients just want to be local.

Some mentioned that offering a wide range of choice was impractical because they only have one local hospital. In this was they felt that Choose and Book focuses on urban areas and is discriminatory against those who can't travel.

In terms of practical alternatives the main options mentioned were:

- A centralised booking system that the patient could call or log on to
- A system that the PCT administrates
- An updated list with information the patient can choose from, but administrated by practice staff.

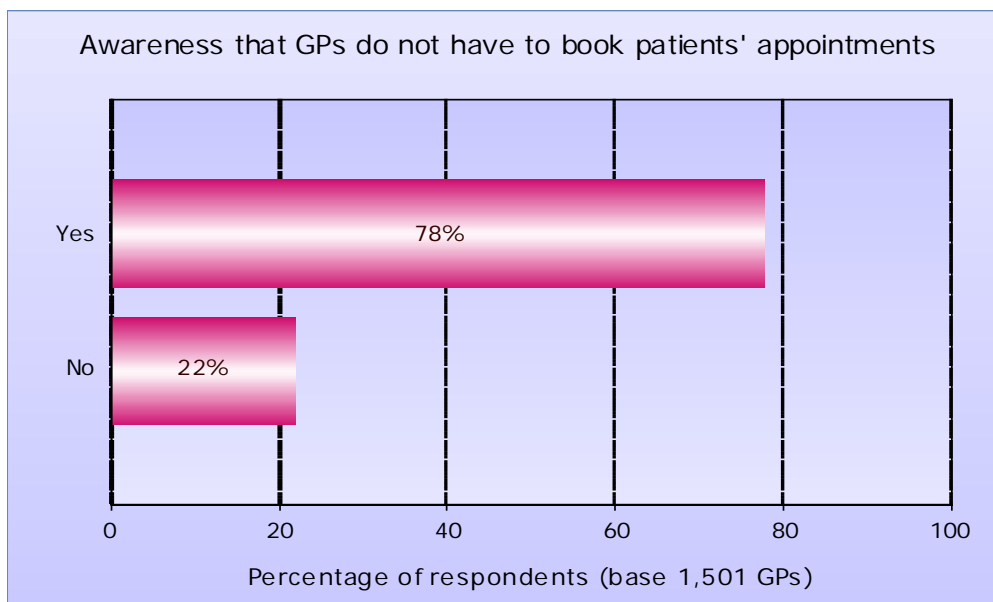
The verbatim listings are provided in Appendix II as a separate volume of the report.

4.5.3 Awareness that the GP does not have to book appointments

In this phase of the research the respondents were asked whether they were aware that they did not have to book the appointment themselves.

The majority of GPs (78%) were aware that they do not have to carry out this activity themselves.

Figure 26 : Awareness of booking options



On a regional basis the knowledge of this fact was quite consistent across the regions. However, in terms of year of qualification there were differences. The lowest awareness of the fact that the GP doesn't have to book appointments themselves was in the group who had qualified post 2000. 67% of respondents in this category were aware of this fact compared with the average of 78%.

In the respondent group who class themselves as knowing very little about Choose and Book, only 56% of respondents were aware that they didn't have to book themselves. 44% of this group were not aware of the fact compared with the average of 22% overall.

Again, awareness of this fact was higher amongst GPs who have experience of Choose and Book, at 89% compared with the national average of 78%.

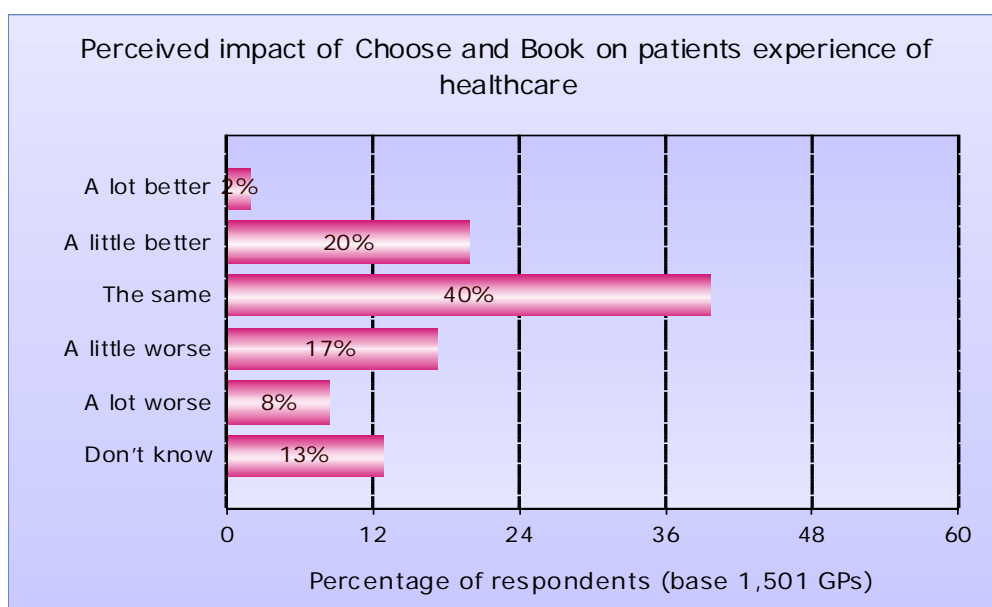
4.6 Impact of Choose and Book on Patients

4.6.1 Patients' experience of healthcare

Most respondents felt that Choose and Book would have no impact on patient's experience of healthcare. 40% of the sample said that patients' experience of healthcare would be the same following the introduction of Choose and Book. In total 22% of felt their patients' experience would be better but 25% selected responses to indicate they felt it would be worse.

13% of respondents didn't know what they anticipate the impact on patient's experience of health will be.

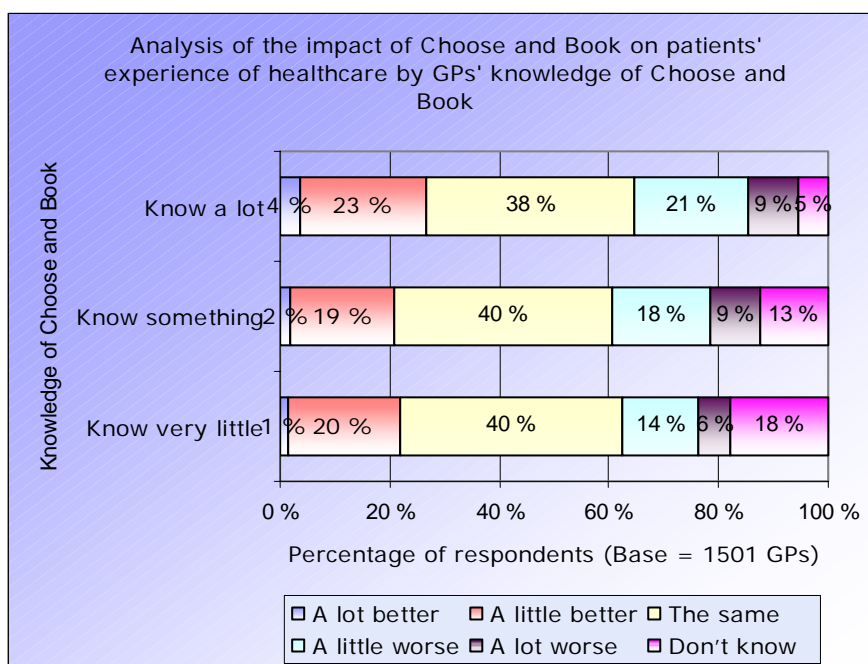
Figure 27 : Anticipated impact of Choose and Book on patient's experience of healthcare



Respondents who know something about Choose and Book differed from the overall population in that a higher proportion felt that patients' experience would be better to some degree (27% compared to 22%), but also 30% believed that it would be worse to some degree compared with 25% overall. Only 5% did not have a view on this.

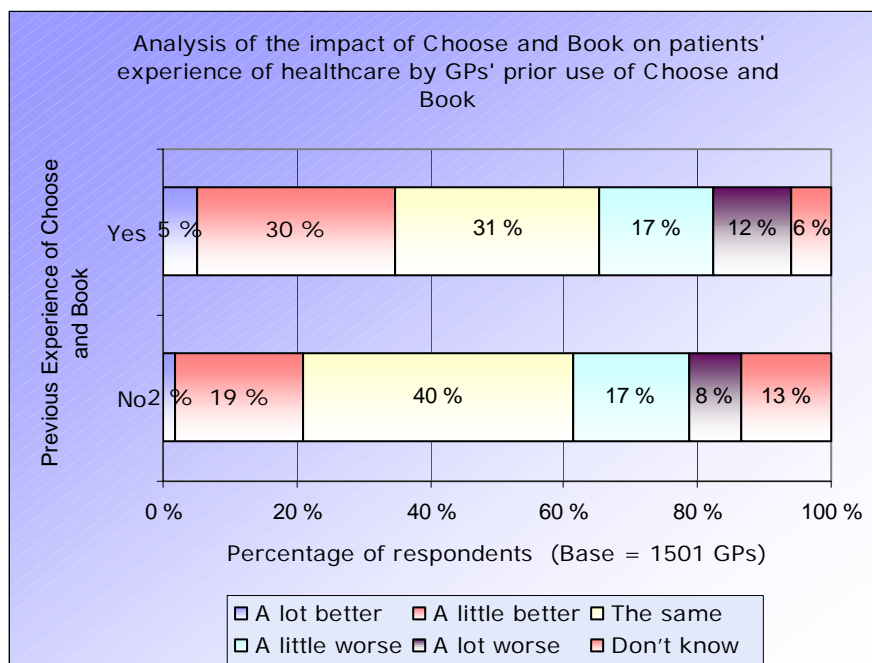
The largest portion (18%) of the sample who didn't know what impact would be was in the group who classed themselves as knowing very little about Choose and Book.

Figure 28 : Analysis of knowledge of Choose and Book influences GP perception of its impact



Previous experience of Choose and Book also gives a clearer view of the perceived impact on patients of the system. In the group who have had experience of Choose and Book, few (6%) said they didn't know what the impact would be. There was a higher proportion who felt that patients' experience would be better (35% compared with 22% of the total).

Figure 29 : Comparison of perceived impact on patient experience by previous usage of Choose and Book



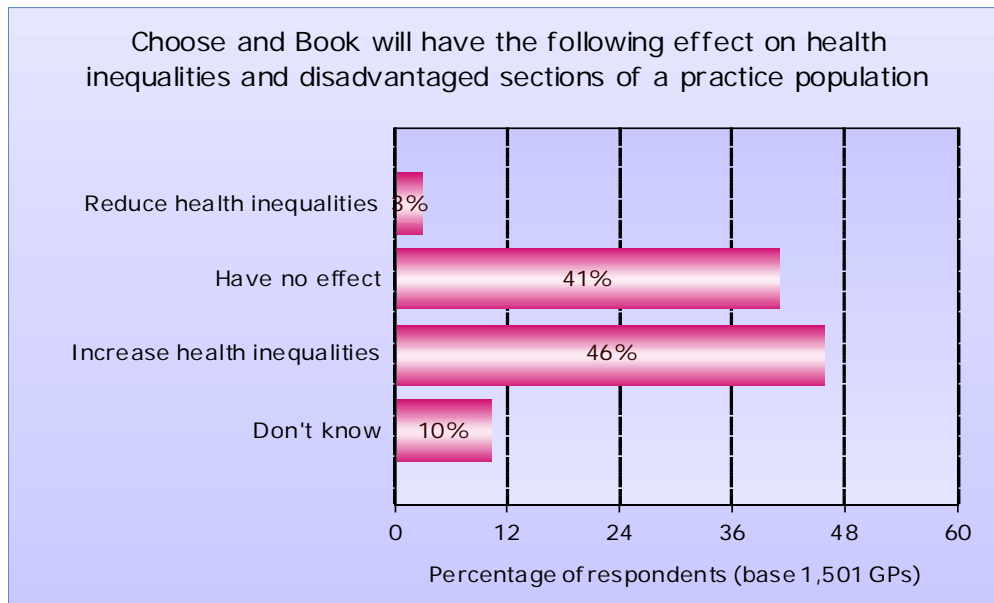
4.6.2 Considerations for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups

Looking into the impact of Choose and Book on patients a little further, respondents were asked about how they felt the facility would impact on specific sections of their patient's i.e. disadvantaged patients and ethnic minorities.

4.6.2.1 Healthcare Inequalities

Almost half of the GPs surveyed (46%) felt that the introduction of Choose and Book would increase health inequalities amongst disadvantaged sections of their practice. Only 3% felt the facility would help reduce inequalities.

Figure 30 : Effect of Choose and Book on health inequalities



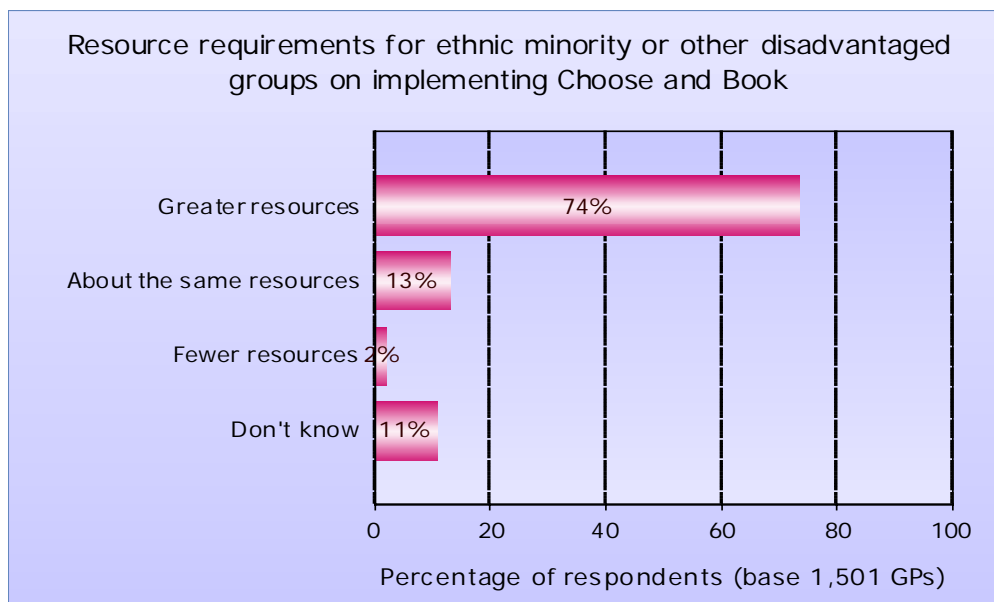
There is little variation across the regions in this aspect of the survey. Slightly more respondents in the London region (8% compared with 3% of the total) felt that Choose and Book would reduce health inequalities.

Those GPs who classed themselves as knowing a lot about Choose and Book tended to feel that the facility would increase health inequalities (51% compared with 46% overall).

4.6.2.2 Impact on Resources

In terms of resource requirement for disadvantaged patients and ethnic minorities, 74% of GPs felt that there would be a greater resource requirement to implement it with these groups.

Figure 31 : Impact on resource requirements to implement Choose and Book amongst disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities



Amongst the group who class themselves as knowing a lot about Choose and Book the percentage of GPs who feel the implementation will take greater resources is slightly higher than average (79% vs 74% overall). Amongst those who have used Choose and Book this figure is slightly lower (71% compared with 74% overall).

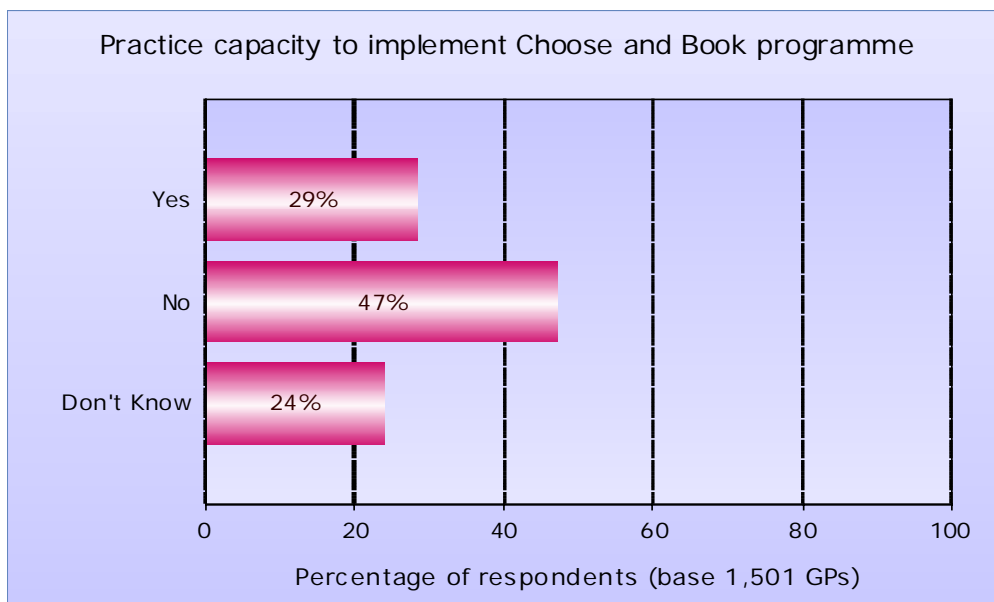
4.7 Impact on GPs

This section of the questionnaire looked at GPs perceptions of how they will manage the implementation of Choose and Book in their practice.

4.7.1 Capacity

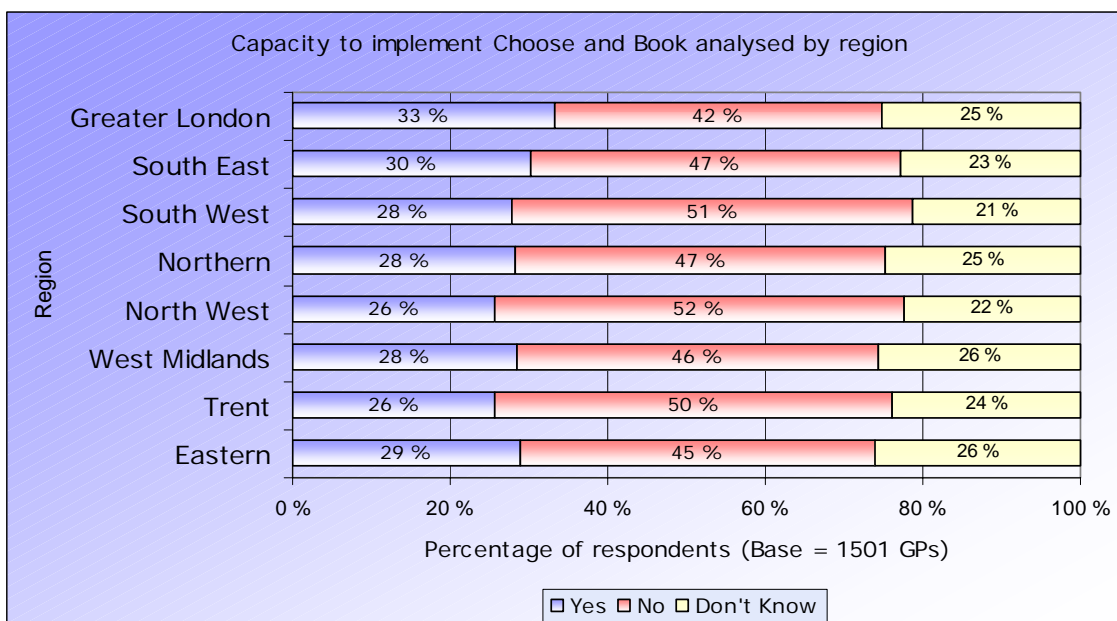
Almost half of the sample (47%) said that they do not think they have the capacity to implement Choose and Book in their practice. Nearly a third (29%) said they do have the capacity, the remaining group (24%) said they don't know.

Figure 32 : GP perception of their capacity to implement Choose and Book



There is a regional variation in how well equipped the respondents feel they are to implement the service. A larger proportion of those in the London region (33%) felt they had the capacity. The lowest figure for this measure occurred in the North West and Trent regions, where only 26% of GPs felt they had the capacity to implement Choose and Book.

Figure 33 : Regional analysis of capacity to implement Choose and Book



Those GPs who class themselves as knowing a lot about Choose and Book also feel more equipped to implement the service; 40% of this group said that they do have the capacity to implement Choose and Book.

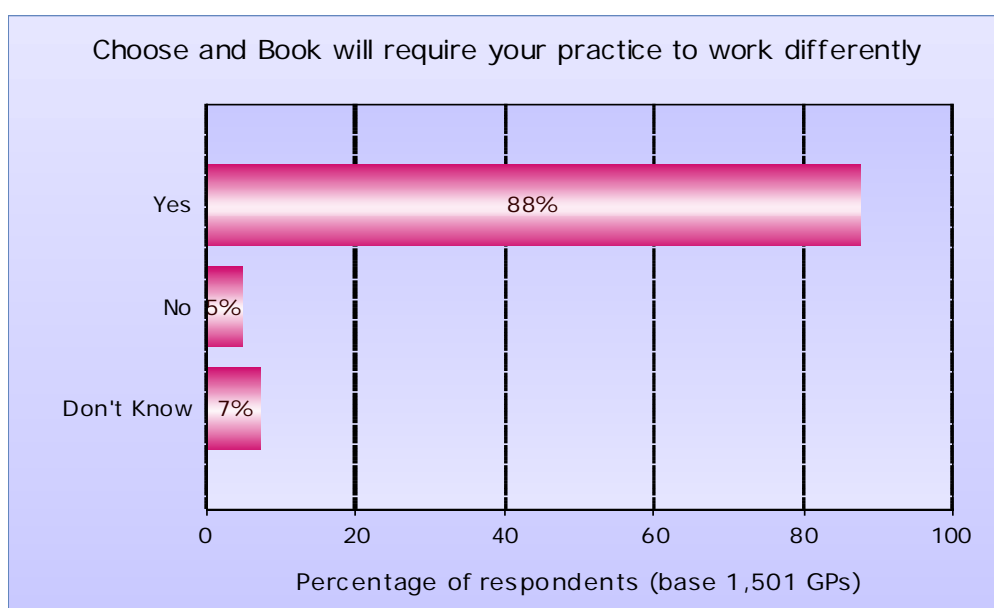
The proportion of GPs saying that they don't have the capacity doesn't change when analysed by knowledge of the service. However, the proportion saying they don't know whether they have the capacity does increase with a decreasing level of knowledge about the service. Of those who know something about the service 23% didn't know if they will have the capacity, Amongst those who know very little about Choose and Book, 33% say they don't know if they will have suitable capacity.

Confidence regarding the introduction of Choose and Book was much higher amongst those who had experience of the service. Within this group 51% were happy that they have sufficient capacity.

4.7.2 Work patterns

There is a high level of consensus that Choose and Book will require practices to work differently – 88% of GPs answered yes to this question.

Figure 34 : Do GPs think Choose and Book will require them to work differently?



There is little variance in this figure across regions or year of qualification.

Amongst the group who have had experience of Choose and Book this figure is lower. In this group 83% of respondents said that they thought its implementation would require their practice to work

differently. Of those who know a lot about Choose and Book, 92% believe their practice would have to work differently.

Those GPs who said they felt they would be required to work differently as a result of the introduction of Choose and Book were then asked in what way they felt this would happen. A summary of their responses as follows:

More time – that the consultation will take more time as the GP has to discuss all options, or that patients will come back for more appointments to discuss the choice they have made. This is not solved by delegating the process to a practice assistant as GPs feel it is their opinion the patient wants and they will come back to see the GP to get that opinion.

GPs are also aware that patients will ask questions about the consultants in the hospitals they are offering, consultants of whom they have no knowledge

More staff – that implementing Choose and Book will need more administration staff which the GP will have to pay for. Associated with this is the support requirements of a confidential area/room – which many don't have. Also mentioned were desks, computers etc.

Higher IT requirements – covering areas such as reliable N3 connections, plus the associate training needs for GPs and staff.

Generally they feel that Choose and Book will raise questions with patients and that this will take more time for everyone to deal with.

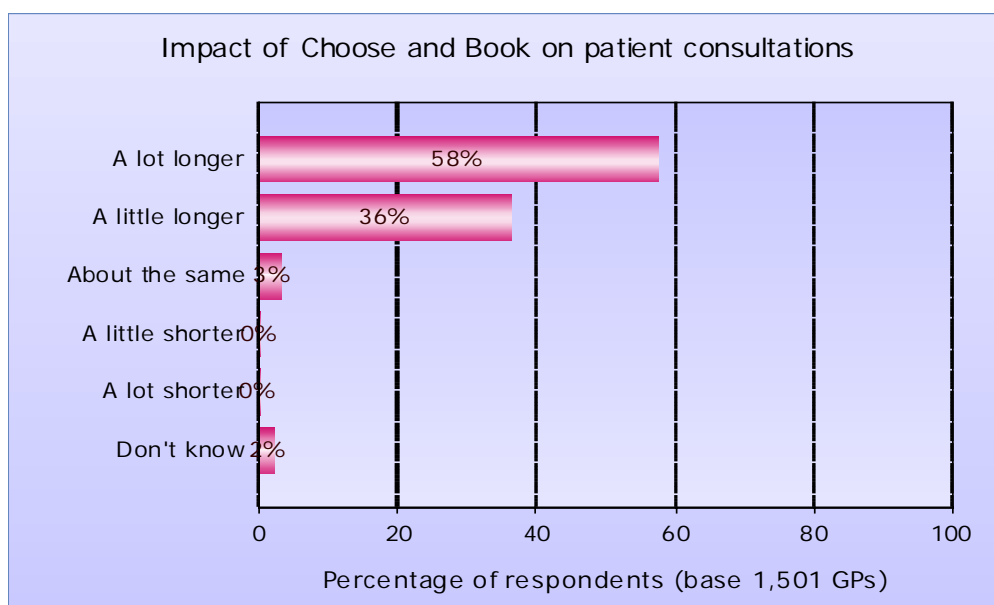
The verbatim listings are provided in Appendix II as a separate volume of the report.

4.7.3 Length of consultations

Respondents were asked what impact they felt Choose and Book would have on consultation times. Only 7 of the 1501 respondents said that they felt the consultation would be shorter. All of the other respondents said that it would be the same or longer.

Overall 94% of respondents felt that consultations would be longer. Splitting this group down 36% said it would be a little longer and 58% said it would be a lot longer.

Figure 35 : GP feelings on consultation length

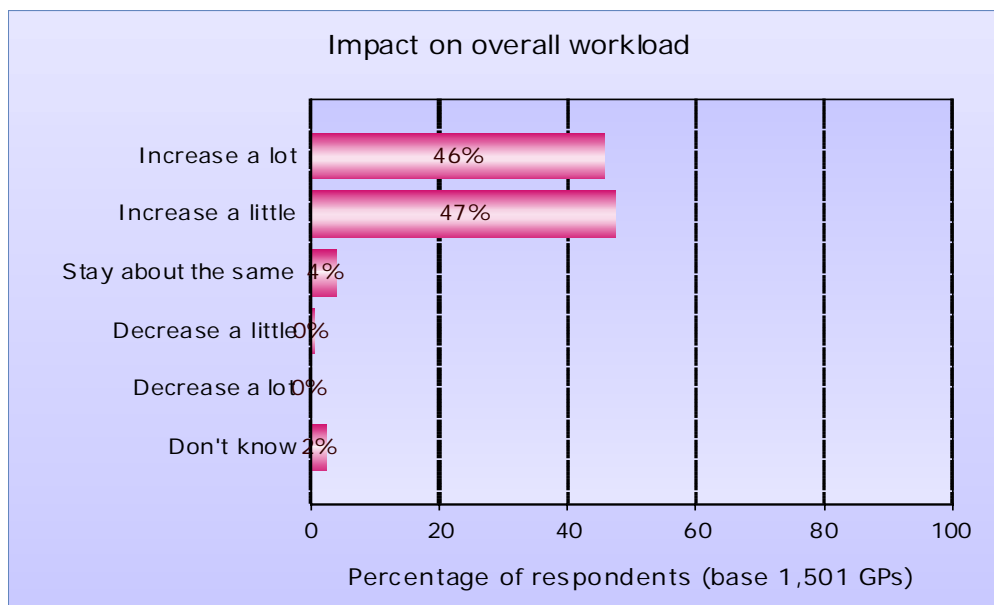


Analysis of respondents who know a lot about Choose and Book and of those who have experienced it does not change their perception. The consensus is that consultation times will increase as a result of Choose and Book implementation.

4.7.4 Overall workload

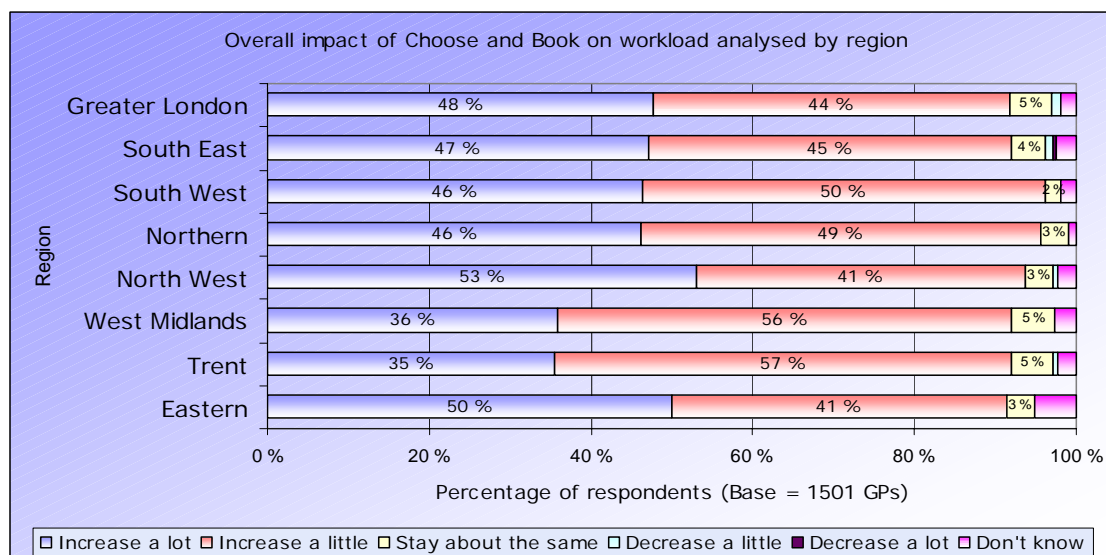
When considering overall workload the picture is similar to that of consultation time length in that respondents perceive that their overall workload will increase. This was split between it increasing a lot (46%) and increasing a little (47%). A small proportion of respondents (4%) said they felt overall workload would stay the same.

Figure 36 : GP views on workload changes due to the introduction of Choose and Book



The regional analysis shows that respondents in some regions are less sure of the impact of Choose and Book on their overall workload. The North West region has the highest proportion (53%) of respondents saying they anticipate their workload increasing a lot. Contrastingly, fewer respondents in Trent (35%) say their workload will increase a lot.

Figure 37 : Regional variation of perceived impact on workload



The proportions don't really change when analysed by knowledge of Choose and Book or prior usage of the service.

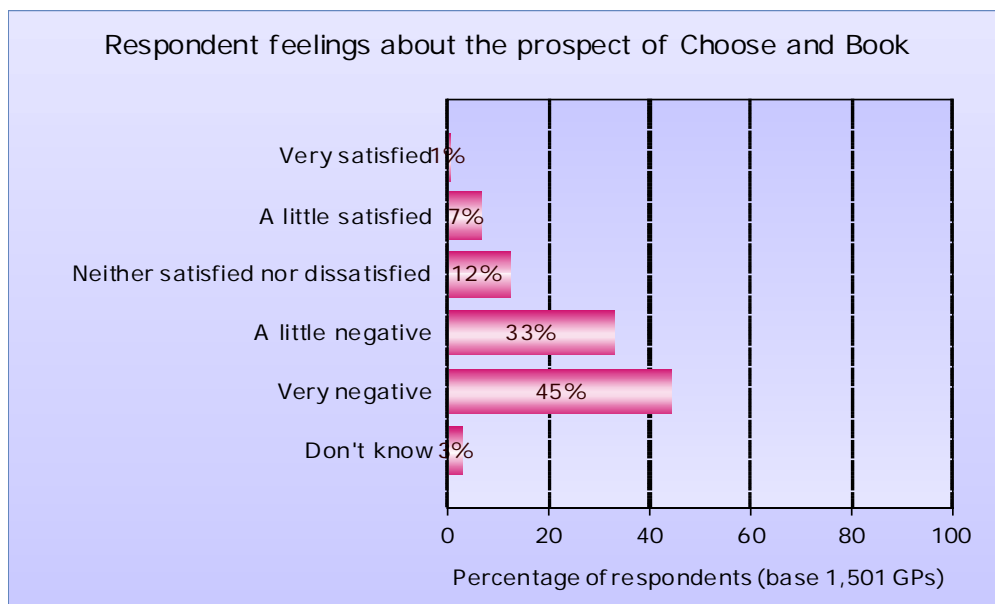
4.8 Overall opinion of Choose and Book

In summary respondents gave their opinion regarding how satisfied they were overall with the prospect of Choose and Book.

The general perception of the project is negative with 78% of respondents saying they were a little negative or very negative. The highest response rate was for very negative. This was selected by 45% of the sample.

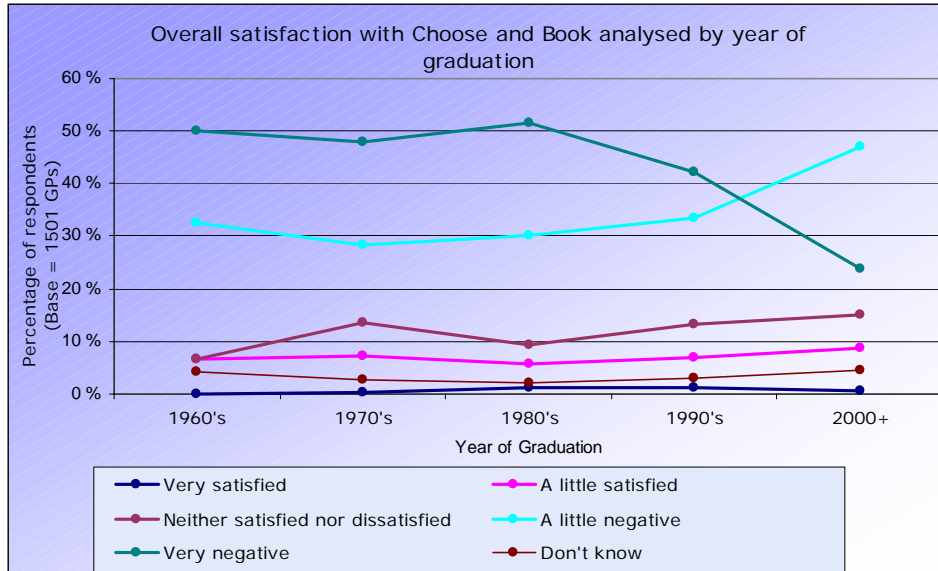
In total 8% of the sample expressed satisfaction with the prospect of Choose and Book. There are very few (3%) respondents who don't know how they feel in this issue.

Figure 38 : Overall prospect of Choose and Book



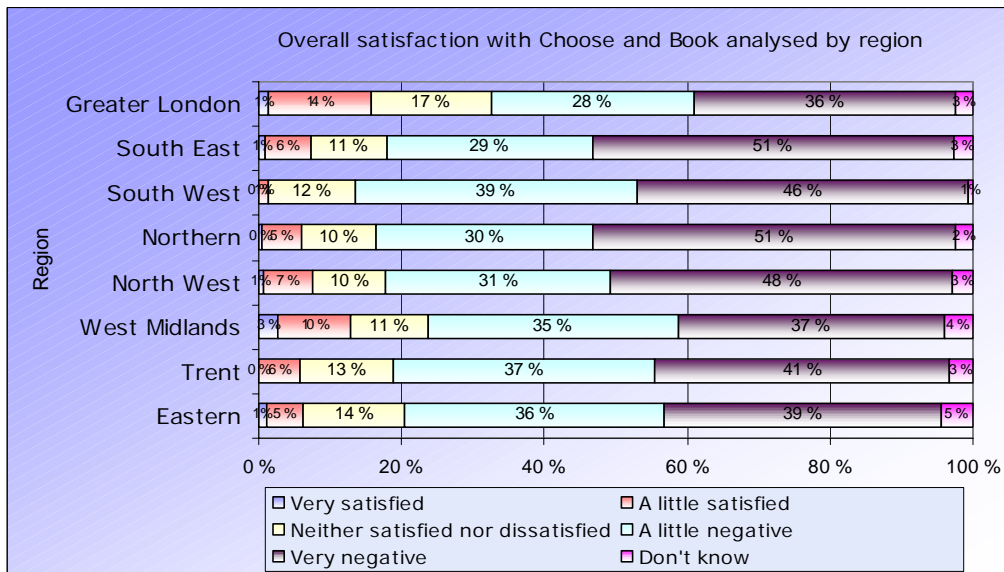
Analysing the data by year of qualification shows that those GPs who qualified recently are less negative than those who have been qualified for longer. They do still say they are negative about the prospect of introducing Choose and Book but more are in the 'a little negative' rather than in the 'very negative' bracket (47% and 24% respectively)

Figure 39 : Comparison of overall satisfaction with the prospect of Choose and Book with year of graduation



On a regional basis the analysis shows that there is a variation across England. Respondents in the London region have a higher level of satisfaction with the prospect of Choose and Book. GPs in the South West region express the highest level of negative feeling with 85% of respondents in this region selecting a negative category.

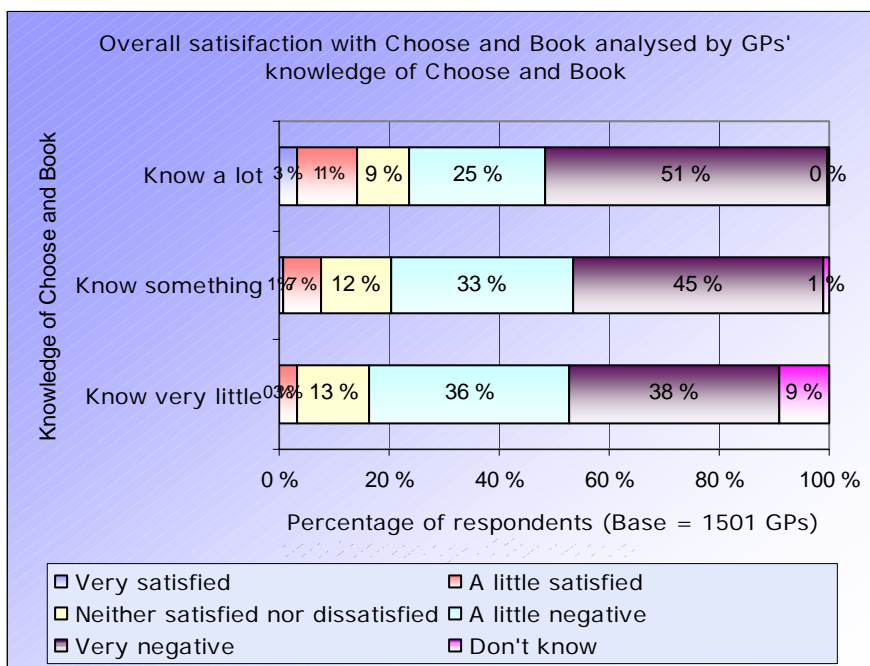
Figure 40 : Comparison of level of satisfaction with Choose and Book by region



When analysed by the level of knowledge of Choose and Book it seems that knowing a lot about the service can have a negative impact on the overall perception of the service – 51% of respondents who say they know a lot about Choose and Book also say they are very negative about it.

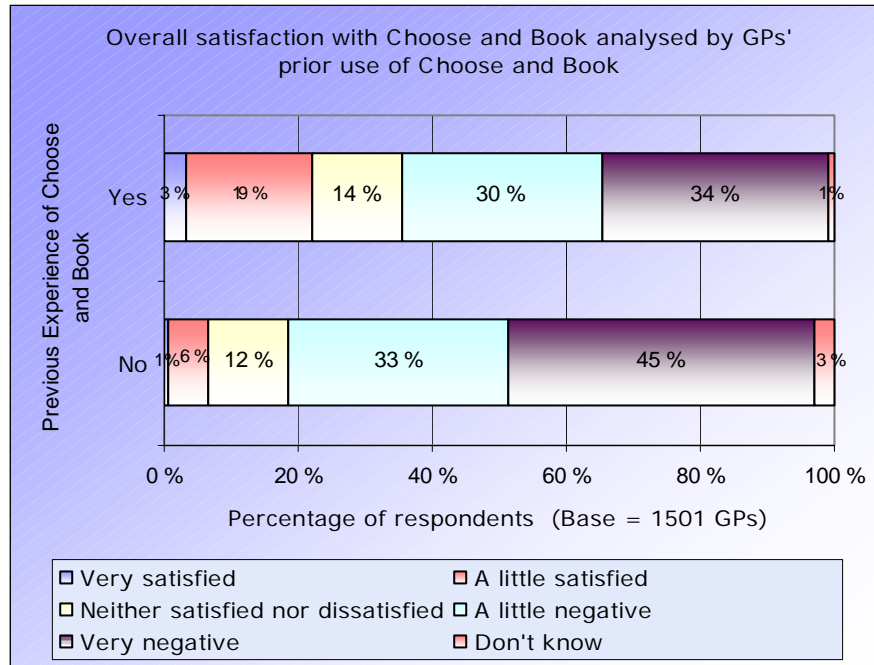
Of those who know very little about Choose and Book only 38% were very negative about it. However, there is a higher level of respondents within this group who don't know what their overall perception of the service is.

Figure 41 : Comparison of overall perception of Choose and Book



Those respondents who have used the service (118) express a more positive view of Choose and Book with 22% of respondents saying they were very satisfied or a little satisfied.

Figure 42 : Comparison of the perception of Choose and Book with prior use of service



5 Comparison of the 2004 and 2005 Surveys

5.1 Introduction

An important objective of the survey conducted in September 2005 was to provide a comparison with the 2004 survey, enabling changes in attitudes to Choose and Book to be highlighted.

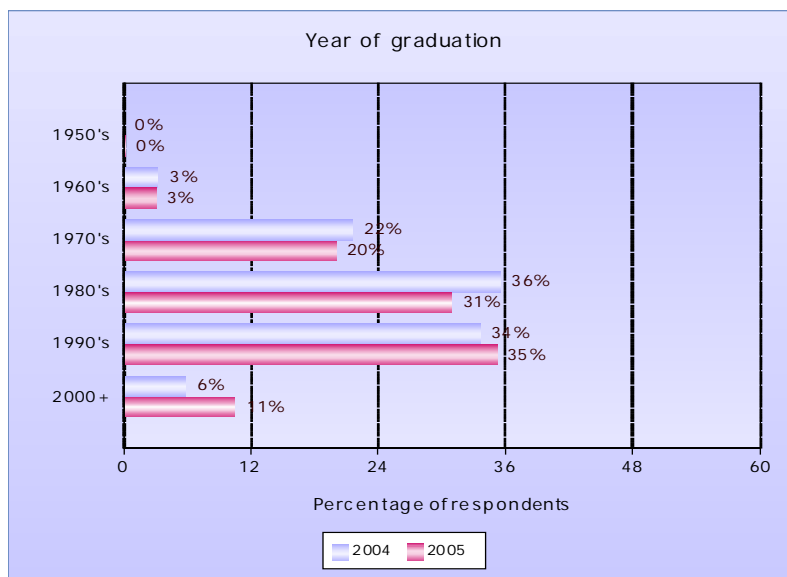
A core group of 14 questions were common to both surveys to provide the basis for comparison.

The base for the 2004 survey was 1500 and for 2005 1501 GPs. Differences between the two which are highlighted in the commentary are statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

5.2 Sample Demographics

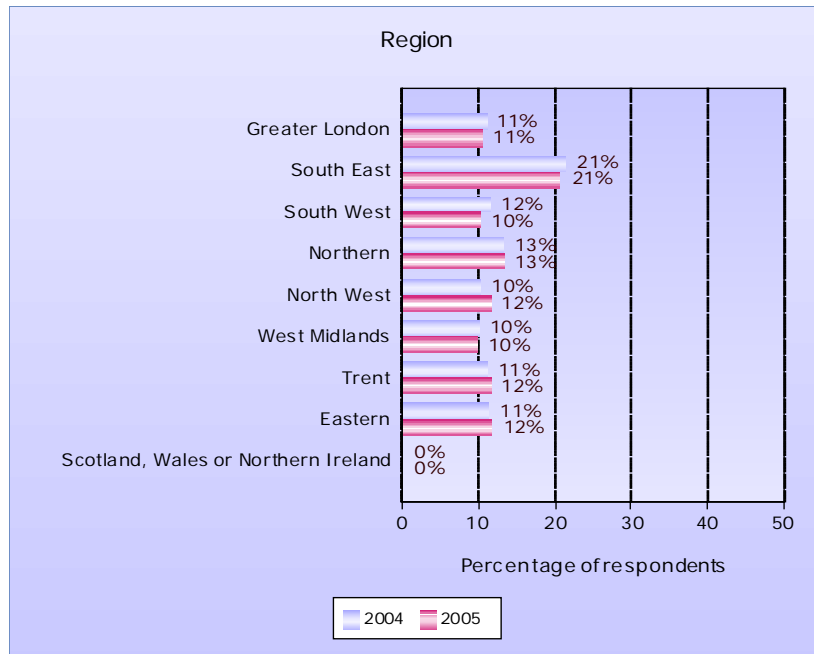
Each study was conducted by inviting all Doctors.net.uk members who are GPs practicing in England to participate in an on-line survey. No quotas were applied in either studies. Figures 43 and 44 demonstrate that the two samples were comparable with regard to year of graduation and region.

Figure 43 : Comparison of respondent's year of graduation



The 2005 sample included a higher proportion of young GPs, although this was still only 11% of the sample. The other significant difference is the smaller proportion of GPs who graduated in the 1980s.

Figure 44 : Comparison of respondents by region



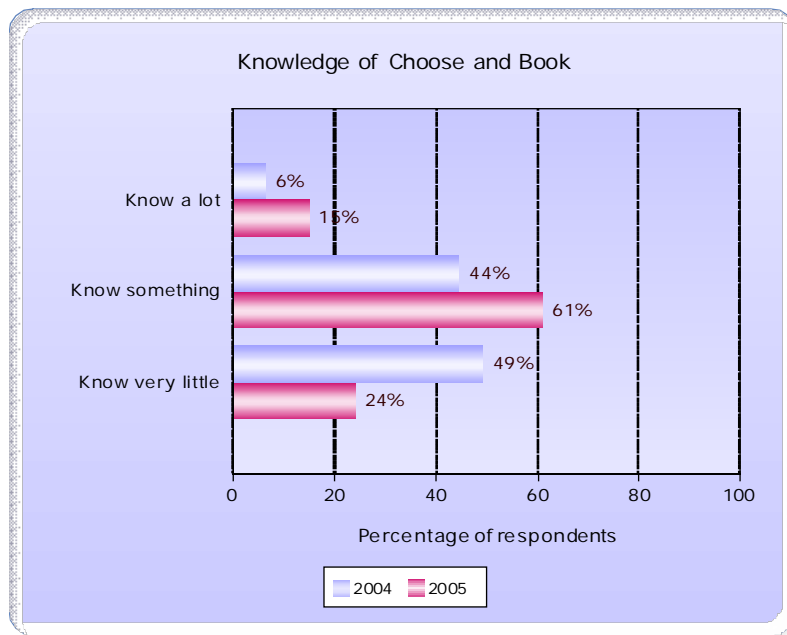
There are no statistically significant differences between the two samples with regard to respondents' region.

5.3 The Degree of Understanding of Choose and Book

5.3.1 Knowledge of Choose and Book

Knowledge of Choose and Book has increased significantly between the two surveys. The proportion of GPs who know a lot about Choose and Book has more than doubled from 6% to 15%, although this is still a minority of the population. Those who believe they know something about it have risen to 61% of the population. Conversely, the number of GPs who know very little has declined from 49% to 24%.

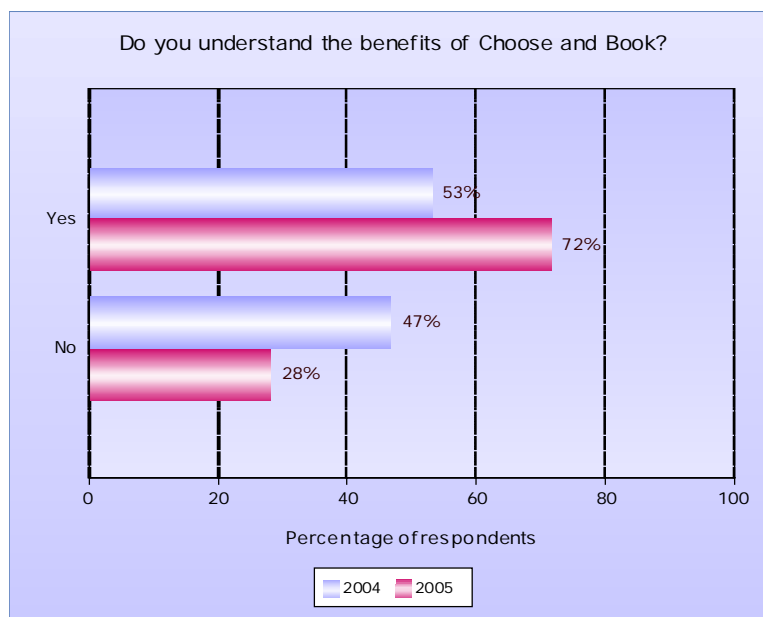
Figure 45 : Comparison of respondents' degree of knowledge of Choose and Book



5.3.2 Benefits of Choose and Book

The proportion of GPs who understand the benefits has also risen significantly, from 53% to 72%.

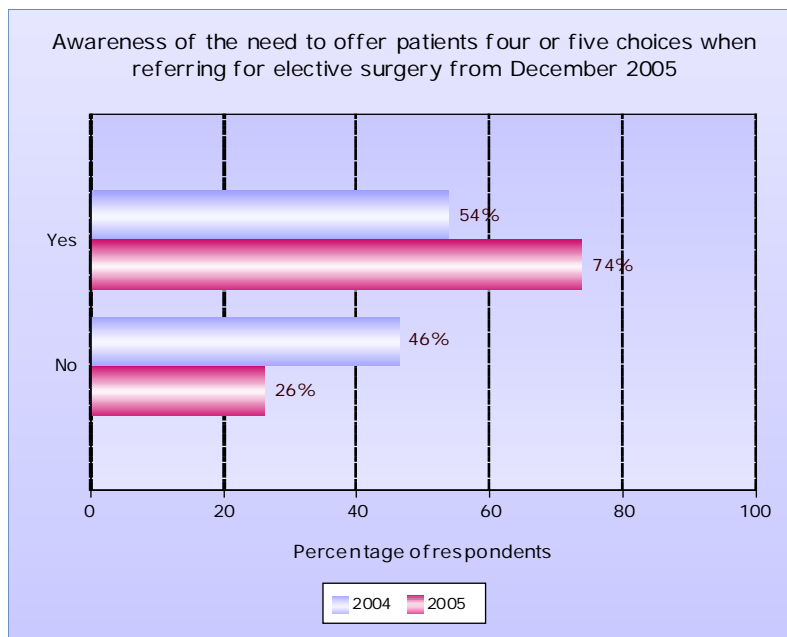
Figure 46 : Comparison of respondents' understanding of the benefits of Choose and Book



5.3.3 Requirements

Awareness of the requirement to offer patients 4 or 5 choices when referring for elective surgery has risen to 74% from 54% a year ago.

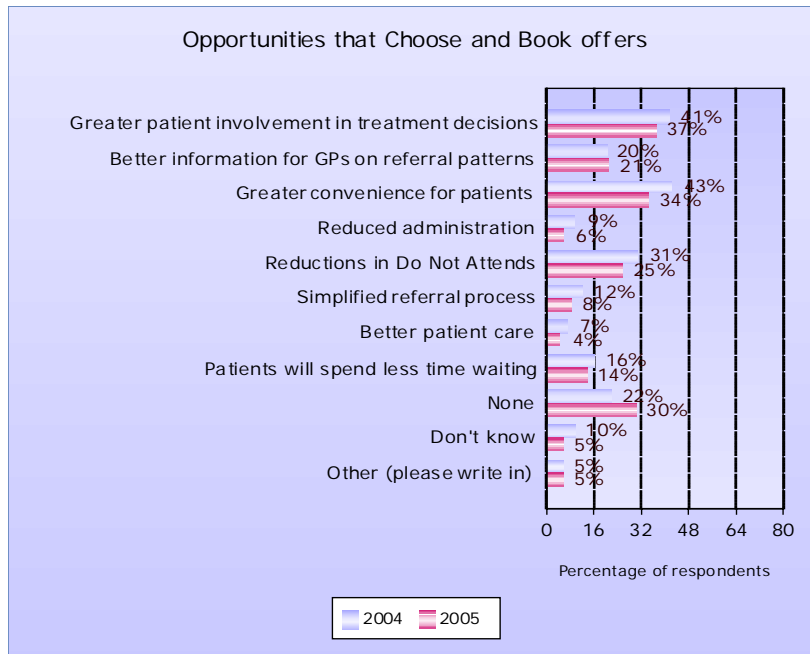
Figure 47 : Comparison of respondents' awareness of the requirement to offer 4 or 5 choice on referral



5.3.4 Opportunities Offered by Choose and Book

Comparison of the two surveys indicates that GPs are identifying fewer benefits of Choose and Book in 2005 compared to 2004. The number of GPs selecting "none" as an option has risen from 22% to 30%. Other than "better information for GPs on referral patterns", all the other potential benefits listed for the respondents received fewer mentions in 2005 compared with 2004. This is demonstrated in Figure 48.

Figure 48 : Comparison of respondents views of the benefits of Choose and Book

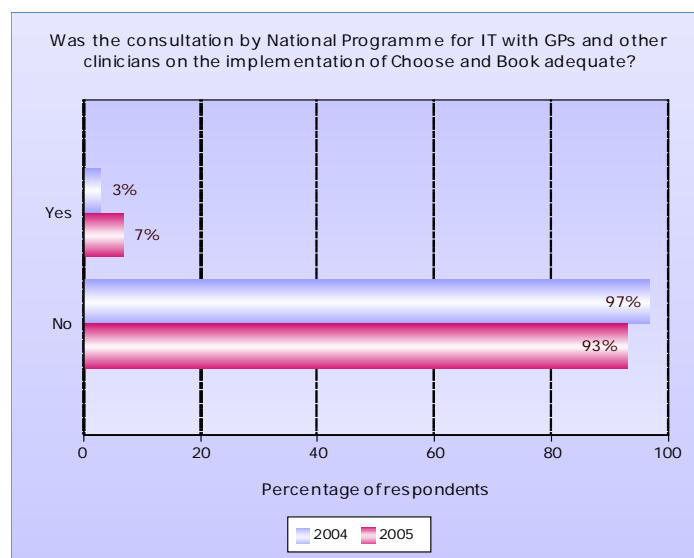


5.4 The Consultation Process for Choose and Book

5.4.1 Adequacy of the consultation on the implementation timetable

There has been a small but statistically significant increase in the proportion of GPs who believe that consultation by NPfIT has been adequate (from 3% to 7%). However, the majority (93%) believe that this process has not been adequate.

Figure 49 :Comparison of respondents views of the consultation process of Choose and Book

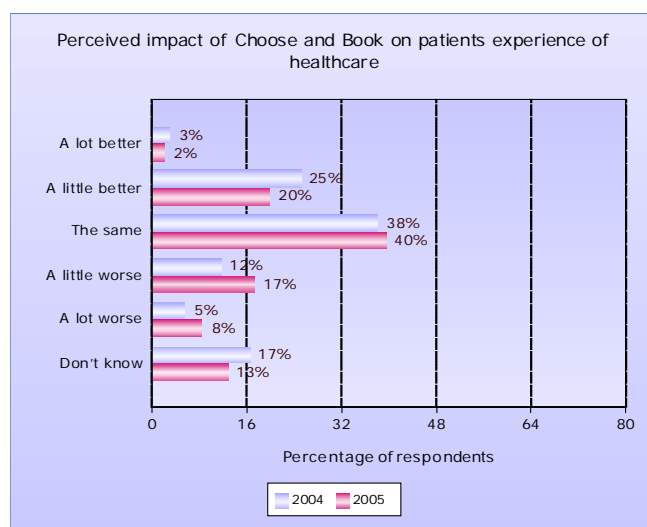


5.5 Impact of Choose and Book on Patients

5.5.1 Patients' experience of healthcare

The changes between 2004 and 2005 on this measure are negative. A higher proportion of GPs perceive that Choose and Book will result in patients having a worse experience of healthcare; this is linked with a decrease in the proportion of GPs believing that the patient's experience will get a little better,

Figure 50 : Comparison of respondents views of the impact on patients' experience of healthcare

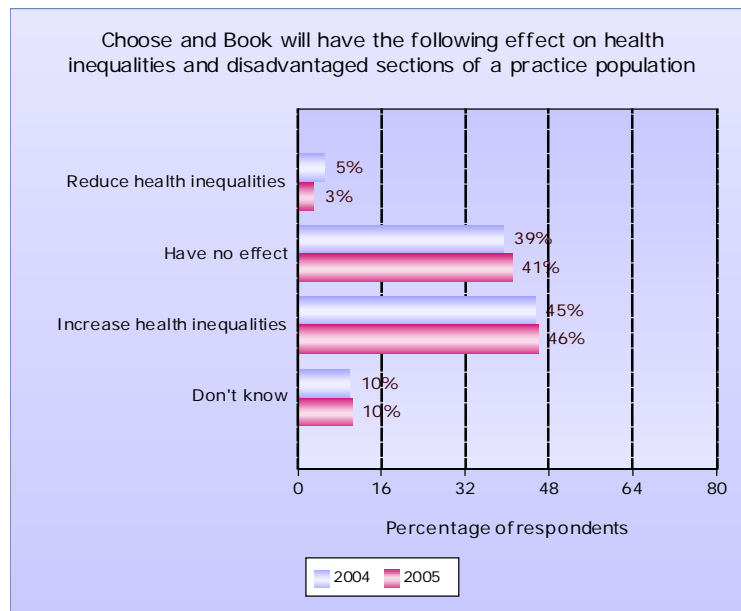


5.5.2 Considerations for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups

5.5.2.1 Healthcare Inequalities

Other than a small decline, from 5% to 3%, in the proportion of GPs thinking that Choose and Book will help to reduce health inequalities, there have been no changes in GPs' views of Choose and Book in this regard over the last year.

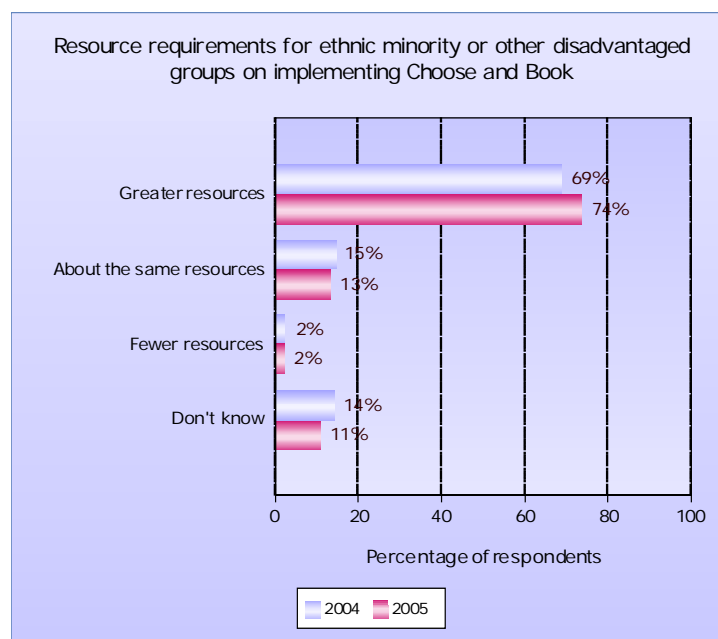
Figure 51 : Comparison of respondents views of the impact on health inequalities



5.5.2.2 Impact on Resources

The majority of GPs believe that Choose and Book will require greater resources to implement for ethnic minority or other disadvantaged groups and this feeling has increased from 69% in 2004 to 74% in 2005. The proportion of doctors selecting "don't know" for this question has declined.

Figure 52 : Comparison of respondents views on the resource requirements for disadvantaged groups

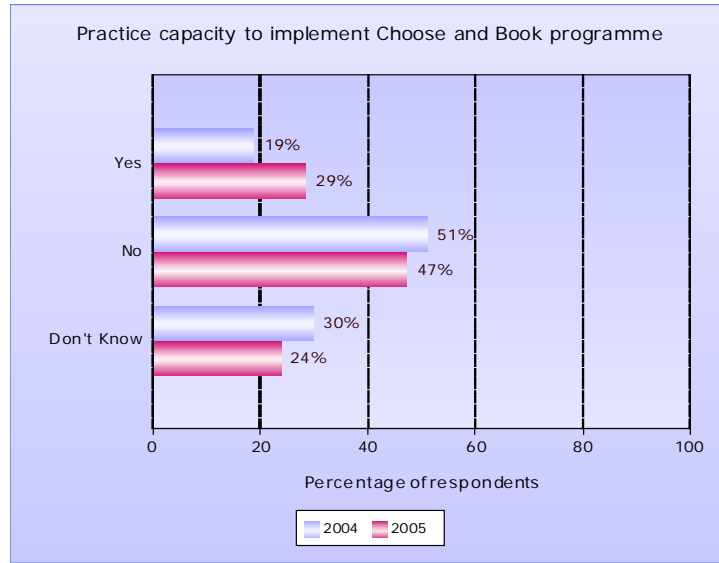


5.6 Impact on GPs

5.6.1 Capacity

More GPs now believe their Practice has the capacity to implement Choose and Book. This has risen from 19% to 29% over the year. However, the largest group of GPs remains those who do not think their Practice has the capacity to implement the service, although it has declined since 2004.

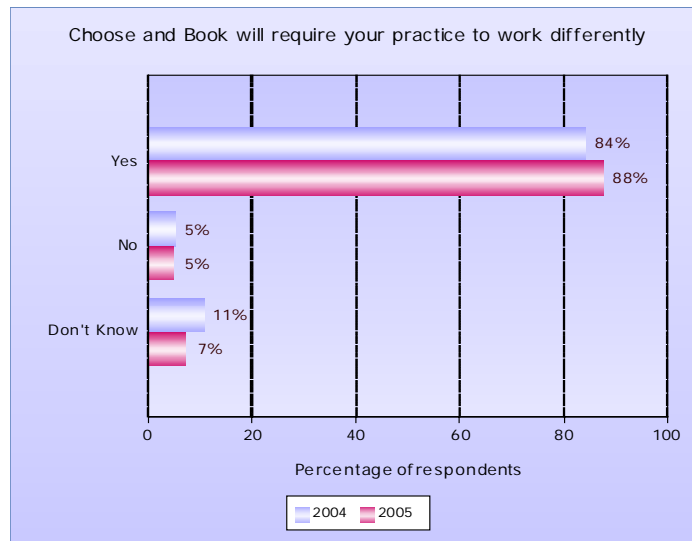
Figure 53 : Comparison of respondents views on their practice capacity to implement Choose and Book



5.6.2 Work patterns

The majority of GPs believe that Choose and Book will require their Practice to work differently. This view has seen a small but statistically significant increase from 84% of GPs in 2004 to 88% in 2005. The proportion of GPs who do not have a view on this issue has declined from 11% to 7%.

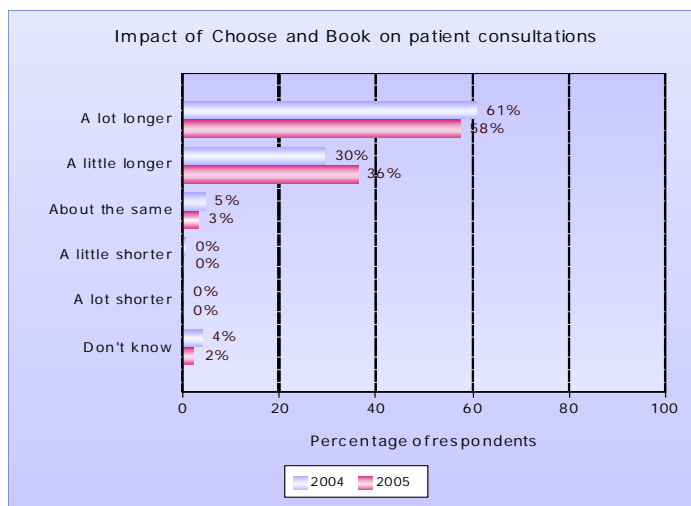
Figure 54 : Comparison of respondents views on their practice work patterns



5.6.3 Length of consultations

The only statistically significant change over the past year is that 36% of GPs feel that patient consultations will take a little longer, compared with 30% in 2004. Other than a small change in the number of GPs who did not have a view in 2004, there are no other differences between the two surveys and the majority of GPs continue to believe that patient consultations will be a lot longer when Choose and Book is implemented.

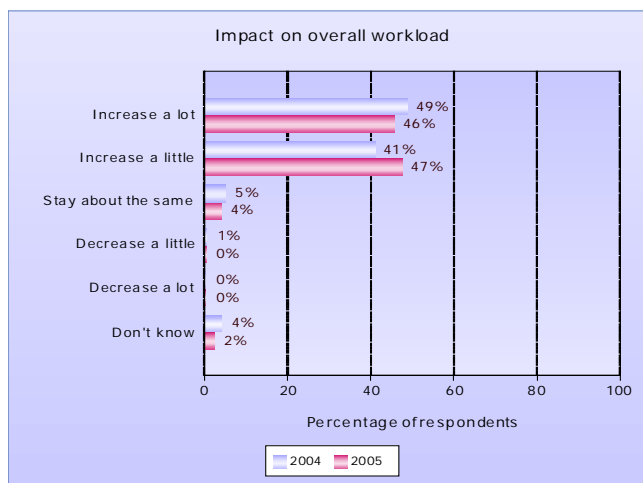
Figure 55: Comparison of respondents' views on the length of the patient consultation



5.6.4 Overall workload

In both surveys, there is a pretty even split of the vast majority of the sample between the workload increasing a lot or a little. 90% of the sample was in one of these categories in 2004 and 91% in 2005. In 2005, there has been a statistically significant increase in the proportion stating the workload will increase a little, whereas the decline in those stating the workload will increase a lot is not statistically significant. Hence, overall there has been little change in Gs' views with regard to the overall impact of Choose and Book on their workload.

Figure 56 : Comparison of respondents views on the impact on the overall workload



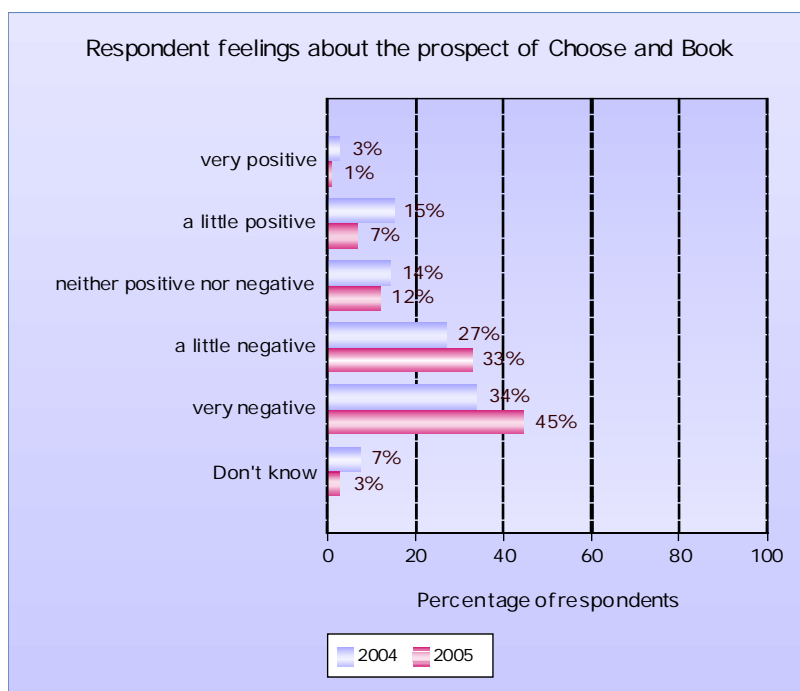
5.7 Overall opinion of Choose and Book

Between 2004 and 2005, the overall opinion of Choose and Book has become more negative. There are a statistically significant increases in the number of GPs feeling either a little or very negative about the prospect of Choose and Book. The former have increased from 27% to 33% and the latter from 34% to 45%.

This is accompanied by statistically significant decreases in the numbers of GPs feeling either a little or very positive. The change is particularly marked for those who feel a little positive as this group has declined from 15% to 7%.

However, the overall pattern has not changed. In both surveys, the largest respondent group is that which feels very negative about Choose and Book and a minority feel positive about it.

Figure 57 : Comparison of respondents feelings about the prospect of Choose and Book



6 Appendix I : Questionnaire & Definition of Regions

6.1 Questionnaire

NAO Survey on Choice at referral

Introductory Text

The National Audit Office has a statutory responsibility to report to Parliament on whether the Department of Health is discharging its responsibilities in an economic, efficient and effective way. In January 2005 we published a study on the Department's preparations for the introduction of patient choice at the point of referral, an initiative which must be in place by December 2005 http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/nao_reports/04-05/0405180.pdf.

The Public Accounts Committee in parliament has decided to hold a hearing on our report on 31 October 2005. The National Audit Office therefore wishes to refresh the survey run in October 2004 in order to provide the Committee with an up-to-date picture of clinical engagement with choice.

This survey is designed to find out how much you know about this area and what your views are of it. Its findings will be published as an update for the Committee but your contribution will remain anonymous, although we may publish some analysis of respondents by region and age.

1. How much would you say you know about Choose and Book? Would you say you ... (please select one box)

know a lot,

know a little, or

know nothing?

2. Do you understand the expected benefits and purpose of Choose and Book?

Yes

No

3. Are you aware of the need to offer patients four or five choices when referring for elective surgery from December 2005?

Yes

No

4. Has the National Programme for IT consulted GPs and other clinicians adequately on the implementation timetable for choose and book?

Yes

No

5. What opportunities, if any, do you think Choose and Book offers? Please select all that apply.

Greater patient involvement in treatment decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Better information for GPs on referral patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greater convenience for patients	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reduced administration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reductions in Do Not Attends	<input type="checkbox"/>
Simplified referral process	<input type="checkbox"/>
Better patient care	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patients will spend less time waiting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will act as a spur for local hospitals to improve	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please write in) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Overall, how do you feel about the prospect of Choose and Book? Are you... (please select one box)

very satisfied,

a little satisfied,

neither satisfied nor dissatisfied,

a little negative, or

very negative?

Don't know

7. In your view, what information will be required for *patients* to choose from a range of providers? (select all that apply)

	Required	Available
Local access issues (e.g. public transport routes and parking availability)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expected outcomes of treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting times for first outpatient appointments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting times to start of treatment or inpatient appointments (as with urgent cancer referrals)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reputation of providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clinical outcomes data (e.g. surgical complication rates)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality-of-life measures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital infection rates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please write in) _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. What information will *you* want in order to refer patients to a broader range of providers? (select all that apply)

	Want	Available
Local access issues (e.g. public transport routes and parking availability)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expected outcomes of treatment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting times for first outpatient appointments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waiting times to start of treatment or inpatient appointments (as with urgent cancer referrals)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reputation of providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clinical outcomes data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality-of-life measures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Peer opinions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital infection rates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please write in) _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Do you currently offer your patients a choice of provider when making a first consultant out-patient appointment?

Yes

No

10. Are you willing to offer choice of 4 providers to patients referred for first consultant out-patient appointments?

Yes

No

11. Have you, or your practice, used Choose and Book

Yes

No

12. Are you likely to use Choose and Book when it is introduced in your practice?

Yes

No

NOTE: IF ANSWER TO QUESTION 12 IS YES GO TO QUESTION 14

13. If no, what alternatives would be used instead of Choose and Book?

14. Are you aware that you, as the GP, do not have to book the patient's appointment?

Yes

No

15. What impact do you think that Choose and Book will have on the patient's experience of their healthcare? Is it likely to be... (please select one box)

- a lot better,
- a little better,
- the same,
- a little worse, or
- a lot worse?
- Don't know

16. Thinking about health inequalities, and disadvantaged sections of your practice population, do you think choice will....

- reduce health inequalities,
- have no effect, or
- increase health inequalities?
- Don't know

17. Will the implementation of 'Choose and Book' require greater or fewer resources for ethnic minority or other disadvantaged groups, than it will for the general population?

- Greater resources
- About the same resources
- Fewer resources
- Don't know

18. Do you think your practice has the capacity to implement and deliver the Choose and Book programme?

- Yes
- No

19. Do you think offering Choose and Book will require you or your practice to work differently?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

NOTE: IF ANSWER TO QUESTION 19 IS EITHER NO OR DON'T KNOW, GO TO QUESTION 21

20. If yes, please briefly explain how you feel you or your practice will be required to work differently?

21. What impact do you expect Choose and Book to have on the length of your consultations? Do you think they will be. (select one box)

- a lot longer,
- a little longer,
- about the same,
- a little shorter, or
- a lot shorter?
- Don't know

22. What impact do you think Choose and Book will have on your overall workload? Will it ...

- increase a lot,
- increase a little,
- stay about the same,
- decrease a little, or
- decrease a lot?
- Don't know

6.2 Definition of Regions

Greater London	<input type="checkbox"/>
South East (Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Berks, Bucks, Oxfordshire, Northants)	<input type="checkbox"/>
South West (Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall, Isles of Scilly)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Northern (Northumberland, Durham, Cleveland, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire Humberside)	<input type="checkbox"/>
North West (Cumbria, Merseyside, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Cheshire)	<input type="checkbox"/>
West Midlands (Birmingham, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trent (South Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eastern (Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk)	<input type="checkbox"/>