



Digital Healthcare Review

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How technology is revolutionising healthcare

The rapid pace of technological advancement is transforming virtually every aspect of our lives – from the places we shop to the ways we work; from the media we consume to how we plan our leisure time.

Our experience of healthcare is no exception to this trend, with everything from GP appointments, prescription services and primary care undergoing their own digital transformation.

People have progressively become used to managing their lives through the medium of connected technology and have become impatient for changes in the way they interact with advisory and care services.

In this report, we'll chart the progress* of the digital healthcare revolution to date and demonstrate how technology is becoming increasingly integrated into our everyday healthcare experience.

We'll also explore the factors driving this change and how the spreading ubiquity of connected digital technologies means that further change is not just desirable, but also inevitable.

Finally, we'll examine the level of demand among patients for digital health services and look at the likelihood of these solutions becoming commonplace in the next few years.

* Findings based on a survey of 1,014 UK adults, conducted February 2016

How we currently use technology to manage healthcare

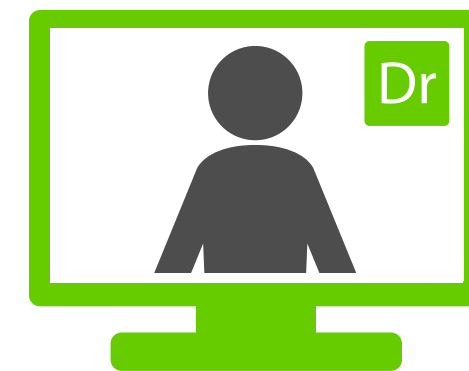
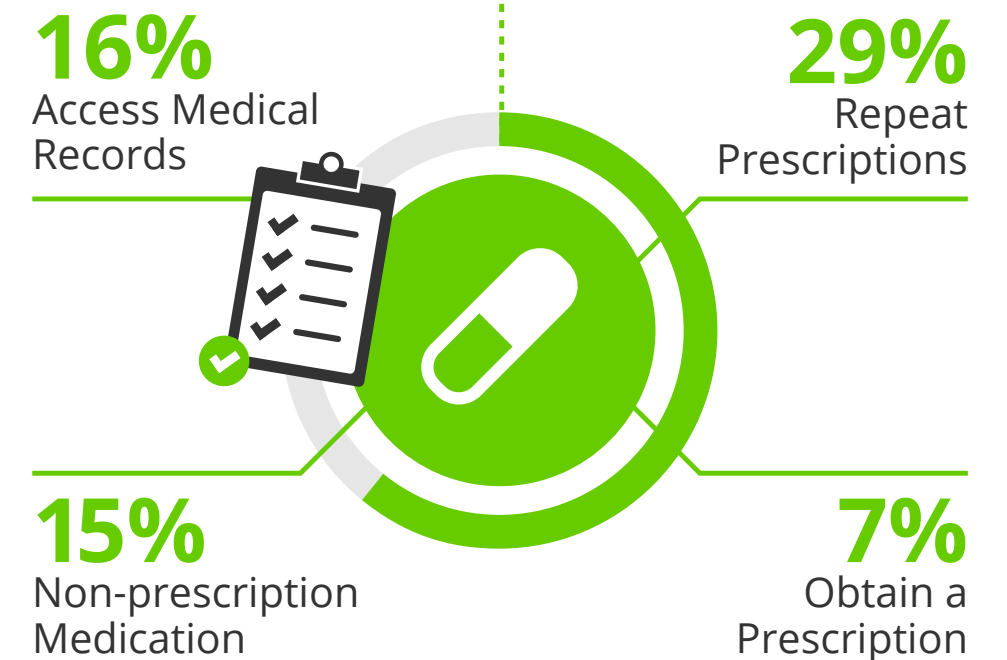
Just under two-thirds (61%) of us currently use technology to access healthcare services, using either our smartphone, tablet or computer.

Most commonly, this is to order repeat prescriptions (29%).

A significant percentage also use technology to contact their GP. 23% have consulted their doctor through one of these devices (e.g. live chat) and 18% report having had a video appointment.

Other common uses include accessing medical records (16%), buying non-prescription medication (15%) and obtaining prescription medicine (7%).

61% Use technology to access healthcare services



23%
Have contacted GP using a smartphone, tablet or computer

18%
Have have had a video appointment with a doctor

Convenience is driving demand for digital healthcare

Our study reveals the majority of people welcome the greater convenience offered by digital healthcare.

Taking video appointments as a case in point, while current usage levels were found to be 18% among our respondents, as many as 82% were willing to consider using this type of service.

When asked under what circumstances they would choose to use a video consultation, most talked about a desire for a more responsive service. **The top reasons cited included getting in an appointment more quickly (36%) on the same day (29%) or even an immediate appointment (28%).**

Others talked about not wanting to travel to a GP surgery, either because they wanted to be able to get advice wherever was convenient to them (31%), because they didn't have easy access to transport (25%) or because they might be out of the country when they needed advice (11%).

This dispels the common myth that people would not trust digital channels to support sensitive matters, such as health concerns.

In fact, the desire for speedy and convenient services more than outweighs any such concerns for the vast majority of people.

Other authoritative studies have reached the same conclusion - for example McKinsey's Digital Patient Survey in 2014 concluded that 75% of patients in the UK expected to use digital services in the near future.

Reasons for using video GP consultations



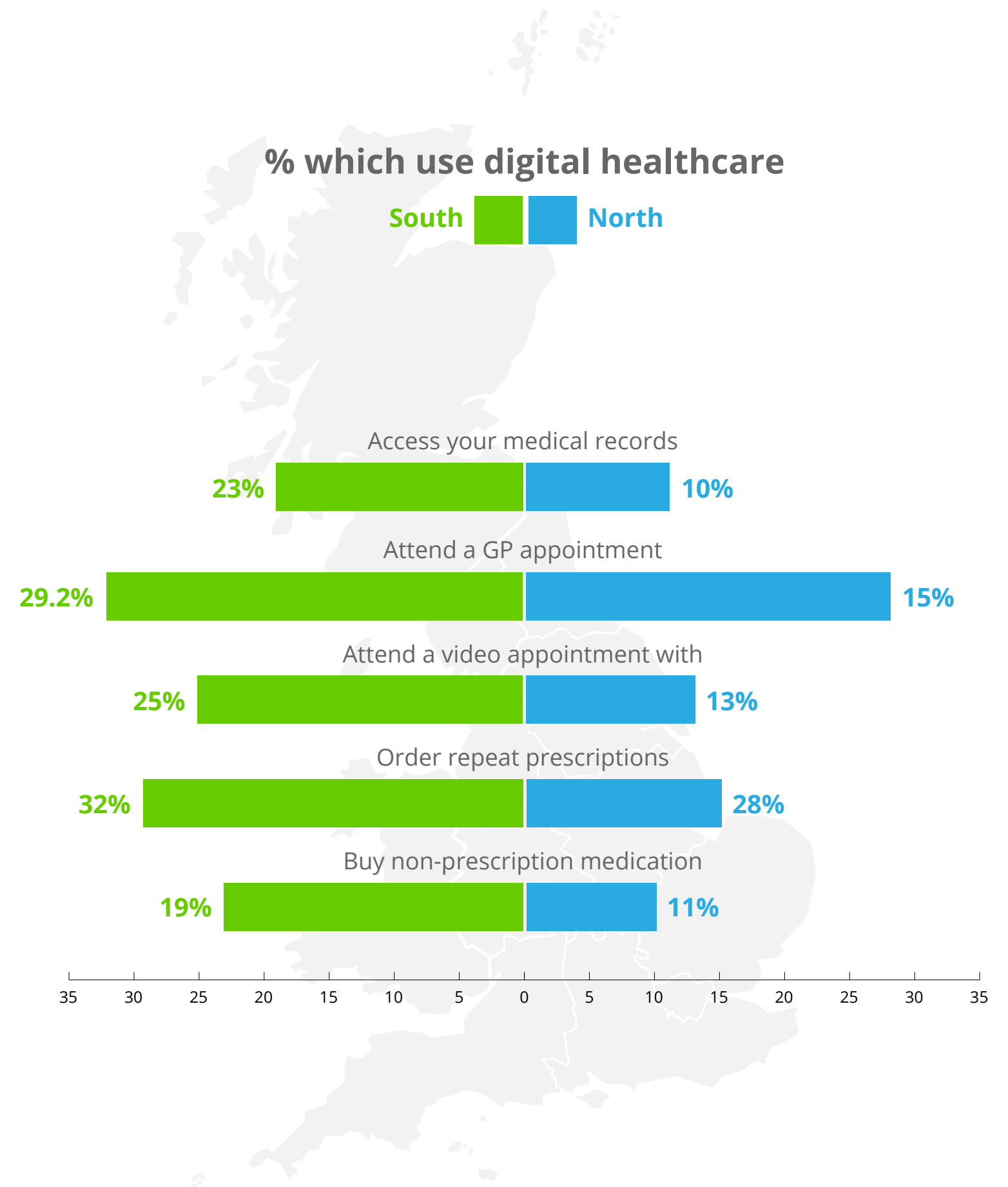
The digital healthcare North vs. South divide

The research also revealed some interesting findings regarding the geographical spread of the adoption of digital healthcare.

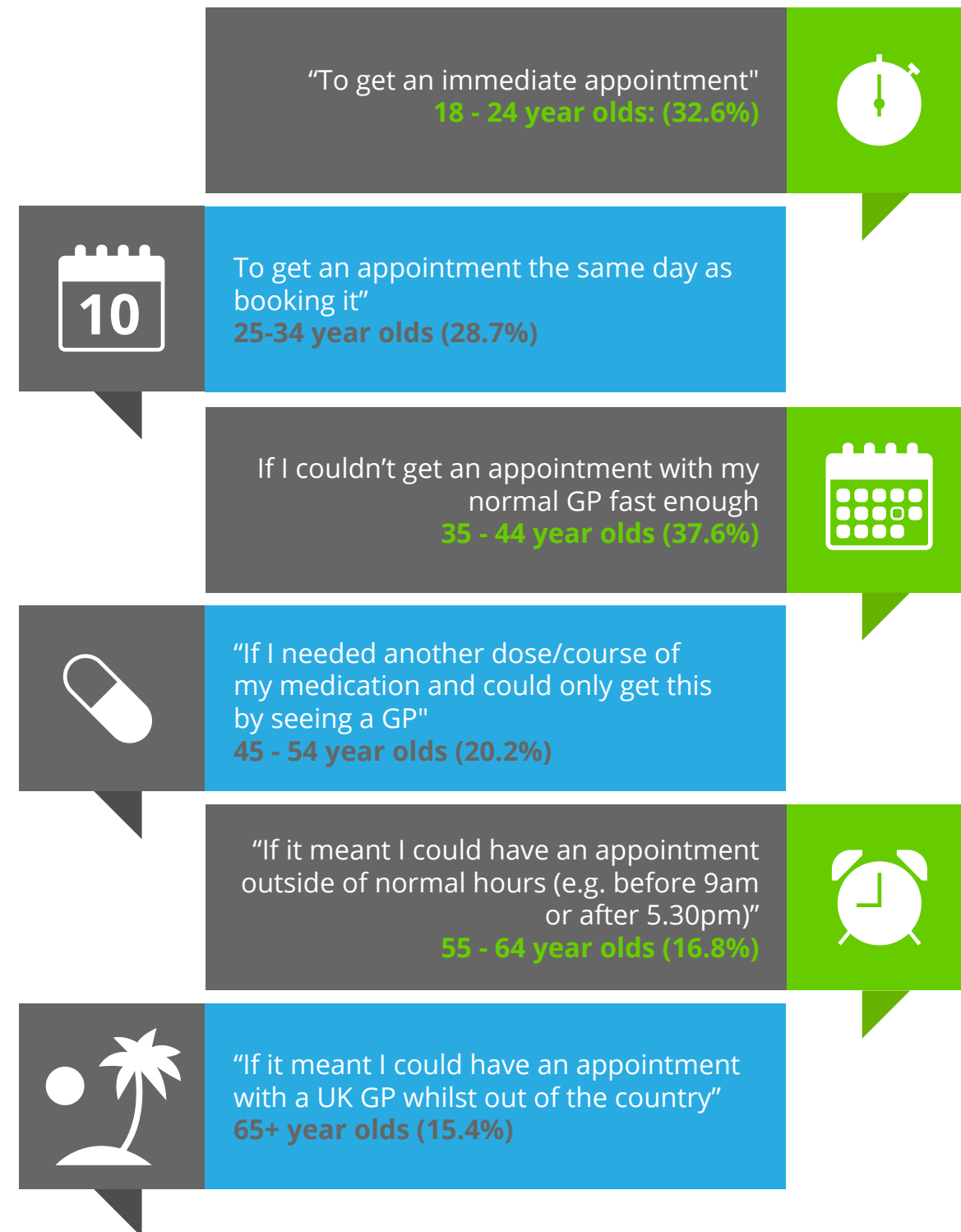
While the data shows digital healthcare is being accessed by a good portion of the nation as a whole, there are some obvious regional variations.

For example, **23% more of those in the South of England (including London, the South-East and South-West) had used technology to access healthcare**, compared with those in the North (including the North-West, North-East and Scotland.)

This regional divide is biggest when you consider how many in each region had spoken with a GP online, or attended a video GP appointment. Those in the South of England were twice as likely to have done so than those in the north (15% vs 29.2% and 12.69% vs. 24.9%, respectively).



In what circumstances would you consider using an online video GP consultation?



Digital healthcare has universal appeal

The immediacy of digital healthcare holds strongest appeal for those aged between 45 and 54, 55 and 64 and over 65s, suggesting there is high demand from those who may have increased need for remote services.

Convenience was key for the 45-plus age group, who responded most positively to using digital healthcare that would allow them to get an appointment if their normal GP couldn't offer them one soon enough.

They also responded positively to using this type of service to get same day or immediate appointments, access to UK healthcare while out of the country, to see a GP outside of normal hours and to get more doses of medication that a GP is required to sign off.



38%

of over 55s using the internet and apps to order repeat prescriptions

13%

are attending GP consultations online

Digital healthcare has universal appeal

Far from shying away from new technology innovations, a number of over-55s are already embracing apps and the internet to address their health needs and access healthcare.

38% of this age group is now using the internet and apps to order repeat prescriptions, while almost one in six do so to purchase non-prescription medicine and 5% to buy prescription medication.

But it isn't just access to medication driving this usage – 13% are attending GP consultations online and nearly one in 10 are accessing their patient records online or via an app.

How digital healthcare can help parents

Certain members of society have specific needs that digital healthcare can help to address, with obvious examples including those with limited mobility or those needing regular advice to manage chronic illnesses.

However, even more everyday concerns would be eased with greater access to such services.

For example – many parents need regular access to medical advice and expertise for the sake of their children’s health.

According to our data, this need is greatest amongst dads, who are less likely to be calm in the event of a child’s illness and injury (41.8%) and to consult professionals about their children’s symptoms (39.5%).

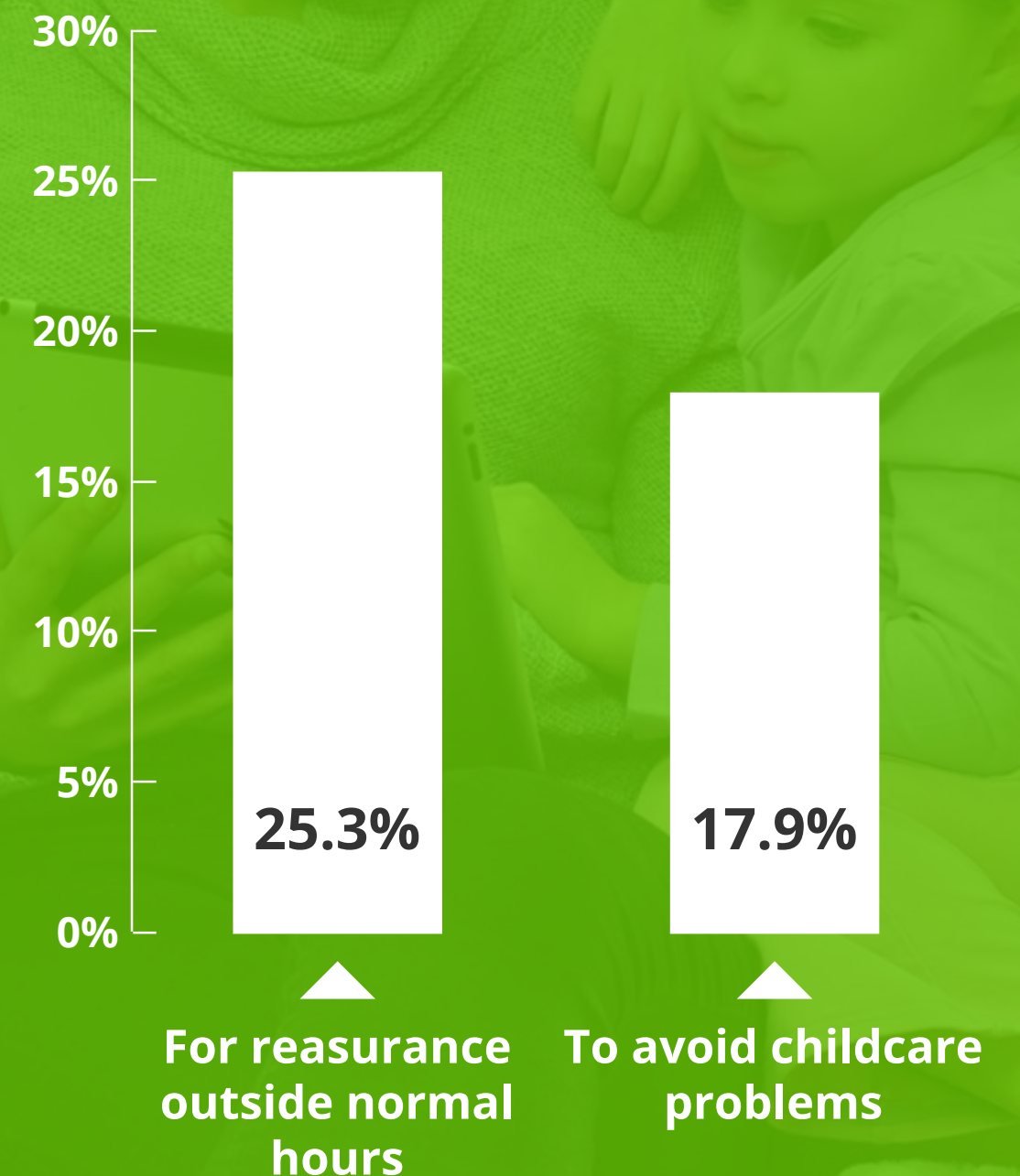
These are needs that digital healthcare can help to solve. For example, when parents with young children were asked for reasons they might use a video consultation, **a quarter highlighted their need for reassurance from a GP outside normal hours when their child was ill (25.3%).**

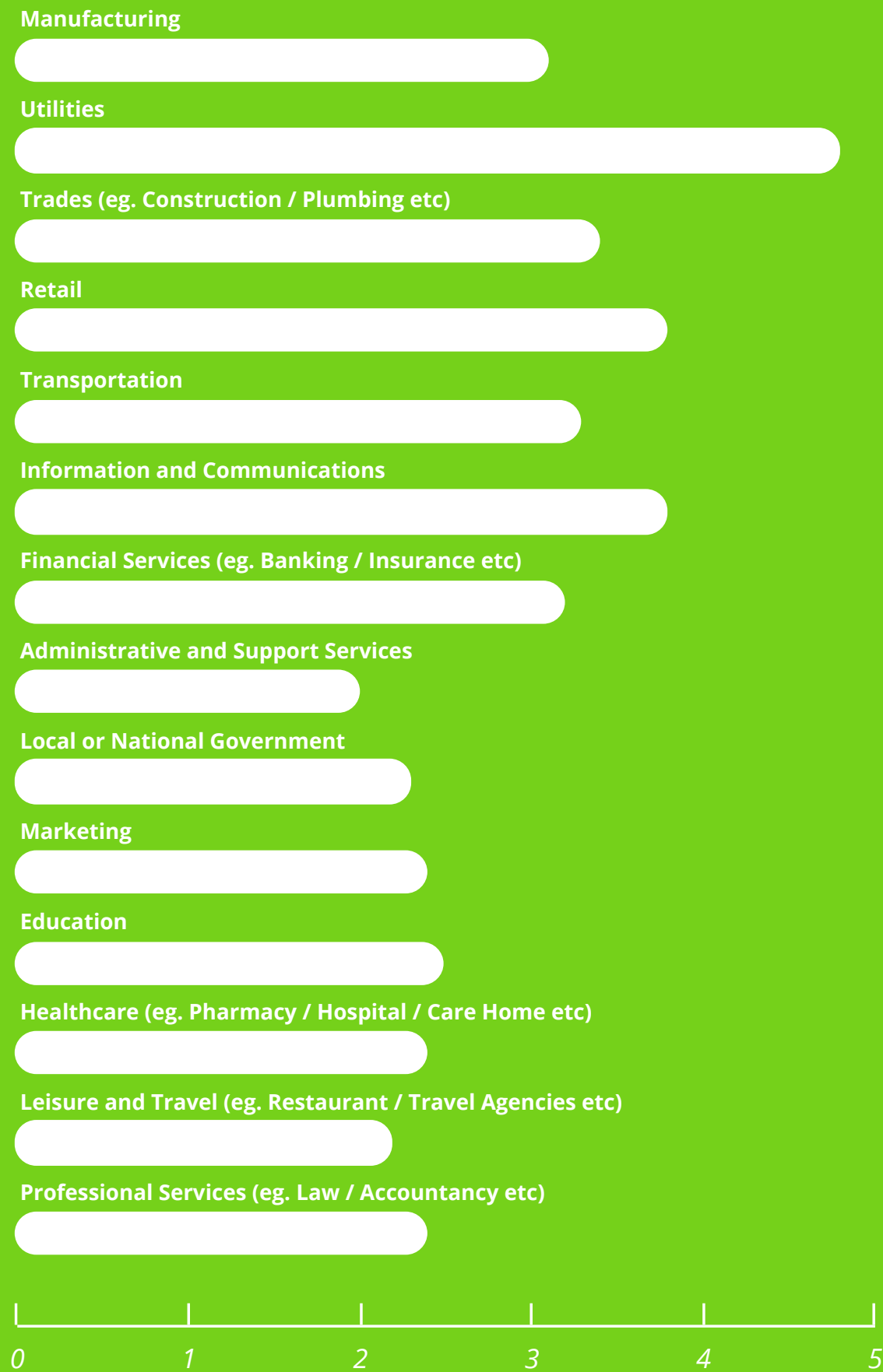
A significant number also pointed to how greater convenience would help ease problems arranging childcare to attend appointments (17.9%).

This may also help parents to better-manage their own health, as **just under a third (31%) admit they neglect their own health concerns due to the time pressures of parenthood.**

Mums were found to be more likely to consciously do so, while dads were more likely to put off seeing a doctor about their own health complaint to focus on their children’s.

ADDRESSING PARENTS’ CONCERNS





In the past year, how many times have you been into work with an infectious illness

How digital healthcare can help workers

Work-related commitments often prove a major barrier to people taking care of their health properly. In fact, achieving the correct work/health balance appears to be a major national weakness.

In such situations, digital healthcare may be a metaphorical, if not literal, life-saver.

The majority of workers we surveyed (57%) say work commitments have meant they have been unable to either book or attend at least one GP appointment in the last 12 months.

On average, this occurs three times over twelve months and, for an estimated 687,000 people in the UK, work-related commitments prevent ten or more appointments each year.

Our research suggests that this may be because many of us are under pressure to work regardless of how ill we might feel - **88% say that they don't feel comfortable calling in sick, even when they feel unwell.**

Just under a quarter (24%) say they are put under pressure to go into work when feeling ill by their boss. As a result, many are taking a number of infectious germs into the working environment, which both prevents them from concentrating on getting better and risks passing on infectious conditions to colleagues.

These problems are worse in women than men, suggesting there is either increased pressure, or a perception of increased pressure, on women to work through sickness and prioritise work over their health.



Infectious illnesses British adults would go into work with

Cough, Cold



Flu



Tonsillitis, Throat infection, Strep throat



Norovirus



Cold sores



Gastroenteritis



Sinusitis



Glandular fever



Chicken pox, Shingles

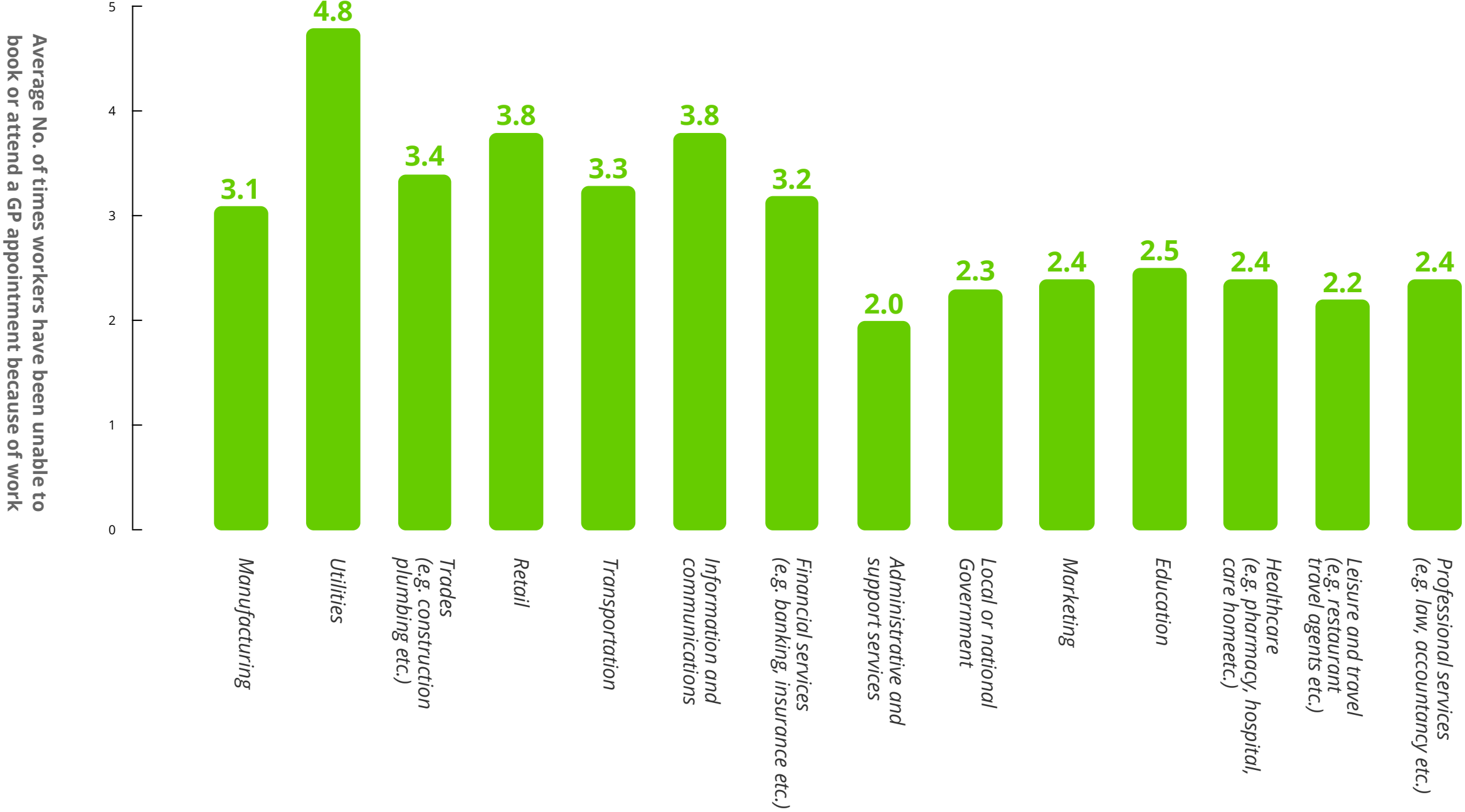


Mumps



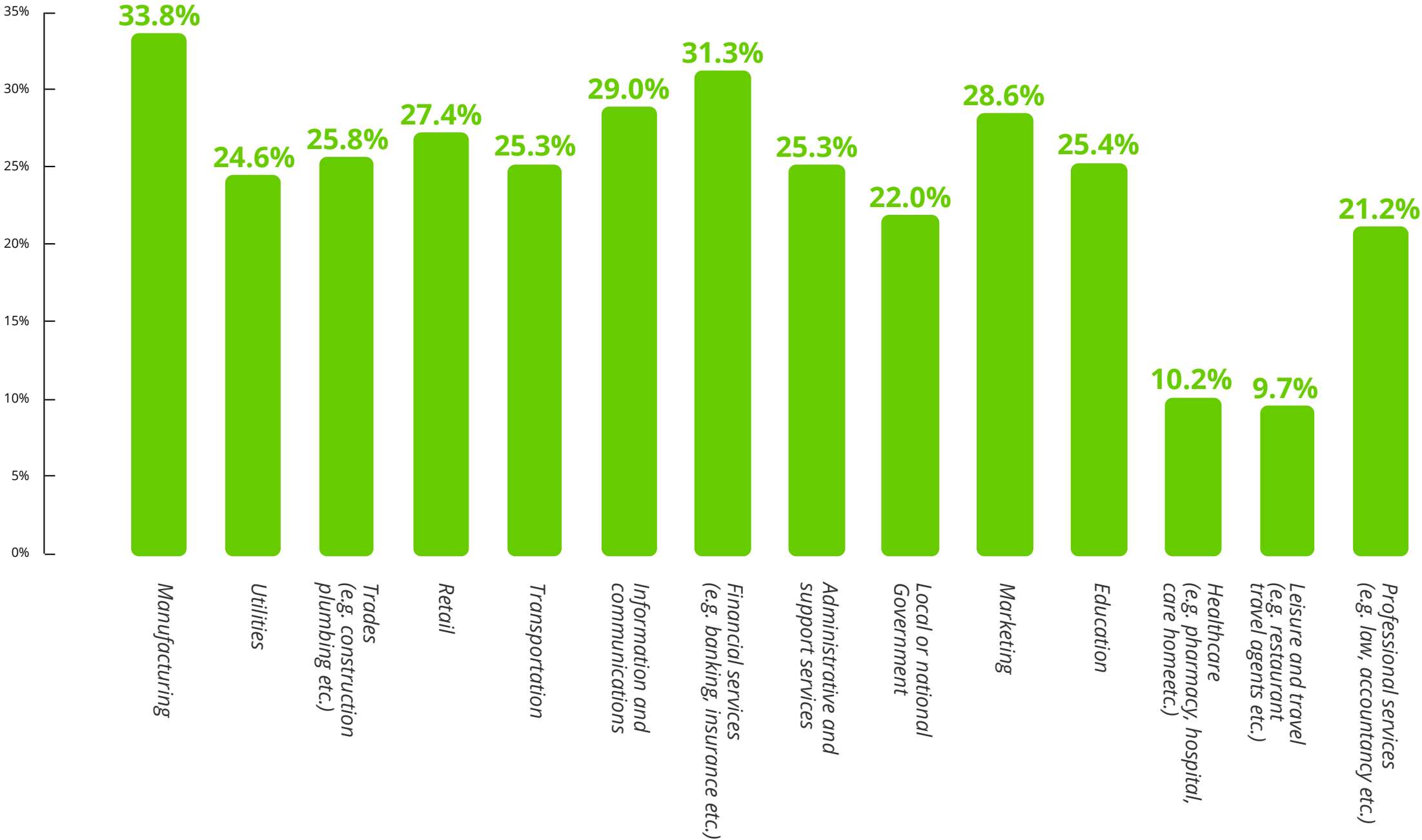
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%

Which industries see the greatest instances of staff not being able to book or attend appointments due to work commitments?



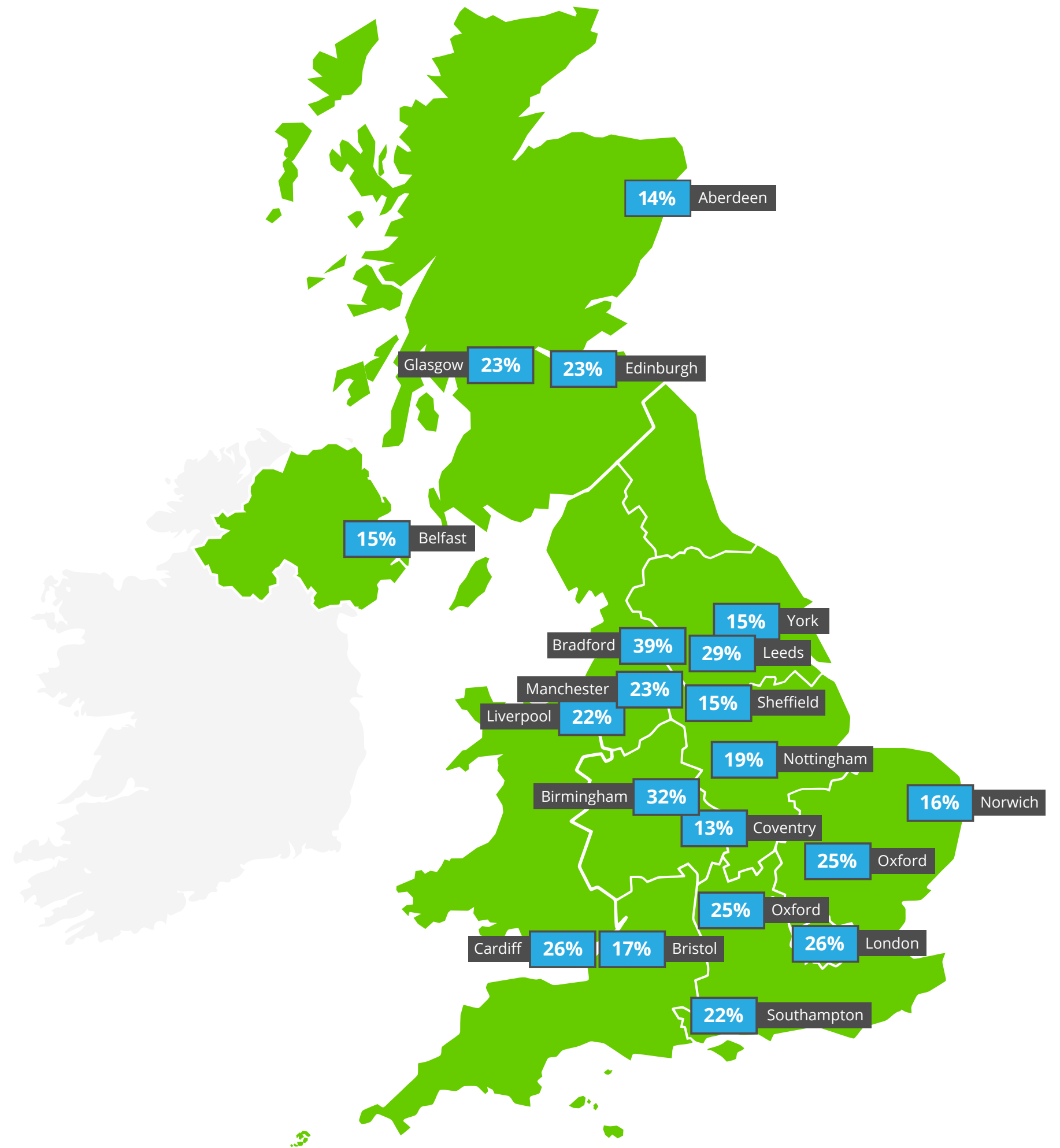
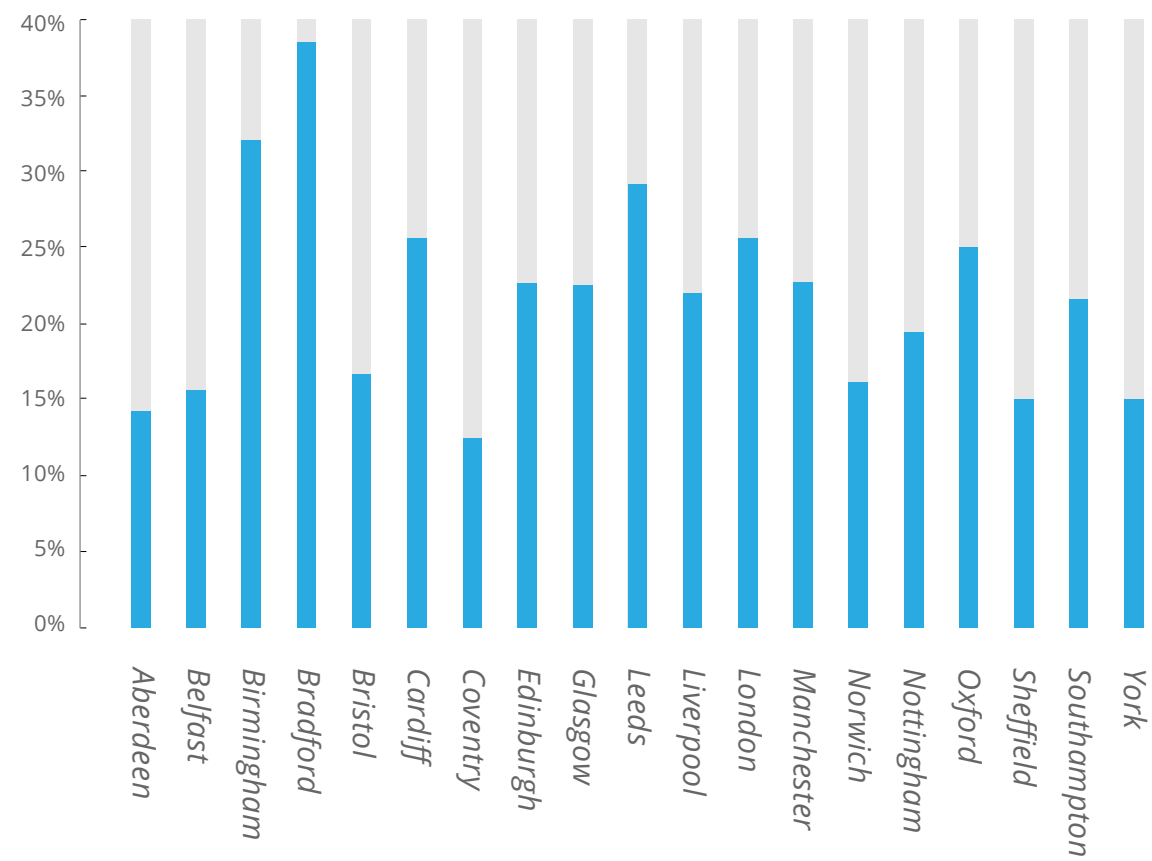
Which industries put the most pressure on ill staff to go into work?

When I am ill I feel under pressure to work from the office

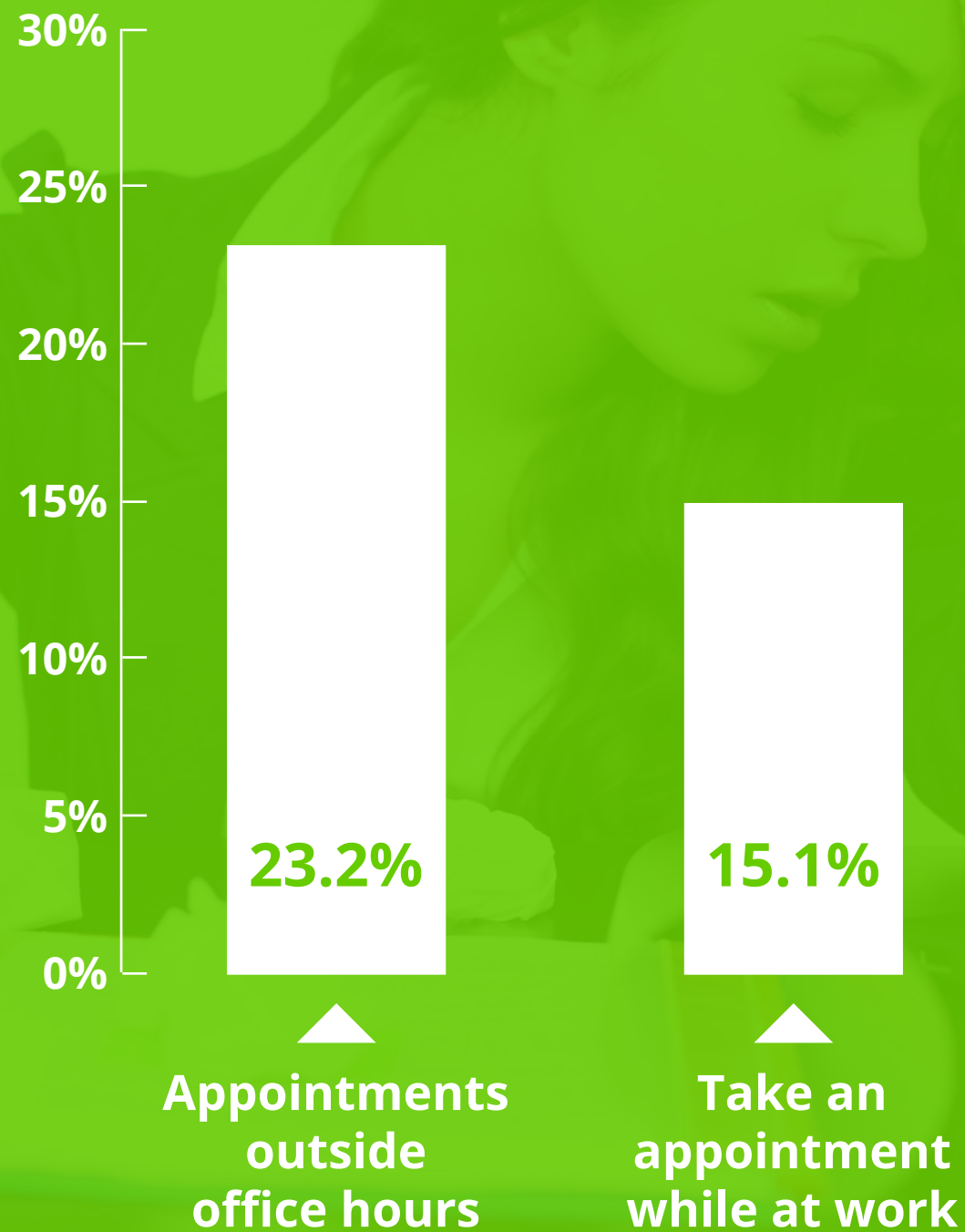


Which cities see staff feeling the most pressured to go into work while sick?

When I am ill I feel under pressure to work from the office



PROVIDING WORK / HEALTH BALANCE



How digital healthcare can help workers

Somewhat unsurprisingly, our respondents were open to the idea of using video GP appointments to help ease these problems.

23% said that they would be keen to arrange appointments in the evening, while 15% would use mobile devices to enable them to attend an appointment without leaving their place of work.

Responsible employers looking to take better care of their people (and save time spent out of the office on GP appointments) would be well-served in providing facilities where video consultations can take place in private.

Conclusion

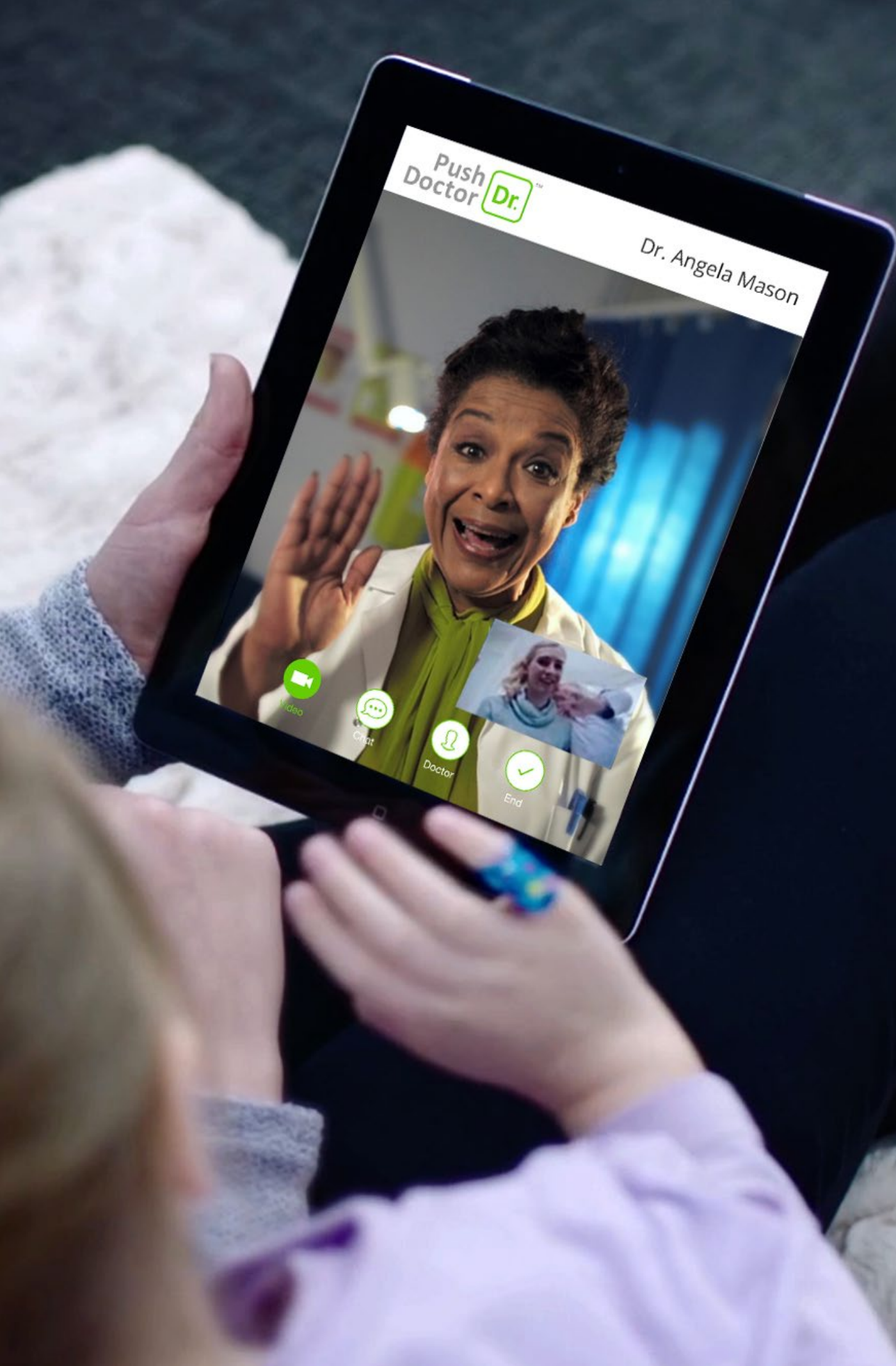
The findings of this report have highlighted a distinct appetite and requirement for more widespread adoption of technology innovations in digital healthcare among the UK population as a whole – as well as within distinct patient groups, including those that are less obvious, including parents and the over 55s.

In fact, these results show just how many patients are already using technology to access healthcare services – with convenience being the main driver for this – suggesting they not only desire more widespread adoption of these healthcare innovations, but are actively instigating it themselves.

Patients now want and expect the same level of convenience and responsive access to healthcare services, as they do from shops, TV providers and social networks.

The onus is on healthcare providers to respond to the demands of modern, connected patients in order to enable greater patient choice in terms of accessing services when and where they need them.





Contact Us

Please get in touch for all questions regarding PushDoctor.co.uk, the GP Futures Report, or if you are looking for any of the following:

- **Expert comment and information on healthcare, wellbeing and the future of the healthcare ecosystem.**
- **Consultation trials and giveaways.**
- **Product images and user statistics.**

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