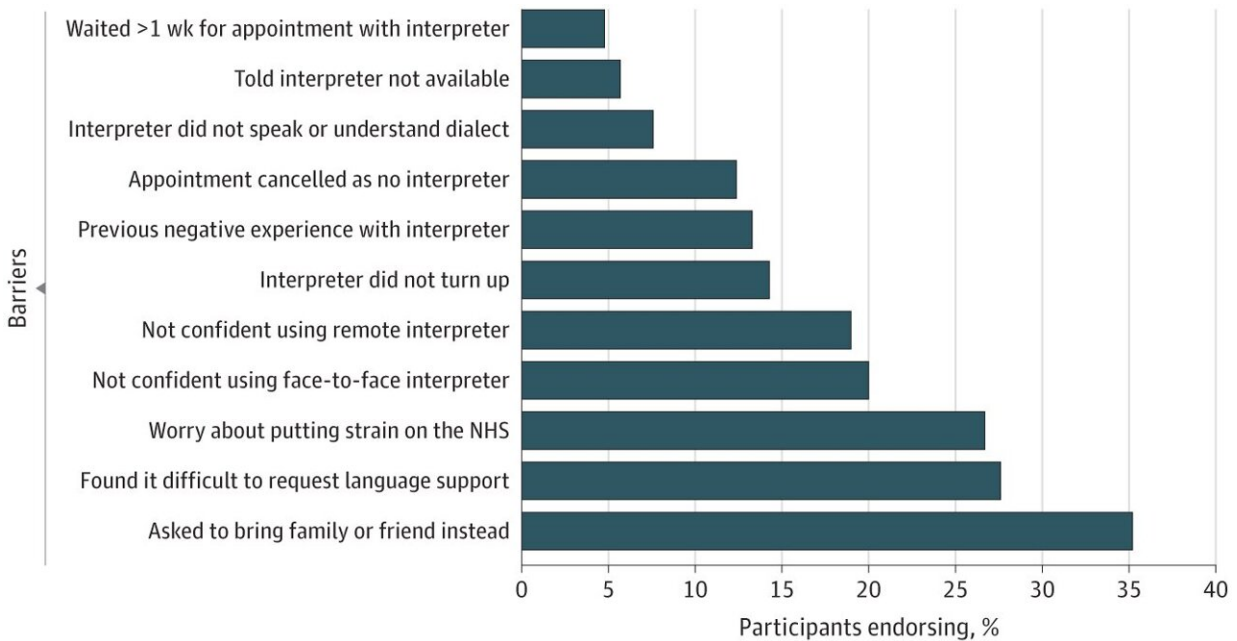


Improving uptake of interpreting services in primary care settings

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Potential Barriers to Using Formal Interpreting Services. "NHS" indicates National Health Service. Credit: *JAMA Network Open* (2022). DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.44092

People who do not speak English well often ask friends and family to translate for them when accessing their GP practice, finds a new study from the University of Surrey. However, more needs to be done to improve the understanding and quality of language support services available, as increasing uptake will ensure people across the UK are

given equal access to health care.

Surveying 105 people from Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani ethnic backgrounds in England who identified themselves as having limited English language proficiency, researchers found that 60 percent reported using at least one type of formal interpreting services, the most common being face-to-face interpreting. The study found that only 37 percent of participants were offered a choice of language support (e.g., face-to-face or telephone interpreter) from their [primary care](#) trust.

Of those who had not accessed interpreting services, 45 percent of participants were assisted by friends or family during consultations, whilst 32 percent reported seeing a doctor or nurse who spoke their language.

Katriina Whitaker, Professor of Psychology and Lead for Cancer Care at the University of Surrey, said, "Having provisions in place to help non-English speakers access [primary care services](#) is vital in ensuring [equal access](#) to health care. Professional interpreting services help to achieve this, but we currently do not know how they are being accessed and utilized by those they were designed to help. Understanding how these services are used could help identify barriers preventing those who require assistance from accessing these services."

In partnership with Queen Mary University London, UCL and University of Warwick, researchers from the University of Surrey investigated the uptake and experience of people from UK South Asian communities accessing interpreting services in primary care settings. Guidance for health care commissioners in England recommends that provisions are in place to help patients access primary care in a language they are comfortable conversing in.

However, participants also identified a number of barriers they

encountered when accessing interpreting services, including difficulties in requesting an interpreter and having to wait more than a week for an interpreter to become available. Other issues that were raised included interpreters not turning up to scheduled appointments and/or not being familiar with the dialect a person was speaking.

Sabine Braun, Professor of Translation studies at the University of Surrey, said, "Although it is encouraging to see that 60 percent of participants who needed [language](#) support had used some kind of interpreting service, many who would benefit from the service are unable to access it. Whether it is because of a previous bad experience, they simply are not aware of it, or the service is too difficult to access, more needs to be done to understand how these services are offered and taken up to ensure they are meeting patients' needs."

This study was published in *JAMA Network Open*.

More information: Katriina L. Whitaker et al, Understanding Uptake and Experience of Interpreting Services in Primary Care in a South Asian Population in the UK, *JAMA Network Open* (2022). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.44092](#)

Provided by University of Surrey

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