

26 February 2002

**Coverage**

Great Britain

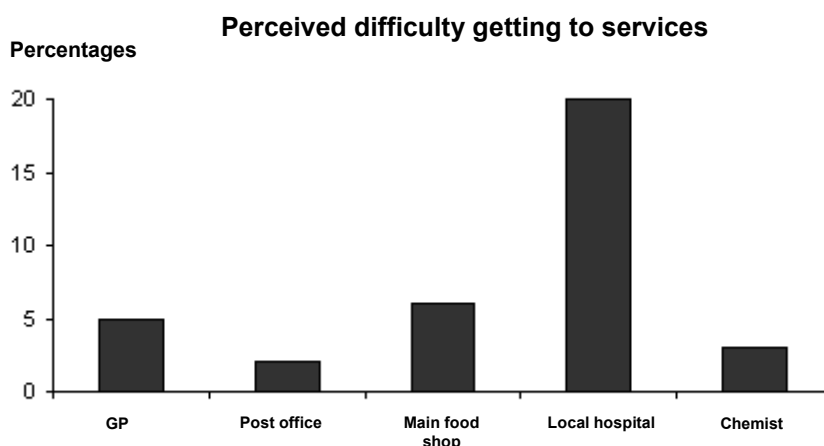
**Theme**

Social and Welfare

# Difficulty in accessing key services

A report\* on the difficulty experienced by people in accessing a range of key local services, published today by the Office for National Statistics, finds that 20 per cent of adults say that they have difficulty getting to their hospital.

The majority of people do not have any difficulty in accessing any of the other services looked at in the survey. Less than six per cent experience difficulty in accessing a chemist, their GP, post office or main food shop.



The questions were included in the National Statistics Omnibus Survey. The analysis focuses on perceptions of difficulty, but also looks at actual difficulty (as measured by journey time) and type of transport used in accessing services.

Four groups who are often thought to suffer poor access to good quality transport were looked at in detail. These are: women, older people, those living in rural areas and people living in deprived areas. The services examined are those which every household is likely to need – the hospital, GP, chemist, post office and main food shop.

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***\*Difficulty in accessing key services***

The report is available on the National Statistics website:  
[www.statistics.gov.uk/accesstoservices](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/accesstoservices)

Key findings are:

Journey times tend to be shortest for the more local services, such as the post office or chemist, which are present on most High Streets. More than four-fifths of adults can access these services within 10 minutes.

Travel times to the hospital are much longer. Two-fifths reported travel times of over twenty minutes but a quarter of people could get to their local hospital within 10 minutes.

Whether a car is available to the household makes a difference to perception of difficulty. Where there is no car, people are nearly twice as likely to say they have difficulties (38 per cent) than those with a car (21 per cent).

There is a clear relationship between actual difficulty (as measured by usual journey time) and perceived difficulty. Women are more likely than men to say they have difficulty in accessing the services examined, reflecting the longer journey times they experience and lower car use.

Younger people, aged 16 to 24, and the elderly, aged 75 and over, have more difficulty accessing services than the general population. Less access to, and use of, a car may partly explain this.

Age differences remain even after allowing for varying levels of household car availability and other factors. The reasons for this are not clear but may reflect differences in personal mobility as well as individual access to cars within the household.

People living in rural or deprived areas report only slightly more difficulty in accessing services than people living in more urban areas. Across each of the services examined, use of the car is substantially greater in rural areas.

For example, more than nine in ten people living in rural areas use the car for their main food shopping and for travel to the hospital. This compares with little more than seven in ten adults in urban areas for these services. Conversely, there is relatively greater use made of foot and public transport in urban areas. This is most marked for journeys to the chemist where half of people in urban areas travel by foot, compared with one-fifth in rural areas.

There were no significant differences in journey times between people living in the most deprived wards and other areas, but there were a significantly greater proportion of people reporting difficulty in accessing at least one service.

This is likely to reflect their greater reliance on alternative forms of transport to the car. Lower car use in the more deprived areas was associated with lower levels of household access to cars. The pattern is apparent with all services but is most noticeable with journeys to the hospital – car use is 33 percentage points lower in the tenth most deprived areas when compared with the tenth least deprived (89 per cent).

## **BACKGROUND NOTES**

1. The National Statistics (NS) Omnibus Survey is a multi-purpose survey based on a representative sample of adults in Great Britain. It is carried out by the ONS on behalf of a range of government departments and other public and non-profit making bodies. It is a fast, effective and reliable way of obtaining information about the general population of particular groups of people. Interviews are conducted throughout the year, addressing a wide range of subjects which can vary from month to month.
2. The NS Omnibus Survey enjoys consistently high response rates and also guarantees a true random sample of respondents. It was first carried out in 1990. During 2002/2003 the survey will be run in eight months of the year (April, June, July, September, October, November, February and March) and modules can be commissioned in one or more months. One adult is interviewed in each household. For further information about the NS Omnibus Survey and about purchasing questions, telephone 020 7533 5310, email [omnibus@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:omnibus@statistics.gov.uk) or look at the National Statistics website at [www.statistics.gov.uk/omnibus](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/omnibus)
3. The results from this survey were obtained from questions commissioned for the NS Omnibus Survey in January and March, 2000 and 2001. The response rate for the modules commissioned for this study was 64 per cent, giving a total of 6,991 respondents. The survey data for the two separate years were merged to give a larger sample size and improve the accuracy of the results.



4. Deprivation is measured using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (wards and local authority areas in England only). The overall Index of Multiple Deprivation used in this report combines six separate indicators (Income; Employment; Health Deprivation and Disability; Education, Skills and Training; Housing; and Geographical Access to Services) into a single deprivation score for each area. This measure was developed in 2000 by the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.
5. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office.
6. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2002.