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#### Cross-sectional analysis of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering user characteristics in General Practices of England in the years 2018-2020

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### Cross-sectional analysis of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering user characteristics in General Practices of England in the years 2018-2020

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Keywords general practice; primary health care; patient portal; electronic health record; personal health record; GP Patient Survey.

### Abstract

Objectives: To explore the characteristics of participants using the different functionalities of the services in the context of NHS General Practices.

Design: Cross-sectional study.

Participants: participants of the General Practice Patient Survey in England for the years 2018-2020.

Primary and secondary outcome measures: Online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering. We assessed the association between online services use and participant characteristics using two-level mixed-effects logistic regression.

Results: 1,806,977 survey participants were included in this study. 15% (n=263938) used online appointment booking in the last 12 months, and 19% (n=339449) had ordered a repeat prescription in the last 12 months. Participants with a long-term condition, on regular multiple medications, who have deafness or hearing loss and who are from the lowest deprivation quintile were more likely to have used online services. Male participants (compared to females) and participants with Black and Other ethnic background compared to White ethnic backgrounds were less likely to use online services. Participants over 85 years old were less likely to use online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering compared to the younger age groups.

Conclusions: Specific groups of participants used online services such as patients with long-term conditions or those with deafness or hearing loss. While online services could provide efficiency to patients and practices it is essential that alternatives continue to be provided to those that cannot use or choose not to use online services. Understanding the different patients' needs could help tailor solutions to encourage the uptake and use of the services.

### Strengths and limitations of this study

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- The study used a sample from a major national survey to explore the characteristics of online services users, a service which has been highly advocated in the NHS and in other healthcare systems of the world.
  - Given the clustered nature of the data (where patients are registered to different general practices) and to account for the clustering, we used multilevel logistic regression analysis.
  - 3. The study relied on self-reported data for online service use due to data unavailability which can lead to response bias.

# BACKGROUND

Online services such as appointment booking or repeat prescription ordering are offered in 99.7% of General Practitioner (GP) practices in England [1], but patients have to request access to the service and adoption remains low (about 31% in May 2020) [1]. According to previous literature, online services, also referred to as patient portals, have the potential to promote patients' involvement in their care, reduce emergency visits and hospitalisation [2], and may improve some health outcomes through improving medication adherence [2, 3] patient knowledge about health and patient efficacy (e.g. patient's confidence in adhering to health instructions or treatment) [4]. Few studies have examined the characteristics of patients using online services and the inequalities that might exist based on patient characteristics in the context of NHS services such as ethnicity and deprivation inequalities [5-7]. Understanding patient characteristics associated with online service use may reveal barriers to use and inform service planning to increase the uptake of the services.

Studies from other countries, and a limited number of studies from the UK, suggest that [7-10] patients with low income, and ethnic minorities may be less likely to use patient portals

due to reduced access to the internet, computers and smartphones [8, 10]. This is the first study to look at online services user characteristics for both online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering explicitly in England, where the NHS have invested in a nation-wide digital transformation programme [11]. This study aims to examine patients' characteristics associated with online appointment booking and repeat prescription service ordering.

# **METHODS**

The methods are described using the Strengthening the reporting of observational studies in epidemiology (STROBE) checklist [12] (Supplementary Table 1).

### Patient and public involvement

The NIHR Applied Research Collaboration of Northwest London Public Advisors were consulted during the study write-up and were involved appropriately in the drafting.

### Study design

Cross-sectional analysis of data from the General Practice Patient Survey (GPPS) of 2018, 2019, and 2020 in England.

### Variables

The outcome variables (online appointment booking use and online repeat prescription use) were based on the responses to the GPPS question: "Which of the following general practice online services have you used in the past 12 months?" [13] in which the answers "Booking appointments online", and "Ordering repeat prescriptions online" were used for this study. The GPPS also records the use of online record viewing. However, we did not include it in this study due to the limited number of participants reporting the use of the functionality (about 5% in 2020

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and lower proportions in 2019 and 2018). Additionally, ten different covariates (explanatory

variables) were included in the models as listed in table 1.

# Table 1 The list of variables included in the two-level regression models of the study and their definitions

Variable	Categories and definition
Gender	Male, Female
Age	16 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74, 75 to 84, 85 or over
Ethnicity	White, mixed, Asian, black, other (derived from 18 ethnicity categories of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories [14]) White, mixed, Asian, black, other (derived from 18 ethnicity categories of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories [14])
Survey year	2018, 2019 or 2020 (created based on the year of the survey)
Long-term conditions	Yes, No, or "I don't know/ Can't answer" answers to the question: "Do you have any long-term physical or mental health conditions, disabilities or illnesses?" [13]
Deafness or hearing loss	Yes or No answer to the question: "Which, if any, of the following long- term conditions do you have?Deafness or hearing loss" [13]
Taking 5 or more medications on a regular basis	Yes or No answer to the question: "Do you take 5 or more medications on a regular basis?" [13]
Parent status	Yes or No answer to the question: "Are you a parent or a legal guardian for any children aged under 16 living in your home?" [13]
Carer status	Yes or No answer derived from the answers to the question: "Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either: long-term physical or mental ill health / disability, or problems related to old age?"
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles	Derived from the IMD ranking available in the dataset where the ranks were converted to quintiles according to the English indices of deprivation 2019 guidance. The IMD ranking in the dataset is based on the ranking of the postcode of the participant [15]. Derived from the IMD ranking available in the dataset where the ranks were converted to quintiles according to the

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English indices of deprivation 2019 guidance. The IMD ranking in the dataset is based on the ranking of the postcode of the participant [15].

**Rurality of** Rural or urban as defined by the ONS [16]Rural or urban as defined by the **General** ONS [16] **Practice** 

### **Data source**

The GPPS is a national, postal survey commissioned by NHS England. GPPS uses random sampling, proportionately stratified by GP practice, age, and gender. Eligibility for GPPS includes having a valid NHS number, being 16 years or older and being registered with a GP for at least 6 months. Response rates of previous surveys are considered, sending more surveys to low-response practices and fewer survey to high-response practices [17-19]. The survey was sent to 2,221,082, 2,328,560, 2,329,590 participants in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, with response rates of 34%, 33% and 32%, respectively [17-19].

In March 2020, social restrictions were announced in England due to the COVID-19 pandemic [20]. The last data collected for the GPPS was in April 2020, however, only a small number of surveys were received post March 2020 with the GPPS indicating it was highly unlikely that the survey results were affected by the pandemic [18].

### Study size

We received data from 2,246,109 participants who completed the GPPS surveys in 2018, 2019 or 2020. After removing participants that did not have complete data for the variables of interest (n=439,060, 19.5%), 1,807,049 participants were included.

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### Statistical methods

We first reported descriptive statistics of the participants based on their online appointment booking and repeat prescription use. We then performed multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression models: First, we created a null model with only the outcome variable and random intercept (GP practice) to understand if there was clustering due to the random intercept. We then added all patient level covariates to the model (model 2). We checked the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) and intercepted in all models to examine the effect of clustering. We then added the GP level variable (GP rurality) in the final model (model 3) [21]. Methods of the sensitivity analyses is in the Supplementary Table 2.

### **RESULTS**

Some of the results of this study will be presented as a conference abstract in the following year [22].

### **Summary statistics**

1,807,049 participants were included of which 15% (n=263938) used online appointment booking (used at least once in the last 12 months), and 19% (n=339449) used online repeat prescription (used at least once in the last 12 months) (Supplementary Table 3). Most participants were female (55.1%), and in the 65-74 years age group (22%), were of white ethnic backgrounds (86.8%), and were registered at GPs in an urban area (83.1%) and half (51.1%) had a long-term condition.

About 19.5% of the total sample received from GPPS was excluded due to missing data. The proportion of participants by category were different to the complete case dataset in the

proportions for age, ethnicity (most participants were from the mixed ethnicity), survey year, long-term condition, taking five or more medications, reporting of deafness or hearing loss, and slight difference in deprivation fifths proportions (Supplementary Table 4). Descriptive statistics of the sensitivity analysis groups are displayed in Supplementary Table 5.

### Patient and GP characteristics associated with online services use

#### Online appointment booking

Results of the two-level mixed-effects logistic regression for the online appointment booking outcome are presented in table 2. Participants with a long-term condition, taking 5 or more medications on a regular basis and who have deafness or hearing loss were more likely to use online appointment booking compared to participants without these characteristics. In the fully adjusted model for patient and GP characteristics, participants with a long-term condition had 67% greater odds of using online appointment booking (CI: 1.66-1.69) compared to participants without a long-term condition.

Males had lower odds of booking an appointment online (OR: 0.89, 95% CI: 0.88-0.90) than females. Compared to the age group (85+), the odds ratio for using online appointment booking was the highest for the age groups 25-34 and 35-44 (OR: 4.96, 95% CI: 4.78-5.14) and (OR: 4.85, 95% CI:4.68-5.03), respectively.

Participants of black and "other" ethnic backgrounds had lower odds than those of white ethnic backgrounds for using online appointment booking, whereas participants of Asian ethnic backgrounds had 11% (OR: 1.11, 95% CI: 1.09-1.13) greater odds of using online appointment booking.

Parents or legal guardians were less likely and carers of people with long-term condition or disability were more likely to book online appointments compared with non-carers.

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There was an inverse association between deprivation quintile and online appointment booking. The odds for using online appointment booking increased with reducing deprivation from the second to fifth (least deprived) quintile compared to the most deprived quintile. Participants in the least deprived quintile had 54% greater odds of booking appointments online (OR: 1.54, 95% CI: 1.51-1.57) compared to those in the most deprived quintile. Participants from the survey year 2020 were the most likely to use online appointment booking compared to participants from the survey year 2018 and 2019.

Participants from GPs located in an urban setting had greater odds of booking appointments

online compared to participants from GPs in a rural setting.

Model comparison: The ICC of 0.13 indicates that there is a slight similarity between values from the same group (in this case from the same GP practice) although the difference is not large because the value is close to zero.

#### Table 2 Two-level Mixed-effects multivariable logistic regression of General Practice Patient Survey participant characteristics on Online appointment booking use in the last 12 months (level 1, N= 1807049 participants; level 2, N=7256 general practices)

+ GP Characte	eristics (Model 3)
Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
1.15***	(1.12, 1.19)
1.67***	(1.66, 1.69)
1.19***	(1.18, 1.20)
1.13***	(1.11, 1.15)
0.89***	(0.88, 0.90)
3.63***	(3.48, 3.78)
4.96***	(4.78, 5.14)
4.85***	(4.68, 5.03)
4.26***	(4.12, 4.42)
3.69***	(3.57, 3.82)
3.09***	(2.99, 3.20)
	Odds Ratios          1.15***         1.67***         1.19***         1.13***         0.89***         3.63***         4.96***         4.85***         4.26***

	+ GP Charact	eristics (Mode
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
75-84	1.74***	(1.68, 1.80)
Ethnicity (REF: White)		
Black	0.84***	(0.81, 0.86)
Asian	1.11***	(1.09, 1.13)
Other	0.96**	(0.92, 0.99)
Mixed	1.04	(1.00, 1.08)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.92***	(0.90, 0.93)
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.14***	(1.13, 1.16)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		
2	1.15***	(1.13, 1.17)
3	1.27***	(1.25, 1.29)
4	1.40***	(1.37, 1.42)
5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018)	1.54***	(1.51, 1.57)
2019	1.19***	(1.18, 1.20)
2020	1.52***	(1.50, 1.54)
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	1.11***	(1.07, 1.16)
Model summary		
ICC	0.13	

\* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.001$ 

### Online repeat prescription ordering

Results of the two-level mixed-effects logistic regression for the online repeat prescription ordering outcome are presented in table 3. Participants with a long-term condition, users of 5 or more medications on a regular basis and participants with deafness or hearing loss were all more likely to use online repeat prescription ordering compared to participants without these characteristics. The odds of using online repeat prescription ordering was 2.58 times greater (OR: 2.58, 95% CI: 2.55, 2.60) for participants with a long-term condition compared to those without a condition.

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Males had 4% lower odds of ordering repeat prescriptions online (OR: 0.96, 95% CI: 0.96-0.97) than females. All age groups from 16-84 had greater odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to the age group 85+. However, participants from the age groups 45-54 and 55-64 had the highest odds of ordering repeat prescriptions online compared to the age group 85+ (OR: 3.18, 95% CI: 3.10-3.28) and (OR: 3.28, 95% CI: 3.20, 3.37), respectively.

Black, Asian, and Mixed had lower odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to the White ethnicity. Parents or legal guardians had 5% lower odds of ordering repeat prescriptions online (OR: 0.95, 95% CI: 0.94- 0.96) than non-parents. Carers of people with a long-term condition or disability had 16% greater odds of ordering repeat prescriptions online (OR: 1.16, 95% CI: 1.15- 1.17) compared to non-carers.

Participants in the deprivation quintiles 4 and 5 (least deprived) had the highest odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to the most deprived group (OR: 1.62, 95% CI: 1.59, 1.64) and (OR: 1.77, 95% CI: 1.74, 1.80), respectively.

Participants who completed the survey in the years 2019 and 2020 had greater odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to participants from the survey year 2018.

Participants from GPs located in an urban setting had lower odds of ordering repeat prescriptions online compared to participants from GPs in a rural setting.

Model comparison: the ICC was 0.08 for model 3 in table 3, which also showed that there is slight evidence that patients from the same GP may have more similar results compared to patients from other GPs. Results of the sensitivity analyses are in Supplementary Tables 6 and 7.

he last 12 months (level 1, N= 1807049 participants; l	+ GP Charact	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confiden Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)		
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.25***	(1 22 1 2
	2.58***	(1.22, 1.2)
Long term condition-Yes	1.26***	(2.55, 2.6
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-	1.20****	(1.25, 1.2
Yes (REF= No)	1.02**	(1.25, 1.2)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.02** 0.96***	(1.00, 1.0)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.96***	(0.96, 0.9
Age (REF: 85+)	1.71***	(164 17)
25-34	2.17***	(1.64, 1.7)
35-44	2.69***	(2.10, 2.2)
	3.18***	(2.61, 2.7)
45-54 55-64	3.28***	(3.10, 3.2)
65-74	3.01***	(3.20, 3.3) (2.93, 3.0)
75-84	1.68***	· · · ·
	1.00	(1.64, 1.7
Ethnicity (REF: White) Black	0.76***	(0.74, 0.7
Asian	0.94***	(0.74, 0.7) (0.93, 0.9)
Other	0.78***	(0.93, 0.9) (0.75, 0.8)
Mixed	0.98	
	0.98	(0.94, 1.0
Parent or legal guardian to a 16-year-old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.95	(0.04.0.0
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.16***	(0.94, 0.9)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)	1.10	(1.15, 1.1
2	1.23***	(1 21 1 2
3	1.23***	(1.21, 1.2) (1.42, 1.4)
5 4	1.62***	· · ·
	1.02***	(1.59, 1.6) (1.74, 1.8)
5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018)	1.//	(1.74, 1.8
2019	1.18***	(1 17 1 1
2019	1.46***	(1.17, 1.1)
	0.88***	(1.44, 1.4)
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural) Model Summary	0.00	(0.85, 0.9
ICC	0.08	

\* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\leq$  0.01, \*\*\* p-value=  $\leq$  0.001

## DISCUSSION

### **Principal findings**

The most notable findings of this study were that online services were predominantly used by certain groups including participants with a long-term condition, using regular multiple medications, have deafness or hearing loss, carers, and the most recent participants of the survey (2020). There was some evidence of inequality in use by some participants groups. Participants of Black, and Other ethnic backgrounds were less likely to use online services compared to people of White ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, the deprivation gradient (the association with online service use in the least deprived quintile and most deprived quintile) showed that online services use increased with reduced deprivation and that use was highest among the least deprived quintile.

### Strengths and weaknesses of the study

Although online services have been offered almost universally in GPs in England since 2015, there continues to be a lack of research on the use of online services (or patient portals) in this setting [7, 23]. This study used a major national survey major national survey which uses rigorous research methodology (accounting for GP practice variation in the models and accounting for missing data in the sensitivity analyses) to explore online services user characteristics in England which can inform service planning and identify patient groups who may need support using the service.

A limitation of the study was using only complete-case data in the analyses. Participants excluded from the analyses due to missing data presented differences in the breakdown of participant characteristics. Therefore, we performed sensitivity to explore what kind of

differences might have observed if all the sample was included. Both summary statistics of the excluded sample and the sensitivity analyses indicated GPs with more missing data may be more likely to have younger age groups, greater deprivation groups, and ethnically diverse groups, all of which were associated with relatively lower odds of using online services. This introduces the possibility that some of the odd's ratios presented in the main analysis may be larger than they are in the population due to missing data bias.

As with all survey-based studies, a major limitation of the GPPS is the non-response bias. However, a study on the methodology of the GPPS, did not find evidence of non-response bias [24].We tried to alleviate non-response bias by controlling for deprivation, ethnicity, age and gender (which can often be associated with low-response rates as reported in a study examining GPPS non-response characteristics [24]).

### Strengths and weaknesses in relation to other studies

This study relied on self-reported online service usage which could introduce response bias. A better way to measure use could be via the electronic patient portal log files. The log files automatically record patient portal activity and can serve as an objective method to examine patient portal use because it is not subject to recall bias and records the exposure prior to the outcome [3]. However, due to data unavailability of patient-level data of this kind at the time of the study, the GPPS records of online services use was used in this study as it has been on other England based studies exploring patient portal use [5, 6].

### **Discussing important differences in results**

Patients from more deprived areas, and from ethnic minorities are reported to have lower uptake of patient portals in previous studies [25]. According to previous studies, deprivation and ethnicity play key roles in online services use [26-28] which was confirmed by the main analysis

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and sensitivity analyses in this study. A study from the USA suggested that patients' ethnicity could be associated with less trust in patient portals [29]. Lower use of online services by participants with greater deprivation levels is repeatedly reported in the literature [30]. This may be due to lower access to the internet, smart phone, and computers among individuals from more deprived areas [7, 31].

### Meaning of the study

There is evidence that online services use in England is increasing every year and it is likely to continue to be an important tool in GP settings. Understanding the needs of populations less likely to use online services may help improve the uptake of the services and meet the needs of vulnerable populations which may be more prone to have reduced access to healthcare services [32] in addition to online services. There is evidence that online services use is increasing every year and it is likely to continue to be an important tool in GP settings. Understanding the needs of populations less likely to use online services may help improve the uptake of the services and meet the needs of populations less likely to use online services may help improve the uptake of the services and meet the needs of vulnerable populations which may be more prone to have reduced access to healthcare services and meet the needs of vulnerable populations which may be more prone to have reduced access to healthcare services [32] in addition to online services.

### Possible explanations and implications for clinicians and

### **Policymakers**

The adoption of online services by those with long-term conditions is promising and can potentially contribute to improve self-management of the long-term condition [2]. However, it is also a reflection that patients with long-term conditions may generally be more likely to use healthcare services[33-35]. Practices could continue to encourage patients with long-term

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conditions to sign up and use online services. However, it is essential that alternatives to online services continue to be provided to patients who are unable to use the services [33-35]. This study shows that online services use is lower among people from more deprived areas and from ethnic minorities which may introduce inequities if in-person services become out of reach. As an example, the move to telephone consultations and remote triage in GPs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for homeless people to access care due to not having a telephone [36]. In-person access to care is seen necessary to reach all patient groups despite access to technology in the move to remote consultations in the COVID-19 pandemic [36]. For this reason, it is important that practices continue to provide in-person services (e.g. for appointment booking and repeat prescriptions) to patients especially those less able to access remote services.

### Unanswered questions and future research

Further research is needed to understand the lack of uptake of the services in some patient groups to clarify if uptake is low due to barriers or due to patient preference. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, where patients are asked to contact their GP remotely [37], inequities in the access and use of the online services may be responsible for dramatic inequities when it comes to situations where online services becomes the only route of accessing care [38]. Although the findings of this study should be viewed as pre-COVID-19 findings, the patterns in disparities may continue or worsen in the post-COVID-19 period amidst the move to remote GP services. Future research could focus on the effects of these services on aspects of the healthcare system such as healthcare utilisation and patients' self-management of their condition.

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### Ethical approval

This study was approved by the Imperial College Research Ethics Committee, Reference number: 20IC6303.

### **Author contribution**

AA, GG, TB and CC created the study design, formulated the research question and finalised the study methodology. AA performed the analysis of the study. JN contributed to the introduction and discussion sections of the study. All authors reviewed and approved the submitted manuscript.

### Data sharing statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from Ipsos Mori but cannot be provided by the authors due to ethical restrictions. However, the aggregate level GPPS data are openly available in the GP Patient Survey webpage at <a href="https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/">https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/</a>

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# **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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# Supplementary material

Supplementary Table 1 STROBE 2007 checklist of items to be included in reports of

observational studies in epidemiology.

Supplementary Table 2. Methods and results of the sensitivity analysis.

Supplementary Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the number and proportion of participant

characteristics in the total population included in the analyses (n=1807049), categorised by

online services use.

Supplementary Table 4. The breakdown of participants by characteristics in the total sample

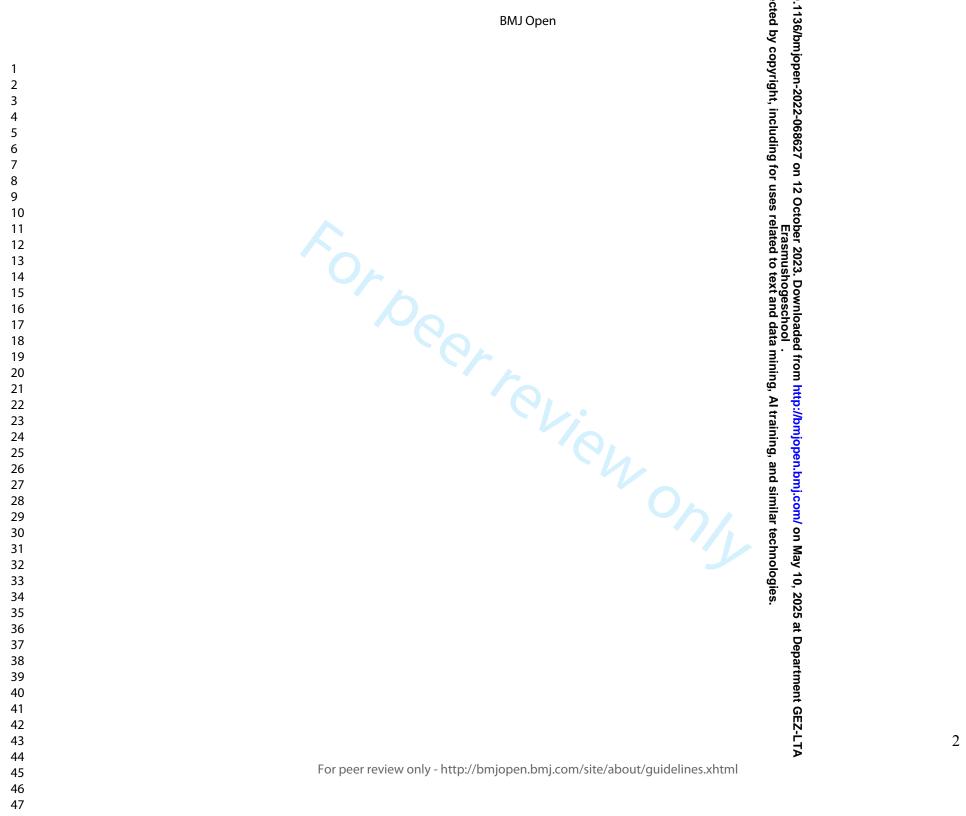
received (n=2,198,821), in the complete case dataset used for the analyses in this study

(n=1,806,977) and in the excluded sample (n=439,060).

Supplementary Table 5. Breakdown of the number and proportion of participant characteristics based on the categories of the proportion of missing data in the GP practice.

Supplementary Table 6. Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online appointment booking in the last 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice.

Supplementary Table 7. Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online repeat prescription ordering in the last 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice.



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# **Supplementary material:**

Supplementary Table 1 STROBE 2007 checklist [12] of items to be included in reports of observational studies in epidemioid gravitational studies (combined)

Section/Topic	Item #	Recommendation de la factoria de la	Reported on page #
Title and abstract	1	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract of LS.	1
		(b) Provide in the abstract an informative and balanced summary of what was done and was found	2
Introduction			
Background/rationale	2	Explain the scientific background and rationale for the investigation being reported	3-4
Objectives	3		4
Methods		g http	
Study design	4	Present key elements of study design early in the paper	4
Setting	5	Describe the setting, locations, and relevant dates, including periods of recruitment, exposite, follow-up, and data collection	5
Participants	6	(a) Cohort study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants. Describe methods of follow-up <i>Case-control study</i> —Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of cases as certainment and control selection. Give the rationale for the choice of cases and controls <i>Cross-sectional study</i> —Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants	5
		(b) Cohort study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and number of exposed and unexposed <i>Case-control study</i> —For matched studies, give matching criteria and the number of controls per case	-
Variables	7	Clearly define all outcomes, exposures, predictors, potential confounders, and effect for diagnostic criteria, if applicable	5
Data sources/ measurement	8*	For each variable of interest, give sources of data and details of methods of assessment ( $\Re$ easurement). Describe comparability of assessment methods if there is more than one group	5
Bias	9	Describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias	6 & Supplementary Table 2
Study size	10	Explain how the study size was arrived at	6

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Quantitative variables	11	Explain how quantitative variables were handled in the analyses. If applicable, descripe which groupings	6-7
Qualitation ( all actors			0 /
Statistical methods	12	were chosen and why       6       6         (a) Describe all statistical methods, including those used to control for confounding       6       8         (b) Describe any methods used to examine subgroups and interactions       6       7	6-7
			Supplementary Table 2
		(c) Explain how missing data were addressed	Supplementary Table 2
		<ul> <li>(c) Explain how missing data were addressed</li> <li>(d) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how loss to follow-up was addressed</li> <li>(d) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was addressed</li> <li>(c) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was addressed</li> <li>(c) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was addressed</li> <li>(c) Cohort study—If applicable, describe analytical methods taking account of support of support</li></ul>	
		(e) Describe any sensitivity analyses	Supplementary Table 2
Results			
Participants	13*	(a) Report numbers of individuals at each stage of study—eg numbers potentially eligible examined for eligibility, confirmed eligible, included in the study, completing follow-up, and analyzed	7
		(b) Give reasons for non-participation at each stage	6-7
		(c) Consider use of a flow diagram	-
Descriptive data	14*	(a) Give characteristics of study participants (eg demographic, clinical, social) and information on exposures and potential confounders	7
		(b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest	7 & Supplementary Table 3
		(c) Cohort study—Summarise follow-up time (eg, average and total amount)	NA
Outcome data	15*	<i>Cohort study</i> —Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures over time <b>a</b>	NA
		Case-control study—Report numbers in each exposure category, or summary measures of exposure	NA
		Cross-sectional study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures	7 & Supplementary Table 4
Main results	16	(a) Give unadjusted estimates and, if applicable, confounder-adjusted estimates and their precision (eg, 95% confidence interval). Make clear which confounders were adjusted for and why bey were included	8-12
		(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized	NA
		(c) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a meaning ful time period	NA
Other analyses	17	Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and sensitivity analyses	Supplementary Table 2, Supplementary Table 5-7
Discussion			
Key results	18	Summarise key results with reference to study objectives	12-13

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		BMJ Open BMJ Open Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or imprecision. Discuss both	
Limitations	19	direction and magnitude of any potential bias $\underline{o}$	n 13-14
Interpretation	20	Give a cautious overall interpretation of results considering objectives, limitations, maltipacity of analyses, results from similar studies, and other relevant evidence	14-16
Generalisability	21	Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results	16
Other information Funding	22	Give the source of funding and the role of the funders for the present study and, if applicable, for the original study on which the present article is based	16
		ods and results of the sensitivity analysis         beerformed in this study, only complete case participants (participants         missing data for any of the variables included in the analyses) were         itivity analyses to explore the effects of excluding participants with         c calculated the proportion of participants with complete dataset (n=2198821) and assigned each practice a new variable         ion of complete case participants in the practice. We then separated         ticipants (n=1807049) into three categories based on the proportion of         beam in their practice. The three categories were: highest missing data         e-range missing data group (26-74%), and lowest missing data group         the same two-level mixed-effects models for each of the outcomes	
that did	ot have any	missing data for any of the variables included in the analyses) were	
		itivity analyses to explore the effects of excluding participants with calculated the proportion of participants with complete data per	
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indicati	g the proport	ion of complete case participants in the practice. We then separated	
		ticipants (n=1807049) into three categories based on the proportion of	
		e-range missing data group (26-74%), and lowest missing data group	
(≤25%)	We then ran	the same two-level mixed-effects models for each of the outcomes	
(online	ppointment b		
three ca	gories.	pooking and online repeat prescription use) separately for each of the <b>CEX</b>	

Results	The summary statistics of the sensitivity analysis groups are reported in table
	Supplementary Table 5. GPs with the highest proportion of missing data (practices with
	75% or more of participants with missing data) had slightly higher percentage of younger
	age groups from 16 to 44 and they had a greater proportion of participants from Black,
	Asian and Other ethnic backgrounds as well. Greater proportion or participants from the
	most deprived group compared to the GPs with lower missing data.
	Results of the sensitivity mixed-effects regression analyses for the online appointment
	booking outcome is in table Supplementary Table 6. Most of the predictor variables in
	Supplementary Table 6 had similar odds ratios and/or overlapping confidence intervals
	when comparing the participants from the practices with the different proportion of missing
	data. The difference in odds ratios when comparing participants from the three different
	practice types (based on the proportion of missing data) were seen in the predictors: having
	a long-term condition (answering yes), age group, ethnicity, parent status, carer status, year
	of survey and GP rurality. These differences indicate that the characteristics of participants
	within each type of the GPs (based on the proportion of missing data) were more similar to
	each other than the other type of practices.
	For the repeat prescription outcome (Supplementary Table 7), differences in odds ratios
	were also seen for the long-term condition (answering yes), age groups, ethnicity, being a

parent, being a carer and for the deprivation quintile. Among the highest missing data GP
practice participants, the least deprived group had 89% (OR: 1.89, 95% CI: 1.82-1.97)
greater odds of online repeat prescription use compared to participants from the most
deprived group where this percentage was only 65% (OR: 1.65, 95% CI: 1.59-1.71) in the
lowest missing data GP practice participants. This indicates that deprivation has a larger
impact in practices with the most missing data compared to practices with the least missing
data for the online repeat prescription ordering outcome.
Sensitivity analyses results reveal that some of the estimates in this study may be attenuated
if missing data/non-response participants were present. However, although most of the
estimates of effect were slightly different in the sensitivity analyses compared to the main
analyses, there was no change in terms of the direction of the effects. For example, odds
ratios that were larger than one in the main analyses remained to be larger than one in all
three models of the sensitivity analysis. The sensitivity analysis also revealed that
differences in online services between the three categories of GPs use were bigger for
online repeat prescription use compared to the online appointment booking use. The
differences between the odds ratios based on the deprivation quintile for online repeat
prescription was also bigger than online appointment booking in all the categories of GPs
indicating that socioeconomic inequities may have a larger influence on online repeat



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	Age 16-24 25-34 35-44	810505         (44.9%)         74381         (4.1%)         159806         (8.8%)         217687         (12.0%)         302285	699689         (45.3%)         64513 (4.2%)         132951         (8.6%)         181290         (11.7%)         253145	110816         (42.0%)         <0	658263 (44.9%) 0.001 67069 (4.6%) 141376 (9.6%) 186112 (12.7%) 243458	(55.2%) 152242 (44.8%) 7312 (2.000 0 18430 (5.4%) 31575 (9.3%) 58827	.com/ on May 10,
	Age 16-24 25-34 35-44	810505         (44.9%)         74381         (4.1%)         159806         (8.8%)         217687         (12.0%)         302285	699689         (45.3%)         64513 (4.2%)         132951         (8.6%)         181290         (11.7%)         253145	110816         (42.0%)         <0	658263 (44.9%) 0.001 67069 (4.6%) 141376 (9.6%) 186112 (12.7%) 243458	(55.2%) 152242 (44.8%) 7312 (2.000 0 18430 (5.4%) 31575 (9.3%) 58827	<b>9</b> <0.001

 Page 28 of 42

Page	29	of	42
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			BMJ Open	Online repeat	cted by copyrig	.1136/bmjopen-2022-068627
Characteristic	s Total	Online appoir booking in the months		Online repeat ordering in the months	prescription e last 12 cluding	068627
	Total	No	Yes p-	No	Yes C	
	(N=1807049)	(N=1543111)	(N=263938) value*	(N=1467600)	(N=339449	) walue
55-64	381808	321902	59906	295168	86640	
	(21.1%)	(20.9%)	(22.7%)	(20.1%)	(25.5%)	ber
65-74	397999	340484	57515	303875	94124 d d d d d d d d d d d d d d d d d d d	202
	(22.0%)	(22.1%)	(21.8%)	(20.7%)	(27.7%) <b>g</b>	<u>.</u>
75-84	211586	191217	20369	176214	35372	Ň
	(11.7%)	(12.4%)	(7.7%)	(12.0%)	(10.4%)a	nla
85+	61497	57609 (3.7%)	3888 (1.5%)	54328 (3.7%)	7169 (2.5	aded
	(3.4%)				a - 	-
Ethnicity			< 0.001		<u>ni</u>	<u> </u>
White	1567690	1340202	227488	1258828	308862 <b>Ģ</b>	a l
	(86.8%)	(86.9%)	(86.2%)	(85.8%)	<u>(91.0%)</u> <u></u>	tp:/
Black	52950	46120 (3.0%)	6830 (2.6%)	47195 (3.2%)	5755 (1. <b>§</b> .%	б <mark>Е</mark>
	(2.9%)				ing	job
Asian	137026	115015	22011	118728	18298 , and (5.4%)	en.
	(7.6%)	(7.5%)	(8.3%)	(8.1%)	(011/0) (0	<u> </u>
Other	29168	24993 (1.6%)	4175 (1.6%)	25773 (1.8%)	3395 (1.5%)	6 <mark>8</mark>
	(1.6%)				lar	<u>e</u>
Mixed	20215	16781 (1.1%)	3434 (1.3%)	17076 (1.2%)	3139 (0. <b>ਭੁ</b> %	
	(1.1%)				hno	May
Survey year			< 0.001		log	×0.0
2018	612084	536349	75735	512184	99900 <b>ē</b>	, 20
	(33.9%)	(34.8%)	(28.7%)	(34.9%)	(29.4%)	25
2019	623358	534321	89037	507522	115836	at D
	(34.5%)	(34.6%)	(33.7%)	(34.6%)	(34.1%)	ep
2020	571607	472441	99166	447894	123713	artn
	(31.6%)	(30.6%)	(37.6%)	(30.5%)	(36.4%)	nen
						2025 at Department GEZ-LTA
						EZ-
						LT

			BMJ Open		Online repeat ordering in the months		cted by copyrig	. 1136/bmiopen-
Characteristics	Total	Online appoin booking in the months			Online repeat ordering in the months	prescript e last 12	uht-including fi	-2022-068627 o
	Total	No	Yes	p-	No	Yes		э -р-
	(N=1807049)	(N=1543111)	(N=263938)		(N=1467600)	(N=3394	<b>5</b> 49)	ovalue <sup>†</sup>
Long-term condition				< 0.001			Eras	cio 0.001
No	833523	730177	103346		736861	96662	d to	202
	(46.1%)	(47.3%)	(39.2%)		(50.2%)	(28.5%)	ish te	
I don't know/ Can't answer	49746 (2.8%)	43186 (2.8%)	6560 (2.5%)		43212 (2.9%)	6534 (1.	ogesch	ownic
Yes	923780	769748	154032		687527	236253	loo	ade
	(51.1%)	(49.9%)	(58.4%)		(46.8%)	(69.6%)		ă ă
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis	1010505	1151010	0	<0.001	1110501		o. Al trai	g<0.00
No	1343735	1151312	192423		1118704	225031	ina.	
<b>X</b> 7	(74.4%)	(74.6%)	(72.9%)		(/6.2%)	(66.3%)	പ	h
Yes	463314	391799	71515		348896	114418 (33.7%)	d si	bmi.co
Deafness or hearing loss	(25.6%)	(25.4%)	(27.1%)	< 0.001	(23.8%)		ilar	<0.00
No	1652099	1409236	242863		1344856	307243 (90.5%)	hno	on May 10.
	(91.4%)	(91.3%)	(92.0%)		(91.6%)	(90.5%)		<u>}</u>
Yes	154950	133875	21075		122744	32206	<u> </u>	
	(8.6%)	(8.7%)	(8.0%)		(8.4%)	(9.5%)		2025 at Depart
Parent or legal guardian to				<0.001				tment GEZ-LTA

 Page 30 of 42

Page 3	31 of	42
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.1136/bmjopen	cted by copyri		'n	BMJ Open			
-2022-068627 o n n aht-Ancluding f	ghtin prescription e last 12 uding by Ves	Online repeat ordering in the months			Online appoi booking in th months	Total	Characteristics
or ⊐ 10-	Yes Z	No	p-	Yes	No	Total	
49) ovalue †	<u>(N=339</u>	(N=1467600)	38) value*	1) (N=263938	(N=1543111)	(N=1807049)	
tober Era	rel						a 16 year
ras	Ŷ						old or younger
	288745 8	1177272		211137	1254880	1466017	No
	(85.1%)	(80.2%)		(80.0%)	(81.3%)	(81.1%)	
Downle ogesch	50704 🛣	290328		52801	288231	341032	Yes
	(14.9%) <b>a</b>	(19.8%)		(20.0%)	(18.7%)	(18.9%)	
	dat		< 0.001				Carer
°.ă . f	261814 <sup>m</sup>	1200653		207482	1254985	1462467	No
ninin from	(77.1%)	(81.8%)		(78.6%)	(81.3%)	(80.9%)	
° <u>-</u>	77635 <b>Ģ</b>	266947		56456	288126	344582	Yes
	(22.9%) <b>≥</b>	(18.2%)		(21.4%)	(18.7%)	(19.1%)	
	raining		< 0.001				Deprivation quintile
<u> </u>	46323	292405		40316	298412	338728	1 (Most
	(13.6%) <sup>nd</sup>	(19.9%)		(15.3%)	(19.3%)	(18.7%)	deprived)
j.com/ on May 10, similar technologi	57351 <b>S</b>	296229		48710	304870	353580	2
ilar 🔰	(16.9%) <b>a</b>	(20.2%)		(18.5%)	(19.8%)	(19.6%)	
on	71994 <b>f</b>	304048		53961	322081	376042	3
Ma	(21.2%) <sup>3</sup>	(20.7%)		(20.4%)	(20.9%)	(20.8%)	
	80906	297096		58902	319100	378002	4
	80906 <b>og</b> (23.8%) <b>g</b>	(20.2%)		(22.3%)	(20.7%)	(20.9%)	
N	82875	277822		62049	298648	360697	5 (Least
at	(24.4%)	(18.9%)		(23.5%)	(19.4%)	(20.0%)	deprived)
5 at Department GEZ-LTA			<0.001				General practice rurality
							ĩ

				BMJ Oper	1			.1136/bmjop	
	Characteristi	ics Total	Online appo booking in months		O or m	nline repe dering in onths	at prescript the last 12	en-2022-068627 o n vriaht-including f	
		Total	No	Yes	NT		NZ		
		(N=1807049)	(N=154311	1) (N=26393	8) value* (N	1=146760	0) (N=3394	⊊ 7 <sup>0-</sup> ‰49) <b>o</b> value†_	
	Rural	306200	263405	42795		8353	67847	cto s re	
		(16.9%)	(17.1%)	(16.2%)	(1	6.2%)	(20.0%)		
	Urban	1500849	1279706	221143	12	29247	271602 (80.0%)	2023. smus	
		(83.1%)	(82.9%)	(83.8%)	(8	3.8%)	(80.0%)	3. C ishc	
<ul> <li>* p-value derived</li> <li>† p-value derived</li> <li>Supplementary</li> <li>complete case data</li> </ul>	l from chi squ <b>Table 4 The</b>	uared test compa	ring online r participants	by characte	ption users ar eristics in the	nd non-use total san	ple receiv		821), in the
Characteristics	ataset useu r	or the analyses		he sample	Total in the		Total in th		
				(n=2,246,109)		1	excluded	trai	
					(n=1807049)		sample (n=439,06	nin <b>g</b>	
Online appointr	nont booking	g in the last 12					(n=439,00	ar <u>-</u>	
months	nent booking	g in the last 12					349730 (7	tp://bmjopen.bmj.cor Ad traininœ and simil	
No			1892841 (	84.3%)	1543111	(85.4%)	349730 (7	<b>2</b> .7%)	
Yes			305980 (1	3.6%)	263938 (	14.6%)	42042 (9		
(Missing)			47288 (2.1	1%)	0 (0.0	)%)	47288 (10	<b>8%</b>	
Online repeat p last 12 months	rescription o	ordering in the						10, 2025 logies.	
No			1807863 (	80.5%)	1467600	(81.2%)	340263 (7	7.5% <b>E</b> )	
Yes			390958 (1	,	339449 (	· /	51509 (11		
(Missing)			47288 (2.1	,	0 (0.	)%)	47288 (10	).8% <b>j</b>	
Gender								nei	
Female			1229473 (	54.7%)	996544 (55.1	%)	232929 (5.	3.1%	
							232929 (53	EZ-I	

 Page 32 of 42

	BMJ Open				
			156574 (3		
Male	967079 (43.1%)	810505 (44.9%)	156574 (3		
(Missing)	49557 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	49557 (11 12700 (2.9		
Age					
16-24	87081 (3.9%)	74381 (4.1%)	12700 (2.9		
25-34	185580 (8.3%)	159806 (8.8%)	25774 (5.9		
35-44	256766 (11.4%)	217687 (12.0%)	39079 (8.9		
45-54	360011 (16.0%)	302285 (16.7%)	57726 (13		
55-64	454900 (20.3%)	381808 (21.1%)	73092 (16		
65-74	487171 (21.7%)	397999 (22.0%)	89172 (20		
75-84	287533 (12.8%)	211586 (11.7%)	75947 (17		
85+	91083 (4.1%)	61497 (3.4%)	29586 (6'		
(Missing)	35984 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	35984 (8.2		
Ethnicity 🔨					
White	1895473 (84.4%)	1567690 (86.8%)	35984 (8.2 15862 (3.4		
Black	68812 (3.1%)	52950 (2.9%)	33583 (7.		
Asian	170609 (7.6%)	137026 (7.6%)	10257 (2.3		
Other	39425 (1.8%)	29168 (1.6%)	4558 (1.0		
Mixed	24773 (1.1%)	20215 (1.1%)	327783 (7		
(Missing)	47017 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	47017 (10		
Survey year					
2018	750619 (33.4%)	612084 (33.9%)	138535 (3		
2019	763244 (34.0%)	623358 (34.5%)	139886 (3		
2020	732246 (32.6%)	571607 (31.6%)	160639 (3		
(Missing)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)		
Long term condition		•			
No	1022671 (45.5%)	833523 (46.1%)	189148 (4		
Yes	1050129 (46.8%)	923780 (51.1%)	126349 (2		
Don't know/Can't say	61802 (2.8%)	49746 (2.8%)	12056 (2.2		
Prefer not to say	38879 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38879 (8.9		
(Missing)	72628 (3.2%)	0 (0.0%)	72628 (16		
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis					
No	1632850 (72.7%)	1343735 (74.4%)	289115 (6		
Yes	574749 (25.6%)	463314 (25.6%)	111435 (2		
			· · · ·		

Page	34	of 42	
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	BMJ Op	cted by copyright 38510 (8.80)		
(Missing)	38510 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38510 (8.8%)	
Deafness or hearing loss				
No	1799633 (80.1%)	1652099 (91.4%)	147534 (3 <b>§</b> .6	
Yes	179304 (8.0%)	154950 (8.6%)	$24354(5, \bar{9})$	
(Missing)	267172 (11.9%)	0 (0.0%)	267172 (69.9 267172 (69.9 elated	
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger			elated	
No	1782911 (79.4%)	1466017 (81.1%)	316894 (7 <b>ð.</b>	
Yes	407923 (18.2%)	341032 (18.9%)	66891 (15	
(Missing)	55275 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	55275 (12 <b>m</b> )	
Carer			id o	
No	1741536 (77.5%)	1462467 (80.9%)	279069 (6 <b>2</b> .0	
Yes	410450 (18.3%)	344582 (19.1%)	65868 (15 <b>3</b> )%	
(Missing)	94123 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	94123 (21	
Deprivation fifth			Ű,	
1- least deprived	437189 (19.5%)	338728 (18.7%)	98461 (22	
2	444869 (19.8%)	353580 (19.6%)	91289 (20 🕸 %	
3	464884 (20.7%)	376042 (20.8%)	88842 (20,5%)	
4	461586 (20.6%)	378002 (20.9%)	83584 (19 0%	
5 - most deprived	435997 (19.4%)	360697 (20.0%)	75300 (17 2%	
(Missing)	1584 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1584 (0.4%)	
General practice rurality				
Rural	374466 (16.7%)	306200 (16.9%)	68266 (15 <b>क</b> %)	
Urban	1871643 (83.3%)	1500849 (83.1%)	370794 (8 <b>¥</b> .5	
(Missing)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) <b>Ö</b>	

 Supplementary Table 5. Breakdown of the number and proportion of participant characteristics based on the categories of the proportion of missing data in the GP practice artment GEZ-LTA

Page 35 of 42

1 2	
2 3 4 5 6	Characteri
4	Characteri
5	
6	
7 8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	Online servi
15 16	Online app
17	last 12 mont
18	Online rep
19	last 12 mont
20	Gender
21	Female
22 23	
24	Male
25	
26	Age
27	16-24
28	25-34
29 30	35-44
31	
32	45-54
33	
34	55-64
35	
36 37	65-74
38	
39	75-84
40	
41	
42	
43 44	
44 45	
46	

47

Characteristics	Participants from practices with 25% or less participants with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Participants from practices with 26%- 74% of participants with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Participants from practices with 75% or more participants with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
nline services use			
Online appointment booking in the 🗸 st 12 months	75194(15.9%)	176193(19.4%)	55937(13.1%)
Online repeat prescription use in the st 12 months	102332(21.6%)	176193(19.4%)	60924(14.4%)
ender		1-	
Female	265428 (56.0%)	503040 (55.3%)	228076 (53.8%)
Male	208654 (44.0%)	406112 (44.7%)	195739 (46.2%)
ge			
16-24	18750 (4.0%)	34473 (3.8%)	21158 (5.0%)
25-34	39537 (8.3%)	75142 (8.3%)	45127 (10.6%)
35-44	55609 (11.7%)	103244 (11.4%)	58834 (13.9%)
45-54	79934 (16.9%)	149707 (16.5%)	72644 (17.1%)
55-64	100332 (21.2%)	194450 (21.4%)	87026 (20.5%)
55-74	106927 (22.6%)	208741 (23.0%)	82331 (19.4%)
75-84	56564 (11.9%)	111123 (12.2%)	43899 (10.4%)

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Characteristics	Participants from practices with 25% or less participants with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Participants from practices with 26%- 74% of participants with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Participants from practices with 75% or more participants with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
85+	16429 (3.5%)	32272 (3.5%)	12796 (3.0%)
Ethnicity	6		
White	5027 (1.1%)	17758 (2.0%)	30165 (7.1%)
Black	16190 (3.4%)	49142 (5.4%)	71694 (16.9%)
Asian	3729 (0.8%)	10722 (1.2%)	14717 (3.5%)
Other	4175 (0.9%)	8704 (1.0%)	7336 (1.7%)
Mixed	444961	822826	299903
	(93.9%)	(90.5%)	(70.8%)
Survey year			
2018	166729	305514	139841
	(35.2%)	(33.6%)	(33.0%)
2019	162214	315671	145473
	(34.2%)	(34.7%)	(34.3%)
2020	145139	287967	138501
	(30.6%)	(31.7%)	(32.7%)
Long-term condition			
No	11725 (2.5%)	24207 (2.7%)	13814 (3.3%)
I don't know/ Can't answer	220575	411974	200974
	(46.5%)	(45.3%)	(47.4%)
Yes	241782	472971	209027
	(51.0%)	(52.0%)	(49.3%)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis			



Page 37 of 42

1 2 3 4 5 6 7		
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15		
<ol> <li>16</li> <li>17</li> <li>18</li> <li>19</li> <li>20</li> <li>21</li> <li>22</li> <li>23</li> <li>24</li> <li>25</li> </ol>		
26 27 28 29 30		
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38		
39 40 41 42 43 44 45		
43 44		

Characteristics	Participants from practices with 25% or less participants with missing data n=474082,	Participants from practices with 26%- 74% of participants with missing data n=909152,	Participants from practices with 75% or more participants with missing data. n=423815,
	1843 practices	3361 practices	2052 practices
No	363720	674880	305135
	(76.7%)	(74.2%)	(72.0%)
Yes	110362	234272	118680
	(23.3%)	(25.8%)	(28.0%)
Deafness or hearing loss			
No	433463	827757	390879
	(91.4%)	(91.0%)	(92.2%)
Yes	40619 (8.6%)	81395 (9.0%)	32936 (7.8%)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year			
old or younger			
No	385230	746422	334365
	(81.3%)	(82.1%)	(78.9%)
Yes	88852 (18.7%)	162730	89450 (21.1%)
		(17.9%)	
Carer			
No	382112	732193	348162
	(80.6%)	(80.5%)	(82.1%)
Yes	91970 (19.4%)	176959	75653 (17.9%)
		(19.5%)	
Deprivation quintile			
1 (Most deprived)	38111 (8.0%)	146156	154461
-		(16.1%)	(36.4%)
2	64792 (13.7%)	174694	114094
		(19.2%)	(26.9%)



Characteristics	Participants from practices with 25% or less participants with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Participants from practices with 26%- 74% of participants with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Participants from practices with 75% or more participants with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
3	99792 (21.0%)	199586	76664 (18.1%)
		(22.0%)	× /
4	124261	203142	50599 (11.9%)
	(26.2%)	(22.3%)	
5 (Least deprived)	147126	185574	27997 (6.6%)
	(31.0%)	(20.4%)	
General practice rurality			
Rural	116101	165787	24312 (5.7%)
	(24.5%)	(18.2%)	
Urban	357981	743365	399503
	(75.5%)	(81.8%)	(94.3%)

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Supplementary Table 6 Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online appointment booking in the last 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice

			BMJ Open		.1136/bmjopen-2022 .cted by copyright, ir		
Predictors	Model 3, Partici practices with 2 participants wit n=474082, 1843	5% or less h missing data	Model 3, Partic practices with 2 participants wi n=909152, 3361	practices vetth participants v	Model 3, Participants from practices with 75% or more participants with missing da n=423815, 2052 practices		
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Restiges	95% Confid Interva	
Long term condition (REF= No)	(	Dr.			023. Dov nushog to text :		
Long term condition- I don't know/	1.16***		1.14***	(1.10, 1.10)	1.16****data mini	(1.10.1	
Can't say	1.78***	(1.10, 1.23)	1.69***	(1.10, 1.19)		(1.10, 1	
Long term condition- Yes	1.70	(1.75, 1.81)	1.09	(1.67, 1.72)	1.49** <b>*€</b>	(1.46, 1	
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-Yes (REF= No)	1.19***	(1.17, 1.22)	1.20***	(1.18, 1.22)	1.20*** raining, and simila	(1.17, 1	
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.15***	(1.11, 1.19)	1.12***	(1.09, 1.14)	1.12****chnolog	(1.08, 1	
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.88***	(0.86, 0.89)	0.88***	(0.87, 0.89)	0.91*****; 9.2025 9.202	(0.89, 0	
Age (REF: 85+)	2 20***		276444	(2.55.2.00)		(2.01.7	
16-24	3.39***	(3.14, 3.66)	3.76***	(3.55, 3.98)	3.50*** <b>ep</b>	(3.21, 3	
25-34 35-44	4.69***	(4.37, 5.03)	5.17*** 5.13***	$(4.91, 5.45) \\ (4.87, 5.40)$	4.66*** <b>artme</b>	(4.30, 5	
<u> </u>	4.03***	(4.32, 4.96) (4.01, 4.57)	4.51***	(4.87, 5.40) (4.29, 4.74)	<u>4.46****</u> 3.75****	(4.11, 4)	

Predictors	Model 3, Partic practices with 2 participants wit n=474082, 1843	25% or less th missing data	o or lesspractices with 26%-74% ofnissing dataparticipants with missing data			cipants from 75% or more th missing data 2 practices
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ration	95% Confidence Interval
55-64	3.80***	(3.56, 4.05)	3.94***	(3.75, 4.13)	3.07***	(2.84, 3.32)
65-74	3.27***	(3.07, 3.49)	3.32***	(3.16, 3.48)	3.07***# 2.35**** 1.43****	(2.18, 2.54)
75-84	1.81***	(1.69, 1.93)	1.83***	(1.74, 1.93)		(1.32, 1.55)
Ethnicity (REF: White)					1.43***tethogeschool and data 0.87***tininini 1.01 minim	
Black	0.75***	(0.69, 0.81)	0.83***	(0.79, 0.87)	0.87***	(0.83, 0.90)
Asian	1.04	(1.00, 1.09)	1.10***	(1.07, 1.14)	1.14*** <b>3</b> · <b>3</b>	(1.10, 1.17)
Other	0.86**	(0.79, 0.95)	0.92**	(0.87, 0.98)	1.01 <b>n</b> i <b>n</b> i	(0.96, 1.06)
Mixed	1.01	(0.93, 1.10)	1.01	(0.95, 1.07)	1.09***	(1.02, 1.16)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16- year-old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.91***	(0.89, 0.93)	0.90***	(0.88, 0.92)	1.09*** 0.96***taining, and similar technolog	(0.93, 0.98)
Carer-Yes	1.11***		1.15***		1.17*** <b>8. 6</b>	
(REF= No)		(1.09, 1.13)		(1.13, 1.17)	ar t	(1.14, 1.19)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)					1.17*** 1.17*** 1.17***	
2	1.15***		1.14***		1.16*** <b>\$</b> 2025	
		(1.11, 1.20)		(1.12, 1.17)		(1.13, 1.19)
3	1.23***	(1.19, 1.28)	1.29***	(1.26, 1.32)	1.27***	(1.23, 1.30)
4	1.38***	(1.33, 1.44)	1.40***	(1.37, 1.43)	1.36*** 🛱	(1.31, 1.41)
5 (least	1.54***	(1 49 1 60)	1.52***	(1 40 150)	1.27***         D           1.36***         pa           1.53***         fmmmt	(1 4 - 1 - 0)
deprived)		(1.48, 1.60)		(1.49, 1.56)	'nt	(1.46, 1.60)

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 Page 40 of 42

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Predictors	Model 3, Partici practices with 2 participants with n=474082, 1843	5% or less h missing data	Model 3, Partie practices with participants with n=909152, 336	26%-74% of th missing data	Model 3, Part practices with particigans w n=423815, 205	75% or more with missing da
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confiden Interval
Survey year (REF= 2018)					ber 202 Erasmu lated to	
2019	1.16***	(1.14, 1.18)	1.18***	(1.17, 1.20)	1.25*** <b>********</b>	(1.22, 1.28
2020	1.46***	(1.43, 1.49)	1.52***	(1.50, 1.54)	1.61*** <b>ີສິອິຊິ</b>	(1.57, 1.65
General practice rurality-Urban (REF= Rural) Model summary	1.22***	(1.10, 1.23)	1.11***	(1.10, 1.19)	nloaded from school . nd data minin	(0.97, 1.24
Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC)	0.13		0.12	•	0.13 0.13 0.13	
<sup>*</sup> p-value= 0.05, **	<sup>k</sup> p-value= ≤0.01,	*** p-value= $\leq 0.0$	001		jopen.bmj.com/ on May 10, 2025 at Dep ing, and similar technologies.	
		nodel 3 of the sensi egories of GPs base				ring in the las

Page 41

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Predictors	practices with 25% or less participants with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices		Model 3, Participants from practices with 26%-74% of participants with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices		Cted 13 by copyright Model 3, Participants from practizes with 75% or more participants with missing data. $n=423815, 2052$ practices		
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	2 October 2023. Downloa sds. tioErasmushogesche Ralated to text and d	95% Confidence Interval	
Long term condition (REF= <sup>4</sup> No)	0				2023. I smush ad to te		
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.25***	(1.18, 1.32)	1.25***	(1.20, 1.30)	1.2 and	(1.17, 1.31)	
Long term condition- Yes	2.71***	(2.66, 2.75)	2.56***	(2.52, 2.59)	2.428	(2.37, 2.47)	
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis- Yes (REF= No)	1.26***	(1.24, 1.29)	1.26***	(1.24, 1.28)	المقالمة checole بلاته checole بلات checole بلات checol	(1.26, 1.32)	
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.02	(1.00, 1.05)	1.02	(1.00, 1.04)	1. Ening	(0.98, 1.04)	
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.96***	(0.94, 0.97)	0.96***	(0.95, 0.97)	0.98**5 d	(0.96, 1.00)	
Age (REF: 85+)					hd s		
16-24	1.64***	(1.53, 1.75)	1.76***	(1.67, 1.85)	1.2**	(1.50, 1.76)	
25-34	2.16***	(2.04, 2.29)	2.22***	(2.13, 2.32)	1.98**	(1.85, 2.13)	
35-44	2.67***	(2.52, 2.82)	2.82***	(2.70, 2.94)	2.37**	(2.21, 2.54)	
45-54	3.25***	(3.09, 3.42)	3.29***	(3.16, 3.42)	2.82**	(2.65, 3.01)	
55-64	3.35***	(3.18, 3.52)	3.43***	(3.31, 3.56)	2.8 * *	(2.64, 3.00)	
65-74	3.11***	(2.97, 3.27)	3.15***	(3.03, 3.27)	2.48***	(2.33, 2.64)	
75-84	1.73***	(1.65, 1.82)	1.75***	(1.68, 1.82)	1.43***	(1.34, 1.53)	
Ethnicity (REF: White)					T D		
Black	0.77***	(0.71, 0.84)	0.73***	(0.70, 0.77)	0.81**2*	(0.77, 0.84)	
Asian	0.88***	(0.84, 0.92)	0.94***	(0.91, 0.97)	1.01	(0.98, 1.04)	
Other	0.79***	(0.71, 0.87)	0.76***	(0.72, 0.81)	0.82***	(0.77, 0.86)	

Predictors	Model 3, Participants from practices with 25% or less participants with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices		Model 3, Participants from practices with 26%-74% of participants with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices		Cfect 3 by copyright 2 by copyright 2 Model 3, Participants from practizes with 75% or m participants with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices		
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval		95% Confidence Interval	
Mixed	0.96	(0.89, 1.05)	0.98	(0.93, 1.05)		(0.92, 1.07)	
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.93***	(0.91, 0.96)	0.94***	(0.92, 0.96)	0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.000 0.0000 0.0000 0.0000 0.00000 0.00000 0.000000	(0.06, 1.02)	
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.13***	(1.11, 1.16)	1.15***	(1.14, 1.17)	1. 200	(1.17, 1.22)	
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		64			d data mining		
2	1.21***	(1.17, 1.26)	1.22***	(1.19, 1.25)	1.22***	(1.19, 1.26)	
3	1.37***	(1.32, 1.42)	1.43***	(1.40, 1.46)	1.423****	(1.39, 1.47)	
4	1.54***	(1.48, 1.59)	1.59***	(1.55, 1.62)	1.æ7*😽	(1.62, 1.73)	
5 (least deprived)	1.65***	(1.59, 1.71)	1.74***	(1.70, 1.78)	1.89**	(1.82, 1.97)	
Survey year (REF= 2018)					v <u>2</u> .		
2019	1.16***	(1.13, 1.18)	1.17***	(1.15, 1.19)	1.25**	(1.24, 1.29)	
2020	1.40***	(1.38, 1.43)	1.46***	(1.44, 1.48)	1.54**	(1.51, 1.58)	
General practice rurality- Urban (REF= Rural)	0.94**	(0.89, 0.99)	0.90***	(0.87, 0.94)	1.14 1.14 0.5 me 0.6 mologie	(0.88, 1.07)	
Model summary					10, ogi		
Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC)	0.07		0.07		2025 at Department GEZ-LTA		

#### Cross-sectional analysis of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering user characteristics in General Practices of England in the years 2018-2020

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## Cross-sectional analysis of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering user characteristics in General Practices of England in the years 2018-2020

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# Abstract

Objectives: To explore the characteristics of the General Practice Patient Survey (GPPS) respondents using the different functionalities of the online services in the context of England's

National Health Service (NHS) General Practices. We hypothesised that use of online services would vary according to patient sociodemographic factors.

Design: Cross-sectional study using respondent-level data from the GPPS in England of the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. We assessed the association between online services use and respondent characteristics using two-level mixed-effects logistic regression.

Participants: Survey respondents of the GPPS 2018-2020.

Primary and secondary outcome measures: Online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering.

Results: 1,806,977 survey respondents were included in this study. 15% (n=263938) used online appointment booking in the previous 12 months, and 19% (n=339449) had ordered a repeat prescription in the previous 12 months. Respondents with a long-term condition, on regular multiple medications, who have deafness or hearing loss and who are from the lowest deprivation quintile were more likely to have used online services. Male respondents (compared to females) and respondents with Black and Other ethnic background compared to White ethnic backgrounds were less likely to use online services. Respondents over 85 years old were less likely to use online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering compared to the younger age groups.

Conclusions: Specific groups of respondents were more likely to use online services such as patients with long-term conditions or those with deafness or hearing loss. While online services could provide efficiency to patients and practices it is essential that alternatives continue to be provided to those that cannot use or choose not to use online services. Understanding the different patients' needs could help tailor solutions to encourage the uptake and use of the services.

# Strengths and limitations of this study

- The study used a sample from a major national survey which follows a rigorous methodology in its data collection to explore the characteristics of online services users, a service which has been highly advocated in the NHS and in other healthcare systems of the world.
- 2. Given the clustered nature of the data (where patients are registered to different general practices) and to account for the clustering, we used multilevel logistic regression analysis.
- 3. The study relied on self-reported data for online service use due to data unavailability which can lead to response bias.

# BACKGROUND

Online services such as online appointment booking or repeat prescription ordering are offered in 99.7% of General Practitioner (GP) practices in England [1], but patients have to request access to the service and adoption remains low (about 31% in May 2020) [1]. According to previous literature, online services, also referred to as patient portals, have the potential to promote patients' involvement in their care, reduce emergency visits and hospitalisation [2], and may improve some health outcomes through improving medication adherence [2, 3] patients' knowledge about health and patient efficacy (e.g. patient's confidence in adhering to health instructions or treatment) [4]. Few studies have examined the characteristics of patients using online services and the inequalities that might exist based on patient characteristics in the context of the National Health Service (NHS) of England such as ethnicity and deprivation inequalities

[5-7]. Understanding patient characteristics associated with online service use may reveal barriers to use and inform service planning to increase the uptake of the services.

Studies from other countries, and a limited number of studies from the UK, suggest that [7-10] patients with low income, and ethnic minorities may be less likely to use patient portals due to reduced access to the internet, computers and smartphones [8, 10]. This is the first study to look at online services user characteristics for both online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering explicitly in England, where the NHS have invested in a nation-wide digital transformation programme [11]. This study aims to examine patients' characteristics associated with online appointment booking and repeat prescription service ordering.

Healthcare systems are characterized as complex systems and healthcare innovations often face multi-faceted challenges in diffusion ("passive spread") and adoption due to the nature of complex systems [12]. A major theory considered in healthcare innovation adoption is the digital divide theory which considers the inequality that occurs when people without access to technology (that is physical access but also access to the knowledge and skills to use the technology) are excluded from the benefits that technology has to offer [13, 14]. In consideration of the digital divide theory [13, 14], we hypothesized that those of older age (patients 35 years old and older) of lower socioeconomic status and respondents of minority ethnic groups would be less likely to use online services. Additionally, in consideration of patients' health status, we hypothesized that respondents with long-term or chronic conditions (but not those who are very ill) may be more likely to use online services because of their increased need to access and use the services such as appointment booking and repeat prescription.

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## **METHODS**

#### Patient and public involvement

The NIHR Applied Research Collaboration of Northwest London Public Advisors were consulted during the study write-up and were involved appropriately in the drafting.

## Study design

Cross-sectional analysis of respondent-level data from the General Practice Patient Survey (GPPS) of 2018, 2019, and 2020 in England. The respondent-level data was pseudonymised and researchers' did not have access to respondents' name, address, NHS number or date of birth. Respondent-level data is only presented aggregately to protect respondents' privacy as agreed in the ethical approval of the study (20IC6303). Data collection for each survey was between January and March for the years 2018 and 2019 and between January and April for 2020. Respondents of the survey have the right to withdraw their consent before the data is processed [15].

#### Variables

The outcome variables (online appointment booking use and online repeat prescription use) were based on the responses to the GPPS question: "Which of the following general practice online services have you used in the past 12 months?" [16] in which the answers "Booking appointments online", and "Ordering repeat prescriptions online" were used for this study. The GPPS also records the use of online record viewing. However, we did not include it in this study due to the limited number of respondents reporting the use of the functionality (about 5% in 2020 and lower proportions in 2019 and 2018). Additionally, ten different covariates (explanatory variables) were included in the models as listed in table 1. The list of variables were chosen

based on factors that are known to be associated with patient portal use in the literature such as

long-term condition status, deafness or hearing loss, parent and carer status and based on data

availability such as taking 5 or more medications regularly (another indicator for healthcare

status).

Variable	Categories and definition
Gender	Male, Female
Age	16 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74, 75 to 84, 85 or over (as categorised by the survey)
Ethnicity	White, mixed, Asian, black, other (derived from 18 ethnicity categories of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories [17]) White, mixed, Asian, black, other (derived from 18 ethnicity categories of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories [17])
Survey year	2018, 2019 or 2020 (created based on the year of the survey)
Long-term conditions	Yes, No, or "I don't know/ Can't answer" answers to the question: "Do you have any long-term physical or mental health conditions, disabilities or illnesses?" [16]
Deafness or hearing loss	Yes or No answer to the question: "Which, if any, of the following long- term conditions do you have?Deafness or hearing loss" [16]
Taking 5 or more medications on a regular basis	Yes or No answer to the question: "Do you take 5 or more medications of a regular basis?" [16]
Parent status	Yes or No answer to the question: "Are you a parent or a legal guardian f any children aged under 16 living in your home?" [16]
Carer status	Yes or No answer derived from the answers to the question: "Do you lool after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either: long-term physical or mental ill health / disability, or problems related to old age?"
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles	A variable provided by GPPS based Derived from the ONS score indicating deprivation banding based on patients' postcode where the ran were converted to quintiles according to the English indices of deprivatio 2019 guidance [18].
Rurality of the General Practice	A variable provided by GPPS based on the GP practice's postcode categorised as Rural or urban as defined by the ONS [19]Rural or urban defined by the ONS [19]

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#### Data source

The GPPS is a national, postal survey commissioned by NHS England. GPPS uses random sampling, proportionately stratified by GP practice, age, and gender. Eligibility for GPPS includes having a valid NHS number, being 16 years or older and being registered with a GP practice for at least 6 months. Response rates of previous surveys are considered, sending more surveys to low-response practices and fewer survey to high-response practices [20-22]. The survey was sent to 2,221,082, 2,328,560, 2,329,590 respondents in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, with response rates of 34%, 33% and 32%, respectively [20-22].

In March 2020, social restrictions were announced in England due to the COVID-19 pandemic [23]. The last data collected for the GPPS was in April 2020, however, only a small number of surveys were received post March 2020 with the GPPS indicating it was highly unlikely that the survey results were affected by the pandemic [21].

#### Study size

We received data from 2,246,109 respondents who completed the GPPS surveys in 2018, 2019 or 2020. After removing respondents that did not have complete data for the variables of interest (n=439,060, 19.5%), 1,807,049 respondents were included.

### Statistical methods

We first reported descriptive statistics of the respondents based on their online appointment booking and repeat prescription use. We then performed multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression models: First, we created a null model with only the outcome variable and random intercept (GP practice) to understand if there was clustering due to the random intercept. We then

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added all patient level covariates to the model (model 2) (most of the variable in the final model were patient-level variables). We checked the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) and intercepted in all models to examine the effect of clustering. We then added the GP practice level variable (GP practice rurality) in the final model (model 3) [24]. Methods of the sensitivity analyses is in the Supplementary Table 1. The statistical analysis was performed in RStudio software version 1.4.1717.

The Strengthening the reporting of observational studies in epidemiology (STROBE) checklist was completed to review the methods of the study [25] (Supplementary Table 2).

#### **RESULTS**

Some of the results of this study were presented in a conference abstract [26].

#### **Summary statistics**

1,807,049 respondents were included of which 15% (n=263938) used online appointment booking (used at least once in the previous 12 months), and 19% (n=339449) used online repeat prescription (used at least once in the previous 12 months) (Supplementary Table 3). Most respondents were female (55.1%), and in the 65-74 years age group (22%), were of white ethnic backgrounds (86.8%), and were registered at GP practices in an urban area (83.1%) and half (51.1%) had a long-term condition.

About 19.5% of the total sample received from GPPS was excluded due to missing data. The proportion of respondents by category in the excluded respondents were different to the complete case dataset in the proportions for age, ethnicity (most respondents were from the mixed ethnicity), survey year, long-term condition, taking five or more medications, reporting of

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deafness or hearing loss, and slight difference in deprivation fifths proportions (Supplementary Table 4).

Descriptive statistics of the sensitivity analysis groups are displayed in Supplementary Table 5. GP practices with the highest proportion of missing data (practices with 75% or more of respondents with missing data) had slightly higher percentage of younger age groups from 16 to 44 and they had a higher proportion of respondents from Black, Asian and Other ethnic backgrounds as well as higher proportion or respondents from the most deprived group compared to the GP practices with lower missing data.

# Patient and GP practice characteristics associated with online

#### services use

#### Online appointment booking

Results of the two-level mixed-effects logistic regression for the online appointment booking outcome are presented in table 2. Respondents with a long-term condition, taking 5 or more medications on a regular basis and who have deafness or hearing loss were more likely to use online appointment booking compared to respondents without these characteristics. In the fully adjusted model for patient and GP practice characteristics, respondents with a long-term condition had 67% greater odds of using online appointment booking (OR: 1.67, CI: 1.66-1.69) compared to respondents without a long-term condition.

Respondents of black and "other" ethnic backgrounds had lower odds than those of white ethnic backgrounds for using online appointment booking, whereas respondents of Asian ethnic

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backgrounds had 11% (OR: 1.11, 95% CI: 1.09-1.13) greater odds of using online appointment booking.

There was an inverse association between deprivation quintile and online appointment booking. The odds for using online appointment booking increased with reducing deprivation from the second to fifth (least deprived) quintile compared to the most deprived quintile. Respondents in the least deprived quintile had 54% greater odds of booking appointments online (OR: 1.54, 95% CI: 1.51-1.57) compared to those in the most deprived quintile. Respondents from the survey year 2020 were the most likely to use online appointment booking compared to respondents from the survey year 2018 and 2019.

Respondents from GP practices located in an urban setting had greater odds of booking appointments online compared to respondents from GP practices in a rural setting. Model comparison: The ICC of 0.13 indicates that there is a slight similarity between values from the same group (in this case from the same GP practice) although the difference is not large because the value is close to zero.

Sensitivity analysis: Results of the sensitivity analysis for online appointment booking are in the Supplementary Table 6. Most of the predictor variables in Supplementary Table 6 had similar odds ratios and/or overlapping confidence intervals when comparing the respondents from the practices with the different proportion of missing data. The difference in odds ratios when comparing respondents from the three different practice types (based on the proportion of missing data) were seen in the predictors: having a long-term condition (answering yes), age group, ethnicity, parent status, carer status, year of survey and GP rurality.

Table 2 Two-level Mixed-effects multivariable logistic regression of General Practice Patient Survey respondent characteristics on Online appointment booking use in the previous 12 months (level 1, N= 1807049 respondents; level 2, N=7256 general practices)

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7 8 9 10 11 12	
13 14 15 16 17	
18 19 20 21	
22 23 24 25 26	
27 28 29 30 31	
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47 48 49 50 51	
52 53 54 55	
56 57 58	

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1 2

	+ GP practice Characteristic (Model 3)	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)		
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.15***	(1.12, 1.19)
Long term condition- Yes	1.67***	(1.66, 1.69)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis Yes (REF= No)	- 1.19***	(1.18, 1.20)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.13***	(1.11, 1.15)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.89***	(0.88, 0.90)
Age (REF: 85+)		
16-24	3.63***	(3.48, 3.78)
25-34	4.96***	(4.78, 5.14)
35-44	4.85***	(4.68, 5.03)
45-54	4.26***	(4.12, 4.42)
55-64	3.69***	(3.57, 3.82)
65-74	3.09***	(2.99, 3.20)
75-84	1.74***	(1.68, 1.80)
Ethnicity (REF: White)		
Black	0.84***	(0.81, 0.86)
Asian	1.11***	(1.09, 1.13)
Other	0.96**	(0.92, 0.99)
Mixed	1.04	(1.00, 1.08)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.92***	(0.90, 0.93)
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.14***	(1.13, 1.16)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		
2	1.15***	(1.13, 1.17)
3	1.27***	(1.25, 1.29)
4	1.40***	(1.37, 1.42)
5 (least deprived)	1.54***	(1.51, 1.57)
Survey year (REF= 2018)		
2019	1.19***	(1.18, 1.20)
2020	1.52***	(1.50, 1.54)
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	1.11***	(1.07, 1.16)
Model summary		
ICC	0.13	

\* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.001$ 

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Online repeat prescription ordering Results of the two-level mixed-effects logistic regression for the online repeat prescription ordering outcome are presented in table 3. Respondents with a long-term condition, users of 5 or more medications on a regular basis and respondents with deafness or hearing loss were all more likely to use online repeat prescription ordering compared to respondents without these characteristics. The odds of using online repeat prescription ordering was 2.58 times greater (OR: 2.58, 95% CI: 2.55, 2.60) for respondents with a long-term condition compared to those without a condition.

Black, Asian, and Mixed had lower odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to the White ethnicity.

Respondents in the deprivation quintiles 4 and 5 (least deprived) had the highest odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to the most deprived group (OR: 1.62, 95% CI: 1.59, 1.64) and (OR: 1.77, 95% CI: 1.74, 1.80), respectively.

Respondents who completed the survey in the years 2019 and 2020 had greater odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to respondents from the survey year 2018.

Respondents from GP practices located in an urban setting had lower odds of ordering repeat prescriptions online compared to respondents from GP practices in a rural setting.

Model comparison: the ICC was 0.08 for model 3 in table 3, which also showed that there is slight evidence that patients from the same GP practices may have more similar results compared to patients from other GP practices.

Sensitivity analysis results: Results of the sensitivity analysis for the repeat prescription outcome are in supplementary table 7. Differences (compared to the main analysis) in odds ratios were seen for the long-term condition (answering yes), age groups, ethnicity, being a parent, being a

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carer and for the deprivation quintile. Among respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data, the least deprived group had 89% (OR: 1.89, 95% CI: 1.82-1.97) higher odds of online repeat prescription use compared to respondents from the most deprived group where this percentage was only 65% (OR: 1.65, 95% CI: 1.59-1.71) in the lowest missing data GP practice respondents.

Table 3 Two-level Mixed-effects multivariable logistic regression of General Practice Patient Survey respondent characteristics on Online Repeat prescription ordering use in the previous 12 months (level 1, N= 1807049 respondents; level 2, N=7256 general practices)

	+ GP Practice Characteristic (Model 3)	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)		
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.25***	(1.22, 1.29)
Long term condition- Yes	2.58***	(2.55, 2.60)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-	1.26***	(1.00, 1.00)
Yes (REF= No)	1.20	(1.25, 1.28)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.02**	(1.20, 1.20) (1.00, 1.03)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.96***	(0.96, 0.97)
Age (REF: 85+)		(00,00,00,0)
16-24	1.71***	(1.64, 1.77)
25-34	2.17***	(2.10, 2.23)
35-44	2.69***	(2.61, 2.77)
45-54	3.18***	(3.10, 3.28)
55-64	3.28***	(3.20, 3.37)
65-74	3.01***	(2.93, 3.09)
75-84	1.68***	(1.64, 1.73)
Ethnicity (REF: White)		
Black	0.76***	(0.74, 0.78)
Asian	0.94***	(0.93, 0.96)
Other	0.78***	(0.75, 0.81)
Mixed	0.98	(0.94, 1.02)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16-year-old or	0.95***	
younger-Yes (REF= No)		(0.94, 0.96)
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.16***	(1.15, 1.17)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		
2	1.23***	(1.21, 1.25)
3	1.44***	(1.42, 1.46)

	+ GP Practice Characteristics (Model 3)	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
4	1.62***	(1.59, 1.64)
5 (least deprived)	1.77***	(1.74, 1.80)
Survey year (REF= 2018)		
2019	1.18***	(1.17, 1.19)
2020	1.46***	(1.44, 1.47)
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	0.88***	(0.85, 0.91)
Model Summary		,
ICC	0.08	

\* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.001$ 

## DISCUSSION

## **Principal findings**

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that indicators of increased healthcare need and socioeconomic disadvantage predicted variations in the use of online services and use of the services increased over the three years studied. Some of the findings agreed with what we hypothesized such as patients with long-term conditions being more likely to use online services and respondents of lower socioeconomic status and minority ethnic groups being less likely to use online services. However, contrary to our hypothesis, not all respondents of the age groups 35-84 were all more likely to use online services compared to respondents of the age group 85 years old and older.

## Strengths and weaknesses of the study

Although online services have been offered almost universally in GP practices in England since 2015, there continues to be a lack of research on the use of online services (or patient portals) in

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this setting [7, 27]. This study used a major national survey which uses rigorous research methodology in its data collection process and used suitable analysis methodology for processing the data (accounting for GP practice variation in the models and accounting for missing data in the sensitivity analyses) to explore online services user characteristics in England which can inform service planning and identify patient groups who may need support using the service. We accounted for clustering in our data presenting patient-level data in which patients belonged to different GP practices, by using multilevel logistic regression model which is an analysis methodology that takes into account the hierarchy in the data [28]. Clustering by GP practice was important not only because patients from the same GP practice may be more similar to each other, but patient portal functionalities and promotion of online services (such as providing training, posters, emails and reminders) to use online services may vary from one GP practice to another [29].

A limitation of the study was using only complete-case data in the analyses. Respondents excluded from the analyses due to missing data presented differences in the breakdown of respondent characteristics. Therefore, we performed sensitivity to explore what kind of differences might have observed if all the sample was included. Both summary statistics of the excluded sample and the sensitivity analyses indicated GP practices with more missing data may be more likely to have younger age groups, greater deprivation groups, and ethnically diverse groups, all of which were associated with relatively lower odds of using online services. This introduces the possibility that some of the odd's ratios presented in the main analysis may be larger than they are in the population due to missing data bias.

However, although most of the estimates of effect were slightly different in the sensitivity analyses compared to the main analyses, there was no change in terms of the direction of the

effects. For example, odds ratios that were larger than one in the main analyses remained to be larger than one in all three models of the sensitivity analysis. The sensitivity analysis also revealed that differences in online services between the three categories of GP practices use were bigger for online repeat prescription use compared to the online appointment booking use. The differences between the odds ratios based on the deprivation quintile for online repeat prescription was also bigger than online appointment booking in all the categories of GP practices indicating that socioeconomic inequities may have a larger influence on online repeat prescription ordering than online appointment booking. At the same time, for the online repeat prescription outcome, the difference in deprivation quintile were associated with bigger differences in the odds associated with the outcome for respondents from the highest missing data GP practices compared to the other GP practices.

As with all survey-based studies, a major limitation of the GPPS is the non-response bias. However, a study on the methodology of the GPPS, did not find evidence of non-response bias [30]. We tried to alleviate non-response bias by controlling for deprivation, ethnicity, age and gender (which can often be associated with low-response rates as reported in a study examining GPPS non-response characteristics [30]).

#### Strengths and weaknesses in relation to other studies

This study relied on self-reported online service usage which could introduce response bias [31]. A better way to measure use could be via the electronic patient portal log files. The log files automatically record patient portal activity and can serve as an objective method to examine patient portal use because it is not subject to recall bias and records the exposure prior to the outcome [3]. However, due to data unavailability of patient-level data of this kind at the time of

the study, the GPPS records of online services use was used in this study as it has been on other England based studies exploring patient portal use [5, 6].

#### **Discussing important differences in results**

Patients from more deprived areas, and from ethnic minorities are reported to have lower uptake of patient portals in previous studies [32]. According to previous studies, deprivation and ethnicity play key roles in online services use [33-35] which was confirmed by the main analysis and sensitivity analyses in this study. A study from the USA suggested that patients' ethnicity could be associated with less trust in patient portals [36]. Lower use of online services by respondents with greater deprivation levels is repeatedly reported in the literature [37]. This may be due to lower access to the internet, smart phone, and computers among individuals from more deprived areas [7, 38]. íclic

## Meaning of the study

There is evidence that online services use in England is increasing every year and it is likely to continue to be an important tool in GP practice settings. Understanding the needs of populations less likely to use online services may help improve the uptake of the services and meet the needs of vulnerable populations which may be more prone to have reduced access to healthcare services [39] in addition to online services.

According to the theory of the digital divide, [13, 14], using technologies such as patient portals may require more than just access to a computer, skills such as digital literacy and eHealth literacy may be essential to enable the use of these services. Education is also considered a detrimental factor contributing to the digital divide [40]. While the literature on social theories could help interpret the behavior of patients using healthcare information system technologies,

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the quantitative nature of the study does not allow us to dig deep into the social constructs that drive these behaviors. However, such theories can help us understand the mechanisms, and that may be involved in leading some individuals to adopt the technologies. For example, we are aware that socioeconomic factors play a role in patient portal use, which may be associated with the factors that were not studied in the study, such as access to the internet, access to digital technologies. Additionally, although we estimated that younger populations would be more likely to use and have access to technologies, we could not see that pattern in the study may be because young people are less likely to need the healthcare system and services such as appointment booking and repeat prescription requests. We can already see the complex mechanisms that may be involved in driving individuals to use an adult electronic patient which may be driven by social factors beyond this study.

#### Possible explanations and implications for clinicians and

## Policymakers

The adoption of online services by those with long-term conditions is promising and can potentially contribute to improve self-management of the long-term condition [2]. However, it is also a reflection that patients with long-term conditions may generally be more likely to use healthcare services[41-43]. Practices could continue to encourage patients with long-term conditions to sign up and use online services. However, it is essential that alternatives to online services continue to be provided to patients who are unable to use the services [41-43]. This study shows that online services use is lower among people from more deprived areas and from ethnic minorities which may introduce inequities if in-person services become out of reach. As an example, the move to telephone consultations and remote triage in GP practices amidst the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for homeless people to access care due to not having a Protected by copyright, including for uses related to text and data mining, Al training, and similar technologies

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telephone [44]. In-person access to care is seen necessary to reach all patient groups despite access to technology in the move to remote consultations in the COVID-19 pandemic [44]. For this reason, it is important that practices continue to provide in-person services (e.g. for appointment booking and repeat prescriptions) to patients especially those less able to access remote services. Training to use online services may be a solution to increase adoption which is already provided in some GP practices [29] and we can continue to recommend it

## Unanswered questions and future research

Further research is needed to understand the lack of uptake of the services in some patient groups to clarify if uptake is low due to barriers or due to patient preference. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, where patients are asked to contact their GP practice remotely [45], inequities in the access and use of the online services may be responsible for dramatic inequities when it comes to situations where online services becomes the only route of accessing care [46]. Although the findings of this study should be viewed as pre-COVID-19 findings, the patterns in disparities may continue or worsen in the post-COVID-19 period amidst the move to remote GP services.

Future research could focus on the effects of these services on aspects of the healthcare system such as healthcare utilisation and patients' self-management of their condition. Our future research aim is to use electronic health records to estimate patient portal use in GP practices in England as opposed to self-report of patients and examine outcomes such as healthcare utilization and health outcomes in association with patient portal use to test patient portal's influence on health and the healthcare system in general.

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### Ethical approval

This study was approved by the Imperial College Research Ethics Committee, Reference number: 20IC6303. Respondents of the survey provide informed consent to take part in the research by taking part in the survey and have the right to withdraw their consent before the data is processed.

#### **Author contribution**

AA, GG, TB and CC created the study design, formulated the research question and finalised the study methodology. AA performed the analysis of the study. JN contributed to the introduction and discussion sections of the study. All authors reviewed and approved the submitted manuscript.

### Data sharing statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from Ipsos Mori but cannot be provided by the authors due to ethical restrictions. However, the aggregate level GPPS data are openly available in the GP Patient Survey webpage at <a href="https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/">https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/</a>

## **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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# Supplementary material

Supplementary Table 1 Methods of the sensitivity analysis.

#### **BMJ** Open

Supplementary Table 2. STROBE 2007 checklist of items to be included in reports of observational studies in epidemiology.

Supplementary Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the number and proportion of respondent characteristics in the total population included in the analyses (n=1807049), categorised by online services use.

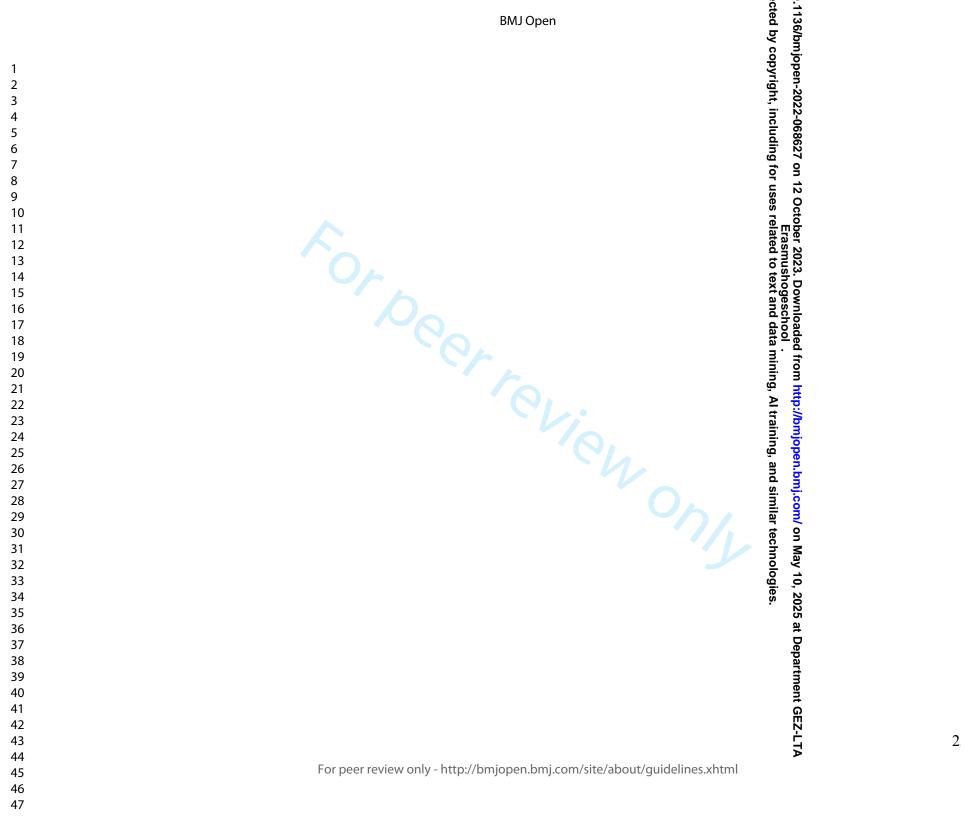
Supplementary Table 4. The breakdown of respondents by characteristics in the total sample received (n=2,198,821), in the complete case dataset used for the analyses in this study

(n=1,806,977) and in the excluded sample (n=439,060).

Supplementary Table 5. Breakdown of the number and proportion of respondent characteristics based on the categories of the proportion of missing data in the GP practice.

Supplementary Table 6. Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online appointment booking in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice.

Supplementary Table 7. Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online repeat prescription ordering in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice.



Page 26 of 44

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# Supplementary material: Supplementary Table 1. Methods of the sensitivity analysis

	that did not have any missing data for any of the variables included in the analyses) were	ed
	that did not have any missing data for any of the variables included in the analyses) were	to te
	included. We ran sensitivity analyses to explore the effects of excluding respondents with	ext an
	missing data. We first calculated the proportion of respondents with complete data per	d data
	practice using the complete dataset (n=2198821) and assigned each practice a new variable	minir
	indicating the proportion of complete case respondents in the practice. We then separated	ıg, Al t
	the complete case respondents (n=1807049) into three categories based on the proportion	trainin
	of complete case respondents in their practice. The three categories were: highest missing	ıg, anc
	data group ( $\geq$ 75%), middle-range missing data group (26-74%), and lowest missing data	ł simil
	group (≤25%). We then ran the same two-level mixed-effects models for each of the	ar tecl
	outcomes (online appointment booking and online repeat prescription use) separately for	hnolog
	In the main analyses performed in this study, only complete case respondents (respondents that did not have any missing data for any of the variables included in the analyses) were included. We ran sensitivity analyses to explore the effects of excluding respondents with missing data. We first calculated the proportion of respondents with complete data per practice using the complete dataset (n=2198821) and assigned each practice a new variable indicating the proportion of complete case respondents in the practice. We then separated the complete case respondents (n=1807049) into three categories based on the proportion of complete case respondents in their practice. The three categories were: highest missing data group (≥75%), middle-range missing data group (26-74%), and lowest missing data group (≤25%). We then ran the same two-level mixed-effects models for each of the outcomes (online appointment booking and online repeat prescription use) separately for each of the three categories.	gies.
lement	ary Table 2 STROBE 2007 checklist [12] of items to be included in reports of observational studies in ep	pidem
	Checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies (combined)	

Page	28	of	44
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		BMJ Open      1         BMJ Open      02         version      02         Recommendation      02         (a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstraction       67	Pa
Section/Topic	Item #	Recommendation	Reported on page #
Title and abstract	1	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract $\frac{\mathbf{a}}{\mathbf{b}}$	1
		(b) Provide in the abstract an informative and balanced summary of what was done and what was found	2
Introduction		est	
Background/rationale	2	Explain the scientific background and rationale for the investigation being reported State specific objectives, including any pre-specified hypotheses Present key elements of study design early in the paper Present key elements of study design early in the paper	3-4
Objectives	3	State specific objectives, including any pre-specified hypotheses	4
Methods		o te shi si	
Study design	4	Present key elements of study design early in the paper	4
Setting	5	and data collection	5
Participants	6	<ul> <li>(a) Cohort study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of select in the participants. Describe methods of follow-up</li> <li>Case-control study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of case ascertainment and control selection. Give the rationale for the choice of cases and controls</li> <li>Cross-sectional study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants</li> <li>(b) Cohort study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and number of exposed and unexposed Case-control study—For matched studies, give matching criteria and the number of empty selection.</li> </ul>	5
Variables	7	Clearly define all outcomes, exposures, predictors, potential confounders, and effect and rest. Give diagnostic criteria, if applicable	5
Data sources/ measurement	8*	For each variable of interest, give sources of data and details of methods of assessment (reasurement). Describe comparability of assessment methods if there is more than one group	5
Bias	9	Describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias	6 & Supplementary Table 2
Study size	10	Explain how the study size was arrived at	6
Quantitative variables	11	Explain how quantitative variables were handled in the analyses. If applicable, describe which groupings were chosen and why	6-7
Statistical methods	12	(a) Describe all statistical methods, including those used to control for confounding	6-7
I		(b) Describe any methods used to examine subgroups and interactions	Supplementary Table 2
		(c) Explain how missing data were addressed	Supplementary Table 2

Decretés		BMJ Open BMJ Open (d) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how loss to follow-up was addressed	
Decretés			
Desculto		<i>Case-control study</i> —If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was and dressed <i>Cross-sectional study</i> —If applicable, describe analytical methods taking account of sampling strategy	
Desaulta		(e) Describe any sensitivity analyses	Supplementar Table 2
Results			
Participants	13*	(a) Report numbers of individuals at each stage of study—eg numbers potentially eligible examined for eligibility, confirmed eligible, included in the study, completing follow-up, and analyzed	7
		(b) Give reasons for non-participation at each stage	6-7
		(c) Consider use of a flow diagram	-
Descriptive data	14*	(a) Give characteristics of study participants (eg demographic, clinical, social) and in the mation on	7
		exposures and potential confounders (b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of interest (c) a lease of the second data for each variable of the second data for e	7 & Supplementar Table 3
		(c) Cohort study—Summarise follow-up time (eg, average and total amount)	Data collection times are summarized u study design subsection
Outcome data	15*	Cohort study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures over time a	Supplementar Table 3 (chec categories of survey year)
		<i>Case-control study</i> —Report numbers in each exposure category, or summary measures of exposure	Supplementar Table 3
		Cross-sectional study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures	7 & Supplementar Table 4
Main results	16	(a) Give unadjusted estimates and, if applicable, confounder-adjusted estimates and their precision (eg, 95% confidence interval). Make clear which confounders were adjusted for and why drey were included	8-12
		(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized	Table 1
		(c) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a meaning ful time period $\mathbf{x}$	NA
Other analyses	17	Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and sensitivity and yses	Supplementar Table 2, Supplementar Table 5-7
Discussion			

				BMJ Open		cted by copyright,	.1136/bmjopen-2	Pag
						pyrigh	pen-2	
Key results	18			reference to study object			023	12-13
Limitations	19	direction ar	nd magnitude of a		_	ud	686	
Interpretation	20	analyses, re	esults from simila	pretation of results cons r studies, and other rele	vant evidence	limitations, maailti o	ip <b>ù</b> city of	14-16
Generalisability	21	Discuss the	generalisability (	(external validity) of the	e study results	r	12	16
Other information						es.	0	
Funding	22			nd the role of the funde present article is based	rs for the present st	udy and, if applic a c c c to c	able, for the	16
	Characteristi	Total	months No	the previous 12 Yes p- 11) (N=263938) val	ordering in months No ue* (N=146760	eat prescripting the previous No. Yes 00) (N=3394449	from http:- Divalue†	
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		(55.1%)	(54.7%)	(58.0%)	(55.1%)	(55.2%)and	n.b	
	Male	810505	699689	110816	658263	152242 <u>s</u> .	nj.c	
		(44.9%)	(45.3%)	(42.0%)	(44.9%)	(44.8%) <b>2</b>	OT C	
	Age			<0	0.001	r te	<b>₀</b> <0.001	
	16-24	74381 (4.1%)	64513 (4.2	%) 9868 (3.7%)	67069 (4.69	%) 7312 (2.5%)	1 May	
	25-34	159806	132951	26855	141376	18430 <b>g</b>	,	
		(8.8%)	(8.6%)	(10.2%)	(9.6%)	(5.4%) <sup>98</sup>	2025	
	35-44	217687	181290	36397	186112	31575	<u>රි</u> බ	
		(12.0%)	(11.7%)	(13.8%)	(12.7%)	(9.3%)	nt De	
	45-54	302285	253145	49140	243458	58827	epa	
		(16.7%)	(16.4%)	(18.6%)	(16.6%)	(17.3%)		
							tment GEZ-LTA	

Page	31	of	44
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			BMJ Open		.1136/bmjopen-2022-068627 o cted by copyright_on_1 prescript_on_1 e previouuding f	
Characteristic	s Total	Online appoir booking in the months		Online repeat ordering in th months	prescription22- e previous 1288627 o	
	Total	No	Yes p-	No	Yes Z p	-
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55-64	381808	321902	59906	295168	86640	
	(21.1%)	(20.9%)	(22.7%)	(20.1%)	(25.5%)at ar	
65-74	397999	340484	57515	303875	94124 <b>6</b> 22 22	
	(22.0%)	(22.1%)	(21.8%)	(20.7%)	(27.7%) <b>g</b> <u>s</u> <u>3</u>	
75-84	211586	191217	20369	176214	35372 age	
	(11.7%)	(12.4%)	(7.7%)	(12.0%)	(10.4%)	
85+	61497	57609 (3.7%)	3888 (1.5%)	54328 (3.7%)	7169 (2.5 3 3 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6	
	(3.4%)				<u> </u>	
Ethnicity			< 0.00		inin	0.0
White	1567690	1340202	227488	1258828	308862	
	(86.8%)	(86.9%)	(86.2%)	(85.8%)	<u>(91.0%)</u>	
Black	52950	46120 (3.0%)	6830 (2.6%)	47195 (3.2%)	5755 (1.2.%)	
	(2.9%)				jop	
Asian	137026	115015	22011	118728	18298 and 5.4%) and	
	(7.6%)	(7.5%)	(8.3%)	(8.1%)		
Other	29168	24993 (1.6%)	4175 (1.6%)	25773 (1.8%)	3395 (1. <b><u>9</u>%)</b>	
	(1.6%)				lar t	
Mixed	20215	16781 (1.1%)	3434 (1.3%)	17076 (1.2%)	3139 (0. <b>ਭ਼੍</b> %)	
	(1.1%)			· · ·	May	_
Survey year			< 0.00		y Yq, ologi	0.0
2018	612084	536349	75735	512184	99900 <b>i</b> g , 20	
	(33.9%)	(34.8%)	(28.7%)	(34.9%)	(29.4%) <b>S</b>	_
2019	623358	534321	89037	507522	115836	
	(34.5%)	(34.6%)	(33.7%)	(34.6%)	(34.1%) <b>e</b>	
2020	571607	472441	99166	447894	123713	
	(31.6%)	(30.6%)	(37.6%)	(30.5%)	99900         99           (29.4%)         2025           115836         at           (34.1%)         ep           123713         (36.4%)	
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			BMJ Open		epeat prescription in the previouding f	.1136/bmjopen-:
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Long-term condition			<(	0.001	s relate	ctober Era
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	(46.1%)	(47.3%)	(39.2%)	(50.2%)	(28.5%) <b>g</b>	ISh
I don't know/ Can't answer	49746 (2.8%)	43186 (2.8%)	6560 (2.5%)	43212 (2	.9%) 6534 (1.8)	)ownlc ogesch
Yes	923780	769748	154032	687527	236253 <b>a</b>	lool
	(51.1%)	(49.9%)	(58.4%)	(46.8%)	(69.6%) ta	. <u> </u>
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis	1242725	1151212	er:	1118704	ning, Al traihi	rom http://bmjj
No	1343735	1151312	192423	1118704	0	ope
Yes	(74.4%) 463314	(74.6%) 391799	(72.9%) 71515	(76.2%)	(66.3%) and 114418	b
1 05	(25.6%)	(25.4%)	(27.1%)	(23.8%)	(33.7%)	.bmj.co
Deafness or hearing loss	(23.070)	(23.470)	· /	0.001	ilar teo	₹<0.00
No	1652099	1409236	242863	1344856	307243 a (90.5%)g	on May 10,
	(91.4%)	(91.3%)	(92.0%)	(91.6%)	(90.5%)	<u> </u>
Yes	154950	133875	21075	122744	32206 jg	
	(8.6%)	(8.7%)	(8.0%)	(8.4%)	(9.5%)	2025 at Depart
Parent or legal guardian to			<(	0.001		tment GEZ-LTA

Page	33	of	44
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	Online appoin	tmont		<u> </u>	
	months	e previous 12	Online repeat ordering in the months	prescription e previous ing Vos	2022-068627 on
		Yes p-	No	Yes g	n 12
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344582	288126	56456	266947	77635 <b>ģ</b>	n <mark>hí</mark>
(19.1%)	(18.7%)	(21.4%)	(18.2%)	(22.9%)≥	http:/
		<0.001		raining	
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(18.7%)	(19.3%)	(15.3%)	(19.9%)	(13.6%) <sup>a</sup>	bm
353580	304870	48710	296229	57351 <b>m</b>	j.co
(19.6%)	(19.8%)	(18.5%)	(20.2%)		Ŭ,
376042	322081	53961	304048		on
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378002		58902		80906	j.com/ on May 10,
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	(19.4%)			(24.4%)	at
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	Characteristics		Online appoi booking in the months		12	Online repe ordering in months	at prescript	<u>s 125</u>
		Total	No	Yes	p-	No	Yes	<del>∑ 3</del> p-
		(N=1807049)	(N=1543111	) (N=26393	88) value*	No (N=146760	0) (N=3394	49) Svalue †
	Rural	306200	263405	42795		238353	67847	
		(16.9%)	(17.1%)	(16.2%)		(16.2%)	(20.0%)	
	Urban	1500849	1279706	221143		1229247	271602	2023.
		(83.1%)	(82.9%)	(83.8%)		(83.8%)	271602 (80.0%)	2023. Downloadec smushogeschool
Supplementary complete case d Characteristics	Table 4 The ba ataset used for	reakdown of r the analyses i	in this study Total in th	(n=1,806,9	77) and in Total in the case datas	the exclude he complete set	ed sample Total in the excluded	$\vec{n} = 2,198,821$ ), in the $\vec{n} = 439,060$ )
					(n=18070	49)	sample (n=439,06	
Online appoint 12 months	ment booking i	n the previous	5			V Or		n.bmj.cor
No			1892841 (8	34.3%)	15431	11 (85.4%)	349730 (7	2.7%)
Yes			305980 (13	/	26393	38 (14.6%) 🗧	42042 (9	
(Missing)			47288 (2.19	%)	0	(0.0%)	47288 (10	8%2
Online repeat p previous 12 mo	-	lering in the					ogies.	10, 2025
No			1807863 (8	30.5%)	14676	00 (81.2%)	340263 (77	7.5% <b>2</b> )
Yes			390958 (17	<i>,</i>		49 (18.8%)	51509 (11	U
(Missing)			47288 (2.19	%)	0	(0.0%)	47288 (10	.8%
Gender								nen
Female			1229473 (5	(17%)	00 (E 11 (E	5 10/)	222020 (52	10
			1227773(3)	·+.//0)	996544 (5	(3.1%)	232929 (53	<u>,.1%∂</u> EZ -LTA

 Page 34 of 44

	BMJ Open					
			:			
Male	967079 (43.1%)	810505 (44.9%)	156574 (3			
(Missing)	49557 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	49557 (11 12700 (2.9			
Age						
16-24	87081 (3.9%)	74381 (4.1%)	12700 (2.9			
25-34	185580 (8.3%)	159806 (8.8%)	25774 (5.9			
35-44	256766 (11.4%)	217687 (12.0%)	39079 (8.9			
45-54	360011 (16.0%)	302285 (16.7%)	57726 (13			
55-64	454900 (20.3%)	381808 (21.1%)	73092 (16			
65-74	487171 (21.7%)	397999 (22.0%)	89172 (20			
75-84	287533 (12.8%)	211586 (11.7%)	75947 (17			
85+	91083 (4.1%)	61497 (3.4%)	29586 (6.)			
(Missing)	35984 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	35984 (8.2			
Ethnicity						
White	1895473 (84.4%)	1567690 (86.8%)	35984 (8.2 15862 (3.0			
Black	68812 (3.1%)	52950 (2.9%)	33583 (7.0			
Asian	170609 (7.6%)	137026 (7.6%)	10257 (2.1			
Other	39425 (1.8%)	29168 (1.6%)	4558 (1.0			
Mixed	24773 (1.1%)	20215 (1.1%)	327783 (7			
(Missing)	47017 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	47017 (10			
Survey year		N				
2018	750619 (33.4%)	612084 (33.9%)	138535 (3			
2019	763244 (34.0%)	623358 (34.5%)	139886 (3			
2020	732246 (32.6%)	571607 (31.6%)	160639 (3			
(Missing)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)			
Long term condition						
No	1022671 (45.5%)	833523 (46.1%)	189148 (4			
Yes	1050129 (46.8%)	923780 (51.1%)	126349 (2			
Don't know/Can't say	61802 (2.8%)	49746 (2.8%)	12056 (2.			
Prefer not to say	38879 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38879 (8.9			
(Missing)	72628 (3.2%)	0 (0.0%)	72628 (16			
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis						
No	1632850 (72.7%)	1343735 (74.4%)	289115 (6			
Yes	574749 (25.6%)	463314 (25.6%)	111435 (2			

Page	36 of	44
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	ВМЈ Ор	38510 (8.8%) 147534 (310) 147534 (5.0%)	
(Missing)	38510 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38510 (8.8%)
Deafness or hearing loss			ncl
No	1799633 (80.1%)	1652099 (91.4%)	147534 (3 <b>2</b> .6
Yes	179304 (8.0%)	154950 (8.6%)	24354 (5.5%)
(Missing)	267172 (11.9%)	0 (0.0%)	267172 (6 <b>8</b> .9 Uses
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger			ses related atted 316894 (76)
No	1782911 (79.4%)	1466017 (81.1%)	316894 (7 <b>ฮ</b> .ฮ <b>ู</b>
Yes	407923 (18.2%)	341032 (18.9%)	66891 (15🕿 🖥
(Missing)	55275 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	55275 (12 <b>x</b> )
Carer			
No	1741536 (77.5%)	1462467 (80.9%)	279069 (6
Yes	410450 (18.3%)	344582 (19.1%)	65868 (15 <b>3</b> )%
(Missing)	94123 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	94123 (21 👍 %
Deprivation fifth			g,
1- least deprived	437189 (19.5%)	338728 (18.7%)	98461 (22
2	444869 (19.8%)	353580 (19.6%)	91289 (20 <b>ឆ្ន</b> ំ9
3	464884 (20.7%)	376042 (20.8%)	88842 (20,2%)
4	461586 (20.6%)	378002 (20.9%)	83584 (19 09
5 - most deprived	435997 (19.4%)	360697 (20.0%)	75300 (17 2%
(Missing)	1584 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1584 (0.4%)
General practice rurality			ilar
Rural	374466 (16.7%)	306200 (16.9%)	68266 (15 <b>कू</b> %
Urban	1871643 (83.3%)	1500849 (83.1%)	370794 (84.5
(Missing)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) <b>Ö</b>

 Supplementary Table 5. Breakdown of the number and proportion of respondent characteristics based on the categories of the proportion of missing data in the GP practice artment GEZ-LTA

Page 37 of 44

31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38
20

Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
Online services use			
Online appointment booking in the frevious 12 months	75194(15.9%)	176193(19.4%)	55937(13.1%)
Online repeat prescription use in the previous 12 months	102332(21.6%)	176193(19.4%)	60924(14.4%)
Gender		1-	
Female	265428	503040	228076
	(56.0%)	(55.3%)	(53.8%)
Male	208654 (44.0%)	406112 (44.7%)	195739 (46.2%)
Age		(,))	(101270)
16-24	18750 (4.0%)	34473 (3.8%)	21158 (5.0%)
25-34	39537 (8.3%)	75142 (8.3%)	45127 (10.6%)
35-44	55609 (11.7%)	103244 (11.4%)	58834 (13.9%)
45-54	79934 (16.9%)	149707 (16.5%)	72644 (17.1%)
55-64	100332 (21.2%)	194450 (21.4%)	87026 (20.5%)
65-74	106927 (22.6%)	208741 (23.0%)	82331 (19.4%)
75-84	56564 (11.9%)	111123 (12.2%)	43899 (10.4%)

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Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of	Respondents from practices with 75% or more	
	respondents with missing	respondents with missing	respondents with missing	
	data n=474082,	data n=909152,	data. n=423815,	
	1843 practices	3361 practices	2052 practices	
85+	16429 (3.5%)	32272 (3.5%)	12796 (3.0%)	
Ethnicity				
White	5027 (1.1%)	17758 (2.0%)	30165 (7.1%)	
Black	16190 (3.4%)	49142 (5.4%)	71694 (16.9%)	
Asian	3729 (0.8%)	10722 (1.2%)	14717 (3.5%)	
Other	4175 (0.9%)	8704 (1.0%)	7336 (1.7%)	
Mixed	444961	822826	299903	
	(93.9%)	(90.5%)	(70.8%)	
Survey year				
2018	166729	305514	139841	
	(35.2%)	(33.6%)	(33.0%)	
2019	162214	315671	145473	
	(34.2%)	(34.7%)	(34.3%)	
2020	145139	287967	138501	
	(30.6%)	(31.7%)	(32.7%)	
Long-term condition				
No	11725 (2.5%)	24207 (2.7%)	13814 (3.3%)	
I don't know/ Can't answer	220575	411974	200974	
	(46.5%)	(45.3%)	(47.4%)	
Yes	241782	472971	209027	
	(51.0%)	(52.0%)	(49.3%)	
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis				

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Page 39 of 44

$\begin{array}{c}1\\2\\3\\4\\5\\6\\7\\8\\9\\10\\11\\2\\3\\14\\15\\16\\17\\18\\9\\20\\21\\22\\23\\24\\25\\26\\7\\28\\9\\30\\31\\32\end{array}$		
30		
<ol> <li>39</li> <li>40</li> <li>41</li> <li>42</li> <li>43</li> <li>44</li> <li>45</li> <li>46</li> <li>47</li> </ol>		

Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082,	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152,	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815,
	1843 practices	3361 practices	2052 practices
No	363720	674880	305135
	(76.7%)	(74.2%)	(72.0%)
Yes	110362	234272	118680
	(23.3%)	(25.8%)	(28.0%)
Deafness or hearing loss			
No	433463	827757	390879
	(91.4%)	(91.0%)	(92.2%)
Yes	40619 (8.6%)	81395 (9.0%)	32936 (7.8%)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year			
old or younger			
No	385230	746422	334365
	(81.3%)	(82.1%)	(78.9%)
Yes	88852 (18.7%)	162730	89450 (21.1%)
		(17.9%)	
Carer			
No	382112	732193	348162
	(80.6%)	(80.5%)	(82.1%)
Yes	91970 (19.4%)	176959	75653 (17.9%)
	, , ,	(19.5%)	. ,
Deprivation quintile			
1 (Most deprived)	38111 (8.0%)	146156	154461
	, , ,	(16.1%)	(36.4%)
2	64792 (13.7%)	174694	114094
		(19.2%)	(26.9%)

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Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
3	99792 (21.0%)	199586 (22.0%)	76664 (18.1%)
4	124261 (26.2%)	203142 (22.3%)	50599 (11.9%)
5 (Least deprived)	147126 (31.0%)	185574 (20.4%)	27997 (6.6%)
General practice rurality			
Rural	116101 (24.5%)	165787 (18.2%)	24312 (5.7%)
Urban	357981 (75.5%)	743365 (81.8%)	399503 (94.3%)

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Supplementary Table 6 Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online appointment booking in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice

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Predictors	Model 3, Respon practices with 25 respondents with n=474082, 1843	5% or less h missing data	Model 3, Respon practices with 26 respondents with n=909152, 3361	5%-74% of n missing data	Model 3, Rasp practices with respondents w n=423815, 205	75% or more ith missing dat
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)	(	Pro			ctober 2023. Dow Erasmushoge s related to text a	
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.16***	(1.10, 1.23)	1.14***	(1.10, 1.19)	1.16***d data mining 1.49***g	(1.10, 1.22)
Long term condition- Yes	1.78***	(1.75, 1.81)	1.69***	(1.67, 1.72)		(1.46, 1.53)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-Yes (REF= No)	1.19***	(1.17, 1.22)	1.20***	(1.18, 1.22)	1.20****ining, and simila	(1.17, 1.23)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.15***	(1.11, 1.19)	1.12***	(1.09, 1.14)	1.12***********************************	(1.08, 1.16)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.88***	(0.86, 0.89)	0.88***	(0.87, 0.89)	0.91****5. 0.91****5. at	(0.89, 0.93)
Age (REF: 85+) 16-24	3.39***	(3.14, 3.66)	3.76***	(3.55, 3.98)	3.50*** <b>b</b>	(3.21, 3.82)
25-34 35-44	4.69*** 4.63***	(4.37, 5.03) (4.32, 4.96)	5.17*** 5.13***	(4.91, 5.45) (4.87, 5.40)	4.66*** <b>art</b> 4.46*** <b>en</b>	$(4.30, 5.06) \\ (4.11, 4.83)$
45-54	4.28***	(4.01, 4.57)	4.51***	(4.29, 4.74)	3.75*** <b>6</b>	(3.46, 4.06)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	
10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26	
27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35	
36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44	
45 46 47	

Predictors	Model 3, Respo practices with 2 respondents wi n=474082, 1843	25% or less th missing data	Model 3, Respondents from practices with 26%-74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices		Model 3, Resp practices with respondents, 205 with respondents w n=423815, 205	75% or more rith missing data
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
55-64	3.80***	(3.56, 4.05)	3.94***	(3.75, 4.13)	3.07*** <b>a</b>	(2.84, 3.32)
65-74	3.27***	(3.07, 3.49)	3.32***	(3.16, 3.48)	3.07***to	(2.18, 2.54)
75-84	1.81***	(1.69, 1.93)	1.83***	(1.74, 1.93)	1.43** <b>********</b>	(1.32, 1.55)
Ethnicity (REF: White)		0			0.87************************************	
Black	0.75***	(0.69, 0.81)	0.83***	(0.79, 0.87)	0.87******************	(0.83, 0.90)
Asian	1.04	(1.00, 1.09)	1.10***	(1.07, 1.14)	1.14*** <b>5</b> . <b>5</b>	(1.10, 1.17)
Other	0.86**	(0.79, 0.95)	0.92**	(0.87, 0.98)	1.01 nin m	(0.96, 1.06)
Mixed	1.01	(0.93, 1.10)	1.01	(0.95, 1.07)	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	(1.02, 1.16)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16- year-old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.91***	(0.89, 0.93)	0.90***	(0.88, 0.92)	9, ALtraining, and si	(0.93, 0.98)
Carer-Yes	1.11***		1.15***		1.17***********************************	
(REF= No)		(1.09, 1.13)		(1.13, 1.17)	lar t	(1.14, 1.19)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)					1.17*** milar technologi	
2	1.15***	(1.11, 1.20)	1.14***	(1.12, 1.17)	1.16*** <b>\$</b> 2025	(1.13, 1.19)
3	1.23***	(1.19, 1.28)	1.29***	(1.26, 1.32)	1.27***	(1.23, 1.30)
4	1.38***	(1.33, 1.44)	1.40***	(1.37, 1.43)	1.36*** 🛱	(1.31, 1.41)
5 (least deprived)	1.54***	(1.48, 1.60)	1.52***	(1.49, 1.56)	1.27***         at           1.36***         pa           1.53***         filler	(1.46, 1.60)

	Model 3, Respon practices with 2 respondents wit n=474082, 1843	5% or less h missing data	Model 3, Respo practices with respondents with n=909152, 336	26%-74% of ith missing data	Model 3, Resp practices with respondents w n=423815, 205	75% or more ith missing data
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
Survey year (REF= 2018)					Coctober 2023 Erasmus ses related to	
2019	1.16***	(1.14, 1.18)	1.18***	(1.17, 1.20)	1.25** <b>******</b>	(1.22, 1.28)
2020	1.46***	(1.43, 1.49)	1.52***	(1.50, 1.54)	1.61*** <b>*****</b>	(1.57, 1.65)
General practice rurality-Urban (REF= Rural)	1.22***	(1.10, 1.23)	1.11***	(1.10, 1.19)	1.10 den	(0.97, 1.24)
Model summary			<u> </u>		inin	
Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC)	0.13		0.12		0.13 g, Al train	
<sup>c</sup> p-value= 0.05, **	* p-value= $\leq 0.01$ ,	$x^{***}$ p-value= $\leq 0.0$	001		vaded from http://bmjopen.bmj.com/ on May 10, 20 nool . data mining, Al training, and similar technologies.	
					May 10, 2025 hnologies.	

Page 43

Predictors	practices with	with missing data	practices with	pondents from th 26%-74% of with missing 52, 3361	priectikes responden data. j=42 priectices	respondents from with 75% or mor its with missing 23815, 2052
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	October 2023. Downloaded	95% Confidence Interval
Long term condition (REF= ^	0				2023. I smush id to te	
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.25***	(1.18, 1.32)	1.25***	(1.20, 1.30)	1.2 and	(1.17, 1.31)
Long term condition- Yes	2.71***	(2.66, 2.75)	2.56***	(2.52, 2.59)	2.428	(2.37, 2.47)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis- Yes (REF= No)	1.26***	(1.24, 1.29)	1.26***	(1.24, 1.28)	1.thining	(1.26, 1.32)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.02	(1.00, 1.05)	1.02	(1.00, 1.04)	, Al tr融hing,	(0.98, 1.04)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.96***	(0.94, 0.97)	0.96***	(0.95, 0.97)	0.98**5 d	(0.96, 1.00)
Age (REF: 85+)					bu md	
16-24	1.64***	(1.53, 1.75)	1.76***	(1.67, 1.85)	1.@2** <mark>8</mark> *	(1.50, 1.76)
25-34	2.16***	(2.04, 2.29)	2.22***	(2.13, 2.32)	1.98**	(1.85, 2.13)
35-44	2.67***	(2.52, 2.82)	2.82***	(2.70, 2.94)	2.37***	(2.21, 2.54)
45-54	3.25***	(3.09, 3.42)	3.29***	(3.16, 3.42)	2.82**	(2.65, 3.01)
55-64	3.35***	(3.18, 3.52)	3.43***	(3.31, 3.56)	2.8 <b>.</b> ***	(2.64, 3.00)
65-74	3.11***	(2.97, 3.27)	3.15***	(3.03, 3.27)	2.48**	(2.33, 2.64)
75-84	1.73***	(1.65, 1.82)	1.75***	(1.68, 1.82)	1.43***	(1.34, 1.53)
Ethnicity (REF: White)					ťD	
Black	0.77***	(0.71, 0.84)	0.73***	(0.70, 0.77)	0.81**	(0.77, 0.84)
Asian	0.88***	(0.84, 0.92)	0.94***	(0.91, 0.97)	1.01	(0.98, 1.04)
Other	0.79***	(0.71, 0.87)	0.76***	(0.72, 0.81)	0.82**	(0.77, 0.86)

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Page 44 of 44

Predictors	practices with	with missing data	practices w	espondents from ith 26%-74% of as with missing 152, 3361	practikes responden	respondents fro with 75% or m ats with missing 23815, 2052
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval		95% Confidence Interval
Mixed	0.96	(0.89, 1.05)	0.98	(0.93, 1.05)		(0.92, 1.07)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.93***	(0.91, 0.96)	0.94***	(0.92, 0.96)	Cotyper 2023. Downloa Related to Sext and d	(0.96, 1.02)
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.13***	(1.11, 1.16)	1.15***	(1.14, 1.17)		(1.17, 1.22)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)					ninir	
2	1.21***	(1.17, 1.26)	1.22***	(1.19, 1.25)	1.22***	(1.19, 1.26)
3	1.37***	(1.32, 1.42)	1.43***	(1.40, 1.46)	1.423****	(1.39, 1.47)
4	1.54***	(1.48, 1.59)	1.59***	(1.55, 1.62)	1.æ7*😽	(1.62, 1.73)
5 (least deprived)	1.65***	(1.59, 1.71)	1.74***	(1.70, 1.78)	1.89**	(1.82, 1.97)
Survey year (REF= 2018)					ω <u>Ξ</u> .	
2019	1.16***	(1.13, 1.18)	1.17***	(1.15, 1.19)	1.25**	(1.24, 1.29)
2020	1.40***	(1.38, 1.43)	1.46***	(1.44, 1.48)	1.54**	(1.51, 1.58)
General practice rurality- Urban (REF= Rural)	0.94**	(0.89, 0.99)	0.90***	(0.87, 0.94)	1.34 1.54 0.500 May 10,	(0.88, 1.07)
Model summary					10, ogi	
Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC)	0.07		0.07		2025 at Department GEZ-LTA	

# **BMJ Open**

## Cross-sectional analyses of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering user characteristics in General Practices of England in the years 2018-2020

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# Cross-sectional analyses of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering user characteristics in General Practices of England in the years 2018-2020

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Word count: 4527.

Keywords general practice; primary health care; patient portal; electronic health record; personal health record; GP Patient Survey.

# Abstract

Objectives: To explore the characteristics of the General Practice Patient Survey (GPPS) respondents using the different functionalities of the online services in the context of England's

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National Health Service (NHS) General Practices. We hypothesised that use of online services would vary according to patient sociodemographic factors.

Design: Cross-sectional study using respondent-level data from the GPPS in England of the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. We assessed the association between online services use and respondent characteristics using two-level mixed-effects logistic regression.

Participants: Survey respondents of the GPPS 2018-2020.

Primary and secondary outcome measures: Online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering.

Results: 1,806,977 survey respondents were included in this study. 15% (n=263938) used online appointment booking in the previous 12 months, and 19% (n=339449) had ordered a repeat prescription in the previous 12 months. Respondents with a long-term condition, on regular multiple medications, who have deafness or hearing loss and who are from the lowest deprivation quintile were more likely to have used online services. Male respondents (compared to females) and respondents with Black and Other ethnic background compared to White ethnic backgrounds were less likely to use online services. Respondents over 85 years old were less likely to use online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering compared to the younger age groups.

Conclusions: Specific groups of respondents were more likely to use online services such as patients with long-term conditions or those with deafness or hearing loss. While online services could provide efficiency to patients and practices it is essential that alternatives continue to be provided to those that cannot use or choose not to use online services. Understanding the different patients' needs could inform solutions to encourage the uptake and use of the services.

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# Strengths and limitations of this study

### Strengths

- The study used a sample from a major national survey which has developed a robust methodology in its data collection to explore the characteristics of online services users, a service which has been highly advocated in the NHS and in other healthcare systems of the world.
- 2. Given the clustered nature of the data (where patients are registered to different general practices) and to account for the clustering, we used multilevel logistic regression analysis.

#### Limitation

1. The study relied on self-reported data for online service use due to data unavailability which can lead to response bias.

# BACKGROUND

Online services such as online appointment booking or repeat prescription ordering are offered in 99.7% of General Practitioner (GP) practices in England [1], but patients have to request access to the service and adoption remains low (about 31% in May 2020) [1]. According to previous literature, online services, also referred to as patient portals, have the potential to promote patients' involvement in their care, reduce emergency visits and hospitalisation [2], and may improve some health outcomes through improving medication adherence [2, 3] patients' knowledge about health and patient efficacy (e.g. patient's confidence in adhering to health instructions or treatment) [4]. Few studies have examined the characteristics of patients using online services and the inequalities that might exist based on patient characteristics in the context

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of the National Health Service (NHS) of England such as ethnicity and deprivation inequalities [5-7]. Understanding patient characteristics associated with online service use may reveal barriers to use and inform service planning to increase the uptake of the services.

Studies from other countries, and a limited number of studies from the UK, suggest that [7-10] patients with low income, and ethnic minorities may be less likely to use patient portals due to reduced access to the internet, computers and smartphones [8, 10]. This is the first study to look at online services user characteristics for both online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering explicitly in England, where the NHS have invested in a nation-wide digital transformation programme [11]. This study aims to examine patients' characteristics associated with online appointment booking and repeat prescription service ordering.

Healthcare systems are characterized as complex systems and healthcare innovations often face multi-faceted challenges in diffusion ("passive spread") and adoption due to the nature of complex systems [12]. A major theory considered in healthcare innovation adoption is the digital divide theory which highlights the inequality that arises when people without access to technology (that is physical access but also access to the knowledge and skills to use the technology) are excluded from the benefits that technology has to offer [13-15]. In consideration of the digital divide theory [13-15], we hypothesized that those of older age (patients 35 years old and older) of lower socioeconomic status and respondents of minority ethnic groups would be less likely to use online services. We hypothesized the younger age group (younger than 35 years old) to be more likely to use online services due to the high adoption of technology in this age group and their familiarity with the use of internet [16]. We hypothesized that individuals of lower socioeconomic status and minority ethnicities to be less likely to use online services as this has been reported in several studies looking into the use of patient portals and patient

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characteristics [8, 17-19]. Additionally, in consideration of patients' health status, we hypothesized that respondents with long-term or chronic conditions (but not those who are very ill) may be more likely to use online services because of their increased need to access and use the services such as appointment booking and repeat prescription. Additionally, patients with long-term conditions have certain physical limitation and socio-economic circumstances that could also influence their ability to access healthcare services in person.

# **METHODS**

## Patient and public involvement

This study had limited involvement from from the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration of Northwest London Public Advisors whom were consulted during the study write-up and were involved appropriately in the drafting.

# Study design

Cross-sectional analyses of respondent-level data obtained from the General Practice Patient Survey (GPPS) of 2018, 2019, and 2020 in England. The respondent-level data were pseudonymised. The researchers' did not have access to the respondents' identifies: name, address, NHS number and date of birth. Respondent-level data are only presented aggregately to protect respondents' privacy as agreed in the ethical approval of the study (20IC6303). Data collection for each survey was between January and March for the years 2018 and 2019 and between January and April for 2020. Respondents of the survey had the right to withdraw their consent before their data were processed [20].

# Variables

## Outcome variables

The outcome variables (online appointment booking use and online repeat prescription use) were based on the responses to the GPPS question: "Which of the following general practice online services have you used in the past 12 months?" [21] in which the answers "Booking appointments online", and "Ordering repeat prescriptions online" were used for this study. We compared the characteristics of those who replied "yes" to the question to those who replied "no" to the question. The answers "yes" and "no" were provided by the GPPS for each of the options: "Booking appointments online", and "Ordering repeat prescriptions online". The GPPS also records the use of online record viewing. However, we did not include it in this study due to the limited number of respondents reporting the use of the functionality (about 5% in 2020 and lower proportions in 2019 and 2018).

## Explanatory variables

Ten different covariates (explanatory variables) were included in the models as listed in table 1. Variables were selected based on factors that are known to be associated with patient portal use in the literature such as long-term condition status, deafness or hearing loss, and parent and carer status, and based on data availability such as taking 5 or more medications regularly (another indicator for healthcare status).

their definition	18.
Variable	Categories and definition
Gender	Male, Female
Age (bands)	16 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74, 75 to 84, 85 or over (as categorised by the survey)
Ethnicity	White, mixed, Asian, black, other (derived from 18 ethnicity categories of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories [22]) White, mixed,

Table 1 The list of variables included in the two-level regression models of the study and	ł
their definitions.	

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	A sign black other (5 bread groups derived from 19 other site astagonics
	Asian, black, other (5 broad groups derived from 18 ethnicity categories published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories [22])
Survey year	2018, 2019 or 2020 (created based on the year of the survey)
Long-term conditions	Yes, No, or "I don't know/ Can't answer" answers to the question: "Do you have any long-term physical or mental health conditions, disabilities or illnesses?" [21]
Deafness or hearing loss	Yes or No answer to the question: "Which, if any, of the following long- term conditions do you have?Deafness or hearing loss" [21]
Taking 5 or more medications on a regular basis	Yes or No answer to the question: "Do you take 5 or more medications on a regular basis?" [21]
Parent status	Yes or No answer to the question: "Are you a parent or a legal guardian for any children aged under 16 living in your home?" [21]
Carer status	Yes or No answer derived from the answers to the question: "Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either: long-term physical or mental ill health / disability, or problems related to old age?"
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles	The GPPS provided a variable called deprivation rank for all respondents included in the survey which was defined as: ONS IMD score - deprivation banding based on patient postcode. We converted the ONS IMD scores provided by GPPS to IMD quintiles using the English indices of deprivation 2019 guidance [23]. We chose the deprivation quintile instead of deciles or IMD ranking to reduce the number of categories in the model while accounting for a potential predictor of online services use (deprivation) [24] and to duplicate the same categories used in previous GPPS analyses [5, 6, 24].
Rurality of the General Practice	A variable provided by GPPS based on the GP practice's postcode categorised as Rural or urban as defined by the ONS [25] rural or urban as defined by the ONS [25]

# Data source

The GPPS is a national, postal survey commissioned by NHS England. GPPS uses random sampling, proportionately stratified by GP practice, age, and gender. Eligibility for GPPS includes having a valid NHS number, being 16 years or older and being registered with a GP

practice for at least 6 months. Response rates of previous surveys are considered, sending more

Page 9 of 54

surveys to low-response practices and fewer surveys to high-response practices [26-28]. The survey was sent to 2,221,068, 2,328,560, 2,329,590 respondents in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, with response rates of 34%, 33% and 32%, respectively [26-28].

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In March 2020, social restrictions were announced in England due to the COVID-19 pandemic [29]. The last data collected for the GPPS was in April 2020, however, only a small number of surveys were received post March 2020 with the GPPS indicating it was highly unlikely that the survey results were affected by the pandemic [27].

## **Study population**

We obtained data from respondents who completed the GPPS surveys in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and only included the respondents who answered either "yes" or "no" to using online appointment booking and/or online repeat prescription ordering as described in the variables section above. We then removed respondents who did not have complete data for the variables of interests.

## **Statistical analyses**

We first reported descriptive statistics of the respondents based on their online appointment booking and repeat prescription use. All of the included variables in this study were categorical. We first tabulated each exploratory variable by the outcome variables and compared using Chi square test. We then performed univariate analysis between each of the explanatory variables and the outcome variable to check if they converge and to examine the coefficients. Collinearity was avoided by using the same set of variables used in previous studies analysing online services use using GPPS data [5], and checking for collinearity after the analysis was completed. To perform multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression models: First, we created null models with only the outcome variables and random intercepts (GP practices) to understand if there was clustering due

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to the random intercepts. We then added all patient level covariates to the models (model 2) (most of the variable in the final models were patient-level variables). We checked the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) and intercepted in all models to examine the effect of clustering. We then added the GP practice level variable (GP practice rurality) in the final models (model 3) [30]. After completing all analyses we also performed model diagnostics to check the best fit model and checked for multicollinearity by calculating the variable inflation factor (VIF). Model diagnostics was performed by calculating Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and comparing the BIC of the different versions of the models. The model with the lowest BIC was considered the best fit model [31]. VIF that was lower than 5 was considered not indicating collinearity [32]. The statistical analyses were performed in RStudio software version 1.4.1717.

## Sensitivity analyses

Methods of the sensitivity analyses is in the Supplementary Table 1. Because only complete case participants were included in this study, we ran a sensitivity analysis to predict the outcome this decision may have had on the main analyses. To do this, we first categorized GP practices according to the proportion of complete case participants available. The outcome of this categorization resulted in three groups: highest missing data group (75% of the participants in these practices had missing data), middle-range missing data group (26-74% of the participants in these practices had missing data), and lowest missing data group (25% or less of the participants in these practices had missing data). We then categorized the complete-case participants according to the proportion of missing data in their GP practices using the three categories (highest, middle-range and lowest missing data groups) and then ran the same analyses described in the statistical analyses sub-section above.

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The Strengthening the reporting of observational studies in epidemiology (STROBE) checklist was completed to review the methods of the study [33] (Supplementary Table 2).

# **RESULTS**

Some of the results of this study were presented in a conference abstract [34].

# Sample size

We received data from 2,246,109 respondents who completed the GPPS surveys in 2018, 2019 or 2020. After removing respondents that did not have complete data for the variables of interest (n=439,060, 19.5%), 1,807,049 respondents were included.

## **Summary statistics**

1,807,049 respondents were included of which 15% (n=263938) used online appointment booking (used at least once in the previous 12 months), and 19% (n=339449) used online repeat prescription (used at least once in the previous 12 months) (Table 2). Most respondents were female (55.1%), and in the 65-74 years age group (22%), were of white ethnic backgrounds (86.8%), and were registered at GP practices in an urban area (83.1%) and half (51.1%) had a long-term condition.

 Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the number and proportion of respondent characteristics in the total population included in the analyses (n=1807049), categorized by online services use

 CharacteristicsTotal
 Online appointment

CharacteristicsTotal	Online appointment	Online repeat prescription	
	booking in the previous	ordering in the previous	
	12 months	12 months	
			î

Page 1	2 of 54
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	Total (N=180704	No 9)(N=154311	Yes 1)(N=263938	p- )value*	No (N=1467600	Yes 0)(N=33944	p- 9)value†
Gender				< 0.001			0.97
Female	996544	843422	153122		809337	187207	
	(55.1%)	(54.7%)	(58.0%)		(55.1%)	(55.2%)	
Male	810505	699689	110816		658263	152242	
	(44.9%)	(45.3%)	(42.0%)		(44.9%)	(44.8%)	
Age (bands)				< 0.001			< 0.00
16-24	74381	64513	9868		67069	7312	
	(4.1%)	(4.2%)	(3.7%)		(4.6%)	(2.2%)	
25-34	159806	132951	26855		141376	18430	
	(8.8%)	(8.6%)	(10.2%)		(9.6%)	(5.4%)	
35-44	217687	181290	36397		186112	31575	
	(12.0%)	(11.7%)	(13.8%)		(12.7%)	(9.3%)	
45-54	302285	253145	49140		243458	58827	
	(16.7%)	(16.4%)	(18.6%)		(16.6%)	(17.3%)	
55-64	381808	321902	59906		295168	86640	
	(21.1%)	(20.9%)	(22.7%)		(20.1%)	(25.5%)	
65-74	397999	340484	57515		303875	94124	
	(22.0%)	(22.1%)	(21.8%)		(20.7%)	(27.7%)	
75-84	211586	191217	20369		176214	35372	
	(11.7%)	(12.4%)	(7.7%)		(12.0%)	(10.4%)	
85+	61497	57609	3888		54328	7169	
	(3.4%)	(3.7%)	(1.5%)		(3.7%)	(2.1%)	
Ethnicity				< 0.001			< 0.00
White	1567690	1340202	227488		1258828	308862	
	(86.8%)	(86.9%)	(86.2%)		(85.8%)	(91.0%)	
Black	52950	46120	6830		47195	5755	
	(2.9%)	(3.0%)	(2.6%)		(3.2%)	(1.7%)	
Asian	137026	115015	22011		118728	18298	
	(7.6%)	(7.5%)	(8.3%)		(8.1%)	(5.4%)	
Other	29168	24993	4175		25773	3395	
	(1.6%)	(1.6%)	(1.6%)		(1.8%)	(1.0%)	
Mixed	20215	16781	3434		17076	3139	
	(1.1%)	(1.1%)	(1.3%)		(1.2%)	(0.9%)	
Survey year				< 0.001			< 0.00
2018	612084	536349	75735		512184	99900	
	(33.9%)	(34.8%)	(28.7%)		(34.9%)	(29.4%)	

Page 13 of 54

2019	623358	534321	89037	507522	115836	
	(34.5%)	(34.6%)	(33.7%)	(34.6%)	(34.1%)	
2020	571607	472441	99166	447894	123713	
	(31.6%)	(30.6%)	(37.6%)	(30.5%)	(36.4%)	
Long-term			<	0.001		< 0.0
condition						
No	833523	730177	103346	736861	96662	
	(46.1%)	(47.3%)	(39.2%)	(50.2%)	(28.5%)	
I don't know/		43186	6560	43212	6534	
Can't	(2.8%)	(2.8%)	(2.5%)	(2.9%)	(1.9%)	
answer						
Yes	923780	769748	154032	687527	236253	
	(51.1%)	(49.9%)	(58.4%)	(46.8%)	(69.6%)	
Taking five or	· (		<	0.001		< 0.0
more						
medication on	l					
a regular						
basis						
No	1343735	1151312	192423	1118704	225031	
	(74.4%)	(74.6%)	(72.9%)	(76.2%)	(66.3%)	
Yes	463314	391799	71515	348896	114418	
	(25.6%)	(25.4%)	(27.1%)	(23.8%)	(33.7%)	
Deafness or				0.001		< 0.0
hearing loss						
No	1652099	1409236	242863	1344856	307243	
	(91.4%)	(91.3%)	(92.0%)	(91.6%)	(90.5%)	
Yes	154950	133875	21075	122744	32206	
100			(8.0%)	(8.4%)	(9.5%)	
	(8.6%)	(8.7%)	(0.070)	(0.470)	(9.570)	
	· · ·	(8.7%)			(9.570)	
Parent or lega	· · ·	(8.7%)		0.001	(9.570)	<0.0
guardian to	· · ·	(8.7%)			(3.570)	<0.0
guardian to a 16 year	· · ·	(8.7%)			(3.370)	<0.0
guardian to a 16 year old or	· · ·	(8.7%)			(3.370)	<0.0
guardian to a 16 year old or younger	1		<	0.001		<0.0
guardian to a 16 year	1466017	1254880	211137	0.001	288745	<0.0
guardian to a 16 year old or younger No	l 1466017 (81.1%)	1254880 (81.3%)	<( 211137 (80.0%)	0.001	288745 (85.1%)	<0.0
guardian to a 16 year old or younger	1466017 (81.1%) 341032	1254880 (81.3%) 288231	<( 211137 (80.0%) 52801	0.001 1177272 (80.2%) 290328	288745 (85.1%) 50704	<0.0
guardian to a 16 year old or younger No	l 1466017 (81.1%)	1254880 (81.3%)	<( 211137 (80.0%) 52801 (20.0%)	0.001 1177272 (80.2%) 290328 (19.8%)	288745 (85.1%)	
guardian to a 16 year old or younger No	1466017 (81.1%) 341032	1254880 (81.3%) 288231	<( 211137 (80.0%) 52801 (20.0%)	0.001 1177272 (80.2%) 290328	288745 (85.1%) 50704	
guardian to a 16 year old or younger No Yes	1466017 (81.1%) 341032	1254880 (81.3%) 288231	<( 211137 (80.0%) 52801 (20.0%)	0.001 1177272 (80.2%) 290328 (19.8%)	288745 (85.1%) 50704	<0.00

Yes	344582	288126	56456	266947	77635	
	(19.1%)	(18.7%)	(21.4%)	(18.2%)	(22.9%)	
Deprivation				< 0.001		< 0.001
quintile						
1 (Most	338728	298412	40316	292405	46323	
deprived)	(18.7%)	(19.3%)	(15.3%)	(19.9%)	(13.6%)	
2	353580	304870	48710	296229	57351	
	(19.6%)	(19.8%)	(18.5%)	(20.2%)	(16.9%)	
3	376042	322081	53961	304048	71994	
	(20.8%)	(20.9%)	(20.4%)	(20.7%)	(21.2%)	
4	378002	319100	58902	297096	80906	
	(20.9%)	(20.7%)	(22.3%)	(20.2%)	(23.8%)	
5 (Least	360697	298648	62049	277822	82875	
deprived)	(20.0%)	(19.4%)	(23.5%)	(18.9%)	(24.4%)	
General	· · ·		· ·	< 0.001	· · ·	< 0.001
practice						
rurality						
Rural	306200	263405	42795	238353	67847	
	(16.9%)	(17.1%)	(16.2%)	(16.2%)	(20.0%)	
Urban	1500849	1279706	221143	1229247	271602	
	(83.1%)	(82.9%)	(83.8%)	(83.8%)	(80.0%)	
	` '	` '	` ´ ´	· · · · · ·	` '	

\* p-value derived from chi squared test comparing online appointment booking users and non-users † p-value derived from chi squared test comparing online repeat prescription users and non-users

About 19.5% of the total sample received from GPPS was excluded due to missing data. The proportion of respondents by category in the excluded respondents were different to the complete case dataset in the proportions for age, ethnicity (most respondents were from the mixed ethnicity), survey year, long-term condition, taking five or more medications, reporting of deafness or hearing loss, and slight difference in deprivation fifths proportions (Supplementary Table 3). However, when comparing the complete case sample to the total sample received, the differences in proportions between the two categories are very small and vary between 1-2% (Supplementary Table 3).

Descriptive statistics of the sensitivity analysis groups are displayed in Supplementary Table 4. GP practices with the highest proportion of missing data (practices with 75% or more of

respondents with missing data) had slightly higher percentage of younger age groups from 16 to 44 and they had a higher proportion of respondents from Black, Asian and Other ethnic backgrounds as well as higher proportion or respondents from the most deprived group compared to the GP practices with lower missing data.

## Patient and GP practice characteristics associated with online

## services' use

The results of the univariate analysis are in the supplementary table 5. Online appointment booking

Results of the two-level mixed-effects logistic regression for the online appointment booking outcome are presented in table 2. Respondents with a long-term condition, taking 5 or more medications on a regular basis and who have deafness or hearing loss were more likely to use online appointment booking compared to respondents without these characteristics. In the fully adjusted model for patient and GP practice characteristics, respondents with a long-term condition had 67% greater odds of using online appointment booking (OR: 1.67, CI: 1.66-1.69) compared to respondents without a long-term condition.

Respondents of black and "other" ethnic backgrounds had lower odds than those of white ethnic backgrounds for using online appointment booking, whereas respondents of Asian ethnic backgrounds had 11% (OR: 1.11, 95% CI: 1.09-1.13) greater odds of using online appointment booking.

There was an inverse association between deprivation quintile and online appointment booking. The odds for using online appointment booking increased with reducing deprivation from the second to fifth (least deprived) quintile compared to the most deprived quintile. Respondents in

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the least deprived quintile had 54% greater odds of booking appointments online (OR: 1.54, 95% CI: 1.51-1.57) compared to those in the most deprived quintile. Respondents from the survey year 2020 were the most likely to use online appointment booking compared to respondents from the survey year 2018 and 2019.

Respondents from GP practices located in an urban setting had greater odds of booking appointments online compared to respondents from GP practices in a rural setting. Model comparison: The ICC of 0.13 indicates that there is a slight similarity between values from the same group (in this case from the same GP practice) although the difference is not large because the value is close to zero.

#### Sensitivity analysis

Results of the sensitivity analysis for online appointment booking are in the Supplementary Table 6. Most of the predictor variables in Supplementary Table 6 had similar odds ratios and/or overlapping confidence intervals when comparing the respondents from the practices with the different proportion of missing data. The difference in odds ratios when comparing respondents from the three different practice types (based on the proportion of missing data) were seen in the predictors: having a long-term condition (answering yes), age group, ethnicity, parent status, carer status, year of survey and GP rurality. The differences between the odds ratios based on the deprivation quintile for online repeat prescription was also bigger than online appointment booking in all the categories of GP practices indicating that socioeconomic inequities may have a larger influence on online repeat prescription ordering than online appointment booking. Most of the odds ratios that were statistically significant remained significant for the different analyses by practice size except for the ethnicity categories including: Asian, Other and Mixed categories

which may reflect the differences in ethnic representation	on in each of the se	nsitivity analyses
categories.		
Table 2 Two-level Mixed-effects multivariable logistiPatient Survey respondent characteristics on Onlineprevious 12 months (level 1, N= 1807049 respondent	appointment boo	king use in the general praction
2 3 4 <b>Predictors</b> 5 6	(Model 3) Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
7 Long term condition (REF= No)		İ
Long term condition (Idli 100) Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.15***	(1.12, 1.19)
Long term condition Y don't know/ Can't say	1.67***	(1.66, 1.69)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis- Yes (REF= No)	1.19***	(1.18, 1.20)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.13***	(1.11, 1.15)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.89***	(0.88, 0.90)
Age (bands) (REF: 85+)	0.07	(0.00, 0.90)
16-24	3.63***	(3.48, 3.78)
25-34	4.96***	(4.78, 5.14)
35-44	4.85***	(4.68, 5.03)
	4.26***	
45-54		(4.12, 4.42)
55-64	3.69***	(3.57, 3.82)
65-74	3.09***	(2.99, 3.20)
75-84	1.74***	(1.68, 1.80)
Ethnicity (REF: White)	0.04444	
Black	0.84***	(0.81, 0.86)
Asian	1.11***	(1.09, 1.13)
Other	0.96**	(0.92, 0.99)
Mixed	1.04	(1.00, 1.08)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.92***	(0.90, 0.93)
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.14***	(1.13, 1.16)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		
2	1.15***	(1.13, 1.17)
3	1.27***	(1.25, 1.29)
4	1.40***	(1.37, 1.42)
5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018)	1.54***	(1.51, 1.57)
2019	1.19***	(1.18, 1.20)
2020	1.52***	(1.50, 1.54)
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	1.11***	(1.07, 1.16)
,	1.11	[(1.07, 1.10]
Model summary	0.12	
ICC	0.13	
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previous 12 months (level 1 , N= 1807049 respondents)	Hevel 2, N=7256 general pra + GP practice Characterist (Model 3)	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95%   Confidence   Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)		
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.15***	(1.12, 1.19
Long term condition- Yes	1.67***	(1.66, 1.69
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis- Yes (REF= No)	1.19***	(1.18, 1.20
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.13***	(1.11, 1.15
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.89***	(0.88, 0.90
Age (bands) (REF: 85+)		
16-24	3.63***	(3.48, 3.78
25-34	4.96***	(4.78, 5.14
35-44	4.85***	(4.68, 5.0)
45-54	4.26***	(4.12, 4.42
55-64	3.69***	(3.57, 3.82
65-74	3.09***	(2.99, 3.20
75-84	1.74***	(1.68, 1.80
Ethnicity (REF: White)		
Black	0.84***	(0.81, 0.80
Asian	1.11***	(1.09, 1.13
Other	0.96**	(0.92, 0.99
Mixed	1.04	(1.00, 1.08
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.92***	(0.90, 0.93
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.14***	(1.13, 1.16
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		
2	1.15***	(1.13, 1.17
3	1.27***	(1.25, 1.29
4	1.40***	(1.37, 1.42
5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018)	1.54***	(1.51, 1.57
2019	1.19***	(1.18, 1.20
2020	1.52***	(1.50, 1.54
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	1.11***	(1.07, 1.10
Model summary		
ICC	0.13	

\* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.001$ 

#### Online repeat prescription ordering

Results of the two-level mixed-effects logistic regression for the online repeat prescription ordering outcome are presented in table 3. Respondents with a long-term condition, users of 5 or more medications on a regular basis and respondents with deafness or hearing loss were all more likely to use online repeat prescription ordering compared to respondents without these characteristics. The odds of using online repeat prescription ordering were 2.58 times greater (OR: 2.58, 95% CI: 2.55, 2.60) for respondents with a long-term condition compared to those without a condition.

Black, Asian, and Mixed had lower odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to the White ethnicity.

Respondents in the deprivation quintiles 4 and 5 (least deprived) had the highest odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to the most deprived group (OR: 1.62, 95% CI:

1.59, 1.64) and (OR: 1.77, 95% CI: 1.74, 1.80), respectively.

Respondents who completed the survey in the years 2019 and 2020 had greater odds of using online repeat prescription ordering compared to respondents from the survey year 2018. Respondents from GP practices located in an urban setting had lower odds of ordering repeat

prescriptions online compared to respondents from GP practices in a rural setting.

Model comparison: the ICC was 0.08 for model 3 in table 3, which also showed that there is

slight evidence that patients from the same GP practices may have more similar results compared to patients from other GP practices.

Sensitivity analysis results: Results of the sensitivity analysis for the repeat prescription outcome are in supplementary table 7. Differences (compared to the main analysis) in odds ratios were seen for the long-term condition (answering yes), age groups, ethnicity, being a parent, being a carer and for the deprivation quintile. Among respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data, the least deprived group had 89% (OR: 1.89, 95% CI: 1.82-1.97) higher odds of online repeat prescription use compared to respondents from the most deprived group where this percentage was only 65% (OR: 1.65, 95% CI: 1.59-1.71) in the lowest missing data GP practice respondents. At the same time, for the online repeat prescription outcome, the difference in deprivation quintile were associated with bigger differences in the odds associated with the outcome for respondents from the highest missing data GP practices compared to the other GP practices.

The VIF values for all explanatory variables in our fixed-effects logistic regression models for both outcomes (online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering) were below the threshold of 5 (ranging from 1 to 1.8) indicating that there is no evidence of multicollinearity among the explanatory variables. In terms of model diagnostics, BIC values of each of the models (null model, model 2 and model 3) were compared to each other to make sure that the model presented is the best fit model (the model with the lowest BIC). The values of BIC for all the models for each outcome are summarized below:

Value of BIC for the online appointment booking outcome models:

Null model: BIC= 1434808

Model 2: BIC=1398822

Model 3: BIC= 1398807

Value of BIC for the online repeat prescription ordering outcome models:

Null model: BIC= 1692919

Model 2: BIC= 1601232

Model 3: BIC= 1601182

Table 3 Two-level Mixed-effects multivariable logistic regression of General Practice Patient Survey respondent characteristics on Online Repeat prescription ordering use in the previous 12 months (level 1, N= 1807049 respondents; level 2, N=7256 general practices) .

	+ GP Practice Characteristics (Model 3)		
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	
Long term condition (REF= No)			
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.25***	(1.22, 1.29)	
Long term condition- Yes	2.58***	(2.55, 2.60)	
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-	1.26***	(2.00, 2.00)	
Yes (REF= No)		(1.25, 1.28)	
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.02**	(1.00, 1.03)	
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.96***	(0.96, 0.97)	
Age (bands) (REF: 85+)			
16-24	1.71***	(1.64, 1.77)	
25-34	2.17***	(2.10, 2.23)	
35-44	2.69***	(2.61, 2.77)	
45-54	3.18***	(3.10, 3.28)	
55-64	3.28***	(3.20, 3.37)	
65-74	3.01***	(2.93, 3.09)	
75-84	1.68***	(1.64, 1.73)	
Ethnicity (REF: White)			
Black	0.76***	(0.74, 0.78)	
Asian	0.94***	(0.93, 0.96)	
Other	0.78***	(0.75, 0.81)	
Mixed	0.98	(0.94, 1.02)	
Parent or legal guardian to a 16-year-old or	0.95***		
younger-Yes (REF= No)		(0.94, 0.96)	
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.16***	(1.15, 1.17)	

	+ GP Practice (Model 3)	+ GP Practice Characteristic (Model 3)		
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval		
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)				
2	1.23***	(1.21, 1.25)		
3	1.44***	(1.42, 1.46)		
4	1.62***	(1.59, 1.64)		
5 (least deprived)	1.77***	(1.74, 1.80)		
Survey year (REF= 2018)				
2019	1.18***	(1.17, 1.19)		
2020	1.46***	(1.44, 1.47)		
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	0.88***	(0.85, 0.91)		
Model Summary		• • • •		
ICC	0.08			

\* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\le 0.01$ , \*\*\* p-value=  $\le 0.001$ 

## **DISCUSSION**

## **Principal findings**

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that indicators of increased healthcare need and socioeconomic disadvantage predicted variations in the use of online services and use of the services increased over the three years studied. Our findings partly confirmed out hypotheses in that patients with long-term conditions were more likely to use online services and respondents of lower socioeconomic status and minority ethnic groups were less likely to use online services. However, our findings did not support our hypothesis that not all respondents older than 35 were less likely to use online services, as use varied by age group. Respondents of the age groups 35-84 were all more likely to use online services compared to respondents of the age group 85 years old and older.

## Strengths and weaknesses of the study

#### Strengths

This study used a major national survey which uses robust research methodology in its data collection process and used suitable analysis methodology for processing the data (accounting for GP practice variation in the models and accounting for missing data in the sensitivity analyses). The study explored online services user characteristics in England which can inform service planning and identify patient groups who may need support using the service. We accounted for clustering in our data presenting patient-level data in which patients belonged to different GP practices, by using multilevel logistic regression model which is an analysis methodology that takes into account the hierarchy in the data [35]. Clustering by GP practice was important not only because patients from the same GP practice may be more similar to each other, but patient portal functionalities and promotion of online services (such as providing training, posters, emails and reminders) to use online services may vary from one GP practice to another [36].

#### Limitations

A limitation of the study was using only complete-case data in the analyses, which risks sample bias. Respondents excluded from the analyses due to missing data presented differences in the breakdown of respondent characteristics. Therefore, we performed sensitivity to explore what kind of differences might have observed if all the sample was included. Both summary statistics of the excluded sample and the sensitivity analyses indicated GP practices with more missing data may be more likely to have younger age groups, greater deprivation groups, and ethnically diverse groups, all of which were associated with relatively lower odds of using online services.

This introduces the possibility that some of the odd's ratios presented in the main analysis may be overestimated in the population due to missing data bias.

However, although most of the estimates of effect were slightly different in the sensitivity analyses compared to the main analyses, there was no change in terms of the direction of the effects. For example, odds ratios that were larger than one in the main analyses remained larger than one in all three models of the sensitivity analysis. The sensitivity analysis also revealed that differences in online services use between the three categories of GP practices were bigger for online repeat prescription use compared to the online appointment booking use.

As with all survey-based studies, a major limitation of the GPPS is the non-response bias. However, a study on the methodology of the GPPS, did not find evidence of non-response bias [37]. We tried to alleviate non-response bias by controlling for deprivation, ethnicity, age and gender (which can often be associated with low-response rates as reported in a study examining GPPS non-response characteristics [37]).

## Strengths and weaknesses in relation to other studies

This study relied on self-reported online service usage which could introduce response bias [38]. A better way to measure use of outcomes such as online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering could be via the electronic patient portal log files. The log files automatically record patient portal activity and can serve as an objective method to examine patient portal use because it is not subject to recall bias and records the exposure prior to the outcome [3]. However, due to data unavailability of patient-level data of this kind at the time of the study, the GPPS records of online services use was used in this study as it has been on other England based studies exploring online services use [5, 6].

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## **Discussing important differences in results**

Patients from more deprived areas, and from ethnic minorities are reported to have lower uptake of patient portals in previous studies [39]. According to previous studies, deprivation and ethnicity play key roles in online services use [40-42] which was confirmed by the main analysis and sensitivity analyses in this study. A study from the USA suggested that patients' ethnicity could be associated with less trust in patient portals [18]. Lower use of online services by respondents with greater deprivation levels is repeatedly reported in the literature [19]. This may be due to lower access to the internet, smart phone, and computers among individuals from more (C) deprived areas [7, 43].

## Meaning of the study

There is evidence that online services use in England is increasing every year and it is likely to continue to be an important tool in GP practice settings. Although online services have been offered almost universally in GP practices in England since 2015, there continues to be a lack of research on the use of online services (or patient portals) in this setting [7, 44]. Understanding the needs of populations less likely to use online services may help to improve the uptake of these services and to better meet the needs of vulnerable populations which are more likely to have reduced access to healthcare services [45] in addition to online services.

According to the theory of the digital divide, [14, 15], using technologies such as patient portals may require more than just having access to a computer. Skills such as digital literacy and eHealth literacy may be essential to enable the use of these services. Lack of education is also considered a detrimental factor contributing to the digital divide [46]. While our study did not directly investigate the mechanisms of the digital divide, it provides valuable insight into the

Page 25 of 54

#### **BMJ** Open

disparities that may exist in the use of online services. Factors that we found to be associated with reduced likelihood of using online services such as measures of lower socioeconomic status may be associated with factors such as limited digital skills and inadequate access to technology [13]. Efforts to understand the specific challenges faced by different patient groups in accessing and using online services, healthcare staff and policymakers can help develop tailored strategies to bridge the digital divide [47] and promote equitable access to online services. Further investigation including both quantitative and qualitative approaches can help us to better understand the mechanisms, and what may be involved in leading some individuals to adopt the technologies.

We estimated that younger populations would be more likely to use and have access to technologies, we could not see that pattern in the study may be because young people are less likely to need the healthcare system and services, such as appointment booking and repeat prescription requests. Additionally, this may be due to the complex mechanisms that may be involved in individuals opting to use online services which may be driven by social factors beyond this study.

## Possible explanations and implications for clinicians and

## **Policymakers**

The adoption of online services by those with long-term conditions is promising and can potentially contribute to improving self-management of the long-term condition [2]. However, it is also a reflection that patients with long-term conditions may generally be more likely to use healthcare services [48-50]. Practices could continue to encourage and support patients with long-term conditions to sign up and use online services. However, it is essential that alternatives to online services continue to be provided to patients who are unable to use the services [48-50].

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This study shows that online services use is lower among people from more deprived areas and from ethnic minorities which may increase inequities if in-person services become further out of reach. As an example, the move to telephone consultations and remote triage in GP practices amidst the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for homeless people to access care due to not having a telephone [51]. In-person access to care is seen necessary to reach all patient groups despite access to technology in the move to remote consultations in the COVID-19 pandemic [51]. For this reason, it is important that practices continue to provide in-person services (e.g. for appointment booking and repeat prescriptions) to patients especially those less able to access remote services. Training GP practice staff to promote the use online services may be a solution to increase adoption which is already provided in some GP practices [36] and we can continue to recommend it.

## Unanswered questions and future research

Further research is needed to understand the lack of uptake of the services in some patient groups to clarify if uptake is low due to barriers or due to patient preference. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when patients are asked to contact their GP practice remotely [52], inequities in the access and use of the online services may have exacerbated inequities in situations where online services became the only route to access care [53]. Although the findings of this study relate to pre-COVID-19, the patterns in disparities may persist or worsen in the post-COVID-19 period amidst the move to increased remote GP services.

Future research could explore how remote services might affect aspects of the healthcare system such as healthcare utilisation and patients' self-management of their conditions. Our future research aim is to study patient portal use in GP practices in England using electronic health

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records instead of relaying on patients' self-report. We will explore the influence of patient portal use on health outcomes and healthcare utilization to better understand its impact on health and the healthcare system.

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# **Ethical approval**

This study was approved by the Imperial College Research Ethics Committee, Reference number: 20IC6303. Respondents of the survey provided informed consent to take part in the research by allowing us to use their anonymised survey data, but they had the right to withdraw their consent before these data were processed.

# Author contribution

AA, GG, TB and CC created the study design, formulated the research question and finalised the study methodology. AA performed the analysis of the study. JN contributed to the introduction and discussion sections of the study. All authors reviewed and approved the submitted manuscript.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from Ipsos Mori but

cannot be provided by the authors due to ethical restrictions. However, the aggregate level GPPS

data are openly available in the GP Patient Survey webpage at https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/

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# **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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# **Supplementary material**

Supplementary Table 1 Methods and results of the sensitivity analysis.

Supplementary Table 2. STROBE 2007 checklist of items to be included in reports of

observational studies in epidemiology.

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Supplementary Table 3. The breakdown of respondents by characteristics in the total sample received (n=2,198,821), in the complete case dataset used for the analyses in this study (n=1,806,977) and in the excluded sample (n=439,060).Supplementary Table 4. Breakdown of the number and proportion of respondent characteristics based on the categories of the proportion of missing data in the GP practice.

Supplementary Table 5. <u>Table presenting summaries of the univariate analyses for each of the</u> <u>outcomes.</u>

Supplementary Table 6. Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online appointment booking in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice.

Supplementary Table 7. Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online repeat prescription ordering in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice.



# **Supplementary material:** Supplementary Table 1. Methods and results of the sensitivity analysis

Methods	In the main analyses performed in this study, only complete case respondents (respondents
	that did not have any missing data for any of the variables included in the analyses) were
	included. We ran sensitivity analyses to explore the effects of excluding respondents with
	missing data. We first calculated the proportion of respondents with complete data per
	practice using the complete dataset (n=2198821) and assigned each practice a new variable
	indicating the proportion of complete case respondents in the practice. We then separated
	the complete case respondents (n=1807049) into three categories based on the proportion
	of complete case respondents in their practice. The three categories were: highest missing
	data group ( $\geq$ 75%), middle-range missing data group (26-74%), and lowest missing data
	group ( $\leq 25\%$ ). We then ran the same two-level mixed-effects models for each of the
	outcomes (online appointment booking and online repeat prescription use) separately for
	each of the three categories.
Results	The summary statistics of the sensitivity analysis groups are reported in table
	Supplementary Table 5. GPs with the highest proportion of missing data (practices with

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75% or more of respondents with missing data) had slightly higher percentage of younger age groups from 16 to 44 and they had a greater proportion of respondents from Black, Asian and Other ethnic backgrounds as well. Greater proportion or respondents from the most deprived group compared to the GPs with lower missing data. Results of the sensitivity mixed-effects regression analyses for the online appointment booking outcome is in table Supplementary Table 6. Most of the predictor variables in Supplementary Table 6 had similar odds ratios and/or overlapping confidence intervals when comparing the respondents from the practices with the different proportion of missing data. The difference in odds ratios when comparing respondents from the three different practice types (based on the proportion of missing data) were seen in the predictors: having a long-term condition (answering yes), age group, ethnicity, parent status, carer status, year of survey and GP rurality. These differences indicate that the characteristics of respondents within each type of the GPs (based on the proportion of missing data) were more similar to each other than the other type of practices. For the repeat prescription outcome (Supplementary Table 7), differences in odds ratios were also seen for the long-term condition (answering yes), age groups, ethnicity, being a parent, being a carer and for the deprivation quintile. Among the highest missing data GP

practice respondents, the least deprived group had 89% (OR: 1.89, 95% CI: 1.82-1.97)

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greater odds of online repeat prescription use compared to respondents from the mostdeprived group where this percentage was only 65% (OR: 1.65, 95% CI: 1.59-1.71) in thelowest missing data GP practice respondents. This indicates that deprivation has a largerimpact in practices with the most missing data compared to practices with the least missingdata for the online repeat prescription ordering outcome.

Sensitivity analyses results reveal that some of the estimates in this study may be attenuated if missing data/non-response respondents were present. However, although most of the estimates of effect were slightly different in the sensitivity analyses compared to the main analyses, there was no change in terms of the direction of the effects. For example, odds ratios that were larger than one in the main analyses remained to be larger than one in all three models of the sensitivity analysis. The sensitivity analysis also revealed that differences in online services between the three categories of GPs use were bigger for online repeat prescription use compared to the online appointment booking use. The differences between the odds ratios based on the deprivation quintile for online repeat prescription was also bigger than online appointment booking in all the categories of GPs indicating that socioeconomic inequities may have a larger influence on online repeat prescription ordering than online appointment booking. At the same time, for the online repeat prescription outcome, the difference in deprivation quintile were associated with

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bigger differences in the odds associated with the outcome for respondents from the highest

missing data GPs compared to the other GPs.

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		Checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies (combined)	
Section/Topic	Item #	Checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies (combined)       Image: Checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies (combined)         Recommendation       Image: Checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies (combined)	Reported on page #
Title and abstract	1	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract $\mathbf{x}_{\mathbf{x}} \mathbf{x}_{\mathbf{x}} \mathbf{x}_{\mathbf{x}}$	1
	Į	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract to be the abstract of the abstract and balanced summary of what was done and the abstract and the abstract and balanced summary of what was done and the abstract and the abst	2
Introduction			
Background/rationale	2	Explain the scientific background and rationale for the investigation being reported	3-5
Objectives	3	State specific objectives, including any pre-specified hypotheses	4-5
Methods		trai	
Study design	4	Present key elements of study design early in the paper	5
Setting	5	Describe the setting, locations, and relevant dates, including periods of recruitment, populare, follow-up, and data collection	8
Participants	6	<ul> <li>(a) Cohort study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants. Describe methods of follow-up</li> <li><i>Case-control study</i>—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of case ascertainment and control selection. Give the rationale for the choice of cases and controls</li> <li><i>Cross-sectional study</i>—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants</li> <li><i>Cross-sectional study</i>—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants</li> <li><i>Cohort study</i>—For matched studies, give matching criteria and number of exposed angunexposed <i>Case-control study</i>—For matched studies, give matching criteria and the number of controls per case</li> </ul>	7
Variables	7	Clearly define all outcomes, exposures, predictors, potential confounders, and effect moders. Give diagnostic criteria, if applicable	6-7
Data sources/ measurement	8*	For each variable of interest, give sources of data and details of methods of assessment (reasurement). Describe comparability of assessment methods if there is more than one group	6-7
Bias	9	Describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias	9 & Supplementary Table 1

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Study size	10	Explain how the study size was arrived at	8
Quantitative variables	11	Explain how quantitative variables were handled in the analyses. If applicable, describe which groupings were chosen and why	6-7
Statistical methods	12	(a) Describe all statistical methods, including those used to control for confounding	9
	•	(b) Describe any methods used to examine subgroups and interactions	Supplementary Table 1
		(c) Explain how missing data were addressed	Supplementary Table 1
		(d) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how loss to follow-up was addressed Case-control study—If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was addressed Cross-sectional study—If applicable, describe analytical methods taking account of suppring strategy	
		(e) Describe any sensitivity analyses	Supplementary Table 1
Results		d choa	
Participants	13*	(a) Report numbers of individuals at each stage of study—eg numbers potentially eligible examined for eligibility, confirmed eligible, included in the study, completing follow-up, and analyzed	10
		(b) Give reasons for non-participation at each stage     i     i       (c) Consider use of a flow diagram     iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii	10
			-
Descriptive data	14*	(a) Give characteristics of study participants (eg demographic, clinical, social) and in structure of exposures and potential confounders	10-13
		(b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest	13 & Supplementary Table 3
		exposures and potential confounders       transmission         (b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest       in open braining, and similar technology         (c) Cohort study—Summarise follow-up time (eg, average and total amount)       total amount)         interest       interest         interest       interest <td< td=""><td>Data collection times are summarized unde study design subsection</td></td<>	Data collection times are summarized unde study design subsection
Outcome data	15*	Cohort study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures over time <b>May</b> 10, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 2	Supplementary Table 3 (check categories of survey year)
		Case-control study—Report numbers in each exposure category, or summary measures of exposure	Supplementary Table 3
		Cross-sectional study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures	13 & table 3
Main results	16	( <i>a</i> ) Give unadjusted estimates and, if applicable, confounder-adjusted estimates and their precision (eg, 95% confidence interval). Make clear which confounders were adjusted for and why they avere included	14-18, Supplementary
		(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized	Table 5Table 1
		(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized	

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		(c) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a meaningful time period	NA
Other analyses	17	Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and sensitivity analyses	Supplementary Table 1, Supplementary Table 6-7
Discussion	•		
Key results	18	Summarise key results with reference to study objectives	20
Limitations	19	Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or impraction. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias	21-22
Interpretation	20	Give a cautious overall interpretation of results considering objectives, limitations, mole by City of analyses, results from similar studies, and other relevant evidence	23-24
Generalisability	21	Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results	23-24
Other information	•	Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results	
Funding	22	Give the source of funding and the role of the funders for the present study and, if applicable, for the original study on which the present article is based	26

# Supplementary Table 3 The breakdown of respondents by characteristics in the total sample received (h=2,198,821), in the complete case dataset used for the analyses in this study (n=1,806,977) and in the excluded sample (h=4,90,060)

Characteristics	Total in the sample	Total in the complete	Total in the 🛓
	received (n=2,246,109)	case dataset	excluded 🛱 📑
		(n=1807049)	sample 👸 💡
			Total in the excluded in sample (n=439,060)
Online appointment booking in the previous			d a
12 months			similar
			ilar 🔰
No	1892841 (84.3%)	1543111 (85.4%)	349730 (7 <b>§</b> .7%
Yes	305980 (13.6%)	263938 (14.6%)	
(Missing)	47288 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	47288 (108%)
Online repeat prescription ordering in the			42042 (95% A) 47288 (168%) s. 20
previous 12 months			2025 9S.
•			at
No	1807863 (80.5%)	1467600 (81.2%)	340263 (77.5%
Yes	390958 (17.4%)	339449 (18.8%)	51509 (11.7%)
(Missing)	47288 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	47288 (10.8%)
Gender			nt
		•	G
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			2000 20 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10 10
Female	1229473 (54.7%)	996544 (55.1%)	232929 (5
Male	967079 (43.1%)	810505 (44.9%)	156574 (3
(Missing)	49557 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	49557 (11
Age			
16-24	87081 (3.9%)	74381 (4.1%)	12700 (2.9
25-34	185580 (8.3%)	159806 (8.8%)	25774 (5.9
35-44	256766 (11.4%)	217687 (12.0%)	39079 (8.9
45-54	360011 (16.0%)	302285 (16.7%)	57726 (13
55-64	454900 (20.3%)	381808 (21.1%)	73092 (16
65-74	487171 (21.7%)	397999 (22.0%)	89172 (20
75-84	287533 (12.8%)	211586 (11.7%)	75947 (17
85+	91083 (4.1%)	61497 (3.4%)	29586 (6.7
(Missing)	35984 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	35984 (8.2
Ethnicity	L'O		29586 (6.7 35984 (8.2
White	1895473 (84.4%)	1567690 (86.8%)	15862 (3.6
Black	68812 (3.1%)	52950 (2.9%)	33583 (7.6
Asian	170609 (7.6%)	137026 (7.6%)	10257 (2.3 4558 (1.0%
Other	39425 (1.8%)	29168 (1.6%)	4558 (1.0%
Mixed	24773 (1.1%)	20215 (1.1%)	327783 (7
(Missing)	47017 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	47017 (10
Survey year			,
2018	750619 (33.4%)	612084 (33.9%)	138535 (3
2019	763244 (34.0%)	623358 (34.5%)	139886 (3
2020	732246 (32.6%)	571607 (31.6%)	160639 (3
(Missing)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Long term condition			189148 (4
No	1022671 (45.5%)	833523 (46.1%)	189148 (4
Yes	1050129 (46.8%)	923780 (51.1%)	126349 (2
Don't know/Can't say	61802 (2.8%)	49746 (2.8%)	12056 (2.7
Prefer not to say	38879 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38879 (8.9
(Missing)	72628 (3.2%)	0 (0.0%)	72628 (16
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis			289115 (6:
No	1632850 (72.7%)	1343735 (74.4%)	289115 (6

Yes	574749 (25.6%)	463314 (25.6%)	cted by copyright
(Missing)	38510 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38510 (8 80%
Deafness or hearing loss	50510 (11770)	0 (0.070)	38510 (8.8%
No	1799633 (80.1%)	1652099 (91.4%)	147534 (39.0
Yes	179304 (8.0%)	154950 (8.6%)	24354 (5.5%)
(Missing)	267172 (11.9%)	0 (0.0%)	267172 (60.9
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or			es related to t
younger	1702011 (70.40/)	1466017 (01 10/)	216904 (78
No Yes	1782911 (79.4%)	1466017 (81.1%) 341032 (18.9%)	316894 (7
(Missing)	55275 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	66891 (152) 55275 (125)
Carer	33273 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	
No	1741536 (77.5%)	1462467 (80.9%)	279069 (6 <b>3</b> .0
Yes	410450 (18.3%)	344582 (19.1%)	65868 (15 <b>₽</b> )
(Missing)	94123 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	94123 (2194
Deprivation fifth	5 1125 (11270)	0 (0.070)	2
1- least deprived	437189 (19.5%)	338728 (18.7%)	98461 (22
2	444869 (19.8%)	353580 (19.6%)	91289 (20
3	464884 (20.7%)	376042 (20.8%)	88842 (20,29
4	461586 (20.6%)	378002 (20.9%)	83584 (1920)
5 - most deprived	435997 (19.4%)	360697 (20.0%)	75300 (17
(Missing)	1584 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1584 (0.4%)
General practice rurality			r te
Rural	374466 (16.7%)	306200 (16.9%)	68266 (15
Urban	1871643 (83.3%)	1500849 (83.1%)	370794 (8 <b>8</b> .5
(Missing)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) <u>č</u> e s.

Supplementary Table 4 Breakdown of the operation of missing data in the GP presented by the transmission of transmission of the transmission of the transmission of the transmission of transmissi	actice				in the categories of the	
Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents	068627 on 12 October 2023. Downloaded from http://bmjopen.bmj.com/ on May 10, 20 Erasmushogeschool cluding for uses related to text and data mining, Al training, and similar technologies.		
Ko,	with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices	ober 2023. Dov Erasmushoge elated to text a		
Online services use				and		
Online appointment booking in the previous 12 months	75194(15.9%)	176193(19.4%)	55937(13.1%)	hool. data m		
Online repeat prescription use in the previous 12 months	102332(21.6%)	176193(19.4%)	60924(14.4%)	ining,		
Gender				Al t		
Female	265428 (56.0%)	503040 (55.3%)	228076 (53.8%)	/bmjop raining		
Male	208654 (44.0%)	406112 (44.7%)	195739 (46.2%)	y, and		
Age		, <i>,</i> ,		sim		
16-24	18750 (4.0%)	34473 (3.8%)	21158 (5.0%)	ilar 💆		
25-34	39537 (8.3%)	75142 (8.3%)	45127 (10.6%)	tec on		
35-44	55609 (11.7%)	103244 (11.4%)	58834 (13.9%)	May 10 hnolog		
45-54	79934 (16.9%)	149707 (16.5%)	72644 (17.1%)	), 2025 jies.		
55-64	100332 (21.2%)	194450 (21.4%)	87026 (20.5%)	2025 at Department GEZ-LTA ss.		
65-74	106927 (22.6%)	208741 (23.0%)	82331 (19.4%)	artmer		

Page 43 of 54

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<ol> <li>11</li> <li>12</li> <li>13</li> <li>14</li> <li>15</li> <li>16</li> <li>17</li> <li>18</li> <li>19</li> <li>20</li> <li>21</li> </ol>	
20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32	
<ul> <li>33</li> <li>34</li> <li>35</li> <li>36</li> <li>37</li> <li>38</li> <li>39</li> <li>40</li> <li>41</li> <li>42</li> <li>43</li> </ul>	
44 45 46 47	

Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
75-84	56564 (11.9%)	111123	43899 (10.4%)
	50501(11.570)	(12.2%)	
85+	16429 (3.5%)	32272 (3.5%)	12796 (3.0%)
Ethnicity			
White	5027 (1.1%)	17758 (2.0%)	30165 (7.1%)
Black	16190 (3.4%)	49142 (5.4%)	71694 (16.9%)
Asian	3729 (0.8%)	10722 (1.2%)	14717 (3.5%)
Other	4175 (0.9%)	8704 (1.0%)	7336 (1.7%)
Mixed	444961	822826	299903
	(93.9%)	(90.5%)	(70.8%)
Survey year			1.
2018	166729	305514	139841
	(35.2%)	(33.6%)	(33.0%)
2019	162214	315671	145473
	(34.2%)	(34.7%)	(34.3%)
2020	145139	287967	138501
	(30.6%)	(31.7%)	(32.7%)
Long-term condition			
No	11725 (2.5%)	24207 (2.7%)	13814 (3.3%)
I don't know/ Can't answer	220575	411974	200974
	(46.5%)	(45.3%)	(47.4%)
Yes	241782	472971	209027
	(51.0%)	(52.0%)	(49.3%)

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Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
Taking five or more medication on a			
regular basis No	363720 (76.7%)	674880 (74.2%)	305135 (72.0%)
Yes	110362 (23.3%)	234272 (25.8%)	118680 (28.0%)
Deafness or hearing loss			
No	433463 (91.4%)	827757 (91.0%)	390879 (92.2%)
Yes	40619 (8.6%)	81395 (9.0%)	32936 (7.8%)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger			2
No	385230 (81.3%)	746422 (82.1%)	334365 (78.9%)
Yes	88852 (18.7%)	162730 (17.9%)	89450 (21.1%)
Carer			
No	382112 (80.6%)	732193 (80.5%)	348162 (82.1%)
Yes	91970 (19.4%)	176959 (19.5%)	75653 (17.9%)
Deprivation quintile			
1 (Most deprived)	38111 (8.0%)	146156 (16.1%)	154461 (36.4%)



Page 45 of 54

Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
2	64792 (13.7%)	174694	114094
		(19.2%)	(26.9%)
3	99792 (21.0%)	199586 (22.0%)	76664 (18.1%)
4	124261 (26.2%)	203142 (22.3%)	50599 (11.9%)
5 (Least deprived)	147126 (31.0%)	185574 (20.4%)	27997 (6.6%)
General practice rurality			
Rural	116101 (24.5%)	165787 (18.2%)	24312 (5.7%)
Urban	357981 (75.5%)	743365 (81.8%)	399503 (94.3%)

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		cted by copyright.	.1136/bmjopen-202	
Supplementary Table 5. Table presenting summaries of the univariate ana	lyses for each of the	=	Ň	
Summary of univariate analysis for the online appointment booking outco		ıdir	862	edictor
(1807049 respondents in 7256 practices)		or u	n 12	
Predictors Long term condition (REF= No)	Odds Ratios	S &		p
	1.10	lated	221.07 - 1.13	
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.10	0.02 te	31.07 - 1.13	<0.0
Long term condition- Yes	1.50		¥1.40 - 1.31	<0.0
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-Yes (REF= No)	1.16		1.15 - 1.17	<0.0
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	0.94	0.0 <sup>1</sup>	a 50.92 - 0.95	<0.0
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.88		B 0.87 - 0.89	<0.0
Age bands (REF: 85+)		traini	//bmj	
16-24	2.32	l training5and	2.24 - 2.41	<0.0
25-34	3.05	۹.0	2.94 - 3.15	<0.0
35-44	3.00	iia 이.05	<b>2</b> .9 - 3.11	<0.0
45-54	2.96	0. Simila Gechtologies.	May 2.87 - 3.06	<0.00
55-64	2.88	0.0 0.0	<b>10</b> 202.79 - 2.98	<0.0
65-74	2.62	0.04	8 ₽2.53 - 2.71	<0.0
	1.61	0.03	<b>Dep</b> art1.56 - 1.67	<0.0
Ethnicity (REF: White)			ment	
			nent GEZ-LTA	
			LTA	

Page 47 of 54	BMJ Open		cted by copyright, miceluding 0.00000000000000000000000000000000000	
1 2			open-2	
3 4	Black	0.81	0.0 <b>∄</b> 90.79 - 0.84	<0.001
5 6	Asian	1.10	0.0 1.12	<0.001
7 8	Other	0.94	0.02 \$0.91 - 0.97	<0.001
9 10 11	Mixed	1.11	0.02 01.07 - 1.16	<0.001
12 13	Parent or legal guardian to a 16-year-old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	1.06	0.08 m 201.05 - 1.07	<0.001
14 15	Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.21	0.04 ated to 121.05 - 1.07 1023: D1.2 - 1.22 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.05	<0.001
16 17	Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		wnloa escho and da	
18 19	2 3 4 5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018)	1.11	0.0 <b>4</b> · <b>4</b> 1.1 - 1.13	<0.001
20 21	3	1.19	0.00 m 1.18 - 1.21	<0.001
22 23	4	1.28	0.04 51.26 - 1.3 0.04 501.36 - 1.41	<0.001
24 25	5 (least deprived)	1.38	0.00 pp1.36 - 1.41	<0.001
26 27	Survey year (REF= 2018)		and similar 0.020 01.17 - 1.2 0.020 y 1.48 - 1.51 0.020 gie	
28 29			milar 1 1 1 1 0	0.001
30 31	2019	1.18	0.051 91.17 - 1.2	<0.001
32 33	2020	1.50	0.000 Y 1.48 - 1.51	<0.001
34 35	General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	1.07	0.0 <sup>1</sup> /2 201.03 - 1.11	<0.001
36 37			i at D	
38	Summary of univariate analysis for the repeat prescription ordering outcon	ne univariate anal	ysis with sach of the pr	edictors
40 41	(1807049 respondents in 7256 practices)		nent Q	
42 43			ent GEZ-LTA	
44 45 46	For peer review only - http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/a	about/guidelines.xhtm	•	

Page 48 of 54
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BMJ Open			.1136/bmjopen-2022-068627 .cted by copyright, including	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	SE	6/bmjopen-2022 by copyright, in	р
Long term condition (REF= No)			-068627 ing for 1.124	Î
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.21	0.02	<b>ਰ</b> 1.1 <b>3</b> - 1.24	<0.00
Long term condition- Yes	2.70	0.01	12 s s 2.6 8 - 2.73	<0.00
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-Yes (REF= No)	1.72	0.01	elated	<0.00
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.13	0.01	tober - 1.74 tober - 1.74 Erasmushogeschool . erated to text and data mining - 0.9	<0.00
Gender-Male (REF= Female) Age bands (REF: 85+) 16-24 25-34	1.01	0.00	gesiche desiche desiche	0.007
Age bands (REF: 85+)			aded fr bol . lata mi	
16-24	0.87	0.02	• 📮	<0.00
25-34	1.06	0.02	A training: 1.33 - 1.4	<0.00
35-44	1.37	0.02	ning1.389 - 1.4	<0.00
45-54	1.91	0.03	and similar technologies.	<0.00
55-64	2.31	0.03	nilar 2.255 - 2.37 te	<0.00
65-74	2.41	0.03	schnol 2.3 gy - 2.47	<0.00
			10, 20 logies.	
Ethnicity (REF: White)			2025 at E es.	
Black	0.66	0.01	0.68	<0.00
Asian	0.77	0.01	0.7 <b>5</b> - 0.78	<0.00
			GEZ-LTA	
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Page 49 of 54	BMJ Ope	en			.1136/bmjopen-2023.068 cted by copyright, including.	
1 2 3					open-202 opyright,	
4	Other	0	).66	0.01	<b>∃</b> 0.6 <b>3</b> - 0.68	<0.001
5 6 7	Mixed	0	0.84	0.02		<0.001
8 9	Parent or legal guardian to a 16-year-old or younger-Yes (REF=	<b>No</b> ) 0	).73	0.00	on - 0.73 for 0.72 - 0.73 Uses 1.33 related	<0.001
10 11	Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1	.32	0.01	es 11:53 Poctober 2023 Perasmus	<0.001
12 13	Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)				to nu	
14 15 16	2	1	.18	0.01		<0.001
17 18	3	1	.35	0.01	nd data - 1.37 data - 1.37	<0.001
19 20	4	1	.50	0.01	n 1.458 - 1.52	<0.001
21 22	2 3 4 5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018) 2019	1	.60	0.01	1.480 - 1.52 1.480 - 1.52 1.59 1.59 1.63 Al training, and 1.17 - 1.19	<0.001
23 24	Survey year (REF= 2018)				/bmjo	
25 26 27	2019	1	.18	0.01	g, and 1.17 - 1.19	<0.001
27 28 29	2020		.43	0.01	g, Al training, and similar technologies.	<0.001
30 31	General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	0	).78	0.01	F 60.736 - 0.8	<0.001
32 33					lay 10 nolog	
34						
35 36					2025 at Department GEZ-LTA эs.	
37 38					Dep	
39					artm	
40					ent	
41 42					GEZ	
43					Ξ.	
44 45 46	For peer review only - http://bmjopen.br	ıj.com/site/a	about/guio	delines.xhtml	4	

BMJ Open BMJ Open Supplementary Table 6 Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online appointment booking in the previous 12 menths outcome for each of the actoropics of CPs based on the preparties of missing data in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the projective

Predictors	Model 3, Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices		Model 3, Respondents from practices with 26%-74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices		Model 3, Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815 2052 practices	
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Raso Standogesci	95% Confidence Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)			r.		aded ool . data	
Long term condition- I don't know/	1.16***		1.14***		from http://bmjopen.bm	(1.10, 1.22)
Can't say	1.70***	(1.10, 1.23)	1 (0****	(1.10, 1.19)		(1.10, 1.22)
Long term condition- Yes	1.78***	(1.75, 1.81)	1.69***	(1.67, 1.72)		(1.46, 1.53)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-Yes (REF= No)	1.19***		1.20***	07	1.20**** 1.20**** 1.12**** 1.12**** 1.12****	
		(1.17, 1.22)		(1.18, 1.22)	yies, 20	(1.17, 1.23)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.15***	(1.11, 1.19)	1.12***	(1.09, 1.14)		(1.08, 1.16)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.88***	(0.86, 0.89)	0.88***	(0.87, 0.89)	at Department GEZ-LTA	(0.89, 0.93)
Age (REF: 85+)					D tr	

Predictors	Model 3, Respo practices with 2 respondents wi n=474082, 1843	25% or less th missing data	Model 3, Respo practices with 2 respondents wi n=909152, 3361	26%-74% of th missing data	cted by copyright Model 3, Resp practices with respondents w n=423815, 205	75% or more tith missing d
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confiden Interval
16-24	3.39***	(3.14, 3.66)	3.76***	(3.55, 3.98)	3.50***# a	(3.21, 3.8
25-34	4.69***	(4.37, 5.03)	5.17***	(4.91, 5.45)	elaster 3.50***ter 4.66***to	(4.30, 5.00
35-44	4.63***	(4.32, 4.96)	5.13***	(4.87, 5.40)	4.46*** <b>** 5</b>	(4.11, 4.83
45-54	4.28***	(4.01, 4.57)	4.51***	(4.29, 4.74)	3.75***agew	(3.46, 4.06
55-64	3.80***	(3.56, 4.05)	3.94***	(3.75, 4.13)	3.07***	(2.84, 3.32
65-74	3.27***	(3.07, 3.49)	3.32***	(3.16, 3.48)	2.35****	(2.18, 2.54
75-84	1.81***	(1.69, 1.93)	1.83***	(1.74, 1.93)	1.43*** <b>9</b> . <del>d</del>	(1.32, 1.55
Ethnicity (REF: White)			10		om ht ning,	
Black	0.75***	(0.69, 0.81)	0.83***	• (0.79, 0.87)	0.87***	(0.83, 0.90
Asian	1.04	(1.00, 1.09)	1.10***	(1.07, 1.14)	1.14***********************************	(1.10, 1.17
Other	0.86**	(0.79, 0.95)	0.92**	(0.87, 0.98)	1.01 g. g	(0.96, 1.00
Mixed	1.01	(0.93, 1.10)	1.01	(0.95, 1.07)	1.09** a	(1.02, 1.10
Parent or legal guardian to a 16- year-old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.91***	(0.89, 0.93)	0.90***	(0.88, 0.92)	0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96****	(0.93, 0.98
Carer-Yes	1.11***		1.15***		1.17***	(0.95, 0.90
(REF= No)		(1.09, 1.13)		(1.13, 1.17)	1.17****00 10, 2025	(1.14, 1.19
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)					25 at Depa	
2	1.15***		1.14***		1.16*** m	
		(1.11, 1.20)		(1.12, 1.17)	ent	(1.13, 1.19

Page	52 of	54
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25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38

$ \begin{array}{ c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c$	$ \begin{array}{ c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c$				BMJ Open		.1136/bmjopen-20 cted by copyright			
$ \begin{array}{ c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c$	$ \begin{array}{ c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c$	Predictors	practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data		practices with a respondents wi	26%-74% of th missing data	practices with responeten with	respon <b>g</b> en with missing data.		
$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$\begin{array}{c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c $		,	95% Confidence		95% Confidence	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence		
4 $1.38^{***}$ $(1.33, 1.44)$ $1.40^{***}$ $(1.37, 1.43)$ $1.36^{***}$ $1.31, 1.41)$ 5 (least $1.54^{***}$ $1.52^{***}$ $1.53^{***}$ $1.53^{***}$ $0$ $(1.46, 1.60)$ Survey year       (REF= 2018)       (1.14, 1.18) $1.18^{***}$ $(1.17, 1.20)$ $1.25^{***}$ $(1.22, 1.28)$ 2019 $1.46^{***}$ $(1.43, 1.49)$ $1.52^{***}$ $(1.50, 1.54)$ $1.61^{***}$ $(1.57, 1.65)$ General practice $1.22^{***}$ $(1.10, 1.23)$ $1.11^{***}$ $1.10$ $4$ $0$ $0$ Model summary $(1.10, 1.23)$ $1.11^{***}$ $(1.10, 1.19)$ $1.10$ $1.09$ $1.09$ $1.09$ $1.09$ $1.09$ $1.09$ $1.10^{**}$ $1.10^{$	$\begin{array}{c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c $	2	1.00 / / /		1.004-04-04					
5 (least deprived) $1.54^{***}$ $1.52^{***}$ $1.53^{**}$ $1.53^{**}$ $1.53^{**}$ $1.63^{**}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.63^{***}$ $1.22^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.125^{***}$ $1.10^{***$	5 (least deprived) $1.54^{***}$ $(1.48, 1.60)$ $1.52^{***}$ $(1.49, 1.56)$ $1.53^{**}$ or						1.2/***#far			
Survey year (REF= 2018)(1.40, 1.00)(1.40, 1.00)(1.40, 1.00)2019 $1.16^{***}$ $(1.14, 1.18)$ $1.18^{***}$ $(1.17, 1.20)$ $1.25^{***}$ $(1.22, 1.28)$ 2020 $1.46^{***}$ $(1.43, 1.49)$ $1.52^{***}$ $(1.50, 1.54)$ $1.61^{***}$ $(1.57, 1.65)$ General practice rurality-Urban (REF= Rural) $1.22^{***}$ $(1.10, 1.23)$ $1.11^{***}$ $1.10$ $V$ Model summary $V$ $V$ $V$ $V$ $V$ $V$	depinted)       (1.40, 1.60)       (1.40, 1.60)       (1.40, 1.60)       (1.40, 1.60)         Survey year (REF= 2018)       (1.40, 1.10)       (1.14, 1.18)       1.18***       (1.17, 1.20)       1.25***       (1.22, 1.28)         2019       1.46***       (1.43, 1.49)       1.52***       (1.50, 1.54)       1.61***       (1.57, 1.65)         General practice       1.22***       (1.10, 1.23)       1.11***       (1.10, 1.19)       (0.97, 1.24)         Wodel summary       (1.10, 1.23)       1.11***       (1.10, 1.19)       (0.97, 1.24)         Interclass       0.13       0.12       0.13       and similar of protocol         * p-value=       0.05, ** p-value= ≤ 0.01, *** p-value= ≤ 0.001       for p-value=       0.01       for p-value=			(1.33, 1.44)		(1.37, 1.43)		(1.31, 1.41)		
2020       1.46***       (1.43, 1.49)       1.52***       (1.50, 1.54)       1.61***       0       (1.57, 1.65)         General practice rurality-Urban (REF= Rural)       1.22***       (1.10, 1.23)       1.11***       1.10       A training of the second sec	$\begin{array}{c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c $	deprived)	1.54***	(1.48, 1.60)	1.52***	(1.49, 1.56)	0 0 5	(1.46, 1.60)		
2020       1.46***       (1.43, 1.49)       1.52***       (1.50, 1.54)       1.61***       0       (1.57, 1.65)         General practice rurality-Urban (REF= Rural)       1.22***       (1.10, 1.23)       1.11***       1.10       At raise       (0.97, 1.24)         Model summary	$\begin{array}{c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c $			NR			nloade school 1d dat:			
2020       1.46***       (1.43, 1.49)       1.52***       (1.50, 1.54)       1.61***       0       (1.57, 1.65)         General practice rurality-Urban (REF= Rural)       1.22***       (1.10, 1.23)       1.11***       1.10       A training of the second sec	$\begin{array}{c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c $	2019	1.16***	(1.14, 1.18)	1.18***	(1.17, 1.20)	1.25**** d	(1.22, 1.28)		
General practice rurality-Urban (REF= Rural)1.22***(1.10, 1.23)1.11***1.10 $g$ P $M$ $M$ $M$ Model summaryInterclass correlation coefficient (ICC)0.130.120.13 $m$ </td <td>Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC)<math>0.13</math><math>0.12</math><math>0.13</math><math>0.13</math>* p-value= 0.05, ** p-value= <math>\leq 0.01</math>, *** p-value= <math>\leq 0.001</math><math>0.13</math><math>0.13</math><math>0.13</math><math>0.13</math></td> <td>2020</td> <td>1.46***</td> <td>(1.43, 1.49)</td> <td>1.52***</td> <td>(1.50, 1.54)</td> <td>1.61***<b>2</b> on</td> <td>(1.57, 1.65)</td>	Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) $0.13$ $0.12$ $0.13$ $0.13$ * p-value= 0.05, ** p-value= $\leq 0.01$ , *** p-value= $\leq 0.001$ $0.13$ $0.13$ $0.13$ $0.13$	2020	1.46***	(1.43, 1.49)	1.52***	(1.50, 1.54)	1.61*** <b>2</b> on	(1.57, 1.65)		
Model summaryindext operationInterclass correlation coefficient (ICC) $0.13$ $0.12$ p-value= $0.05$ , ** p-value= $\leq 0.01$ , *** p-value= $\leq 0.001$	Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) $0.13$ $0.12$ $0.13$ $0.13$ * p-value= 0.05, ** p-value= $\leq 0.01$ , *** p-value= $\leq 0.001$ $0.13$ $0.13$ $0.13$ $0.13$	rurality-Urban	1.22***	(1.10, 1.23)	1.11***	(1.10, 1.19)	1.10 g, Al train	(0.97, 1.24)		
Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) $0.13$ $0.12$ $0.13$ $nd similarsimilarfree http://www.second.com/secondp-value= 0.05, ** p-value= \le 0.01, *** p-value= \le 0.0010.13nd similarsimilarfree http://www.second.com/sec$	Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC) $0.13$ $0.12$ $0.13$ $0.13$ * p-value= 0.05, ** p-value= $\leq 0.01$ , *** p-value= $\leq 0.001$ $0.13$ $0.13$ $0.13$ $0.13$	Model summary				$\sim$	jope ing			
p-value= 0.05, ** p-value= $\leq 0.01$ , *** p-value= $\leq 0.001$	* p-value= 0.05, ** p-value= $\leq 0.01$ , *** p-value= $\leq 0.001$		0.13		0.12		0.13 and simil			
	10, 2025 ogies.	<sup>*</sup> p-value= 0.05, **	* p-value= $\leq 0.01$ ,	*** p-value= $\leq 0$ .	001		n/ on May ar technol			
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Page	53	of	54
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 BMJ Open BMJ Open Supplementary Table 7 Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online repeat prescription of dering in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice

Predictors	Model 3, respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices		practices with respondents data n=9091	pondents from th 26%-74% of with missing 52, 3361	Model 3, respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. $\vec{B}$ =423815, 2052		
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	practices Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Dodo at a tan ining 2.24	95% Confidence Interval	
Long term condition (REF= No)		0			vnload eschoo and dat		
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.25***	(1.18, 1.32)	1.25***	(1.20, 1.30)	1.24************************************	(1.17, 1.31)	
Long term condition- Yes	2.71***	(2.66, 2.75)	2.56***	(2.52, 2.59)	2.42***	(2.37, 2.47)	
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis- Yes (REF= No)	1.26***	(1.24, 1.29)	1.26***	(1.24, 1.28)	1. training, and simil	(1.26, 1.32)	
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes	1.02		1.02				
$\frac{(\text{REF}=\text{No})}{(\text{REF}=\text{No})}$	0.96***	(1.00, 1.05)	0.96***	(1.00, 1.04)		(0.98, 1.04)	
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.96***	(0.94, 0.97)	0.96***	(0.95, 0.97)	0.948*** on I	(0.96, 1.00)	
Age (REF: 85+) 16-24	1.64***	(1.53, 1.75)	1.76***	(1.67, 1.85)	1.62*3	(1.50, 1.76)	
25-34	2.16***	(1.33, 1.73) (2.04, 2.29)	2.22***	(1.07, 1.83) (2.13, 2.32)	1.88***	$(1.50, 1.76) \\ (1.85, 2.13)$	
35-44	2.67***	(2.52, 2.82)	2.22***	(2.70, 2.94)	2.37****	(2.21, 2.54)	
45-54	3.25***	(3.09, 3.42)	3.29***	(3.16, 3.42)	2.82***	(2.21, 2.54) (2.65, 3.01)	
55-64	3.35***	(3.18, 3.52)	3.43***	(3.31, 3.56)	2.81*	(2.64, 3.00)	
65-74	3.11***	(2.97, 3.27)	3.15***	(3.03, 3.27)	2.48**	(2.33, 2.64)	
75-84	1.73***	(1.65, 1.82)	1.75***	(1.68, 1.82)	1.43**	(1.34, 1.53)	
Ethnicity (REF: White)					Ter Ter		

Predictors	practices with	with missing data	practices with	pondents from th 26%-74% of with missing 52, 3361	Modek3, 1 practizes responden	cted by copyright 200 Model 23, respondents from practices with 75% or mor respondents with missing data. $\vec{p}$ =423815, 2052		
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	October Ratios Ratiates 0.80	95% Confidence Interval		
Black	0.77***	(0.71, 0.84)	0.73***	(0.70, 0.77)	0.8	(0.77, 0.84)		
Asian	0.88***	(0.84, 0.92)	0.94***	(0.91, 0.97)	1.055.	(0.98, 1.04)		
Other	0.79***	(0.71, 0.87)	0.76***	(0.72, 0.81)	0.824	(0.77, 0.86)		
Mixed	0.96	(0.89, 1.05)	0.98	(0.93, 1.05)		(0.92, 1.07)		
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.93***	(0.91, 0.96)	0.94***	(0.92, 0.96)	0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0. 0	(0.96, 1.02)		
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.13***	(1.11, 1.16)	1.15***	(1.14, 1.17)	1.19**	(1.17, 1.22)		
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		C	Vi		1.22 Al traini			
2	1.21***	(1.17, 1.26)	1.22***	(1.19, 1.25)	1.2 *****	(1.19, 1.26)		
3	1.37***	(1.32, 1.42)	1.43***	(1.40, 1.46)	1.43*2	(1.39, 1.47)		
4	1.54***	(1.48, 1.59)	1.59***	(1.55, 1.62)	1 🗗 * 😽	(1.62, 1.73)		
5 (least deprived)	1.65***	(1.59, 1.71)	1.74***	(1.70, 1.78)	1.89***	(1.82, 1.97)		
Survey year (REF= 2018)					on N			
2019	1.16***	(1.13, 1.18)	1.17***	(1.15, 1.19)	1.26*	(1.24, 1.29)		
2020	1.40***	(1.38, 1.43)	1.46***	(1.44, 1.48)	1. <b>§</b> 1*🖻	(1.51, 1.58)		
General practice rurality- Urban (REF= Rural)	0.94**	(0.89, 0.99)	0.90***	(0.87, 0.94)	0.97 2025 al	(0.88, 1.07)		
Model summary								
Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC)	0.07		0.07		0.08 epartment			

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 $\mathcal{J} = \leq 0.00 \, .$ \* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.001$ For peer review only - http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/guidelines.xhtml

### Cross-sectional analyses of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering user characteristics in General Practices of England in the years 2018-2020

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# Cross-sectional analyses of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering user characteristics in General Practices of England in the years 2018-2020

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Keywords general practice; primary health care; patient portal; electronic health record; personal health record; GP Patient Survey.

# Abstract

Objectives: To explore the characteristics of the General Practice Patient Survey (GPPS) respondents using the different functionalities of the online services in the context of England's National Health Service (NHS) General Practices. We hypothesised that respondents who are Page 3 of 54

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older, with lower socioeconomic status, and non-White ethnicity would be less likely to use online services, while long-term conditions might increase their usage. Design: Cross-sectional study using respondent-level data from the GPPS in England of the years 2018, 2019 and 2020. We assessed the association between online services use and respondent characteristics using two-level mixed-effects logistic regression. Participants: Survey respondents of the GPPS 2018-2020. Primary outcome measures: Online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering. Results: 1,806,977 survey respondents were included in this study. 15% (n=263938) used online appointment booking in the previous 12 months, and 19% (n=339449) had ordered a repeat prescription in the previous 12 months. Respondents with a long-term condition, on regular multiple medications, who have deafness or hearing loss and who are from the lowest deprivation quintile were more likely to have used online services. Male respondents (compared to females) and respondents with Black and Other ethnicity compared to White ethnicity were less likely to use online services. Respondents over 85 years old were less likely to use online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering compared to the younger age groups.

Conclusions: Specific groups of respondents were more likely to use online services such as patients with long-term conditions or those with deafness or hearing loss. While online services could provide efficiency to patients and practices it is essential that alternatives continue to be provided to those that cannot use or choose not to use online services. Understanding the different patients' needs could inform solutions to increase the uptake and use of the services.

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# Strengths and limitations of this study

### Strengths

- The study used a sample from a major national survey which has developed a robust methodology in its data collection to explore the characteristics of online services users, a service which has been highly advocated in the NHS and in other healthcare systems of the world.
- 2. Given the clustered nature of the data (where patients are registered to different general practices) and to account for the clustering, we used multilevel logistic regression analysis.

### Limitation

- 1. The study used only complete-case data in the analyses, which risked sample bias.
- 2. The study relied on self-reported data for online service use due to data unavailability which can lead to response bias.

# BACKGROUND

Online services such as online appointment booking or repeat prescription ordering are offered in 99.7% of General Practitioner (GP) practices in England [1], but patients have to request access to the service and adoption remains low (about 50% in May 2023) [1]. According to previous literature, online services, also referred to as patient portals, have the potential to promote patients' involvement in their care, reduce emergency visits and hospitalisation [2], and may improve some health outcomes through improving medication adherence [2, 3] patients' knowledge about health and patient efficacy (e.g. patient's confidence in adhering to health

instructions or treatment) [4]. Few studies have examined the characteristics of patients using online services and the inequalities that might exist based on patient characteristics in the context of the National Health Service (NHS) of England such as ethnicity and deprivation inequalities [5-7]. Understanding patient characteristics associated with online service use may reveal barriers to use and may inform service planning to increase the uptake of these services.

Studies from other countries, and a limited number of studies from the UK, suggest that [7-10] patients with low income, and with non-White ethnicity may be less likely to use patient portals due to reduced access to the internet, computers and smartphones [8, 10]. This is the first study to look at online services user characteristics for both online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering explicitly in England, where the NHS have invested in a nation-wide digital transformation programme [11].

Healthcare systems are characterised as complex systems and healthcare innovations often face multi-faceted challenges in diffusion ("passive spread") and adoption due to the nature of complex systems [12]. A major theory considered in healthcare innovation adoption is the digital divide theory which highlights the inequality that arises when people without access to technology (that is physical access but also access to the knowledge and skills to use the technology) are excluded from the benefits that technology has to offer [13-15]. In consideration of the digital divide theory [13-15], we formulated several hypotheses based on respondent characteristics and knowledge from previous literature. We hypothesised that:

1. That the younger age group (younger than 35 years old) to be more likely to use online services due to the high adoption of technology in this age group and their familiarity with the use of internet [16].

- 2. That individuals of lower socioeconomic status and minority ethnicities to be less likely to use online services as this has been reported in several studies looking into the use of patient portals and patient characteristics [8, 17-19].
- 3. In consideration of individuals' health status, we hypothesised that respondents with long-term or chronic conditions (but not those who are very ill) may be more likely to use online services because of their increased need to access and use the services such as appointment booking and repeat prescription. Additionally, people with long-term conditions have certain physical limitation and socio-economic circumstances that could be associated with their ability to access healthcare services in person.

Thus, we aimed to examine which respondent characteristics were associated with online appointment booking and repeat prescription service ordering and test the hypotheses that we formulated.

# **METHODS**

# Patient and public involvement

This study had limited involvement from the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration of Northwest London Public Advisors, whom were consulted during the study write-up and were involved appropriately in the drafting.

# Study design

Cross-sectional analyses of respondent-level data obtained from the General Practice Patient Survey (GPPS) of 2018, 2019, and 2020 in England. The respondent-level data were BMJ Open: first published as 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-068627 on 12 October 2023. Downloaded from http://bmjopen.bmj.com/ on May 10, 2025 at Department GEZ-LTA

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pseudonymised. The researchers did not have access to the respondents' identifies: name, address, NHS number and date of birth. Respondent-level data are only presented aggregately to protect respondents' privacy as agreed in the ethical approval of the study (20IC6303). Data collection for each survey was between January and March for the years 2018 and 2019 and between January and April for 2020. Respondents in the survey had the right to withdraw their consent before their data were processed [20].

# Variables

#### Outcome variables

The outcome variables (online appointment booking use and online repeat prescription use) were based on the responses to the GPPS question: "Which of the following general practice online services have you used in the past 12 months?" [21] in which the answers "Booking appointments online", and "Ordering repeat prescriptions online" were used for this study. We compared the characteristics of those who replied "yes" to the question to those who replied "no" to the question. The answers "yes" and "no" were provided by the GPPS for each of the options: "Booking appointments online", and "Ordering repeat prescriptions online". The GPPS also records the use of online record viewing. However, we did not include it in this study due to the limited number of respondents reporting the use of the functionality (about 5% in 2020 and lower proportions in 2019 and 2018).

#### Explanatory variables

Ten different covariates (explanatory variables) were included in the models as listed in table 1. Variables were selected based on: BMJ Open: first published as 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-068627 on 12 October 2023. Downloaded from http://bmjopen.bmj.com/ on May 10, 2025 at Department GEZ-LTA

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1. Factors that have been identified in the literature as being associated with patient portal

use, such as long-term condition status, deafness or hearing loss, and parent and carer

status, and

2. Data availability such as taking 5 or more medications regularly (another indicator for healthcare status).

# Table 1 The list of variables included in the two-level regression models of the study and their definitions.

Variable	Categories and definition
Gender	Male, Female
Age (bands)	16 to 24, 25 to 34, 35 to 44, 45 to 54, 55 to 64, 65 to 74, 75 to 84, 85 or over (as categorised by the survey)
Ethnicity	White, mixed, Asian, black, other (derived from 18 ethnicity categories of the Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories [22]) White, mixed, Asian, black, other (5 broad groups derived from 18 ethnicity categories published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories [22])
Survey year	2018, 2019 or 2020 (created based on the year of the survey)
Long-term conditions	Yes, No, or "I don't know/ Can't answer" answers to the question: "Do you have any long-term physical or mental health conditions, disabilities or illnesses?" [21]
Deafness or hearing loss	Yes or No answer to the question: "Which, if any, of the following long- term conditions do you have?Deafness or hearing loss" [21]
Taking 5 or more medications on a regular basis	Yes or No answer to the question: "Do you take 5 or more medications on a regular basis?" [21]
Parent status	Yes or No answer to the question: "Are you a parent or a legal guardian for any children aged under 16 living in your home?" [21]
Carer status	Yes or No answer derived from the answers to the question: "Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either: long-term physical or mental ill health / disability, or problems related to old age?"
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles	The GPPS provided a variable called deprivation rank for all respondents included in the survey which was defined as: ONS IMD score - deprivation banding based on respondents' postcode. We converted the ONS IMD scores provided by GPPS to IMD quintiles using the English indices of deprivation 2019 guidance [23]. We chose the deprivation quintile instead of deciles or IMD ranking to reduce the number of categories in the mode

	while accounting for a potential predictor of online services use (deprivation) [24] and to duplicate the same categories used in previous GPPS analyses [5, 6, 24].
<b>Rurality of</b>	A variable provided by GPPS based on the GP practice's postcode
the General	categorised as Rural or urban as defined by the ONS [25] rural or urban as
Practice	defined by the ONS [25]

### **Data source**

The GPPS is a national, postal survey commissioned by NHS England. GPPS uses random sampling, proportionately stratified by GP practice, age, and gender. Eligibility for GPPS includes having a valid NHS number, being 16 years or older and being registered with a GP practice for at least 6 months. Response rates of previous surveys are considered, sending more surveys to low-response practices and fewer surveys to high-response practices [26-28]. The survey was sent to 2,221,068, 2,328,560, 2,329,590 respondents in the years 2018, 2019 and 2020, with response rates of 34%, 33% and 32%, respectively [26-28].

In March 2020, social restrictions were announced in England due to the COVID-19 pandemic [29]. The last data collected for the GPPS was in April 2020, however, only a small number of surveys were received post March 2020 with the GPPS indicating it was highly unlikely that the survey results were affected by the pandemic [27].

# **Study population**

We obtained data from respondents who completed the GPPS surveys in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and only included the respondents who answered either "yes" or "no" to using online appointment booking and/or online repeat prescription ordering as described in the variables section above. We then removed respondents who did not have complete data for the variables of interest. Protected by copyright, including for uses related to text and data mining, Al training, and similar technologies

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### **Statistical analyses**

We first reported descriptive statistics of the respondents based on their online appointment booking and repeat prescription use. All of the included variables in this study were categorical. We first tabulated each exploratory variable by the outcome variables and compared using Chi square test. We then performed univariate analysis between each of the explanatory variables and the outcome variable to check if they converge and to examine the coefficients. Collinearity was avoided by using the same set of variables used in previous studies analysing online services use using GPPS data [5], and checking for collinearity after the analysis was completed. To perform multilevel mixed-effects logistic regression models: First, we created null models with only the outcome variables and random intercepts (GP practices) to understand if there was clustering due to the random intercepts. We then added all respondent level covariates to the models (model 2) (most of the variable in the final models were respondent level variables). We checked the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) and intercepted in all models to examine the effect of clustering. We then added the GP practice level variable (GP practice rurality) in the final models (model 3) [30]. After completing all analyses, we also performed model diagnostics to check the best fit model and checked for multicollinearity by calculating the variable inflation factor (VIF). Model diagnostics was performed by calculating Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and comparing the BIC of the different versions of the models. The model with the lowest BIC was considered the best fit model [31]. VIF values greater than 5 indicated collinearity [32]. The statistical analyses were performed using RStudio software version 1.4.1717.

# Sensitivity analyses

The methods used in the sensitivity analyses are described in Supplementary Table 1. Because this study included only complete case participants, we ran a sensitivity analysis to predict the outcome this decision may have had on the main analyses. To do this, we first categorised GP practices, according to the proportion of complete case participants available, into three groups: highest missing data group (75% of the participants in these practices had missing data), middle-range missing data group (26-74% of the participants in these practices had missing data), and lowest missing data group (25% or less of the participants in these practices had missing data). We next categorised the complete-case participants according to the proportion of missing data groups) and then ran the same analyses described in the statistical analyses sub-section above. We completed the Strengthening the reporting of observational studies in epidemiology (STROBE) checklist to review the methods of the study [33] (Supplementary Table 2).

# RESULTS

Some of the results of this study were presented in a conference abstract [34].

### Sample size

We received data from 2,246,109 respondents who completed the GPPS surveys in 2018, 2019 or 2020. After removing respondents that did not have complete data for the variables of interest (n=439,060), 1,807,049 (80.5%) respondents were included.

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# **Summary statistics**

1,807,049 respondents were included of which 15% (n=263938) used online appointment

booking (used at least once in the previous 12 months), and 19% (n=339449) used online repeat

prescription (used at least once in the previous 12 months). Of the respondents, 55.1% were

female, 22% in the 65-74 years age group, 86.8% self-identified as having White ethnicity,

83.1% were registered at GP practices in an urban area, and half (51.1%) had a self-reported

long-term condition (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the number and proportion of respondent characteristics in the total population included in the analyses (n=1807049), categorised by online services use

use		
CharacteristicsTotal	Online appointment	Online repeat prescription
	booking in the previous	ordering in the previous
	12 months	12 months

	Total	No	Yes	p-	No	Yes	p-
	(N=180704	49)(N=15431	11)(N=26393	8)value*	(N=146760	00)(N=33944	9)value
				<b>-</b>			
Gender				< 0.001			0.97
Female	996544	843422	153122	<u> </u>	809337	187207	
remate							
N ( 1	(55.1%)	(54.7%)	(58.0%)		(55.1%)	(55.2%)	
Male	810505	699689	110816		658263	152242	
	(44.9%)	(45.3%)	(42.0%)		(44.9%)	(44.8%)	
Age (bands)				< 0.001			< 0.00
16-24	74381	64513	9868		67069	7312	
	(4.1%)	(4.2%)	(3.7%)		(4.6%)	(2.2%)	
25-34	159806	132951	26855		141376	18430	
	(8.8%)	(8.6%)	(10.2%)		(9.6%)	(5.4%)	
35-44	217687	181290	36397		186112	31575	
	(12.0%)	(11.7%)	(13.8%)		(12.7%)	(9.3%)	
45-54	302285	253145	49140		243458	58827	
	(16.7%)	(16.4%)	(18.6%)		(16.6%)	(17.3%)	
55-64	381808	321902	59906		295168	86640	
	(21.1%)	(20.9%)	(22.7%)		(20.1%)	(25.5%)	
65-74	397999	340484	57515		303875	94124	
	(22.0%)	(22.1%)	(21.8%)		(20.7%)	(27.7%)	

Page 13 of 54

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75.04	211506	101217	20260		176014	25272	
75-84	211586	191217	20369		176214	35372	
0.5.	(11.7%)	(12.4%)	(7.7%)		(12.0%)	(10.4%)	
85+	61497	57609	3888		54328	7169	
	(3.4%)	(3.7%)	(1.5%)		(3.7%)	(2.1%)	
Ethnicity				< 0.001			< 0.00
White	1567690	1340202	227488		1258828	308862	
	(86.8%)	(86.9%)	(86.2%)		(85.8%)	(91.0%)	
Black	52950	46120	6830		47195	5755	
	(2.9%)	(3.0%)	(2.6%)		(3.2%)	(1.7%)	
Asian	137026	115015	22011		118728	18298	
	(7.6%)	(7.5%)	(8.3%)		(8.1%)	(5.4%)	
Other	29168	24993	4175		25773	3395	
	(1.6%)	(1.6%)	(1.6%)		(1.8%)	(1.0%)	
Mixed	20215	16781	3434		17076	3139	
	(1.1%)	(1.1%)	(1.3%)		(1.2%)	(0.9%)	
Survey year				< 0.001			< 0.00
2018	612084	536349	75735		512184	99900	
	(33.9%)	(34.8%)	(28.7%)		(34.9%)	(29.4%)	
2019	623358	534321	89037		507522	115836	
	(34.5%)	(34.6%)	(33.7%)		(34.6%)	(34.1%)	
2020	571607	472441	99166		447894	123713	
	(31.6%)	(30.6%)	(37.6%)		(30.5%)	(36.4%)	
Long-term condition				< 0.001			< 0.00
No	833523	730177	103346		736861	96662	
110	(46.1%)	(47.3%)	(39.2%)		(50.2%)	(28.5%)	
I don't know/	<u> </u>	43186	6560		43212	6534	
Can't	(2.8%)	(2.8%)	(2.5%)		(2.9%)	(1.9%)	
answer						(	
Yes	923780	769748	154032		687527	236253	
	(51.1%)	(49.9%)	(58.4%)		(46.8%)	(69.6%)	
Taking five or				< 0.001			< 0.00
more							
medication on	L						
a regular							
basis							
No	1343735	1151312	192423		1118704	225031	
	(74.4%)	(74.6%)	(72.9%)		(76.2%)	(66.3%)	
Yes	463314	391799	71515		348896	114418	
	(25.6%)	(25.4%)	(27.1%)		(23.8%)	(33.7%)	
Deafness or				< 0.001			< 0.00

Page	14	of	54
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No	1652099	1409236	242863	1344856	307243	
	(91.4%)	(91.3%)	(92.0%)	(91.6%)	(90.5%)	
Yes	154950	133875	21075	122744	32206	
	(8.6%)	(8.7%)	(8.0%)	(8.4%)	(9.5%)	
Parent or lega	al			<0.001		< 0.00
a 16 year						
old or						
younger						
No	1466017	1254880	211137	1177272	288745	
	(81.1%)	(81.3%)	(80.0%)	(80.2%)	(85.1%)	
Yes	341032	288231	52801	290328	50704	
	(18.9%)	(18.7%)	(20.0%)	(19.8%)	(14.9%)	
Carer				< 0.001		< 0.00
No	1462467	1254095	207482	1200652	261814	
INO	1462467	1254985		1200653		
Yes	(80.9%) 344582	<u>(81.3%)</u> 288126	<u>(78.6%)</u> 56456	(81.8%) 266947	<u>(77.1%)</u> 77635	
res	(19.1%)	(18.7%)	(21.4%)	(18.2%)	(22.9%)	
Deprivation	(17.170)	(10.770)	(21.470)	<0.001	(22.770)	< 0.00
quintile				0.001		\$0.00
1 (Most	338728	298412	40316	292405	46323	
deprived)	(18.7%)	(19.3%)	(15.3%)	(19.9%)	(13.6%)	
2	353580	304870	48710	296229	57351	
	(19.6%)	(19.8%)	(18.5%)	(20.2%)	(16.9%)	
3	376042	322081	53961	304048	71994	
	(20.8%)	(20.9%)	(20.4%)	(20.7%)	(21.2%)	
4	378002	319100	58902	297096	80906	
	(20.9%)	(20.7%)	(22.3%)	(20.2%)	(23.8%)	
5 (Least	360697	298648	62049	277822	82875	
deprived)	(20.0%)	(19.4%)	(23.5%)	(18.9%)	(24.4%)	
General practice rurality				<0.001		<0.001
Rural	306200	263405	42795	238353	67847	
	(16.9%)	(17.1%)	(16.2%)	(16.2%)	(20.0%)	
Urban	1500849	1279706	221143	1229247	271602	
	(83.1%)	(82.9%)	(83.8%)	(83.8%)	(80.0%)	

\* p-value derived from chi squared test comparing online appointment booking users and non-users

† p-value derived from chi squared test comparing online repeat prescription users and non-users

About 19.5% of the total population sample received from GPPS was excluded due to missing data. The proportion of respondents by category in the excluded respondents were different to the complete case dataset in the proportions for age, ethnicity (most respondents were from the mixed ethnicity), survey year, long-term condition, taking five or more medications, reporting of deafness or hearing loss, and slight difference in deprivation fifths proportions (Supplementary Table 3). However, when comparing the complete case sample to the total sample received, the differences in proportions between the two categories are very small and vary between 1 and - 2% (Supplementary Table 3).

Descriptive statistics of the sensitivity analysis groups are displayed in Supplementary Table 4. GP practices with the highest proportion of missing data (practices with 75% or more of respondents with missing data) had slightly higher percentage of younger age groups from 16 to 44 and they had a higher proportion of respondents with Black, Asian and Other ethnicities, as well as higher proportion or respondents from the most deprived group compared to the GP practices with lower missing data.

# Respondent and GP practice characteristics associated with online

### services' use

The results of the univariate analysis are in the supplementary table 5.

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### Online appointment booking

Results of the two-level mixed-effects logistic regression for the online appointment booking outcome are presented in table 3. Respondents with a long-term condition, taking 5 or more medications on a regular basis and who have deafness or hearing loss were more likely to use online appointment booking compared to respondents without these characteristics. In the fully adjusted model for respondent and GP practice characteristics, respondents with a long-term condition had 67% greater odds of using online appointment booking (OR: 1.67, CI: 1.66-1.69) compared to respondents without a long-term condition.

Respondents with black and "other" ethnicity had lower odds than those with White ethnicity for using online appointment booking, whereas respondents with Asian ethnicity had 11% (OR:

1.11, 95% CI: 1.09-1.13) greater odds of using online appointment booking.

There was an inverse association between deprivation quintile and online appointment booking. The odds for using online appointment booking increased with reducing deprivation from the second to fifth (least deprived) quintiles compared to the most deprived quintile. Respondents in the least deprived quintile had 54% greater odds of booking appointments online (OR: 1.54, 95% CI: 1.51-1.57) compared to those in the most deprived quintile. Respondents from the survey year 2020 were the most likely to use online appointment booking compared to respondents from the survey year 2018 and 2019.

Respondents from GP practices located in an urban setting had 11% greater odds of booking appointments online compared to respondents from GP practices in a rural setting (OR: 1.11, 96% CI: 1.07-1.16).

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9 10 11 12 13 14	Table 3 Ty Patient Su previous 1
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31	35-44 45-54
33	55-64
34 35	65-74
36	75-84
37	Ethnicity Black
38 39	Asian
40	Other
41 42	Mixed
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54	2020
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Model comparison: The ICC of 0.13 indicates that there is a slight similarity between value	S
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from the same group (in this case from the same GP practice) although the difference is not large

because the value is close to zero.

Table 3 Two-level Mixed-effects multivariable logistic regression of General Practice Patient Survey respondent characteristics on Online appointment booking use in the previous 12 months (level 1, N= 1807049 respondents; level 2, N=7256 general practices)

	+ GP practice Characteristics	
	(Model 3)	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)		
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.15***	(1.12, 1.19)
Long term condition- Yes	1.67***	(1.66, 1.69)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis- Yes (REF= No)	1.19***	(1.18, 1.20)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.13***	(1.11, 1.15)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.89***	(0.88, 0.90)
Age (bands) (REF: 85+)		
16-24	3.63***	(3.48, 3.78)
25-34	4.96***	(4.78, 5.14)
35-44	4.85***	(4.68, 5.03)
45-54	4.26***	(4.12, 4.42)
55-64	3.69***	(3.57, 3.82)
65-74	3.09***	(2.99, 3.20)
75-84	1.74***	(1.68, 1.80)
Ethnicity (REF: White)		
Black	0.84***	(0.81, 0.86)
Asian	1.11***	(1.09, 1.13)
Other	0.96**	(0.92, 0.99)
Mixed	1.04	(1.00, 1.08)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.92***	(0.90, 0.93)
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.14***	(1.13, 1.16)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		
2	1.15***	(1.13, 1.17)
3	1.27***	(1.25, 1.29)
4	1.40***	(1.37, 1.42)
5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018)	1.54***	(1.51, 1.57)
2019	1.19***	(1.18, 1.20)
2020	1.52***	(1.18, 1.20) (1.50, 1.54) (1.07, 1.16)
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	1 11***	(1.07, 1.16)

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	+ GP practice Characteristics (Model 3)		
Predictors	+ GP practice (Model 3) Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	
Model summary			
ICC	0.13		

\* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\le 0.01$ , \*\*\* p-value=  $\le 0.001$ 

#### Sensitivity analyses

Results of the sensitivity analysis for online appointment booking are in the Supplementary Table 6. Most of the predictor variables in Supplementary Table 6 had similar odds ratios and/or overlapping confidence intervals when comparing the respondents from the practices with the different proportion of missing data. The difference in odds ratios when comparing respondents from the three different practice types (based on the proportion of missing data) were seen in the predictors: having a long-term condition (answering yes), age group, ethnicity, parent status, carer status, year of survey and GP rurality. The differences between the odds ratios based on the deprivation quintile for online repeat prescription were also bigger than online appointment booking in all the categories of GP practices. Most of the odds ratios that were statistically significant remained significant for the different analyses by practice size, except for the ethnicity groups including: Asian, Other and Mixed categories which may reflect the differences in ethnic representation in each of the sensitivity analyses categories.

#### Online repeat prescription ordering

Results of the two-level mixed-effects logistic regression for the online repeat prescription ordering outcome are presented in table 4. Respondents with a long-term condition, users of 5 or more medications on a regular basis and respondents with deafness or hearing loss were all more likely to use online repeat prescription ordering compared to respondents without these

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3 4	characteristics. The odds of using online repeat prescription ordering were 2.58 times greater		
5 6	(OR: 2.58, 95% CI: 2.55, 2.60) for respondents with a long-term condition compared to those		
7 8 9	without a condition.		
10 11	Black, Asian, and Mixed ethnicities had lower odds of us	ing online repeat	prescription ordering
12 13	compared to the White ethnicity.		
14 15 16	Respondents in the deprivation quintiles 4 and 5 (least de	prived) had the hi	ghest odds of using
17 18	online repeat prescription ordering compared to the most	deprived group (C	DR: 1.62, 95% CI:
19 20	1.59, 1.64) and (OR: 1.77, 95% CI: 1.74, 1.80), respectively.		
21 22 23	Respondents who completed the survey in the years 2019 and 2020 had greater odds of using		
24 25	online repeat prescription ordering compared to respondents from the survey year 2018.		
26 27	Respondents from GP practices located in an urban setting had lower odds of ordering repeat		
28 29 30	prescriptions online compared to respondents from GP practices in a rural setting.		
31 32	Model comparison:		
33 34	The ICC was 0.08 for model 3 in table 4, which also show	ved that there is sl	light evidence that
35 36 37	respondents from the same GP practices may have more s	similar results con	npared to respondents
38 39	from other GP practices.		
40 41 42	Table 4 Two-level Mixed-effects multivariable logistic         Patient Survey respondent characteristics on Online F	Repeat prescription	on ordering use in
43 44	the previous 12 months (level 1, N= 1807049 responde practices)	•	-
45 46		+ GP Practice ( (Model 3)	
47 48 49	Predictors	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval
50 51			
52	Long term condition (REF= No)		
53	Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.25***	(1.22, 1.29)
54 55	Long term condition- Yes	2.58***	(2.55, 2.60)

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	+ GP Practice (Model 3)	+ GP Practice Characteristic (Model 3)	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	95%	
		Confidence	
		Interval	
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-	. 1.26***		
Yes (REF= No)		(1.25, 1.28)	
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.02**	(1.00, 1.03)	
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.96***	(0.96, 0.97)	
Age (bands) (REF: 85+)			
16-24	1.71***	(1.64, 1.77)	
25-34	2.17***	(2.10, 2.23)	
35-44	2.69***	(2.61, 2.77)	
45-54	3.18***	(3.10, 3.28)	
55-64	3.28***	(3.20, 3.37)	
65-74	3.01***	(2.93, 3.09)	
75-84	1.68***	(1.64, 1.73)	
Ethnicity (REF: White)			
Black	0.76***	(0.74, 0.78)	
Asian	0.94***	(0.93, 0.96)	
Other	0.78***	(0.75, 0.81)	
Mixed	0.98	(0.94, 1.02)	
Parent or legal guardian to a 16-year-old or	0.95***		
younger-Yes (REF= No)		(0.94, 0.96)	
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.16***	(1.15, 1.17)	
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)			
2	1.23***	(1.21, 1.25)	
3	1.44***	(1.42, 1.46)	
4	1.62***	(1.59, 1.64)	
5 (least deprived)	1.77***	(1.74, 1.80)	
Survey year (REF= 2018)			
2019	1.18***	(1.17, 1.19)	
2020	1.46***	(1.44, 1.47)	
General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	0.88***	(0.85, 0.91)	
Model Summary			
ICC	0.08		
p-value= 0.05, ** p-value= $\leq$ 0.01, *** p-value= $\leq$	0.001		

Sensitivity analyses:

Results of the sensitivity analysis for the repeat prescription outcome are in supplementary table

7. Differences (compared to the main analysis) in odds ratios were seen for the long-term

condition (answering yes), age groups, ethnicity, being a parent, being a carer and for the

deprivation quintile. Among respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data, the least deprived group had 89% (OR: 1.89, 95% CI: 1.82-1.97) higher odds of online repeat prescription use compared to respondents from the most deprived group where this percentage was only 65% (OR: 1.65, 95% CI: 1.59-1.71) in the lowest missing data GP practice respondents. At the same time, for the online repeat prescription outcome, the difference in deprivation quintile were associated with bigger differences in the odds associated with the outcome for respondents from the highest missing data GP practices compared to the other GP practices.

### Model diagnostics:

The VIF values for all explanatory variables in our fixed-effects logistic regression models for both outcomes (online appointment booking and online repeat prescription ordering) were below the threshold of 5 (ranging from 1 to 1.8) indicating that there is no evidence of multicollinearity among the explanatory variables. In terms of model diagnostics, BIC values of each of the models (null model, model 2 and model 3) were compared to each other to make sure that the model presented is the best fit model (the model with the lowest BIC). The values of BIC for all the models for each outcome are summarised in table 5 below:

Table 5 Model diagnostics results (namely BIC: Bayesian information criterion) for both	ı
outcomes and for each of the models (null model, model 2 and model 3)	

Model	Value of BIC for the online	Value of BIC for the online
	appointment booking	repeat prescription ordering
	outcome models	outcome models
Null model	1434808	1692919
Model 2	1398822	1601232

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Model 3	1398807	1601182

# DISCUSSION

# **Principal findings**

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that indicators of increased healthcare need and socioeconomic disadvantage predicted variations in the use of two types of online services and use of these services increased over the three years studied. Contrary to our hypothesis about age, we observed different variability in the relationship between age and online services use. Respondents younger than 35 years old were not the only highest users of online services as respondents of the age groups 35-84 were all more likely to use online services compared to respondents of the age group 85 years old and older. Our findings partially confirmed our hypotheses regarding lower socioeconomic status and minority ethnicities aligning with our expectations that these respondent groups were less likely to use online services. A notable alignment with our hypothesis was observed in the relationship between online services use and long-term conditions. Respondents with long-term conditions were more likely to use online services use and long-term conditions.

# Strengths and weaknesses of the study

#### Strengths

This study used a major national survey which uses robust research methodology in its data collection process and used suitable analysis methodology for processing the data (accounting for GP practice variation in the models and accounting for missing data in the sensitivity

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analyses). The study explored online services user characteristics in England which can inform service planning and can identify patient groups who may need support using these services. We accounted for clustering in our data presenting respondent level data in which respondents' belonged to different GP practices, by using multilevel logistic regression model which is an analysis methodology that takes into account the hierarchy in the data [35]. Clustering by GP practice was important not only because respondents from the same GP practice may be more similar to each other, but patient portal functionalities and promotion of online services (such as providing training, posters, emails and reminders) to use online services may vary from one GP practice to another [36].

#### Limitations

A limitation of the study was using only complete-case data in the analyses, which risked sample bias. Respondents excluded from the analyses due to missing data presented differences in the breakdown of respondent characteristics. Therefore, we performed sensitivity to explore what kind of differences might have observed if there were no exclusions. Comparing summary statistics of the excluded sample and the sensitivity analyses showed that GP practices with more missing data were more likely to have younger age groups, greater deprivation groups, and ethnically diverse groups, all of which were associated with relatively lower odds of using online services. This introduces the possibility that some of the odd's ratios presented in the main analysis may be overestimated in the population due to missing data bias. However, although most of the estimates of effect were slightly different in the sensitivity analyses compared to the main analyses, there was no change in terms of the direction of the effects. For example, odds ratios that were larger than one in the main analysis also revealed that

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differences in online services use between the three categories of GP practices were bigger for online repeat prescription use compared to the online appointment booking use.

As with all survey-based studies, a major potential limitation of the GPPS is non-response bias. However, a study on the methodology of the GPPS, did not find evidence of non-response bias [37]. We tried to alleviate non-response bias by controlling for deprivation, ethnicity, age, and gender (which can often be associated with low-response rates as reported in a study examining GPPS non-response characteristics [37]).

# Strengths and weaknesses in relation to other studies

This study relied on self-reported online service usage which could introduce response bias [38]. A potentially better way to measure use of online appointment booking and repeat prescription ordering could be via the electronic patient portal log files. The log files automatically record patient portal activity and can serve as an objective method to examine patient portal use because these are not subject to recall bias and record the exposure prior to the outcome [3]. However, due to data unavailability of patient-level data of this kind at the time of the study, the GPPS records of online services use were used in this study in other England based studies exploring online services' use [5, 6].

# Discussing important differences in results

People from more deprived areas, and from ethnic minorities were reported to have lower uptake of patient portals in previous studies [39]. According to previous studies, deprivation and ethnicity play key roles in online services use [40-42] which were confirmed by the main analysis and sensitivity analyses in this study. A survey study from the USA suggested that respondents' ethnicity could be associated with less trust in patient portals [18]. Reduced use of online services by respondents with greater deprivation levels has been reported multiple times 

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in the literature [19]. This may be due to worse access to the internet, smart phone, and computers among individuals from more deprived areas [7, 43].

# Meaning of the study

There is evidence that online services use in England is increasing every year and it is likely to continue to be an important tool in GP practice settings. Although online services have been offered almost universally in GP practices in England since 2015, there continues to be a lack of research on the use of online services (or patient portals) in primary care [7, 44]. Understanding the needs of populations less likely to use online services may help to improve the uptake of these services and to better meet the needs of vulnerable populations which are more likely to have reduced access to healthcare services [45] in addition to online services.

According to the theory of the digital divide, [14, 15], using technologies such as patient portals may require more than just having access to a computer. Skills such as digital literacy and eHealth literacy may be essential to enable the use of these services. Lack of education is also considered a detrimental factor contributing to the digital divide [46]. While our study did not directly investigate the mechanisms of the digital divide, it provides valuable insight into the disparities that may exist in the use of online services. Factors associated with reduced use of online services, like lower socioeconomic status indicators, may relate to challenges such as limited digital skills and inadequate access to technology [13]. Understanding the specific challenges faced by different patient groups in accessing and using online services can help healthcare staff and policymakers to develop tailored strategies to bridge the digital divide [47] and to ensure fair access to online services. Further investigation, employing quantitative and qualitative approaches, can enhance our understanding of the mechanisms influencing individual technology adoption.

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We hypothesised that younger populations would be more likely to use and have access to technologies, but we could not see that pattern in the study, possibly because young people are less likely to need the healthcare system and services, such as appointment booking and repeat prescription requests. Additionally, this may be due to the complex mechanisms that may be involved in individuals opting to use online services which may be driven by social factors not included in this study.

# Possible explanations and implications for clinicians and

### policymakers

The adoption of online services by those with long-term conditions is promising and can potentially contribute to improving self-management of long-term conditions [2]. However, there is evidence that people with long-term conditions may generally be more likely to use healthcare services [48-50]. Practices should continue to encourage and support people with long-term conditions to sign up and use online services. However, it is essential that alternatives to online services continue to be provided to people who are unwilling or unable to use these services [48-50].

This study shows that online services' use is lower among people from more deprived areas and from ethnic minorities, which may increase inequities if in-person services become further out of reach. As an example, the move to telephone consultations and remote triage in GP practices amidst the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for homeless people to access care, due to not having a telephone or if having a telephone, not being able to pay for the call [51]. However, the study only interviewed 21 people experiencing homelessness and may not be representative of experience of all people under similar circumstance in England [51]. In-person access to care is seen as necessary to reach all patient groups, despite using access to technology to support

moves to increased remote consultations in the COVID-19 pandemic [51]. For this reason, it is important that practices continue to provide in-person access (e.g. for appointment booking and repeat prescriptions) to patients especially those less able to access remote services. Training GP practice staff to promote and to support the increased use of online services is already occurring in some GP practices [36] and we can continue to recommend providing training to increase use.

# Unanswered questions and future research

Further research is needed to understand low uptake of online services in some patient groups, and to clarify if this is due to barriers or due to peoples' preference. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when patients are asked to contact their GP practice remotely [52], variable access and use of the online services may have exacerbated inequities in situations where online services became the only route to access care [53]. Although this study's findings relate to the pre-COVID-19 period, the patterns in disparities may have persisted or worsened in the post-COVID-19 period amidst the move to increasing the delivery of GP services remotely. Future research could explore how remote services might affect aspects of the healthcare system such as healthcare utilisation and patients' self-management of their conditions. Our future research aim is to study patient portal use in GP practices in England using electronic health records instead of relying on individuals' self-reporting. We will explore the association between patient portal use and health outcomes and on healthcare utilisation to better understand its impact on health and the healthcare system.

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# **Ethical approval**

This study was approved by the Imperial College Research Ethics Committee, Reference number: 20IC6303. Respondents of the survey provided informed consent to take part in the research by allowing us to use their anonymised survey data, but they had the right to withdraw their consent before these data were processed.

# Author contribution

AA, GG, TB and CC created the study design, formulated the research question and finalised the study methodology. AA performed the analysis of the study. JN contributed to the introduction and discussion sections of the study. All authors reviewed and approved the submitted manuscript.

### Data sharing statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from Ipsos Mori but cannot be provided by the authors due to ethical restrictions. However, the aggregate level GPPS data are openly available in the GP Patient Survey webpage at <a href="https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/">https://www.gp-patient.co.uk/</a> [21].

# **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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# Supplementary material

Supplementary Table 1 Methods and results of the sensitivity analysis.

Supplementary Table 2. STROBE 2007 checklist of items to be included in reports of

observational studies in epidemiology.

Supplementary Table 3. The breakdown of respondents by characteristics in the total sample

received (n=2,198,821), in the complete case dataset used for the analyses in this study

(n=1,806,977) and in the excluded sample (n=439,060). Supplementary Table 4. Breakdown of

the number and proportion of respondent characteristics based on the categories of the proportion

of missing data in the GP practice.

Supplementary Table 5. Table presenting summaries of the univariate analyses for each of the outcomes.

Supplementary Table 6. Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online appointment booking in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice.

Supplementary Table 7. Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online repeat prescription ordering in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice



## **Supplementary material:** Supplementary Table 1. Methods and results of the sensitivity analysis

Methods	In the main analyses performed in this study, only complete case respondents (respondents
	that did not have any missing data for any of the variables included in the analyses) were
	included. We ran sensitivity analyses to explore the effects of excluding respondents with
	missing data. We first calculated the proportion of respondents with complete data per
	practice using the complete dataset (n=2198821) and assigned each practice a new variable
	indicating the proportion of complete case respondents in the practice. We then separated
	the complete case respondents (n=1807049) into three categories based on the proportion
	of complete case respondents in their practice. The three categories were: highest missing
	data group ( $\geq$ 75%), middle-range missing data group (26-74%), and lowest missing data
	group ( $\leq 25\%$ ). We then ran the same two-level mixed-effects models for each of the
	outcomes (online appointment booking and online repeat prescription use) separately for
	each of the three categories.
Results	The summary statistics of the sensitivity analysis groups are reported in table
	Supplementary Table 5. GPs with the highest proportion of missing data (practices with

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75% or more of respondents with missing data) had slightly higher percentage of younger age groups from 16 to 44 and they had a greater proportion of respondents from Black, Asian and Other ethnic backgrounds as well. Greater proportion or respondents from the most deprived group compared to the GPs with lower missing data. Results of the sensitivity mixed-effects regression analyses for the online appointment booking outcome is in table Supplementary Table 6. Most of the predictor variables in Supplementary Table 6 had similar odds ratios and/or overlapping confidence intervals when comparing the respondents from the practices with the different proportion of missing data. The difference in odds ratios when comparing respondents from the three different practice types (based on the proportion of missing data) were seen in the predictors: having a long-term condition (answering yes), age group, ethnicity, parent status, carer status, year of survey and GP rurality. These differences indicate that the characteristics of respondents within each type of the GPs (based on the proportion of missing data) were more similar to each other than the other type of practices. For the repeat prescription outcome (Supplementary Table 7), differences in odds ratios were also seen for the long-term condition (answering yes), age groups, ethnicity, being a parent, being a carer and for the deprivation quintile. Among the highest missing data GP

practice respondents, the least deprived group had 89% (OR: 1.89, 95% CI: 1.82-1.97)

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greater odds of online repeat prescription use compared to respondents from the mostdeprived group where this percentage was only 65% (OR: 1.65, 95% CI: 1.59-1.71) in thelowest missing data GP practice respondents. This indicates that deprivation has a largerimpact in practices with the most missing data compared to practices with the least missingdata for the online repeat prescription ordering outcome.

Sensitivity analyses results reveal that some of the estimates in this study may be attenuated if missing data/non-response respondents were present. However, although most of the estimates of effect were slightly different in the sensitivity analyses compared to the main analyses, there was no change in terms of the direction of the effects. For example, odds ratios that were larger than one in the main analyses remained to be larger than one in all three models of the sensitivity analysis. The sensitivity analysis also revealed that differences in online services between the three categories of GPs use were bigger for online repeat prescription use compared to the online appointment booking use. The differences between the odds ratios based on the deprivation quintile for online repeat prescription was also bigger than online appointment booking in all the categories of GPs indicating that socioeconomic inequities may have a larger influence on online repeat prescription ordering than online appointment booking. At the same time, for the online repeat prescription outcome, the difference in deprivation quintile were associated with

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bigger differences in the odds associated with the outcome for respondents from the highest

missing data GPs compared to the other GPs.

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		Checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies (combined)	
Section/Topic	Item #	Checklist for cohort, case-control, and cross-sectional studies (combined)       Image: Combined of the combined of th	Reported on page #
Title and abstract	1	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract $\mathbf{x}_{\mathbf{x}} \mathbf{x}_{\mathbf{x}} \mathbf{x}_{\mathbf{x}}$	1
	Į	(a) Indicate the study's design with a commonly used term in the title or the abstract to be the abstract of the abstract and balanced summary of what was done and the abstract and the abstract and balanced summary of what was done and the abstract and the abst	2
Introduction			
Background/rationale	2	Explain the scientific background and rationale for the investigation being reported	3-5
Objectives	3	State specific objectives, including any pre-specified hypotheses	4-5
Methods		trai	
Study design	4	Present key elements of study design early in the paper	5
Setting	5	Describe the setting, locations, and relevant dates, including periods of recruitment, populare, follow-up, and data collection	8
Participants	6	<ul> <li>(a) Cohort study—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants. Describe methods of follow-up</li> <li><i>Case-control study</i>—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of case ascertainment and control selection. Give the rationale for the choice of cases and controls</li> <li><i>Cross-sectional study</i>—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants</li> <li><i>Cross-sectional study</i>—Give the eligibility criteria, and the sources and methods of selection of participants</li> <li><i>Cohort study</i>—For matched studies, give matching criteria and number of exposed angunexposed <i>Case-control study</i>—For matched studies, give matching criteria and the number of controls per case</li> </ul>	7
Variables			
Data sources/ measurement	8*	For each variable of interest, give sources of data and details of methods of assessment (reasurement). Describe comparability of assessment methods if there is more than one group	6-7
Bias	9	Describe any efforts to address potential sources of bias	9 & Supplementary Table 1

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		BMJ Open BMJ Open BMJ open-20 Turnhin here the study size use arrived at	
Study size	10	Explain how the study size was arrived at	8
Quantitative variables	11	Explain how quantitative variables were handled in the analyses. If applicable, describe which groupings were chosen and why	6-7
Statistical methods	12	(a) Describe all statistical methods, including those used to control for confounding	9
	•	(b) Describe any methods used to examine subgroups and interactions	Supplementary Table 1
		(c) Explain how missing data were addressed	Supplementary Table 1
		(d) Cohort study—If applicable, explain how loss to follow-up was addressed Case-control study—If applicable, explain how matching of cases and controls was addressed Cross-sectional study—If applicable, describe analytical methods taking account of suppring strategy	
		(e) Describe any sensitivity analyses	Supplementary Table 1
Results		d choa	
Participants	13*	(a) Report numbers of individuals at each stage of study—eg numbers potentially eligible examined for eligibility, confirmed eligible, included in the study, completing follow-up, and analyzed	10
		(b) Give reasons for non-participation at each stage     i     i       (c) Consider use of a flow diagram     iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii	10
		(c) Consider use of a now diagram	-
Descriptive data	14*	(a) Give characteristics of study participants (eg demographic, clinical, social) and in structure of exposures and potential confounders	10-13
		(b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest	13 & Supplementary Table 3
		exposures and potential confounders       transmission         (b) Indicate number of participants with missing data for each variable of interest       in jop         (c) Cohort study—Summarise follow-up time (eg, average and total amount)       total amount)         interest       interest         interest       interest<	Data collection times are summarized unde study design subsection
Outcome data	15*	Cohort study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures over time <b>May</b> 10, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 20, 2	Supplementary Table 3 (check categories of survey year)
		<i>Case-control study</i> —Report numbers in each exposure category, or summary measures of exposure	Supplementary Table 3
		Cross-sectional study—Report numbers of outcome events or summary measures	13 & table 3
Main results	16	( <i>a</i> ) Give unadjusted estimates and, if applicable, confounder-adjusted estimates and their precision (eg, 95% confidence interval). Make clear which confounders were adjusted for and why they avere included	14-18, Supplementary
		(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized	Table 5Table 1
		(b) Report category boundaries when continuous variables were categorized	

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		(c) If relevant, consider translating estimates of relative risk into absolute risk for a meaningful time period	NA
Other analyses	17	Report other analyses done—eg analyses of subgroups and interactions, and sensitivity analyses	Supplementary Table 1, Supplementary Table 6-7
Discussion	•		
Key results	18	Summarise key results with reference to study objectives	20
Limitations	19	Discuss limitations of the study, taking into account sources of potential bias or impraction. Discuss both direction and magnitude of any potential bias	21-22
Interpretation	20	Give a cautious overall interpretation of results considering objectives, limitations, mole by City of analyses, results from similar studies, and other relevant evidence	23-24
Generalisability	21	Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results	23-24
Other information	•	Discuss the generalisability (external validity) of the study results	
Funding	22	Give the source of funding and the role of the funders for the present study and, if applicable, for the original study on which the present article is based	26

## Supplementary Table 3 The breakdown of respondents by characteristics in the total sample received (h=2,198,821), in the complete case dataset used for the analyses in this study (n=1,806,977) and in the excluded sample (h=4,90,060)

Characteristics	Total in the sample	Total in the complete	Total in the 🛓
	received (n=2,246,109)	case dataset	excluded 🛱 📑
		(n=1807049)	sample 👸 💡
			Total in the excluded in sample (n=439,060)
Online appointment booking in the previous			d a
12 months			similar
			ilar 🔰
No	1892841 (84.3%)	1543111 (85.4%)	349730 (7 <b>§</b> .7%
Yes	305980 (13.6%)	263938 (14.6%)	
(Missing)	47288 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	47288 (108%)
Online repeat prescription ordering in the			42042 (95% A) 47288 (168%) s. 20
previous 12 months			2025 9S.
•			at
No	1807863 (80.5%)	1467600 (81.2%)	340263 (77.5%
Yes	390958 (17.4%)	339449 (18.8%)	51509 (11.7%)
(Missing)	47288 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	47288 (10.8%)
Gender			nt
		•	G
			GEZ-LTA
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Female	1229473 (54.7%)	996544 (55.1%)	232929 (5
Male	967079 (43.1%)	810505 (44.9%)	156574 (3
(Missing)	49557 (2.2%)	0 (0.0%)	49557 (11
Age			u u
16-24	87081 (3.9%)	74381 (4.1%)	12700 (2.9
25-34	185580 (8.3%)	159806 (8.8%)	25774 (5.9
35-44	256766 (11.4%)	217687 (12.0%)	39079 (8.9
45-54	360011 (16.0%)	302285 (16.7%)	57726 (13
55-64	454900 (20.3%)	381808 (21.1%)	73092 (16
65-74	487171 (21.7%)	397999 (22.0%)	89172 (20
75-84	287533 (12.8%)	211586 (11.7%)	75947 (17
85+	91083 (4.1%)	61497 (3.4%)	29586 (6.7
(Missing)	35984 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	35984 (8.2
Ethnicity	L'O		29586 (6.7 35984 (8.2
White	1895473 (84.4%)	1567690 (86.8%)	15862 (3.6
Black	68812 (3.1%)	52950 (2.9%)	33583 (7.6
Asian	170609 (7.6%)	137026 (7.6%)	10257 (2.3 4558 (1.0%
Other	39425 (1.8%)	29168 (1.6%)	4558 (1.0%
Mixed	24773 (1.1%)	20215 (1.1%)	327783 (7
(Missing)	47017 (2.1%)	0 (0.0%)	47017 (10
Survey year			,
2018	750619 (33.4%)	612084 (33.9%)	138535 (3
2019	763244 (34.0%)	623358 (34.5%)	139886 (3
2020	732246 (32.6%)	571607 (31.6%)	160639 (3
(Missing)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Long term condition			189148 (4
No	1022671 (45.5%)	833523 (46.1%)	189148 (4
Yes	1050129 (46.8%)	923780 (51.1%)	126349 (2
Don't know/Can't say	61802 (2.8%)	49746 (2.8%)	12056 (2.7
Prefer not to say	38879 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38879 (8.9
(Missing)	72628 (3.2%)	0 (0.0%)	72628 (16
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis			289115 (6:
No	1632850 (72.7%)	1343735 (74.4%)	289115 (6

Yes	574749 (25.6%)	463314 (25.6%)	cted by copyright
(Missing)	38510 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	38510 (8 80%
Deafness or hearing loss	50510 (11770)	0 (0.070)	38510 (8.8%
No	1799633 (80.1%)	1652099 (91.4%)	147534 (39.0
Yes	179304 (8.0%)	154950 (8.6%)	24354 (5.5%)
(Missing)	267172 (11.9%)	0 (0.0%)	267172 (60.9
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or			es related to t
younger	1702011 (70.40/)	1466017 (01 10/)	216904 (78
No Yes	1782911 (79.4%)	1466017 (81.1%) 341032 (18.9%)	316894 (7
(Missing)	55275 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	66891 (152) 55275 (125)
Carer	33273 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	
No	1741536 (77.5%)	1462467 (80.9%)	279069 (6 <b>3</b> .0
Yes	410450 (18.3%)	344582 (19.1%)	65868 (15 <b>₽</b> )
(Missing)	94123 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	94123 (2194
Deprivation fifth	5 1125 (11270)	0 (0.070)	2
1- least deprived	437189 (19.5%)	338728 (18.7%)	98461 (22
2	444869 (19.8%)	353580 (19.6%)	91289 (20
3	464884 (20.7%)	376042 (20.8%)	88842 (20,29
4	461586 (20.6%)	378002 (20.9%)	83584 (1920)
5 - most deprived	435997 (19.4%)	360697 (20.0%)	75300 (17
(Missing)	1584 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	1584 (0.4%)
General practice rurality			r te
Rural	374466 (16.7%)	306200 (16.9%)	68266 (15
Urban	1871643 (83.3%)	1500849 (83.1%)	370794 (8 <b>8</b> .5
(Missing)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%) <u>č</u> e s.

Supplementary Table 4 Breakdown of the operation of missing data in the GP presented by the transmission of transmission of the transmission of transmission of the transmission of transmission of transmission of the transmission of transmissi	actice				in the categories of the	
Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents	068627 on 12 October 2023. Downloaded from http://bmjopen.bmj.com/ on May 10, 20 Erasmushogeschool cluding for uses related to text and data mining, Al training, and similar technologies.		
ro,	with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices	ober 2023. Dov Erasmushoge elated to text a		
Online services use				and		
Online appointment booking in the previous 12 months	75194(15.9%)	176193(19.4%)	55937(13.1%)	hool. data m		
Online repeat prescription use in the previous 12 months	102332(21.6%)	176193(19.4%)	60924(14.4%)	ining,		
Gender				Al t		
Female	265428 (56.0%)	503040 (55.3%)	228076 (53.8%)	/bmjop raining		
Male	208654 (44.0%)	406112 (44.7%)	195739 (46.2%)	y, and		
Age		, <i>,</i> ,		sim		
16-24	18750 (4.0%)	34473 (3.8%)	21158 (5.0%)	ilar 💆		
25-34	39537 (8.3%)	75142 (8.3%)	45127 (10.6%)	tec on		
35-44	55609 (11.7%)	103244 (11.4%)	58834 (13.9%)	May 10 hnolog		
45-54	79934 (16.9%)	149707 (16.5%)	72644 (17.1%)	), 2025 jies.		
55-64	100332 (21.2%)	194450 (21.4%)	87026 (20.5%)	2025 at Department GEZ-LTA ss.		
65-74	106927 (22.6%)	208741 (23.0%)	82331 (19.4%)	artmer		

Page 43 of 54

1 2 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
<ol> <li>11</li> <li>12</li> <li>13</li> <li>14</li> <li>15</li> <li>16</li> <li>17</li> <li>18</li> <li>19</li> <li>20</li> <li>21</li> </ol>	
20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32	
<ul> <li>33</li> <li>34</li> <li>35</li> <li>36</li> <li>37</li> <li>38</li> <li>39</li> <li>40</li> <li>41</li> <li>42</li> <li>43</li> </ul>	
44 45 46 47	

Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
75-84	56564 (11.9%)	111123	43899 (10.4%)
	50501(11.570)	(12.2%)	
85+	16429 (3.5%)	32272 (3.5%)	12796 (3.0%)
Ethnicity			
White	5027 (1.1%)	17758 (2.0%)	30165 (7.1%)
Black	16190 (3.4%)	49142 (5.4%)	71694 (16.9%)
Asian	3729 (0.8%)	10722 (1.2%)	14717 (3.5%)
Other	4175 (0.9%)	8704 (1.0%)	7336 (1.7%)
Mixed	444961	822826	299903
	(93.9%)	(90.5%)	(70.8%)
Survey year			1.
2018	166729	305514	139841
	(35.2%)	(33.6%)	(33.0%)
2019	162214	315671	145473
	(34.2%)	(34.7%)	(34.3%)
2020	145139	287967	138501
	(30.6%)	(31.7%)	(32.7%)
Long-term condition			
No	11725 (2.5%)	24207 (2.7%)	13814 (3.3%)
I don't know/ Can't answer	220575	411974	200974
	(46.5%)	(45.3%)	(47.4%)
Yes	241782	472971	209027
	(51.0%)	(52.0%)	(49.3%)

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Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
Taking five or more medication on a			
regular basis No	363720 (76.7%)	674880 (74.2%)	305135 (72.0%)
Yes	110362 (23.3%)	234272 (25.8%)	118680 (28.0%)
Deafness or hearing loss			
No	433463 (91.4%)	827757 (91.0%)	390879 (92.2%)
Yes	40619 (8.6%)	81395 (9.0%)	32936 (7.8%)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger			2
No	385230 (81.3%)	746422 (82.1%)	334365 (78.9%)
Yes	88852 (18.7%)	162730 (17.9%)	89450 (21.1%)
Carer			
No	382112 (80.6%)	732193 (80.5%)	348162 (82.1%)
Yes	91970 (19.4%)	176959 (19.5%)	75653 (17.9%)
Deprivation quintile			
1 (Most deprived)	38111 (8.0%)	146156 (16.1%)	154461 (36.4%)



Page 45 of 54

Characteristics	Respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices	Respondents from practices with 26%- 74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices	Respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data. n=423815, 2052 practices
2	64792 (13.7%)	174694	114094
		(19.2%)	(26.9%)
3	99792 (21.0%)	199586 (22.0%)	76664 (18.1%)
4	124261 (26.2%)	203142 (22.3%)	50599 (11.9%)
5 (Least deprived)	147126 (31.0%)	185574 (20.4%)	27997 (6.6%)
General practice rurality			
Rural	116101 (24.5%)	165787 (18.2%)	24312 (5.7%)
Urban	357981 (75.5%)	743365 (81.8%)	399503 (94.3%)

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		cted by copyright.	.1136/bmjopen-202	
Supplementary Table 5. Table presenting summaries of the univariate ana	lyses for each of the	=	Ň	
Summary of univariate analysis for the online appointment booking outco		ıdir	862	edictor
(1807049 respondents in 7256 practices)		or u	n 12	
Predictors Long term condition (REF= No)	Odds Ratios	S &		p
	1.10	lated	201.07 - 1.13	
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.10	0.02 te	31.07 - 1.13	<0.0
Long term condition- Yes	1.50		¥1.40 - 1.31	<0.0
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-Yes (REF= No)	1.16		1.15 - 1.17	<0.0
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	0.94	0.0 <sup>1</sup>	a 50.92 - 0.95	<0.0
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.88		B 0.87 - 0.89	<0.0
Age bands (REF: 85+)		traini	//bmj	
16-24	2.32	l training5and	2.24 - 2.41	<0.0
25-34	3.05	۹.0	2.94 - 3.15	<0.0
35-44	3.00	iia 이.05	<b>2</b> .9 - 3.11	<0.0
45-54	2.96	0. Simila Gechtologies.	May 2.87 - 3.06	<0.00
55-64	2.88	0.0 0.0	<b>10</b> 202.79 - 2.98	<0.0
65-74	2.62	0.04	8 ₽2.53 - 2.71	<0.0
	1.61	0.03	<b>Dep</b> art1.56 - 1.67	<0.0
Ethnicity (REF: White)			ment	
			nent GEZ-LTA	
			LTA	

Page 47 of 54	BMJ Open		cted by copyright, miceluding 0.00000000000000000000000000000000000	
1 2			open-2	
3 4	Black	0.81	0.0 <b>∄</b> 90.79 - 0.84	<0.001
5 6	Asian	1.10	0.0 1.12	<0.001
7 8	Other	0.94	0.02 \$0.91 - 0.97	<0.001
9 10 11	Mixed	1.11	0.02 01.07 - 1.16	<0.001
12 13	Parent or legal guardian to a 16-year-old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	1.06	0.08 1.05 - 1.07	<0.001
14 15	Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.21	0.04 ated to 121.05 - 1.07 1023: D1.2 - 1.22 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.04 0.05	<0.001
16 17	Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		wnloa escho and da	
18 19	2 3 4 5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018)	1.11	0.0 <b>4</b> · <b>4</b> 1.1 - 1.13	<0.001
20 21	3	1.19	0.00 m 1.18 - 1.21	<0.001
22 23	4	1.28	0.04 51.26 - 1.3 0.04 501.36 - 1.41	<0.001
24 25	5 (least deprived)	1.38	0.00 pp1.36 - 1.41	<0.001
26 27	Survey year (REF= 2018)		and similar 0.020 01.17 - 1.2 0.020 y 1.48 - 1.51 0.020 gie	
28 29			milar 1 1 1 1 0	0.001
30 31	2019	1.18	0.051 91.17 - 1.2	<0.001
32 33	2020	1.50	0.000 Y 1.48 - 1.51	<0.001
34 35	General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	1.07	0.0 <sup>1</sup> /2 201.03 - 1.11	<0.001
36 37			i at D	
38	Summary of univariate analysis for the repeat prescription ordering outcon	ne univariate anal	ysis with sach of the pr	edictors
40 41	(1807049 respondents in 7256 practices)		nent Q	
42 43			ent GEZ-LTA	
44 45 46	For peer review only - http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/a	about/guidelines.xhtm	•	

Page 48 of 54
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BMJ Open			.1136/bmjopen-2022-068627 .cted by copyright, including	
Predictors	Odds Ratios	SE	6/bmjopen-2022 by copyright, in	р
Long term condition (REF= No)			-068627 ing for 1.124	Î
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.21	0.02	<b>ថ្មី</b> 1.1 <b>3</b> - 1.24	<0.00
Long term condition- Yes	2.70	0.01	12 s s 2.6 8 - 2.73	<0.00
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-Yes (REF= No)	1.72	0.01	elated	<0.00
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.13	0.01	tober - 1.74 tober - 1.74 Erasmushogeschool . erated to text and data mining - 0.9	<0.00
Gender-Male (REF= Female) Age bands (REF: 85+) 16-24 25-34	1.01	0.00	gesiche desiche desiche	0.007
Age bands (REF: 85+)			aded fr bol . lata mi	
16-24	0.87	0.02	• 📮	<0.00
25-34	1.06	0.02	A training: 1.33 - 1.4	<0.00
35-44	1.37	0.02	ning1.389 - 1.4	<0.00
45-54	1.91	0.03	and similar technologies.	<0.00
55-64	2.31	0.03	nilar 2.255 - 2.37 te	<0.00
65-74	2.41	0.03	schnol 2.3 gy - 2.47	<0.00
			10, 20 logies.	
Ethnicity (REF: White)			2025 at E es.	
Black	0.66	0.01	0.68	<0.00
Asian	0.77	0.01	0.7 <b>5</b> - 0.78	<0.00
			GEZ-LTA	
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Page 49 of 54	BMJ Ope	en			.1136/bmjopen-2023.068 cted by copyright, including.	
1 2 3					open-202 opyright,	
4	Other	0	).66	0.01	<b>∃</b> 0.6 <b>3</b> - 0.68	<0.001
5 6 7	Mixed	0	0.84	0.02		<0.001
8 9	Parent or legal guardian to a 16-year-old or younger-Yes (REF=	<b>No</b> ) 0	).73	0.00	on - 0.73 for 0.72 - 0.73 Uses 1.33 related	<0.001
10 11	Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1	.32	0.01	es 11:53 Poctober 2023 Perasmus	<0.001
12 13	Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)				to nu	
14 15 16	2	1	.18	0.01		<0.001
17 18	3	1	.35	0.01	nd data - 1.37 data - 1.37	<0.001
19 20	4	1	.50	0.01	n 1.458 - 1.52	<0.001
21 22	2 3 4 5 (least deprived) Survey year (REF= 2018) 2019	1	.60	0.01	1.480 - 1.52 1.480 - 1.52 1.59 1.59 1.63 Al training, and 1.17 - 1.19	<0.001
23 24	Survey year (REF= 2018)				/bmjo	
25 26 27	2019	1	.18	0.01	g, and 1.17 - 1.19	<0.001
27 28 29	2020		.43	0.01	g, Al training, and similar technologies.	<0.001
30 31	General practice rurality-urban (REF= rural)	0	).78	0.01	F 60.736 - 0.8	<0.001
32 33					lay 10 nolog	
34						
35 36					2025 at Department GEZ-LTA эs.	
37 38					Dep	
39					artm	
40					ent	
41 42					GEZ	
43					Ξ.	
44 45 46	For peer review only - http://bmjopen.br	ıj.com/site/a	about/guio	delines.xhtml	4	

BMJ Open BMJ Open Supplementary Table 6 Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online appointment booking in the previous 12 menths outcome for each of the actoropics of CPs based on the preparties of missing data in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the projective

Predictors	Model 3, Respon practices with 22 respondents wit n=474082, 1843	5% or less h missing data	practices with 26%-74% of practices with			
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratio Book Stand	95% Confidence Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)			r.		aded bata	
Long term condition- I don't know/	1.16***		1.14***		from http://bmjopen.bm 1.16*** <b>9</b> , Al training 1.49***and	(1.10, 1.22)
Can't say	1.70***	(1.10, 1.23)	1 (0****	(1.10, 1.19)		(1.10, 1.22)
Long term condition- Yes	1.78***	(1.75, 1.81)	1.69***	(1.67, 1.72)		(1.46, 1.53)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis-Yes (REF= No)	1.19***		1.20***	07	1.20***milar technologies 1.12***	
		(1.17, 1.22)		(1.18, 1.22)	, 20 Jies	(1.17, 1.23)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes (REF= No)	1.15***	(1.11, 1.19)	1.12***	(1.09, 1.14)		(1.08, 1.16)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.88***	(0.86, 0.89)	0.88***	(0.87, 0.89)	at Department GEZ-LTA	(0.89, 0.93)
Age (REF: 85+)					1t C	

Predictors	Model 3, Respo practices with 2 respondents wi n=474082, 1843	25% or less th missing data	Model 3, Respo practices with 2 respondents wi n=909152, 3361	26%-74% of th missing data	cted by copyright Model 3, Resp practices with respondents w n=423815, 205	75% or more 75% rith missing d
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confiden Interval
16-24	3.39***	(3.14, 3.66)	3.76***	(3.55, 3.98)	3.50***# a	(3.21, 3.8)
25-34	4.69***	(4.37, 5.03)	5.17***	(4.91, 5.45)	elaster 3.50***ter 4.66***to	(4.30, 5.06
35-44	4.63***	(4.32, 4.96)	5.13***	(4.87, 5.40)	4.46*** <b>** 5</b>	(4.11, 4.83
45-54	4.28***	(4.01, 4.57)	4.51***	(4.29, 4.74)	3.75***agew	(3.46, 4.00
55-64	3.80***	(3.56, 4.05)	3.94***	(3.75, 4.13)	3.07***	(2.84, 3.32
65-74	3.27***	(3.07, 3.49)	3.32***	(3.16, 3.48)	2.35****	(2.18, 2.54
75-84	1.81***	(1.69, 1.93)	1.83***	(1.74, 1.93)	1.43*** <b>9</b> . <del>d</del>	(1.32, 1.55
Ethnicity (REF: White)			10		om ht ning,	
Black	0.75***	(0.69, 0.81)	0.83***	• (0.79, 0.87)	0.87***	(0.83, 0.90
Asian	1.04	(1.00, 1.09)	1.10***	(1.07, 1.14)	1.14***********************************	(1.10, 1.17
Other	0.86**	(0.79, 0.95)	0.92**	(0.87, 0.98)	1.01 g. g	(0.96, 1.00
Mixed	1.01	(0.93, 1.10)	1.01	(0.95, 1.07)	1.09** a	(1.02, 1.10
Parent or legal guardian to a 16- year-old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.91***	(0.89, 0.93)	0.90***	(0.88, 0.92)	0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96**** 0.96****	(0.93, 0.98
Carer-Yes	1.11***	(0.0), 0.))	1.15***	(0.00, 0.72)	1.17***	(0.93, 0.90
(REF = No)		(1.09, 1.13)		(1.13, 1.17)	1.17****00 10, 2025	(1.14, 1.19
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)					25 at Depa	
2	1.15***		1.14***		1.16*** m	
		(1.11, 1.20)		(1.12, 1.17)	ent	(1.13, 1.19

Page	52 of	54
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	381.5, 2052 practicesRatios95%gConfidence
$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	a d Interval
4 1.38*** (1.33, 1.44) 1.40*** (1.37, 1.43) 1.36*	**************************************
	**************************************
5 (least deprived) 1.54*** 1.52*** 1.52*** 1.53*	**************************************
Survey year (REF= 2018)	**n · - (1.22, 1.28)
2019 1.16*** (1.14, 1.18) 1.18*** (1.17, 1.20) 1.25*	
2020 1.46*** (1.43, 1.49) 1.52*** (1.50, 1.54) 1.61*	** <b>1</b> (1.57, 1.65)
General practice rurality-Urban (REF= Rural)         1.22***         (1.10, 1.23)         1.11***         1.10	<b>G</b> , <b>A</b> (0.97, 1.24)
Model summary	
Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC)0.130.120.13	n.bmj.com
* p-value= 0.05, ** p-value= $\leq 0.01$ , *** p-value= $\leq 0.001$	n.bmj.com/ on May 10, 20 and similar technologies.
	2025 at Department GEZ-LTA эs.

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Page	53	of	54
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 BMJ Open BMJ Open Supplementary Table 7 Results of model 3 of the sensitivity analysis of the online repeat prescription of dering in the previous 12 months outcome for each of the categories of GPs based on the proportion of missing data in the practice

Predictors	practices with	with missing data	practices with respondents data n=9091	pondents from th 26%-74% of with missing 52, 3361	Model 3, respondents from practices with 75% or more respondents with missing data $\vec{n} = 423815, 2052$	
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	practices Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Dodo at a tan ining 2.24	95% Confidence Interval
Long term condition (REF= No)		0			vnload eschoo and dat	
Long term condition- I don't know/ Can't say	1.25***	(1.18, 1.32)	1.25***	(1.20, 1.30)	1.24************************************	(1.17, 1.31)
Long term condition- Yes	2.71***	(2.66, 2.75)	2.56***	(2.52, 2.59)	2.42***	(2.37, 2.47)
Taking five or more medication on a regular basis- Yes (REF= No)	1.26***	(1.24, 1.29)	1.26***	(1.24, 1.28)	1. training, and simil	(1.26, 1.32)
Deafness or hearing loss-Yes	1.02		1.02			
$\frac{(\text{REF}=\text{No})}{(\text{REF}=\text{No})}$	0.96***	(1.00, 1.05)	0.96***	(1.00, 1.04)		(0.98, 1.04)
Gender-Male (REF= Female)	0.96***	(0.94, 0.97)	0.96***	(0.95, 0.97)	0.948*** on I	(0.96, 1.00)
Age (REF: 85+) 16-24	1.64***	(1.53, 1.75)	1.76***	(1.67, 1.85)	1.62*3	(1.50, 1.76)
25-34	2.16***	(1.33, 1.73) (2.04, 2.29)	2.22***	(1.07, 1.83) (2.13, 2.32)	1.88***	$(1.50, 1.76) \\(1.85, 2.13)$
35-44	2.67***	(2.52, 2.82)	2.22***	(2.70, 2.94)	2.37****	(2.21, 2.54)
45-54	3.25***	(3.09, 3.42)	3.29***	(3.16, 3.42)	2.82***	(2.21, 2.54) (2.65, 3.01)
55-64	3.35***	(3.18, 3.52)	3.43***	(3.31, 3.56)	2.81*	(2.64, 3.00)
65-74	3.11***	(2.97, 3.27)	3.15***	(3.03, 3.27)	2.48**	(2.33, 2.64)
75-84	1.73***	(1.65, 1.82)	1.75***	(1.68, 1.82)	1.43**	(1.34, 1.53)
Ethnicity (REF: White)					Ter Ter	

Predictors	Model 3, respondents from practices with 25% or less respondents with missing data n=474082, 1843 practices		Model 3, respondents from practices with 26%-74% of respondents with missing data n=909152, 3361 practices		Cted til by copyright opyright Model 3, respondents from practises with 75% or mon respondents with missing data. $\vec{p}=423815, 2052$ practices	
	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	Odds Ratios	95% Confidence Interval	October Ratiose Ratierassmu 0.80	95% Confidence Interval
Black	0.77***	(0.71, 0.84)	0.73***	(0.70, 0.77)	0.8138	(0.77, 0.84)
Asian	0.88***	(0.84, 0.92)	0.94***	(0.91, 0.97)	1.05 5.	(0.98, 1.04)
Other	0.79***	(0.71, 0.87)	0.76***	(0.72, 0.81)	0.824	(0.77, 0.86)
Mixed	0.96	(0.89, 1.05)	0.98	(0.93, 1.05)		(0.92, 1.07)
Parent or legal guardian to a 16 year old or younger-Yes (REF= No)	0.93***	(0.91, 0.96)	0.94***	(0.92, 0.96)	0.4 0.4 0.4 0.4 0.4 0.4 0.4 0.4 0.4 0.4	(0.96, 1.02)
Carer-Yes (REF= No)	1.13***	(1.11, 1.16)	1.15***	(1.14, 1.17)	1.19**	(1.17, 1.22)
Deprivation quintile (REF: 1- Most deprived)		C	Vi		1.22 Al traini	
2	1.21***	(1.17, 1.26)	1.22***	(1.19, 1.25)	1.2 ************************************	(1.19, 1.26)
3	1.37***	(1.32, 1.42)	1.43***	(1.40, 1.46)	1.43*2	(1.39, 1.47)
4	1.54***	(1.48, 1.59)	1.59***	(1.55, 1.62)	1 🗗 * 😽	(1.62, 1.73)
5 (least deprived)	1.65***	(1.59, 1.71)	1.74***	(1.70, 1.78)	1.89***	(1.82, 1.97)
Survey year (REF= 2018)					ech	
2019	1.16***	(1.13, 1.18)	1.17***	(1.15, 1.19)	1.26*	(1.24, 1.29)
2020	1.40***	(1.38, 1.43)	1.46***	(1.44, 1.48)	1. <b>9</b>	(1.51, 1.58)
General practice rurality- Urban (REF= Rural)	0.94**	(0.89, 0.99)	0.90***	(0.87, 0.94)	0.97 2025 at	(0.88, 1.07)
Model summary						
Interclass correlation coefficient (ICC)	0.07		0.07		0.08 epartment	

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 $\mathcal{J} = \leq 0.00 \, .$ \* p-value= 0.05, \*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* p-value=  $\leq 0.001$ For peer review only - http://bmjopen.bmj.com/site/about/guidelines.xhtml