

General Dental Council Patient and Public Survey 2017

Topline Results

- This document details results from an Ipsos MORI omnibus survey conducted with 1232 adults aged 15 and over in the United Kingdom between 31 March to 9 April 2017.
- Booster interviews were carried out to ensure at least 100 interviews each in Wales and Northern Ireland.
- All respondents were interviewed face-to-face, in their homes.
- Similar surveys took place between 27 November and 10 December 2015, 7 and 20 November 2014, 27 September and 7 October 2013, 31 August and 16 September 2012, and between 8 April and 17 April 2011. Data from questions that were also asked in those surveys are included in this document.
- Results are taken from the 2017 survey unless otherwise stated.
- Results are based on all respondents unless otherwise stated (1232 in 2017, 1259 in 2015, 1640 in 2014, 1603 in 2013, 1609 in 2012 and 1563 in 2011).
- The 2017, 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012 data is weighted to the known population profile for the United Kingdom.
- Respondents were asked to choose one answer code for each question unless otherwise stated.
- Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to respondents being able to give multiple responses to a question or computer rounding.
- An asterisk (*) indicates a percentage of less than 0.5% but greater than zero.
- At questions GD14, GD15 and GD16 only those 'other (please specify)' answers which 2% or more participants mentioned are included in this topline. For answers which 1% or fewer participants mentioned, please refer to the full data tables.
- Findings from the 2017 survey highlighted in yellow are significantly different to when the question was last asked.

Statistical Significance

It should be remembered that a sample and not the entire population of adults aged 15 and over living in the United Kingdom has been interviewed. Consequently, all results are subject to potential sampling tolerances (or margins of error), which means that not all differences between results are statistically significant. For example, for a question where 50% of the people in a weighted sample of 1232 respond with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary more than plus or minus three percentage points from a census of the entire population (using the same procedures).

Indications of approximate sampling tolerances for this survey are provided in the following table. As shown, sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample and the size of the percentage results (the bigger the sample, the closer the result is likely to be to the result that would be obtained if the entire population was asked the same question).

This survey used a quota sampling approach. Strictly speaking the tolerances applied here apply only to random samples with an equivalent design effect. In practice, good quality quota sampling has been found to be as accurate.

Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels			
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
Size of sample on which survey result is based	±	±	±
100 interviews	6	9	10
200 interviews	4	6	7
300 interviews	3	5	6
400 interviews	3	5	5
500 interviews	3	4	4
600 interviews	2	4	4
700 interviews	2	3	4
800 interviews	2	3	4
900 interviews	2	3	3
1232 interviews	2	3	3
1259 interviews	2	3	3
1640 interviews	2	2	2
1603 interviews	2	2	2
1609 interviews	2	2	2
1563 interviews	2	2	3

Different groups within a sample (e.g. men and women) may have different results for the same question. A difference has to be of a certain size in order to be statistically significant though. To test if a difference in results between two sub-groups within a sample is statistically significant one, at the 95% confidence interval, the differences between the two results must be greater than the values provided in the table below. Again, strictly speaking the sampling tolerances shown here apply only to random samples with an equivalent design effect. In practice, good quality quota sampling has been found to be as accurate.

Differences required for significance at or near these percentages			
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
Size of sample on which survey result is based	±	±	±
100 and 100	8	13	14
100 and 200	7	11	12
100 and 300	7	10	11
100 and 400	7	10	11
100 and 500	7	10	11
200 and 200	7	10	11
200 and 300	5	8	9
200 and 400	5	8	9
200 and 500	5	8	8
300 and 300	5	7	8
300 and 400	5	7	8
300 and 500	4	7	7
400 and 400	4	6	7
400 and 500	4	6	7
500 and 500	4	6	6
1232 and 1259 (2017 and 2015 surveys)	2	4	4
1259 and 1640 (2015 and 2014 surveys)	2	3	4
1640 and 1603 (2014 and 2013 surveys)	2	3	3
1603 and 1609 (2013 and 2012 surveys)	2	3	4
1603 and 1563 (2013 and 2011 surveys)	2	3	4
1609 and 1563 (2012 and 2011 surveys)	2	3	4

Use of Dentists and Dental Care Professionals

GD01 When was the last time you went to the dentist?

	2017	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
	%	%	%	%	%	%
In the last 6 months	54	54	50	51	50	53
In the last 7-12 months	15	15	14	15	16	12
In the last 1-2 years	10	9	10	10	10	10
More than 2 years ago	13	11	13	11	10	15
I used to go to the dentist but I don't any more	5	6	8	9	8	7
I have never been to the dentist	2	3	5	4	7	3
Don't know	*	*	*	*	1	N/A

GD02 On average, how often do you go to the dentist?

Base: People who go to the dentist: 2017 (1148); 2015 (1125); 2014 (1422); 2013 (1376); 2012 (1320)

	2017	2015	2014	2013	2012
	%	%	%	%	%
Once every six months	50	56	53	54	52
Once a year	27	24	26	24	27
Once every two years	9	8	6	9	8
Less than once every two years	14	12	15	13	12
Don't know	*	0	*	*	*

GD03 And how long have you been with your current dentist or dental practice?

Base: People who go to the dentist: 2017 (1148); 2015 (1125); 2014 (1422); 2013 (1376); 2012 (1320)

	2017	2015	2014	2013	2012
	%	%	%	%	%
One year or less	11	10	9	11	14
Over one year, up to two years	10	7	9	9	13
Over two years, up to five years	20	20	23	20	22
Over five years, up to 10 years	19	19	18	19	18
Over 10 years, up to 15 years	13	16	12	12	11
Over 15 years, up to 20 years	7	8	9	9	7
Over 20 years	17	18	18	18	14
Don't know	3	2	2	2	1

GD04 **As you're probably aware, dental care is available both through the NHS and privately. Sometimes during one visit to the dentist, you may even have a combination of NHS and private treatment.**

Thinking about the last time you visited your dentist or dental practice, which of these options best describes the type of care you think you received?

Base: People who go to the dentist at least once every two years: 2017 (997); 2015 (982); 2014 (1216); 2013 (1188); 2012 (1145)

	2017 %	2015 %	2014 %	2013 %	2012 %
NHS dental care that I paid for	47	45	45	48	45
NHS dental care that was free	22	25	26	24	31
A mixture of NHS dental care and private dental care in the UK*	10	6	7	6	5
Private dental care only in the UK	18	19	19	20	18
I had treatment abroad	2	2	1	1	1
I'm not sure what type of care I received	2	2	1	1	*

*In 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012, the answer code was worded: 'NHS dental care and additional private dental care in the UK.'

Satisfaction with Dental Care

GD05 **Now thinking about your own experience, how satisfied or otherwise are you with your dental care or treatment?**

Base: People who go to the dentist at least once a year: 2017 (898); 2015 (898); 2014 (1129); 2013 (1063)

	2017 %	2015 %	2014 %	2013 %
Very satisfied	67	68	62	61
Fairly satisfied	29	28	34	35
Fairly dissatisfied	2	3	2	2
Very dissatisfied	2	1	1	1
Don't know	*	*	*	*

Regulation of Dental Professionals

The following questions will ask you about your views on the regulation of different types of services. By 'regulation' we mean where there is a set of rules that govern behaviour, actions and conduct, and where action may be taken if these rules aren't met.

GD06 **Now thinking about healthcare generally (and not just dental care), how confident, if at all, are you that regulation of this works effectively?***

	2017 %	2015 %	2014 %	2013 %	2012 %
Very confident	24	20	17	14	14
Fairly confident	54	56	58	57	58
Not very confident	16	16	16	20	17
Not at all confident	3	4	4	4	6
Don't know	3	4	6	5	6

*In 2015, 2014 and 2013 the question was worded: 'Now thinking about healthcare, how confident, if at all, are you that regulation of this works effectively?' In 2012, the question was worded: 'How confident, if at all, are you that healthcare in general works effectively?'

GD07 Which of the following best describes how aware you were of the General Dental Council before this survey?

	2017 %	2015 %	2014 %	2013 %	2012 %	2011 %
I had definitely heard of the General Dental Council before	24	20	17	15	20	10
I think I had heard of the General Dental Council before	15	18	16	27	21	15
I had not heard of the General Dental Council before	61	62	65	58	57	70
Not sure	*	*	1	1	2	5

In 2012 and 2011, the answer codes were worded: 'I have definitely heard of the General Dental Council before', 'I think I have heard of the General Dental Council before', and 'I have not heard of the General Dental Council before'.

GD08 How confident, if at all, are you that the General Dental Council is regulating dentists and dental care professionals effectively?

Base: People who have heard of the General Dental Council before: 2017 (492); 2015 (465); 2014 (558); 2013 (644); 2012 (602)

	2017 %	2015 %	2014 %	2013 %	2012 %
Very confident	20	14	14	15	12
Fairly confident	62	61	61	62	66
Not very confident	9	9	12	16	13
Not at all confident	1	2	1	1	3
Don't know	7	14	11	5	6

Complaints

GD09 Have you ever complained about a dental professional? This includes making a complaint to staff at your dental practice, including to a receptionist.

Base: People who have been to a dentist at some point: 2017 (1209); 2015 (1209); 2014 (1564); 2013 (1524); 2012 (1464)

	2017 %	2015 %	2014 %	2013 %	2012 %
Yes	5	4	2	4	3
No	95	96	97	96	95
Don't know	*	0	*	*	1
Prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	1

In 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012 the question was worded: 'Have you ever complained about a dental professional?'

GD10 Have you ever considered complaining about a dental professional?

Base: People who have not, don't know or prefer not to say if they have complained about a dental professional: 2017 (1149); 2015 (1156); 2014 (1523); 2013 (1467); 2012 (1422)

	2017 %	2015 %	2014 %	2013 %	2012 %
Yes	8	8	5	8	5
No	92	92	95	92	93
Don't know	*	0	*	*	1
Prefer not to say	0	0	0	0	1

GD11 Thinking about the most recent time you complained or considered complaining, what type of dental professional did you complain or consider complaining about?

Multi-code question except for 'Don't know/can't remember' answer code*

Base: People who have complained or considered complaining about a dental professional: 2017 (142); 2015 (142); 2014 (119); 2012 (116)

	2017 %	2015 %	2014 %	2012 %
Dentist	82	89	83	83
Receptionist	8	*	1	7
Orthodontic Therapist	3	4	6	2
Dental Hygienist	2	4	3	1
Dental Technician	2	2	1	3
Clinical Dental Technician	2	1	2	3
Dental Nurse	1	1	2	1
Dental Therapist	1	0	1	0
Don't know/can't remember	*	0	1	0

*In 2017 participants could select more than one answer; in 2015, 2014 and 2012 participants could only select one answer.

GD12 Thinking about the most recent time you complained or considered complaining, when was this?

Base: People who have complained or considered complaining about a dental professional: 2017 (142); 2014 (119); 2012 (116)

	2017 %	2014 %	2012 %
Within the last six months	10	13	11
Within the last year	14	9	16
Within the last two years	12	18	18
Within the last five years	16	18	14
More than five years ago	48	42	41
Don't know / Can't remember	0	0	0

GD13 Thinking about the most recent time you complained or considered complaining, who did you complain or consider complaining to?

Multi-code question except for 'I wasn't sure who to complain to' and 'Don't know' answer codes

Base: People who have complained or considered complaining about a dental professional: 2017 (142); 2014 (119); 2013 (165); 2012 (116)

	2017 %	2014 %	2013 %	2012 %
The practice where the treatment was carried out	48	40	41	37
The General Dental Council	7	4	9	10
The NHS	7	6	7	3
Trading Standards	3	3	2	1
The Dental Complaints Service	2	7	4	7
A Health Ombudsman	2	0	2	4
The Care Quality Commission	0	0	1	1
Other (please specify)	3	5	9	1
I wasn't sure who to complain to	31	41	27	32
Don't know	4	1	2	8

GD14 **You said you considered making a complaint about <INSERT RESPONSE FROM GD11>. What prevented you from complaining? Please select the top three reasons from the following list.****

Multi-code question (up to three options) except for 'Don't know/can't remember' answer code

Base: *People who have considered complaining about a dental professional: 2017 (82)*; 2014 (78)*; 2012 (74)**

	2017 %	2014 %	2012 %
I didn't know where to start	33	35	29
I didn't have the time	24	22	19
I didn't believe that the matter would be investigated	14	12	20
I changed dental practice	13	N/A	N/A
I didn't think that the issue would get a satisfactory response	13	N/A	N/A
I didn't want to confront the dental professional as I'll have to continue seeing them in the future	10	12	10
The process for complaining is too long-winded	8	7	4
I changed dental professional	8	N/A	N/A
I prefer to talk to someone face-to-face about my concerns rather than to go through a formal complaints process	3	7	7
I was worried that it might negatively impact on the dental professional's career	3	N/A	N/A
I was afraid the practice would refuse to treat me in future	1	N/A	N/A
The opening hours of the complaints service were not convenient for me	0	0	3
I didn't understand the information that was given to me or that I found out about how to complain	0	4	3
I thought that the issue was too serious to be dealt with at the practice	0	N/A	N/A
I didn't know who or where to go to for information on how to complain	N/A	20	26
I changed dentist	N/A	3	N/A
Other (please specify)	7	11	5
I didn't think the issue was serious enough / these things can happen	7	N/A	N/A
Too much hassle / I don't like to complain	3	N/A	N/A
Don't know / Can't remember	0	1	4

* The small base sizes means comparison of figures and trends is indicative only.

**In 2014 and 2012 the question was worded: 'You said you considered making a complaint about a dental professional. What prevented you from complaining? Please select the top three reasons from the following list.'

GD15 **If you did want to make a complaint, which of the following would be the most useful way for you to find out how or where to complain to?**

Multi-code question except for 'Don't know' and 'None of these' answer codes

Base: People who have not, don't know or prefer not to say if they have complained about a dental professional: 2017 (1149)

	2017 %
Online	59
Browsing the internet (e.g. using Google or another search engine)	36
My dental practice's website	19
The General Dental Council website	12
Via social media e.g. Facebook or Twitter	2
At my dental practice	39
The receptionist	29
Leaflets	6
Posters	4
Electronic information screens	4
At my GP practice	32
The receptionist	22
Leaflets	7
Posters	4
Electronic information screens	4
Other	13
Citizens advice/a Citizens Advice Bureau	9
Other (please specify)	1
None of these	7
Don't know	2

GD16 **What, if anything, would concern you about making a complaint?**

Multi-code question except for 'I would not have any concerns' and 'Don't know' answer codes

Base: People who have not, don't know or prefer not to say if they have complained about a dental professional: 2017 (1149)

	2017 %
I would be worried in case I would have to continue seeing the dental professional in the future	14
I would be afraid the practice would refuse to treat me in future	11
I wouldn't know where to start	9
I would be worried that the issue would not get a satisfactory response	9
Other (please specify)	1
I would not have any concerns	56
Don't know	1

GD17 **In some cases, patients cannot find the right organisation to investigate their complaint. If this happened to you, which of the following, if any, would you want to happen?**

	2017 %
The organisation I complained to should pass the complaint to the appropriate organisation to investigate it and let me know that they have done so	61
The organisation I complained to should pass the complaint back to me so that I can decide what I want to do next	28
Something else (please specify)	2
The organisation should advise me what to do / advise me who to send the complaint to	1
Don't know	6
None of these	2

Treatment Expectations

GD18 Which of the following, if any, would be most important to you when receiving treatment from a dental professional?

Multi-code question (up to three options) except for 'Don't know' and 'None of these' answer codes

	2017 %
The cleanliness and hygiene of the dental practice	69
The quality of care provided by the dental professional	64
The dental professional's level of experience	43
The dental professional's behaviour during appointments	33
The dental professional's communication skills	25
The dental practice's approach to patient confidentiality	13
The dental professional's behaviour in their personal time	7
None of these	1
Don't know	1

GD19 Which, if any, of these do you think it is important for you to be told before treatment starts?

Multi-code question (up to three options) except for 'Don't know' and 'None of these' answer codes

	2017 %
The cost of the treatment	74
A description of the planned treatment	68
How long the treatment will take	55
The dental professional's level of experience	22
The standards of care dental professionals are expected to meet	18
How to give positive and negative feedback about dental professionals	4
The complaints procedure	4
None of these	1
Don't know	1

Regulatory Action

GD20 The dental regulator, the General Dental Council, is able to take a range of actions against dental professionals in cases of poor care or wrongdoing. I am going to read out a series of situations where a dentist has not acted professionally. For each of these situations, please tell me what you think would be the most appropriate action, if any, for the dental regulator to take against the dentist?

	2017 %
<u>A dentist posts racist comments on their personal Facebook page</u>	
No action	13
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council’s disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions	26
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional’s registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve	12
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed	28
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional’s name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK	19
Don’t know	3
<u>A dentist accidentally prescribes the wrong medication to a patient, and there are serious side effects leading to the patient being admitted to hospital</u>	
No action	3
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council’s disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions	8
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional’s registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve	23
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed	42
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional’s name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK	21
Don’t know	2
<u>A dentist is charged for drunk and disorderly behaviour on a night out</u>	
No action	42
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council’s disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions	26
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional’s registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve	10
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed	13
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional’s name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK	6
Don’t know	2

	%
<u>A dentist removes the wrong tooth</u>	
No action	3
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council's disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions	14
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional's registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve	31
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed	36
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional's name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK	13
Don't know	2
<u>A dentist gives a patient a rude response to a complaint the patient has made about them</u>	
No action	7
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council's disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions	52
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional's registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve	21
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed	14
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional's name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK	4
Don't know	2

GD21 The dental regulator, the General Dental Council, is able to take a range of actions against dental professionals in cases of poor care or wrongdoing. I am going to read out a series of situations where a dental nurse has not acted professionally. For each of these situations, please tell me what you think would be the most appropriate action, if any, for the dental regulator to take against the dental nurse?

2017
%

<u>A dental nurse posts racist comments on their personal Facebook page</u>		
	No action	15
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council’s disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions		28
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional’s registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve		12
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed		24
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional’s name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK		17
	Don’t know	3
<u>A dental nurse accidentally gives the wrong medication to a patient, and there are serious side effects leading to the patient being admitted to hospital</u>		
	No action	4
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council’s disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions		10
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional’s registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve		27
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed		38
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional’s name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK		18
	Don’t know	2
<u>A dentist nurse is charged for drunk and disorderly behaviour on a night out</u>		
	No action	47
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council’s disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions		26
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional’s registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve		8
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed		12
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional’s name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK		5
	Don’t know	2

	%
<u>A dental nurse reads notes out wrong and, as a result, a dentist removes the wrong tooth</u>	
No action	5
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council’s disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions	19
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional’s registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve	35
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed	30
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional’s name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK	9
Don’t know	2
<u>A dental nurse gives a patient a rude response to a complaint the patient has made about them</u>	
No action	8
Reprimand – this is a statement of the General Dental Council’s disapproval, but the dental professional is still fit to practise with no restrictions	56
Conditions – this is where restrictions are placed on the dental professional’s registration for a set amount of time, for example that they must take further training and provide evidence to prove that they are taking steps to improve	19
Suspension – this means that the person cannot work as a dental professional for a set period of time, but may return to work after the suspension is completed	12
Strike off register – this is the most serious sanction as it removes a dental professional’s name from the register. This means that they can no longer work in dentistry in the UK	3
Don’t know	2

Re-contacting Respondents for Future Research

GD22 **Both Ipsos MORI and the General Dental Council may wish to carry out some further follow up research about this subject within the next 12 months. Would you be willing for us, Ipsos MORI, and The General Dental Council to securely keep hold of your contact details for this period so that either organisation can invite you to take part in the research? Please be assured that your responses to today’s survey will remain confidential to Ipsos MORI, and that both organisations would securely delete any re-contact details you agree to provide here after 12 months, unless you agree otherwise during the follow up research.**

	%
Yes	41
No	59

Demographics

Gender

		%
Male		49
Female		51

Age

		%
15-24		15
25-34		16
35-44		16
45-54		17
55-64		14
65+		22

Social grade

		%
A		4
B		23
C1		28
C2		21
D		15
E		9

Marital status

		%
Married/living as		54
Single		30
Widowed/divorced/separated		17

Working status

		%
Working		56
Not working		44

Occupation

		%
Full-time		37
Part-time		11
Self-employed		8
Not working – housewife		5
Still in education		8
Unemployed		3
Retired		24
Other		4

Children in household

	Yes	%
		29
	No	71

Children's ages
Multi-code question

	%
Aged 0-3	12
Aged 4-5	7
Aged 6-9	10
Aged 10-15	12
None aged under 16	71

Location

	%
England	73
Northern Ireland	4
Scotland	15
Wales	8

Ethnicity

	%
White	88
Non-white	12