National Dental Health Report 2015
Understanding patients perspective of dentistry in the UK
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Introduction

Understanding Patients Perspective of Dentistry in the UK

Oasis Dental Care is the leading provider of private dentistry in the UK and Ireland and a major provider of NHS dental care, upholding exceptional clinical standards and providing quality dental care to each and every one of our patients.

We operate over 300 practices across the UK and Ireland, with over 1,400 dentists and therapists and more than 3,000 support staff, delivering quality dentistry to more than 2.1 million patients.

This report examines perceptions of dentistry in the UK - not in respect of Oasis Dental Care practices but in relation to all dental care practices across the UK, both NHS and private. This enables us to present a clear picture of the state of UK dentistry in 2015, with insights straight from the people who matter - the patients.
Key Findings

Key findings of this year’s report into the state of UK-wide dentistry are:

- **37%** of UK adults who have a dentist say they have had the same dentist for longer than ten years.

- **38%** of UK adults have carried out DIY dentistry and of those a quarter gave high treatment costs as a motivator saying it was cheaper to do it themselves.

- **45-54 year olds** use emergency appointments the most - **18%**.

- Of those UK adults who have been to a dentist, the fear of needing further dental procedures scares people most.

About our research:

The independent research for the Oasis Dental Care National Dental Health Report 2015 was carried out for Oasis Dental Care by YouGov.

The report took place between 3rd and 4th February 2015 among a sample of 2,133 adults aged 18 and over. The research was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).
2015’s online survey found that 16% of people don’t have a dentist. Although the number of people without a dentist is relatively low, this figure demonstrates that there are still improvements to be made to encourage everyone to prioritise their oral health. One barrier for people going to the dentist could be attributed to convenience when it comes to opening hours.

Whilst almost half of UK adults who have been to the dentist (47%) say they can usually get an appointment quickly and at a time that’s convenient for them, this isn’t the case across the board. Only 32% of 25-34 year olds felt that they could usually get a quick and convenient appointment when they call. This is in stark contrast to those aged 55 plus, with 62% of this age group saying the same. At Oasis Dental Care, we feel this figure perhaps reflects the busy lifestyles of the younger generation, as modern day commitments may affect their ability to get a convenient appointment.
Chapter One  Dental Convenience

Our report demonstrated that Northern Ireland dental surgeries appear to offer the quickest and most convenient appointments in the UK, with 68% of people from this area saying they can usually get a quick appointment at a time convenient for them.

Dental surgeries in Yorkshire and the Humber are lagging behind the rest of the UK in this respect, with 1 in 10 people from the region saying they usually have to wait a long time to get an appointment - and even then it’s not convenient for them.

Reasonable prices (14%) and convenient opening hours (13%) were also reasons given for choosing a particular practice.

52% say location was an influencing factor when they chose their dental practice.
As a leading provider of dental care in the UK, Oasis Dental Care are constantly working to improve the accessibility of dental services throughout the United Kingdom, whether that’s working with the government on new services or opening up more practices to ensure people can get the treatment they need quickly, efficiently and at a time convenient to them.
Chapter Two

Patient loyalty

Patient loyalty is high across the UK with over a third (37%) of patients having been with their current dentist for over 10 years.

Generally, when asked their reasons for last switching dentist, the top answer was convenience: as a result of moving house / area (28%), or to a more convenient practice (e.g. one closer to their place of work) (11%).

Women are more likely than men to change dentists due to being unhappy with the dental treatment they received (11% compared to 7%). The hunt for lower-cost treatment motivated almost 1 in 10 people (9%) aged 35-44 to switch dentists, while this was less of an influencing factor for those in both the older and younger age brackets.

These statistics suggest that notions of loyalty could be being phased out by the UK public’s desire to be more selective, as people are seeking high quality care at a better price, and at times and locations convenient to them.
Chapter Three

Timeliness

Timeliness appears to be an *issue for many patients*, with only slightly over *1 in 10* people saying their appointments usually start on time (*12%*), although the majority of delays tend to be minor, with almost a quarter of people in the UK who have been to the dentist (*24%*) saying their appointments start 1 to 5 minutes late and a further quarter (*24%*) saying they are 6-10 minutes late.

**KEY FINDINGS**

In terms of timeliness in the UK’s dental industry, **London** is leading the way with the most prompt dentists in the UK, with *17%* of people saying their appointments start on time.

**Wales, Scotland** and the **south east** aren’t far behind, with *15%* of people in each region saying their dental appointments start on time.

Despite offering the most convenient appointments, **Northern Ireland** dental surgeries appear to be the worst at time keeping, with *14%* of people from the region saying their appointments start on average *16 to 30 minutes* late.
Chapter Four

Appointment Frequency

Half of UK residents (50%) said they attended an appointment with the dentist in the last six months - with women (53%) being slightly more likely than men (47%) to be in this bracket. Patients should go to the dentist regularly as these regular appointments accommodate preventative dentistry, where any problems can be picked up and addressed early, helping to avoid the need for costly treatment at a later stage.

50% of UK residents said they have been to the dentist in the last six months.

People in the South of England are more likely to have visited their dentist in the last 6 months (54%) compared to 46% in the North.

A further 17% of UK adults say their last visit to the dentist was over six months ago but within the last year.
Chapter Four Appointment Frequency

All over the UK, men are more likely to have left it longer since their last visit to the dentist.

Worryingly, 6% of men say their last visit was longer than five years ago but within the last ten years (compared to 4% of women) and 7% of men say it was longer than ten years ago (compared to just 4% of women).
Our report examined the reasons why people last visited their dentist. The most common reason was for a general check-up (64%).

Appointments for planned clinical treatments such as fillings were only marginally more common than emergency appointments - 15% compared to 12% - emphasising the range of treatments people rely on their dentists for.

Women were slightly more likely to have last visited their dentist for an emergency appointment than men (13% compared to 11%)

and people aged 45-54 were the most likely of all ages to have attended an emergency appointment last (18%).

KEY FINDINGS

Just under a fifth (18%) of people in the West Midlands said their last visit was an emergency appointment - the highest figure across the UK.

The report also indicated a rise in interest in elective treatments such as those performed for cosmetic purposes. Interest in treatments such as whitening and adult orthodontics is increasing, perhaps due to the advance in technology in these areas. Adult orthodontics now includes a range of options, such as invisible and discreet braces, while teeth-whitening is now available to do at home.
Chapter Six

General Check-ups

61% of UK adults who have ever been to the dentist say they stay on top of their oral hygiene by going for regular check-ups (at least once every 6-12 months).

The East Midlands takes dental hygiene more seriously than the rest of England - the report suggests - with 74% of its residents saying they have regular check-ups.

When it comes to dental hygiene, having regular check-ups can save a lot of time and money in the future.

However, 16% said they don’t regularly go for check-ups, they generally only visit the dentist in an emergency - with those in the 25-34 age group being the most likely to only visit in an emergency (25%).

When you regularly visit the dentist, any problems you may encounter can be attended to much quicker, ensuring you maintain proper dental hygiene. To make sure this is looked after, you should visit your dentist at least every six months to two years.
Chapter Seven

Fear of the Dentist

A third (33%) of people in the UK say they usually feel scared before a visit to the dentist.

38%

of 25-34 year olds who have ever been to the dentist said that they are scared at the thought of potentially needing to have a procedure carried out, compared with just over a quarter (26%) of those aged 55 plus.

People in the West Midlands and North East are most likely to experience this fear, with 38% admitting to usually feeling scared before a visit.

70%

In contrast, respondents in Wales are the least scared - with 70% saying they don’t usually feel scared before seeing the dentist.

More women are scared of the dentist than men - 42% compared to 24% of men.

45-54 year olds are more likely to be scared of the dentist than any other age group (43%).
Chapter Seven Fear of the Dentist

As leading providers of dental healthcare services, we do all we can to make a visit to the dentist as fear-free as possible.

Whether that’s through taking the time to get to know our patients or having a clear treatment plan - our compassionate staff can help. For those with a more extreme phobia, we offer dental sedation services to help make dental treatments run more smoothly. Our website provides information regarding practices which offer dental sedation options.
Chapter Seven  Fear of the Dentist

When it comes to the particular aspects of visiting the dentist that people find scary, the possibility of having to have further procedures has been deemed the scariest, with 31% of people who have been to the dentist saying this is what they are most afraid of when visiting.

A quarter of those in London fear having an injection (25%), while 42% of people in the North East don’t fear anything at all about visiting the dentist - making it the bravest region of the UK in this respect.

39% of those aged 55 and over aren’t scared of any aspect of visiting the dentist, while 25-34 year olds are the most fearful age group when it comes to potentially having work done - 38%.

Keeping on top of oral hygiene and having regular check-ups can help to nip potential problems in the bud before they become serious. Preventative surgery often means that less treatment is needed in the future, resulting in the patient experiencing less pain.

30% say needles and injections are the second most off-putting aspect of visiting the dentist, something that more females than males find scary at 35% and 25% respectively.
Chapter Eight

Desirable Services

When considering what the most desirable dentist services are, this year’s dental report has interestingly shown that a large proportion of people in the UK who have dentist (44%) would like gum disease treatment to be accessible from their dentist. This is closely followed by teeth whitening at 36% and dental sedation at 34%.

The report suggests that women are more concerned about the whiteness of their teeth, with 39% saying they’d like a teeth whitening service to be available from their dentist, while only 33% of men say they’d like this.

Younger people appear to see teeth whitening as the most desirable service, with almost half (45%) of 18-24 year olds saying they’d like this service at their dentist, compared to just 27% of those aged 55 and over.

While teeth whitening procedures rank highly in the list of desirable treatments to receive at a dental practice, home whitening kits are also quite popular (10%). The kits are most commonly used by those in the South East, with 16% saying they’ve tried them. They are more popular among women than men, with 13% of females having tried this compared to just 7% of males.
Chapter Eight Desirable Services

19%

Meanwhile, almost one fifth of 25-34 year olds have whitened their teeth at home – the highest percentage of all age ranges polled.

At-home whitening can often be a less expensive alternative to in surgery whitening treatments, however, whitening treatments performed in your dental practice have the advantage of achieving quicker results and being more effective.
As teeth-whitening is a desirable service for many, it’s important to make sure it’s performed safely and properly. When considering this option, dentists will recommend you make an appointment to ensure your teeth and gums are healthy enough to begin the treatment first.

Whitening your teeth without checking they’re healthy enough could cause damage to your teeth and gums which may cause pain, discomfort or sensitivity and require further dental treatment to resolve.

When undergoing at-home whitening, the safest systems use trays which are moulded to custom fit your mouth, as using standard sized trays could provide the incorrect fit, resulting in the whitening gel - which contains bleach - sitting on your gums during treatment.

It is also important to remember that teeth-whitening procedures will not lighten crowns, caps and bridges, they only work on natural teeth.
Chapter Eight Desirable Services

The most desirable service in the East of England appears to be gum disease treatment, with over half (53%) saying they’d like this service to be available from their dentist, while the North West is the region that desires this the least across the UK, at 32%.

While your dentist can often perform a basic clean and polish of your teeth, the treatment required for gum disease needs to be conducted by a hygienist or specialist periodontist, who have a niche skill set and will have received specialist training in treating and restoring gum health in order to attempt to prevent tooth loss. This is perhaps the reason for such a large number of people saying they’d like this to be available at their local surgery.
Chapter Nine

**DIY Dentists**

The 2015 dentistry report has revealed some concerning statistics regarding how people take the care of their teeth into their own hands. The **most common** treatment being taking painkillers to handle troublesome teeth, with a **quarter** of UK adults saying they’ve done this.

**KEY FINDINGS**

When it comes to more drastic treatments, such as removing a tooth yourself, it appears men are twice as likely to do this themselves than women, with **10%** of men having tried it compared to **5%** of women.

Across the UK, the **West Midlands** and **Wales** are the two regions with the highest number of people who have removed a tooth themselves, with just over **1 in 10 people** having done this (11%). The report also shows how **10%** of people in the **West Midlands** have treated themselves for tooth decay, making this the region with the most number of people to do this.

Interestingly, across the ages both the **55 and over** age group and those aged **18-24** are least likely to take their dental care into their own hands, with **66%** of each saying they’ve never tried this.
Chapter Ten

Reasons for Doing it Yourself

In terms of the motivation behind taking dental care into their own hands, the report has revealed that of those UK adults who have tried to do dental treatments themselves, people felt they either didn’t need a dentist (26%), or felt it was cheaper to fix the problem themselves (25%).

Not having the time, or being unable to get an appointment was an issue for over a quarter of people in London (27%), but a fear of the dentist is what put almost a third of people in the West Midlands off visiting a dental professional (31%).

The age group most likely to take dental care into their own hands due to a fear of the dentist has been revealed as the 45-54 age group at 31%.

As a result, the report has shown that there is work to be done across UK dentistry to promote the importance of maintaining good oral health and regular dental visits, whilst reducing fear and keeping treatment costs to an affordable level.
Chapter Ten  Reasons for Doing it Yourself

With something as important as dental care, it’s essential to maintain regular check-ups with a dentist.

Oasis Dental Care do not recommend taking matters into your own hands. **Regular brushing** and making sure good oral hygiene is maintained are key to helping **prevent dental problems**.
Chapter Eleven

Brushing Habits

The report has revealed a reassuring trend for the state of UK dentistry in that the majority of people brush their teeth twice a day - 63%. However, over a quarter of people only brush their teeth once a day, 26%, but only 3% say they brush less than this.

The North East appears to be home to the keenest brushers, with 3% of people saying they brush more than three times a day, making this the most across the UK. Across all age groups, 25-34 year olds are the most likely to brush twice a day, with 69% saying they do.

The South West appears to be the most on top of replacing their toothbrush, with over three quarters of people there having changed it in the last three months (76%).

On the other end of the scale, 4% of those in London said it’s been longer than a year since they last changed their brush, and 2% of all UK respondents fall into this category too.

Dentists recommend using an electric toothbrush wherever possible, but what is more important - whether you use an electric or manual brush - is brushing for two minutes both in the morning and evening to maintain good oral hygiene.

When it comes to replacing a toothbrush, most people across the UK have done so within the last three months - 66%.

To make sure you take care of your dental health, brushes should be changed every three months, and when you do brush, it’s important not to do so too soon after food or fizzy drinks, as this can damage your tooth enamel - just as brushing too often can.
Chapter Eleven  Brushing Habits

29%

Brush their teeth less than twice a day

This section has revealed some positive results for UK dentistry, showing that the majority of people brush twice a day as dentists recommend.

However, the 29% that brush their teeth less often than this, show that there is still room for improvement in education.
Chapter Twelve

Tooth-Loss Worries

As part of the report into UK dentistry, we wanted to look at just how worried people across the UK are when it comes to the risk of losing their teeth as they age.

Across the UK, most people said they are fairly worried about losing their teeth (39%), but the West Midlands seem to be most concerned about tooth-loss, with 28% of people saying they’re very worried.

On the contrary, 28% of people in the North East aren’t worried at all about losing their teeth as they age, making this region home to the highest number of people who say they are not at all worried.

Tooth-loss appears to be a bigger worry for women (64%) compared to men (47%), as almost a quarter (24%) of women say they are very worried about losing their teeth, compared to just 9% of men.
Chapter Thirteen

Tooth Traditions

When it comes to the tooth fairy, the report has indicated a clear divide in how much people in the UK think each tooth is worth.

While over half (53%) agree £1 is suitable, 23% think 50 pence is more appropriate, and 6% say the tooth fairy shouldn’t leave any money at all.

One in ten people in London agree that no money should be left, while over one in ten, 14%, in Scotland and Northern Ireland say £2 is more appropriate - the highest amount across all regions.

Interestingly, 4% of men think £5 is suitable for a tooth, and 8% of people in Wales agree. On the other end of the scale, 9% of those aged 55 and over think 20 pence per tooth is suitable, compared to just 3% of 18-24 year-olds who think the same.
This year, the report has shown some promising signs for UK dentistry.

While people seem to be considering the appearance of their smile more, it's important to remember that the health of your teeth and gums should be top priority when it comes to oral hygiene, not just the way they look.

As leading dental healthcare providers, we’re committed to helping our patients achieve the best possible oral health.

That’s why at Oasis Dental Care, we continually work to update the whole patient experience, from working with those with a fear of the dentist, to extending opening hours and making sure our practices are a friendly, welcoming environment.