

APPG Inquiry into Cannabis as a Medicine

# All-Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform

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## Medical Cannabis Patient Survey

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This report is a summary of the results of the self-administered questionnaire study conducted from March to April 2016 by United Patients Alliance Ltd. through social media distribution and a number of medically focused cannabis support groups and health support groups. The data contained within maybe reproduced along with an appropriate link/reference to United Patients Alliance ([www.upalliance.org](http://www.upalliance.org)) – Any queries, contact [jon@liebling.co.uk](mailto:jon@liebling.co.uk)



# APPG Inquiry into Cannabis as a Medicine – Patient Questionnaire

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## 2 Introduction

The goal of this questionnaire was to investigate the extent and range of consumption of cannabis for medicinal purposes in the UK and reported effectiveness versus other treatment options. This report is a summary of the results of the self-administered questionnaire study conducted from March to April 2016 through social media distribution and a number of medically focused cannabis support groups and health support groups

The respondents were given the choice to remain anonymous if they desire in order to maximise responses and for their comfort and security. There were 25 questions which included demographic data, condition along with prescription medication and cannabis consumption and supply profiles. Subjects were invited to respond if they identify as a medical consumer of cannabis and are self-selected. 623 were returned valid [447 (71.7%) men, mean age 37.1 years]. Medicinal cannabis consumption was reported by patients with a wide range of conditions including depression (30%), Anxiety (26%), chronic and severe pain (24.1%), Arthritis (12%), Insomnia (21%), fibromyalgia (9%), PTSD (7%).

Whilst caution must be exercised in interpreting these data, they point to the need for immediate legal access to cannabis for patients under the supervision of a doctor.

### 2.1 Author/Analyst:

Jonathan Liebling – Political Director – United Patients Alliance

### 2.2 Previous/Comparable Studies

UK: The medicinal use of cannabis in the UK: results of a nationwide survey. 1998-2002

Published 2005: Ware MA, Adams H, Guy GW

Cohort of Medical Cannabis Consumers: 947

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15857325>

Rest of World:

<http://www.compassioncenter.net/medical-marijuana-patient-survey/>

<http://harmreductionjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1477-7517-2-18#main-content>

### 3 Method

A cross-sectional survey was conducted to collect data from self-selected medicinal cannabis patients in the UK. Patients were identified by word of mouth and through related online support groups. The questionnaire was developed for internet based distribution and self-administration.

The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions including binary (yes/no) responses, Likert scales and open-ended questions. Information collected included demographics (age and gender), condition and symptom details including length since diagnosis, and the effectiveness and side effects of prescription medication and medical cannabis consumption. Patients were free to describe their conditions and symptoms in their own words, which were normalised and categorised during analysis. Condition and symptom information was accepted as reported by the patient in the questionnaire responses, and no attempt to validate these diagnoses was made. Data were entered into a web form. Missing data and outliers were excluded from the analysis; these accounted for less than 10% of the total responses for the questions of interest. Data were imported into a spreadsheet and analysed using a standard statistical techniques. The data were normalised and analysed by a person with a wealth of experience of the subject matter and patient care assisted by medical professionals where required for accurate categorisation.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Demographic Information

- The mean age of the 623 respondents was 37 years of whom 71.6% were male. The ONS figure for Drug Misuse in 2014, which included all cannabis use showed a similar figure. <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB15943/drug-misu-eng-2014-tab.xlsx>
- 50% of respondents provided full name and contact details. The respondents were spread evenly through the whole of the UK.

#### 4.1.1 Age Groupings

Age Group	Respondents
Over 50s	17.50%
Over 35s	52.80%
Under 25s	18.40%
16-24	4.00%
25-59	75.80%

#### 4.1.2 Gender/Age

Gender	Percentage	Respondents
<b>Female</b>	<b>28.3%</b>	<b>176</b>
15-19	4.0%	7
20-24	10.8%	19
25-29	11.4%	20
30-34	10.8%	19
35-39	10.8%	19
40-44	12.5%	22
45-49	11.9%	21
50-54	12.5%	22
55-59	6.3%	11
60-64	5.7%	10
65-69	3.4%	6
<b>Male</b>	<b>71.7%</b>	<b>447</b>
15-19	4.0%	18
20-24	16.1%	72
25-29	15.7%	70
30-34	15.2%	68
35-39	14.3%	64
40-44	9.8%	44
45-49	11.0%	49
50-54	5.4%	24
55-59	4.0%	18
60-64	2.9%	13
65-69	1.3%	6
70-75	0.2%	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>623</b>

## 4.2 Medical Conditions Reported

- Respondents were invited to record all diagnosed conditions. Over 200 different conditions were reported which have been sorted into categories as defined in ICD-10 Version:2015:  
<http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2015/en>
- 37% of respondents reported a single condition 27% (2 conditions), 17% (3), 9% (4), 10% (5 or more)
- 36% of respondents reported one or more mental health conditions

### 4.2.1 Top 20 Conditions (covers 70% of those reported)

Whilst the figures for Depression and Anxiety may seem surprising, but they are broadly in line with general population statistics for those conditions and comparable with other recent studies from around the world:

[https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/helloMD-](https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/helloMD-news>HelloMD_Medical_Marijuana_Patient_Survey.pdf)

[news>HelloMD\\_Medical\\_Marijuana\\_Patient\\_Survey.pdf](https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/helloMD-news>HelloMD_Medical_Marijuana_Patient_Survey.pdf)

<http://harmreductionjournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1477-7517-2-18#main-content>

<http://www.compassioncenter.net/medical-marijuana-patient-survey/>

It should be noted:

- Ave length of condition = 15Yrs – Median 11
- Ave length of cannabis use = 8.1Yrs – Median 5

There is a much higher prevalence of cannabis consumption after diagnosis than before, reflected across all major conditions reported - This is an area for further analysis/research.

Condition	Respondents
Depression	30.0%
Anxiety	26.3%
Pain	24.1%
Arthritis	12.7%
Insomnia	10.9%
Fibromyalgia	9.1%
PTSD	6.6%
Spinal Damage	6.6%
IBS	6.3%
Trauma/Injury	5.9%
Multiple-Sclerosis	5.6%
ADHD	4.8%
Migraines	4.5%
Neuropathy	4.2%
Cancer	4.0%
Sciatica	3.0%
Crohns	3.0%
Asthma	2.6%
Bipolar Disorder	2.2%



#### 4.2.2 Conditions Categories

Condition Category	Respondents
Mental and behavioural disorders	36.0%
Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue	15.9%
Diseases of the digestive system	11.3%
Pain	10.5%
Episodic and paroxysmal disorders	7.4%
Diseases of the nervous system	4.4%
Injury, poisoning and certain other external causes	3.4%
Diseases of the respiratory system	1.9%
Neoplasms	1.8%
Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	1.5%
Certain infectious and parasitic diseases	1.5%
Diseases of the circulatory system	1.0%
Diseases of the genitourinary system	0.8%
Diseases of the skin and subcutaneous tissue	0.7%
Diseases of the eye and adnexa	0.5%
Diseases of the blood and blood-forming organs	0.5%
not elsewhere classified	0.3%
Diseases of the ear and mastoid process	0.2%
Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities	0.2%
External causes of morbidity and mortality	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.2.3 Mental Health Conditions Categorised

- The vast majority 80% of reported mental health conditions can be categorised as a “Common Mental Disorder” such as Depression and Anxiety
- Categories have been defined using the UK Health and Safety Executive Mental Health Report from 2014: <http://healthsurvey.hscic.gov.uk/media/37739/HSE2014-Ch2-Mental-health-problems.pdf>

Mental Health Category	Proportion
Common Mental Disorder	80.2%
Complex Disorders	8.9%
Drug Dependence	2.1%
Serious Mental Illness	8.8%

#### 4.2.4 Length of Condition since Diagnosis (Total)

Length of Condition in Years	Respondents
0-5	17.0%
5-10	19.6%
10-15	18.6%
15-20	14.4%
20-25	12.5%
25-30	7.6%
30-35	3.2%
35-40	2.6%
40-45	1.9%
45-50	1.3%
50-55	0.6%
55-60	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.2.5 Length of Condition since Diagnosis (1-5Yrs breakdown)

Length of Condition in Years	Respondents
0.5	6.7%
0.75	1.0%
1	10.5%
1.5	2.9%
2	14.3%
3	30.5%
4	34.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.2.6 Lengths of Condition Grouped

Length of Condition	Percentage
<b>Female</b>	<b>28.3%</b>
Adult (since 21)	55.1%
Childhood (under 18)	21.0%
AdultLife (from 18-21)	14.2%
All Life (from birth)	9.7%
<b>Male</b>	<b>71.7%</b>
Adult	46.3%
Childhood	26.8%
AdultLife	19.7%
All Life	7.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.2.7 Gender Differences with Top Reported Conditions

Depression	Respondents
Female	24.4%
Male	32.0%

PTSD	Respondents
Female	6.3%
Male	6.7%

Anxiety	Respondents
Female	21.6%
Male	28.0%

Multiple-Sclerosis	Respondents
Female	10.2%
Male	3.8%

Pain	Respondents
Female	18.8%
Male	26.2%

Arthritis	Respondents
Female	21.0%
Male	9.4%

Fibromyalgia	Respondents
Female	21.0%
Male	4.5%

IBS	Respondents
Female	10.2%
Male	4.7%

Insomnia	Respondents
Female	5.7%
Male	12.8%

ADHD	Respondents
Female	1.1%
Male	6.0%

### 4.3 Effectiveness and Side Effects of Prescription Medication and Cannabis

- 23% of respondents reported non-medical side effects of cannabis such as legal issues and fears, social stigma, supply regularity, quality and cost.
- These have been reported separately from medical side effects.

#### 4.3.1 Prescription Medication - Effectiveness

Effectiveness (1-5)	Respondents
1: Worse	12.1%
2: None	29.8%
3: Improve	45.9%
4: Much	10.9%
5: Effective	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Mean = 2.6

Median = 3

#### 4.3.2 Prescription Medication - Side Effects

Severity (1-5)	Respondents
1: None	6.2%
2: A Little	39.8%
3: Average	35.1%
4: Much	16.4%
5: Severe	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Mean = 2.7

Median = 3

#### 4.3.3 Cannabis - Effectiveness

- No respondents reported cannabis either making symptoms worse or having no positive effect

Effectiveness (1-5)	Respondents
3: Improve	8.5%
4: Much	89.9%
5: Effective	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Mean = 3.9

Median = 4

#### 4.3.4 Cannabis – Side Effects (Severity)

- Only one respondent reported “Much” and no respondents reported “Severe” side effects from cannabis.
- 62% reported none.

Severity (1-5)	Respondents
1: None	61.9%
2: A Little	29.6%
3: Average	8.3%
4: Much	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Mean = 1.1

Median = 1

#### 4.3.5 Cannabis – Side Effects (Description)

- Many of the Side-Effects are reported as temporary or short-term and often dose related which can be easily adjusted.
- “Munchies” is reported both as positive and negative. An area for further analysis.

##### 4.3.5.1 Medical Side-Effects

Side Effect	Respondents
None	60.2%
Drowsy	9.1%
Munchies	6.6%
Too-high	4.4%
Nausea/Dizziness	4.4%
Paranoia/Anxiety	3.6%
Dry-Mouth	3.4%
ShortTerm-Memory	2.3%

##### 4.3.5.2 Non-Medical Side-Effects

Side Effect	Respondents
Legal Issues	35.6%
Social Stigma	14.2%
Paranoia/Anxiety(Legality)	14.2%
Reliability of Supply	12.6%
Quality of Product	11.9%
Cost	10.3%

#### 4.3.6 Gender Difference in Effectiveness and Side Effect Severity of cannabis:

- Females report negative side effects more severely
- Males are more likely to worry about non-medical issues (Legality, Supply, Quality, Cost)

##### 4.3.6.1 Cannabis Effectiveness

Effectiveness	Respondents
<b>Female</b>	
Improve	10.9%
Much	86.2%
Effective	2.9%
<b>Male</b>	
Improve	7.6%
Much	91.3%
Effective	1.1%

##### 4.3.6.2 Cannabis Side Effect (Severity)

Severity	Respondents
<b>Female</b>	
Non-Medical	14.7%
None	58.2%
A Little	22.9%
Average	3.5%
Much	0.6%
<b>Male</b>	
Non-Medical	25.6%
None	43.8%
A Little	23.0%
Average	7.6%

#### 4.3.7 Prescription Medications Reported

- This illustrates what existing pharmaceutical medicine type is reduced or replaced by the introduction of cannabis

Medication Category	Respondents
Analgesic (65% Opiates)	23.0%
Anti-Depressant	14.9%
Anti-Inflammatory	12.6%
Sedative	8.0%
Anti-Psychotic	6.9%
Anti-Spasmodic	4.6%
Steroid	3.4%
Anti-Cancer	3.4%
Anti-Spastic	3.4%
CNS Stimulant	3.4%
Ant-Acid	2.3%
Anti-Emetic	2.3%
Immunosuppressant	2.3%
Anti-Convulsant	2.3%

## 4.4 How do you obtain your cannabis?

- Nearly 20% of respondents did not answer this question.
- 19.4% of patients supplied by a home grow/club grow/friend grow (GYO = Grow Your Own)
- 72% of patients have to obtain their medicine from street dealers: Combination of Street (53%) and Friends (19%) as those reporting “Street” or “Friends” can be assumed to be the same source:

Measham, F., Aldridge J. and Parker, H. (2001), *Dancing On Drugs: Risk, health and hedonism in the British club scene*, London: Free Association Books

Supply	Respondents
DID NOT ANSWER	19.1%
Street	52.6%
Friends	19.4%
GYO	10.7%
GYO-Friends	6.7%
GYO-Club	2.0%
Internet	7.3%
Abroad	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## 4.5 What do you think should happen in terms of the law to make it easier/less risky to obtain cannabis for your condition?

- No respondent who answered felt the current situation didn't require changing.
- 68% Legalise/Decriminalise
- 59% Full legalisation
- 32% Medical Only/First
- 26% Mention GYO specifically and are more likely to support decriminalisation.

### 4.5.1 All Respondants

Law Change	Respondents
Full Legalisation	58.9%
Medical Only/First	31.6%
Decriminalise	9.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



#### 4.5.2 GYO vs Non-GYO Difference

Law Change	Respondents
<b>No GYO Mentioned</b>	
Legalise	59.8%
Medical	32.5%
Decriminalise	7.7%
<b>GYO Mentioned</b>	
Legalise	56.1%
Medical	29.0%
Decriminalise	14.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.5.3 Gender Difference

Law Change	Respondents
<b>Female</b>	
Legalise	49.7%
Medical	39.8%
Decriminalise	10.5%
<b>Male</b>	
Legalise	62.5%
Medical	28.4%
Decriminalise	9.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## 4.6 How long have you been taking cannabis medicinally?

- These data suggest that medical cannabis consumption is increasing rapidly with 46% of respondents reporting having consumed for less than 5 years.
- If this were projected over the next 5 years you could predict a doubling of the size of the medical cannabis consuming community.

### 4.6.1 All Respondants

How Long (years)	Respondents
0-5	46.0%
5-10	21.3%
10-15	11.6%
15-20	8.3%
20-25	6.2%
25-30	2.5%
30-35	2.3%
35-40	1.1%
40-45	0.3%
45-50	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Mean=5 years Median = 8.1 Years

### 4.6.2 Gender Differences

How Long (years)	Respondents
<b>Female</b>	
0-5	53.7%
5-10	15.4%
10-15	12.6%
15-20	7.4%
20-25	6.3%
25-30	1.7%
30-35	1.1%
35-40	1.1%
40-45	0.6%
<b>Male</b>	
0-5	42.9%
5-10	23.6%
10-15	11.2%
15-20	8.7%
20-25	6.2%
25-30	2.8%
30-35	2.8%
35-40	1.1%
40-45	0.2%
45-50	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## 4.7 How long after or before you had been prescribed other medicines did you decide that Cannabis was a viable medicine for your condition?

- 67% Users turn to cannabis as a medicine after trying conventional treatments; 48% for more than a year.

How Long	Respondents
Long Time Before (>1yr)	24.5%
Short Time Before (<1yr)	1.7%
Same Time	6.8%
Short Time After(<1yr)	19.0%
Long Time After(>1yr)	48.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### 4.7.1 Gender Differences

How Long	Respondents
<b>Female</b>	
Long Time Before	21.1%
Short Time Before	0.6%
Same Time	5.7%
Short Time After	21.1%
Long Time After	51.4%
<b>Male</b>	
Long Time Before	25.8%
Short Time Before	2.1%
Same Time	7.3%
Short Time After	18.1%
Long Time After	46.7%

## 4.8 What was the view of your GP or Consultant about your cannabis consumption?

- 37% of respondents have not told or discussed their consumption of cannabis with their doctor due to related fears.
- A neutral response from the doctor could indicate tacit support due to fear from the doctor about their career if giving a positive response which would not be there if wishing to give a negative one which would mean 61.5% of doctors were supportive
- Only 25.8% of doctors expressed negativity

Response	Respondents
Positive	41.3%
Neutral	20.2%
No Response	12.7%
Negative	25.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### 4.8.1 Gender Differences

- Females are much less likely to report their cannabis use to their doctor. This is could be due to legal/Social Services fears and the potential impact on family

Response	Respondents
<b>Female</b>	<b>28.6%</b>
Not Told	44.3%
No Response	5.7%
Negative	11.4%
Neutral	12.5%
Positive	26.1%
<b>Male</b>	<b>71.4%</b>
Not Told	34.2%
No Response	8.9%
Negative	18.2%
Neutral	12.8%
Positive	26.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## 4.9 What particular strain(s) of cannabis is/are most appropriate for you?

- Higher THC preferred by 25%
- 40% of patients prefer a 1-1 balance
- 65% Balanced one way or another
- 16% prefer a variety of strains and strengths

Strain Types	Respondents
High THC/Low CBD	11.2%
Balance (More THC)	14.9%
Balanced	39.3%
Balanced(More CBD)	9.9%
High CBD/Low THC	8.0%
Variety	16.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### 4.9.1 Gender Differences

- Significant difference in proportion of respondents choosing High CBD

Strain Types	Respondents
<b>Female</b>	
High THC/Low CBD	10.6%
Balanced (More THC)	13.0%
Balanced	39.8%
Balanced (More CBD)	8.9%
High CBD/Low THC	16.3%
Variety	11.4%
<b>Male</b>	
High THC/Low CBD	11.5%
Balanced (More THC)	15.6%
Balanced	39.1%
Balanced (More CBD)	10.3%
High CBD/Low THC	5.0%
Variety	18.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.10 How do you consume cannabis?

- Comments: Hash is only used by respondents who cannot acquire anything else.
- Respondents reported a number of different types and methods of consumption. The relative proportions were not captured.

##### 4.10.1 Methods of Consumption

Methods of Consumption	Respondents
Vaporise	28.3%
Smoke WITH Tobacco	27.2%
Eat	20.7%
Smoke WOUT Tobacco	18.1%
Capsules	3.1%
Topical	2.6%

##### 4.10.2 Types of Cannabis

Types of Cannabis Consumed	Respondents
Herbal	56.6%
Edibles	20.6%
Oil	14.0%
Extracts	3.1%
Topical	2.8%
Hash	2.9%

# Appendix 1: Survey of those who use medicinal cannabis

## Questionnaire for those using cannabis medicinally

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender? Male/Female
3. What is your ethnicity? White/Asian/African/Afro-Caribbean
4. What is your medical condition?
5. How long have you had this condition?
6. What medicines have you been prescribed for this condition by your doctor or a consultant?
7. How effective has this medication been? (Please give details)
8. What are the side effects of this medication? (Please give details)
9. How long after you had been prescribed other medicines did you decide that cannabis was a viable medicine for your condition?
10. How did you come to this decision?
11. What was the view of your GP or Consultant about this?
12. How long have you been taking cannabis?
13. In what form do you take cannabis?
14. Can you describe the effect that taking cannabis has had on your condition?
15. What have been the side effects of taking cannabis?
16. How do you obtain your cannabis? (Please do not feel obliged to answer this question)
17. How difficult is this?
18. How risky is it in terms of compliance with the law?
19. If there are risks involved in obtaining your cannabis what do you feel about this?
20. What do you think should happen in terms of the law to make it easier/less risky to obtain cannabis for your condition?
21. Have you had any advice about using cannabis for your condition from a person or organisation other than your GP or doctor?
22. What was that advice?
23. How helpful has it been?
24. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make?