

# **General Osteopathic Council: Public Perceptions Study**

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### **Background and Method**

### Aims and objectives

The aim of this study was to provide the GOsC with insight into public and patient perceptions of
osteopathic care and regulation, as well as to test the validity of qualitative findings from a series of four
focus groups conducted by the GOsC.

### Method

- A nationally representative survey of 1,043 members of the UK public was carried out between the 25/11/14 and the 02/12/14.
- In addition to this a boosted sample of 523 people from the UK who have visited an osteopath in the last 12 months were surveyed.
- All the research was undertaken online by YouGov using the YouGov research panel.
- This analysis presents a summary of the main findings from this study.
- Throughout the report, 'osteopathic patients' are defined as people who have visited an osteopath in the past 12 months, unless otherwise stated.
- A statistically significant difference which refers to a difference that is outside of the 'margin of error' and can therefore be considered <u>statistically</u> relevant is represented by . This is considered statistically significant and identified a true difference in opinion this may or may not be considered significant in terms of future policy and/or strategy.
- Significant differences between groups within the UK public are highlighted to show where views differ by key demographics.



### **Key findings**





### **Key Findings**

#### Perceptions of healthcare professions/professionals

- The UK public indicate that two highly compelling factors in giving them confidence in health professionals are that they provide good quality advice and treatment, and that they have a recognised level of education and training. Relatively less importance is placed on factors such as having insurance or links to the NHS.
- Osteopathic patients further support these findings; good treatment and good advice are to them the most important factors when it comes to their confidence in an osteopath.
- When thinking about trust in private health professionals, the public and patients prioritise professional qualifications, i.e. knowing that the professional is well-qualified.
- Less than half of UK adults are aware that osteopaths are regulated.

#### Deciding to visit an osteopath: information needs

- When asked to think about what information would effect their decision to visit an osteopath and about information they would like in advance of their first visit, information about the benefits of treatment is prioritised by both the UK public and recent osteopathic patients.
- Information about the risks of treatment, the professional standards of an osteopath, what the treatment will involve and generally what an osteopath does is also highly important to the public. These facts about osteopathy are prioritised by the public above information such as proof of registration, professional membership status and insurance.

#### **Experience of visiting an osteopath**

- For the public, a positive experience would depend on the osteopath discussing the options for treatment thoroughly with them, liaising with their GP and giving them clear information about the costs of treatment.
- After the public become osteopathic patients, however, they become less likely to value a liaison between their osteopath and their GP and less concerned with information about the costs and risks of treatment. Instead, it becomes much more important to them having a positive experience that the osteopath takes their medical history and gives them a diagnosis.



### **Key Findings (continued)**

#### **Providing feedback and reporting concerns**

- Osteopathic patients prefer to provide their feedback to an osteopath face-to-face. This differs considerably from the wider general public view (the majority of whom have not visited an osteopath or yet feel comfortable with them), who would primarily prefer to provide feedback at home through an online survey.
- Three quarters of the public would always want to be informed if their osteopath made a mistake in their care, regardless of the severity of the mistake.

#### The GOsC and professional standards

- When seeking information about the benefits/risks and standards of osteopathy, the general public indicate that they would most commonly search on the internet or speak to their GP.
- Having to undergo inspections by an independent body/regulator is the factor that gives the public most assurance that osteopaths remain up to date and fit to practise, followed by proving they have undertaken a set number of hours of required training and development.
- While awareness and understanding of the standards of the osteopathic profession is higher among recent patients than the general public, more than one third of patients are not aware that only registered osteopaths are allowed to practise in the UK, and more than half are not aware that there is a publicly-available online register where they can check that their osteopath is registered.
- The majority of the public have confidence that if they raised a concern about an osteopath with the GOsC, it would be properly investigated and addressed.
- When considering what information should be available on the public register, the public regard contact details as most important. Other important information includes disciplinary history and specialist interest and expertise.



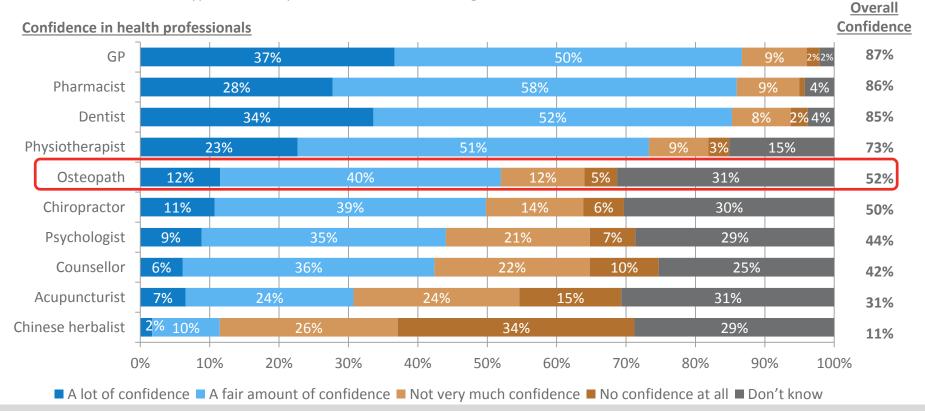
### Perceptions of healthcare professions/ professionals





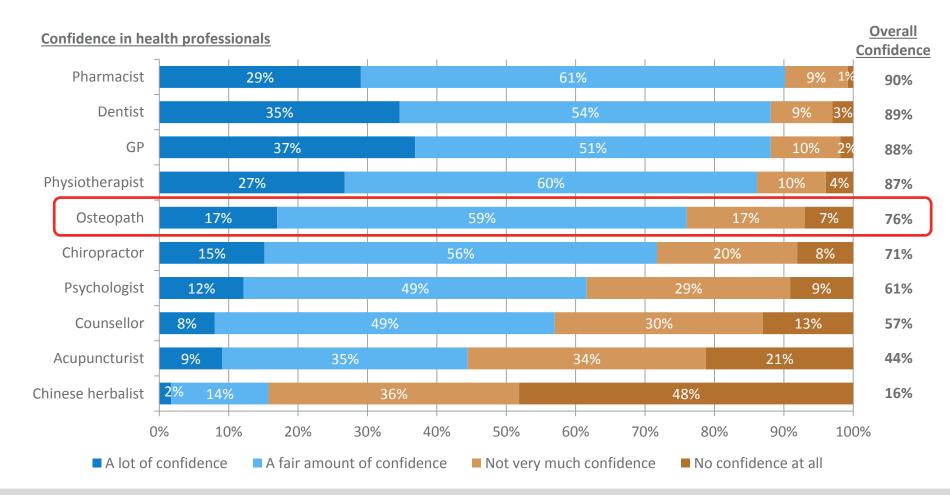
## Osteopaths fall in the middle of the range when it comes to public confidence in health professionals.

- The UK public are more likely to have confidence in more familiar health professionals like GPs, pharmacists and dentists than in osteopaths, but less likely to have confidence in arguably less familiar professionals like chiropractors, counsellors and acupuncturists. This suggests a strong relationship between confidence and familiarity.
- Overall, roughly half of the UK public have at least a fair amount of confidence in receiving healthcare advice and/or treatment from an osteopath.
- However, a sizeable proportion of respondents report they 'don't know' how much confidence they have in receiving treatment from less 'mainstream' types of health professional demonstrating a lack of awareness.





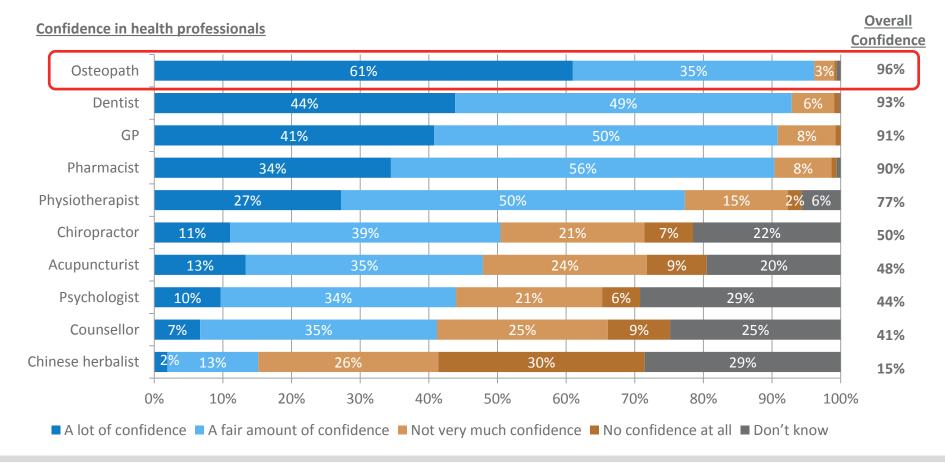
Excluding those who 'don't know', three quarters of the UK public (76%) have at least a fair amount of confidence in receiving healthcare advice or treatment from an osteopath.





### Osteopathic patients demonstrate very high levels of confidence in the advice and treatment provided by osteopaths.

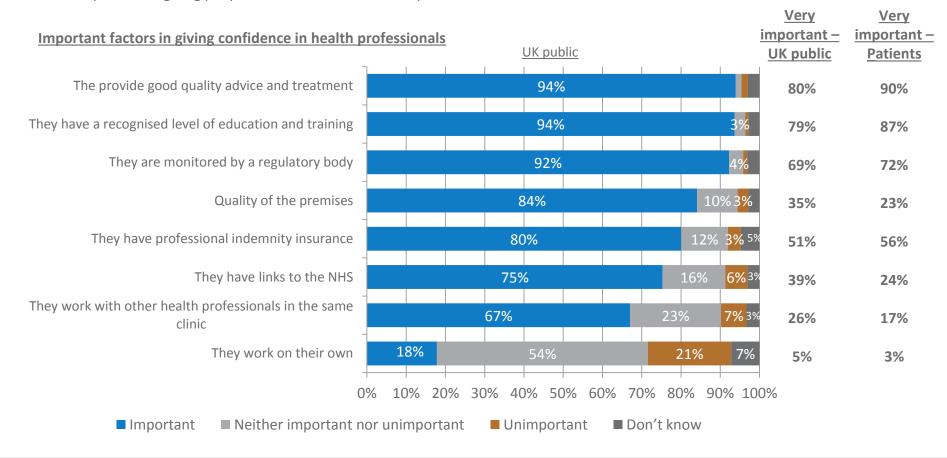
- Confidence in receiving treatment from an osteopath among those who have had treatment in the past 12 months is very high, with just 3% reporting they have not very much confidence and 0% that they have no confidence at all.
- Further, a majority (61%) state that they have a lot of confidence.





# Good quality advice and treatment, a recognised level of education and training and being regulated are rated the most important factors in having confidence in healthcare professionals.

- Osteopathic patients place importance on quality of advice/treatment and the health professionals' level of education/training.
- Although rated as important by a majority (67%) of the public, working with other health professionals in the same clinic is relatively less important to giving people confidence in healthcare professionals.

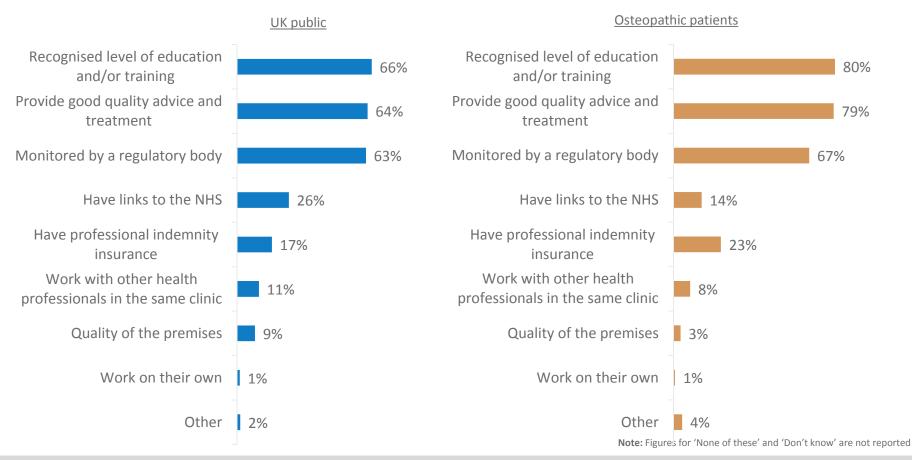


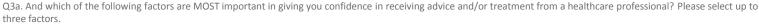


## Education/training, quality of advice and treatment, and regulation are the three most important factors influencing confidence.

• Links to the NHS are particularly important to the UK public, while osteopathic patients place higher value on indemnity insurance.

### Three most important factors in giving confidence in health professionals







## Being 'knowledgeable' is the word that is most commonly associated with a healthcare professional acting in a 'professional' way.

• Other commonly mentioned words are 'caring', 'patient', 'understanding', 'good', 'advice' and 'treatment'.

### Typical quotes are:

### **UK** public

"A good listener, someone who instils confidence, has time"

"Caring ,appropriate, knowledgeable, qualified"

"Appropriate level of education and experience, treatment or medication thoroughly explained and justified, good monitoring of progress of treatment, overseen by official body, understands what NHS offers but also alternatives"

### Osteopathic patients

"Being knowledgeable and confident in their approach"

"Empathic, organised, knowledgeable, educated, up to date with current medication/ treatments"

"Good listener; considerate of my individual needs; gives appropriate advice or treatment & knows when to ask for specialist advice/treatment"



## Being well qualified is the one factor that a majority of the UK public report is most important in giving them trust towards a private health professional.

#### Important factors in giving trust in private health professionals

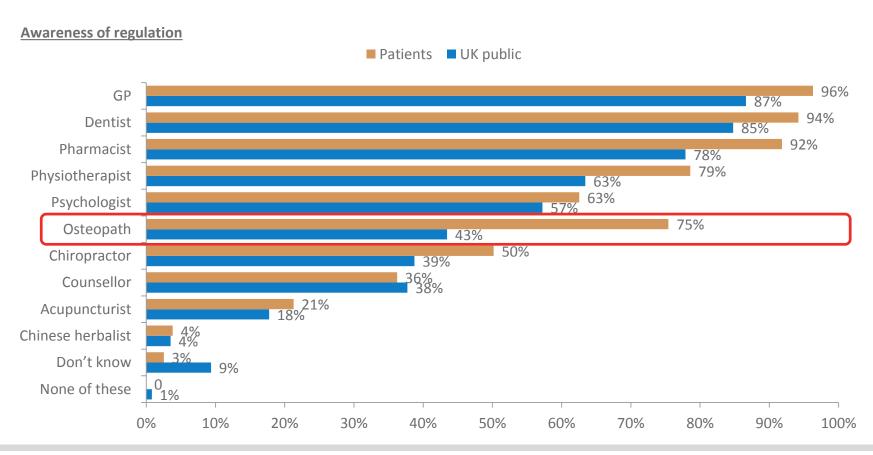
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Not applicable – none of these factors are important in giving me trust towards a private healthcare professional	They are well presented/dressed	5%	5%
towards a private healthcare professional	Don't know	4%	0%
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	Other	1%	1%

- Nearly half of the UK public also report that the quality of advice and treatment (48%) and being monitored by a regulatory body (47%) are important factors influencing trust in private health professionals.
- Being well presented/dressed (5%), knowing that there is action they can take to raise a concern or make a complaint (7%) and the quality of premises (8%) are relatively less important, being mentioned by less that 10% of the UK public.
- Osteopathic patients are particularly likely to report that the quality of advice and treatment is important in giving them trust in health professionals.



## The UK public are divided on whether or not they know that osteopathy is regulated.

- GPs, dentists and pharmacists are most widely recognised as regulated health professionals.
- Within the UK public, women (49%) are significantly more likely than men (38%) to think that osteopaths are regulated.
- Overall, osteopathic patients demonstrate an increased awareness of healthcare regulation. Three quarters (75%) are aware that osteopaths are regulated, which means, however, that one-in-four do not know their osteopath is regulated.





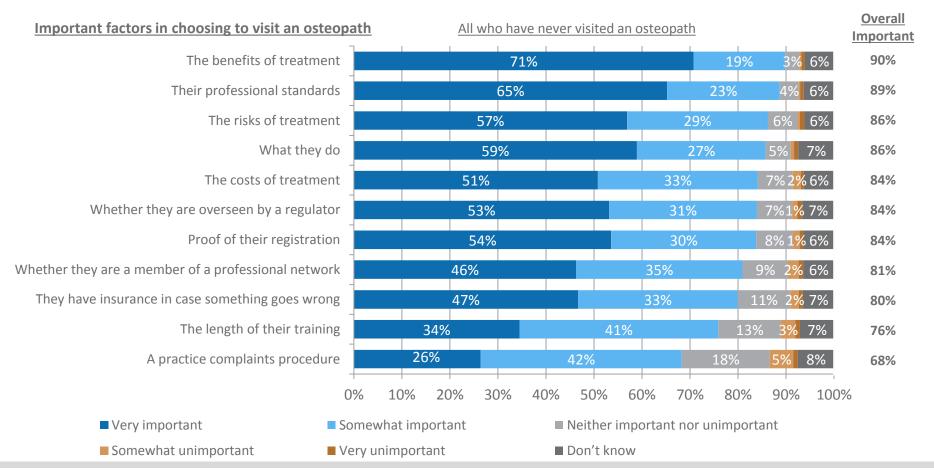
### Deciding to visit an osteopath: information needs





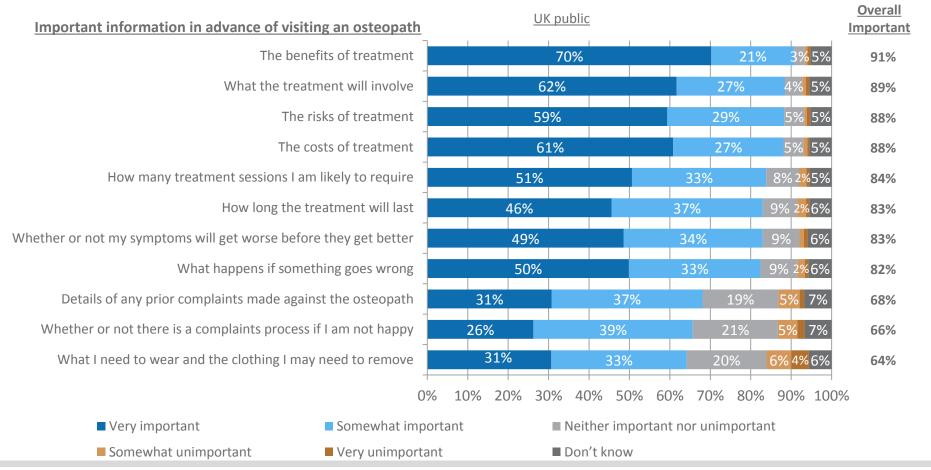
# People who have never before visited an osteopath place the highest importance on information about the benefits when considering a decision about whether or not to have osteopathic treatment.

• Overall, those who have never visited an osteopath prioritise information about the benefits and risks of treatment, the professional standards of an osteopath, and generally what an osteopath does.





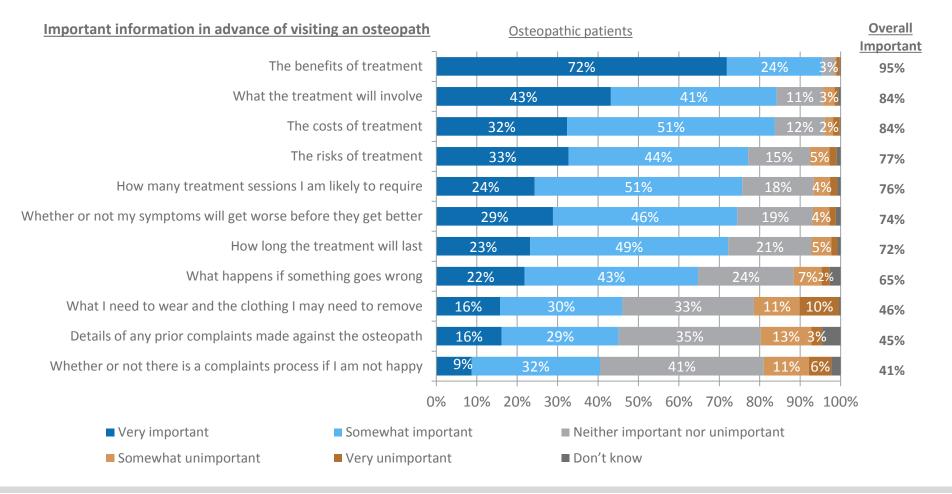
The benefits of treatment is considered important information; nine in ten (91%) members of the UK public state this would be important to them in advance of their first visit to an osteopath.





### Osteopathic patients strongly agree that it is important to them to have information about the benefits of treatment in advance of their first visit.

• Patients report that before their first visit they are also highly likely to value information about the costs of treatment and what it will involve.



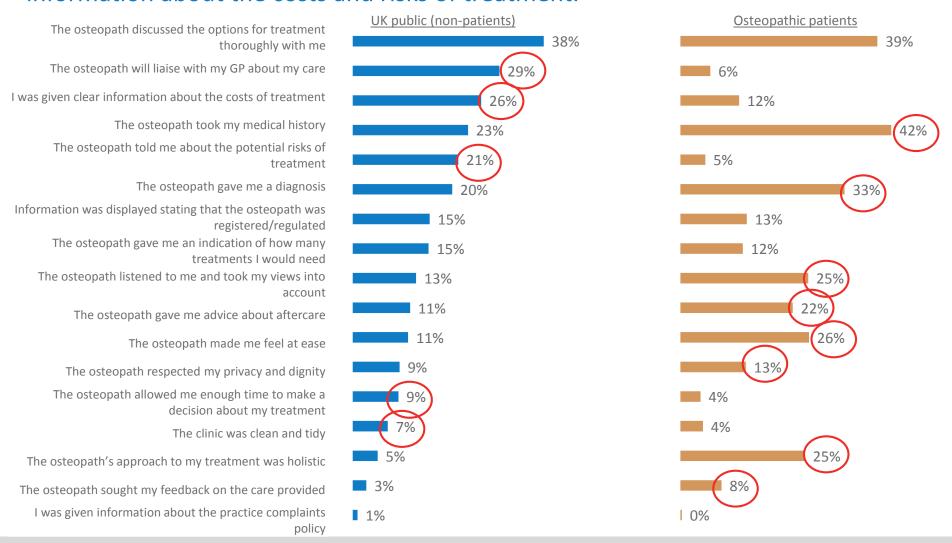


### **Experience of visiting an osteopath**





# When the public become osteopathic patients, they place less importance on the liaison between their osteopath and their GP, and are less concerned with information about the costs and risks of treatment.



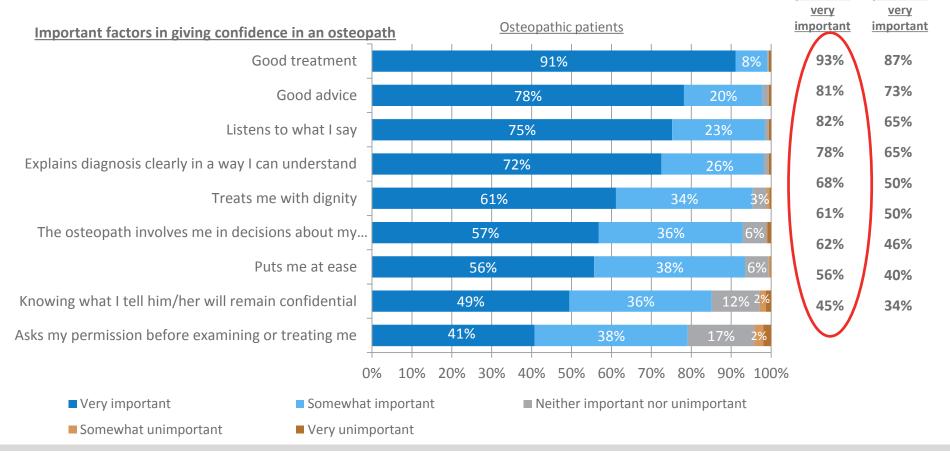


Base: All osteopathic patients (n=523)

## Above all else confidence in an osteopath is related to good treatment.

• A strong majority of patients also demonstrate a need for good advice, attentiveness and clear explanations of diagnoses as being important factors in establishing their confidence in an osteopath.

• Female patients are significantly more likely than male patients to rate each of the factors very important.



Female

patients -

Male

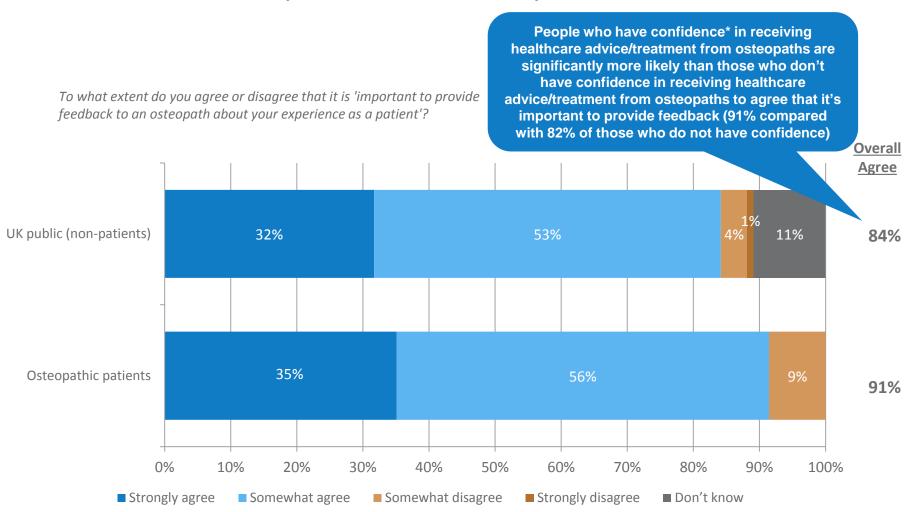
patients -

### **Providing feedback and reporting concerns**





## Osteopathic patients strongly agree that it is important to provide feedback to an osteopath about their experience.



\*Confidence is defined by 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' of confidence in Q1

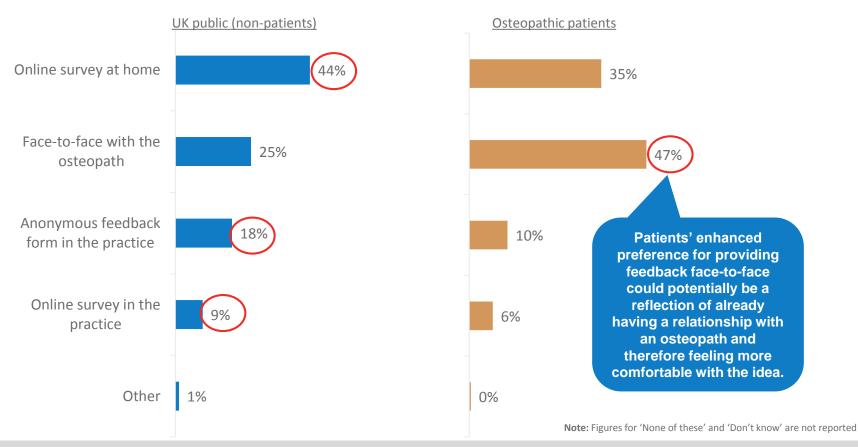


Base: All osteopathic patients (n=523)

## Osteopathic patients prefer to give feedback to their osteopath face-to-face.

• Older people aged 55+ are more significantly likely than younger people to say they would prefer providing feedback face-to-face with the osteopath (34% among the UK public and 56% among patients).

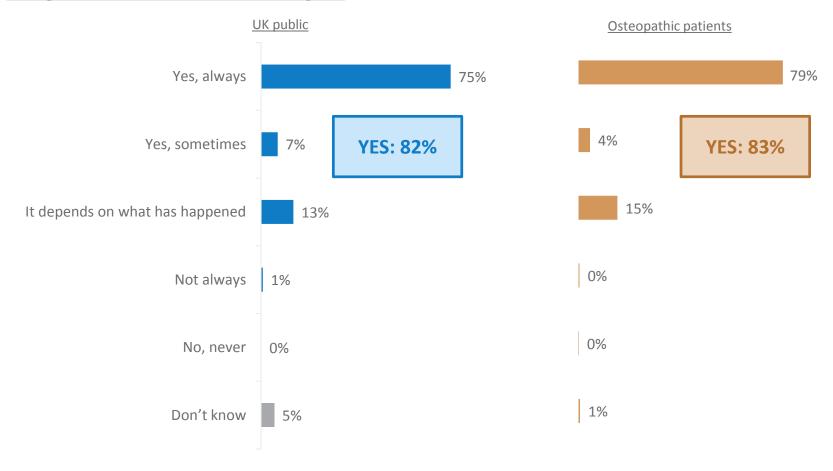
#### Preferred methods of providing patient feedback





The majority (83%) of people who have visited an osteopath in the past 12 months state that they would want their osteopath to tell them about a mistake relating to their care regardless of the severity.

#### Willingness to be informed of mistakes during care





### The GOsC and professional standards

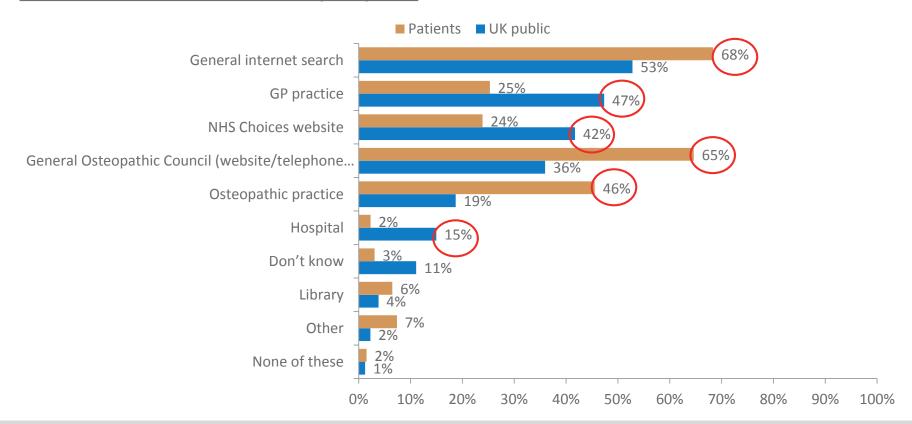




# A general internet search and contacting the General Osteopathic Council are the two most common methods that osteopathic patients would use to find information on standards of osteopathic practice.

• While a significant proportion of the general public would use a general internet search, they are also likely to turn to their GP practice or the NHS Choices website for information on standards of osteopathic practice.

#### Sources of information on standards of osteopathic practice





# Having to undergo inspections by an independent body/regulator is the factor that gives the public most assurance that osteopaths remain up to date and fit to practise.

- Half of osteopathic patients (50%) report that having to prove that an osteopath has done a set number of hours of training/development and are required to undergo specific types of training would give them the most assurance that osteopaths remain up to date and fit to practise.
- The UK public are particularly likely to report that having to be re-tested/re-take exams is a factor that would give them assurance that osteopaths remain up to date and fit to practise.



# More than one third (36%) of osteopathic patients are *not* aware that only registered osteopaths are allowed to work in the UK, and more than half (58%) are not aware that there is a publicly-available online register where they can check.

- Osteopathic patients are largely aware that only qualified osteopaths registered by the General Osteopathic Council are allowed to work as osteopaths in the UK (64%) and that osteopathic practice now requires university level training with a minimum of four years of study (61%).
- The majority (68%) of the UK public are not aware of any of the facts presented to them about the profession.

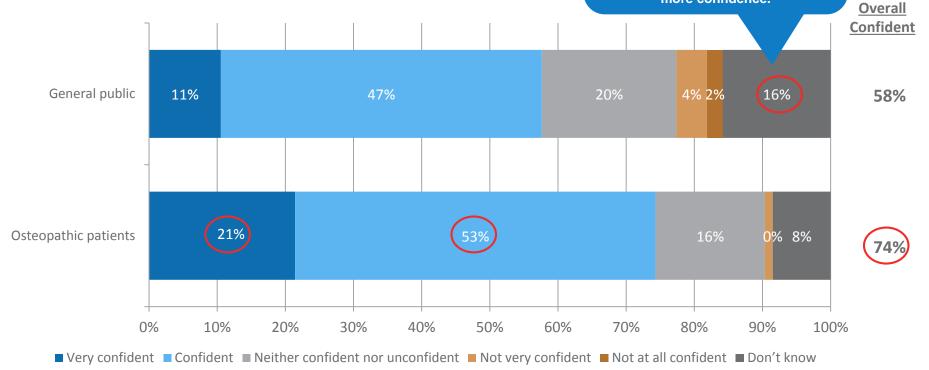
#### ■ Patients ■ UK public Awareness of facts about the osteopathic profession 55% In order to practise, osteopaths must hold professional indemnity insurance 15% Only qualified osteopaths registered by the General Osteopathic Council are allowed to 64% 15% work as osteopaths in the UK Osteopathic practice requires training to university degree level with a minimum of four 61% 14% vears study There is a publicly available Register that allows the public to check whether an 42% osteopath is qualified to treat them 8% To renew their registration, osteopaths must be in good health and declare any criminal 21% or civil actions taken against them in the previous 12 months 6% 29% Osteopaths are required to renew their registration every year 6% Osteopaths are required to complete at least 30 hours of continuing professional 18% development per year 4% 18% None of these 68% 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%



# Three in four (74%) osteopathic patients state they are confident that the General Osteopathic Council would properly investigate and address any concerns they were to raise about an osteopath.

**Introduction:** The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) is the independent regulator for osteopaths in the United Kingdom. The GOsC ensures that osteopaths are qualified, competent and safe to work with patients and the public. Currently the GOsC registers around 4,900 osteopaths.

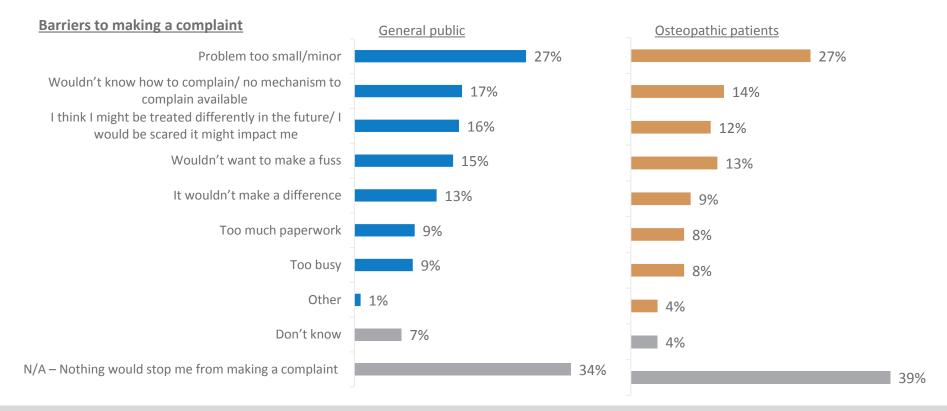
The general public are more likely to not have an opinion or indicate that they do not know, which could be an indication that osteopathic patients are being exposed to information about the GOsC and as a result have more confidence.





## The public most frequently state that nothing would stop them from complaining if they were dissatisfied with their osteopathic care.

- However, among those who do mention a barrier to making a complaint about osteopathic care, the most common one is feeling that the problem is too small or minor.
- Older people in the UK public aged 55+ are significantly more likely than younger people to say that nothing would stop them from making a complaint about osteopathic care if they were dissatisfied (43%). This may correlate with earlier findings indicating that older people are more likely to prefer providing feedback face-to-face.





## The most important information on a public register includes osteopaths' contact details, followed by their specialist interest/expertise.

