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General Osteopathic Council: Public Perceptions Study

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General
Osteopathic
Council

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 statistically 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

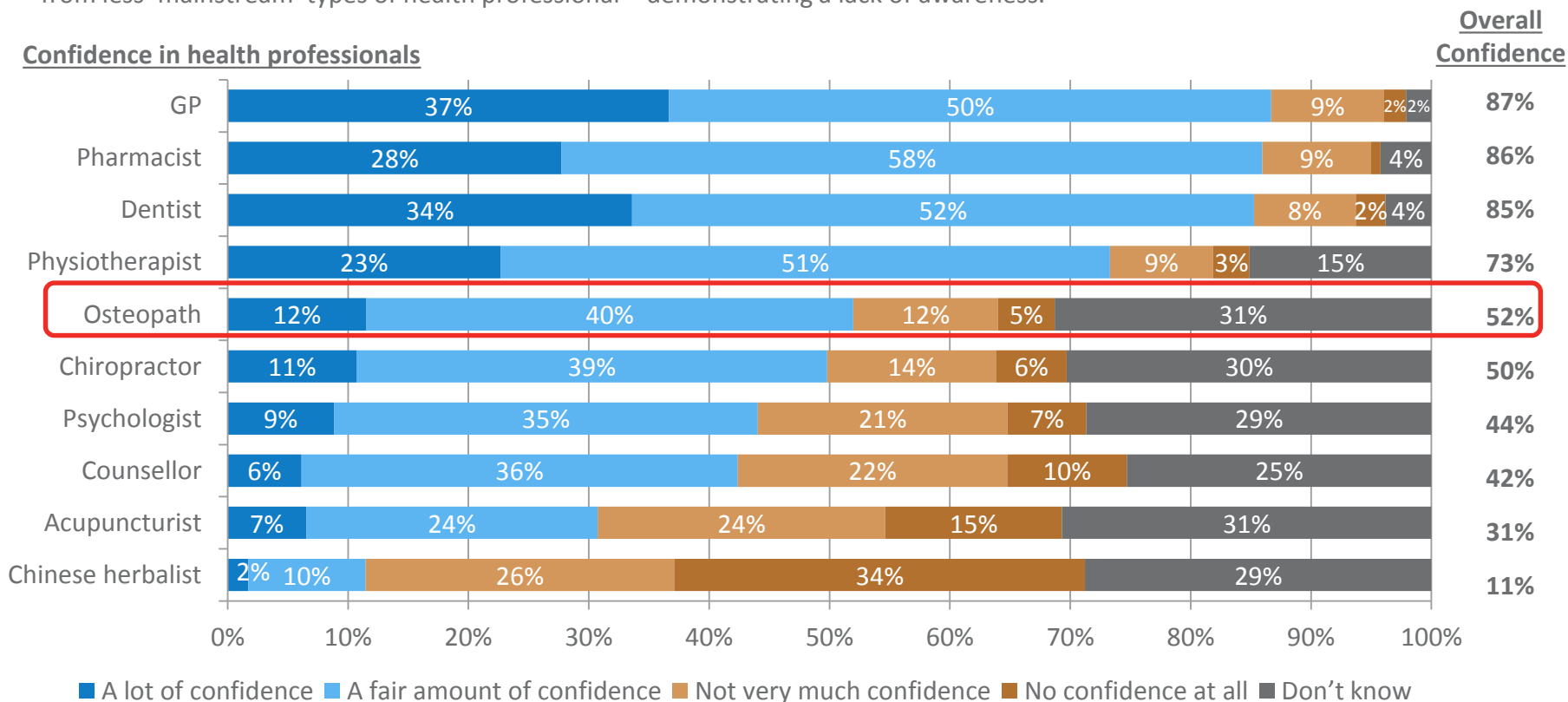
- When seeking information about the benefits/risks and standards of osteopathy, the general public indicate that they would most commonly search on the internet or speak to their GP.
- Having to undergo inspections by an independent body/regulator is the factor that gives the public most assurance that 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

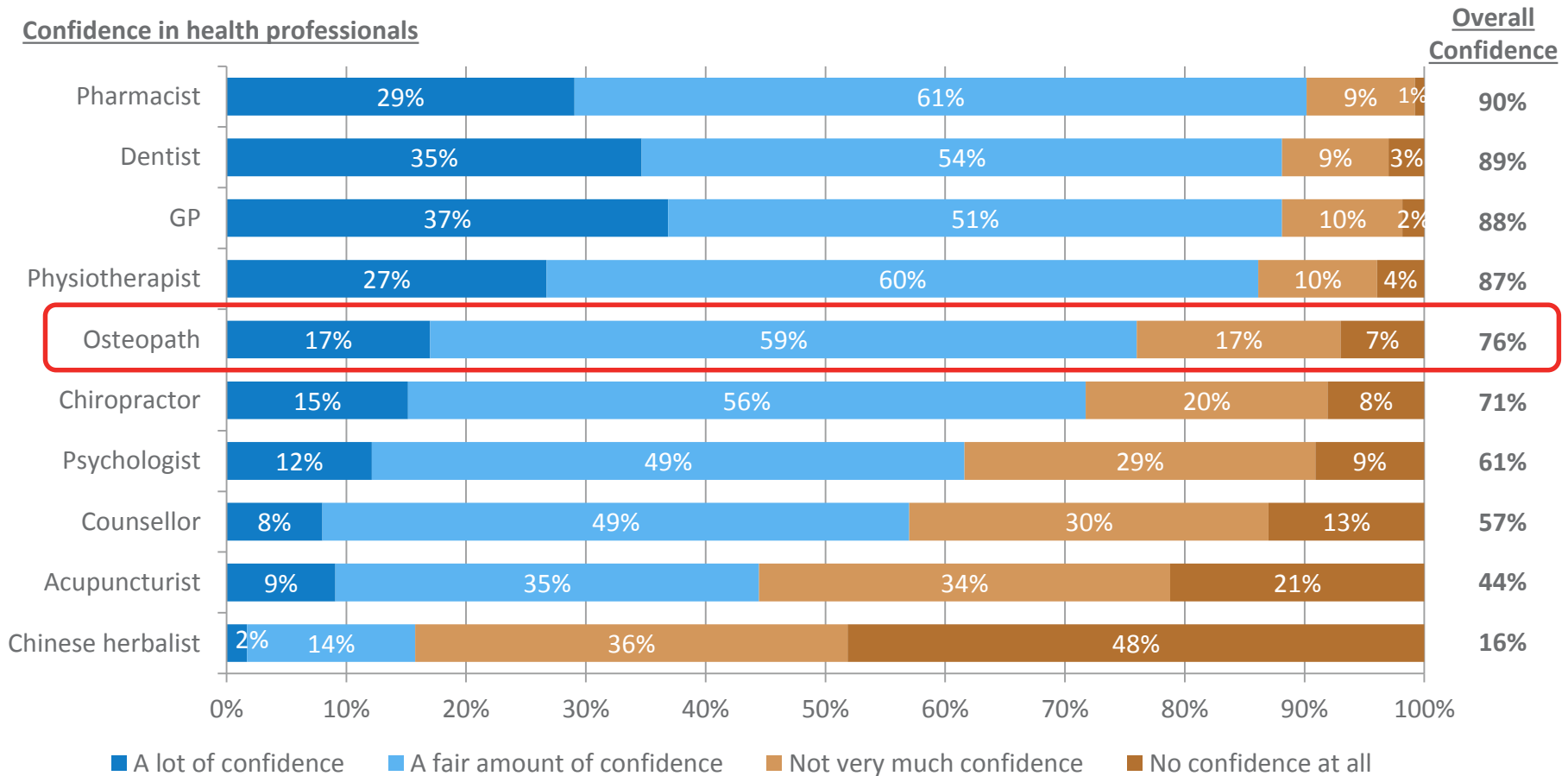


Osteopaths fall in the middle of the range when it comes to public confidence in health professionals.

- 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.



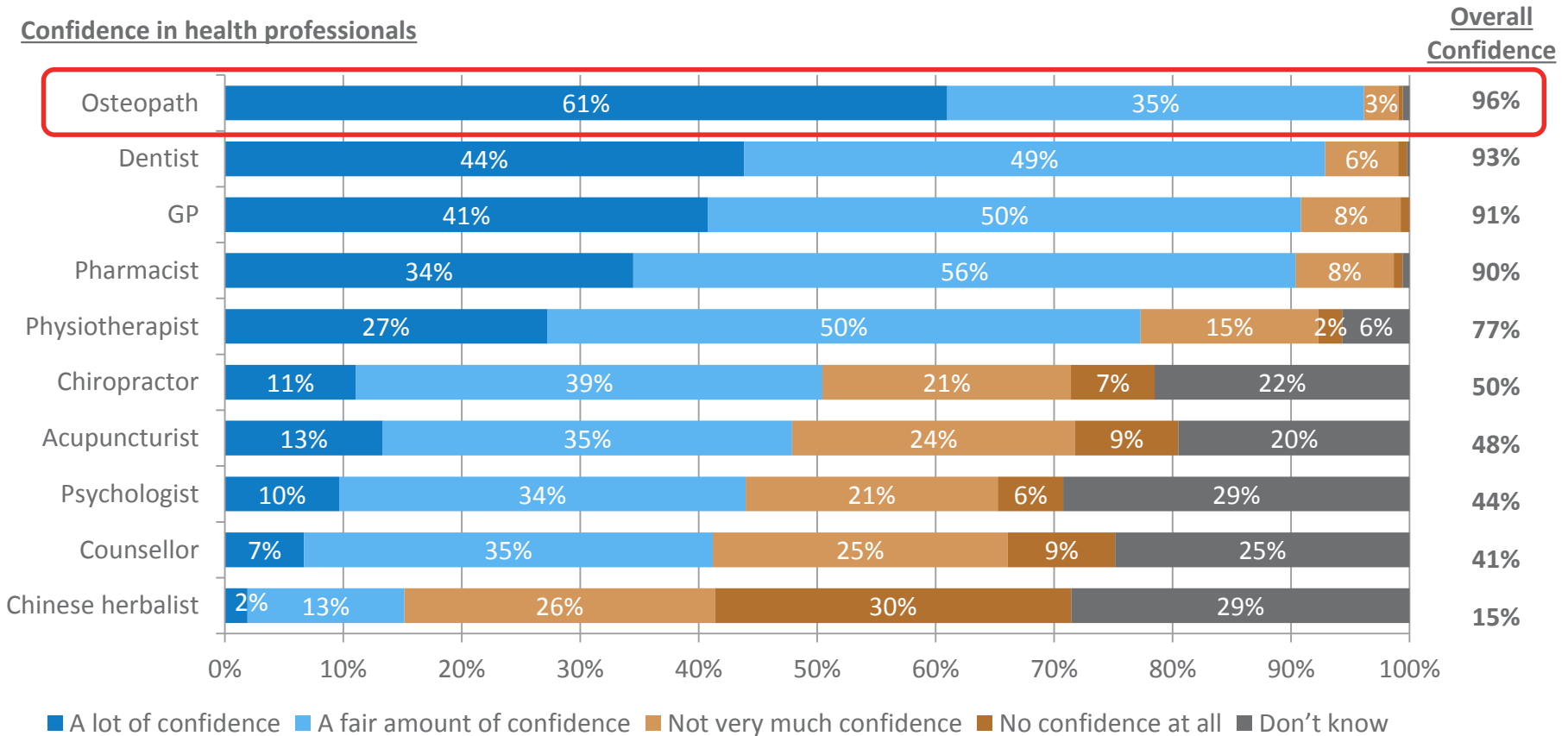
Excluding those who 'don't know', three quarters of the UK public (76%) have at least a fair amount of confidence in receiving healthcare advice or treatment from an osteopath.



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

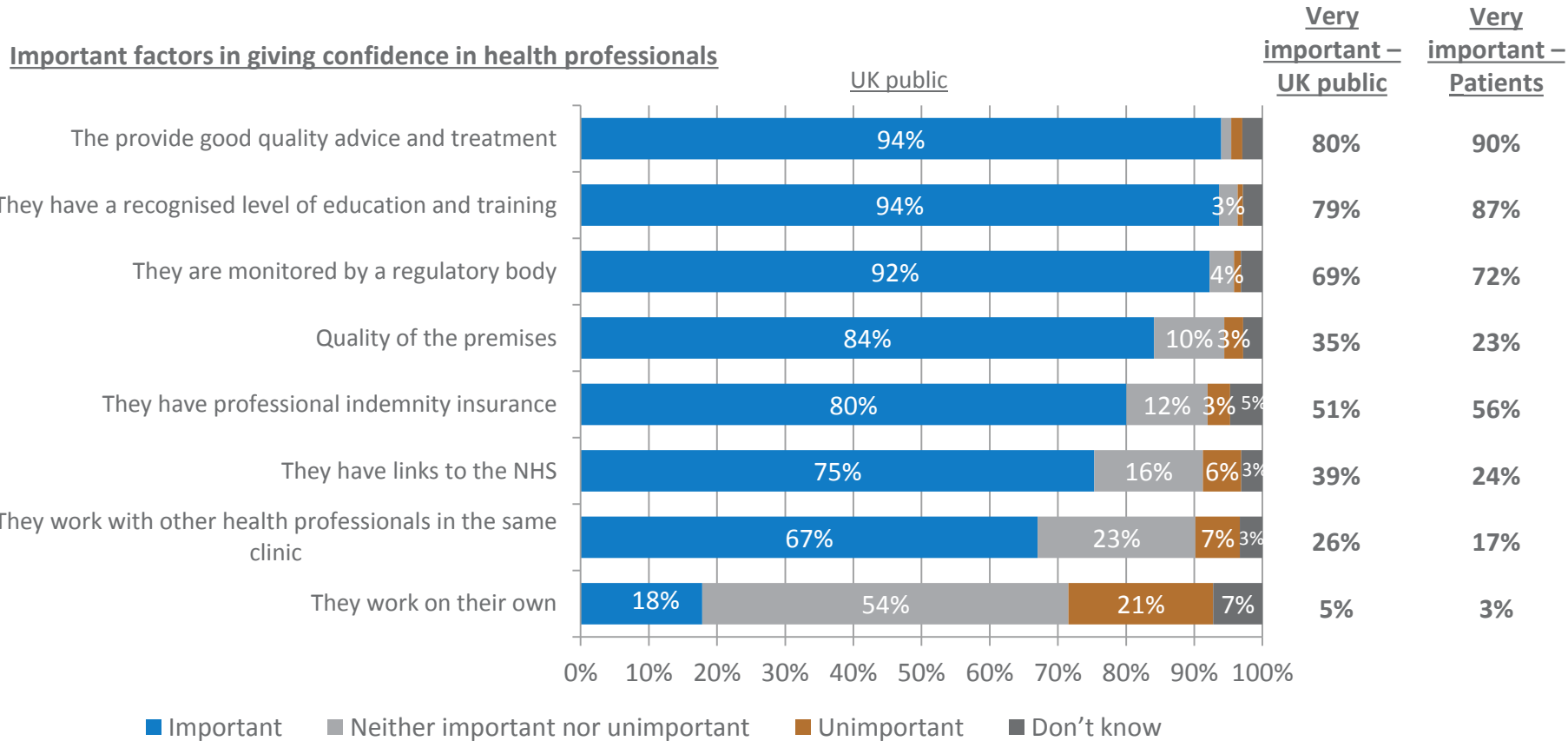
- Confidence in receiving treatment from an osteopath among those who have had treatment in the past 12 months is very high, with just 3% reporting they have not very much confidence and 0% that they have no confidence at all.
- Further, a majority (61%) state that they have a lot of confidence.

Confidence in health professionals



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.

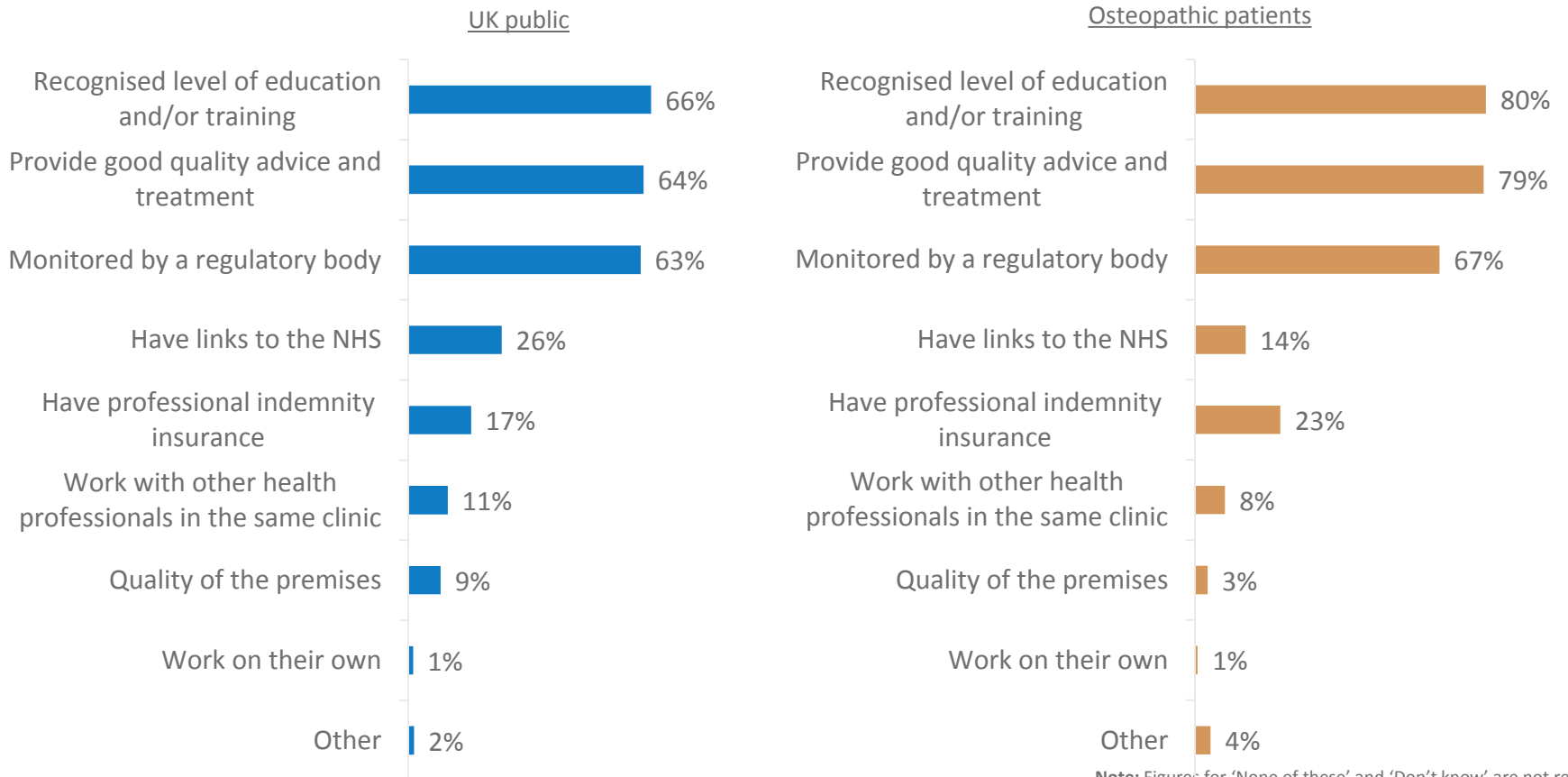
- Osteopathic patients place importance on quality of advice/treatment and the health professionals' level of education/training.
- Although rated as important by a majority (67%) of the public, working with other health professionals in the same clinic is relatively less important to giving people confidence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



Note: Figures for 'None of these' and 'Don't know' are not reported

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

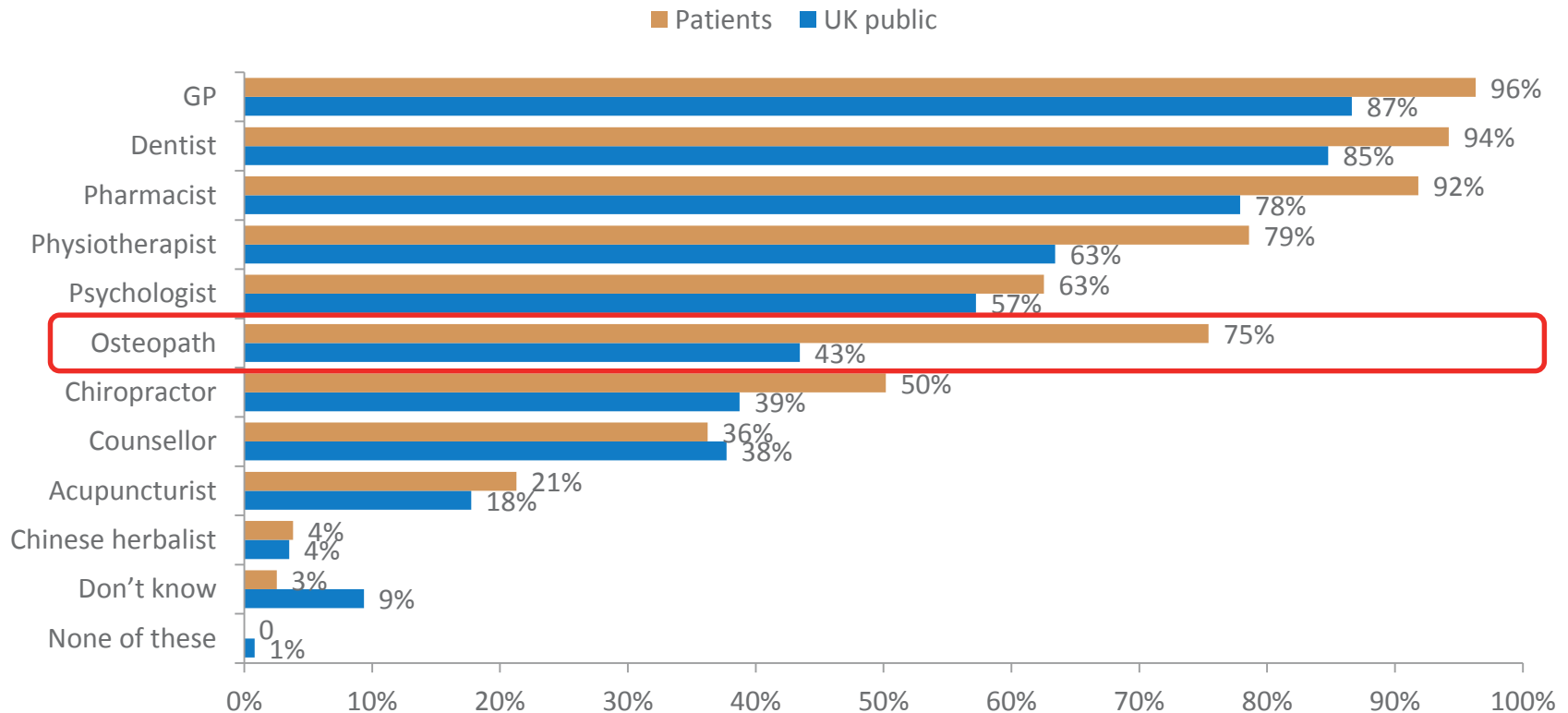
	UK public	Patients
They are well qualified	61%	66%
Quality of advice and treatment	48%	64%
They are monitored by a regulatory body	47%	43%
They have good communication skills (i.e. they explain the diagnosis clearly, speak in a way I can understand)	36%	47%
They take time to listen to you and understand your problem	34%	48%
They have good interpersonal skills (i.e. they treat me with dignity, listen to what I say, put me at ease)	32%	42%
Knowing they update their skills regularly	25%	33%
They are a member of a professional network	25%	30%
They have been recommended by someone you trust	24%	34%
Knowing that I will be involved in decisions about my treatment	24%	28%
Value for money	17%	11%
They will treat my details confidentially	17%	17%
They have close links with the NHS	15%	8%
Quality of the premises	8%	5%
Knowing that there is action I can take if I have any concerns or wish to make a complaint	7%	5%
They are well presented/dressed	5%	5%
Don't know	4%	0%
Not applicable – none of these factors are important in giving me trust towards a private healthcare professional	3%	0%
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 than 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.

Awareness of regulation

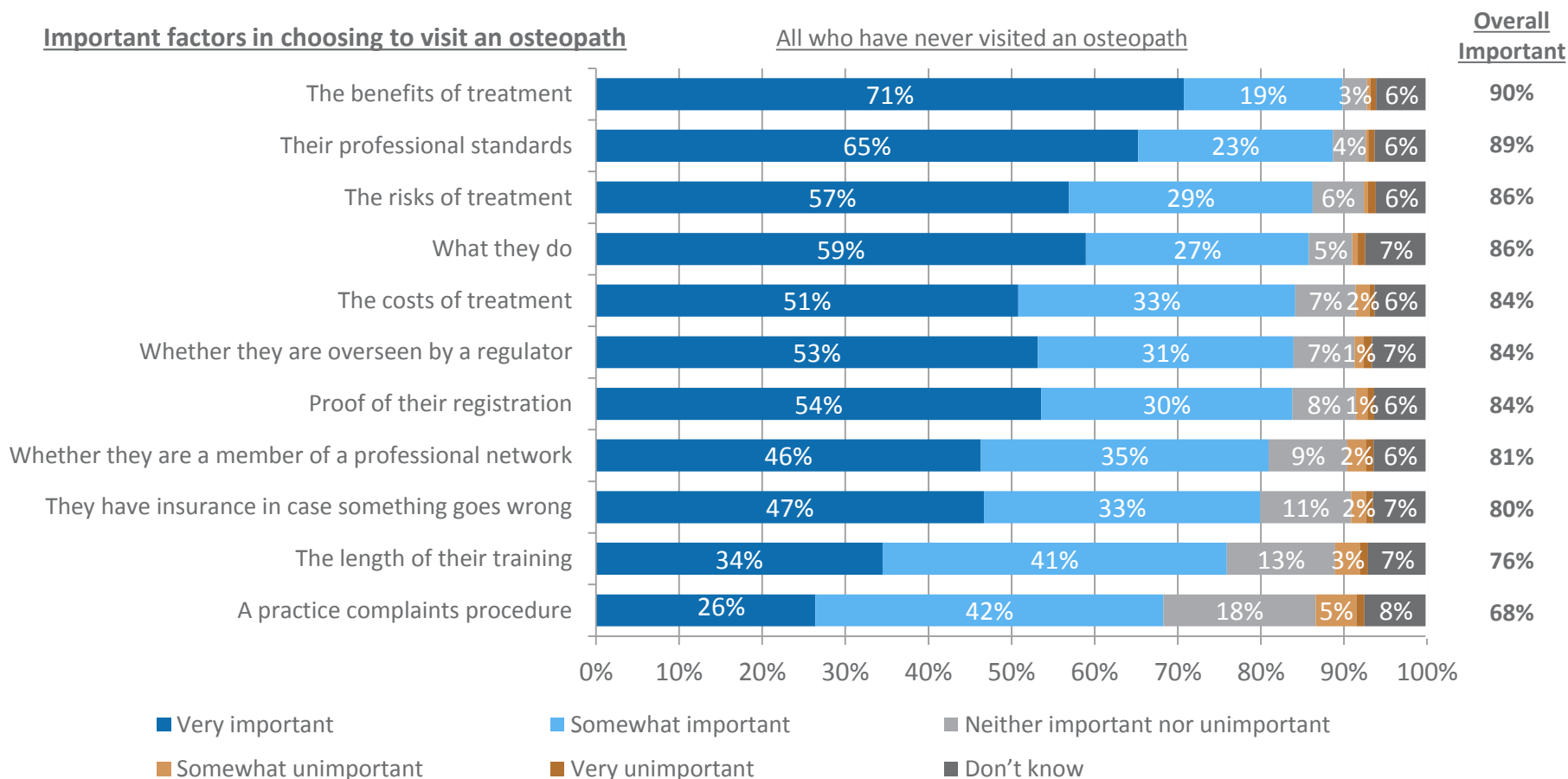


Deciding to visit an osteopath: information needs

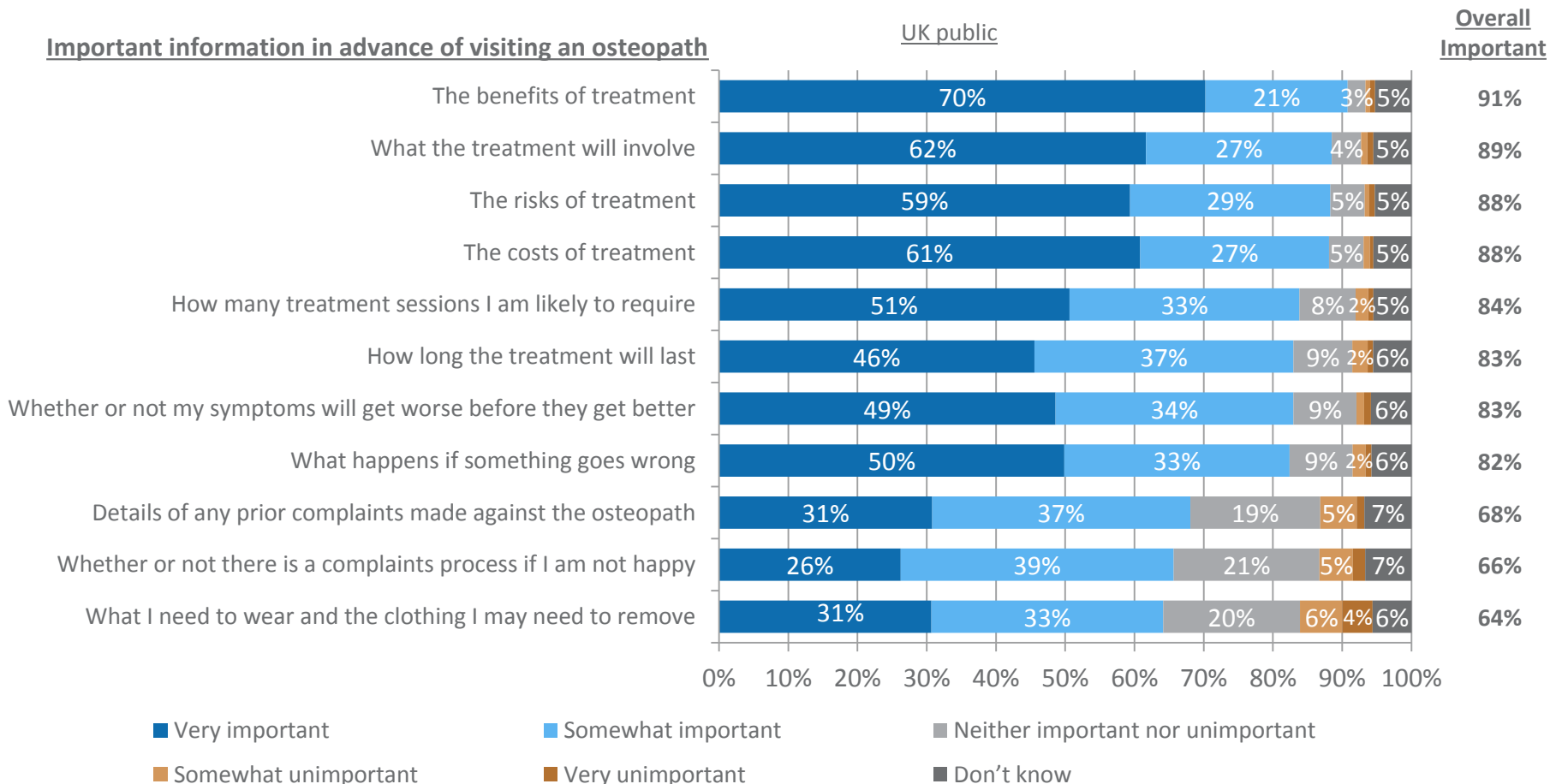


People who have never before visited an osteopath place the highest importance on information about the benefits when considering a decision about whether or not to have osteopathic treatment.

- 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.

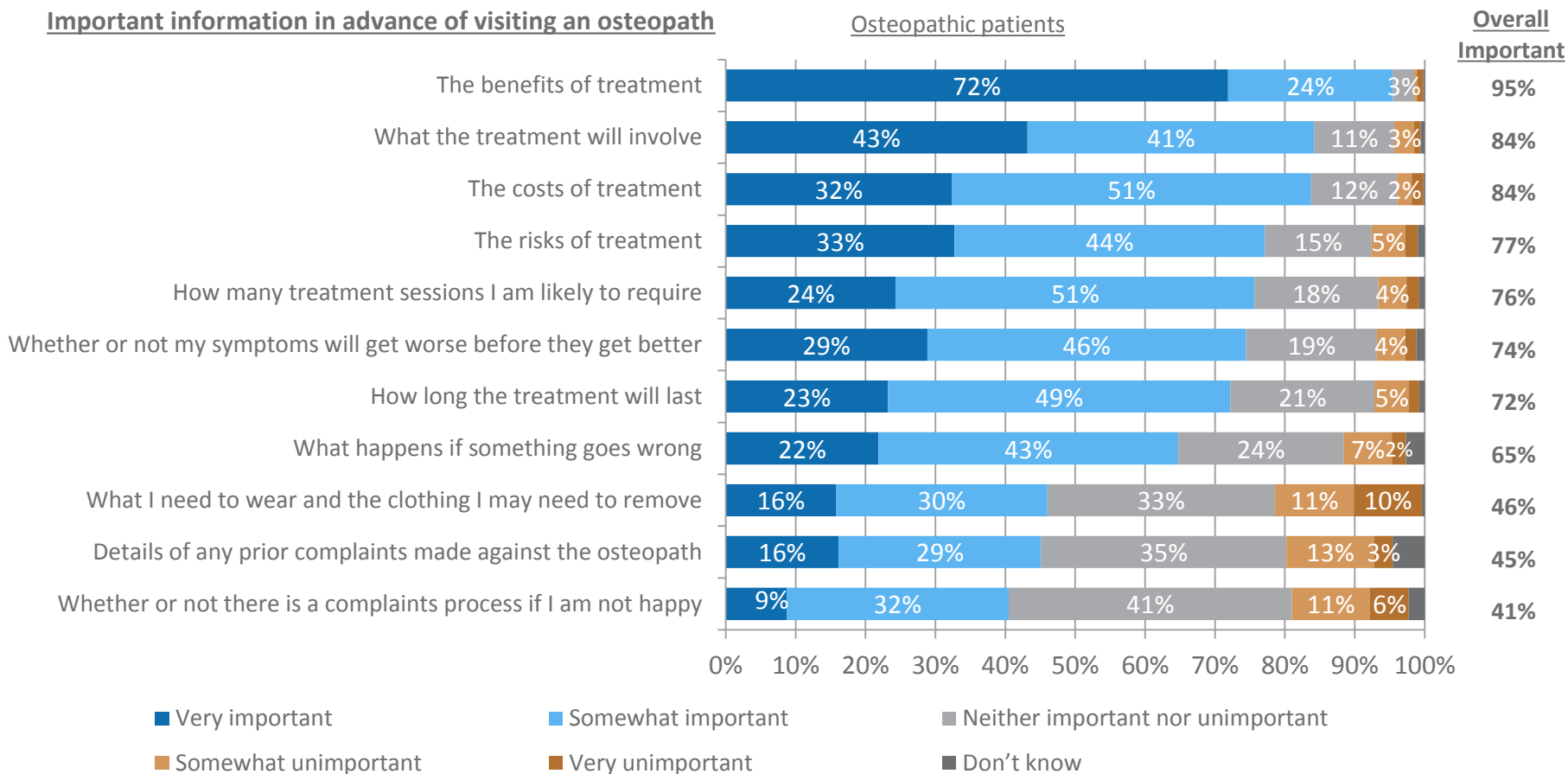


The benefits of treatment is considered important information; nine in ten (91%) members of the UK public state this would be important to them in advance of their first visit to an osteopath.



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

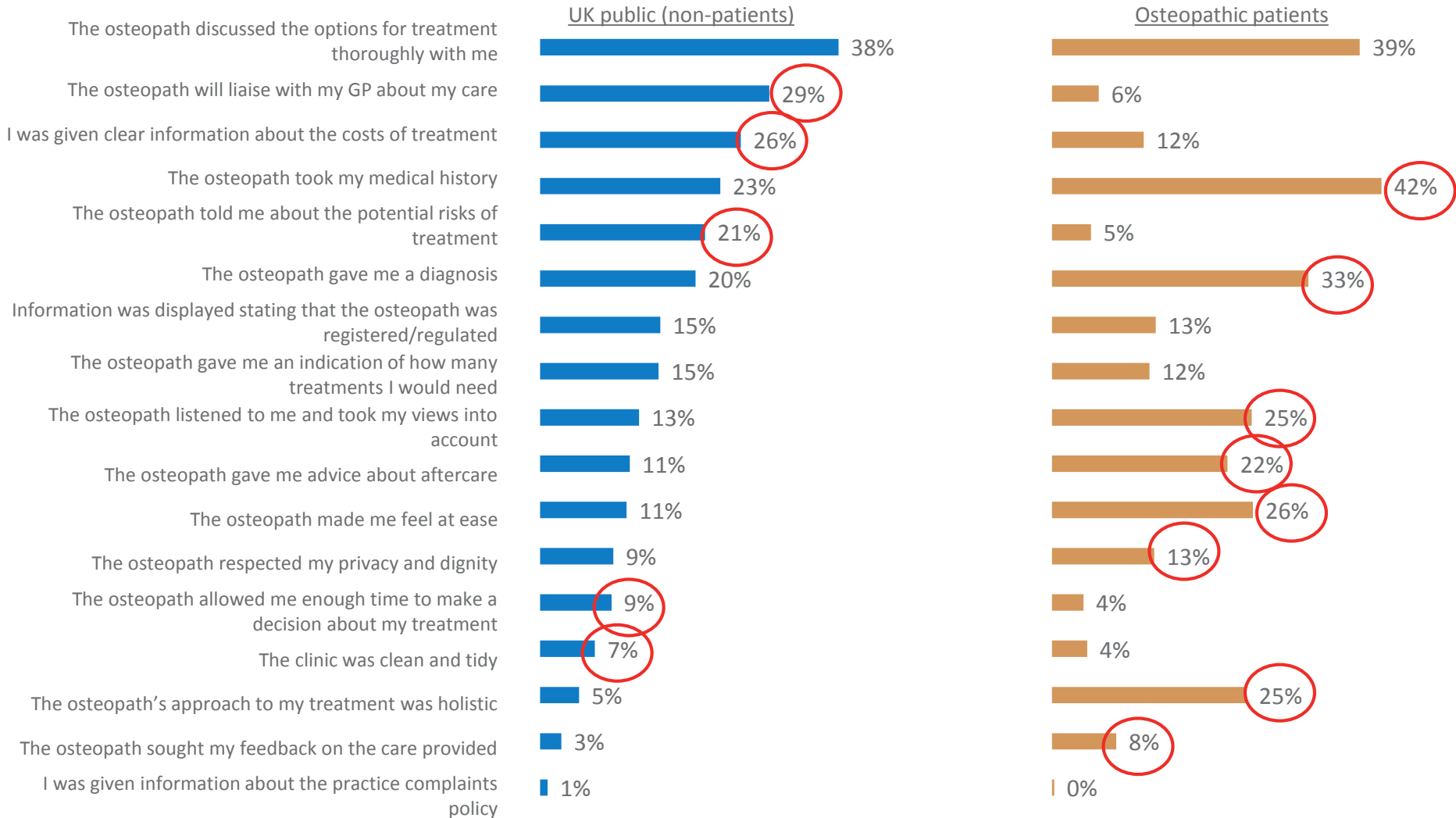
- Patients report that before their first visit they are also highly likely to value information about the costs of treatment and what it will involve.



Experience of visiting an osteopath

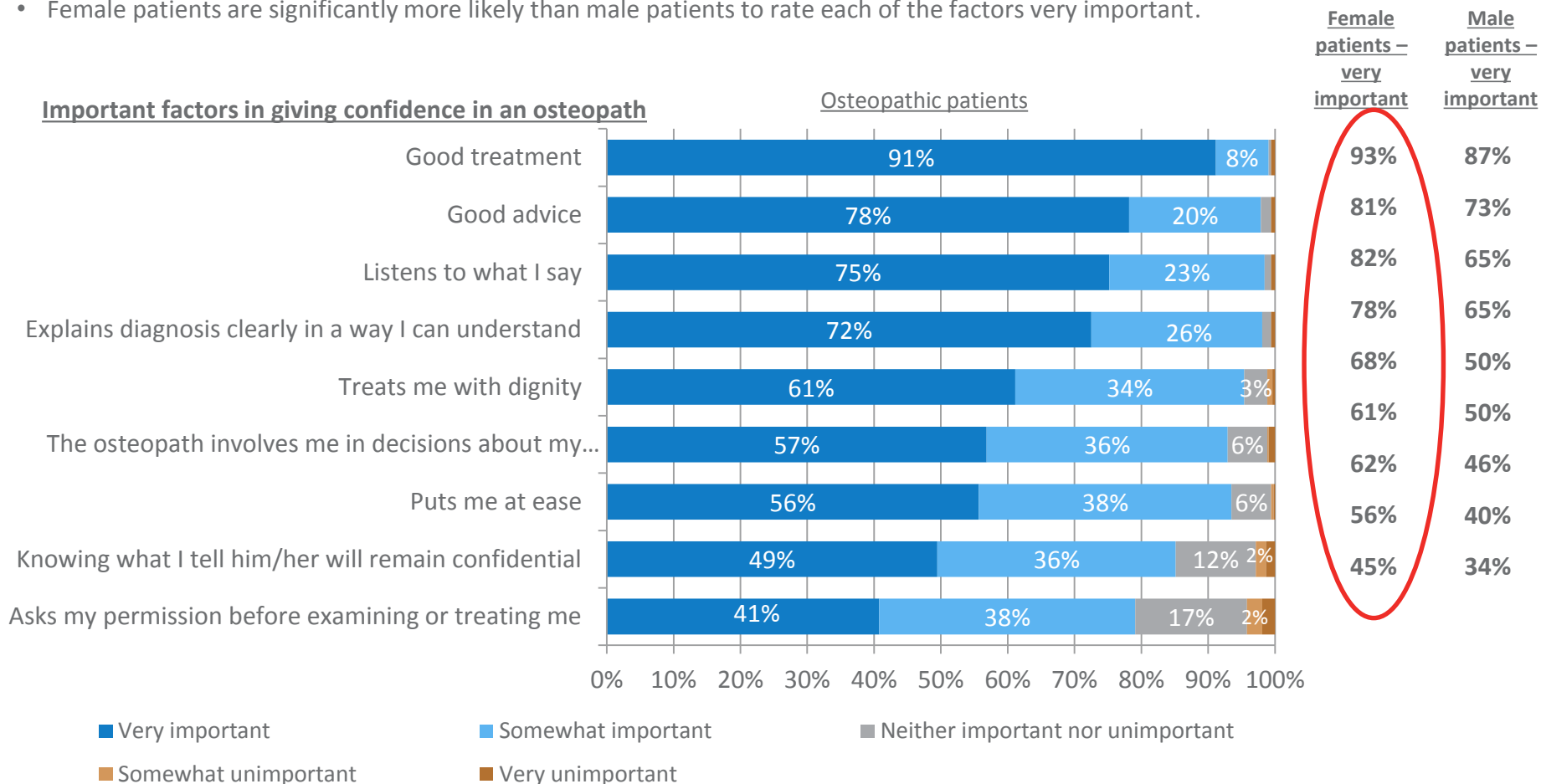


When the public become osteopathic patients, they place less importance on the liaison between their osteopath and their GP, and are less concerned with information about the costs and risks of treatment.



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.



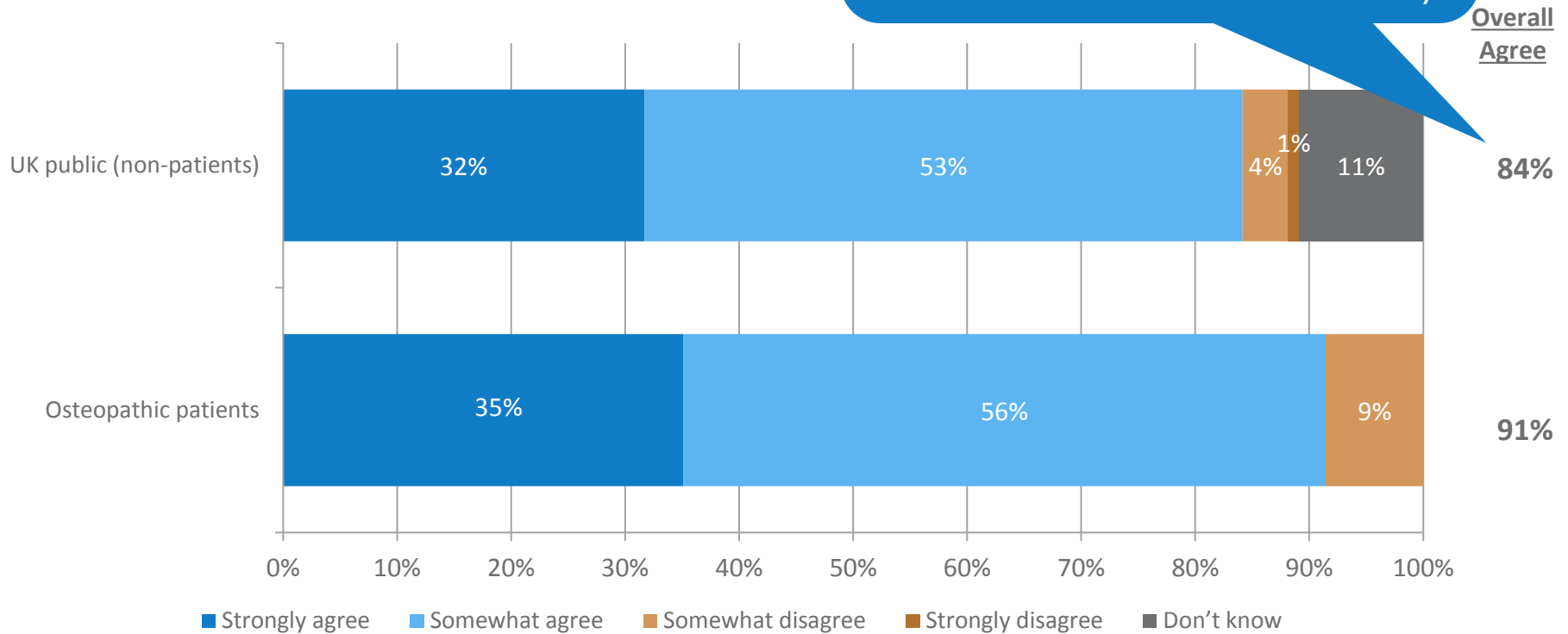
Providing feedback and reporting concerns



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

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is 'important to provide feedback to an osteopath about your experience as a patient'?

People who have confidence* in receiving healthcare advice/treatment from osteopaths are significantly more likely than those who don't have confidence in receiving healthcare advice/treatment from osteopaths to agree that it's important to provide feedback (91% compared with 84% of those who do not have confidence)



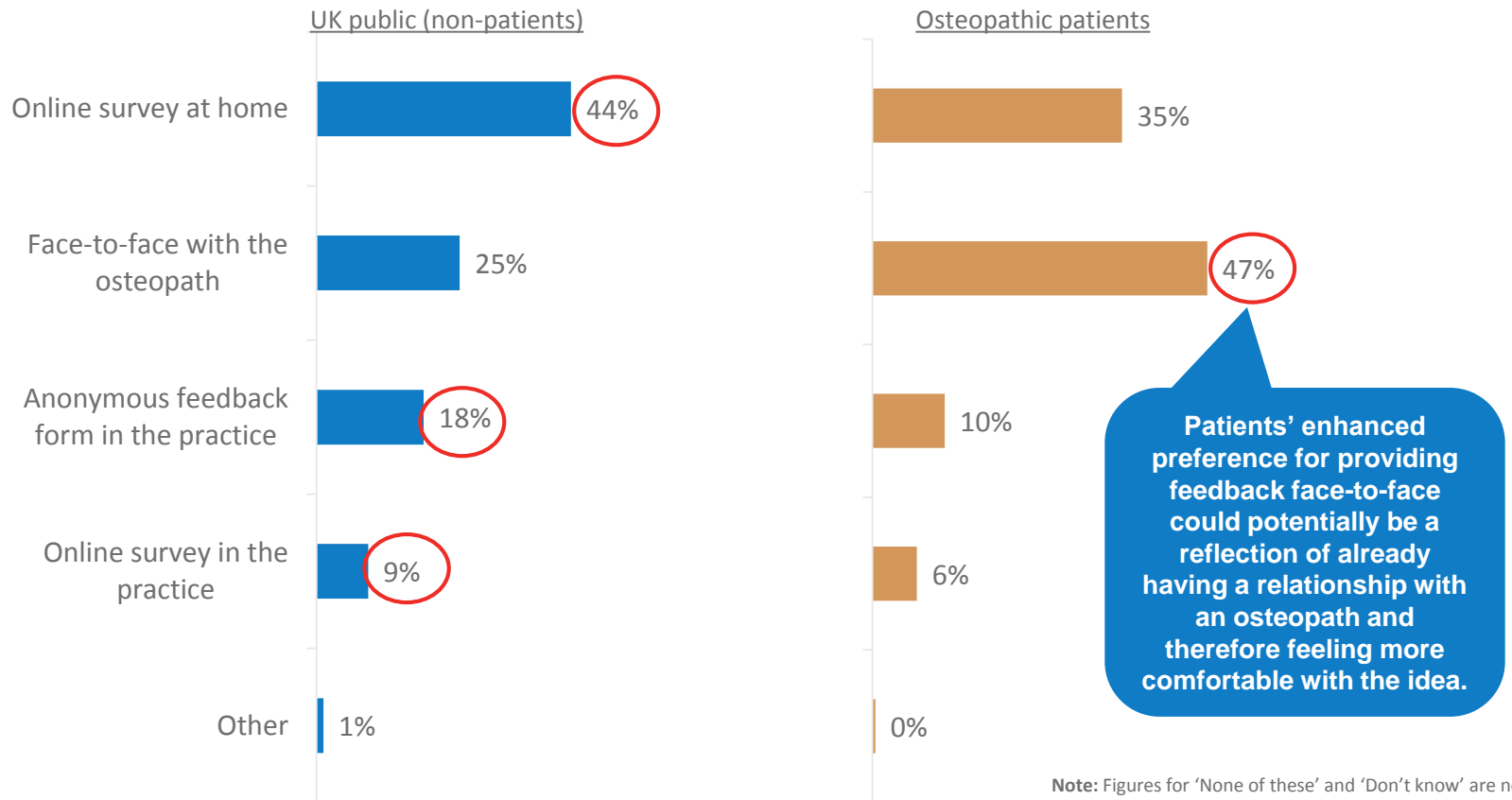
*Confidence is defined by 'a lot' or 'a fair amount' of confidence in Q1

Q17a. Please imagine now that you have had an appointment with an osteopath. To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is 'important to provide feedback to an osteopath about your experience as a patient'? Base: All UK adults who have not visited an Osteopath in the past 12 months (n=1,025)
 Q17b. To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is 'important to provide feedback to an osteopath about your experience as a patient'? 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).

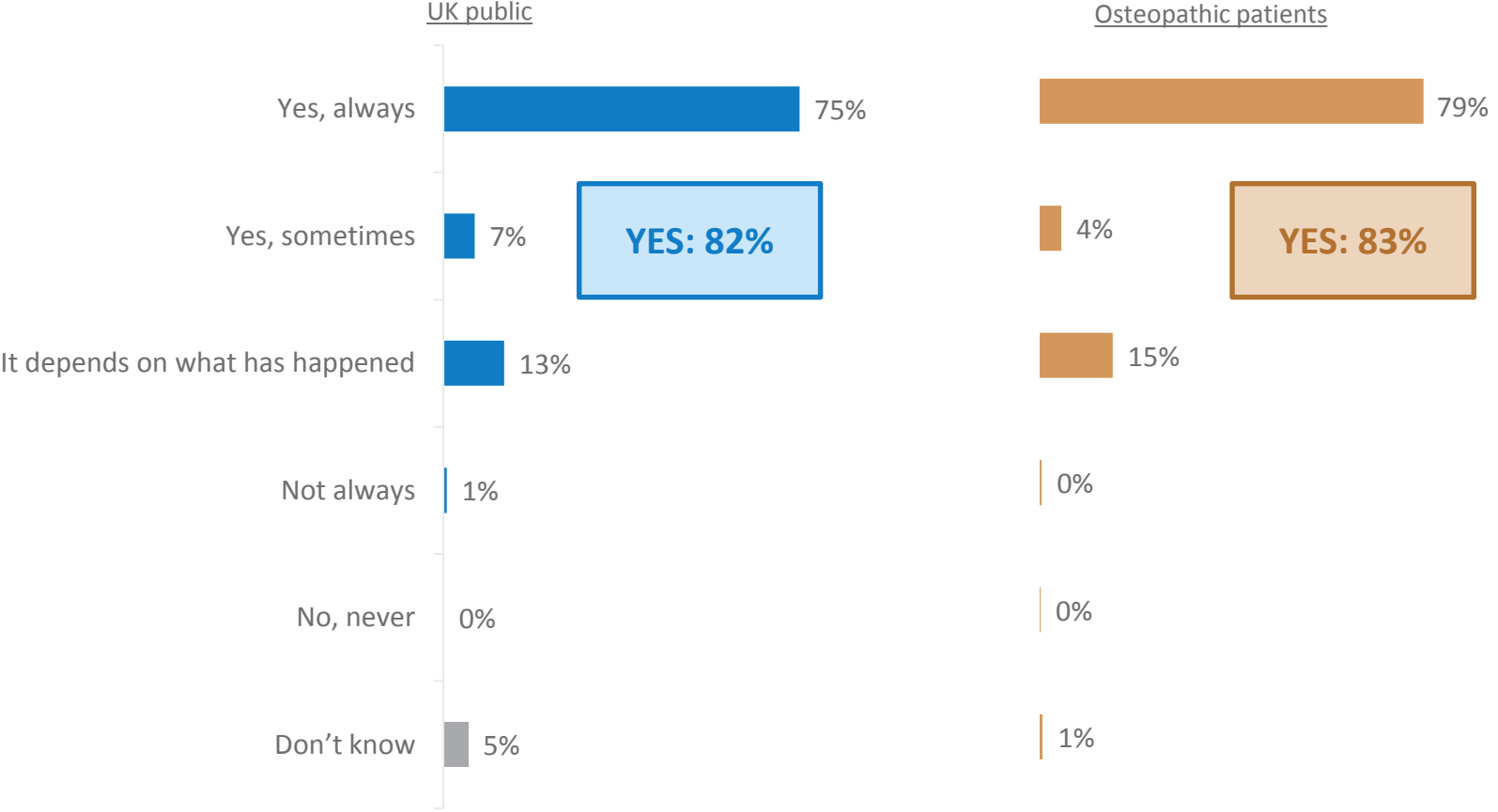
Preferred methods of providing patient feedback



Note: Figures for 'None of these' and 'Don't know' are not reported

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



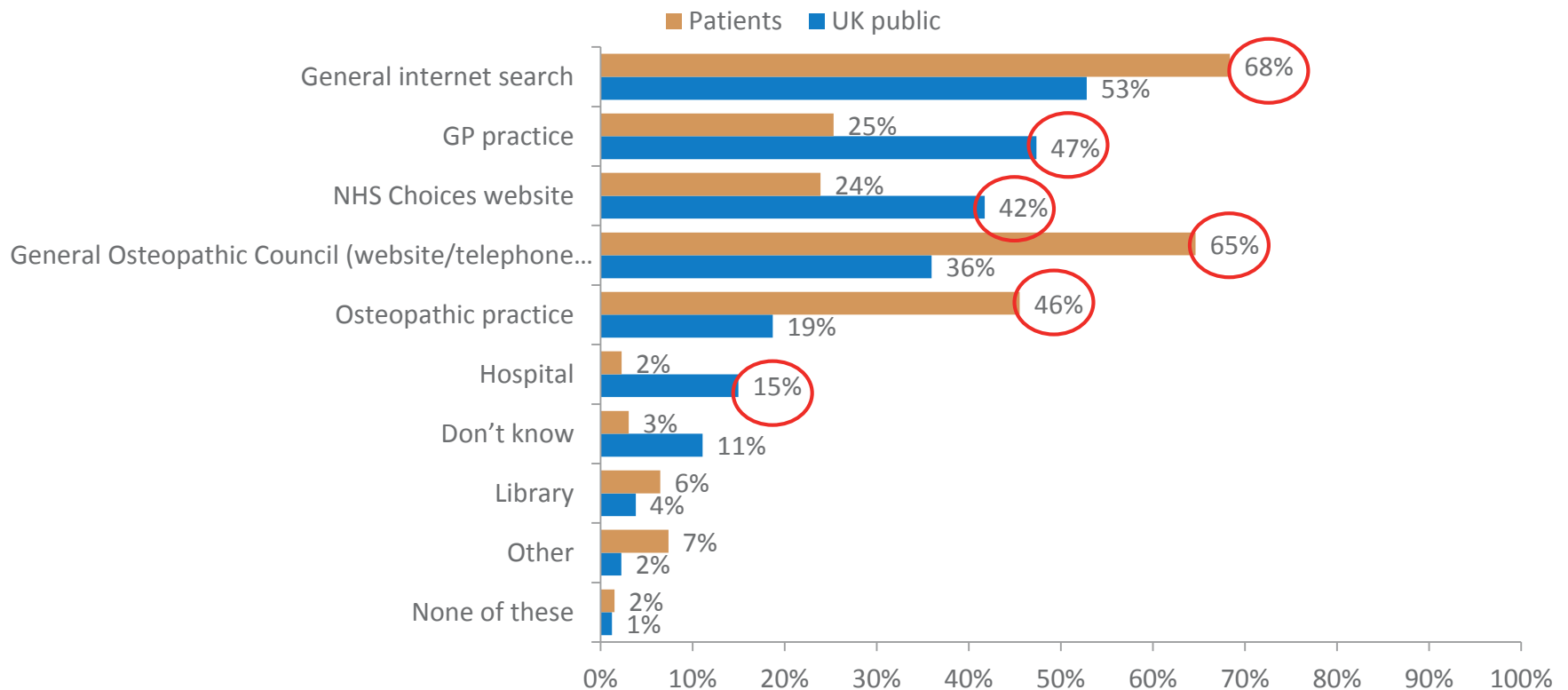
The GOsC and professional standards



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.

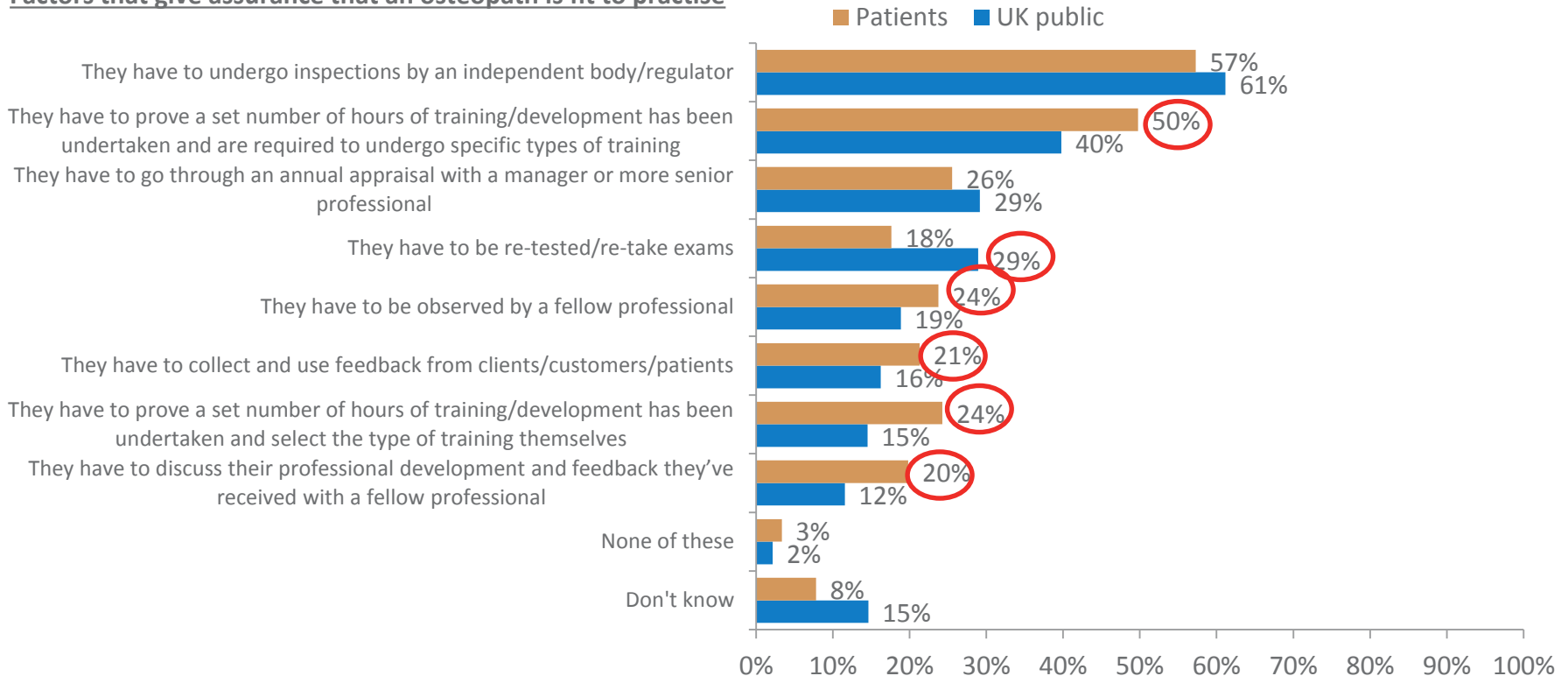
Sources of information on standards of osteopathic practice



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.

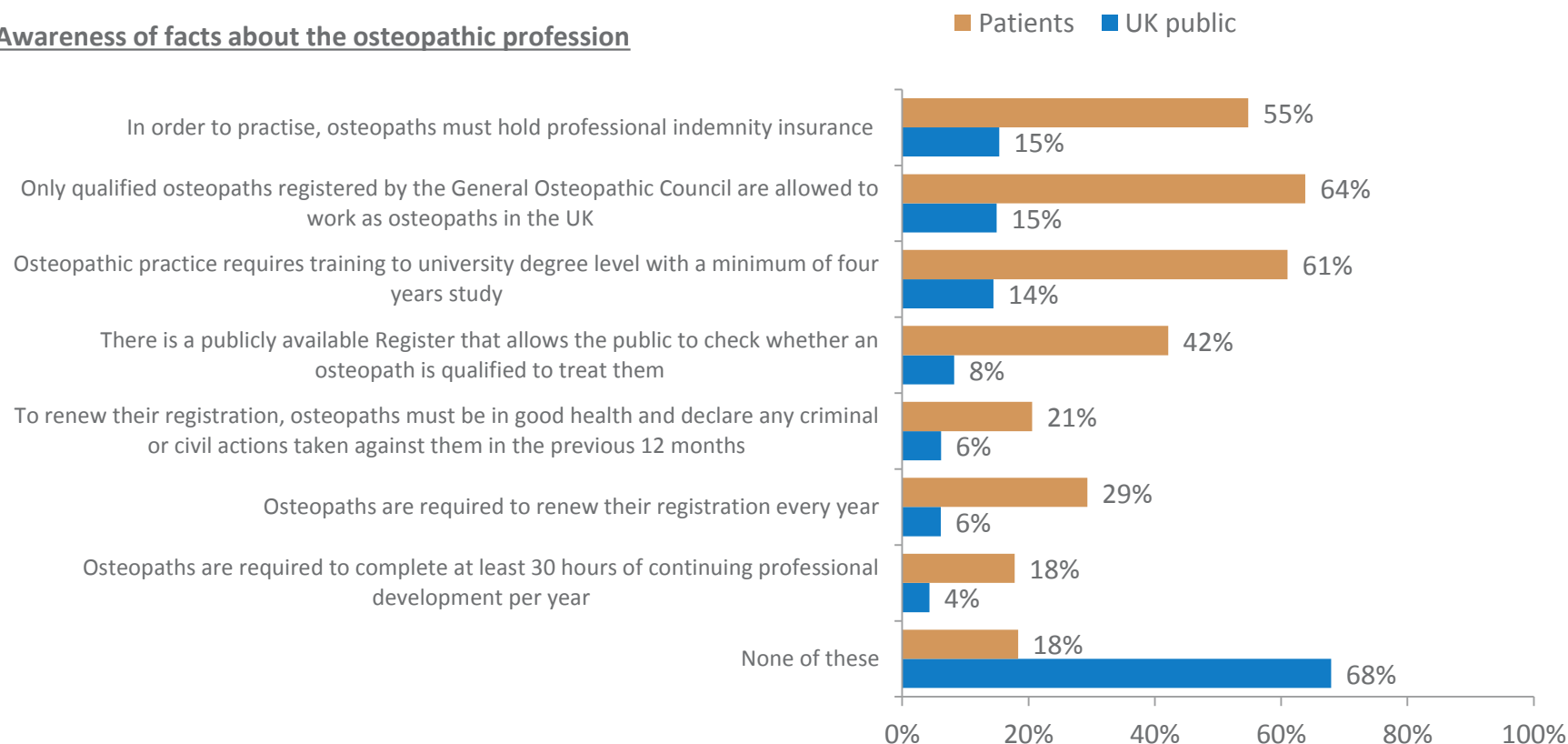
Factors that give assurance that an osteopath is fit to practise



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.

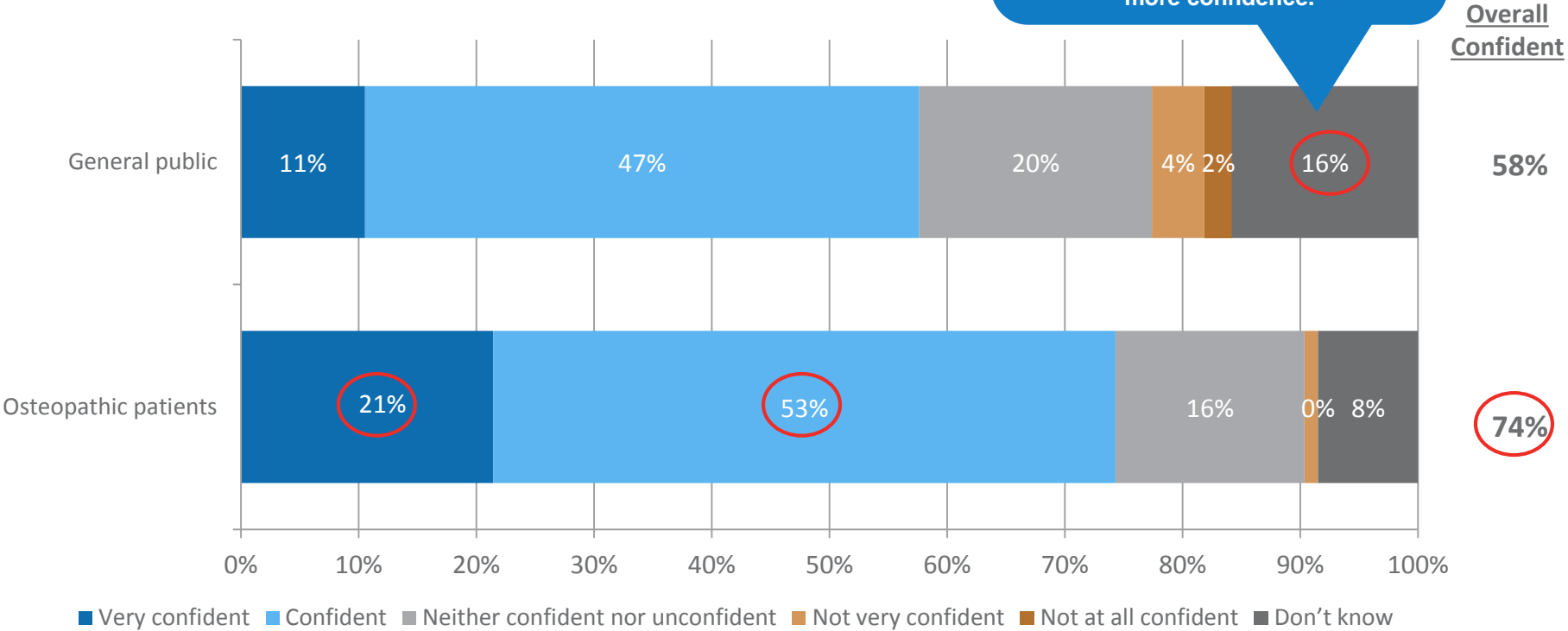
Awareness of facts about the osteopathic profession



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.

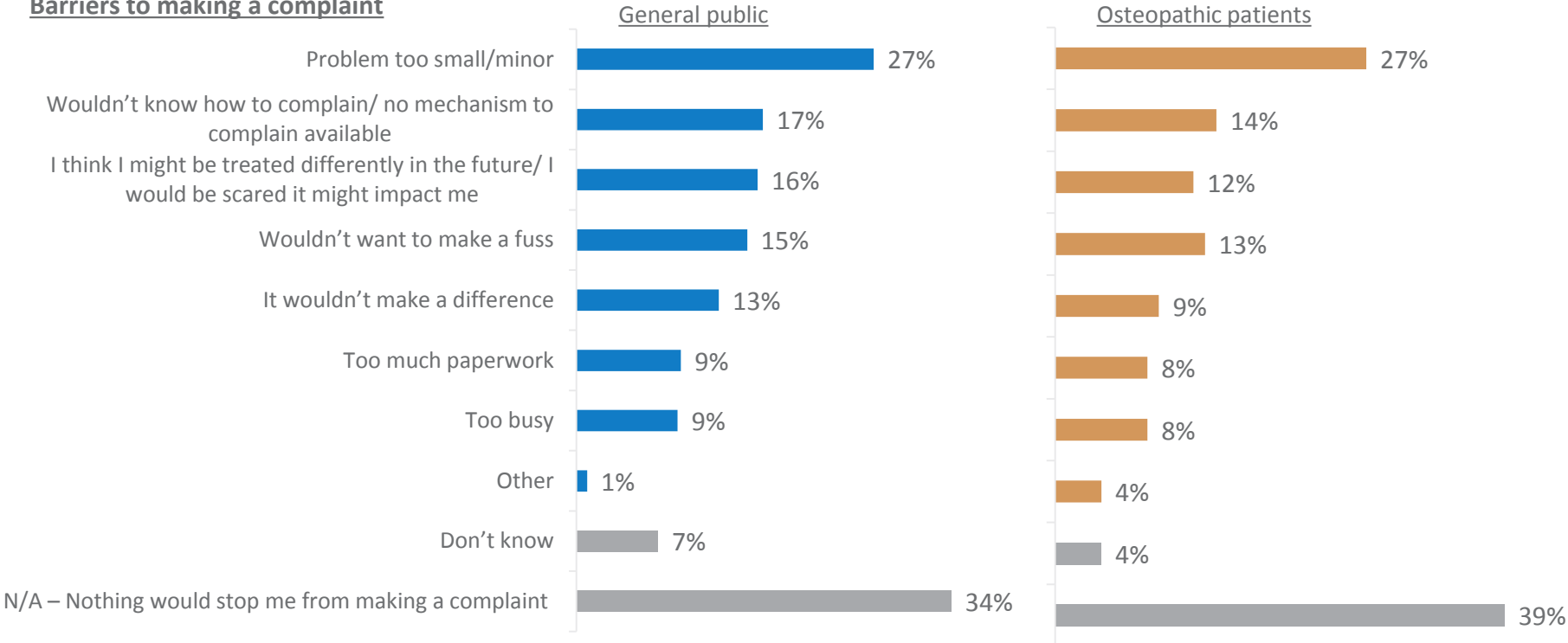
The general public are more likely to not have an opinion or indicate that they do not know, which could be an indication that osteopathic patients are being exposed to information about the GOSc and as a result have more confidence.



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.

Barriers to making a complaint



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

Information that it is important to be on a public register

