

NOW 'YouGov' Survey



45% of adults are unhappy with the appearance of their teeth and 20% would consider orthodontic treatment

A study conducted by YouGov on behalf of British Orthodontic Society (BOS) is published today. The research was carried out to mark the launch of the first National Orthodontic Week in order to obtain some statistical information about people's views of the appearance of their teeth. The BOS fields numerous queries about the growth of orthodontic treatment in adults and with no good statistics available, it commissioned this new research.

The survey canvassed the opinions of 2,050 people split into eight categories according to sex, age, social status, geographical location, working status, marital status and number of children in the household. The findings reveal that:

- 45% of UK adults are unhappy with the appearance of their teeth.
- 20% of UK adults would consider having some form of orthodontic treatment to improve the alignment and appearance of their teeth.
- Of the adults who felt orthodontic treatment would be of benefit,
- 56% would contemplate treatment for an improvement in appearance
- 25% for an improvement in self esteem
- 18% for an improvement in oral health and function.

Commenting on the survey Dr Nigel Harradine, Chairman of the British Orthodontic Society stated "We already had evidence from several studies which indicates that one third of all children assessed at the age of 12 have a significant need for orthodontic treatment, and now this survey shows that 20% of adults are unhappy with the alignment and appearance of their teeth and would consider having orthodontic treatment. Such findings corroborate anecdotal evidence from orthodontists who are experiencing a significant increase in enquiries from adults who may not have had an opportunity to correct their bite and their smile earlier in life. This reflects both a change in attitude towards orthodontic treatment and recent advances in treatment techniques".

The first National Orthodontic Week (NOW) takes place during the week of 22 - 28 March 2010 and was set up by the British Orthodontic Society (BOS), a charity which promotes the very best in education, research and care for patients. The NOW campaign has been created to focus attention on the ways the look and function of people's teeth can impact on their lives and can be improved. It also aims to provide people with clear, trustworthy and impartial information about orthodontic treatment.

What is orthodontics?

Orthodontics is a dental specialty concerned with the growth of the teeth, jaws and face. Nearly one million people of all ages started having orthodontic treatment last year in the UK. Orthodontic treatment is about making the best of your teeth; it's about improving the harmony of your mouth and jaws. Once you can bite together correctly, you can eat more comfortably and care for your teeth and gums more easily. Orthodontics is all about creating a natural, healthy and enduring smile.

Britain is one of the only countries in the world where orthodontic treatment is available free on the NHS depending on the patients' age and the severity of their problem. New technologies have meant that orthodontic treatment can now be discrete and more accessible to a wider range of people, no matter their age. To find out more NOW visit www.nowsmile.org

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Background information

Questions

The survey was run online by YouGov and the questions asked were:

1. Are you happy with the alignment and appearance of your teeth when you smile?
2. As an adult (i.e. aged 18 or over), have you ever had orthodontic braces to straighten your teeth?
3. Would you consider having treatment to straighten your teeth (e.g. braces, surgery etc.) in the future?
4. Which ONE of the following is the main reason why you would consider having treatment to straighten your teeth?
 - a. To improve my work prospects

- b. To improve my romantic prospects
- c. To improve my self esteem
- d. To improve the health and function of my teeth
- e. To improve my appearance

The last question was asked of the total sample of 2,050 and also asked of those “who were considering having treatment in the near future”. The latter question brought up 347 respondents.

Responses

The responses were split into 8 Groups:

- a. male and female,
- b. age groups (done in splits from 18 -24 and then in 10 years to 55+),
- c. social grade (ABC1 and C2DE),
- d. regions (North, Midlands, East, London, South, Wales and Scotland),
- e. working status (full-time, part-time, student, retired, unemployed),
- f. marital status (married, co-habiting, separated, widowed, never married),
- g. children in household (0 – 3+), and
- h. county breakdown (26 counties).

The figures were weighted by YouGov and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Results:

The summarised results are as follows:

Question 1: Are you happy with the alignment and appearance of your teeth when you smile?

Yes, I am = 55%

No, I'm not = 40%

Don't know =5%

There were no significant variations for the responding Groups apart from the 18 – 24 age group and student group. Both of these Groups appeared happier with the alignment and appearance of their teeth. This may reflect the improvement in orthodontic care over the past 10 years which would have seen more of the younger age groups benefitting from previous orthodontic correction.

[Interestingly there was a marked increase in the happy category for those with 3+ children, those living in Merseyside, Nottinghamshire, Berkshire and Devon]

Question 2: As an adult (i.e. aged 18 or over), have you ever had orthodontic braces to straighten your teeth?

Yes, I have=7%

No, I haven't= 93%

Apart from it appearing that orthodontics treatment has only reached a small percentage of the UK population, it also appears that orthodontic treatment has only reached a small fraction of those who would consider treatment to improve the alignment and appearance of their teeth (approx. 15% = 7% of 45%).

Once again the most significant variations were for the 18-24 and 25 – 34 year age group and full time students. Both these groups had greater percentages of orthodontic undertaken, which would reflect the increase in orthodontic care in the past 10 – 20 years.

[There was also a rise in those having orthodontic treatment in the Never Married group, and those living in Kent and the Scottish Highlands. While the older, retired and widowed groups, and those living in Norfolk, Somerset and Devon showed less orthodontic treatment]

Question 3: Would you consider having treatment to straighten your teeth (e.g. braces, surgery etc.) in the future?

Yes, I would= 17%

No, I wouldn't= 73%

Don't know= 10%

It would appear that although 40 – 45% of the UK population would like to improve the appearance of their teeth, only 17 – 20% are happy to do this by orthodontic means. This is probably a confirmation of a long-held instinctive “belief” that about 15% of adults were interested in orthodontic treatment. Does this mean that the remainder of those unhappy with their appearance would be happy to improve by other dental procedures or are they just disinterested?

The more significant variations were the 25 – 34 year age group and students and this would appear to reinforce the concept of greater awareness of orthodontic treatment as an acceptable option for correction amongst the younger generations.

[There was also an increase in “would” in Wales, those living as married or never married, those in Greater Manchester, Staffordshire, West Midlands and South Wales]

Question 4: Which ONE of the following is the main reason why you would consider having treatment to straighten your teeth?

- To improve my work prospects=0%
- To improve my romantic prospects=0%
- To improve my self esteem=4%
- To improve the health and function of my teeth=3%
- To improve my appearance=9%
- There was a “Not applicable” return of 83%.
- It would appear that improvement in appearance is the greatest motivator for orthodontic treatment in adults.

The main variations were, once again, in the 18 – 24 year age group, and students who all felt that raising self esteem was the most important reason for considering orthodontic treatment.

[Interestingly, those in South Wales also felt the same]

When the question was applied to those adults considering having treatment in the near future , the responses were as follows:

- To improve my work prospects=2%
- To improve my romantic prospects=2%
- To improve my self esteem= 24%
- To improve the health and function of my teeth= 20%
- To improve my appearance= 50%
- Don't know=1%

It still appears that improvement in appearance is the main motivator for seeking orthodontic treatment, and that improvement in self esteem and health are also rated, but less so.

It also appears that the younger the adult, the improvement in self esteem plays a greater part than improvement in appearance.

[Interestingly, adults in the London were motivated more by improvement in appearance].

Conclusions

- 40% - 45% of UK adults are unhappy with the appearance of their teeth. Younger adults seem to either have better aligned teeth and are less concerned or are just less concerned.
- Just 7% of UK adults have had some form of orthodontic correction undertaken.
- 17% - 20% of UK adults would consider having some form of orthodontic treatment to improve the alignment and appearance of their teeth. The remainder either do not see any problem or may want to pursue other forms of dental/ restorative treatment.
- Of the adults who felt orthodontic treatment would be of benefit, 56% would contemplate treatment for an improvement in appearance, 25% for an improvement in self esteem and 18% for an improvement in oral health and function.
- Of those adults who were contemplating having treatment in the near future, 50% were undertaking treatment for an improvement in appearance, 24% for an improvement in self esteem and 20% for an improvement in oral health and function. A similar percentage to the overall adult group above.

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