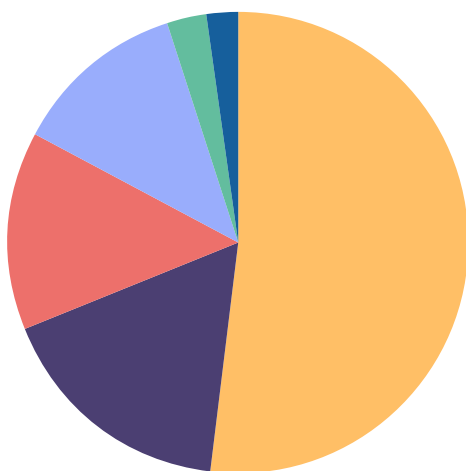


# The impact of education level on health information preferences

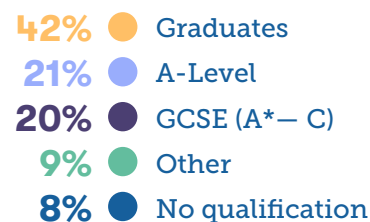
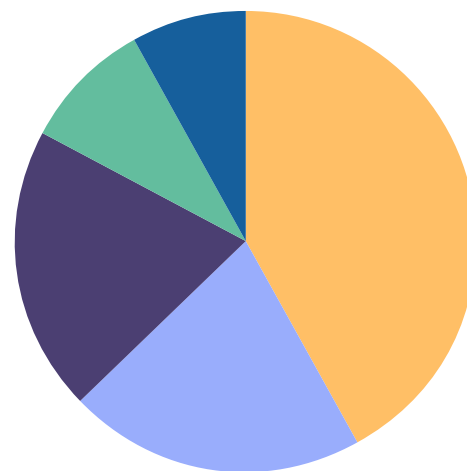
In a PM Society's Patient Engagement Interest Group (PEIG) survey carried out in 2018, interesting insights into patient preferences for health information were revealed. Across a series of factsheets, we explored what patients want from health information and how and where they access it. In this third factsheet, we compare how health information preferences differ based on the education level of respondents.

## Levels of education from respondents:

PM Society's survey respondents:



UK as whole<sup>1</sup>:



<sup>1</sup> [ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduatesintheuklabourmarket/2017](https://ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/graduatesintheuklabourmarket/2017)  
(Last accessed Jun 2020)

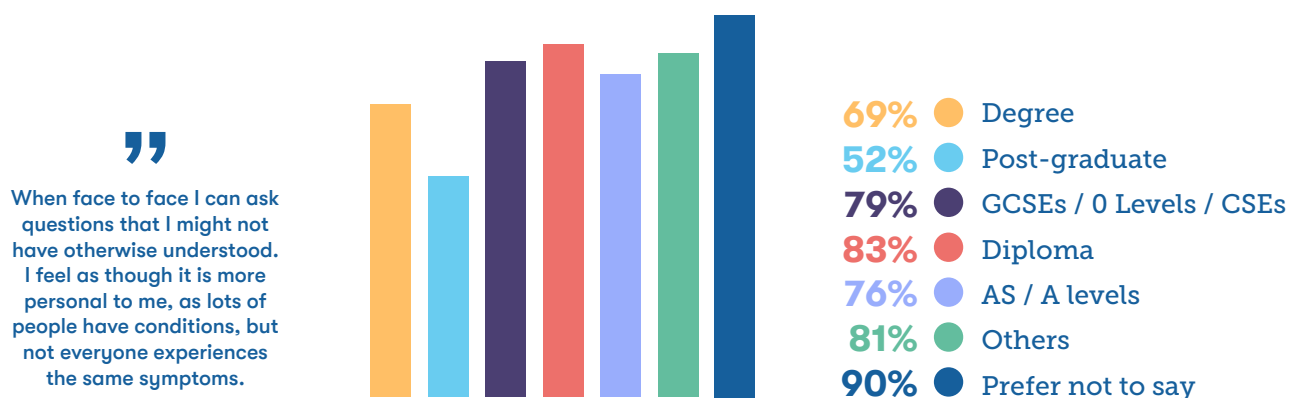
### Key findings:

- › PM Society's survey respondents had a high level of degree and post-graduate degree composition, with **more than half (52%)** declaring one of these two qualifications.
- › A further **quarter (26%)** had obtained A / AS levels or a diploma.
- › Data from PM Society's respondents are not necessarily representative of the UK population – when compared with the UK based on a survey of adults aged 21–64 years, there was an increased representation from respondents who had completed higher education.
- › In the following section, we explore how education levels affected preferences around health information.

### What are the reasons that patients seek health information?

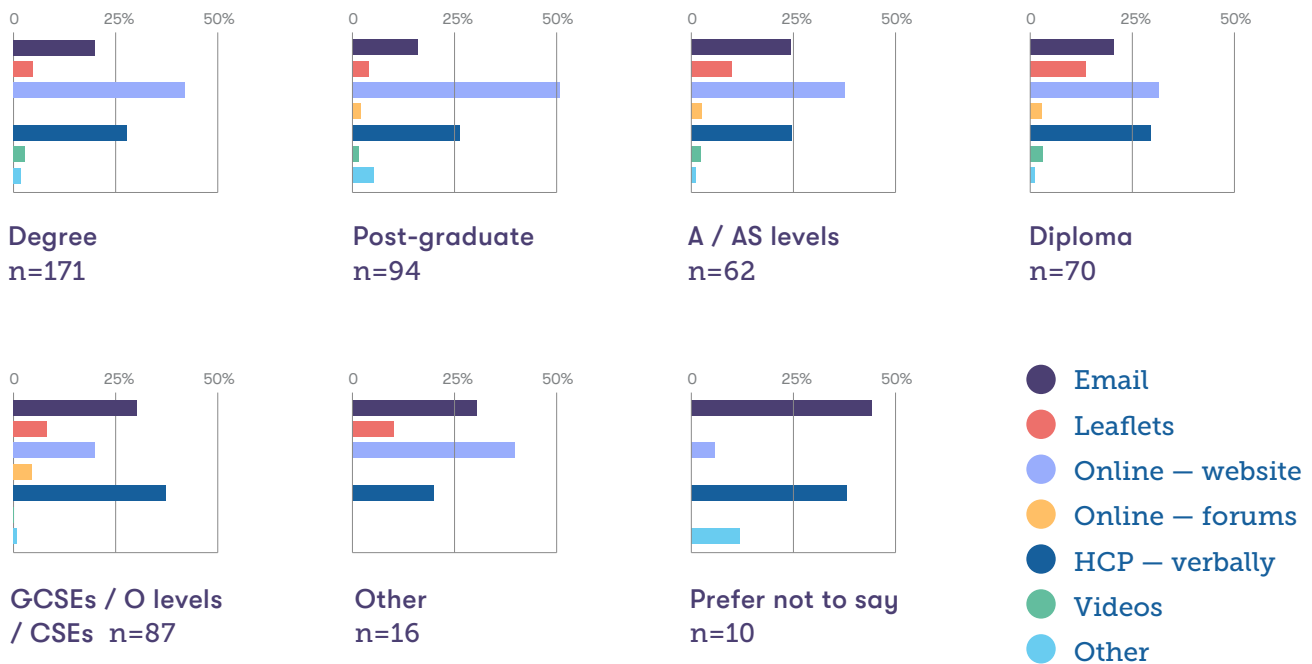
Regardless of level of education, the main reason for seeking health information was to find out what might be causing **specific symptoms**.

### How does education level impacts patients' preference to receive health information from a healthcare professional vs other sources?



- › Respondents were asked to select all options that applied on where they prefer to receive health information from.
- › Results in the graph show how education level affected the number of respondents that selected their **doctor or other healthcare professional (HCP)** as a preferred source of health information.
- › Those respondents with the highest levels of education were **least** likely to select 'receiving information from an HCP' as one of their primary sources of health information.
- › Of respondents who prefer to receive health information from a doctor / HCP, when asked why, a recurring theme was the **ability to interact and ask questions and ensure that the information was tailored to them**.

### What format do patients prefer when receiving their health information?



› A trend in the data showed that the lower the level of qualifications, the more likely the respondents were to select 'receiving information from an HCP' or email, as a preferred source of health information – non-exclusive question.

› Those who preferred 'not to say' what their qualifications were, also seemed to favour email and receiving information from an HCP, although numbers were very small.

### What format do patients prefer when receiving their health information?

#### Via email



I can view it when convenient for me and always have it for reference.

—  
So I don't look stupid if I don't understand what I'm told. (GCSE respondent)

—  
It comes straight to me and I won't lose it as I would if it was on paper.

—  
Because it is for me only and no-one else can see it.

#### Online via a website:



Easy to access as and when you need it, wherever you are, no bits of paper to misplace.

—  
So that I can print it off and keep it. I need to plan for the future.

—  
Because it's easier and I can get all the information I need in a discreet way in the comfort of my own house.

#### Online via forum:



“We can ask questions and share concerns.

—  
I have hearing loss so to read it is much easier.

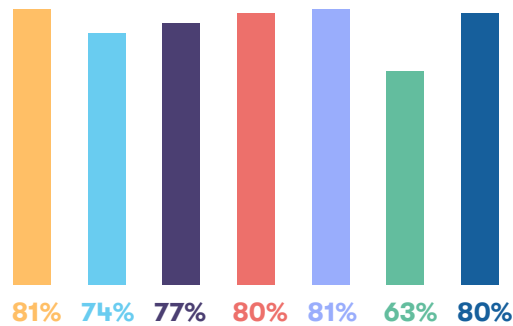
—  
Hopefully will give several opinions and can then make own decision.

› Comments from the 'Other' category were added back to appropriate groups e.g. printed form was added to leaflets.

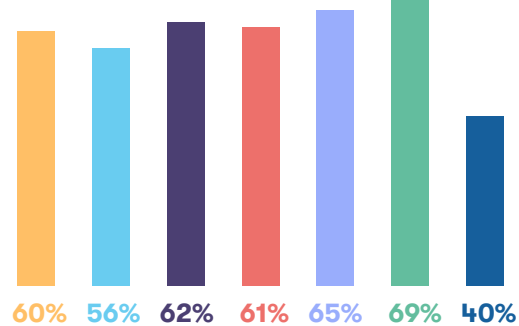
› Apps were only mentioned by a single respondent, but many of those responding 'Other' preferred a combination of formats, mentioning also that it depended on the information being delivered.

What reasons do patients give for accessing health information and how does education level affect those reasons?

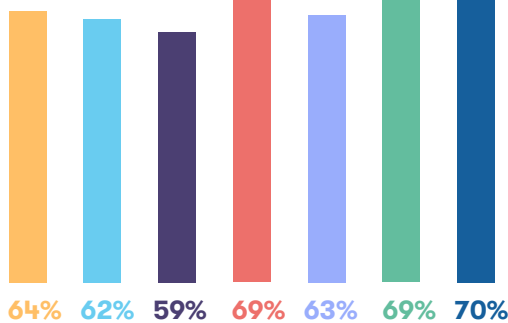
Looking for symptoms



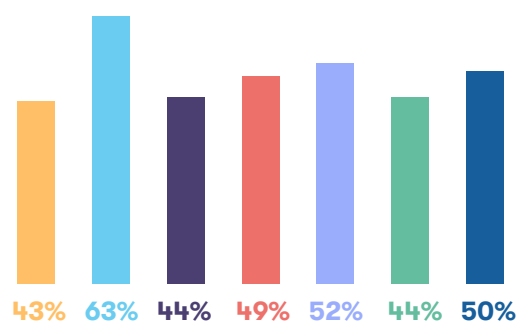
Looking for information after a diagnosis



Looking for information about a treatment



Looking for information about a procedure/test



- Degree
- Post-graduate
- GCSEs / O Levels / CSEs
- Diploma
- AS / A levels
- Others
- Prefer not to say

› When identifying the reason for accessing sources of health information, looking for the causes of symptoms was selected **most often** as a response (non-exclusive) and results were broadly similar across the various levels of qualification.

› Looking for information about a procedure or test was the **least likely** reason for any of the respondents to seek out health information, although those with a post-graduate qualification were more likely to do this.

### In conclusion...

- › The profile of the PM Society's survey respondents showed a more **highly qualified** population than the UK general population.<sup>1</sup>
- › Seeking the cause of **symptoms** was the most frequent reason for looking for health information, irrespective of qualification level.

Although numbers are small, the survey results suggest that:

- › Respondents with higher levels of education may be less likely to want, or perhaps need, to receive health information **from an HCP** and they are more likely to access online sources.
- › Respondents with lower levels of qualifications may also prefer to access **online sources** in case they do not understand what they are being told during the consultation, as mentioned in the free text field responses.
- › Whilst leaflets scored low on the preferred format question, the free text field had numerous mentions of the importance of being able to download information and print it off.

**Note: Only 13% of respondents selected pharmaceutical websites as a primary source of health information in a multiple choice question and the split by qualification level can be seen below.**

