



Chronic Pain
A U S T R A L I A

National Pain Survey 2019





Chronic Pain
AUSTRALIA

National Pain Survey 2019

Answers reported by key themes and metrics

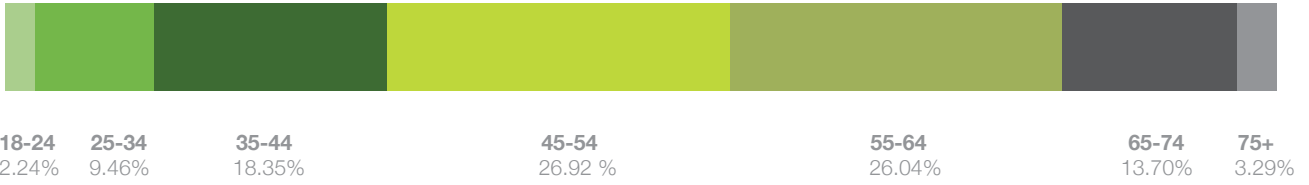
Total number of survey respondents - 1251

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Pharmacists	3
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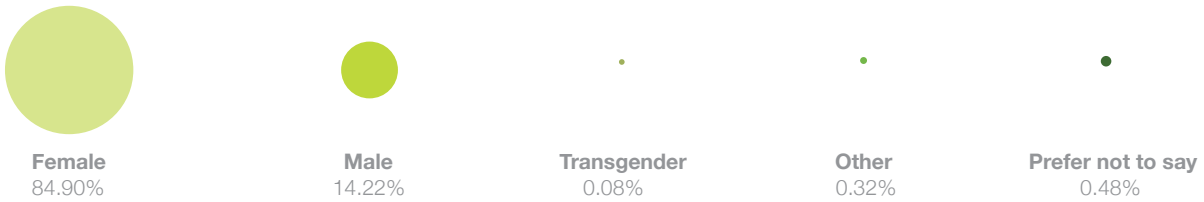
DEMOGRAPHICS

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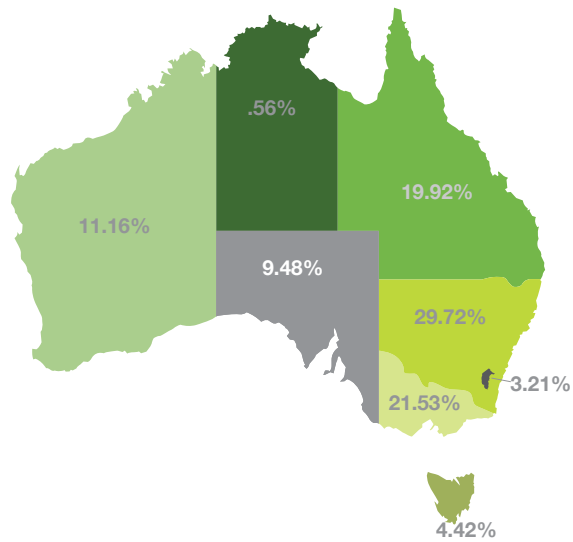
Question 1 What is your age?



Question 2 What is your gender?



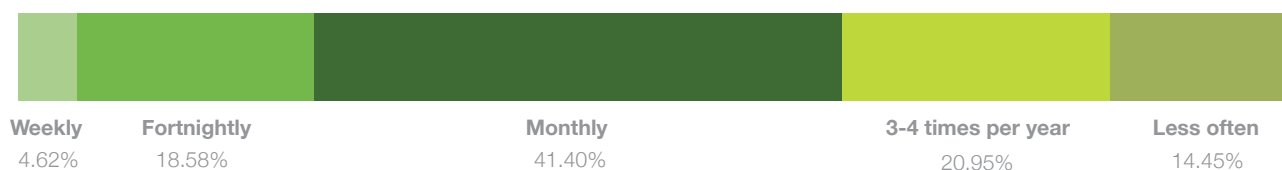
Question 3 What state do you live in?



GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Question 4

How often do you visit your GP about your chronic pain?



Question 5

On a scale of 1-10 how well do you think your GP manages your chronic pain?

8/10

Question 6

What are the most important things for GPs to know, understand and do when treating someone living with chronic pain?

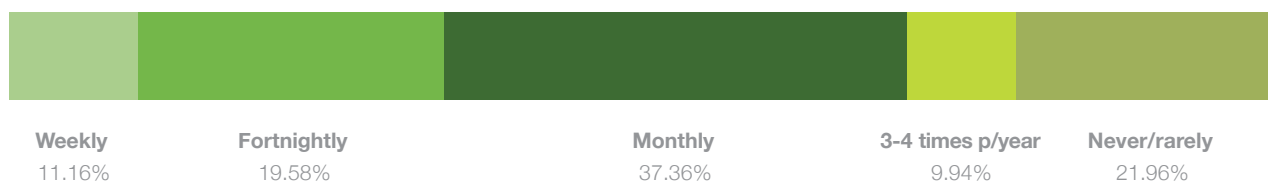
- Listening to the patient is very important. Sometimes 'just being listened to' helps more than any medication ever can
- That it's not in our head and it's hard to explain pain
- The toll it takes on mental health
- Depression and isolation also empathy
- Our pain is different for each individual person. My 10 may be different to your 10. Pain can be seen through the eyes
- Medication is a part of treatment. Doctors and complimentary allied health services people NEED to communicate
- That it is real, exhausting and we need help to get relief from the constant pain, so we can have a better quality of life
- Side effects of pain medications
- Understanding that cannabis helps
- Believe the patient (25% of survey respondents)
- Be understanding
- Pain is constantly there but it gets worse at times depending on what I do or how I sleep. It's not in my head

Question 7

If there was one thing your GP could do now to help you manage your chronic pain, what would it be?

- Listen Research and prescribe medical marijuana/cannabis oil
- Referral to free/low cost treatment that is effective & where I don't have to wait 18 months to see someone
- Be more aware of free services offered through support organisations
- Advocate for broader community understanding that chronic pain is best managed by exercise and personal continuity of care with my GP
- Give me some options to try apart from medication
- Follow through with pain management referral to specialists
- Be my advocate
- Prescribe more effective methods of pain relief without letting me feel like an addict or dismissing my level of pain
- Refer me to others, like physio, mental health, pain management, don't just chuck pills at me, listen to me when I say I don't want them

PHARMACIST

Question 8**How often do you visit your pharmacist about your chronic pain?****Question 9****On a scale of 1-10, how well do you think your pharmacist manages your chronic pain?**

8/10

Question 10**What are the most important things pharmacists should know, understand and do when treating someone living with chronic pain?**

- Don't treat individuals like druggies or junkies (30% of respondents)
- Don't assume you know a better treatment without knowing the full details of injuries, tolerance etc
- Pain relief is not a choice it's a necessity
- I have a great pharmacist. What he does well is that he never questions or makes evaluative statements. He always politely enquires about how I'm going, and is encouraging of me. When I ask about medication alternatives he explains it thoroughly
- Maybe give advice on what the best medication to take
- Privacy! You cannot have an honest and reliable conversation with someone standing at a counter in a public space. Provide feedback for the patient to discuss with their GP regarding better/alternative medication options. Give the patient a feeling of choice and agency
- Recommend the best product
- No judgement of the person for using pain meds

Question 11**If there was one thing your Pharmacist could do now to help with your chronic pain, what would it be?**

- Fill the script, without intrusive questions
- Their hands are tied with the tightening of prescription laws so I wouldn't even bother with them
- Provide necessary medications without judgement (30% of survey respondents)
- No idea
- Fight to get cbd oil legalised
- He already does it. Home delivery
- Keep me updated on new products entering the market. Eg: Heat patches, rubs and comfort pillows
- Get on board with natural remedies

Question 12

Do you know about the Pain MedsCheck trial program?

NO

90.61%

YES

9.39%

Question 13

Would you do a Pain MedsCheck program in your local pharmacy?

YES

26.05%

NO

11.90%

**DON'T KNOW
WHAT IT IS**

62.05%

Question 14

Why/why not?

- Don't know what it is/ I have never heard about it (75 % of survey respondents)
- Anything to get rid of pain. I will try anything
- I prefer to discuss with my GP and pain specialist
- It took me so long to find a medication routine that has given back my quality of life. I wouldn't want to have a flare. I'm satisfied with my current state
- I don't like to take medications. If I must I'd like them reviewed often by someone more interested in my wellbeing than profiting from my pain

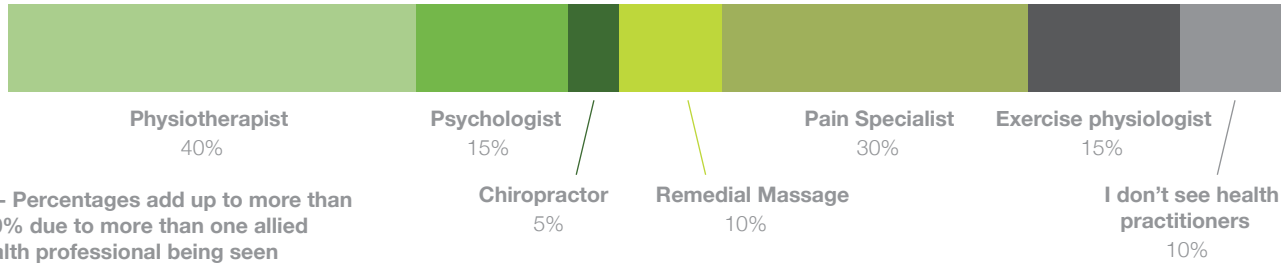


OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Question 15

What other health professionals do you see to help you treat chronic pain?

- 60% of survey respondents reported seeing a combination of allied health professionals



NB- Percentages add up to more than 100% due to more than one allied health professional being seen

Question 16

Were you referred to them by your GP?

YES

63.08%

NO

36.92%

Question 17

Do you find accessing these professionals easy?

YES

51.86%

NO

48.14%

Question 18

How do they help you manage your chronic pain?

- Part of a comprehensive treatment program. Assist with physical activity and mobility. Manage underlying conditions. Provide a holistic approach.
- Have a greater understanding of a multidisciplinary approach
- Make pain bearable/ able to keep going on
- Education, knowledge, testing and medication
- Exercise
- Understanding pain and coping techniques
- They don't / Make it worse

Question 19

Do you find utilising other health professionals affordable?

YES

15.20%

NO

84.80%

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Question 20

Do you think the government should provide a full or partial rebate for accessing allied health professionals to manage chronic pain?

**Question 21**

What do you think is the most important thing the new federal government should do to support people living with chronic pain?

- Affordable treatments
- Better funding
- More government subsidy for medicare, allied health services and pain specialists
- Easier access to NDIS
- Medicinal cannabis on PBS or affordable
- Acknowledging it, and fund more money for pain management and exercise clinics

Question 22

What do you think is the most important thing the state government should do to support people living with chronic pain?

- Same as Federal Government (70% of survey respondents)
- More pains services
- Better access to sevices
- Listen

Question 23

What do you think the governments (state and federal) could do better to assist people living with chronic pain?

- Listen
- More funding
- Better education and awareness within the community and for specialist e.g Doctors
- Same as question 21 and question 22

STIGMA

Question 24

How would you rate your feelings of stigma or negative attitudes because of your chronic pain?

1 being not at all
and 10 being constant

7/10

Question 25

If you do face stigma, can you provide examples of situations when you felt stigmatised?

- Being judged by family members, medical professionals, or people in the public

When my normal doctor is away and need a script. You get interrogated firstly and then made to feel guilty for being in pain because the other treatments haven't worked and he/she tells you that you haven't obviously given them a chance and taken the easy way out. Even though you've tried everything over and over again for 4 years and the only thing that can help make your life even half worth living is the medication that you're now being shamed for using because it was the last resort. He didn't look at my chart notes that explained everything. The only notes he went straight to was my Prescription History and saw the medication that I'm on and labelled me even before I sat down. Being belittled, degraded, shamed and then trying my best to hold back the tears, nod my head in agreement because I must be what he says I am so I can get the medication I need.

—
Survey respondent

My GP makes me feel like I'm drug seeking when I tell him about my pain. I had a really bad hip, I told him it was 10/10 on the pain scale, he looked at me and said 'Really... I don't think it is, it's just normal wear' he went away on holiday so I went to his partner who agreed to give me a referral to a surgeon. The surgeon looked at my radiology, looked at my leg and picked the phone up and rang theatre to see if he could extend his theatre session. I was rushed through and he said it was actually one of the worst hips he'd ever seen and couldn't believe I'd functioned with it. And my GP didn't believe I was in pain !!!!

—
Survey respondent

Question 26

What do you think the public should understand about living with chronic pain?

- It's not a choice
- How constant and debilitating it is
- It's real, not fake. Just because you can't see it doesn't mean we're not in pain
- It is exhausting, depressing & can bring on suicidal thoughts
- That it's a hidden disability. We all look fine but some days getting out of bed feels like it's the most impossible thing on earth

Question 26 cont.

- It affects every aspect of life
- That it never goes away
- It's not their problem it's mine
- We're not drug addicts or lazy
- It isn't in my head
- It's chronic
- Chronic pain affects everyone differently

Question 27**Do you have any ideas as to how the general community could help people with chronic pain?**

- Education/ Public awareness
- Be more understanding, compassionate and patient
- Less judging
- Have more seating around for resting places
- Recognition that it's a disability
- Have some empathy
- Don't park in disabled parks unless you have a sticker and stand up for them in public transport
- Support medical cannabis
- Offer jobs to people with pain and injuries, be more flexible with working conditions
- Campaign of acceptance

Question 28**How important to you think it is that the public understands what it is like to live with chronic pain?**

8/10



MEDICINAL CANNABIS

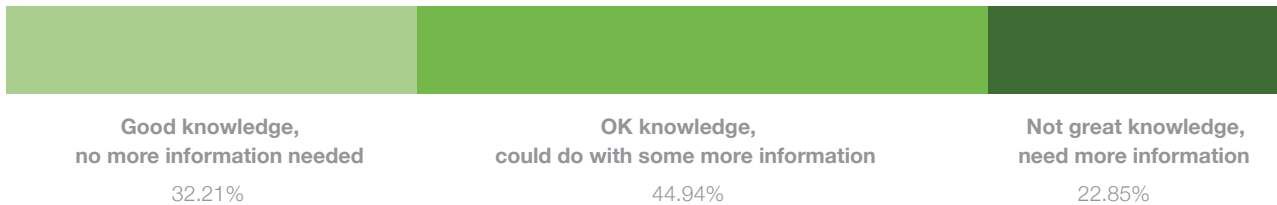
Question 29

What do you think about the use of medicinal cannabis in the management of chronic pain?

- I think it's extremely important and should be widely available and easily accessible
- I would love to be able to try it
- If it's medicinal and it's what helps than I think it's ok
- Legalise it and make it available to people who need it
- It's totally unaffordable
- Needs to be as well controlled as clozapine
- More studies need to be done on this
- I think it should be used in cases where all other pain meds have been tried or are no longer helping the patient

Question 30

How would you rate your knowledge of the science behind medicinal cannabis?



Question 31

Have you spoken to your GP about accessing medicinal cannabis?



Question 32

What was the response?

- Not freely available yet. Too many hurdles, but thinks it would be a good option once its easier to access
- Too expensive and very few doctors who can write a script for it
- It will come one day but will be a lot of paperwork
- Flat out NO
- Referral to pain clinic that prescribed it
- Prescribed pills instead
- He is supportive of the idea, however it all seems just too complicated at this stage

Dismissed and rejected by multiple doctors and pain specialists, who unfortunately are not only ignorant of the growing evidence base for medicinal cannabis but are not even open minded enough to consider the evidence.

Survey respondent

