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Introduction

Ethnopharmacological survey of Britain conducted in collaboration with the Eden Project & Pukka Herbs.

Aims were to gain insight into:

- the public's perception of herbal medicine
- general use of herbs for health, most popular products and a
- how many people grow plants for medicine
- what people grow
- demographic of use

Methodology

- Survey was distributed online, at the Eden Project & at various events
- Semi structured interviews were conducted as well as market research

Results

Response rate: Between N=136 & N=408

Socioeconomic: Use was fairly equal amongst varying statuses

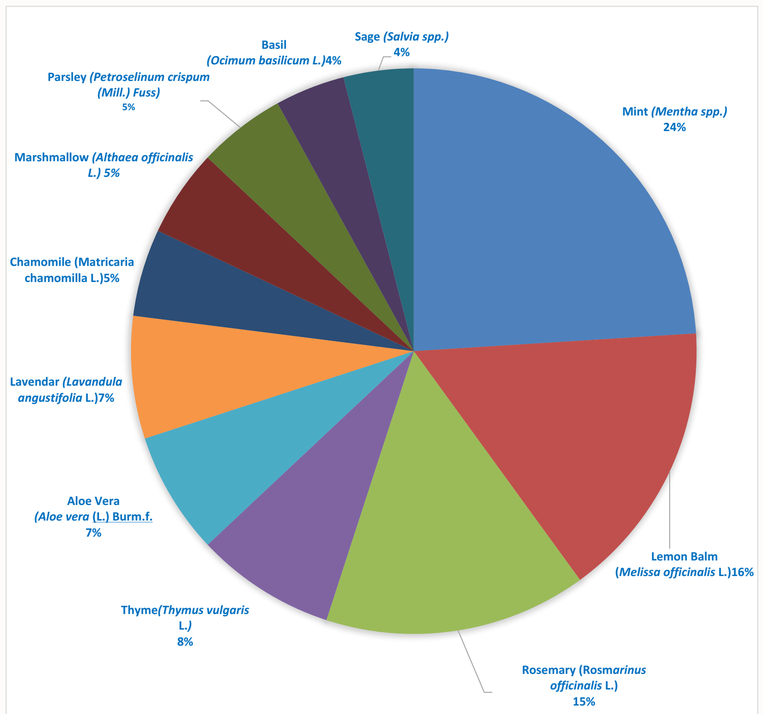
Gender: fairly equal across genders but overall females had a more positive attitude towards herbal medicines.

Age: Most popular use amongst 36-55 years olds

Uses: Sleep, overall wellbeing, digestion, to boost the immune system. People overall would prefer to use them over pharmaceuticals for non-major conditions.

Reasons for use: "natural" "effective" "can have less side effects"

Growing plants: 30.7% grew their own plants for healthcare



Medicinal plants, participants grow themselves (Number of participants=74). A total of 43 plants were named with another 21 only being mentioned once.





Discussion

Age: 36-55 most popular due to higher income as well as more health conditions than millennials. However, millennials showed the most interest to use in the future so this could be an indicator of an increase in plant medicine use in Britain. This may be due to a cultural shift in millennials with consumer choices being more focused on natural health, sustainable choices and "conscious thinking".

Gender: Some aspects of attitude were similar between men and women for example 73% of females and 75% of males stated that they would like to use herbal medicines more (N=142). However there was a vast difference in participant activity between males and females, as only 93 males (26.1%) answered in comparison to 263 females (73.9%). This is important as there is inherent bias with surveys as participants are more likely to complete surveys if they are interested in the topic prior. This is possibly due to differences between genders in attitude towards self care, and a larger audience of for companies using functional herbs through the beauty industry.

Uses: Mainly used minor self limiting conditions, however 42% agreed they are effective for major conditions. Largely people were not aware of the THR scheme & did not use sufficient means of quality control for the products they bought.

Growing Plants: In general those that grow plants are keen to grow more, and those who do not engage in horticulture are not interested in doing so. Encouraging horticulture would be very beneficial for public health & individuals, as it has shown to increase physical, mental & emotional wellbeing & has lead to a decrease in many ailments.

Conclusions

There has been in recent years a cultural shift towards perceptions of herbal medicine in Britain, thus use has increased. Therefore, increased quality control & wider regulation is needed, & the public need to be made more aware the THR scheme as most are unaware of it. It would be very beneficial for public health to encourage gardening for people's wellbeing. The main issues with the study were sample size, bias & differences in reliability of answers due to non-response.

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