CANNAVEC

Cannabis Knowledge Base

How Many Medical Cannabis Patients Are There in the UK?

Official data, triangulated estimates and five-year scenarios

May 2026

~68,000

ACTIVE PATIENTS

(best estimate, May 2026)

~82,500	~95,000	>99%
Treated in 2025	Cumulative since 2018	Privately prescribed

All figures sourced, dated and verifiable — see Sources slide

How Many UK Medical Cannabis Patients? — The Honest Answer

~60,000–75,000 Active Today

Best estimate as of May 2026, triangulated from NHSBSA data + MCCS + Prohibition Partners. Not an official figure — there is no official patient count.

5× Growth Since 2022

From ~15,000 patients treated in 2022 to ~82,500 in 2025. The 2024 NHSBSA item count of 659,293 confirms the scale.

Items ≠ Patients

NHSBSA counts items, not patients. One patient generates ~8 items/year. Confusing items with patients overstates the base by 8–10×.

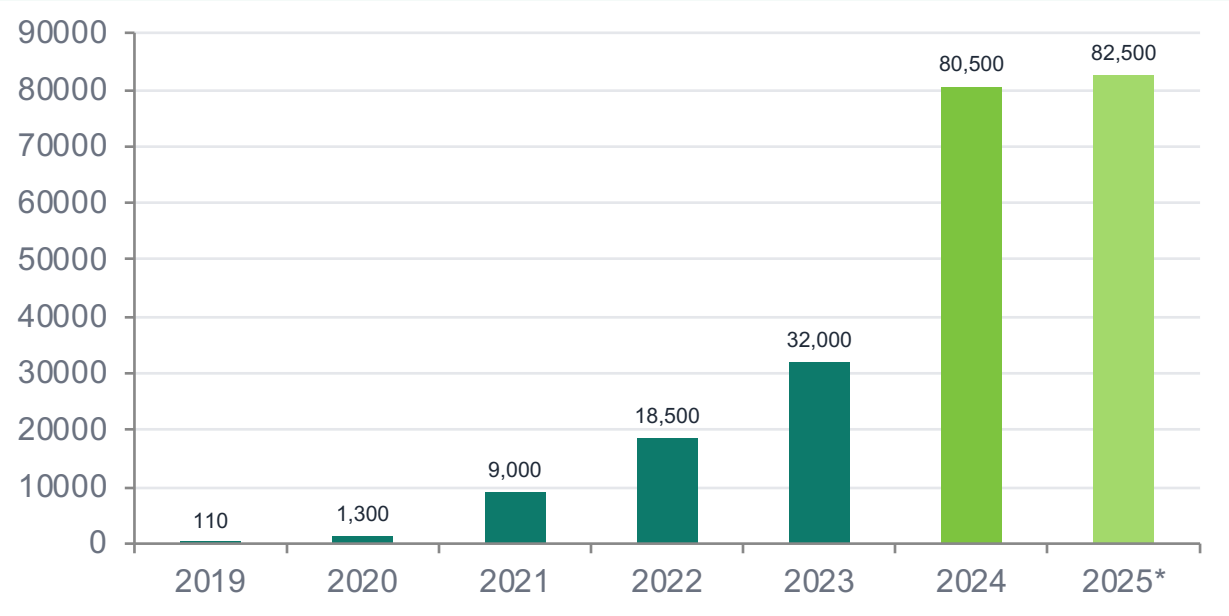
>99% Privately Funded

NHS unlicensed CBPM prescribing is suppressed in official data — fewer than 5 patients/month. This is an entirely private market.

Strong International Precedent

Australia passed 1M patients after broadening GP access. Germany saw a 400% import surge. Canada's medical market halved after recreational legalisation.

UK Private Medical Cannabis — Patient Growth Since Legalisation



* 2025 figure covers January–July only (NHSBSA FOI-03623). The apparent flattening vs 2024 reflects incomplete data coverage (7 months vs 12), not a slowdown in growth. A full-year 2025 total is expected in H2 2026.

~68,000
Active patients
May 2026

659,293
Prescription items
dispensed in 2024

~95,000
Cumulative since
Nov 2018 (MCCS)

262%
Growth in items
2023 → 2024

Why There Is No Single Official Number — And How We Estimate One

Key point: NHSBSA counts prescription items, not patients. One patient generates roughly **8 items per year** — a conversion factor derived from MCCS Good Practice Guidance (January 2026). There is no single official source that counts unique patients.

1

Official Item Data

NHSBSA Freedom of Information requests (FOI-03401, FOI-03623) provide annual prescription item counts for England. The only hard official numbers.

2

Items → Patient Conversion

Source: MCCS Good Practice Guidance (Jan 2026). Conversion factor ~8 items per patient per year, applied to 659,293 items → ~82,000 patients. Used as a directional anchor, not a precise rule.

3

Triangulation

Cross-checked against CIC anchors (35,000 in Apr 2024), Prohibition Partners (50–60k active, 80k treated in 2025) and MCCS (95,000 cumulative).

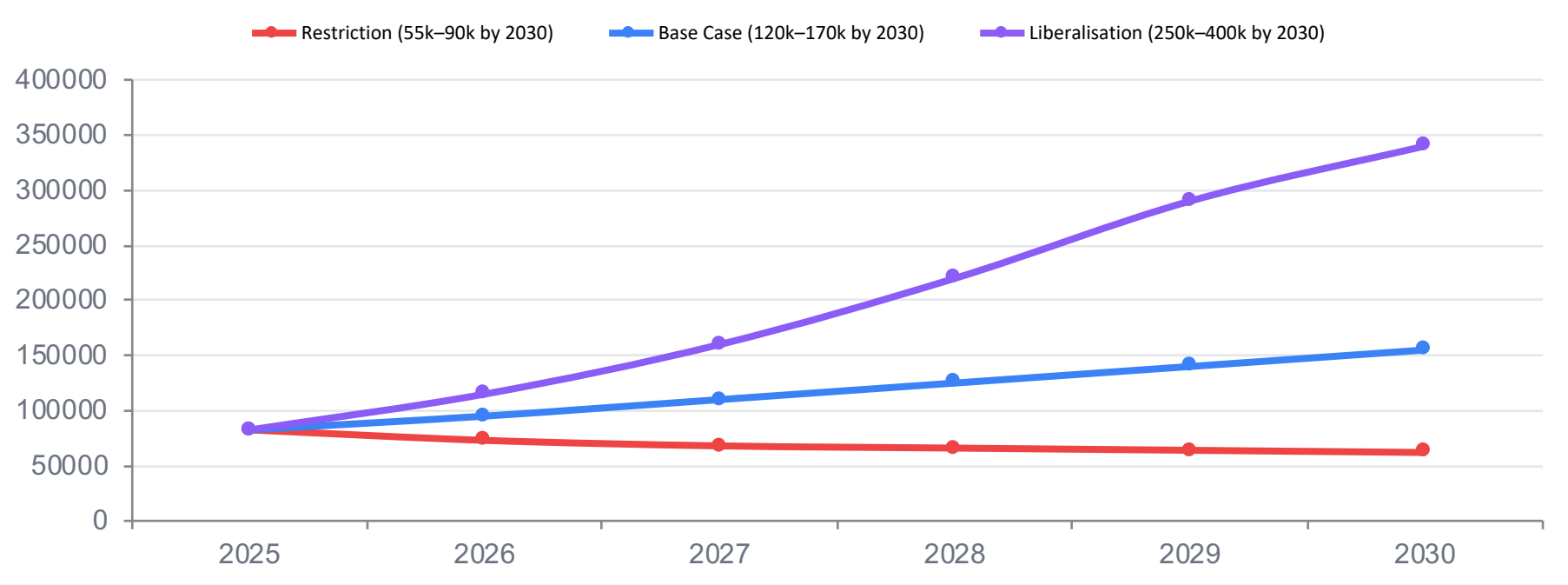
4

Confidence-Banded Range

Result: ~60,000–75,000 active patients (May 2026). Deliberately a range, not a single number. Reviewed quarterly — data moves fast.

Caveats: NHSBSA data covers England only (not Scotland, Wales, NI). Figures are subject to revision. All estimates have ±10–15% uncertainty.

Three Scenarios to End-2030 — Active Patients



Restriction — 55k–90k
Tighter ACMD/CQC rules; mandatory in-person initiation; reduced telemedicine

Base Case — 120k–170k
Specialist-only prescribing continues; private telemedicine grows; prices fall

Liberalisation — 250k–400k
GP initiation; NHS/private shared care; softer ACMD outcome; ACMD reform

What Could Have the Biggest Effect on UK Patient Numbers?

AUSTRALIA

18,000 → 1 Million+

2019 to Jan 2024

What drove it

- Authorised Prescriber pathway opened to GPs & nurses
- 5,700+ prescribers (vs ~400 UK specialists)
- Telemedicine clinics expanded access rapidly
- UK equivalent: allow GPs to initiate → similar trajectory possible

SCALE-UP SIGNAL

GERMANY

400% import surge

H1 2024 → H1 2025

What drove it

- CanG (April 2024): removed narcotics paperwork for doctors
- 19 tonnes imported H1 2024 → 80 tonnes H1 2025
- Telemedicine platforms drove most of the surge
- UK equivalent: removing 'two failed treatments' hurdle or shared care

FRICTION REMOVAL SIGNAL

CANADA

370,000 → 161,000

2019 peak to Mar 2025

What caused the drop

- Adult-use legalisation (2018) made recreational cannabis easy to access
- Medical patients migrated — no clinical relationship needed
- Medical market retained patients needing higher limits / employer recognition
- UK equivalent: broad deregulation without medical reform could shrink the channel

LIBERALISATION

All figures in this presentation are sourced and verifiable

OFFICIAL DATA

- NHS Business Services Authority — FOI-03401 (2023 & 2024 annual items)
- NHS Business Services Authority — FOI-03623 (Jan–Jul 2025 product-level dataset)
- NHS Business Services Authority — FOI-02030 (Licensed CBPM prescriptions)
- UK Parliament Written Question 40028, March 2025
- House of Commons Library — NHS cannabis-based medicine prescriptions

UK INDUSTRY & CLINICAL

- Medical Cannabis Clinicians Society (MCCS) — Good Practice Guidance Jan 2026 (source for 8 items/patient conversion) & Apr 2026 estimates
- Cannabis Industry Council (CIC) — patient anchors 2023, 2024
- Prohibition Partners — UK Medical Cannabis White Paper 2025
- Business of Cannabis — NHSBSA FOI analysis, October 2025
- Kingsley Napley — Navigating the Green Frontier (2025)
- General Pharmaceutical Council — CBPM pharmacy standards, October 2025
- Cannabusinessplans — UK cannabis market forecasts, January 2026
- GrowerIQ — UK prescription surge analysis, April 2026
- Releaf — UK patient numbers analysis, 2025
- Cannabis Health News — UK market analysis, December 2025

AUSTRALIA

- AHPRA / TGA joint statement — one million patients, February 2024
- Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) — access pathways and usage data
- Schaffer KE, Lintzeris N et al. — Internal Medicine Journal, 2025

GERMANY

- BfArM — medical cannabis import data
- Business of Cannabis — Germany CanG import analysis, November 2024
- Business of Cannabis — Germany medical cannabis bill, February 2026
- US News / Reuters — Germany import restrictions, October 2025

CANADA

- Health Canada — Data on cannabis for medical purposes, March 2025
- StratCann — Medical cannabis registrations analysis, December 2025

CANNAVEC NOTE

Cannavec's unique knowledge base constantly updates information based on its sources.

CANNAVEC

The AI Knowledge Base for the Medical Cannabis Industry

The knowledge base for UK medical cannabis.

- Constantly updated patient number data — sourced and dated
- Regulatory intelligence across 12+ jurisdictions
- Supply chain, clinic, and market data in one place

Data current as of May 2026. Reviewed quarterly.

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