We conducted a survey on the quality of life and social consequences for patients with inflammatory bowel disease. Questionnaires of 41 patients with Crohn's disease, 28 patients with ulcerative colitis and 7 patients with overlap colitis were evaluated. All the patients had been hospitalized in the past. 15 patients (20%) were unable to work due to inflammatory bowel disease. 9 (12%) of these 15 patients received a disability pension. 11 patients (15%) had to change a place of work and 16 (21%) had had financial problems due to inflammatory bowel disease. 4 patients (5%) had had to give up a partnership due to the disease. For 16% of the patients their perceived quality of life during the past 4 weeks was poor or very poor, while 35% of the patients perceived their overall quality of life as poor or very poor since the beginning of the disease. We conclude that inflammatory bowel disease affects job and financial matters rather than partnerships. The quality of life is judged by many patients as considerably diminished.