

# Health Survey for England reveals a nation in pain

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Today's *Health Survey for England* reveals more than 14 million sufferers of chronic pain - pain which has lasted for more than three months. The study found that pain is more common among some groups than others, pain incurs significant costs and has serious mental health and wellbeing implications.

The *Health Survey for England* is an annual survey, monitoring the health of the population which is carried out by NatCen Social Research and the Research Department of [Epidemiology](#) and [Public Health](#) at UCL

**The survey found that certain groups are more likely to experience chronic pain:**

- 37% of women, in comparison to 31% of men, reported chronic pain;
- 42% in the lowest income households had chronic pain, compared with 27% in the highest;
- although chronic pain was most prevalent in older people, one in six 16-34 year olds were affected.

**The survey demonstrates a burden on health services and employers:**

- almost one in four said pain had kept them from usual activities (including work) on at least 14 days in the last three months;
- 37% of sufferers had used specialist pain services, rising to 57% among those with the most [severe pain](#).

**We know from earlier research that:**

- sufferers are five times more likely to visit their GP, equating to about 5 million GP appointments a year;
- [back pain](#) alone is estimated to cost £12.3 billion per year.

**Pain has serious psychological impacts.**

- Levels of positive wellbeing were lower than those with no pain and fell according to the severity of pain.
- Sufferers were more likely to be anxious or depressed - 69% with the severest pain reported this.

"This study helps us understand the real extent of pain in England today and who it affects," said Rachel Craig, NatCen Social Research. "It demonstrates that pain is not just physiological, but also mentally debilitating. We also know that it places a cost burden on [health services](#) and employers through days lost from work. These results shed much needed light on an issue which affects so many, adding to a growing body of knowledge on [chronic pain](#)."

Professor Richard Langford, President of The British Pain Society, said: "This authoritative [Health Survey](#) for England establishes beyond doubt the high prevalence of pain in the population of England, and its major impact on people's lives including work, and on wider society.

"Although most frequent in the elderly, the survey also shows that persistent pain is common through all ages from 16 upwards. Taken together with the findings published earlier this week of the National Pain Audit, both local and national commissioners have a duty to ensure that the National Health Service better serves the needs of people living with daily pain, by ensuring access to multi-disciplinary pain services, to restore functioning and ability to work."

**More information:** [www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/1212/20HealthSurveyforEngland-202011,20Health,20socialcareand20lifestyles](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/1212/20HealthSurveyforEngland-202011,20Health,20socialcareand20lifestyles)

Provided by University College London

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