

# Endometriosis may be costing us much more than previously thought

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Along with significant physical pain, endometriosis also hurts Australian women at the hip pocket, as well as having significant economic effects on society as a whole, a new study published today in *PLOS ONE*

confirms.

Researchers from Western Sydney University and UNSW Sydney surveyed more than 400 women either diagnosed with endometriosis or experiencing [chronic pelvic pain](#) to determine the economic impact, including [healthcare costs](#), employment related costs and other costs related to childcare and household maintenance.

Women with endometriosis incurred an average cost of \$31,000 AUD per woman per year. Cost varies with pain level, with women in [severe pain](#) experiencing around six times the cost than women in minimal pain. Similar costs were found in women with other causes for pelvic pain. The majority of costs (75-84%) were due to productivity loss.

The total estimated [economic burden](#) per year in Australia in the reproductive aged population may be as high as \$9.7 billion dollars.

Endometriosis is a condition where tissue similar to the lining to the uterus is found outside the uterus, often causing severe pelvic pain and fatigue. It affects around one in 10 women worldwide, and in Australia, around one in nine women born in 1973-78 were diagnosed with endometriosis by age 40-44.

Lead author on the paper, NICM Health Research Institute Postdoctoral Research Fellow Dr. Mike Armour said the study highlights urgent need for both immediate policy action and more research both into the cause of endometriosis and into [pain management](#) to improve the quality of life for women living with endometriosis and pelvic pain.

"Women in Australia with endometriosis or other causes of chronic pelvic pain incur a substantial financial burden caused by their condition," Dr. Armour said. "As well as [health care costs](#), the pain they experience can result in time off work and a reduction in productivity,

both at work and outside of work."

Women with endometriosis often report having issues achieving adequate pain management said Dr. Armour, and reducing pain could reduce loss of productivity along with improving quality of life.

"This research clarifies that endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain can have considerable impact for the women affected, their carers and the wider economy.

Dr. Armour said that the National Action Plan for Endometriosis needs to prioritise improving pain control in women, as this was the most significant contributor to the [economic impact](#).

"More applied research is needed to assess the true prevalence rate of endometriosis, to determine these economic impacts with greater accuracy, and guide urgent clinical and policy responses," Dr. Armour said.

**More information:** The cost of illness and economic burden of endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain in Australia: a national online survey, *PLOS ONE* (2019). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0223316](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0223316)

Provided by Western Sydney University

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