

2024 survey results

In November 2024, the Pelvic Partnership launched an online survey exploring women's and birthing people's experiences of pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain (PGP) within the last two years. We had over 230 responses in four weeks, with many women sharing stories of limited access to support and treatment.

The findings of this survey are summarised below and will shape the Pelvic Partnership's policy and advocacy efforts over the coming 12 months. We have also included quotes from the survey, shared with permission, highlighted in blue.

Women and their pain

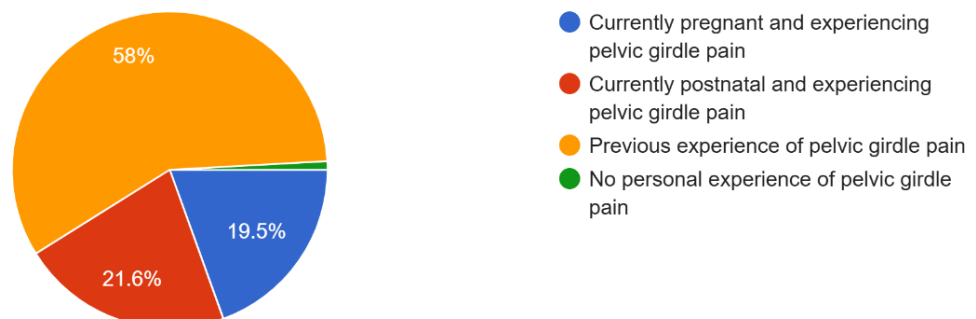
To get an idea of the demographics of our survey respondents, we started by asking several more general questions about them and their experience of pelvic girdle pain:

Of those who responded:

- 58% of respondents had previous experience of pelvic girdle pain
- 41.1% were currently experiencing pelvic girdle pain:
 - 19.5% were currently pregnant and experiencing pelvic girdle pain
 - 21.6% were currently postnatal and experiencing pelvic girdle pain

1. What best describes your experience of pelvic girdle pain?

231 responses

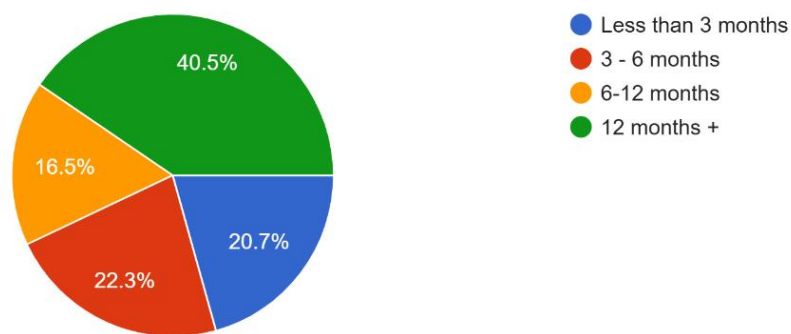


Of those who were currently experiencing pelvic girdle pain, 40.5% of respondents had been in pain for more than 12 months.

It is important to note that the NHS defines chronic pain as being in pain for longer than 3 months. In this survey, only 20.7% of respondents had been in pain for less than 3 months.

2. If you are currently experiencing pelvic girdle pain, how long have you had symptoms?

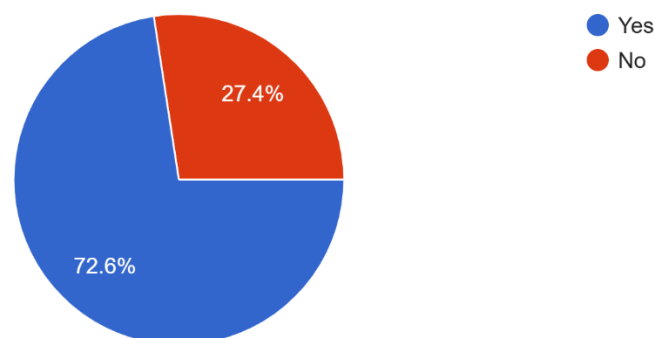
121 responses



We hear from many women who experience pelvic girdle pain in multiple pregnancies. In terms of previous pregnancies, 72.6% had experiencing pelvic girdle pain in a previous pregnancy.

3. Have you experienced pelvic girdle pain in a previous pregnancy?

226 responses



“With my first pregnancy I suffered with PGP at the end of my pregnancy, but with my 2nd baby, it was from 13 weeks until I gave birth. The pain was so bad, I was

unable to walk, look after my toddler and ended up in a wheelchair. It impacted my mental health so much that I had suicidal thoughts.”

The physical and mental health impacts of pelvic girdle pain

To better understand the impact of pelvic girdle pain on their daily life, we asked respondents to share how pelvic girdle pain affected their mobility and ability to do different tasks.

We asked respondents to share the extent to which their pelvic girdle pain impacted their mobility. Importantly, 27% respondents needed to use mobility aids, an increase from 18% in 2023 and only 1 respondent (0.4%) could walk normally without pain, a decrease from 3% in our 2023 survey.

- 3.5% could not get out of bed, they were bedbound
- 27.1% could get around with mobility aids (e.g. crutches or a wheelchair)
- 44.1% could walk a short distance with pain
- 24.9% could walk but have some pain
- 0.4% could walk normally without pain (1 respondent)

4. How does or did your pelvic girdle pain affect your mobility? When experiencing pelvic girdle pain, could or can you...

229 responses



“I couldn’t walk without crutches, struggled to get dressed, drive, get in and out of the car, upstairs.”

“It was painful to stand, walk, lie in bed, move in bed. I couldn’t pick up my toddler.”

“The pain was so bad, I was unable to talk, look after my toddler and ended up in a wheelchair.”

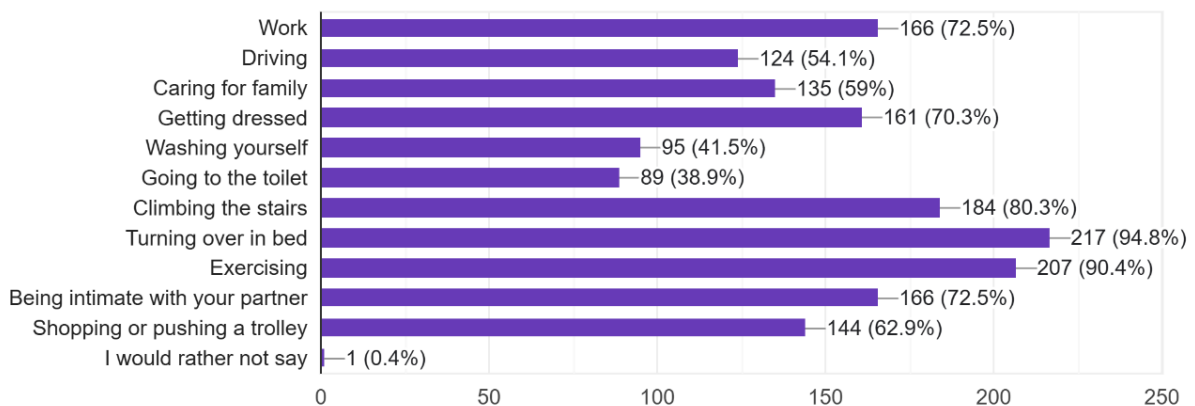
“Eventually the pain was so severe I was admitted to hospital for pain relief.”

Respondents shared that pelvic girdle pain affected their ability to:

- Turning over in bed (94.8%)
- Exercising (90.4%)
- Climbing the stairs (80.3%)
- Being intimate with their partner (72.5%)
- Work (72.5%)
- Getting dressed (70.3%)

5. Does or did your pelvic girdle pain affect your ability to do the following activities:

229 responses



“Had to stop working at 30 weeks due to pain, struggled with this mentally as a nurse felt guilty talking time off when I felt well but nature of the job meant I was unable to carry out simple tasks.”

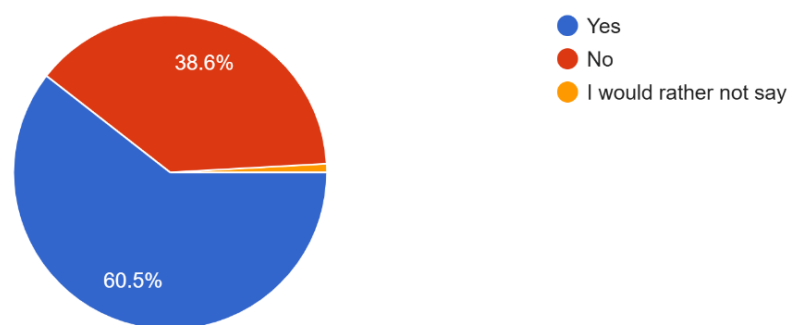
“I was not able to travel into work by public transport. If I drove to work the position would hurt my hips and so did sitting at a desk. I felt guilty at work for not being able

to come in and felt like my line manager didn't understand my pain. I needed assistance to turn over in bed."

Given the impact on so many aspects of our lives, an association between pelvic girdle pain and mental health is not surprising. In our survey, 60.5% of respondents shared that they had a mental health during or after pregnancy associated with their pelvic girdle pain. This is a slight increase from 57.5% in our 2023 survey, but importantly, it is significantly higher than average rates of pre- and post-natal anxiety and depression, of approximately one in five¹.

6. Did you experience or are you experiencing any problems with your mental health during or after pregnancy associated with your pelvic girdle pain?

228 responses



"It was the most horrendous experience. I couldn't do my normal day to day activities, I had to finish work earlier than anticipated. I think I experienced antenatal depression because of it. I was so down and didn't want to do anything because I knew it would be painful."

"Debilitating pain that left me in tears on a daily basis."

"It was so painful, and affected my daily activities. My mental health went downhill as I believed that other pregnant [women] must just braver and stronger than me to put up with this and I should just get on with things but it was unbearable."

¹ <https://maternalmentalhealthalliance.org/about-maternal-mental-health/counting-costs/>

“I had no desire to leave the house or do things I normally enjoy. I didn’t want to see or speak to friends or family.”

“PGP didn’t cause mental health problems but it impacted my coping strategies.”

“It was a frightening experience and really affected my mental health as I felt so alone with it..”

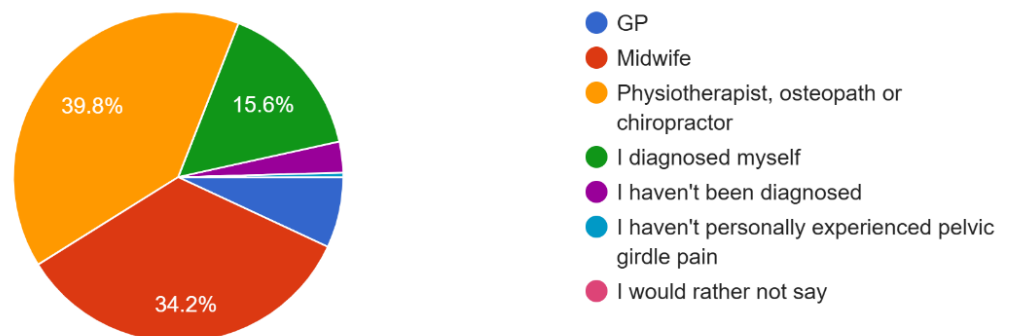
“I’m severely depressed, have anxiety and fear leaving the house in case I fall, or can’t make it to the toilet on time.”

Treatment and engagement with healthcare practitioners

Most respondents were diagnosed with pelvic girdle pain by their physiotherapist, osteopath or chiropractor (39.8%), with an additional 34.2% diagnosed by their midwife and just 6.9% diagnosed by their GP. Importantly, 15.6% of respondents diagnosed themselves.

8. How were you diagnosed with pelvic girdle pain?

231 responses



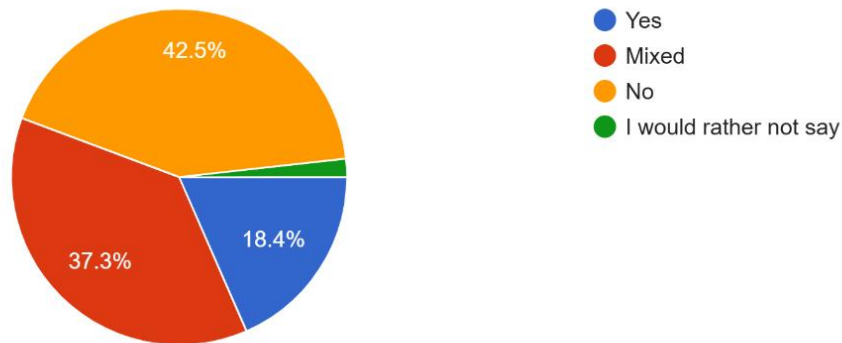
We always ask respondents to share the extent to which they felt supported by their GP or midwife. This year, just 18.4% did feel supported by their GP or midwife, down very slightly from 19% in our 2023 survey.

- 42.5% did not feel supported by their GP or midwife
- 37.3% had mixed feelings about the support offered by their GP or midwife

- 18.4% did feel supported by their GP or midwife

9. Did you feel supported by your GP/midwife?

228 responses



“I felt like I was dismissed and no-one believed me and that it was normal.”

“It made me feel so much worse that the health professionals didn’t seem to have any true understanding of the condition and how awful it was.”

“Being in constant pain is debilitating not just physically but mentally. The lack of free hands-on support and treatment is horrendous.”

“The worst part was that no-one told me what I had or helped me with treatment. I told multiple health professionals about the issue and eventually when diagnosed they weren’t offering help and I felt so alone and like my life as I knew it was over.”

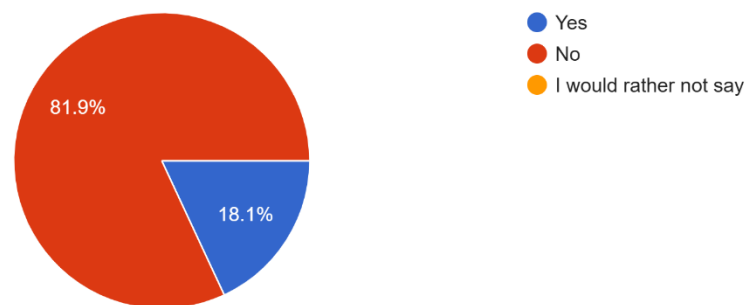
“I was so depressed, nobody could do anything for me. Nobody would assist me with getting a wheelchair as it was “temporary” but I had to ensure 3 months of agony and had to purchase a second hand wheelchair which wasn’t a correct fit for me. But it was my only lifeline. I was passed from pillar to post, midwife to GP, to physio and back to midwives. It was a joke but I felt like a burden to my family and always felt like staff believed I was being dramatic or my pain level wasn’t believed.”

“Health professionals wrote me off and said I couldn’t be helped until my baby was born.”

“After birth it took 3 months to completely go away but my midwife and doctor did not take me seriously and said it’s normal. Not being able to do my best for my toddler during this time really affected my mental health.”

In terms of the treatment offered. We described how pelvic girdle pain can be treated using hands-on approaches, defined manual therapy and asked if they had been offered hands-on treatment on the NHS. This year 81.9% of respondents had not been offered hands-on treatment on the NHS, which is a slight decrease from 86% in 2023.

10. Pelvic girdle pain can be treated with hands-on treatment by a physiotherapist, osteopath or chiropractor. This manual therapy may include mo... you been offered hands-on treatment on the NHS?
227 responses



For those who hadn’t had any hands-on treatment, we asked what treatment they were offered:

- 43% of respondents were offered an individual in-person appointment with exercises and advice (no manual therapy)
- 14.5% were offered a telephone or video appointment with exercises and advice (no manual therapy)
- 8.8% were offered a group in-person class with exercises and advice (no manual therapy)
- 6.2% were offered an appointment but they didn’t take it because the waiting list was too long
- 27.5% responded with other, with no details given

11. If you haven't had any hands-on treatment including manual therapy, what treatment options were you offered on the NHS?

193 responses

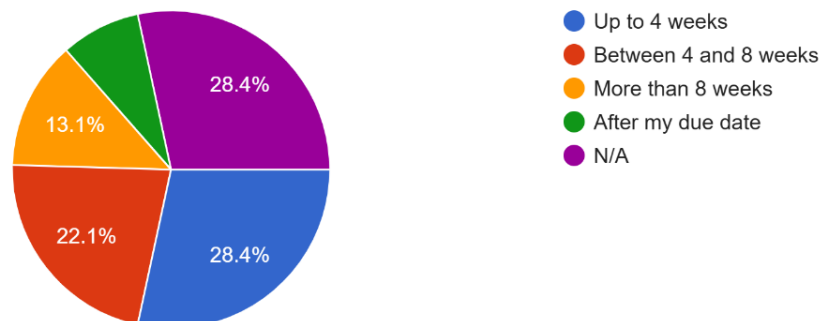


Service users have indicated to us that there is often a long waiting list for NHS appointments, in some cases even being offered an appointment after their due date. In terms of waiting lists for appointments:

- 28.4% had an appointment within 4 weeks
- 22.1% had an appointment after waiting 4-8 weeks
- 13.1% had an appointment after waiting more than 8 weeks
- 8.1% were offered an appointment after their due date

12. If you were offered an appointment on the NHS, how long was the wait?

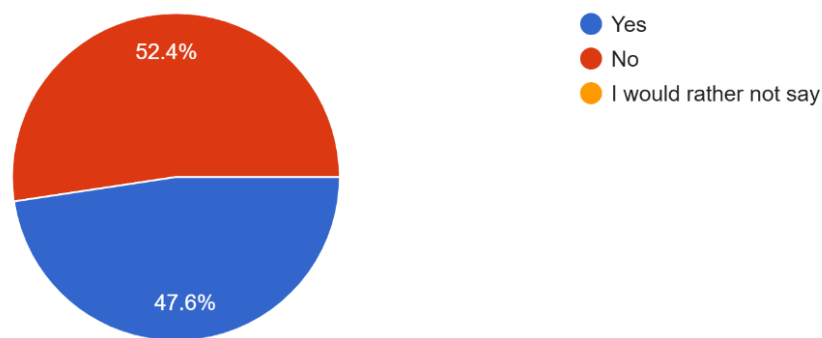
222 responses



We also asked respondents to share any experiences with private physiotherapists, osteopaths and chiropractors; 52.4% had not had treatment from a private practitioner.

14. Have you had hands-on treatment including manual therapy with a private physiotherapist, osteopath or chiropractor?

231 responses



For those who did have treatment, we asked how they found their practitioner:

- 33% found them using an internet search
- 31.3% found them using a recommendation from a friend or family member
- 30.4% found them using the Pelvic Partnership list of recommended practitioners
- 5.2% clicked they would rather not say

15. If you have had private treatment, how did you find your practitioner?

115 responses

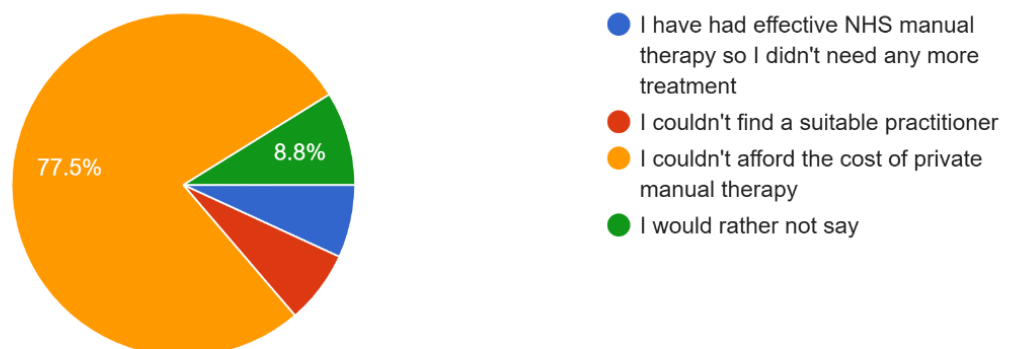


For those who hadn't had private treatment, we asked them to share why. This year 77.5% shared that they hadn't accessed private treatment because they couldn't afford the cost of private treatment, which aligns with feedback from our service users.

- 77.5% shared they couldn't afford the cost of private treatment
- 6.9% shared they had had effective NHS manual therapy so didn't need any more treatment
- 6.9% shared they couldn't find a suitable practitioner
- 8.8% clicked they would rather not say

16. If you haven't had private treatment, is it because?

102 responses



Engagement with the Pelvic Partnership

To ensure our work is responsive to the needs of our service users, we asked several questions about the work of the Pelvic Partnership.

We asked how respondents had heard about the Pelvic Partnership:

- 53.3% had heard about us through social media
- 26.2% through an internet search
- 6.7% through a recommendation from family or friends
- 6.2% through a recommendation from GP or midwife
- 4% through a recommendation from physiotherapist, osteopath or chiropractor

Other sources include MNVP, current recommended practitioners and through this survey.

21. How did you hear about the Pelvic Partnership?

225 responses



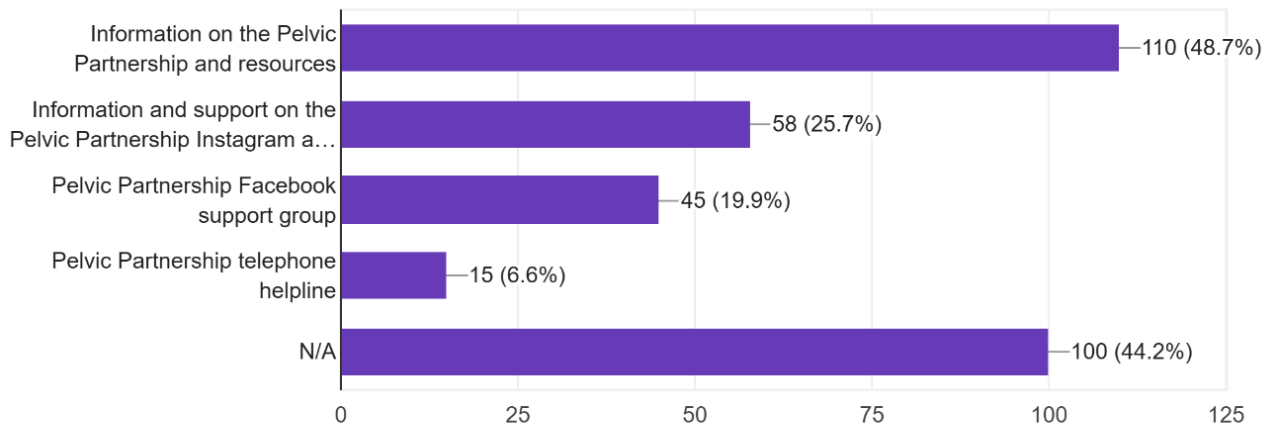
In terms of how we have helped the respondents:

- Information on the Pelvic Partnership and resources (48.7%)
- Information and support on the Pelvic Partnership Instagram and Facebook (25.7%)
- Pelvic Partnership Facebook support group (19.9%)
- Pelvic Partnership telephone helpline (6.6%)

- N/A (44.2%)

22. How has the Pelvic Partnership helped you?

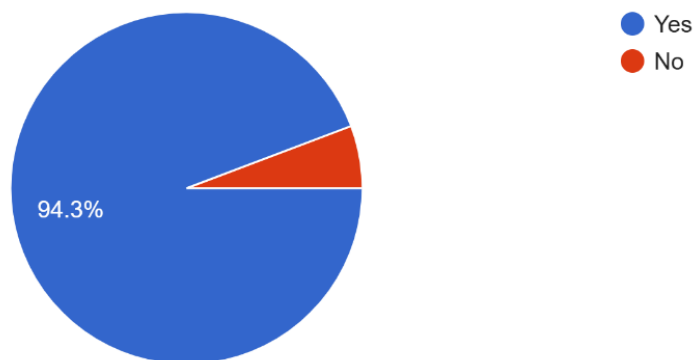
226 responses



Of those who responded, 94.3% were satisfied with the work of the Pelvic Partnership.

23. Are you satisfied with the work of the Pelvic Partnership?

174 responses



94.7% of respondents were happy for the Pelvic Partnership to share comments anonymously in our communications. Have noted these comments in a separate document.

For further details about the survey, please contact our co-ordinator on contact@pelvicpartnership.org.uk.