



People's experiences of periods and the menopause in Hampshire and Isle of Wight

December 2024



Background



Hampshire and Isle of Wight (HIOW) Integrated Care Board (ICB) opened the periods and menopause survey on 6 September 2024. The survey was initially due to close on 7 October but was extended, closing on **4 November**.



The aim of the survey was to seek people's **lived experiences** on how periods and the menopause impact their lives and work.



The survey was **codesigned** with local people with lived experience of HIOW women's health services.



Insights from this survey will identify where people want to access women's health information, support, and health services they need, as well as informing opportunities for **developing women's health services**.



The results of this survey have been analysed and reported by **Health Innovation Wessex**. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number where possible.



Engagement

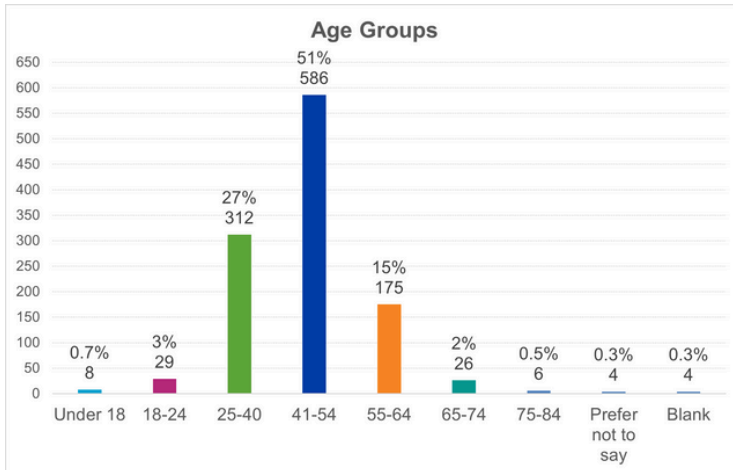
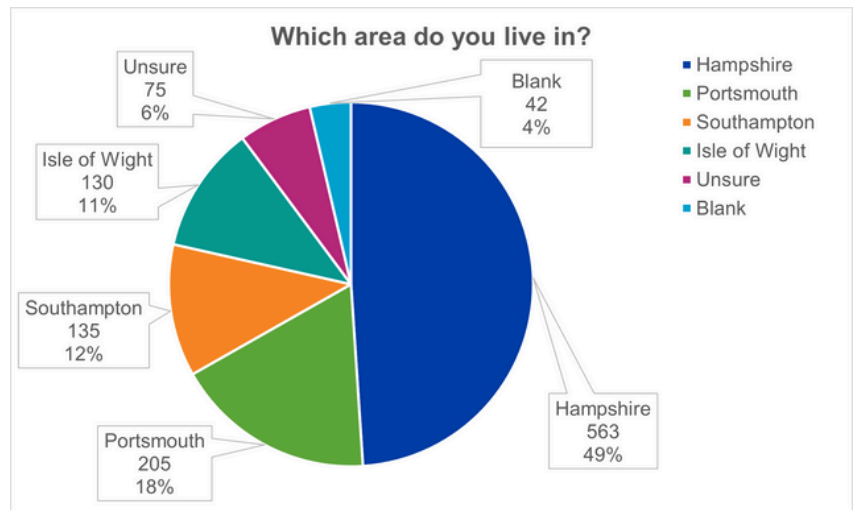


1,248 survey responses were received. Of those, 98 responses were excluded due to being out of area and/or incomplete, meaning the **total responses for analysis was 1,150.**

Nearly half of all respondents (49%) lived in wider Hampshire.

98.4% of respondents identified as female and 98% of respondents stated their gender identity matched their sex assigned at birth. In the survey and report, we recognise that people who do not identify as women also require access to the services being developed, such as transgender, non-binary, or intersex.

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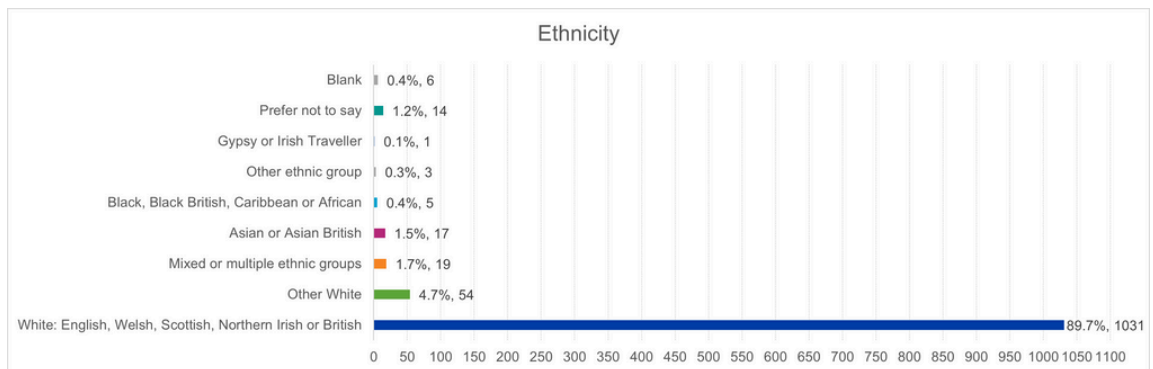
The most common age group of respondents was 41-54 (51%), followed by 25-40 (27%), and 55-64 (15%). The majority of respondents identified as **heterosexual (88%).** Within the LGB+ community, bisexuals had the highest representation (4%) followed by gay and lesbian (2%). **5% respondents preferred not to say** or left the question blank.

The predominant ethnicity of respondents was **White British (89.7%).**

More than half of respondents

(56%) were not religious, but the largest religious group was **Christianity (33%).**

About **15%** of respondents considered themselves to have a **disability** and **15%** of respondents classed themselves as **unpaid carers.** Nearly **5%** of respondents serve(d) in the **armed forces** or are part of an armed forces family.





Findings - periods

93% of respondents had **experienced periods** or similar bleeding.

95% of those felt their **quality of life** had been affected by periods, with **73%** saying they had been **moderately or extremely affected**.

Comments about how periods affected life centred on **pain, heaviness** of periods, and how periods have affected their ability to engage in **daily life**. Around **5%** of respondents used the term '**debilitating**' when describing their experiences.



Experiences of looking for **information, support, or treatment** for period symptoms were **mixed**. The most popular sources of information were **GP surgeries (19%), online (18%), and friends or family (14%)**.

Respondents felt a **lack of empathy and understanding** when seeking support, information, or treatment. The word '**dismissed**' or '**dismissive**' was frequently used to describe experiences.

The most popular **period management** options were **painkillers** and **heat**. Other helpful treatments included **hormonal contraception, prescribed medication, and TENS machines**.

Findings - menopause

72% of respondents were approaching, experiencing, or had experienced **menopause**.

100% of those who responded to the question felt their **quality of life** had been affected by menopausal symptoms.



Comments about how the menopause affected life showed broad impact across **professional, romantic, and sexual relationships** as well as **friendships and social life**. The menopause also affected women's relationships with themselves, with many describing a '**loss of self**'.



As with periods, the most popular sources of information were **online (23%), GP surgeries (21%), and friends or family (15%)**.

Respondents experienced a **lack of knowledge, interest, or support** from GPs when seeking support, information, or treatment. Many women felt it was a '**fight**' to receive help.

The most popular **menopause management** options were **exercise** and '**other**'. Free text responses in the 'other' category centred around **HRT**, with some also highlighting the importance of **supportive people**.



Next steps

Insights from this survey will identify where people want to access women's health information, support, and health services they need, as well as informing opportunities for **developing women's health services**.



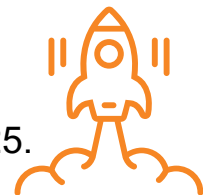
Focus groups are being run alongside this survey by HIOW Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Health and Care Alliance (HIVCA). The aim is to reach those voices seldom heard and minoritised groups that were under-represented in the survey.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB will contact people who indicated in the survey that they would like to be **involved in shaping services further**. Initially, they will aim to get an understanding of the level of involvement individuals would like and the demographic spread of respondents.



Recommendations will be developed based on the information uncovered by the survey and focus groups. HIOW ICB will then plan the future of women's health provision including appropriate innovations and how improvement can be measured.

The above steps will feed into a **strategy** that will be launched in March to coincide with International Women's Day on 8th March 2025.



If you would like to be involved in shaping women's health services in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight but did not leave your details as part of the survey, please contact hiowicb-hsi.population.health@nhs.net.

