

Survey Shows Young People Hit Hardest by Hidden Toll of Chronic Pain

Responses of 1,000 people with chronic pain in the UK reveal the far-reaching burden of chronic pain on mental health, with many feeling misunderstood

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, United Kingdom – 9 September, 2024 – A new survey highlights the profound impact chronic pain has on the lives of people living in the UK, often severely affecting their mental health and well-being. Young respondents (aged 16 to 24), part of the Gen Z demographic, appear to be impacted the most, scoring higher in all categories than older age groups with 73% reporting experiencing social isolation at least once a week due to their chronic pain. Almost one in three of those Gen Z respondents (29%) state that due to their pain they ‘feel like they can’t go on.’ The survey was commissioned by Boston Scientific in July 2024 and canvassed 1,000 respondents in the UK.

Chronic pain, defined as pain that lasts more than 12 weeks¹, is estimated to affect between one-third to one-half of the population of UK adults (up to 28 million people).² The research uncovered how the condition affects almost every aspect of life, including sleep, exercise, relationships and work, undermining mental health.

- **Sleep and exercise:** More than seven in 10 respondents reported disruption to sleep (71%) and exercise (72%), at least once a week — both of which are critical for good mental health.³
- **Anxiety and depression:** Among all UK respondents, 61% and 53% reported experiencing anxiety and depression, respectively, at least once a week. The impact was the highest among the Gen Z demographic, with the majority of those experiencing these negative feelings at least weekly reaching 80% for anxiety and 71% for depression.
- **Caregiver network:** One in five respondents feel that their friends (17%), family (22%), and even doctors (22%) understand how chronic pain affects their mental state.

“Chronic pain is misunderstood, underdiagnosed and undertreated, yet these results show just how much it can dominate every aspect of life and severely impact mental health, especially in younger adults,” says Dr Ashish Gulve, consultant in Pain Medicine from the James Cook University Hospital, Middlesbrough. “With numerous treatment options now available, no one should have to endure chronic pain in silence. I would urge anyone who has been living with the condition for more than 12 weeks to talk openly to their health care professional.”

The survey also highlights the need for better awareness and less stigma around chronic pain, as only six percent of survey participants feel comfortable initiating conversations about their condition.

“The responses uncover the true toll chronic pain takes on the mental and emotional health of those affected. Chronic pain needs to be viewed holistically and as a health issue that needs to be discussed more openly,” said Vincent Sourdain, vice president, Neuromodulation in Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) at Boston Scientific. “Only then can we have meaningful conversations between patients, carers and health care professionals, facilitating early recognition and diagnosis to facilitate timely and effective treatment.”

To learn more about resources for people who experience chronic pain, including a pain centre locator to find local specialists, please visit, www.controlyourpain.co.uk/.

About the survey

The survey was commissioned by Boston Scientific and conducted in July 2024 by Censuswide, a research company. It canvassed 3,009 respondents across the UK, Germany, and Italy aged 16+ experiencing chronic pain, defined as continuous and long-term pain lasting for more than 12 weeks¹. The 1,000 UK respondents included 613 women, 382 men, four non-binary and one unspecified. Censuswide abide by and employ members of the Market Research Society which is based on the European Society for Opinion and Market Research (ESOMAR) principles and are members of The British Polling Council.

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