



Long-Acting Reversible Contraception take up in Southend

Healthwatch Southend
November 2024

healthwatch
Southend

Introduction

Healthwatch Southend acts as the independent voice of local people who use NHS and care services. We capture the lived experience of local people, which can be used to improve services. Because of our independence, we were asked by Southend City Council's Public Health team to find out the views and experiences of those who access sexual health services, specifically Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) to determine how to increase take-up. LARC can include the contraceptive implant, injection or coil.

- The clinical opinion is that increased up-take of LARC could help reduce unintended pregnancy.
- Some women use LARC for menopausal symptoms and not for contraception purposes.

What we did

We produced a survey which aimed to find out what overall experiences people had in being offered LARC, ease of accessing appointments, what method they had been offered, and why they took up the offer or decided not to.

We shared the survey on our website and our social media platforms. We distributed to our networks and partners such as SAVS, Southend City Council, Brooke Sexual Health Service, Southend & Leigh Women's Institute, Welcome to the UK, Southend Homeless Action Network, and at events such as the Feel Good Festival.

Those who took part in the survey were also invited to take part in planned focus groups, to find out in more detail what people had experienced. Two focus groups were held in two local community settings and a third, remotely, online to offer the best take-up. We compiled separate questions for each of focus groups to facilitate further conversations and ask different questions.

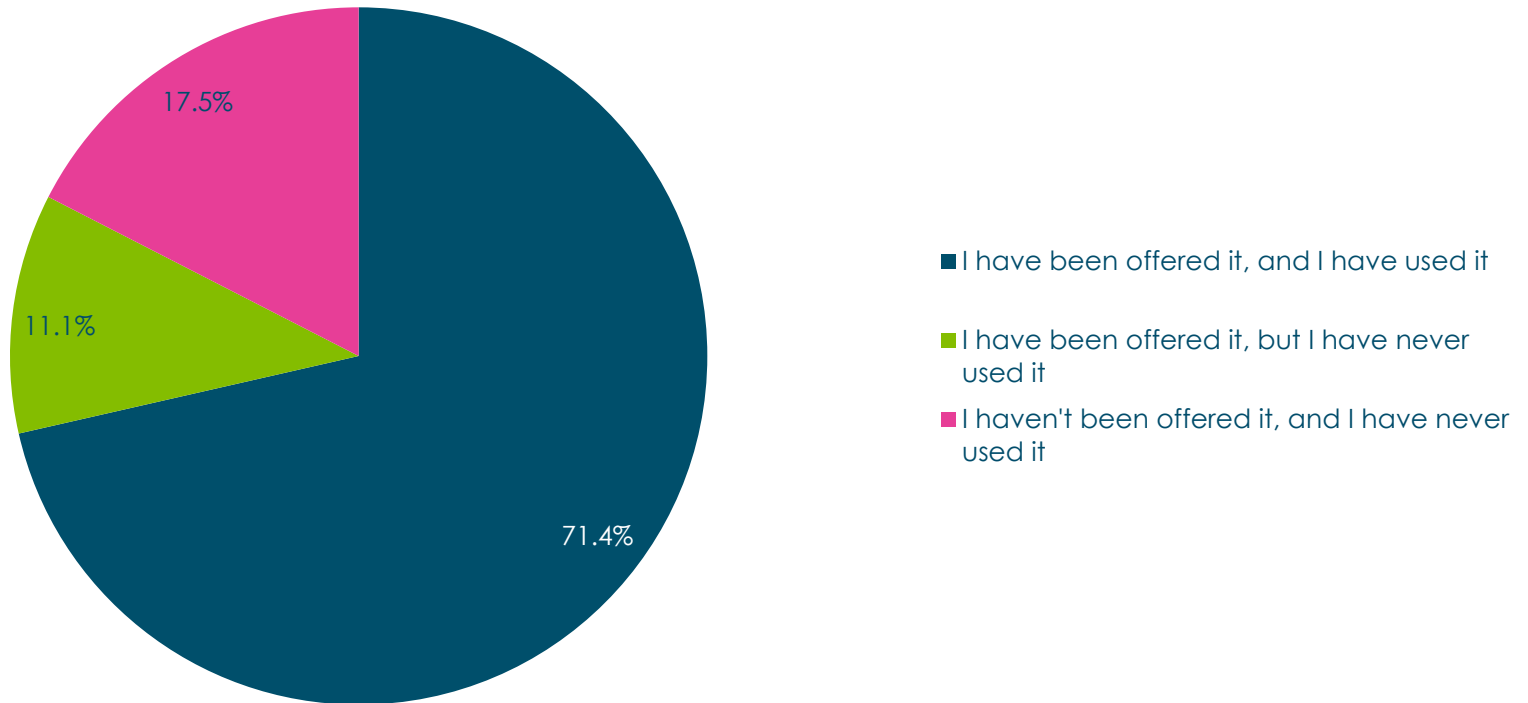
In total, we heard from 70 women in our survey and to spoke to 10 women in our focus groups.

As an incentive, we offered the chance for one participant of the survey to receive one £10 voucher, and the focus group one £15 voucher.

Key findings: using LARC

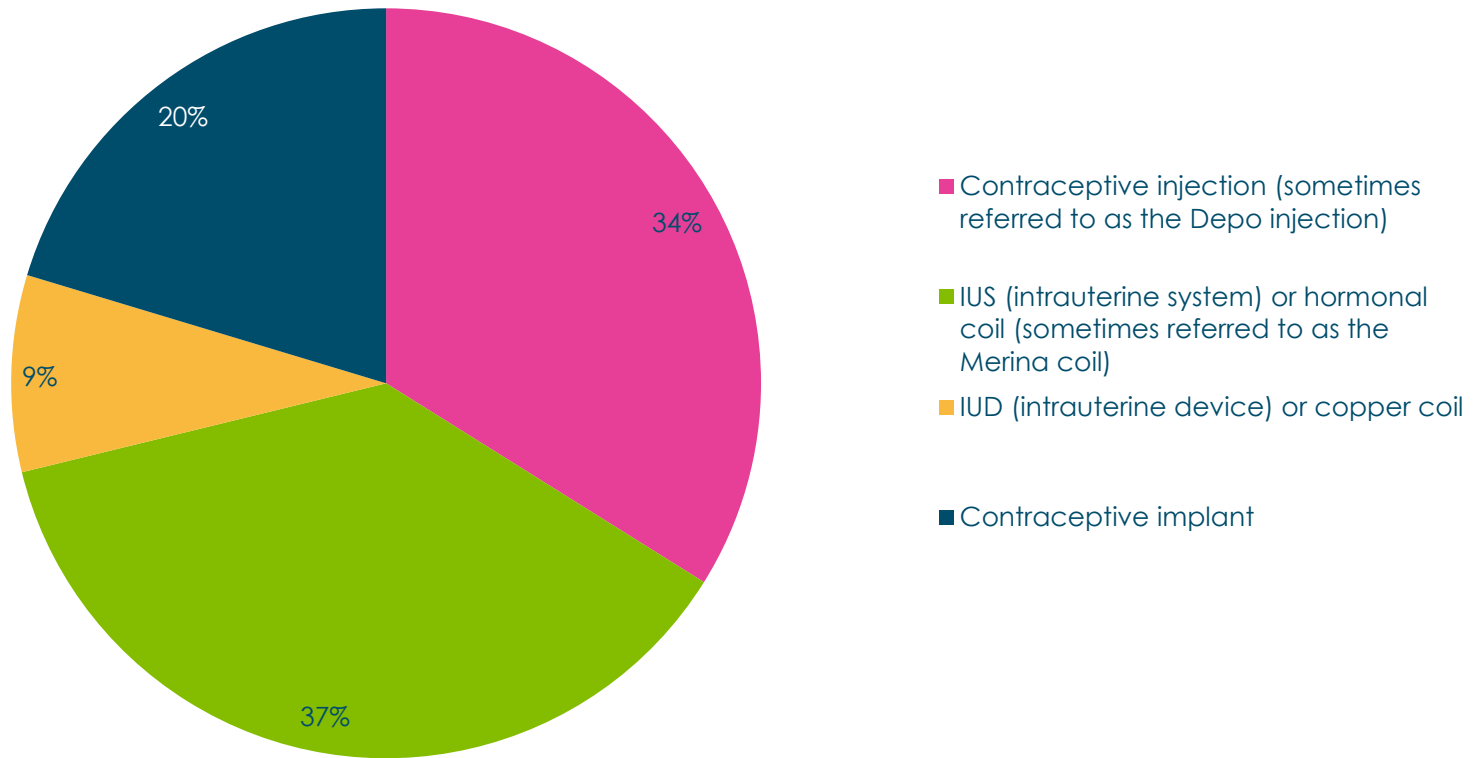
- 63 people completed the survey, seven people skipped through the questions.
- 82.5% of respondents had either used or had been offered LARC.
- The most common LARC was the IUS (intrauterine system) or hormonal coil, followed by the contraceptive injection.
- The majority of respondents had used LARC for birth control and were positive about its convenience and offer for long-term protection.
- Some people used LARC to combat menopausal symptoms.
- The biggest barrier to people choosing LARC was difficulty in finding reliable information to make an informed choice.
- The next barriers included fear of pain or discomfort, preference to have a contraceptive method that is more easily reversible, and appointments at unsuitable times.

Have you ever been offered or used LARC



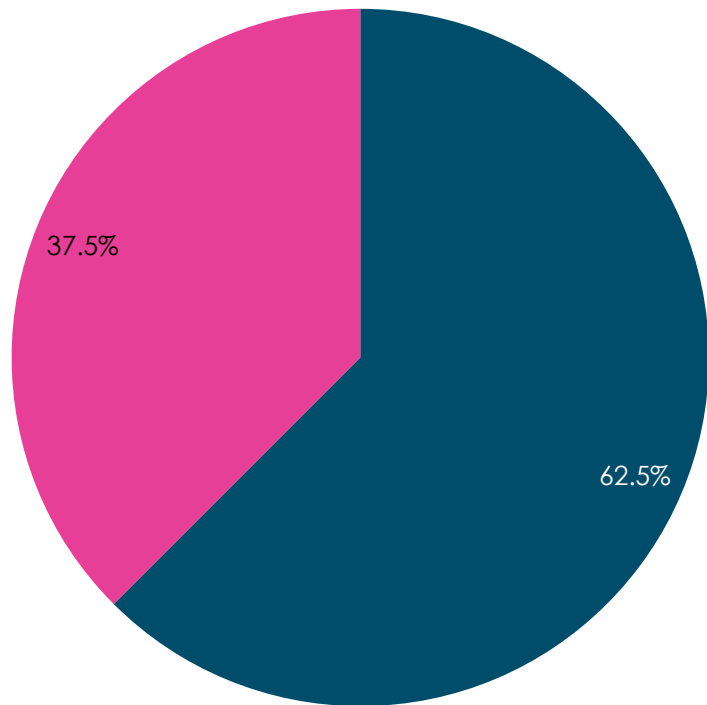
*63 answered

Which LARC have you used before?



*55 answered

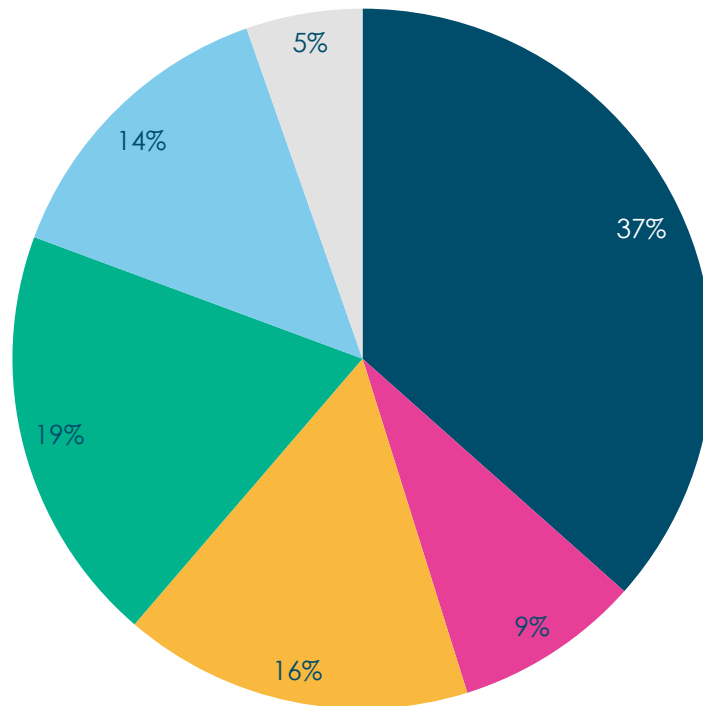
Which LARC have you been offered before? (For people who have been offered it, but never used it)



- Contraceptive injection (sometimes referred to as the Depo injection)
- IUS (intrauterine system) or hormonal coil (sometimes referred to as the Merina coil)
- IUD (intrauterine device) or copper coil
- Contraceptive implant

*44 answered

For what reasons did you choose your method of LARC?



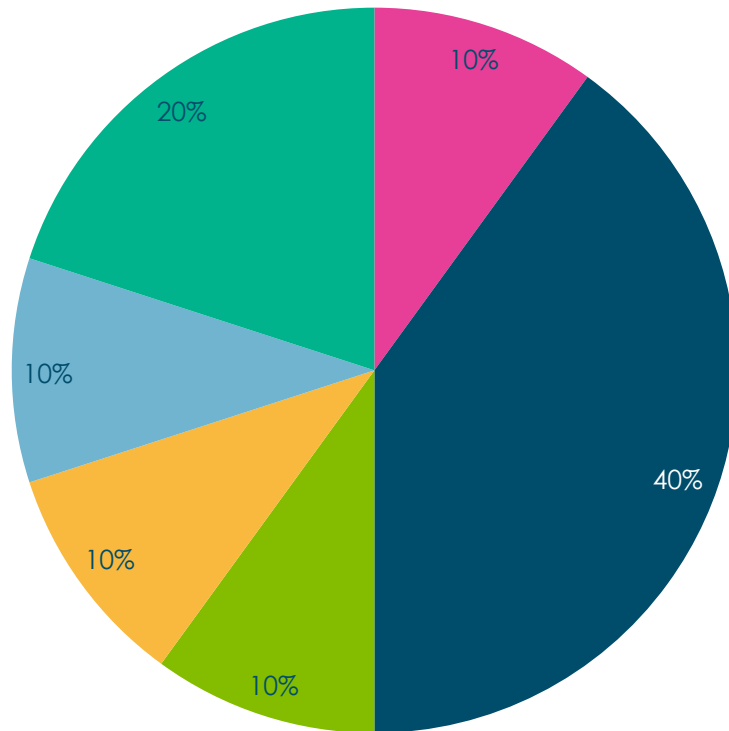
- For birth control
- For menopausal symptoms
- The offer of long term protection
- Convenience
- Its effectiveness
- Other (please specify):

'Other' included:

- "Control of endometriosis"
- "Unable to use the pill"
- "To reduce intensity of bleeding during period"
- "Can use while breastfeeding. Also less likely to gain weight"

*44 answered

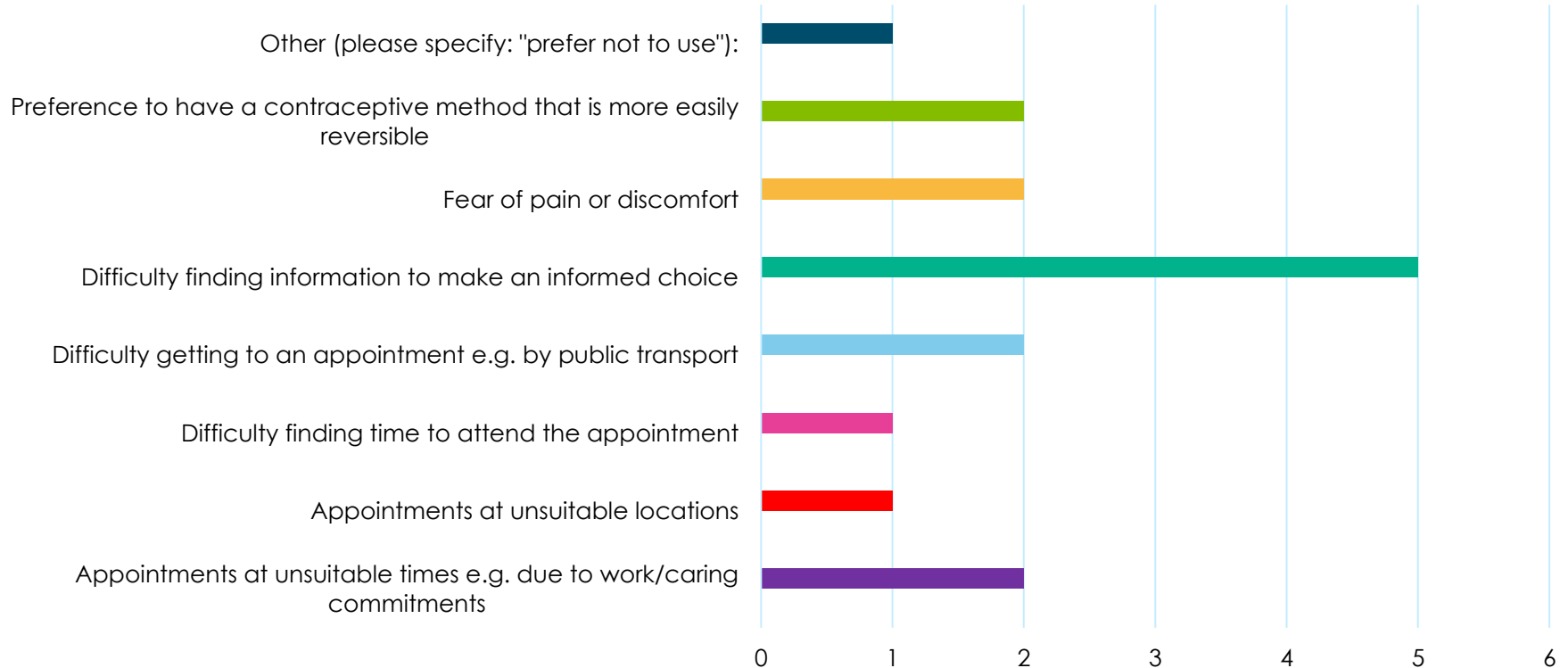
Which methods of LARC would you consider if you had been offered?



- Contraceptive injection (sometimes referred to as the Depo injection)
- IUS (intrauterine system) or hormonal coil (sometimes referred to as the Merina coil)
- IUD (intrauterine device) or copper coil
- Contraceptive implant
- I wouldn't consider any
- I am unsure or would need more information

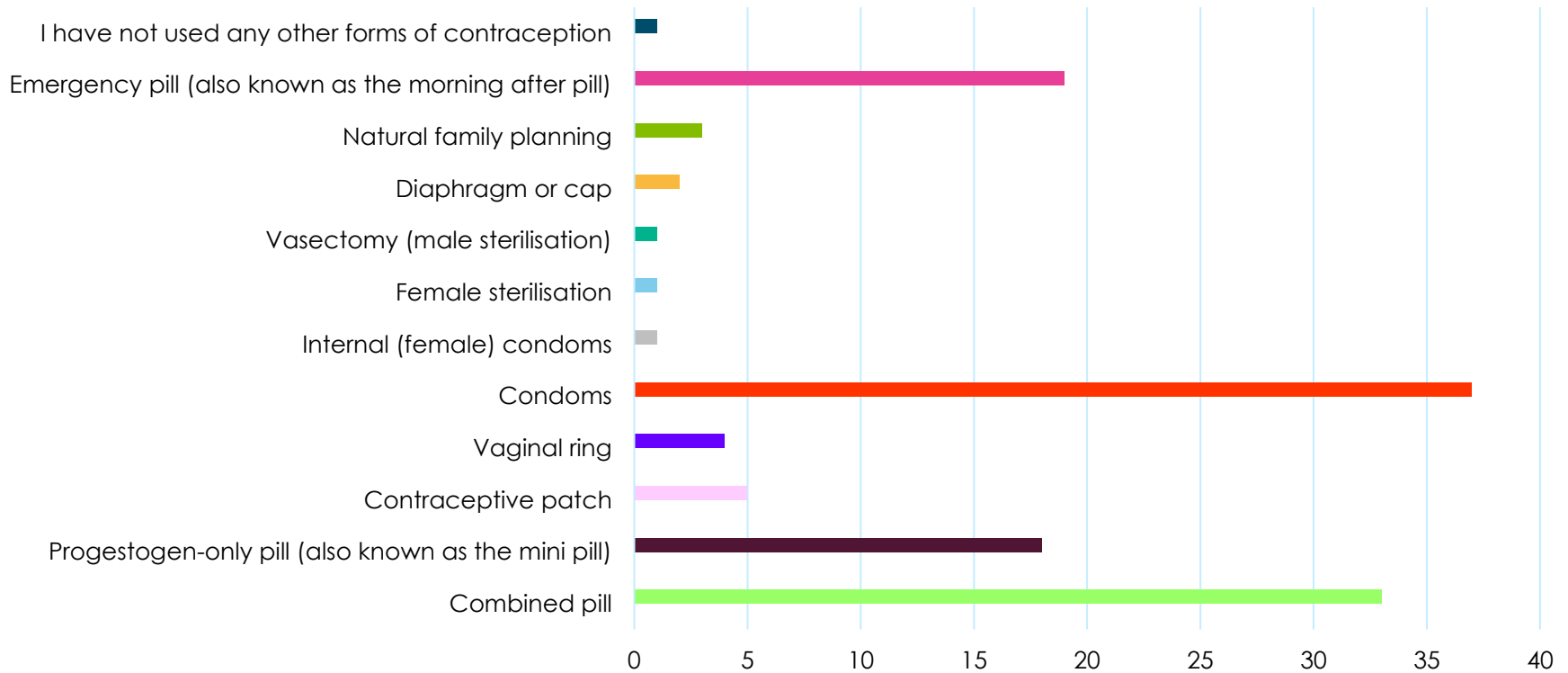
*9 answered

What were your main reasons for not choosing LARC?



*15 answered

Apart from LARC, have you used any form of contraception before?

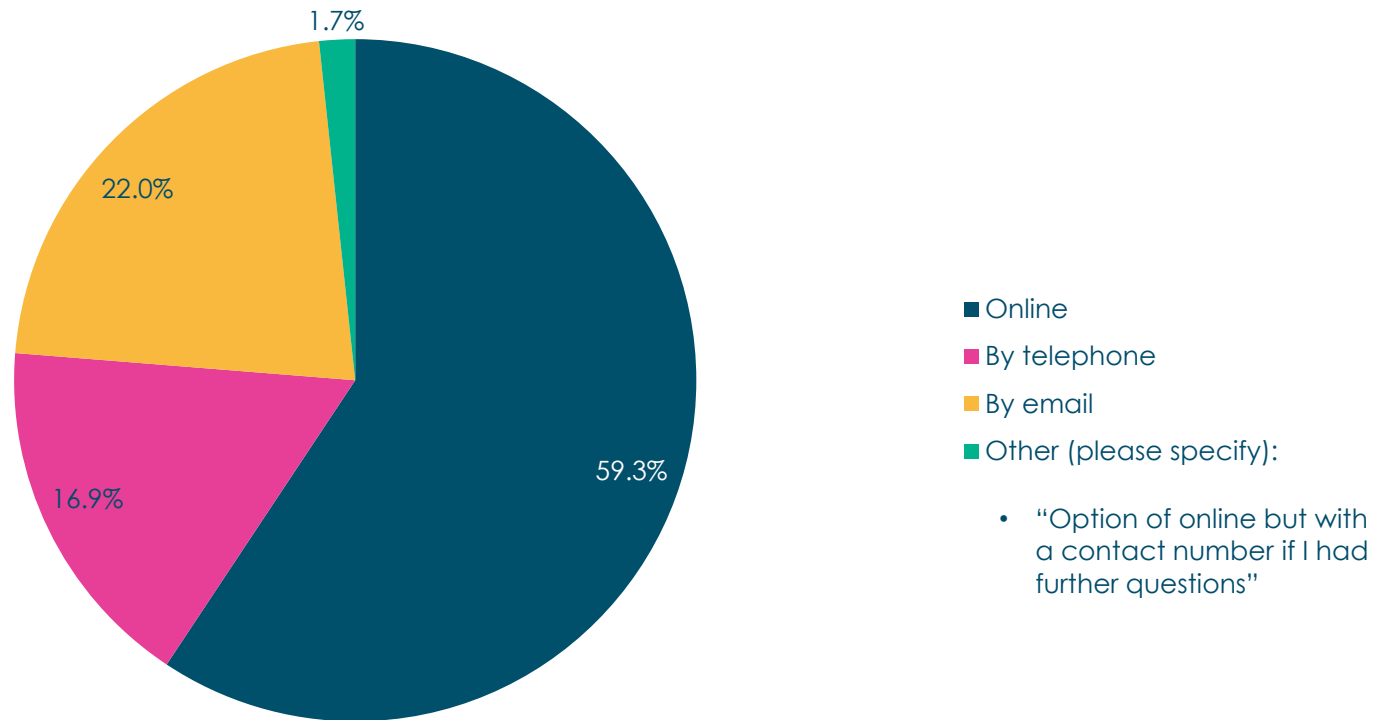


*59 answered

Key findings: appointment times

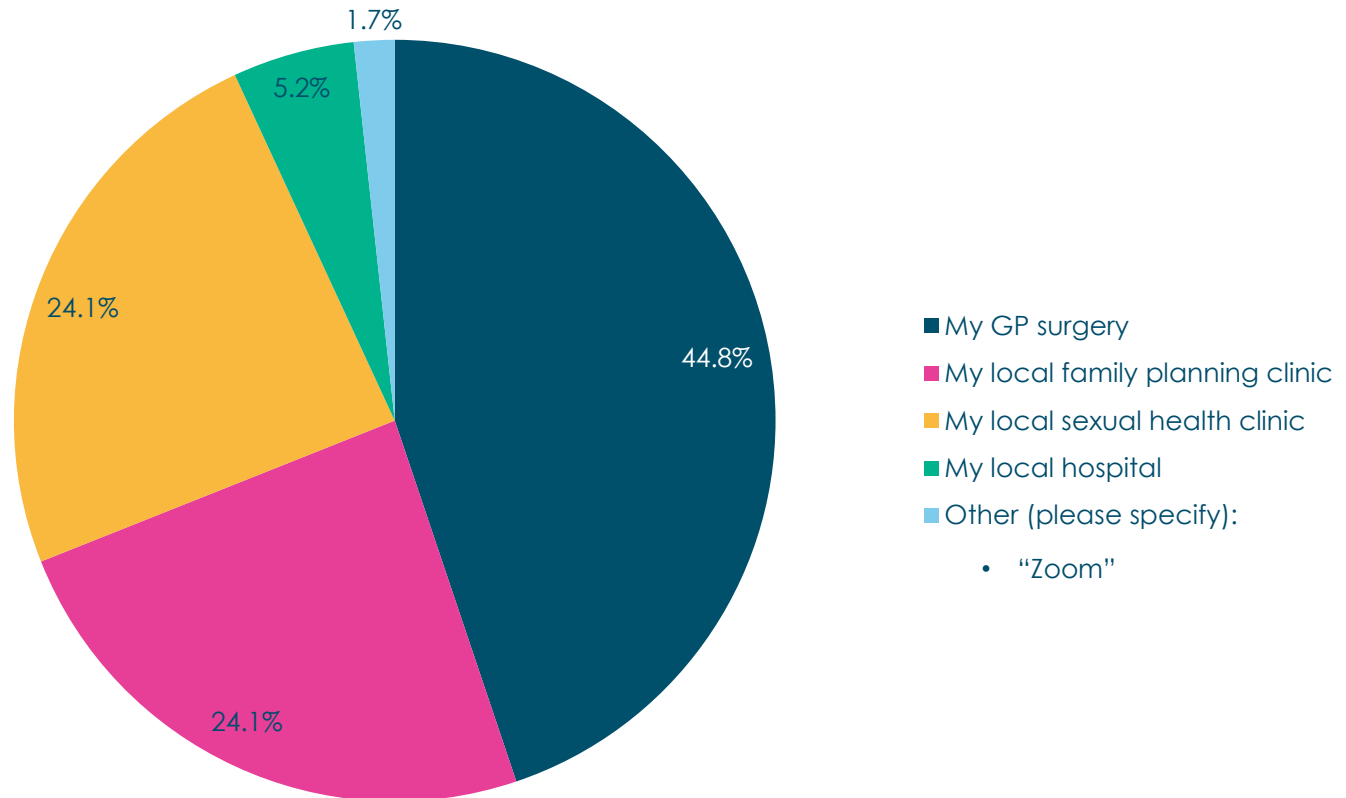
- The survey showed that most would prefer to find out more information about LARC online, closely followed by visiting their GP surgery for more information.
- The majority of respondents prefer to book their LARC appointment online, rather than by email or telephone.
- The preferred place to go to for a LARC appointment is at a GP surgery
- The preferred time to go to a LARC appointment is Saturday morning, a weekday evening, or Saturday afternoon.

If you were interested in a LARC appointment, how would you find it easiest to book an appointment?



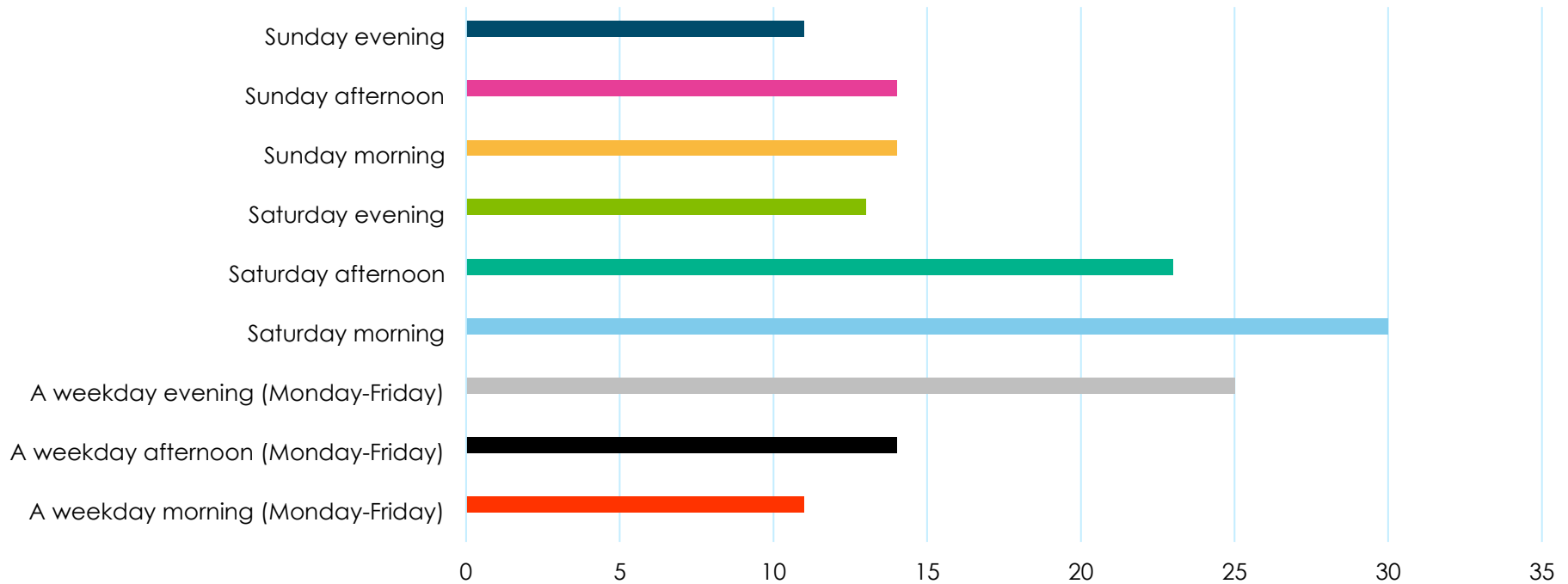
*59 answered

If you were to attend a LARC appointment, where would you prefer to go to receive it?



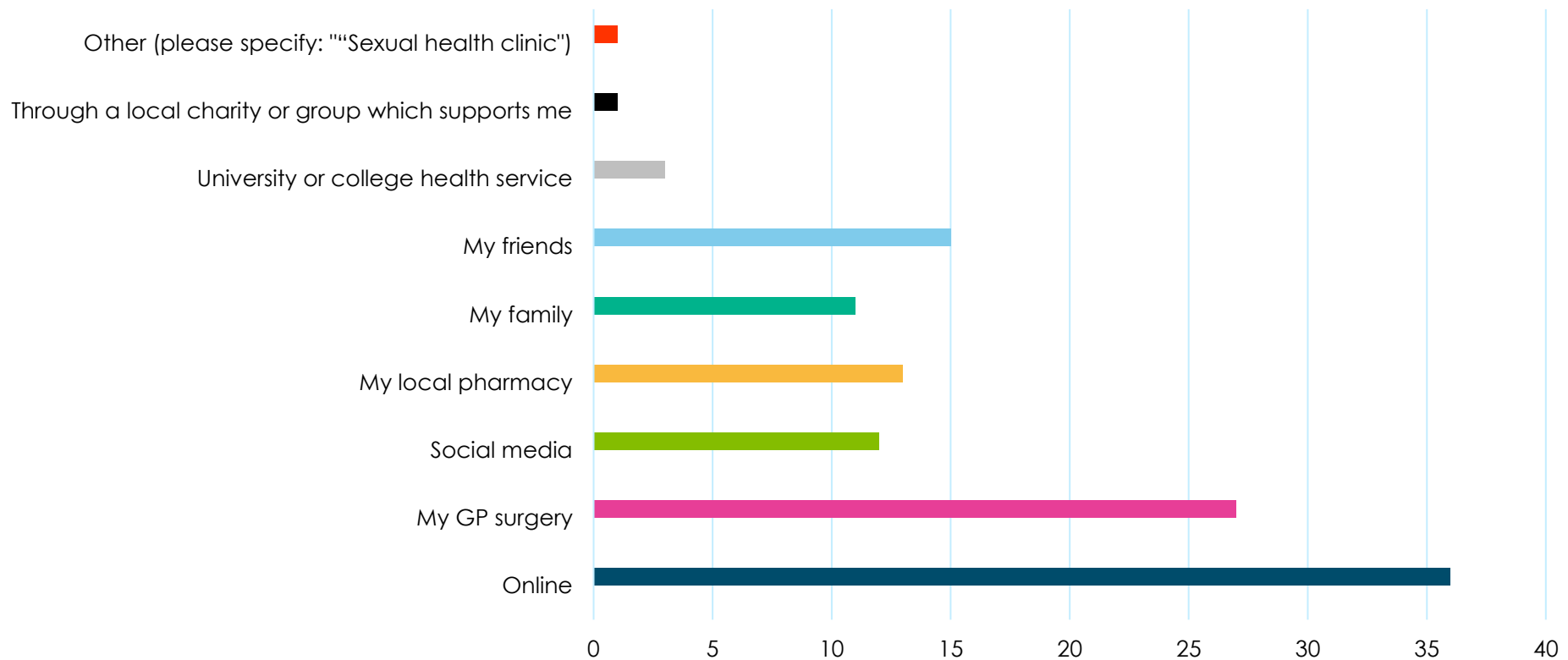
*58 answered

If you were to attend a LARC appointment which days and times suit you best?



*58 answered

If you were looking for more information on LARC, how would you most like to find information about it?



*59 answered



Key themes
What key themes came up in our research?

Key themes: one

Some people had difficulty finding information and making an informed choice about LARC.



“I wasn't sure who to ask. There wasn't much about it online. Seemed 50%, said worked ok for them and rest said it didn't. There wasn't any leaflets or information at GP or pharmacies.”



“Do as much research as you can and ask other women your age group. I was lucky that I had a GP who specialises in Women's Health, so she went through a wealth of information with me.”

Key themes: two

Some people were not aware that the coil can't always be reversed quickly if unsuitable.



“I would say be aware that it doesn't suit everyone and if painful you may have to wait a while for it to be removed/changed. I could have done with more information at the time and would have refused if I had known that I would wait 12 months to have removed.”



“Be prepared for a commitment, as some LARC methods are reversible but not immediate.”

Key themes: three

Long waiting times for appointments.



“Waiting times at GP surgery to have coil replaced were long.”



“Appointments for LARC are incredibly hard to get at the moment in Southend! I’ve been trying unsuccessfully for around 2 months to get a Contraceptive implant. I am unable to take the depo Provera injection due to severe allergic reaction and coils aren’t good either due to severe trauma from a cervical inspection during maternal care. Any use of this data to help improve services locally would be great.”

Key themes: four

No warning about potential levels of discomfort, pain and bleeding during and after fitting/removal of coil and implants.



“I was told it may be sore for a month or two. I had lots of bleeding but when I called back there wasn't much alternative offered or sympathy.”



“I wouldn't get the coil again after it migrated. I had to have surgery after it ended up next to my sigmoid colon and during surgery my uterus was perforated.”



“Don't feel pressured into it – Nurse was telling me that it was best as would not have to remember to take pill etc. I wasn't prepared how difficult it was to fit the implant – I told nurse I had trouble having smear tests, but it was still unpleasant experience. I chose injection instead after because I didn't want go through that again. Even removal was awful.”

Key themes: five

People liked the ease of convenience, effectiveness and long-term protection.



“I mainly have mine to stop my periods as they were very heavy and painful, the coil stops me bleeding. I am new to Southend so will need to have it changed soon as been using it for 4 years since I had fitted in the Ukraine. Hopefully, I can continue.”



“I like the Coil, it was a bit uncomfortable first but I am happy with it now – have had 2 so far and I have peace of mind about not remembering to take the pill or use condoms.”



“I have the Mirena coil and absolutely love it. For me it's one of the best contraceptives I have used (this is my 2nd one after having my second child) I had a mini pill and hated it (did not want to be on it) as I was on Yasmin long term (again, I loved this pill - no issues body really got along with it) however Dr's made me go onto mini pill - awful side affects (felt like I was going crazy/emotional/bled lots).”

Key themes: six

Conflicting information about the length of time between review of effectiveness.



“I was told two different periods of time for having it reviewed or changed. After I had my first child I was told for 5 or 6 years. When I went to GP after 5 years the Nurse told me I should had Merina COIL reviewed every 3 years. I was horrified as thought I had it in too long. Was ok in the end but staff need to know what they are saying to patients is consistent.”



“I decided to try it as thought I had been on the pill too long. I went for fitting when I was 52. The nurse told me I was lucky to get in before I was 52 as service not provided over that age. I believed that until a GP said this not the case.”

Key themes: seven

Conflicting information about the coil for peri-menopausal symptoms and additional HRT.



“I was offered HRT patch as well as the coil. I felt nervous about having both at same time. I asked about oral HRT but was told couldn't have if I had a coil fitted. Discovered from another nurse, this not the case.”

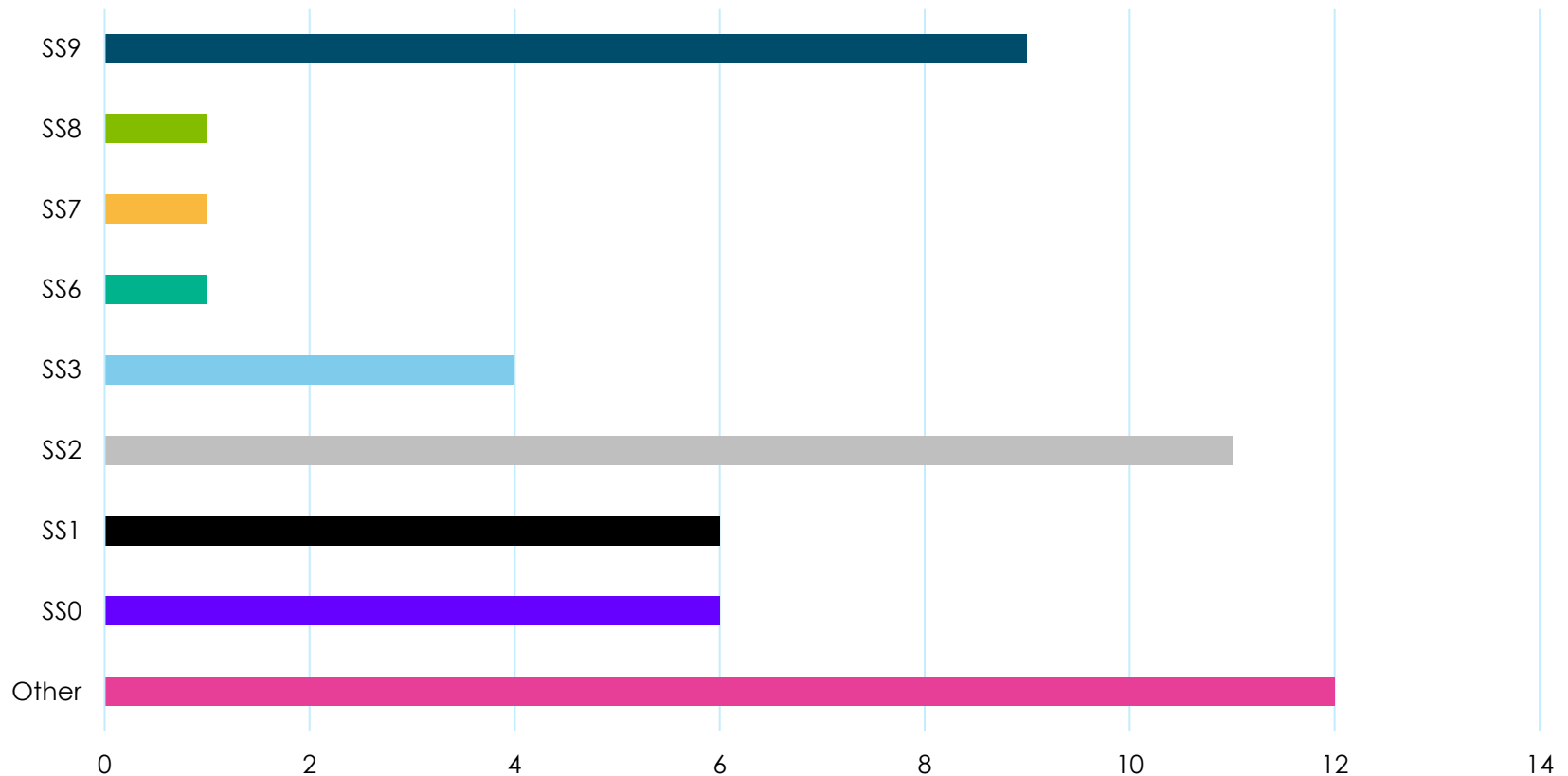


“I wasn't sure about any of it really – I had been having pre-menopausal issues for a while. I was told by GP only option was to have a coil to combat hot flushes and to use a vaginal oestrogen. Nothing was explained very well. In the end I was prescribed HRT patches and reverted back to combined pill.”



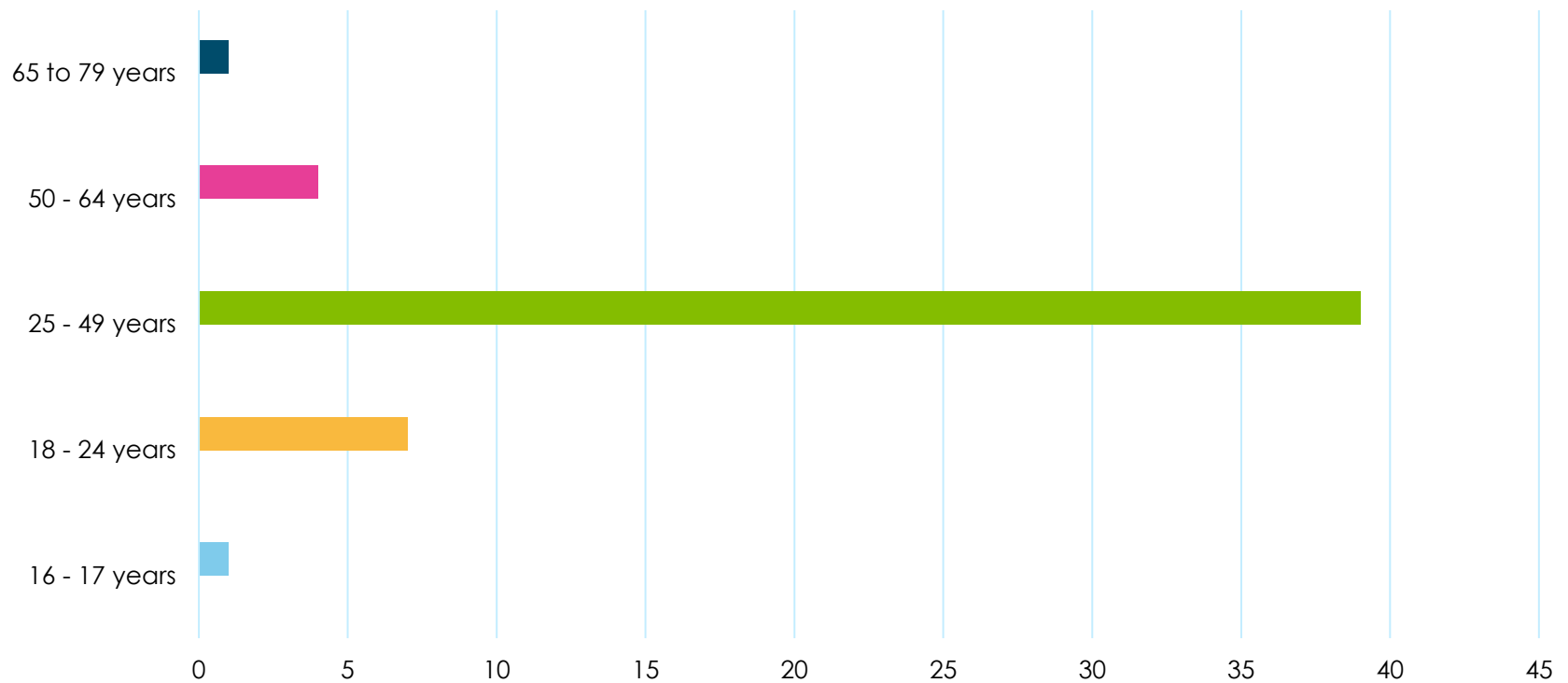
About you
Who responded to our questions?

What are the first three letters of your postcode?



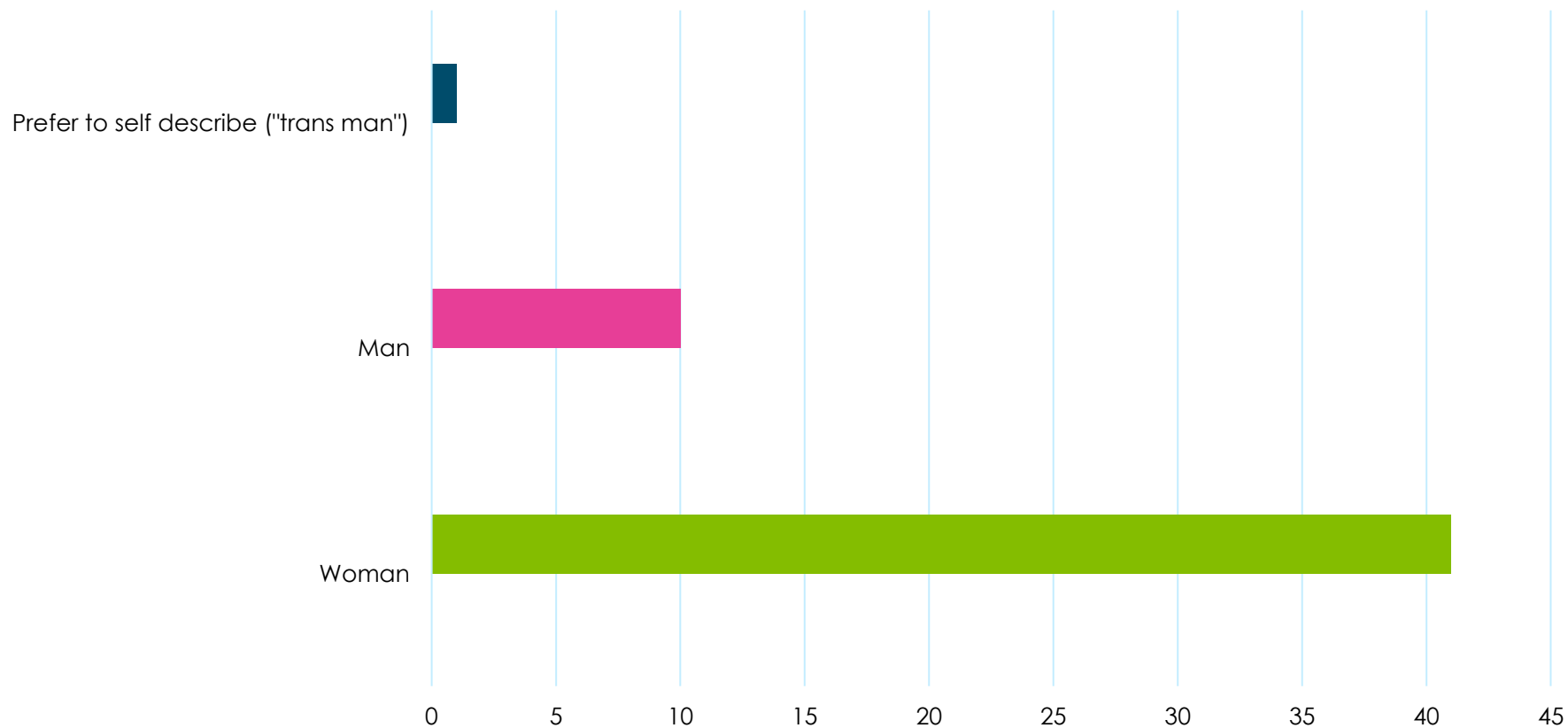
*50 answered

Please tell us your age



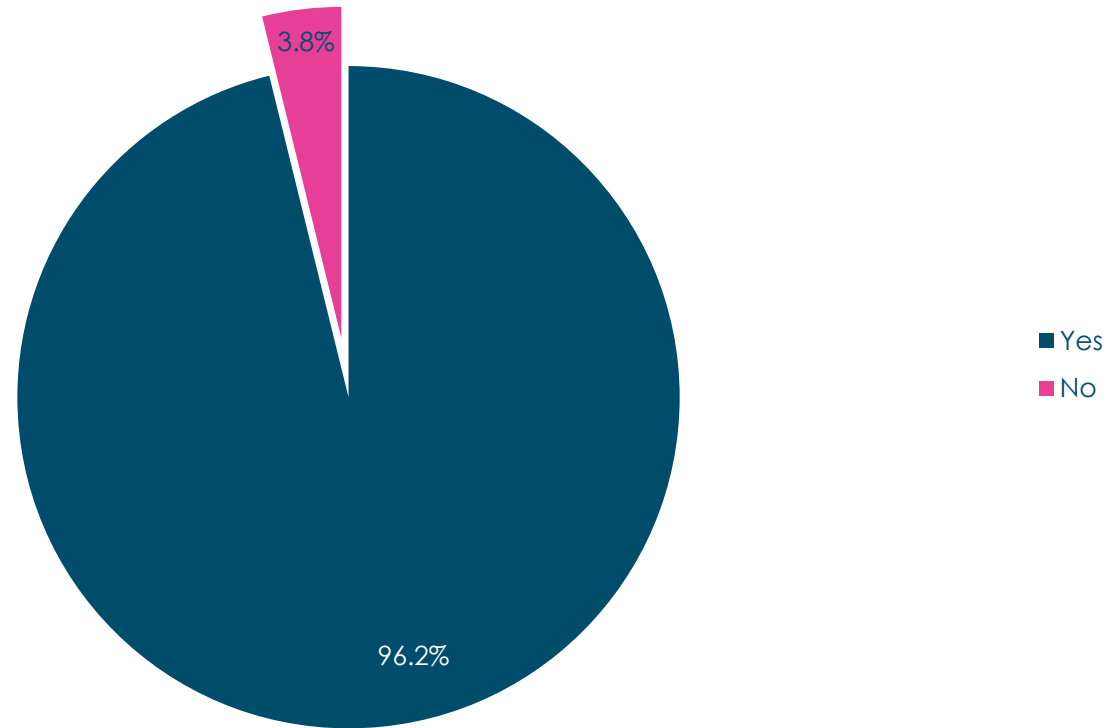
*52 answered

Please tell us your gender



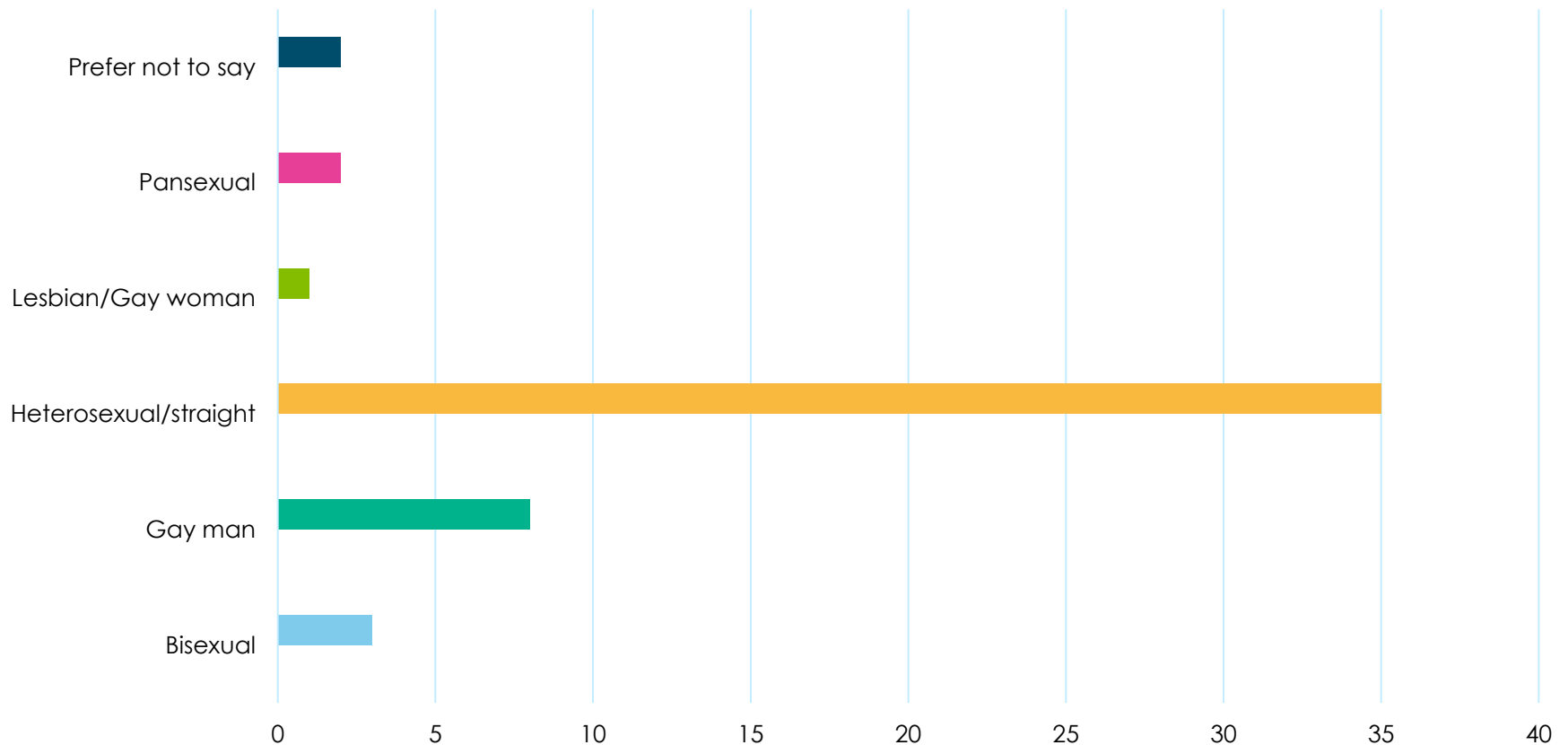
*52 answered

Is your gender identity the same as your sex recorded at birth?



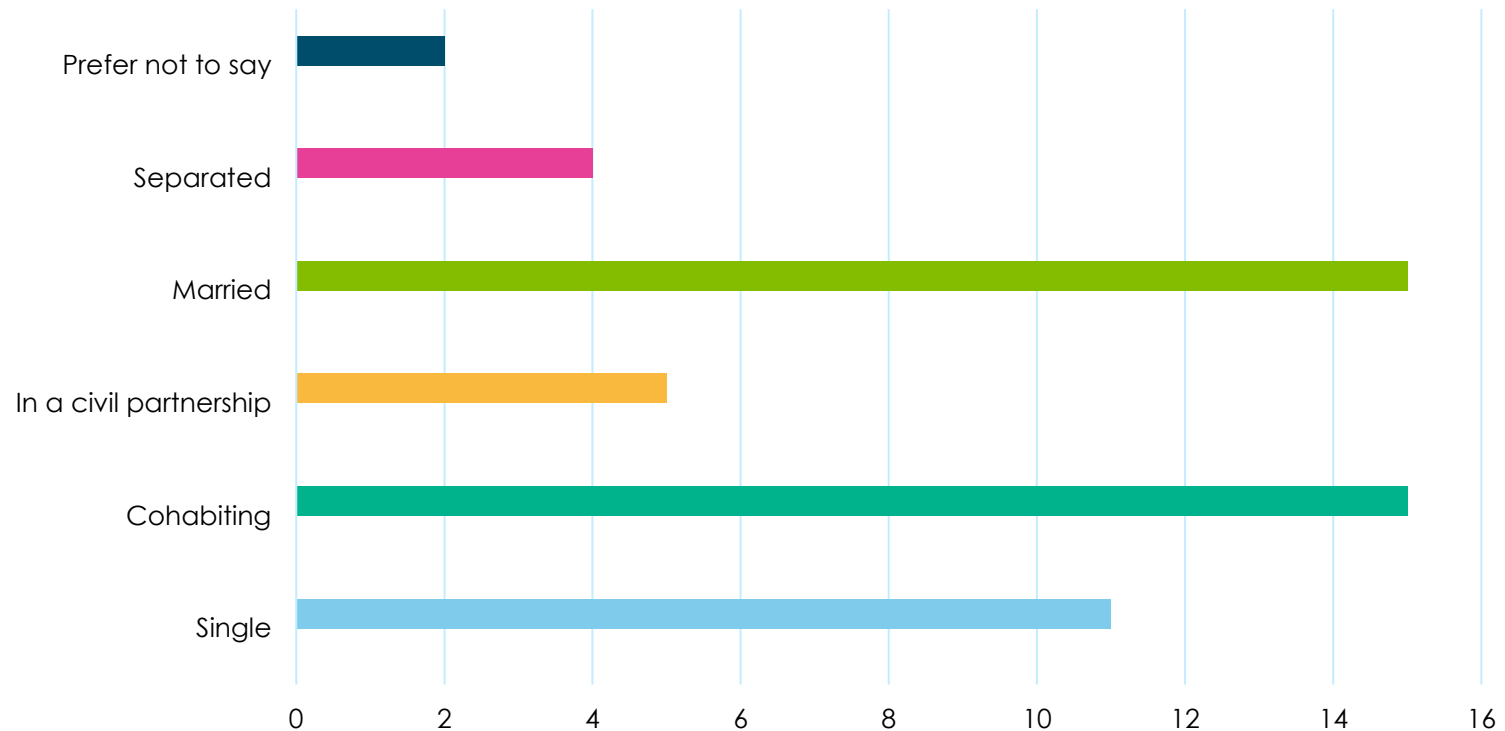
*52 answered

Please tell us which sexual orientation you identify with



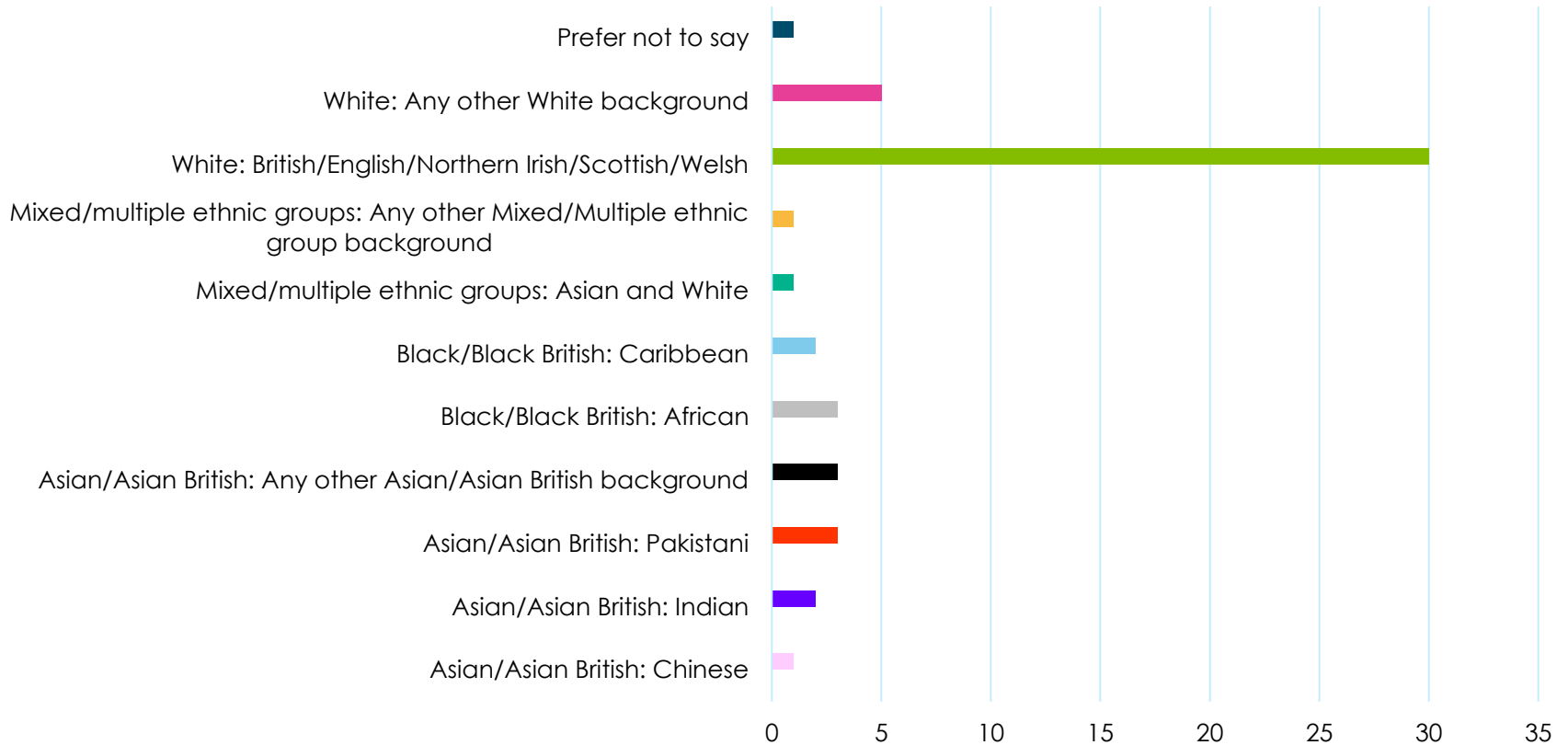
*51 answered

How would you describe your marital or partnership status?



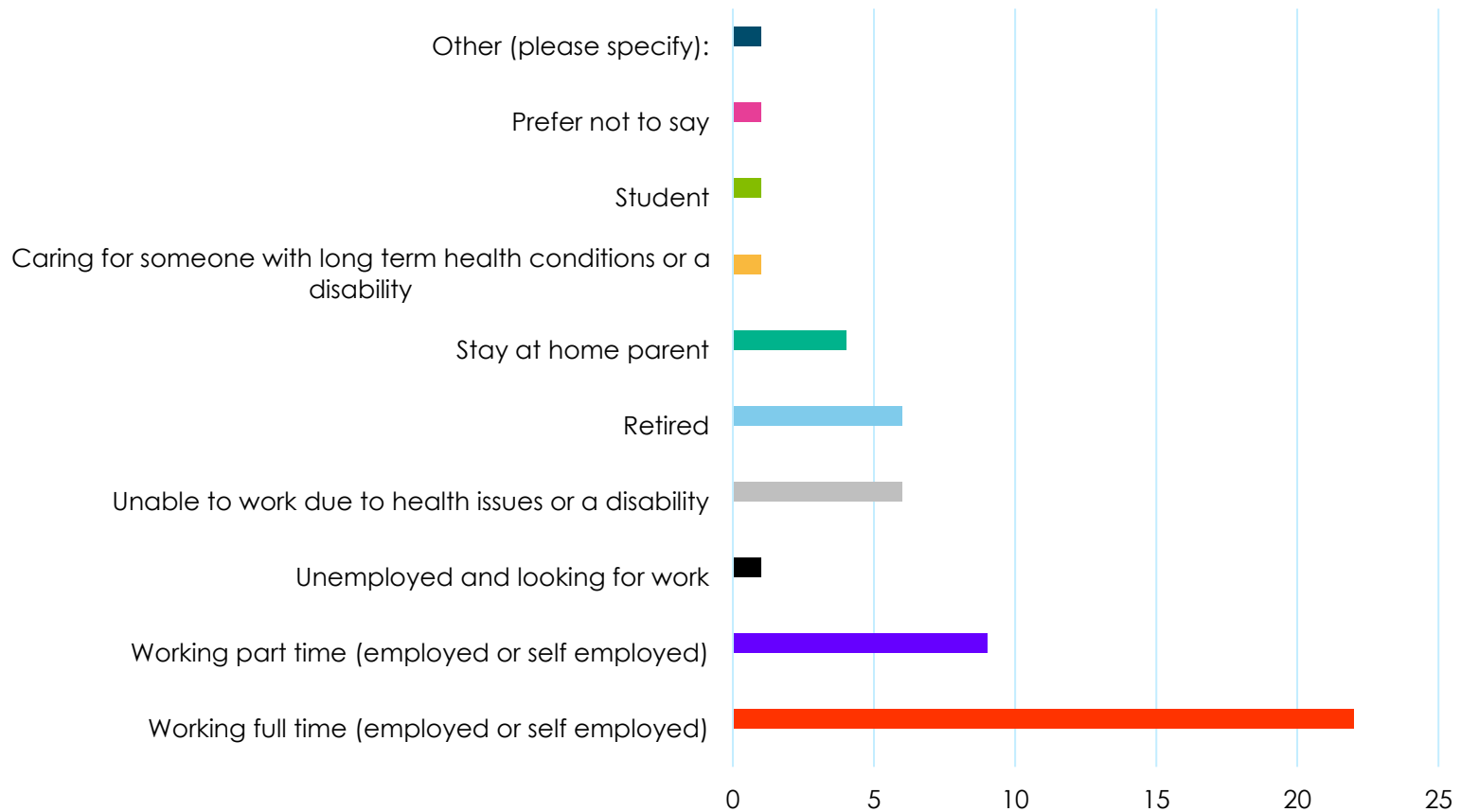
*51 answered

Please select your ethnicity



*51 answered

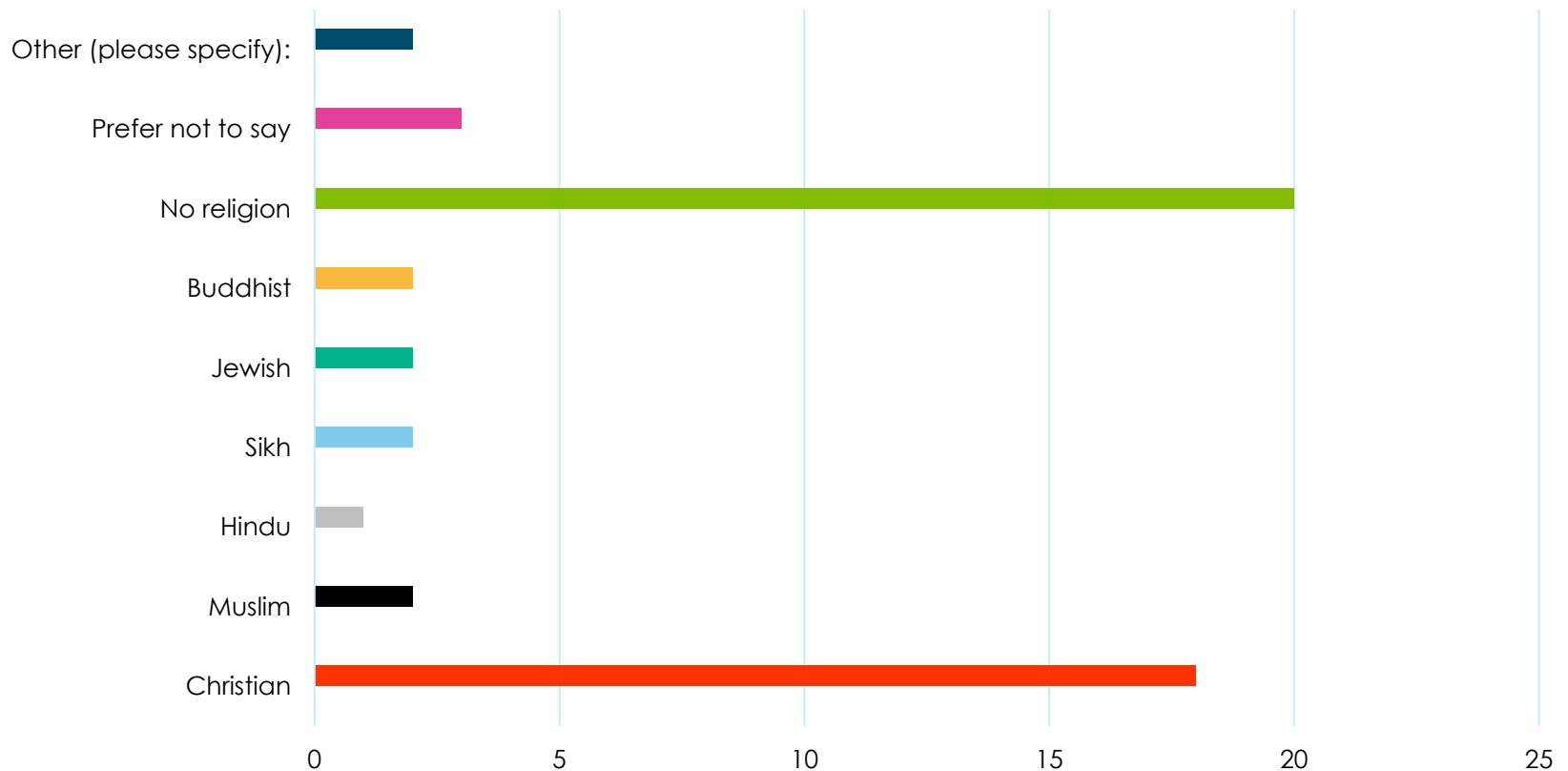
Which of the following best describes your current employment status?



*52 answered

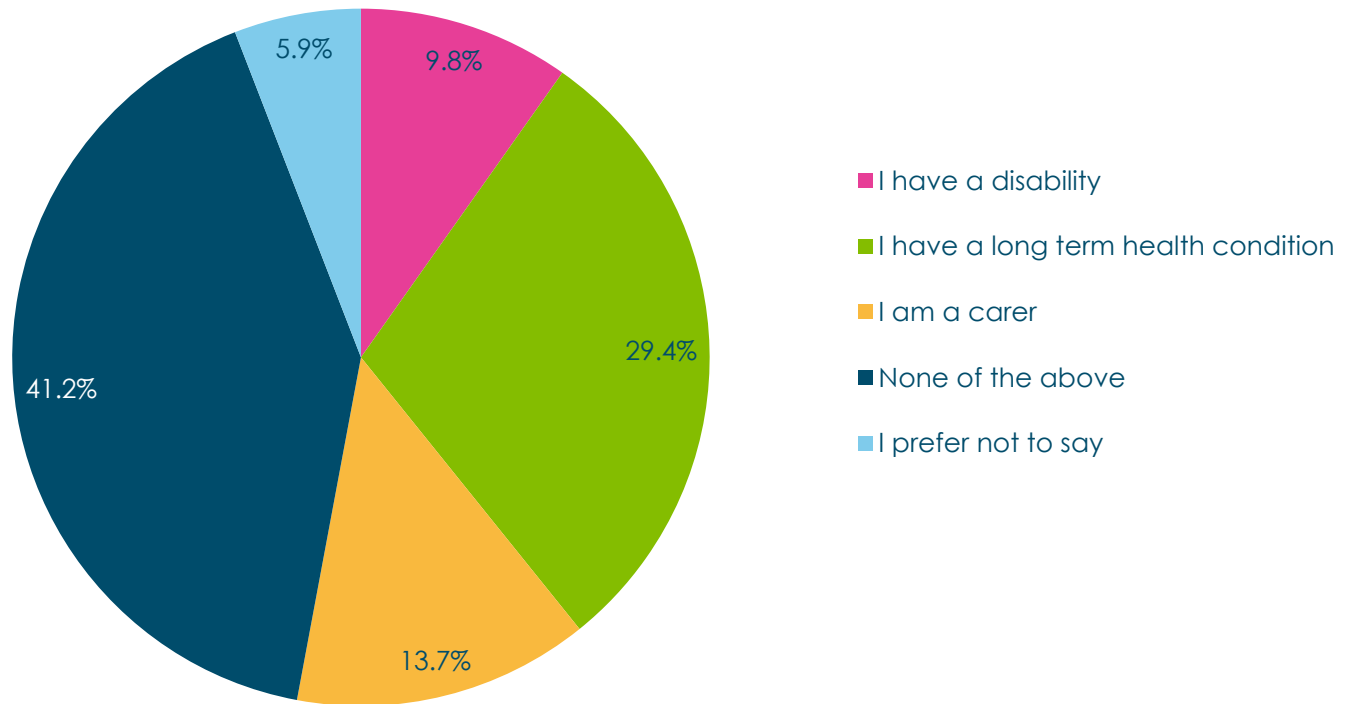
What is your religion or belief?

Other included:
• "Roman Catholic"



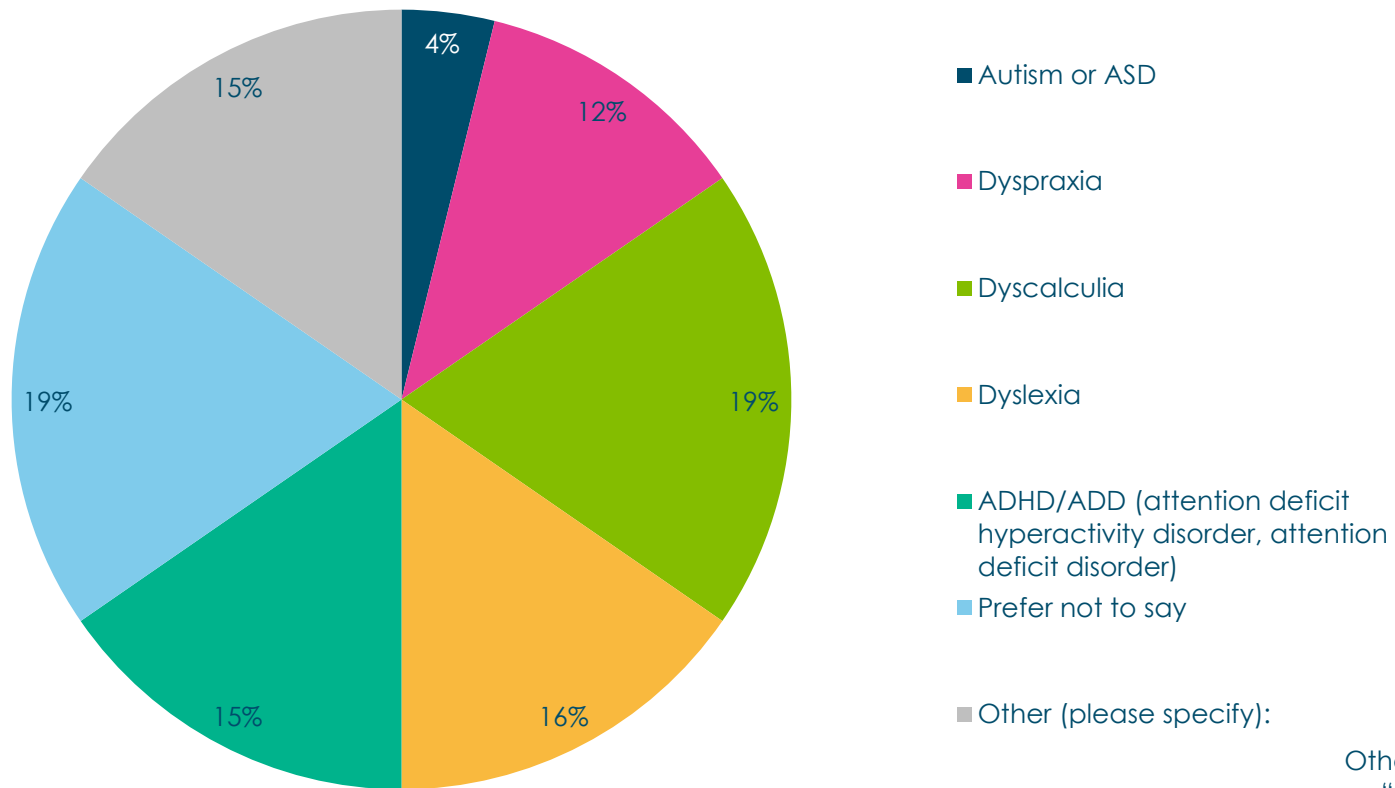
*52 answered

Please select any of the following that apply to you:



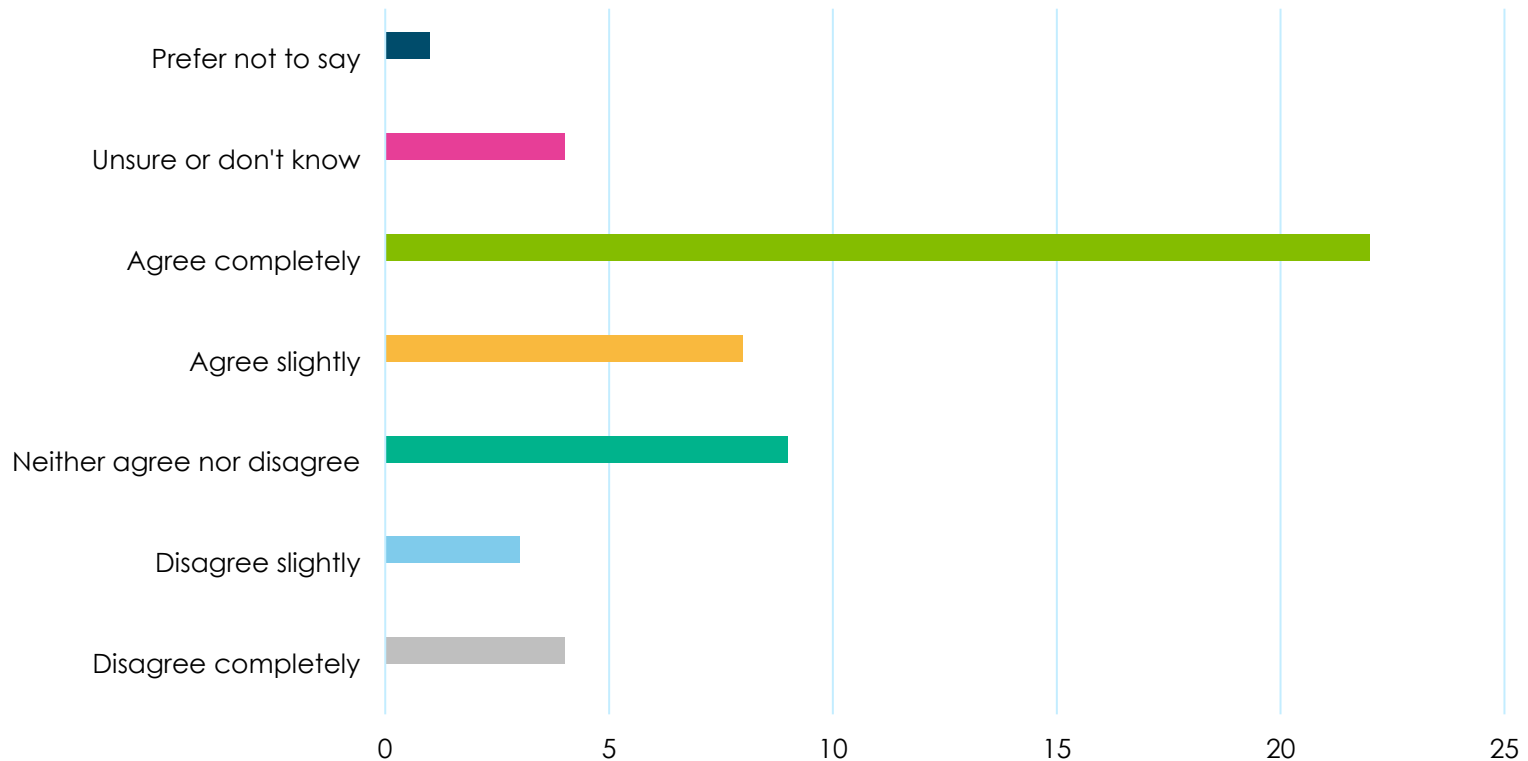
*51 answered

Have you been diagnosed with any of the following?



*25 answered

To what extent to you agree that the communications you receive from the NHS about your care or treatment are accessible (i.e. appropriate for your needs e.g language, braille, BSL, large print, easy read)?



*51 answered

A note about our City

We need to acknowledge the diversity of our City and how this might affect take-up of LARC.

In developing information about LARC, it is important to recognise that just under 6% of residents do not have English as their main language according to the last Census, rising to 7.4% in Victoria ward. Healthwatch Southend has previously reported about the problems faced by users of British Sign Language in accessing GP services.

Contraception may not be acceptable to certain faith groups such as orthodox Jewish (1) or Muslim people (2). On the other hand, we heard that many Eastern European women prefer LARC to other forms of contraception.

(1) Koffman L. Jewish Perspectives on Reproductive Realities. <https://www.ncjw.org/act/action-resources/jewish-perspectives-reproductive-realities/>

(2) Atighetchi D. The position of Islamic tradition on contraception. *Med Law*. 1994;13(7-8):717-25. PMID: 7731352.

Conclusions

Two clear messages emerged from the experiences of the women we heard from:

1. Access to information
2. Access to services

Information needs to:

1. provide sufficient information to allow informed choices to be made, dispelling myths
2. be easy to access online and in other forms
3. reflect the levels of literacy in Southend as well as being culturally sensitive

Concerns were raised about long waiting times, which may lead to some women not taking up the service, seeking alternatives or not using contraception at all. Action is needed across the system to address such concerns, including links with the emerging women's health hubs and primary care access recovery.

Thanks!

Healthwatch Southend is grateful to those local people who shared their experiences with us. Without them, we cannot speak up on behalf of them and their communities.



Appendix

The slides which follow provide additional information about the research we have carried out, including some of the posters we used and where we promoted these materials.



Posters



Have you used the contraceptive injection, coil, or implant?

Share your experience of using long acting reversible contraception (LARC), and help shape the future of contraceptive services for everyone

Need more information?

01702 416320
www.healthwatchesouthend.co.uk
info@healthwatchesouthend.co.uk
/HealthwatchSouthend
@HWSouthend

Complete the survey for a chance to win a £10 voucher!



Have you used the contraceptive injection, coil, or implant?

Share your experience of using long acting reversible contraception (LARC), and help shape the future of contraceptive services for everyone

- Tuesday 12 November, 10–11.30am – St Luke's Community Hub
- Wednesday 13 November, 1–2.30pm – SAVS, Alexandra Street
- Thursday 14 November, 7–8.30pm – Online via MS Teams

Want more information?

01702 416320
info@healthwatchesouthend.co.uk


Join one of our discussions or complete the survey



We placed laminated posters at:

STARS Weston Road	SAVS
Welcome to the UK Vic Plaza	Brook Sexual Health Vic Plaza
Vic Plaza Community Hub Vic Plaza	Boots the Chemist Vic Plaza
Boots the Chemist The Royals	St Edmunds Community Hall Cokefield Road
St Lukes Health Centre Shoebury	North Avenue Surgery Southchurch
Cluny Square Community Hub	Blood Test Centre Vic Plaza
Leigh Community Centre	


Facebook

 **Healthwatch Southend**
Published by [redacted]
· 4 October · 🌐

Do you want to have your voice heard? Are you passionate about having effective contraceptive services in Southend?

If yes, we want to hear from you! 🙌

Sign up to join one of our small focus groups discussing this today 🗨️
<https://www.healthwatchesouthend.co.uk/want-to-help-shape...>

 **healthwatch**
Southend

Help us shape the future of contraceptive services

Have you used the:


- contraceptive injection
- coil
- implant

Join one of our small groups, and tell us your experience of using these contraceptive methods in Southend and help us make a difference!

Interested? We want to hear from you!

📞 01702 416320
🌐 www.healthwatchesouthend.co.uk
✉️ info@healthwatchesouthend.co.uk

Enter the draw for a £15 voucher!


 **Healthwatch Southend**
Published by [redacted]
· 1 October · 🌐

Have you used, or heard of, the contraceptive injection, coil, or implant? If so, we want to hear from you!

Complete our short survey and share your experience of using these services in Southend today 🗨️

You could even win a £10 voucher!

Complete it here 🗨️ <https://www.healthwatchesouthend.co.uk/want-to-help-shape...>

 **healthwatch**
Southend

Have you used the contraceptive injection, coil, or implant?

Share your experience of using long acting reversible contraception (LARC), and help shape the future of contraceptive services for everyone

X/Twitter



Do you want to have your voice heard? Are you passionate about having effective contraceptive services in Southend?

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Sign up to join one of our small focus groups discussing this today ➔
healthwatchsouthend.co.uk/want-to-help-s...

healthwatch Southend

Help us shape the future of contraceptive services

Have you used the:

- contraceptive injection
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- implant

Join one of our small groups, and tell us your experience of using these contraceptive methods in Southend and help us make a difference!

Enter the draw for a £15 voucher!

Interested? We want to hear from you!

01702 416320
www.healthwatchsouthend.co.uk
info@healthwatchsouthend.co.uk

ALT



Have you used, or heard of, the contraceptive injection, coil, or implant? If so, we want to hear from you!

Complete our short survey and share your experience of using these services in Southend today 📌

You could even win a £10 voucher!

➔ healthwatchsouthend.co.uk/want-to-help-s...

healthwatch Southend

Have you used the contraceptive injection, coil, or implant?

Share your experience of using long acting reversible contraception (LARC), and help shape the future of contraceptive services for everyone

Complete the survey for a chance to win a £10 voucher!

Need more information?

01702 416320
www.healthwatchsouthend.co.uk
info@healthwatchsouthend.co.uk
/HealthwatchSouthend
@HWSouthend

Survey questions

1. Have you ever been offered or used LARC?

- I have been offered it, and I have used it
- I have been offered it, but I have never used it
- I haven't been offered it, and I have never used it

2. Which LARC have you used before?

- Contraceptive injection (sometimes referred to as the Depo injection)
- IUS (intrauterine system) or hormonal coil (sometimes referred to as the Merina coil)
- IUD (intrauterine device) or copper coil
- Contraceptive implant

Survey questions

3. Which LARC have you used before?

- Contraceptive injection (sometimes referred to as the Depo injection)
- IUS (intrauterine system) or hormonal coil (sometimes referred to as the Merina coil)
- IUD (intrauterine device) or copper coil
- Contraceptive implant

4. For what reasons did you choose your method of LARC?

- For birth control
- For menopausal symptoms
- The offer of long term protection
- Convenience
- Its effectiveness
- Other

Survey questions

5. Which methods of LARC would you consider if you had been offered?

- Contraceptive injection (sometimes referred to as the Depo injection)
- IUS (intrauterine system) or hormonal coil (sometimes referred to as the Merina coil)
- IUD (intrauterine device) or copper coil
- Contraceptive implant
- I wouldn't consider any
- I am unsure or would need more information
- Other

Survey questions

6. What were your main reasons for not choosing LARC?

- Appointments at unsuitable times e.g. due to work/caring commitments
- Appointments at unsuitable locations
- Difficulty finding time to attend the appointment
- Difficulty getting to an appointment e.g. by public transport
- Difficulty finding information to make an informed choice
- Fear of pain or discomfort
- Preference to have a contraceptive method that is more easily reversible
- Cultural or religious beliefs
- Language barriers, e.g. the language information is provided in
- Difficulty finding childcare to attend the appointment
- Attending an appointment with an unfamiliar health care professional
- Other

Survey questions

7. Apart from LARC, have you used any form of contraception before?

- Combined pill
- Progestogen-only pill (also known as the mini pill)
- Contraceptive patch
- Internal (female) condoms
- Vasectomy (male sterilisation)
- Diaphragm or cap
- Natural family planning
- Emergency pill (also known as the morning after pill)
- I have not used any other forms of contraception
- Vaginal ring
- Condoms
- Female sterilisation
- Other

Survey questions

8. If you were looking for more information on LARC, how would you most like to find information about it?

- Online
- My GP surgery
- Social media
- My local pharmacy
- My family
- My friends
- University or college health service
- Through a local charity or group which supports me
- Other

Survey questions

9. If you were interested in a LARC appointment, how would you find it easiest to book an appointment?

- Online
- By email
- By telephone
- Other

10. If you were to attend a LARC appointment, where would you prefer to go to receive it?

- My GP surgery
- My local family planning clinic
- My local sexual health clinic
- My local hospital
- Other

Survey questions

11. If you were to attend a LARC appointment which days and times suit you best?

- A weekday morning (Monday-Friday)
- A weekday afternoon (Monday-Friday)
- A weekday evening (Monday-Friday)
- Saturday morning
- Saturday afternoon
- Saturday evening
- Sunday morning
- Sunday afternoon
- Sunday evening
- Other

Survey questions

12. Do you have any other comments or experiences you would like to share with us?

13. What one piece of advice would you give to someone considering LARC?

14. Thank you for completing the survey. Everyone who takes the time to fill in this survey will be entered into a prize draw to be in with the chance of winning a £10 voucher. Please leave your full name and email address if you would like to be entered into the draw.

Survey questions

15. Be in with the chance of winning a further £15 voucher!

Alongside this survey, we are holding small focus groups to learn more about your opinions and experiences of using LARC services in Southend. If you are interested in attending a focus group, either online or face-to-face, please leave your name and email address below.

16. What are the first 4 letters of your postcode?

Survey questions

17. Please tell us your age

- 13 to 15 years
- 16 – 17 years
- 18 – 24 years
- 25 – 49 years
- 50 – 64 years
- 65 – 79 years
- 80+ years
- Prefer not to say
- Not known

Survey questions

18. Please tell us your gender

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self describe

19. Is your gender identity the same as your sex recorded at birth?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Survey questions

20. Please tell us which sexual orientation you identify with

- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Heterosexual/straight
- Lesbian/gay woman
- Pansexual
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self describe

Survey questions

21. How would you describe your marital or partnership status?

- Single
- Cohabiting
- In a civil partnership
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced/Dissolved civil partnership
- Widowed
- Prefer not to say

Survey questions

22. Please select your ethnicity

- Arab
- Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi
- Asian/Asian British: Chinese
- Asian/Asian British: Indian
- Asian/Asian British: Pakistani
- Asian/Asian British: Any other Asian/Asian British background
- Black/Black British: African
- Black/Black British: Caribbean
- Black/Black British: Any other Black/Black British background
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Black Caribbean and White
- Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic group background
- White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh
- White: Irish
- White: Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller
- White: Roma
- White: Any other White background
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Survey questions

23. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

- Working full time (employed or self employed)
- Working part time (employed or self employed)
- Unemployed and looking for work
- Unable to work due to health issues or a disability
- Retired
- Stay at home parent
- Caring for someone with long term health conditions or a disability
- Student
- Doing unpaid work/volunteering
- Prefer not to say
- Other

Survey questions

24. What is your religion or belief?

- Christian
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Sikh
- Jewish
- Buddhist
- No religion
- Prefer not to say
- Other

Survey questions

25. Please select any of the following that apply to you:

- I have a disability
- I have a long term health condition
- I am a carer
- None of the above
- Prefer not to say

Survey questions

26. Have you been diagnosed with any of the following?

- Autism or ASD
- Dyspraxia
- Dyscalculia
- Dyslexia
- ADHD/ADD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, attention deficit disorder)
- Tourette's
- Prefer not to say
- Other

Survey questions

27. To what extent do you agree that the communications you receive from the NHS about your care or treatment are accessible (i.e. appropriate for your needs eg language, braille, BSL, large print, easy read)?

- Disagree completely
- Disagree slightly
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree slightly
- Agree completely
- Unsure or don't know
- Prefer not to say

For more information

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