



About Healthwatch Warwickshire

Our aims are:

Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.

Including everyone in the conversation especially those who are frequently ignored.

Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.

Acting on feedback and driving change

Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector.



Influencing services,
providers, and
commissioners



Supporting
individuals



Information
and
Signposting

Healthwatch
Warwickshire

Intelligence
and
Evidence

Engagement
and
Outreach



Engaging
with
communities

Introduction

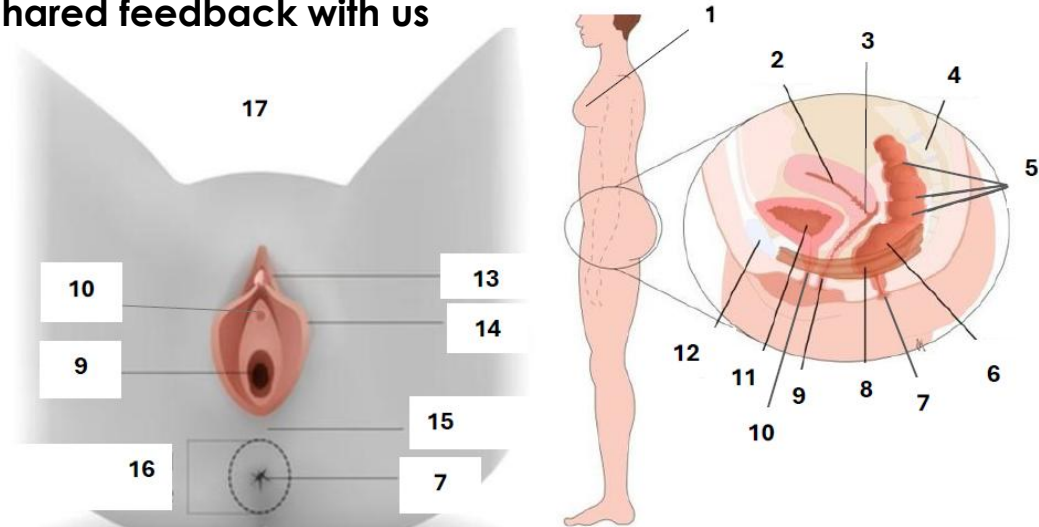
Healthwatch Warwickshire are supporting the Perinatal Pelvic Health Service by engaging with people to find out their knowledge of pelvic anatomy. We want to discover if people know the meaning of medical words, which could be included in information on a pelvic health website, and to find out if other words would be better understood.

The Pelvic Health Service wanted feedback on 14 words and provided pictures to support our conversations. During engagement, we shared the pictures below and asked people to identify the following terms. We asked for demographic information to find out if the answers corresponded to people's circumstances, ethnicity or language.

All responses were gathered during face-to-face engagement. This enabled us to ensure people were correctly identifying parts of the body, using the pictures, or a verbal explanation of location or function, and to provide corrections or education if the words were unfamiliar or misunderstood.

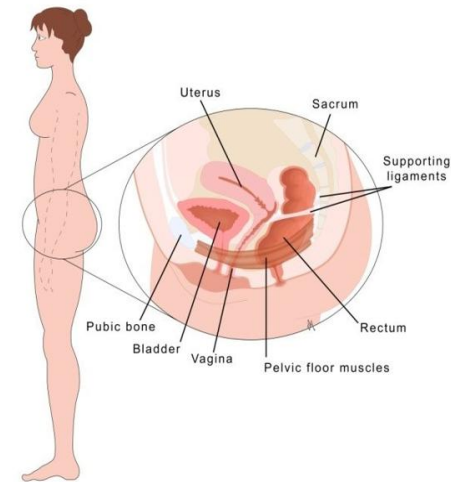
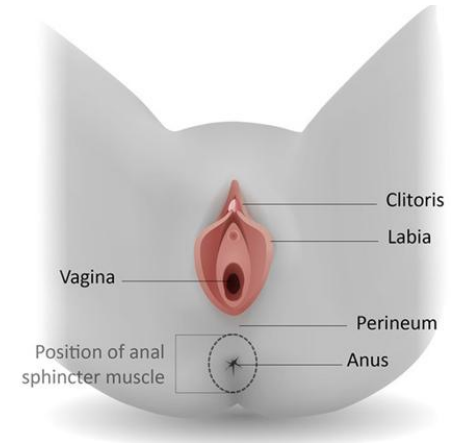
57 people from Coventry and Warwickshire shared feedback with us

Anus	Perineum (Perineal)
Anal Sphincter	Rectum
Bladder	Uterus
Bowel	Urethra
Cervix	Urine
Faeces	Vagina
Labia	Vulva



Summary of Findings

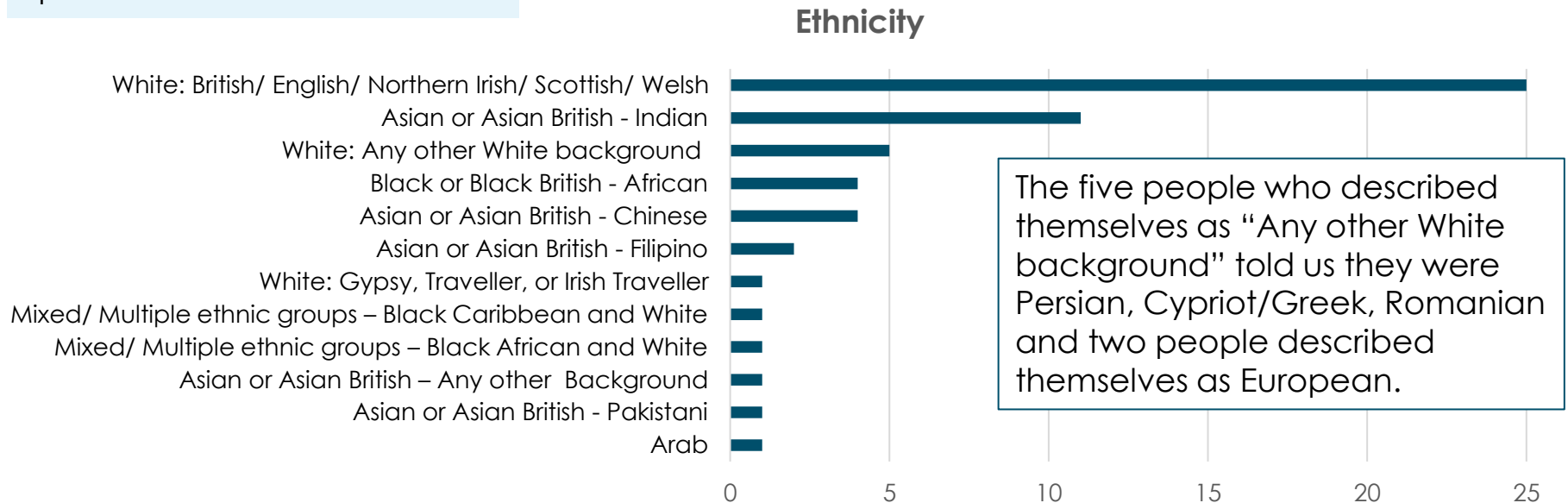
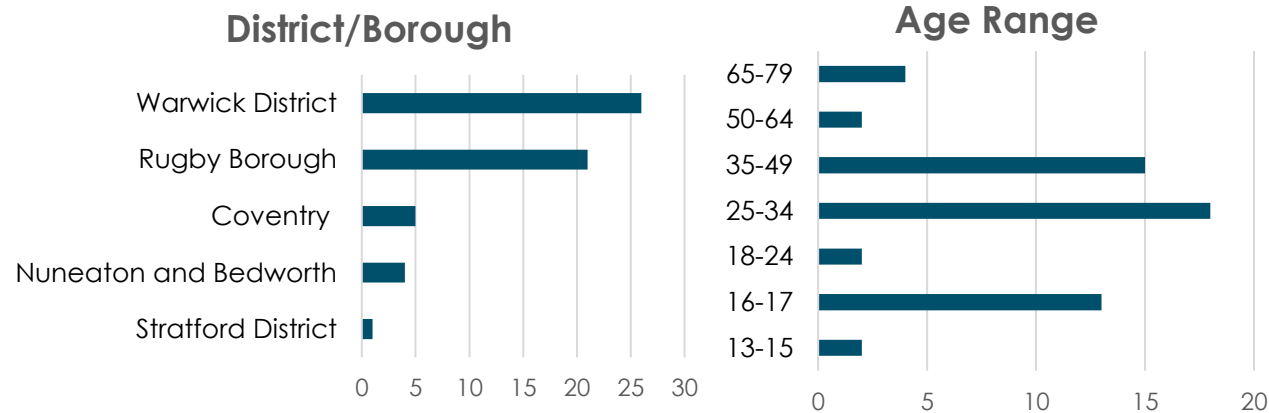
- We shared our survey with 57 people and found the public engaged well with the questions and recognised the importance of this work. 40 people completed the survey and 17 people chose to leave general comments.
- Some words were incorrectly identified, both when people were confident in their answers, and when they were guessing. There was some embarrassment when people did not know the words but felt that they should. The use of labelled pictures and descriptions of location or function during the engagement helped to clarify. Several people commented on the positive learning that had come from the conversations as they better understood the meaning of terms and felt this would benefit any future pelvic health conversations.
- 21 people told us that English was not their first language. We heard about the challenges of language barriers. People who did not have English as a first language were less likely to suggest an alternative for the English word.
- Some words such as urine, bladder and uterus, were well recognised, others such as perineum and anal sphincter were not. Whilst those with English as a first language were more likely to correctly identify the terms, there was still evidence of misunderstandings and a lack of knowledge.



“I had confusion between the meaning of vulva and vagina. It has been good to learn what they mean.” *White British female aged 25 - 35*

Demographics – Who did we hear from

- We heard from 54 females, 1 male, and 2 people told us they were non-binary
- 5 people told us they have a disability
- 5 people told us they have a long-term condition
- 4 people told us they had a medical or biology qualification



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During our engagement, general comments were shared with us about interacting with health professionals and discussing pelvic health.

“I would prefer to use alternative words. If I could do it online by email or chat, I would feel more comfortable as I wouldn’t have someone staring at me.

It’s a hard topic to discuss as you feel embarrassed. Having social anxiety and talking to people, I don’t know, it makes it difficult to have a conversation. I just try to avoid it altogether.”

Feedback from three White British females aged 16 - 17

“I feel comfortable using medical terms and know which part it is referring to as I have studied biology and find it interesting.” *Black or Black British – African female aged 25 - 34*

“It depends on who I’m having the conversation with. If I know them, I would be more likely to use slang or alternative words to the medical ones. If I’m taking to a health professional, I’m not familiar with I would use the medical term. Sometimes in an appointment you’re so worried about only having 10 minutes you forget the medical names as you want to rush.” *Black or Black British – African female aged 25 - 34*

“I know the words written in the list and think I know their placement in my body. I prefer to have a female doctor when discussing these things.” *Arab female aged 25 - 34*

“My partner, who is transgender, might avoid the medical terminology as it could be triggering. It is important to use gender neutral language on a web page, for example writing ‘People with a cervix rather than women’.” *European Non-binary individual aged 25 - 34*

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Understanding of Terminology

	No. of people who correctly identified this term	No. of people who could not identify this term	No. of people who identified this term incorrectly
Urine	38	2	
Bladder	35	5	
Vagina	34	2	4 - Vulva or 'whole thing'
Uterus	33	6	
Anus	32	8	
Cervix	25	9	1 - Vagina
Faeces	28	12	
Bowel	25	14	1- Rectum

"People talk about a vagina as the whole thing - kids are taught boys have penises and girls have vaginas. You never hear the word vulva."

Understanding of Terminology

	No. of people who correctly identified this term	No. of people who could not identify this term	No. of people who identified this term incorrectly
Urethra	19	16	1 - Vulva
Vulva	18	22	1 - Labia 2 - Vagina
Labia	18	21	1 - Vagina
Rectum	13	18	3 - Anus
Anal Sphincter	10	28	1 - Perineum
Perineum (Perineal)	9	30	1 - Inside vagina

We heard several comments from those who did not have English as a first language, who recognised the words from another context:

“I’ve heard of a bowel movement”

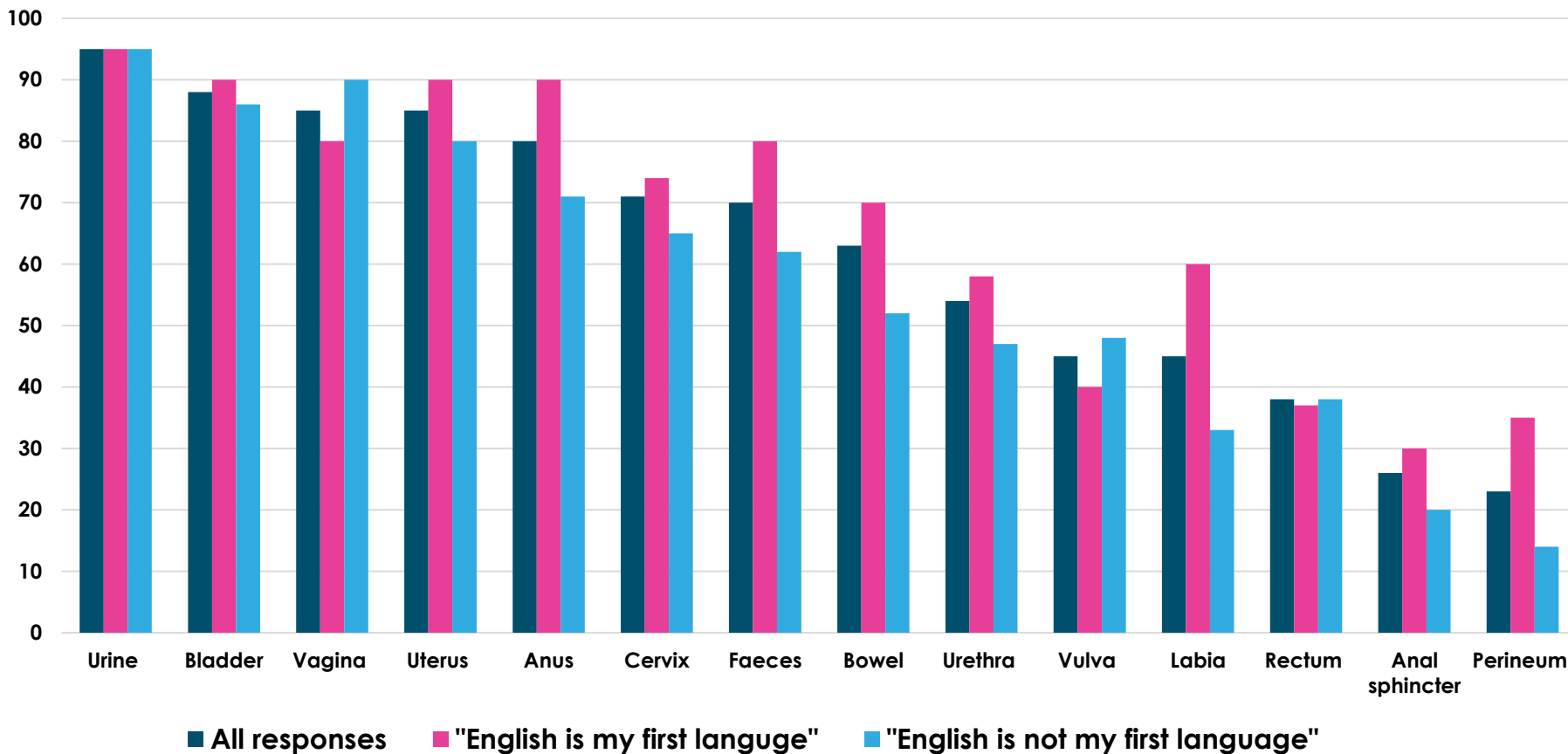
“I’ve seen posters for cervical cancer.”

“Adverts for yoghurt say it is good for your gut – I know what gut means.”

Comparison of responses by language

Whilst native English speakers were more likely overall to understand the words we asked about, those who did not have English as a first language were more likely to correctly identify the words vagina, vulva and rectum.

Percentage of responses correctly identifying each word



Comments from those who told us that English is not their first language.

"I know some of these words in my own language but not in English. When you go to hospital is it difficult to describe when I don't know words for some of the body parts. I don't always want to have to use an interpreter. It is good to learn."

Female aged 35 - 49

"I had stitches after birth but was not told the name of the place where they were."

Female aged 25 - 34

"I know the words in my own language, not in English." *Female aged 35 - 49*

"Some of these words I knew from my pregnancy, but medical terms have a lot of vocabulary to learn if English is not your first language." *Female aged 25 - 34*

"I have no idea what some of the words are or which body part it refers to. If I need to discuss with my GP, I would ask for a female doctor and point to the problem."

Female aged 65 - 79

"If I am feeling uncomfortable in that area I can't describe where it is. Having a specific word for a part of the body is really helpful." *Female aged 25 - 34*

"English language words are preferred, as you know the GP will understand what you're talking about. Not all doctors can speak Gujarati so it's better to have a conversation in English, so everyone knows what is being discussed. From the picture I can say which part it is pointing to."

Female aged 65 - 79

Preferred Words

When we were confident that people knew which part of the body was being discussed, we asked which word they would use, or recognise, to describe that part. Some people gave more than one suggestion and there was a low response rate from those who told us English was not their first language.

Anus	Anus (18), bum (6), butt hole (3), bum hole (2), bottom(2), arsehole, butt, hole
Anal Sphincter	Anal sphincter (6), anal muscles (6), anus (2) butt hole, butt muscles, the ring, bum hole
Bladder	Bladder (28)
Bowel	Intestines (17), bowel (16), gut (5)
Cervix	Cervix (21)
Faeces	Poo (25), poop (4), faeces (3), stool (3), motion
Labia	Labia (14), flaps (5), lips (3), vaginal lips (2)
Perineum (Perineal)	Perineum (7), gooch (2), space between vagina and anus (2), cooch, t'aint "On a man this is called a gooch"
Rectum	Rectum (10), lower bowel (4), arse, butt
Uterus	Uterus (15), womb (12)
Urethra	Urethra (11), urine tube, wee hole, opening, urine pipe, wee canal, pee hole
Urine	Wee (18), urine (13), wee (18), pee (6), piss
Vagina	Vagina (25), lady bits, lou lou
Vulva	Vulva (14), whole area (2), genital area, private parts, lou lou, fanny, cooch, pussy, whole thing

Next steps for the Perinatal Pelvic Health Service

Our engagement showed a low level of understanding for some of the terminology. Through the conversations and survey, we created a learning opportunity which was appreciated by participants. The development of a website for pelvic health is another opportunity for education for the public on pelvic anatomy.

- Consider those who do not speak English as a first language and offer a translate function on a pelvic health webpage.
- During the engagement, pictures worked well to explain unfamiliar terms, although people found it easier to understand what was shown on the external picture rather than the internal one. On a website, use animation, picture or glossary to explain key terms.
- Not all participants recognized commonly used alternative terms for body parts. While offering alternative words may help some individuals, describing the basic function or location of each term may be more effective in preventing confusion. This was particularly true for internal anatomy. Participants demonstrated this approach by using functional descriptions to describe and recognise the terminology, such as referring to the urethra as the 'urine tube'.

Response from the Perinatal Pelvic Health Service

“Thank you for supporting our work to explore the accessibility of pelvic health medical terminology. Your input is helping us develop an information resource that is inclusive and understandable for all women and birthing people.

Your findings will directly inform the language used on our new perinatal pelvic health website, ensuring that medical terminology is accompanied by clear, accessible explanations. This is essential for promoting understanding, enabling earlier identification of pelvic health concerns, and supporting prevention during the perinatal period.

Importantly, your work has highlighted the need to provide clear explanations of terminology, anatomy, and function—supported by visual aids—regardless of whether readers believe they are familiar with the terms. We also recognise the additional challenges faced by those for whom English is a second language and have therefore integrated Google’s accessibility features into the website to support translation and comprehension.”

**Perinatal Pelvic Health Service
South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust**

Thank you to everyone who shared their thoughts and experiences with Healthwatch Warwickshire during this engagement.

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Warwickshire

For more information:

For information about this report contact: Caroline@healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk

Healthwatch Warwickshire
4-6 Clemens Street, Leamington Spa
CV31 2DL

website: www.healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk

telephone: 01926 422 823

email: info@healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk

write: FREEPOST Healthwatch Warwickshire

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