

OUR FIRST MENOPAUSE SURVEY

# The State of Menopause

We surveyed 1,039 women ages 40-65 across the United States to understand what they know, how they feel (from symptoms to emotions), who they talk to, and which treatments they are and are not considering. The result is a picture of what menopause looks like today, for the women who are living it today.

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OUR FIRST MENOPAUSE SURVEY

# The State of Menopause

**Menopause: the final frontier.** At least that's what we're conditioned to believe. And yet, women entering midlife and beyond are flourishing — we're running our work lives, home lives, and internal lives with the confidence of women who have experience. But for all our accomplishments, this phase that can last as long as  $\frac{1}{3}$  of our lives is woefully underrepresented. Unlike other reproductive phases, historically we weren't learning about it from our mothers or in school, and there are few sanctioned spaces to discuss the symptoms, experiences, and how this affects women's everyday lives.

And that can translate to confusion, isolation, and a lack of treatment. It has been only recently that elders have provided context, healthcare providers (HCP) have started speaking openly, and the internet has exploded with information.

We wanted to better understand how women are living with and making decisions about their menopause treatment, so we can design better systems to support them. After all, vasomotor symptoms of menopause — perimenopause, menopause and postmenopause — can last up to 10 years<sup>1</sup> for some...and that's a long time.

<sup>1</sup> Avis NE, Crawford SL, Greendale G, et al. Duration of menopausal vasomotor symptoms over the menopause transition. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2015;175(4):531-539. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2014.8063.

# What we set out to learn

- Which symptoms most commonly impact women, and how are they treating them
- Women's perceptions about hormone replacement therapy (HRT), widely considered the only effective treatment for menopause symptoms until recently
- How informed are they about the menopause journey, and who do they speak to about it
- How do women feel about this life shift, and where do they seek support
- What impact, if any, does menopause have on women's sex lives



# Menopause is inevitable, yet many women aren't preparing for it

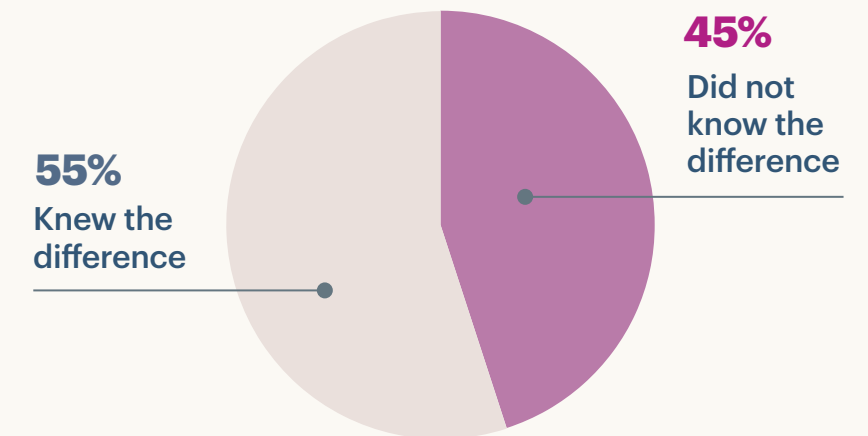


Nearly half of women (**45%**) didn't know the distinction between perimenopause and menopause

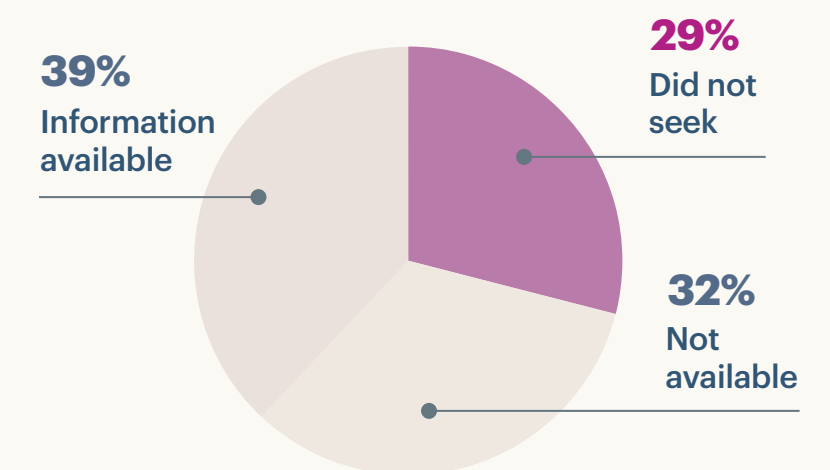


Nearly one-third of women (**29%**) did not seek out information prior to entering menopause

Prior to experiencing symptoms, did you know the difference between perimenopause & menopause?

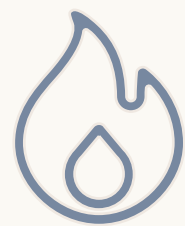


Do you feel like there was enough perimenopause and menopause information available before you started experiencing symptoms?

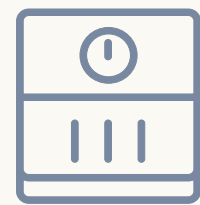


# Hot flashes are just the tip of the iceberg

The most common symptoms across all stages of menopause:



Hot flashes



Weight gain



Trouble sleeping



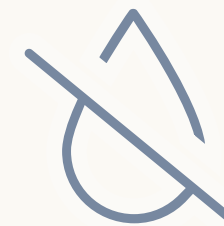
Night sweats



Bladder control



Brain fog



Vaginal dryness, painful sex

Honorable mentions:



Hormonal vertigo



Cold flashes



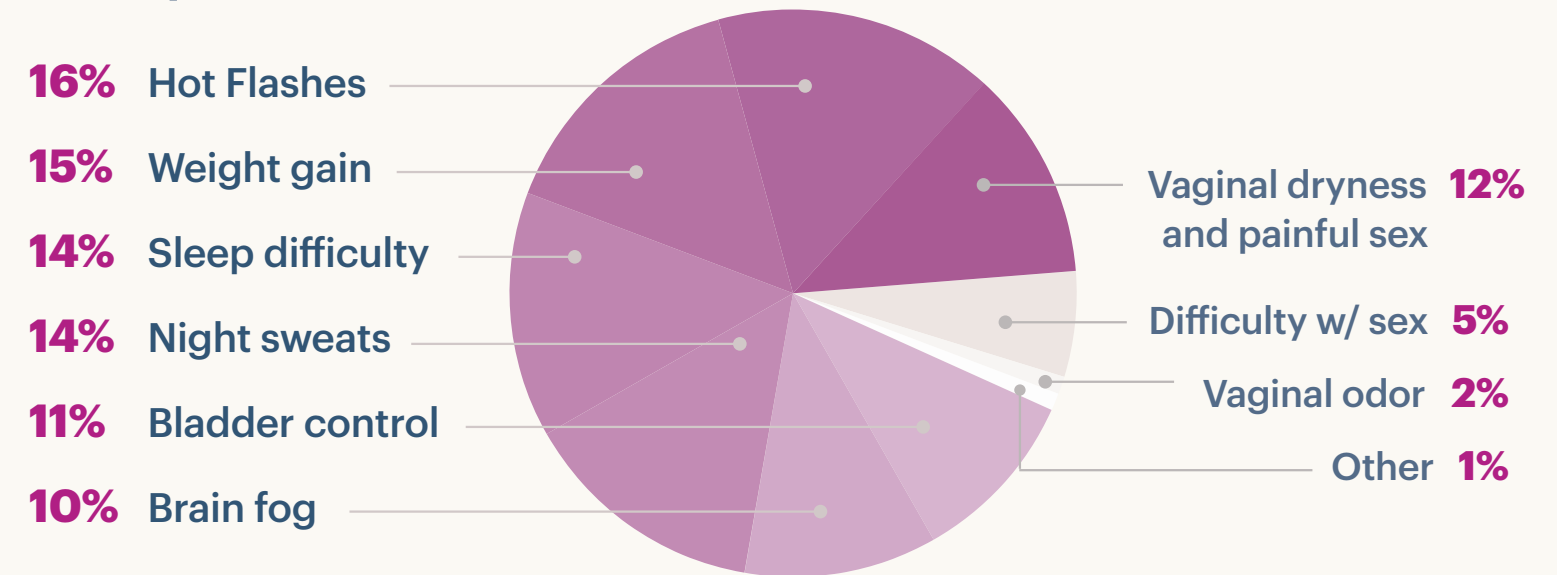
Facial hair



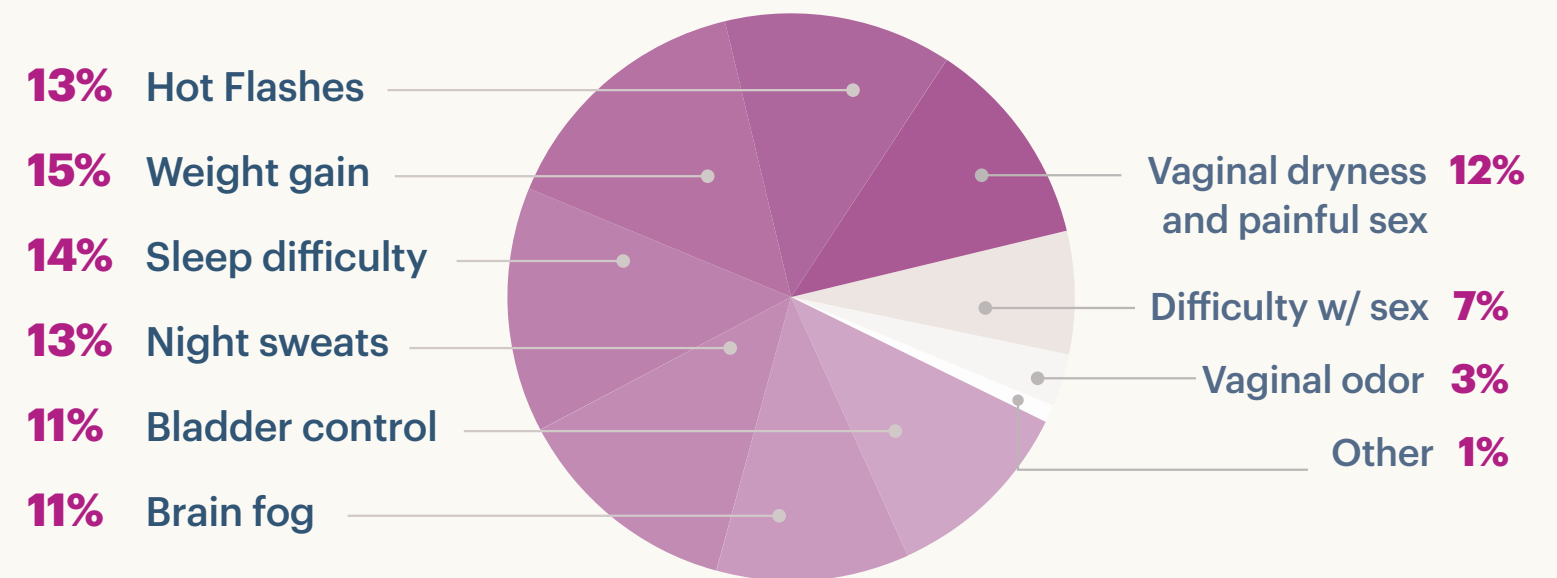
Vaginal atrophy, which causes symptoms like vaginal dryness and painful sex, is treatable with vaginal moisturizer, yet **68%** of menopausal women have never used over-the-counter (OTC) vaginal treatments

## Which symptoms impact women the most?

### Menopause



### Perimenopause

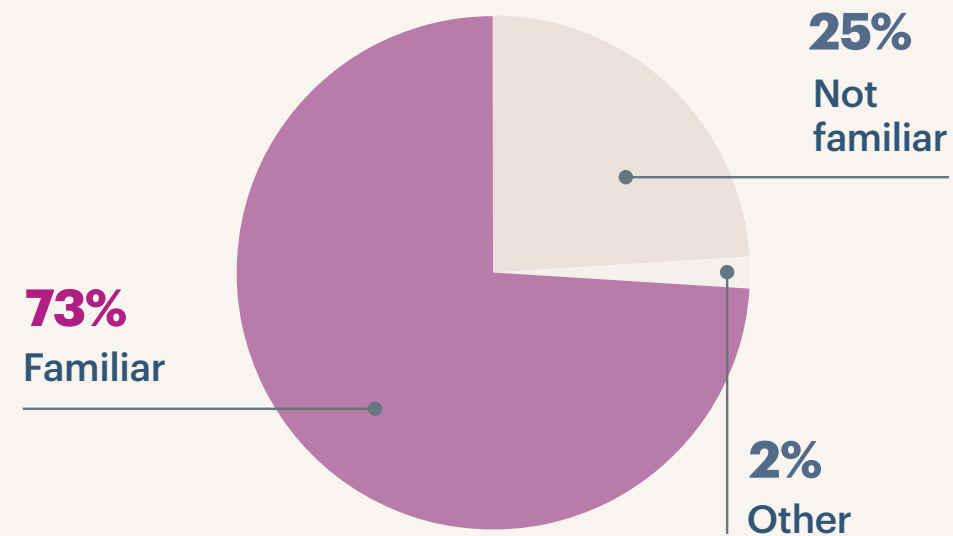


# A replacement for hormone replacement therapy

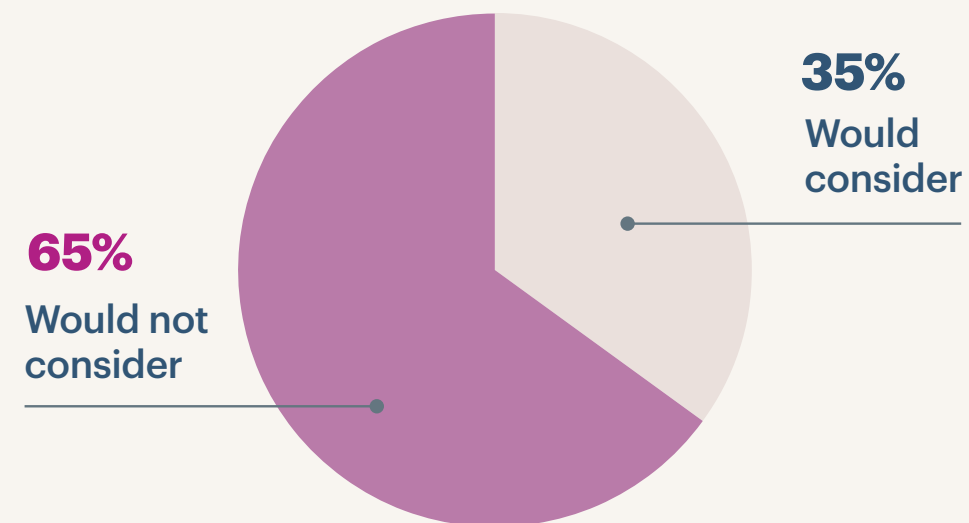
For years, the only clinically proven treatment option for menopause was hormone replacement therapy (HRT), and it was prescribed as soon as onset of symptoms and for many years after. However, a landmark study supported by the NIH in 2002 showed that hormone replacement therapy drugs, “a combination of one particular estrogen and progestin regimen, was associated with small but significant increases in breast cancer, heart attacks, strokes and blood clots.”<sup>1</sup> In retrospect, even though the study had limitations, since then, the market for HRT has declined by 94%,<sup>2</sup> which means that women today are likely having worse experiences than their mothers and grandmothers did when it comes to managing menopause related symptoms.



Are you familiar with HRT as a treatment?



Based on what you know about HRT, would you consider taking it?



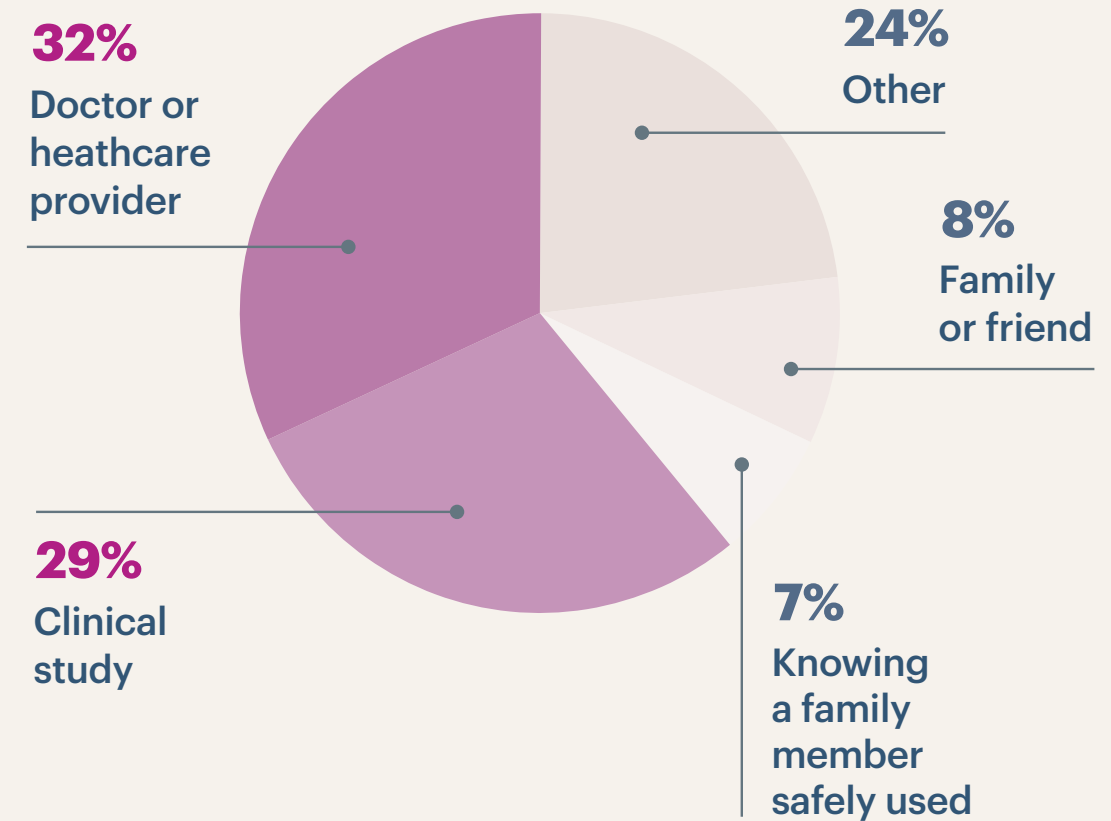
Among those familiar with hormone replacement therapy (HRT), **65%** of women wouldn't consider using HRTs to treat their menopause symptoms





When asked what would lead those women to consider taking HRT, the overwhelming response was a doctor or healthcare provider recommendation (**32%**) or a clinical study proving safety and efficacy (**29%**)

### What would convince you to use HRT?





## We believe women today are likely having a worse menopause experience than their mothers

Between the 1960s to the early 2000s, hormone replacement therapy was the most common treatment for menopause symptoms.<sup>1</sup> It was also considered the most effective solution at the time. Since far less women are using HRT today, and gaps still exist around effective substitute treatments, it's safe to say today's women are having a worse menopause experience than their mothers did.

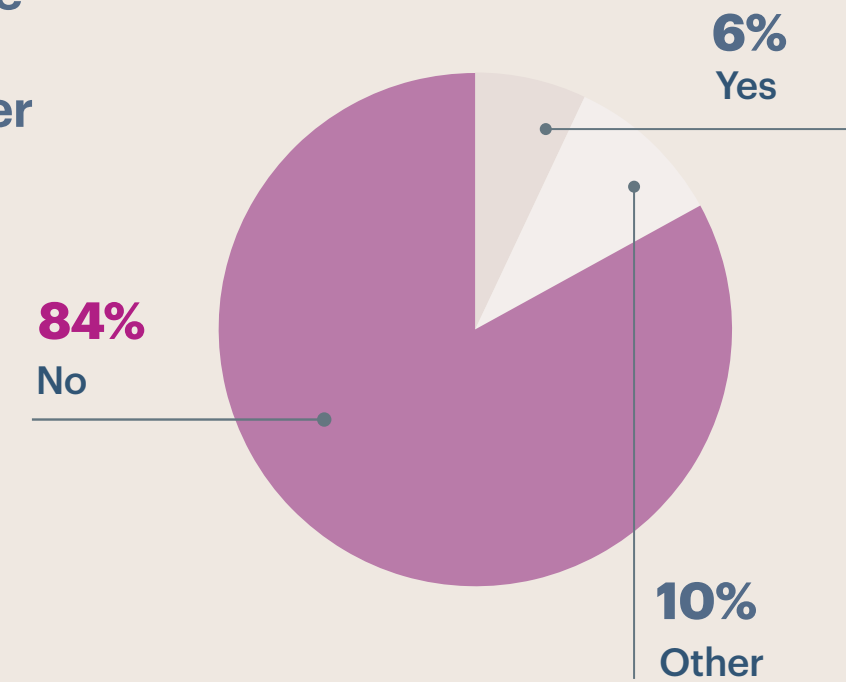


**84%** of respondents reported not using the same menopause treatments that their mother or grandmother used

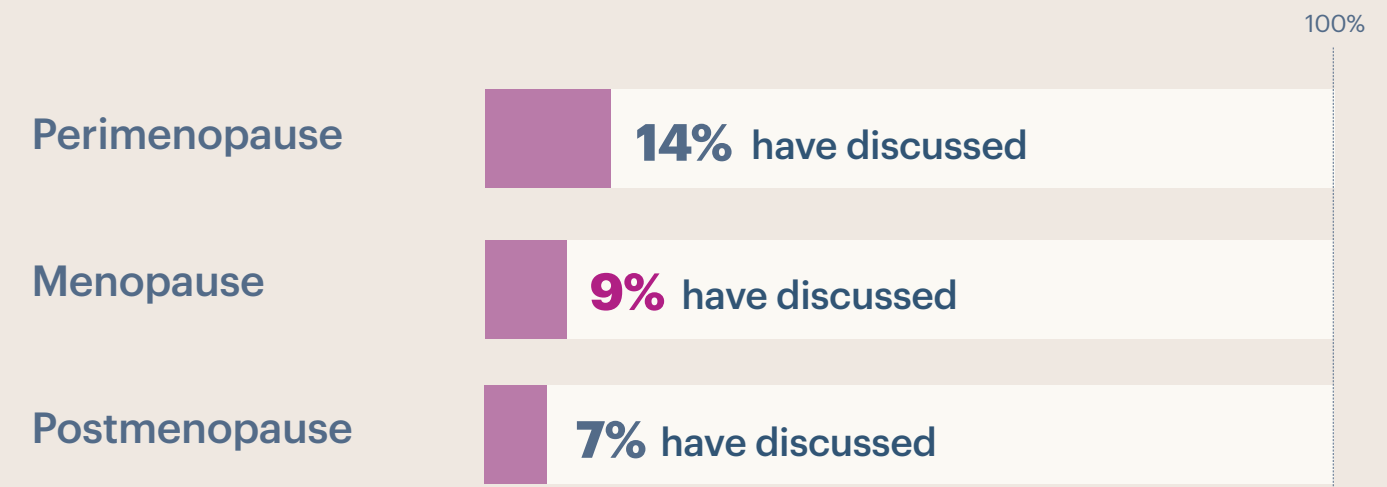


Yet only **9%** spoke to their mothers about their menopause symptoms

Are you using the same treatment that your mother or grandmother used?



Have you discussed menopause symptoms with [your] mother?



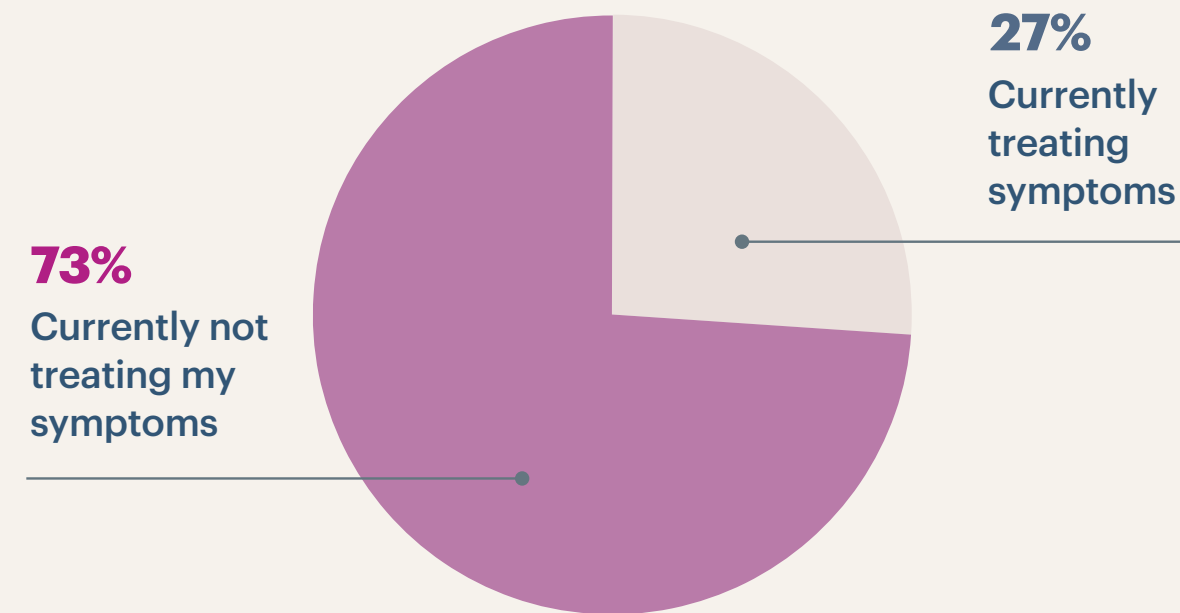
# Due in part to the lack of effective options, women are choosing to “tough it out”

Across phases of the menopause journey, most women are choosing not to treat their symptoms

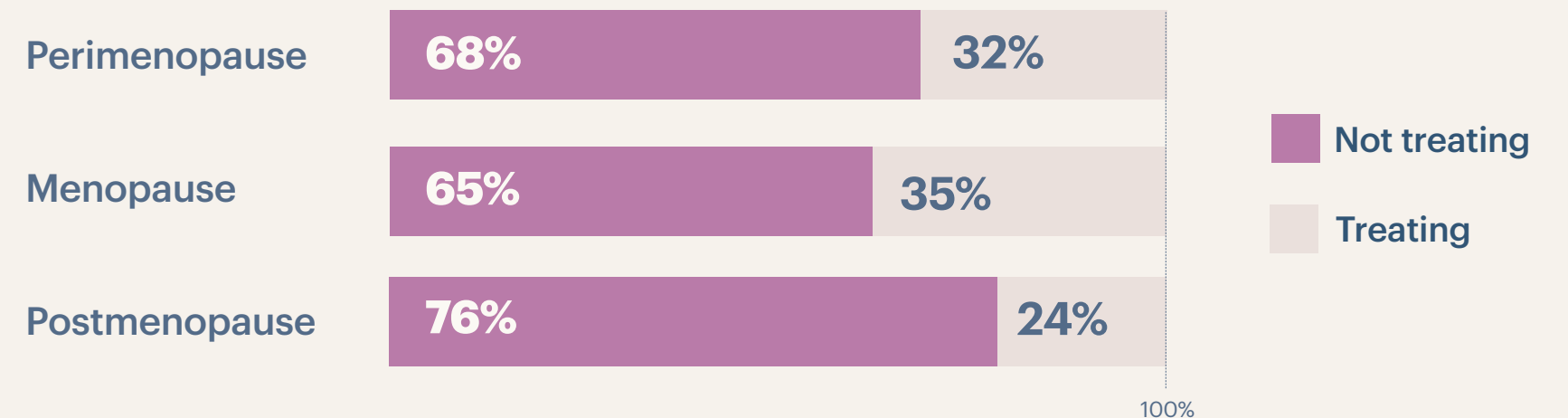


**73%** of women report they are not currently treating their symptoms

## Are you currently treating your menopause symptoms?



## Toughing it out at each phase



100%

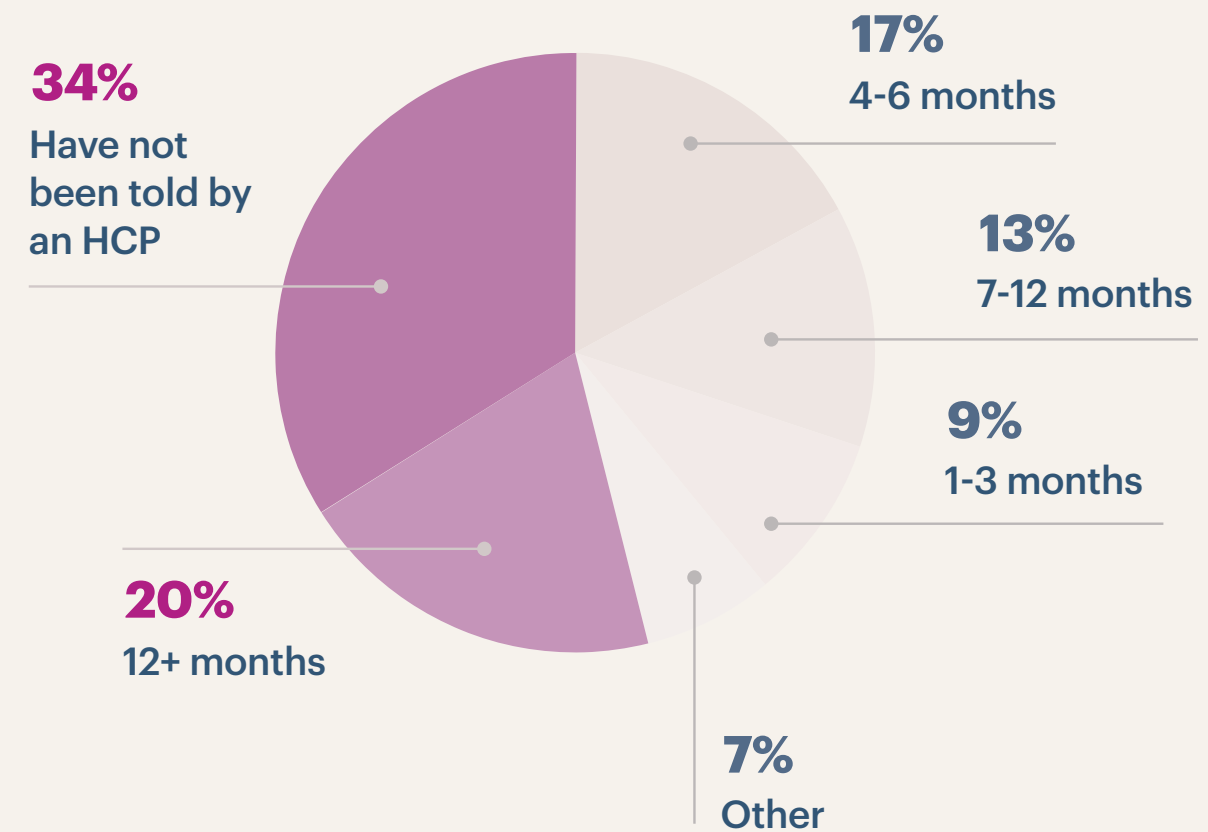


**34%** of women surveyed have not been formally “diagnosed as menopausal” by a healthcare provider (HCP)



**20%** of women experienced symptoms for 12+ months before being assessed by an HCP

How long were you experiencing symptoms before an HCP assessed your symptoms as perimenopause, menopause, or postmenopause?



## We need to *talk* about menopause

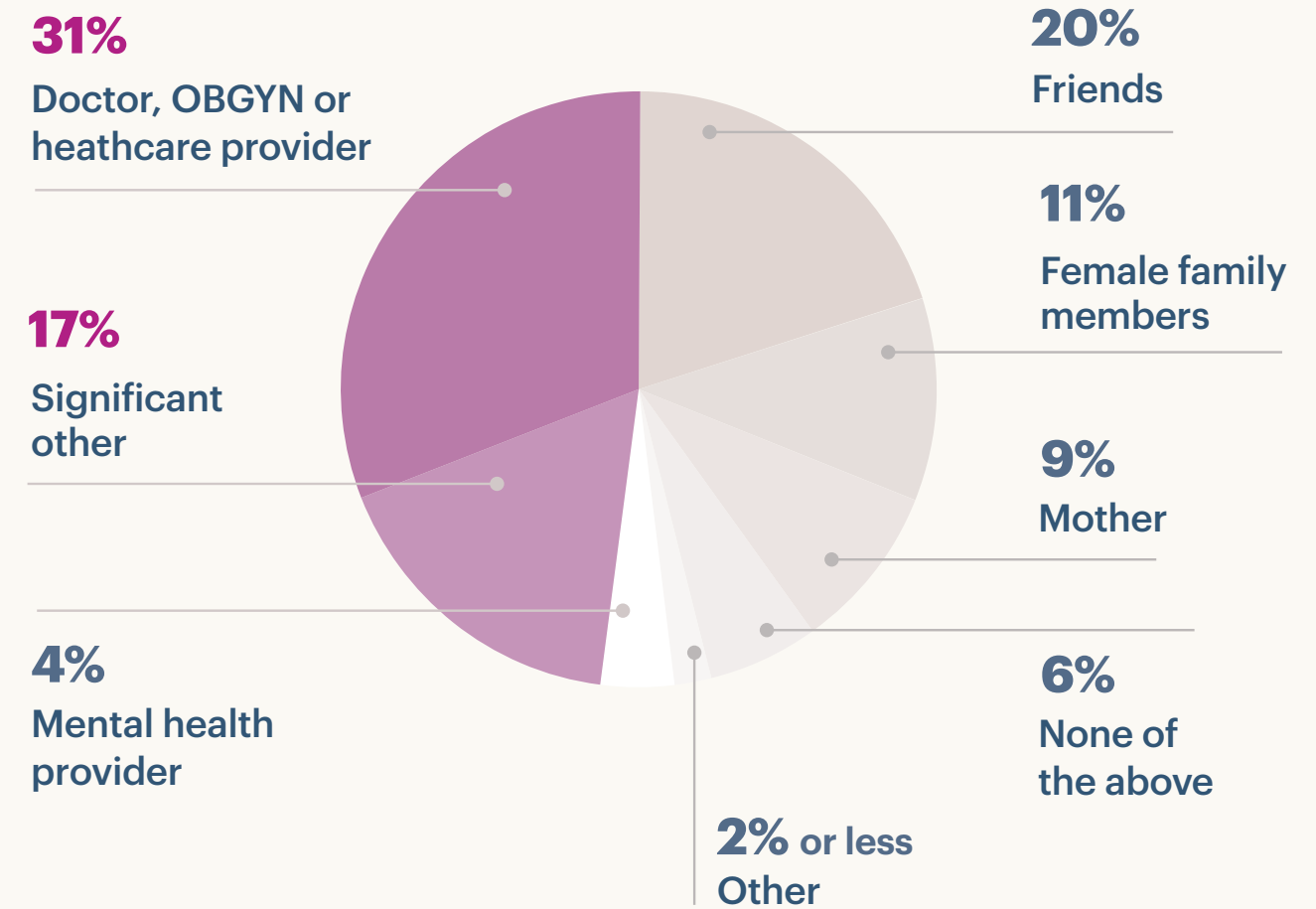
Taboo topics suffer from a lack of accepted spaces for conversation, and menopause symptoms are no exception. Menopause is a fact of every woman's life. Our research shows less than half of women are speaking to a doctor, and less than a quarter are speaking to their partners about their symptoms.





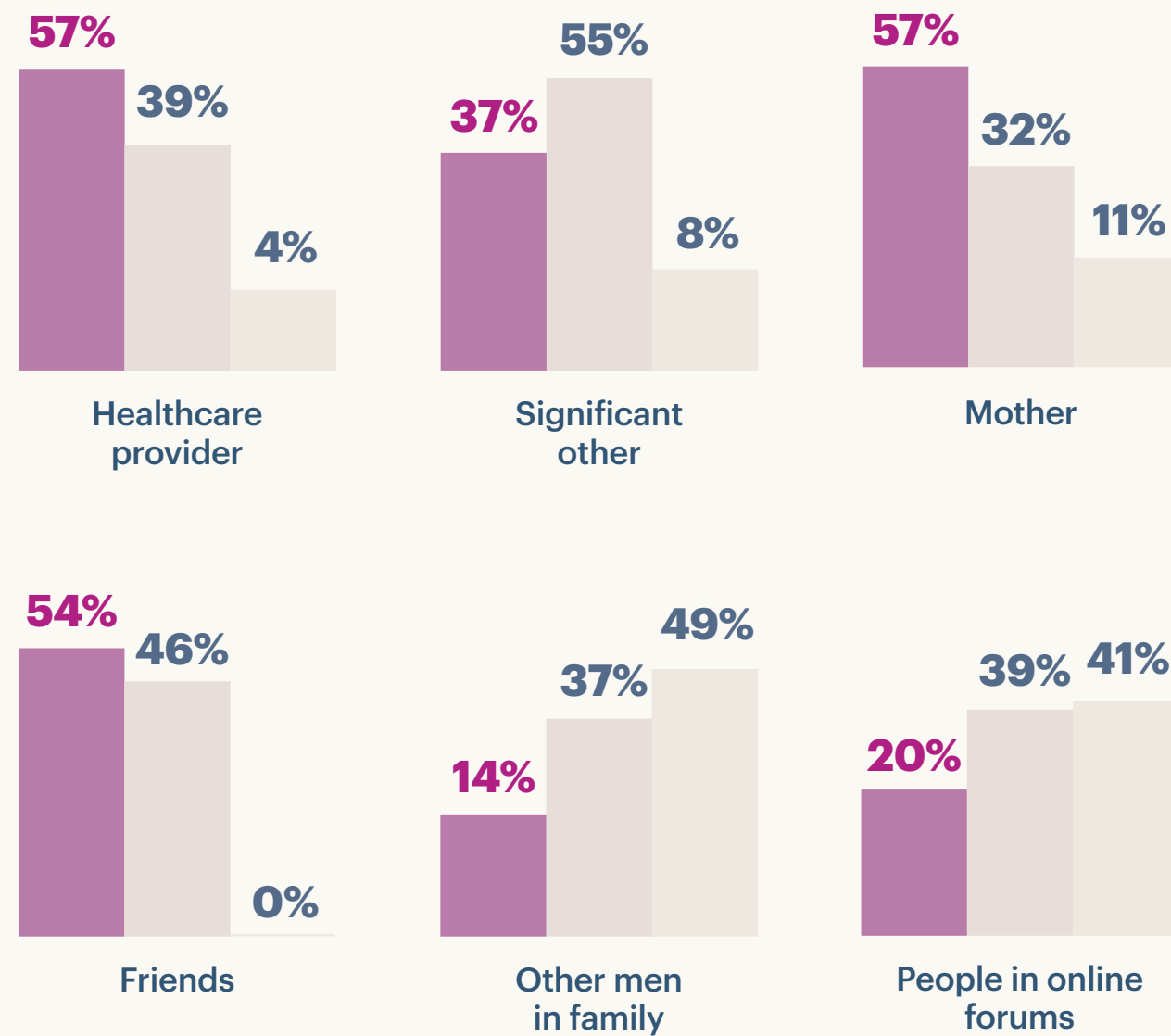
The most common outlet for women to discuss their menopause symptoms is with a doctor or healthcare provider **(31%)** and yet only about **17%** of women report speaking to a significant other

### Have you discussed these symptoms with any of the following individuals?



## When discussing menopause with the following individuals, have you felt understood and supported?

Always Sometimes Never



**57%** of women say they always feel supported by their HCPs. Only **20%** say the same about seeking help in online forums



**49%** of women report never feeling supported by other men in their family about their symptoms

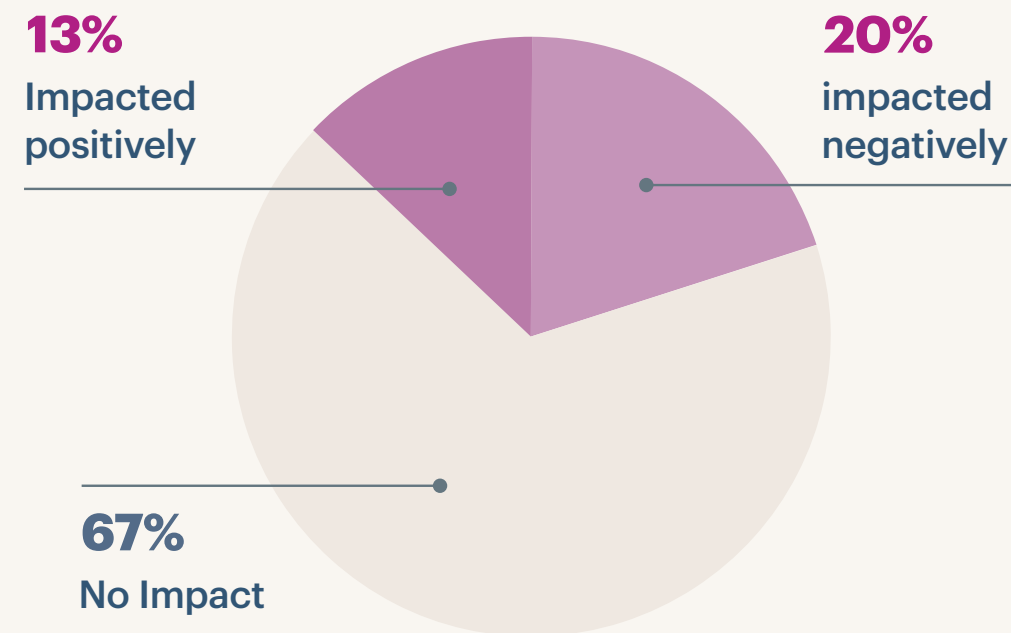




## We're not shouting "Menopause!" from the rooftops...

When reflecting on their transition to perimenopause, menopause, and postmenopause, women most often report feeling "neutral." And while menopause symptoms impact their lives, the majority of women say the symptoms don't affect their self-confidence.

Once you learned you had reached your current menopausal state, did it impact your self-confidence?



Many women who viewed their current menopausal state positively reported being glad not to be inconvenienced by periods (including painful or heavy periods)

**THE GOOD:  
POSTMENOPAUSE**



Knowing the journey through was complete brought a new focus on the rest of my life.

**THE BAD:  
MENOPAUSE**

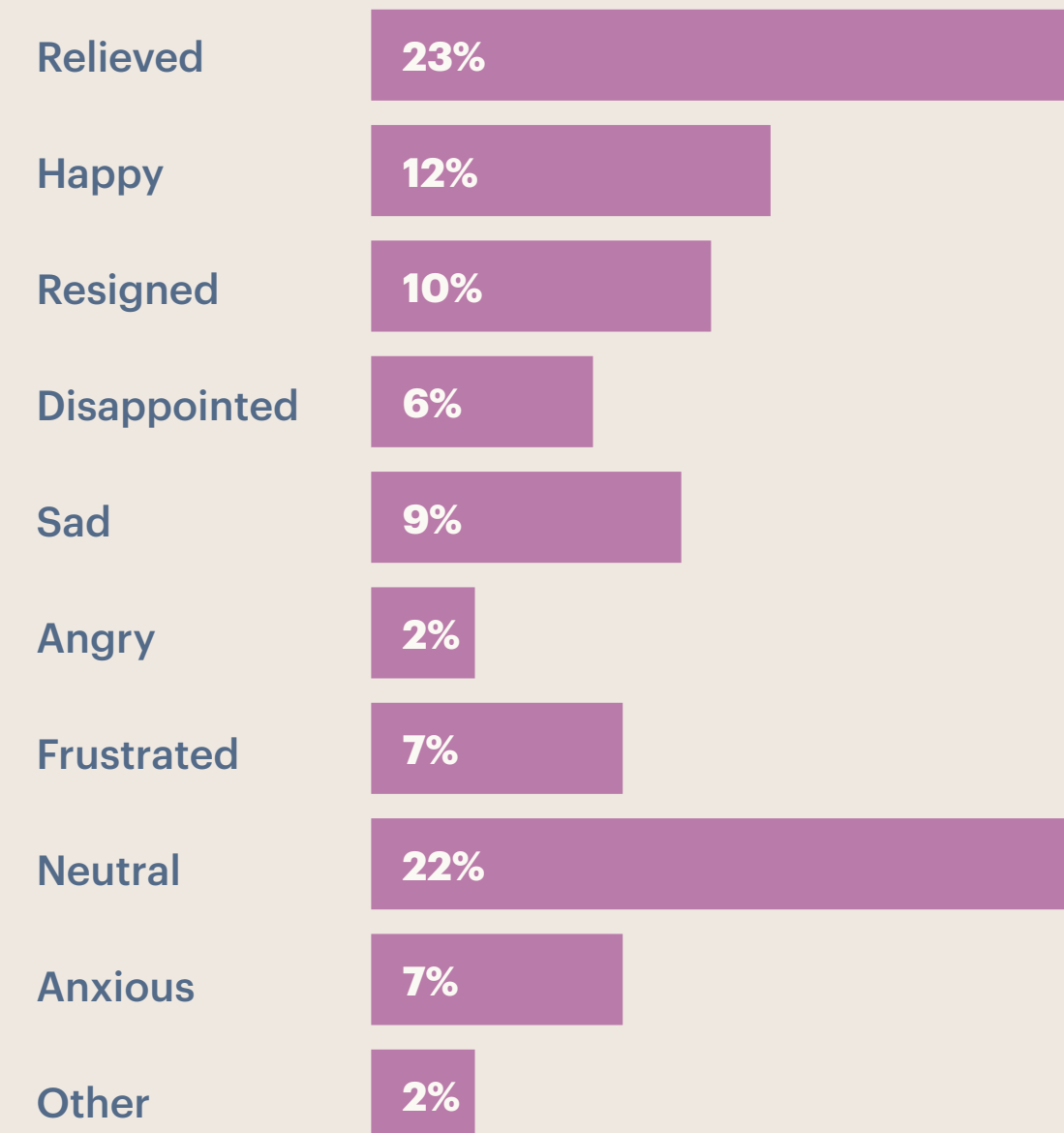


Feeling old and tired and not sexy anymore, and that you suddenly become invisible.



The most common emotion associated with reaching postmenopause was “relieved” (**38%**) followed closely by “happy” (**21%**). In contrast, only **29%** of menopausal women and **19%** of perimenopausal women reported these same feelings.

### How did you feel when you learned you had reached your current stage of menopause?



# Destigmatizing menopause in the workplace

According to Harvard Business Review, millions of postmenopausal women are reaching new heights in their careers while experiencing menopause symptoms.<sup>1</sup> Prioritizing women in leadership positions means not only acknowledging menopause as a stage in women's lives, but providing education and support systems to identify and manage symptoms.





**73%** of women are not treating their symptoms, meaning many are suffering through menopause at work

### THE GOOD



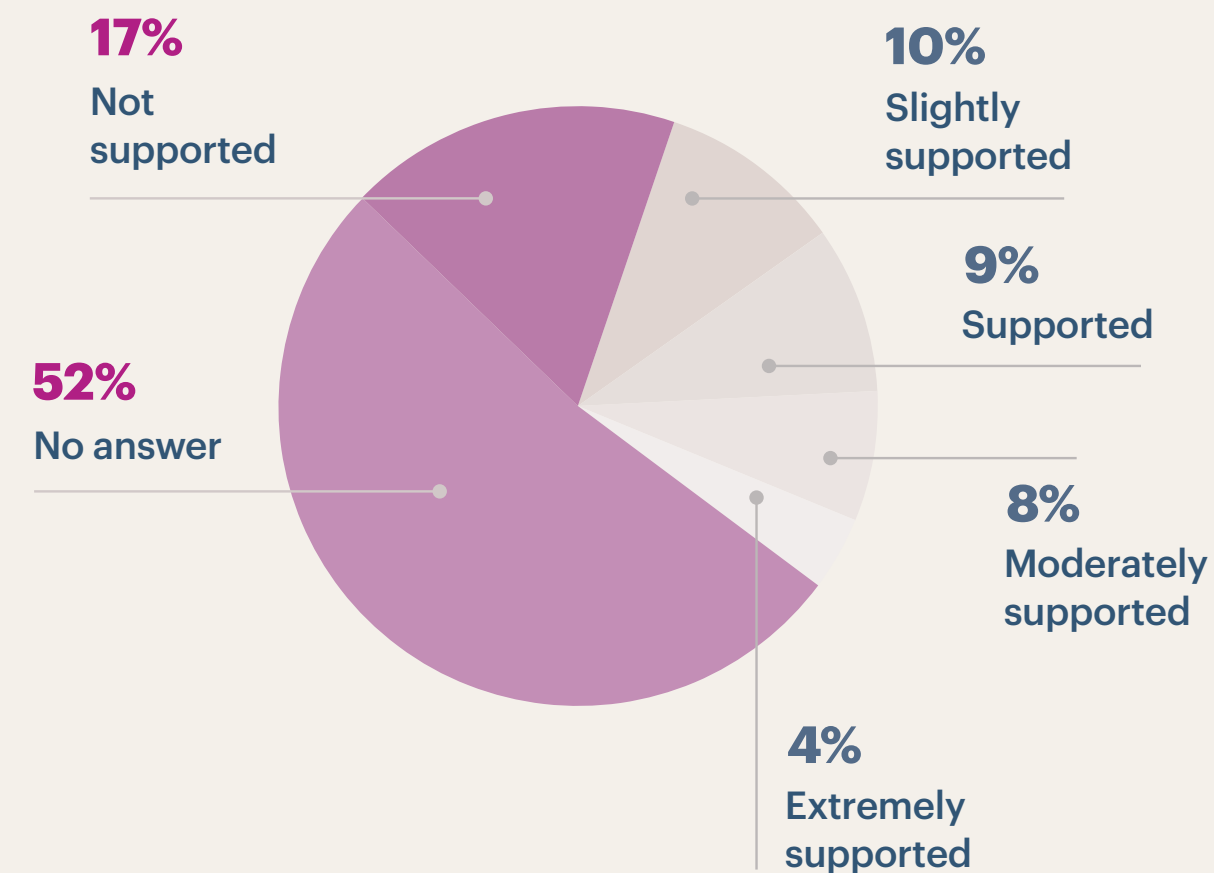
Emotional displays greatly reduced which is excellent for women in management.

### THE BAD



Lack of sleep placed me in brain fog and [it was] so hard to concentrate and do my job. Very frustrating.

Do you feel supported by your place of employment to manage symptoms brought on by menopause?

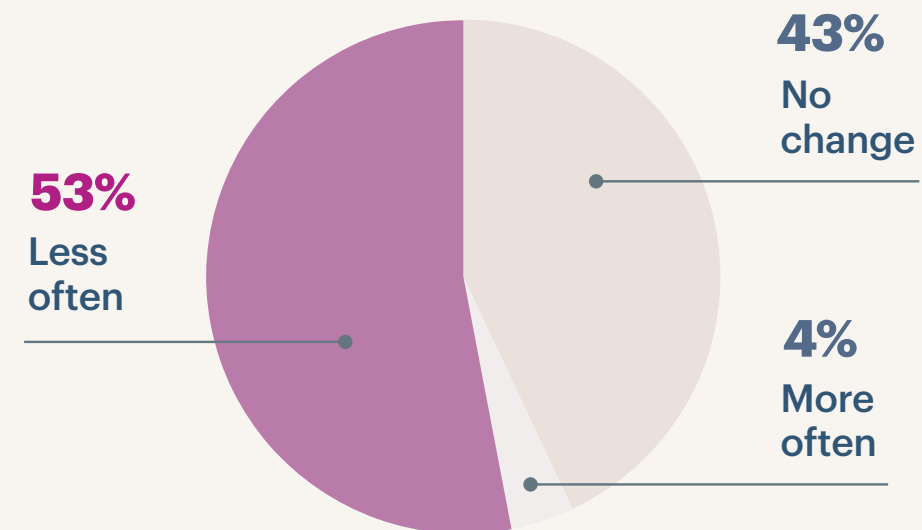




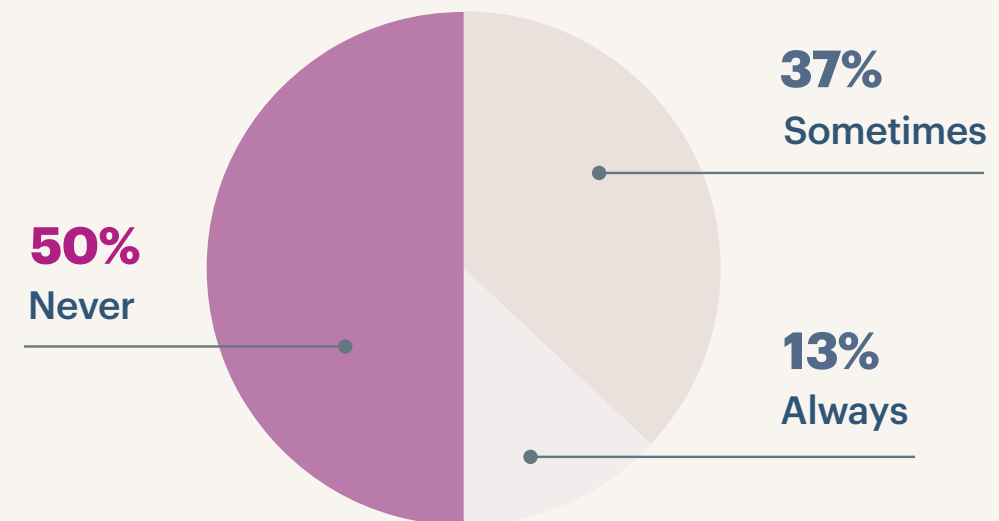
## Let's talk about sex (+ menopause)

Menopause marks the end of a woman's reproductive years, which means sex is no longer connected to pregnancy or periods. But for many women, hormonal changes during menopause can lead to vaginal dryness, painful sex, and a lack of arousal. **That doesn't mean women don't want to want sex**, but it can mean they're having it less often.

Since you started experiencing symptoms of menopause, do you have sex with a partner(s) more or less often?



Since you started experiencing symptoms of menopause, is sex with a partner physically painful to you?

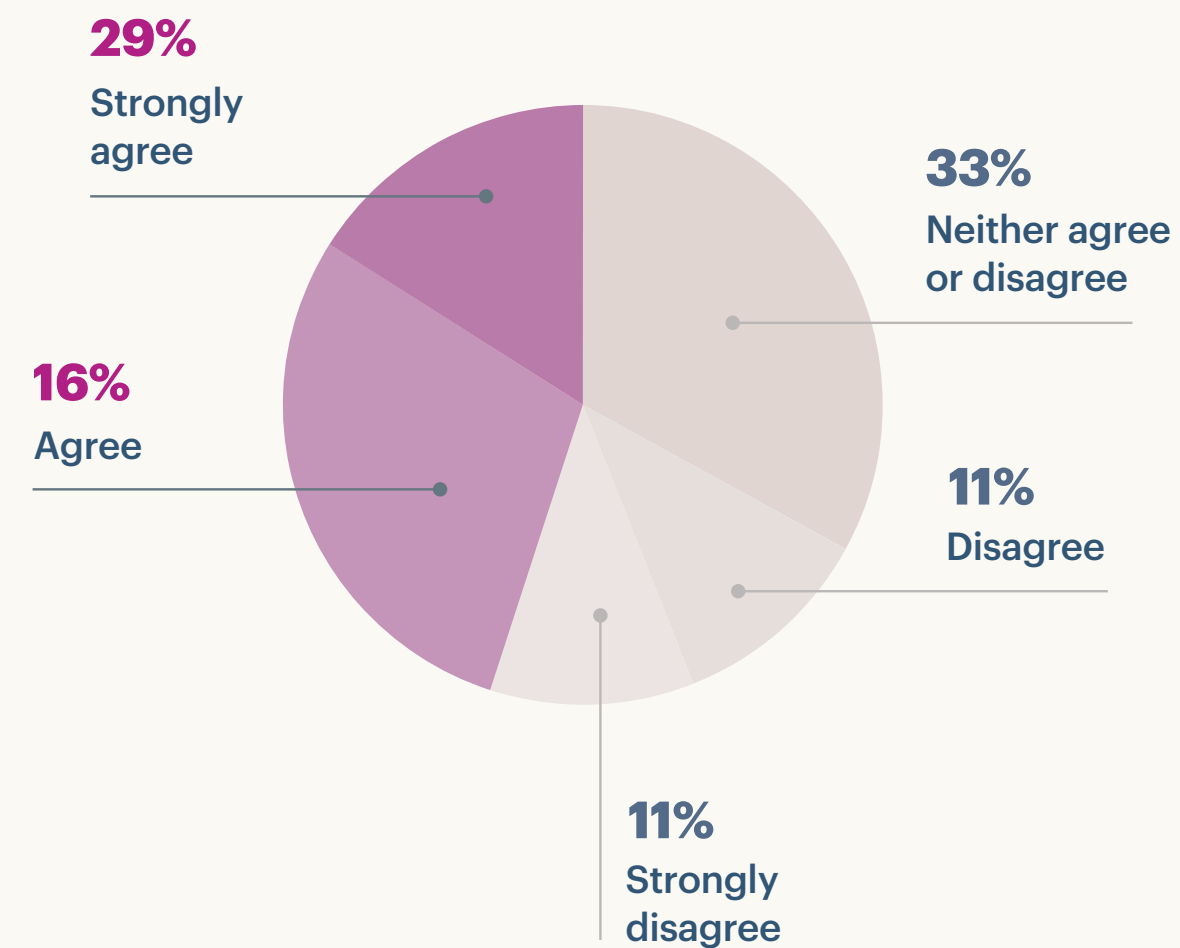


**61%** of menopausal women report vaginal dryness contributes to painful sex, yet **41%** of them never use lubricants or sex toys



Nearly **half** of women surveyed agree that menopausal symptoms have affected their sex life

### Menopausal symptoms have affected my life





# We can do better for women

So, where do we go from here? For us, this study was enlightening. With more than one billion women expected to be menopausal by 2025,<sup>1</sup> shining a light on the multitude of dimensions and experiences women will have as they enter menopause isn't just important — it's essential.

Symptoms are just the beginning, and with nearly  $\frac{2}{3}$  of women "toughing it out" with hot flashes for an average of 7.4 years (some as long as 10 years),<sup>2</sup> that means most women are enduring symptoms that can be chronic and in some cases progressive. Physical symptoms have lasting health implications, not to mention the emotional toll of suffering (mostly) in silence.

We can do better by women, period. We should be:

- Better preparing them with open communication and trusted resources for education. There are at least 34 symptoms of menopause, let's make sure women know what to look out for
- Developing an understanding of the science behind the symptoms, so women can make informed decisions about their menopause journey
- Arming healthcare providers with information on all types of treatment options — from HRT and SSRIs to over-the-counter, and drug- and hormone-free solutions

At Bonafide, we believe that treating a hot flash or vaginal dryness does more than relieve a symptom, it makes for a better day, and maybe even a better decade.

<sup>1</sup>World Health Technical Report Series. Research on the Menopause in the 1990's. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization; 1996. <sup>2</sup> Avis NE, Crawford SL, Greendale G, et al. Duration of menopausal vasomotor symptoms over the menopause transition. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2015;175(4):531-539. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2014.8063