

WOMEN'S VOICES IN MENOPAUSE



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Príomh-Mholtaí

- ⊕ Soláthar oiliúint ar leith sa sos móstraithe a chinntiú do gach gairmí ábhartha sláinte
- ⊕ Téigh i dteaghmháil go réamhghníomhach le soláthraithe na teiri peatholáthair hormón (HRT) chun incháilitheacht a chinntiú i gcóir aisíocaíocht faoi scéimeanna pobal chun ualach costais na n-othair a laghdú
- ⊕ Tacú le clinicí/molanna do mná a sholáthar agus líonraí le béim ar leith ar sholáthar seirbhísí i gceantair tuithe agus cúram sláinte na mban sa phobal
- ⊕ Comhionannas rochtain agus rochtain pras a chinntiú ar thacaíochtaí meabharshláinte saindeartha
- ⊕ Rochtain ar chúram agus tacaíochtaí don sos móstraithe a fheabhsú d'fhir trasinscneacha agus do dhaoine neamh-dhénártha
- ⊕ Feachtas láidir eolais agus faisnéise a fhorbairt ar chomharthaí an tsosa móstraithe agus tacaíochtaí atá ar fáil
- ⊕ Rochtain ar oideachas a fheabhsú trí oiliúint ar íogaireacht inscne agus cursa teoiric scileanna speisialta don sos móstraithe a chur san áireamh
- ⊕ Oideachas fad saoil sláinte agus dea-bhail a éascú trí cursa speisialta ar chúram sláinte na mban a chuimsiú san Idirbhliain
- ⊕ Polasaithe cuimsitheacha a fhorbairt don ionad oibre a dhéanann tacaíochtaí do mná le linn don sos móstraithe a chur chun cinn
- ⊕ Cur chuige uile-oileánda do thacaíochtaí sosa móstraithe agus cúram sláinte na mban a imeascú agus a ailíniú

Priority Recommendations

- + Ensure specific training in menopause is provided for all relevant healthcare professionals**
- + Proactively engage suppliers of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to ensure eligibility for re-imbursement under community schemes to ease the burden of costs on patients**
- + Support provision of women's clinics/hubs and support networks with particular emphasis on the provision of services in rural areas and women's healthcare in the community**
- + Ensure equal and timely access to tailored mental health supports**
- + Improve access to menopause care and supports for trans men and non-binary people**
- + Develop strong information and awareness campaigns about menopause symptoms and available supports**
- + Improve access to education by facilitating the inclusion of gender sensitivity training and a menopause special skills theory course**
- + Facilitate a lifelong education about health and well-being through the inclusion of a special course on women's healthcare during transition year**
- + Develop comprehensive workplace policies that promote support for women during menopause**
- + Integrate and align an all-Island approach to menopause supports and women's healthcare**

Réamhrá

Bíonn taithí difriúil ag mná éagsúla ar an tsos míostraithe. Ó easpa feasachta agus eolais cruinn go deacrachartaí teacht ar chúniamh nó tacaíocht. Cuireadh mná ina dtost agus tá siad ag streachailt i gcónaí chun na tacaíochtaí cuí don sos míostraithe a fháil sa phobal, san ionad oibre, agus sa chóras sláinte i gcoitinne.

Fágadh rófhada an ábhar seo faoi their. Is mná céile, páirtithe, máithreacha, deirfiúracha, cairde, comhghleacaithe, ceannasaithe iad na mná meanapásacha – tá sé tuillte ag mná go dtabharfar éisteacht dá nguthanna agus go bhfaighfeadh siad tacaíocht is cuma cén áit nó am a theastaíonn sé uathu.

I gcás a lán mná, seo an cruachás ina bhfuil siad, tar éis dóibh a bheith ag streachailt leis na cianta ag fanacht ar thacaíochtaí sláinte cuí, rud atá ag cur brú suntasach ar mheabharshláinte agus dhea-bhail na mban seo le fada an lá.

Tá easpa tubaisteach traenála agus eolais i measc gairmithe sláinte i leith an tsos míostraithe. Tá sé de cheart ag mná rochtain a bheith acu ar eolas pras, cruinn agus inmhuiiníne a thabharfaidh tacaíocht dóibh agus a dhéanfaidh iad a threorú fud fad an tsaol.

Caithfidh na forbairtí is déanaí i gcúram sosa míostraithe tarlú mar chuid de thraenáil níos leithne ar íogaireacht inscne agus réamhchlaontacht neamh-chomhfhiosach don fhoireann cúraim sláinte chun eispéireas na mban a fheabhsú agus chun a chinntíú go gcomhlíonófar a riachtanais aonaracha cúram sláinte.

I mbuiséad malartach Shinn Féin do 2022, gealladh €1.4 billiún de bheartais nua don Sláinte, lena n-áirítear maoiniú €106m chun Straitéisí Sláinte a chur i bhfeidhm agus infheistíocht breise de luach €5m i mbord Taighde Slainte, Institiúd Sláinte Phoiblí & Tascfhórsa Shláinte na mBan. Chabhródh maoiniú breise molta i mbuiséad malartach Shinn Féin don Sláinte leis na beartais mar atá molta sa cháipéis seo a mhaoiniú.

Cuimsíonn an cáipéis seo moltaí agus beartais polasaí curtha le chéile tar éis cruinnithe éagsúla le gairmithe sláinte, grúpaí mná, agus eagraíochtaí. I lár an aonaigh anseo, tá moltaí a forbraíodh bunaithe ar thaithí pearsanta na mban léirithe i suirbhéireacht Shinn Féin, Menopause Matters.

Introduction

Experiences of menopause can vary significantly from woman to woman, from the lack of awareness and accurate information to difficulty accessing help or support. Women have been silenced and continue to struggle to access adequate menopause supports in the community, workplace, and the wider healthcare system.

This topic has been taboo for far too long. Menopausal women are wives, partners, mothers, sisters, friends, colleagues, bosses – women deserve their voices to be heard and receive the support where and when they need it.

This is the case for many women, who have been struggling for decades to receive adequate healthcare supports that has been putting considerable pressure on their mental health and well-being.

There is a severe lack of training and knowledge among healthcare professionals in relation to menopause. Women deserve to have access to timely, accurate and trusted information that will support and guide them through their life.

Advancements in menopause care need to happen as part of broader gender-sensitivity and unconscious bias training for healthcare staff to improve experiences of care for women and ensure that their individual healthcare needs are being met.

Sinn Féin's alternative budget 2022 has committed to €1.4 billion in new measures for Health, including €106m of funding to implement Health Strategies and €5m additional investment in the Health Research Board, Institute of Public Health & Women's Health Task Force. Additional funding proposed in Sinn Féin's alternative budget for Health would help to fund measures as proposed in this document.

This document includes policy proposals and recommendations developed following various engagements with healthcare professionals, women's groups, and organisations. Central to this are recommendations that were developed based on women's personal experiences reflected in Sinn Féin's survey Menopause Matters.

Survey Results

Sinn Féin conducted an online survey between November and January to hear directly from women about their experiences with menopause. The results of the survey have been used to inform key recommendations and policy proposals to addressing this critical and often difficult stage in women's lives.

We received **1,205** responses.

It was a self-selective survey where respondents provided information on condition, treatment and personal experience. Human stories anonymously provided by respondents have been used in this document for the purposes of outlining the importance of this issue and general impact.

The main findings include:

88.44% feel there is still stigma in Irish society around discussing menopause

97.91% believe that the Government is not doing enough to support women experiencing menopausal symptoms in Ireland

32.89% are not confident discussing menopause with their GP/Consultant

45.42% received support or medical advice, but felt it wasn't sufficient and **36.10%** haven't received any advice at all

85.20% do not believe that healthcare professionals in Ireland are educated enough in perimenopause/menopause

80.57% would like to see their workplace implement menopause policies

General findings:

49.54% experienced menopausal symptoms

43.47% currently take HRT and **56.53%** are not taking HRT

81.52% are affected by menopausal symptoms at work and **40.45%** have missed work because of the symptoms

Menopause in Primary and Community Care

Sinn Féin believes that healthcare must be delivered based on the principles of equality and need. There must be timely and equitable access to healthcare supports for all women.

In primary care we would focus on improving knowledge among healthcare professionals and ensure that healthcare professionals are provided with appropriate training in menopause.

We would improve access to healthcare supports for women in the community by facilitating timely access to supports outside clinical settings, including the provision of dedicated support networks, clinics, women's hubs and improved access to mental health supports.

Recommendations

Primary Care:

- + Improve accessibility to menopause supports for all women without discrimination of any kind
- + Adequately staff and fully resource menopause clinics and dedicated support networks
- + Ensure specific training in menopause is provided for all healthcare professionals
- + An increase role for psychologists, dietitians, and nutritionists with a background in menopause
- + An increase role for Nurses and Midwives including CNS, ANP and prescribers
- + Proactively engage suppliers of Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to ensure eligibility for re-imbursement under community schemes to ease the burden of costs on patients

Community Care:

- + Ensure equal and timely access to tailored mental health supports
- + Establish supports to assist advocacy groups/associations for women
- + Facilitate the establishment of One Stop Shop clinics for women's health needs that would provide a broad range of services from screening to psychotherapy with a particular focus on rural areas
- + Establish a dedicated helpline that would receive calls outside of clinic times and would allow women receive support without the need for an



appointment

Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

'The health system is failing women'

'More acknowledgment that this is a problem and not just dismissed as a woman's thing. My symptoms are more severe than I thought they'd be and I feel it's not talked about so maybe it's just me. More mainstream advise and discussion would be useful.'

'I asked my Doctor to test me for menopause. He told me they were not very good at detecting menopause. And that was the end of conversation. Felt like I could not ask any more.'

'Women are that badly supported in relation to menopause that they don't even know what's wrong with them as they don't know what the symptoms are.'

'My GP is totally uneducated about HRT and I had to pay €200 to see a Menopause Specialist. My symptoms are so bad I have had suicidal thoughts but I'm hoping this HRT cycle will bring me through.'

'This is the last taboo in healthcare and it needs to change. I was suicidal at one point and I didn't know what was wrong with me. HRT has been a game changer.'

'GP's need to be educated, there's too much conflicting advice.'

'Personally I feel women's health goes under diagnosed or not seen as important, GP's are reluctant to make referrals to the relevant specialists therefore people left to go untreated.'

Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

'Services need to be more accessible to women, menopause specific clinics cost upwards of 500 Euro which is out of range for middle class never mind lower income women whether single or families.'

'There needs to be alternative professionals that can be accessible for more options in dealing with menopause.'

'I only know about menopause from online research. Had 30 out of 40 symptoms and was being treated for individual health issues but menopause was never mentioned by GP.'

'Doctors are not educated enough in this field and are too quick to dismiss symptoms as depression.'

'I feel let down by medical professionals- if I'd been aware that my symptoms - in particular anxiety- were associated with the menopause I feel it would have made a huge difference to me.'

'All GP's in Ireland should be trained in up to date information on Menopause and no GP should be allowed to refuse to even discuss HRT with a patient. We know what we need.'

'Educate GPS specifically on menopause so women do not feel they are not being listened to or ignored.'

'I would like proper access to advice and guidance for women experiencing the menopause , and not have it treated as something to be dismissed as the moaning of hysterical unbalanced women, it should be a normal part of women's health care.'

Knowledge and Education

There are over 40 symptoms associated with menopause. The lack of information and knowledge has been intergenerational issue for far too long.

54.03% of respondents to our online survey indicated that they received some but insufficient information about menopause and **30.76%** received no information at all.

Sinn Féin believes much more needs to be done to increase awareness, improve access to education and information about menopausal symptoms and recognise that menopause is different for every woman.

It is crucially important for women in this State to be informed in a timely manner about existence of services and supports available to them, and most importantly, of how to access those services.

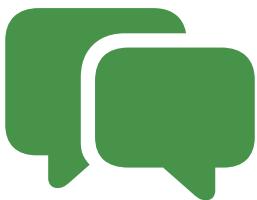
Recommendations

Improve access to information:

- + Provide trusted and relevant information on symptoms and care in a timely and accurate manner
- + Improve knowledge about the long-term benefits and risks of the HRT
- + Improve awareness about menopause symptoms and supports (e.g radio broadcasting, leaflets)
- + Ensure timely access to Symptom Checker

Improve access to education:

- + Ensure that a menopause special skills theory course and an advanced special skills module are included within the core curriculum for specialist training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology
- + Support the promotion of advanced training specialist module on menopause and the subspecialty training in reproductive medicine
- + Facilitate a lifelong education about health and well-being through the inclusion of special course on women's healthcare during transition year in post primary education



Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

'It's an individual journey with widely differing effects. It just needs more education at all levels.'

'I would like to see information given to younger women so they can recognize symptoms early. At age 46 and post-menopausal I only realised 2 years ago that symptoms I'd had for years were actually perimenopause.'

'Education is key, young women need to be educated on this in school. I had no clue about symptoms or perimenopause.'

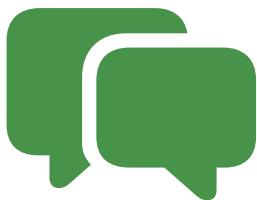
'More education for women before they start menopause so they can be prepared and proactive.'

'Maybe more advertising what help is out there as it's not easy talking to your GP.'

'I would like to see menopause being more openly discussed so that women know what to expect, where to access support and that just because something is "natural progression" doesn't mean there aren't things that can help. We have midwives for pregnancy why not specialist nurses for menopause?'

'Knowledge around pre menopause is needed. Women are unaware of many symptoms surrounding menopause.'

'These conversations need to be more widespread, and this topic needs to be taught in schools and colleges and modules on the menopause should be mandatory for all GPs.'



Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

'There needs to be education to prepare women for the Menopause and the medical profession to provide advice, understanding and treatment where necessary. I'm fairly sure that a lot of women are really suffering unnecessarily from multiple symptoms and may even think they are losing the plot and not even be aware that they are all caused by the Menopause.'

'Please expand our knowledge of the menopause and services that provide that knowledge and understanding.'

'Even the official information the HSE has on the website on HRT is not up to date. The leaflets with the HRT meds are not up to date and list risks that with the new type of bio identical meds are not there.'

'We need proper education and messaging programmes so women can feel empowered to make the correct decisions for their health.'

'I have to rely on Facebook groups for information and support. Tons of Irish women are also incontinent through menopause and childbirth, zero medical intervention, waiting lists years long.'

Menopause at Work

Women experiencing menopause can find themselves physically, psychologically, and emotionally drained which inevitably makes it harder for them to meet demands of the workplace.

81.52% of respondents to our online survey indicated that menopausal symptoms affected them at the workplace with **40.45%** missed work because of the symptoms, while **80.57%** would like to see their workplace implement a menopause policy.

The profile of menopause in the workplace needs to be acknowledged and recognised as an important occupational issue.

Creating a supportive policy environment which facilitates flexible working entitlements would be transformative for workers in this situation.

Menopause affects each women's physical and emotional health differently and consideration needs be given to the universal phase of a woman's life when managing female staff at the workplace.

Employers and line managers should know what menopause is, the nature of symptoms, and how those symptoms might impact working conditions of their employees. It is important for line managers and employers to be respectful, listen carefully and take such difficulties seriously.

Employers in both public and private sectors should develop positive employment policies and guidance that recognise the importance of menopause and provides for a balanced evidence-based approach to support women and their needs.

Recommendations

Development of workplace policies that promote support for women during menopause:

- + Create guidelines for employers that will contain information about the menopause in the workplace
- + Acknowledge that women may be uncomfortable discussing their menopause so a culture of openness must be encouraged
- + Provide awareness training for staff

Education and Training:

- + Create specialised training and awareness raising for line managers and human resource personnel managers to support conversations in an appropriate manner
- + Implementation of wider health awareness campaign for staff including provision of work-related information on the menopause
- + Provide guidance for workers on how to deal with the menopause

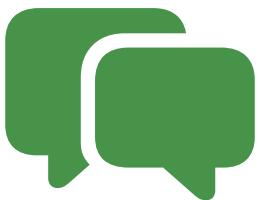
Sickness Absence Policies:

- + Ensure that there is a specific reference to menopause in all sick leave policies

Health and Safety:

Risk Assessment at the workplace should recognise and consider specific needs of menopausal women and ensure that the working environment is as safe as possible, including:

- + Recognise the duty of care to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of their staff including menopause
- + Regulation of temperature and ventilation in the workplace
- + Facilitate adequacy of restroom facilities including access to toilet facilities and cold water
- + Ensure that uniforms and PPE are appropriate for wearers and acknowledge that needs of the wearer can change, and this should be reflected in the uniform policy



Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

'I have struggled with menopause symptoms it has affected my work life, home life, mental and physical health to a point that I thought I couldn't go on.'

'It is so difficult at times to work while going through some of the awful symptoms and very little compassion from employers.'

'It needs to become part of the curriculum and become a part of workplace policy.'

'It's like living in a nightmare that never ends. The mood swings, dry skin, dry other places too ,hair loss, hot flushes, night and day sweats. Poor concentration, poor memory. Women have to deal with these symptoms as well as holding down a job and looking after a family. It's ridiculous that there is no support or understanding on how this effects women. Millions of women.'

'I would like women in their menopause to be more supported in work especially. to be allowed to take sick menopausal leave paid. A menopausal clinic to be implemented where women can have easy access to a doctor.'

'I feel because of age and symptoms that there is discrimination in the workplace. If feel employers prefer younger people.'

'The flashes when severe can be very embarrassing as well as distressful and I would find it very hard to work in a public employment.'



Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

'I didn't realise what was going on, I thought I was having a nervous breakdown and was bullied at work.'

'It is difficult to work full time when with menopause but can't afford to cut down.'

'More support and help for women going through the menopause. It should not be a taboo subject anymore and women should not be made feel that they cannot speak about it. Its a very serious thing to go through. The government, doctors and work places need to get behind women going through it. Women should not be dismissed.'

'I didn't feel I could speak to any one in work about my symptoms.'

Menopause Policy in the North and the importance of all-Island cooperation

The provision of NHS menopause services across the north is scant. There is only one dedicated NHS menopause service in Belfast and only two menopause specialists in the entire north.

Throughout trust areas outside greater Belfast, women are treated for menopause symptoms by gynaecologists or GPs. There is evidence that GPs are not sufficiently trained in this area and do not have the expertise required to assist women adequately with their menopausal symptoms.

For rural women, and women along rural border communities, many of whom do not have access to reliable GP coverage or public transport, the problems associated with menopause and isolation can be particularly acute.

Menopause is still a taboo subject. A lack of knowledge and understanding of the subject has not been addressed by the education system. For example, while there is a statutory curriculum for state-funded schools in the north which includes instruction on fertility and sexual maturation, there is no mention of menopause or perimenopause. In addition, research from campaign groups shows that 41% of universities across Britain and the north of Ireland do not have mandatory menopause education as part of their medical training¹.

According to the Office of National Statistics in Britain, menopausal women are the fastest growing demographic in the workforce². This emphasises the importance of focusing on the impact of menopause on women in the workforce in recent times. There is a strong need for the practical workforce policies, such as ventilation, availability of ice and cold water and other comfort issues.

In October 2021, Sinn Féin Minister of Finance Conor Murphy MLA indicated that his department is in the process of developing a menopause policy to support Civil Service staff while his department has delivered several awareness sessions on menopause.

Menopause in the workplace policy has been developed at Derry City and Strabane District Council, Libraries NI, the Education Authority, the PSNI, and Belfast City Council is currently in the process of finalising policy on menopause.

While there are no specific statutory equality laws providing protection for menopause and perimenopause, remedy can be sought in other areas of law. According to the Equality Commission et al, there is equality legislation in existence that is applicable to menopause policy and the workforce; for example, the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 (Amended 1998), the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976, Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, the

¹ CBP-9355.pdf (parliament.uk)

² Menopause and work: why it's so important (menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk)

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006, and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Challenges faced by women in accessing supports and healthcare on this island goes far beyond issues mentioned in this document. From the lack of awareness and accurate information to difficulty accessing help, women have been silenced and are struggling to access adequate healthcare supports in the community, the workplace, and the wider health system.

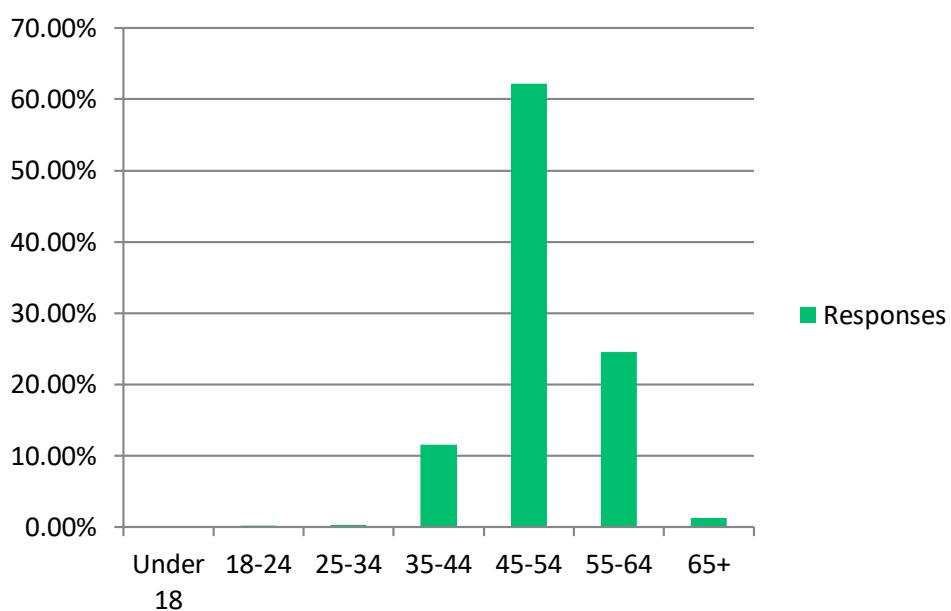
'An all-Ireland approach to menopause support should be discussed & implemented as this affects all women north & south.'

'Definitely not, especially in the North of Ireland. There is not enough specialist menopause clinics, and the waiting lists are just getting longer. Even the private clinics have long waiting lists. GPs are not trained enough.'

Menopause Matters Survey data

Q1 What age group are you in?

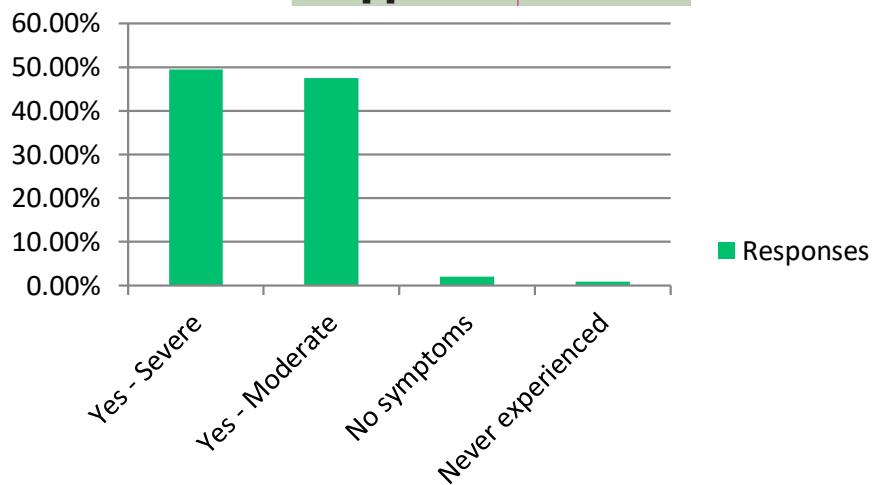
Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 18	0.00%	0
18-24	0.17%	2
25-34	0.33%	4
35-44	11.54%	139
45-54	62.16%	749
55-64	24.56%	296
65+	1.24%	15
Answered		1,205
Skipped		0



Q2

Have you ever experienced menopausal symptoms?

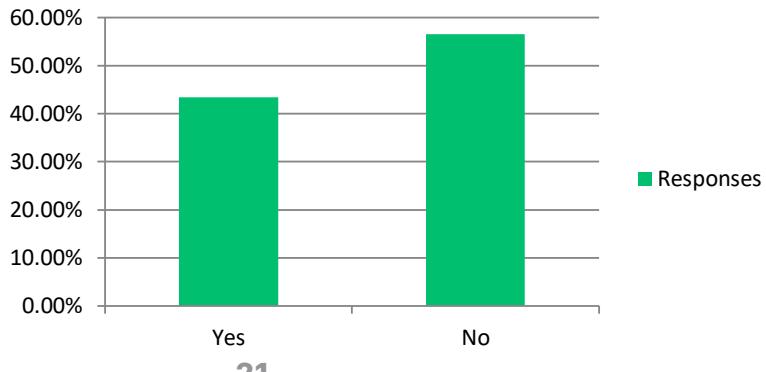
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes - Severe	49.54%	596
Yes - Moderate	47.55%	572
No symptoms	2.00%	24
Never experienced	0.91%	11
	Answered	1,203
	Skipped	2

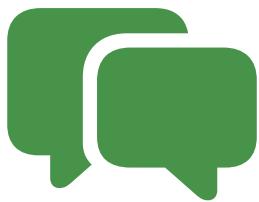


Q3

Do you currently take HRT?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	43.47%	523
No	56.53%	680
	Answered	1,203
	Skipped	2





Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

Q4

If you are not on HRT, can you state why not and if not,
what other therapies, if any, do you take?

Answered

767

Skipped

438

'My GP doesn't really want to know.'

'I've never asked about it.'

'In all honesty I don't think GPs are up to date on menopause treatment.'

'The lack of understanding, the fear of what side effects it might have. Completely depending on GP to make a decision.'

'Severe lack of information and knowledge caused delay in starting HRT.'

'I went to the GP to ask for it but he actually laughed out loud at me and changed the subject to my child who has special needs. I was too embarrassed to mention it again'

'I just haven't found the courage to go to my GP yet in case they send me away without any help.'

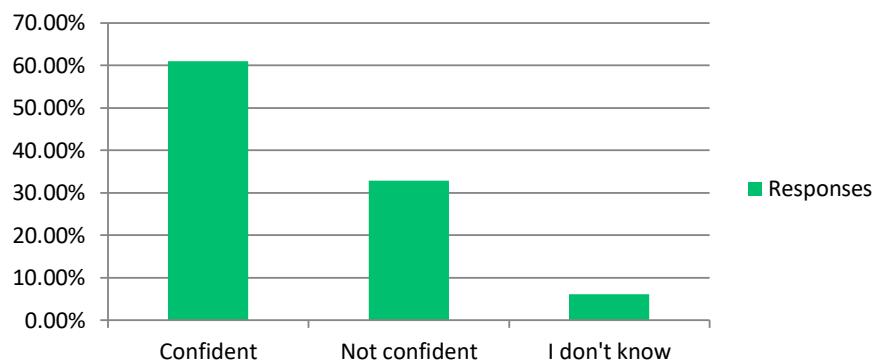
'Well, I've been misdiagnosed for years - all menopause symptoms were ignored and given numerous tablets & tests when it was menopause all the time.'

'Never offered. No Womens health centre here in my locality.'

'I cannot take HRT, am on waiting list to see Gynaecology and trying to manage my symptoms myself, GP not at all helpful.'

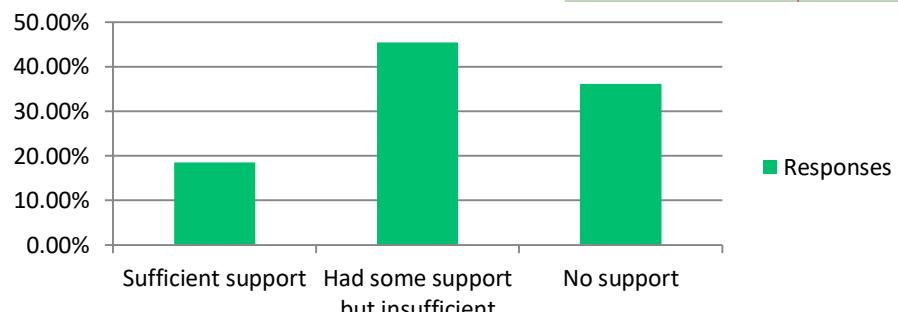
Q5 How confident would you feel discussing menopause with your GP/Consultant?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Confident	61.05%	735
Not confident	32.89%	396
I don't know	6.06%	73
Answered		1,204
Skipped		1



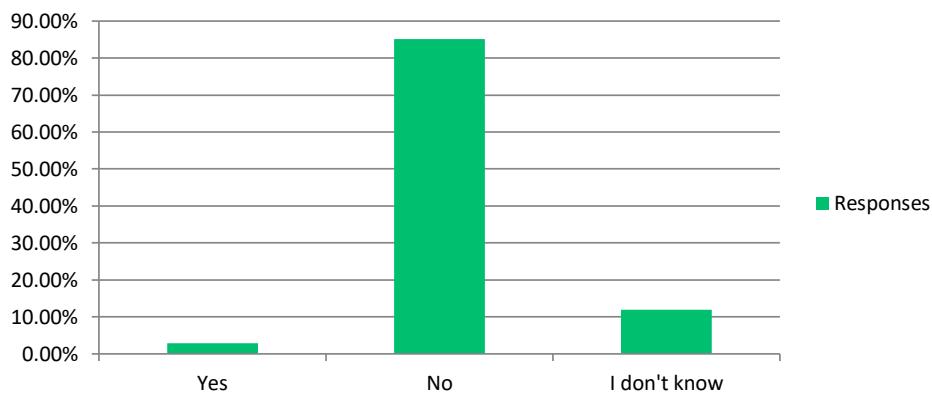
Q6 How much support or medical advice have you received from your GP/Consultant about menopause?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Sufficient support	18.47%	220
Had some support but insufficient	45.42%	541
No support	36.10%	430
Answered		1,191
Skipped		14



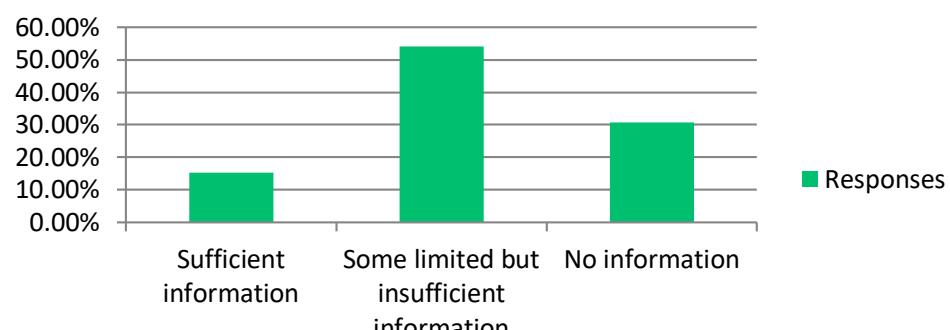
Q7 Do you believe that healthcare professionals in Ireland are educated enough in perimenopause/menopause?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	2.83%	34
No	85.20%	1,025
I don't know	11.97%	144
Answered		1,203
Skipped		2



Q8 How much education/information did you have about menopause?

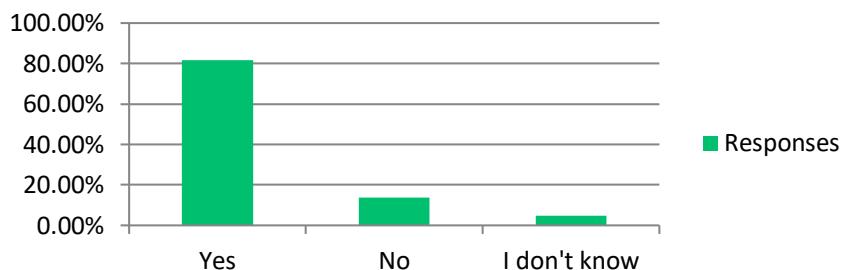
Answer Choices	Responses	
Sufficient information	15.21%	183
Some limited but insufficient information	54.03%	650
No information	30.76%	370
Answered		1,203
Skipped		2



Q9

Do your menopausal symptoms affect you when you are working?

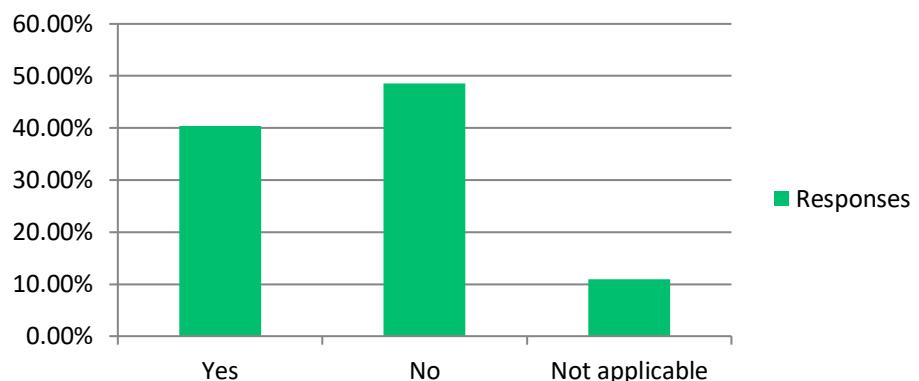
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	81.52%	979
No	13.66%	164
I don't know	4.83%	58
Answered		1,201
Skipped		4



Q10

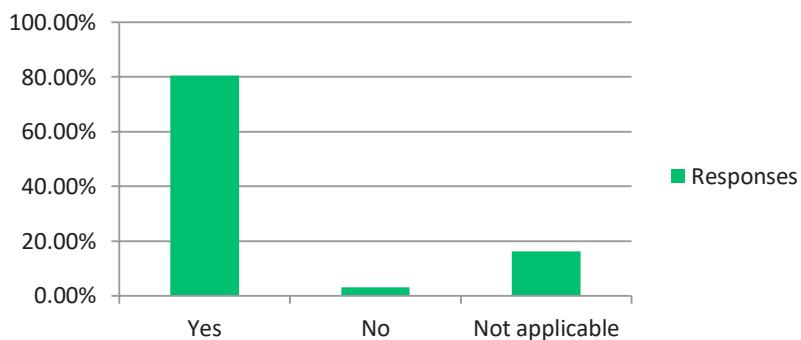
Have you ever missed work because of your symptoms?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	40.45%	487
No	48.59%	585
Not applicable	10.96%	132
Answered		1,204
Skipped		1



Q11 Would you like to see your workplace implement a menopause policy?

Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	80.57%
No	3.17%
Not applicable	16.26%
	Answered
	1,199
	Skipped
	6





Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

Q12

Do you feel there are enough supports for women experiencing menopausal symptoms?

Answered

1,153

Skipped

52

'No...medical care for women is incredibly lacking in this country, a one size fits all approach where you don't get listened to and languish on HSE waiting lists for years...'

'Absolutely no support whatsoever. I've researched for years on own and have had to resort to self-treatment. Now on BHRT, totally acquired on my own, doing much better.'

'No, there needs to be more support and information available about peri-menopause and the menopause.'

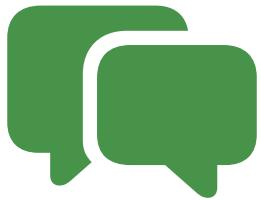
'No more support must be given including offering real alternatives such as homeopathic treatment.'

'I find it amazing how little our GPs know about the different treatments You must educate yourself.'

'No I do not, in fact I do not feel there is enough support for women in any health care area.'

'No and as I'm only 39 it took me over a year to convince my doctor I was going through it.'

'No. Despite the fact that menopause impacts all women who reach the point of menopause either prematurely or otherwise, I have never seen a public information campaign that explains menopause effectively, identifies supports and treatment available, and breaks stigma. We have more public information campaigns about how to bin chewing gum than we do about menopause.'



Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

'Absolutely not. Not only is it impossible to get and appointment with your GP but when you do, you just get a blank face because they nearly feel embarrassed to talk about the subject.'

'A male GP told me to make another appointment with a female GP. My appointments with 2 female GPs were ineffective-they were young girls with no understanding. I was given no information or support except the wrong HRT. I found some support in online forums.'

'No, a lot of taboo about menopause can impact all aspects of life so more support is required to enable women to cope with symptoms while trying to work and raise families.'

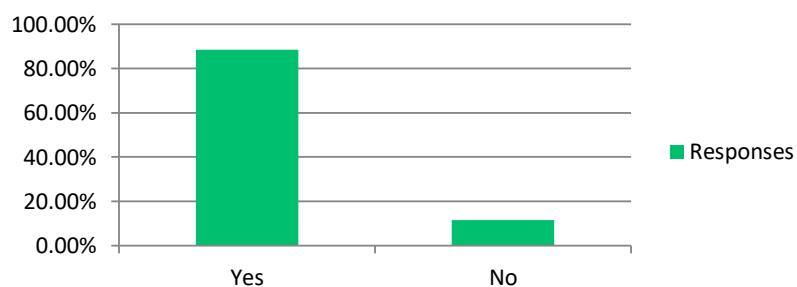
'Support available is inadequate and requires a joint effort with women, GPs, Pharmacies and to raise the issues and allow women to make more informed choices about their bodies. '

'I've educated myself so much on menopause, and it's all the helpful apps and YouTube videos, books and support groups. It's doesn't take much to understand the basics, yet I know more than my GP. It's absolutely disgraceful how women are just left like this. It's the worst thing over ever experienced. The depression and fatigue to name a few is crippling. I've had Crohn's disease for 20 years and I go through that anyway over this. We need help.'

'No I think that it's a really tough time in a woman's life and it's like everything in this country we just have to get on with it, with little or no support'

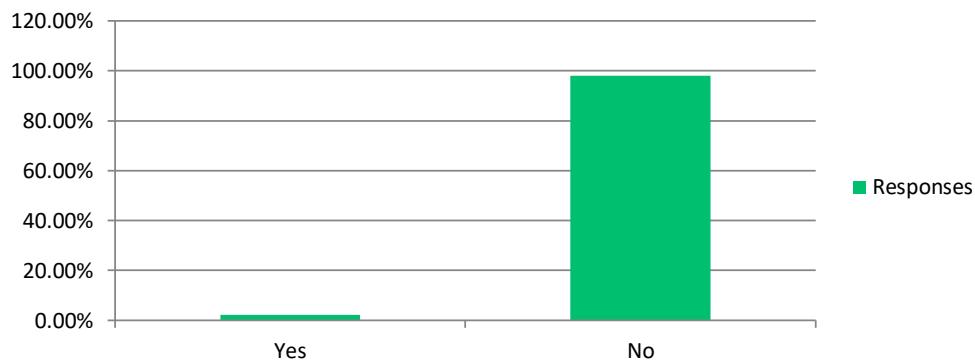
Q13 Do you feel there is still stigma in Irish society around discussing the menopause?

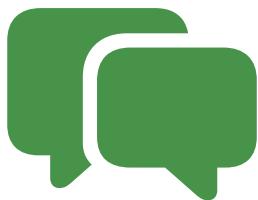
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	88.44%	1,063
No	11.56%	139
Answered		1,202
Skipped		3



Q14 Do you believe that the Government is doing enough to support women experiencing menopausal symptoms in Ireland?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	2.09%	25
No	97.91%	1,172
Answered		1,197
Skipped		8





Women's voices in menopause: real women, real stories

Q15

Are there any further comments or experiences you would like to share?

Answered

839

Skipped

366

'I don't think our government are offering enough support to our medical care givers, be it general practice or hospitals. These services are under increasing pressures. It seems unless people come together and make voices heard through the media the government ministers are not interested, an overhaul of our medical services, devised by doctors, and not ministers and management is needed.'

'Menopause is an extreme physical, mental and emotional change. It can be more intense than pregnancy. Women get consideration when pregnant but not through menopause. Is it because we are not worthy of it unless we are growing a person? Just shows the government doesn't really care for women, only what they have to offer.'

'In general women are and have been treated appalling by Irish government. Childcare and women issues are a disgrace, way behind the times and other countries in these matters.'

'More support and help for women going through the menopause. It should not be a taboo subject anymore and women should not be made feel that they cannot speak about it. It's a very serious thing to go through. The government, doctors and workplaces need to get behind women going through it. Women should not be dismissed.'

Appendix I

Questions as presented in survey order for corresponding graphic:

Respondent by age:

What age group are you in?

Impact on treatment:

Have you ever experienced menopausal symptoms?

Do you currently take HRT?

If you are not on HRT, can you state why not and if not, what other therapies, if any, do you take?

How confident would you feel discussing menopause with your GP/Consultant?

How much support or medical advice have you received from your GP/Consultant about menopause?

Do you believe that healthcare professionals in Ireland are educated enough in perimenopause/menopause?

How much education/information did you have about menopause?

Impact on quality of life and well-being:

Do your menopausal symptoms affect you when you are working?

Would you like to see your workplace implement a menopause policy?

Do you feel there are enough supports for women experiencing menopausal symptoms?

Do you feel there is still stigma in Irish society around discussing the menopause?

Attitudes towards Government response:

Do you believe that the Government is doing enough to support women experiencing menopausal symptoms in Ireland?

WOMEN'S VOICES IN MENOPAUSE



David Cullinane



Lynn Boylan



Michelle Gildernew



Denise Mitchell



Colm Gildernew



Sorca Clarke

www.sinnfein.ie