

ONLINE MENOPAUSE CENTRE

MENOPAUSE STUDY 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

SCOPE & APPROACH

The Online Menopause Centre (OMC) is the UK's first online menopause clinic, providing women with the ability to access personalised and up-to-date hormone replacement therapy via an affordable, accessible, and convenient online consultation.

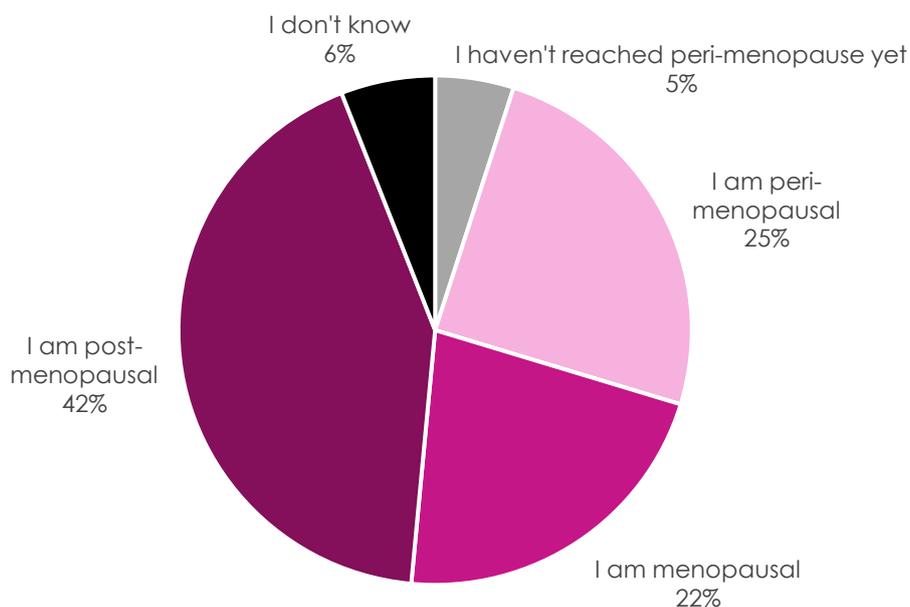
Working with Ellerton Marketing, Zing Insights ran a survey of 35–64-year-old women to understand more about their awareness and experiences of menopause in the UK, with a particular focus on work.

The survey was conducted online through the Zing Insights panel, emailed to OMC clients, and published on their social media. In total, we achieved 464 responses, consistent with the 2021 sample.

We've analysed responses to explore the key findings in this executive summary report.

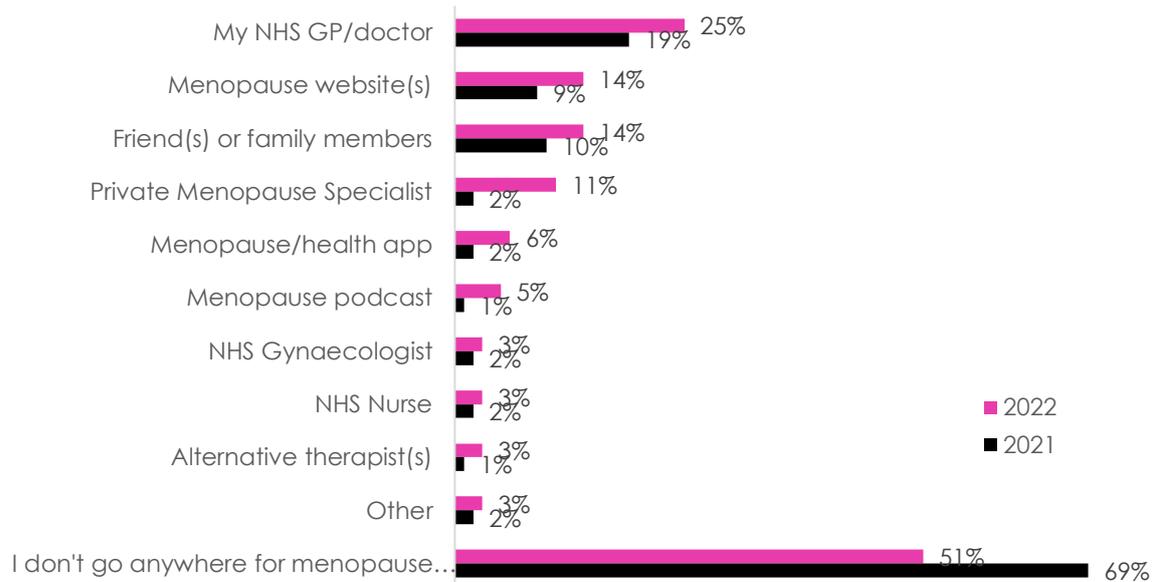
INSIGHTS

22% of the sample were menopausal this year compared to 20% in 2021, 25% (16% in 2021) were perimenopausal and 43% were post-menopausal (40% in 2021).

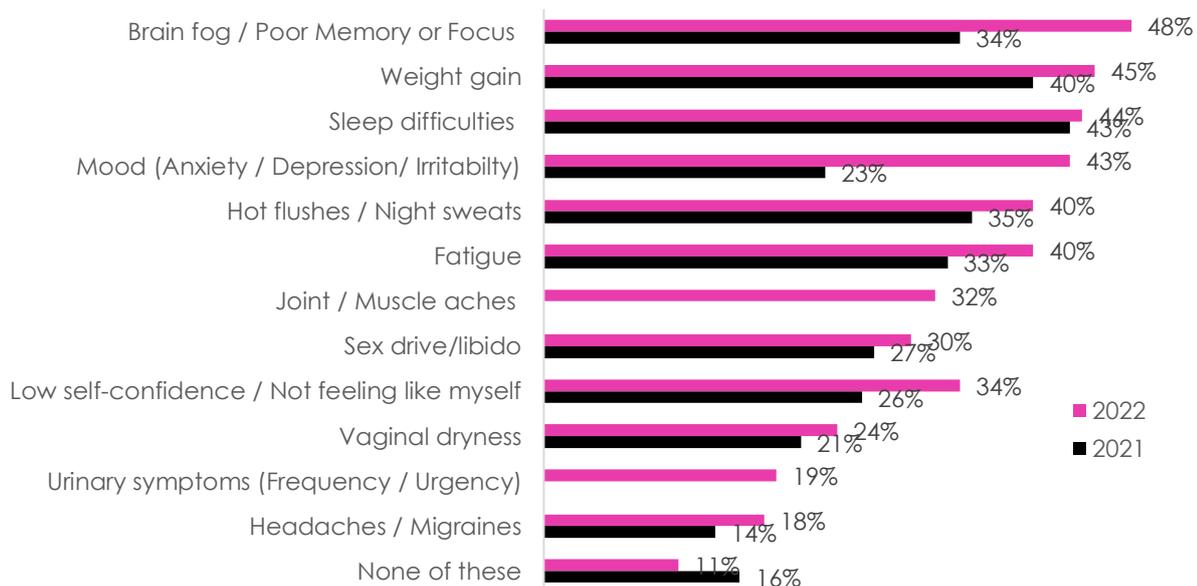


Overall, 25% use the NHS/GP/doctor for their menopause health treatment and support, 14% use menopause websites, 14% ask family or friends, 11% now use a private menopause specialist, significantly more than in 2021 (2%), however we can't ignore the potential sample bias based on including OMC client response data.

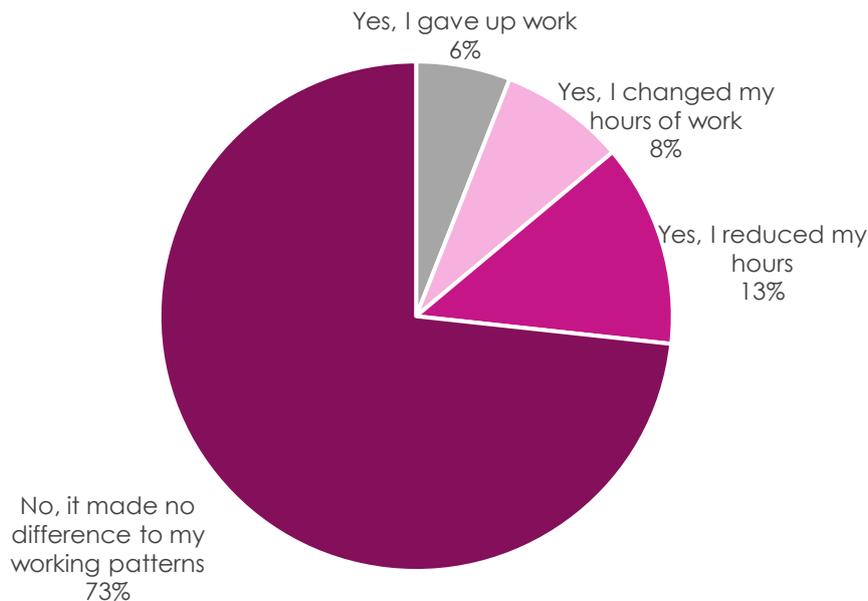
It's clear that significantly more of those experiencing menopausal symptoms are seeking health support and treatment now than in 2021, with increases across the board.



Looking at the core symptoms women find most challenging to manage, brain fog, memory and focus ranks highest followed by weight gain, sleep difficulties and mood. It's impossible to know for sure, but significant YoY increases for some symptom management, could be aligned to a number of high-profile personalities discussing their symptoms over the past year.



Of the 87% of participants who work outside the home, 74% made no changes to their working patterns because of the menopause, but of the remaining 26%, 6% gave up work due to their menopause symptoms, 8% changed their hours of work and 13% reduced their hours.



It was interesting that those working in skilled trades e.g., hairdressing, plumber, etc. were more likely to have reduced their hours because of the menopause than those working in professional roles (17% vs. 12%). However, more telling is the fact that while overall, 26% said the menopause had impacted their working patterns in some way, 30% of those working in senior management had been impacted to some degree.

We asked participants to what extent their menopause/perimenopause symptoms have impacted their worklife. Overall, 11% said they had been impacted severely and another 37% partially. 71% of those who said the menopause/perimenopause had severely impacted their worklife worked in professional job roles.

Participants site a range of ways the menopause/perimenopause has impacted their worklife, we've included some comments below, but the topline summary includes more than 260 comments.

"Anxiety & depression, brain fog and a not very understanding line manager resulted in my giving up my job."

"A lack of sleep made it difficult to concentrate at work."

"Muscle and joint pain are very difficult to manage in a retail job."

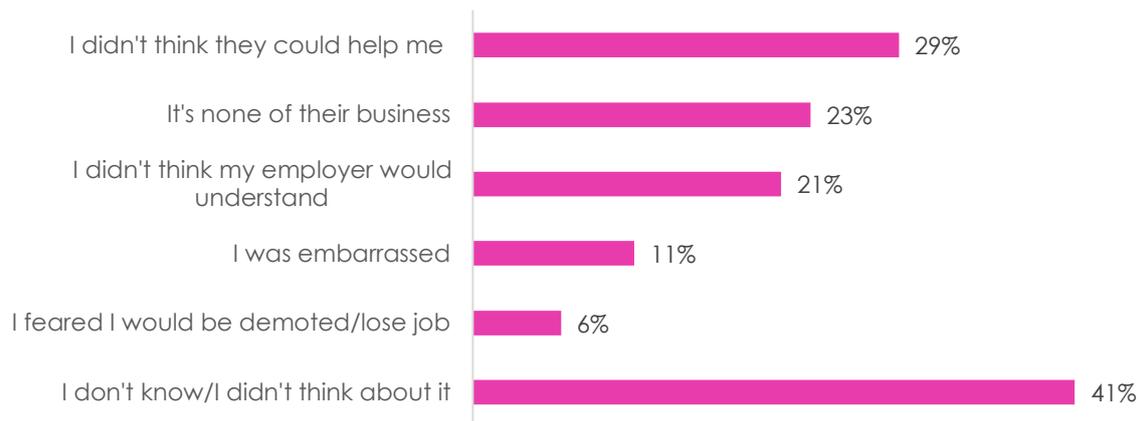
"Less patient, higher anxiety levels, less energy."

"Hard to work when you're getting hot flushes and lack of sleep from night sweats, which all leads to a lack of confidence and negative feelings."

"Less focus, more irritable, less energy, more emotional, less mentally strong."

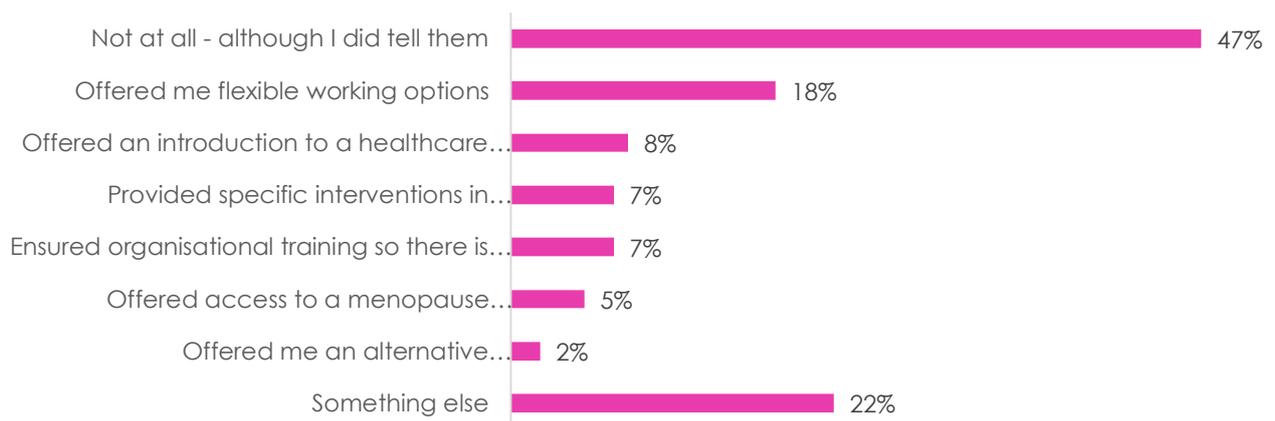
Overall, just 14% of participants discussed their menopause/perimenopause symptoms with their employers, although this increased to 21% for those working in skilled trade roles.

The main reasons participants gave for not discussing their symptom were a belief that they couldn't help, a sense that it's none of their business and a belief that their employer would not understand.



Those working in senior management roles were least likely to have thought about telling their employer (54% I don't know/I didn't think about it) by comparison, to 38% of middle management, 28% of supervisors and 43% of employees.

For those who did speak to their employers (14% overall n=60, caution small sample), we asked how employers had helped them to manage their menopause/perimenopause experience.



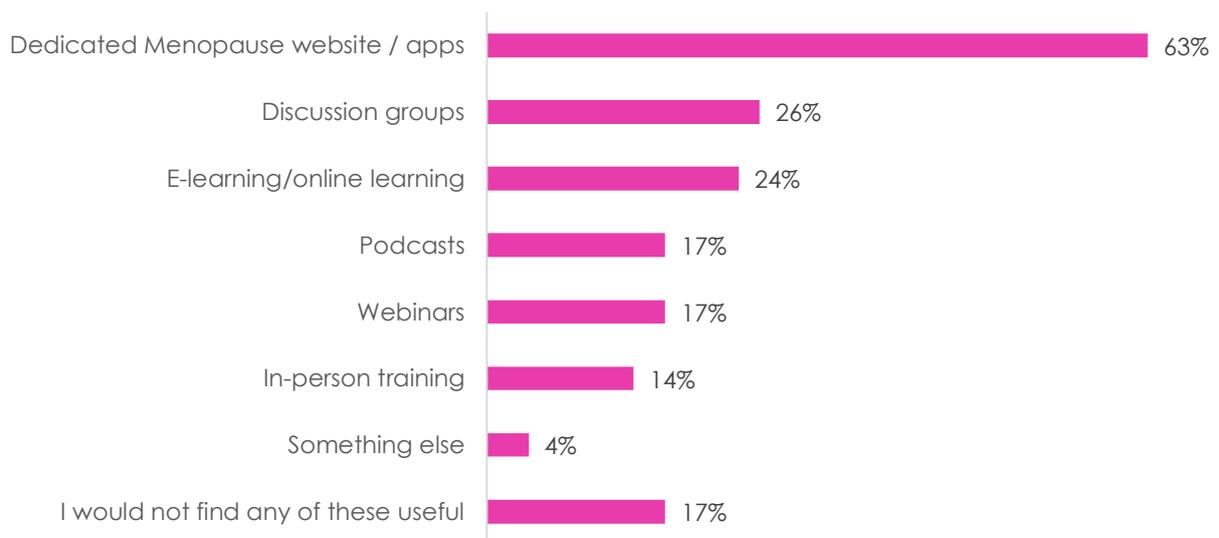
Other support methods offered by employers included time off, referral to occupational health, personal coaching for anxiety management, sympathy, and friendship.

Participants mainly look to the internet, looked to friends/family members, or went to their GP/NHS for advice and information around the menopause. Many of those who said 'somewhere else' didn't go anywhere for advice and information, believing they didn't need advice.

The internet was dominant across the majority of sub-groups, but interestingly those from mixed or Asian ethnic groups had a higher propensity to reach out to family/friends for information and advice.

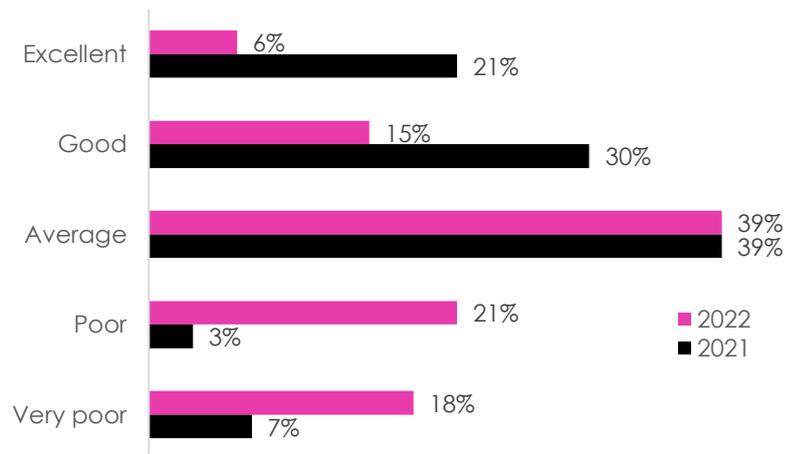


Looking at which methods participants would find most useful for accessing menopause/ perimenopause information and advice, the vast majority (83%) would find one or more of the options useful but there was a flyaway winner, with more than 6 in 10 saying they'd value a dedicated menopause website/apps, followed by 26% who'd value discussion groups and 24% who would value e-learning/online learning.



Looking at those with experience of NHS/GP menopause health treatments, we asked how participants would rate the service they'd received.

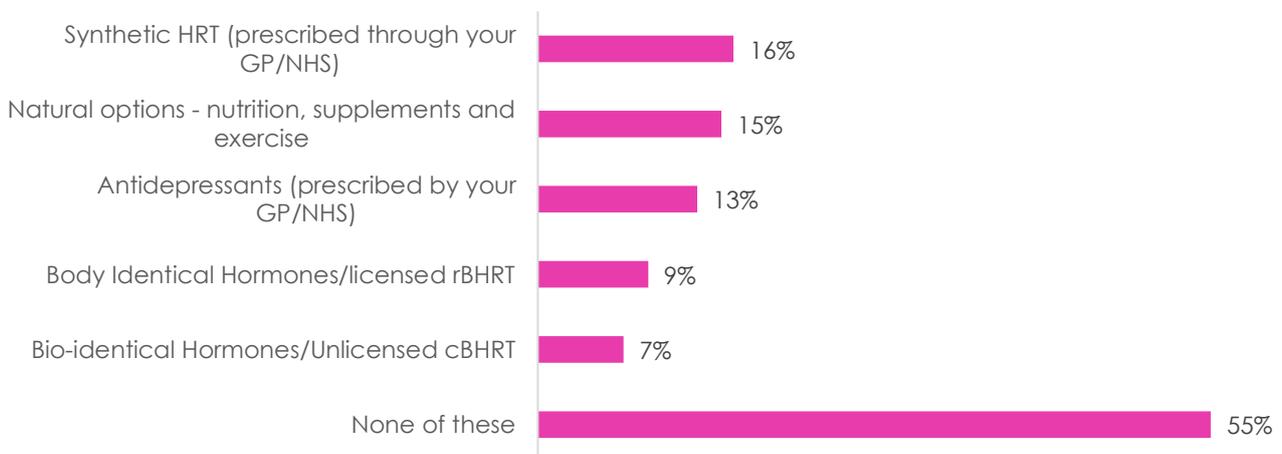
In comparison with 2021, ratings have fallen dramatically. From a mean average of 3.54 in 2021 down to a 2.70 rating out of 5.00 in 2022, with little difference by age, region, or ethnicity.



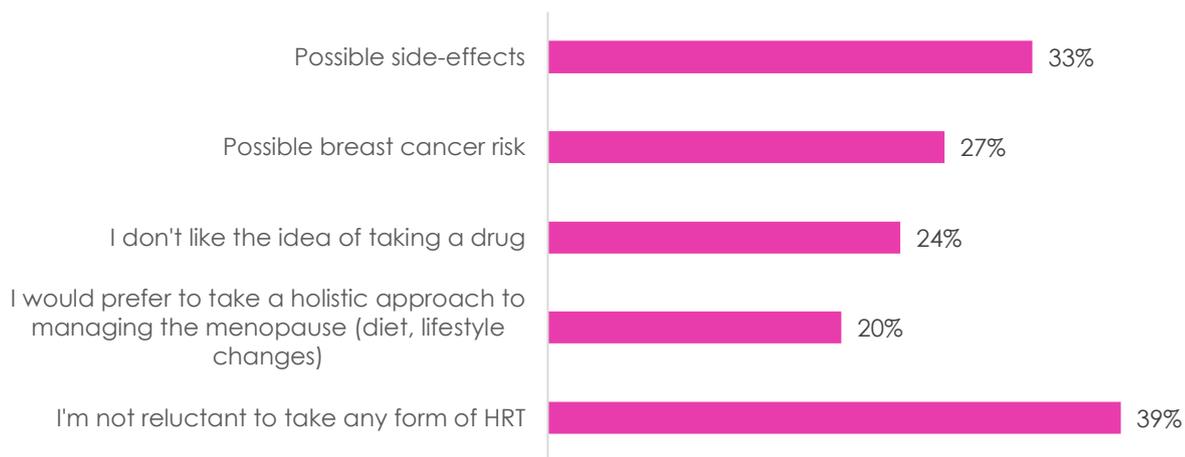
Overall, 47% said there would be no change in their likelihood to visit their GP about their menopause health in the next 12 months, 16% were more likely and 38% were less likely. Unsurprisingly, perimenopausal women were significantly more likely to say they were more likely to reach out for help than those who are already menopausal (30% vs. 12%).

Of those with awareness, 72% of women believe there is not enough menopause/perimenopause information freely available to them, the remainder believe there is already lots of information available.

More than half of all participants (55%) are not currently receiving any of the listed menopause treatments. 16% were using synthetic HRT, 15% were reliant on natural options and 13% had been prescribed antidepressants.



61% of participants suggested they had some qualms about taking HRT to manage their menopause.



30% of participants said they were very (19%) or quite (11%) likely to consider using a private menopause health service in the future. The main reason was a wish to see a specialist in menopause health (36%) or because they feel unsupported by the NHS and their GP (27%).

We asked participants if they had anything else to tell us about their menopause or perimenopause experiences, as before the topline summary report includes a full breakdown of more than 130 comments. We've included a selection below:

"I asked my GP about HRT. He shrugged his shoulders and told me to order an herbal supplement from the internet."

"Women are so under informed about this massive health impact in every woman's life! I can't believe how debilitating I have found bladder and vaginal issues and I just didn't know!"

"Having to join the dots myself and figure out my issues were peri-menopausal was difficult. My doctor should have been able to guide me."

"I was very reluctant to use HRT due to the breast cancer risk but saw a programme on it and discussed with my GP and decided to try it as my hot flushes were ruining my life. They embarrassed me during the day and exhausted me at night. Since retiring from the police I now work part time in a school, so my work life balance is better too."

"I wish there were Menopause Clinics or support groups available on the NHS."

However, it's disheartening to see that there are also some women who lack empathy for their own genders' individual and different experiences, certainly something that comes through in medicine too.

"Women need to be more stoic and stopping being victims of something natural."

"Menopause isn't a problem for every woman. I was fine, just a few very manageable hot flushes and the odd, unexpected bleed. Apart from that it didn't impact me at all. I welcomed it. I don't seek treatment because I didn't need treatment. The demonisation of menopause in the press is dangerous. It's a normal biological process not a health issue. Of course, support should be available for women who have problems, but women should not be educated to expect problems. I also worry about the monetisation of menopause problems. Women who have issues shouldn't be tricked into thinking throwing money at their menopause will cure all ills or magically restore youth."

"Women need to be more stoic and stopping being victims of something natural."

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- Significantly more of those experiencing menopausal symptoms are seeking support and treatment now than in 2021 (31% in 2021 vs. 49% now).
- It appears that symptom awareness and alignment with the menopause has increased year-on-year, with considerably more citing brain fog, mood/anxiety, fatigue, or low self-confidence this year than in 2021.
- 26% of working women experiencing the menopause/perimenopause had changed their work patterns in some way as a direct result. This was particularly true of those working in senior management.
- Looking at those who said their worklife had been impacted severely, 71% were working in professional job roles.
- Despite a considerable impact on their work, only 14% of working participants had discussed menopause with their employers. Their main reasons for not doing so were 'didn't think they could help' or 'it's none of their business'.
- Those working in senior management positions were least likely to have considered telling their employers.
- The internet is the primary tool for menopause/perimenopause information overall, however family/friends were more important for those in mixed race or Asian ethnic groups.
- Dedicated websites/apps were by far the preferred method of accessing advice and information.
- Ratings for GP/NHS menopause healthcare have significantly fallen year-on-year with 39% rating services poor or very poor compared to just 10% in 2021. However, we should be aware that there could well be a 'covid' factor in that rating (e.g., greater leniency due to the pandemic in 2021).
- More than 7 in 10 women (72%) feel there is not sufficient menopause/perimenopause information freely available to them.
- More than half of the women currently experiencing menopause/perimenopause are not currently receiving any treatments and it's probably not surprising that 61% of women have some qualms about taking HRT.
- Overall, 30% of participants were very or quite likely to consider using a private menopause health service in the future. Their main reasons being the ability to see a specialist and the lack of support from their GP/the NHS.