



GENERATION MENOPAUSE

THE INVISIBILITY REPORT

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FOREWORD

This whitepaper is a rallying cry on behalf of the 'invisible' community of mid-life women and a wakeup call to retailers, brands and manufacturers that there is a whole section of society that is simply not being listened to or catered for.

It is estimated that one billion women will be going through the menopause by 2025¹. While the natural transition of the menopause is a fact of life for almost all women, what's deeply troubling is the air of mystery that continues to cloak the subject, and the perpetuating relationship this taboo has with the lack of resource for those experiencing menopause, from brands, retailers, employers and wider society.

The research conducted in this study has found that overwhelmingly, women in their mid-life feel overlooked by society and unable to find the support they need from brands, retailers, employers or even loved ones, whilst struggling with debilitating physical, emotional and mental symptoms - from anxiety and panic attacks to insomnia and depression.

Our responsibility to the 13 million women² currently going through or who have experienced the menopause in the UK, as well as the generations of women to come, is to not let them feel invisible but to cultivate greater awareness and understanding, through easily accessible and more inspiring information to finally shed the menopause of its taboo reputation.

The purpose of GEN M, bringing the best of the menopause together in one place, and our promise to make the menopause experience better today than it was yesterday was born out of our personal experiences. We knew that if we felt blind-sided by the menopause and lost when looking for the right information and support, we won't have been alone.

This research substantiates that fact and we believe the millions of women that make up Generation Menopause deserve better.

The wide variety of symptoms and lack of current available options frame the pressing need for an all-encompassing resource like



GEN M, to support not only those experiencing the menopause first-hand but to educate brands, retailers, employers and support networks – who all have a responsibility in instilling societal change for the future.

What can be deduced from this research project is the irrefutable need for brands and retailers to better cater for the menopausal consumer. To not only be a part of the conversation, but part of sustained change.

The menopause is not just about hot sweats and HRT. From shampoos for thinning hair to extra intensity creams for your skin and temperature regulating clothing and bedding – our shopping needs go through 'the change' as well. We need the brands and retailers we've been loyal to, to transition with us.

Through collaborative partnerships, bringing together the best resources, information and expert advice, products and solutions, we can change the rhetoric on the menopause taboo once and for all.

Together, we've got this.

**Heather Jackson and Sam Simister,
Co-Founders of GEN M**

¹Source: *The demography of menopause*.
Hill K. *Maturitas*. 1996 Mar;23(2):113-27. doi: 10.1016/0378-5122(95)00968-x.

²Source: *Nuffield Health Survey 2017* (n=3275 women in UK aged 40-65)

INVISIBLE AT HOME INVISIBLE AT WORK INVISIBLE ACROSS SOCIETY

HALF OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION WILL EXPERIENCE THE MENOPAUSE DURING THEIR LIVES. THERE WILL BE AN ESTIMATED 1 BILLION GLOBALLY IN THE MENOPAUSE BY 2025. INDEED, THERE ARE 13 MILLION PERI OR POST-MENOPAUSAL WOMEN IN THE UK RIGHT NOW - A THIRD OF THE FEMALE POPULATION.

This natural transition can bring with it up to 48 symptoms, experienced differently by every individual and, as evidenced in this research, it is often confusing, difficult to navigate, unexpected and brings with it serious emotional, mental and physical side effects. For 10% of women, this can last up to 12 years.³

We've seen positive action taken to destigmatise taboo topics in recent years through impactful campaigns like #MeToo and #ThisGirlCan, as well as marketing around menstruation and period poverty, which continue to drive important change. Yet, despite impacting a large proportion of the population in 2020, the menopause remains a social taboo.

Why is it that in the UK today, 3 in 4 of the women we spoke to think the menopause remains a taboo subject, not talked about openly enough in society? More troubling still, why is it that 87% of those experiencing the menopause think that mid-life women are overlooked by society and brands?

This report reveals the true extent to which the menopause impacts women, and those transitioning, in the UK today. We surveyed 2,000 women aged 35-60 which captured a new depth of insight on the distinct lack of support, education or knowledge on the menopause, as well as the extent to which women in our society are suffering in silence.

It indicates that women are currently surviving menopause with a mixture of grit and determination, rather than being prepared for and supported to navigate its impact. The report uncovers insight to better understand the 2 in 3 women who were 'blindsided' by the perimenopause and how we can address the isolation and loneliness they face in dealing with the menopause over many years.

We found that for many women this transition hits them (typically aged 45 – 55) at a stage in their life when they are time poor, juggling a career with dependants or ageing parents, to whom the

menopause is an inconvenience. For the majority, their partners (for 67%) and sons/daughters (for 75%) know nothing or very little about how the menopause is affecting them emotionally and mentally.

This report explores the resulting, hidden impact this transition, and society's perceived disregard, is having on 13 million women in the UK and the 41% of menopausal women feeling 'lonely, invisible, irrelevant and dispensable'.

It points to the responsibility of workplaces and employers to better support menopausal women in work – the fastest growing demographic in the workforce today⁴. Those surveyed whose career was on a high when entering the perimenopause were the most significantly unprepared (90%), knew almost nothing about it (83%) and over half (55%) said it made them feel invisible. The need for workplaces to be better established to cater for perimenopausal and menopausal women was supported by 88% of women surveyed.

Similarly, it puts the spotlight on the role of brands and retailers who have marginalised mid-life women, made them feel no longer relevant through uninspiring and unrelatable marketing and advertising and overpriced products, that lack clear signposting. A significant 90% of menopausal women would benefit from brands working harder to be inclusive to and cater for women experiencing the menopause.

This research highlights a clear call to action for better, more inspiring and easily accessible information, with 96% of perimenopausal and menopausal women supporting the need for a dedicated resource providing advice, information, experts, tried and tested products and solutions for those undergoing the menopause in one place – a service that GEN M now provides.

Overwhelmingly, it demonstrates the collaborative role of brands, retailers, employers, support networks, medical professionals and society in general in resetting the dial on how we view the menopause. Like many social taboos, it requires collaborating to sweep away years of social norms and this research triggers new thinking on the back of sober facts to build a better today for the 1 in 3 women suffering in silence at the moment.

³<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/symptoms/>

⁴ONS Labour market statistics

HOW CAN WE MAKE THE **MENOPAUSE** EXPERIENCE BETTER TODAY THAN IT WAS YESTERDAY?

This white paper has highlighted a number of deficiencies in the way that society for the most part, has inadvertently disregarded and overlooked a large proportion of the female population. It brings to light the attitudes, feelings and opinions of an 'invisible generation' of women who have thus far navigated a life changing transition in silence.

Encouragingly, with that we can also gain a unique insight into the possibilities and opportunities for society to truly understand a demographic of 13 million peri to post-menopausal women – and how to better support them at home, at work and across society.

When we asked perimenopausal and menopausal women what would be most beneficial in improving their experience of the menopause, they told us:

96% OF WOMEN

CALLED FOR A DEDICATED WEBSITE BRINGING TOGETHER THE BEST OF THE MENOPAUSE IN ONE PLACE - FROM TRIED AND TESTED PRODUCTS, INFORMATION, ADVICE, EXPERTS AND SOLUTIONS

94%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM BRANDS BEING MORE INCLUSIVE AND CATERING BETTER TO MENOPAUSAL WOMEN

87%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE MEDIA AND PRESS BEING MORE VOCAL ABOUT THE MENOPAUSE

94% OF WOMEN

GOING THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE SAID THEY FELT THEY WOULD BENEFIT FROM SOCIETY BEING MORE OPEN TO TALKING ABOUT THE MENOPAUSE

93%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM THEIR PARTNER BETTER UNDERSTANDING WHAT WOMEN ARE GOING THROUGH DURING THE MENOPAUSE

93% OF MENOPAUSAL WOMEN

WOULD BENEFIT FROM THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY BEING BETTER INFORMED

88% OF MENOPAUSAL WOMEN

WOULD LIKE WORKPLACES TO BE BETTER SET UP TO SUPPORT MENOPAUSAL WOMEN

96%

WOULD BENEFIT FROM SUPPORT FROM THEIR GPs

SYMPTOMS AND EFFECTS

THE MENOPAUSE KNOWLEDGE GAP

Half of women can't name any phases of the menopause

One of the key findings amongst women surveyed within this report is the lack of knowledge about the symptoms they're experiencing and at which stage of the menopause they are.

The stage medically referred to as the 'perimenopause' (the transition stage prior to the menopause) suffers a greater lack of recognition by women and when focussing on symptoms associated with this stage, we found that 20% classified as possibly perimenopausal – this translates to 2.2million women who may be starting the menopause transition but haven't been able to confirm this.

Half of women surveyed (49%) couldn't name any phases of the menopause, even when prompted and almost half (46%) hadn't come across the term perimenopause. It appears that recognition, or even knowledge of this phase remains low throughout the menopause, with only 47% of women who have already experienced it, being familiar with the term.

With women largely unaware that what they're experiencing is the beginning of the menopause, it's perhaps unsurprising that 1 in 5 women visit their doctor six times before receiving adequate help or advice⁵. At a time of great strain on the NHS, it raises the question of what more can be done to help women diagnose their symptoms and access solutions quicker and easier.

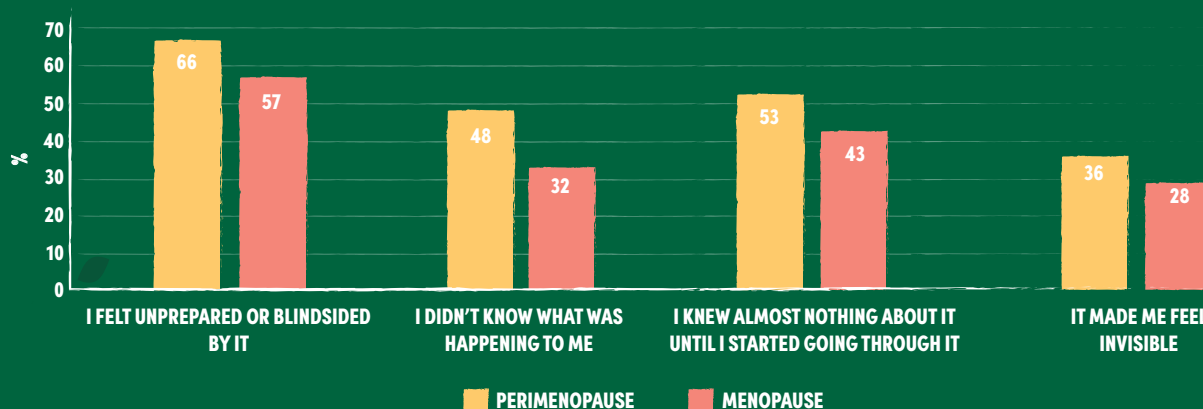
2 in 3 women were blindsided by the menopause

For the majority of women, the menopause can hit unexpectedly. Figure 1 indicates that 2 in 3 perimenopausal women felt unprepared or blindsided by it and 1 in 2 admitted they didn't know what was happening to them.

Research findings point towards a lack of preparation, knowledge or education on the menopause and its symptoms, with around half of women confessing they know almost nothing about the menopause before they started going through it.

This is particularly troubling given the menopause is an inevitable part of life for most women. Positive action has been taken by the Government to add the menopause to the school curriculum from September 2020, which will go some way to educating the next generation. However, this research clearly indicates a need for greater education and information to properly support those experiencing the menopause right now and those beyond school years who are wholly unprepared for what is about to come.

Figure 1: Indications of how unprepared women are for the onset of menopause

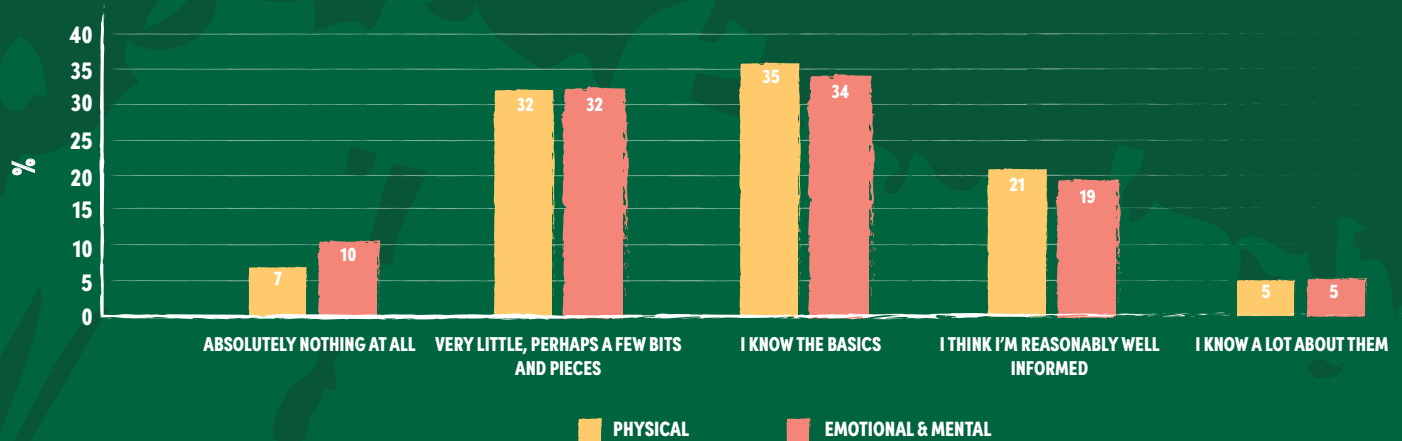


Base: Currently experiencing the Menopause n=344; definitely going through Perimenopause n=204
Question: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experience of the? (Slightly or strongly agree)

Only 1 in 4 women claim to know a lot or be reasonably well informed about the effects of the menopause

Figure 2 further demonstrates the lack of information and education on the menopause, with a significant percentage of the female population knowing very little about the transition that they will be, and perhaps are already, experiencing. 42% of women know nothing or very little about the emotional and mental effects of menopause. When assessing whether awareness and knowledge fluctuates throughout the different stages of menopause, we can identify that over a quarter (27%) of women currently experiencing the menopause still know nothing or very little about the emotional or mental effects.

Figure 2: Knowledge around menopause effects - physical and mental



Base: All respondents; n=2010

Question: How much do you feel you know about the physical (or emotional/mental) effects of the menopause?

“THE MENOPAUSE IS LIKE HAVING AN ILLNESS. IT’S DEBILITATING. I’M EXHAUSTED 24/7 BECAUSE MY SLEEP IS DISTURBED CONSTANTLY, WITH OR WITHOUT THE HOT FLUSHES. ANXIETY RULES MY LIFE! FATIGUE OVERWHELMS MY BODY AND MIND... MY PAINFUL JOINTS REALLY DO HURT, A LOT. MY MEMORY LAPSES WORRY ME ENOUGH TO THINK I’VE ACTUALLY GOT DEMENTIA. VERTIGO LITERALLY SENDS ME IN A SPIN. MY LACK OF FOCUS AND CONCENTRATION MAKES ME LOOK STUPID.”

HALF OF WOMEN (51%) CAN NAME ONLY 3 OF THE 48 SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MENOPAUSE

Hot flushes and mood swings are the most known symptoms (Figure 3), followed by brain fog/memory loss, insomnia, night sweats and weight loss.

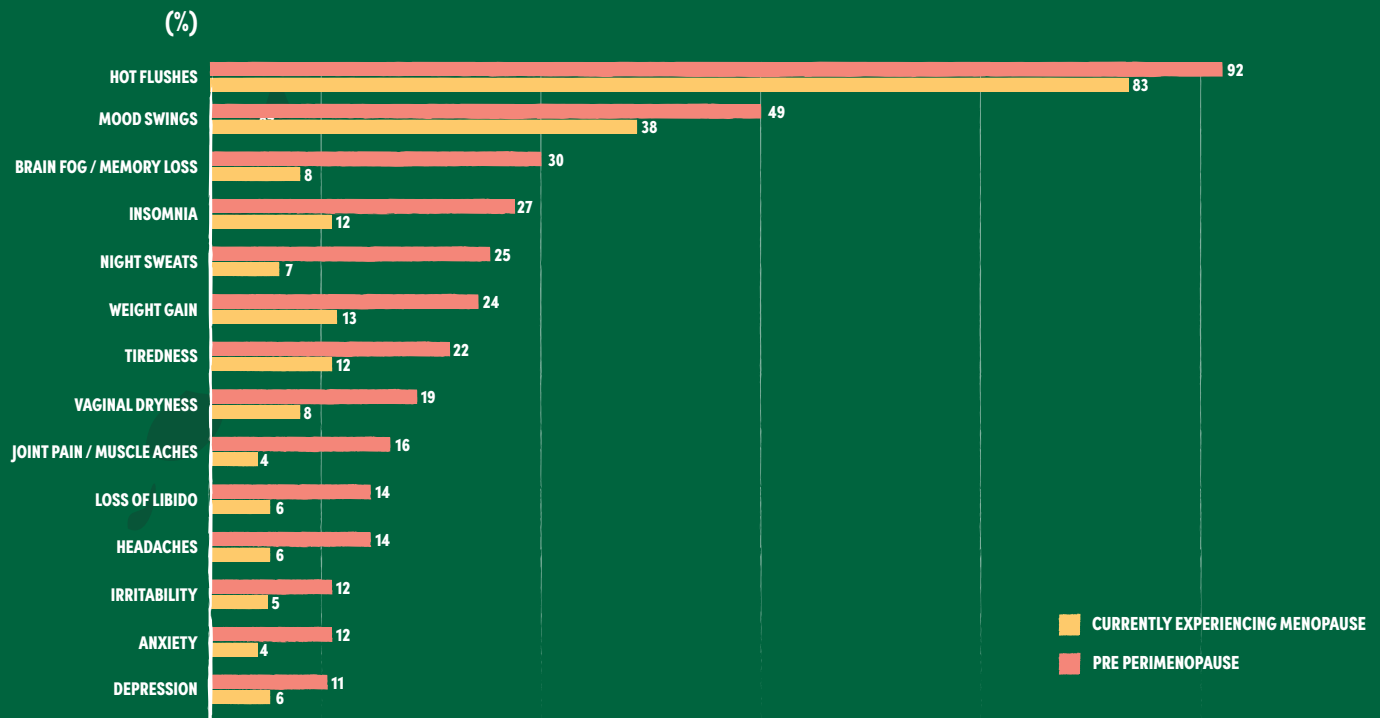
The findings demonstrate limited symptom knowledge and awareness amongst women who have not yet entered the perimenopause, correlating with the confusion, feelings of being unprepared and not knowing what's happening at the start of the transition. This highlights the need for further education, information and discussion around symptoms to better prepare women and provide the tools to better navigate the menopause.

Less than 15% of women could name depression, anxiety or irritability as a menopause symptom, despite research findings showing that these are in the top ten most debilitating symptoms which have a negative impact on women's lives.

Therefore, the menopause is more difficult to understand and cope with, as many individuals cannot identify their symptoms, or themselves, as menopausal – meaning they don't look for or receive the right care, support or treatment.

Less than half of women – even those going through the menopause - reach a point of believing they are well informed about the effects of the menopause, with lower proportions saying they know about the mental or emotional impacts caused.

Figure 3: Top 14 symptoms most associated with menopause – comparing answers of those going through it now and those pre- perimenopause



Base: Currently experiencing the Menopause n=344; Pre-Perimenopause n=757

Question: We are interested in how many symptoms of the menopause people know. Please write down as many as you can think of? (Open text coded under themes)



THE INVISIBLE MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT

41% OF WOMEN GOING THROUGH THE MENOPAUSE REVEALED FEELING 'LONELY, INVISIBLE, IRRELEVANT OR DISPENSABLE'

Many of the symptoms manifest as emotional and in the absence of real knowledge about the impact of the menopause, can easily be attributed to other causes or reasons - 50% of menopausal and post-menopausal women reference a non-physical symptom when describing their experiences. This figure is even higher among those who are experiencing the perimenopause (57%).

Of perhaps greater concern, is that some symptoms appear to be manifesting into more serious emotional and mental health issues and can seriously impact on feelings of confidence and self-worth. These are grave insights into the 'invisible' impact of the menopause on mental health, particularly troubling since women aged 50 – 54 have the highest suicide rate in the UK⁶, according to the Office for National Statistics. Without more certain knowledge around the non-physical side effects, these symptoms can be easily mis-attributed or lead to false diagnosis.

"I SUFFER FROM CRIPPLING ANXIETY AND A LOT OF IT'S ASSOCIATED WITH MY HEALTH. IT TURNS OUT THAT MANY OF THE SYMPTOMS I'VE BEEN GETTING FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS OR SO MAY SIMPLY BE THE PERIMENOPAUSE AND I'M WORRYING FOR NOTHING."

⁶<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/2019registrations>



HALF ARE
EXPERIENCING
ANXIETY



40% FEEL
INVISIBLE
OR DISPENSABLE



40% FEEL
UNATTRACTIVE



40% SAY THEY
LACK CONFIDENCE

The feelings above represent those currently experiencing the perimenopause or menopause. In the context of the UK population currently experiencing the menopause, it suggests that at least 6 million women are experiencing or have experienced anxiety which could be related to the menopause.

When asked how much those close to them knew about the mental and emotional effects of the menopause, 75% of women said their sons or daughters knew nothing or very little, with over two thirds (67%) of women saying their partner knows nothing or very little. This research indicates a need to better educate and inform support networks about the invisible but often debilitating symptoms that their loved ones may experience, in order to help women navigate a personal experience which is clearly having an adverse effect on mental and emotional wellbeing.

“I FEEL PEOPLE SHOULD BE MORE EDUCATED ON THE SUBJECT. ALL THE FAMILY. IT’S PART OF LIFE. IF WOMEN AND THEIR LOVED ONES WERE MORE INFORMED, IT WOULD MAKE COUPLES KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT AND HAVE SOME KNOWLEDGE OF HOW THEY COULD HELP EACH OTHER. STOP IT BEING SUCH A TABOO SUBJECT”

SELF-DIAGNOSIS

GOING IT ALONE

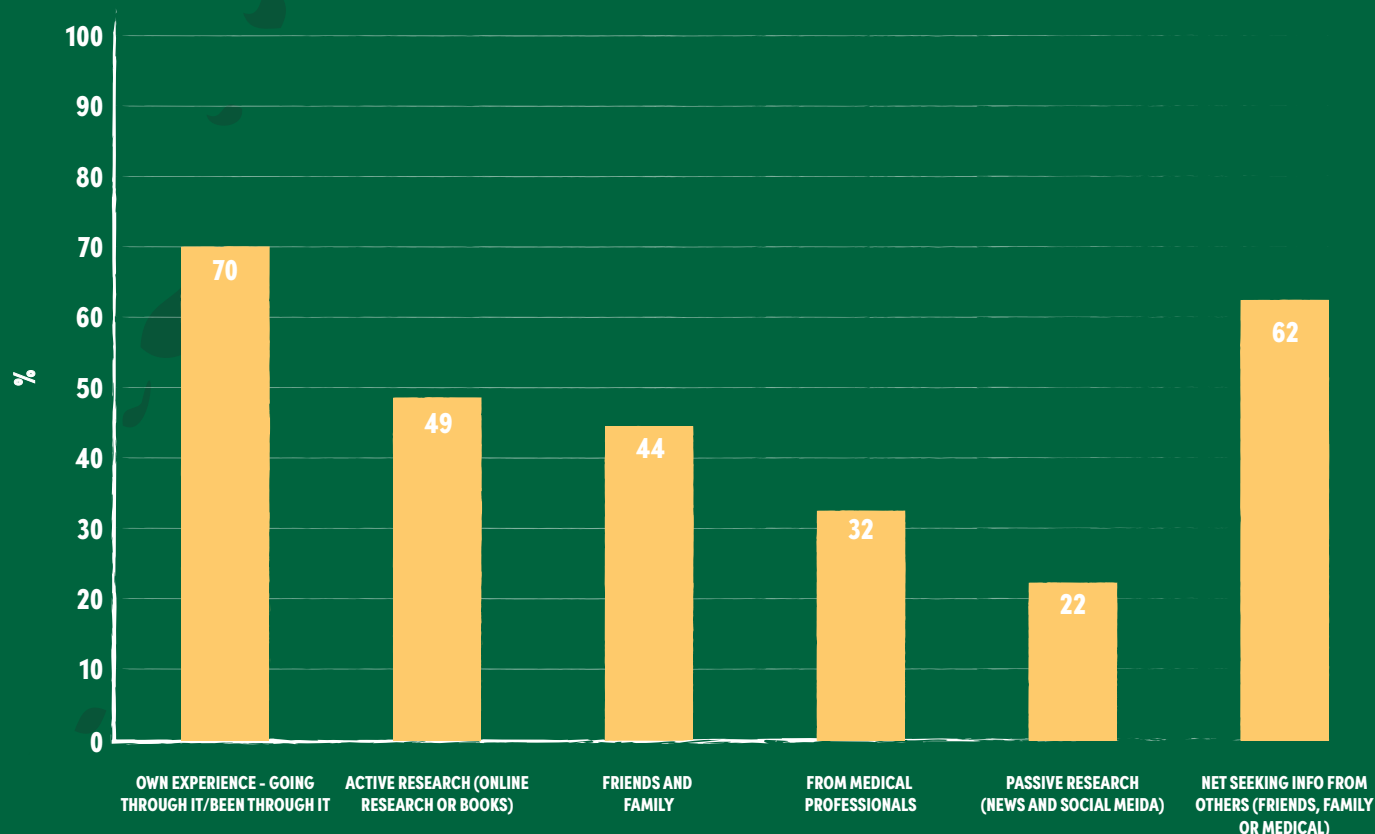
70% OF MENOPAUSAL WOMEN LEARNT FROM OWN EXPERIENCES

Two thirds (70%) of women who are currently experiencing or have been through the menopause said that what they know about the menopause was based on their own experience and the self-discovery that accompanies it (Figure 4). Only 1 in 3 have sought information from medical professionals with less than half (44%) turning to friends or families for support.

Interestingly, more women go to the internet to find out about menopause than medical professionals, despite 81% of women believing that doctors and the NHS have a responsibility to better educate or support women with the menopause.

The picture painted by this simple analysis underlines the fact that women are for the most part, navigating the challenges of the menopause alone – resulting in the manifestation of feelings of isolation and invisibility while going through this period of their life. The inference is that women are silently covering up their symptoms and struggling on, with most not seeking help or sharing their experiences even with friends who may be experiencing the same isolation themselves. This is a societal problem which permeates medical professions, workplaces, families and personal relationships too.

Figure 4: Sources of information about menopause



Base: Currently experiencing Menopause or have been through the menopause n=656
Question: Where have you got your information about the menopause?

THE MID-LIFE CONSUMER

MARGINALISED BY BRANDS AND RETAILERS

87% OF WOMEN EXPERIENCING THE MENOPAUSE SAID THEY THOUGHT MID-LIFE WOMEN WERE OVERLOOKED BY SOCIETY AND BRANDS:

The statistics in this section evidence that, for the most part, mid-life and menopausal women feel marginalised by brands and retailers, who they believe should be doing more to provide better solutions to improve the menopause experience and deliver marketing and advertising that both resonates and is representative of their demographic.

The findings particularly highlight the opportunity that purpose-led brands can own in standing up and igniting societal change for their consumers. Beyond this, it highlights a clear commercial opportunity for brands and retailers to own this space and provide effective products, services and solutions to an engaged and profitable market of 13 million women experiencing, or who have experienced, the menopause in the UK today.

A CALL FOR BRANDS AND RETAILERS TO DELIVER BETTER PRODUCT SOLUTIONS FOR THE 13 MILLION PERI OR POST-MENOPAUSAL WOMEN IN THE UK:

When it comes to providing more manageable solutions to menopause symptoms, women currently experiencing the menopause highlight supplements and vitamins (44%) as the most important product, followed by nutrition (34%), HRT (35%), exercise and fitness solutions (25%) and sleepwear (22%) designed for the menopause market.

This research explored in which product areas brands and retailers could do more to deliver better solutions for menopausal women, identifying an opportunity to provide better product solutions in feminine care (42%), nutrition and supplements (42%), beauty, including haircare and skincare (26%), clothing (24%) and beds and bedding (22%) which respondents feel isn't currently being delivered.

90% OF WOMEN BELIEVE BRANDS SHOULD BE WORKING HARDER TO BE INCLUSIVE AND CATER TO MENOPAUSAL WOMEN:

Research revealed a need for in-store retailers to improve the interaction and signposting of menopause-friendly solutions. Just 23% of those currently experiencing the menopause believe that shop assistants are well educated on the shopping needs of menopausal women.

Less than half thought that retailers made products easy to find in store (36%), provided the right products for those going through the menopause (42%) and included clear information about menopausal products on their websites (40%).

Just 1 in 4 women experiencing the menopause claim to have found it easy to find the products they need, evidencing a need to better signpost and promote products providing a solution to the needs of menopausal women. When they are able to find solutions to their needs, over half (55%) of menopausal women stated that products designed for the menopause are overpriced, highlighting an opportunity to provide better value and more cost-effective solutions to this consumer group.

91%

OF WOMEN EXPERIENCING THE MENOPAUSE OR PERIMENOPAUSE SAY THEY HAVE NEVER SEEN ANY SPECIFIC ADVERTISING OR MARKETING FOR MENOPAUSAL PRODUCTS.

Of those who have seen menopausal marketing, 39% of menopausal women said it was uninspiring. Over half (57%) of women currently experiencing the menopause say that marketing and advertising does not reflect their life or the lives of their friends, viewing it as uninspiring (56%), showing an outdated view of their life stage (54%) and they can't relate to it (47%). Encouragingly, one third of women acknowledge there are some brands that are doing this well, something that hasn't gone unnoticed to respondents of this survey.

There is a clear and significant opportunity for brands and retailers to become a more dynamic force in standing up for women living with the menopause, currently made to feel invisible to the brands they've been loyal to throughout their life. The respondents of this survey were very forthcoming with their feedback in relation to this topic, expressing a demand for brands, services and retailers to produce different, relevant and inspiring campaigns, asking that these be true reflections of the lives of mid-life women. It is evident that there is significant consumer demand amongst mid-life women to be harnessed by purpose-led brands who recognise the commercial potential within this engaged market.



"IT WOULD BE GREAT IF CLOTHES MANUFACTURERS MADE US SPECIALISED COOL CLOTHING AND NIGHTWEAR!"

"MIDDLE AGED WOMEN ARE OFTEN TREATED AS INVISIBLE. ALSO - CLOTHES STYLES ARE EITHER TOO YOUNG OR TOO OLD. WE STILL LIKE TO BE FASHIONABLE!"

'I WOULD SUPPORT AND ADVOCATE ANY CAMPAIGN THAT MAKES THE PUBLIC MORE AWARE ABOUT MENOPAUSE AND NORMALISES AND MODERNISES THE IMAGE OF MENOPAUSAL WOMEN. I WAS IN MY 30s WHEN I WAS PERIMENOPAUSAL. I'M IN MY LATE 40s AND DEFINITELY MENOPAUSAL. I AM STILL COOL, SEXY, DYNAMIC, INTELLIGENT, BEAUTIFUL AND FULL OF LIFE'

MENOPAUSE AT WORK

Those whose career was on a high when the perimenopause began were the most unprepared (90%), knew the least about it (83%) and over half said it made them feel invisible (55%).

The UK workforce as a whole is ageing and according to the Office for National Statistics, menopausal women are the fastest growing demographic in the workplace⁷.

With 75 to 80 per cent of women experiencing symptoms, this will undoubtedly impact them during their working life. A survey last year found that over 90% of respondents felt that their menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms were having a negative impact on their work⁸.

With generations of working women enduring several, often debilitating and invisible symptoms of menopause whilst at work, it is important to address the role that workplaces have in making the menopause experience better and easier to navigate for female employees.

Only 1 in 5 women believe their employer is well-informed about the menopause. Over half (52%) of menopausal women stated their employer knows nothing or very little about the mental or emotional effects of the menopause.

Overwhelmingly, a significant 88% of women going through the menopause said that workplaces being

set up to better support menopausal women would be a benefit.

With a large percentage of women managing this life-changing transition at work, there's a pressing need to more publicly acknowledge the impact that the menopause can have on working life and normalise these conversations as workplace discussions.

Our analysis reveals another important subgroup of women in the world of work whose career is on a high when menopause or perimenopause strikes. For these women, many of whom claim to be juggling family responsibilities, their career is further complicated by the emotional and physical symptoms they must contend with.

Those who claim their career was on a high when they began the perimenopause were most significantly impacted across a number of factors, with 90% saying they felt unprepared, 83% knowing almost nothing about it and 85% saying it negatively impacted the relationship with their spouse or partner. Furthermore, over half of career women (55%) said the perimenopause made them feel invisible.

"Having been through it, the main problem was at work. I was so over tired that some days were very bad. I think there should be more understanding that you should take time out. My previous boss had been a very good role model, talking about the menopause as she went through it. The main thing is comfort and reassurance."



⁷Government Report on Menopause

⁸<https://www.newsonhealth.co.uk/news/menopause-at-work-survey-results-published>



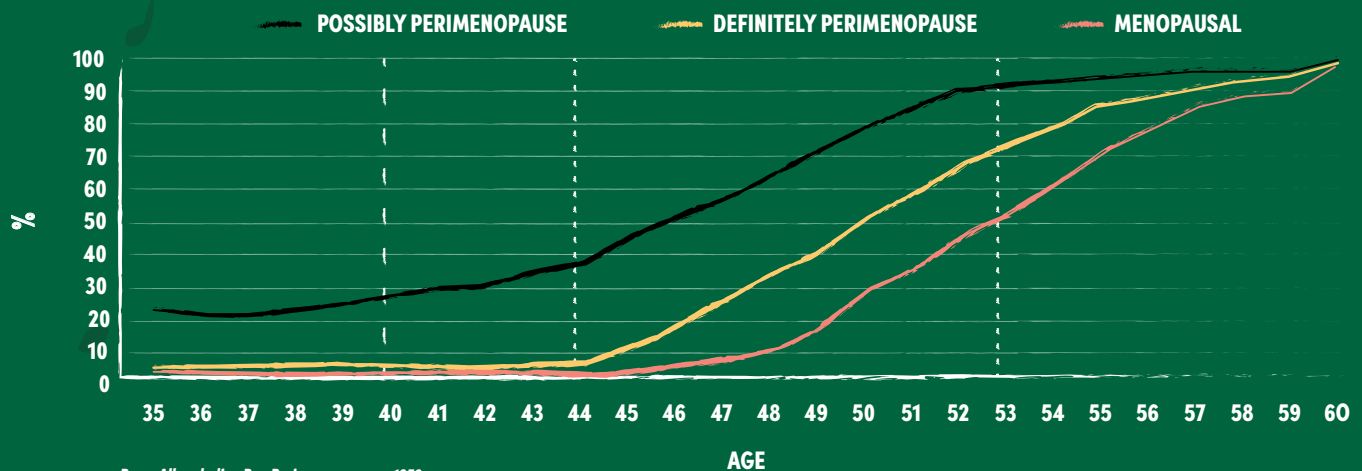
A QUARTER OF WOMEN ARE POSSIBLY PERIMENOPAUSAL BY THE AGE OF 40

Our analysis by age shows clearly that while the menopause becomes more common from the age of 44, more than 1 in 4 women were possibly perimenopausal based on symptoms by 40.

According to our survey, 80% of 40-44⁴ year old women are in employment. According to our survey 2 in 5 of these also have children aged under 12.

Looking at the age group where the menopause really starts to impact, almost half of women (45%) aged between 44 and 53 are responsible for at least one dependent under the age of 18. What we can deduce is that the onset of menopausal symptoms at this key stage represents another significant issue to manage, on top of the multiple pressures and responsibilities many women experience at this time.

Figure 5: Age at which women start each stage of menopause



Base: All excluding Pre-Perimenopause; n=1253

Question: Which of these descriptions best describes your current situation with regards the menopause?

MENOPAUSE IS A MODERN-DAY TABOO WHICH NEEDS TO BE BROKEN DOWN

3 OUT OF 4 WOMEN THINK THAT THE MENOPAUSE IS A TABOO SUBJECT, NOT OPENLY DISCUSSED IN SOCIETY

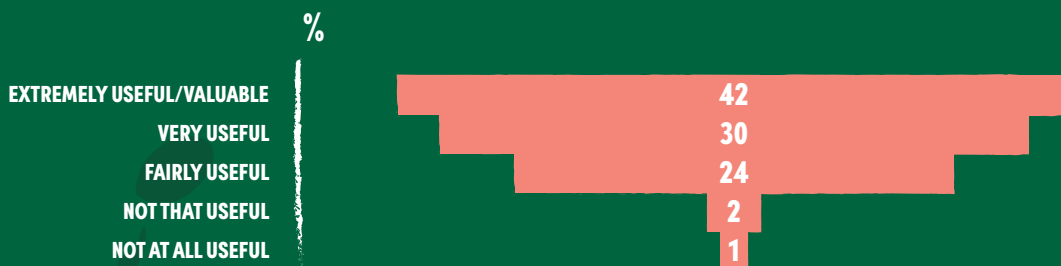
The results emerging from this research provide a clear indication that the menopause is a subject which many women feel uncomfortable or unnatural to talk about with others. Furthermore, this is not a new phenomenon - by definition, a taboo is something which has never been opened up to wider scrutiny or debate. As the numbers of women entering the menopause continue to grow, the sheer volume of people affected multiplies as the impact of these life-changing symptoms begins to impact relationships with partners, families and work colleagues.

94% of women going through the menopause said they would benefit from society being more open to talking about the menopause.

Pivotal to long-lasting change is ensuring that clear, easily understandable and accurate information is available in a simple, inspiring way, both easy to access and available to all. Furthermore, there's crucial need to better educate, not only those experiencing the menopause, but their support networks who all have a responsibility in removing the stigma, opening up the dialogue and helping their loved ones navigate this transition.

It is hardly surprising that the response to the idea of a dedicated and supportive web platform bringing together the best resources, experts and tried and tested solutions for the menopause was received enthusiastically by 96% of women (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Reaction to the idea of a dedicated online resource for women going through the menopause



Base: All respondents; n=2010

Question: How useful do you think it would be to have a dedicated organisation/website (one stop shop) providing all the information, support, resources and products you might require when going through the menopause in one place?

“Brilliant idea to have a dedicated website. The benefits of an inclusive, website, with ads from brands, reviews on brands and a forum and advice from the experts about the physical and emotional changes would be great. The website itself should be a multi-agency product & should be advertised on all female personal products e.g. Tampax & I could go on. Women knowing they can access a website (it has to be first class & very informative) could change women’s outlook on the menopause at every stage.”

THE INVISIBLE WOMEN IN THEIR OWN WORDS

It is rare to receive an extensive number of comments in response to a research project, however when we interviewed 2,000 UK women, aged 35 – 60 years old about the menopause, we received overwhelming gratitude for shedding light on a 'dark secret' so many women keep to themselves. The subject matter resonated so powerfully with our audience that we felt we had to share some of the comments they volunteered which echo the subjects we covered in this white paper.

"Feel written off by society. Fed up of the medical profession constantly calling me 'a woman of a certain age.'"

"Your survey was really useful. There were loads of symptoms I had no idea were associated with the change. I suffer from crippling anxiety and a lot of it's associated with my health. It turns out that many of the symptoms I've been getting for the last couple of years or so may simply be the perimenopause and I'm worrying for nothing."

"It's 3.30am and I am filling the survey in, hot sweaty and fed up with the menopause"

"I found it uplifting to do this survey, felt like people wanted to know how I felt instead of brushing it aside, it made me feel seen and not invisible. I felt like my problems were being listened to."

"I think the menopause is treated as a joke by the majority of society and businesses. It seems to me that it is used as an excuse by men to denigrate women, the whole 'younger' by which they mean fertile woman thing. Until the menopausal and post-menopausal are shown as attractive intelligent interesting women things will remain the same."

"I found that my employer knew nothing about what happens to a woman going through menopause until I brought the subject up."

"We need more info on peri menopause - it's a shock to know how far in advance it all starts and how it affects you mentally not just physically. Everyone knows about hot flushes but brain fog? Some days at work I wonder how I ever got to where I have in my career! I feel like a bumbling idiot who can't get words out. I have never suffered from imposter syndrome until my perimenopause."

"Hard to get information through to partners as very little spoken about menopause in general. Greater general communication in the media and socially would be needed along with more careful subliminal support from strong brands."

"It is a major part of a women's life where changes on many levels, happen and on the whole we have no real information or support on how to deal with each new development, no one you really talk to about it, so you just get on with it doing the best you can."

"I had a bad time at work with hot flushes, no understanding at all - from women too. It would be great if the workplace treated it seriously and as a genuine medical condition and also great if clothes manufacturers made us specialised cool clothing and nightwear."

CONCLUSION

Put simply, society is failing half of the population. For too long, brands, retailers, employers and support networks have turned their backs on the menopause, further stigmatising a topic that is already cloaked in taboo, and fostering a culture where women are unsupported, afraid to speak out and suffering in silence.

This research highlights a stark picture of just how debilitating the menopause can be and it is important that we address the extent of physical, mental and emotional symptoms within this report because if we don't, we cannot address society's lack of understanding and awareness of its true impact.

It is time to change the rhetoric on the menopause – this report reinforces that it isn't a gender issue, it's a societal one - and we share a new depth of insight into the role and responsibility that brands, retailers and employers have in better engaging, catering to and addressing the needs of mid-life women.

The menopause should not be feared. It is a transition that women have been experiencing since the beginning of time and will continue to experience for the foreseeable. What this report evidences, however, is that it is inexcusable to go on disregarding the attitudes and opinions of the 'invisible generation' who can be heard and understood from this research.

This report provides forward thinking, purpose-led brands with a level of insight, not available until now, on the shopping needs and demands of 20% of their probable consumer base⁶. It's a wake-up call to brands and retailers on the commercial opportunities that exist within this market – not only those who succeed in 'owning' the menopause space but those who can better develop goods, services and marketing to increase their share of this engaged market. If this research doesn't awaken brands and retailers to understand the mid-life consumer and what menopausal women want right now, what will?

Employers and workplaces can reap the benefits of placing greater value on the needs and experiences of menopausal women at work. As the fastest growing demographic in the workplace, employers cannot afford not to openly and positively address menopause at work. In the coming years, we will see people-orientated organisations leading the way in this area, recognising and valuing the relationship between menopause and wellbeing at work.

affecting women's mental and emotional wellbeing. By opening up the dialogue across education, the workplace and within support networks, the silent suffering induced by menopause may be shared and actively reduced. Advertising and marketing brands and retailers also play a role in engaging and catering to women in this life stage and becoming more inclusive in the way they talk about the menopause.

It is our strong belief this research demonstrates it is time to reset the dial and begin acknowledging the far ranging and significant impacts the menopause has on women's lives.

Overwhelmingly, it highlights a need for collaboration in making the menopause experience easier, for the time-poor busy woman, for whom the menopause is an inconvenience that she is often unprepared for. 96% of women surveyed universally spoke out about the need for a dedicated resource that brings together the best of the menopause in one place, reinforcing the important role of GEN M in curating this.

This white paper emphasises that the burden should not rest squarely on the shoulders of women to seek out information about the menopause but should be something shared by all of society – from brands, retailers and employers to medical professionals and support networks.

GEN M is here to sign post and promote the very best information, resources and services available from inspiring menopause brands, champions and organisations to ensure that women, and their support networks, can access the support they need to navigate the menopause more easily. We will champion the very best tried and tested products, solutions and brands who are leading the way in manufacturing and marketing to menopausal women, as well as acting as an all-encompassing resource for workplaces.

If you are a purpose-led brand or people-orientated organisation that has been inspired or motivated by the insights and findings detailed within this white paper, we urge you to not only be a part of the conversation but join us in creating collaborative and sustained change. GEN M can support you in using this insight and our platform to better target, engage and value your customers, employees, colleagues and support networks. We can make the menopause experience better today than it was yesterday.

TOGETHER, WE'VE GOT THIS
WWW.GEN-M.COM/CONTACT-US

METHODOLOGY

The survey was completed by a nationally representative sample of 2010 UK women by age, region and socio-economic group. The survey respondents were sourced from Dynata (www.dynata.com), the Market Research Industry's largest first-party sample provider with 62m fully permissioned consumers and business professionals worldwide.

The 15 minute survey was completed online between Friday 25th September and Thursday 1st October 2020. Key to analysing the data was dropping the survey respondents into groups according to where they were on the menopause journey. We wanted to recognise the Perimenopause as part of this journey but were aware that many women would not have heard of the term, therefore we created some definitions with which the respondents could self-classify themselves. The question used and how we used it for classification is shown below.

B1 Which of these descriptions best describes your current situation with regards the menopause?

	CLASSIFICATION
I haven't noticed any changes yet that would suggest I might be heading towards the menopause	PRE-PERIMENOPAUSE
I think I may be experiencing symptoms that suggest I have started the transition period (perimenopause) towards the menopause but I can't be absolutely sure. (e.g. you may be experiencing irregular periods, hot flushes, mood changes, vaginal dryness)	POSSIBLY PERIMENOPAUSE
I have definitely started the transition period (perimenopause) towards the menopause (e.g. you may be experiencing irregular periods, hot flushes, mood changes, vaginal dryness).	DEFINITELY PERIMENOPAUSE
I am going through the menopause at the moment	MENOPAUSE
I am post menopause	POST MENOPAUSE