



discover.ai

EXPERIENCES
OF THE
MENOPAUSE

Time for a real change



Who we are

discover.ai

[Discover.ai](#) is all about exploring rich and relevant content gathered from sources in the online world, to identify emergent, exciting insights and ideas for brands. For each brief we receive, we will hand pick the places in the online world to go to, in order to feed our project with the most meaningful content.

The content we gather will often include, for example, narratives from emergent brand websites, experts and organisations websites, influencers and bloggers, online journalism and conversations from consumer forums, consumer feedback and review sites and relevant social media conversation.

To find out more, contact Flora Kader at info@discover.ai

The symptoms of menopause

This report makes repeated references to the symptoms that can be caused by menopause. Before reading the report, familiarise yourself with this list of possible symptoms.

Read full project

This report is based on findings from a Discover.ai Springboards project. In particular, the research unearthed important insights around diverse experiences of menopause and how they are at play in each of the opportunity areas. If you are interested in understanding these opportunity areas more deeply and reading lots more consumer verbatim, get in touch with Discover.ai for a copy of the full project.



[Over The Bloody Moon](#) is a leading menopause consultancy, working across the globe. Over The Bloody Moon is powered by a collective of menopause specialists, providing education, training, research, and resources to schools, organisations, brands, and individuals to ensure the menopause transition is a positive time of life.

To find out more, contact Lesley Salem, the founder at lesley@overthebloodymoon.com



The menopause is an inevitability. It's something that every woman in your life (your mother, your niece, your doctor, your boss, your bus driver) will at some point experience. In some instances, the menopause will affect transgender and non-binary people too. Some people will experience only mild symptoms, while for others, symptoms will be unbearably severe. In our research, we saw a gap between the daily lived experiences of those struggling with menopause and the support and recognition they received. More can and should be done to help prepare, equip, and empower people to manage their menopause to avoid unnecessary suffering.

The situation right now is that people know next to nothing about the menopause until one day BAM! it hits them. Over 900,000 women in the UK have left their jobs because of menopausal symptoms¹. The wall of silence can leave people feeling isolated, trapped, and embarrassed. Some end up guilty that they aren't resilient enough to 'cope' like they should. Loved ones are often blissfully ignorant and relationships can be put under strain. Experiences like these are compounded by intersections of class, race, weight, and geography.

Big problems require bold solutions. This report will propose concrete actions we can all take to help improve the current situation.

Where better to start than by challenging the outdated misogyny and unimaginative ageism that makes menopause one of society's last great taboos? Living and breathing for over half a decade is something that deserves to be celebrated and there's a huge gap in the market for culturally viable depictions of later life. Our **Empower Honesty** section reflects on the feelings of shame and the culture of silence that surrounds menopause and links this to the normalisation of female pain (physical and emotional) which we see ingrained in us from puberty.

The next crucial step is to ensure people are receiving the emotional support they need and deserve. Here, we should recognise that the internet currently offers

many rich resources and grassroots communities where menopausal people can find a sense of comradery, solidarity, empowerment, and connection. However, our Offer Real Support section draws together ways in which friends, family and colleagues can improve the day-to-day reality of menopausal people beyond the virtual realm. Bringing support into the home and into the workplace.

Although the UK is at the forefront of the menopause movement globally, the vast majority of us are still in the dark. For example, few people realise that depression, anxiety, and loss of confidence are common psychological symptoms of menopause². Our **Recognise and Treat** section will suggest ways to address the shocking lack of education about what the menopause actually consists of and raise awareness for the wide of hormonal and non-hormonal options for alleviating symptoms. As it stands, only 12% of women in the UK receive help in the form of hormone therapy³.

A key aim of this project is to highlight the diverse experiences of menopause that exist. When you picture a menopausal person do you see a white woman in her 50s? Our **Include the Excluded** section encourages you widen the lens and get resources into the hands of those who need them most. It's no longer enough to pay lip service to inclusivity. We must consider and combat the distinct challenges faced by menopausal people of colour, menopausal people in their 20s, 30s and 40s, transgender people, those who are religious, those who are disabled and those for whom menopause was triggered by surgery.

Think back to your mother, your niece, your doctor, your boss, your bus driver... think of yourself. What are you going to do to make sure the next generation of menopausal people aren't left out in the cold?

1. <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1416/menopause-and-the-workplace/>

2. <https://www.themenopausecharity.org/>

3. https://menopausupport.co.uk/?page_id=60

About the research method...

The Challenge

In the context of increased focus on women's health in the UK, the spotlight is gradually turning towards the menopause. Indeed, menopause is one of 5 priority areas cited in the government's 2022 Strategy for Women's Health set to be published later this year. The UK is at the forefront of the menopause movement globally, with more and more organisations dismantling taboos and challenging stigma. Consumers are beginning to notice the huge failings in how menopause is taught and thought about – brands and businesses need to innovate to remain ahead of the curve and maintain credibility

The Question

What can we learn from online conversations around the menopause that will help us to understand the different ways that menopause is experienced and perceived, in order to inspire new narratives and solutions for the next generation?

What we did and where we looked

- We sourced a sample of rich, stretchy, and inspiring sources around menopause, perimenopause, fertility, and ageing
- We used our machine learning model of Human Drivers to surface the key textual factors as a starting point of analysis
- We ran a qualitative deep dive analysis into our rich and diverse data set to find the nuggets of insight that unlock opportunity



A note on terms we're using:

This report contains verbatim content from people who are writing online. Most of the content uses the terms **woman/women** to describe people who have experienced or will experience the menopause. We know it is important to acknowledge that not all people who experience menopause are women, and not all those who identify as women experience the menopause.

We recognise that existing as a woman, whether **cisgender** or **transgender**, or existing as a **transgender person**, will impact the needs and experiences of the menopause.

Furthermore, we use the term **menopause** throughout this report to refer to symptoms and experiences

which would more accurately be classed as symptoms and experiences related to the **perimenopause**. The perimenopause is the time leading up to the one day when the menopause takes place. We do this because our approach is interested primarily in reflecting the thoughts and feelings of those struggling with symptoms and therefore we see it as appropriate to mirror the language they themselves use.

An acknowledgment of surgical menopause:

We make reference to **surgical menopause** in this report while discussing "early menopause", however we recognise that surgical menopause is distinct from naturally occurring menopause and it is accompanied by its own unique challenges.

EMPOWER HONESTY

In our research we saw calls for a more honest reflection of what it's like to be a woman in this day and age. Many people in their 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s are living full and exciting lives, and yet brands and popular culture very rarely reflect this. Meanwhile, women of all ages minimise and normalise intense physical pain and discomfort in order to remain 'convenient' in what has historically been a man's world. And finally, we saw that the pain of infertility is often overlooked and occasionally dismissed by peers who gesture the supposed 'quick fix' solutions that now exist.

What we can do...

Redefine the norms of age

A rejection of the unimaginative fetishization of youth in favour of a defiant embracing of the whole of life.

Consumers can lobby media & streaming platforms for creative representations of women in midlife and senior years. **Brands can** choose imagery that reflects the modern reality of women in their 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s. **Employers can** tackle ageism through informed and open debate & implement workplace policies that acknowledge older women for their experience.

Female pain out of the dark

Silence around physical pain and discomfort is ingrained in women from adolescence. Tackle normalisation across the board

Consumers and brands can use bold language that challenges minimisation of period pain. **Brands can** innovate products that combat pain & chronic pain e.g. TENS, CBD & SCENAR technology. **Employers can** revolutionise their options for reporting sick leave. Give choices that accurately reflect reasons people take time off, including menopause and menstruation.

A compassionate end to fertility

Making room for women (of all ages) to grieve the end of their fertility without judgement or dismissal.

Consumers can express sympathy for friends confronted with infertility no matter their age & offer to attend appointments together. **Brands can** partner with influencers and creators who live empowered child-free lives. **Employers can** provide mental health support and awareness of fertility as a journey or moment of crisis.

What this means is that people often feel embarrassed to reach menopause and tend to discuss it only in hushed tones with peers, if at all. But the silence around menopausal discomfort shouldn't be seen in isolation. Women are taught to suppress excruciating pain from adolescence – from periods, to IBS, to endometriosis. Finally, being dismissed means those faced with infertility are forced to process on their own and often don't receive the empathy they require.

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So, let's stand united and challenge these outdated misconceptions of middle-age that rob us of our beauty, self-esteem and confidence.

[Source](#)

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It's just an IUD fitting
It's just period pain.
It's just a heavy period It's just an early miscarriage. It's just morning sickness. It's just pregnancy. It's just early labour. It's just your age. It's just one of those things It's just menopause.

[Source](#)

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Loss can take many forms Not being able to have a child or more children is a significant loss and many people take time to grieve.

[Source](#)



OFFER REAL SUPPORT

In our research we saw that some people are waking up to the fact that they have been neglecting the menopausal people around them. For a long time, people experiencing menopause have been scoffed at by family members and dismissed by their bosses with the result that they retreat inside themselves and battle with menopause alone.

What this means is that personal relationships are carrying unnecessary tension. It also means that the workforce is losing talented, experienced female employees and the morale of the entire team is being negatively impacted. Finally, it means that many people may feel lonely and isolated.

What we can do...

Loved ones taking initiative

Removing the onus put on menopausal people to educate those around them - friends, partners and children proving they care.

Consumers can without being asked and take pressure off people in their life transitioning through menopause. **Brands can** fund school & community-based workshops that teach children how to react and understand. **Employers can** level the playing field by providing leave for partners to accompany loved ones to important menopause appointments to understand and advocate for their needs.

The office adapted to women

Practical changes that wilfully improve the day to reality of menopausal people at work.

Employers can optimise the office environment e.g. adequate sanitation, multi-purpose wellbeing rooms, adjustable temperatures. **Also**, train managers to realise women hitting menopause might suffer a crisis of confidence & to reassure, showing empathy and understanding. **And finally**, make reasonable adjustments that help retain valuable female employees e.g. flexible working.

Unite with others

New ways to connect with women who are (often reluctantly) in the same boat. Forging community loud and proud.

Consumers can carve out physical and virtual spaces for menopausal people of all ages to share and bond e.g. team sports, menopause cafes, metaverse. **Brands can** use light-hearted tone and faithfully reflect the humour which women employ when discussing menopause. **Employers can** platform people who want to establish networks in the workplace to share experiences and tips on dealing with symptoms. **Employers can** set up employee resource groups and networks and run group masterclasses so people can discuss different ways to manage their menopause and share experiences with others.

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Men work alongside women, men are married to women, and I think men also need to know what's going on because we need to have that empathy and understanding of what's happening to our partners, our friends: says Gabby Logan.

[Source](#)

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Menopause is not just a gender or age issue, as it can impact on colleagues both directly or indirectly, and it should therefore be considered as an organisational issue.

[Source](#)

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My message to other women [and trans and non binary people] of all ages is 'Don't do menopause alone, it's a battle you don't need to fight!'

[Source](#)



RECOGNISE AND TREAT

In our research we saw that the vast majority of people aren't aware of the many symptoms – physical, psychological and cognitive – that can indicate a person is entering menopause. Unfortunately, this ignorance is not limited to the general population, healthcare professionals are often shockingly uninformed about the signs to look out for and the possible treatments to consider.

What this means is that people suffer for a long time when they could be managing their symptoms and risk health complications down the line. In particular, deep depression and anxiety are important symptoms of menopause that rarely receive the attention or treatment they require. Finally, it means that people who do manage to receive treatment often end up being greeted with a rigid one-size-fits-all approach.

What we can do...

Awareness of the symptoms

Everyone knowing the symptoms of menopause – children taught at school, doctors taught at university. Signs recognised and misdiagnosis tackled.

Consumers can call for tech that can more accurately diagnose menopause e.g. wearables, apps based of big data. **Brands can** market products that relieve lesser-known symptoms e.g. acne, insomnia, body odour, changed sense of taste, which will raise awareness. **Employers can** educate via outreach programs to local schools and via open dialogue in communications.

Unblur mental strain

Waking up to the real and devastating impact menopause can have on people's mental health. Depression and anxiety treated with hormone therapy not antidepressants.

Consumers can donate to charities that raise awareness about the possible psychological impact of menopause. **Brands can** lobby to ensure antidepressants are not first-line treatment for menopause. **Employers can** choose health insurance providers that offer talking therapy and encourage uptake by people with multiple caring responsibilities & those dealing with grief.

Perfect your symptom management

Finding what works is a journey. Time, support, and patience for people to discover which treatment combination suits them best – be it medical or holistic.

Brands can innovate products & apps that allow people to track their physical and emotional symptoms & monitor the outcome after switching treatments. **Employers can** break down socio-economic barriers to accessing hormone therapy by paying for staff prescriptions e.g. like Boots and Timpson have done.

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Anyone else watched #davinamenopause I'm appalled to think that GP's only training in the menopause is an optional EModule.

[Source](#)

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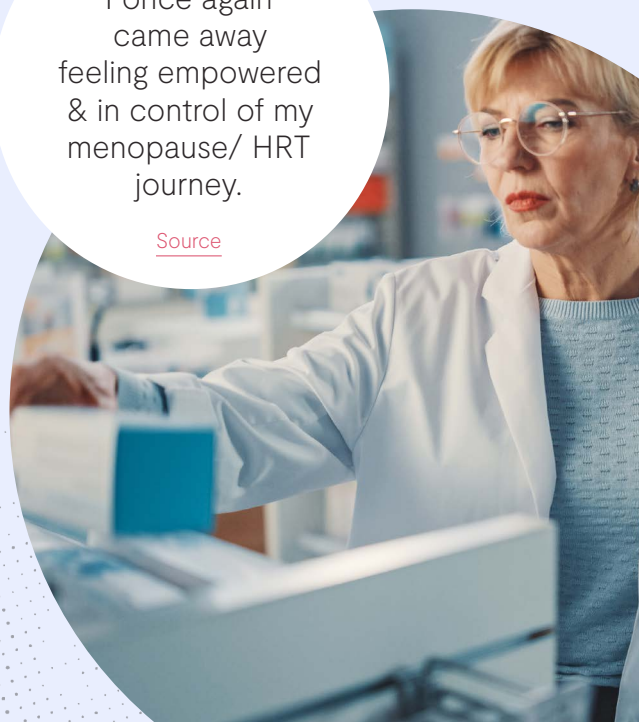
Low mood, depression and anxiety are all common symptoms of the peri/menopause but they are not inevitable and you can do something about them.

[Source](#)

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I once again came away feeling empowered & in control of my menopause/ HRT journey.

[Source](#)



INCLUDE THE EXCLUDED

In our research we saw increasingly diverse voices raising awareness about their particular experience menopause – they explain how it's the same and how it's different. Not enough people understand the nuances of menopause for black, Asian, Latin American, religious, and disabled women. Trans people, women whose menopause was triggered by surgery and younger women currently feel unrepresented too.

What this means is that people from ethnic diversities are not currently benefitting from the burgeoning menopause discourse, even though their experience is likely the most intense. It also means trans people are dreading medical screenings because they will likely be greeted with insensitivity. Finally, it means younger women are caught totally off guard and feel insecure in their identity.

What we can do...

Beyond tokenism

Designing tailored resources and actively putting them in the hands of each audience – intersectionality embraced.

Charities can translate leaflets and guides into minority languages and distribute them in places where these people go, online and in person. **Brands can** partner with vocal advocates for minority groups who are already doing amazing work around menopause e.g. Dr Nighat Arif, Nina Kuypers. **Employers can** respect employee boundaries and make sure any menopause initiatives are considerate of cultural and religious preferences.

Recognising trans experiences


Trans and non-binary people given a platform to share their menopause journeys – more understanding and more consideration.

Consumers can use inclusive language and be conscious of trans & non-binary audiences. **Brands can** include gender neutral options when innovating products e.g. pee proof underwear, comfort clothing. **Employers can** make sure trans and non-binary experiences of menopause are mentioned in training sessions and discussions.

A portrait of early menopause

Our narrow conception of menopause leaves younger people out in the cold – a broadened image will have everyone better prepared.

Consumers can petition modern, inclusive brands to run menopause lines e.g. Savage X Fenty. **Brands can** opt for imagery showing people of various ages in menopause to spark dialogue and attention. **Employers can** make sure surgical & early menopause experiences are included in training sessions and discussions.



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Future plans include a professionally-staffed helpline, and a menopause bus to visit communities which are often excluded from menopause care.

[Source](#)

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Your menopause resource may be useful but if you exclude trans & non-binary people from it, your actions will have a negative impact. #Menopause #IncludeMyMenopause.

[Source](#)

“
I hope it helps other early menopausal ladies feel less alone.

[Source](#)

Conclusion

The UK is at the forefront of the 'Menopause Movement', recruiting new advocates every day – people who have personally been impacted by menopause and seen the needless disruption it can cause when undiagnosed, ignored, or ineffectively managed.

This report is a call to action: to brands, to organisations, to communities, and individuals. Menopause is just one aspect of women's health that has been ignored for too long. In an age of longevity, ensuring people are prepared and equipped for this significant life transition and know how to support those impacted by it, becomes ever important. When women thrive, so do communities, relationships, the economy.

Most people experiencing perimenopause are in their late 40s. This segment is characterised by being more affluent and due to this 'life shift' is a time of re-appraisal. For anyone transitioning through menopause (early, surgical, medically induced, as well as natural ageing menopause) it's a time when they are forming new habits and looking to brands and services for solutions that will help power them at a new optimum.

The current set of new entrants are dominated by Gen Xers who are driving awareness and advocating for action around menopause, so they get the products and services they need to keep thriving. This generation have continued to find ways to enjoy life, their way. Redefining rules, breaking through glass

ceilings, challenging taboos and encouraging positive change. Ensuring they have choices to manage and tailor their menopause, as well as bringing others on their journey. Understanding their unique needs (as the menopause woman's profile is not homogenous) and helping them live life, to their rules, and to their own rhythm is a way to help them take charge of their change: something, that every person impacted by menopause has the right to.

If you look more closely at the menopause movement, you'll see it's being powered by a new wave of feminism. A group of feisty, smart, economically active women who want the world to value in a way that disrupts traditional value of femininity based on 'youth', 'attractiveness' and 'fertility'. Support them on their cause and you'll be a trusted companion, enabling them to live their lives, fully.

Lesley Salem



Acknowledgements

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