



# Annual Health Report 2023

# Welcome to our Annual Health Report 2023

We've crunched the data from thousands of customers and surveyed the UK public to bring you our health and wellness insights of 2023.

At a time when we can be more proactive about wellness than ever before, with countless personalisation and tracking options, we saw many positive signs of people taking control of their health.

Our attitudes to health survey showed many of us are investing in our health, despite increased living costs, and sales of our prostate cancer screening tests surged in reaction to celebrities sharing their diagnoses in the media.

We also highlight how the current financial squeeze may be costing our health, as we explore the decline in several key health biomarkers between 2021 and 2023.

As people continue to tighten their belts, one of this year's biggest trends could be finding ways to live well on a budget. At Medichecks, we'll continue to play our part by giving personalised health insights that have the potential to help people live longer, healthier lives.



Helen Marsden  
Director and Co-founder

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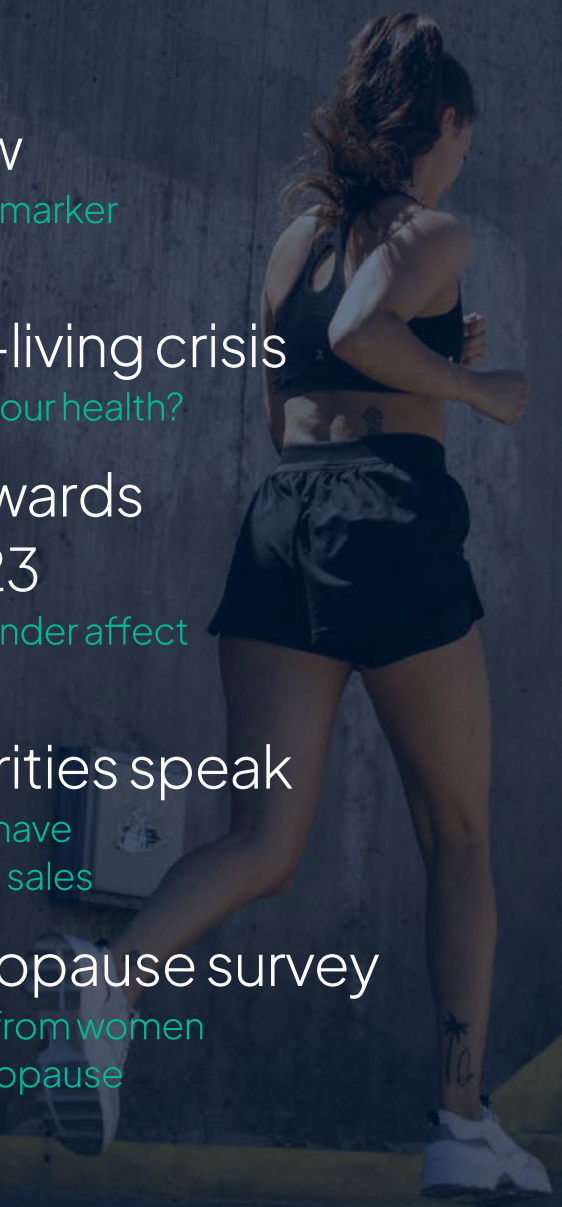
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# Year in review

## A breakdown of biomarker trends from 2023



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Medical Director

A hand is holding a pink box labeled 'Sample Collection Kit' with the Medichecks logo. The box is tilted, and the text 'Sample Collection Kit' is written in white. The background is a blurred image of a person's arm in a grey sleeve.

Sample  
Collection  
Kit.

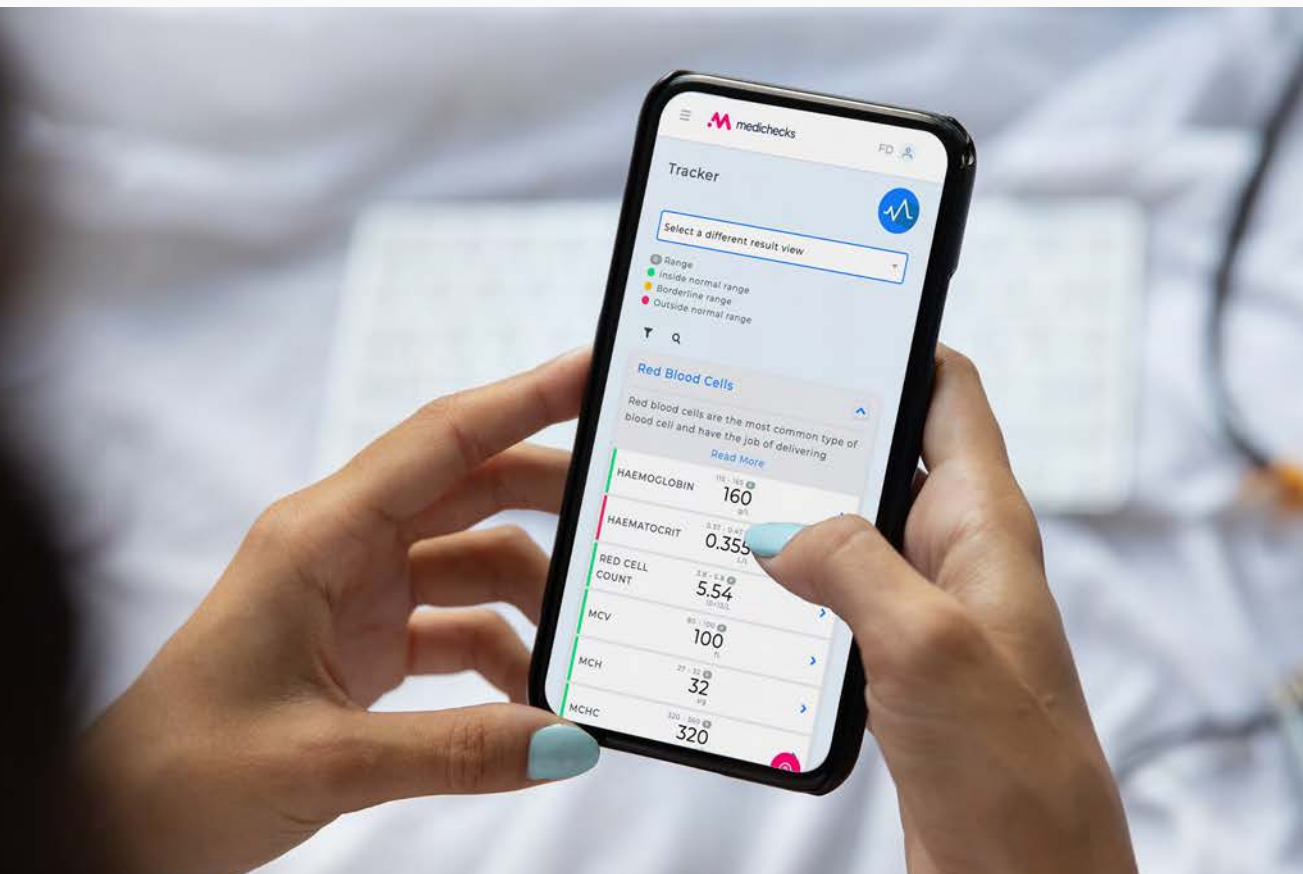
**Data**

Data is based on all Medichecks customer results from 2023. Exclusions from this dataset include any failed samples and biomarkers lacking established reference ranges.

All data was accurate at the time of publication.  
Percentage values have been rounded to the nearest integer.

# After crunching the numbers from thousands of customer results in 2023, we've discovered some interesting insights about the nation's health.

From cholesterol markers to sex hormones, it's clear that certain biomarkers are more challenging to keep in check.



## Abnormal T levels

### One in four men and women had an abnormal testosterone result.

Over a quarter of men (26%) had a total testosterone result outside the normal range. And a third (33%) had an abnormal free testosterone result.

Testosterone supplementation and anabolic steroid use may have skewed these results, but it could also reflect the population-level decline in this hormone. Testosterone levels are thought to be declining by about 1% every year on average in men.

But it's not just a male hormone. Testosterone plays a crucial role in women too in maintaining bone density, muscle strength, libido, mood, and energy. We found that a similar proportion of women's total testosterone results (26%) were also abnormal. Conditions like polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), taking hormone replacement therapy, and getting older can all affect testosterone levels.

Top 5 biomarkers most likely to return an abnormal result:

- 1 Total cholesterol (50%)
- 2 LDL cholesterol (47%)
- 3 Transferrin saturation (33%)
- 4 Non-HDL cholesterol (32%)
- 5 Luteinising hormone (31%)



76% of women over 50  
had a raised total  
cholesterol result.

**Did you know?**

Due to changes in oestrogen, cholesterol levels often increase during and after menopause.

61% of men over 50  
had a raised total  
cholesterol result.

## Lipid level lowdown

### **Almost half of total cholesterol results were raised.**

**Of all biomarkers, total cholesterol was most likely to return an abnormal result. Half (50%) of all results were raised – and this figure increased with age.**

Cholesterol is essential for the body to function normally. However, too much bad cholesterol can increase your risk of conditions like heart attacks and strokes. There's a lot more to cardiovascular risk than total cholesterol. It's dependent on many factors, including family history, smoking status, and blood pressure. But knowing your cholesterol level is a good start.

Ratios such as total cholesterol:non-HDL, as well as apolipoprotein profiles and lipoprotein(a), can also help to build a better picture of your risk. These markers are included in our brand-new [Optimal Health Blood Test](#).

### Female trends, ironed out

More than one in three young women had an abnormal transferrin saturation result.

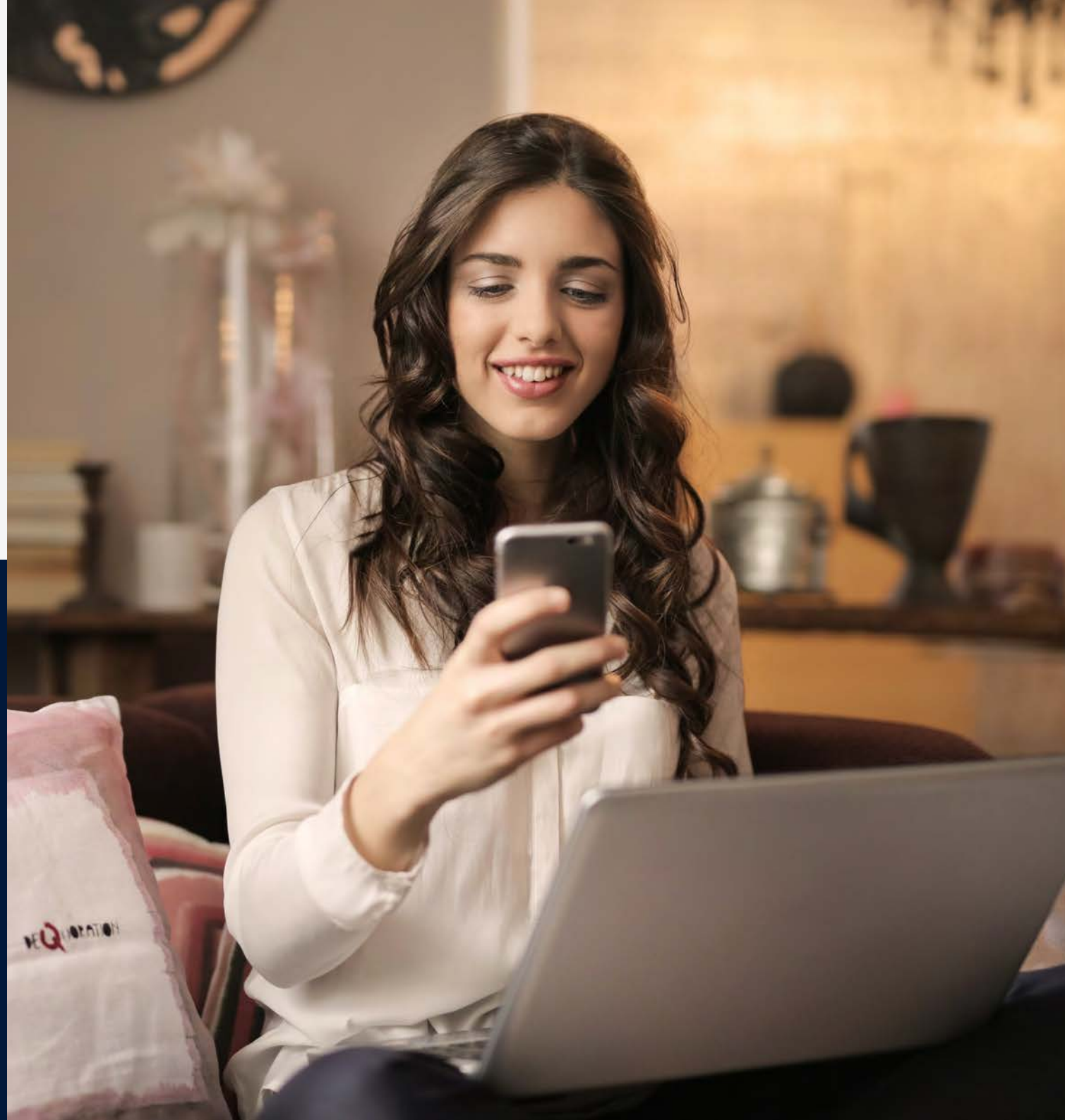
For women aged 18–45, transferrin saturation was abnormal in over a third of cases (38%).

A low transferrin saturation result most often points to an iron deficiency, of which there are many potential causes. Women are more likely to have low iron than men due to periods and pregnancy.

### Sweet 60s

Nearly one in five customers over 60 had a raised HbA1c result.

HbA1c is an indicator of blood sugar control over approximately three months. Our results showed that 19% of people over 60 had a raised HbA1c result which usually indicates prediabetes or diabetes itself.



# Low D in the land of tea

Vitamin D deficiency was one of the most common nutrient deficiencies.

It's perhaps no surprise that many Brits don't quite get enough of the sunshine vitamin. We found that 20% of vitamin D results were abnormal, which can have significant health implications. Vitamin D helps to regulate our mood, immune system, and energy levels.

Experts recommend that everyone takes a vitamin D supplement throughout the autumn and winter months in the UK.

Down on vitamin D

1 in 5 vitamin D results were abnormal in 2023.



# The cost-of-living crisis

## What's the cost to your health?



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### Data

This analysis compares median biomarker results from 2021 and 2023. For data points expressed as ranges (greater than or less than specific values), these qualifiers were removed to establish numerical values for analysis. The Mann-Whitney test was applied to determine the statistical significance of percentage changes, with a p-value threshold set at <0.05. Reference is made to our 'Attitudes towards health survey 2023', conducted in November 2023, which garnered 1,507 responses.

All data was accurate at the time of publication.  
Percentage values have been rounded to the nearest integer.

### References


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**In 2023, 93% of Brits reported increased living costs <sup>[1]</sup>. And it seems that rising energy, housing, and food prices are not just straining budgets but may also be impacting our health.**

Our analysis showed a decline in key health biomarkers like vitamins, minerals, and cholesterol between 2021 and 2023, and it's possible the financial crisis has played a part. Let's delve into these critical findings.





### Sugar spike

The average HbA1c level increased in both men and women by 6%.

HbA1c (or glycated haemoglobin) is an indicator of blood glucose (or blood sugar) level and can be used to check your risk of diabetes.

### Climbing cholesterol

The average level of non-HDL (bad) cholesterol increased by approximately 3%.

Cholesterol isn't all bad. It has several vital functions in your body, such as making hormones and building cells. However some types, grouped under the term non-HDL (or bad) cholesterol, can increase your risk of cardiovascular disease.

## How might the cost-of-living crisis affect HbA1c and non-HDL cholesterol levels?

- 1. Eating more processed foods:** over a quarter (28%) of UK consumers are eating more processed foods due to higher living costs<sup>[5]</sup>, which can increase bad cholesterol levels and diabetes risk.
- 2. Lack of exercise:** a third of people (33%) from our survey said they're reducing their spend on gym memberships and health services, or have discontinued these services all together, due to the financial squeeze. Reduced physical activity negatively impacts blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- 3. Stress:** financial concerns may be a cause of chronic stress, which not only affects our mental health but can also impact blood sugar control and our balance of fats.

### Falling ferritin

The average ferritin level decreased by 7% in men.

Ferritin is a protein that reflects how much iron is stored in your body. Iron is vital for transporting oxygen around your body and supporting your immune system.

### B12 breakdown

The average vitamin B12 level decreased by 14% in women and 15% in men.

Vitamin B12 is like a superhero sidekick for your body. It helps produce red blood cells, keep your nerves healthy, and boost your energy and mood.

## How might the cost-of-living crisis affect ferritin and B12 levels?

- 1. Dietary choices:** as living costs rise, Brits are reducing their meat and dairy intake, which are key sources of ferritin and vitamin B12 <sup>[2]</sup>. Cow's milk sales fell by 6% in 2022, partly due to rising costs and a shift towards plant-based diets <sup>[3]</sup>. A recent study shows that 43% of UK consumers view meat reduction as a cost-saving strategy <sup>[4]</sup>.
- 2. Stopping supplements:** nearly four in ten people (39%) in our survey said they're spending less on health supplements due to the cost-of-living crisis, which may contribute to a drop in micronutrient levels.
- 3. Stress:** persistent financial stress can also lower B12 levels, impacting overall health.

## 5 tips for eating well on a budget

1. **Plan your meals ahead and cook from scratch** - eating at home also gives you more control over ingredients than eating out and takeaways.
2. **Buy in bulk and freeze food** - frozen fruit and veggies can retain just as many nutrients as fresh ones.
3. **Love your legumes** - legumes such as chickpeas and lentils are excellent (but inexpensive) sources of protein, iron, and vitamin B12.
4. **Buy seasonal produce** - it's not only fresher, it's usually cheaper too.
5. **Snap up cafe and restaurant leftovers** - when you fancy a treat, you can grab delicious food at a hefty discount on apps like Too Good To Go.

## 3 ways to break a sweat without breaking the bank

1. **Embrace the great outdoors** - enjoy outdoor workouts in your local park, or try Couch to 5K or Parkrun.
2. **Use DIY weights** - upcycle your way to stronger muscles at home, using water bottles, tins, or a packed rucksack for a cost-free resistance workout.
3. **Use YouTube, your new personal trainer** - access hundreds of workouts, from yoga to HIIT - each with a fitness guru to guide you.



Revealed:

# Men's and women's attitudes towards health in 2023

## How do age and gender affect health mindsets?



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### Data

Based on 1,507 responses to our 'Attitudes towards health 2023 survey' which ran in November 2023.

All data was accurate at the time of publication.  
Percentage values have been rounded to the nearest integer.

### References

1. Lobstein T, Jackson-Leach R, Powis J, Brinsden H, Gray M. 2023. Available from: <https://www.worldobesity.org/resources/resource-library/world-obesity-atlas-2023>.

# Our health is affected by our individual set of beliefs, priorities, and experiences.

We decided to explore the impact of age and gender on current UK health perspectives in our attitudes towards health survey.

Now let's unpack the 1,507 responses.

**A lack of motivation is preventing us from prioritising our health.**

Work, affordability, and even pain or injury didn't hold us back quite as much in 2023 as lack of motivation.

Nearly half of people (47%) listed lack of motivation as a factor that impacts how much they prioritise their health. This figure rose among 25 - 34-year-olds, with 60% of this cohort listing it as a factor.

So what's causing this lack of motivation?

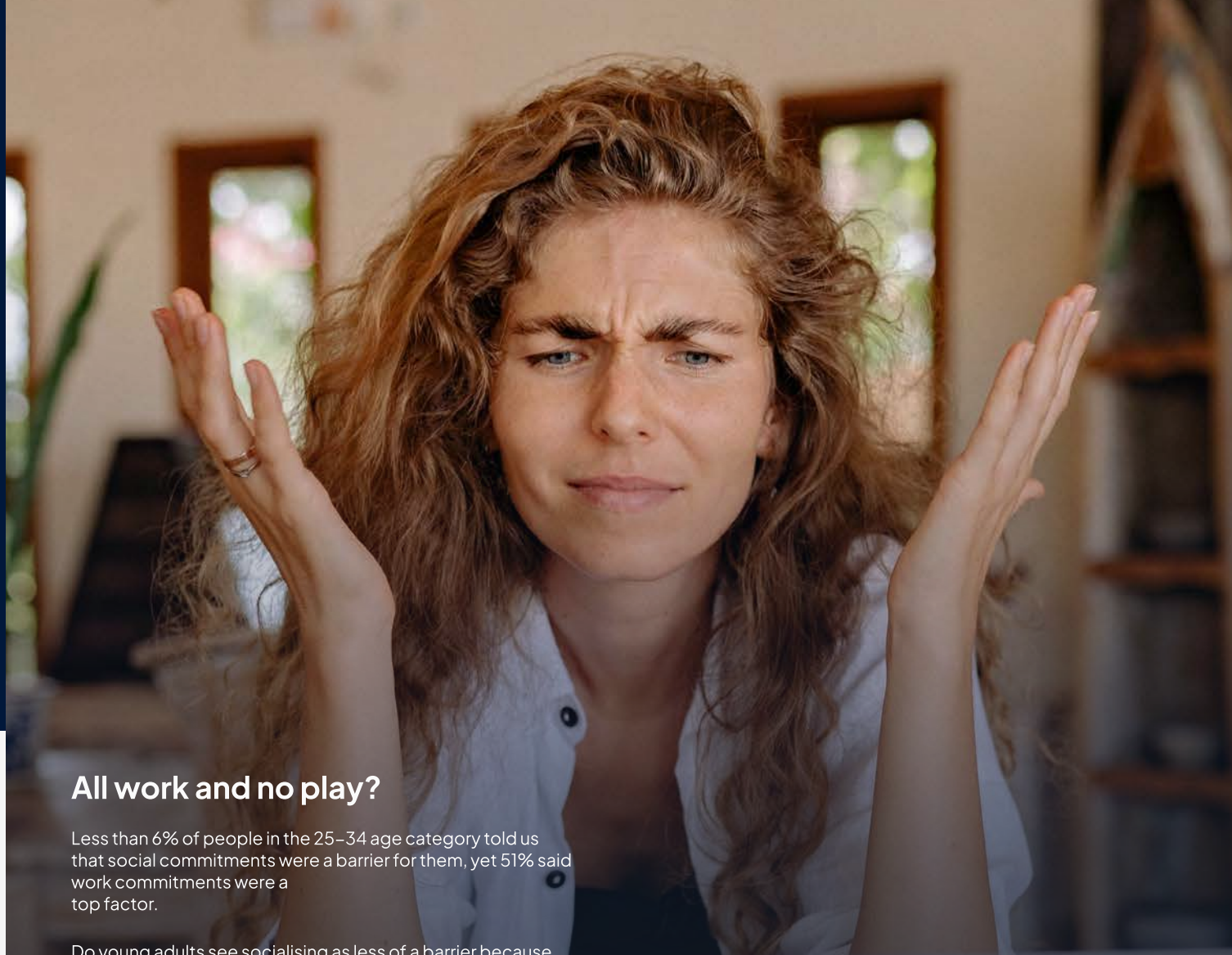
## All work and no play?

Less than 6% of people in the 25–34 age category told us that social commitments were a barrier for them, yet 51% said work commitments were a top factor.

Do young adults see socialising as less of a barrier because their health activities are more likely to be social events (e.g. going to the gym with a friend) or are people working more and socialising less?

People aged 34 - 44 had similar results, though they were more likely to list family commitments as a barrier (42% compared to the average score of 30%). This mirrors trends we're seeing across society of people waiting well into their 30s before starting a family. At the same time, this age bracket is likely to have older relatives to take care of.

People 45 and over were more likely to list pain as a barrier, with 55–65-year-olds most likely to list pain (43%).



# The top health concerns of 2023 were energy or mental health-related – regardless of age or gender.

People were twice as likely to select feeling tired as a health concern as being overweight, despite over 38% of the world's population being overweight or obese <sup>[1]</sup>. Are we prioritising how we feel rather than what we see on the scales?

The second most common health concern was stress or anxiety, with 39% of people selecting it, which was reported twice as often as physical illness

## Men vs women

Sexual function featured in men's top five, whereas menopause featured for women.

Our findings were pretty consistent across ages, though people under 45 were more likely to be concerned by a poor diet, which may be due to a lack of time, money, or confidence in the kitchen.

More than one in five men listed sexual function as one of their top health concerns.

## The top five health concerns for men and women

Men	Women
Feeling tired or low energy 41%	Feeling tired or low energy 48%
Stress or anxiety 39%	Stress or anxiety 40%
Sexual function 21%	Menopause 28%
Hormone imbalance 20%	Being overweight 26%
Being overweight 18%	Hormone imbalance 23%

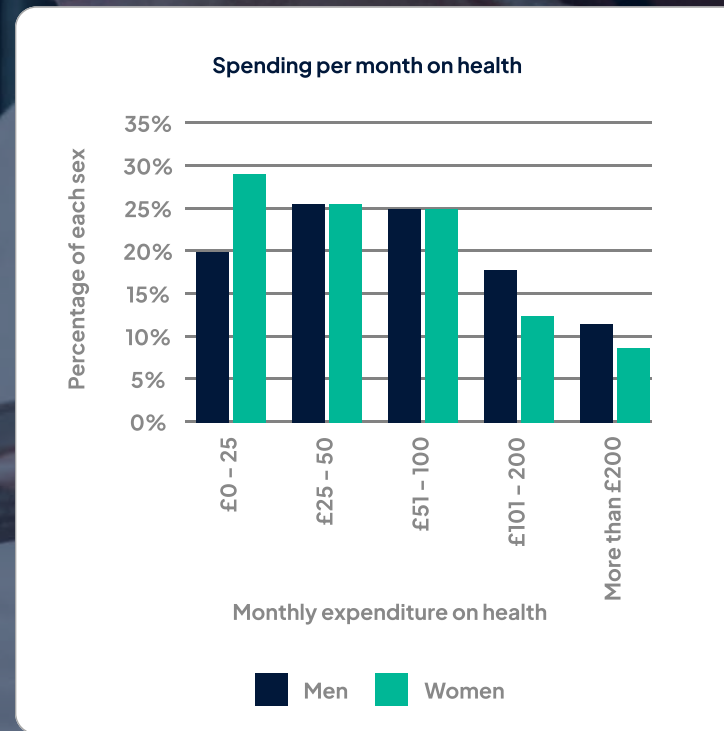
Percentages represent proportion of men and women who rated each health concern as one of their top three."

# Hey big spenders!

One in ten people spent over £200 on their health on things like gym memberships, superfoods, and health tests. That's even despite the pinch of the financial crisis.

People aged 25 to 54 spent the most on their health. And nearly a third (33%) of people in the 25-34 age bracket shelled out over £100 a month.

People aged 65 and over were likely to spend the least on their health, with 41% spending £25 a month or less.





# Feel-good findings.

## Three-quarters of women are up to date with health checks

There isn't much more to say other than keep up the good work! Men, you have more room for improvement as 57% of men told us they were up to date - so please talk to a doctor to see what's available.

## Let's par-tee-total!

**Nearly half (48%) of people said they don't drink alcohol - at all! This percentage rose to 54% in the under-45s categories.**

Limiting or abstaining from alcohol can help to prevent some lifestyle-related diseases and help keep organs functioning at their best.

The age group most likely to drink more than the recommended intake was people 65 and over, with 12% consuming more than 14 units a week.

## Body confidence increases with age

## Body satisfaction generally increased with age for both men and women.

However, men were happier overall with their bodies and came out with an average satisfaction score of 6.2 out of ten compared to women's 5.4 average score.

# When celebrities speak

## How public figures have influenced PSA test sales



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Medical Director

### Data

This dataset focuses on sales of our PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) Blood Test to male customers during 2023. Regional testing rates were calculated by dividing the total sales in each area by the estimated male population figures obtained from Eurostat. The calculation of abnormal result percentages was based on reference ranges as stipulated by NICE N012 guidelines.

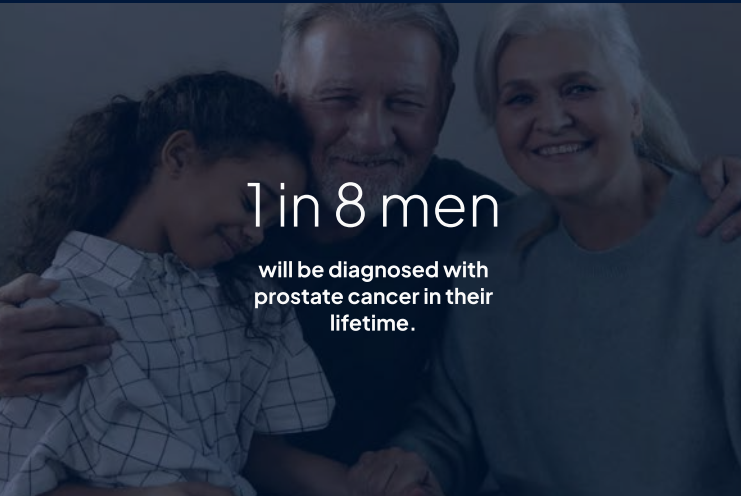
All data was accurate at the time of publication.  
Percentage values have been rounded to the nearest integer.

### References

1. Moore CM, Frangou E, McCartan N, Santaolalla A, Kopcke D, Brembilla G, et al. Prevalence of MRI lesions in men responding to a GP-led invitation for a prostate health check: a prospective cohort study. *BMJ Oncology*. 2023;2.
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# Demand for prostate cancer screenings surge in line with media focus.

Last year, a wave of familiar faces bravely shared their prostate cancer journeys in the media spotlight, and the public didn't just listen - they acted.



1 in 8 men  
will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime.

## Public figures driving the prostate cancer conversation in 2023

### 1 Paul Burrell

In January, Paul opened up about his diagnosis of prostate cancer in an episode of Lorraine.

The former butler of Princess Diana had a blood test for a TV show in 2022, which revealed high levels of PSA. A follow-up MRI scan revealed prostate cancer.

### 2 Colin McFarlane

In June, actor and voice artist, Colin McFarlane spread a heartfelt message for Men's Health Week and Father's Day. He and his brother were both diagnosed with prostate cancer in the same year with no symptoms.

The condition was picked up through regular PSA testing.

### 3 Nick Owen

The respected broadcaster shared his diagnosis of prostate cancer in early August.

Aged 75, Owen had surgery in April and has since urged other men to get tested. His announcement triggered a ten-fold spike in Prostate Cancer UK's risk checker tool.

### 4 Andy Taylor

In August, Duran Duran's original guitarist was in the news after starting a radioactive treatment, Lutetium-117, extending his life expectancy.

The 62-year-old had shared his diagnosis of stage four prostate cancer in 2022.

### 5 Bill Turnbull

The BBC presenter, Bill Turnbull died on 31st August 2022, aged 66, following a long battle with prostate cancer.

His death continues to have a considerable impact, with a spike in prostate cancer referrals around the same date in 2023.

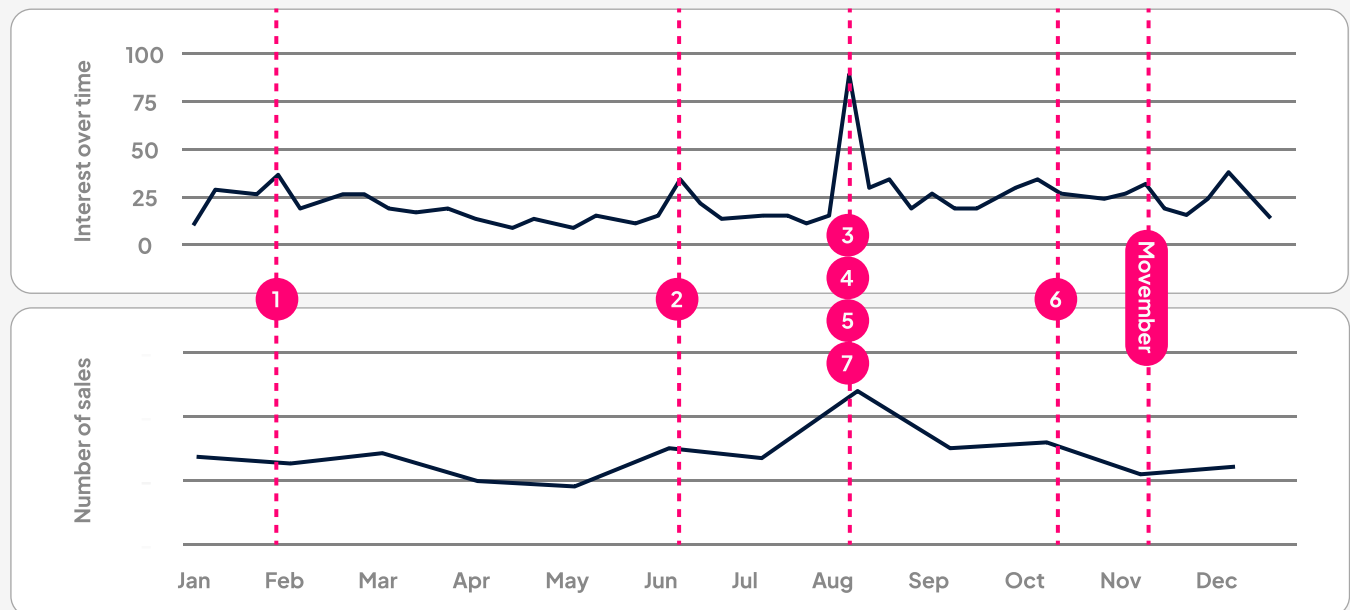
### 6 Steve Rider

Sports presenter, Steve Rider, revealed on BBC breakfast that he was receiving treatment for prostate cancer and encouraged other men to get checked.

### 7 Alfie Moon (Eastenders)

Eastenders aired a new prostate cancer storyline in August 2023, which saw Alfie Moon (played by Shane Richie) diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Interest in "PSA tests" on Google Trends



Sales of Medicecks PSA Blood Tests

# A surge in PSA testing.

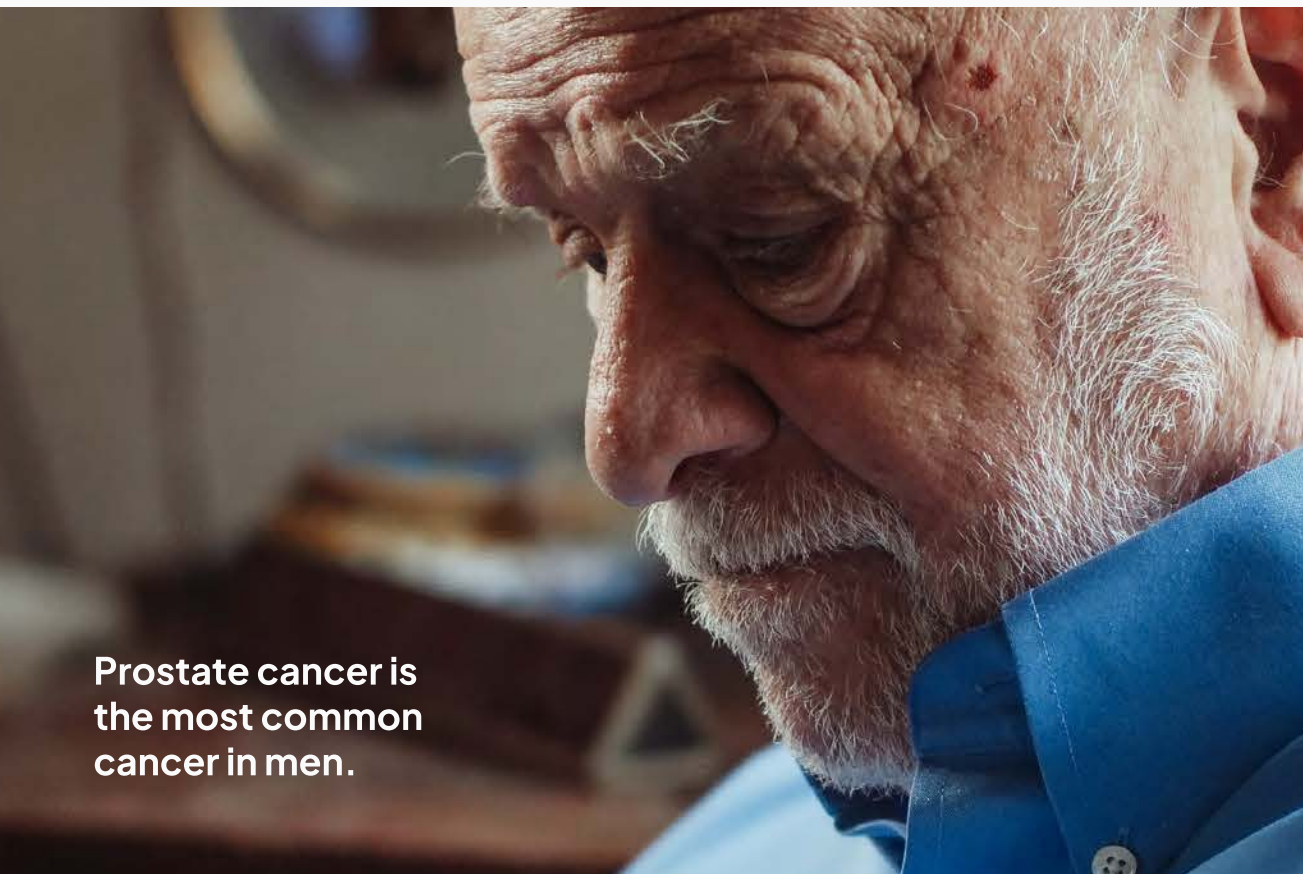
The media's spotlight on prostate cancer sparked conversation and spurred action.

Sales of our PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) Blood Test markedly increased in August 2023. We sold 1.9 times as many PSA tests compared to November 2023, typically our best-selling month due to Movember initiatives.

## Why is there no prostate cancer screening programme in the UK?

The UK doesn't currently have a national PSA screening programme as the PSA test alone isn't reliable enough to detect prostate cancer that needs treatment.

The REIMAGINE study found over half of men with a positive MRI and serious prostate cancer had a low PSA result <sup>[1]</sup>, which shows the importance of research into using technology like MRI scans alongside PSA testing.



Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men.

The ten-year survival rate for prostate cancer in the UK is about

78%.

Around

33

men die from prostate cancer every day in the UK.

You are

2.5x

more likely to have prostate cancer if your brother or father did.

## Testing rates by location.

Men in the West Midlands were 1.9 times more likely to take a Medicecks PSA Blood Test in 2023 than men in London.

Populations with the lowest testing rates (percentage of male population who took a Medicecks PSA Blood Test) included London, Northern Ireland, and Scotland.

Differences may be due to socioeconomic factors, population demographics, cultural differences, accessibility to testing, and attitudes towards prostate cancer screening.

## What's next for prostate cancer screening?

The LIMIT trial aims to investigate the feasibility of community-based prostate cancer screening using a portable MRI scanner in a travelling van <sup>[2]</sup>. The hope is that this five-minute scan will increase accessibility to men who would otherwise not be scanned. If successful, larger-scale trials would be necessary before this type of screening is rolled out.

In November 2023, Prostate Cancer UK announced the launch of their £42 million TRANSFORM trial <sup>[3]</sup>. The study will compare the most promising tests and provide more definitive evidence for the best way to screen for prostate cancer.

Studies like this are paving the way for a national screening programme, which might soon become a reality.

## Who is most at risk of prostate cancer?

In the UK, one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. Some men are more at risk than others.

**Risk factors for prostate cancer include:**

- **Age** - the risk increases if you're over 50.
- **Ethnicity** - rates of prostate cancer are higher among black men.
- **Family history** - you're at greater risk if you have a first-degree relative with prostate cancer.

[Check your risk in 30 seconds.](#)

Percentage of raised PSA results according to age

18 - 50 years

4%

51 - 60 years

7%

> 60 years

17%

PSA levels naturally increase with age. Among men over 60 taking a Medichicks test, one in six had elevated PSA.

However, only one in four men with a high PSA level actually have prostate cancer. It's a useful indicator but not definitive for cancer.



To find out more about the pros and cons of testing, visit [our PSA blog](#).



# The big menopause survey

First-hand insights from women going through menopause



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Medical Director

## Data

Data is taken from 265 responses to "The big menopause survey" conducted by Medchecks in September 2023. Participants included peri- or postmenopausal females in the UK.

All data was accurate at the time of publication.  
Percentage values have been rounded to the nearest integer.

## References

1. Hormone replacement therapy, England April 2015 to June 2023, NHS Business Services Authority. [cited 8 Nov 2023]. Available: [https://nhsbsa-opendata.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/hr/hrt\\_june\\_2023\\_v001.html](https://nhsbsa-opendata.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/hr/hrt_june_2023_v001.html)
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# Why is everyone talking about the menopause?

Menopause awareness has made waves in 2023, with famous faces sharing their stories, new treatments becoming available, and healthcare systems recognising the need for improved care.

Wanting to find out more, we turned to our customers for insights. Our big menopause survey gathered 265 responses from perimenopausal and postmenopausal women — here's what we learned.

# Symptoms of menopause.

It's commonly stated around 80% of women experience symptoms of menopause.

Yet 98% of the women we surveyed had symptoms and 67% of women experienced at least one atypical symptom.

## 5 most common symptoms.

1. Brain fog or memory problems
2. Tiredness or low energy
3. Joint pain or stiffness
4. Difficulty sleeping
5. Hot flushes

## 5 most common atypical symptoms.

1. Formication  
(sensation of bugs crawling over the skin)
2. Dental problems
3. Increased body odour
4. Numbness of the extremities
5. Altered spatial awareness

**12% of women didn't talk to anyone about their experience of menopause.**

Despite about one in eight women from our survey not discussing their experience of menopause with anyone, one study found that British women tend to be most comfortable talking about it across the 33 countries surveyed<sup>[2]</sup>.

**A pause in the passion**

**83% experienced a drop in libido.**

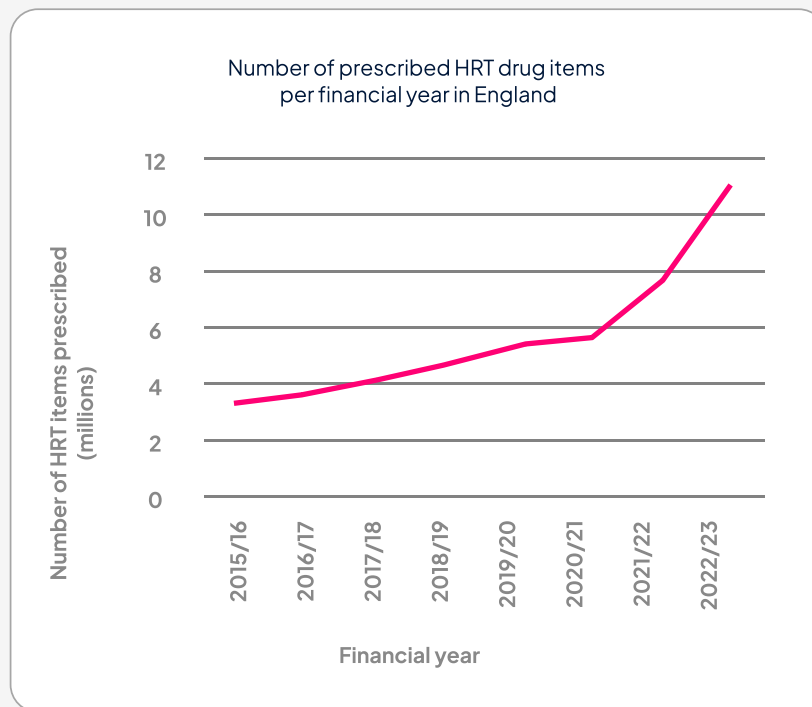
Most women experienced a decline in their sex drive, due to low energy levels (51%), low self-esteem (36%), mood changes (35%), and sexual symptoms (33%). 18% of women said there was no obvious cause.



# 2023: the year HRT prescriptions soared

More than 11 million HRT items were prescribed in England in 2022/23 – that's a 47% increase compared to 2021/22<sup>[1]</sup>.

Rising demand led to shortages in HRT treatments like Utrogestan®. The surge has been put down to the "Davina effect" and wider awareness around menopause.



Graph adapted from NHS Business Services Authority<sup>[1]</sup>.

## Hot flush news flash

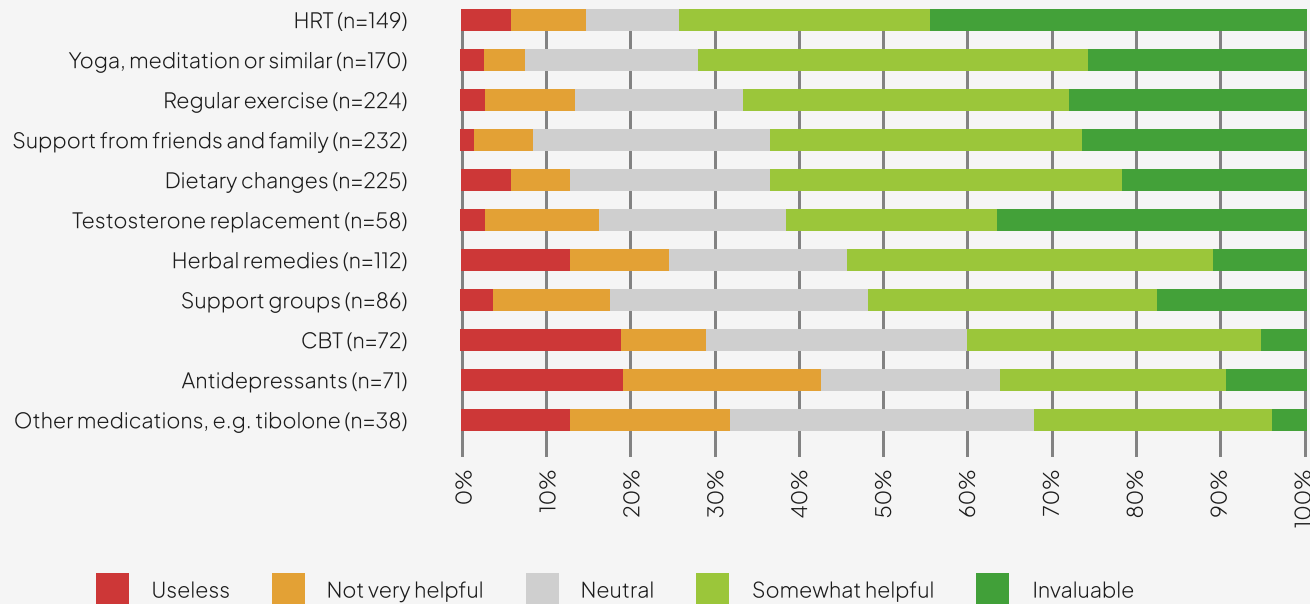
Veoza, also known as fezolinetant, has just been approved for use in the UK and been made available for private prescription. This non-hormonal drug has been described as "gamechanging" when it comes to treating hot flushes, offering a new treatment option for hundreds of thousands of women, particularly for those where HRT is unsuitable.

# Voices of experience

What truly works according to women going through menopause.

Menopause is a unique and individual experience – what works for some women might not work for you. However, we found that some treatment strategies, such as HRT and lifestyle changes, were particularly effective for many women.

## Which management techniques were most effective?



## How can you help someone going through menopause?

A third of people said their partner would be supportive but unlikely helpful.

So, how can you help?

Our respondents told us:

- "Learn more about the topic" (48%)
- "Offer reassurance" (43%)
- "Give space when I need it" (43%)
- "Be patient and compassionate" (43%)
- "Ask how I'm feeling" (36%)

# Missed our webinar?

Dr Clare Spencer (My Menopause Centre) and Dr Natasha Fernando (Medichecks) discuss how to manage low libido, cardiovascular risk, sleep problems, and much more.

[Watch our webinar](#)

## Still a way to go

While menopause is finally getting the increased attention it deserves, the journey is far from over.

- 72%** attended their GP to discuss menopause. Of these women, 36% said they had a poor experience and didn't get the help they needed.
- 57%** still felt there was a stigma attached to talking openly about menopause.
- 76%** didn't think there was enough support available for people going through menopause.
- 48%** of women didn't feel their workplace offered adequate support around menopause

# Where to learn more

We asked women to share their favourite and most helpful sources of information on menopause.

Here's what they came up with.

## Websites

- British Menopause Society
- Postcards from Midlife
- My Menopause Centre
- Menopause Matters

## Apps

- Balance app by Louise Newson

## TV Programmes

- Davina McCall: Sex, Mind, and the Menopause
- The Truth About Menopause with Mariella Frostrup

## Books

- Owning Your Menopause - Kate Rowe-Ham
- The Happy Menopause: Smart Nutrition To Help You Flourish - Jackie Lynch
- The Wisdom of Menopause: Creating Physical and Emotional Health During the Change - Christiane Northrup
- Hormone Repair Manual: Every Woman's Guide to Healthy Hormones After 40 - Lara Briden
- Second Spring: The ultimate self-care guide to help you through menopause - Kate Codrington



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