

# Australian women's experiences seeking help for common health issues



Positive interactions between women and their healthcare professionals are critical to ensuring women receive timely and appropriate care. Women need to feel confident seeking help for their health concerns and to trust that they will be heard when they do.

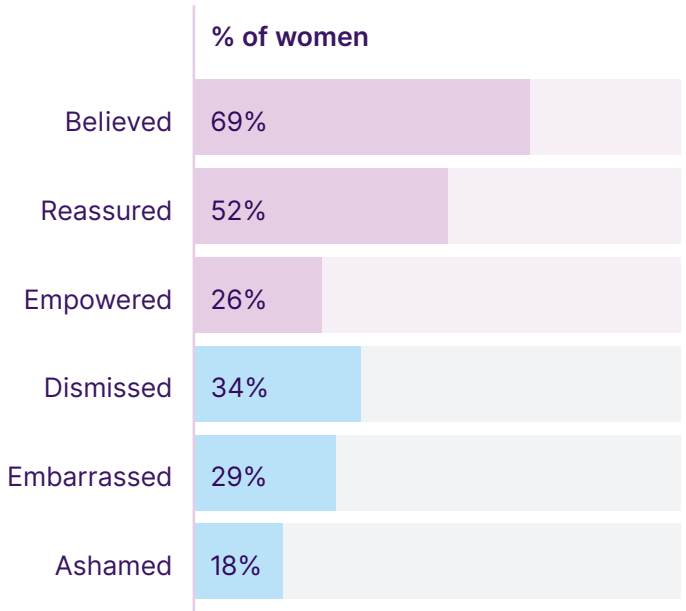
To understand women's experiences with seeking help for common health issues, the National Women's Health Survey (NWHS) asked those who had recently sought help from a doctor for bothersome periods, pelvic pain, or bothersome menopausal symptoms how they had felt when discussing the issue.

It is important that women feel confident seeking help when they need it.

## Experiences seeking help

For each of the 3 health issues, we asked women who had recently sought help whether they felt believed, reassured, empowered, dismissed, embarrassed or ashamed when discussing their symptoms with a doctor.

### Periods



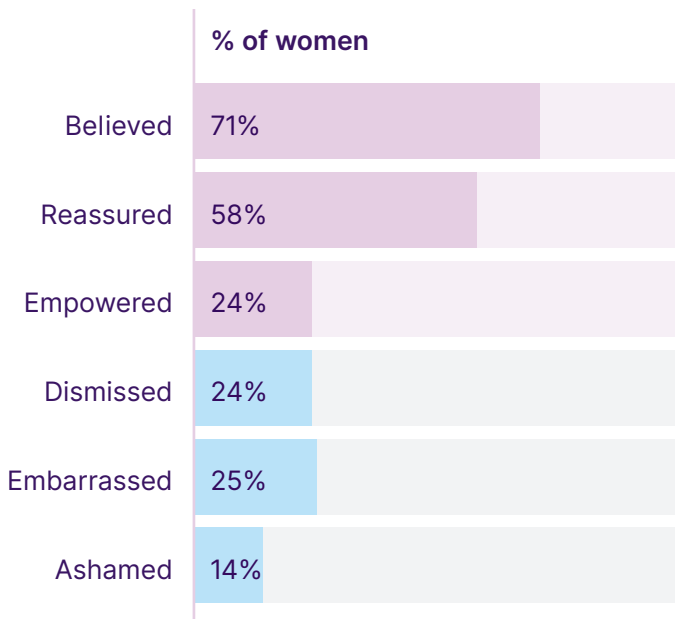
**5 in 10 (53%)**

women reported positive experiences when talking to a doctor about their bothersome periods.

Overall, 5 in 10 women (53%) women reported positive experiences when talking to a doctor about their bothersome periods. Most women (7 in 10) felt believed, but around 3 in 10 felt dismissed (34%) or embarrassed (29%).

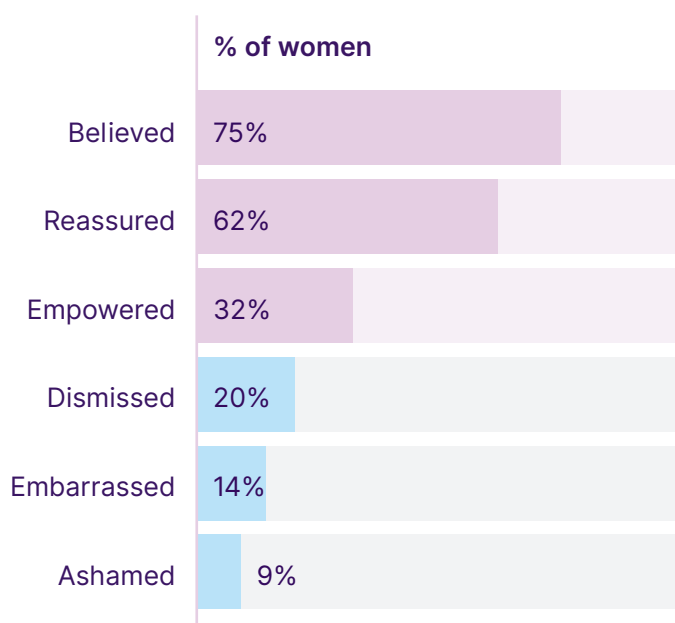


## Pelvic pain



Overall, 6 in 10 women (56%) reported positive experiences when talking to a doctor about their pelvic pain. Most women felt believed (71%) and reassured (58%), but 3 in 10 felt embarrassed (25%) and 2 in 10 felt dismissed (24%).

## Menopause



Overall, 6 in 10 women (62%) reported positive experiences when talking to a doctor about their bothersome menopausal symptoms. Most women felt believed (75%) and reassured (62%), but 2 in 10 felt dismissed (20%).

## How many didn't seek help, and why?

Many women who had bothersome symptoms did not seek help. For example, 4 in 10 had not sought help for their bothersome periods, 5 in 10 had not sought help for their pelvic pain and 4 in 10 had not sought help for their bothersome menopausal symptoms.

Across all 3 health issues, the most common reason women gave for not seeking help was that they didn't think their symptoms were bad enough.

### So what?

- Many Australian women reported positive experiences when seeking care for periods, pelvic pain and menopause from their doctor.
- However, some women had negative experiences, like feeling dismissed, embarrassed or ashamed when seeking help for these issues.
- It's important that women feel confident to seek medical help if they are struggling with their period, pelvic pain or menopausal symptoms, to ensure they receive timely and appropriate treatment.<sup>1,2</sup> However, these results also show that many women avoid or delay seeking care as they don't feel their symptoms are bad enough.
- Public awareness campaigns are essential to provide women and girls with evidence-based information about periods, pelvic pain and menopause so that they know what's normal, what's not and when to seek help, and feel confident advocating for themselves in healthcare settings.
- To promote positive healthcare interactions for women and doctors, it is important that doctors are supported (for example, through education and systemic changes) to provide holistic women's health care that validates women's experiences and takes into account their preferences for treatment.<sup>3</sup>

## References

- 1 Bridging the gender pain gap. Victorian Government Department of Health Women's Health and Wellbeing Program. October 2025. Accessed October 30, 2025. <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/inquiry-into-womens-pain>
- 2 Issues Related to Menopause and Perimenopause. Commonwealth of Australia Senate Community Affairs References Committee. September 2024. Accessed January 27, 2026. [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Community\\_Affairs/Menopause/Report](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Community_Affairs/Menopause/Report)
- 3 Thomas H, Best M, Mitchell G. Factors affecting the provision of whole person care. *Aust J Gen Pract.* April 2020;49(4). doi:10.31128/AJGP-05-19-49503

## About this short report

The Jean Hailes National Women's Health Survey (NWHS) is an annual survey designed to help us better understand the issues that affect women in Australia, their attitudes and behaviours, and the health information and policy changes that will help improve their health and wellbeing.

The 2023 NWHS explored Australian women's experiences seeking help for bothersome periods,

pelvic pain and menopausal symptoms. It was conducted online in mid-2023 with a national sample, but only in English. A total of 3,570 women aged 18 and over residing in Australia participated in the survey.

The 2023 NWHS was conducted with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

For more information about the NWHS, see the technical report on our [website](#).