

STATE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH 2026



Cleveland Clinic

Women's Comprehensive Health
and Research Center

Your health
can't wait.
Every woman,
every age,
every stage:
What women need
to know about
their health now.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nearly half of women are concerned about affording healthcare, more than they are about developing serious conditions like cancer or heart disease — a concern that may influence how and when they seek care.

This report captures the State of Women's Health in 2026 and highlights how women across generations understand, access and manage their health.

These challenges are not abstract. They are shaping real decisions women make about their health every day. Importantly, these patterns are not limited to one generation; they are present across all age groups, though they show up in different ways over time.

Key takeaways:

- **Financial pressures are shaping women's health decisions.** Cost concerns across every generation are influencing how women approach preventive care, routine visits and long-term health planning. In some cases, these pressures may lead women to delay or avoid care altogether.
- **Generational divides are fracturing how women approach health.** Women across age groups approach healthcare differently, with varying levels of engagement, awareness and comfort navigating the system. This highlights the need for more tailored, life-stage-specific support.
- **Gaps in knowledge are affecting women's ability to act on their health.** Limited awareness of menopause and Alzheimer's disease leaves many women unprepared to manage their health risks, delaying prevention and treatment.

These findings highlight how financial, informational and generational challenges are not abstract. They are shaping real decisions women make about their health every day.

FOREWORD

There is a crisis hiding in plain sight in America. Not in our hospitals. Not in our research labs. In the daily lives of women across this country who have been told, in ways loud and quiet, that their health can wait.

It can't. And it won't.

What you are about to read is not a comfortable report. It is an honest one. It tells us that nearly half of American women are worried about affording healthcare, more than they are about developing cancer or heart disease. It tells us that three out of four Boomer+ women haven't seen a gynecologist in the past year — not because they don't care about their health, but because a lifetime of being deprioritized has led them to believe they simply don't need to. It tells us that only one in five women know that Alzheimer's disease disproportionately affects women, even though it will claim the lives of millions of us.

That last number should stop you cold. Two-thirds of all Alzheimer's diagnoses are in women. And yet most women don't know that. Most women aren't protecting themselves from it. And most women aren't being told.

This reflects a gap in how the healthcare system has been built — one that has not fully accounted for women's comprehensive health needs.

But here is what else this report tells us — and this is the part we want every woman reading this foreword to hold on to: **Knowledge changes everything. Once women know their Alzheimer's risk is higher than men's, nearly 90% take action to protect their cognitive health. Not someday. Now.**

That is the most powerful sentence in this entire report. It means the solution is within reach. It means women are not the problem; they are the answer. Give them the truth, and they will act on it. Every single time.

The Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center was built on exactly that belief. We created this Center because we know that when women have access to connected, coordinated, research-informed care, outcomes change. When they understand that menopause affects not just their comfort, but their heart, their brain and their bones, they engage with it differently. When they know that Alzheimer's is coming for them at twice the rate it comes for men, they stop waiting and start protecting themselves. And when we close the financial gap that keeps so many women from seeking care in the first place — when we make excellent healthcare genuinely accessible, not just theoretically available — everything changes.

This report tells the story of four generations of women navigating a system that was not built for them. Gen Z women, young and relatively engaged, who don't yet know what's coming. Millennial women, who are trying, desperately, to take care of themselves while the cost of doing so keeps rising. Gen X women, our invisible generation who have spent so long caring for everyone else that they have quietly stopped caring for themselves. And Boomer+ women, who deserve so much more than a healthcare system that has effectively told them, at the stage of life where the risks are greatest, that they no longer need to show up.

Every one of these women deserves better. Every one of them deserves to know what we now know. And every one of them deserves a system built around their actual lives, their actual bodies and their actual needs.

That is what this Center is here to do. That is what this report is here to begin.

In the meantime, your health cannot wait for a system to catch up. It cannot wait for the right moment, the right insurance, the right doctor who finally listens. It cannot wait until the kids are grown or the parents are settled or the job is less demanding.

It cannot wait because you cannot wait. Because the women in your life cannot wait. Because the daughters watching you cannot wait.

Read this report. Share it with the women in your life. Talk to your doctor. And know this: the most important thing you will learn in the pages that follow is that you were never meant to navigate this alone.

Now you know. And now it begins.

Maria Shriver, award-winning journalist, women's health advocate, founder of the Women's Alzheimer's Movement at Cleveland Clinic, co-founder of the Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center

Dr. Beri Ridgeway, MD, executive vice president and chief of staff of Cleveland Clinic and co-founder of the Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center



The State of Women's Health in 2026 is inconsistent.

While women of all ages in the United States seek reliable guidance to address their health concerns and strive to make smart choices about their wellbeing, their ability to focus on their own needs often takes a back seat, as many women prioritize the needs of their families, careers and others before their own health. This is often due to personal financial concerns, caregiving responsibilities, daily stressors at work and home and a spate of misinformation.

These pressures are putting women's health at risk today and at every stage of life.

To better understand how women view and engage with their health, the [Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center](#) conducted a national survey highlighting important differences across generations and identifying opportunities to better support women.

WHEN FINANCIAL PRESSURES SHAPE WOMEN'S HEALTH DECISIONS

Nearly half of women are worried about being able to afford proper care, above all other health issues. For many women, this concern reflects broader financial strain, as 45% consider their financial health to be fair or poor.

Those concerns are well founded. According to a [study from Deloitte](#), women spend about \$15.4 billion more than men annually on out-of-pocket healthcare costs, even when pregnancy-related services are excluded. This is about 18% higher than what men pay and can lead to severe consequences, including how women choose to prioritize their healthcare.

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the amount women spend more than men each year on out-of-pocket healthcare costs.

The potential implications of women's financial concerns are significant, as 45% of women are concerned about being able to afford proper care, more than developing major, life-threatening chronic conditions, including cancer (33%), heart disease/stroke (33%) and Alzheimer's disease (29%).

And in many cases, financial concerns keep women from being proactive about their health. For instance, women who consider their financial health as fair/poor (21%) are more likely than those who consider their financial health as excellent/very good (15%) to

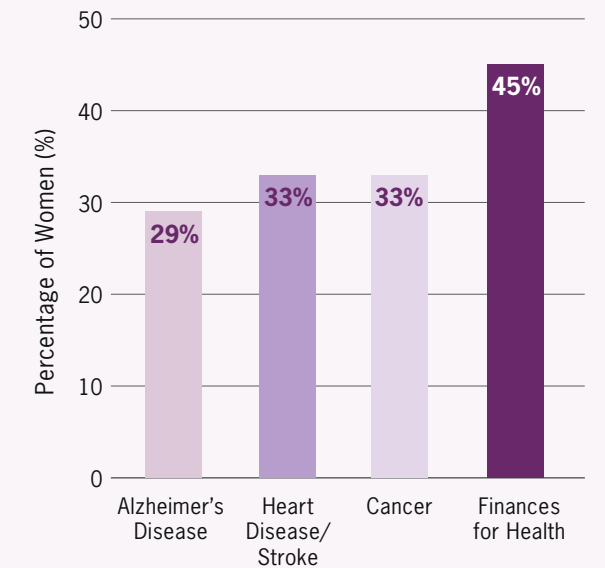
admit that they aren't taking any preventive measures to support their cognitive health.

Indeed, how women consider their financial health correlates with how they consider their physical health. Two-thirds (66%) of women who consider their own financial health as excellent/very good also rate their physical health as excellent/good. But only 14% of women who consider their financial health as fair/poor give a high rating to their physical health.

Financial stress and health decisions appear closely linked. Women who report financial strain may be less likely to prioritize preventive or routine care and more likely to delay medical visits. In some cases, these concerns may lead women to delay or avoid care altogether.

Furthermore, women who consider their financial health as fair/poor are less likely than those who consider it to be excellent/good to feel empowered to advocate for their own health (62% vs. 73%, respectively). Thirty-five percent admit to not taking any dietary supplements, and 17% of those who have not seen a gynecologic specialist in the last 12 months cite cost or lack of health insurance as reasons for skipping this care.

Women's Top Health Concerns: Financial vs. Medical Risks



UNDERSTANDING PREVENTIVE CARE AND REGULAR VISITS

While health finances are a universal concern across all generations of women, other factors also impact if, when and why some women seek healthcare.

Nearly one-third (31%) of women who haven't visited their primary care provider (PCP) in the past two years believe they're healthy and simply don't feel the need to go, highlighting an opportunity to strengthen understanding of the role preventive care plays in long term health. Additionally, 26% of women who have avoided PCP visits state that they experience anxiety about seeing the doctor.

Similar gaps in understanding also affect how women view gynecologic care. Overall, 58% of women have not seen an Ob/Gyn or other gynecologic specialist in the past year, a percentage that increases drastically as women age. Three-fourths (76%) of Boomers+ and 58% of Gen X have not had a gynecological visit in the past year, much higher than Gen Z (47%) and Millennials (48%).

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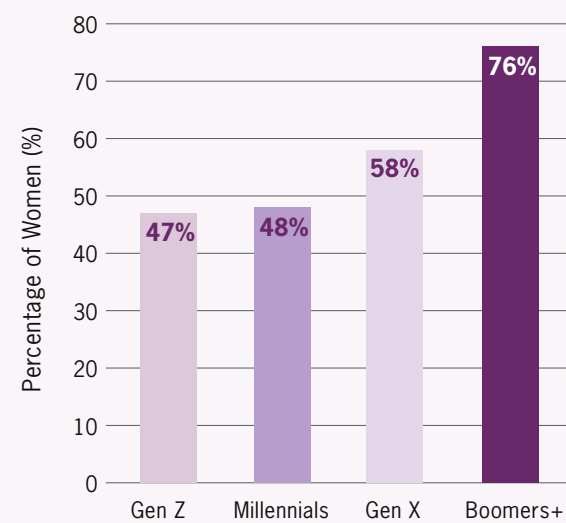
Why? Four in 10 women overall — even higher when looking at Boomers+ (59%) — say they do not believe it is necessary, often due to common misconceptions about who benefits

from gynecologic care. Twenty-two percent of women are operating under the misconception that gynecologists and women's health specialists only serve pregnant women or those planning pregnancy.

These, as well as other barriers to healthcare that women face, can be bridged through improvements in patient support and communication. This is exactly why the Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center exists: to fill a need for a new and better way of delivering healthcare to women that is coordinated, connected and informed by research across the entire spectrum of women's health. Misconceptions about when and why to seek care also contribute to gaps in preventive health behaviors.

These findings suggest that engagement with healthcare does not necessarily increase over time without the right support, information and access.

Women Who Have Not Seen an Ob/Gyn in the Past Year



Gynecologic care plays an important role in women's health, at every age. With women of all ages at risk of gynecologic cancers, and those risks increasing with age, routine care makes a difference in early cancer detection.

— **Dr. Beri Ridgeway, MD**, executive vice president and chief of staff of Cleveland Clinic and co-founder of the Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center



MENOPAUSE MISCONCEPTIONS

Menopause is one of the most significant transitions in a woman's life, yet it remains one of the least understood.

In fact, women feel they do not know enough about the nuances and complexities of this natural transition, with half of all women (52%) believing menopause is not discussed enough. This statistic is supported by the fact that 42% of women do not know that menopause can affect multiple body systems, including the heart, brain and bones.

Plus, more than one-third of women (38%) are not aware of the various menopause treatment options currently available, including hormone therapy, lifestyle adjustments, supplements and others. This lack of awareness persists even among women

of menopause age (45-55), with half (50%) similarly unaware of its far-reaching effects.

These knowledge gaps can affect how women experience menopause and how prepared they feel to manage symptoms and long-term health changes. According to 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data, more than 63 million women in the U.S. are 50 years of age or older, and approximately 6,000 women enter menopause each day.

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We see many women who have not felt heard or pushed down the wrong path when managing their menopause transition. To navigate this transition, women need accurate information from trained medical professionals in an environment where they feel comfortable talking about what they're experiencing.

– **Dr. Pelin Batur, MD**, medical director of the Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center



However, women are eager for the knowledge gap to change. Nearly half (49%) believe women's bodies are not represented in reproductive health research. This is particularly concerning when considering that 80% of women aged 55 and older also have at least one chronic condition, such as arthritis, asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes. For women in this and other life stages, there is a clear need for more comprehensive medical care and research.

This difference also signals an opportunity to fill the menopause knowledge gap with valuable, credible health information leveraging new approaches and methods. For instance, "Shared Medical Appointments," which the Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center offers, enable participants to talk with their healthcare providers as well as other women experiencing menopause.

Together, these insights point to an opportunity to better support women with clearer guidance, earlier education and more accessible care across the full continuum of their lives.



ONLY ONE IN FIVE WOMEN KNOW ALZHEIMER'S IS A WOMEN'S DISEASE

Beyond menopause, another important gap in women's health awareness centers on Alzheimer's disease and its disproportionate impact on women.

While about two-thirds of people diagnosed with Alzheimer's are women, most women do not know that fact. Only 19% of women answered correctly when asked whether men or women are more likely to get Alzheimer's, and only 29% worry they may get Alzheimer's disease when they get older. This lack of concern is evident in both older and younger generations, as 54% of Boomers+ and 47% of Gen Z say they are not concerned about

getting Alzheimer's, pointing to a large knowledge gap in the disease's potential impact.

With more knowledge comes empowerment. Nearly nine in 10 of those who know women are at higher risk than men for Alzheimer's (87%) are taking preventive measures to support their brain health, with activities including brain games (45%), maintaining social connections with friends/family (37%) and taking brain health vitamins (32%). This pattern highlights a broader opportunity: when women understand their health risks, they are more likely to take meaningful steps to protect their long-term health.

These findings also highlight the importance of engaging women earlier in life with clear, actionable health information.

We have an opportunity and responsibility to ensure women of all ages are equipped with knowledge and resources to deal with the effects of menopause and understand their increased risk of Alzheimer's. If we're going to change the trajectory of women's health outcomes, this must include engaging younger generations earlier in these critical conversations about their health.

– **Maria Shriver**, an award-winning journalist, women's health advocate, founder of Women's Alzheimer's Movement at Cleveland Clinic and co-founder of the Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center



A CLEAR PATH FORWARD FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH

While the state of women's health presents real challenges, it also reveals meaningful opportunities to improve care, understanding and outcomes. At the Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center, we are committed to improving access to care, advancing research and supporting women with clear, connected and compassionate health information.

Our specialists are pioneering research and care approaches and implementing new tools, therapies and thinking to redefine healthcare for women at midlife and beyond. In collaboration with the Women's Alzheimer's Movement at Cleveland Clinic, we are further addressing and reducing risk

for Alzheimer's disease and other neurological conditions in women through medical discovery to better understand the diseases and their impact, as well as supporting women with healthy lifestyle modifications and research.

Through the [Cleveland Clinic Global Women's Health + WAM Forum](#), we are bringing together women of all ages and backgrounds alongside experts, advocates and community voices to engage in these critical discussions about progress in women's health.

To learn more about women's health research, menopause and reducing Alzheimer's risk, visit clevelandclinic.org/caringforwomen.



About This Report

The State of Women's Health 2026 Survey and Report is a national research initiative designed to capture timely and actionable insights into the health experiences, needs and emerging trends of women in the U.S. The findings will support the Cleveland Clinic Women's Comprehensive Health and Research Center.

Methodology

Data referenced in this report comes from a survey of 2,000 women aged 18 years and older in the United States. The survey was fielded between March 11-19, 2026. The margin of error is $\pm 2\%$ at the 95% confidence level. Within this report, Gen Z women (n=399) are defined as those born between 1997-2008, Millennial women (n=527) are born between 1996-1981, Gen X women (n=525) are born between 1965-1980 and Boomer+ women (n=549) are born between 1964 and before. Women of menopausal age (n=349) are defined as those who are between the ages of 45 and 55 years old. The sample was balanced for national representation of age and region based on U.S. Census Bureau data.



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