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## MRS Awards 2022

Creative Development Research  
**Winner**

**AMV BBDO**

**TENA**

How creative qualitative  
research for TENA influenced  
the award-winning 'Last Lonely  
Menopause' campaign

## Summary

The incontinence products brand TENA wants to break the silence around menopause and support women at this transformational time. TENA and their ad agency, AMV BBDO, commissioned The Outsiders to conduct qualitative research with menopausal women to understand their experiences and to evaluate an early-stage creative execution.

Using online groups, we interviewed a cross-section of women. We made extensive use of innovative pre-tasks and projective techniques to enable the participants to open up and share some extremely personal and potentially embarrassing experiences, including around urinary incontinence. In particular, we asked women to tell their stories as if they were genre movies – a love story, comedy, mystery, horror and tragedy. This was incredibly effective in getting a more holistic picture of what it is like to be menopausal.

The final ad, guided by the insight, and which won Channel 4s Diversity in Advertising Award, is honest, wry, funny and moving. It shows the toughest parts of menopause, such as mood swings, sweats and bladder problems. But it also shows an older woman living a rounded life, having sex and building her relationship with her daughter by talking about her experiences. TENA has seen positive feedback, widespread coverage and increased sales.

## Synopsis

Until recently, there has been little public discussion of the menopause. The incontinence products brand TENA is committed to breaking this silence and supporting women at this challenging and transformational time in their lives. TENA and their ad agency, AMV BBDO, commissioned The Outsiders to conduct qualitative research with peri-menopausal and menopausal women to understand their experiences and to evaluate an early-stage creative execution.

### Methodology

The research took place in the UK and France. We conducted four online quads in the UK and two online groups in France. In each market we interviewed a cross-section of women: various ages – including early menopause – LGBTQ+ women and women from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The advertising creative stimulus was a draft script for a TV ad that was voiced over still images. (See image one.)

### What was innovative about this project?

We made extensive use of innovative pre-tasks and projective techniques to enable the participants to open up and share some extremely personal and potentially embarrassing experiences. Menopause is stereotypically depicted as sad or shameful but we wanted to get a more rounded view.

We asked the women to carry out a detailed pre-task that included making a collage showing how they feel about the menopause and sharing life advice and practical tips for the next generation – a niece, daughter, young friend – for when it is their turn.

The most innovative and effective element of the pre-task used storytelling. We asked women to write the story of their menopause in five different movie genres, which we then explored in the online group phase of the research. The genres were as follows:

- A love story
- A comedy
- A mystery
- A horror story
- A tragedy

This was incredibly effective in getting a broader and more holistic picture of what it is like to be menopausal. In particular, the love story, the comedy and the mystery were rich sources of stories and anecdotes, some of which were about the more positive sides of menopause, and about the challenges that women face. Participants wrote about feeling more comfortable in their skin and that the menopause wasn't the end, but the beginning of a new phase of life. They also shared funny moments, leading to a more nuanced and detailed understanding that fed into creative development. We believe that this storytelling task was critical to the insight that we were able to develop, and that without using this technique we would have been unlikely to gather some of the more positive stories around the menopause. (See image two.)

The Outsiders also went beyond the brief. Based on the pivotal finding that although TENA, as an incontinence

products provider, does have permission to play in this space, it would be essential to make a strong link in the creative to urinary incontinence (which is a little-discussed symptom of menopause), we invited some of the women from the UK quads to do some separate individual depth interviews to explore the issue further. The moderator had already built a rapport with the women in the quads and was therefore seen as a trusted listener and someone the participants were willing to open up to. We added these interviews at no extra cost as we felt the issue was so important.

### The outcome

Some of our key findings were as follows:

- That the list of symptoms that people experience going through menopause is long and varied; many women had no idea what to expect and, consequently, found it hard to get a diagnosis and early treatment and support.
  - For example, many women had no idea that they might suffer from urinary incontinence, itchy skin, anxiety, memory loss and mood swings, amongst many others.
- As such, it is hardly surprising that if women don't know, the other people in their lives – their partners, children and colleagues – are even less likely to know what is happening and so be able to be supportive and understanding.
- Many women have been unable to speak to their partners about the menopause and, in some cases, it has contributed to relationship breakdown.
- In particular, urinary incontinence can be experienced as deeply shameful and can silence even the most open and progressive women.
- The women we spoke to wanted change and were glad that TENA was taking up this cause.

### The impact

The final ad[i] is honest, wry, darkly funny and extremely moving. It doesn't flinch from showing some of the toughest parts of menopause, such as mood swings, sweats and bladder problems. But it also shows an older woman living a rounded life, having sex and embracing this new phase, whilst building her relationship with her daughter by talking about her experiences. Women on social media report being brought to tears.

This ad won the Channel 4 Diversity in Advertising Award and has had widespread positive coverage in the press and on social media. See image three.

The research validated AMV's creative approach, ensured that the ad struck the right tonal balance and resonated with the target audience in a respectful way. It also highlighted any potentially problematic pieces of language and scenes that they were then able to tweak to improve.

The findings also provided rich, visceral and creatively interesting language, experiences and testimonials which fed directly into the social element of the campaign, shining a light on the myriad ways in which the menopause can impact women and sparking much-needed discussion.

The research was invaluable in developing an 'Infrequently Asked Questions' conversation guide[ii], which encourages people to ask more – and better – questions about the menopause. By using some of the most compelling and thought provoking questions from the research, as well as the wisdom, advice and tips of the women who participated, in their own words, the guide is able to counter the dry, clinical information that's typically surfaced from a Google search.

The research also demonstrated the value of the campaign to TENA, and inspired them on the role the brand could play in helping break the silence and stigma around the menopause.

### Why should this entry win?

The judges are looking for innovation and impact and this project has an abundance of both. Here are ten reasons we deserve to win:

1. **The innovative use of pre-tasks and projective techniques which enabled The Outsiders to build empathy with the research participants and ensured they felt safe to talk about their experiences.**
2. **The creativity in using storytelling genres as a tool to get a rounded picture of the menopause. We don't believe that we would have got such rich data without using this technique.**
3. **The foresight of the client and the ad agency in commissioning the research instead of relying on existing stereotypes.**

The bravery of the client and ad agency in honouring the findings and including some of the most authentic but potentially shame-inducing elements of life as a woman, such as pubic hair, chin hair, lube and pee. Channel 4 said[iii] "The short film is one of the only ads about bladder weakness to actually show urine on screen."

The huge amount of coverage that the ad has enabled the client to achieve.

The vastly positive reaction to the ad from the press and retailers and from the public on social media – and the impact on sales; Boots said they had already seen an uplift. See image three.

The commitment of The Outsiders to getting to the truth, which extended to conducting some additional depth interviews at no extra charge when it became clear that it would benefit the project.

The potential to be a catalyst for change, starting conversations and normalising talking about the menopause without shame or stigma.

Winning the Channel 4 'Diversity in advertising' award. Steven Lacey from The Outsiders has now been invited to be on the judging panel for the award next year, based on his expertise in both research and advertising.

The delight of the clients, who told us the following:

**From TENA**

*“I’ve been in marketing for many years, and this is the best, most insightful research I’ve ever seen... I was blown away the focus groups – the participants talked about a stigmatized topic in far more open way than we had seen before. The work led us towards an execution that has landed exactly as we dreamed with women; they’ve told us they feel connected to the brand. And the analysis is a treasure that we will keep building on.”*

**From AMV**

*“At AMV, we believe in being radically empathetic. We ask the right questions, dig deeper and listen to get the right ingredients to create work that really speaks to our audience.*

*The Outsiders were a perfect partner in helping us do this – finding novel, interesting and thought provoking ways to engage with a subject that’s too often treated with lazy assumptions and thoughtless stereotypes. They helped us create a refreshingly honest portrayal of what it means to be a woman going through the menopause.”*

[i] <https://www.tena.co.uk/women/living-with-bladder-weakness/menopause-and-urine-leakage/last-lonely-menopause>

[ii] <https://tena-images.essity.com/images-c5/810/393810/original/tenawomen-reappraisal-conversationguide-ukonly-16-9-english-2022.pdf>

[iii] <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4s-diversity-advertising-award-winner-tena-launches-new-lastlonelymenopause>

### Still from the stimulus for TENA research

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Actor voices over: “It’s like shedding a skin, but sweatier.”

Description also voiced over: The woman is drying her armpits under the hand dryer at work whilst chatting to a co-worker



Menopause Campaign Research



**Love story: a change for the better**

“ I bravely applied to join a private Facebook group called Peri Merri Totes, even though I wasn’t sure if I was yet in peri.

For the first time, my symptoms became funny, joyful, even lovely and fascinating. These women on that group have such humour and honesty.

I have laughed and cried on this site. Mainly crying with laughter and relief.

So now I really do love my body. Accept my flabby tummy after having a six pack all my life.

I love and admire myself because of my experiences through being peri.

What a journey!”

**Comedy: the menopause rap**

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“The forgetfulness has, at times, been amusing. Items have been put down not to be seen again for days, months, years.

The constant mental checking when I leave the house to go anywhere. Have I got my keys, phone, purse, Oyster card? Did I lock the back door, front door, turn the oven off? Me and my friends were chatting about it and decided to turn it into a rap:

Is it off?  
 Am I off?  
 Oven on? Oven off?  
 And did you lock the door  
 Iron off? What’s off? It’s off... I think it’s off.  
 Heating on? Heating off?  
 And did you lock the door?  
 Straighteners on? Straighteners off?  
 Are you sure they are off?  
 And did you lock the door?”



Menopause Campaign Research



The ad received 169+ pieces of press coverage (print, online, broadcast outlets, UK & abroad) including: Independent, Daily Mail, Daily Star, The Sun, The Mirror, Daily Express, Verve Times & BBC Radio Wiltshire, BBC Radio Lancashire, talkRADIO, Talk TV, BBC Radio Cornwall

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**MailOnline**

**'Game-changing' Tena menopause advert that won £1million of free airtime on Channel 4 will show a mother suffering night sweats, hormonal rage and bladder weakness**

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-10764715/Game-changing-Tena-menopause-advert-wins-1million-free-airtime-Channel4>

- Tena campaign is the recipient of broadcaster's Diversity In Advertising Award
- Brands and agencies were asked to share ideas that confront ageism in adverts
- The Tena commercial tackles the realities of the menopause rarely-seen on TV

**Feedback from retailers**

'I think the TENA campaign looks great, very heartfelt, honest and emotional' **Asda**

'This is so brilliant - well done. If you have any ideas on how Tesco can further support the campaign, please let me know' **Tesco**

'We have already seen an uplift this week' **Boots**



**Kat Vine** @Kattiekins · 10h  
 Crying at the beautiful #tena advert shown during the @ThisisDavina #Menopause prog on @Channel4  
 #lastlonelymenopause thank you for helping to lead the #menopauserevolution Davina! ❤️

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• **BEHIND THE WOMAN** • @behindthewoman1 · 6h  
 Replying to @behindthewoman1  
 Which is why it's essential to achieve some balance in the global messaging. All I can say is thank god the agency that created this didn't hone into the disease, fear & early death narratives. There's light & shade, relationships, the emotional & physical, but there's also hope!



**SP** @sarahwelshy · 9h  
 Sobbed buckets at this. 3 years before I knew what the hell was happening to me - 3 devastating, lonely, terrifying years. My children now know what #menopause is and my daughter won't go through what I did. I'm right behind this campaign  
 #lastlonelymenopause



**Elaine Smithies** @elsmithies  
 Have you seen this? It's soooo good. Feel like representations of #menopause are finally starting to shift. Feels like it was created with people with lived experience.  
 #lastlonelymenopause  
[channel4.com/press/news/cha...](https://channel4.com/press/news/cha...)



**Christina Simpson** @Christina46... · 2d  
 Thank you, it's about time.  
 #lastlonelymenopause

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Menopause Campaign Research

