

Reproductive Health: Exploring Fertility and Menopause

INTO Equality Conference 2023

Sláinte Atáirgthe:

Iniúchadh ar an Torthúlachta agus ar an Sos Míostraithe (Meanapás)

Comhdháil ar Chomhionannas CMÉ 2023



Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone
3ú – 4ú Feabhra 2023



Fáilte

Dear Delegate,

We are delighted to welcome you to Athlone for the 2023 INTO Equality Conference. The theme of this year's conference is *Reproductive Health: Exploring Fertility and Menopause* – an important issue for our members and their partners as demonstrated in recent years at Congress.

With a predominately female workforce in teaching, there are a significant number of members who experience reproductive health issues in schools across the country every day. The impact of infertility, pregnancy loss and menopause also clearly extends to partners and broader school communities. The number of teachers who are impacted was clearly evidenced by the interest in last year's INTO health webinar series on *Menopause, HRT and Women's Future Health* and later on *Reproductive Health, Infertility and Pregnancy Loss*.

Building on the momentum of INTO Congress, the Equality Committee undertook research on teachers' experiences of reproductive health. This critical research informed a bill proposed by then Senator (now TD) Ivana Bacik that aimed to provide a clear category of paid leave for pregnancy loss and for those undergoing fertility treatment. This bill, entitled the *Organisation of Working Time (Reproductive Health Related Leave) Bill 2021* is currently before Seanad Éireann, and the INTO will continue to advocate for this critical leave until such time as it is realised.

The INTO believes that if we are serious about inclusion, we must be willing to discuss reproductive health openly and ensure that supports are in place for teachers and their partners as they face different stages of their reproductive health journeys. Going through these challenges in silence precludes teachers from receiving support and empathy from their colleagues and broader school communities. Reproductive health-related matters are often difficult and distressing with serious emotional, physical and financial impacts on a woman and her partner in both their personal and school lives.

We anticipate that this conference will provide a safe space for members to reflect on their own individual journeys and provide an opportunity to support each other compassionately. We are hopeful that by starting the discussion here today, we will begin to remove the barriers and taboos that unfortunately still surround such topics.

Tá súil againn go mbainfidh sibh uilig taitneamh agus tairbhe as an gComhdháil.

Is muidne, le meas,



Seán Ó Drisceoil
Uachtarán CMÉ



Seán Ó Baoill
Rúnaí Ginearálta

Clár

Friday, 3 February

2.30pm	Registration
3.00pm	Opening of conference John Driscoll, INTO President
	Cathaoirleach, INTO Equality Committee Nuala Grealy
3.10pm	Update on Organisation of Working Time (Reproductive Health Related Leave) Bill 2021 Senator Marie Sherlock
3.15pm	Keynote address: <i>From Fertility to Menopause – What can be done?</i> Professor Nadine Farah
4.00pm	Tea/coffee
4.30pm	Workshop A
5.35pm	Workshop B
6.45pm	Drinks reception

Saturday, 4 February

9.30am	Presentation of research
10.00am	Discussion groups
11.10am	Tea/coffee
11.30am	Fireside discussion
12.15pm	Keynote address: <i>Information is Power</i> Síle Seoige
1.00pm	Closing remarks

General information

Registration

Registration opens at 2.30pm on Friday, 3 February. We ask you to assist the INTO staff by completing your delegate card, which is in your pack, prior to your arrival at the registration desk.

INTO communication policy

Please be advised that photography, videography and/or live streaming will be taking place at this event. These materials may be used by the INTO and included in publications, media materials, promotional materials, digital platforms and social platforms. If you do not wish the INTO to use your image, please go to the registration desk and inform staff. The INTO can then take reasonable steps to comply with your wishes.

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, delegates are advised that identifiable photographs will not be taken during the discussion groups.

Car park

There are 400 complimentary car parking spaces available on site.

Absence from school

The Department of Education (DE) has given approval for leave of absence for delegates to attend the conference. A copy of the DE correspondence was emailed to you in your delegate welcome email. However, substitute cover is not available.

Conference evaluation

Delegates will be contacted after the conference with a link to a short online questionnaire for the purposes of evaluating the conference.

Exhibitors

The following are the exhibitors in attendance and their stands will be located in the Eiscir Riada Suite.

- ✎ Breast Cancer Ireland
- ✎ Comhar Linn
- ✎ Cornmarket
- ✎ Health Insurance Authority
- ✎ Precision Health
- ✎ Spectrum.Life
- ✎ The Menopause Hub
- ✎ VHI



Follow the conference on social media @INTOnews #EqConf23
Full coverage of the conference plenary sessions will be available on the INTO website.

The Equality Committee

The role of the INTO Equality Committee is to advise the CEC and the organisation on equality matters. The committee considers the nine grounds comprehended by equality legislation which are: gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. The committee consists of one representative from each of the INTO's 16 districts, each elected for a three-year term (2020-23). The committee meets five times per year and considers current issues across both jurisdictions, equality issues pertaining to the education system and INTO members as well as national and international equality updates.

The INTO Equality Committee has previously advocated for a reproductive health leave scheme to enable a better work-life balance for members. The committee looks forward to welcoming you to the conference and supporting your participation in the conference workshops and discussion groups.

President: John Driscoll
 Vice-President: Dorothy McGinley
 District 1: Seán Kelly
 District 2: Gráinne McAleer
 District 3: Sarah Ann McClafferty
 District 4: Majella Ní Chonduibh

District 5: Sarah Bradley
 District 6: Ann Comyn
 District 7: Josephine Byrne
 District 8: Margaret Murphy
 District 9: Anne-Marie Coffey
 District 10: Susan Carpenter

District 11: Eleanor O' Dwyer
 District 12: Fionnghuala O'Regan
 District 13: Tracie Tobin
 District 14: Nuala Greal
 District 15: Emer Mangan
 District 16: Rory Gibbons



Keynote presenters



PROFESSOR NADINE FARAH MD, FRCOG, FRCPI, DIP US, MB BCh LRCPI AND SI

Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, The Coombe Hospital.
UCD Associate Clinical Professor.

Professor Farah graduated from the Royal College of Surgeons in 1998 with an honour's degree. She completed her training in Ireland in 2010 and was appointed as a consultant in the Coombe Hospital. Her special interests include fertility, ambulatory gynaecology, early pregnancy management and high-risk obstetrics.

SÍLE SEOIGE

TV presenter, podcaster, MC, wellness speaker and yoga teacher.

Gaeilgeoir Síle is a talented broadcaster who has developed a wealth of experience over the past 24 years in the media business. She has presented and researched TV projects on all TV stations in Ireland – RTÉ, TG4, Virgin Media and Oireachtas TV – working across all the different genres. She's also worked in radio, presenting and contributing on radio stations including *Newstalk*, *RTÉ Radio 1* and *iRadio*.

Since 2019, she has been working on her own successful podcast series called *Ready to be Real* featuring well known faces, experts in a particular field and people with extraordinary stories to tell and it continues to grow its fanbase. In 2021, Síle gained critical acclaim for her powerful and emotional documentary on the topic of miscarriage for TG4.



Discussion groups

Delegates have the opportunity to attend a discussion group on one of a number of themes. The venues for each of these discussion groups will be clearly signposted at the conference. Delegates have previously received an email outlining the discussion group topics.

Fireside discussion group panel

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| /// Maeve McCafferty, Equality Officer, INTO | /// Ruairí Mac Conduibh INTO member, District 7 |
| /// Nuala O'Donnell, Senior Official, Northern Office | /// Dr Dara Hume, GP/Cavan Menopause Clinic |
| /// Josephine Byrne, Equality Committee Representative, District 7 | /// Dr Aman Kwatra, Chartered Counselling Psychologist |

Workshops

Delegates choose **TWO** workshops at registration. Please be aware that workshops will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Both workshops take place on Friday, 3 February. Workshop A begins at 4.30pm and workshop B is at 5.35pm.

Venues		
Room	Workshop A and B alternate	Presenter
Le Carrow 1 - first floor	<i>Embracing self care and self compassion</i>	Dr Aman Kwatra
Le Carrow 2 - first floor	<i>Nutrition for fertility and menopause</i>	Emer O'Driscoll
Lough Ree 1 - ground floor	<i>Reproductive health leave in 2023: Entitlements and ambitions</i>	Ashling Lynch
Lough Ree 2 - ground floor	<i>Miscarriage and Pregnancy Loss: A Silent Grief</i>	Bríd Carroll
Lough Ree 3 - ground floor	<i>Exploring the Journey of Infertility</i>	Dr Bogdan Alexandra Muresan
Killinure - ground floor	<i>Navigating the menopause</i>	Dr Catherine Riordan

EMBRACING SELF-CARE AND SELF-COMPASSION – DR AMAN KWATRA

This brief workshop aims at supporting attendees towards emotional wellbeing, highlighting the importance of self-care and self-compassion, and focusing on ways to strengthen resilience, while being on what can often be a challenging and sometimes heart-breaking journey in managing fertility, pregnancy loss and menopause.

NUTRITION FOR FERTILITY AND MENOPAUSE – EMER O'DRISCOLL

Nutrition and Menopause will focus on dietary recommendations which can improve heart health and bone health and also how to ensure participants consume adequate omega 3, calcium and vitamin D with guidelines on caffeine, alcohol and phytoestrogens. *Nutrition for Fertility* will focus on optimising egg and sperm health, how to track ovulation and fertility complications.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH LEAVE IN 2023: ENTITLEMENTS AND AMBITIONS – ASHLING LYNCH

INTO Official Ashling Lynch will guide participants through current family leave arrangements for teachers and will discuss recent changes, how we've gotten to where we are, and what we hope to achieve in the coming years. This will include an overview of leave arrangements for pregnancy related sick leave, breastfeeding, miscarriage, surrogacy and paternity leave.

MISCARRIAGE AND PREGNANCY LOSS: A SILENT GRIEF – BRÍD CARROLL

Together we will examine the significance of these losses and their impact on a family unit. This workshop aims to explore the multiple nuances involved in these losses and offer support and advice that can enable this process of grief to a healthy accommodation for those who experience such loss.

EXPLORING THE JOURNEY OF INFERTILITY – DR BOGDAN ALEXANDRA MURESAN

The infertility journey can be physically and emotionally challenging for couples and individuals. This workshop will help in understanding the difficult road faced by these patients by exploring the causes, challenges and treatment of infertility.

NAVIGATING THE MENOPAUSE – DR CATHERINE RIORDAN

The workshop will focus on educating and empowering women to embrace the menopause at home and at work so that they can continue to live the life they love. The session aims to explore the symptoms and treatments of menopause as well as offer tips to managing menopause at work.



Workshop presenters



Dr Aman Kwatra
Spectrum.Life

Dr Aman Kwatra is a chartered counselling psychologist, registered with the Psychological Society of Ireland and the British Psychological Society, and an avid classicist. He currently works with Spectrum.Life as a consultant psychologist and research associate and also guest lectures at Trinity College Dublin. Aman has previously worked in the HSE and the Irish Prison Service and recently co-authored an evidence-based self-help book titled *Transforming Emotional Pain: An Emotion-Focused Workbook*. He also has previous professional and educational background in international relations, post-war recovery and mass media.



Emer O'Driscoll
Blackrock Clinic

Emer is a senior dietitian working in the Blackrock Clinic. She is a certified fertility dietitian and an intuitive eating counsellor. Areas of interest are female health particularly fertility, PCOS and menopause, intuitive eating and disordered eating. She also works with oncology and bariatric patients in a clinical setting. Emer loves working with people who are struggling with their relationship with food and helping them to heal. She also loves helping women to balance their hormones and anyone who is just looking to feel better and have more energy



Ashling Lynch
INTO

A graduate of UCD, Ashling has a breadth of experience across the INTO Head Office, where she has worked for over a decade, and was appointed as an Official to the Conditions of Employment section in the INTO in August 2019.

She regularly engages with the Department of Education in respect of teachers' terms and conditions, and advises members on their leave, staffing, and other terms and conditions.

Ashling has worked closely with a number of INTO Equality Officers, supporting the work of the Equality Committee.



Bríd Carroll *Psychotherapist*

Originally from a teaching background Bríd is a qualified psychotherapist with a special interest in bereavement and loss. Bríd holds a Degree in Counselling Psychotherapy from Middlesex University, a Masters in Bereavement Studies from RCSI Dublin and a Postgraduate Certificate in Childhood Bereavement from St Christopher's Hospice, London.

She is presently working in the south east with families and children experiencing loss through bereavement illness and separation. She is a contributor to the Irish Hospice Foundation's workshop series.

Bríd is the Chair of the advisory committee of the Irish Childhood Bereavement Network and a member of the steering committee of the Family Bereavement Network of Europe. She provides information talks and online webinars on grief and loss for professionals and bereaved parents. Bríd has accompanied many parents, families and children who are grieving the loss of their child, parent or sibling over the past 30 years.



Dr Bogdan Alexandru Muresan *The Coombe Hospital*

Dr Bogdan Alexandru Muresan MD MRCPI is a subspecialist in Human Reproductive Medicine. He graduated from IHU University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca, Romania in 2011. He was appointed Locum Consultant in The Coombe University Hospital in 2022. His areas of special interest include fertility, early pregnancy and obstetrics.



Dr Catherine Riordan *The Menopause Hub*

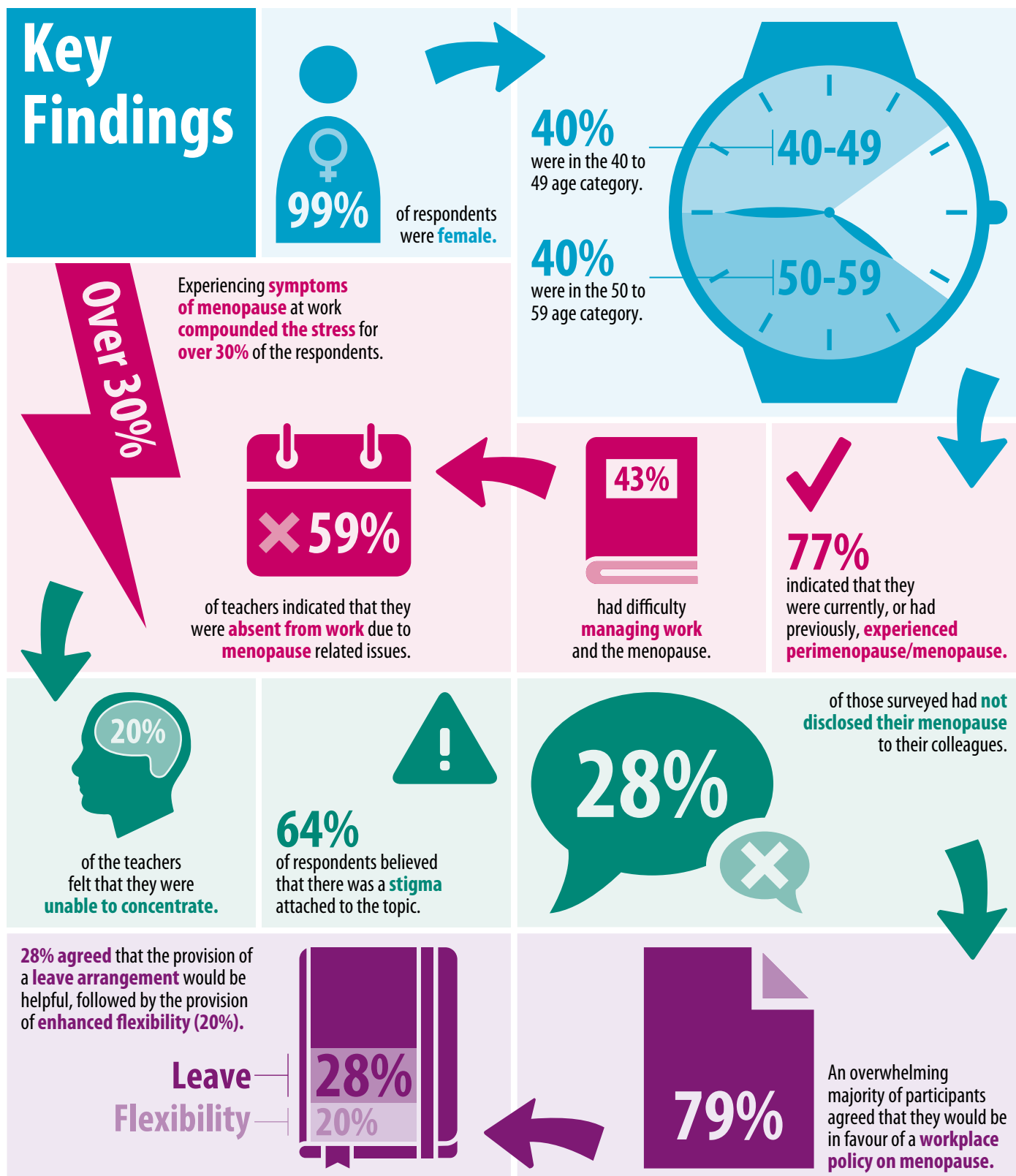
Dr Catherine Riordan MB FRCS is one of the senior clinicians at The Menopause Hub in Dublin. Her original training was in urology and she is a member of the urology team at St Michael's Hospital in Dún Laoghaire. She has also worked in women's health and reproductive medicine for over 20 years. Having worked as a fertility specialist at two of Ireland's largest IVF clinics, she now offers a specialist fertility service at Bray Women's Health Centre.



INTO Menopause Survey (2022)

In 2022, the Equality Committee conducted a snapshot survey with a random selection of 4,800 INTO members on the topic of the menopause.¹ While the survey only generated a 6% return rate, the findings nonetheless provide interesting insights into teachers' experiences and paves the way for a fuller discussion on managing the menopause at work.

The following graphics capture some of the key findings and commentary:



¹The survey captured teachers' views on both perimenopause and menopause, however, for the purpose of the report the term menopause will be used interchangeably to denote both.

What our members said in the survey...

“

Poor sleep leads to issues like brain fog, ability to communicate and self-confidence.

Your **memory** goes to absolute mush, I thought I had early dementia and could not remember the names of kids in my class.

The impact of menopause on your **self-confidence** is shocking.

Dealing with physical symptoms such as **hot flushes** was a particularly challenging aspect.

My principal has been a **great support** and she understands my symptoms.

Increased awareness has opened up the possibilities for more open discussions in our workplace.

I appreciate INTO addressing this issue.



on the challenges...

An inability to concentrate and the onset of '**brain fog**' at a time when teachers are bombarded with new initiatives and circulars.

I have thought of **giving up my AP2 post**, I have also considered **retirement**.

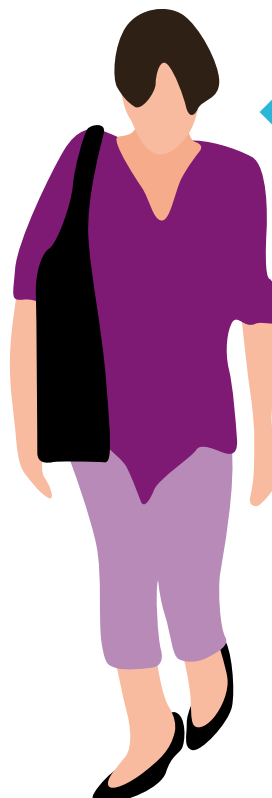
Menopause has an enormous effect on your **self-confidence** and your previous natural ability to think on your feet.

I am **job sharing** in part due to menopause related tiredness, anxiety, depression.

on supporting the menopause...

I'm so glad this discussion has opened up. Our most experienced staff in our schools are **suffering in silence** 99% of the time.

Fully in support of a policy on menopause, time off as necessary and understanding/support for those who are experiencing problems with menopause at school.



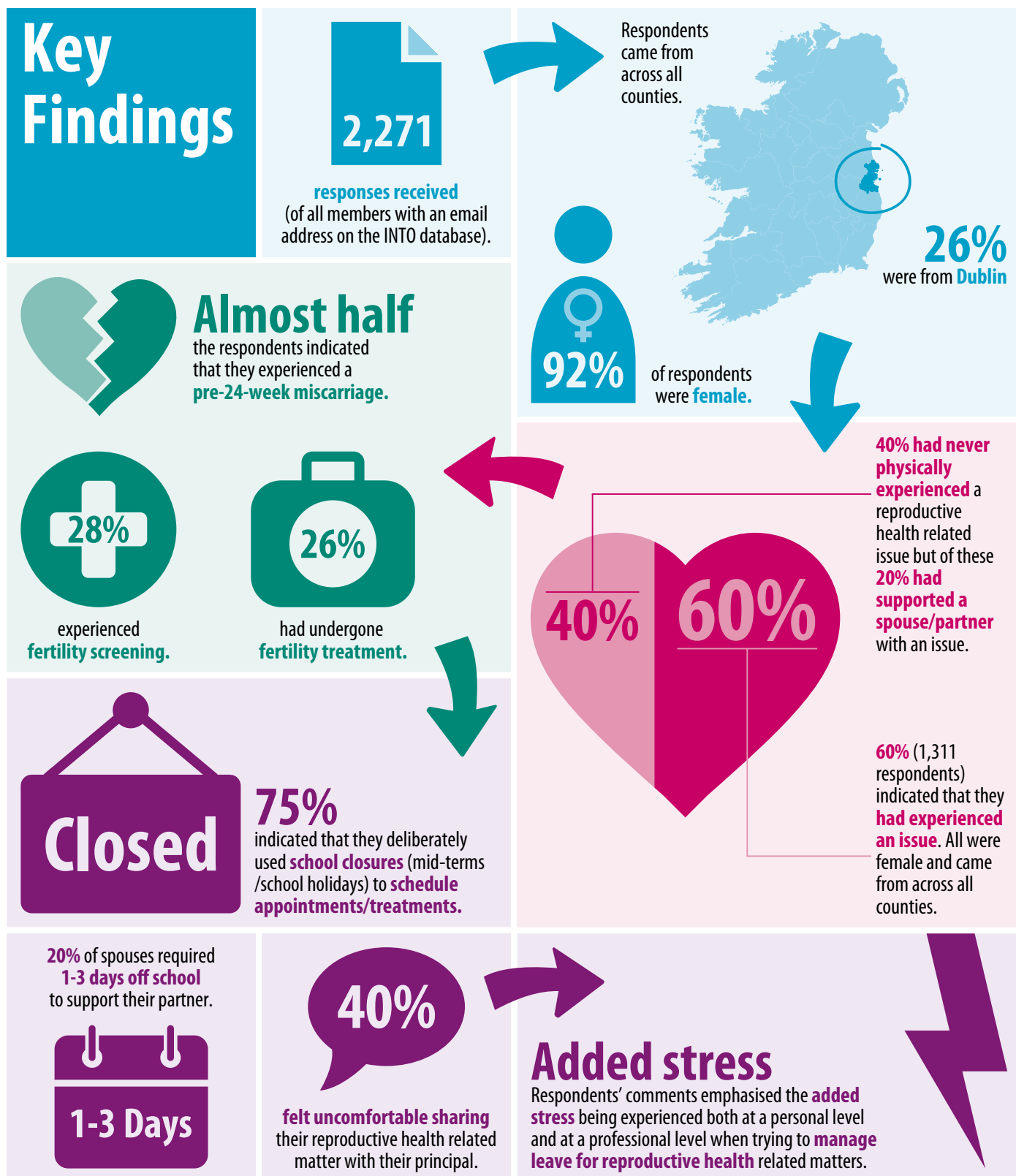
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INTO Reproductive Health Survey (2019)

In 2019, the INTO Equality Committee undertook research into members' experiences of managing reproductive health related matters during work time.¹

The following graphics capture some of the key findings and commentary:



¹A full copy of the report is available at: <https://bit.ly/INTOSurveyReproductiveHealth2019>



What our members said in the survey...

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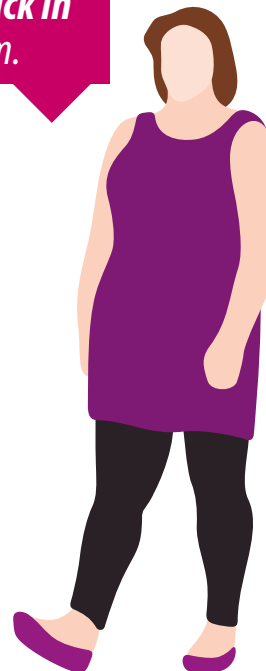
It's a **stressful thing** to have to go **through** without having to stress about taking time off and how to keep the matter private.

It is an **emotional rollercoaster**, an exhausting experience not to mention the expense.

Despite my principal being as incredibly supportive as possible, I put myself under **unnecessary stress** and worry while undergoing IVF.

I think there is still a **stigma attached** to it [reproductive health matters].

During IVF treatment I travelled to Dublin, leaving at 5am, to get to an early appointment so that I would be **back in work** for 10am.



I feel that training on **supporting colleagues** is a must.

This survey and subsequent motion to Congress is a very good **stepping stone** to **raising awareness** and making conversations easier.

I felt I could not take school days and **used up EPV days** or tried to schedule appointments during holidays.

Teachers need **support and time** to manage reproductive health related matters in the form of additional leave, unrelated to sick leave.

I do not have a permanent job and would feel that telling my principal that I was going for fertility treatment would **stand against me** in any future job interviews.



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Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

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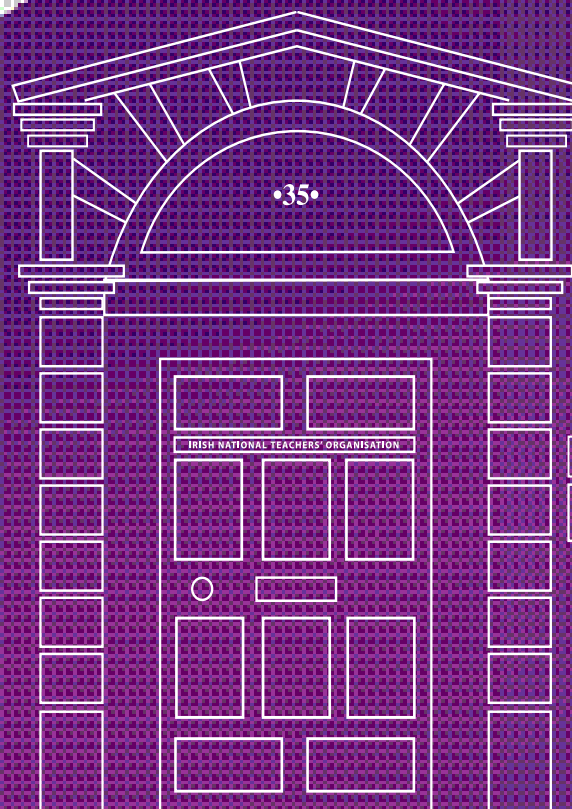
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