

Level of Knowledge, Dialogue, and Comfort About the Vagina

Women take their health seriously and are more educated than ever to make informed decisions about their health and well-being — except when it comes to vaginal health. While health care providers and women are increasingly open to discussing intimate topics such as breast cancer, contraception, and menopause, women still shy away from discussions about the vagina. Below are findings from a national ARHP survey conducted among 1,117 women ages 18 – 44 to evaluate their attitudes toward and perceptions of their vaginas.

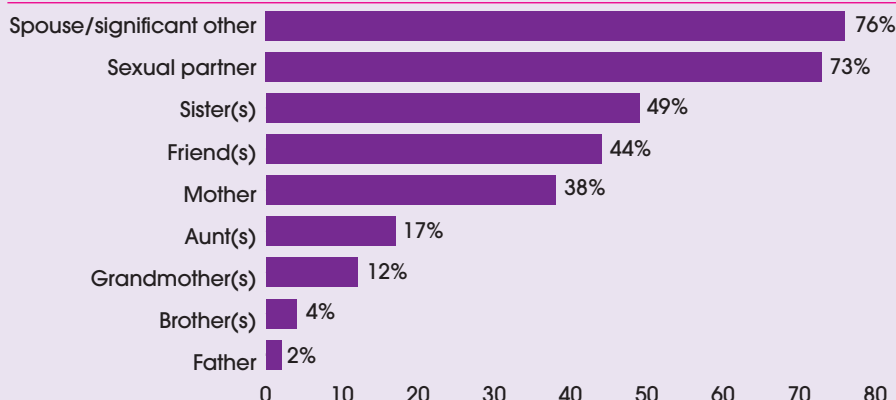
PAST VS. PRESENT

- **Wanted: more information**
 - Two-thirds of women (65%) agree that vaginal health and research have not received the proper attention they deserve
 - More than half of the women surveyed (59%) agree that society has too many misconceptions about vaginas
 - 90 percent of women agree that it is important for women to be sufficiently educated about the vagina
- **Still in the Dark Ages?**
 - Most women (73%) think that while society is more comfortable about vagina discussions, there is still shock value attached to the topic
 - Two-thirds (66%) of women agree that compared with their mother's generation, women now make an effort to care for and protect their vaginas, as they do with their breasts

CURRENT VAGINA DIALOGUES

- **Women are uncomfortable, especially with discussions**
 - While 76 percent of women agree that women today are more able to say the word "vagina," close to half (47%) agree that discussions about the vagina should be held in private
 - More than one-third of women (35%) are uncomfortable having any discussions about vaginas; nearly one out of five women (21%) is even uncomfortable talking to her health care provider about it
 - Only 14 percent of women believe that women are as comfortable talking about their vaginas as men are about penis-related issues
- **Ashamed to look?** While women perform breast self-exams regularly, only half (49%) of women surveyed have ever performed a self-exam of their vaginas, and one in four women (24%) has not looked at her vagina in a year or longer

People With Whom Women Feel Comfortable Discussing Their Vagina



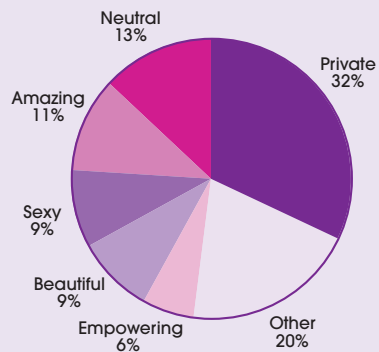
CONFIDENCE LEVEL

- **Social stigma seems to affect women's personal perceptions**

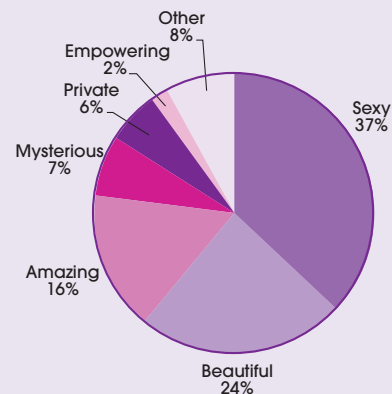
- Nearly three in four women surveyed (73%) believe that the vagina is still a shocking topic
- Only one in 10 women think that there is no shame in having discussions about the vagina
- Women most commonly describe their vagina as “private”
- Some common words women use to refer to their vagina include: “private” (parts, area, spot, etc.), “down there,” and “crotch”
- Some women consider their vaginas as “ugly,” “gross,” “dirty,” and “embarrassing”

- **Women perceive their vaginas very differently than they believe their spouses/significant others perceive their vaginas**

Women's Perception of Their Vaginas



Spouse/Significant Other's Perception of Their Vaginas



- **Does size matter?**

- More than half (57%) of women don't think their vagina is the right size
- One in five women (23%) are not comfortable inserting something into the vagina

KNOWLEDGE LEVEL

- **Knowledge = behavior**

- Only half of the women surveyed (51%) consider themselves to be extremely/very knowledgeable about their vaginas
- Women who believe they are very/extremely knowledgeable are more likely to talk about vaginas in public (60%) and feel comfortable about using vaginally administered products (54%)

- **What women know about the vagina**

- Most women (84%) know that when something is inside the vagina (e.g., tampon, contraceptive vaginal ring), the vagina walls spread and “hug” the object
- Yet, more than half (54%) think that a tampon or condom could get lost or trapped inside the vagina
- Eight out of 10 women (81%) know that the vagina varies in length from woman to woman
- More than two-thirds (70%) of women answered correctly that the vagina slants back at an angle towards the lower back

Top Vaginal Information Sources for Women

