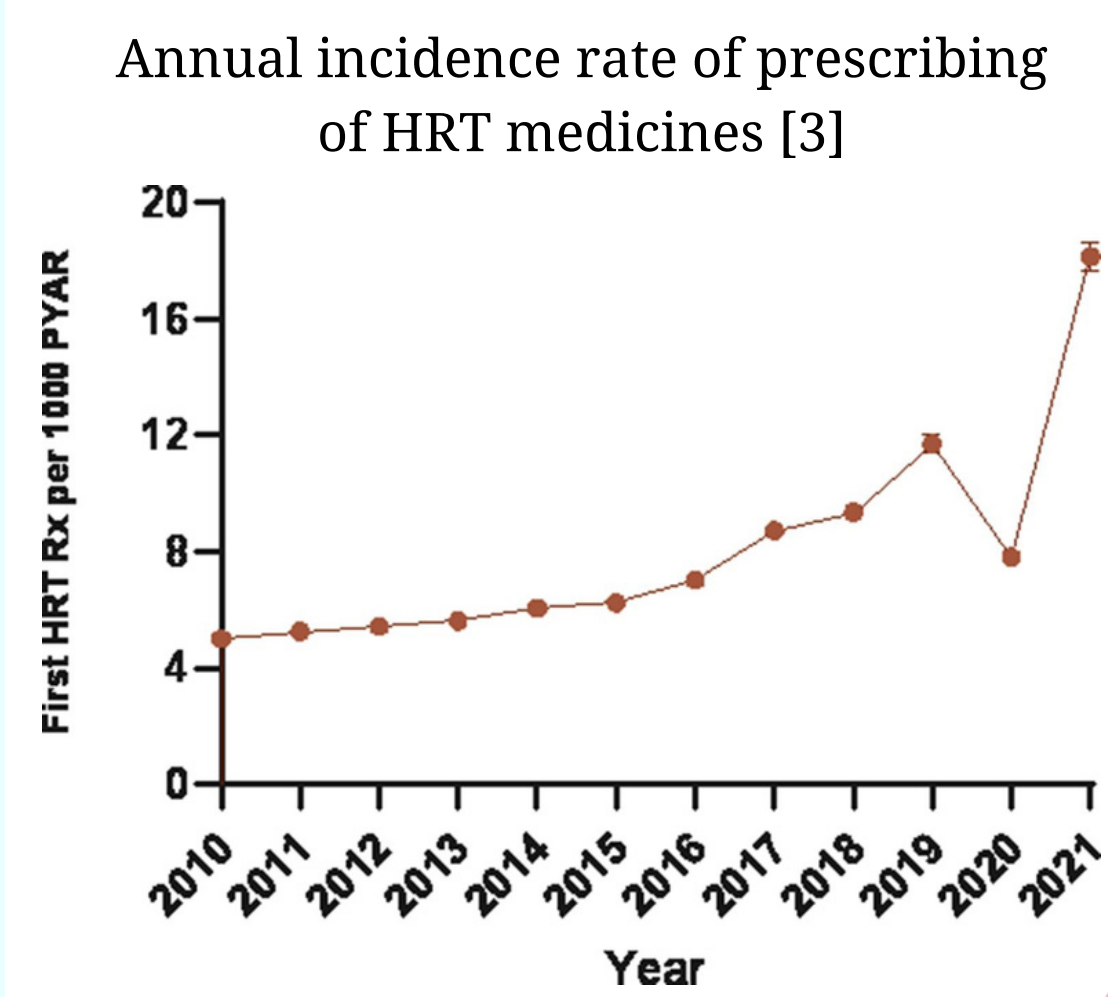


HRT in the media - a fair press?

Figure 1



The Menopause

The menopause, according to the NICE according to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, is the 'biological stage in a woman's life when menstruation stops permanently due to the loss of ovarian follicular activity' [1]. This then results in a **decrease** in important physiological hormones, namely oestrogen and progesterone [2].

HRT

HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) is the medical intervention for menopause symptoms [4]. Due to an ongoing media debate regarding its safety [5], opinions on HRT are divided, and the way in which it is presented in the media is often reflective of this.

Testosterone

Testosterone is not currently licensed for treatment of menopausal symptoms in the UK, although it can be prescribed off label to help with **low libido** [6].

Research summary

The aim of this research project was to investigate the current opinions of HRT in the media, and compare them with the available NICE recommendations. Data was also **collected on conflicts of interest (COIs)** found in these sources. The aim was to discern whether a COI, financial or otherwise, could be linked to the agreement/disagreement of a source with the NICE guidelines. We analysed the top 30 sources from each platform.

In the longterm, it is hoped that this project will bring more clarity to women seeking information online regarding recommendations for HRT, as there is a plethora of information and opinions online. The popularity of HRT is increasing [figure 1], therefore it is important that good quality information is available to patients.

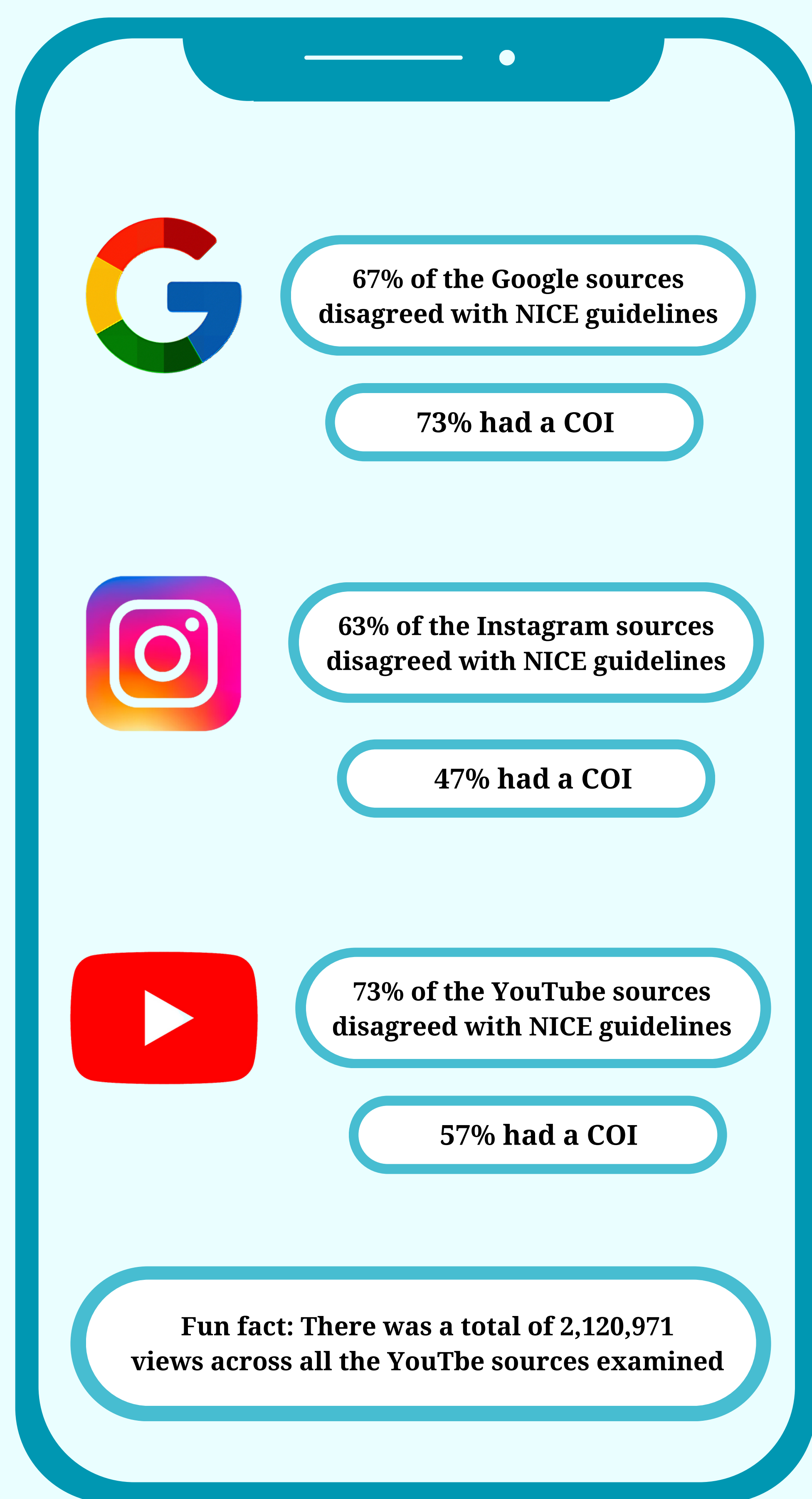


Figure 2

% of COIs among all Google sources

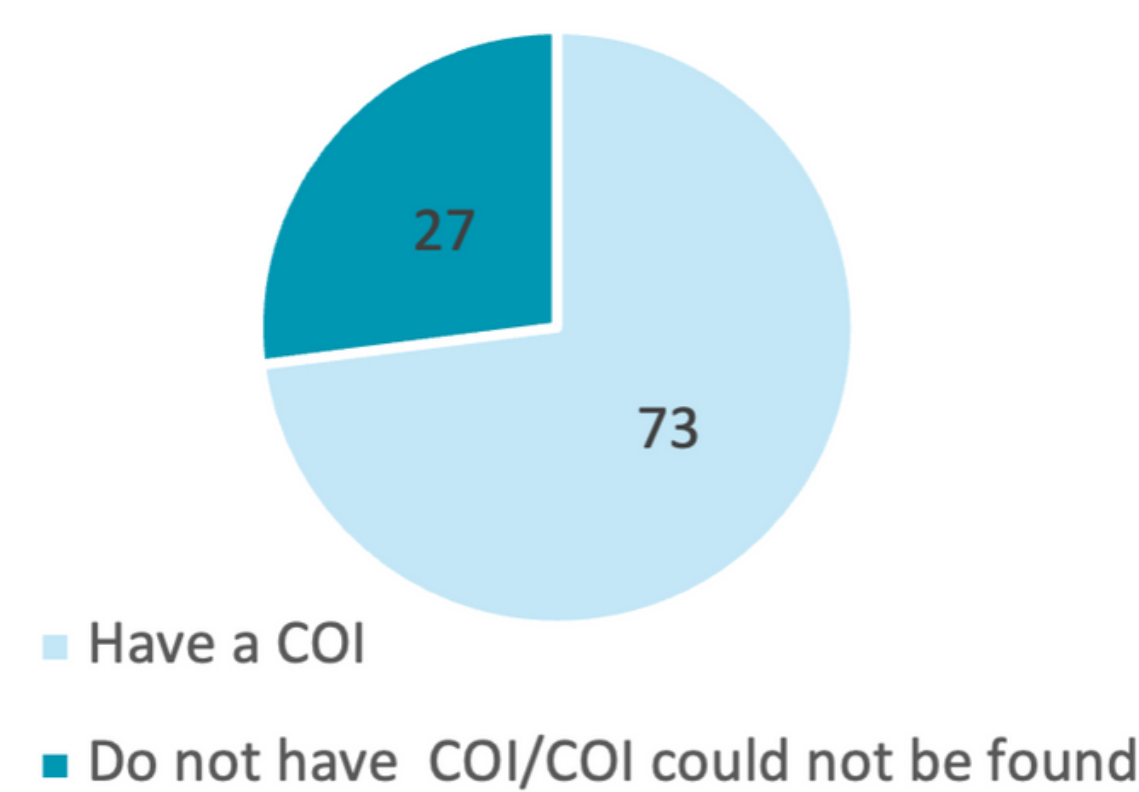
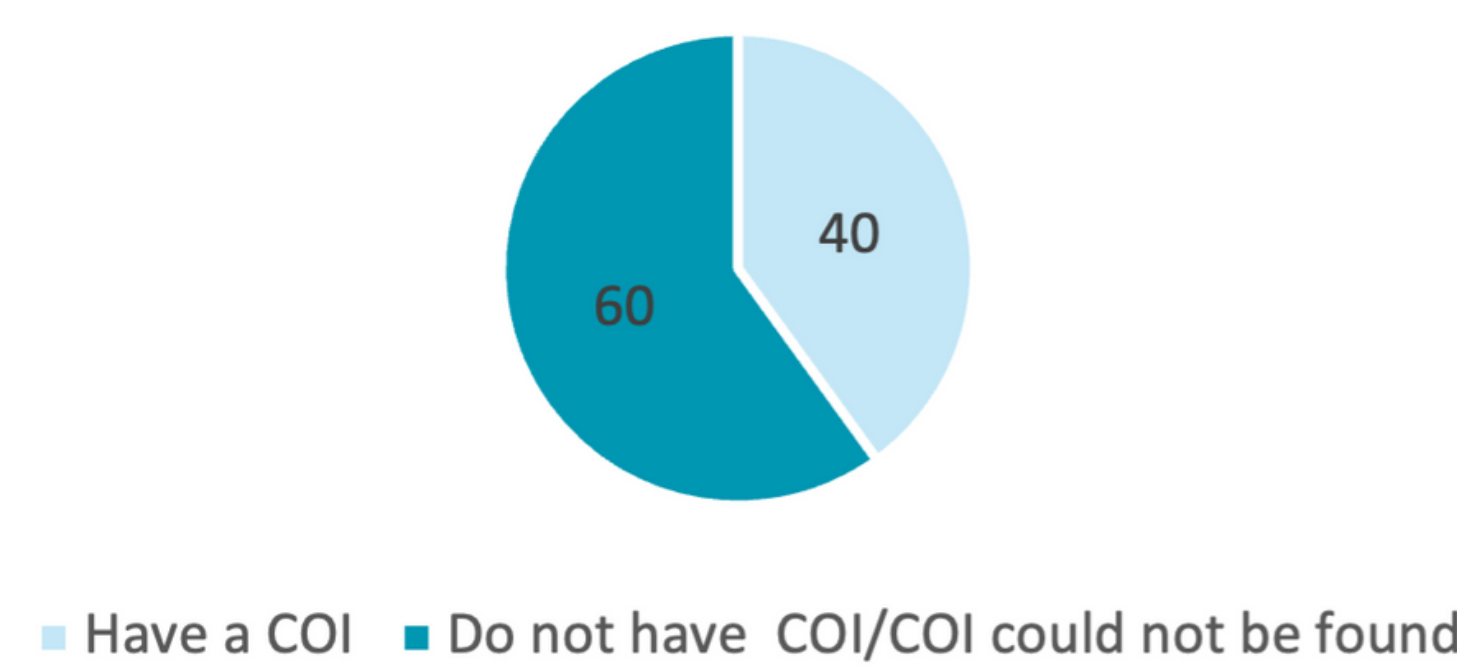


Figure 3

% of COIs among YouTube sources that agree with NICE guidelines



Analysis

Of all the sources searched, **57% had a COI**. For YouTube, the percentage of COIs among sources that disagreed with NICE guidelines [figure 4] was **much higher** than the percentage found among those that agreed [figure 3], **64% vs 40%**. For Google and Instagram, presence of a COI didn't seem to effect likelihood of disagreement.

Figure 4

% of COIs among YouTube sources that disagree with NICE guidelines

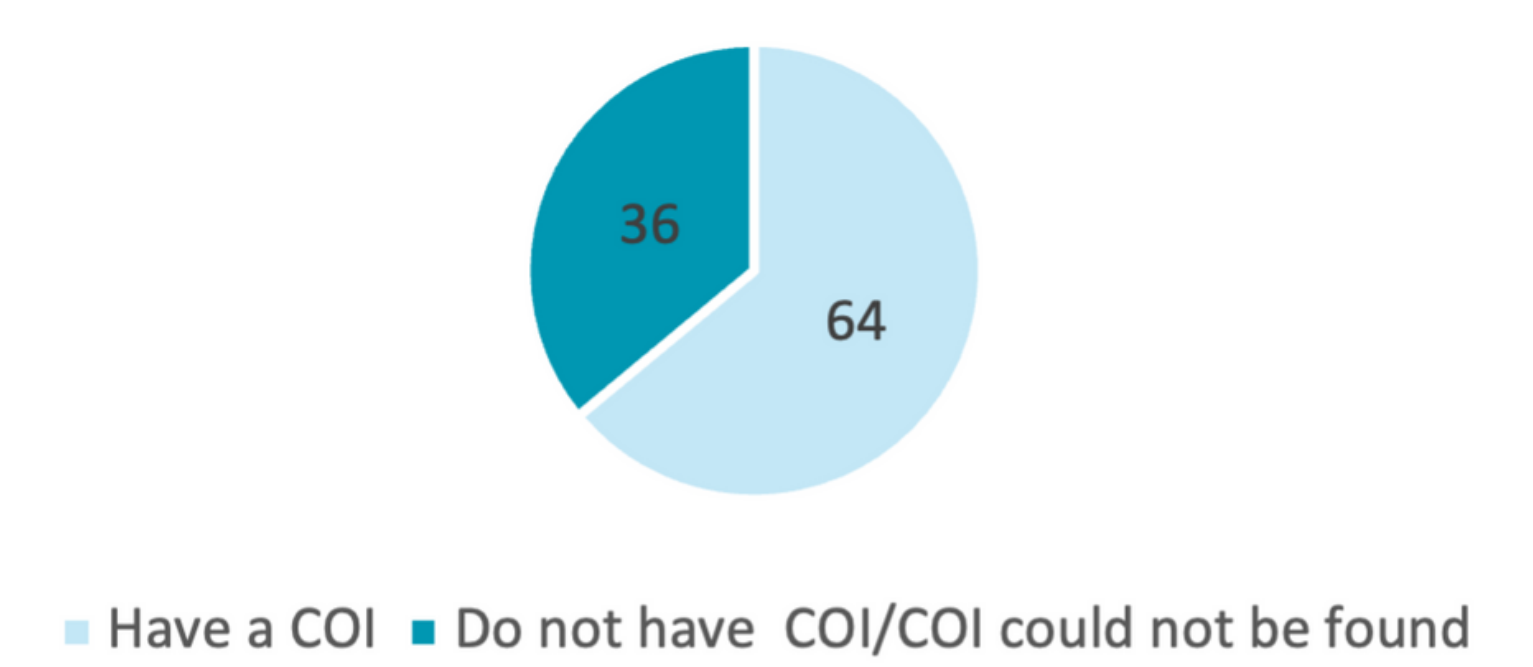
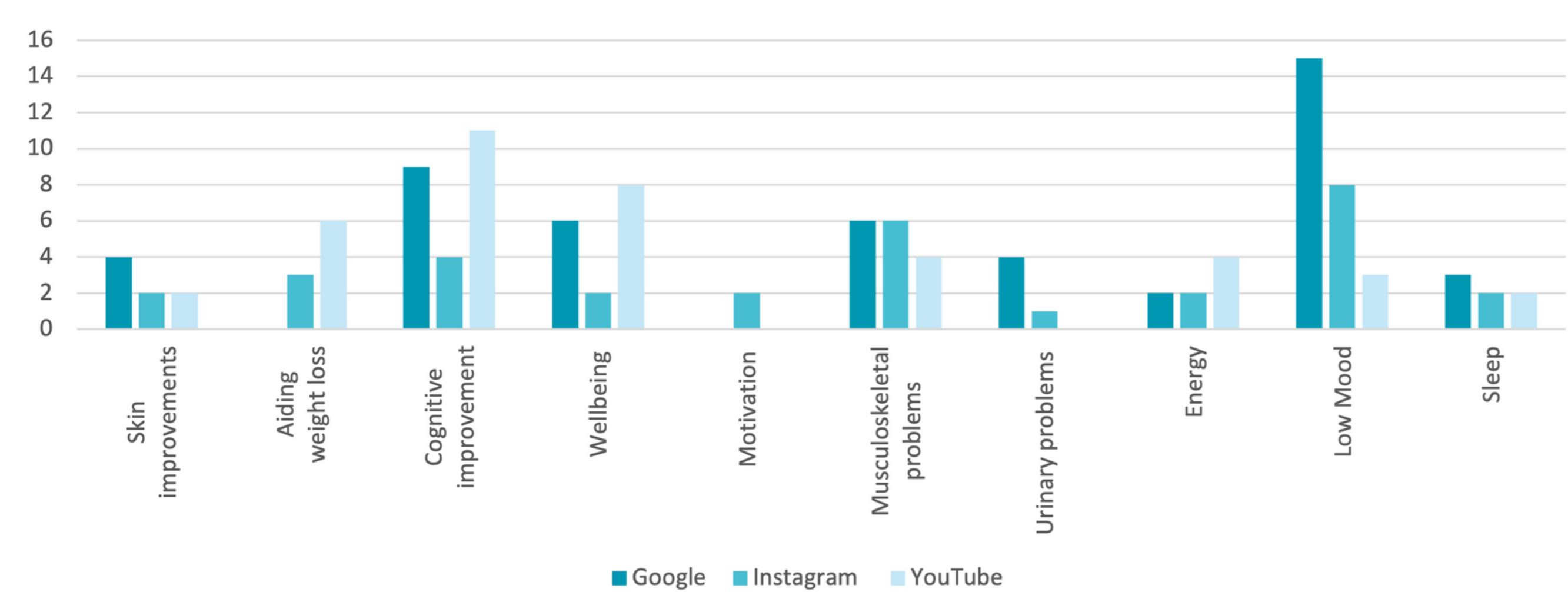


Figure 5

Claims made for use of HRT



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- Graphics - Trendify [Canva]

Quick conclusions

- The quality of information available online is **not of high quality** - it is very difficult to tell which sources are conflicted
- Conflicts of interest may impact the opinions presented in the sources - for YouTube, if a source has a COI, it seems more likely to disagree with NICE recommendations
- **Anecdotal evidence** should not be awarded the same value as scientific evidence in conversations regarding healthcare
- This study highlights the difficulties that people face when searching for information about HRT and the menopause - media should be consumed with a critical eye

Credit

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