

Menopause at Work



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Menopause at Work

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Executive Summary

This report outlines the findings from a survey conducted across 14 organisations comprising 1,523 respondents.

The objectives of the survey were to explore experiences of menopause at work. The survey contained 11 questions including 6 open-ended questions. Statistical data from 5 closed questions are presented. The open-ended questions were analysed and a number of key themes are presented, together with exemplar verbatim quotes.

To summarise, respondents reported a general and pervasive lack of awareness of the impact of symptoms of menopause on work roles and tasks. There was limited confidence for those women already menopausal in discussing menopause at work, driven by embarrassment, stigma and taboo. Many women did not discuss their menopause for fear of discrimination. This fear led women to hide, conceal and mask their symptoms which in turn perpetuated and exacerbated feelings of anxiety, depression and loss of confidence. As a result, many women reported feeling isolated and struggled on a regular (daily) basis. The consequences for some women were significant including, changing roles, taking (un- or under-explained) sick leave, leaving their jobs and feeling suicidal.

On a positive note, where participants discussed positive experiences in the workplace, they were clearly linked to open discussion resulting in better awareness and understanding of the impact of symptoms. This then allowed for reasonable workplace modifications and adjustments to be made.

Whilst male colleagues and line-managers were often mentioned as a barrier to open communication and understanding of menopause in the workplace, there were references to age (younger colleagues) as a barrier also. However, the most significant barrier to greater understanding in the workplace was the lack of available support. Broadly speaking, most respondents identified that educating managers and staff through workshops would be the most beneficial platforms for raising awareness. A further 3 out of 5 respondents felt that reasonable adjustments could be introduced in order to support menopause at work.

Introduction

Once a taboo subject, there has been a significant increase in recent years in discussion and awareness of menopause and its impact on women in the workplace in recent years. For example, in July 2017, the UK Government published research on menopause transition and its economic impact (Brewis et al., 2017) and, across a week-long series in May 2019, BBC Breakfast ran a variety of news items challenging stereotypes and opening up the conversation. The conversation around menopause in the workplace does appear to be growing, which is welcome. It is however still at an early stage, as much of the data in this report confirms.

The menopause transition, or 'peri-menopause', is a natural life stage for women and is usually experienced between the ages of 45-55. It is defined as 'the time between onset of menstrual irregularity and the menopause', when menstruation ceases (O'Neill and Eden, 2017: 303), and is the stage where women are most likely to experience symptoms. These symptoms can last several years. How each woman experiences menopause is different and unique to every woman (Banks, 2019). The impact, duration, onset and severity of symptoms experienced throughout this period vary greatly, but can include hot flushes, night sweats, mood changes, poor concentration, memory loss, anxiety and weight gain.

It is estimated that there are 4.3 million women aged between 50-64 (ONS 2019) in the UK workforce. Given that the average age of a woman's menopause is 51, a significant number of women will be working while in transition (O'Neill and Eden, 2017). There is evidence to suggest that menopausal symptoms do have a negative effect on women's working lives (Griffiths and Hunter, 2014) with nearly 40% of women agreeing that menopausal symptoms had some negative effect on their work performance (Griffiths et al, 2013).

There is a need for employers to offer guidance, support and increase awareness of menopause, instead of treating it as a 'taboo' subject or a personal matter (Matthews, 2015, Hardy et al, 2019). Altmann (2015) argues that line-managers especially require training in how to support women experiencing the menopause. Jack et al (2016) outline several recommendations for employers but suggests that not acknowledging menopause creates an 'inhospitable environment... where menopause is an embarrassing or inappropriate topic' (Jack et al, 2016: 92). Ensuring women are supported during this period is especially important as many are reaching the peak of their work performance and have extensive and valuable knowledge and skills that employers do not wish to lose. Whilst there is limited evidence currently to support the view that women leave their jobs, or suffer negative impact on their careers (Brewis et al, 2017), there is evidence in this study to suggest they do.

Report Objectives

This report explores how employees experience menopause at work. The survey explored feelings and attitudes of a range of employees, including women who have transitioned through the menopause, those who are currently experiencing menopausal symptoms and both male and female colleagues working alongside them.

The specific objectives are to explore:

- How confident employees feel about discussing menopause – the impact of open or closed discussion
- The impact of menopausal symptoms on women's performance, career and mental health in the workplace
- The attitudes towards menopause in the workplace from colleagues and line-managers
- What help and support is available and required in the workplace

Methods

Data Collection

Data was collected via an online survey. 14 organizations participated in the research. In total 1,523 responses were collected.

Data Analysis

The survey responses to closed-ended questions were captured and analysed in Excel. Descriptive statistics are presented in the following document.

Over 5,000 responses to both closed and open-ended questions were uploaded into specialist qualitative data analysis software (Nvivo 11). These responses were then coded into themes. Themes and supporting quotes are detailed throughout the document.

Limitations

There are some limitations of the survey, primarily the survey is self-selecting. This is indicated by the high number of female participants, and the over-representation of women who are also menopausal.

Results

The data were collected via Survey Monkey between March 2018 and November 2019
In total 1,523 responses were collected.

Q.1 Age range breakdown:

-30	48	3%
31-40	163	11%
41-45	197	13%
46-50	462	30%
51-55	470	31%
56-60	154	10%
61-65	29	2%
65+	0	0%
	1523	100%

Q2. Gender breakdown

175 respondents were Male, however 5 male respondents also indicated they were also menopausal. This may be due to a data entry mistake; it may also be due to question design related to gender identity as there was no option for identifying as a different/alternative gender in the question.

88% (1,343) of respondents were Female. 5 additional respondents chose not to answer the question.

Q3. Are you, or others in your family or workplace, menopausal? Are you a line manager?

62% (946) of respondents said they are currently menopausal

16% (239) of respondents have a partner or family member who is menopausal

26% (399) of participants indicate they work with someone who is menopausal

15% (228) of respondents say they work with someone in their direct team who is menopausal

14% (210) of participants currently know no-one in the workplace or within their family who is menopausal

Q3. Line Managers

27% (406) of respondents are line-managers, 42% (169) of whom are also menopausal.

39% of line-managers have work colleagues who are menopausal

34% (138) of line-managers have direct team members who are menopausal.

23% (94) of line-managers are male. 28% (94) of male line-managers have a team member who is menopausal

77% (312) of line-managers are female. 36% (312) of female line-managers have a team member who is menopausal

The discrepancy between male and female line-managers who have members of their team who are menopausal is of interest and may indicate that male line managers were less aware of women in their team who were menopausal. This was borne out in the qualitative responses, as many women indicated they were or would be too embarrassed to discuss their menopausal symptoms with a male manager. Whilst some women suggested it was easier to discuss with female colleagues, most found it difficult to discuss regardless of the gender of the manager. Another factor which impacted on women's confidence in discussing their difficulties was the age of their line manager, with a number of women reporting negative experiences with younger female line-managers.

*My experience of **younger female** supervisors is not a good one, they need to be more aware!*

Women Managers aren't always the most supportive especially if they haven't experienced the same types of symptoms, and Male managers tend to be a bit embarrassed

*When the E Mails came out about this forum I was disgusted to hear **young women** in my office saying, "look have you seen this E Mail , just another excuse to get an afternoon off and give someone something to do as a job and that the women should just get on with it ?" I couldn't believe my ears*

Don't assume men do not know, age is more a barrier than sex.

I think menopause is the last taboo that we do not discuss. I personally had no idea how much it would affect me and what it meant. Certainly in my 20s and 30s, I would not have had the empathy with an older colleague. More education is definitely needed.

That said there was a perception that male line managers were difficult to approach and would have difficulty dealing with menopause issues in the workplace:

Menopause at Work

Seriously, this is a question? There is no support because male line managers have zero understanding.

I have received no training or guidance, I working in an area of policing dominated by males who will not under any circumstances talk about women's problems, even the women here are suppressed about talking about their problems

I don't want to talk about it but I would like to be understood. I think male colleagues will not take the matter seriously. They don't know as they haven't experienced it after all.

Not discussed it with anyone - line managers are all male - not comfortable raising the issue. Don't think they would be comfortable either

Q4. Acknowledgement of Menopause in the Workplace

1,506 (99%) of the survey's respondents responded to the question 'Do you feel menopause is acknowledged in the workplace?', however **50%** of the question's respondents suggest that there was no acknowledgement at all of menopause in their workplace

41% suggested that there was some ('a little') acknowledgement of the menopause in the workplace.

Only 9% of respondents claimed that their workplace acknowledged the menopause 'a lot'

31% of those who thought menopause was acknowledged in the workplace were line-managers

55% of Male respondents thought that the menopause was acknowledged in the workplace

49% of Female respondents thought that the menopause was acknowledged in the workplace

The discrepancy (55% vs 49%) between male and female responses to this question is interesting, yet it is unclear why there might be such a difference in perceptions of acknowledgement of menopause in the workplace.

Q5. How confident are you to discuss menopause at work?

Participants were asked to rate how confident they were in discussing the menopause at work (0-100).

Overall, those experiencing menopause report lower levels of confidence compared to their non-menopausal colleagues. The average score for menopausal women is 41, compared to 48 for non-menopausal respondents. If we look at very low confidence scores (0-19), 38% of menopausal women feel they have no confidence at all in discussing the menopause at work. Almost 70% of menopausal women feel they have moderate to no confidence at all in discussing menopause at work.

Analysis of qualitative responses showed that respondents regarded discussing menopause as difficult and hard to do. There were over 100 references associated with feelings of **embarrassment, shame, stigma and taboo**. This suggests that unless the organisations themselves are prepared to discuss menopause openly the difficulties women experience in the workplace will continue.

*I am really struggling with my symptoms and there is **a taboo around being open and honest** about this because it is a 'women's problem'. We feel like we have to use an alternative reason rather than say what it actually is.*

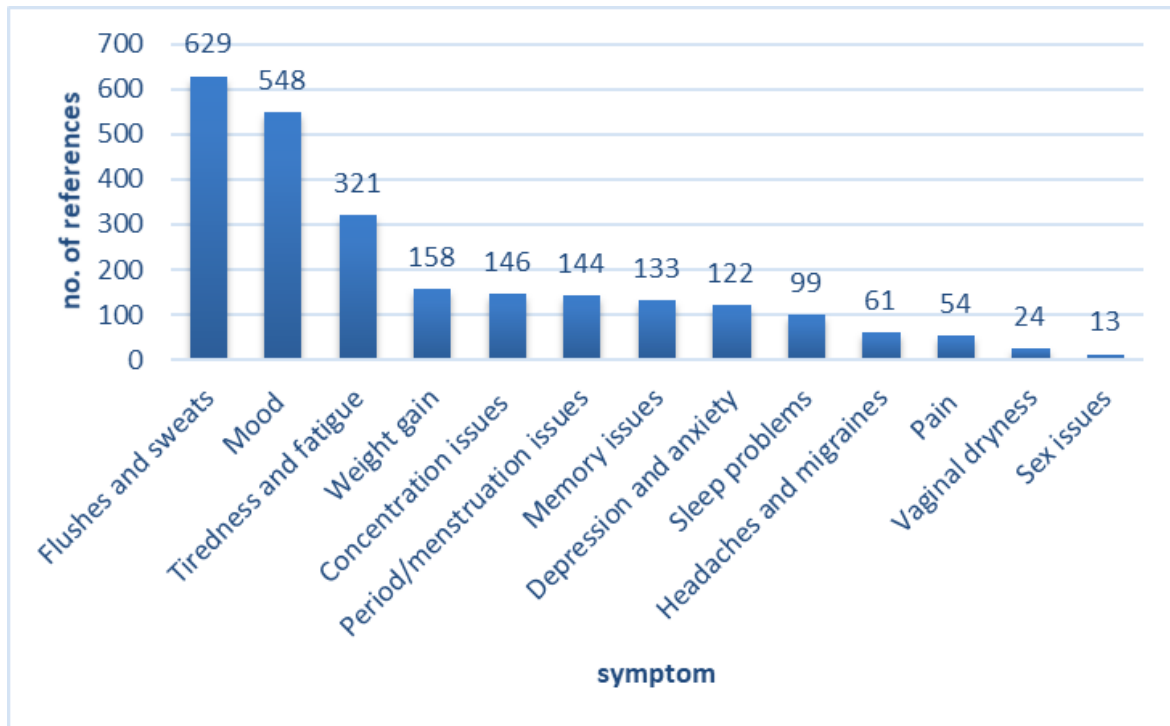
*I think menopause is the **last taboo that we do not discuss**. I personally had no idea how much it would affect me and what it meant.*

*The condition is treated as a joke. It has a huge impact on health and wellbeing but it is not acknowledged as a health condition in the workplace. **There is stigma** and no encouragement for support.*

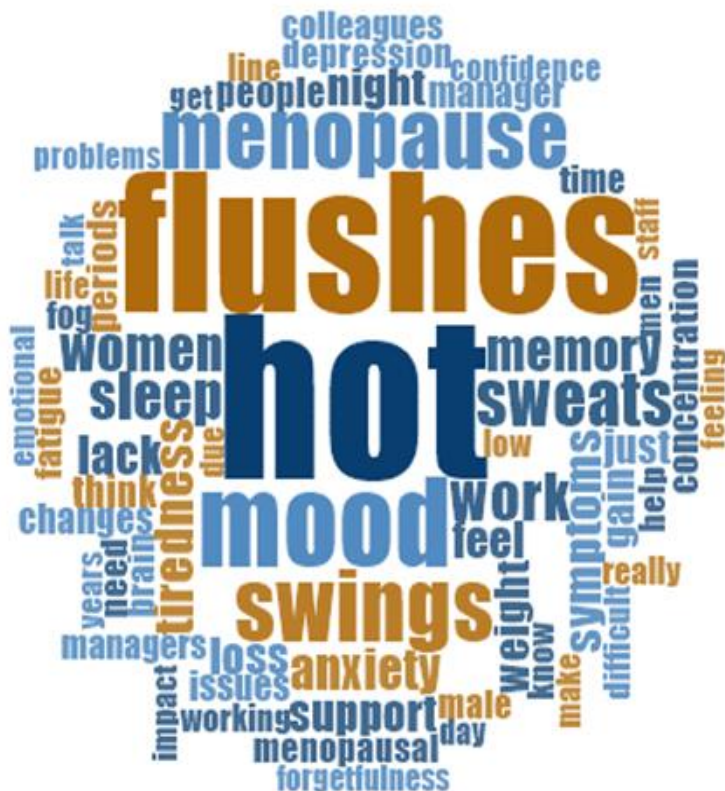
*Like mental ill health and menstruation, the **menopause is embarrassing - almost taboo**. Women also fear they'll be viewed as 'past it' and too old to have anything to contribute.*

*I think with an aged workforce it is good to address this. I see a lot of people that try to manage their menopause ineffectively and this does have an effect on their temperament. I also see people who are in denial or **embarrassed** by it.*

Q6. What are the most common menopausal symptoms that you know affect women?



Word Cloud from Open-ended responses at Q.6



Knowledge of Menopausal Symptoms

The range of symptoms known by respondents was wide-ranging, however by far the most commonly known symptoms were hot flushes and mood swings.

Of those respondents who were menopausal (947 respondents), almost all gave 3 menopausal symptoms (93%). Of those who were not menopausal (576 respondents), almost three quarters were able to list three symptoms. This suggests that most people were aware of the symptoms experienced by menopausal women, however the gap in understanding might relate to the severity and impact of those symptoms (see analysis of Q.7).

Experiences of menopausal symptoms

*My worst problem in the work place is that I suffer from **immense tiredness** which is part of my menopausal symptoms. I also sometimes **struggle to think of the words** I want to say, and actually getting the words out! I can also **feel very emotional and tearful** for no reason and often feel 'under the weather' and **lacking in energy and enthusiasm**.*

*I have really suffered with menopause symptoms recently and have really really struggled with work . It can make you **feel anxious, forgetful, lacking confidence and general just shit** about yourself.*

*Interesting to learn about the mental health issues associated with the menopause. Explains a lot, thought I was just 'losing the plot'! I can associate with **brain fog, poor memory and concentration, anxiety, loss of confidence and motivation, poor sleep**.*

*I am peri menopausal - regular periods but many **symptoms tiredness, lack of concentration, skin break outs, anxiety, vaginal dryness, headaches, wake up and can't get back to sleep, irritability**.*

*The **hot flushes** are bothering me a lot and it makes me want to take time out, but I feel I have to continue to work without even letting my colleagues know.*

*I have found **weight gain and low mood** to be a big issue for me. **Flushes** occasionally and so far no night sweats. Was taking HRT for a short period but GP advised against it and put me on 20mg Fluoxetine to help with low mood. Helps a bit but it's the **weight gain, bloating and general puffiness** I am struggling to cope with.*

Q7. Impact of menopausal symptoms on work tasks and roles

1,441 (95%) participants answered Q.7. They were asked to rate out of 100 the impact of menopausal symptoms on work performance. The average score was 55. Further 56% said that the impact was high or extremely high, which indicates that employers need to be aware that menopausal symptoms have substantial impact on workplace performance.

Score		total %	Male %
0-25	= little or no impact	= 18%	33%
26-50	= moderate impact	= 25%	34%
51-75	= high impact	= 33%	26%
76+	= extremely high impact	= 23%	8%

Of the respondents to this question 156 (89%) were men, their average score was 42 – this suggests that men were less aware of the **impact** of menopausal symptoms (maybe because women were hiding their symptoms – see below) at work. It might, however, also reflect the sample in this survey which is biased towards female respondents who were already experiencing menopause and were therefore more sensitive to its impact.

There is clearly evidence that women found the symptoms of menopause had substantial **impact** on their ability to perform in their job roles and tasks. However, they were reluctant to disclose these **daily struggles for fear of discrimination** in the workplace. The fear of being labelled incompetent or ‘past it’ then led women to **hide, mask and conceal** their symptoms. Very often the continued struggle with symptoms coupled with the inability to discuss them openly, resulted in women suffering mental health issues such as **anxiety, depression and a loss of confidence** – these feelings were exacerbated as they manifested as both symptoms and consequences. Women unsurprisingly reported substantially **negative consequences** whereby in order to cope they either move out of the workplace, change roles or take sick leave and in one case, one woman reported feeling suicidal.

Impact on work performance

*I was given a very complex project to deal with & found **it very hard to cope** due to my severe menopausal symptoms (brain fog, anxiety, insomnia). I approached my then manager on numerous occasions to say that **I needed help & that I was really struggling**, but she just laughed it off. She couldn't seem to understand that my menopause was really affecting my ability to do my job. I ended up going sick for 2 months with stress.*

*I don't discuss that I'm peri-menopausal at work and would like to be able to without embarrassment as **I do think it affects my work**. I also think adjustments should be made at work for women at this stage of their lives.*

*I started to **perform badly at work** as a result of forgetfulness and loss of confidence and lack of structure which I was appraised negatively on. Now I know I'm menopausal I am having to work harder to overcome the record and excel. It's really draining and causing me anxiety.*

Menopause at Work

*I started having symptoms just after I stepped into a senior role, unfortunately they **impacted my ability to perform**. My manager lost patience with me and I felt bullied as he continuously criticised me. I was moved out of my role and my confidence was depleted. Sadly although my menopause is under control, **I don't have the confidence any more to progress at work**. I feel trapped in a job that I can do very well, I know I am capable of doing more but I lack the self-belief and confidence to aim higher.*

Daily Struggle and Isolation

*The feeling of **isolation, loss of confidence** contributed to me handing in my rank along with a throw away comment from a male manager who would be totally unaware of the impact this had.*

*feeling inadequate, **lost and depressed all the time**. Putting on a front - my ability to interact with people has diminished incredibly and I am becoming **self-isolated**.*

*I tried to talk to my Manager about my menopausal symptoms but because she hadn't struggled with her menopause she wasn't very sympathetic. She doesn't seem to realise **how much of a struggle it is for me** some days.*

Fear of Discrimination

*Women are reluctant to highlight menopause issues in **fear of the negative impact it will have at work and potentially their career**.*

*I'm not sure how younger colleagues would react and would be **worried at raising awareness** on a personal level in case **I'm viewed adversely as 'past it'** in the work place.*

*I think the call is a great idea, really appreciated. But I have concerns that in a majority male working environment, highlighting menopausal symptoms could be **used against women**: I can imagine an interviewing **preferring a male candidate to a menopausal woman**.*

*[I've told] no one as I believe it would **affect my positive work status and future progression***

Hiding masking concealing

*Instead like me **you feel you have to hide your emotions and symptoms in fear** of it having them misunderstood or having a negative effect on your role. Holding seminars and forums etc is all very good but there needs to be a clear structure on how issues are dealt with to in-still confidence in both supervisors and the individual it effects.*

*I haven't told anyone that I'm starting to go through it. The hot flushes are bothering me a lot and it makes me want to take time out, but I feel **I have to continue to work without even letting my colleagues know**.*

*Too many women **suffer in silence***

Generally I try to cope with the symptoms without making others aware.

Anxiety, Depression and Loss of Confidence

*Mood and mental health issues e.g. feeling **depressed** and lack of confidence*

*I started to perform badly at work as a result of forgetfulness and **loss of confidence** and lack of structure which I was appraised negatively on. Now I know I'm menopausal I am having to work harder to overcome the record and excel. It's really draining and **causing me anxiety**.*

*I have really suffered with menopause symptoms recently and have really, really struggled with work . It can make you **feel anxious**, forgetful, **lacking confidence** and general just shit about yourself.*

*Whilst going through the menopause, I felt unable to maintain a senior role, balance home and personal life, **lost confidence**, **anxiety** appeared where once there was confidence and drive*

Consequences:

*I feel that the effects of the menopause are largely trivialised and joked about too much, they can have a **devastating effect** & should be taken much more seriously. I personally ... **feel so depressed** and in so much pain, but I feel that I cannot talk about it as it is too embarrassing so I just **struggle on**. It has affected all aspects of my life in a very negative way.*

*I managed a member of staff who went **sick for a day at a time for menopause** and she was put on management action for number of times going sick. I contacted OH for support and there was nothing they could offer. Completely alienated a hard working member of staff*

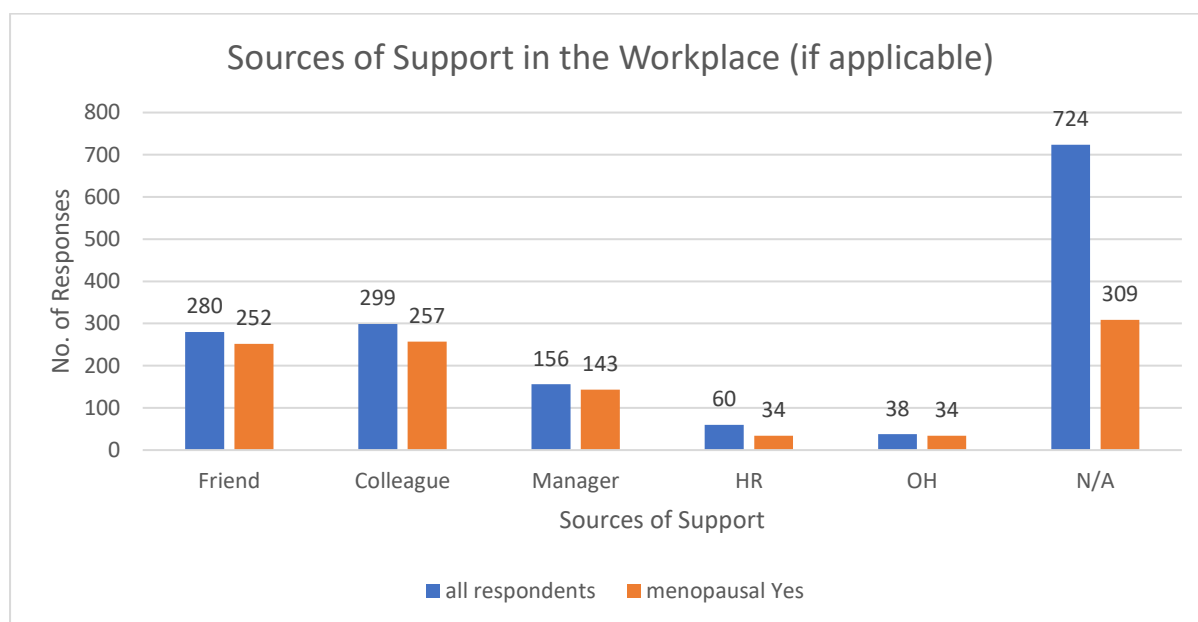
*The feeling of isolation, loss of confidence **contributed to me handing in my rank** along with a throw away comment from a male manager who would be totally unaware of the impact this had.*

***I left a management job** within NWP a few years ago due to my menopause and lack of confidence support as a manager. Now I have come back to the organization at a lower grade so that I can manage a work life balance.*

*I approached my then manager on numerous occasions to say that I needed help & that I was really struggling, but she just laughed it off. She couldn't seem to understand that my menopause was really affecting my ability to do my job. **I ended up going sick for 2 months with stress**.*

*Have suffered alone with the menopause for at least 3 years. For the first year or so I kept this to myself as I was embarrassed and ashamed and kept putting it to the back of my mind. I was crying for nothing / depressed / hot sweats / night sweats and **even suicidal**. I felt totally alone and didn't want to talk about it as I didn't feel that anyone would understand and I didn't want people to think this was just a 'cop out'.*

Q.8 Where have you received menopause support at work, if applicable?



The majority of those who responded to the close-ended question were currently menopausal. However, nearly half of those who have ticked N/A were also currently menopausal and this may be because they have not received any support at work at all (see below). As the open-ended question reveals, many reported receiving no support whatsoever.

Of those that received support from sources within the workplace, examples were both positive and negative. Where the experience was positive, it was closely linked to open communication – indicating that open, honest discussion of menopause was critical to better outcomes for women in the workplace.

Positive

*I find my **work colleagues** are very helpful towards me, and I am open about the menopause, then they realise why, sometimes I am quiet or tired. Thank you to my wonderful work colleagues.*

*I have been extremely lucky to have a **knowledgeable understanding line manager** who has been able to put things in place for me to manage my day to day duties.*

Our PTI is amazing - she just talks openly and honestly and in such a funny matter-of-fact way it would be hard to see how it could ever offend.

Negative

No support from HR at all. I was going through menopause in my 40's it was looked upon as a disciplinary issue

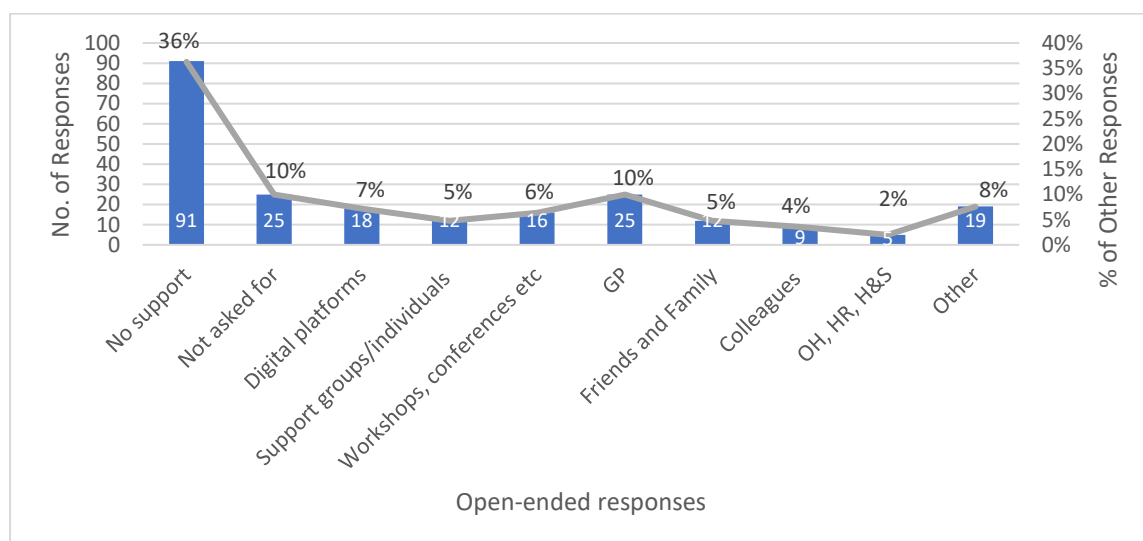
Being told to do up my second button on an open neck shirt whilst in the throes of a hot sweat by a member of my SLT was not appreciated and was not received well. Also being told that the average age is 51 so therefore it should not really affect me at 49..... Educational for all is a big thing. I never thought it would affect me the way that it is at the present time.

More needs to be done. I openly discussed my situation with a female manager once and she was totally dismissive as she was not at that stage of her life. I have never discussed it again because of her

Q8. Support at Work – Other (open-ended responses)

There were 251 responses to the question, ‘Where have you received menopause support at work?’

200 responses were collected from individuals currently menopausal. The remainder were either male, not yet menopausal or had already transitioned. The majority of respondents (91) suggested that there was no formal or informal support mechanisms available in the workplace. Only 79 respondents could point to some form of work-based support, and on the whole, this appeared to be fairly limited. There is also a reluctance for some women to discuss and ask for support - 25 respondents mentioned that they had not asked for, nor sought support at work.



No support at all offered by the organisation/managers

*I haven't received any assistance but that could be because **I haven't asked for it***

*I have found an article on the **intranet** about managing someone with menopause*

*Not for myself but **the Menopause Matters conference** has been offered to me as a line manager.*

Women's Support Network and Wellbeing Officer

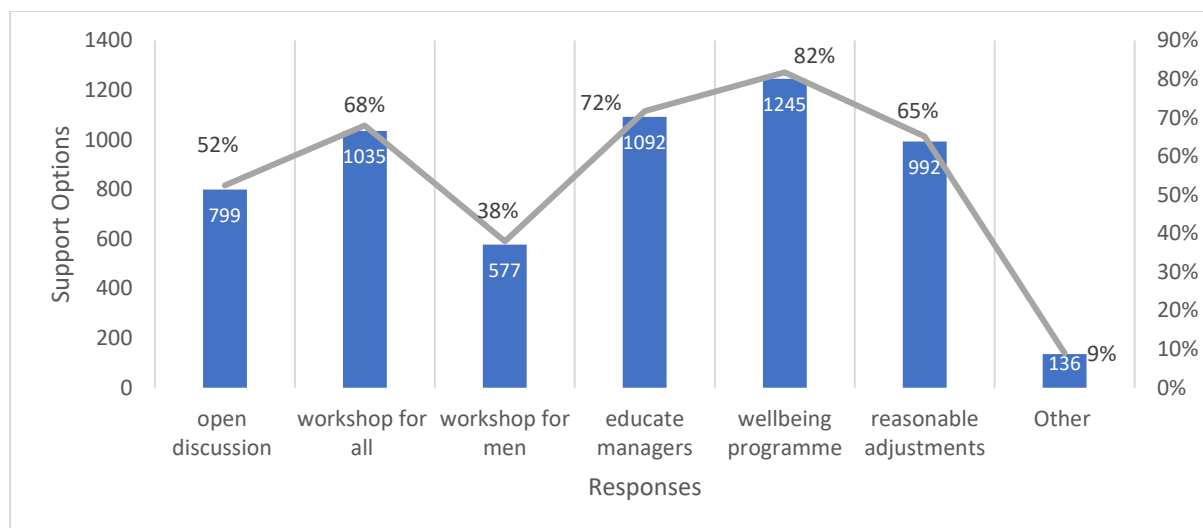
*I personally have had support from **my GP** and feel that I have managed it well. But also feel that if I hadn't, I would have struggled to find support in the work place.*

Family member and friends who are going through it. Support at work is minimal as most people see it as a 'failing' illness

The females in the office have discussed this in the open and some males who have partners going through have joined in.

Recent comms from the Health and Safety Team

Q.9 What can your organisation do to support Menopause @ Work?



Q.9 What can your organisation do to support Menopause @ Work? (open-ended)

A total of 136 participants responded to this question with various other suggestions as to how they felt their organisations might support menopause in the workplace.

In total, 71 suggestions included offering flexible working (11), provision of desk fans and control of air-con (11), adequate toilets and sanitary provisions (3), adjustments and alternatives to uniforms (7), and better policy and guidelines regarding the kinds of reasonable adjustments that could be made (7). Several responses suggested different formal and informal support groups might be offered (12).

Make flexible working readily available

Give out electric fans

Ensure that the air conditioning, (where applicable) is always working correctly, specially in offices.

Our headquarters has no provision for sanitary towel or tampon vending due to the design concept of nothing allowed on the walls useless if you are in the perimenopause when due to agile working you need to carry any towels in case of heavy bleeding

Light weight uniforms

Not having to wear cravats/ties

Have a clear documented work moderated agreement around its potential issues covering all roles within the organisation. This will prevent any ambiguity on how to deal with and provide a support network for those affected if required.

Relaxed informal groups for colleagues who are going through the menopause to discuss symptoms and coping mechanisms. So you know you are not alone.

Menopause at Work

A number of respondents felt that no adjustments should be made (5) and were **resistant** to addressing (or even discussing) menopause in the workplace. Associated with this is the fear that some people might 'abuse the system' in some way; however, they were very much in the minority. A greater number were simply unable to think of any adjustments at all (7).

*I think there is **no necessity for them to pay it any attention**. Should a member of staff have an issue, there is plenty of advice available via the internet or through their GP. **This is overkill**. Women have experienced this for 1000's of years. We have many other challenges in life to contend with.*

*I think the menopause is like any other condition - **it is not necessary to openly discuss** it with everyone, an acceptance that it exists and has consequences is enough for me. I think some people talk about it too much (I sit beside someone who wants to talk about it almost daily).*

No to reasonable adjustments - we just wouldn't have a workforce - it isn't a disability like a lot of conditions it's something we need to be open about and deal with.

Not sure how they would implement that for the front line firefighters

*As a person suffering, I am not aware if it is possible for reasonable adjustments to be made. I think we have to be careful as it could open up **opportunities for people to abuse it**. I would be interested to know how it is dealt with on a response team*

*I think every case should be looked at on its own merit, whilst **I do think it could be open to abuse** it saddens me that colleagues often undermine the symptoms and show the female to be not competent in their role / making excuses to have time off.*

The vast majority of responses however, related to **promoting understanding** (69), including simple acknowledgement, **open discussion** (18), training, education in order to **raise awareness and reduce stigma** (discussed above) of menopause in the workplace.

Reducing the stigma of the menopause is paramount to tackling the current issue surrounding the lack of support and awareness.

Just being able to discuss it is a good start

There needs to be open dialogue and an educational programme,

Acknowledge it and make allowances. Puberty and pregnancy are understood and allowed for, menopause is the last taboo

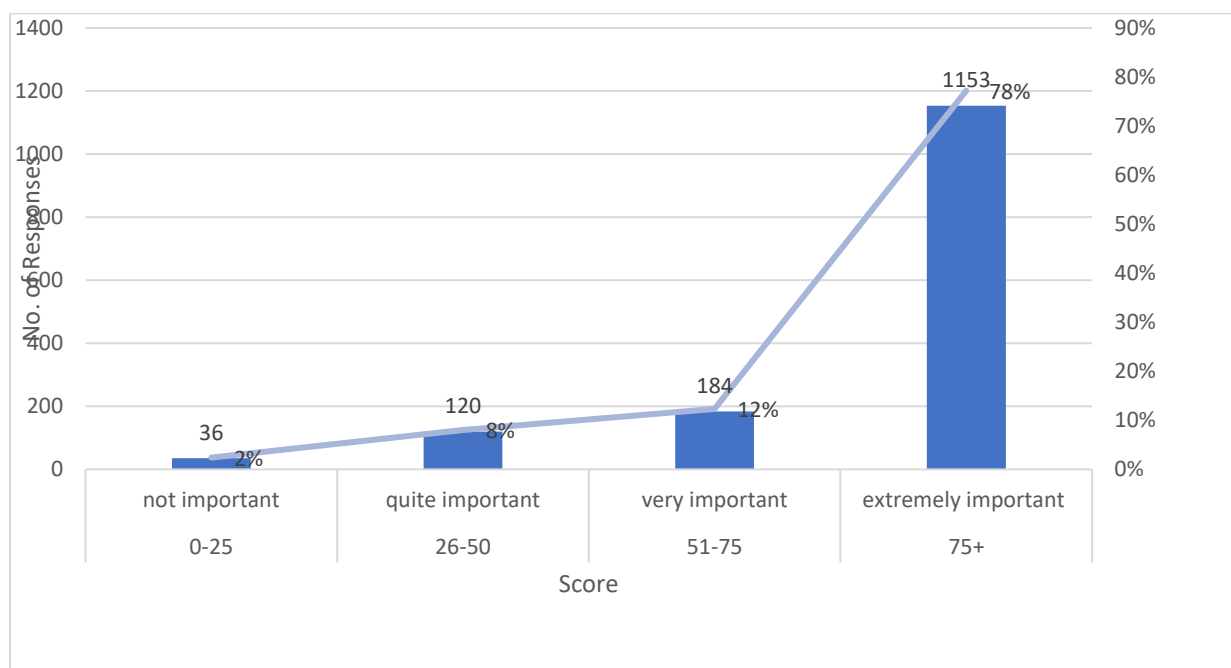
Making everyone aware that such things may have an impact to create some sort of understanding (especially among male colleagues), where it may be needed in extreme cases.

We feel culturally awkward to talk about menopause and its potential impact in the workplace. I have really noticed that the reluctance to talk about it or raise awareness of it often comes from those experiencing it

age range to be experiencing it). We need to explain more and in different ways the benefit of talking about menopause in the workplace without it being taboo, awkward or embarrassing.

Q.10 How important is it to 'normalise' menopause at work?

98% (1,493) of all survey respondents answered Q.10. The average score was 86.



Almost 4 out of 5 respondents gave a score of over 75 which suggests they think it is highly or extremely important to 'normalise' menopause at work. 43% of respondents gave the maximum score of 100 to this question. This suggests that whilst some respondents found it **embarrassing** to discuss, or had not previously considered discussing menopause, the vast majority were keen to **reduce the stigma** in order to ensure **open and transparent discussion**.

*The starting point is to be able to **facilitate a discussion** in 121 sessions with line managers about symptoms that are or perceived to be impacting on my ability to get my work done. Better **understanding and flexibility** and to be made awareness that the support when, if needed." Thus a big part of this will be educating of people managers, male and female. Also being supported by occupational health which is not something I feel I could approach them today. Overall, I feel the need for **greater openness** in the my workplace, which does not exist today. A workplace environment where I could feel acknowledged and feel my manager, HR and OH are supporting me.*

There is evidence to suggest that where there was **open discussion**, it significantly helped those with menopausal symptoms. They felt more supported and understood. The **understanding and awareness** gained through open discussion allowed for consideration of workplace modification which improved both performance and women's mental health.

*I was, and still am, experiencing severe fatigue and insomnia, which was having an adverse effect on my memory and ability to organise myself. **My line manager suggested that I start work a little bit later for a few weeks**, and I found this **really helpful**. There was no pressure from my line manager and I have found her really supportive.*

*My worst year was last year when I was constantly feeling nauseous, had headaches, terrible mood swings and literally just felt awful. I was **able to connect** with my manager at this time who was going*

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*through a similar stage and immediately knew where I was at and how I felt. This in turn made me feel so much better and able to **open up about my experience** and being able to speak to someone else going through it.*

For me, being open and honest about how I feel has helped enormously and encourages other colleagues to talk about it too.

*When I first had my operation and went into menopause I didn't want people to know, I felt being in a male dominant environment it may be seen as a weakness. I was ashamed I guess. However with recent TV programmes, also the force doing a inputs to managers and staff I feel more confident to talk about it. **I recently told my team so they would have a clearer understanding of my health situation and they were nothing but very supportive.***

Q.11 Your experiences, suggestions and thoughts are valuable, so please tell us some more?

The responses to this question have informed much of the analysis throughout this document, however a number of quotes are included as they illustrate the key themes highlighted in the document.

I personally have not discussed my experiences at work. I rarely have a full night's sleep. I usually wake any time around 2-4 am and not able to go back to sleep. I then drive an hour to and from work for a 10 hour shift. I have a fan on the desk which I am continuously turning on and off and am conscious that this is noticed by others although I do try to inject some humour into this. Generally I try to cope with the symptoms without making others aware.

The mental health side of the peri-menopause/menopause needs to be taken seriously within the workplace. Sometimes you feel that you can't think straight and are emotional (for no apparent reason) and then other times you are fine again. It is also about acceptance by an individual that you will be going through this stage in your life for many years to come and the workplace needs to have 'reasonable adjustments' in place to support employees.

Women are reluctant to highlight menopause issues in fear of the negative impact it will have at work and potentially their career. It must be identified that all menopause symptoms are very different and affect everyone differently. There is not a guide book that will suit everyone and therefore women need to feel confident to be able to be honest and ask for help / support if necessary. Instead like me you feel you have to hide your emotions and symptoms in fear of it having them misunderstood or having a negative effect on your role. Workplace modifications within reason can have a positive impact on the individual and overall make them more productive at work. Holding seminars and forums etc is all very good but there needs to be a clear structure on how issues are dealt with to in-still confidence in both supervisors and the individual it affects. Guidelines need to be clear ... because supervisors are unsure what to Do, therefore making the individual feeling isolated, unsupported and being dealt with unfairly.

It's difficult enough getting your own head around Menopause. When you're getting symptoms that you don't understand or realise that are related to menopause, how can we expect others to understand? There needs to be more education, for everyone - including women. Some of the symptoms are debilitating but still you're having to work. Feeling isolated because you feel so run down, brain fog, nobody to turn to and still having to carry on as normal.

Being in a male dominated environment, I wouldn't feel comfortable discussing menopause with my line manager. Because of lack of education, it feels that most people would see it as an excuse not to do your job properly. Running this webinar has been invaluable, it has made me realise I need to be kinder to myself rather than beat myself up for not being able to achieve what I have always been able to achieve.

I worry it will just be another thing that makes men roll their eyes and make people more reluctant to take women on in senior roles. I'd really love this not to be the case. but that would be my concern. I'd like to feel it's ok to talk more openly but bottom line is - I'm not there yet. Perhaps we need some senior leaders to show lead the way.

At times my moods have been so low I have been suicidal with hormone imbalance wanted to walk out an 18year career due to lack of support by management and team mates - its ignorance of the condition and looks like a "fake illness" as on face value you look ok but really you are not I have been in 2 years of personal hell

I think the issue can be seen as a sort of joke but I hesitate to make too much of it because quite frankly there are not very many other menopausal women here. Culturally it is quite a negative thing, associated with being over the hill, dried up and a bit 'vacant'....Practical measures in the workplace which would help are: Vending machines in Ladies toilets for sanitary products, Air fresheners in ladies toilets, Signposting on the Wellbeing pages of the intranet to support groups

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