

Menopause at Work 2018 Survey Report

Introduction

The impact of menopause at work is an emerging health and business issue.

Figures released by the Office for National Statistics show that the number of economically active women has jumped three times faster than their male counterparts over the past couple of years. The number of economically active women aged 50 to 64 increased by 6.5%.

There are currently 3.5 million women over the age of 50 working in the UK and the average age for menopause is 51. It is therefore critical businesses understand the impact of this changing demographic so they can introduce the appropriate policies, training and support.

The purpose of the Menopause at Work 2018 Survey and Report is to establish:

- If women working through menopause are experiencing difficulties in the workplace.
- What support organisations currently have in place to support women working through menopause.
- How comfortable women felt talking about menopause at work.

Quantative and qualitative data was gathered across a variety of sectors including Finance, Education, Technology, Legal, Retail and Manufacturing. The age of respondents ranged from 40 – 64 years with 74% falling within the 46 – 55 age bracket.

Symptoms

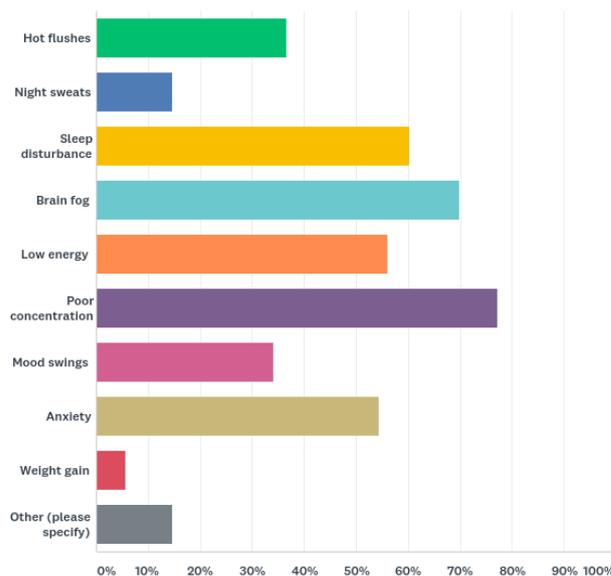
A wide range of symptoms were experienced by respondents including hot flushes, night sweats, sleep disturbance, low energy, poor concentration, mood swings, anxiety, depression, joint stiffness, palpitations, heavy periods, dizziness, nausea, low libido, weight gain, acne, migraines and urinary incontinence.

"We need to make people more aware – it's not just hot sweats!"

“If I didn’t know I was experiencing symptoms of menopause how was anyone else to know? I was just expecting hot flushes and I didn’t get them.”

The top three symptoms which caused women most difficulty in the workplace were **poor concentration, brain fog and sleep disturbance.**

Q8 Which of these symptoms is or has impacted your ability to do your job?



Symptoms were shown to affect job performance, relationships with colleagues and career confidence.

“Brain fog and debilitating fatigue, nausea and aching body have seriously affected my memory, my ability to think and problem solve and I’ve struggled to get through the day on many occasions”

“I have forgotten to attend meetings and I’ve had emotional outbursts and tears which impact on my ability to manage others”

“Very poor short term memory made it hard to remember facts and figures. Hot flushes in meetings made it hard to concentrate and were embarrassing. Sleep disturbance meant I was permanently exhausted”

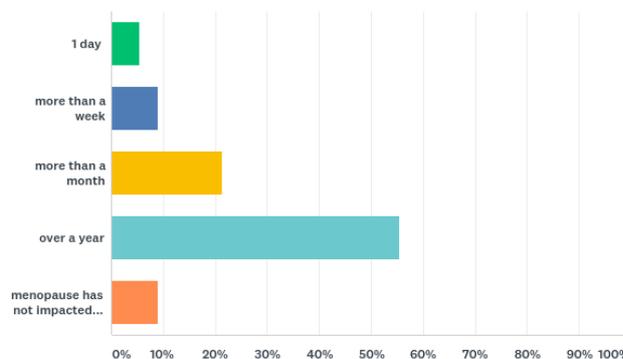
“I can see lips moving but really struggle to focus and take in what’s being said or understand it”

“Brain fog and poor concentration means I find it takes much longer to do tasks than it used to and I find it hard to remain focused on the task in hand.”

“I find it difficult some days to recall protocols and guidelines off the top of my head like I used to. I doubt my self more over decisions I make even when I know they are right.”

“Mood swings mean I snap at people who don’t deserve my overreaction.”

Q10 Would you say menopause has impacted your ability to do your job for

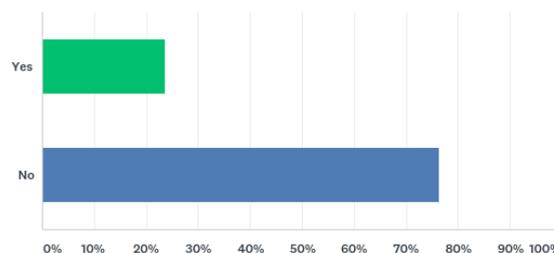


Perhaps not surprisingly 75% of respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement **“menopause has negatively impacted my ability to do my job”** with over 50% saying their performance at work has been affected for over a year.

Absenteeism v Presenteeism

Interestingly, despite the extent to which symptoms can create difficulties at work less than 25% of respondents have taken time off in relation to their symptoms.

Q11 Have you ever taken time off from work for menopause symptoms?



This result indicates that presenteeism, where employees come into work despite not being physically or mentally well, is a more likely consequence of working through menopause than absenteeism. The annual costs to UK employers are therefore much higher.

According to the Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health 2007 report, the cost of absenteeism per average employee is £335 and the total cost to UK employers is £8.4 billion. However, the costs related to presenteeism are £605 per average employee with a total cost of approx £15.1 billion.

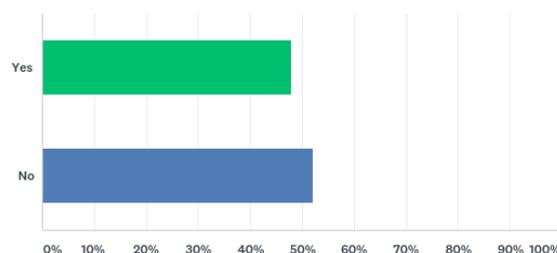
"Despite not taking any time off work there were occasions when I felt I needed to because of lack of sleep. However how do you ring in sick and explain that!"

I would leave my job now if I could afford to. I spend all week pretending to be normal and spend the weekend recovering."

Managing Symptoms at Work

Women tend to use personal coping strategies such as Hormone Replacement Therapy, commonly known as HRT, or lifestyle changes to manage symptoms with varying degrees of success. Lack of access to balanced, expert advice alongside a reluctance to be open about symptoms at work is an issue for many.

Q18 Would you feel comfortable talking to your HR function about your menopause symptoms at work?



Whilst nearly 80% of respondents felt comfortable talking to colleagues about menopause symptoms at work and nearly 60% felt comfortable talking to their line manager, less than half were willing to speak to their HR function.

“The young lady from HR had never come across brain fog and my (precious) reputation as a competent employee suffered”

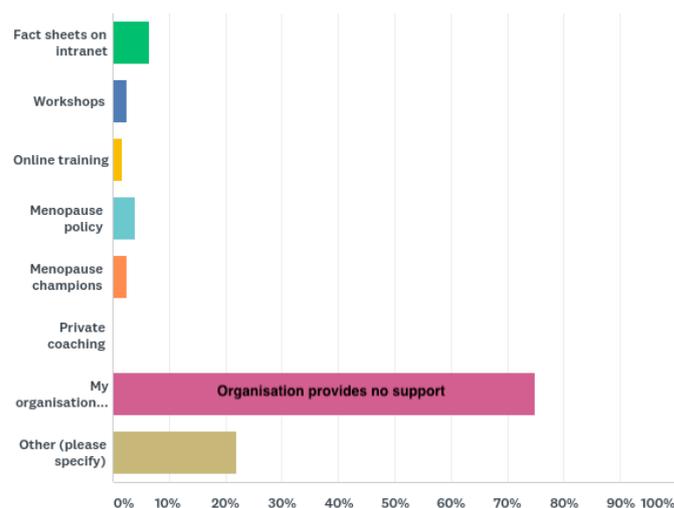
“My manager’s response was to suggest I change position on the talent grid”

“Colleagues of a similar age demonstrate understanding”

Support in the Workplace

75% of organisations currently provide no support for female employees experiencing menopause symptoms at work.

Q20 What support does your organisation provide for female employees experiencing menopause symptoms at work?



In those organisations where support is offered it is most commonly in the form of fact sheets or a policy.

Conclusion

It is evident that the impact of menopause at work affects multiple business fundamentals including employee engagement, performance and profit.

So what can employers do to promote a more diverse and age friendly environment and specifically support women working through menopause? My view is that workplace policies are essential to provide all parties with a framework of reference. However, they only make a

difference as part of a wider strategy and accompanying training programme.

Organisations following best practice avoid singling older female employees out for special treatment, and instead focus on three key pillars of awareness, education and support:

- Raise **awareness** across your organisation for all employees by introducing menopause as an inclusive topic. Men and younger women also need to understand menopause so they can support colleagues, friends and family.
- **Educate** line managers with regards to employment law, best practice workplace solutions and reasonable adjustments so they are well positioned to lead and develop mid life female team members.
- Provide specific **support** to women with balanced, expert advice on managing symptoms both at work and home so they can continue to be effective and productive in their roles.

By developing and implementing your approach to menopause at work across these three key pillars, not only will you improve the experience of women working through menopause but you will also be promoting an inclusive and age positive culture where everyone is valued.