

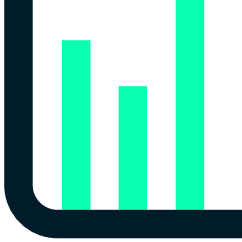


Women into Science
and Engineering

TOGETHER WITH: 

Building a menopause -inclusive workplace





Supporting menopause in the workplace

Menopause is a natural stage of life, but for many people it can have a significant impact on physical health, mental wellbeing and work. Creating a supportive workplace helps organisations retain experienced talent, improve employee wellbeing and foster a more inclusive culture.

While menopause is a biological transition experienced by women, its impact extends far beyond the individual. Whether you're experiencing it yourself, supporting a loved one or line managing women in your team, everyone has a role to play in creating supportive environments where people can continue to thrive.

What is menopause?

Menopause is when periods stop due to declining hormone levels. The transition into menopause, known as perimenopause, can last several years and is often when symptoms are most noticeable. Experiences vary significantly from person to person, with some experiencing minimal disruption and around 25% of women facing symptoms that can have a substantial impact on daily life and work.

There are approximately 34 different symptoms, which include:

-  Hot flushes
-  Fatigue
-  Difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
-  Brain fog and difficulty concentrating
-  Anxiety
-  Loss of confidence

It is estimated that around **13 million people in the UK are peri-menopausal or menopausal**, representing approximately one-third of the female population.

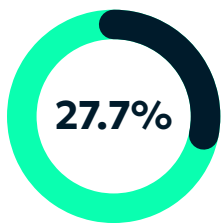
Menopause usually occurs between the ages of **45 and 55**, with the **average age** in the UK being **51**.

➤ Why is it important in the workplace?



Women play a significant role in the economy, with 16.7 million women in employment in the UK, making up just under half (48%)¹ of the overall workforce.

Women experiencing menopause are one of the fastest-growing groups in the workforce, with employment among 50–64-year-olds increasing by 40% over the last 20 years.²



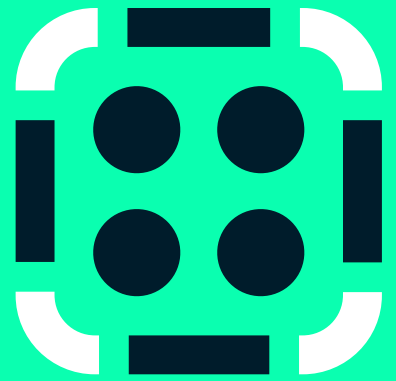
Women remain underrepresented in STEM roles, making up just 27.7% of the UK STEM workforce.¹

Retaining the women who do enter and progress within STEM is therefore critical. Many experience menopause at a stage in their careers when they hold significant technical expertise, leadership responsibilities and organisational knowledge.

Without adequate support, organisations risk losing experienced employees at precisely the point when they are making some of their most valuable contributions.

¹ Workforce Data – March 2026

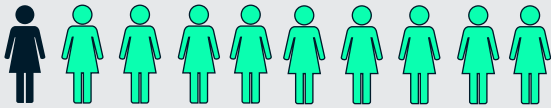
² New 'reskilling era' needed to boost lifelong learning for older workers as career options stall and pension savings fall, says CIPD | CIPD



The impact

Menopause can affect confidence, wellbeing, attendance and career progression. Research shows that two-thirds (**67%**) of women experiencing menopausal symptoms report a negative impact on their ability to work, while over half (**53%**) have been unable to go to work at some point because of their symptoms.³

The impact can also be seen in retention and progression.



One in ten women have left a job due to menopause symptoms, while **14%** have reduced their hours and **8%** have chosen not to apply for promotion.⁴

The consequences extend beyond individual organisations. Around 60,000 women are estimated to be out of work due to menopause symptoms, representing a significant loss of skills, experience and talent across the UK workforce.⁵

Despite the scale of the issue, only **24%** of women aged 40-60 say their organisation has a menopause policy or support measures in place.³ Encouragingly, WISE's 2026 Measuring Progress report found that **71%** of WISE members have a menopause policy in place, demonstrating growing recognition of the importance of workplace support.

Legal obligations

Employers have a responsibility to support employees experiencing menopause. Depending on the circumstances, menopause symptoms may be covered by the Equality Act 2010, alongside employers' responsibilities under health and safety legislation.

Beyond legal compliance, effective menopause support can improve wellbeing, help retain experienced employees and foster an inclusive workplace culture.

³ Menopause in the workplace: Employee experiences in 2023

⁴ Menopause and the Workplace

⁵ United Kingdom – The Health and Economic Impacts of Menopause

Menopause Action Plan

From April 2026 the Government announced that employers with 250 or more employees have the option to produce and publish a voluntary action plan alongside their gender pay gap data. Subject to legislation, this is expected to become mandatory from spring 2027.⁶

The aim of menopause action plans is to encourage employers to take meaningful, measurable action to improve workplace gender equality and better support employees experiencing menopause.

What should be included in the action plan?

Action plans should outline the practical steps your organisation will take to:

-  Reduce barriers experienced by employees affected by menopause
-  Improve employee wellbeing and retention
-  Support workplace gender equality
-  Complement wider efforts to address the gender pay gap

A menopause policy sets out your organisation's commitment to supporting employees experiencing menopause. An action plan is what turns that commitment into practice.

Before writing a plan, understand where you are now. Review existing policies, benefits and practices. Identify what is already working, where the gaps are, and where there are opportunities to build on existing foundations.

An effective action plan should identify specific actions, timescales, responsibilities and measures of success. It should be evidence-based, realistic and regularly reviewed to ensure progress is being made.

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/collections/action-plans-list-of-actions





Actions and support

Communication and employee voice

Understanding your workforce is the foundation for effective menopause support. Create open forums to gather feedback and build trust among colleagues. Examples include:

- Employee Resource Groups
- Menopause champions or coaches
- Anonymous feedback channels
- Listening sessions/focus groups

Training for managers

Managers are often the first point of contact for employees seeking support. Providing training helps managers to develop the confidence and knowledge they need to handle conversations sensitively and appropriately

Managers should understand:

- What menopause is and how it can affect employees
- When workplace adjustments may be appropriate
- The support available
- Their responsibilities around confidentiality
- How to have supportive conversations

Workplace adjustments

Small adjustments can make a significant difference to employees experiencing menopause symptoms. Review existing workplace policies and consider whether additional flexibility or adjustments could be helpful. Examples include:

- Flexible working arrangements, including working hours and location
- Temperature control
- Quiet spaces for rest or recovery

Adjustments should be discussed on an individual basis, recognising that menopause affects everyone differently.

Access to support and resources

Some employees may not feel comfortable speaking out about their experience and needs. It's important that information, guidance and support is easily accessible for all when it's needed. This could include signposting:

- Menopause policy or guidance
- Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)
- Private healthcare provisions
- Menopause coaches
- Mental health first aiders
- Wellbeing champions



Additional resources

Policies alone are not enough. The most successful organisations combine policy, education, leadership commitment and employee engagement to create a culture where menopause can be discussed openly, and support can be accessed confidently.

Case study with WISE member, Nationwide

To see how menopause support can be embedded in practice, explore our case study with WISE member Nationwide. Discover how the organisation developed menopause support from a grassroots initiative into a company-wide programme and learn practical lessons that can help your own organisation improve wellbeing, retention and inclusion.

[Menopause in the workplace >](#)



WISE consultancy

Creating a supportive and inclusive workplace for people experiencing menopause requires a considered and evidence-based approach. WISE can support your organisation to develop a menopause action plan, review workplace practices, and explore how menopause risk assessments may form part of your wider wellbeing strategy.

We can also provide guidance on establishing and sustaining effective employee networks or resource groups that help foster awareness, support and inclusion.

This **consultancy support** is available to all organisations. For Champion members, consultancy hours are included as part of membership and can be used to access this support.



Ready to build a better workplace with a more gender-equitable workforce?

Get in touch with us today, and let's build something meaningful – together.



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