

WINONA

Corporate Wellness Case Study

BEYOND THE STIGMA: ADVOCATING FOR MENOPAUSE
SUPPORT IN EVERY WORKPLACE



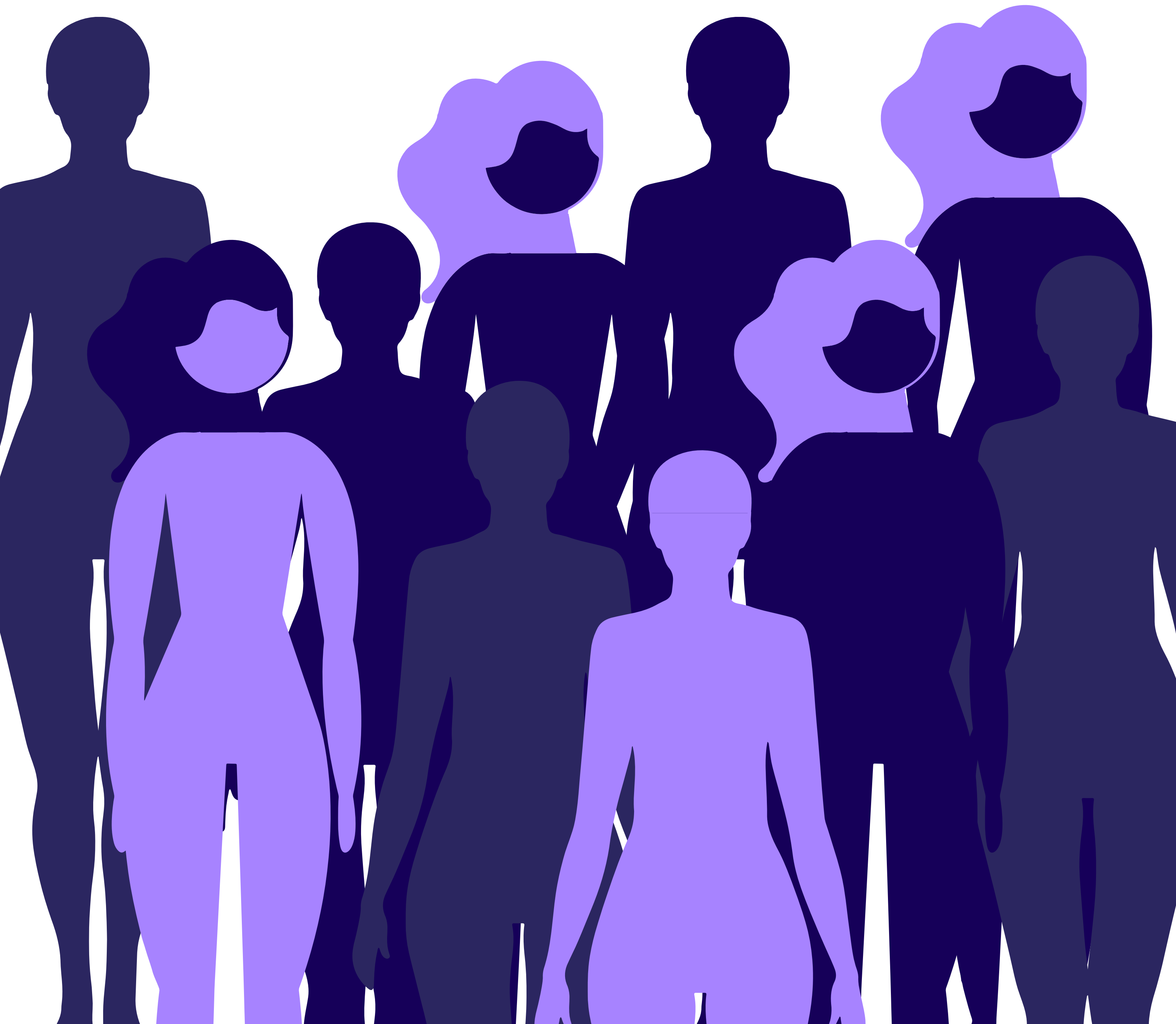


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1.3 Million

WOMEN IN THE U.S ENTER MENOPAUSE
ANNUALLY.





1.3 million women enter the menopause transition in the United States each year ([NCBI](#)). 20% of the workforce is made up of women between the ages of 45 and 54 ([SHRM](#)). However, some women can begin perimenopause in their early to mid-30s, expanding the population impacted by symptoms. When it comes to perimenopause support, there is even less research done on this group of younger women.

[Winona](#) conducted an independent study on women going through menopause and their experiences in the workplace. More than 1100 US-based women going through the menopause transition participated in our Menopause in the Workplace survey. The survey encompassed a wide age range of respondents from various sectors, including legal and medical fields, as well as operational roles like gym directors. Their positions varied from paralegal to veterinary technician, with diverse tenure in their roles, reflecting a spectrum of seniority.

Acknowledgement

We're deeply grateful to the more than 1000 Winona patients who took the time to consider these questions and share with us honestly. This was an enormous undertaking, and we couldn't have done it without you. We appreciate your feedback and your stories; thanks to your efforts, we'll be able to provide better care to you and thousands of other women.



Case Studies

CAREER *Choices*



Women **should not be made to feel like their best years are behind them** due to menopause. Many of us had to get past childbearing age to see promotions, and just as that happens, we hit menopause and are stigmatized again.

— Participant

Women can experience various symptoms that impact their ability to perform their jobs successfully. Symptoms like brain fog can impact the ability to properly operate heavy machinery. Hot flashes can make it difficult to perform a variety of tasks, especially if there is no space provided for the worker to cool down and recover. Additionally, menopause symptoms have influenced the decision-making of 43% of respondents regarding career advancement or job changes, suggesting a significant impact on professional development and career trajectory.



My work performance has **taken a big hit** during my first year and a half of menopause.

— Participant

Despite noting that they feel pain or discomfort related to different symptoms, most did not take time off work. 71% of respondents have concealed or downplayed the severity of their menopause symptoms at work, especially during critical times involving major projects or high-stakes assignments.





MENOPAUSE *Stigma*

Winona's survey data points to workplace cultures where many feel the need to hide their symptoms, possibly due to stigma, misunderstanding, or a lack of support structures. When asked if they chose to miss work or take time off, only 38% of respondents mentioned doing so. This result may seem to indicate that symptoms are not serious enough for respondents to take off work. However, both other data from our study and external data highlight that symptoms can actually be very intense. Symptoms like anxiety, depression, nausea, and difficulty with memory should be enough to warrant a sick note from a doctor. The question then becomes why women don't take off work, even when they are suffering.

Have you ever found yourself concealing or downplaying your menopause symptoms at work, particularly during crucial times involving major projects or high-stakes assignments?

Yes 849 resp. **71%**



No 346 resp. **29%**



Why are women concealing or downplaying symptoms or opting not to take time off?



I am the owner of an all-women workplace, and my colleagues and employees are at least 10 years younger than I am. Although I often talk about the challenges I am experiencing, **my symptoms are typically interpreted by my team as insignificant or minor inconveniences rather than life-changing challenges** in energy, mood, and health.

— Participant

Some respondents feel that they can't miss work, due to a lack of understanding from their colleagues. As one participant noted, symptoms are seen as an inconvenience, rather than a serious concern. However, given that perimenopause can start 7-10 years before a woman undergoes menopause, and the entire menopause transition can last up to 20 years, this should be taken seriously. There needs to be a paradigm shift for menopause to be destigmatized.

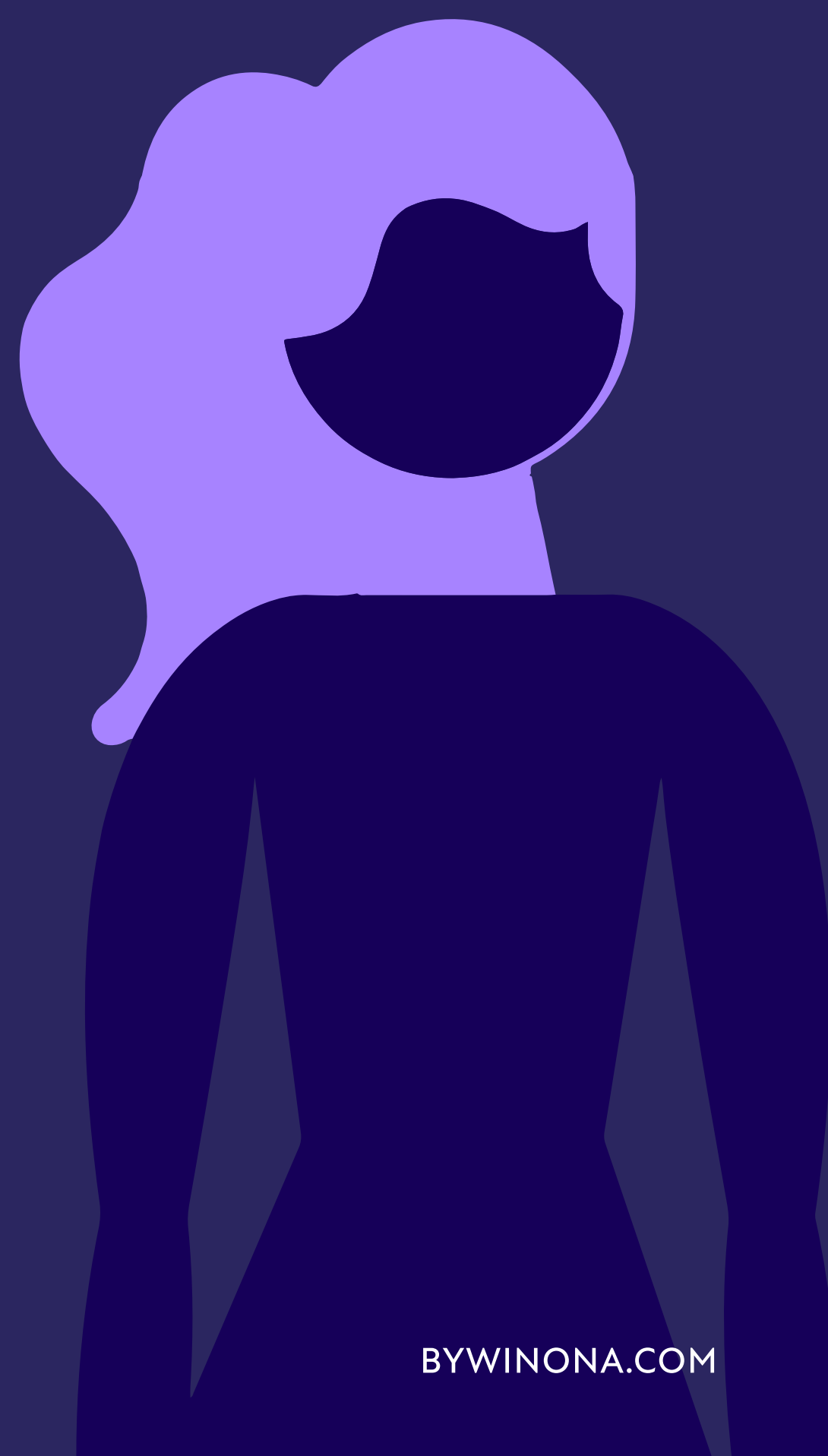


EMPLOYEE *Productivity*

Does your workplace have any policies or guidelines in place to support employees going through menopause?



Approximately two-thirds (**67.2%**) of respondents reported having had to take a break at work due to menopause symptoms. A significant 80.8% state that menopause symptoms negatively affect their concentration at work. This high percentage indicates that menopause symptoms are not just a personal health issue but also a workplace productivity concern.



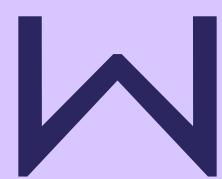


Employers can increase productivity and promote workplace happiness through more menopause support, which will in turn reduce employee churn. Providing additional support can boost the overall morale of the workplace. Currently it appears the majority of employers are not taking these steps. **Only 5.6% of respondents work somewhere with policies or guidelines in place to support employees going through menopause,** revealing a significant gap in organizational support for a substantial part of the workforce. An internal survey at work, or a focus group led by women impacted by menopause, is a great starting point.



Even though our workplace is incredibly progressive and feminist, none of the women I work with understand menopause. **There is a general lack of cultural understanding of how debilitating the symptoms can be.** I am not able to do half of what I used to be able to do. I am grateful to be the owner of this business, as I have no idea how I'd continue to meet expectations if I were an employee somewhere else.

— Participant

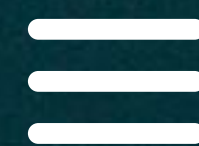


DESIRED *Accommodations/* *Changes* at Work

Participants were asked what changes they would like to see in their workplace, and the majority of respondents spoke about flexible working hours. Other comments around this subject included leave for menopause, extra breaks, or the ability to start late or end early some days when symptoms were intense.

- Flexible working hours are the most desired form of support, with 60.5% of respondents favoring this accommodation.
- Understanding from management and colleagues is also significant, with 47.7% of respondents seeking this form of support.
- Individual temperature control options are important for 44.7% of the respondents.
- Access to a private, restful space is desired by 30.4% of the participants, and 23.3% are looking for support groups or resources.

[Learn More](#)



Many of the participants work in the healthcare or education sectors. These buildings often have a set temperature that cannot be altered or adjusted.



In schools, most buildings are temperature controlled, and this can easily become uncomfortable.

— Participant



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR CONSIDERATION: *Education and Awareness*

Many women added that focus groups, education, resources, and more understanding would make their day-to-day more productive and comfortable. Winona offers a Menopause in the Workplace program and complimentary training for human resources and leadership.

[More Information Here](#)

There is a clear indication that more supportive workplace policies and an open culture for discussing such topics are needed. Creating a more inclusive environment could improve job satisfaction, retention, and productivity among employees experiencing menopause.

94%

of respondents noted that their workplace does not have education or policies in place to assist with menopause in the workplace.

MOCKING *Menopause*



Literally anything to acknowledge that **perimenopause and menopause are legitimate health issues and not punchlines to bad jokes**. Many women my age and older feel invisible and disregarded in the workplace.

— Participant

Other women in the survey echoed this sentiment and mentioned how coworkers - especially male colleagues - openly make jokes about menopause. One other participant mentioned how menopause, like other women's issues such as menstruation, is seen as a laughing matter. This mockery demonstrates a lack of respect for women going through menopause and explains why women would choose to hide their symptoms.



Human Resources AND MENOPAUSE

Only 14% of participants ever discussed menopause with their company's leadership.

Human resources can set up systems to explore topics surrounding employee benefits, support, and focus groups. Some insurance companies do cover menopause support, but many programs have age restrictions that preclude extending support to women going through perimenopause. Adding additional support from a company like Winona can help women through this transition more successfully.



Nobody is talking about this because we feel it will be seen as a deficit and not a health condition. Mental health has come a long way, but **there is still a long way to go to provide an equitable work environment as people age.**

— Participant



Have you ever discussed menopause or related topics with your employer or HR department?



Winona offers complimentary resources, which those in leadership positions at companies can explore, like a comprehensive guide to menopause symptoms. The fact that very few respondents have discussed menopause with HR or their employer, and the lack of supportive corporate policies in place, highlights an area for immediate action for HR departments. Developing clear guidelines and support systems for menopause could help employees better manage their symptoms, contributing to a healthier and more productive work environment.

[Learn More](#)



HOW HRT HELPS *Support Women in the Workplace*



The questions that I answered yes, menopause affected my work, were before I started Winona treatment. **My symptoms are about 99% gone since I started treatment.**

— Participant

HRT has been effective at reducing some of these workplace issues for Winona patients. Study participants praised the product for its effectiveness within a few months of use and cited appreciation for the convenience, confidentiality, and affordability. While HRT has been effective for many users, it's not a catch-all solution. Providing additional support alongside HRT can make the workplace more menopause inclusive. Our study findings suggest that there is a considerable opportunity for employers to address menopause as a workplace issue, provide support, and foster a culture where employees can openly discuss and manage their health needs without fear or stigma.

Recommendations FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:



Perimenopause is invisible and **menopause is an afterthought to 100% of doctors.**

— Participant

Additional areas for further research would include specific menopause support across different industries and additional support for perimenopausal women. To enhance the understanding and support for menopause and perimenopause in the workforce, future research should delve into the impact of workplace policies on the health and productivity of affected women.

Investigating the effectiveness of employer-provided resources, such as flexible working hours and specialized health programs, could offer insights into best practices. Exploring the awareness and attitudes of both employees and employers towards menopause and perimenopause could help identify gaps in knowledge and support, leading to more inclusive and supportive work environments.



HRT has given me some of my life force back. Recommend it to my friends and colleagues. We don't have to suffer, we can support each other!

— Participant





We have a long way to go until women everywhere have access to meaningful menopause support in the workplace. This survey is one of the ways Winona is doing our part to help. With our efforts, we hoped to create an opportunity for women to share their feelings and lived experiences in this specific area, and the findings have been enlightening. Education, awareness, and the backing of company leadership, combined with HRT and other medical support, can improve employee satisfaction, safety, and workplaces as a whole.



Did you find this information interesting? Feel free to share it with your [LinkedIn](#) network, using the hashtag [#menopauseintheworkplace](#).



Additional Ways to *Take Action*:

- Connect with [us here](#) to bring menopause care to the women in your workforce.
- Share your story and connect with others in our [Winona Women's Facebook group](#).
- Give Winona a try yourself and [enjoy 20% off](#) for educating yourself on this important topic.
- Start a dialogue at your company, and let us know what else you find out!

Join Winona