

SURVEY FINDINGS · 2026

Hormone health at work: a hidden issue

Why hormone health support matters for women's careers,
progression and retention

5,592

women surveyed

80%

UK-based

70%

on hormone treatment

Background: the hidden impact of hormone health at work

Women account for 50.1% of the global working age population yet make up only 40% of total employment and just 35.4% of leadership positions worldwide, according to data from the International Labour Organisation.

The reasons for this are multifactorial, but one significant yet overlooked issue is women's hormone health.

Put simply, women's hormone health has a profound impact on the workforce. Hormone-related conditions such as PCOS/PMOS and endometriosis affect up to one in ten women while up to one in five new mothers will experience postnatal depression. Some 90% of women are thought to experience premenstrual symptoms, and every woman will become perimenopausal or menopausal during their lifetime.

Together, these conditions can affect women for decades of their working lives, impacting physical and mental health, attendance, productivity, career progression and ultimately whether they continue in the workplace.

Currently, employers are ill-equipped to deal with the challenges and support their workforce. But as women remain in the workplace for longer than ever before, understanding hormone health **must** be an imperative for every organisation.

Balance@Work survey: making hormone health a mainstream employment issue

Balance@Work is a workplace educational platform that combines clinical expertise and workplace experience to help organisations better understand and respond to hormone health challenges in the workplace. Through our work, we see all too clearly that hormone health is not a niche issue. It affects work, confidence, progression and retention, yet the cost of poor hormone health is often hidden. Women are not always absent. They are often at work, but not able to perform at their best.

And while in recent years awareness of menopause in the workplace has grown, much less consideration is given by employers to the broader impact of hormone health throughout a woman's lifetime.

To address this awareness gap, Balance@Work conducted a survey to capture real experiences of women's hormone health, and the challenges many women face when coping with symptoms in the workplace.

Our survey offers employers a golden opportunity to better understand how hormone-related symptoms affect performance and retention and identify practical steps employers can take to create healthier, more inclusive and more productive workplaces.

How we carried out our survey

Our online survey was launched to gauge women's experiences of hormone health at work.

The survey was open from 4 March to 5 May 2026 and was promoted on social media and email newsletters by Dr Louise Newson and the Balance app.

The survey consisted of a combination of multiple-choice questions and free text options. Participation was anonymous and not remunerated.

It was completed by 5,592 people and findings were analysed by members of the Balance@Work team.

What did we find?

This report summarises the findings of our survey and, crucially, offers employers practical recommendations.

The analysis focuses on five key areas: the burden of hormone-related symptoms, the hidden cost to the workplace, the talent drain, the importance of support and treatment, and the workplace support gap.

Headline findings include:

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- **The symptom burden:** 79% of respondents say hormone-related symptoms have affected their work participation or career decisions
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- **Performance:** Three quarters (76%) say they are held back by their symptoms while still at their desks
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- **Progression barriers:** One in four (25%) have passed up the chance to apply for promotion
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- **Talent drain:** Almost one in four (24%) have left a role or organisation because of their symptoms
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- **The value of treatment:** One in five (19%) of women taking hormone treatments (also known as HRT) stayed in a role they had been about to quit
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- **The training gap:** Almost three quarters (72%) have never had hormone-health training at work.

Our survey demonstrates that employers have a practical role to play through training, better conversations, signposting and clearer guidance around hormone health.

Why hormone health is everyone's business

79% of women say hormone-related symptoms have affected their work participation or career decisions.

60% describe the effect on their working life as 'significant' or 'enormous'.

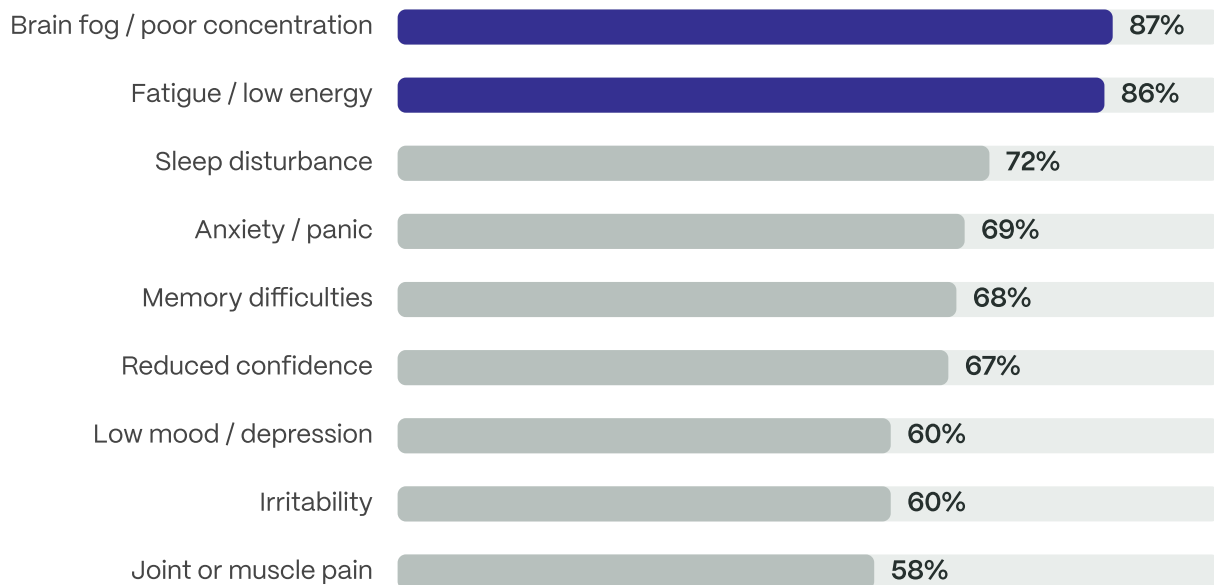
91% of women (nine out of ten) believe their symptoms are hormone-related.

Hormone changes are far from a single-symptom issue: On average, women are coping with nine different hormone-related symptoms at one time.

Hidden symptoms have the most impact: 87% of respondents reported brain fog was the symptom affecting their work performance the most, followed by fatigue (86%). And what about hot flushes, often framed as the most common symptom of hormone change? These ranked 13th, named by just 41% of respondents as one of the symptoms most affecting their work.

The symptoms that follow women to work

Share of affected women naming each as one of the symptoms that most affects them at work. Cognitive and emotional symptoms dominate.



WHAT WOMEN TOLD US

"Because I have tried to push through the fatigue, memory, brain fog and exhaustion, I have burnt out"

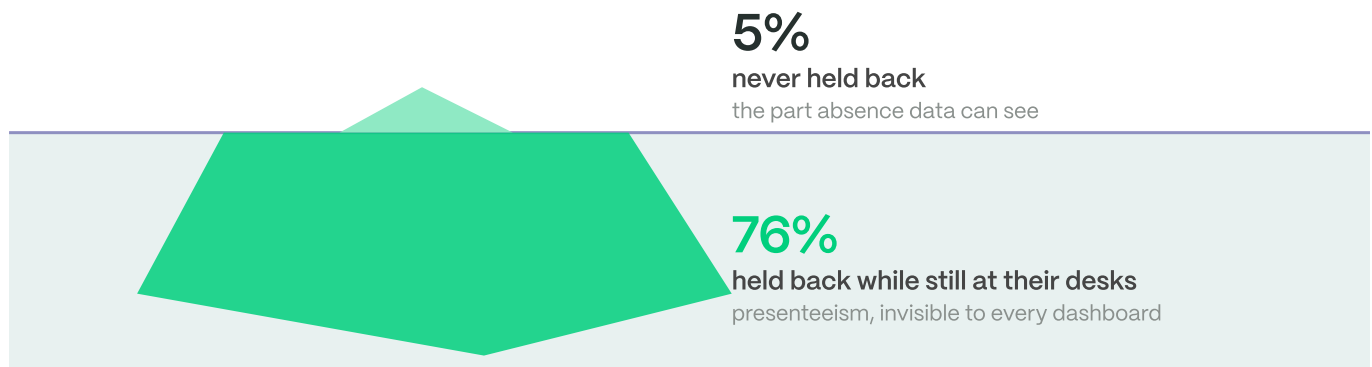
"The symptoms knock your confidence, which has a greater effect than the symptoms themselves"

Why sickness absence rates don't tell the whole story

Presenteeism: Despite experiencing symptoms that reduce their ability to perform at their usual level, 76% of respondents continue to work. This hidden productivity loss means that absence data alone may significantly underestimate the impact of hormone health on workforce performance.

Sick days are the tip of the iceberg

Only 1 in 20 women (5%) are never held back; 76% are held back while still at their desks.



Performance loss: More than seven in ten respondents (71%) rated their performance at just 7 out of 10 or lower. This equates to around a 30% reduction in self-reported performance, a hidden productivity cost that is rarely captured by traditional workplace metrics.

Sickness absence is often mislabelled: Among women who took 40 or more days off work, more than half (56%) of their absence was hormone-related, yet 82% was recorded as being due to other causes. This suggests the true impact of hormone health on workplace absence is routinely underestimated.

Absence rises in step with hormonal symptoms: Women who attribute all their sickness absence to hormone-related symptoms lose around three times as many working days each year as those with no hormone-related absence, approximately 37 days compared with 12.

Symptom-masking medication is linked to higher absence: Women managing symptoms with pain medication lose around twice as many working days as those using HRT (approximately 29 days versus 14), while women prescribed antidepressants lose around 23 days. The findings highlight the potential workplace cost when hormone-related symptoms are managed without addressing the underlying hormonal changes.

WHAT WOMEN TOLD US

"Bleeding and flooding have caused me to call in sick every month for eight years, had to change my hours to two weeks full time, two weeks off, for 50% pay to keep my job"

"I have currently been on sick leave for 16 weeks (ongoing) due to suffering significantly with perimenopause symptoms alongside adenomyosis"

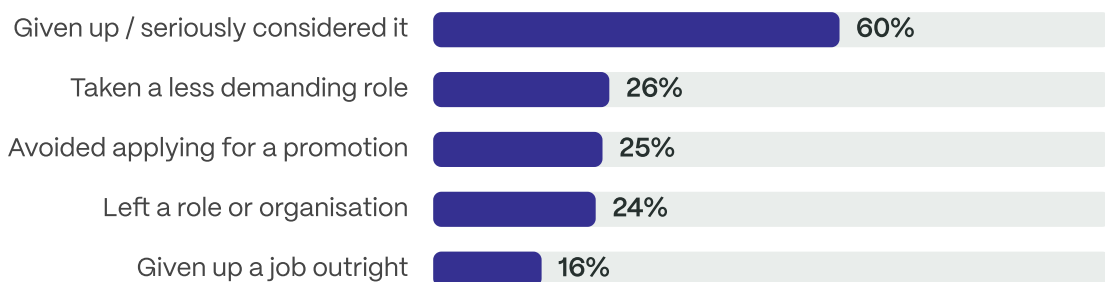
"I haven't yet worked out whether brain fog is something I should disclose at work. I worry it would make me more vulnerable"

Experienced, skilled women are quitting the workplace

Symptoms push women off the career ladder: One in four respondents said they had passed up the opportunity to apply for a promotion (25%), taken a less demanding role (26%), or left a role or organisation altogether (24%) because of their symptoms. These are career decisions driven not by ability or ambition, but by unmanaged hormone-related symptoms.

Careers bent out of shape by symptoms

Share of women who have altered their working life because of hormonal symptoms.

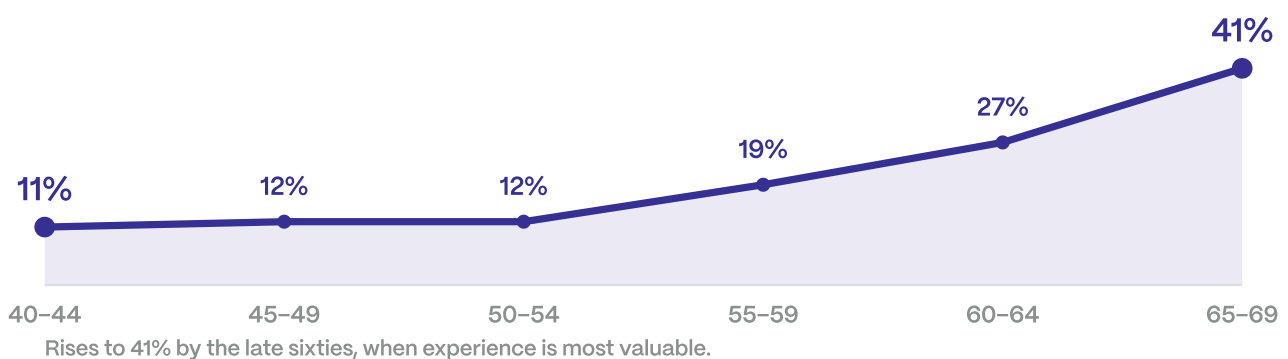


One in six have already quit: One in six respondents (16%) said they had left a job because of their symptoms, while a further 60% had seriously considered doing so. This suggests the true impact of hormone-related symptoms on employee turnover is likely to be underestimated, as the underlying reason is rarely captured in exit interview data.

Experienced talent is being lost: The proportion of women who said they had left a job because of their symptoms was highest among respondents in their late 60s, reaching 41%. This represents the loss of highly experienced employees at a stage in their careers when their knowledge, expertise and mentoring are often at their greatest value.

The loss compounds with seniority

Share who have ever given up a job because of symptoms, by current age. A lifetime measure by current age, so it reflects a whole career rather than the age of leaving.



More than a quarter want out: One in four women (28%) have considered leaving the workforce altogether because of their symptoms.

Many feel trapped: Nearly one-third of respondents (30%) wanted to reduce their working hours but could not afford to, leaving them to remain at work despite struggling with their symptoms. For employers, this represents one of the greatest hidden costs: employees are present, but unable to perform at their usual level.

WHAT WOMEN TOLD US

"My confidence has decreased so much that I am leaving my job and stepping back from management"

"I am the director and feel that my brain cannot be relied on anymore"

"I had to change my entire career due to my menopause symptoms"

Treatment helps keep women in employment

Treatment is key: 92% of women taking hormone treatments (HRT) report their symptoms improved, with half of these (49%) saying it helped significantly.

Hormone treatment works, by women's own account

Women on HRT reporting whether their symptoms improved.



Treatment helps to retain talent: 19% of respondents taking hormone treatments credit their treatment with helping them stay in the workplace. This underscores the importance of timely, evidence-based treatment not only for symptom management, but the wider economy. Beyond the 19% who stayed, a further 6% took on a more demanding role, 4% returned to the workforce, and 47% reported their symptoms improved.

But access to hormone treatments is patchy: Almost two thirds (64%) of respondents reported difficulties accessing hormone treatments; 63% say that the inability to access hormone treatments has a knock-on effect at work.

Women want open hormone conversations: 85% of respondents believe they would benefit from discussing their hormones with a healthcare professional.

Help is slow to reach many women: Among women still searching for effective hormone treatments, 62% have been doing so for two years or more. Better signposting to trusted information and appropriate care could shorten that journey, helping women regain their wellbeing and productivity sooner.

WHAT WOMEN TOLD US

"I had to leave my job due to perimenopause. I received no support from my employers or from the GP at the time. It was horrendous and I had no option other than to leave. My boss was female, as was my GP. My symptoms were dismissed and I was eye rolled by both parties. I lost my identity, community, industry and income"

"I was sacked after six months due to waiting on appointments. NHS went down the wrong track and I could not work while waiting on appointments"

"I didn't realise how much my symptoms were affecting me until I started HRT. Within a short time I became my old self again"

The hormone taboo: support in the workplace

Hormone health is rarely discussed in the workplace: More than half of respondents (51%) were unaware of any workplace guidance or policies on hormone health, while nearly three-quarters (72%) said they had never received any hormone health training at work. These findings suggest that many workplaces lack the awareness, education and support needed to help employees manage hormone-related health at work.

Employers seen as unsupportive: More than one in three women (37%) say their workplace is either unsupportive when it comes to hormone health or that the issue is not even on the organisation's radar.

The support infrastructure most organisations are missing

Share of women reporting each gap.



Many women do not feel comfortable speaking up: One in four women (25%) would not feel comfortable disclosing hormone-related symptoms to their manager. Equipping managers with the knowledge and confidence to have supportive conversations can help create a workplace culture where women feel able to seek the support they need.

WHAT WOMEN TOLD US

"Everyone in the workplace should have a basic knowledge of hormones to better understand what someone may be struggling with"

"More compassion and understanding from managers, not just another tick-box exercise"

"Employees, especially managers, should be given mandatory training and create safe space for female employees to be heard and understood. Empathy!"

Helping women thrive at work

One of the clearest messages from our survey is that employees are not simply asking for awareness: they need workplaces and healthcare systems that understand hormone health, respond appropriately, and enable them to continue thriving at work.

Across more than 9,000 qualitative comments, six consistent themes emerged.

1. Employees continue to suffer in silence

Many respondents described hiding symptoms because they feared being viewed as less capable, less resilient or less promotable. This was particularly evident in senior leadership, client-facing and sales roles where respondents felt they could not show vulnerability.

Common sentiments included:

- "I don't feel able to tell my manager"
- Fear of being perceived as weak
- Worry that disclosure would damage career progression
- Feeling they had to 'mask' symptoms every day.

2. Hormone-related symptoms have a significant impact on work performance

Respondents described symptoms affecting:

- Concentration and memory ('brain fog')
- Confidence
- Decision-making
- Productivity
- Communication
- Emotional regulation
- Energy levels
- Sleep and recovery.

3. Better education, not just policies, is the biggest workplace need

When asked what would most improve workplace support, respondents overwhelmingly requested:

- Greater awareness across the whole organisation
- Better educated managers
- Open conversations that reduce stigma
- Practical understanding of hormone-related symptoms
- Workplace cultures where discussions feel safe.

4. Flexibility is viewed as one of the most valuable forms of support

Flexible working emerged repeatedly as one of the simplest and most effective workplace adjustments.

Employees described benefits including:

- Time off to attend healthcare appointments
- Home working
- Flexible start and finish times
- Ability to manage fatigue or fluctuating symptoms
- Occasional rest breaks.

5. Many respondents expressed frustration with healthcare experiences

A substantial number of comments highlighted difficulties accessing appropriate diagnosis or treatment.

Recurring issues included:

- Symptoms being dismissed
- Lack of understanding of perimenopause, PMS and PMDD
- Being offered antidepressants rather than investigation of hormone-related causes
- Inconsistent knowledge among healthcare professionals
- Delays accessing specialist hormone treatments.

6. There is strong support for broadening the conversation beyond menopause

Although menopause featured prominently, many respondents welcomed a broader focus on female hormone health.

Comments referenced PMS, PMDD, menstrual health, fertility, pregnancy-related hormonal changes, endometriosis, PCOS/PMOS and surgical menopause. Many felt employers should recognise hormone health as a lifelong workplace issue rather than one confined to menopause.

What can employers do?

Our survey's central finding was this: the greatest challenge is not simply hormone symptoms themselves, but the lack of understanding surrounding them.

Respondents consistently called for:

- Clinically informed education
- Confident and compassionate managers
- Psychologically safe conversations
- Practical workplace flexibility
- Better signposting to healthcare support
- Recognition that hormone health affects employees across the working lifespan.

Organisations have an opportunity to move beyond awareness campaigns towards embedding hormone health into everyday management practice, creating workplaces where employees feel understood, supported and able to perform at their best.

Every workplace hormone health journey starts somewhere

The experiences shared in this report show why better understanding and practical support matter. If you would like to learn more about supporting hormone health in your organisation, or how employees can access trusted, evidence-based information, please contact the Balance@Work team.

[Insights | Menopause Articles, Podcasts & Videos | Balance@Work](#)

Contact us

Our survey analysis

- **Self-reported and self-selecting:** respondents are already engaged with their hormone health, so prevalence figures indicate scale rather than population rates, and treatment results are women's own assessments.
- **Day counts are modelled** from banded survey answers, not exact tallies.
- **The medication-and-absence comparison is an association,** not proof of cause.
- **Age-based figures are lifetime measures by current age.**
- Percentages use each question's own base, so the number answering varies by question and figures may not sum to 100.

Download the Balance app to
learn more about hormone health.

SCAN TO DOWNLOAD

