

Women, work and the menopause

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Menopausal women fear age-based discrimination in the workplace and face a glaring lack of menopause-specific support, according to new research.

Researchers from Monash, La Trobe and Yale Universities found many women felt anxious about speaking with their managers and colleagues about any symptoms because of the fear of being stereotyped as 'aged.'

In addition to managing peri- and [menopausal symptoms](#), many of the women surveyed were also juggling the stress of parental and child-

caring responsibilities and other life transitions such as divorce.

Organizational dynamics expert Associate Professor Kathleen Riach from Monash University's Department of Management said the results offered a unique insight into the physical and emotional life stresses and opportunities facing many women in this growing workforce demographic.

"Often it is not the hot flush that caused anxiety, but the stigma attached to being seen as 'menopausal' in the workplace," Associate Professor Riach said.

"Our findings stress that the experience of [menopause](#) is not simply about biology, but shaped by an occupational environment that may exacerbate or ameliorate menopausal symptoms.

"Workplace cultures and practicalities such as how to obtain a desk fan send important messages about how valued or recognised older women are by their organisations."

More than 800 women aged over 40 and working in the university sector took part in the study.

Among the report recommendations was a consensus that there should be more information and training about menopause and its symptoms for supervisors so they can be better equipped to handle conversations and provide support. Practical solutions are also flagged, such as offering temperature control in offices to manage symptoms.

Professor Gavin Jack from La Trobe University said the findings were significant particularly as more women are working for longer, with implications for economic productivity and mental health.

The researchers hope the report is a catalyst to breaking down some of the taboo that surrounds menopause.

"Managers and women themselves need an attitudinal shift away from seeing hormonal issues as weak or a barrier to a successful career. Organisations need to recognise that mature-aged [women](#) are a committed, ambitious, and resilient segment of the workforce. This report is a big step in that direction," Professor Jack said.

More information: The full report can be found on the Women Work and the Menopause website: www.womenworkandthemenopause.com/

Provided by Monash University

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