GLOBAL 50 50

POLICY BRIEF - 2026

# WORKING THROUGH IT?

What employers and governments should do for women at menopause



*Burdened Pathways*, Jenelle Justalero.

**Menopause symptoms touch every dimension of women's health and carry vast societal consequences. The case for action is not only one of individual rights: demographic shifts mean more women than ever are navigating menopause in formal paid work at the height of their careers. Governments, health systems and employers can no longer afford to outsource the cost of inaction onto women's bodies, careers and lives. Global 50/50 reviewed the menopause provisions of 198 organisations active in global health, and found provisions for only 37. Almost nowhere does the law require an employer to act, but the costs to women, workplaces and societies demand action.**

## WHAT EMPLOYERS SHOULD DO

### Name menopause in the policies you already have

Menopause support can be integrated into policies covering flexible working, workplace adjustments, occupational health and health insurance. A woman should not have to work out which policy, if any, might cover her.

### Publish what you offer

Women should be able to easily locate the provisions that are available to them. We found only 1 standalone policy in the public domain; most provision is out of public view and public accountability.

### Train managers to listen, not to assume

Managers should be trained to work out support with the employee rather than for her. Employees should also have access to support that doesn't depend on their manager, whether that's occupational health, HR or a named menopause focal point.

### Count the results

Employers should report provision uptake and outcomes, disaggregated by age and contract type and, where possible, by ethnicity and disability. The women least able to ask are those on short-term and grant-funded contracts, which are all too common in the global health sector.

### Governments play a vital role in ensuring legal rights

Few laws require employers to make any provision for employees going through menopause. Some governments around the world (see page 2) have shown that provision for menopause adjustments, non-discrimination and employer accountability can be legal requirements rather than recommendations. Others can follow.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

**More women are staying longer in the workforce.** Across the OECD, the employment rate of women aged 55 to 59 rose by 18.5 percentage points between 2000 and 2024, roughly double the rise among men of the same age. With more women working into their 50s and early 60s in formal employment than in previous generations, workplaces of all sizes employ women navigating menopause.

**When women leave early, their expertise leaves with them.** Menopause arrives at the point in a career when experience is at its peak. A woman in her late 40s or 50s carries 25 or 30 years of skills, judgement, networks and institutional memory. Yet, in the UK, 1 in 10 women aged 45 to 55 have left a job because of menopause symptoms.

**Costs are heavy and collective when ignored.** In Norway, economists estimate earnings fall by 7.4% on average four years after a menopause diagnosis. Costs accrue across societies. The OECD identifies older workers and women as essential to the workforce as working-age populations shrink. Losing experienced women in their 50s means fewer people in work, more reliance on the state, and a wider gender pension gap.

**The burden falls hardest on women with the least protection.** While little evidence is available outside high-income countries, a study of 280 women in southern India found that 40% of daily wage labourers and domestic workers had moderate to severe symptoms alongside poor work ability. Cooler workplaces reduce hot flushes, yet women in informal, factory, agricultural and market work often have the fewest heat protections.

> **"In most organisations, the policy exists and the manager means well, but neither the manager nor the employee knows what happens next. … A woman is left managing a transition that can last years with an accommodation designed for an afternoon."**
>
> Jennifer Barsky, MenoGlobal

# WHAT 198 ORGANISATIONS ACTIVE IN GLOBAL HEALTH OFFER WOMEN AT MENOPAUSE

**1 OF 198**
**organisations had a menopause policy in the public domain**

**37 OF 198**
**organisations had menopause provisions that were published or shared with us**

Of the 198 organisations we assessed, we found menopause-related provisions on the websites of 8, and another 29 shared internal information. Among the 37 organisations where policies or provisions were found, 5 had standalone menopause policies, 17 offered adjustments, flexible working or structured workplace conversations on menopause, 14 offered sick leave and 5 offered personal leave. The number of organisations for which we identified menopause support has risen since our 2023 report, from 21 to 37. The direction of travel is encouraging, but menopause support is still far from the norm.

## RECENT LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

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| **Australia, Mar 2025** | Public Service Commission circular on supporting Commonwealth employees through perimenopause and menopause, after a Senate inquiry. |
| **Rhode Island, June 2025** | First US state to require employers to make reasonable accommodations for menopause. |
| **Philadelphia, Dec 2025** | Menstruation, perimenopause and menopause become protected classes; in force January 2027. |
| **United Kingdom, Dec 2025** | Employers with 250 or more staff must publish an equality action plan with at least one action on menopause; mandatory from spring 2027. |
| **Illinois, Aug 2026** | Employers with 4 or more staff must accommodate menopause; in force January 2027. |
| **Jamaica, Oct 2026** | Cabinet approved the development of a national policy on menopause and andropause, with ministries responsible for gender and for labour and social security. |

Guidance has moved faster than law. The European Menopause and Andropause Society, the British Standards Institution and the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission all ask employers to treat menopause as an organisational priority. In September 2026, the International Organization for Standardization published guidance on menstruation and menopause in the workplace, covering culture, manager training, practical adjustments, and disclosure and privacy.

**Read the Global 50/50 report *Working through it?***

### MENOPAUSE PROVISION BY TYPE

**198**
**organisations assessed**

**37**
**provision we could review**

**161**
**no provision found**

**5**
**standalone policy**
1 public · 1 referenced online · 3 internal

**17**
**adjustments, flexible working, discussions**
6 public · 11 internal

**14**
**sick leave**
0 public · 14 internal

**5**
**personal leave**
0 public · 5 internal

■ Found in the public domain ☐ Shared with us



*Paddy drying by women*, Abhraneel Chakraborty.

> **"Menopause is a justice issue that has been overlooked for too long. The costs – to women and economies – aren't from symptoms, they're from workplaces and laws that leave people to manage alone. Employers must play their role in ensuring menopause is supported as a normal, accepted part of working life."**
>
> Lynsey Robinson, Global 50/50

Source: Global 50/50. Working through it? What 198 organisations active in global health offer women at menopause. Cambridge: 2026.

This brief is the first release from Bodies at Work, Global 50/50's 2026 series on whether workplaces accommodate the working body. The full report, *The Unaccommodated Body*, assesses 198 organisations on six issues across the reproductive life course and sets out our methods in full.

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