

# MENOPAUSE WITHOUT TABOO

MENOPAUSE WITHOUT TABOO

# INVISIBLE



REPORT ON A QUANTITATIVE STUDY AMONG  
WORKING WOMEN AGED 40-55.  
STUDY CARRIED OUT FOR  
KULCZYK FOUNDATION

August 2024

# AT WORK

MENOPAUSE  
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# MAIN CONCLU- SIONS

## Polish women on the labor market

Women in the perimenopausal age (40-55) constitute a significant portion of the working people. There are **over 3 million of them in Poland, representing approximately 20% of the total working population**. The average age of working women is 42 (source: Central Statistical Office).

## Changes from the ground up

Nearly **70% of respondents believe that companies should introduce solutions supporting women in the perimenopausal period. As many as 87% of working women believe that such solutions will have a positive impact on their attitudes towards work and daily functioning**. Their expectations primarily revolve around the introduction of basic amenities, such as appropriate temperature conditions (55%) and the possibility to work remotely (49%).

## Struggling with symptoms

**As many as 94% of working women aged 40-55 experience symptoms of menopausal transition**, and almost half of them (46%) experience 6 or more bothersome symptoms at the same time. **For 83% of female employees, these ailments negatively impact their comfort and effectiveness at work**, which can lead to lower self-esteem and decreased work engagement.

## They do not talk about it at work

As many as **51% feel uncomfortable speaking openly about their needs in the workplace**. This situation indicates a lack of safety and acceptance in this area, which can lead to a deepening sense of isolation and misunderstanding among women experiencing menopause.

## Menopause and work

46% of employees believe that the specific needs of perimenopausal women are not recognized in their workplace. This results in **stress related to the impact of symptoms on work (41%)** and a sense of reduced efficiency and effectiveness (38%). **As many as 42% considered limiting or terminating their professional activity due to their symptoms**.

## Let's act!

The scale of the problem is significant, and ignoring the needs of perimenopausal women can have negative consequences for both their well-being and the companies they work for. Therefore, it is particularly important to raise awareness of this period and implement changes at the organizational level, as well as support women themselves through education and building their self-confidence.

# INTRO- DUCTION

**Women in the perimenopausal period constitute a large and economically important group among the working population. However, their quality of life and specific needs in the workplace are often neglected.**

Many women struggle for years with bothersome symptoms such as hot flashes, sleep disturbances, and mood swings, which can negatively impact their well-being, concentration, and overall functioning. Ignoring this problem not only impacts women's individual well-being but also has economic consequences for companies and, ultimately, the entire economy.

That is why it is so important to raise awareness of the specific needs of perimenopausal women and to implement solutions that will improve their quality of life in the workplace.

Addressing the issue of menopause at work will benefit women themselves – ensuring their better well-being and financial security in the future – as well as employers, by reducing costs associated with recruiting new employees and thus retaining valuable and experienced employees.

In addition to changes at the organizational level, actions are needed to empower women themselves – reliable education, breaking down stereotypes, and building self-confidence and willingness to use support.

We hope that the results of this study will contribute to drawing greater attention to this important issue and inspire further actions to improve the situation of perimenopausal women on the labor market in Poland.

# SELECTED DATA ABOUT POLISH WOMEN ON THE LABOR MARKET

(source: Central Statistical Office)

**4,5 MILLION**

women in the perimenopausal age (i.e. 40-55).

This is **28%** of all adult women in Poland.

**42**

is the average age of working women in Poland.

**20%**

Polish women and men in the productive age are women in the perimenopausal age (i.e. 40-55).

**APPROX. 70% POLISH WOMEN**

in the perimenopausal age (i.e. 40-55) work.

That's **over 3 million** people and about 205 of all working people.

Women in the perimenopausal period struggle with many bothersome symptoms that affect their well-being and daily functioning, both physically and mentally.

Nearly half of the respondents experience muscle, joint or headache pain (57%), chronic fatigue (50%) and sleep disorders (45%).

As many as 46% of the respondents indicate 6 or more types of ailments.

*Question:*  
Have you experienced and of the following symptoms in the last 12 months?

*Base:*  
1643 working women aged 40-55

## 94% OF WORKING WOMEN AGED 40-55 FEEL SYMPTOMS RELATED TO MENOPAUSAL TRANSFORMATION



Over 80% of surveyed women declare that menopause – related symptoms negatively impact their professional functioning.

The respondents aged 40-44 are more likely to report problems with concentration (31%) and loss of self-confidence (19%), while those aged 50-55 report hot flashes (35%) and sweating (25%).

*Question:*

*Have you experienced any of these symptoms as bothersome at work (select all that apply)?*

*Base:*

*1643 working women aged 40-55*

## 83% OF WORKING WOMEN AGED 40-55 FEEL NEGATIVE IMPACT OF MENSTRUAL TRANSFORMATION-RELATED AILMENTS ON WORK



A woman is shown from the chest up, holding a white rectangular sign in front of her face. The sign has a simple line drawing of a sad face with downturned lips and closed, downward-slanting eyes. The woman is wearing a dark, long-sleeved top and a watch on her left wrist. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

**87% OF THE SURVEYED**

believes that introducing solutions supporting women during menopause would have a positive impact on their attitude towards work and functioning at work

**51%**

don't feel ready to talk openly about their health needs related to menopause at work.

Base:  
1643 working women aged 40-55

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**#MENOPAUSEWITHOUTTABOO**

## Unspoken needs

On the one hand, as many as 87% of women surveyed believe that implementing supportive solutions during this period would positively impact their attitudes towards work and daily functioning. On the other hand, however, over half (51%) do not feel comfortable enough to openly discuss their health needs related to menopause at work.

Together, these two pieces of information show a situation where the needs of perimenopausal women are largely ignored or silenced in the workplace. Women realize that dedicated support would be very helpful, but at the same time, they don't feel they can seek it from their employers. A lack of openness in discussing the challenges of this period means the problem remains invisible and needs remain unmet.

Creating an atmosphere of greater understanding and acceptance in the workplace seems crucial. This would allow women to openly communicate their needs, and companies to respond appropriately, benefiting the well-being and productivity of their employees. Organizational change is essential, but so is strengthening women's self-confidence through education and breaking taboos.

## Invisible needs

**Female office workers** are most likely to feel that their specific needs related to menopause are ignored (51%). Female **managers and professionals** are the least likely to report such feelings (40%).

**Female healthcare and social care workers** constitute a specific group – as many as 26% of them disagreed with the statement about a lack of awareness of needs in the workplace (total: 19%). This may indicate that the situation for women in this specific industry is slightly better than in other sectors.

These differences may result from the specific nature of a given work environment – the level of knowledge about the menopausal transition among management and colleagues, the type of relationships and openness in communication, as well as greater sensitivity to health issues in some industries.

Nevertheless, the scale of the problem remains significant. Therefore, it is crucial to create an atmosphere of understanding and support for perimenopausal women in the workplace, regardless of position or sector.

# 46%

Working women aged 40-55 believe that the needs of perimenopausal women are not noticed in their workplace

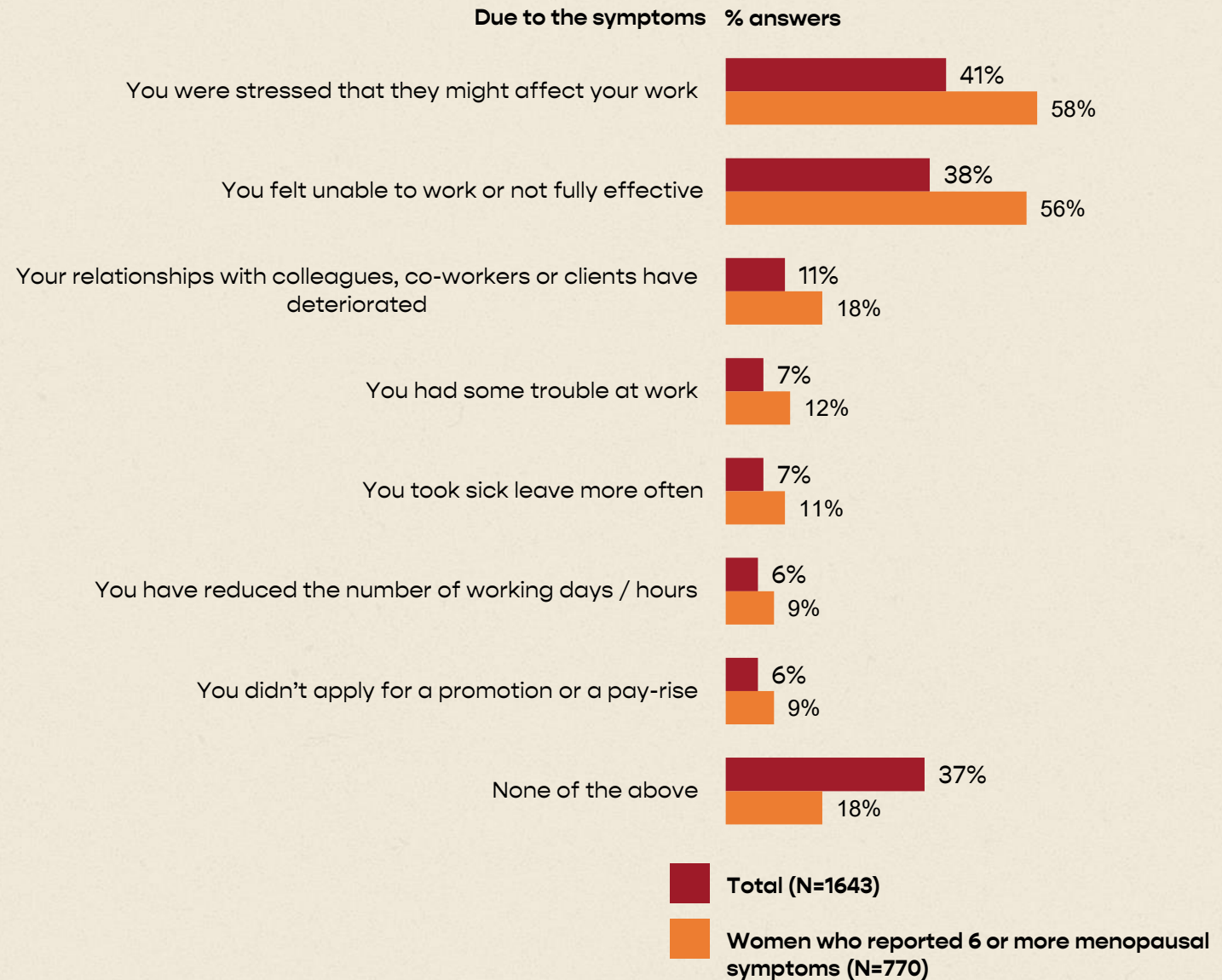
Symptoms of menopausal transition negatively impact women's functioning in the work environment.

When asked about specific difficulties, the respondents most often indicated stress related to the impact of symptoms on work and a feeling of reduced efficiency and effectiveness.

Women who experience multiple symptoms are more likely to experience various types of occupational problems resulting from perimenopausal symptoms.

*Question:*

*In general (i.e. not just in the last 12 months) in relation to such symptoms...*



# 45% OF THE SURVEYED

at the age of 40-44 are stressed that the symptoms they experience may affect their work.

**36%** feel this way among the respondents aged 50-55.

Base:  
1643 working women aged 40-55

**MENOPAUSE  
WITHOUT TABOO**



**#MENOPAUSEWITHOUTTABOO**

# WHY DOES THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN FEARING MENOPAUSE IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR PROFESSION DECREASE WITH AGE?

I believe that more women over 50 have already confronted the changes that maturity brings. I am referring to realizing one's needs, the so-called life review, the illness or death of parents, children leaving home, and qualitative changes in friendships and partnerships.

They also experience changes in their bodies and are already confronted with internalized stereotypes (those from upbringing and role models) and environmental stereotypes regarding the canonical category of attractiveness.

In this broad context, the "menopausal symptoms" that scare us as women take on a different meaning and dimension. For younger people, they are more associated with fear and a certain imagination, while for older people, they are associated with real experience and processing, which brings with it a full spectrum of emotions (including positive ones).



Alicja Długotłęcka  
**Psychotherapist, educator, sex educator**

*Doctor of Humanities, long-time lecturer in psychosomatics and sexual rehabilitation at the Faculty of Rehabilitation at the University of Physical Education in Warsaw, psychotherapist in the humanistic-experiential stream.*

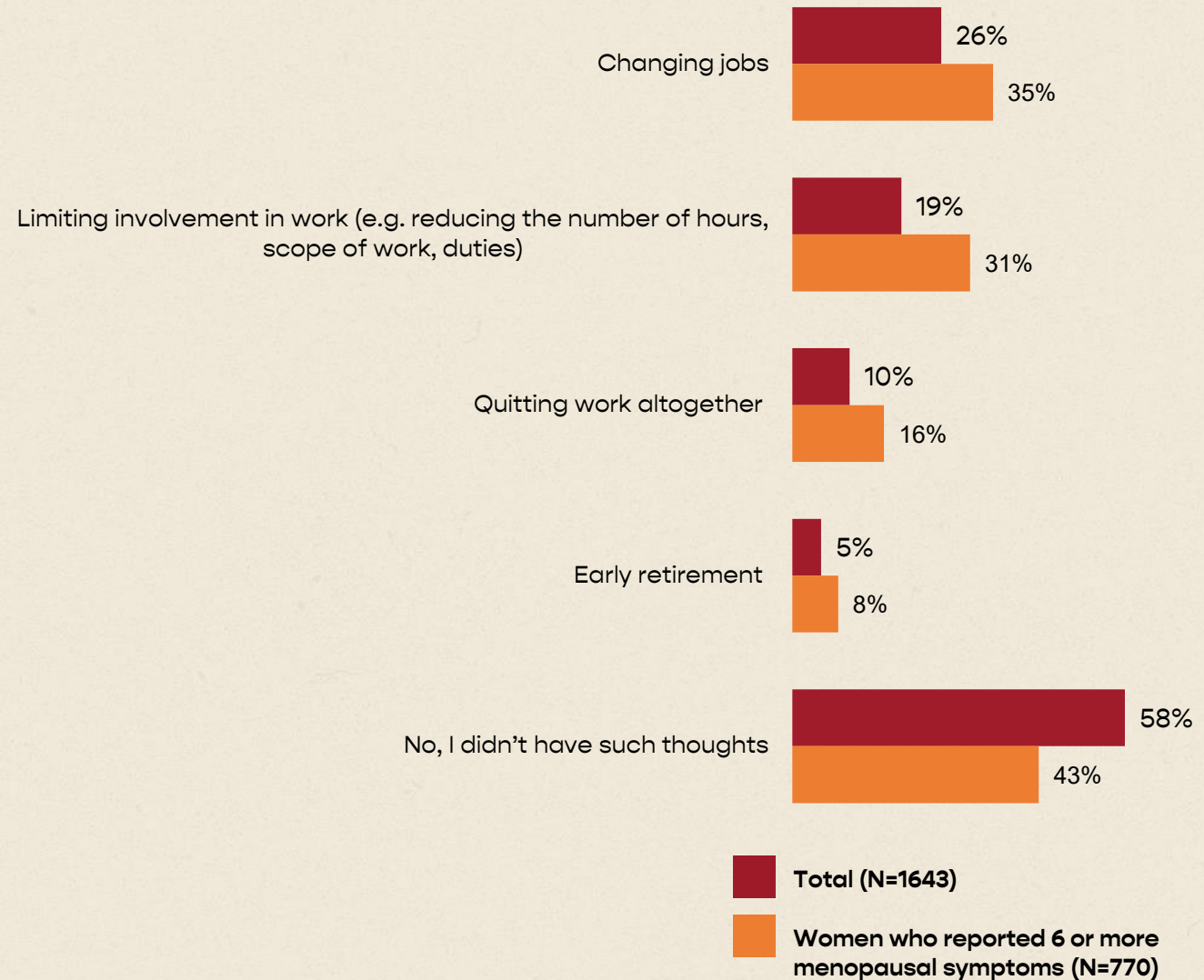
*For many years, she has been involved in psychosexual education and women's sexuality, conducting training for professionals and young people. She is the author of numerous publications and popular science books.*

42% of the surveyed women considered changing, limiting or ending their professional activity due to menopausal symptoms, and this was more common among women experiencing multiple ailments related to menopause.

*Question:*

*In general (i.e. not just in the last 12 months) in connection with these symptoms, have you ever thought about...*

**Due to the symptoms, I sometimes thought about... % answers**



## Flexibility and uncertainty

Menopausal symptoms may particularly translate into limited professional activity among women working in the least stable forms of employment.

Every third woman running her own business has considered limiting her involvement in work due to the ailments she experiences, and every fifth has already reduced her working hours.

Women working under civil law contracts (contracts of mandate and contracts for specific work) also decided to limit their working hours due to menopausal symptoms more often than other groups (19%).

Part-time employment for perimenopausal women can be an additional source of uncertainty. This may be due to the lack of systemic solutions to support them during this period and fewer opportunities for support or adjustments in the workplace.



# 69% OF WORKING WOMEN

aged 40-55 believe that companies should have solutions supporting women during menopause

Base:  
1643 working women aged 40-55

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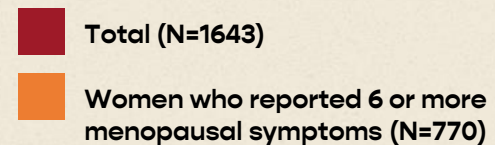
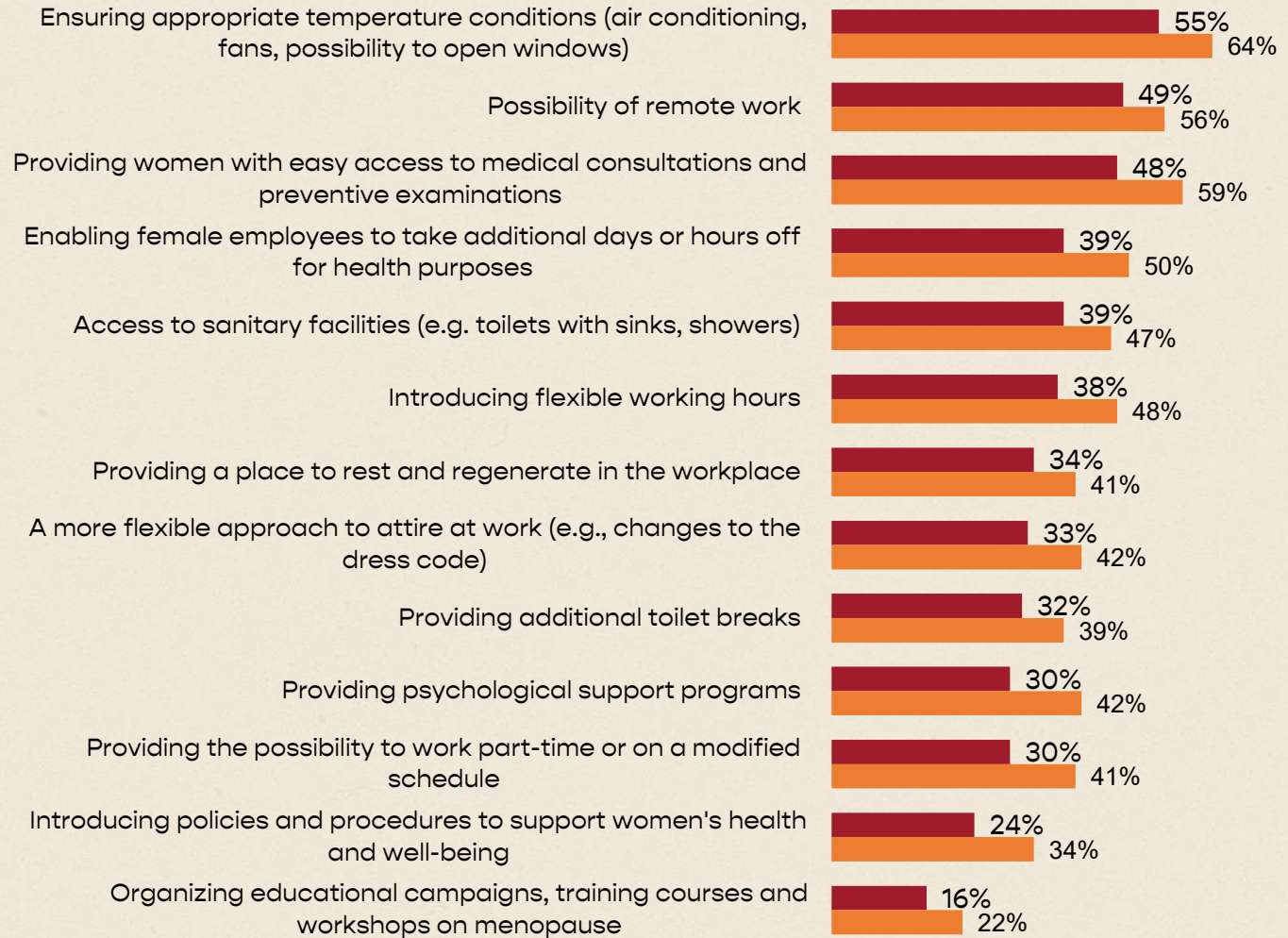
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Women expect, above all, practical amenities that will help alleviate bothersome symptoms and make it easier to reconcile work with health needs. Many of these solutions do not involve high costs.

At the same time, activities that build knowledge and shape a friendly organizational culture in this area are also important.

*Question:  
What solutions do you think companies should implement to support women working for them during menopause?*

**Menopause at work – solutions % answers**



## Desired solutions

Regardless of the type of work performed or the sector, there is a significant demand for comfortable temperature conditions, access to medical consultations, flexibility in work hours and locations, and sanitary facilities. Service industries also emphasize the possibility of regeneration at work.

**The most important solutions** indicated by respondents (by professional group):

• **managers and professionals:**

1. Possibility of remote work (62%)
2. Providing easy access to medical consultations and tests (58%)
3. Ensuring appropriate temperature conditions (56%)

• **office workers:**

1. Remote work opportunities (63%)
2. Ensuring appropriate temperature conditions (55%)
3. Introducing flexible working hours (45%)

• **service and sales employees:**

1. Ensuring appropriate temperature conditions (53%)
2. Providing easy access to medical consultations (44%)
3. Possibility of using additional days off for health purposes (33%)

• **blue-collar workers:**

1. Ensuring appropriate temperature conditions (56%)
2. Providing additional toilet breaks (44%)
3. Access to adequate sanitary infrastructure (43%)

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Technique:**

CAWI

**Sample size:**

1,643 working women

**Age:**

40–55 years old

**Representative sample due to:**

age, size of place of residence, macroregion

**Delivery time:**

August 9-16, 2024

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**Methodological note for the purpose of citing results:**

The study of working women aged 40-55 was carried out by Ipsos on behalf of the Kulczyk Foundation in August 2024 using an online survey on a representative sample of 1,643 women in terms of age, size of place of residence, and macroregion.

# REPORT INVISIBLE



# AT WORK

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