

Online Magazin IAB-Forum

Is the menopause a women's issue only?

16. October 2026 | Carola Burkert, Dana Müller, Hannah Steinberg, Marieke Volkert

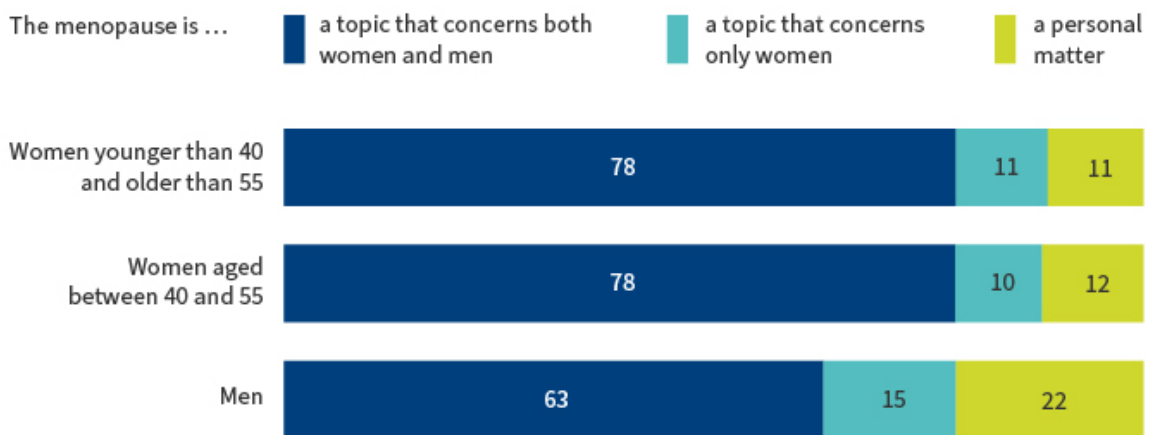


Results from an IAB survey paint a strikingly clear picture: menopause is predominantly viewed not as an exclusively female or private issue, but as a topic that is relevant to both women and men. This should also serve as a signal to employers, as menopausal symptoms can impact women's labour market participation.

Menopause is more than just a private matter, as shown by survey results from the IAB online survey "Working and Living in Germany" (IAB-OPAL). A clear majority of women (78 percent) view menopause as an issue that concerns both women and men — regardless of whether the respondents themselves are at the age when menopause typically occurs. Only about one in ten women categorises the topic as exclusively concerning women, while one in nine considers it a purely personal matter.

Agreement with statements about menopause

Respondents' answers, in percent



Source: Online survey "Work and Life in Germany" (IAB OPAL), wave 8, Autumn 2025 (N = 8,695), weighted results.

Men consider menopause as a purely personal matter almost twice as often as women do (22 percent versus 11 or 12 percent). The proportion of men who view menopause exclusively as a women's issue is also higher than amongst women. Nevertheless, a clear majority of the men surveyed view menopause as a shared issue for both women and men, even though the proportion (63 percent) is slightly lower than amongst women. In this respect, greater awareness and information regarding this issue would likely be welcomed by both women and men. Particularly in mixed-gender teams, this could lead to greater sensitivity and support for the women affected.

This support is essential, as studies from the [UK](#), [Norway](#), and [Sweden](#) demonstrate that menopause-related symptoms can negatively affect employment, working hours, and income. At the same time, they can be associated with a higher reliance on social benefits. Drawing a parallel to the "motherhood penalty" — the negative impact motherhood can have on women's career trajectories and earnings — researchers such as [Gabriella Conti](#) refer to this phenomenon as the "menopause penalty."

What does this mean for companies?

Companies play a pivotal role in this regard. To better integrate the topic of menopause into the everyday working environment, companies should address the issue and develop initiatives to provide information, raise awareness, and offer support to employees. The goal is to share knowledge about menopause and potential symptoms, highlight existing needs for support, and help employees manage the associated challenges in their daily work. However, in many workplaces the subject is rarely discussed openly. To foster a more open approach, male employees

— particularly those in leadership positions — should also be appropriately informed. After all, alongside improved access to healthcare services and information regarding menopause, international studies show that a supportive work environment can help mitigate the negative impact on women’s career paths.

Literature

Abrahamsson, Sara; Barschkett, Mara; Flatø, Martin (2025): [Beyond Hot Flashes: The Career Cost of Menopause](#). IZA Discussion Paper No. 17789.

Burkert, Carola; Müller, Dana; Steinberg, Hannah Sinja; Volkert, Marieke (2026): Die Wechseljahre der Frau – ein blinder Fleck in der Arbeitswelt. IAB-Forum, 24 June 2026.

DOI:[10.48720/IAB.FOO.20260624.01](#)

Burkert, Carola; Müller, Dana (2025): Auswirkungen der Wechseljahre auf die Arbeitswelt – ein unterschätztes Tabuthema. IAB-Forum, 24 February 2025. DOI:[10.48720/IAB.FOO.20250224.01](#)

Bryson, Alex; Conti, Gabriella; Hardy, Peycheva, Darina; Sullivan, Alice (2022): The consequences of early menopause and menopause symptoms for labour market participation. Social Science & Medicine, Vol. 293, Art. 114676. DOI: [10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114676](#)

Conti, Gabriella; Ginja, Rita; Persson, Petra; Willage, Baton (2025): The menopause” penalty”. National Bureau of Economic Research, No. w33621. DOI: [10.3386/w33621](#)

Bild: Miljan Živković / stock.adobe.com;

DOI: [10.48720.IAB.FOO.20261016.02](#)

Cite article

Burkert, Carola; Müller, Dana ; Steinberg, Hannah; Volkert, Marieke (2026): Is the menopause a women’s issue only?, In: IAB-Forum 16th of October 2026, <https://iab-forum.de/en/is-the-menopause-a-womens-issue-only/>, Retrieved: 16th of October 2026

Zitationshinweis

Carola Burkert; Dana Müller; Hannah Steinberg; Marieke Volkert (2026): Is the menopause a women's issue only? , In: Online Magazin IAB-Forum 16. October 2026, <https://iab-forum.de/en/is-the-menopause-a-womens-issue-only/>, Abrufdatum: 16. October 2026

Lizenzhinweis

Diese Publikation ist unter folgender Creative-Commons-Lizenz veröffentlicht: Namensnennung – Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0):

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.de>