

RESEARCH REPORT R047/2024

Menopause Survey 2023

Headline report

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1. Key findings at a glance

- 83 per cent of respondents said that they had found symptoms of the menopause either moderately or extremely problematic at work, an increase of 7 percentage points from 2018 (76 per cent).
- Tiredness (85 per cent) and sleep disturbances (81 per cent) resulting from the menopause were cited as the most problematic menopause symptoms when working. These two issues continue to be the leading problematic menopause symptoms, as per 2018 results.
- In terms of the working environment, recalling detailed information (72 per cent) and having to work shifts (57 per cent) were the top two main aspects of work that make coping with symptoms of the menopause more difficult. This is different from 2018, where the temperature of the working environment and inadequate opportunity to control the ventilation of their working environment, were cited as most likely to make coping with symptoms of the menopause more difficult for respondents.
- Greater awareness amongst, both, senior managers (78 per cent), and line managers (77 per cent), of menopause as a possible occupational health issue were identified as the main adjustments and support needed to make it easier to cope with symptoms of the menopause at work.
- Overall, 33 per cent of respondents said that they had considered leaving because they have found it difficult to deal with the menopause at work, an increase of 13 percentage points from 2018 (20 per cent). At the same time, 65 per cent said that they feel their job performance had been negatively affected by the menopause.
- 58 per cent of respondents decided not to tell their manager that they were/are experiencing symptoms of the menopause because they feel it is a personal matter.
- 81 per cent of respondents said that 'having difficulty coping with the symptoms' and being 'worried about the effect of the symptoms on their work performance' (for 79 per cent of respondents) were the top reasons which influenced their decision to tell their manager that they were/are experiencing symptoms of the menopause. These two reasons continue to be the leading influence on disclosure to management, compared to the 2018 results.
- 72 per cent of respondents said that after telling their line manager about experiencing symptoms of the menopause, their discussion was treated with confidentiality; 67 per cent answered the same in 2018.
- Only 17 per cent of respondents said that after telling their line manager that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause, their duties or role was officially amended or changed.
- 70 per cent of respondents had gone to work despite feeling that they should have taken sick leave because they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause, an increase of 8 percentage points from 2018 (62 per cent). Moreover, 43 per cent of respondents had taken annual leave or rest days to take time off because of their symptoms, in contrast to 35 per cent doing so in 2018.
- 38 per cent of respondents who had taken sickness absence due to the menopause had not told their manager the real reason for their absence, as compared to 44 per cent who answered the same in 2018. Meanwhile, 19 per cent who had told their manager the real reason said that their

absence had been recorded accurately, an increase from the 9 per cent who answered the same in 2018.

- 93 per cent of managers who responded to the survey said that they would be either somewhat or very confident to support someone they line-managed who was going through the menopause, a positive increase of 7 percentage points from 2018 (86 per cent).
- Only 18 per cent of managers said that they had been given training on how to support someone going through the menopause, an increase of 7 percentage points from 2018 (11 per cent). The main content covered in the training includes factual information about the menopause (e.g. overview and symptoms) and how experiencing symptoms of the menopause might impact individuals at work.
- 50 per cent of managers did not know whether their force had a formal policy regarding management of the menopause in the workplace, as compared to 64 per cent who answered the same in 2018. Moreover, 96 per cent of managers said that they would find it useful to have a formal policy, a significant increase from the 67 per cent who said so in 2018.

2. Executive summary

2.1. Introduction

The Menopause Survey 2023 is a collaborative project which involved the engagement and support of many organisations and stakeholders across policing including: the Police Federation of England and Wales, the Police Superintendents' Association, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Police Service of Northern Ireland and the National Police Chiefs' Council. This survey was conducted for the second time since 2018, to examine the experiences and awareness of the menopause amongst police officers and police staff at a national level in England and Wales. In particular, it looks at the experiences of individuals who either have gone through or are going through the menopause, as well as the experiences and awareness of managers and supervisors in terms of supporting individuals who are going through the menopause. This report provides an overview of the top-level findings for the survey from all respondents.

2.2. Participants and procedure

The survey was launched on World Menopause Day, 18th October 2023, and was open for five weeks; it closed on 24th November 2023. Overall, 5,991 useable responses were received during this time. 77 per cent of respondents were police officers and 23 per cent were police staff (less than 1 per cent were in another role within the police service). Different questions were asked depending on whether respondents had personal experience of the menopause and/or had managerial or supervisory responsibilities. 71 per cent of respondents said that they either had gone through or were going through the menopause. 32 per cent of respondents said that they had managerial responsibilities and 56 per cent fell into both categories. Only 6 per cent of overall respondents said that questions about the menopause would not be personally relevant to them. Statistically the sample sizes obtained within this survey were large enough that the percentages quoted in this report can be considered to be accurate within the normal bounds of academic rigor.

2.3. Experience of the menopause at work

83 per cent of respondents who answered questions about their experiences of the menopause at work said that they found overall symptoms of the menopause as either moderately or extremely problematic. Tiredness, sleep disturbances and poor memory were the symptoms most likely to be seen as problematic by respondents. A notable proportion of respondents also highlighted that symptoms of the menopause linked to their psychological and physical wellbeing were either moderately or extremely problematic for them at work. For instance, 67 per cent said that lower confidence, 65 per cent mentioned weight gain, and 50 per cent said that anxiety and panic attacks were moderately or extremely problematic symptoms.

The two aspects of the working environment most likely to make coping with symptoms of the menopause more difficult for respondents were recalling detailed information and having to work shifts. A general trend in the data suggests that police officers were more likely to find that their working environment made coping with symptoms more difficult as compared to police staff, which remains unchanged since the 2018 survey. However, respondents' comments also demonstrate that different roles bring different challenges within the working environment. For example, the working environment of frontline, uniformed officers (both officers and staff) seemed to have a greater impact on coping with symptoms of the menopause. Therefore, tailoring specific adjustments for specific roles and working environments may be more appropriate than a "one size fits all" approach.

Overall, respondents did not feel they had sufficient access to specific adjustments and support mechanisms that might make it easier to cope with symptoms of the menopause at work. For example, the majority of respondents said they did not have access to better ventilation, air conditioning and temperature control at work. This was despite reporting that, for the most part, they would find these adjustments beneficial. In particular, over three quarters of respondents said that they would find it very helpful for there to be greater awareness amongst line managers and senior managers around the menopause as a possible occupational health issue. Outside of the office space, nearly two thirds of respondents said that they would find it very helpful to have more flexibility in both their working hours and location.

2.4. Experiences of working during the menopause

Notably, 65 per cent of respondents felt that their job performance had been negatively affected by the menopause. It was, however, much less common for respondents to feel that the menopause had negatively affected their manager's and colleagues' views of their competence at work (30 per cent). Moreover, 59 per cent of respondents said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied in their jobs. Job satisfaction was however linked to the severity of respondents' symptoms: respondents who said that they found symptoms of the menopause extremely problematic at work were less likely to be satisfied at work than respondents for whom symptoms were less problematic (57 per cent versus 68 per cent respectively). Respondents who found symptoms of the menopause to be extremely problematic were also more likely to have considered leaving. 38 per cent of respondents who said that they found the symptoms of the menopause extremely or moderately problematic agreed that they had considered leaving because they found it difficult to deal with the menopause at work.

2.5. Disclosure and management support

Respondents were asked about whether they had told their manager they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause; over a third decided not to disclose, with the top reason for nondisclosure being that respondents felt it was a personal matter. On the other hand, the top reason which influenced respondents' decision to tell their manager they were/are experiencing symptoms of the menopause was due to difficulty coping with the symptoms (81 per cent). After disclosure to their manager, 68 per cent of respondents agreed that they were treated with dignity and respect, and 69 per cent of respondents agreed they were not treated differently (or in a negative way). However, almost a quarter of respondents (24 per cent) did not feel that they received the right support or enough support after telling their line manager or supervisor that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

2.6. Absence due to the menopause

Around one in five (21 per cent) respondents said that they had taken sickness absence because they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause. Respondents also highlighted that inaccurate recording of menopause-related absence was widespread. 38 per cent of respondents who had taken sickness absence due to the menopause hadn't told their line manager the real reason for their absence, and just 19 per cent of those who had told their manager said that their absence had been recorded accurately (e.g. a "menopause-related absence"). Whilst sickness absence due to the menopause was relatively uncommon, 70 per cent of respondents said that they had attended work despite feeling that they should have really taken sick leave because of their symptoms. In addition, 43 per cent of respondents had used annual leave or rest days to take time off because they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

2.7. Experiences and awareness of managers

There was often a lack of awareness amongst managers regarding the availability of menopause policies and guidance. 50 per cent of managers did not know whether or not their force had a formal menopause policy; 39 per cent did not know whether or not their force had published any guidance. In addition, less than two in ten managers who responded to the survey said that they had been given training on how to support someone going through the menopause. Managers, however, indicated that they would welcome policy and guidance, with a large majority of respondents saying that they would find it useful to have a policy and guidance on management of the menopause at work.

Despite not having adequate access to policy, guidance or training, the majority of managers (93 per cent) who responded to the survey said that they would be somewhat or very confident in their ability to support someone going through the menopause. This compares to only 7 per cent who said that they would be not at all, or not very confident. Levels of awareness about the menopause amongst managers who have, and have not, had any personal experience with the menopause remains high. 94 per cent of managers with personal experience of the menopause said that they had a good level of awareness; meanwhile, 77 per cent of managers without personal experience felt that they also had a good level of awareness. Managers for the most part appeared to demonstrate progressive views about the menopause at work and felt that the menopause should be something that was talked about as an occupational health issue.

3. Introduction

The Menopause Survey 2023 is part of an ongoing research project to understand the experiences and awareness of the menopause amongst police officers and police staff. It is the second iteration of the survey since 2018, to look at the impact of the menopause within the police service at a national level in England and Wales. The findings of the survey will be used to better represent and support anyone within the police workforce going through the menopause, as well as to inform future policy and guidance on the topic. This project was conducted by the Research team at the Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) on behalf of PFEW, UNISON, the Police Superintendents' Association (PSA), the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the Civil Nuclear Constabulary and Police Service of Northern Ireland.

The menopause is a natural and inevitable transition in a woman's life when their ovaries stop producing eggs and there is a drop in the production of the hormone oestrogen. This can result in a range of physical and psychological symptoms (including hot flushes, difficulty sleeping, low mood and anxiety, and problems with memory and concentration) many of which can have an adverse impact upon wellbeing at work (NHS, 2022). The menopause usually occurs between 45 and 55 years of age, but it can happen earlier (NHS, 2022).

In England and Wales, 24 per cent of female police officers are aged 45 or over¹. In addition, the police staff workforce is a more mature workforce, with female workers in the majority: 61 per cent of police staff are over 41, and 64 per cent are female². The menopause therefore presents an important occupational health issue that has the potential to affect thousands of people within the police service.

This report provides an overview of the top-level findings for the survey from all respondents. We have also provided a range of illustrative comments from the survey. Further reports containing force-level data will also be available from the Police Federation of England and Wales.

¹ Data from Home Office Pay Census 2022-23 (data as of 31 March 2023).

² Data from Home Office's Police Workforce England and Wales, 31 March 2023 data tables

4. Procedure and Participants

The Menopause Survey was open to anyone who was either going through or had gone through the menopause and anyone with management or supervisory responsibility with the police service in England and Wales. Its two main aims were to understand:

- 1) **The experiences of individuals who either have gone through or are going through the menopause; and**
- 2) **The experiences and awareness of managers and supervisors in terms of supporting individuals who are going through the menopause.**

There continues to be relatively little research evidence concerning the impact of the menopause on the working lives of people within the police service, specifically in England and Wales. Whilst a handful of studies focus on the experiences of menopause across certain police forces (for example - Griffiths et al., 2006; Police Federation of Northern Ireland, 2018; Laverick et al., 2019; Atkinson et al., 2021), others draw upon policies and research surrounding the menopause within the UK police service (Beck et al., 2018; Atkinson et al., 2024). These studies, however, do not provide an insight at a national and holistic level for England and Wales police, nor do they examine the experiences and awareness of managers. The Menopause Survey serves to address such gaps in the current evidence base.

To enable consistency and data comparisons, this year's Menopause Survey used a very similar set of questions to the ones adopted in the 2018 Menopause survey. These questions focused on the impact of menopause symptoms at work and the access to, and desirability of, specific workplace adjustments. Questions were also included in the current survey to explore in more detail respondents' experience of disclosure and treatment by their line managers. The survey also incorporated further questions on menopause related presenteeism (attending work despite feeling one should have taken sickness absence) and leaveism (taking annual leave or rest days rather than sickness absence), as these practices are thought to be widespread within policing (e.g. Hesketh et al., 2014; Houdmont et al., 2018).

Questions were included in this survey specifically for managers. These focused on managers' confidence in managing someone who was going through the menopause and the level of support they received to manage someone going through the menopause (in terms of access to training and the existence of force policy and guidance on the menopause at work).

Finally, five general questions regarding awareness of the menopause were also included. These questions were open to everyone within the police service, including people who have gone through or are going through the menopause, managers, and colleagues. These questions were included to ascertain broader levels of awareness across the police service.

Although in general this survey mirrors the approach taken by other similar surveys, it also allows respondents to self-identify as having experience of the menopause. Because this study relies on self-identification, we also solicited responses from individuals who suspected that they were going through the menopause but had not had this confirmed by a doctor. 21 per cent of respondents who answered questions on the menopause fell into this category.

The survey was launched on World Menopause Day, 18th October 2023, and was open for five weeks; it closed on 24th November 2023. Data was collected using an online survey hosted by Survey

Monkey. A link to the survey was circulated to the PFEW membership as well as the Menopause Action Group (MAG). Members of the MAG took responsibility for the dissemination of the survey link to their respective organisations. All responses were collated and analysed by researchers at PFEW. This research project is compliant with all aspects of the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics as well as the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Overall, 6,409 responses were received, this was reduced to 5,991 after data cleansing³. 77 per cent of respondents were police officers, 23 per cent were police staff and less than 1 per cent said that they had another role within the police.⁴ 71 per cent of respondents said that they either had gone through or were going through the menopause. 32 per cent of respondents said that they had managerial or supervisory responsibilities and 56 per cent fell into both of these categories. Only 6 per cent of overall respondents said that questions about the menopause would not be personally relevant to them. Although these respondents were not the main focus of the research, they were asked several questions about their level of awareness of the menopause, and these are reported towards the end of this report.

Amongst respondents who said that they had personal experience of the menopause, 67 per cent said that they were currently going through the menopause and 4 per cent said that they had gone through the menopause.

Because there are no definitive data on the numbers of police officers and police staff who are experiencing, or have experienced, the menopause, a decision was made not to weight the data in any way. The proportions reported in this report are therefore all unweighted figures. However, using broad estimates, the population sizes, based on 1) on the number of female police workers aged over 45 for questions relating to the menopause and 2) the number of police officers in a supervisory rank⁵, statistically the sample sizes for these groups were large enough that the percentages quoted in this report can be considered to be accurate within the normal bounds of academic rigour⁶.

³ E.g., responses were removed if they were implausible or did not provide responses to at least one of the key variables required for classification (response to menopause questions, responses to manager questions, etc).

⁴ Please note – due to rounding this does not total 100%.

⁵ These numbers are for police officers as data on supervisory responsibilities are not openly available for police staff

⁶ Margin of error is $\pm 2\%$ with a 95% confidence level

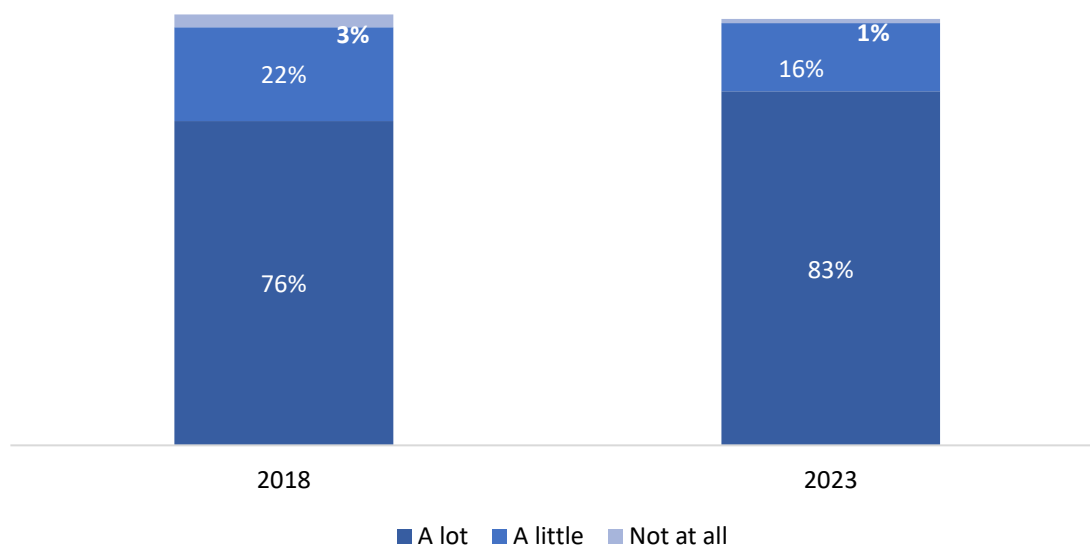
5. Individuals who have been through or are going through the menopause

5.1. Experience of the menopause at work

Menopause symptoms at work

Respondents were asked how problematic symptoms of the menopause have been for them at work. Overall, **83 per cent of respondents said that symptoms of the menopause were either moderately or extremely problematic**; an increase of 7 percentage points from 2018 (76 per cent).

Figure 1: Overall, how problematic have symptoms of the menopause been for you when working



The proportions of police officers and police staff who found symptoms of the menopause to be either moderately or extremely problematic at work were broadly similar, at 85 per cent and 81 per cent respectively. Police officers were therefore more likely to say that they found symptoms of the menopause to be problematic when working.

Respondents were also asked about which specific symptoms of the menopause they found to be problematic at work. **Tiredness (85 per cent), sleep disturbances (81 per cent) and poor memory (81 per cent) were the symptoms most likely to be seen as problematic by respondents.** These same issues continue to be the leading problematic menopause symptoms, as per 2018 results. In addition, poor concentration (80 per cent) was also commonly cited as being moderately or extremely problematic for a lot of the respondents.

A notable proportion of respondents also highlighted that symptoms of the menopause linked to their psychological and physical wellbeing were either moderately or extremely problematic for them at work. For instance, 67 per cent said that lower confidence, 65 per cent mentioned weight gain, and 50 per cent said that anxiety and panic attacks were moderately or extremely problematic symptoms. All of the symptoms listed had a clear increase in response rate since 2018; for example, in

2018 it was 58 per cent who said lower confidence, 60 per cent who said weight gain, and 42 per cent said that anxiety or panic attacks were moderately or extremely problematic symptoms at work.

Some of the symptoms of the menopause are perhaps less well recognised within a workplace environment than others, but nonetheless are problematic symptoms. This is reflected in the data too; whilst there were some symptoms that were most likely to be problematic for respondents at work, there were a number of different symptoms respondents noted that had an impact upon them at work.

Nearly two thirds of respondents (60 per cent and over) found at least eight out of the 19 symptoms listed in the survey as either moderately or extremely problematic at work.

Respondents' comments reinforce the cumulative and combined impact that the varying symptoms of the menopause have on their wellbeing at work-

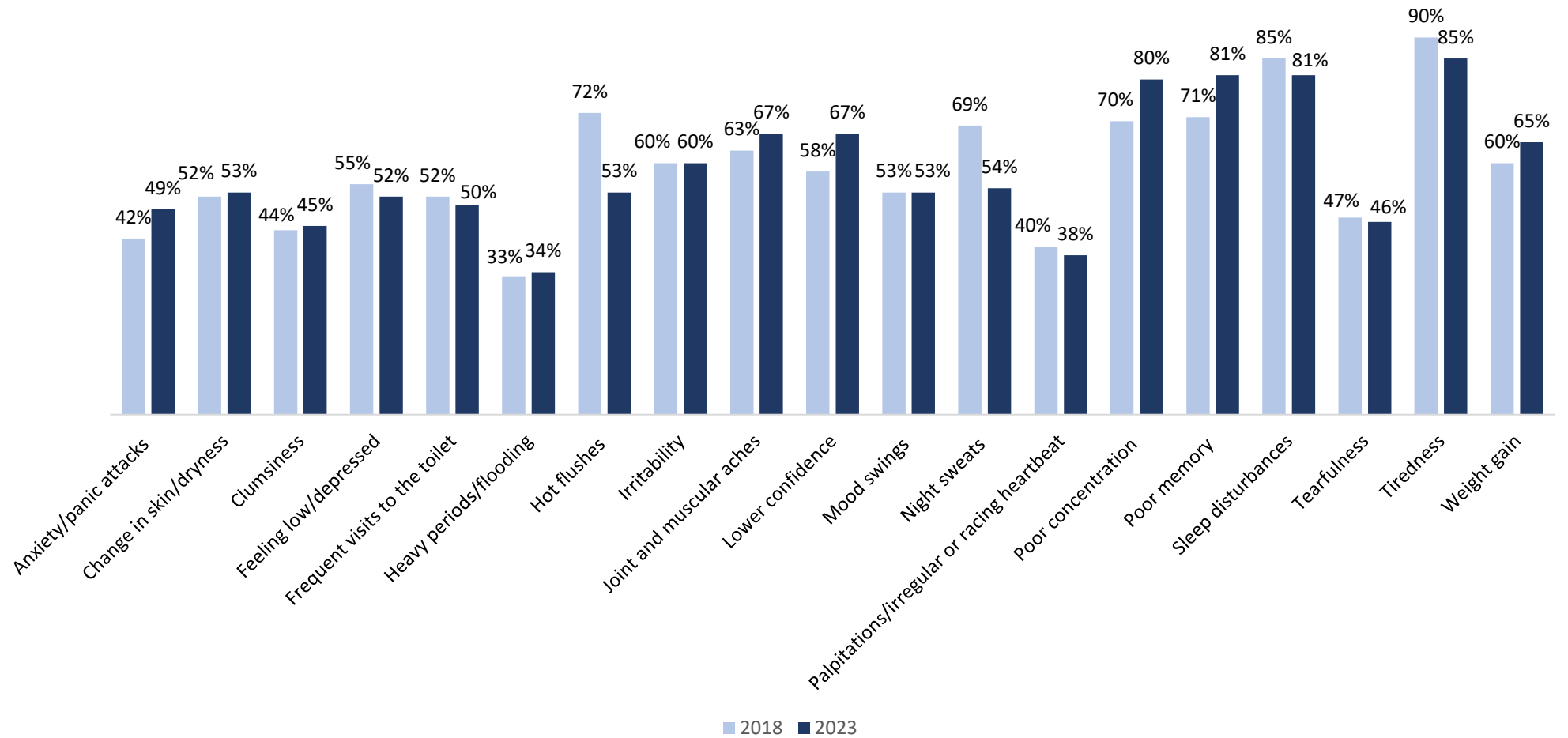
"I have found the menopause to be the worst time of my life due to severe depression, anxiety and panic attacks. This alongside of my decline in physical health (muscle stiffness and pain all over my body) fatigue due to not sleeping, a feeling of being past it, invisible, and the stress of the job being about to move me at the drop of a hat to a position I would not cope with is horrendous and I am constantly prepared to HAVE to leave the job of this happens is scary as I need the money to keep my house."

"Feeling hot or cold when those around me are normal. Feeling paranoid, feeling on the outside looking in. Permanently exhausted. Colleagues treat me like I am ready to retire but I have years left in me."

"A majority of the menopause training is aimed towards females rather than looking at educating the males in how to be supportive of the females in their department. There should be male menopause buddies in each department - Many males in the department do not understand the concept of brain fog, tearfulness or tiredness and so it is harder for females to "cope" with the symptoms as the don't feel they can mention it without feeling like a failure. This then breeds the lack of self-confidence - as a product of being unable to talk about the "M" word. I have heard male colleagues say things like "we all feel tired" when a female colleague has menopause fatigue or laugh when female colleagues have forgotten what they are saying due to brain fog."

Police officers and police staff, both tend to find menopause symptoms problematic across the board. There were, however, some statistically significant differences between officers and staff. For instance, 83 per cent of police officers said that poor concentration was a moderately or extremely problematic symptom for them at work, compared to 74 per cent of police staff. On the other hand, 55 per cent of police staff reported that hot flushes were moderately or extremely problematic for them at work, compared to 51 per cent of officers. Regardless of role, all respondents who experienced symptoms of the menopause were highly likely to say that their symptoms had been problematic for them at work.

Figure 2: Moderately or extremely problematic symptoms of the menopause



5.1.2. The working environment

The two aspects of the working environment most likely to make coping with symptoms of the menopause more difficult for respondents were recalling detailed information (72 per cent) and having to work shifts (57 per cent). This is different from 2018, where the temperature of the working environment and inadequate opportunity to control the ventilation of their working environment, were cited as the top reasons that make coping with symptoms of the menopause more difficult.

Other notable aspects of the working environment that make coping with menopause more difficult were workload (48 per cent) and the pressure of tight deadlines (43 per cent).

A general trend in the data suggests that police officers were more likely to find that their working environment made coping with symptoms more difficult as compared to police staff, which was the same in 2018. For instance, 61 per cent of police officers said that having to work shifts made coping with symptoms of the menopause moderately or extremely difficult, compared to 40 per cent of police staff. 52 per cent of police officers said that their workload made coping moderately or extremely difficult, compared to 37 per cent of police staff. Similarly, 40 per cent of police officers said that having to make difficult decisions made coping moderately or extremely difficult, compared to 28 per cent of police staff.

Table 1: Aspects of the working environment (where applicable) that made coping with symptoms of the menopause moderately or extremely difficult.

	Police Officers	Police Staff
Recalling detailed information	75%	63%
Having to work shifts	61%	40%
Having fixed working hours	31%	26%
The temperature of your working environment	55%	53%
Inadequate opportunity to control ventilation in your working environment	53%	51%
Inadequate access to toilet facilities	20%	13%
Shared offices/workspaces	29%	25%
The physical demands of the job	38%	22%
The design of uniforms	38%	29%
The pressure of tight deadlines	46%	33%
Workload	52%	37%

	Police Officers	Police Staff
Not being office based	16%	8%
Having to make difficult decisions	40%	28%
Having to attend formal meetings	28%	25%
Having to maintain your position for long periods of time without relief (e.g. scene guard, cell watch)	31%	25%

In some instances, examining the impact for specific roles and specific work settings is more useful than looking at differences between police officers and staff. For instance, **the temperature and ventilation of office spaces, including communication and control rooms, appeared to be a particular issue for officers and staff alike.** Around half of respondents who worked within this environment said that the temperature of the working environment (55 per cent police officers, and 53 per cent police staff) and an inability to control the ventilation of their working environment (53 per cent police officers, and 51 per cent police staff) made coping with symptoms of the menopause either moderately or extremely difficult.

In addition, **the working environment of frontline, uniformed officers (both officers and staff) seemed to have a greater impact on coping with symptoms of the menopause.** For example, 71 per cent of respondents in a Response Policing role said that shift work made coping with symptoms of the menopause either moderately or extremely difficult. Moreover, 47 per cent of Response Policing respondents said that the physical demands of their job made coping moderately or extremely difficult, 59 per cent said the design of the uniforms and 51 per cent said that having to maintain their position for long periods without relief made coping moderately or extremely difficult. Similarly, more than half of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) said that having to work shifts (56 per cent), the physical demands of the job (52 per cent), the design of uniforms (67 per cent) and having to maintain their position for long periods (68 per cent) made coping moderately or extremely difficult.

Respondents' comments also demonstrate that different roles bring different challenges within the working environment. The data suggests that focusing on tailoring specific adjustments for specific roles and working environments may be more appropriate than a "one size fits all" approach that is applicable to all respondents within the sample.

"Being operational during the summer, in a stab vest, and having to deal with hot flushes has been extremely uncomfortable. This is unavoidable due to my role; however it has made coping with the symptoms more difficult."

"I am isolated in my supervisor's role and have very few females that I can share my experiences with."

"Being in a high pressure, high stress role requiring instant decisions on Risk when suffering from palpitations and "brain fog" already increases the pressure to try and remember and consider all

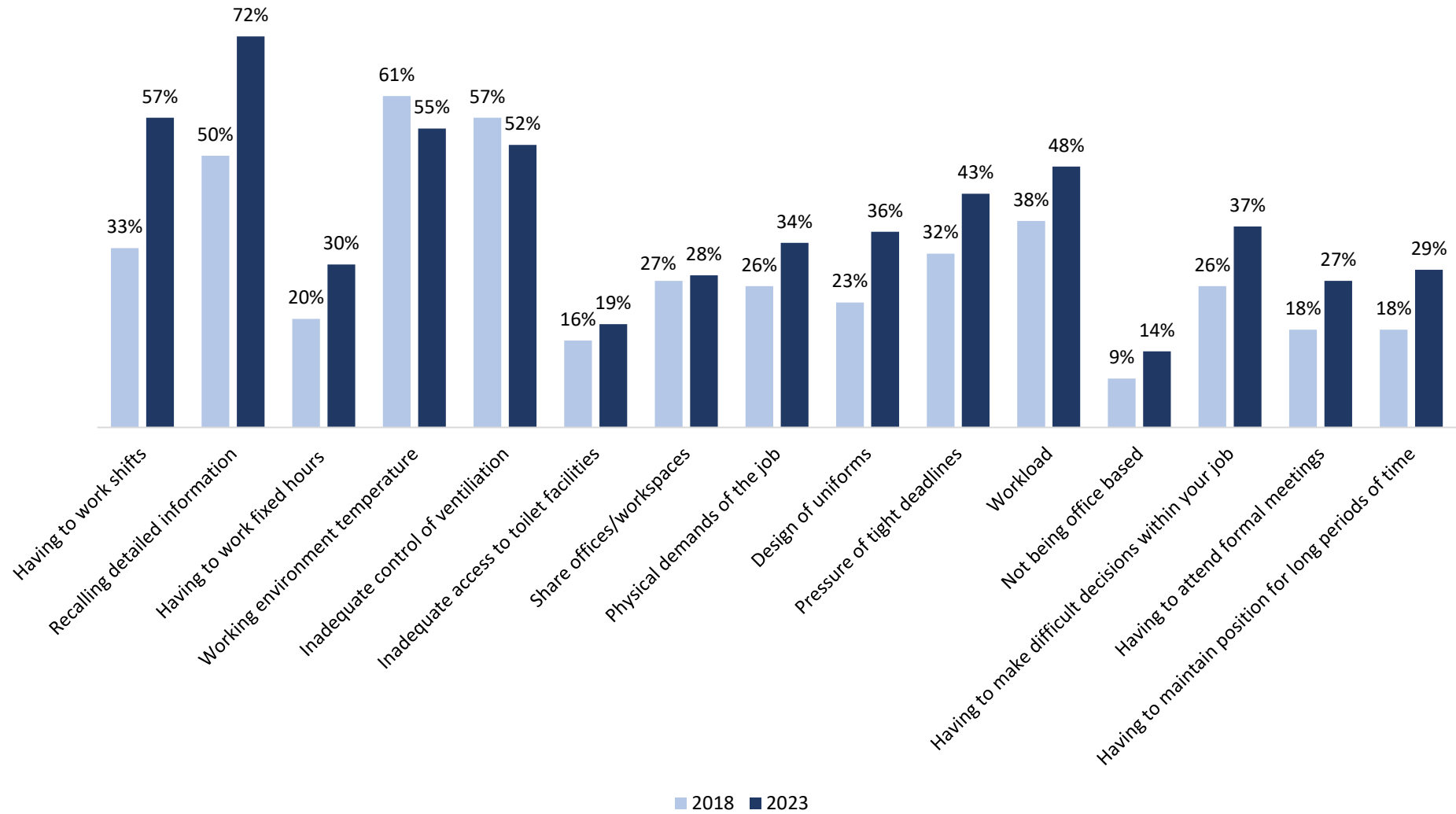
areas. Forgetting words and acts during briefings is embarrassing especially when in a position of rank.”

“Hot sweats are a problem when the temperature of the classrooms I work in are unable to be changed. Sometimes feeling lightheaded during teaching is unbearable and will need to send classes for a break to cover this and allow me some time to have a drink and sit down for 5-10 mins... Shifts are not ideal due to tiredness but there are no options for flexibility in my role. Due to this I have cut my days down as I was finding this a strain... Unable to do as much AID as I would like as wearing MET VEST means I am unable to regulate my body temperature.”

“Being told that I will be sent on L3 aid is absolutely terrifying from a mental as well as physical perspective - I cannot stand for long periods of time and need to be close to a toilet none of which is taken into account. I am in a specialist role so do not ordinarily do aid.”

It is evident from the respondents’ comments that whether indoors or outdoors, frontline or operational support, supervisors or not, the menopause affects police officers and staff in varying degrees and several forms, all of which need to be taken into account when considering adjustments and support. This brings us to the next section of this report.

Figure 3: Aspects of the working environment (where applicable) that made coping with symptoms of the menopause moderately or extremely difficult



5.1.3. Adjustments and support

Respondents were asked whether or not they had access to specific adjustments and support mechanisms which may make it easier to cope with symptoms of the menopause at work. For instance, over 90 per cent of respondents said that they did not have access to better ventilation, air conditioning and temperature control at work. Moreover, around eight out of ten respondents highlighted limited awareness amongst senior managers of the menopause as a possible occupational health issue.

Sufficient access to more basic adjustments was also not available for a substantial number of respondents. In particular, **53 per cent of respondents said that they did not have sufficient access to readily available cold drinking water, and 51 per cent said that they did not have adequate access to toilet facilities whilst working.** Police officers were more likely to say that they did not have access to these specific adjustments as compared to police staff. 57 per cent of police officers said they did not have access to readily available cold drinking water, compared to 40 per cent of police staff. Similarly, 55 per cent of police officers said they did not have adequate access to toilet facilities compared to 38 per cent of police staff. This continues to be in line with the findings from 2018, highlighting no real improvements in getting sufficient access to basic facilities at work for both police officers and staff.

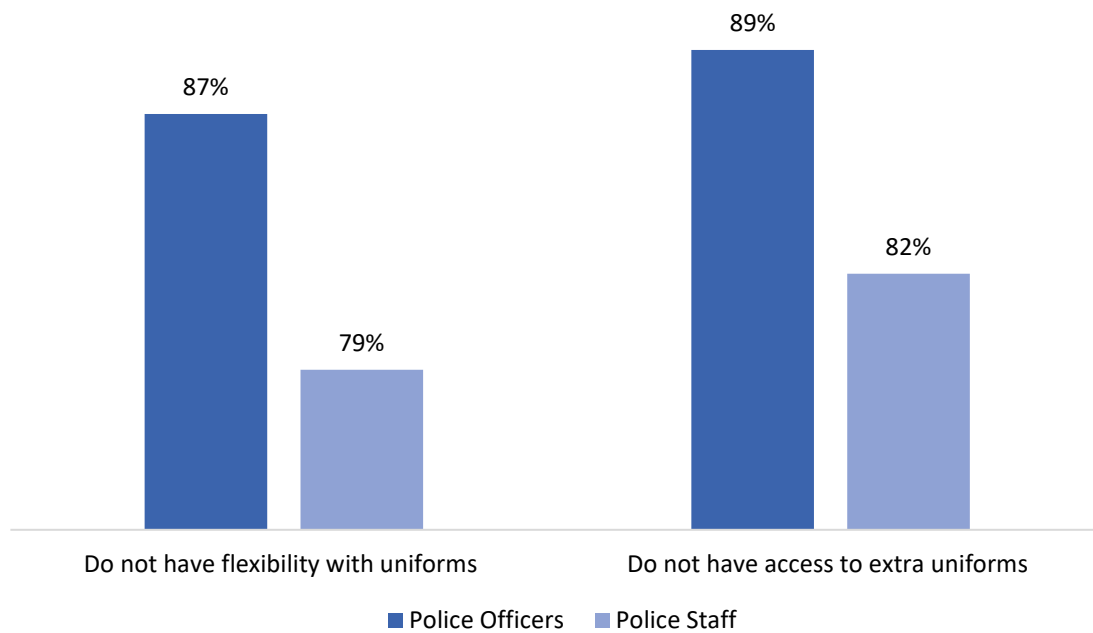
Table 2: Sufficient access to basic facilities at work

	Police Officers		Police Staff	
	2018	2023	2018	2023
Do not have access to readily available cold drinking water	55%	57%	41%	40%
Do not have adequate access to toilet facilities	53%	55%	39%	38%

Overall, there was generally some variation in police staff and police officers' access to specific adjustments and support mechanisms. However, the data indicates that there is a lack of communication around the menopause and limited access to support for the majority of police officers and staff alike. For instance, 79 per cent of police officers and 67 per cent of police staff did not receive any information or advice from their employer about menopause and coping at work; 72 per cent of police officers and 61 per cent of police staff said that they did not have access to informal support at work such as a women's network; and 77 per cent of police officers and 68 per cent of police staff said that they do not have the opportunity to talk to/get support from someone other than their line manager.

Another issue worth noting is how eight out of every ten respondents mentioned that they did not have access to extra uniforms (87 per cent) or flexibility with their uniforms (85 per cent). This was true for both police officers and members of police staff. To elaborate, 87 per cent of police officers do not have flexibility with their uniform and 89 per cent do not have access to extra uniforms. For police staff, these proportions were 79 per cent and 82 per cent respectively.

Figure 4: Issues with Uniform between police officers and staff



Amongst respondents who *did* have access to the available adjustments, the majority said that those adjustments were in place because of force policy or practice, rather than because they asked for them. For instance, 92 per cent of respondents who said there was greater awareness amongst senior managers of the menopause within their force said that this was in place as a matter of force policy or practice. Similarly, 92 per cent who had access to informal support at work said that this was also the result of force policy and practice.

Of all the adjustments that were listed, the adjustments that were most likely to come about because respondents asked for it (rather than it being a matter of force policy or practice) were: flexible working hours (35 per cent), flexible working location (33 per cent) and better ventilation, air conditioning and temperature control (27 per cent).

A recurring theme within respondents' comments was the need for fans and adjustments to temperature. It was noted that even when some respondents had the ability to control temperature and ventilation there was sometimes discord with other colleagues in shared office spaces. This lack of understanding was a source of frustration to many, as is evident from the following quotes:

"People move personal fans, or there are no fans provided within an office environment as it is a "new improved" office, and these are not seen as a requirement. Fans should be readily available in each office for someone to grab without having to explain why they need them or have to formally request. Kept with pens, pencils, paper, tested and approved not specially ordered in."

"I find the temperature within the office particularly warm and whilst we do have air conditioning it can only be used for a short burst of coolness as others in the office complain."

"Lack of awareness from building management and SLT around ventilated areas. The building manager insisted that fire doors were closed and as there were no windows that open and the air con was broken it was making officers including myself very hot and bothered and unable to focus. I had to fight for fans that took 5 months to come. There is little understanding about hot flushes"

and sleep issues that some of my officers and myself really struggle with and how understandably women resign as they have to fight to be heard when it comes to issues with work and memory etc.”

Amongst respondents who did not currently have access to specific adjustments or support mechanisms, there was generally a sense that they would find these adjustments at least somewhat or very helpful in coping with symptoms of the menopause at work. In particular, over three quarters of respondents said that they would find it very helpful for there to be greater awareness amongst line managers (77 per cent) and senior managers (78 per cent) around the menopause as a possible occupational health issue.

Within the office, more than half of the respondents indicated that they would find it very helpful to have access to better ventilation, air-conditioning and temperature, access to readily available cold drinking water and toilet facilities. Outside of the office, nearly two thirds of the respondents said that they would find it very helpful to have more flexibility in both their working hours and location.

Figure 5: Access to specific adjustments and support

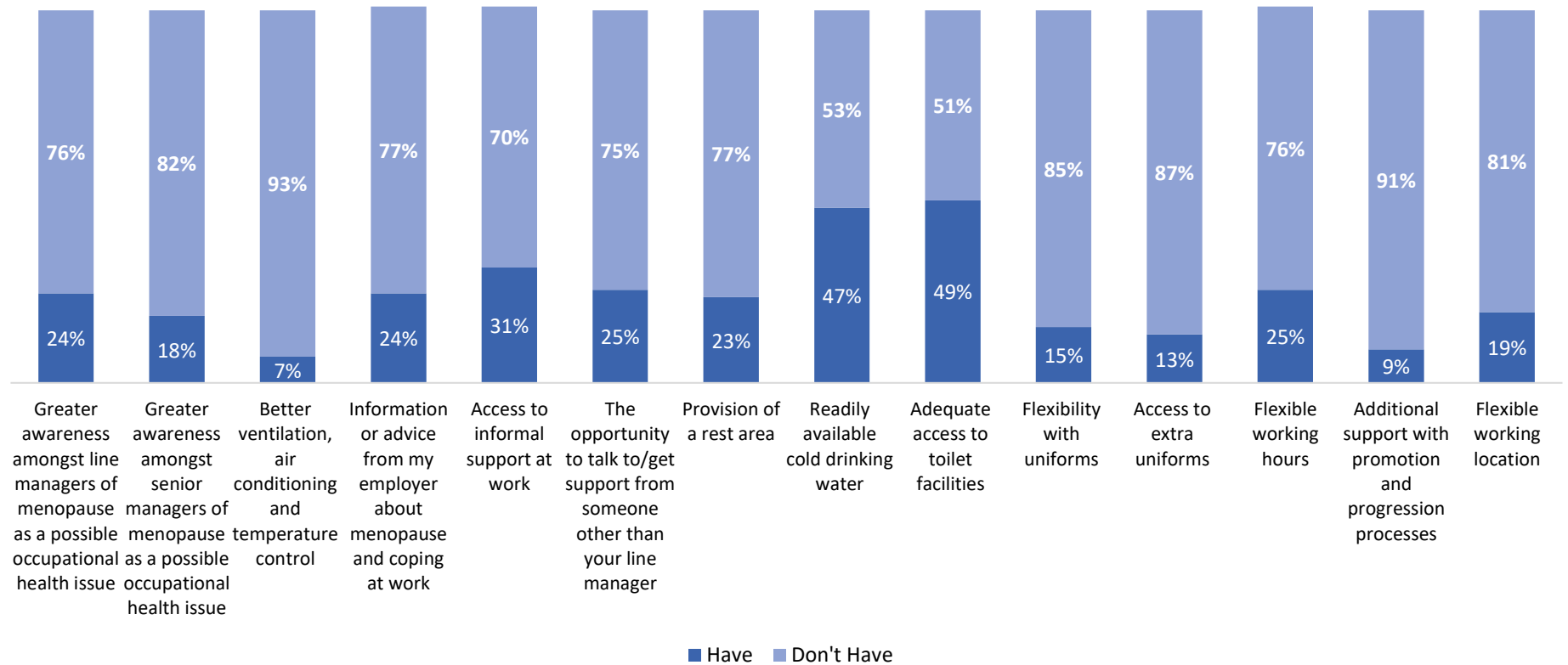
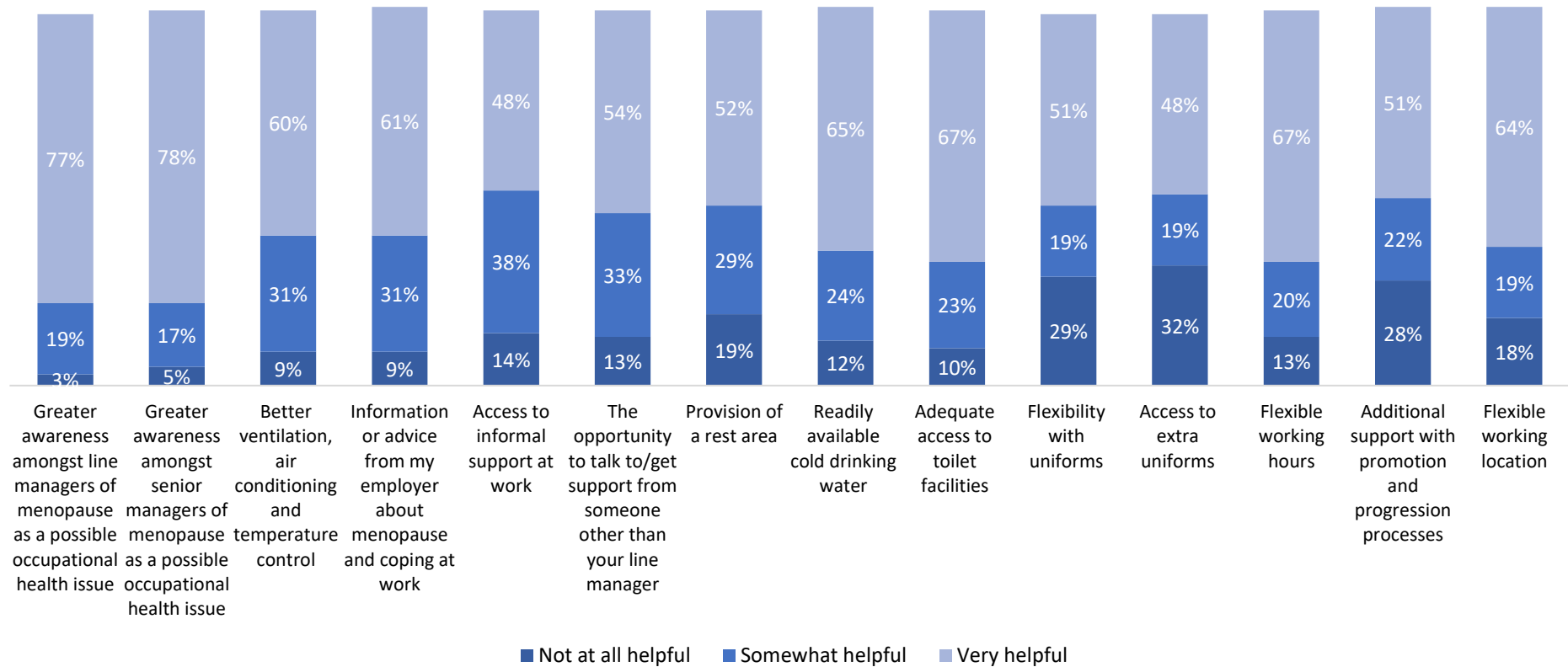


Figure 6: Perceived helpfulness of adjustments and support that are not already in place.

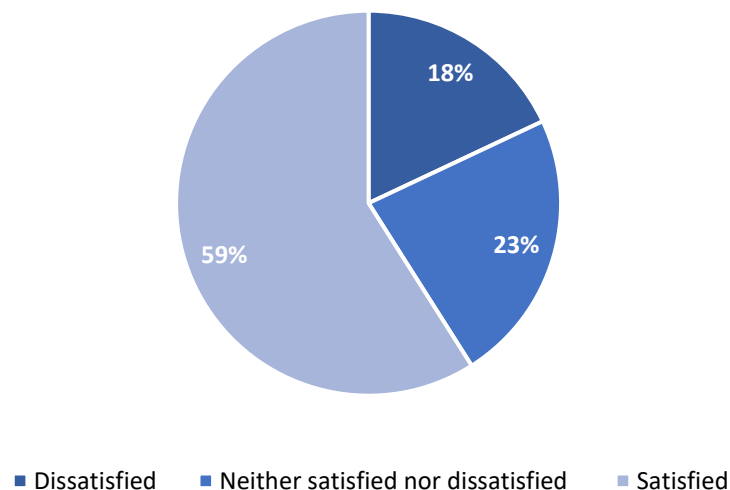


5.2. Experiences of working during the menopause

Overall, over half of respondents (59 per cent) reported being either satisfied or very satisfied with their job. This compares to 18 per cent who said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. There was not much variation in job satisfaction between police officers and police staff; however, police officers were slightly less likely to be satisfied than police staff, at 58 per cent and 64 per cent respectively.

Respondents who said that they found symptoms of the menopause either extremely or moderately problematic at work were less likely to be satisfied at work than respondents for whom symptoms were less problematic. 68 per cent of respondents who found symptoms of the menopause not at all problematic at work and 70 per cent who found symptoms a little problematic at work reported being satisfied in their jobs. This compares to job satisfaction scores of 57 per cent for the respondents who said that they found their menopause symptoms either moderately or extremely problematic at work.

Figure 7: Overall, how satisfied are you with your job?



65 per cent of respondents felt that their job performance had been negatively affected by the menopause, although respondents who said that they found symptoms of the menopause extremely or moderately problematic were much more likely to feel that their job performance had been negatively affected. Almost three quarters of this group (72 per cent) felt that their job performance had been affected.

It was much less common for respondents to feel that the menopause had negatively affected their manager's and colleagues' views of their competence at work, with only 30 per cent of overall respondents reporting this to be the case (for respondents who found their menopause symptoms extremely or moderately problematic, this increased to 35 per cent).

A higher proportion of police officers felt that the menopause had a negative impact on their job performance as compared to police staff (68 per cent and 56 per cent respectively). Police officers were also more likely to feel that the menopause had a negative impact upon their colleagues' and

manager's perceptions of their job performance (33 per cent, as compared to 22 per cent of police staff).

Figure 8: I feel that my job performance has been negatively affected by the menopause

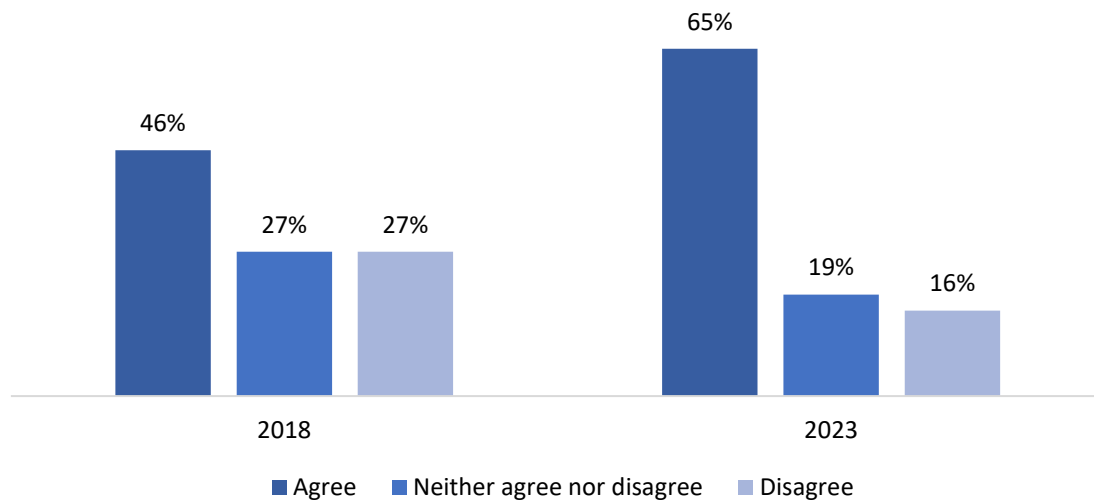


Figure 9: I feel that the menopause has negatively affected my managers and colleagues view of my competence at work

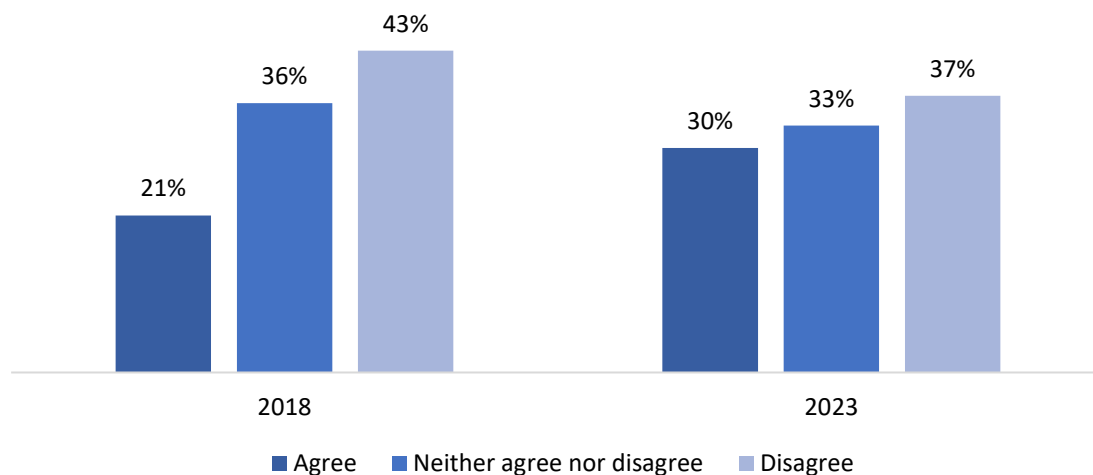


Figure 8 depicts how there has been a notable increase in the number of respondents reporting that their job performance has been negatively affected by the menopause from 46 per cent in 2018 to 65 per cent in 2023. Similarly, **Figure 9** indicates that there has also been an increase of 9 percentage points amongst respondents reporting that the menopause has negatively affected their managers and colleagues view of their competence at work, from 21 per cent in 2018 to 30 per cent in 2023.

Figure 10: I have considered leaving because I have found it difficult to deal with the menopause at work

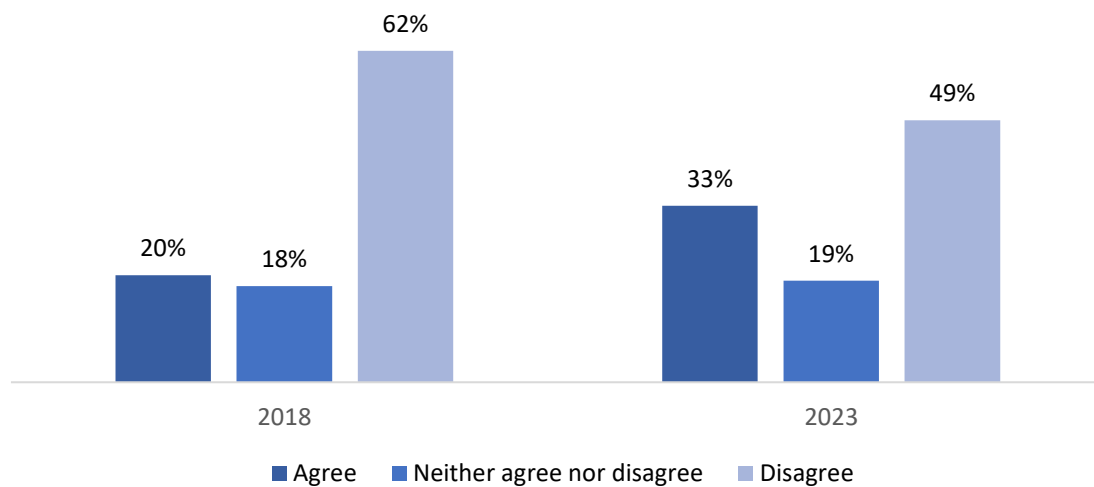
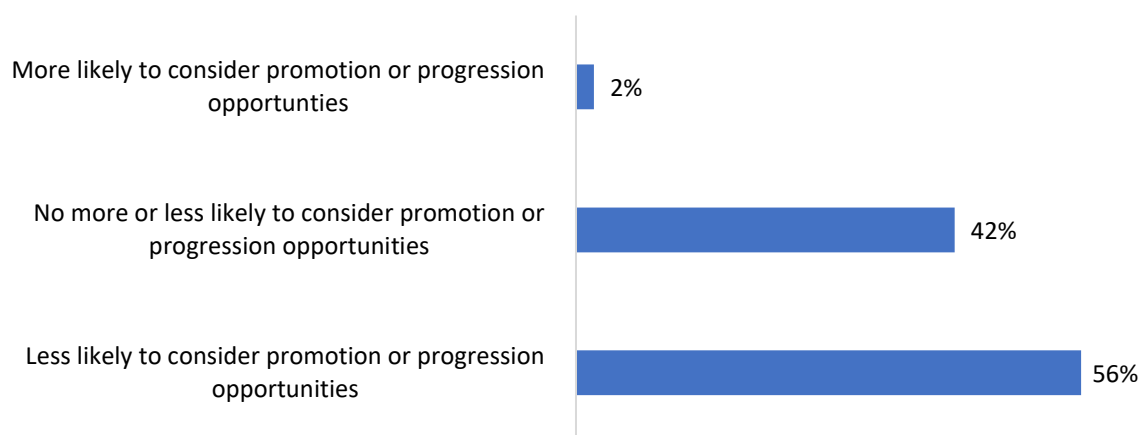


Figure 10 shows how one in three respondents (33 per cent) said that they had considered leaving because they have found it difficult to deal with the menopause at work, an increase of 13 percentage points from 2018 (20 per cent). Police officers were slightly more likely to consider leaving (34 per cent) than police staff (30 per cent); but once again, the extent to which respondents found symptoms to be problematic was the biggest predictor for leaving. 38 per cent of respondents who said that they found the symptoms of the menopause extremely or moderately problematic agreed that they had considered leaving because they found it difficult to deal with the menopause at work.

Lastly, **Figure 11** indicates that 56 per cent of respondents said that they were now less likely to consider promotion or progression opportunities as compared to before they began to experience symptoms of the menopause; this increased to 61 per cent of respondents for those who found the symptoms of the menopause to be extremely or moderately problematic at work. For police officers and police staff, these proportions were relatively similar at 57 per cent and 54 per cent respectively.

Figure 11: Compared to before you began to experience symptoms of the menopause, are you now...



5.3. Disclosure and management support

Respondents were asked about whether or not they had disclosed to their line manager that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause. **58 per cent of respondents decided not to tell their manager that they were/are experiencing symptoms of the menopause because they feel it is a personal matter.**

Figure 12: Why did you not tell your line manager or supervisor that you were/are experiencing symptoms of the menopause?



Respondents who did not disclose to their line manager that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause were also asked to explain in their own words why they had decided not to do so. Often respondents highlighted a gender barrier saying that their line manager was male; additionally, they also said that management were not available, understanding, or trained enough in how to support a colleague who was/is going through the menopause. Respondents' saw the menopause as a personal matter and often did not discuss it in fear of judgement as there were concerns that they would be treated in a negative way. Unfortunately, these issues combined make those experiencing the menopause feel that it is 'easier to suffer in silence', as one respondent revealed. Some of these insights are shared below:

"All my managers are male. This is not something I would be comfortable speaking to with any male managers. It is a very personal issue menopause, and it is already sometimes a struggle for women to be taken seriously at work due to part time hours, commitments with children etc. to then have to talk about symptoms which taken individually can seem like symptoms anyone could get like tiredness just doesn't seem to sit right."

"Embarrassment. Taboo subject. Don't want to be labelled as the sweaty, radgy, old woman by male colleagues who already make jokey comments "its her age" etc. Easier to suffer in silence."

“I felt if I fully disclosed the symptoms I was experiencing it may be determined I could not do my job - I financially support myself and had children to support at University and could not risk losing my job or being moved to a lower position.”

“I do not work in the same force area, let alone the same building as my line manager, so what could they do anyway?”

“I didn’t realise the issues I was having were due to menopause initially. I didn’t understand what was happening to me mentally so very difficult to explain to someone else.”

“I don’t think management are equipped to deal with this issue and more importantly that the police could handle supporting females for example by sending me home when I have unexpected flooding. I feel staffing issues take precedence over everything in the police.”

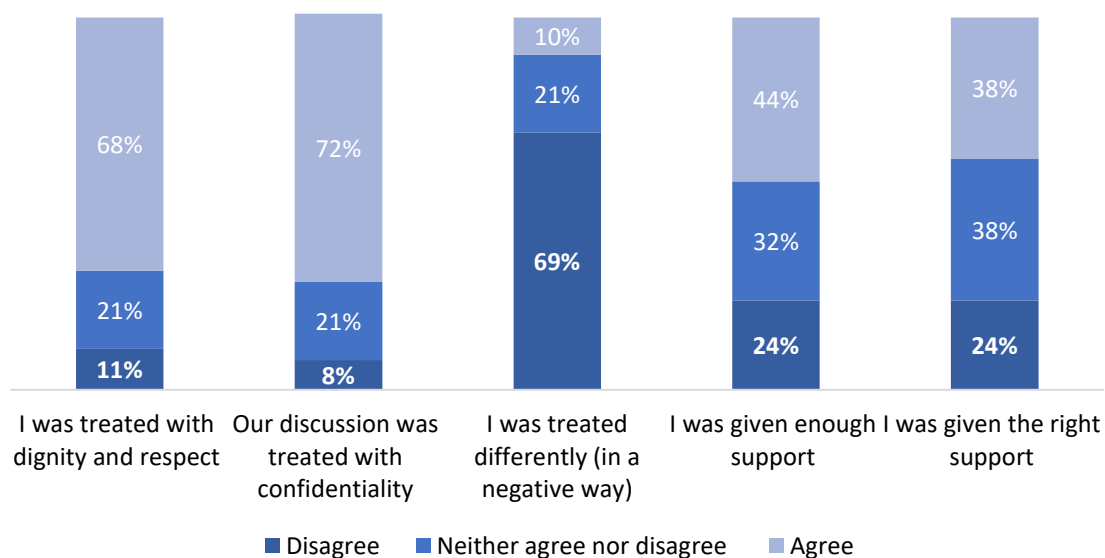
On the other hand, the most **common reasons for respondents’ which influenced their decision to speak to their line manager about experiencing symptoms of the menopause were because they were having difficulty coping with their symptoms (81 per cent) and they were worried about the effect of the symptoms on their work performance (79 per cent)**. These two reasons continue to be the leading influence on disclosure to management as per the 2018 survey results as well. Other common reasons for disclosure were to account for changes in the respondent’s behaviour (68 per cent) and because their symptoms were obvious (57 per cent). Only 26 per cent of respondents said that they had disclosed to their manager that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause because they wanted to be referred to Occupational Health.

Table 3: Did any of the following reasons influence your decision to tell your line manager or supervisor that you are/were experiencing symptoms of the menopause?

	Yes
You were worried about the effect of your symptoms on your work performance	79%
You were having difficulty coping with the symptoms	81%
Your symptoms were obvious	57%
To account for changes in your work attendance	34%
To account for changes in your behaviour	67%
You wanted to be referred to Occupational Health	26%

Of the respondents who did choose to disclose to their line manager that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause, 72 per cent said that their discussion was treated with confidentiality. 68 per cent who did disclose to their manager said that they were treated with dignity and respect and 69 per cent said that they were not treated differently (in a negative way). Moreover, 44 per cent said that they were given enough support.

Figure 13: After telling my line manager or supervisor that I was experiencing symptoms of the menopause...



Respondents were also asked about other people or groups which they had told their experience of the menopause to. A large majority of respondents (95 per cent) had disclosed to their friends and family that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause. 82 per cent of respondents reported disclosing to medical professional outside of the police, and 81 per cent had disclosed to their colleagues.

Table 4: Disclosure of menopause

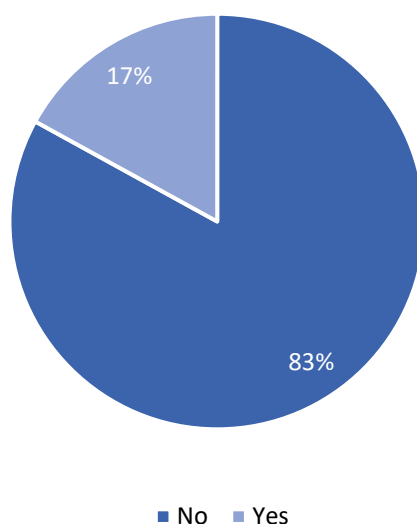
	2018	2023
Your line manager	47%	64%
Occupational Health	20%	30%
Human Resources	7%	9%
Your colleagues	75%	81%
A more senior officer/member of staff who is not your line manager	18%	28%
The people you manage	44%	38%
A medical professional outside of the police service	73%	82%
A formal menopause support network outside of the police service	5%	10%

	2018	2023
A formal menopause support network inside of the police service⁷	-	19%
Your friends and family	91%	95%

Whilst there has been a general trend of increased disclosure since 2018, disclosure to departments such as Occupational Health and Human Resources continue to be less common as seen in Table 4. These findings were similar for police officers and staff; this suggests that there continues to be a taboo around discussing menopause-related concerns with work professionals (HR and Occupational Health) and is therefore still being under-reported and under-recorded within the police service.

Rates of disclosure were broadly similar across police officers and police staff. For instance, 62 per cent of police officers and 68 per cent of police staff said that they had told their line manager; 81 per cent of police officers and 84 per cent of police staff had told their colleagues. Both police officers and staff were less likely to have spoken to their HR department (10 per cent and 8 per cent respectively); however, police staff were less likely to have spoken to Occupational Health about their symptoms of the menopause as compared to police officers (21 per cent and 33 per cent respectively).

Figure 14: After telling your line manager or supervisor that you were experiencing symptoms of the menopause, were your duties or role officially amended or changed?



⁷ Please note – newly added answer option for 2023 therefore no comparable data for previous years.

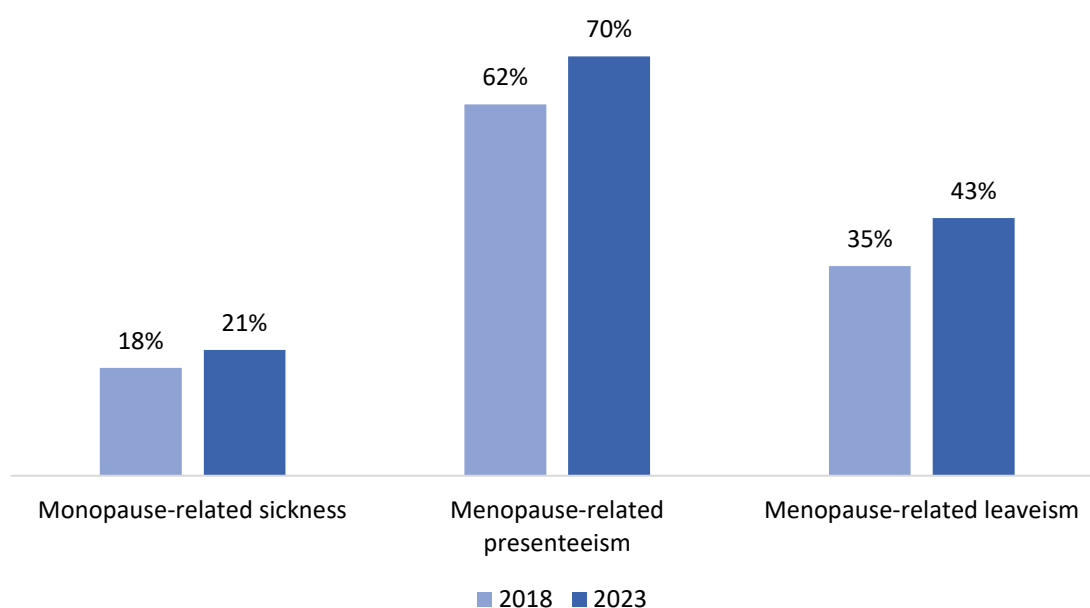
Around one in five respondents (21 per cent) said that they had taken sickness absence because they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause. In addition, 38 per cent of respondents had not told their line manager the real reason for their absence, compared to 44 per cent who answered the same in 2018.

Respondents were also asked to tell us how their absence had been recorded (if not as menopause-related absence). Their responses highlight a range of different recording practices, however menopause-related absence that was not accurately recorded was most commonly recorded as 'stress' or 'anxiety' instead. A substantial number of respondents also said that their absence was inaccurately recorded as 'depression' or 'migraines'.

A word cloud shaped like a brain, containing terms related to menopause, stress, and health. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with the largest words being 'work', 'stress', 'anxiety', 'menopause', 'depression', 'sickness', 'migraine', and 'stomach'. Other visible words include 'health', 'period', 'menstruation', 'hormones', 'mood', 'fatigue', 'headache', 'joint', 'pain', 'sleep', 'time', 'issues', 'time', 'sick', 'part', 'leave', 'symptom', 'upset', 'pain', 'medical', 'option', 'bleeding', 'home', 'menopausal', 'headache', 'stomach', 'migraine', 'sickness', 'depression', 'menopause', 'anxiety', 'work', 'stress', 'anxiety', 'menopause', 'depression', 'sickness', 'migraine', 'stomach'.

Although respondents who had taken sickness absence because they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause were in the minority, **70 per cent of respondents said that they had attended work despite feeling that they should have taken sick leave because of their symptoms** (i.e. menopause-related “presenteeism”), an increase of 8 percentage points from 2018 (62 per cent). Moreover, **43 per cent had taken annual leave or rest days to take time off because they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause** (i.e. menopause-related leaveism), in contrast to 35 per cent doing so in 2018.

Figure 16: Absence from work due to symptoms of the menopause



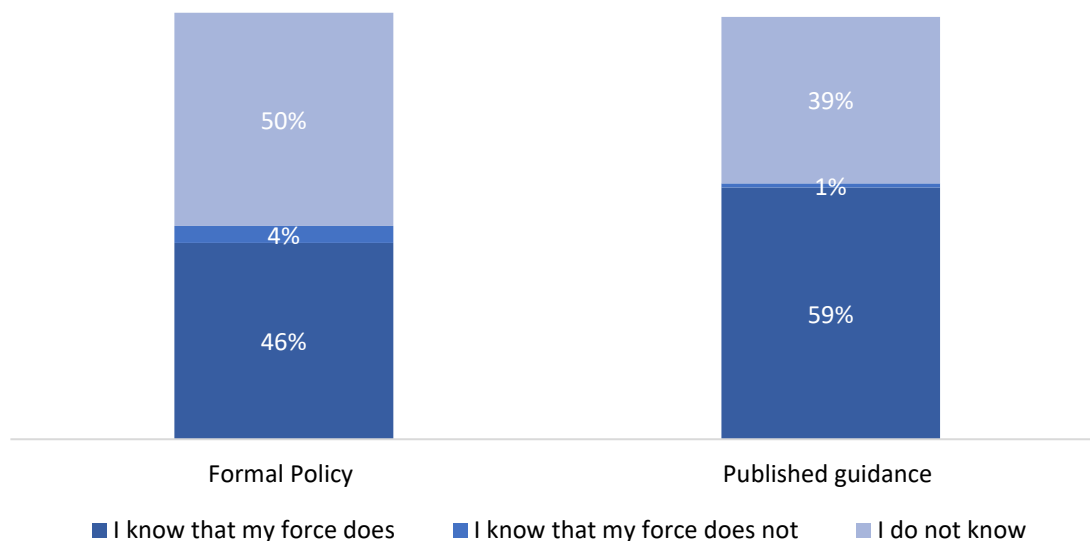
The rates of menopause-related sickness absence amongst police officers and police staff were relatively similar, at 21 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. However, police staff were more likely to tell their line manager the real reason for their absence as compared to police officers (66 per cent and 60 per cent respectively). The proportion of police officers whose absence was inaccurately recorded (82 per cent) was slightly higher than police staff (78 per cent); as was the proportion of police officers who reported menopause-related presenteeism (70 per cent compared to 68 per cent of police staff), and menopause-related leaveism (44 per cent compared to 41 per cent of police staff).

6. Experiences and awareness of managers

6.1. Availability and awareness of policy and guidance

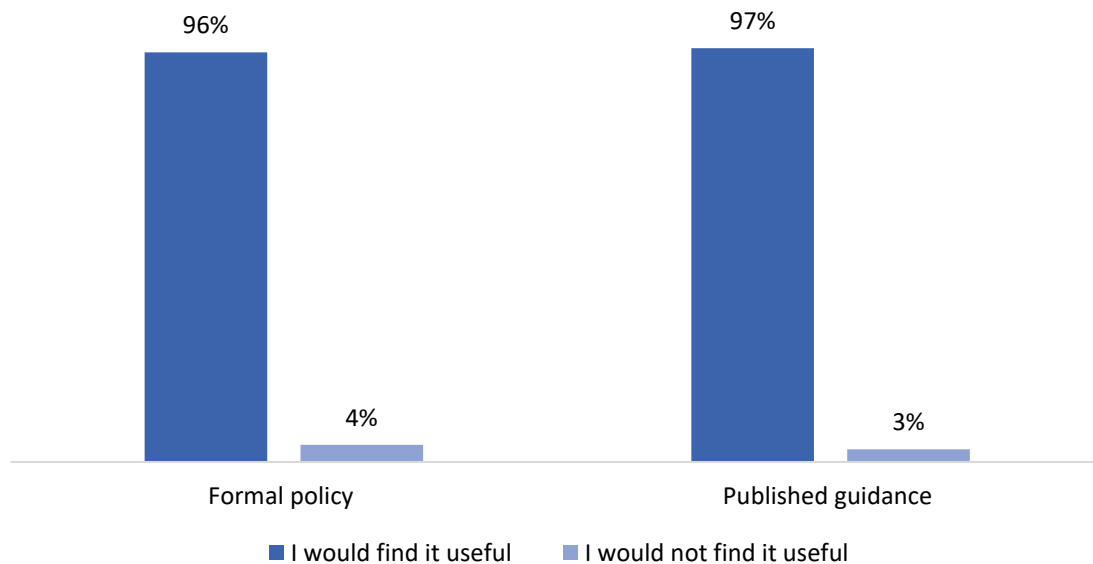
Amongst managers, there appears to be a general lack of awareness regarding menopause policies and guidance. **50 per cent of managers said they did not know whether their force had a formal menopause policy, and 39 per cent said that they did not know whether their force had published guidance on management of the menopause in the workplace.** 46 per cent of managers said that they were aware that their force did have a formal policy; whilst awareness of guidance was slightly more common at 59 per cent.

Figure 17: Do you know whether or not your force has a formal policy/guidance regarding management of the menopause in the workplace?



Whilst many were not aware of policy or guidance, **a large majority of managers said that they would find it useful to have a policy (96 per cent) and, in particular, guidance (97 per cent) on management of the menopause at work** [refer to Figure 18].

Figure 18: Would you find it useful if your force had a formal policy/guidance regarding management of the menopause in the workplace?



Very few managers said that they had been given any training on how to support someone going through the menopause; only 18 per cent said that they had received any training, a slow increase of 7 percentage points from when the survey was last conducted in 2018 where 11 per cent had answered the same. Those who had received training generally rated the training positively- 66 per cent said that the training was either good or very good, compared to just 5 per cent who felt the training they received was poor or very poor. Most of the training was delivered internally by the force (93 per cent).

Figure 19: Have you been given any training on how to support someone going through the menopause?

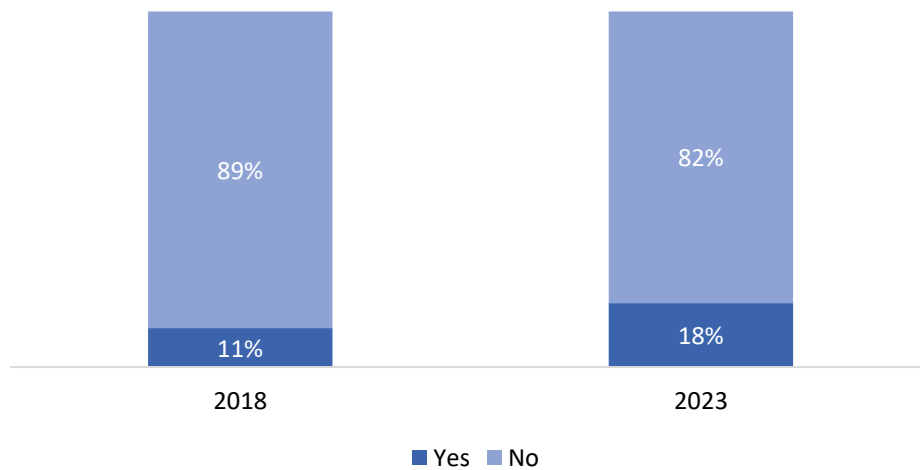
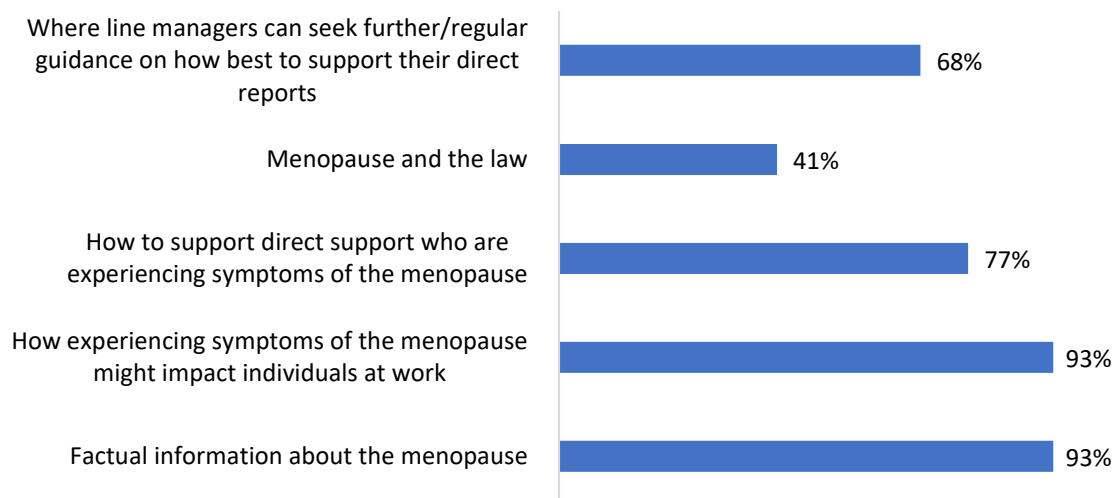


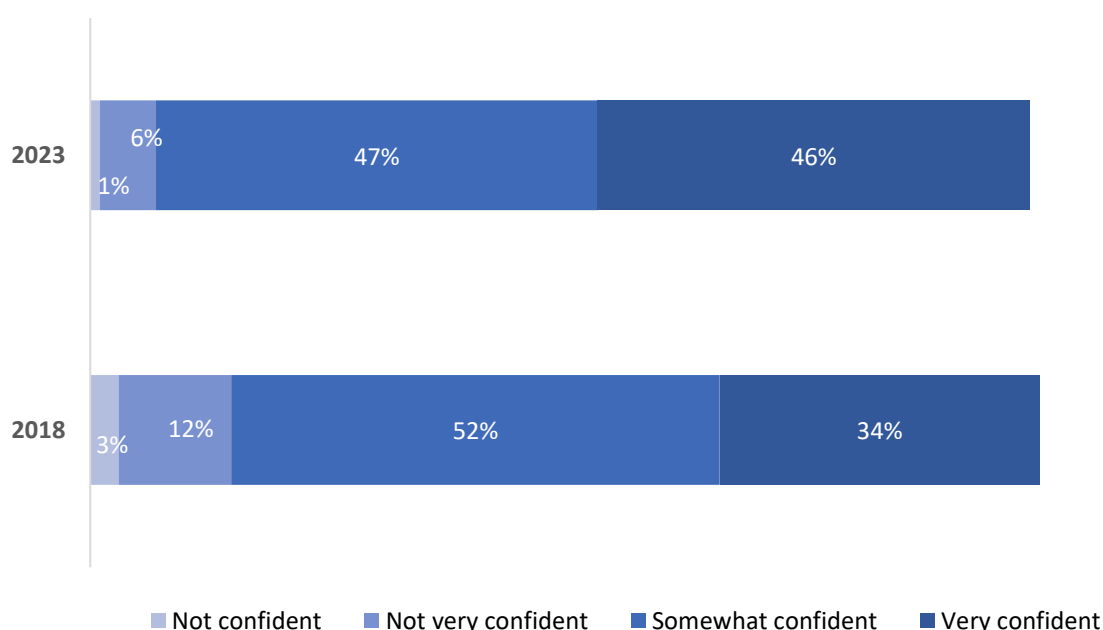
Figure 20: What content was covered in the training you received?



6.2. Confidence to support someone going through the menopause

Despite the lack of training, managers generally reported themselves as confident in their ability to support someone they line managed who was going through the menopause. 93 per cent of **managers who responded to the survey said that they would be either somewhat confident or very confident to support someone they line-managed who was going through the menopause**, a positive increase of 7 percentage points from 2018 data (86 per cent). In contrast, only 7 per cent of managers said that they would either be not at all or not very confident that they would be able to support someone they line managed who was going through the menopause.

Figure 21: If someone you managed or supervised disclosed that they were going through the menopause, how confident would you be in your ability to support them?



It is worth noting that around 19 per cent of survey respondents who answered questions pertinent to managers also said that they had experienced menopause symptoms themselves; whilst 6 per cent of managers said that they might have experienced menopause symptoms. As around a quarter of managers had experienced some symptoms of the menopause, we can assume that levels of awareness around menopause policy, guidance, and training on the menopause as well as confidence in being able to support someone going through the menopause might be influenced by managers' own personal experiences.

For example, personal experience of the menopause was associated with a boost in respondents' confidence in their ability to support someone they line managed who was going through the menopause. Whilst 87 per cent of respondents with no personal experience of the menopause said that they felt somewhat or very confident in their ability to support someone going through the menopause, 97 per cent of respondents who had experienced symptoms of the menopause said that they felt confident in doing so.

However, upon further interrogation we found that having a personal experience of the menopause did not actually have any impact on awareness regarding the availability of policy and guidance. For instance, 49 per cent of respondents who had experienced menopause symptoms and were a manager

said that they were not aware if their force had a policy on the menopause, compared to 43 per cent who had not experienced menopause symptoms and were a manager. Similarly, 40 per cent of respondents who had experienced menopause symptoms and were a manager said they were not aware if their force had published guidance on managing the menopause, compared to 34 per cent who had not experienced menopause symptoms and were a manager.

Moreover, there was little to suggest that personal experience was seen as a substitute to formal guidance regarding the menopause. Managers who had personally experienced the menopause were in fact slightly more likely to say that they would find it useful to have guidance on how to support someone going through the menopause (97 per cent) compared to those who hadn't (96 per cent).

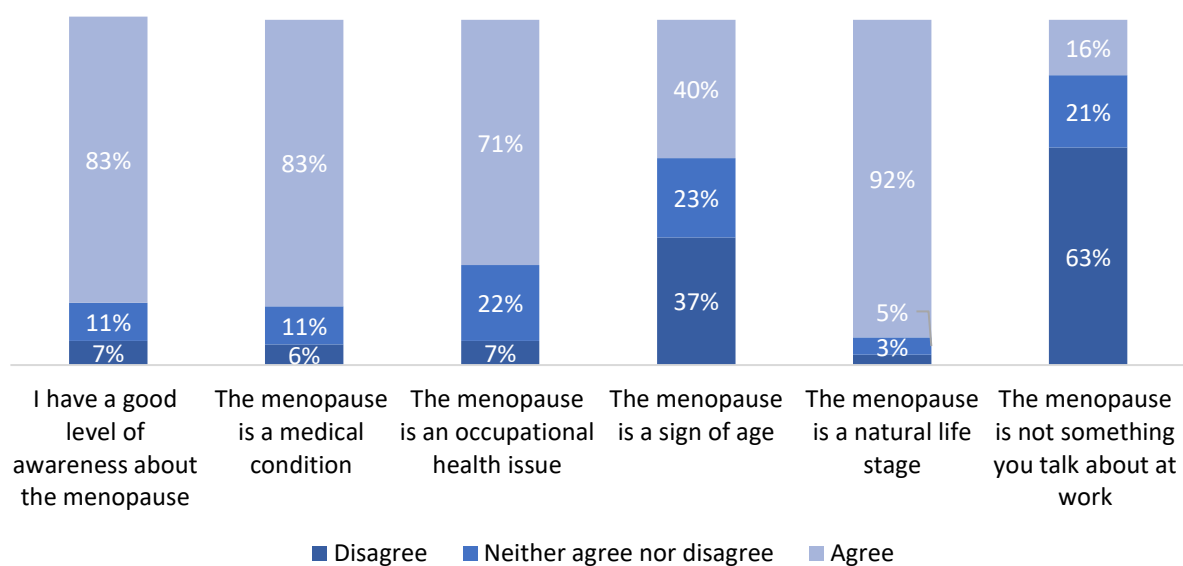
Lastly, according to the data from the 2018 report, around a third of respondents who disclosed to their line manager that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause agreed that they received enough support and the right support. This trend continued in 2023, with less than half of respondents who disclosed to their line manager that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause agreeing that they received enough support (44 per cent) and the right support (38 per cent). This continues to suggest some discrepancy between the apparent confidence of line managers to provide support and the actual experience of people going through the menopause who seek support, which is an important factor to recognise in order to facilitate positive change.

7. Awareness of and attitudes towards the menopause across the police service

The next section of the Menopause Survey focuses on awareness of, and attitudes towards, the menopause more generally. These questions were open to everyone who completed the survey. This also included officers and staff who were neither managers nor had gone through or were going through the menopause.

Overall, the attitudes around the menopause are seemingly positive, with the majority of respondents agreeing that they have a good level of awareness about the menopause, that they recognise the menopause is a real health condition, and that they are willing to talk about it within a workplace environment. A large majority of respondents also felt that the menopause was a natural life stage. Finally, regardless of whether or not they had experienced symptoms of the menopause or had managerial responsibilities, nearly three quarters of respondents said that the menopause is a medical condition and an occupational health issue.

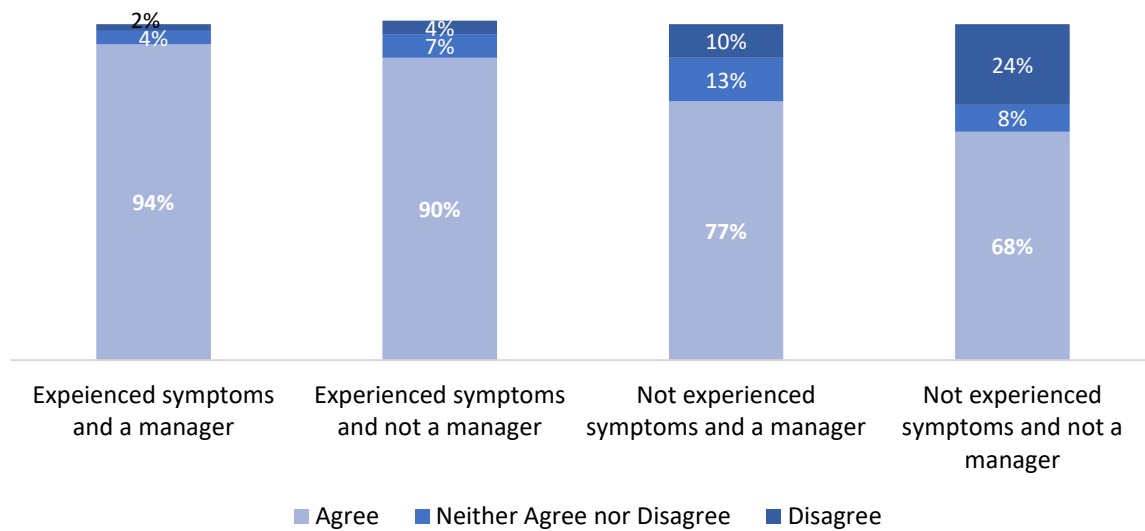
Figure 22: Attitudes towards the menopause



As would perhaps be expected, respondents who had experienced symptoms of the menopause were substantially more likely to feel that they had a good level of awareness of the menopause when compared to respondents who had not experienced any symptoms; 91 per cent versus 72 per cent.

Amongst respondents without personal experience of the menopause, managers were more likely to feel that they had a good level of awareness as compared to respondents without managerial responsibilities, however this difference is relatively small. Amongst this group of respondents, 77 per cent of managers and 68 per cent of non-managers felt that they had a good level of awareness.

Figure 23: I have a good level of awareness about the menopause



Further attitudes towards the menopause based on experience and management responsibilities are explored in Table 5.

Table 5: Attitudes towards the menopause

	Experienced symptoms and a manager		Experienced symptoms and not a manager		Not experienced symptoms and a manager		Not experienced symptoms and not a manager	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
The menopause is a medical condition	87%	5%	85%	5%	85%	3%	80%	6%
The menopause is an occupational health issue	73%	7%	72%	6%	78%	9%	86%	4%
The menopause is a sign of age	24%	53%	50%	31%	13%	57%	30%	37%
The menopause is a natural life stage	88%	5%	94%	3%	88%	0%	91%	4%

The menopause is not something you talk about at work	11%	75%	18%	60%	2%	89%	27%	60%
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Figure 22 (on page 37) shows how the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement ‘the menopause is not something you talk about at work’. Managers were more likely than respondents without managerial responsibilities to feel that the menopause was something that should be talked about at work. 75 per cent of managers who had experienced symptoms of the menopause, and 89 per cent of managers who had not experienced symptoms of the menopause said they disagreed with the statement “the menopause is not something you talk about at work”. This compares with 60 per cent of non- managers who had and had not experienced symptoms of the menopause saying the same. This is a positive result, and it highlights the openness to discuss menopause within the workplace and the capacity for these discussions to be had within the police service. Regardless of whether or not a manager has experienced symptoms, this positive finding indicates that those who they line manage can expect to have these open discussions around menopause, with managers being receptive to it.

8. Assessing recent developments around menopause support

Since the menopause survey last ran in 2018, respondents were asked if they have seen or are aware of any positive changes within their force to support officers and staff experiencing symptoms of the menopause. Approximately 3000 responses were given, offering a wide range of perspectives. The key themes that emerged from the responses are presented below.

The good news is that many police officers and staff noted positive changes around menopause awareness and support, including the emergence of menopause champions, support groups, and mandatory trainings. The following feedback reflects this-

“A lot of guidance and support are available, and we have menopause champions who are on hand to provide extra support and advice. Also held a conference with professional speakers.”

“Absolutely! Much more support much more open. It’s not so much a taboo and the training being mandatory for all is great and will help everyone to better understand women.”

“Amplified awareness and acceptance. Support groups and seniors acknowledging the issues and driving awareness and starting to drive change.”

However, whilst there have been notable positive changes, respondents’ comments also indicated that there is still much work to be done around supporting officers and staff who experience menopause symptoms.

Firstly, it is worth noting that there was a marked difference between how police officers and police staff experienced menopause within the police service, wherein police staff tend to have a comparatively better experience as they have access to more support-

“I was Police staff in 2018 and feel that there is more awareness and support for Police staff, I am now a PC and feel that the awareness and support is not as good.”

“A little more awareness but still just paying lip-service to the reality of how it may impact a woman. I retired as an officer due to the menopause and now work as staff with less responsibility and no line management duties.”

Respondents also indicated that there is a real need for increased understanding and assistance from management, wherein line managers and supervisors make a conscious effort to access and apply the information and policies that are available-

“Females are now starting to speak about it a bit more openly, however there is still a stigma attached to it. There are supervisors who use it as an excuse to hide behind when officers make mistakes rather than look at a way to support them. Things are still not taken into account, for example, training for PST running and bending down when your joints become really stiff.”

“I am aware that there is more information now readily available for supervisors through work however as informative as this is, it is only of any use if it is firstly read by supervisors and secondly if those supervisors actually understand how serious an issue this can be for those experiencing it and provide actual, fair and honest support to staff rather than putting pen to paper stating the

support is there but then maintaining an unsupportive, critical and demeaning attitude within the workplace.”

“Over the last five years I've seen a menopause policy appear and some menopause cafe's in the last year. But despite the policy it is not something that is known about or taken into account within the force and there is no support. The last five years have been a battle of wills with supervisors to try and get the support I need, and this is still ongoing. At first I was embarrassed to discuss with male supervisors but as I've got older I've become more confident about it. I accept that I am seen as a difficult employee because of it and no longer worry about what they think of me but I know this is not true of my colleagues.”

Women experiencing the menopause in the police service also mainly tend to find support from each other. Respondents recognised a lack of understanding, respect, and empathy from people of the opposite gender, or younger age groups, in how they view the menopause.

“I have seen booklets around the station which is good, and I feel there are more conversations about menopause within women of the same/relevant age group. This does not extend to younger or male colleagues and I hear mocking comments to the booklets.”

“Due to high level of demand, the pressure is still put on officers/staff / women going through the menopause regardless of how tearful/stressed they are, and it is co-women workers that help pick each other up to get on with it.”

This qualitative feedback offers us some more nuanced insight of the recent developments around menopause support within the police service. Whilst there has been a positive shift over the last five years, it is still not enough to properly support those who are experiencing menopause symptoms, and there is still scope for further improvements in this field.

9. Conclusion

The 2018 menopause report was the first time when national empirical evidence was gathered to demonstrate the impact of the menopause within the police workforce in England and Wales. This 2023 menopause report comes after a period of five years and provides useful findings which not only showcase the current situation, but also allows us to make comparisons to previous data so we can see what has changed around the menopause across policing. For instance, the survey results showed that 83 per cent of people who had either gone through or were going through the menopause found their symptoms to be either moderately or extremely problematic at work, an increase of 7 percentage points from 2018 (76 per cent). Furthermore, 33 per cent of respondents said that they had considered leaving because they have found it difficult to deal with the menopause at work, an increase of 13 percentage points from 2018 (20 per cent).

These findings highlight how common it is for the menopause to have a significant impact on people's working life within the police service. Given that the menopause is a natural and inevitable stage of every woman's life, problematic menopause symptoms cannot be seen as a niche issue. Instead, they should be given due recognition as an important occupational health concern within the police service, and something that must be carefully considered by management and colleagues.

The survey also demonstrated the high prevalence of symptoms such as tiredness and sleep disturbances amongst respondents (these two issues also continue to be the leading problematic menopause symptoms, as per 2018 results). Such symptoms can be difficult and distressing for anyone to deal with, regardless of their job. However, we know from other research within a policing context (for instance, the Police Federation's Pay and Morale surveys⁸), that levels of fatigue within the police service are already quite high. There is therefore a clear risk that tiredness, sleep disturbances and other related symptoms resulting from the menopause could exacerbate or compound existing levels of fatigue.

Similarly, the results also indicate that symptoms of the menopause linked to respondents' psychological wellbeing were common within the sample; more than half of the respondents reported lower confidence (67 per cent) and anxiety and panic attacks (50 per cent) as problematic symptoms. Again, all the symptoms listed in the survey questionnaire had a clear increase in response rate since 2018. Existing research suggests that the mental wellbeing of the police population is already poorer than the general population⁹. Thus, for people going through the menopause there could be a heightened risk of experiencing problematic psychological symptoms in a work context where poor mental health and wellbeing is already widespread.

These findings emphasise why it is vital to ensure that effective support and adjustments are in place for people who go through the menopause within the police service. Menopause can be a potentially exacerbating factor to performance across multiple job roles within policing, and therefore must be taken into account in policy and practice. As things stand, only 17 per cent of respondents had their

⁸ According to the P&M 2023 survey, fatigue is impacting officers' ability to function socially and at work. The share agreeing that that they 'found it difficult to carry out certain duties and responsibilities at work' because they had been too fatigued was 60 per cent. In their homelife, 73 per cent say that fatigue has an impact.

⁹ The P&M 2023 results show that anxiety levels are much higher among Police officers than among those in the Armed Forces, and the public as a whole.

duties or role officially amended or changed after telling their line manager that they were experiencing symptoms of the menopause.

It is also important to note that we found a high degree of under-reporting and under-recording of menopause-related symptoms within the survey. Over a third (38 per cent) of people who said that they had taken sickness absence due to the menopause had not told their line manager the real reason for their absence. Even if they did tell their manager the real reason, the survey findings show that it was unlikely to have been recorded accurately. In addition, close to half of all respondents (43 per cent) had used annual leave or rest days to take time off due to the menopause, and almost three quarters (70 per cent) had come into work despite feeling they should have taken sick leave due to the menopause. Again, both these numbers have increased since 2018. This suggests that forces, and the police service as a whole, will have underestimated the true impact that the menopause can and is having on the police workforce. More work is needed within many forces to understand the wide range of effects that the menopause is having upon people within the police service.

Arguably there are also some positive findings coming out of this survey. For instance, nine in ten managers felt either somewhat or very confident that they would be able to support someone going through the menopause. A majority of managers, regardless of whether or not they had experienced menopause symptoms themselves, also saw the menopause as an occupational health issue that should be discussed openly at work. This shows that there is a willingness amongst many managers to ensure that the people they supervise are provided with appropriate guidance and support regarding the menopause. It must be noted, however, that there was a lower response rate within the survey amongst managers than amongst people who had gone through the menopause. Consequently, there may be many managers whose knowledge and awareness of the menopause remains limited and who do not engage with the resources and guidance available to them. The survey findings suggest the same; greater awareness amongst, both, senior managers (78 per cent), and line managers (77 per cent), of menopause as a possible occupational health issue were identified as the main adjustments and support needed to make it easier to cope with symptoms of the menopause at work. In light of this, there is still more effort required to ensure that every manager within the police service has the knowledge and confidence to support someone they line manage who is going through the menopause.

In conclusion, the 2023 Menopause Survey has demonstrated the extent to which symptoms of the menopause continue to affect the working lives of police officers and police staff. An essential next step is to put in place the support mechanisms and adjustments needed to recognise and, wherever possible, lessen the impact on those affected. In particular, the proportion of managers who have received any training on how to support someone going through the menopause is still very low, with not much improvement over the last five years (18 per cent in 2023, from 11 per cent in 2018). Moreover, half of managers don't even know whether their force has a formal policy regarding management of the menopause in the workplace; this proportion declined from 2018 (64 per cent in 2018, down to 50 per cent in 2023). This is problematic because it shows that even if a force has a policy in place, the manager may not be aware of it, and would also not be likely to have any training to help make a difference. Therefore, it is not only the team members that need support, but also their managers to be able to assist them appropriately. More visibility, more awareness, more training and understanding can help foster a working environment that better the experiences of individuals who are going through the menopause within the police service.

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