

GROUND-BREAKING GLOBAL FIRST RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

MENOPAUSAL LEADERS & WORK 2022



Overview of the study

Context

Menopause is a significant life stage for women and is an inevitable natural ageing process. However, many more women suffer from menopause because of surgical menopause or breast cancer treatment. Globally, there are approximately 650 million menopausal women, and about two million more women enter natural menopause each year, most of whom are working.

In Australia, there are over **2.5 million employed women aged between 40 and 60**, most of whom would be menopausal. Older women (45 years and older) represent approximately **17% of the Australian workforce** and are vital to the economy, however workforce participation rates in the 55-64 years age group were only 55%. Research suggests that with an ageing workforce, retention of menopausal women is critical for both business and the economy and increasing their workforce participation could equate to an **additional 1.5% Australian GDP**.



Currently inclusion is seen as a key imperative for business and that more needs to be done to develop women's careers to senior leadership roles. Generation-X is the first full generation of career women, and leaders with the highest workforce participation rates for women in history. Globally, women account for just 23% of Executives and approximately 29% in senior management roles. In Australia, women are also under-represented, with fewer than 30% of women holding key managerial roles in Australia's ASX-500 companies.

Women aged 40-55 are considered a crucial leadership talent pool. This aligns with menopause age and, therefore, there will be more working women in a natural or induced menopause than ever before. **This makes menopause and menopausal leaders a significant and necessary focus for businesses globally.**

Menopause is under-recognised in terms of gender diversity, equality, and inclusion (GDEI) and menopausal workers face social injustice globally, particularly in relation to women in leadership roles, and especially in the private sector. It is critical to understand how menopausal leaders experience work - what helps or hinders their retention, motivation, career aspirations and progression. Little is known about the relationship between perceived stressors, menopause symptoms, coping strategies, personal and work resources that affect work outcomes for menopausal leaders.

Further, the limited research shows a bi-directional relationship with menopause symptoms and work outcomes, and shows work and the work environment (e.g., hot temperatures) affect menopause symptoms and experience. Similarly, organisational culture issues, the taboo of menopause, and gendered ageism in the workplace have emerged in the menopause at work literature, but there is a dearth of literature focusing on these factors.

Key Facts

- ◇ Menopause is a significant life stage for women and is an inevitable natural ageing process. Menopause is a complex situation for women, and many find it an unsettling, confusing, and uncertain time. Menopausal women are juggling multiple roles, face multiple stressors and symptoms and may feel their careers have stalled.
- ◇ There are several stages of menopause and many women in their early to mid-40s are unaware of that perimenopause or menopause transition are part of the natural menopause process.
- ◇ Perimenopause (menopause-transition) often occurs for women aged between 40 and 55 years and can have a significant negative impact on a woman's quality of life but can also start earlier. Postmenopause occurs twelve months after cessation of periods.
- ◇ Many more women go into menopause because of ovarian insufficiency, surgical menopause (e.g., a hysterectomy, oophorectomy, or breast cancer treatment).
- ◇ Menopausal women can experience a range of symptoms (up to 40) that can combine to create clusters of symptoms. Vasomotor symptoms (i.e., hot flashes/night sweats), anxiety, depression and cognitive issues are the most common. Approximately 80% of women experience menopause symptoms, with about 25% having severe symptoms and only 10% having less than two symptoms.
- ◇ There are over 500 million menopausal women globally and about 2 million women enter menopause each year, yet there is little research or understanding about menopause at work.
- ◇ There are more than 2.5 million working women in Australia.
- ◇ Menopause is still a taboo subject among women and especially at work.
- ◇ Research shows menopausal women are juggling multiple roles, face multiple symptoms, may have reduced workability, and may choose to leave the workforce. Menopausal women face many stressors, including, multiple roles, societal, family, financial, and work stressors, social injustice issues (i.e., ridicule, gender-ageism, harassment, lookism, lack of support and exclusion), along with a wide diversity and clustering of symptoms. Similarly, symptomatic menopausal women often have a more difficult time at work and often go unsupported.
- ◇ There is some evidence that menopausal women may choose to work part time, stall their career, or leave the workforce.
- ◇ There are only 4 Menopause and Work studies published with Australian participants. Stage one of this study (completed in 2021) is due to be published in 2022.
- ◇ To date, there are no studies globally focused on Menopausal Leaders and work experience.
- ◇ Our research confirms that many women are surprised by menopause and that menopause is a highly individualised experience. Therefore, understanding the complexity of Menopause at Work (MAW) will provide significant insights for HR and leadership knowledge, strategy, and HRM practice.

Research Aim and Purpose

This study is being undertaken by Vanessa Giannos (PhD student) through the Griffith Business School, under the guidance of Professor Ruth McPhail. This study takes a holistic approach and seeks to understand the menopausal experiences of working menopausal leaders at a deeper level, particularly in the Private Sector. It is intended that this research will be published in Australia and globally.



The aim of the research is to identify a framework to assist menopausal women and leaders to better cope with menopause at work, raise awareness of menopause at work for female leaders and specifically what organisations, leaders and HR need to do to be more inclusive and supportive of menopausal workers and leaders.

The purpose of this study is two-fold: (1) to develop a theoretical framework to improve the understanding of how organisational culture and work affects menopausal workers and leaders' experience and to understand the resources, coping strategies they use, and (2) to identify facilitators and barriers at work and how to improve the practical support required to retain and develop menopausal leaders in the private sector in Australia.

Vanessa said, "I want to make this process as valuable and insightful for the research, business, HR, Leaders and the participants as possible. I am passionate about raising awareness, developing, promoting, and applying key findings in practical ways in the workplace."

Participant Eligibility

The study is seeking perimenopausal and postmenopausal leaders who have **menopause symptoms**, with at least **3 direct reports**, working in the **Australia Private Sector**. Menopause may be cancer-related, medical menopause or natural menopause. The study would like to hear from menopausal leaders with early menopause (i.e., ovarian insufficiency). Refer to definitions on page 5.

Participants will be aged between **40 and 60** years of age (or younger for those with **early menopause**).

Your Commitment

There are two options for participation.

Research Process



**Completing the online journal is optional.*

Option One: Participants will complete an online Menopause Journal and take part in an interview post completion of the journal

Participants are being offered a unique opportunity to partake in an online menopausal journal over a six week period. The time needed to complete the Menopause Journal is up to the individual, however, it is expected to take a minimum of 3 hours across the 6 week period. See our journaling page on our website for more information.

Journaling is considered part one of the study and participants may join the study in one of three cohorts, **throughout July and August 2022**. Once the journaling period is complete, the participant will be invited to an online interviews are likely to be between (October and December 2022).

Option Two: Participants will participate in two interviews (and questionnaires) of approximately two hours each over a 3 month period.

The first interview and survey will be conducted in **August-September 2022** and the second interview/survey is likely to be completed in **February-March 2023**.

Participation is anonymous in both options. Participants will select a pseudonym to enable participants to receive a copy of their data. This can assist women in talking to their loved ones and health care professionals to get the right support.

Participation is anonymous.

Participants can ask for a copy of their raw data that can assist women in talking to their loved ones and health care professionals to get the right support.

Definitions of menopause

- ◇ **Perimenopause:** You are experiencing periods, however there may be fluctuations and changes (heavier, lighter, flooding, spotting) and you are experiencing one or more of the primary menopause symptoms outlined below.
- ◇ **Menopause:** Your periods have stopped less than a year, or you experience a sudden stop of your periods due to surgical or medically related menopause.
- ◇ **Early Menopause:** You become **post-menopausal**, due to ovarian insufficiency prior to 40.
- ◇ **Post Menopause:** Your periods have stopped for at least one year.
- ◇ **Medical Menopause:** You have come into menopause due to cancer treatment, hysterectomy, or oophorectomy.

Common Menopause Symptoms

<p>Main Menopause Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Period Changes ▪ Hot flushes, chills ▪ Night Sweats ▪ Urogenital issues (e.g. bladder) ▪ Vaginal Dryness ▪ Reduced sex drive / painful sex <p>Other Menopause Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anxiety / Nervousness ▪ Concentration difficulties ▪ Crying spells ▪ Dizzy/Faint ▪ Fatigue (emotional and physical) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Headaches / migraines ▪ Heart discomfort ▪ Irritability / Impatience ▪ Joint or Muscle Pain ▪ Low or Depressed mood Memory issues ▪ Migraine ▪ Mood Swings ▪ Other Cognitive issues (e.g. difficulty retaining information) ▪ Sexual Difficulties ▪ Skin / Hair Changes ▪ Sleep problems (insomnia, disturbed sleep) ▪ Sweating ▪ Vertigo
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Further Information

Study Website: https://bit.ly/Menopausal_Leader_Study_2022

Griffith University Link: <https://www.griffith.edu.au/surveys/volunteer-for-important-research-projects>

About Vanessa: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/vanessa-giannos-leadership-development-executive-coach-hr/>

To participate in this study, please contact Vanessa Giannos who will arrange a confidential call with you.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss potential participation, please email Vanessa: vanessa.giannos@griffithuni.edu.au or call **0404 936 643**

