A photograph of two women in a professional setting. The woman on the left has short, grey hair and is wearing a light blue button-down shirt. She is looking towards the woman on the right. The woman on the right has long, brown hair and is also wearing a light blue button-down shirt. They are sitting at a desk with a laptop, a pen holder, and a coffee cup. The background features a brick wall and some potted plants.

Wales
TUC
Cymru

The menopause in the workplace

Interim report

Wales TUC Cymru

Wales TUC

Menopause interim report

Why this work is needed

The Wales TUC has a positive relationship with workplace reps across Wales. Through consultations with these reps, holding Equality network meetings and engaging with the Wales TUC equality committee, we discovered that workplaces were not tackling certain issues in a way that helped workers. More worryingly, there were some issues that were ignored completely and this left workers being disciplined on competency grounds for an issue that required reasonable adjustments, or staff feeling unable to discuss equality issues in the workplace.

48%

Women make up nearly half of the Welsh workforce



One of those issues that was being ignored was that of the menopause.

Work began by engaging with reps and asking them if this was their experience, we found anecdotal evidence from workplaces and from the Women's forum that the menopause wasn't an issue that was being discussed in the workplace and although some found the process easy, other's found it to be a time where they experienced numerous symptoms that made working life more difficult. The menopause is often a taboo subject and this made this topic even more difficult to discuss and get help or have reasonable adjustments put in place.

Menopause is part of the natural ageing process for women, which refers to the point in time when menstruation has ceased for 12 consecutive months. This occurs naturally, usually between the ages of 45-55. In UK, the average age is 52. Symptoms associated with the menopause can include hot flushes, palpitations, night sweats, sleep disturbances, fatigue, poor concentration, irritability, mood disturbances, skin irritation and dryness. The period of hormonal change and associated symptoms (peri-menopause) can last from four to eight years with women suffering varying degrees of symptoms during that time.

To look conservatively at some of the statistics of the people who may be affected. Women aged 16-64 comprise approximately half (48%) of the Welsh workforce (ONS Employment stats March 2016). When looking specifically at over 50s in the Welsh workforce, 44% are Women (ONS stats March 2016). They represent over 213,000 workers (ONS Employment stats). This figure does not take into account those that are experiencing an early menopause or one brought about by medical treatment or surgery. It is also difficult to statistically gauge the number of people who experience the menopause from the non-binary, transgender or intersex communities and furthermore how different equality strands experience the menopause, or if differs because of your disability, age, race, religion, sexual



orientation or marital/civil partnership status. Consequently, many women in today's Welsh workplaces are, or will be working through a little discussed stage of life, the menopause.

Wales TUC motion to conference

To further develop this work and to gain the consent and action of the Trade Union movement in Wales, the Wales TUC Equality Committee proposed a motion to the biennial conference held in May 2016. The text was as follows;

Conference calls on the Wales TUC to lead the way in conjunction with WEN Wales and Older People's Commission to address the gaps in research that exist on the Menopause. Furthermore, to build upon survey work undertaken on Welsh Women about their experiences in the workplace in order to create healthy workplaces for women who are experiencing the menopause.

Conference instructs the General Council to establish a campaign to:

- Highlight the role of Trade Unions in challenging attitudes to the menopause, ensuring that employers have procedures in place, and offering support to women who are experiencing problems.
- Campaign on a wider occupational health and safety awareness campaign to raise issues such as the menopause so all staff know that their employer has a positive attitude, and that it's not something women should feel embarrassed about.
- Work in partnership with WEN Wales, the Older Peoples Commission to develop a joint resource for workers,

The menopause usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55. In the UK, the average age is 51, but it can happen much earlier. Around 1 in every 100 women will experience a premature menopause, before the age of 40.

- reps and employers.
- Campaign for better healthcare information for women experiencing the menopause
- Provide guidance on how to deal with the menopause and make it freely available
- Raise meetings with employers to ensure that the workplace meets the needs of menopausal women.
- To ensure that existing TUC leaflets are recreated bilingually so to make them appropriate for a Welsh audience

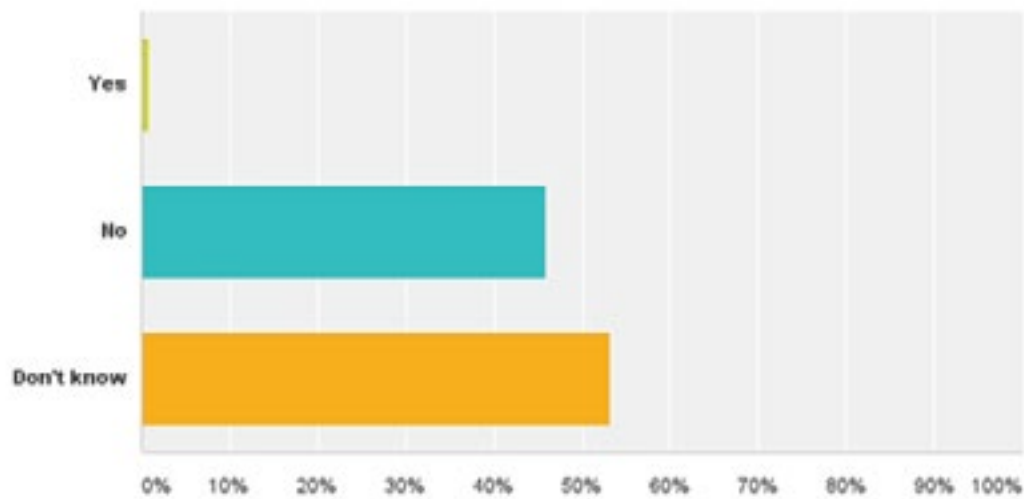
Wales TUC Equalities Committee

This motion was unanimously passed and it became a conference resolution which the Wales TUC office has been instructed to work on.

What the survey findings are

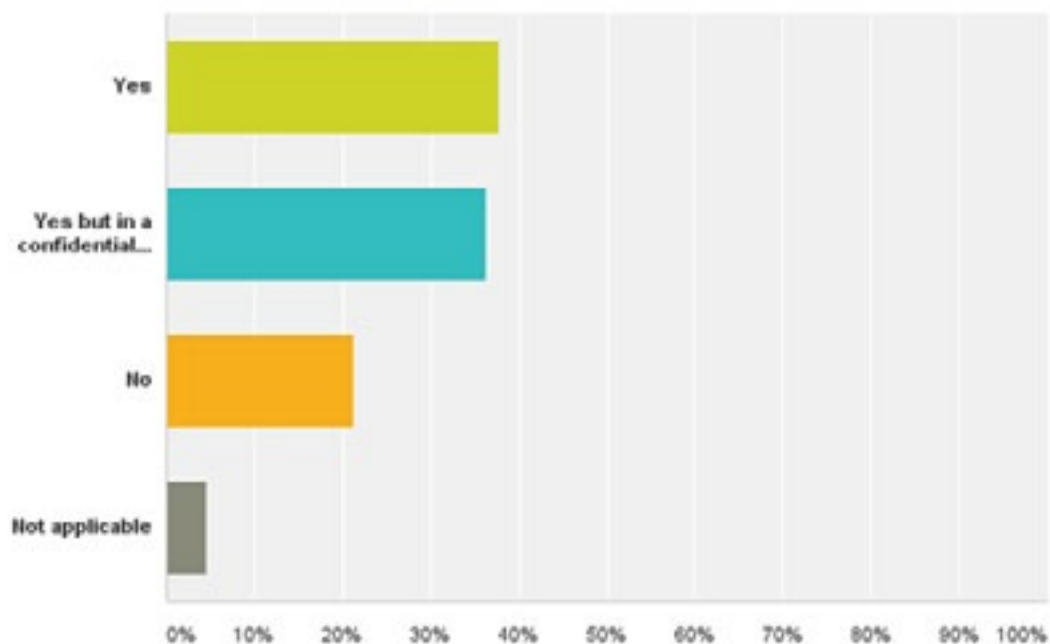
Q1 Does your workplace have a policy on the menopause?

Answered: 3,695 Skipped: 0



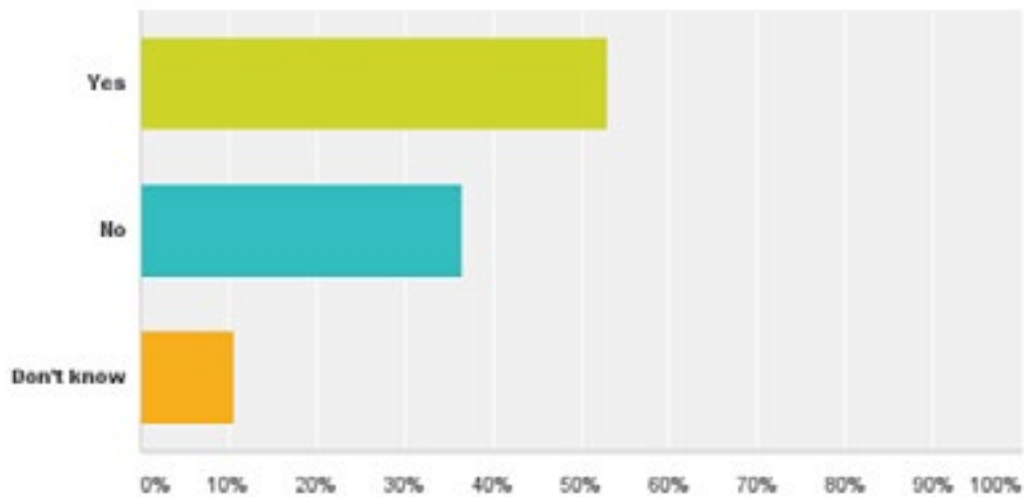
Q2 Would you feel comfortable talking about your menopause status at work?

Answered: 3,695 Skipped: 0

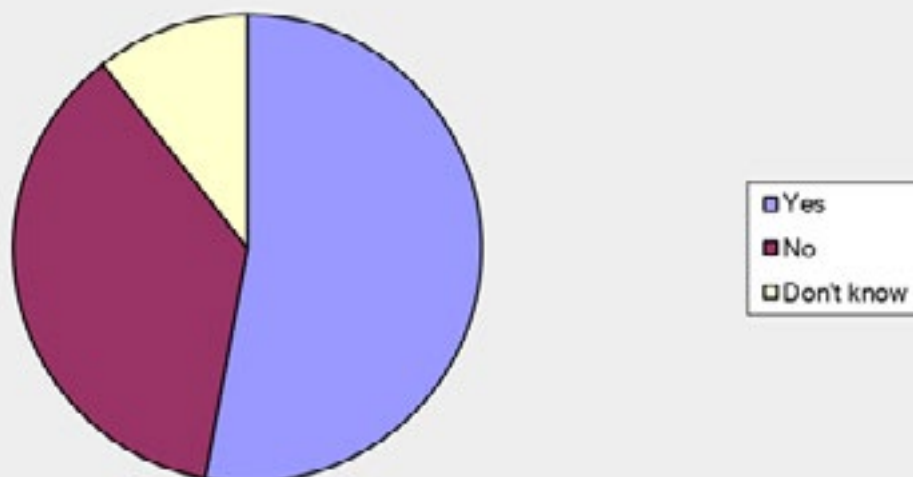


Q3 Does the gender of your line manager influence how much you talk to them about the menopause?

Answered: 3,695 Skipped: 0

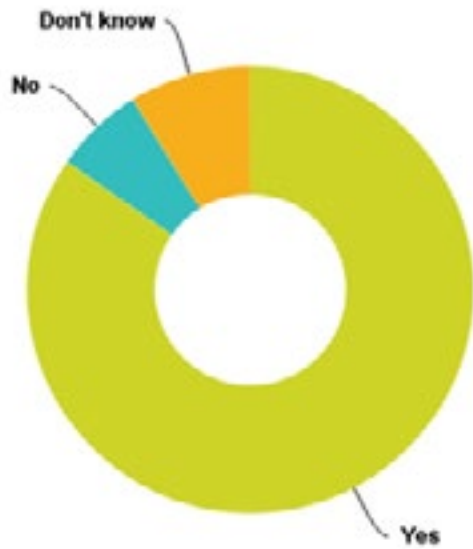


Does the gender of your line manager influence how much you talk to them about the menopause?



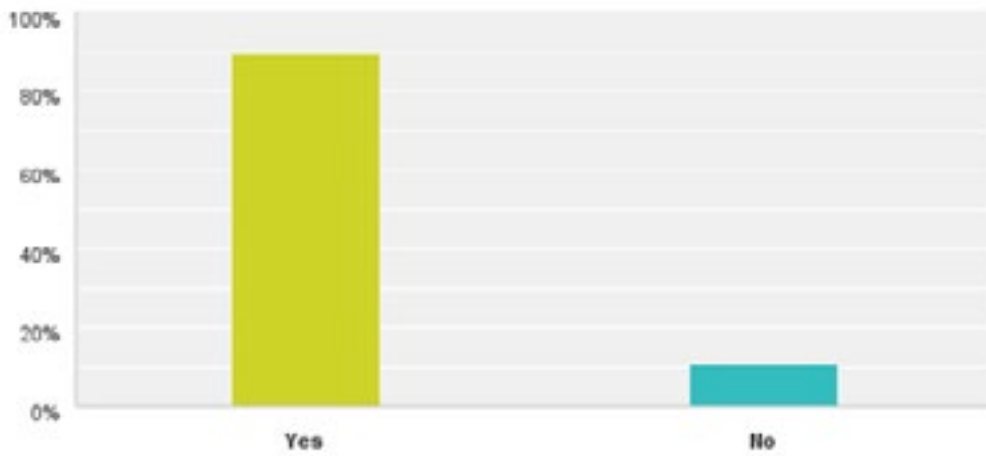
Q4 Do you think that the menopause affects working life?

Answered: 3,424 Skipped: 271



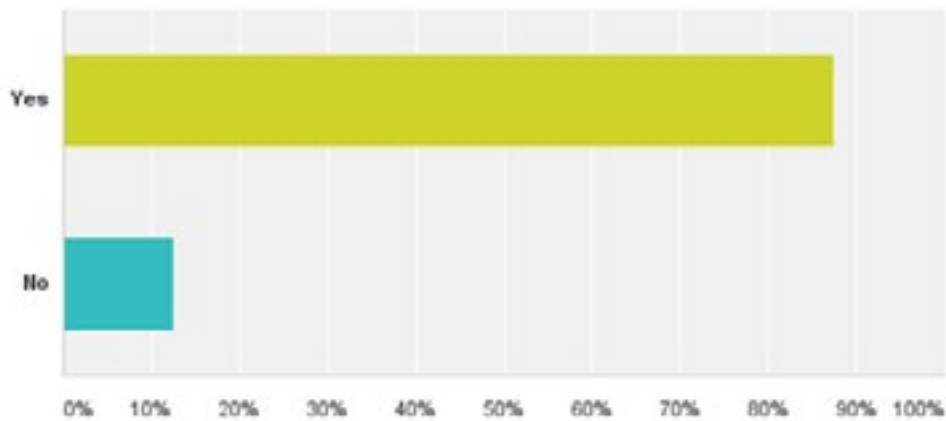
Q5 Would you welcome a model workplace policy from the Wales TUC on the menopause?

Answered: 3,424 Skipped: 271



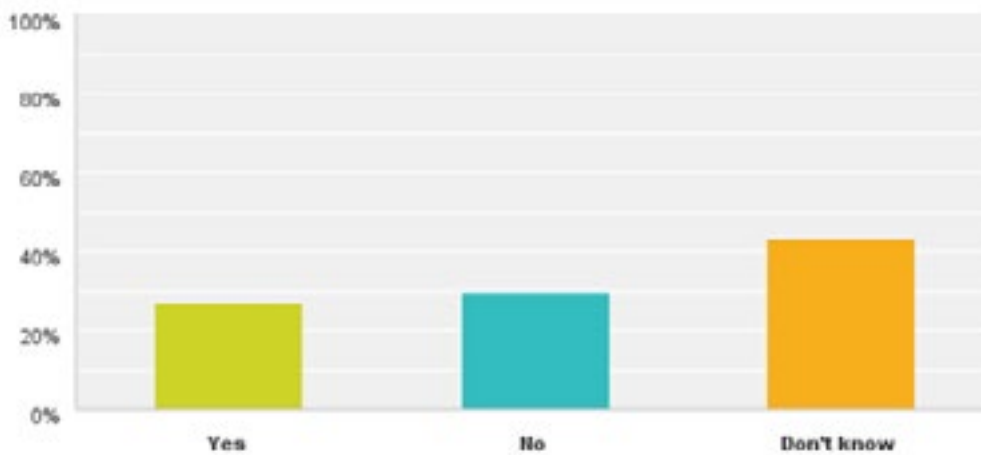
Q6 Would you welcome training for union reps so that they could support women experiencing the menopause at work?

Answered: 3,424 Skipped: 271



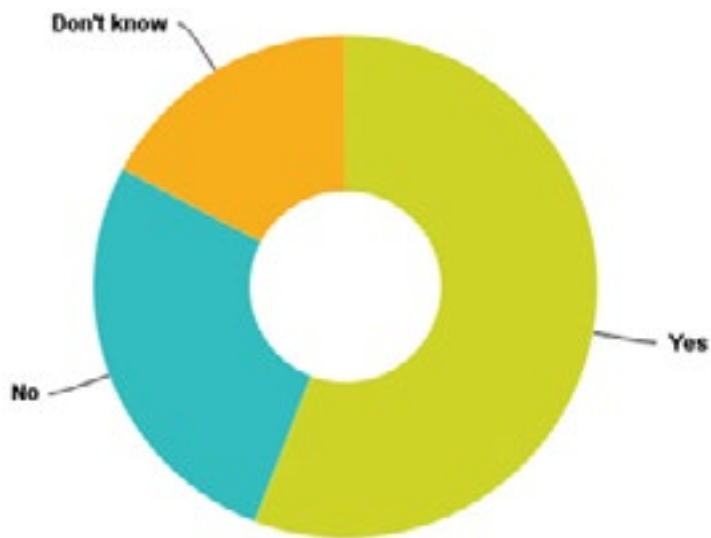
Q9 Do you think the menopause is treated negatively within your workplace?

Answered: 3,424 Skipped: 271



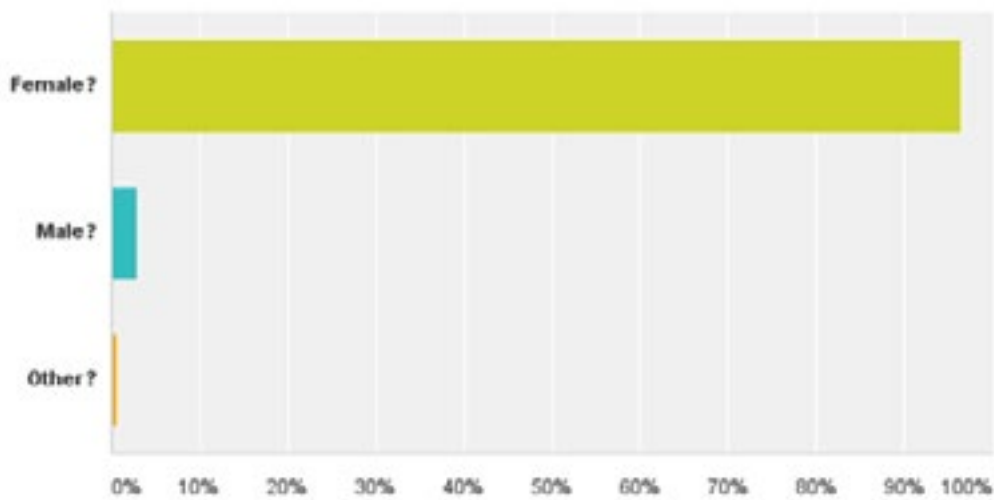
Q10 Has the menopause even been treated as a joke topic within your workplace?

Answered: 3,424 Skipped: 271



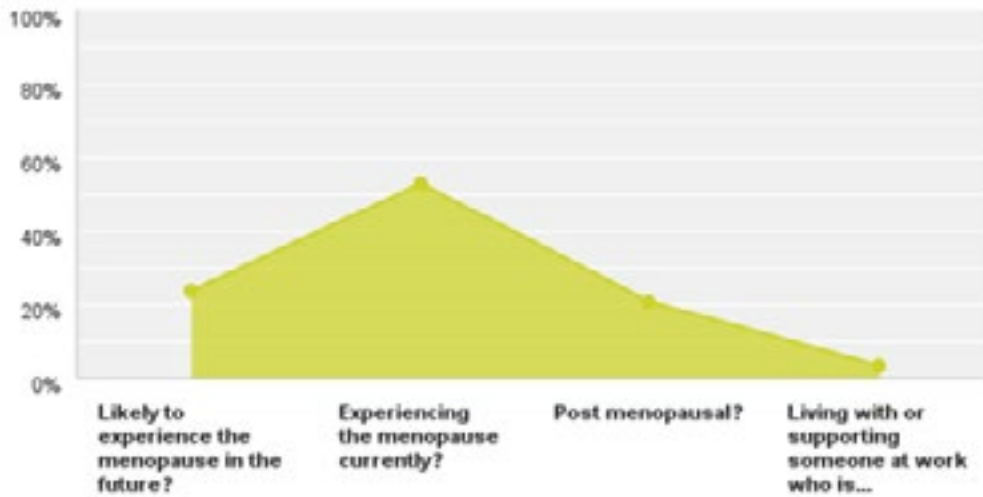
Q12 Are you

Answered: 3,373 Skipped: 322



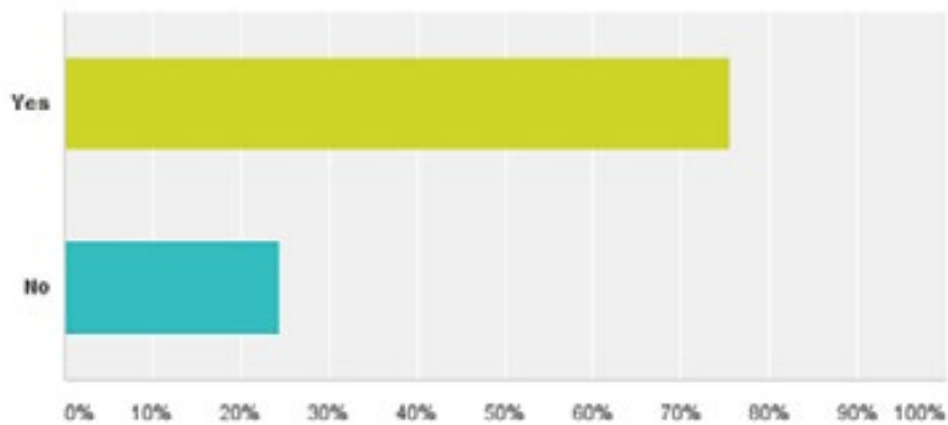
Q13 Are you

Answered: 3,332 Skipped: 363



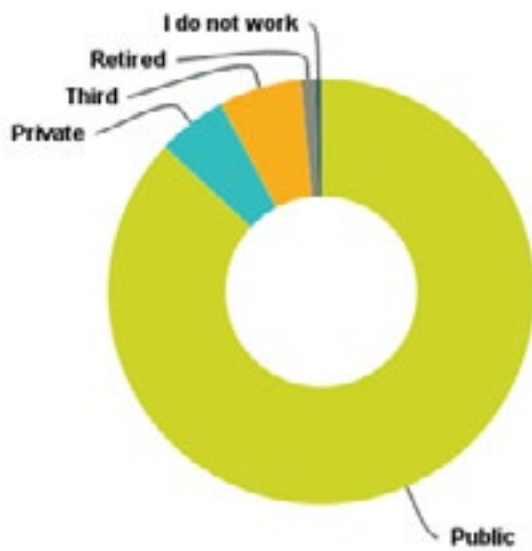
Q14 Are you a member of a Trade Union?

Answered: 3,373 Skipped: 322



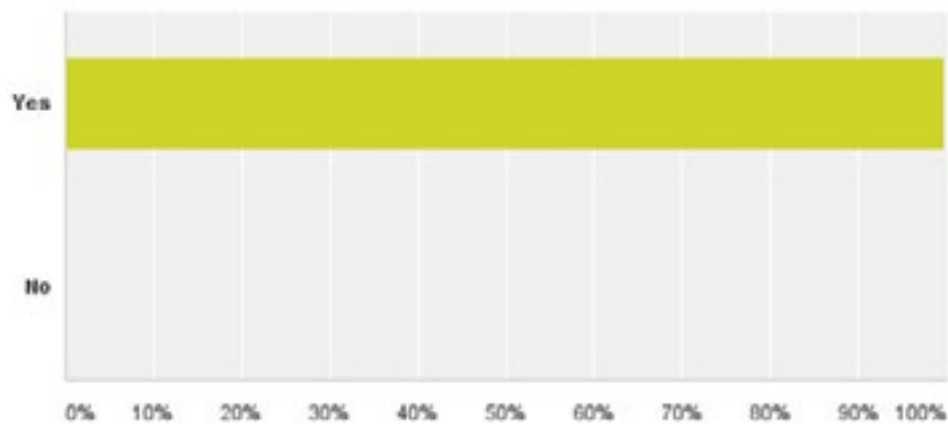
Q16 What sector do you work in?

Answered: 3,373 Skipped: 322



Q17 Do you live or work in Wales

Answered: 3,373 Skipped: 322



Summary and next actions

Wales TUC has launched a joint campaign with the Women's Equality Network Wales (WEN Wales). This campaign will firstly look at developing a report which can highlight the issues and outline how to tackle this issue in the workplace. The current outline for the report is as follows;

Main headings and timeline for menopause document

The menopause, a workplace issue

- What is the menopause?
 - Natural, peri, medical, surgical
- Timeline, Diagnosis of menopause. NICE Guidelines
- Legal cover
- Symptoms
 - Physical, psychological, sexual, HRT
- Coping strategies
 - Being informed, empowering
- Disclosure
 - Talking to a manager or union rep in the workplace
- Wales TUC survey research
- How many women took part
- Results and findings
- What this tells us

- The effect of the menopause
- Women's experiences at work
- What we expect of the workplace
- Protection, public sector equality duty, discrimination
- The menopause health and safety/disability. Health and wellbeing during the menopause
- The menopause and protected characteristics, BME women, young women, disabled women, lesbian women, religious women.
- Is there a male menopause
- Ideal workplace policies

- Reasonable adjustments
- Health and Wellbeing during the menopause

- Women's experience at work, case studies/ experiences
- What can you expect from your workplace?
- Workplace policies and reasonable adjustments, easy wins/What can workplace union reps do?
- What can employers do?
- What can unions do?
- What a model workplace policy might look like
- Who to signpost to
- How to join a union
 - Worksmart website
- Further information and signposting