

JOINT SUBMISSION ON  
REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS  
FOR  
MENOPAUSE-RELATED NEEDS  
IN THE WORKPLACE  
BY  
ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN FOR ACTION AND RESEARCH  
AND  
HEYVENUS INTEGRATED HEALTHSCIENCE

**aware**

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Source:  
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## Case for Menopause in the Workplace and Reasonable Accommodation

### 1. Executive Summary

Menopause is a predictable life stage affecting a growing share of Singapore's workforce, particularly women aged 45–64 who are often at the peak of their skills and leadership contribution. As Singapore advances efforts to extend careers and build an age-inclusive workforce, unmanaged menopausal symptoms such as sleep disturbances, fatigue, brain fog, and mood changes remain an overlooked factor contributing to productivity loss, absenteeism, and early workforce exit.

Insights from our research<sup>1</sup> involving 1,741 respondents, together with ongoing dialogues with women's networks across Singapore, consistently highlight the need for structured workplace support. These findings reinforce the strategic importance of retaining experienced mid-career women, particularly in sectors facing talent shortages, ageing demographics, and leadership pipeline pressures.

This proposal presents a practical, evidence-informed framework for integrating menopause-related accommodations into workplace practice. Recommendations are designed to complement existing Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement.

Implementation is designed to be pragmatic and scalable, with minimal regulatory burden. Leadership commitment, manager capability-building, and consistent monitoring of outcomes will be key to effectiveness.

Embedding menopause support into employment policies strengthens labour-market participation among experienced women, widens leadership pipelines, and reinforces Singapore's broader commitments to gender equality and inclusive growth. The Ministry of Manpower's guidance in this emerging area of workforce health would position Singapore as a leader in building a resilient, fair, and age-inclusive workforce where individuals can contribute fully across all stages of life.

### 2. Understanding Menopause

Menopause is a natural biological transition that generally occurs in Singapore women between the ages of 45 and 55, with the average age of onset around 49 years old.<sup>2</sup> This is slightly earlier than the Western average of 51. Menopause marks the end of menstrual cycles, officially defined as 12 consecutive months without a period. Prior to menopause, women experience a perimenopausal phase that can last up to a decade, characterised by fluctuating hormone

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<sup>1</sup> Menopause and The Bottom-Line: A Leadership Challenge for APAC Leaders, HeyVenus, NUS Asia Centre for Bia-Echo Asia Centre for Reproductive Longevity and Equality at Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, 2025

<sup>2</sup> [Is Singapore ready for the menopause wave from a super ageing society?](#)

levels. These symptoms are often unpredictable and fluctuating, which can significantly affect a woman's ability to perform at work and maintain her career momentum.

Despite its prevalence, menopause remains a largely silent struggle. Cultural norms encourage women to endure symptoms without complaint, while social stigma makes open discussion difficult. This silence is especially pronounced in workplaces, where many women report feeling unsupported and hesitant to seek help.

The consequences of this lack of acknowledgement are far-reaching. It heightens risks of poor mental health, social isolation, reduced productivity, and lower quality of life. Symptoms such as frequent urination can disrupt daily routines and social engagement, while brain fog and anxiety can undermine job performance and professional confidence. Evidence from Mayo Clinic and the NHS shows that with better awareness and supportive workplace practices, many symptoms can be effectively managed, allowing women to continue contributing meaningfully during this critical life stage.

As Singapore's population ages, the need for structured menopause support becomes increasingly urgent. By 2030, one in four Singaporeans will be aged 65 or older. This means many women will spend a substantial portion of their lives post-menopause and a significant share of these years will overlap with continued workforce participation. Recognising menopause not as a private burden, but as a predictable life stage that deserves societal and workplace support, is essential to sustaining a resilient, inclusive labour force.

### **3. Key Workplace Insights from the NUS ACRLE and HeyVenus APAC Research Paper<sup>3</sup>**

The recent research paper produced by the National University of Singapore's Bia-Echo Asia Centre for Reproductive Longevity and Equality (ACRLE), in partnership with health-tech company HeyVenus Integrated Healthscience, surveyed 1,741 respondents comprised of working women and people managers aged 20 to 60 across five Asia-Pacific countries, including Singapore (ACRLE-HeyVenus Research Paper<sup>4</sup>). The study's findings highlight the significant impact of menopause on women's professional lives, particularly as many juggle considerable responsibilities and workplace pressures.

In Singapore, two-thirds of female employees aged 45 and above reported experiencing multiple menopause-related symptoms such as fatigue, brain fog, mood swings, and hot flushes that negatively affect their job performance and overall well-being. Despite significant progress in women's career advancement in Singapore, where slightly over half of midlife

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<sup>3</sup> [New study finds perimenopause symptoms affect working women's career and well-being | The Straits Times](#)

<sup>4</sup> Menopause and The Bottom-Line: A Leadership Challenge for APAC Leaders, HeyVenus, NUS Asia Centre for Bia-Echo Asia Centre for Reproductive Longevity and Equality at Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, 2025

women in our study hold mid to senior leadership roles, many are achieving these milestones while managing substantial, often invisible challenges.

Rather than indicating that current systems are sufficient, these findings underscore a critical gap: women have progressed in spite of the lack of structured support, often at personal cost. Many are performing at high levels while silently navigating symptoms that disrupt concentration, sleep, confidence, and day-to-day functioning.

Social stigma continues to be a significant obstacle. The ACRLE-HeyVenus Research Paper found that almost seven in ten working women in Singapore feel that stigma around menopause prevents them from discussing their symptoms openly and seeking workplace support. This culture of silence is further exacerbated by a general lack of awareness about perimenopause and menopause, with approximately 40% of female employees in Singapore reporting that they feel completely uninformed, a sentiment that extends to many employers as well. As a result, many women feel isolated and unsupported during a particularly challenging phase of their life.

Menopause is increasingly recognised as a global health and economic priority. According to the World Economic Forum's (WEF) January 2025 report, "Blueprint To Close The Women's Health Gap: How To Improve Lives And Economies For All,<sup>5</sup>" closing the global menopause gap could yield an estimated US\$120 billion (S\$160.6 billion) in annual gains to gross domestic product. The report identifies menopause as one of nine key conditions driving a third of the global women's health gap, warning that untreated menopause symptoms can increase the risk of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, neurological diseases (including depression and dementia), osteoporosis, Type 2 diabetes mellitus, and other gynaecological disorders.

The WEF research underscores that menopause is not merely a personal health concern but a significant workplace and economic issue. Organisations that fail to address the specific needs of menopausal employees risk losing valuable talent through decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and premature workforce exit. In contrast, companies that implement proactive policies and foster supportive workplace cultures can empower women to maintain their careers and contribute fully, thereby enhancing organisational resilience and inclusivity.

These findings present a clear call to action for Singapore companies to establish menopause-inclusive guidelines, raise awareness about perimenopause and menopause, reduce associated stigma, and create environments where women feel safe to seek support and accommodations throughout their menopausal journey.

For more information, refer to Annex for details of the ACRLE-HeyVenus Research Paper.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/publications/blueprint-to-close-the-women-s-health-gap-how-to-improve-lives-and-economies-for-all>

## 4. Impact on Work Performance

Menopausal symptoms can substantially affect the work performance, attendance, and career trajectories of midlife employees. The ACRLE-HeyVenus Research Paper spanning various industries found that fatigue, sleep disturbances, diminished concentration, mood fluctuations, and cognitive difficulties pose significant challenges during working hours.

A comprehensive cross-sectional study <sup>6</sup>conducted with over 400 menopausal healthcare employees found that 65% reported negative impacts on their work performance due to menopausal symptoms. Additionally, 18% indicated they had taken sick leave because of the severity of their symptoms. Fatigue emerged as the most influential factor leading to decreased performance and increased absenteeism. Many employees experiencing severe symptoms feel compelled to maintain productivity, which often results in presenteeism and continuing to work while unwell; ultimately lowering overall workplace efficiency.

What often makes it hardest for women at work are the psychological and cognitive symptoms such as anxiety, mood swings, and trouble focusing rather than just the more obvious hot flushes. These invisible challenges can deeply affect how someone feels at work, sometimes even leading them to reconsider their career path or feel unable to perform at their best. More than one-third of respondents reported that menopause-related symptoms influenced their decisions to change roles, reduce working hours, or consider early retirement. This trend represents a potential loss of experienced professionals at crucial stages of their careers.

The impact of these symptoms is evident across various job functions and organisational levels, affecting both managerial and non-managerial staff.

Internationally, similar patterns have been observed. For example, a UK report<sup>7</sup> from Standard Chartered Bank revealed that nearly half of menopausal women felt less motivated to seek promotions or take on additional responsibilities due to their symptoms, and one in four contemplated leaving the workforce altogether.

These findings highlight the significance of menopause as both a workforce and economic imperative, a consideration that is increasingly relevant as Singapore's workforce ages and retirement ages continue to rise.

## 5. Case for Reasonable Accommodations

### Legal and Regulatory Framework

Under Singapore's Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices (Guidelines) and the recently passed Workplace Fairness Act (WFA), employers are required to act fairly and without discrimination. The Guidelines advise that recruitment and selection decisions should be

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<sup>6</sup> [Impact of menopausal symptoms on work and careers: a cross-sectional study - PMC](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Menopause in the Workplace: Impact on Women in Financial Services](#)

based on merit. This includes considering essential factors such as an individual's skills, experience, and ability to perform the necessary job functions. The WFA strictly prohibits discrimination of any kind on the grounds of age, nationality, sex, marital status, pregnancy, caregiving responsibilities, race, religion, language ability, disability or mental health condition. This framework establishes a formal expectation for fair and equitable treatment in the workplace.

### **Menopause as a Workplace Concern**

While menopause is a natural life stage, it frequently brings significant and ongoing symptoms such as concentration difficulties, fatigue, and mood disturbances. These symptoms can have a substantial impact on an employee's ability to perform at work. In instances where these symptoms significantly impair daily functioning, menopause may reasonably be interpreted as a form of disability that warrants workplace accommodations.

### **Ethical and Economic Imperatives**

Providing reasonable accommodations for menopause is both an ethical responsibility and a workforce necessity. Insights from the ACRLE-HeyVenus Research Paper and ongoing dialogues with women's networks consistently show that midlife women, where many are at critical leadership and productivity stages, require targeted support to remain fully engaged at work.

Addressing menopause in the workplace reduces absenteeism, presenteeism, and turnover, while lowering downstream healthcare costs linked to unmanaged symptoms. It also strengthens gender equity and reinforces organisations' commitment to supporting women across all life stages.

This approach aligns with national priorities, including the Enabling Masterplan 2030, which emphasises inclusive, age-friendly employment. Embedding menopause accommodations signals organisational readiness for a multigenerational workforce and ensures that employees can continue contributing effectively regardless of age or health status.

### **The Economic Case for Singapore**

International estimates, including from the World Economic Forum (2025), show that closing the menopause support gap could unlock up to US\$120 billion in global GDP annually.<sup>8</sup> For Singapore, the stakes are clear: Women in midlife represent a critical segment of the workforce, often at the height of their skills, leadership capacity, and institutional knowledge.

International evidence shows that unmanaged menopause symptoms lead a meaningful proportion of women to reduce working hours, decline advancement, or exit the workforce

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<sup>8</sup> World Economic Forum & McKinsey Health Institute. (2025). Blueprint to Close the Women's Health Gap: How to Improve Lives and Economies for All. World Economic Forum.

altogether.<sup>9</sup> Applying a conservative scenario assumption and informed by this international evidence, if 10% of mid-career women in Singapore are materially affected by menopause, the cumulative impact of productivity loss, increased absenteeism, leadership attrition, and replacement costs would be in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars annually. These losses directly undermine national goals around workforce sustainability, gender equity, and economic competitiveness in an ageing society.

### **A Case Study of Success**

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) published a case study on how organisations can take meaningful action of women's health in the workplace.<sup>10</sup> They highlighted 2 organisations, Bayer and Essity, which make reproductive health a workplace priority. They found that such measures promote comfort and dignity, health and well-being, and increased productivity.

### **6. Key Actionable Areas for Menopause Accommodations**

A collaborative approach is essential in developing effective menopause accommodations in the workplace. Engaging in open dialogue allows for the tailoring of support measures to suit the specific needs and context of each workplace. This consultation process not only ensures that accommodations are practical and relevant but also nurtures a harmonious and inclusive organisational culture. Through such engagement, buy-in is promoted, stigma is reduced, and employees are empowered to play an active role in shaping policies that genuinely address their requirements.

#### **Core Accommodations for Supporting Menopausal Employees**

To provide meaningful support to employees experiencing menopause, employers should focus on actionable measures that directly address the most significant challenges. The following key areas are recommended:

- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Implementing options such as staggered start and end times, remote work opportunities, and symptom-triggered rest breaks can help employees manage fatigue, cognitive difficulties, and mood fluctuations effectively.
- **Workplace Environment Adjustments:** Providing access to cooling aids like fans and climate control, quiet or rest spaces, and ergonomic supports can alleviate physical discomfort and create a more comfortable work environment.
- **Recognising menopause-related symptoms as legitimate health concerns** within existing medical leave and insurance frameworks allows employees to seek medical attention or manage their symptoms without penalty or stigma.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shattering-the-silence-about-menopause-12-month-progress-report/shattering-the-silence-about-menopause-12-month-progress-report?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com#iv-evidence-from-roundtables](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shattering-the-silence-about-menopause-12-month-progress-report/shattering-the-silence-about-menopause-12-month-progress-report?utm_source=chatgpt.com#iv-evidence-from-roundtables)  
<https://impactsofmenopause.com/bayer-fpa/case-study-united-states/>

<sup>10</sup> Spotlight: Building Menopause-Friendly Workplaces Across The Private Sector, 2025

- Manager and Peer Support: Training managers to understand the impact of menopause and respond with empathy, as well as establishing peer support networks, helps reduce stigma and mitigate feelings of isolation among affected employees.
- Confidentiality and Policy Integration: Ensuring privacy in health disclosures and formally incorporating menopause accommodations into existing health, diversity, and inclusion policies fosters consistent and non-discriminatory treatment.

### **Industry-Specific Considerations**

Certain industries such as healthcare, hospitality, and retail may pose unique challenges for employees experiencing menopause, especially where uniforms or strict operational protocols are required. In these sectors, customised accommodations may be necessary. Examples include providing flexible uniform options, scheduling designated break times for symptom management, and supplying private rest or changing facilities. Addressing these needs while upholding professional standards calls for a sensitive and consultative approach, ensuring both employee well-being and the effective functioning of the organisation.

## **7. Implementation Strategies for Menopause Accommodations**

To ensure menopause accommodations are successfully embedded within workplace practices, organisations should adopt a structured approach that facilitates both immediate action and ongoing improvement. The following strategies provide practical, step-by-step guidance for effective execution.

### **Gain Leadership Support**

It is crucial to communicate the business rationale for menopause accommodations to senior leaders. Securing visible endorsement from leadership helps integrate menopause support within broader diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), environmental, social and governance (ESG) and wellbeing initiatives. Such advocacy signals organisational commitment and encourages a culture of acceptance and support.

### **Develop and Communicate Policies**

Organisations should draft clear and accessible policies that recognise menopause as a workplace consideration. These policies must outline accommodation processes, ensure confidentiality protections, and include anti-retaliation measures. To maximise awareness, policies should be widely disseminated through employee handbooks, intranet platforms, and onboarding materials, ensuring all staff are informed and empowered.

### **Raise Awareness and Build Capability**

Launching awareness campaigns, which may include workshops, webinars, and educational materials, can help normalise discussions about menopause in the workplace. Training sessions for managers and HR staff should focus on menopause symptoms, their impact, stigma reduction, and developing sensitive communication skills for handling accommodation requests. This approach cultivates empathy and preparedness across all levels of the organisation.

### **Establish Support Channels**

Confidential and accessible points of contact, such as HR representatives, Employee Assistance Programs, and digital platforms, should be established within organisations to assist employees seeking advice or accommodations. Organisations can further promote openness by supporting peer groups or appointing Menopause Champions, fostering a supportive environment and reducing feelings of isolation.

### **Ensure Clear Accommodation Processes**

Streamlining procedures for requesting, reviewing, and implementing accommodations is essential. These processes should be confidential, feature defined timelines, and include accountability measures. Aligning menopause accommodations with existing programs, such as medical leave and flexible work policies, can simplify administration and ensure consistency.

### **Monitor and Evolve Practices**

Organisations should actively collect data to understand the real impact of menopause support on their workforce. Regular feedback, pulse checks, and tracking indicators such as absenteeism, turnover, and productivity help employers identify what is working and where additional support is needed.

By building this evidence base, organisations can refine their policies, demonstrate measurable outcomes, and ensure that menopause accommodations remain relevant, effective, and responsive to employees' needs over time.

## **8. Looking Ahead to Equitable Workplaces**

Integrating menopause into reasonable accommodation policies supports Singapore's national efforts to build an age-inclusive, multigenerational workforce. Proactive, evidence-based support helps organisations retain experienced midlife talent, strengthen leadership continuity, and sustain productivity. Embedding menopause considerations within broader inclusive workforce practices and health initiatives will be important for ensuring workplaces remain equitable, responsive, and competitive as Singapore's workforce ages.

## **Annex – Survey Methodology & Demographics**

This Annex outlines the methodologies used to gather the data supporting this proposal. It includes details on participant demographics, sampling techniques, and data collection procedures to ensure transparency and credibility. The survey engaged a representative cross-section of employees across industries and job roles in Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam and Australia, capturing diverse experiences related to menopause and workplace accommodations. This rigorous approach provides a reliable foundation for the policy recommendations and supports ongoing evaluation of implementation effectiveness.

## Survey Development & Deployment

Two tailored survey questionnaires were developed:

1. Women Employees Survey: Capture lived experiences and workplace challenges of working women.

2. People Managers Survey – Understand managerial awareness, training gaps, and policy implementation.

The surveys were designed based on expert consultations and a literature review and included a mix of multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions for comprehensive data collection.

The survey was conducted digitally via the Zoho Survey platform and distributed across:

- Employee networks, industry groups, and HR forums.
- Social media platforms and professional organizations.
- Collaborators and corporate partners.

A pilot test was conducted to validate clarity, relevance, and reliability before the full deployment of the survey.

### Target Population & Sampling

- Geographic Scope: Respondents were from Singapore, Vietnam, Australia, Japan, and Indonesia.
- Stratified Sampling Approach: Ensured representation across age groups, job levels, industries, and cultural backgrounds.

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- Age Distribution: The women employees survey targeted working women 20–66 years, covering early, mid, and late-career professionals.

- The people managers survey included all genders aged 20–66 years, ensuring a broad perspective on managerial awareness and workplace support for menopause.

### Sample Size:

- A total of 1,741 individuals participated.

### Quantitative Analysis

- Prevalence & Trends: Analysed symptom impact, workplace policies, and workplace support structures.

- Demographic Comparisons: Segmented data by age, job level, industry, and region to identify key variations.

- Workplace Impact Assessment: Examined correlations between menopause symptoms, productivity, and career progression.

### Qualitative Insights

- Employee Experiences & Barriers: Thematic analysis of open-ended responses to highlight real-life workplace challenges.

- Managerial Awareness & Support Needs: Identified gaps in training, policy implementation, and readiness to support menopausal employees.

### Benchmarking & Policy Implications

- Findings were compared with global best practices to inform HR strategies and policymaker recommendations.

#### Considerations & Limitations

- The survey is based on self-reported experiences, which may introduce response bias.
- Cultural and regional differences highlight the need for localized workplace strategies.

#### Ethical Considerations

- Voluntary Participation & Informed Consent: Respondents participated freely with full awareness of the study's purpose.
- Data Privacy & Confidentiality: Responses were anonymized.
- Compliance with Research Standards: The study adheres to ethical research practices, ensuring fair representation and unbiased reporting.