

# Menopause at Work: a survey to look at the impact of menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms upon women in the workplace

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## Background

- Currently, approximately 4 million women aged >50 years are employed in the UK,<sup>1</sup> comprising around 45% of the total workforce for this age group.<sup>2</sup>
- Between 1994 and 2014, this age group accounted for almost three-quarters (72%) of the growth in women's employment, and this trend is steadily increasing, meaning that more women than ever before will transition to the menopause while working.<sup>3</sup>
- Roughly 80% of women experience symptoms related to the menopause, with 25% having severe symptoms that detrimentally affect their family, home and work life;<sup>4,5</sup> these include impaired concentration, tiredness, poor memory, depression, feeling down, lowered confidence, sleepiness and hot flushes.<sup>2</sup>
- Around 5% of women will find it very difficult to cope with work during their menopausal transition,<sup>2</sup> and around 10% of women who experience severe menopausal symptoms actually leave employment.<sup>5</sup>
- Evidence on the impact of menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms on women in the workplace is scarce.

## Aims

- The aims of this survey were to investigate the impact of menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms on respondents' work performance, absenteeism and hours worked.

## Methods

- An online questionnaire was developed by the authors, which followed a simple tick-box answer format.
- The questionnaire was disseminated via social media to women experiencing menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms.
- All replies were anonymised and pooled for analysis.

## Results

### Respondents

- The questionnaire was completed by 1132 women.

### Impact of menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms on work performance

- Over 90% of respondents felt that their menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms were having a negative impact on their work (**Figure 1**), with over half of respondents stating that colleagues had noted a deterioration in their work performance (**Figure 2**).
- As a result of poor performance at work, 9% of women had to undergo a disciplinary procedure.

### Impact of menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms on absenteeism

- Around half of respondents reported having time off work due to menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms (**Figure 3**), with 19% being absent for >8 weeks (**Figure 4**).
- In total, 37% of women had been provided with a sickness certificate from their doctor; of these, 52% listed anxiety/stress as the cause, with only 7% stating menopause as a reason for sickness leave (**Figure 5**).

### Impact of menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms on hours worked

- As a result of their menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms, 31% of women had thought about reducing their working hours and 32% had thought about leaving their job (**Figure 6**).
- Just over half of women had chosen to reduce their hours at work (**Figure 6**).

### Management of menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms

- Almost three-quarters of respondents had received some sort of treatment from a doctor or other healthcare professional for their menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms (**Figure 7**).

### Information and advice about the menopause

- Only 14.5% of women had received any advice or support from their workplace about their menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms.
- In total, 9% of respondents stated that their workplaces offered menopause awareness sessions, 10% offered menopause discussion groups, and 4% offered training for staff about the menopause (**Figure 8**).
- Just over three-quarters of women reported that their workplaces offered no information or support regarding the menopause (**Figure 8**).

## Conclusions

- Results from this survey highlight the substantial impact of menopausal and perimenopausal symptoms on women in the workplace in terms of their work performance, sickness rate, and ability to cope with their job.
- The reasons for sickness are usually incorrectly classified as being related to anxiety or stress.
- There is a general lack of support for menopausal and perimenopausal women in the workplace.

Figure 1. Have your symptoms ever had a negative impact on your work?

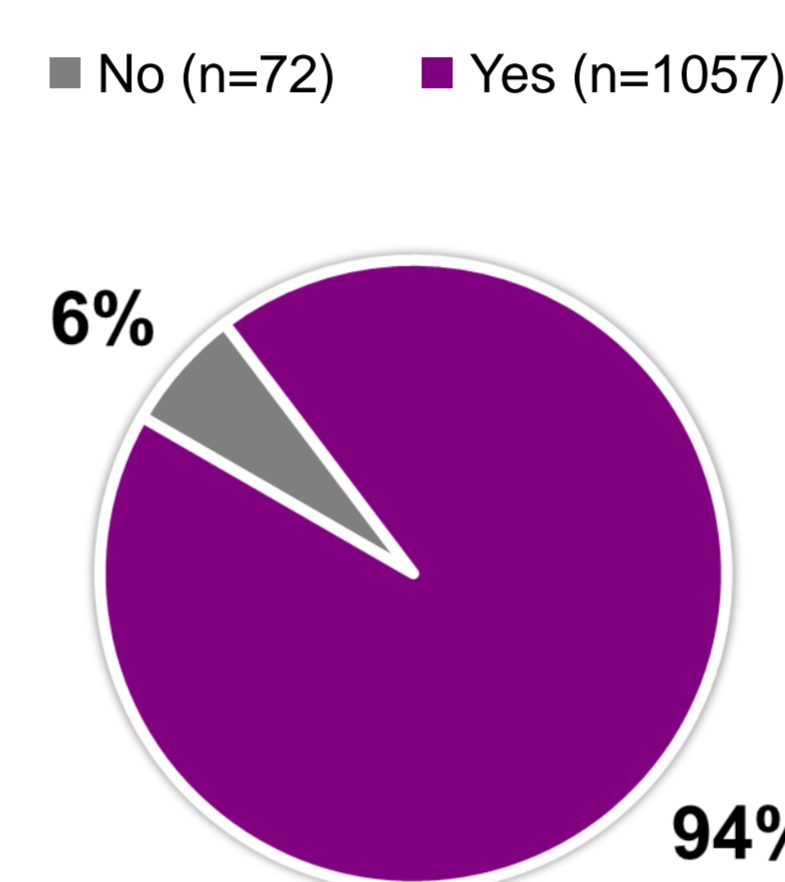


Figure 2. Have any of your colleagues ever noticed a deterioration in your work performance due to your symptoms?

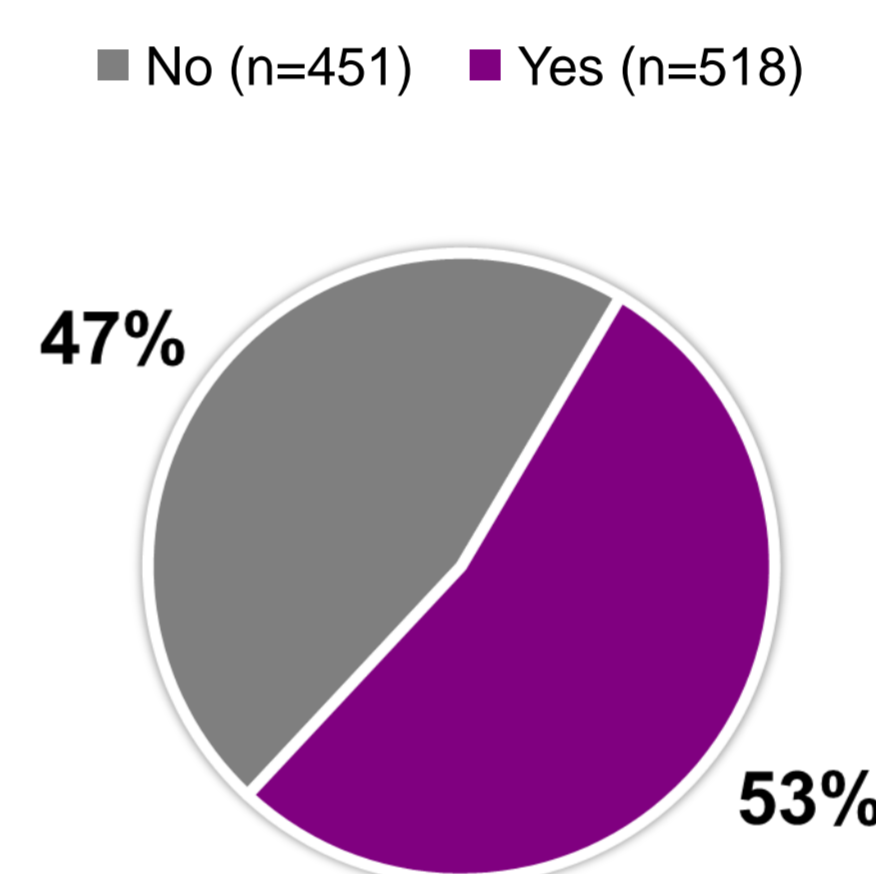


Figure 3. Have you ever had time off work due to your symptoms?

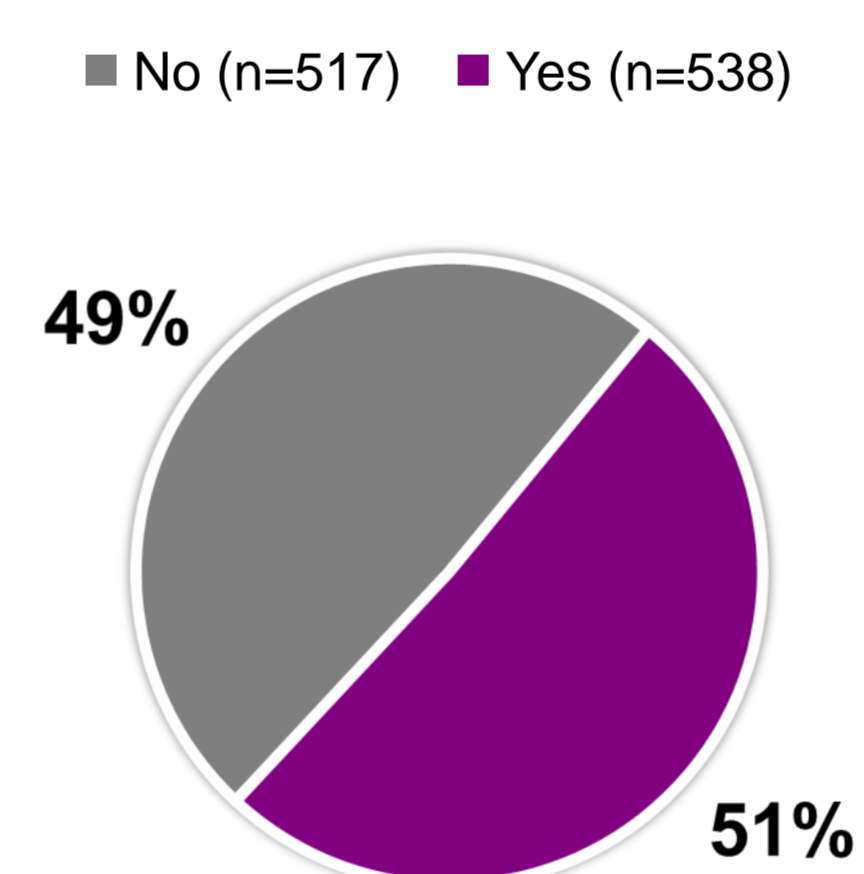


Figure 4. How long have you had off work?

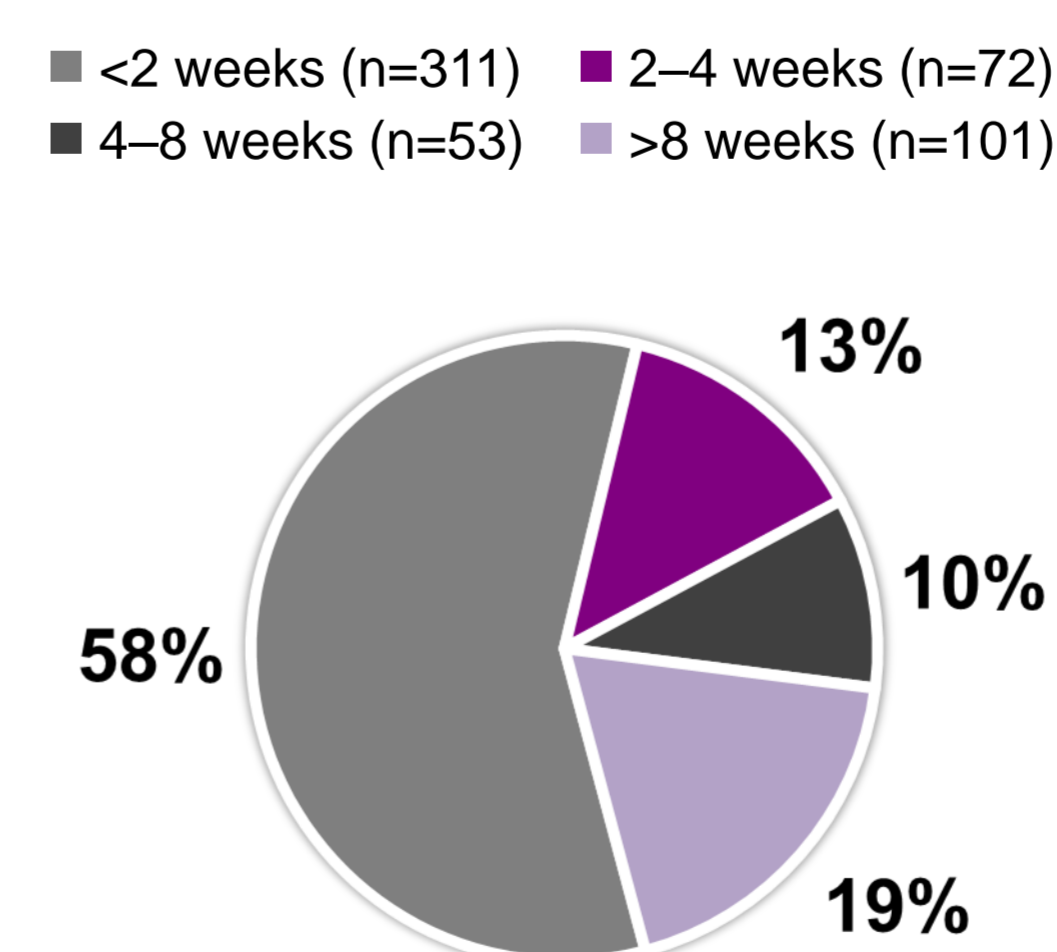


Figure 5. What was the reason documented on your sickness certificate?

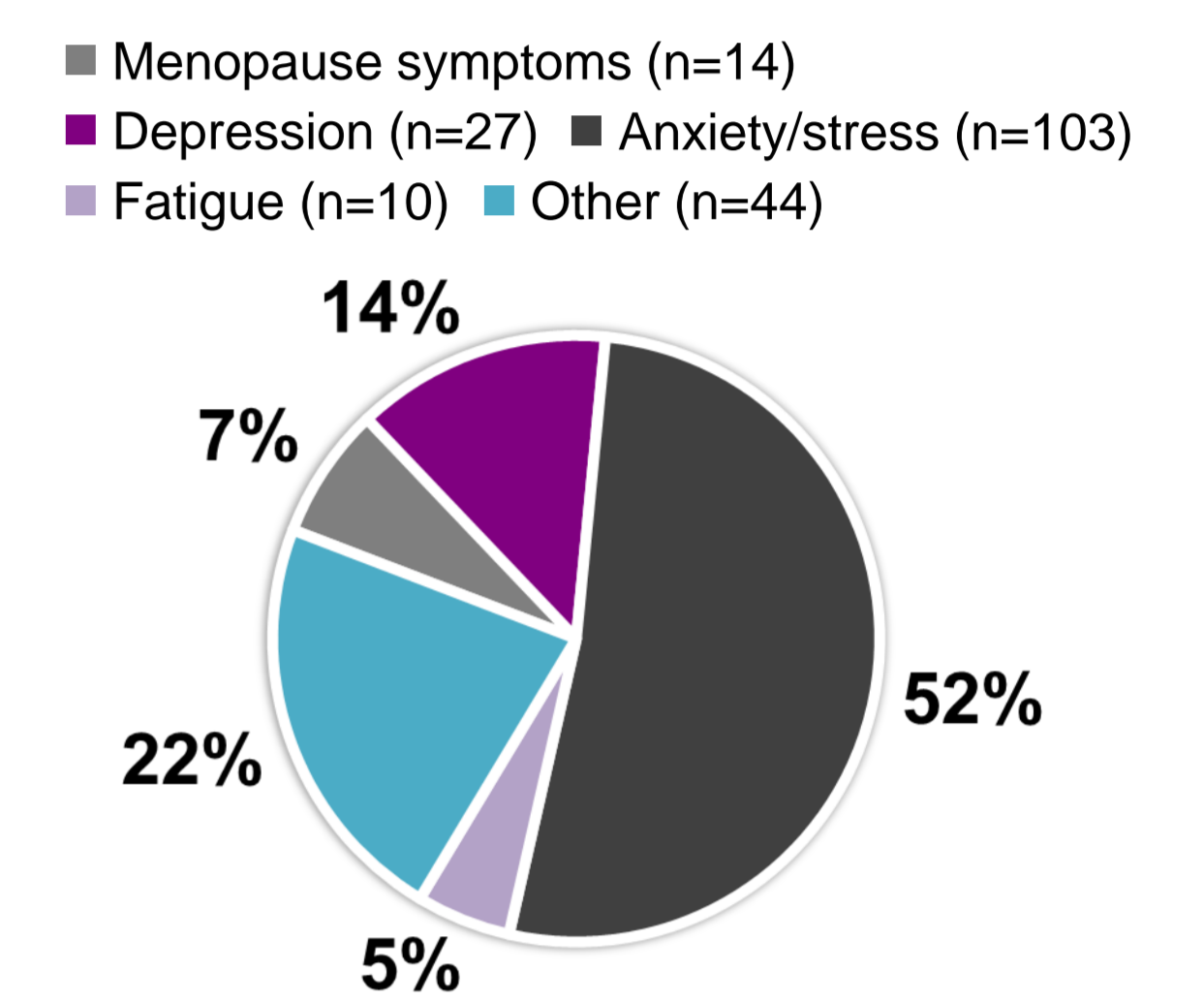


Figure 6. As a direct result of your symptoms, have you ever done any of the following:

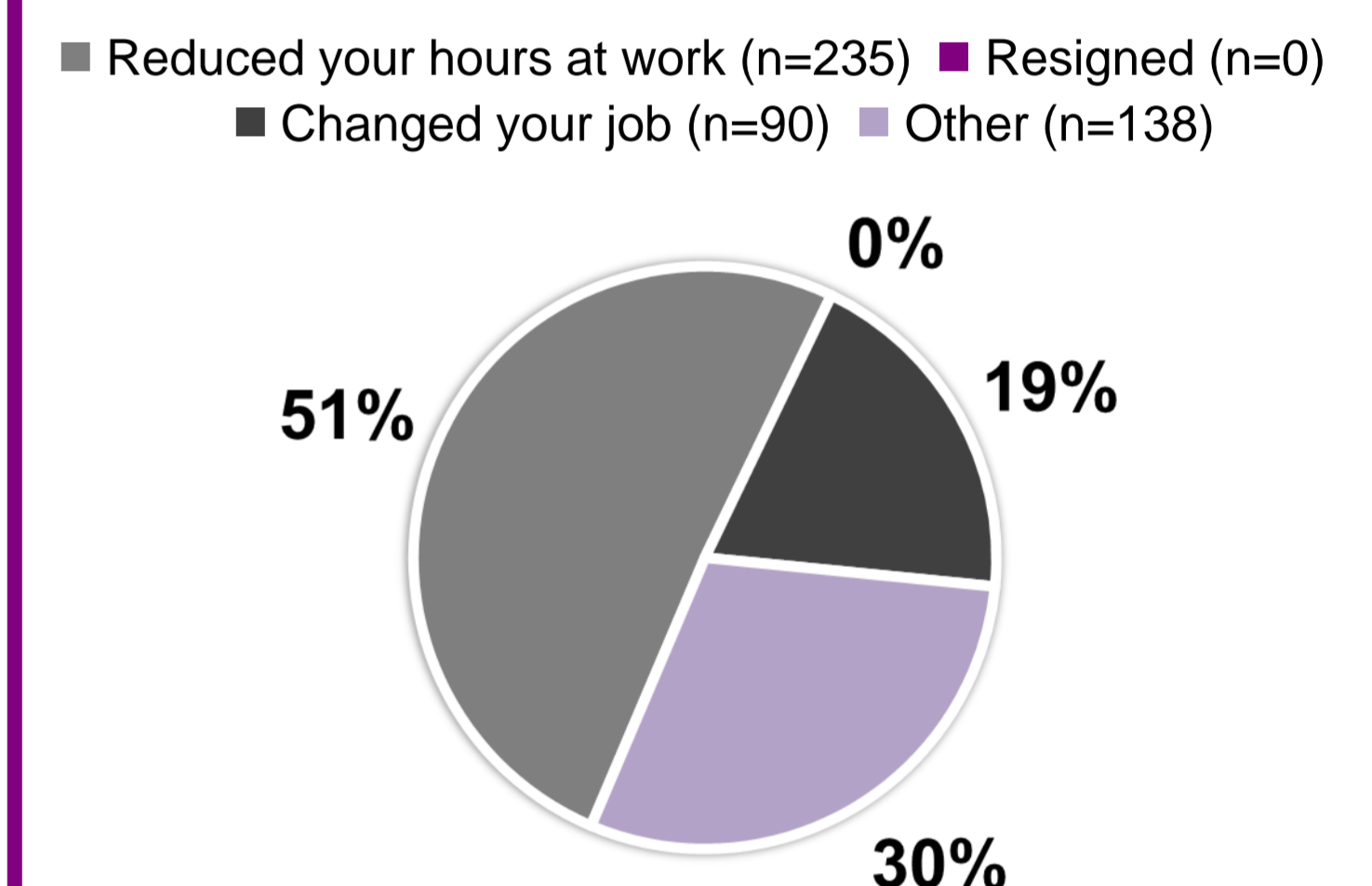


Figure 7. Have you ever received any treatment from a doctor or other healthcare professional for your symptoms?

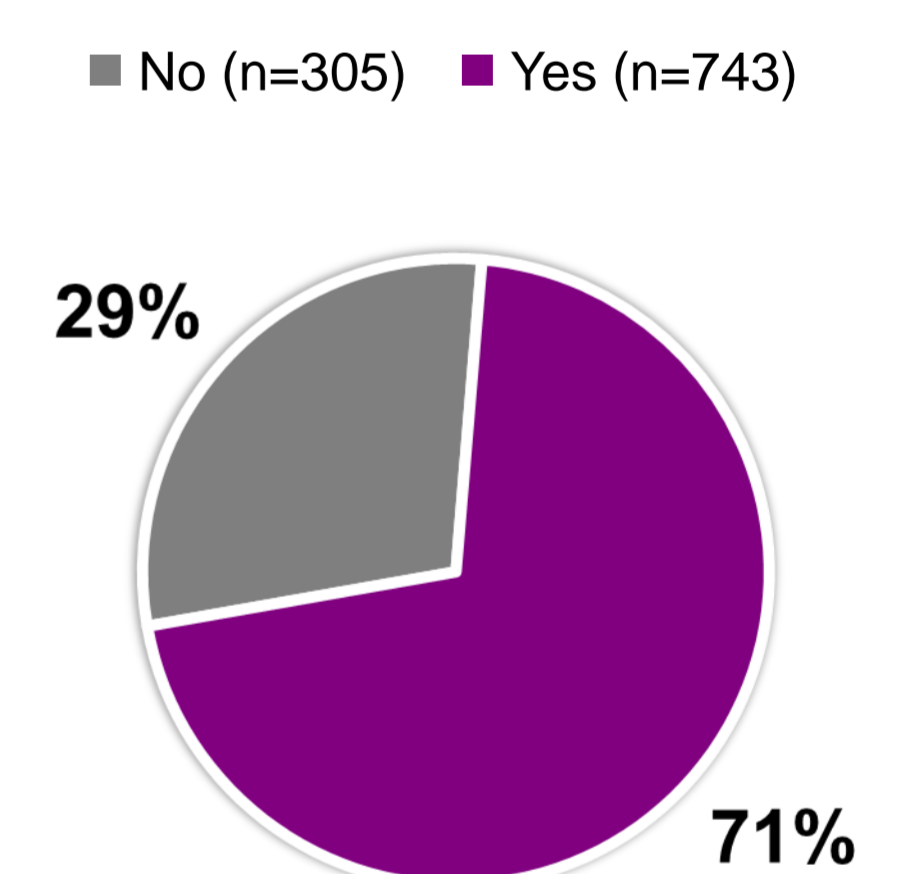
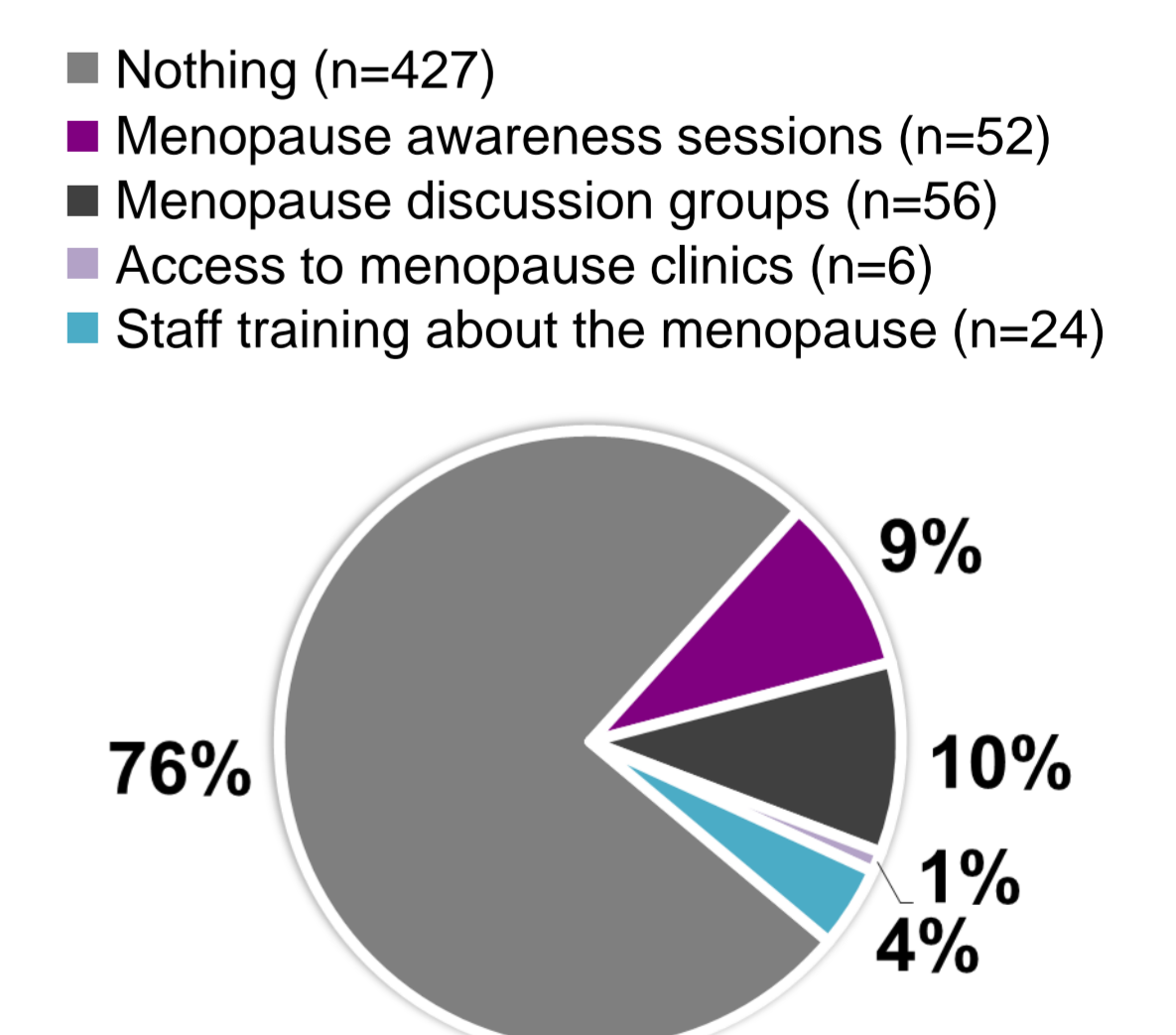


Figure 8. Does your workplace offer any of the following menopause-related services:



## References

1. Office for National Statistics 2019.
2. Kopenhagen T & Guidozzi F. *Climacteric* 2015;18:372-5.
3. Brewis J *et al.* Department of Education 2017.
4. Griffiths A *et al.* *Maturitas* 2016;85:79-81.
5. Menopause and Work – Faculty of Occupational Medicine Guidelines 2018. Available at: <http://www.fom.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Guidance-on-menopause-and-the-workplace-v6.pdf> (accessed July 2019).

## Acknowledgments

Editorial support in the development of this poster was provided by James Reed PhD and Sarah Stowell PhD CMPP of Blue Heeler Ltd and funded by the authors.



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