

Tackling taboos Why female health in the workplace matters Part 2





In Ireland today, women report that they are struggling to juggle their daily lives while also coping with female health issues - **and this can be made even more challenging when adding work into the mix.**

In Part 1 of this series, we explored how women in Ireland are affected by female health-related issues at different life stages. Now, having conducted a further survey, of over 300 nationally representative participants, **we have explored how female health related issues impact women in the workplace specifically.**

The insights we uncovered reflected the broader trends highlighted in part 1 – **that there are significant unmet needs when it comes to female health related supports in the workplace.** While the majority of women we surveyed are happy to discuss female health with colleagues, there is a relatively high level of discomfort in discussing issues with managers and employers. **This means that while many women may be facing challenges and struggles around female health, they are doing so in silence.** Read on to see how these insights might inform your company's approach to future employee supports.



Communication and discussions are vital

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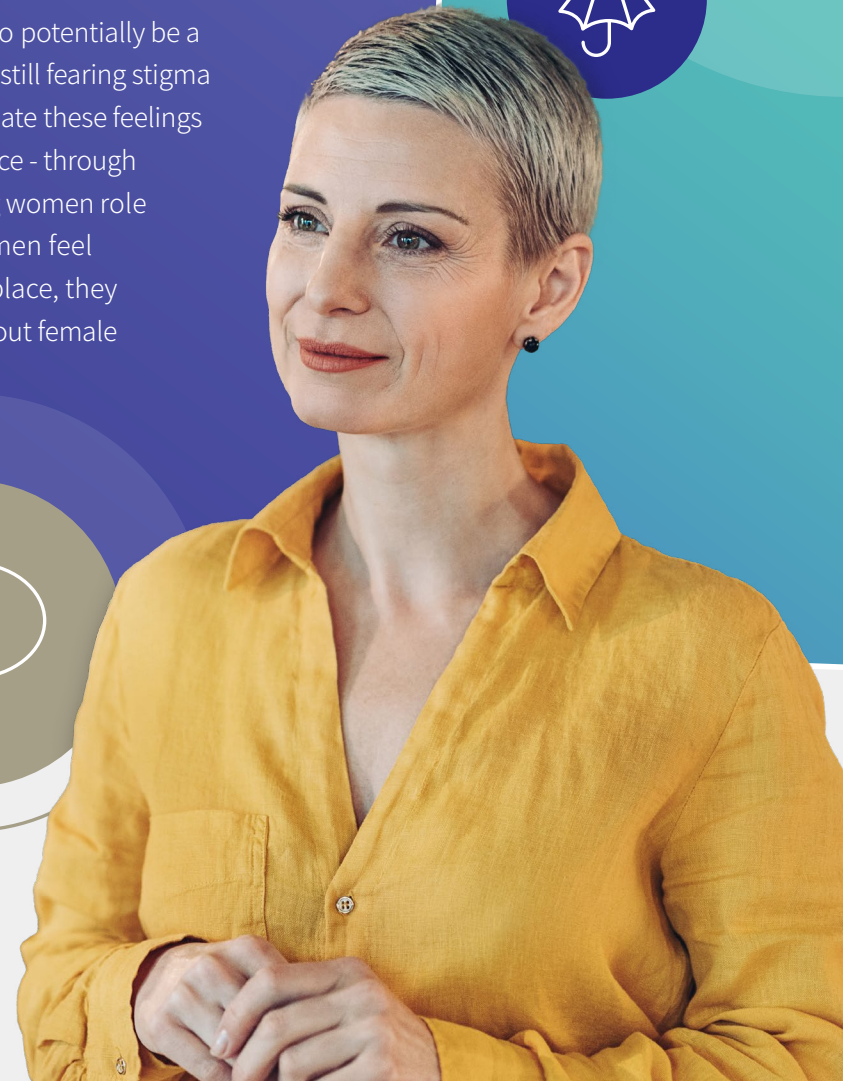
Our initial research into the topic found that there was a major challenge around the individuals that women felt comfortable talking to about female health. It transpires that in the workplace, this challenge is elevated and more complex. **For example, just under 60% of respondents said they are comfortable discussing female health-related issues with colleagues. However, only 42% would be comfortable to highlight it to their employer and manager¹.** While our research found that women grow more comfortable sharing with their colleagues as they age, it still doesn't negate the apparent lack of psychological safety and open communication regarding female health in many organisations.

36% of women agreed with the statement 'I am fearful of negative repercussions on my career if I disclose female health issues to my employer'¹. This is an eye-opening statistic and one that says a lot about the perceived stigma around female health and the apparent lack of support in the workplace.

The finding suggests that **1 in 3 women are either 'suffering in silence' in their workplace or simply have not been given the guidance and support by their employer to speak up about their challenges¹.** When we combine this information with the findings of our first report, it becomes clear that businesses and employers need to do more to support their female employees. Now, while employers do not need to assume the role of GP or health professional, there does need to potentially be a paradigm shift in businesses. With women still fearing stigma in the workplace, companies need to alleviate these feelings by creating psychological safety in this space - through policies, removing biases, and spotlighting women role models with the organisation. When women feel comfortable and understood in the workplace, they are more likely to feel confident talking about female health and their requirements.



36% of women worry that discussing female health with their manager **could jeopardise their career¹.**





The importance of policy-driven support \ 2

We've already identified the fact that many female employees don't feel confident speaking up about their health to their manager, and they lack policy-driven support from their organisations. But, our latest research also found that **one-third of all women have had to use precious annual leave as a result of female health issues, with a further 27% having to take unpaid leave¹**. It's disheartening to find that while younger women are more likely to be in need of 'leave' support, this is a practice we see across all age groups in our data.

In these instances the financial pressure on female employees is amplified.

Many are facing reduced income due to female health-related symptoms or treatment, and this is further compounded by the current cost of living crisis.

Only 13% of women we surveyed worked for a company that had dedicated policies in place for female health¹. While it's great to see some organisations leading the charge in this space, It's clear that to help employees feel supported, encouraged and happy, there needs to be formalised policies and systems in place. These supports not only need to take into account female health, but also offer suitable solutions and directions to the correct information and care systems. An approach like this could reduce absenteeism, make managing annual leave easier, and potentially improve productivity within the business.



**Only 13% of
women we surveyed**

worked for a company that had dedicated
policies in place for female health¹.



Attract and retain female talent

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We now know that female health is vitally important, and we also know that **87% of women reported they aren't receiving support in a formal way at their organisation¹**. So, what does this mean for both employees and employers?

We found that **52% of women would consider moving to an organisation with better female health supports, and in the case of 18-24 year olds, this number jumps to 68%¹**. So it's clear that having formalised processes and policies around the guidance and support you offer female employees is no longer a 'nice to have', it's a 'need to have'. This presents an opportunity.

By investing in, and implementing meaningful and relevant female health support at your organisation, you will be able to ensure your employees are less likely to look elsewhere for the employee experience they desire. What's more, by providing industry-leading solutions for your female employees, you can also make your organisation an attractive prospect for female workers who are actively looking for a new employer. With Ireland currently experiencing the 'great break-up', in which women in senior roles are leaving businesses that fail to meet their needs for flexibility and support², investment in this area could help you to overcome the challenges associated with skills shortages. By championing (and publicly marketing) your commitment to female workers and female health, you can position your business as a company that people want to work with. **This dedication to your female employees can not only help to reduce your staff turnover rates, but create a more inclusive and psychologically safe organisational culture.**



68% of 18-24 year old women
would consider moving to an organisation
with better female health supports¹.

The support your female employees need

Throughout our research, we have uncovered a variety of important insights. Two key findings are that **only 13% of women we surveyed worked for a company that had dedicated policies in place for female health¹**, and up to **68% of women would consider moving to an organisation with better female health supports¹**. This means there is a huge opportunity for employers and their healthcare providers to offer the information and support needed. Women in Irish workplaces need better guidance and care around their health, and so far, few organisations are providing this at an appropriate level.

This is just one of the reasons why we developed our new female health consultation service, **so your employees don't have to figure it out on their own**. This health insurance benefit will give your female employees direct access to GPs who are specialists in female health, who can explain factors to consider and the treatment options available. They can even refer female employees for follow up in-person care if required, and guide them to other supports that often form part of the ideal treatment - **such as nutrition, physiotherapy and mental health**.

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Where this benefit is available on your plan, we will provide a contribution towards a video consultation booked with an Irish based Centric Health GP who is a specialist in female health. We will pay Centric Health directly up to the amount detailed for the number of visits listed on your Table of Cover. You will be required to provide payment details for the remaining amount at the time of booking. Centric Health will take payment 48 hours before your scheduled appointment and once payment is taken it is non-refundable. This amount cannot be claimed against any other benefit on your plan, including your GP visits benefit, as you cannot claim for the same medical expenses twice. The female health specialist GP may recommend additional follow-on services, such as blood tests, scans, or visits to other allied health professionals. These follow on services are not covered under this benefit, but you may have cover on your plan under another benefit listed on your Table of Cover. This service is not suitable for emergencies or urgent conditions as this may delay your treatment. Where a member is under the age of 18, it is necessary for an adult dependent on the policy to book the consultation on their behalf. Depending on the nature of the presenting issue, the GP may request the presence of a parent or guardian for those under the age of 18.

Information correct as at November 2023

Sources:

¹Irish Life Health Female Health in Business Research, Red C Omnibus, July 2023

²The 'great break-up' – Women in senior roles quitting over lack of flexible work, The Irish Independent, October 2023



To find out more about how you can better support your female employees, simply speak to our experts today on

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