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### **Women feel they face societal barriers and biases in the workplace and supporting their unique health needs is a key driver in job satisfaction**

Ipsos Public Affairs, in partnership with Sun Life, conducted groundbreaking research that amplifies the voices of women in the workforce, revealing their unique health needs and advocating for greater attention and support

**Toronto, Ontario, June 5, 2024** — Historically, women's healthcare has been neglected, with insufficient research and a limited understanding of how sex and gender differences affect health outcomes. This has resulted in women's unique health concerns, such as breast and cervical cancer, sexual, reproductive, fertility and maternal health, and menopause, being inadequately addressed. Furthermore, research on health issues disproportionately affecting women, like migraines and anxiety disorders, has been chronically underfunded.

To shed light on this critical issue, Sun Life partnered with Ipsos in Canada to conduct a mixed-methods research study focusing on women's health in the workplace and how employers can support and foster it. The study aimed to provide Sun Life with insights into the specific needs and concerns of women regarding their health, including the most common health issues they face, the types of support they require, and their expectations from employers in terms of health support.

To read the report, please visit:

[Sun Life Women and Health in the Workplace Bright Paper](#)

#### *Key insights include:*

- Women of different ages and life stages experience varied health issues:
  - Women under 40 put more emphasis on gynecological and reproductive matters while those 40 and over listed chronic issues and/or hormonal issues related to perimenopause and menopause as prevalent concerns.
- Mental health is a top concern for women across all age groups:
  - 56% of employed women report mental health as the most important health concern
  - Only 46% report that their employer benefits cover mental health services; 19% say they don't know if their employer offers mental health benefits.
  - 36% of those who report having mental health benefits find coverage inadequate in meeting their needs.



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- Societal and workplace biases impact women's health:
  - 85% feel they still bear a greater burden of household and childcare responsibilities than men.
  - 68% believe women in the workplace are at a disadvantage if they take a leave of absence.
  - 67% say age is perceived as a greater disadvantage for women in terms of career advancement and opportunities compared to men
- Health supports are a key driver of job satisfaction; yet many women did not feel their employer supports their needs:
  - Only 37% say their employer provides adequate resources and support for women's health.
  - Only 47% are comfortable requesting accommodations for women's health.
  - 60% of women believe women's health issues, like menstruation and menopause, can hinder career advancement.
  - Women who feel supported by their workplace mention workplace benefits, workplace culture and respect, mental health supports, flexibility and accommodations as key factors.

Group benefits play a valued role in supporting women's health but there is often a lack of awareness of benefits and supports offered. 7 in 10 say their benefits plan met their needs; however, there can be gaps in coverage and low levels of awareness of the benefits that are available to them. Specifically, there is a lack of awareness regarding benefits for women's health, including contraceptive coverage, fertility treatments, and menopause support.

### About the Study

These are some of the findings of a Ipsos poll conducted between January 23 and January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024, on behalf of Sun Life. For this survey, a sample of 1,421 employed Canadian women, aged 18+ years was interviewed in English and French. The data were weighted to the latest Statistics Canada Census (2021) information by age, region and employment status (full- and part-time). The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll is accurate to within  $\pm 3.2$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, had all employed adult women been polled. The credibility interval will be wider among subsets of the population. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

For the qualitative portion of the research, a total of 30 women participants were engaged between January 19 and January 26th, 2024, on Ipsos's digital qualitative platform 3i through the Ipsos Conversations Community.



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