

The underutilised potential of women made visible via the TNO Health@Work Scan

Equality. For a long time, companies and organisations focused on that principle. After all, everyone should have the same career opportunities. But in striving for equality, something essential is often overlooked: men and women are not the same. Biologically, there are major differences, with women's health complaints often relating to their life stage and the hormonal (im)balance that comes with it. More dialogue is needed on how menstruation, pregnancy, motherhood, and (peri) menopause affect women at work. Only by discussing this openly at work and adopting a solution-oriented approach can we create a work culture where women feel truly at home and can reach their full potential



Not only does this benefit female employees, but it also positively impacts their productivity and thus the entire organization. The TNO Health@Work Scan makes the invisible visible by mapping the (hormone-related) health of employees, with extra attention to the differences between men and women.

Why focus specifically on hormone-related health?

At work, we have long been used to not talk about the differences between men and women and the consequences this has for absenteeism and work productivity. The encouragement to start that conversation often feels uncomfortable. It's time to break this taboo! Because, whether you like it or not, those differences exist, and without acknowledging them, they continue to be overlooked as a blind spot.

TNO Health@Work Scan: What is it exactly?

It is a scientifically substantiated, data-driven method that provides insight into the (hormonal) health and work experience of all employees. Based on an extensive questionnaire, the scan maps out what types of health complaints employees have and to what extent this affects their well-being, productivity, and career. Of course, this is an anonymous survey, so participants can be completely open without concerns.

What's in it for organisations?

The TNO Health@Work Scan makes visible what was previously invisible and helps organisations take targeted action to improve the working situation of their employees. Sometimes small adjustments can make a big difference. But most important is fostering a work culture that acknowledges the differences between employees and where employers are understanding and provide the right support during difficult periods. Ultimately, this benefits both employees and employers, as it significantly increases the chances of higher job satisfaction and productivity, while positively influencing absenteeism.

Has the scan already been implemented in practice?

We first tested the TNO Health@Work Scan within our own organisation and then carried it out at the two locations of the Máxima Medical Center in Eindhoven and Veldhoven. The healthcare sector was deliberately chosen because more than eighty percent of employees in that sector are women. Furthermore, we distributed the scan—in close collaboration with CBS—among Dutch employees. This enables organizations to benchmark their results with national outcomes, which can provide valuable insights.

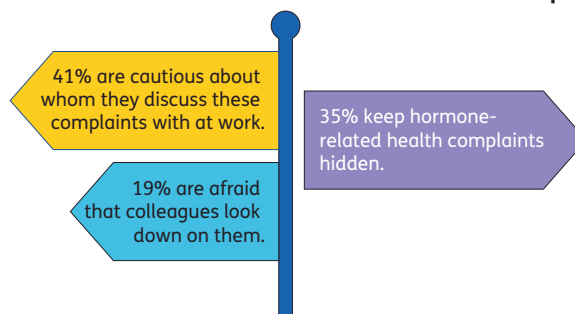
What are the most striking results so far?

39% of women indicate that hormone-related health complaints affect their work. That translates to more than 1.5 million women in the Netherlands. The scan showed that as many as 58% of women and 77% of men indicate that hormone-related complaints are not openly discussed, and 22% of female employees consider it a risk for their career to talk about it. Also notable: 16% of women often feel guilty towards their employer because of hormone-related health complaints.

And in terms of new insights?

It turns out that postmenopausal women, on average, have the lowest absenteeism. This is remarkable, as they often face labor market discrimination, even in times of labor shortages. Retaining this group of employees is crucial, especially given their extensive experience. It is also wise to pay more attention to young women who regularly suffer from menstrual complaints, especially since they still have their entire careers ahead of them. How? By taking these complaints and their impact on work and career opportunities seriously, discussing them openly, and breaking the taboo around biologically determined issues and hence creating a more inclusive work environment.

Of the women with hormone-related health complaints:



Source: Factsheet hormone-related complaints in women: the impact on work.



Scan the QR-code for more information.

Interested in the TNO Health@Work Scan?

The more organisations adopt this scan, the greater the chance that we can break the taboo in the Netherlands, so that all employees can reach their full potential. For more insight into what targeted attention to women's health can yield financially for an organization, TNO has developed the KOBAFEM, a cost-benefit tool that can also be linked to the Health@Work Scan to calculate financial benefits concerning the impact of Women's health at the workplace. For more information, contact us.

Contact

Harry de Boer
Business Developer
✉ harry.deboer@tno.nl

Petra Teeuwen
Senior Project Leader
✉ petra.teeuwen@tno.nl

TNO Health & Work
Sylviusweg 71
2333 BE Leiden
088 866 7500

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