

STRUCTURING SOCIETIES TO ANTICIPATE AN INEVITABLE LIFE TRANSITION MENOPAUSE-RELATED POLICY DISCOURSE IN THE U.K. AND U.S.

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Roughly half the world's population will transition into menopause if they live into their 5th and 6th decades. In 2018 and 2022, the British Parliament and United States Congress, respectively, each introduced policy addressing menopause. While the UK policy, which focused on what would have established formal workplace accommodations for persons experiencing menopausal symptoms, progressed further through legislative channels than did the research and funding-focused policy proposed in the United States, in the end none were enacted into law. The fates of both laws led us to ask whether and in what ways the menopausal transition and life stage – experienced by roughly half of the world's population living into their fifth and sixth decades of life and yet often omitted in consideration of the female reproductive lifespan— has been discussed in these legislative chambers across their histories.

We searched the electronic legislative databases for each country dating to the earliest records available. We found menopause-related policy discourse beginning in 1980 in the US (n= 226) and in 1987 in the UK (n=169), distributed across three major themes: Research, Clinical Care, and Workplace. Within these, we found similarities and differences in policymakers' proposals and debates, as well as shared challenges for the issue's legislative champions, despite the structural differences in governance and national approaches to providing for public health.

We present the themes, potential opportunities, and critical implications of these legislative narratives around menopause, to reflect the ways the needs and outcomes associated with this inevitable life stage –and by extension, those affected by it– are defined in the national policymaking chambers of these two western nations. We also consider what such definitions suggest about protections and adaptations addressing the full female reproductive lifespan in the US and UK, as contextualized by current policy climates in both nations.