

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Women and Access to Health Daring Circle and White Paper

### What is the issue with women and access to health?

- Around the world, men are more likely to have access to appropriate healthcare than women.
- There is still a structural lack of research and data on the most effective and appropriate treatments for women. We know less about the effects of therapies and treatments on women than men.
- It's often harder for women to access mental healthcare than men because of cultural stigma and practical constraints. Women often find it hard to get the information they need, particularly in remote areas. Women often face limited physical access to care, lack the means to pay for healthcare or the time to address health issues, and vulnerable and undocumented women are often excluded from health services.

A few key data points help to illustrate this:

- **Research matters.** Women are more likely to die of heart disease because the way they experience symptoms is not widely understood.<sup>1</sup>
- **Awareness of different symptoms matters.** Doctors are more likely to diagnose depression in women compared with men, even when both genders have identical symptoms.<sup>2</sup>
- **Education matters.** Only 27% of women without any education in Malawi, for example, know that HIV transmission risks can be reduced by taking drugs during pregnancy, compared to 59% for women with secondary education in the country.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5586439/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/reenitadas/2018/04/12/womens-healthcare-comes-out-of-the-shadows-femtech-shows-the-way-to-billion-dollar-opportunities/#766fa7c16159>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.prb.org/girls-education-fact-sheet/>

- **Free time matters.** In a survey of women in developed countries, 62% of women say they lack the time to do what they know they should to stay healthy.<sup>4</sup>

Women are not just often denied access to quality care, they are also discriminated against in the delivery of this care. Even in 2019, access to healthcare is still dependent on gender.

### What is the role of technology?

- In the coming decades, technology will inevitably change the shape of healthcare in the developed and developing worlds. While many of these issues require infrastructural, societal or economic change, technology will make a difference too. It could replicate these inequalities or reduce them.
- If we want healthtech to reduce the gender-based global health inequalities in assumptions, thinking, data, and practice, we must close the gender gap in who funds, designs, and builds that technology.
- Women are more likely than men to identify the issues which affect them disproportionately. As a result they are more likely to develop solutions, found companies to bring them to market, invest in them, and promote them.
- That means ensuring women have access to investment, insurance, talent, and equipping more women with skills, confidence, and support.

### How can technology address the barriers to women's access to health?

- Many of the issues affecting women's access to health need infrastructural, societal or economic change, but technology can still help to address the barriers and avoid replicating the inequalities outlined above.
- Precision medicine defined by an individual patient's genetic code or unique biologic response can personalise treatment, digital platforms allow on-demand real time expertise through sensors, telemedicine such as chat, or artificial intelligence, eliminating the obstacles of time and distance.
- However, women are underrepresented in healthtech:
  - 70% of C suite executives in healthcare in the US are men<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.talentinnovation.org/\\_private/assets/PopHealthcare\\_ExecSumm-CTI.pdf](https://www.talentinnovation.org/_private/assets/PopHealthcare_ExecSumm-CTI.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/women-in-the-healthcare-industry>

- Only 3% of people in the sector think that women's aspirations are driving change in healthtech.<sup>6</sup>
- Women's health accounts for only 4% of the overall funding for R&D for healthcare products<sup>7</sup>
- By the middle of the 2010s, only about 10% of US healthtech businesses were founded by women.<sup>8</sup>

A great deal of work is needed to encourage more women to enter and lead in the technology sector.

### How big is the market opportunity from women's healthtech?

- 'Femtech' – startups which solve medical issues which have historically challenged women – is now an identifiable category targeted by investors.
- The global women's health market is expected to reach \$54.62 billion by 2026, according to Grand View Research.
- The market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.2%, particularly in North America and Asia Pacific regions.<sup>9</sup>

### What are you calling for?

- There is plenty that governments, businesses, universities, and NGOs can do to redress these biases and encourage a new generation of health technologies which address these inequalities.
- The Daring Circle recommends that businesses, governments, NGOs, and universities:
  - Raise the profile of the problem of men's symptoms receiving more research attention than those of women.
  - Sponsor research focusing on women's health outcomes and raise awareness of the gap.

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<sup>6</sup> The Industry Gender Gap: Women and Work in the Fourth Industrial Revolution, WEF 2016  
[http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_FOJ\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_GenderGap.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_FOJ_Executive_Summary_GenderGap.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/reenitadas/2018/04/12/womens-healthcare-comes-out-of-the-shadows-femtech-shows-the-way-to-billion-dollar-opportunities/#4a05a55e6159>

<sup>8</sup> <https://rockhealth.com/reports/2016-year-end-funding-report-a-reality-check-for-digital-health/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/>

- Assure women providers, patients and advocates participate in the design and implementation of electronic health records.
- Fund accelerators to encourage, develop, invest in, and grow young companies seeking to improve mental health.
- Encourage funded competitions to discover and encourage technology to fill existing gaps in access to physical care.
- Raise the profile of wait times and charging for treatments as a matter of public health and gender equality.

### What is the Access to Health Daring Circle?

- The Women & Access to Health Daring Circle is an initiative of the Women's Forum for the Economy & Society, bringing together an ecosystem of partners to improve women's access to health by concretely advancing solutions that harness technology to address the gender gap in access in developed and developing countries, as well as to understand the barriers to women leading in health tech and support promising tech solutions that address the issues of access to health for women, through funding and mentorship.
- The Daring Circle is led by **AXA** and **Sanofi**. Its Strategic Members are **BNP Paribas** and **Google**, in collaboration with **RB** as a Global Partner and **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance** as an Institutional Partner. It is also supported by **Mercer** as Knowledge Partner. We are facilitating mentorship between these partners and five start-ups working hard to improve women's access to health.
- As a circle of partners, our goal is to improve women's access to health and to get women's leadership in healthtech onto the agenda of international institutions, companies, institutes of higher education and others. We do this by:
  - Conducting research and putting it into the public domain, such as the paper on Women's Access to Health.
  - Empowering and supporting healthtech leaders. We led a competition to find the most promising startups improving women's access to health and awarded them prize money and access to mentorship from our partners.
  - We are facilitating mentorship between the partners and the five winning startups, which provide services ranging from supporting efficient and accurate vulvar and cervical examinations, to ensuring that babies' medical histories are available to health officials on a wearable necklace, and an at-home test to help women understand their fertility.

### What is the Women's Forum for the Economy and Society?

- The Women's Forum for the Economy & Society is a global platform of actions to highlight women's voices and build together a more inclusive economy. With the Daring Circles, the Women's Forum's ambition is to drive innovative solutions at scale and at pace through collaboration between businesses, public entities, NGOs and the media to have impact on issues where women are disproportionately affected and where their leadership is most urgently needed.