

LEADING BEYOND THE GAP:

Closing the Women's Health Gap in Canada

Blueprint for Action

February 2026



Closing the women's health gap in cardiovascular diseases (CVD) in Canada

Canadian women face an unequal burden from cardiovascular diseases

1

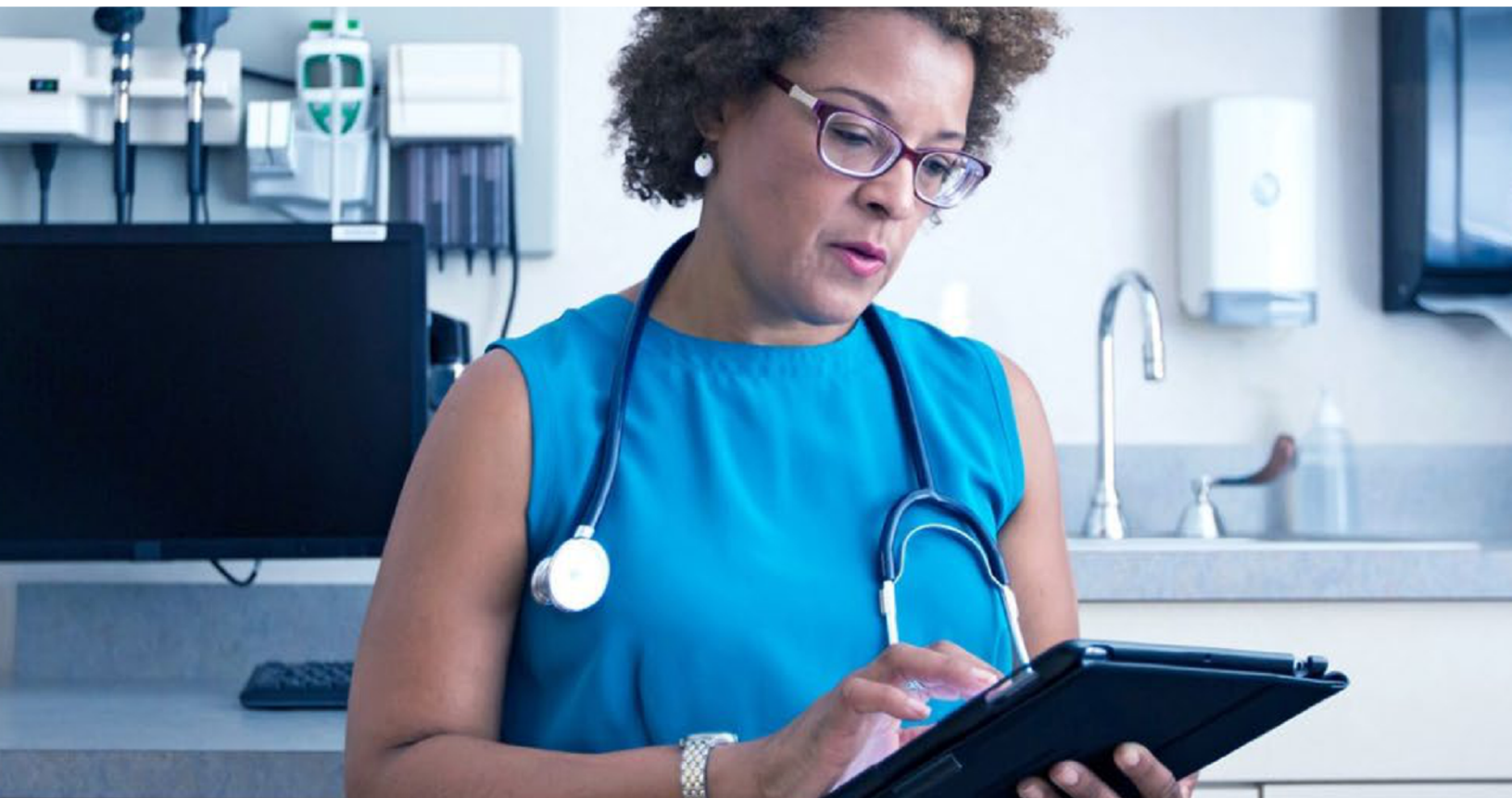
Canadian woman dies every 20 minutes from heart disease¹. In 2019, 20% more women than men died of heart failure, and 32% more women than men died of stroke in Canada²

60%

of the women's health gap in Canada is driven by the lack of innovation and data³

29%

of the Canadian women's health gap is driven by cardiovascular diseases. Closing it could add ~\$2B to Canadian GDP³



1. "Ms. Understood: Heart & Stroke 2018 Report" Heart & Stroke Foundation (2018)
2. "System failure: Women's heart and brain health are at risk" Heart & Stroke Foundation (2023)
3. "Closing the women's health gap: Canada's \$37 billion opportunity," McKinsey & Company (2025)
4. "Participation of Women in Cardiovascular Trials From 2017 to 2023" Jama Network (2025) – note that data represents participation across Canada and Mexico

Gaps in the current healthcare ecosystem...

require action to close

1 **Lack of understanding and recognition of women-specific CVD symptoms**, causing women to be misdiagnosed or experience delays in diagnosis

Incorporate research findings into cardiology training materials to educate current and incoming care practitioners on women's symptoms

2 **Limited research and under-reporting of CVD treatment** safety and efficacy to inform treatment specific to women

Identify surgical and pharmacological treatments that address needs of female CVD patients and fund initiatives to fill gaps

3 **Under-representation in clinical trials** causing limited effectiveness of existing treatments

Increase women's participation in clinical trials by partnering with research institutions and CVD foundations to raise awareness of trials, empower women with CVD conditions to participate, and enforce reporting on outcomes by sex and gender

Female representation in CVD clinical trials, 2017-2023⁴



■ Insufficient representation

Hypertension

Arrhythmia

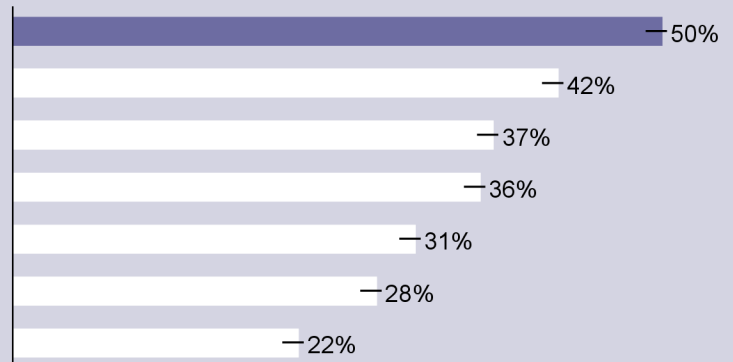
Heart failure

Stroke

Coronary heart disease

Pulmonary hypertension

Acute coronary syndrome



4 **Limited innovation of breakthrough treatments** driven by gaps in evidence specific to women's CVD experiences and ongoing reliance of male-dominated treatment criteria

Support CVD innovation by partnering with research institutions, grant-makers and investors to fund innovations from discovery to scale and adoption

5 **Lack of community or patient awareness of women-specific CVD symptoms**, causing women to be unaware of their specific symptoms and delay seeking treatment

Partner to launch national campaigns to inform the public of women-specific CVD symptoms

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The Women's Health Collective
Canada would like to express
deep gratitude to Desjardins for
their commitment to building
positive change for Canada

