

LEADING BEYOND THE GAP:

Closing the Women's Health Gap in Canada

Blueprint for Action

February 2026



Closing the women's health gap in brain and mental health disorders in Canada

Canadian women face an unequal burden from mental and brain disorders

3-5x

higher mortality for women compared to men for neurological diseases such as dementia, epilepsy, and Parkinson's¹

~5%

higher rates of poor mental health, anxiety and depression for Canadian women vs men²

74%

of the Canadian women's health gap stems from gaps in care delivery³

15%

of the Canadian women's health gap is driven by brain and mental health disorders. Closing it could add ~\$6B Canadian to GDP⁴



1. Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System (2023-2024)
2. "The State of Mental Health in Canada: Gender in the Spotlight" Canadian Mental Health Association (2024)
3. McKinsey Health Institute data (2025)
4. "Closing the women's health gap: Canada's \$37 billion opportunity," McKinsey & Company (2025)
5. "The gender health gap: Its impact on working women in Canada" Sun Life (2024)

Gaps in the current healthcare ecosystem...

require action to close

1 **Limited sex- and gender-disaggregated data from mental health research and clinical trials**, hindering understanding of women's specific symptom presentation and treatments

Enforce sex- and gendered reporting of mental health trials

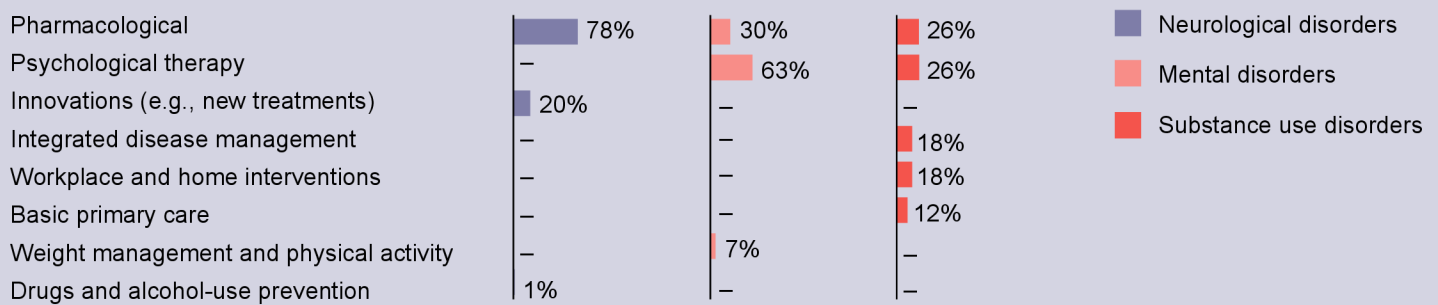
2 **Generalization of brain and mental health symptoms across genders** causing women to be underdiagnosed or experience delayed diagnoses for brain and mental health disorders

Document women-specific symptoms for brain and mental health and incentivize use in Canadian medical schools and healthcare facilities

3 **Pharmacological interventions contribute the most to the gap in treatment** (26-30% for substance and mental disorders, 78% for neurological conditions³), indicating opportunities to improve care delivery through proper diagnosis and management

Research sex-specific nuances to existing pharmacological treatments and optimize women's access to effective interventions (e.g., tailored dosages)

Portion of DALY gap for women by intervention type in Canada, 2019³



4 **Patient education mechanisms are often insufficient** (10% of women have unmet mental health needs compared with 6% of men); leaving women uninformed about treatment options and available support services

Scale treatment pathways leveraging digital solutions (e.g., virtual trauma training to meet patient needs)

5 **Leading cause of workforce disability leave in Canada** (i.e., brain and mental health conditions drive 40% of benefits claims for women vs. 30% for men⁵), impacting the Canadian workforce and productivity

Advise employers and benefits providers on adequate mental health coverage for women and tactics to educate on early risk factor identification and prevention

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The Women's Health Collective
Canada would like to express
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positive change for Canada

