



## **Video Script: Mind the Gap: exploring women's health inequalities in Northern Ireland**

**Duration:** 3:50 minutes

**Format:** Animated text (no narration, animation for decorative purposes only)

**Audience:** General Public

### Introduction

Healthcare isn't equal for everyone.

[Research shows](#) women are often overlooked, facing more barriers to care and worse health outcomes than men.

This is known as the [gender health gap](#).

In the UK, women live longer than men.....[but spend more of their lives in ill health](#).

In fact, Research suggests the UK has the 12th largest gender health gap globally with women spending [three more years in ill health and disability when compared to men](#).

### How did the gender health gap happen?

Women make up 51% of the population, yet historically, [healthcare has been designed for men](#).

Women's health conditions are often [underfunded and under-researched](#).

This means we don't fully [understand how conditions that affect both men and women impact them differently](#).

## The Impact of the Gender Health Gap in Northern Ireland

Women's health outcomes in Northern Ireland reflect these wider global and UK trends.

Endometriosis is a chronic debilitating condition which Affects 1.5 million women in the UK, yet some women in NI [wait over two years for an initial appointment with a consultant](#).

Heart disease kills twice as many women as breast Cancer in Northern Ireland. [Yet 6 in 10 women don't know it's a leading cause of death](#). This lack of awareness raises women's risk of heart disease and heart attack.

Mental Health, older teenage girls (16-19) in Northern Ireland [are more likely to self-harm \(19.1%\) or have suicidal thoughts \(22.7%\)](#) than boys (7.1% and ~5%) and their rates are higher than those seen in international studies.

Women in Northern Ireland have also [shared their experiences of accessing healthcare](#).

1,080 individuals and 74 organisations took part in a women's health survey by the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

[79% Of women felt unheard](#), dismissed or had their symptoms downplayed by a health professional.

[2 out of 3 Women](#) said a health condition or disability affected their workplace experience.

[31% of women](#) find essential services 'Inaccessible' or 'Very inaccessible'.

## Economic Costs of the Gender Health Gap

The impact of this health gap on work and the economy is also significant.

Heavy periods, endometriosis, and ovarian conditions are estimated to cost the UK economy nearly [£11 billion a year](#).

Yet investing in women's health would bring economic benefits. A recent study estimated that for [every £1 invested in obstetrics and gynaecology services in England = £11 return](#).

[Around 60,000 women in the UK](#) can't work due to menopause symptoms.

Yet supporting menopausal women in work could add [an estimated £1.5 billion](#) to the economy annually.

## Bridging the Gender Health Gap

Research identifies a number of key steps that could make a real difference for women's health and the healthcare system as a whole

[Health is shaped by more than medical care](#)—we must address social factors too.

All young people should have [early access to reliable information](#) on women's health.

[A life-course approach](#) ensures targeted support at key stages of women's lives.

[Better healthcare coordination](#) — women struggle with fragmented services and inflexible funding.

Local and global policymakers agree — every region needs a [comprehensive women's health strategy](#).

## Are we reducing the gap in Northern Ireland?

An action plan for Women's Health is being developed by the Department of Health but funding is limited.

[A listening exercise](#) is also underway to understand women's healthcare needs.

However, experts say an action plan isn't enough. A cross-departmental strategy is needed.

Health experts have also suggested that [Women's Health Hubs](#) could help.

[England is rolling out health hubs](#)— one-stop clinics for menopause, gynaecology & more.

The Derry Well Women centre believes [this could work in Northern Ireland](#). “We can wrap our services around women.... without spending additional money” said Dr Sandra McNeill.

Ultimately, there is still work to do in Northern Ireland to close the health gap and ensure women get the care they need.

[Communities and countries and ultimately the world are only as strong as the health of their women.](#) — Michelle Obama

Thank you for watching.