



Women's  
Health



January 2024

## Overview of Women's Health

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Women's Health Issue Brief, Part 1

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This is part one in a series of briefs about key women's health issues with particular relevance to women of workforce age and for which employers can act to improve both the quality of life and health of women in the workforce. Each brief provides a general overview of each of the women's health issues below and then describes research related to employer workforce and/or health care costs and health inequities as applicable.

### Other briefs in this series:

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**Part 2, Women's Mental Health**

**Part 3, Cardiovascular Health in Women**

**Part 4, Obesity in Women**

**Part 5, Menopause / Healthy Aging in Women**

*Women face diverse and unique health concerns across their lifespan which may affect overall health and wellness. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 14% of adult women are in fair or poor health and 49% have an ongoing health issue.*

## Overview of Women's Health

Women face diverse and unique health concerns across the lifespan which may affect their overall health and wellness. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 13.9% of women aged 18 and over are in fair or poor health and 49% of women have an ongoing health issue. Further, 41.8% of women aged 20 and over are obese, 45.2% have hypertension and the leading causes of death are heart disease and cancer.<sup>1</sup> In July 2022, HealthyWomen fielded a national survey of 6,199 women and found that three-quarters have been diagnosed with at least one health condition and approximately 40% rated their health as “just okay” or worse. In addition, only half of these women reported being fully up to date on all recommended screenings and preventive measures, with one in five reporting they had none. Sixty-two percent of women reported that certain factors inhibited them; including rising cost of deductibles and copayments, high cost of healthy foods, and lack of motivation.<sup>2</sup> Notably, women who are caregivers (meaning that they provide daily or regular support to children, adults or people with chronic illnesses or disabilities) are at greater risk for poor physical and mental health, including depression and anxiety.<sup>3</sup>

An issue brief from The Commonwealth Fund compared the status of women's health and health care in the U.S. to 10 other high-income countries, such as Germany and Australia, and found that women in the U.S. report worse access to health care and poorer health status. U.S. women also have the greatest burden of chronic illness; one in five U.S. women reported having two or more chronic conditions in addition to having the highest rate of emotional distress. Yet, women in the U.S. also report the highest rates of skipping needed health care due to cost difficulty affording their health care and are least satisfied with their care.<sup>4</sup>

Challenges with access to preventive care are more commonly experienced by people in underrepresented racial or ethnic groups; people who identify as transgender, lesbian and bisexual; and individuals who are uninsured/under-insured, younger or living in rural areas.<sup>5,6</sup> Although there were favorable trends in young adult women ages 18 to 25 queried in the National Survey of Family Growth in terms of utilization of preventive services and contraception use from 2002 to 2015, health inequities have persisted in HPV vaccination in Black women and effective contraception in respondents from all racial and ethnic minority groups.<sup>7</sup>

This issue brief uses gender-specific language and the term “women” for simplicity although much of this information may also apply to transgender men, nonbinary individuals or those who may identify differently than the gender and pronouns used in this issue brief.

*For issue briefs on more women's health topics, [click here](#).*

## Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/womens-health.htm>
- 2 <https://www.healthywomen.org/programs/national-action-plan>
- 3 <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/7facts-womens-health/index.html>
- 4 Gjunja MZ, Tikkanen R, Seervai S, et al. What is the Status of Women's Health Care in the U.S. Compared to Ten Other Countries? The Commonwealth Fund Survey Brief, December 2018.
- 5 Fiscella K, Sanders MR. Racial and ethnic disparities in the quality of health care. *Annu Rev Public Health*. 2016; 37: 375-394.
- 6 Bazzi AR, Whorms DS, King DS, et al. Adherence to mammography screening guidelines among transgender persons and sexual minority women. *Am J Public Health*. 2015; 105(11): 2356-2358.
- 7 Murray Horwitz ME, Pace LE, Ross-Degnan D. Trends and disparities in sexual and reproductive health behaviors and service use among young adult women (aged 18-25 years) in the United States, 2002-2015. *Am J Public Health*. 2018; 108(S4): S336-S343.



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## About the Purchaser Business Group on Health (PBGH)

Purchaser Business Group on Health (PBGH) is a nonprofit coalition representing nearly 40 private employers and public entities across the U.S. that collectively spend \$350 billion annually purchasing health care services for more than 21 million Americans and their families. PBGH has a 30-year track record of incubating new, disruptive operational programs in partnership with large employers and other health care purchasers. Our initiatives are designed to test innovative methods and scale successful approaches that lower health care costs and increase quality across the U.S.



