

IN HER WORDS

Women's Experience with the Healthcare System in BC

When it comes to healthcare in British Columbia, women are experiencing serious inequities that are impacting their physical, mental, and emotional well-being — just because they are women. We asked women across the province to tell us about their experiences.



ALL WOMEN

Almost 1/3 of women do not feel like their needs are being treated effectively by the healthcare system. **Half** of women have felt a physician had diminished or overlooked their symptoms.

“It took me three years to receive a Lyme Disease diagnosis. I was misdiagnosed by my doctor, and then dismissed by seven doctors after that, each only recommending anti-anxiety medication. But I knew deep down something was seriously wrong.”



UNDER 45

38% of women under age 45 have challenges accessing care. **1/3 of younger women** rated their emotional health as “fair” or “poor”.

“I had experienced bloating in my abdomen for as long as I could remember. After four years of being told everything was “normal,” I was finally diagnosed with Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome. Do not give up when someone tells you that nothing is wrong.”



OVER 45

3 in 5 mature women reported having had their symptoms diminished or overlooked by a healthcare professional.

“My doctor told me I was too young for menopause. But I knew what I was experiencing wasn't normal — the sore breasts, sleep deprivation, moments of rage. I felt dismissed, like it was all in my head.”

THERE IS AN URGENT NEED FOR A GREATER FOCUS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

Ethnicity, culture, sexuality, ability, location, education, and income — all affect how women interact with the healthcare system. In this way, each woman's experience is as individual as she is.

INVEST. ENGAGE. SPEAK UP.
INHERWORDS.CA



MATERNITY

Women from underprivileged populations (including recent immigrants, refugees, or those with a history of incarceration, homelessness, poverty, substance use) were almost **2x as likely** to report lack of access to maternal care.

“At the time of my pregnancy I was hugely unsupported and uninformed. I was 20 years old and under the poverty line. I felt disrespected for this.”

INDIGENOUS

1/3 of Indigenous women rated their emotional health as “poor”. 83% of Indigenous women age 16-24 reported challenges accessing the care they needed.

“I have re-occurring pancreatitis. They stigmatized me as an alcoholic, but I don't drink. I was hospitalized, my levels went up while I was in the hospital, and then they apologized for accusing me of drinking. But I have tattoos, and they judge you, and that stigma follows you.”

IMMIGRANT

Immigrant women experience a **decline in health** over time and may under-report their healthcare needs.

“I have a family doctor. But I worry because English is my second language, so I have difficulties describing my symptoms and where they are occurring on my body. So if I got in an accident or very ill, I worry about how to explain this to the doctor.”