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Where Can Investments in Women's Health Lead Us Tomorrow?

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Introduction

Globally, nearly 1 billion women, which is roughly one in three women, experience physical pain every single day. This indicates a gap between the healthcare they need and what they actually get.¹

Investment in women's health, often referred to as femtech, shows significant economic impact and growth potential. In 2021, the femtech industry received \$5.4 billion in Asia and \$4.5 billion in North America, indicating strong investor interest in women's health technologies.² Investing in women's health isn't just the right thing; it's a smart investment with far-reaching benefits. Healthy women are the foundation of strong societies, contributing significantly to economic growth, social stability, and the well-being of future generations. Yet, persistent gender disparities in healthcare access and quality continue to hold women back, affecting not only their own potential but also the collective progress of nations.

By examining the links between women's health, economic prosperity, and overall societal well-being, aim to demonstrate the necessity of placing women's health and empowerment at the center of global development strategies. This shift is not merely philanthropic but a catalyst for a more equitable and prosperous future for all. This article highlights the positive ripple effects of investing in women's health and inspires policy changes prioritizing women's healthcare access, research, and innovation.

Investing in Women's Health: A Full-Circle Approach

The concept of investing in women's health goes beyond just allocating funds. It's a comprehensive strategy that includes several key areas. Firstly, it prioritizes increased access to quality healthcare. This means ensuring women can receive preventive care, screenings, treatment for both chronic and acute conditions, sexual and reproductive health services, and vital mental health support. Secondly, investment in women's health fuels research and development. This includes funding research specific to women's health needs and addressing conditions like endometriosis, pregnancy complications, and gender-specific cancers. Similarly, empowering women with knowledge is another crucial aspect of investment. Education and awareness campaigns inform women about their bodies, potential health risks, and available healthcare services. This knowledge empowers them to make informed decisions about their well-being. Finally, investment helps in capacity building within healthcare systems. This involves training and upskilling healthcare professionals to deliver gender-sensitive care that effectively addresses women's unique needs.

Improved health translates into a more robust economy. When women are healthy, they are more likely to participate in the workforce, contributing to economic growth. Additionally, investing in preventive care and treatment of chronic diseases lowers overall healthcare expenditures. Healthy women are also more likely to be productive at work, leading to better economic performance for businesses and the nation.

¹ <https://hologic.womenshealthindex.com/en>

² [Research AI | Your A.I. powered Research Assistant \(statista.com\)](#)

By demonstrating the positive economic impact, investments in women's health result in improved access to healthcare for women, creating a virtuous cycle that benefits individuals, families, and societies. Investing in women's health is a social good and a smart economic investment with far-reaching benefits.

Why is investing in Women's Health Critical for the Economy?

In 2021, women's health through technology-based products, services, and software attracted significant investment. The Reproductive Health subsector received the most attention, with 25.8% of investors, followed by the Healthcare subsector with over 20%³.

Women's health has been viewed solely through a social lens for far too long. However, a growing body of evidence demonstrates a powerful and often overlooked truth: investing in women's health is not just the right thing to do; it's a strategic economic imperative. We unlock economic benefits that ripple throughout society by prioritizing women's access to quality healthcare, education, and empowerment. This is likely due to several factors, including decreased absenteeism, improved cognitive function, and higher employee morale.

Some of the economic impacts of investing in women's health are as follows-

- **Increased Workforce Participation and Productivity:**
Healthy women are more likely to participate in the workforce, contributing to economic growth. This is likely due to several factors, including decreased absenteeism, improved cognitive function, and higher employee morale.
- **Reduced Healthcare Costs:**
Investing in preventive care and treatment of chronic diseases in women lowers overall healthcare expenditures. A 2023 report by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that women with lower incomes are more likely to be uninsured and experience difficulties affording healthcare services.⁴ By addressing these disparities, preventive care can help manage health issues before they become expensive problems.
- **Demographic Stability and Economic Growth:**
When women have access to quality healthcare, particularly sexual and reproductive health services, they are better equipped to make informed decisions about family planning. This can lead to smaller families by choice, allowing women to invest more time and energy into education and careers. The World Bank reports that girls with just one additional year of secondary education see a 15-25% increase in their future wages. This translates into a larger pool of skilled workers, fueling economic growth and innovation.⁵
- **Investing in the Next Generation:**
Healthy mothers are more likely to have healthy children, leading to a better-educated and more productive next generation. Research by the World Health Organization suggests that every dollar

³ [Research AI | Your A.I. powered Research Assistant \(statista.com\)](#)

⁴ <https://www.kff.org/about-womens-health-policy/>

⁵ <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/education-statistics-%5Eall-indicators>

invested in maternal health yields a return of \$3 in economic and social benefits.⁶ Additionally, empowered women are more likely to invest earnings in their families and communities, which can increase demand for goods and services, further stimulating economic activity.

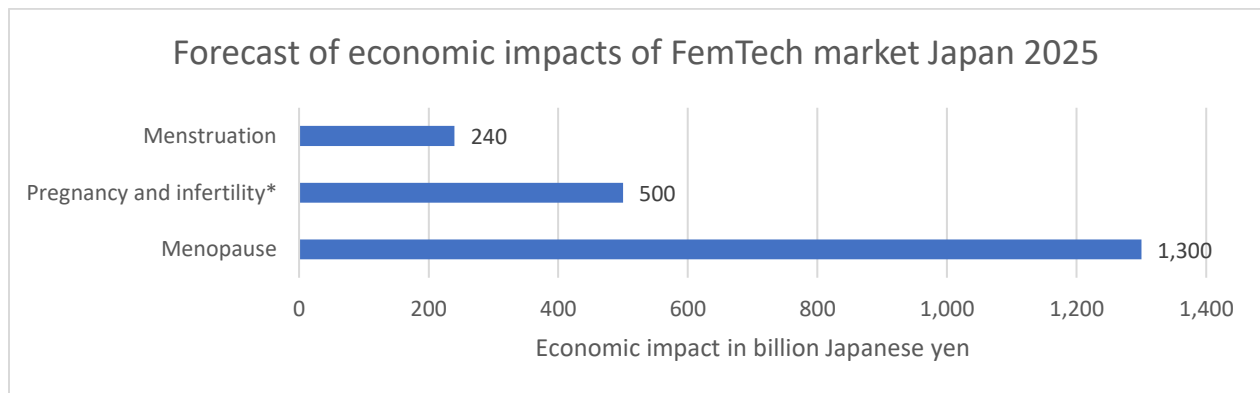
- **FemTech Market Growth:** The FemTech industry, focusing on technology-based products and services for women's health, is witnessing significant investor interest. In 2021, the FemTech industry received \$5.4 billion in Asia and \$4.5 billion in North America, indicating strong potential for economic growth in this sector.

Case study of Japan

Facing a demographic crisis of a shrinking workforce and declining birth rates, Japan is strategically investing in women's health to revitalize its economy. Improved access to healthcare, including reproductive health services, empowers women to make informed family planning choices. By presenting a more supportive environment for women to balance work and family life, Japan hopes to increase female labor force participation, boost productivity, and achieve more excellent demographic stability, all contributing to a more prosperous future.

The following chart shows the economic impact of investment in women's health-

Forecast of annual economic effects resulting from the female technology (FemTech) market in Japan in 2025, by category (in billion Japanese yen)







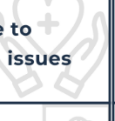


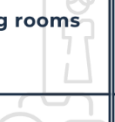


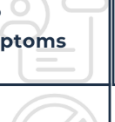



Source - Statista 2024

According to a forecast conducted in March 2021, the upcoming development of the female health technology (FemTech) market was projected to generate an economic impact of around two trillion Japanese yen in 2025. The development of the menopause field was forecast to lead to the highest economic outcomes of approximately 1.3 trillion yen in 2025⁷.

⁶ <https://www.who.int/health-topics/maternal-health>

⁷ [Japan: economic impact forecast of FemTech industry by category 2025 | Statista](#)

SHARE OF LARGE CORPORATE ENTERPRISES ENGAGING IN HEALTH MANAGEMENT OF FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN JAPAN AS OF OCTOBER 2021, BY MEASURE

82.80% - Provide financial aid for gynaecological examinations 	58.30% - Provide paid leave etc. for gynaecological examinations 	54.40% - Provide consulting services by public health nurses etc. for female health 
53.70% - Improve circumstances to make it easier for employees to take menstrual leave 	49.20% - Build structure to deal with female health issues 	49.10% - Spread information about health management for mothers 
37.40% - Support fertility treatments (paid leave for hospital visits, etc.) 	27.30% - Provide resting rooms for women only 	26.70% - Establish project teams or departments to promote female health management 
23.50% - Support menopausal symptoms and disorders 	5.60% - Provide Apps to monitor menstrual symptoms 	27.30% - Others 
5.70% - Nothing in particular 	0.20% - No answer 	

Source - Statista 2024

In 2021, around 83 percent of large corporations in Japan provided financial aid for gynecological examinations to their female employees, while only about 5.7 percent of incorporated enterprises were not implementing any measures to improve the health management of female employees.⁸ This indicates a growing concern and awareness about investing in women's healthcare.

A major contributor to Japan's per capita growth was the rising number of women entering the labor force. The labor force participation rate of women in Japan rose to 74 percent in 2022 from 63 percent in 2012. The new entrants, typically former stay-at-home mothers, were able to rejoin the labor force due to enhanced child-care support from the government and improved maternity leave policies provided to them. These additional female workers helped mitigate the country's chronic labor shortage, which also boosted family income, and fueled the country's economic growth.⁹

Investing in women's health isn't just about improving their well-being; it's about creating a more prosperous future for all. By prioritizing the health needs of women, we unlock a powerful economic engine fueled by a healthy, educated, and engaged workforce. This investment yields financial benefits and contributes to a more just and equitable society.

⁸ [Japan: large corporations promoting female health by measure 2021 | Statista](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1091112/japan-large-corporations-promoting-female-health-by-measure-2021/)

⁹ <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/11/13/cf-japans-economy-would-gain-with-more-women-in-science-and-technology>

What are the challenges in investing in Women's healthcare?

While investing in women's health significantly impacts the economy, achieving progress requires navigating through different challenges. These challenges range from ingrained biases within the medical system to societal stigmas and limitations in access and affordability. Understanding these obstacles is crucial for developing effective strategies to overcome them and create a healthcare system that prioritizes the well-being of all women. Here, we explore five key challenges affecting women's healthcare progress.



- Gender Bias in Research and Funding:** Historically, medical research has often focused on men's health, leading to a lack of understanding of women's specific health needs. A 2021 American Medical Women's Association study found that only 4% of clinical trials included a gender-balanced population.¹⁰ This limited data makes it challenging to develop effective treatments and interventions for women's health conditions.
- Social Stigma and Lack of Awareness:** Stigma surrounding certain women's health issues, such as menstrual health or mental health, can prevent women from seeking necessary care. A 2022 survey by YouGov revealed that 42% of women in the United States felt uncomfortable discussing their menstrual health with a doctor¹¹. This lack of open communication hinders early detection and treatment of potential health problems.
- Accessibility and Cost Barriers:** Affordability and access to healthcare services are significant hurdles, particularly for low-income women and those living in rural areas. A 2023 report by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that women with lower incomes are more likely to be uninsured

¹⁰ <https://www.amwa-doc.org/>

¹¹ <https://yougov.co.uk/society/articles/44822-synching-menopause-what-do-britons-know-about-peri>

and experience difficulties affording healthcare services¹². These financial barriers limit access to preventive care and treatment.

- **Shortage of Female Healthcare Providers:** A lack of female healthcare providers, especially in certain specialties, can create a gender gap in patient care. A 2020 report by the Association of American Medical Colleges found that only 38% of all practicing physicians in the US are women¹³. This can make it challenging for women to find providers with whom they feel comfortable discussing their health concerns.
- **Policy and Political Challenges:** Government policies and political agendas can sometimes hinder progress in women's healthcare. For example, restrictions on access to safe abortion services can have detrimental effects on women's overall health and well-being. Studies by the Guttmacher Institute consistently demonstrate the negative consequences of restrictive abortion policies¹⁴. These policy challenges necessitate ongoing advocacy and public education efforts.

Addressing these challenges can create a healthcare system that is more equitable, accessible, and responsive to the unique needs of women, ultimately improving their health outcomes and contributing to a healthier society and economy overall.

What steps can be taken to bridge the healthcare gap for women?

Investing in women's health isn't just about social good; it's a strategic economic investment. Several countries have implemented innovative policies demonstrating the positive impacts on women's well-being and national economic prosperity. Some of the current best practices are-



What steps can be taken to bridge the healthcare gap for women?

**Expanding Access
Through Midwives:
Addressing
Geographical Barriers
in Ethiopia**

**Telehealth Services
for Rural Women
(India)**

**Comprehensive Sexual
and Reproductive
Health Education:
Empowering Young
Women in Chile**

**Investing in Women's
Mental Health:
Prioritizing Well-
being in Finland**

¹² <https://www.kff.org/about-womens-health-policy/>

¹³ <https://www.aamc.org/data-reports/faculty-institutions/report/state-women-academic-medicine>

¹⁴ <https://www.guttmacher.org/global/abortion>

- **Telehealth Services for Rural Women (India)**

To address the limited access to healthcare in remote areas, India established the "Telemedicine and eHealth Network." This program provides remote consultations with specialists, focusing on areas with limited healthcare infrastructure. This approach caters to the specific needs of women in geographically isolated areas, improving access to quality healthcare and potentially increasing their participation in the workforce.¹⁵

- **Expanding Access Through Midwives: Addressing Geographical Barriers in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia grappled with a high maternal mortality rate, often due to limited access to skilled birth attendants, particularly in remote areas. Recognizing this challenge, the government strategically trained and deployed midwives to these underserved regions. They also prioritized building healthcare facilities closer to communities. This approach has yielded positive results. Ethiopia has witnessed a significant decrease in maternal mortality rates as more women have access to skilled birth attendants during childbirth.¹⁶

- **Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health Education: Empowering Young Women in Chile**

Chile previously struggled with high rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) due to a lack of comprehensive sexual education. The Guttmacher Institute reports on a strategic investment made by the Chilean government – implementing a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education program within the school curriculum. This initiative has led to a positive shift. Teen pregnancy rates have declined, and young people have a better understanding of sexual health, empowering them to make informed choices.¹⁷

- **Investing in Women's Mental Health: Prioritizing Well-being in Finland**

Finland has historically faced high rates of depression among women, particularly after childbirth. Recognizing the importance of mental well-being, the Finnish government increased funding for mental health services. Their focus has been on providing specialized perinatal mental healthcare for women. This investment has improved access to much-needed support, leading to better overall well-being for mothers and their families¹⁸.

Where do we stand in Women's Healthcare?

There's a compelling case to be made for investing in women's health. It's not just about doing the right thing; it's a strategic economic investment with far-reaching benefits. When women are healthy, they are more likely to participate in the workforce, leading to economic growth. Additionally, investing in preventive care and treatment for chronic diseases lowers overall healthcare expenditures.

¹⁵ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1909067>.

¹⁶ <https://www.who.int/health-topics/maternal-health>

¹⁷ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19962642/>

¹⁸ <https://www.weforum.org/organizations/finland-government/>

At Frost and Sullivan Institute, we believe investing in women's health goes beyond simply allocating funds. It's a comprehensive strategy encompassing several key areas. Firstly, it prioritizes increased access to quality healthcare. Secondly, investment in women's health fuels research and development. And finally, empowering women with knowledge is another crucial aspect of investment.

While the economic benefits of investing in women's health are clear, there are challenges to overcome. These challenges range from ingrained biases within the medical system to societal stigmas and limitations in access and affordability. Addressing these challenges is crucial for developing effective strategies to create a healthcare system that prioritizes the well-being of all women.

Investing in women's health creates a ripple effect, creating a healthier, more productive, and prosperous future for all. By prioritizing women's well-being, we unlock a powerful economic engine and contribute to a more equitable society. This investment is not just a social good; it's a smart economic decision with the potential to create a better future for future generations.