

healthcare now | Unique insights to navigate a complex market

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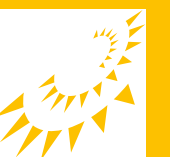
(Mind The)
Gender Gap



Bray Leino



SOLARIS
health



About Healthcare Now

Rooted in research and insight, essential provocation for brands and businesses in the health & wellbeing space.

We've got a long history of helping brands navigate the complex sphere of healthcare.

The main challenge used to be regulatory compliance, but today there are so many more factors to consider. It's a landscape completely changed by events of recent years and that change is constant...and happening quickly.

As two entities working across the full spectrum of health & wellbeing, from common ailments to rare diseases, Bray Leino and Solaris Health are in a unique position. In 2022 we came together to commission independent research agency QuMind to conduct a nationwide healthcare study

of 1,000 respondents across both consumer and core patient groups*. This exclusive, quantitative and qualitative research study – State of the Nation Wellness Report – unlocks previously unattainable insights to power healthcare marketing, now.

Through our programme of thought-provoking content, we'll reveal the beliefs and experiences that are shaping health attitudes and behaviours. From consumer and patient insight, we'll explore human perspectives and derive potential implications for brands and businesses navigating this space. Ultimately, we set out to see the world of healthcare through the eyes of those that matter.

*Those in primary care for with an ongoing medical condition and those with an ongoing chronic/rare medical condition.



Core insight:

Gender influences how people manage their health and wellbeing. But not in the way that we think.

The goal for most marketing communications is to reflect the world around us, driving home that sense of relatability and resonance. To feel real. Progressive. Inclusive...

Marketing demographics continue to differentiate between men and women – and there are many reasons why this is actually really useful for marketers, providing the foundation for this article.

However, we must also acknowledge that society is changing and how we identify genders within marketing also needs to evolve. Some of the principles highlighted in this article will also have resonance beyond the traditional gender roles.

In recent times, we've seen marquee campaigns supporting women. Always's 'Like a Girl', 'This Girl Can' from Sport England; Cannes Lions got in on the act in 2015, introducing the Glass Lion: The Lion for Change, an award to honour ad campaigns that address gender inequality or prejudice.

For an industry striving for equal and real representation between genders in advertising, what happens when there are clear distinctions between the attitudes and behaviours of men and women? How do we lean into this without side-stepping into the world of stereotyping and bias?

Our research shows that gender influences how people manage their health – both mentally and physically. Men and women differ in how they approach their health, and that's evident in their attitudes and behaviours around wellbeing.

Within this instalment of the Healthcare Now series we'll uncover several of the key differences between men and women in the healthcare space – from the motivations and barriers to managing physical health, to the conscious vs. instinctive management of mental health – and discuss the implications for branded communications.





+ Making health and wellbeing a priority

Men tend to prioritise their health and wellbeing, whereas women are motivated but struggle to find the time and mental energy.

Around half of women (51%) claim that they take a proactive role in their health and wellbeing – when life allows them to. This is statistically higher for women than for men.

In contemporary culture the perceived roles of women are ever evolving. No longer confined to the traditional and

stereotypical, there is a movement of greater empowerment for women and good brand communications will try to reflect this shift (at worst, even jump on the bandwagon).

However, those more established female roles still have huge impact on the reality of day-to-day life, particularly when it comes to healthcare. Work and children are two factors that prevent women having the time and energy to do exercise, for example.

“ **I want to start doing squats, working on the arms, more cardio but I am putting it off...when my baby's awake, I cannot do it, so it relies on when my husband sits with kids.** ”

– Female.

“ **Work gets in the way [of taking exercise]. I would like to have greater flexibility with work time – start earlier, finish earlier.** ”

– Female.

38% of men, however, claim that 'taking a proactive role in my health and wellbeing is a top priority in my life', specifically their physical health. Statistically higher than females.

This strive for more time and mental energy in daily life amongst women goes beyond just the health space of course, prompting the opportunity for wider remit brand partnership and collaboration in helping women achieve better quality (higher priority) physical and emotional wellness.



+ Men are less proactive and more instinctive in how they manage their mental health

When it comes to health, the prescription medication vs. natural approach debate remains ubiquitous. Taking prescription medication for mental health is prevalent, with **30% of the population taking medication for their mental health.**

Those we spoke to said that taking prescription medication is due to being unhappy about family issues and personal relationships – the medication is used as a coping mechanism.

“ I got really, depressed, and I went straight to my doctor, I started taking that and then I realised it was actually helping me with a lot of other things. ”

“ I don't go around telling people I take it, but it's interesting the number of people who talk to me about it, and then I will talk to them about it if they talk to me. Most people I know are on medication. ”

Taking medication for mental health is increasingly becoming de-stigmatised. The #PostYourPill trend came to light at the end of November 2021, when well-known influencer and Ambassador for Mental Health, Dr Alex George, decided to share the results of a recent poll he conducted. These results showed that 75% of online voters admitted to having experienced stigma, judgement, and discrimination, simply for taking the medication that helps better their mental wellbeing.

There are still some who think over prescription is a problem. They prefer to manage their mental health instinctively e.g. exercise, meditation, or therapy.

“ [GP's think] just get him in get him out, not worrying too much about overmedication. ”

“ I'd try to find another way to deal with the problem other than taking medications. ”

“ I know that there are things you can do without having to rely on drugs like CBT. ”

“ Planting flowers in my garden gives me great joy – nature is wonderful. ”

“ I walk my dog twice a day, you can feel the day's pressure lifted when you're out. ”





Mental health management is where we see some of the biggest attitudinal and behavioural distinctions between men and women within our research.

Almost a quarter (23%) of men sampled suggested that they are very proactive in managing their mental health and wellbeing – significantly higher than women (17%).

However, their proactivity is instinctive. Men say they manage their mental health by doing things they enjoy and making time for themselves.

“ I’ve **never sought any professional mental health advice...** I tend to concentrate on activities that I enjoy doing. ”
– Male.

“ I don’t consciously need time for myself **it comes naturally.** ”
– Male.

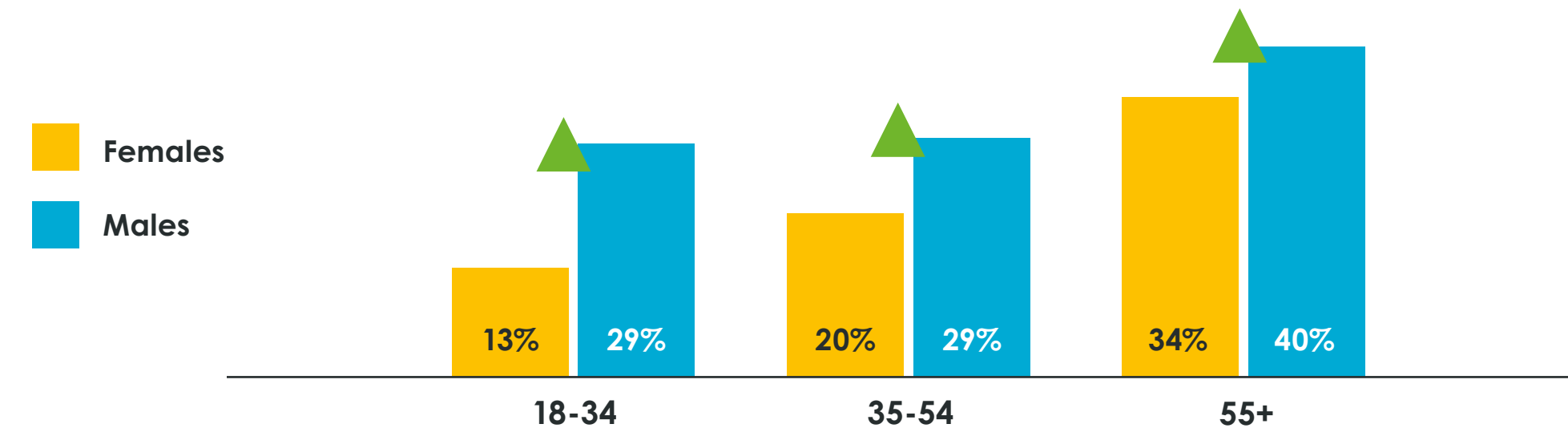
“ It is **up to me** to maintain my mental health. ”
– Male.

Women, however, are much more conscious in their mental health management, making a mindful behavioural effort in improving their mental and emotional well-being through their lifestyle choices i.e. getting enough

sleep, eating a healthy/ well balanced diet and having a good work/life balance.

Women, especially those 55+, are also most likely to take medication for their mental health.

Prescribed medication intake for mental health



So what? Notice the different approach to 'proactivity' between men and women. For men, productivity in health is much more instinctive, everyday, almost a given. For women, it is a desire. An ambition which is increasingly hard to realise in day-to-day life without more conscious, assertive behaviour.

This presents brands with the opportunity to delve into the notion of 'proactivity' in much more granular detail, carving out distinction through demonstrating a deeper understanding of what it really means.



+ The impact of social media on mental health is well understood by all genders, but men prefer to avoid social media for the sake of their mental health, more so than women

The relationship between social media and mental health has long been a topic of controversy. And the impact of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok on people's emotional and mental wellbeing will continue to gather attention as the landscape evolves.

Bullying, anxiety, loneliness, trolling, FOMO. All well-documented potential implications of social media becoming an integral (arguably unavoidable), addictive part of our lives.

18% of men prefer to avoid social media for the sake of their mental health, stating that social media made them feel paranoid or negative about their own lives.

“ [Social Media] increased my feelings of paranoia e.g., if you put something up and you don't get any likes. [I've] learnt that it can make me feel bad. ”

“ It's like people looking at a goldfish bowl or a zoo, like you're in a cage and people [are] looking at everything you do or say. ”

“ Sometimes it's a bit of a false reality because people post things which showcase the best parts of their life which set expectations really high. ”

There is something surprising and brutally honest in these perceptions and the resulting behaviour of avoidance. They highlight a potentially evolving approach to social media that brands must take note of.

It is easy to fall into the trap of showing your 'best self' on social media, even at a brand level. The classic showcasing of how this brand helps you 'live your best life'. The potentially over-inflated promises of feeling 'better' and 'cure'. Do we really know how that is going to make somebody feel?

Our research suggests that it would better serve brands to have a deeper understanding of life beyond the condition/ailment and the nuanced approach to proactive

management of physical and mental health between men and women when trying to build brand connection.

A headache is a headache, regardless of your gender. However, the context behind that headache, the triggers, the day you're trying to get through, the way you manage that headache could undoubtedly be different.

Rather than sticking to the stereotypical, or familiar, mimicking what we 'think' daily life looks like for definitive groups of people, actually take the time to really dig into the synergies and nuances between individual groups of people to drive that perceived brand relevance. We're all human, after all.



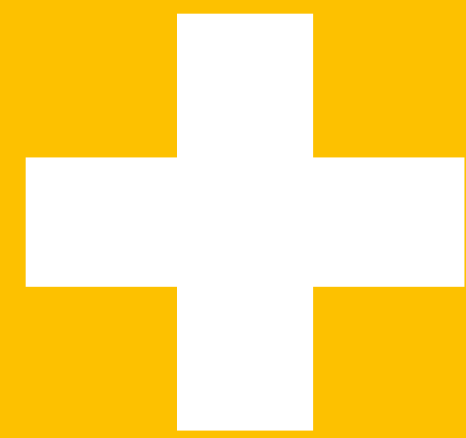
Summary

Core Insight:

Gender influences how people manage their health and wellbeing – both mentally and physically, but not in the way that we think.

What this challenges:

Stereotypical views of gender roles in healthcare.



Nuggets and numbers

Conscious vs. instinctive mental health management between genders.

54% of women make an effort to get a good night's sleep to look after their mental health.

45% of women make a conscious effort to eat a healthy/ well-balanced diet.

“ I don't consciously need time for myself, **it comes naturally.** ”

– Male.

Women are more motivated to manage their physical health but struggle to find the time and mental energy.

42% of women suggest that they don't have the energy to take a more proactive role in their physical health, compared to 26% of men.

52% of women take a proactive role in their physical health to 'look good for themselves.

Statistically higher than men (**35%**).

Social media can have a negative impact on mental health.

18% of men avoid social media for the sake of their mental health, statistically higher than women.

17% of women think they should avoid social media for their mental health.

Points of view

Unique perspectives on the core insight



Social Media perspective Harry Laflin

Head of Social – Bray Leino

The impact of content shared across platforms on individual's emotional and mental wellbeing is undeniable and continues to gain attention both within the social media industry and wider news agenda.

Statistics, such as the 18% of men choosing to avoid social media due to its negative effects on their mental health, are eye-opening and reflect a shifting attitude towards social media that brands must acknowledge.

To build authentic brand connections on social media, we must move away from stereotypes and embrace the nuances that make us all human. By doing so, we can create content that truly resonates with our diverse social audiences.



Creative perspective Brianna Miller and Gemma Hanham

Creative concept team – Bray Leino

Brianna: Many women across industries feel like they have to push harder at work for recognition, whilst still trying to find time for health and wellbeing. This in itself is an impossible feat, as a lot brands and influencers promote unattainable health routines that the average working woman simply can't fit into their day. No one steps back and says 'actually, you simply need a couple of hours a day for yourself, guilt free', which is the mentality I think men have.

Gemma: I don't think we'll ever be truly gender-equal when it comes to health, there are too many factors at play. Brands and businesses therefore need to be digging deep into individual behaviours, biological, and social factors when talking to an audience about health.



Creative perspective Kyla Manenti

Agency Marketing Manager – Bray Leino

Period cramps stop us partaking in PE and sports as teens; pregnancy and the months/years post-partum alters our relationship with our bodies and sense of self; the menopause brings all manner of mental and physical health challenges. And that's after years of the monthly cycle! By their very nature, women are consciously making choices about how and whether they can dedicate time to their health and wellbeing. So it's really not a huge surprise they don't naturally prioritise this in the same way as men. But therein lies a real opportunity for brands – supporting accessibility to health & wellbeing for women. And recognising that men may favour brands and products which integrate more seamlessly within their lifestyles.



Contact us

For more information on how we can help drive growth for your health & wellbeing brand, contact Sam Crocker
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