ABHI

CAPTURING GENDER EQUALITY IN HEALTHTECH

2024 Report

WHY IS GENDER EQUALITY IMPORTANT?

Promotes Economic Growth

Gender equality in the workforce can significantly boost economic productivity and growth. For example, a McKinsey report estimated that achieving gender equality could add $12 trillion to the global economy by 2025.

Reduces Poverty

When women have equal access to education, work, and resources, they can lift themselves and their families out of poverty. The World Bank notes that improvements in gender equality result in faster economic growth and more effective poverty reduction.

Improves Health Outcomes

Equitable access to medical services for all genders leads to better health outcomes. UNICEF reports that children's health and survival rates are higher when women have a higher status and decision-making power in the society.

Enhances Educational Opportunities

Gender equality in education allows both boys and girls to develop skills needed for the modern economy. UNESCO highlights that each additional year of schooling for girls reduces infant mortality rates and increases a woman's earning potential.

Strengthens Families and Communities

When both men and women have equal rights and opportunities, families are healthier, more stable, and more able to contribute positively to their communities.
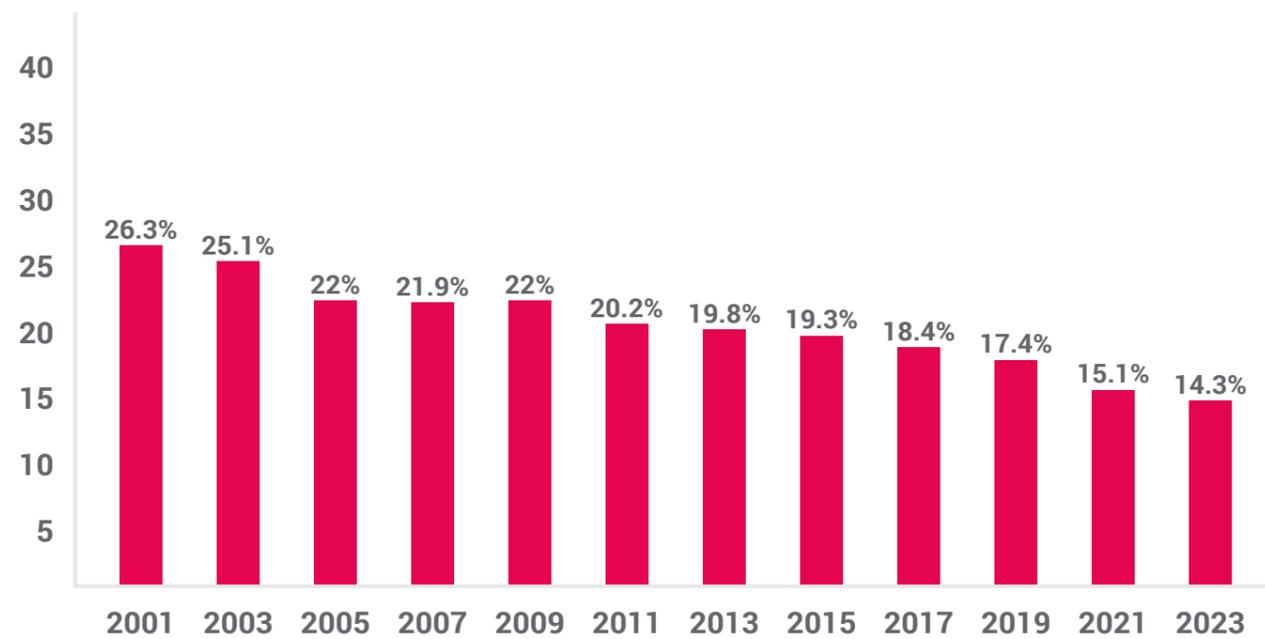
Promotes Social Justice and Human Rights

Gender equality is a fundamental human right. Ensuring equal treatment and opportunities for all genders supports a fair and equitable society.

ABOUT ABHI

ABHI is the UK's leading industry association for health technology (HealthTech).

ABHI supports the HealthTech community to save and enhance lives. Members, including both multinationals and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), supply products from syringes and wound dressings to surgical robots, diagnostics and digitally enhanced technologies. We represent the industry to stakeholders, such as the government, NHS and regulators. HealthTech plays a key role in supporting delivery of healthcare and is a significant contributor to the UK's economic growth. HealthTech is the largest employer in the broader Life Sciences sector, employing 154,000 people in 4,465 companies, with a combined turnover of £34.3bn. The industry has enjoyed growth of around 5% in recent years. ABHI's 400 members account for approximately 80% of the sector by value.

ABHI's Commitment

Our approach to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is a key part of ABHI's culture. We are committed to ensuring that every voice, regardless of background or identity, is actively sought out, heard and respected.

We will strive, constantly, to create an industry where everybody feels able to bring their whole self to work.

We will promote understanding and awareness of how important it is to embrace inclusivity of all in our industry and the patients we serve. Including fully diverse perspectives drives creativity, innovation and our ability to transform healthcare.

We will steadfastly challenge behaviours, wherever they occur, that detract from the integrity of our sector.

HOW DOES THE UK RANK?

PwC's Women in Work Index, which assesses progress made towards achieving gender equality at work across 33 OECD countries, ranks the UK at number 17.

The UK has a gender pay gap of 14.3%. This is declining slowly, falling by approximately a quarter over the last decade, but more work needs to be done.

This means that for women in the UK, they will, on average, earn 86 pence for every pound earned by men.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second annual Gender Equality in HealthTech Report.

As the landscape of HealthTech evolves, understanding the dynamics of gender equality within this critical sector remains paramount. This year, we are thrilled to share insights from 156 industry professionals – which is nearly double last year's participation. This significant increase not only underscores the growing commitment of the HealthTech community to gender equality but also enhances our ability to assess progress and changes over time. Thank you to all those who contributed.

Our findings this year reveal a strong inclination towards leadership styles that foster collaboration and independence within teams, but also provides some intriguing gender-specific insights. For example, women are notably more inclined to lead by example (48% vs. 32% for men). Conversely, men more frequently prefer giving their teams the autonomy to work independently (52% vs. 30% for women). These preferences highlight diverse approaches to leadership within the sector.

Leadership success in HealthTech is also increasingly tied to the alignment with organisational values, and the importance of work-life balance. With a 10% point increase in the emphasis on organisational culture compared to last year, signalling a shift towards more value-driven leadership in HealthTech.

Equal access to healthcare and treatment, regardless of background, is essential, emphasising why our industry must reflect the diversity of the communities it serves. By promoting strategies that enhance equality, HealthTech can set a standard for others to follow, contributing to economic and health benefits both nationally and globally. Indeed, gender-based workplace discrimination not only undermines individual careers but also has a significant economic impact, costing the UK economy billions annually. While gender is one of many diversity aspects, closing the gender gap remains a key area with substantial implications for the broader economy and healthcare outcomes.

Through this report, we delve into these dynamics and more, exploring how gender influences leadership styles, the barriers female leaders face, and the overall impact of gender diversity on the HealthTech industry. This provides us with the opportunity to reflect on how, as a sector, we can continue to address those barriers.

Jane Lewis,
Chief Operating Officer and Finance Director, ABHI
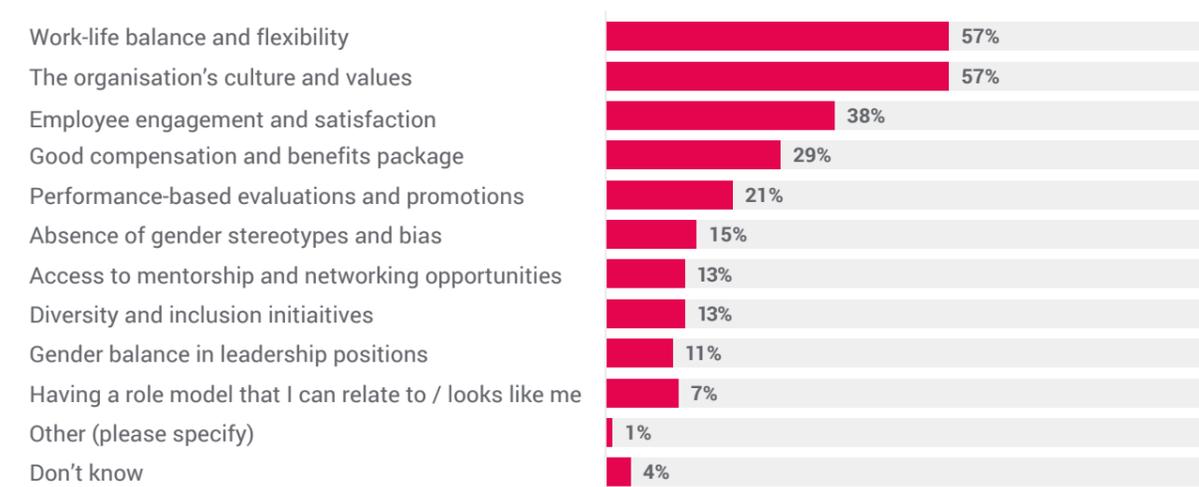
LEADERSHIP TECHNIQUES AND BARRIERS

Almost half encourage team collaboration or leading by example.

Nearly half of HealthTech workers encourage collaboration from team members to reach consensus decisions or lead by example to motivate and inspire their team (both 45%). Additionally, 34% of respondents give their team the freedom to work independently and make their own decisions, while a quarter (24%) provide a vision to motivate and inspire the team to succeed.

Whilst there are small sample sizes split by gender, it appears women are much more likely than men to describe their leadership style as "*Leading by example to motivate and inspire my team*" (48% vs 32% respectively). However, men are more likely than women to describe their leadership style as "*Giving my team the freedom to work independently to make their own decisions*" (52% vs 30% respectively).

Over half consider culture and values and work-life balance the most important factors in leadership success.

The organisation's culture and values, as well as work-life balance and flexibility, are the most commonly cited factors in succeeding as a leader in the HealthTech industry (both 57%). Nearly two fifths highlight employee engagement and satisfaction (38%), three in ten value good compensation and benefits packages (29%) and a fifth also value performance-based evaluations and promotions (21%). The importance of an organisation's culture and values has risen since the previous wave, which was 47%.

Respondents also value representation and inclusion, with 15% highlighting the absence of gender stereotypes and bias, and over a tenth highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusion initiatives (13%) and gender balance in leadership positions (11%) when it comes to professional development. It was also important for 7% of respondents to have a role model that can relate to/looks like them.

The figures align closely with 2023's results, though there was a notable 10% increase in the level of responses that highlighted the importance of an organisation's culture and values.

% for whom the following are important in helping succeed as a leader

Work-life balance and flexibility	57%
The organisation's culture and values	57%
Employee engagement and satisfaction	38%
Good compensation and benefits package	29%
Performance-based evaluations and promotions	21%
Absence of gender stereotypes and bias	15%
Access to mentorship and networking opportunities	13%
Diversity and inclusion initiaitives	13%
Gender balance in leadership positions	11%
Having a role model that I can relate to / looks like me	7%
Other (please specify)	1%
Don't know	4%

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

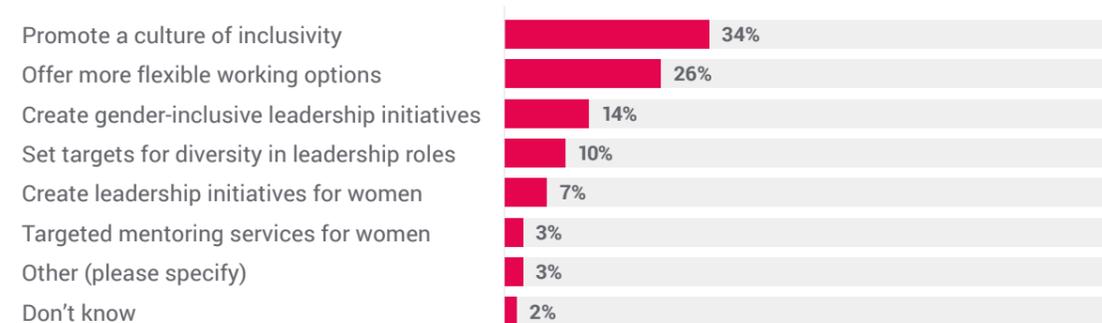**Almost two thirds cite diverse leadership styles as being a benefit of women in leadership.**

Diverse leadership styles and approaches are the main benefits of having women in leadership positions in the HealthTech industry, with almost two thirds (64%) of respondents highlighting this factor. The second most cited benefit is the increased representation and role modelling for other women in the workplace, with 43% of respondents noting this advantage. Additionally, nearly a third of respondents (33%) mentioned the emotional intelligence that women leaders bring to the table.

Family and caregiving responsibilities are the most significant barrier to female leadership

Just like 2023's survey, almost half (47%) highlight family and caregiving responsibilities as one of the most significant barriers to female leadership in the industry, rising by 9% from the previous wave. Balancing work and personal life was the most common barrier in the previous wave, was seen as the second most significant barrier this time, with 44% of respondents citing this issue. Gender bias and stereotypes are identified by a third (37%) of respondents as a barrier to female leadership, while three in ten (26%) note the lack of diverse representation on leadership teams as a significant obstacle.

Other barriers identified by a smaller percentage of respondents include the lack of flexible working opportunities at senior levels, the gender pay gap and unequal compensation, and limited access to networking and mentorship opportunities.

% who think the following is the best way to raise awareness of issues facing women in leadership.

Promote a culture of inclusivity	34%
Offer more flexible working options	26%
Create gender-inclusive leadership initiatives	14%
Set targets for diversity in leadership roles	10%
Create leadership initiatives for women	7%
Targeted mentoring services for women	3%
Other (please specify)	3%
Don't know	2%

PROMOTING A MORE INCLUSIVE CULTURE COULD RAISE AWARENESS OF WOMEN'S ISSUES IN LEADERSHIP.

A third (34%) feel promoting a culture of inclusivity throughout the company is the best way to help raise awareness of issues facing women in leadership. There has been a 10% point increase in those who think offering more flexible working options for both senior men and women is the best way to raise awareness (26% vs 16% previous wave). Other options include creating leadership initiatives for both men and women (14%), setting targets for diversity in leadership roles with measurable achievements and timelines (10%), creating leadership initiatives specifically for women (8%), and providing targeted mentoring services for women (3%).

When asked about tracking positive impacts of having women in the organisation, one theme was the need for balanced and differing approaches to leadership. One respondent suggested tracking the "number of women in senior positions or being developed for moves into senior positions." Another theme was the importance of feedback communication, with one respondent suggesting "recording and capturing feedback from women in employee involvement surveys" as key to tracking positive impacts.

Balancing work and personal life is the most significant barrier in the career of women

Balancing work and personal life (41%) and family and caregiving responsibilities (35%) were identified as the most significant barriers in women's careers specifically. The gender pay gap and unequal compensation (26%), gender bias and stereotypes (22%) and limited access to leadership development programmes (20%) were also seen as significant barriers.
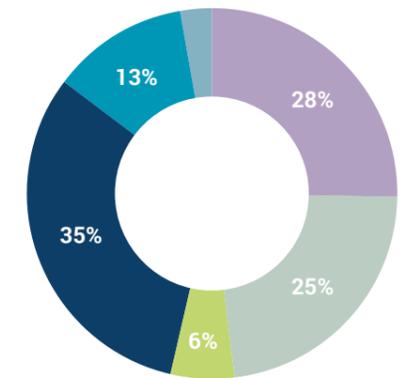
When asked about the most common issues that derail female leaders' careers, the responses fell into several themes. One recurring issue mentioned was balancing work with

family life at home, such as "lack of flexibility when caregiving for family is needed" and "trying to balance family and work." Another issue mentioned was a lack of support and mentorship, with responses like a "lack of advocacy at peer and more senior level" and that "flexible working options for senior leaders are not supported." Additionally, some respondents cited gender bias and discrimination as a significant issue, such as a "*culture that is discriminatory*" and "*trying to be a man and act like a man.*"

A quarter of women in HealthTech have been treated differently due to their gender

Half (50%) of women in the HealthTech industry indicated that they have been in a leadership position where they were treated differently than their colleagues. Out of those who said yes, over a quarter (28%) stated that they were treated differently due to their gender, while 15% were unsure if it was because of their gender. Only 6% said they were treated differently, but not because of their gender. Just over a third (35%) claimed they were not treated differently at all.

% of women facing resistance when leading men

- Yes - due to gender — 28%
- Yes - not sure if it was due to gender — 25%
- Yes - but not because of gender — 6%
- No — 35%
- Don't know — 13%
- Prefer not to say

Women find more gender-based resistance when leading men, than vice versa

The survey found that 34% of respondents have experienced resistance when leading men, with one in seven (15%) stating that it was due to their gender. On the other hand, 48% of respondents have not experienced any resistance when leading men, while 16% did not know and 2% preferred not to say. In comparison, a greater percentage of them had experienced resistance when leading women (40%) but only 6% said that this was based on gender.

For women who claimed they experienced resistance in leading other women, some mentioned age or experience as a factor, such as "*if you are leading older team members, that is the challenge,*" and "*willingness to be lead by someone significantly younger.*" Others felt that women were sabotaging their efforts, such as a "*lack of sharing information, female colleagues with more experience think they are in the hierarchy*" or "*blocking promotion, lack of collaboration, taking credit when not their work.*"

LEADERSHIP BENEFITS

A majority imagined themselves in leadership roles at the start of their career.

Just under half of those in senior manager plus roles (48%) imagined that they would have reached a leadership role within their industry or organisation at the start of their career. While 24% said they probably would, another 24% said they definitely would. On the other hand, 34% of respondents said they probably would not, and 12% said they definitely would not. The remaining respondents either did not know or preferred not to say.

When asked what motivated individuals to progress to their current level, a few key themes emerged. Ambition, determination, and the desire to prove oneself are common themes, with one person citing their "*our company purpose and culture, desire to make a difference for society.*" Others cite financial rewards and job satisfaction, as well as a passion for their subject matter, with one respondent citing "*the financial rewards that came with the job level.*"

When also asked if there were any differences in how they navigate their organisation now, compared to early in their career, there are several important patterns. One theme that emerges is an increased confidence in their own abilities and opinions. As one respondent states, "*the only difference is my voice is now louder and more confident.*" Another adds, "*now I have the confidence in my decisions and do not doubt myself as much.*" This confidence has led to a greater willingness to challenge others, with one respondent noting, "*I now ask more questions and stay far more curious than I did at the start of my career. The biggest errors I made back then was to assume that others (in leadership positions) knew the answer.*"

Top benefit to leadership is greater understanding of others' perspectives.

When senior manager plus respondents were asked about the benefits they have received from their leadership experiences, a majority of respondents cited a greater understanding of other people's perspectives (54%), followed by improved communication skills (40%). Over a third also cited increased self-confidence and a greater ability to collaborate with others (both 36%), and over a quarter also cited a greater capacity to make decisions (30%), a greater ability to problem-solve (26%) and a greater appreciation of team dynamics (26%).

Companies are well perceived in prioritising DE&I

Of those who are aware of their company's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy, the average level of importance they believe their company places on it is 8.1 out of 10. A similar level of priority is perceived as being placed by the companies on addressing health inequalities (7.8).

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Over four fifths have reported feeling imposter syndrome.

A large majority of those in HealthTech (87%) reported experiencing imposter syndrome to some extent. Over a third (36%) of respondents reported experiencing imposter syndrome frequently, while almost another third (33%) reported experiencing it occasionally. Another fifth (18%) reported experiencing it rarely, while only a tenth (12%) reported never experiencing imposter syndrome.

When asked how they deal with imposter syndrome, respondents gave a variety of strategies. Some talked about changing their perception of fear and proving to themselves that they are capable, such as "reminding myself of the value I bring to the company" and "telling myself it is not real." Others mentioned the importance of believing in themselves and their abilities, with quotes like "having confidence in my own abilities" and "I give myself a good talking to, reviewing my successes and achievements."

Considering your early career to now, can you describe any differences between the way you navigate organisational structures and internal politics?

I now ask more questions and stay far more curious than I did at the start of my career. The biggest errors I made back then was to assume that others (in leadership positions) knew the answer. By asking questions and being an active listener is a good way to navigate a matrix organisation and internal politics.

I am more confident to challenge, push back, ask for what I need or want. It still causes me to be held back that I do this, in a way I don't see happening for men. I try to advocate for what other women need to be able to progress due to the reality of them being more responsible for the children/home duties (STILL A THING) and point out unconscious bias when I see it.

Early career prior to children I would work all hours and very much be a yes person. The further into my career and certainly post children my time became precious and therefore more focused and I began to say no or ask what the priorities were.

Much more task focused with 'things to do' and 'get done'. Now it is much more 'how' and 'who with'.

I had to constantly push myself forward and keep a track of my achievements and repeat them back to leadership early on as it seemed easy for them to forget my accomplishments compared to male colleagues. Being in a senior leadership role, there is less need to fight for recognition but it is still necessary and the gender imbalance still obvious.

It is more about how other people respond to me. It is a lot easier to navigate organisational structures when people are listening and paying attention to me. In my early career, I struggled to have my voice heard (and may have had less to say in all honesty)."

In my early career I was part of a team that input to the problem solving but did not make decisions. Now I make the decisions on behalf of the company and people accept them as the right decision, I don't have to sell as much.

Having started my career in the early 1990's - the mantra of the decade was 'you need to make a senior position before you are 40 years old! This was and is complete rubbish. I tried to keep work/life balance in check when my family were younger, moving into senior positions in my mid 40s. This has worked well for me and has made me a more effective leader being able to draw upon multiple life experiences.

LESSONS LEARNT

As we conclude our second annual Gender Equality in HealthTech Report, several key lessons have emerged, reinforcing the critical importance of gender equality in shaping a more inclusive and effective HealthTech sector. This year's findings not only reflect growing awareness and commitment but also underscore the areas requiring continued focus and improvement.

1

Leadership Styles and Gender Dynamics

Our data indicates a diverse range of leadership styles within HealthTech, with significant differences observed between genders. Women leaders tend to motivate and inspire through example, while men are more likely to emphasise independence in decision-making. Recognising and valuing these diverse approaches can enhance team dynamics and lead to more innovative outcomes.

2

The Economic and Health Impact of Gender Equality

The significant economic losses due to gender-based workplace discrimination highlight the need for systemic changes within the industry. Promoting gender equality is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic one, offering potential economic and health benefits on a national and global scale.

3

The Importance of Reflecting Community Diversity

HealthTech companies must mirror the diversity of the populations they serve to ensure equitable access to healthcare innovations. This year's report stresses the necessity for our industry to lead by example, adopting and promoting strategies that enhance diversity and inclusion across all levels.

4

The Role of Organisational Culture

There has been a notable shift towards prioritizing organisational culture and values. Cultivating a workplace that values work-life balance, cultural inclusivity, and employee engagement is essential for fostering leadership success and attracting top talent.

5

Barriers to Female Leadership

Persistent barriers such as family and caregiving responsibilities, gender bias, and unequal compensation continue to hinder the advancement of women in HealthTech. Addressing these issues through flexible work policies, supportive mentorship, and transparent career development opportunities is crucial for advancing gender equality.

6

The Power of Diverse Leadership

Diverse leadership styles bring numerous benefits, including increased empathy, better decision-making, and enhanced problem-solving capabilities. Our findings strongly suggest that diverse leadership can significantly improve team performance and innovation.

We would love to know what you think of this report.
Do the findings resonate with your own experiences? Has this prompted you to think about your own career, or how you may be able to help support those around you? When we issue this survey next year, are there any additional questions you would like to see asked? If so, please send to enquiries@abhi.org.uk with the heading 'Gender Equality in HealthTech'

This report serves as both a reflection of where we stand and a blueprint for the journey ahead. It is a call to action for all stakeholders within the HealthTech community to commit to continuous improvement and to embrace the diverse perspectives and skills that women bring to leadership. By doing so, we can drive more profound and enduring changes in the HealthTech sector, ultimately leading to better health outcomes for all.

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