

**GENDER AND EQUITY IN ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE
IN
JAMAICA AND BARBADOS**

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ABSTRACT

The overall aim of this study is to determine the presence and extent of gender differentials with respect to access to health care and health expenditures in Jamaica and Barbados. This study represents the first evaluation of gender differences in health care access and expenditures in the Caribbean. Facility records of utilization statistics, the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (1991 and 1999), and facility-based exit surveys were used. Despite limitations imposed by the dearth of household and epidemiological information, this study provides evidence of the greater use of private facilities by both men and women, regardless of income level. In addition, the study finds that income, quality of service, and type of provider are more important than gender in explaining facility use and health expenditure levels. The study raises a number of important questions about the extent to which the health system may restrict the access of males, and about the efficacy of the reform efforts to increase greater equity in access to quality care. Finally, the study highlights the need for more in-depth analysis to determine whether gender differences in use of services are related to institutional factors, individual preferences, or gender-differentiated illness-management practices.