

Making women visible **B2 B2+**



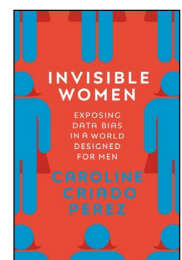
Instead of accompanying her colleague Anne McClain on a spacewalk, NASA astronaut Christina Koch (centre) found herself assisting McClain and astronaut Nick Hague (left) into their spacesuits on 22 March 2019.

Nasa

- 1 In March, 2019, NASA created a lot of publicity around the first all-female spacewalk by astronauts on the International Space Station. For the first time, two women would venture outside the station together to carry out repairs. Then the agency had to embarrassingly cancel the walk — because the ISS only had one spacesuit that would fit
- 5 women.

This was a particularly public manifestation of a depressingly common phenomenon. According to Caroline Criado Perez's new book *Invisible Women*, we live in a world that is literally made for men. And the results of that vary from annoying to downright dangerous.

Most products are made for a standard male, known as a 50th percentile male in the U.S.A.: 1.77m tall and 76kg in weight. And most data on risks is collected about the standard male



20 (for example the risks of exposure to chemicals in the work environment). Often, even if a manufacturer wanted to take women (or non-white people) into consideration, there is no data to base
25 changes on.

But even if there is data, it doesn't necessarily get taken into account. Any woman who has stood in a queue for the female toilets in a public space knows the
30 frustration of seeing the male toilets with no queue. Yet building regulations state that male and female toilets must be given the same floor space. Sound fair? Not when you take into account the data that says
35 women take 2.3 times longer on average in public toilets. What's more, men's toilets usually have urinals as well as cubicles, so more men can use the space at the same time.

40 PROTECTION

Annoying, yes, but not life-threatening. But there are many cases where simply being a woman means you are more at risk. In the U.K., as in many other countries, employers
45 are responsible for providing workers with appropriate safety equipment and protective clothing. Criado Perez quotes a study by the Trades Union Congress in the UK that discovered that most construction
50 companies simply order smaller sizes of men's clothing and equipment. Criado Perez mentions, "The use of a 'standard' US male face shape for dust, hazard¹ and eye masks means they don't fit most women (as well
55 as a lot of black and minority ethnic men)." Even more worrying, British female police officers are issued body armour designed for men that allows no space for women's

breasts. Not only is that uncomfortable, it
60 means the vests rise up on women, leaving them unprotected around the waist.

Help: 1. risk

CALLING SIRI

It's not just men's size that is used as a standard. Most voice recognition software
65 recognises deeper voices much more consistently than higher ones. Ironical, since it has been pointed out that most of the main vocal assistants like Siri and Alexa use female voices. But dangerous when it's
70 being used in a car, to make a phone call hands-free for example.

Women are in any case more at risk in car accidents. Overall, women are involved in fewer accidents, but, the author reveals, "When a woman is involved in a car crash,
75 she is 47% more likely to be seriously injured, and 17% more likely to die." This is because most car safety tests again use a standard male crash-test dummy.



Astrid Linder with the EvaRID dummy

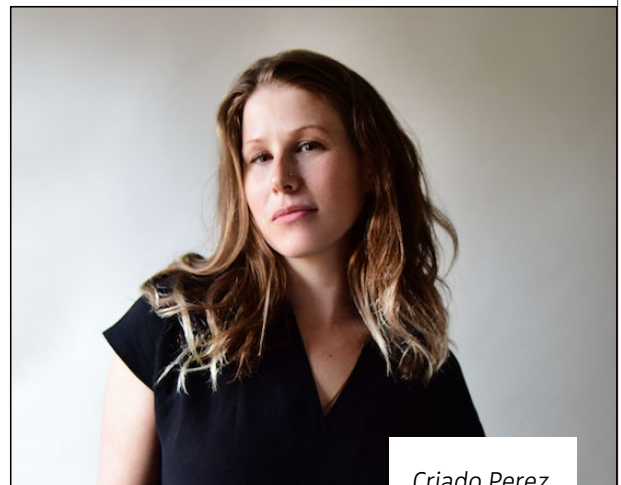
Criado Perez quotes Astrid Linder, research director of traffic safety at the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute, who has been working on an anthropomorphically correct female test dummy, EvaRID. Linder points out that
80 for three vital tests EU safety regulations
85

impose the use of a male dummy. The only test that requires also testing with a female dummy is one where the dummy is placed in the passenger seat. And it's simply a scaled-down version of the male one, it doesn't take into account the differences in male and female bodies.

These are just a handful of examples Criado Perez details in her book. The author and broadcaster has received many awards for her feminist campaigning, such as forcing Twitter to act on sexual abuse² in posts or getting women's suffrage campaigner Millicent Fawcett honoured with a statue in Parliament Square: the first woman honoured outside "the Mother of Parliaments". Criado Perez also successfully lobbied to keep a woman pictured on Bank

of England banknotes, proposing author Jane Austen to replace social reformer Elizabeth Fry. One woman who is a little less invisible from now on.

Help: 2. insults



Rachel Louise Brown

Criado Perez



Victoria Cleland, Chief Cashier of the Bank of England, with the new £10 Note.

a. Focus on the photo and the introduction. How well does this event illustrate the title of the article? **Suggest** a definition of who “invisible women” are.

b. Read the first two paragraphs and **find out** what type of document this is. Then **explain** in your own words what a world “made for men” consists of. What does the word “data” refer to?

c. Group 1: Read the text from ‘But even if...’ to ‘unprotected around the waist’ (l.26-61)

Group 2: Read the text from ‘Calling Siri’ to ‘female bodies.’ (l.63-93)

Find out in which fields women are “invisible”. **Explain** the potential consequences of this use of data on the lives of women and anyone who is not a “standard” white male.

d. Explain how the journalist proceeds to denounce such a limited view of our society.

e. Read the last paragraph and **pick out** the measures that have been taken to make women more visible. Can you think of other solutions?