

Conclusion



Photo: Nelisa Wolfgramm – Learning and Development Facilitator at the Brush Farm Corrective Services Academy.

Conclusion

The information in *Women in NSW 2013* points in many directions regarding NSW women's progress. Here we review selected findings from each chapter and leave readers to judge for themselves.

The first chapter describes a NSW whose female population has become more culturally and linguistically diverse in the last decade, especially in Sydney. Associated with that, women's religious affiliation has diversified, and the number of Hindu and Muslim women has grown within a solidly Christian majority. The ageing patterns identified in last year's Report are notable, with women's median age now some two years above that of men. The number of NSW Aboriginal women has grown considerably, by one-quarter since the last Census in 2006.

The Health chapter contains indicators of overall health status and indicators of very specific conditions. Generally, women manifest slightly less good health than men if we look at the prevalence of long-term conditions and how frequently people self-report good health. In terms of specific health conditions, the three main trouble spots for women are psychological distress, the sexually transmitted disease Chlamydia and fall-related hospitalisations among older women. Many health and wellbeing indicators show much poorer outcomes for women living in rural and regional areas and for women from lower socio-economic groups.

Women in regional and remote regions are likely to be younger mothers. The teenage fertility rate rose in the 5 years to 2011 in both remote and very remote NSW.

The most dramatic change from last year's Report comes in education in the indicator on Year 12 completion. Seemingly as a result of fewer men becoming trainees and apprentices at an early age, and the new high school completion age introduced in 2010, the percentage of boys completing Year 12 is now two points higher than the percentage of girls. In higher education, women are outperforming men in NSW: women make up 57 percent of both undergraduate and of post-graduate students. In vocational education, women form a majority of students overall, while remaining a small minority of trade apprentices and trainees.

Unlike education, in the workforce the gender gap between women and men is narrowing. In part, this is because men's performance on indicators such as labour force and employment participation is falling. As well, women are increasingly likely to be in the workforce, including in the child-bearing years, when a historically high 75 percent of women remain in the workforce in NSW. It should also be remembered, however, that women make up 70 percent of part-time workers – which leads in turn to women having \$10,000 lower median annual earnings than men in 2011, and a greater likelihood of experiencing housing stress in older age.

There has been little change in the area of women's leadership, where the gender gap between women and men in senior positions across society remains stark and intransigent, with few exceptions (for example, leadership in TAFE NSW). The interesting new data on local government, higher education, small business and non-government organisations provides additional insights into where the 'glass ceiling' lies across this landscape and we also look at the distinct experiences of Aboriginal women leaders.

The final chapter on safety and justice shows, as did last year's Report, that crime is highly gendered, with a sizable majority of crimes such as sexual assault and domestic violence being committed by men against women. Most trends are stable, although for some crimes recorded by police, such as domestic violence assaults against Aboriginal women, the trend is downwards. The number of women assault offenders rose by around 5 percent over the seven years to September 2012, while the number of women prisoners in NSW between 2002 and 2012 rose at the same rate as the number of male prisoners.

Just as the contributions of women across NSW have informed the development of this second edition of *Women in NSW*, Women NSW invites feedback and suggestions on how to make the Report more useful and informative in the future.