

Executive summary

Pip Job

Winner of the 2014 NSW – ACT
RIRDC Rural Women's Award.

Photographer: Toby Peet



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Women in NSW 2014 continues the NSW Government's commitment to track gender equity across key aspects of women's lives. In this third release since the Government initiated annual reporting, some 90 indicators define women's status across the areas of health and wellbeing, education and learning, work and financial security, leadership and safety and justice.

As with previous *Women in NSW* reports, this year's 'annual report card' makes data available to the public and to the government, business and the community sectors for use in policy-making, decision-making and program design. It is intended to raise awareness of how the lives of women and men differ, and how groups of women compare, and to track the progress of women over time.

The report presents leading indicators for each topic, selected according to the criteria outlined in the introduction. In response to our consultations following the last two *Women in NSW* reports, this year we have refined a number of indicators and presented more information in diagrams and tables with less narrative.

To the extent possible, this year's report exposes how subgroups of women are tracking, including Aboriginal women, younger and older women, women from culturally diverse backgrounds, and women who live in different locations.

Chapter one: A profile of NSW women

In 2013 there were 3.8 million women living in NSW, roughly half the total NSW population and almost a third of the total Australian female population. Aboriginal women make up 2.5 percent of the state's female population. Most NSW women (64 percent) live in Greater Sydney with around one-third living in the remainder of the state.

Women's median age in 2013 was 38.7 years, nearly two years older than men's. Life expectancy for women (84 years) was around four years longer than for men. Mothers continue to give birth at older ages, and there has been a decline in the fertility rate amongst teenagers over recent years. In 2012, 24 percent of all mothers who gave birth were 35 years of age and older and 3.2 percent were teenagers.

Most people live in families in NSW. Lone mother families comprise 13.5 percent of all families while lone father families comprise 2.8 percent. There is an increasing trend for people to live alone, with women making up a larger proportion of people living alone, particularly in older age groups.

A slightly higher proportion of women than men reported having a disability in 2012 (19 percent of women and 18 percent of men). This is the same rate for women and one percentage point lower for men than the last survey data, in 2009. However, women are more than twice as likely as men to be primary carers for people with disability or someone aged.

Chapter two: Health and wellbeing

A number of health conditions affect women more than men, and the leading causes of death are changing. As in the past, older women in 2012 were more likely than men to die from dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Cardiovascular disease continues to rank first among the leading causes of death for women and men in NSW. However, since 2010 diabetes has risen three places from the 11th ranked to the 8th ranked leading cause of death for NSW women.

Young women are more likely than young men to require hospitalisation as a result of Chlamydia, the sexually transmissible disease with the highest incidence in NSW. The concerning upward trend in hospitalisation for self-harm in young women has continued this year with young women

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2.5 times more likely than young men to be hospitalised for intentional self-harm. Fall-related hospitalisations are common among older women; women aged 65 years and over are 1.3 times more likely to be hospitalised than men of the same age.

Consistent with the last two *Women in NSW* reports, NSW women are less likely than men to rate their health positively and they engage in lower levels of physical activity than their male counterparts. This coexists with the fact that women engage in healthy behaviours more often than men. Fewer women than men smoke (12 percent compared to 20 percent of men in 2013), around half as many women as men engage in risky drinking (17 percent compared to 36 percent of men), and fewer women than men are overweight and obese (45 percent compared to 56 percent of men).

Aboriginal women's health is reported on a number of indicators, including their antenatal and maternity health experience. Births to Aboriginal mothers have more than doubled as a percentage of all births since 1990. While births to teenage mothers have dropped since 2006, the share of births to Aboriginal teenage mothers remains far higher than for the total population (19 percent compared to 3 percent for the total population in 2011).

The rate of normal vaginal births for women has decreased over the last two decades in NSW, and the rate of elective caesarean sections has increased. This is a nationwide trend; of the states and territories, NSW had the highest rate of vaginal births in 2011.

Chapter three: Education and learning

NSW women and girls have made substantial progress in educational attainment and achievement in the last few decades. The percentage of women with qualifications at Certificate III and above has increased by 20 percentage points since 2001, to 57.5 percent of all NSW women in 2013. This is a faster rate of growth than among men. Girls consistently outperform boys in high school completion rates, and women hold a greater share of commencements in undergraduate and postgraduate study at 57 percent and 59 percent respectively. Since 1995 the gap between women and men in apprenticeship and traineeship completion rates has closed with women accounting for 48 percent of all completions in 2013.

While the educational outcomes of girls and women are positive overall, girls continue to favour traditional subjects and avoid the science, engineering and mathematics-related areas that can lead to high paying careers. Women made up just 12 percent of technical and trade apprentice and trainee commencements in the 12 months to September 2013, a fall from 17 percent 12 months earlier. The proportion of Higher School Certificate (HSC) completions that are in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects remains lower for girls (31 percent) than for boys (45 percent).

Aboriginal women's greater participation in apprenticeships and vocational education and training (VET) overall that we identified in last year's report continues. In 2012 Aboriginal women comprised 5.4 percent of VET students and 5.5 percent of traineeship or apprenticeship commencements, more than double their presence in the NSW population. However at university level Aboriginal women are under-represented, accounting for just 1.8 percent of all women's undergraduate enrolments.

Women face challenges in converting qualifications into well-rewarded work. The graduate salary gap between NSW men and women persists at around 9 percent or \$5,000 per year, and female VET graduates are less likely than their male counterparts to work in the field in which they are qualified six months after graduating.

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The gap between girls' HSC completion rates in the highest and lowest socioeconomic groups has been narrowing over the last five years from 12 to 9 percentage points. However girls living in metropolitan areas were much more likely to complete their HSC than girls living in remote areas (78 percent compared to 57 percent).

Chapter four: Work and financial security

The long-term trend towards greater participation in paid work continues among NSW women. In 2014 some 57 percent of women in NSW participated in the labour force. Part-time and casual employment remains a substantial part of women's working lives, with 26 percent of women in NSW employed in casual jobs in 2013. This is some 5 percentage points higher than for men, though this gap has narrowed slightly during the last year.

While this year's data shows that the unemployment rate for NSW women was the same as for men, women fared worse when it came to underemployment and underutilisation. In November 2013 some 15.8 percent of women in the NSW labour force were either unemployed or wanted more hours of work, a rate 3.7 percentage points higher than men's.

When it comes to working in the home, women continue to shoulder the burden of unpaid household work, spending an average of 13 hours more than men per week on household duties in 2012 (the latest year available). This gender gap narrowed by 5 hours between 2011 and 2012, with women reducing their hours and men increasing theirs.

For the first time, this year we report on people working long hours of paid employment. Men are more likely to work 45 hours or more per week. This is true for the total employed population and also for people of child-rearing age. In 2013, about 26 percent of women of child-rearing age who were working full-time reported working 45 hours or more per week compared to 37 percent of men in the same age group. Interestingly, over the last decade the rate of long hours of work has declined for both men and women, though it has declined more among men.

The workforce in NSW remains strongly gender segmented along both occupational and industry lines, but the long-term trend shows that this segmentation is slowly breaking down in some areas. Women continue to improve their share of managerial and professional occupations. In some areas, such as the semi-skilled blue-collar occupations, women have been losing their share over time, although there has been a significant increase since last year's report in women working in the mining industry.

Women remained locked into low paid jobs, something evident in the distribution of earnings among the full-time adult workforce. Among men, less than 9 percent are found in the bottom decile (tenth) of annual earnings, whereas among women the bottom decile accounts for nearly 16 percent. The gender pay gap in NSW in November 2013 was 2 percentage points lower than last year. While the pay gap fluctuates, there is a long-term trend for the gender pay gap in NSW (14 percent in November 2013) to be smaller than the national pay gap (17 percent).

Chapter five: Leadership

Following the 2013 Australian Government elections, NSW women slightly increased their share of seats in the federal parliament, holding 29 percent of NSW seats in the House of Representatives and half of NSW Senate seats. A new indicator this year shows that the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples maintained an equal representation of men and women on its eight-member newly elected board which took office on 19 August 2013.

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At the top end in the corporate world, women's representation still lags considerably behind men's. In April 2014, women comprised 21 percent of all directorships of NSW based companies within the top 200 listed companies on the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX 200). This has grown by 6 percentage points since 2011.

The picture of women's leadership in the public sector and in the professions is one of slow and piecemeal improvement. Women's representation in the Senior Executive Service has grown from 22 percent in 2002 to 27 percent in 2012. On NSW Government boards and committees, women's representation (at 38 percent) is still low compared to men's, however between 2012 and 2013, increases were seen across six of the eight government portfolios, with the lowest levels of female representation 12 months earlier.

Consistent with the findings in last year's report, women are slowly increasing their share of senior leadership positions in teaching and academia. In 2013, women outnumbered men as primary school principals (58 percent) and as NSW TAFE Institute directors and managers (58 percent), and held 40 percent of secondary school principal positions. Among senior academics in NSW universities, women's representation has grown by 10 percentage points since 1999 to 30 percent in 2013.

Among senior ranks of the legal profession the proportion of female Queen's Counsels or Senior Counsels has notably increased since last year's report by 4 percentage points, albeit from a very low base of 6 percent in 2012 to 10 percent in 2013. Women represented 58 percent of solicitors issued with a Practising Certificate for the first time in 2013. How, and whether, the trend for women to outnumber men in the legal profession translates into greater representation at senior levels will be something to watch in future years.

Chapter six: Safety and justice

Women continue to be more likely than men to experience violence in family and community settings, although men are more likely to be victims of homicide or physical assault.

In NSW in the 12 months to March 2014, women were the victim in more than two-thirds of domestic violence-related (DV-related) assaults and were four times as likely as men to be sexually assaulted. More than two-thirds of DV-related assaults were perpetrated by males only. While the proportion of female domestic violence victims has remained relatively stable since 2005, over the same period the rates for DV-related assaults have been consistently higher for Aboriginal women than non-Aboriginal women, although both have been declining. More recently there has been an increase in DV-related assault rates for men and women, rising by 2 percent overall over the two years to March 2014.

A downwards trend in recorded incidents of non-DV-related assault is evident for women and men, with the number of female and male victims both falling by an average of 3 percent per annum since 2005. Women were victims in 30 percent of cases of non-DV-related assault in the 12 months to March 2014.

Women's presence among offenders and in the prison system is unchanged since last year's report. Twenty-one percent of offenders were women in 2011 and 2012, although over the last year there has been a slight increase in offender rates for both women (up from 610 to 751 per 100,000 population) and men (up from 2,401 to 2,890). Women make up 7 percent of the NSW prison population and are 14 times less likely to be imprisoned than men.

Since 2011–12 there has been a decline in the number and proportion of sex-discrimination complaints lodged by NSW women with both the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board and the Australian Human Rights Commission.