

Chapter one

A profile of NSW women

Elizabeth Smyth with her daughter Aleighah
2013 NSW Carers Award recipient.

Photographer: Jamie North



A profile of NSW women

This chapter provides information about the population of NSW women, including where they live, their age profile, and the profile and responsibilities of women with disability and those caring for people with disability. Note that this year we rely on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates and projections in several instances as limited new population data was available; Census data is collected every five years. This year we also have the opportunity to use data from the ABS *Disability, Ageing and Carers 2012* survey, undertaken every three years.

Key findings

In 2013, there were an estimated 3.8 million women in NSW representing half of the total NSW population. Aboriginal women make up 2.5 percent of the female population and half of the total Aboriginal population. In 2013, the median age for women in NSW was 38.7 years, 1.8 years older than for men.

NSW remains highly urbanised with the majority of women living in Greater Sydney (2.4 million women). As women live longer than men, in NSW there are more women than men living alone.

Fertility rates in NSW have been stable over recent years. The median age for first time mothers is 29 years while the median age for all mothers is 31 years.

Disability rates in NSW have slightly increased in the past decade. In NSW in 2012, 19 percent of women reported having some form of disability compared to 18 percent of men. This is the same proportion for women and 1 percentage point lower for men than the last survey data, in 2009. Nationally women also have a higher rate of disability compared to men (19 percent compared to 18 percent). In NSW in 2012, women were more than twice as likely as men to be primary carers.

Population size and distribution

As at December 2013, the total NSW population was estimated to be 7.5 million with women representing 50 percent of the population (some 3.8 million women).¹ This proportion is slightly lower than at the 2011 Census, where women made up 51 percent of the population. NSW women represent 32 percent of the Australian female population.²

According to the latest available data for regions across Australia (June 2012) NSW remains highly urbanised with 64 percent of women living in Greater Sydney (2.4 million women) and the remaining 36 percent living in the rest of NSW (1.3 million women).^{3 4}

At the 2011 Census there were 87,500 Aboriginal women in NSW, representing 2.5 percent of the female population and just over half of the total NSW Aboriginal population.⁵ We use this data throughout this year's report when comparing Aboriginal women's representation. However, it is important to note that recent estimates of the Aboriginal female population suggest that the population in 2011 was closer to 104,600 women or 2.8 percent of the NSW female population.⁶

More Aboriginal women live in NSW than in any other state or territory although, as a percentage of the population, NSW ranks behind the Northern Territory, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia.⁷

1 ABS (2014) *Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2013*. Cat no. 3101.0.

2 ABS (2014) *Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2013*. Cat no. 3101.0.

3 ABS (2013) *Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia 2012*. Cat no. 3235.0.

4 The data for regions is for a different year (2012) and source than the 2013 data used to estimate population size in this chapter.

5 ABS (2011) *Census of Population and Housing*.

6 ABS (2013) *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011*. Cat no. 3238.0.55.003.

7 ABS (2013) *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011*. Cat no. 3238.0.55.003.

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Population structure

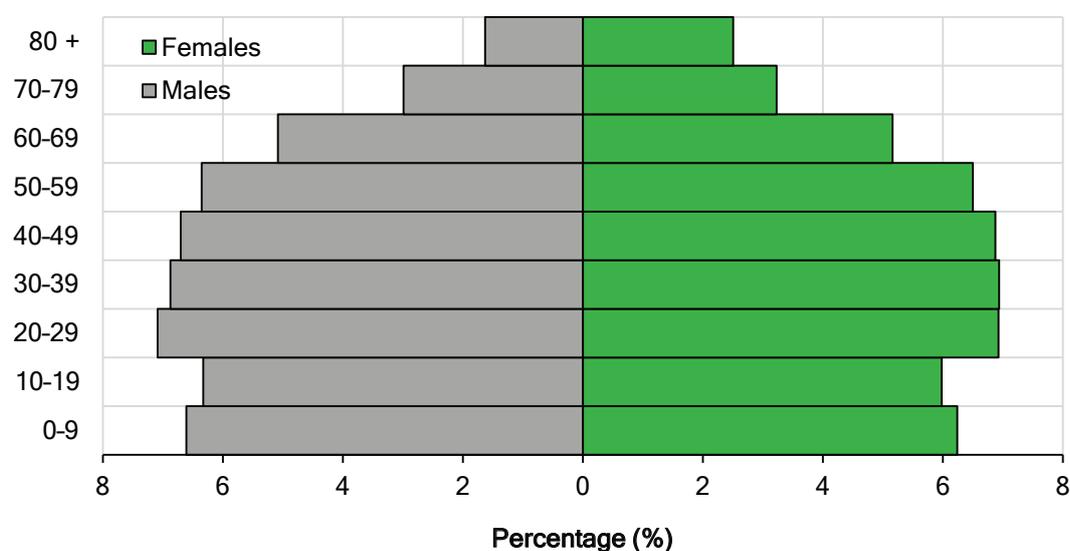
Sustained low fertility and increasing life expectancy have contributed to population ageing in Australia in a similar way to most developed countries.

The population structure in Figure 1.1 shows the distribution of the NSW population aged 0 to 80 years and over. Boys are the majority (51 percent) in the 0 to 9 year age group, while women are the majority (61 percent) in the 80 years and over age group.⁸

As reported in *Women in NSW 2013*, the age structure for Aboriginal women is very different to that of non-Aboriginal women (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Aboriginal girls (0–19 years) comprise approximately 23 percent of the Aboriginal female population whereas girls comprise 12 percent of the non-Aboriginal female population.

Another way to look at population is to compare median age: the age at which approximately half of the population is older and half is younger. The estimated median age for NSW women in 2013 was 38.7 years, 1.8 years older than men's median age of 36.9 years. The gender gap in women's median age has remained stable since 2011 although women's and men's median age has slightly increased. Women's and men's median age in NSW is comparable to Australia; where in June 2013, women's median age was 38.2 years, also 1.8 years older than the median age of Australian men.⁹

Figure 1.1 Population distribution, by age and sex, NSW, 2013



Note: Data show estimated resident population as at June 2013.

Population: NSW population.

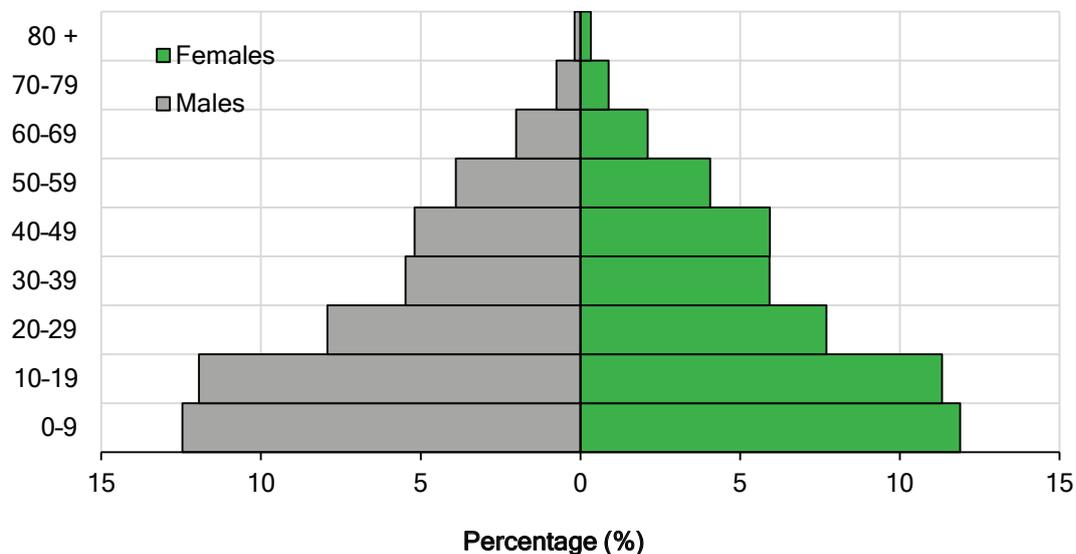
Data source: ABS (2014) *Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2013*. Cat no. 3101.0.

⁸ ABS (2014) *Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2013*. Cat no. 3101.0.

⁹ ABS (2014) *Australian Demographic Statistics, December 2013*. Cat no. 3101.0.

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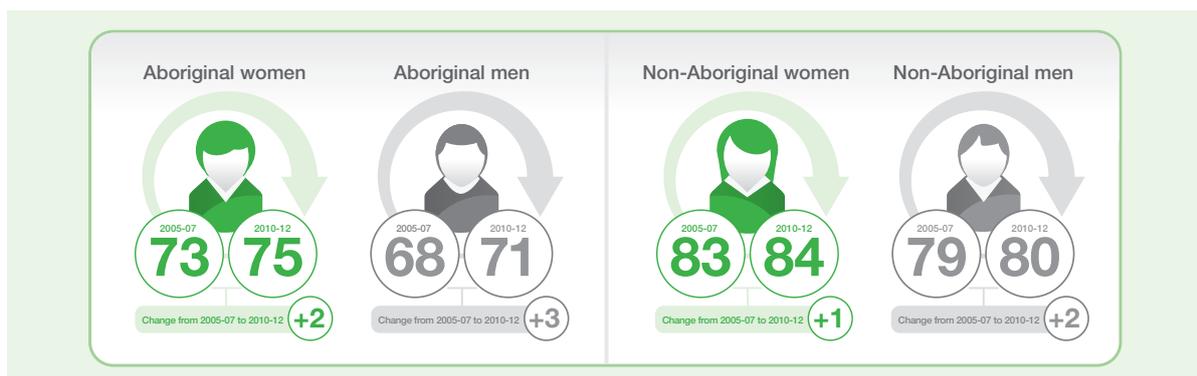
Figure 1.2 Aboriginal population distribution, by age and sex, NSW, 2012



Note: Data show estimated resident population as at June 2012.
 Population: NSW Aboriginal population.
 Data source: ABS (2013) *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2011*.
 Cat no. 3238.0.55.003.

In 2012 the life expectancy at birth for women in NSW was 84 years compared to men at 80 years.¹⁰ For Aboriginal women in NSW, life expectancy at birth was 75 years and for men it was 71 years.¹¹ The gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal women, although wide, is narrowing slowly. In 2010–12 it was 9 years compared to 10 years in 2005–07 (see Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Life expectancy at birth, estimates 2005–07 to 2010–12



Population: NSW population.
 Data source: ABS (2013) *Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2010–2012*.
 Cat no. 3302.0.55.003 and ABS (2013) *Deaths, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3302.0.

¹⁰ ABS (2013) *Deaths, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3302.0.

¹¹ ABS (2013) *Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2010–2012*. Cat no. 3302.55.003.

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Fertility and births

The number of births in NSW has increased significantly over the last 10 years because the average number of children born to each woman (the total fertility rate) has gone up, and the number of women of childbearing age has increased (see Figure 1.4).

The fertility rate in 2012 was 1.9 births per woman, up from 1.8 births in 2002; this continues to be just below the replacement level of 2.1 births per woman.¹² This is similar to the national rate, which in 2012 was also 1.9 (see Figure 1.4).

The fertility rate for Aboriginal women in 2012, at 2.6 births per woman, was higher than for non-Aboriginal women (see Table 1.1).

From 2005 to 2012, the annual number of births to Aboriginal mothers in NSW increased by 46 percent, compared to an increase of only 8 percent for all mothers.¹³

Fertility rates in NSW differ between urban, regional and rural areas with women in more remote areas having higher fertility rates. Birth rates in major cities are below replacement level (at 1.9 births per woman) whereas rates outside of major cities are above replacement level (2.2 in inner regional, 2.5 in outer regional, 2.6 in remote and 3.0 in very remote communities) (see Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.4 Fertility rate, Australia and NSW, 2002–12



Population: NSW population.

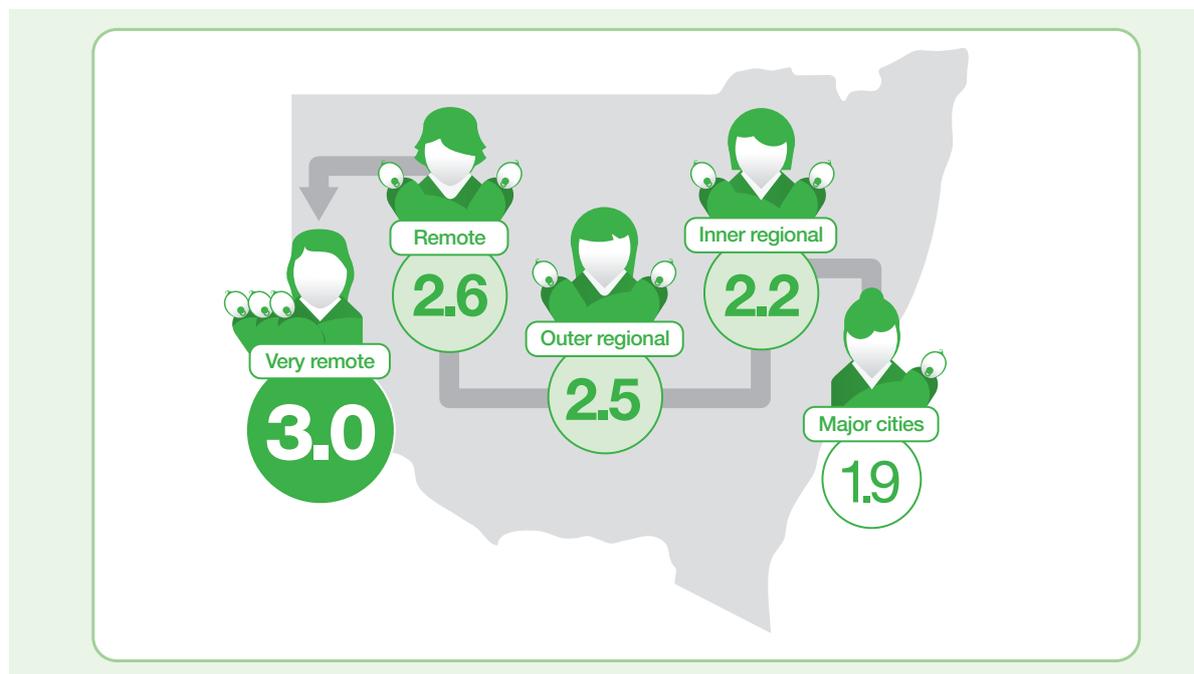
Data source: ABS (2013) *Births, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3301.0.

¹² ABS (2013) *Population Projections, Australia, 2012 (base) to 2101*. Cat no. 3222.0.

¹³ ABS (2013) *Births, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3301.0.

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Figure 1.5 Fertility rates by remoteness, 2012



Population: NSW population.

Data source: ABS (2013) *Births, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3301.0.

In 2012 the median age in NSW of all mothers was 31 years and 29 years for first time mothers.¹⁴ The median age of NSW mothers has remained stable since 2006. Between 2002 and 2012 fertility rates for women aged 19 and under have slowly decreased whereas fertility rates for those aged 35 and over have increased significantly. In 2012, 24 percent of all mothers who gave birth were aged 35 years or older and 3.2 percent were teenagers (see Figures 1.6 and 1.7).

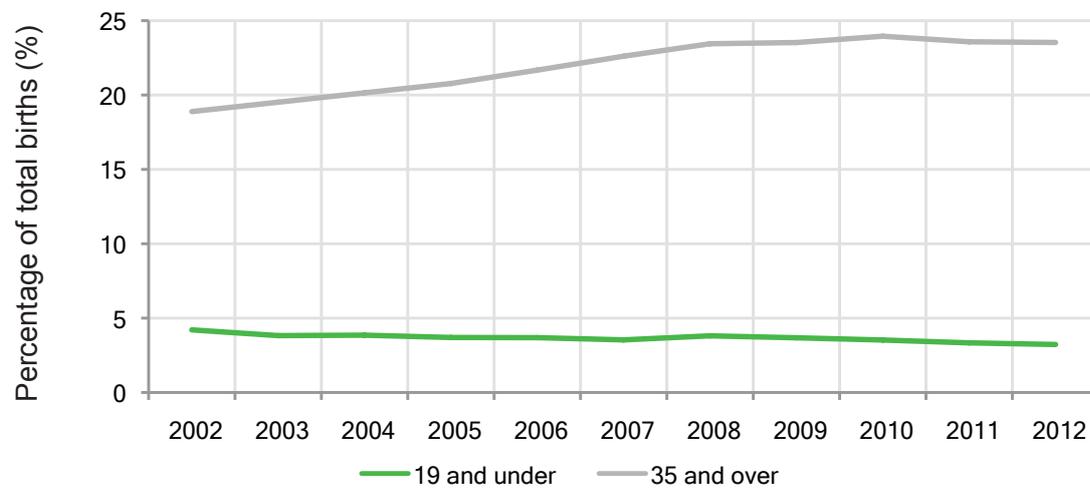
Aboriginal women have more births at younger ages.¹⁵ The median age of all Aboriginal mothers in 2012 was 25 years compared to 31 years for the average non-Aboriginal woman. Over the last two decades there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of births to Aboriginal and teen mothers, even though it remains higher than the state average (see Figure 1.6).

¹⁴ ABS (2013) *Births, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3301.0.

¹⁵ ABS (2013) *Births, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3301.0.

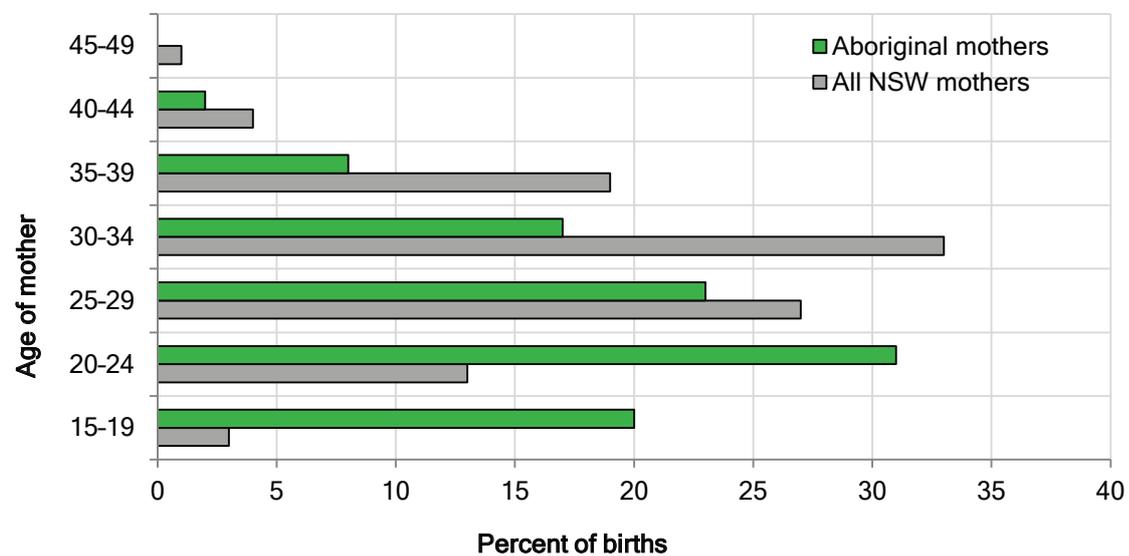
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Figure 1.6 Teenage births and births to mothers aged 35 years and over, NSW, 2002–12



Population: Teenage women and women aged 35 years and over, NSW.
 Data source: ABS (2013) Births, Australia, 2012. Cat no. 3301.0.

Figure 1.7 Births by age of mother and Aboriginality, NSW, 2012



Population: NSW population.
 Data source: ABS (2013) Births, Australia, 2012. Cat no. 3301.0.

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Aboriginal women

Table 1.1 provides a demographic summary for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations.

Table 1.1 Profile of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations, NSW, 2012

	Non-Aboriginal females	Non-Aboriginal males	Aboriginal females	Aboriginal males	Total Aboriginal
NSW	3,676,343	3,624,791	104,600	103,900	208,500
Births, 2012–13	47,900	50,600	1,777	1,800	3,600
Fertility	1.9	-	2.6	-	-
Median age of parents	31	33	25	28	-
Median age at death	85	79	64	61	61
Life expectancy at birth	84	80	75	71	72

Population: NSW population.

Data source: ABS (2013) *Births, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3301.0 and ABS (2013) *Deaths, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3302.0 and ABS (2013) *Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2010–2012*. Cat no. 3302.55.003.

People with disability and carers

In NSW in 2012, 19 percent of women reported having some form of disability compared to 18 percent of men.¹⁶ This is the same rate for women and one percentage point lower for men than the last survey data, in 2009. Nationally, women also have a higher rate of disability compared to men (19 percent compared to 18 percent respectively).¹⁷

Disability rates in NSW have increased in the past decade. The rates for women have increased by 92.6 per 100,000 persons, from 598.8 in 2003 to 691.4 in 2012. While the rates for men have also increased, from 591.8 in 2003 to 657.5 in 2012, they have grown more slowly than for women.¹⁸

The sex differential in rates of reported disability varies dramatically from childhood to old age. Young boys are more likely than young girls to have a reported disability, with boys aged 5–14 almost twice as likely to report a disability as girls the same age (11.6 percent of boys compared to 6.0 percent of girls).

In contrast, NSW women report higher rates of disability than men in all age groups between 60 and 90. Women are also more likely than men to report a profound or severe core activity limitation overall (7.2 percent of women compared to 5.6 percent of men), and for all age brackets over 15 years. This gender differential is most pronounced in the older age groups (see Table 1.2).

16 ABS (2012) *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: New South Wales 2012*. Cat no. 4430.0.

17 ABS (2012) *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings 2012*. Cat no. 4430.0.

18 ABS (2012) *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: New South Wales 2012*. Cat no. 4430.0.

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Table 1.2 Reported disabilities by age group and sex, NSW, 2012

	Profound or severe core activity limitation		All with reported disability	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
0–4	1.5	2.9	2.3	3.7
5–14	3.5	6.6	6.0	11.6
15–24	2.4	2.4	6.2	6.4
25–34	2.0	1.4	7.7	8.1
35–44	3.1	2.8	11.4	10.5
45–54	6.1	3.8	19.5	18.6
55–59	7.5	6.7	24.0	26.7
60–64	9.6	8.3	31.8	31.0
65–69	9.8	9.5	39.5	37.7
70–74	11.3	9.5	40.3	40.0
75–79	23.0	16.6	52.2	59.1
80–84	32.2	26.4	65.5	61.1
85–89	55.0	34.3	78.3	76.6
90 and over	67.5	66.0	82.8	86.2
Total	7.2	5.6	18.5	17.9

Note: A profound or severe core limitation refers to a person who always or sometimes needs help with a core activity task. All people with reported disability includes an impairment, which has lasted for at least six months and restricts everyday activities.

Population: NSW household population.

Data source: ABS (2012) *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: New South Wales 2012*. Cat no. 4430.0.

As in the Australian population, most women in NSW with a severe or profound disability are aged 65 years and over. In 2012, of the estimated 268,100 women living in NSW who had a severe or profound disability, 53 percent were 65 years or older and 47 percent were aged under 65 years. The rate of severe or profound core activity limitation was higher for women living in outer regional and remote areas (10 percent) and inner regional areas of NSW (7.3 percent) compared to women living in major cities (6.9 percent).¹⁹

In NSW in 2012, women accounted for 68 percent of all primary carers of people who are elderly or with a disability. Across all age groups women make up at least 60 percent or more of all primary carers within their age bracket. Women's share increases as they get older, peaking at the 35–44 bracket where women account for 82 percent of primary carers in the age bracket.²⁰

In terms of the overall population a greater percentage of women than men were primary carers in 2012; 4.6 percent of women compared to 2.1 percent of men. Women were more likely to be primary carers than men in all age groups up to 74 years, with 75 years and over being the only age bracket where a smaller proportion of women than men were primary carers. The percentage of women who are primary carers steadily increases with age, only declining once they reach 75. In comparison the percentage of men who are primary carers increases consistently across all age brackets but only surpasses women once they are 75 years or older (see Figure 1.8).

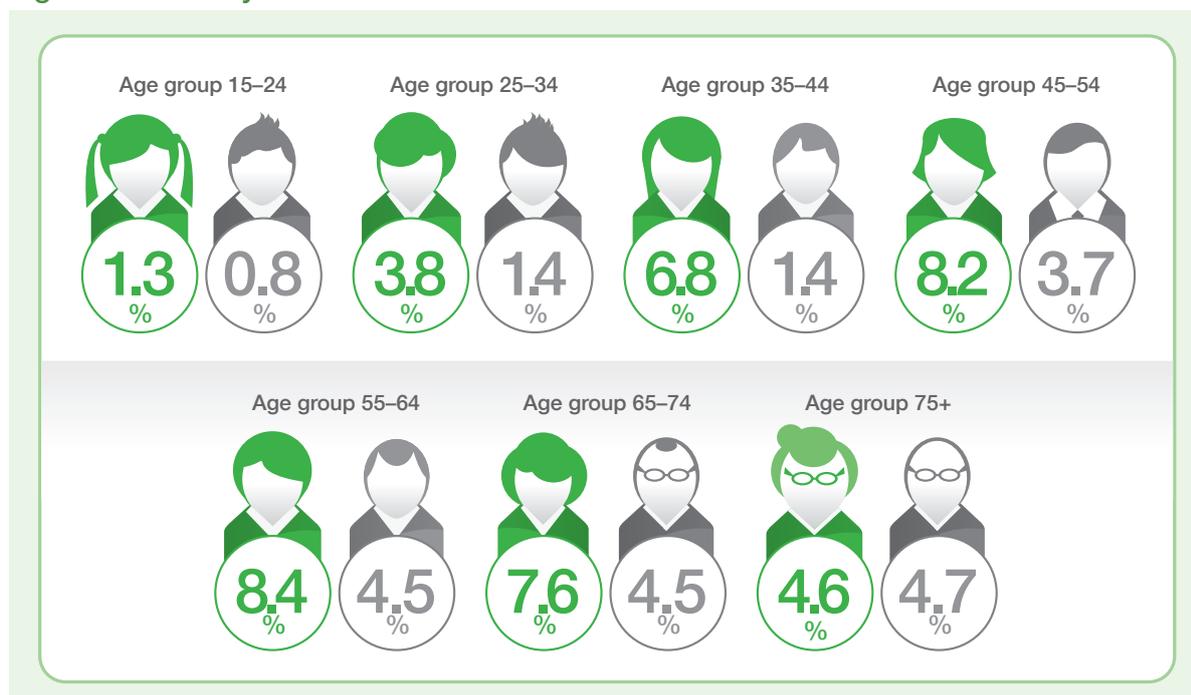
Patterns relating to the employment of women carers are reported in the chapter Work and financial security.

¹⁹ ABS (2012) *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: New South Wales 2012*. Cat no. 4430.0.

²⁰ ABS (2012) *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: New South Wales 2012*. Cat no. 4430.0.

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Figure 1.8 Primary carers



Note: A carer is someone who provides ongoing (or potentially ongoing) informal help or supervision to someone who has disabilities or long-term health conditions or a person who is elderly. A primary carer is someone who provides assistance for one or more of the core activities: communication, mobility and self-care.

Population: NSW household population.

Data source: ABS (2012) *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: New South Wales 2012*. Cat no. 4430.0.

Living arrangements, marriage and families

Most people in NSW live in family households, with the most common family living arrangement being people who are living in the same household with children. At the 2011 Census, families with children made up 45.5 percent of families with lone mother families comprising 13.5 percent of families, and lone father families 2.8 percent.²¹

Women are more likely than men to live alone, a feature more evident in older age groups. In 2011, women made up 55 percent of the almost 600,000 people in NSW who lived in lone person households. More than twice as many women who were aged 65 years or older lived alone than men the same age (164,300 women compared to 75,500 men).²²

The number of people living in lone person households has been increasing and is projected to grow to between 27 and 30 percent of all households in NSW by 2031.²³ Women who are living alone are expected to continue to outnumber men. The projection for more women living alone is in part due to the larger number of women than men in older age groups, which in turn reflects the longer life expectancy of women. While women are more likely to be living alone in old age, the tendency for men to live alone is more evenly distributed across age groups, reflecting the likelihood that men at a younger age are living alone.

21 ABS (2011) *Census of Population and Housing*.

22 ABS (2011) *Census of Population and Housing*.

23 ABS (2010) *Household and Family Projections, Australia, 2006 to 2031*. Cat no. 3236.0.

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The marriage rate in NSW has decreased slightly in 2012 to 5.6 per thousand population from 5.7 in 2011 as has the divorce rate. Women tend to marry at a younger age than men (29 years for women compared to 31 years for men).

In 2012, there were 2.0 divorces per thousand of population, compared to 2.4 12 years earlier.²⁴ NSW had the shortest median length of marriage to divorce (11.2 years) compared to other states and the largest increase in divorces (690, or 5.0 percent higher in comparison to 2011). The median age for divorces for women was 42 years compared to 46 years for men in 2012.

Immigration

In last year's *Women in NSW* report we used Census data to report in detail the cultural diversity of the NSW population, showing that just over a quarter of the state's female population was born overseas. Some 28 percent spoke a language other than English at home, nearly five percentage points higher than for Australia as a whole.²⁵

Twenty-eight percent of all immigrants settle in NSW with Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland being the next largest receivers of immigrants (24, 17 and 16 percent respectively).

In 2012–13, 36,709 female immigrants (52 percent of all immigrants to NSW) gave NSW as their intended state of residence.²⁶ The number of men was 34,029. This was an increase of 5.7 percent more women since 2011–12, and a 4.6 percent increase for male immigrants.

Data from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection show most people arriving in NSW from overseas settle in Sydney. The fastest growing age groups among new settlers are those aged 65 and older, children under 15 years and adults aged 30 to 49.

Conclusion

The population of women in NSW continues to grow through birth and migration. The NSW population size and distribution has remained stable since 2011. In NSW, there are more males than females in the 0–9 year old age group. This is a trend across all OECD countries where boys predominate in the 0–9 age group.²⁷

The life expectancy gender gap is closing. In NSW between 2001 and 2013, women's life expectancy increased by 1.8 years to 84 years. Male life expectancy increased more quickly during this period (by 2.7 years) but remains lower than women's at 79.7 years.

24 ABS (2012) *Marriages and Divorces, Australia, 2012*. Cat no. 3310.0.

25 ABS (2011) *Census of Population and Housing*.

26 Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2014), *Overseas Arrivals and Departures Statistics*. Unpublished data.

27 OECD *Women and Men in OECD Countries*. OECD Publishing <http://www.oecd.org/std/37962502.pdf>

Women are starting families later in life. They are getting married later and more women aged over 35 are having children. Overall, life expectancy for women in NSW is high compared to other OECD countries where the average for women was 82.8 in 2011.²⁸ However, Aboriginal women on average live shorter lives. They had a 75 year life expectancy in 2012, nearly 10 years less than the Australian and OECD female average. NSW women's current fertility rate is also slightly higher than the OECD average at 1.9 compared to 1.7.²⁹

28 OECD (2013) *Health at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2013-en

29 OECD (2014) *OECD Factbook 2014: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*. http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/oecd-factbook-2014_factbook-2014-en