

Executive summary

Introduction

This report examines a range of indicators across five topic areas – health and wellbeing, education and learning, work and financial security, leadership and representation, and safety and access to justice – to evaluate gender equality and gender difference in NSW.

In so doing it will provide baseline data for government, business and the community sector for use in policy-making, decision-making and program design. This is the first ‘annual report card’ on women in NSW, and future reports will allow progress to be tracked over time.

Leading indicators were selected for each topic based on the criteria outlined on page 2. As we continue to consult, new topics may be included in subsequent reports.

The report uses survey data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) longitudinal survey, as well as other NSW Government survey and administrative data. As Census 2011 data was not available at the time of writing, it will be used in *Women in NSW 2013* and subsequent reports.

Chapter One: A profile of NSW women

Women in NSW are likely to live in cities, come from diverse cultural backgrounds and speak many languages.

Aboriginal women make up 2.1 percent of the female population of NSW, which in 2011 was 3.68 million women or 50.4 percent of the state’s population. In 2006, nearly two-thirds of NSW women lived in Sydney, with most of the remainder in regional areas and less than one percent in remote areas of the state.

Nearly a quarter of NSW women were born overseas, and one in five spoke a language other than English at home.

The median age of women in NSW in 2011 (38 years) is nearly two years older than that of men. Women are more likely to live longer than men; however, the gap is closing.

Women are far more likely to be at the head of a single parent household than are men. One in five families in NSW is headed by a single parent, and 88 percent of single parents are women.

Over a third of women over 65 years live alone. Women between the ages of 80 and 84 years are more than twice as likely as men to be living alone.

Chapter Two: Health and wellbeing

The health of women is dependent on a range of factors, not only those normally considered within the usual medical model. In measuring wellbeing outcomes for women, consideration also needs to be given to social, economic and educational factors that relate to health, many of which are covered in other parts of the Report.

For example, reducing violence against women and assisting women to balance the many competing priorities they experience from work and family life will have a positive impact on their health.

Overall, NSW women have mixed outcomes across the range of health and wellbeing indicators.

They are more likely to be hospitalised for falls and as a result of experiencing complications that arise from untreated chlamydia. More women die of cerebrovascular disease, dementia and cancer than men, although this may be because women generally live longer than men.

Women in NSW are more likely than men to report high levels of psychological distress, to be hospitalised for intentional self-harm and to lodge workers’ compensation claims relating to mental disorder.

NSW women are not likely to smoke (only 14 percent identify as smokers), and half as many women as men drink at risky levels. However, nearly half of the women in NSW are overweight or obese (48 percent) and women rate their health status a little less positively than men.

Chapter Three: Education and learning

Education and employment opportunities are important for social stability and participation in democratic processes. They are also strongly linked to better health and wellbeing for individuals. Significantly, education and employment opportunities for women also directly affect economic growth and development in NSW. Given the significance of NSW to Australia, it is also true that enhancing economic growth in NSW enhances national economic outcomes.

More girls than boys in NSW complete year 12 of high school and more women than men participate in vocational education and training and attend university, both as undergraduates and as postgraduates.

However, women and girls are still not well represented in subjects that lead to the highest earning professions. Just 33 percent of girls' Higher School Certificate (HSC) completions are in science, technology, engineering and maths compared to 44 percent of boys'. Engineering and related technologies make up 12 percent of men's undergraduate enrolments at university, but just 1.4 percent of women's.

In vocational education and training, the proportion who hold qualifications at the Certificate III level or above is increasing at a faster rate for women than for men, but women are still far less likely to undertake the apprenticeship training that leads to well-paying, high-demand trades jobs.

Although a greater proportion of university students are women, male graduates earn considerably more than females in their first year out, a difference of 7.3 percent or \$4,000 in 2011.

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Chapter Four: Work and financial security

Access to paid work is a cornerstone of women's financial and social independence. More than half of NSW women are working in the paid workforce, although 41 percent of employed women work part-time and 28 percent are engaged as casuals.

Women now make up 45 percent of the paid workforce. However, they are still not paid as well as men for equivalent work. Women continue to volunteer in the community more than men and are still doing the bulk of household work.

Women workers are largely clustered in sales, community services and clerical and administrative occupations, often working in health care, education and training, and retail services.

While the weekly wage gap between women and men in NSW has decreased by 4 percentage points since 1995, men still earn 14 percent more each week than women. This is better than for women across Australia, however, for whom the weekly wage gap with men is 17 percent.

Women's financial security is more precarious than men's against a number of indicators: more retired women than men in NSW rely on government pensions and allowances as their main form of income; NSW women have on average \$12,000 less in superannuation assets than men; and more than 60 percent of older single person households experiencing rental or mortgage stress are female.

Chapter Five: Leadership and representation

Leadership gender equality has increased in recent decades; however, there are areas where progress has been slow, very recent or has stalled altogether.

In public life, women in NSW have made their greatest gains in leadership positions at the level of local government and the Australian Senate. Forty percent of NSW seats in the Senate are now filled by women. However, women's representation at other tiers of government remains low, at around 25 percent.

In the private sector, as of April 2012, 17 percent of all NSW directorships were held by women (compared to 14 percent nationally).

Around 29 percent of board members are women within the not-for-profit sector; in the NSW public sector, 37 percent of board and committee members are women.

The professions of law and education are approaching a gender-balanced workforce, but women form a distinct minority in senior roles.

Chapter Six: Safety and access to justice

Women are far less safe in NSW families and communities than men.

Women are more than twice as likely as men to experience domestic violence and five times more likely than men to be sexually assaulted and have the assault perpetrated by their partner. In the 12 months to September 2011, nearly 20,600 women were the victims of a recorded domestic violence-related assault in NSW, but surveys suggest the actual incidence is far greater. Women make up 70 percent of people protected by Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders.

Women are less likely than men to be victims of some crimes: robbery, non-domestic violence-related assault and murder; and violence against women varies significantly across regions, both within Sydney and across the state. There has been a decline since 2003 in the rate of Aboriginal women who are victims of domestic violence.

The reporting rate for sexual assault is 20 percentage points lower than for robbery, and the attrition rate of sexual offence cases is high, with less than 10 percent of recorded incidents involving adults proven in court.

The data provides some surprises regarding women's sense of safety on and around public transport, which at least during daylight hours is equivalent to or greater than men's.

How does NSW compare?

Not surprisingly, since NSW makes up a third of the Australian population, NSW women's status and experiences are very similar to those of Australian women more widely.

Indicators of their health status are slightly better in some areas, such as reporting high or very high levels of psychological stress and being overweight or obese. In education, NSW women have slightly higher education rates than the Australian average, including participation in work-related learning for people in the workforce.

It is perhaps in the area of work and financial security that the greatest differences between NSW women and Australian women as a whole are evident.

NSW women have lower overall labour force participation rates (perhaps related to their higher educational participation noted above), but slightly higher rates of pay once they are in employment. There are more NSW women who have no superannuation coverage.

In terms of women's leadership, NSW women do better in their representation levels on government boards and committees, and in the judiciary, but are less likely to be in the public sector Senior Executive Service.

NSW women are slightly less likely to have experienced domestic violence in the last 12 months; although as with the other indicators, the differences are small.

Women in NSW 2013 will be able to provide a bigger range of comparisons using 2011 Census data where the limitations associated with sample surveys do not apply.

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