

# Introduction

The report is intended to raise awareness of how the lives of women and men differ. It is an annual evaluation of gender equality and gender difference in NSW.



## The NSW Government's commitment to women

The NSW Government is pleased to publish the first *Women in NSW* report. Apart from meeting a commitment made at the 2011 NSW state election, the report also meets the Government's commitment to greater accountability and transparency and is a key political and policy touchstone.

Without reliable information, policy and political debate is impoverished, and good public policy is inevitably compromised.

The report is intended to raise awareness of how the lives of women and men differ. It is an annual evaluation of gender equality and gender difference in NSW.

It also tells us how NSW women are faring compared to Australia as a whole, and what is happening to different subgroups of women across the state. It is not intended to be entirely comparative with men; indeed, some of the most interesting comparisons are between groups of women.

## Who the report is for

The report is designed to be used by decision-makers in government, business and the community sector, as well as by members of the public. The information it contains will also be of interest to students, researchers and educators.

This first report provides basic information that public and private sector organisations need to develop policies and take action on issues concerning women. Future reports will allow the tracking of progress over time.

The report presents a range of contrast and comparisons, but it does not offer definitive conclusions as to the reasons behind them. This would require deeper research and statistical analysis that are better provided by specialist agencies and research centres, as needed.

The facts and figures in this report are as relevant to men as they are to women. The issues they highlight concern both sexes, and, inevitably, any change they drive will affect us all.

## Scope and structure of the report

The report is structured around five themes that are central to women's life experiences. These are:

- Health and wellbeing
- Education and learning
- Work and financial security
- Leadership and representation
- Safety and access to justice.

In addition, a demographic profile of NSW women (Chapter One) describes current trends in women's age, fertility, family and household arrangements.

Key statistics, descriptive analysis and a focus topic of interest are presented for each theme.

Sources where the reader can find more information are given. Where possible, the information presented has four dimensions which are summarised in the box below.

The report does not deal with government achievements or program outcomes. However, its themes and indicators are aligned to the government's commitments to the people of NSW through *NSW 2012*, the State Plan.

## Gender indicators

There is a large suite of indicators and data sources that could be included in a report on women. Several hundred were initially identified.

In order to produce a report that is useful, accessible and manageable to develop and update each year, the following approach was adopted:

- A set of leading indicators was chosen for each theme.
- Where data is available, NSW women's experience in terms of the national gender indicators series produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is given to allow comparison between NSW and Australia as a whole (see the Appendix).
- Readers are referred to sites where additional data and information can be found.

Eight criteria were used to select leading indicators<sup>1</sup>:

- 1. Worth measuring**  
Relevant to services and community and government priorities
- 2. Gender-sensitive**  
They identify significant gender gaps at a point in time, and over time

### 3. Information that can galvanise action

They inform areas that are responsive to policy or program changes

### 4. Understandable

The data is accessible and clear to a broad audience so that the community can come to its own judgements about its meaning

### 5. Comparable

Comparable data is available across jurisdictions and over time

### 6. Can be measured for diverse populations

They facilitate comparison between different groups of women

### 7. Accurate

The information published is of sufficient accuracy so that the community can have confidence in it

### 8. Administratively simple

They are already in use within the NSW Government or are easy to produce from established data.

Clearly, it is not always possible to utilise all these criteria to select an indicator, but as many as possible have been considered for each indicator.

## Four dimensions of gender equity

### The gender difference

Women's status compared to men

### Trends over time

The direction and pace of progress in gender equality

### How does NSW compare?

Contrasting NSW and Australian women's experiences

### Tracking subgroups of women

Comparing specific groups of NSW women (for example, Aboriginal women, rural and regional women, women from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, specific age groups and women with a disability)

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller discussion of these criteria, see World Health Organisation (2003) *Comparative Evaluation of Indicators for Gender Equity and Health*, WHO Centre for Health Development, Kobe, Japan; and Productivity Commission (2011) *Report on Government Services*, Chapter One.

## Data sources

The report seeks to bring a range of information together in an easy-to-use format. It draws on:

- published and unpublished large-scale survey data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- data from national specialist surveys, in particular the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) longitudinal survey
- government administrative data that is associated with a specific program (for example, the Higher School Certificate, workers' compensation or Commonwealth Rent Assistance)
- NSW Government survey data that is published, but may not be well-known to a broad audience (for example, the NSW Population Health Survey).

While administrative data associated with service use should not be taken to be representative of a problem or issue, it can shed light on important topics. Where possible, data from different sources are presented to provide the reader with a balanced picture.

This choice is consistent with the NSW Government's commitment to honest, transparent and accountable government as described in Goal 31 of *NSW 2012*, the State Plan.

Census 2011 data will be used in subsequent reports and one-off research studies by Women NSW in the future. As data becomes progressively available from mid-2012, it will be possible to offer more analysis about subgroups of women and to track changes between census periods.

## Using this report

This first baseline report will be used in consultations with agencies, peak organisations and other external stakeholders. It will also be of use to those involved in policy development and advocacy more generally.

Women NSW will also identify issues for the NSW Government's data development agenda where additional sex-disaggregated data may be needed.

It is expected that new data availability and user feedback from the 2012 report will contribute to the development of the second *Women in NSW* report in 2013.