



# ANNUAL WOMEN'S SURVEY 2024

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**COUNTRY  
WOMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION  
OF NSW**



CWA of NSW Annual Women's Survey

As President of the Country Women's Association of NSW, I am proud to present the findings from our 2024 Annual Women's Survey. This survey, undertaken with the participation of 1,670 women from across New South Wales, provides invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities women in regional, rural and remote areas face. The data collected will be central to guiding our advocacy efforts, ensuring that we continue to address the issues most important to women in these communities. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to every woman who took the time to share her experiences, concerns and ideas. Your voices will help shape our future initiatives and support our ongoing commitment to empowering women across the state.



*Jay Beames*

## METHODOLOGY

The Country Women's Association of New South Wales (CWA of NSW) is dedicated to addressing the needs of its members and the broader community. As part of its 2023–2026 Strategic Plan CWA of NSW launched the Annual Women's Survey in August 2024. This survey aims to gather insights into the lives of women across NSW to guide future initiatives, actions and advocacy efforts of the CWA of NSW.

The survey was conducted online using Survey Monkey. It was shared via email notifications to members, on the CWA of NSW website, through social media platforms like Facebook, printed publications like The Country Woman journal and various networks to the wider community.

The survey focused on women living in regional, rural and remote areas of NSW, comprising 37 questions structured as follows:

**Demographic Information:** Gathering essential data to understand respondent backgrounds.

**Membership Feedback:** Collecting insights on member needs and preferences regarding CWA of NSW services and activities.

**Local Community Insights:** Understanding challenges, opportunities and priorities across NSW Government Human Services Wellbeing Framework nine domains: Health, Safety, Housing, Finance, Infrastructure, Education, Empowerment, Environment and Agriculture.

**Suggestions for Action:** Encouraging respondents to propose actions and initiatives to address women's needs in each of the nine domains.

The survey was open from 1st August to 30th October 2024. It had an initial reach of approximately 8,000 members with an additional reach to the community. The survey received a total of 1,670 completed responses.

# 1670

women  
responded  
to the  
survey

## 20%

Major Cities

## 42%

Inner Regional areas

## 37%

Outer Regional areas

## 1%

Remote areas

## AGE RANGES

18-24: 0.45%

25-34: 2.64%

35-44: 4.37%

45-54: 12.92%

55-64: 26.21%

65+: 53.87%



When asked to rate the nine domains from the NSW Government Human Services Wellbeing Framework respondents rated the following domains as highest importance to them.



## HEALTH

Being healthy and access to health care.

Issues of most concern

- Limited access to specialised healthcare providers
- Lack of primary healthcare providers
- Affordability of medical treatments and medications.



## SAFETY

Feeling and being safe.

Issues of most concern

- Insufficient law enforcement presence
- Gender-based violence and harassment
- Lack of protective infrastructure such as lighting.



## HOUSING

Having a safe and affordable place to live.

Issues of most concern

- High cost of housing
- Shortage of housing stock
- Financial hardship
- Lack of affordable housing stock.

# WHAT WOMEN WOULD LIKE US TO BE TALKING ABOUT?

## 1 HOUSING

Concerns related to availability, affordability and quality of housing.

## 2 SAFETY

Concerns about personal safety, domestic violence, harassment and the availability of support services for affected individuals.

## 3 TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

Issues related to the availability, reliability and affordability of transport, and access to digital or physical connectivity due to geographic or infrastructural limitations.

## 4 EMPLOYMENT & COST OF LIVING

Financial pressures related to food, services and daily living expenses. Issues involving job availability, wage equality, financial security and barriers to economic independence for women.

## 5 SOCIAL ISOLATION

Feelings of loneliness, lack of community support and insufficient opportunities to engage socially or within community structures

## 6 ACCESS TO SERVICES

General lack of or difficulty accessing essential services, including legal aid, housing support and other resources critical for women's wellbeing.

## 7 WELLBEING

Concerns relating to physical, mental and emotional health, including access to healthcare, mental health support and overall quality of life.

## 8 CHILDCARE

Issues related to the cost, quality or availability of childcare services in regional, rural and remote NSW.

## 9 EDUCATION & SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Issues related to accessing education, training opportunities or resources needed for personal and professional growth.

# HEALTH

Good health is essential for maintaining an active and productive life, influencing both paid and unpaid work. Women often experience poorer health compared to men during their working years, with higher rates of chronic conditions, including mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

Women are more likely to visit healthcare professionals and be admitted to hospital, leading to greater out-of-pocket healthcare costs. The disparity in healthcare access between urban and rural areas is a persistent issue, particularly when it comes to services tailored to women's specific health needs.

## What challenges do women in regional, rural remote NSW/ACT face in accessing health care?

- 40% Limited access to specialised healthcare providers
- 32% Lack of primary healthcare providers
- 21% High cost of medical treatments and medications
- 6% Other (lack of transport, recruitment and retention health care professionals)
- 2% Gender bias and discrimination in health care settings.

## What do women believe would help them overcome these challenges?

- 32% More women's health clinics and facilities
- 29% Expanded Telehealth services for remote areas
- 17% Increased funding for women's health programs and initiatives
- 7% More gender-based education for healthcare providers
- 6% Combination of: telehealth, funding, education, women's health clinics
- 4% Increased healthcare workforce
- 4% Other (increased bulk billing affordable care, improved health infrastructure & facilities, improved transport & infrastructure, improved mental health service, better funding and government support).



# SAFETY

Residents in regional, rural and remote NSW face heightened risks of crime, including sexual assault, property theft and domestic violence, with women disproportionately affected. Statistics from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) reveal persistent crime rates in these areas, with property crime and violent crime rates significantly higher than in Greater Sydney. Domestic violence continues to be a major issue, with increasing reports of related assaults and a rising incidence of non-domestic assaults in regional communities.



## What makes women feel unsafe in regional, rural and remote communities in NSW/ACT?

- 34% Insufficient law enforcement presence
- 30% High incidence of gender-based violence and harassment
- 16% Limited access to emergency services
- 15% Lack of protective infrastructure such as lighting
- 4% Other (youth behaviour, drugs & alcohol).

## What do women believe would make them feel safer in these communities?

- 36% Increased policing and community initiatives
- 25% More community education on gender-based violence
- 23% More support services for victims of domestic violence
- 7% Improved infrastructure in public places (lighting, CCTV cameras)
- 7% Combination of: increased policing, community, education and victim support
- 1.52% Other
- 0.33% Not sure.

# HOUSING

Homelessness and housing insecurity continue to disproportionately affect women, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas of NSW. Census data highlights a significant increase in the number of women experiencing homelessness, with women aged 45 and over being particularly at risk. Many women in these regions face heightened challenges in accessing safe, affordable housing due to rising rents, limited housing options and economic factors such as income disparity.

## What do women feel are the greatest barriers to finding safe, affordable housing in regional, rural, remote NSW/ACT?

- 41% High cost of housing
- 24% Shortage of housing stock
- 10% Financial hardship
- 7% Lack of affordable housing stock
- 5% Security Safety concerns
- 5% Other( specific to the individual)
- 4% Access to housing support services
- 4% Location based issues.

## What do women believe would make housing more accessible for them in these areas?

- 42% More investment in affordable housing
- 20% Increase support services for homeless women and those at risk
- 14% Rent control policies to curb rent inflation
- 10% Increase government subsidies for housing programs
- 8% Combination of: affordable housing, support services, rent control government subsidies
- 4% Other (limit short term rentals, limit investment property ownership, not sure)
- 2% Increase public housing
- 1% Improve employment and financial stability.



# FINANCE

Women in NSW experience higher rates of poverty than men, with 17% of women living below the poverty line in 2021-22, compared to 14% of men. Income inequality remains a critical issue, particularly for women in regional, rural and remote areas, where workforce participation is lower than in Greater Sydney. Despite progress, gendered disparities persist in full-time and part-time work, with a significantly higher proportion of women working part-time compared to men.



## What economic challenges do women face in regional, rural and remote communities in NSW/ACT?

- 51% Limited access to affordable childcare and flexible work arrangements
- 26% Gender pay gaps and lack of career advancement opportunities
- 9% Lack of support for entrepreneurship and business
- 9% Discrimination and bias in hiring and promotion practices
- 5% Other (lack of job opportunities, lack of transport, carer responsibilities).

## What do women believe would overcome these challenges and improve their financial security?

- 41% Affordable childcare and flexible work arrangements
- 22% Access to training and mentorship programs to foster professional growth
- 20% Actions to address the gender pay gap and promote pay equity
- 9% Access to grants and resources to support women in business
- 6% Combination of: childcare, flexible arrangements, training mentoring, grants
- 1% Increase employment opportunities
- 1% Other.

# INFRASTRUCTURE

For women living in regional, rural and remote NSW, infrastructure plays a crucial role in daily life, impacting access to essential services such as healthcare, education and transportation. However, many women report critical gaps in infrastructure, particularly in telecommunications, which hinder their connectivity and ability to engage with the wider community and economy. These challenges are compounded by the lack of adequate public services and facilities that meet their needs, creating barriers to mobility, safety and economic participation.

## What aspects of local regional, rural and remote infrastructure do women believe need urgent attention?

- 37% Improved access to healthcare and emergency services
- 24% Affordable reliable telecommunications services
- 22% Improved transport and road connectivity
- 6% Access to reliable energy sources
- 5% Combination of: improved health, emergency services, telecommunications, transport connectivity and energy
- 4% Access to clean water and sanitation facilities
- 0.8% Other (public housing, climate resilient infrastructure).

## What improvements in telecommunications do women in regional, rural and remote NSW/ACT want to enhance connectivity?

- 60% An expansion of mobile network coverage
- 17% Regulation to ensure fair pricing and service quality standards
- 9% Subsidies for broadband in underserved areas
- 7% Community projects to improve local telecommunications infrastructure
- 5% Combination of: mobile network expansion, pricing and service regulation, subsidies for underserved areas and community projects
- 1.19% Other
- 0.09% Not sure.



# EDUCATION

Women in regional, rural and remote NSW face significant challenges in accessing and completing education and training programs. Year 12 completion rates for girls living in outer regional areas (68.7%) and remote or very remote areas (71.6%) are lower than those of girls in major cities (78.8%) in NSW (2022). Women make up over one third (38.1%) of people completing apprenticeships/traineeships (2022).

## What challenges do women in regional, rural and remote communities in NSW/ACT face in accessing education and training?

- 33% Insufficient funding or financial support
- 29% Lack of local education facilities and providers
- 12% Limited access to affordable transport options
- 12% Lack of affordable childcare
- 9% Combination of: funding, facilities, transport, childcare
- 4% Other.

## What changes would women like to see to improve access to education and training in these areas?

- 35% Locally delivered course options
- 29% An expansion of online learning options and virtual classrooms
- 18% Increased financial support programs
- 10% Increased availability and access to childcare support
- 6% Combination of: course options, learning options, financial and childcare support
- 1.6% Other (awareness and outreach, support services and mentorship, transport accessibility).



# EMPOWERMENT

Women play a vital role in community life across regional, rural and remote NSW, contributing through both formal leadership and unpaid social production, including caregiving and volunteering. Despite their significant contributions, women remain underrepresented in decision-making roles, limiting their influence on policies and initiatives that directly impact their communities.

## What challenges prevent women from having a say in decision-making in regional, rural and remote NSW/ACT?

- 54% Societal challenges and longstanding inequalities
- 17% Lack of time
- 8% Lack of confidence
- 7% Education/knowledge gaps
- 5% Other
- 4% Financial constraints
- 3% Not sure
- 2% None.

## How can women's participation in decision-making in these communities be strengthened?

- 20% Access to support networks & mentorship
- 20% Encouragement for community engagement
- 17% Access to education, training & upskilling
- 12% Access to opportunities for engagement
- 9% Enhancement of policy & regulation
- 8% Increased representation
- 7% Not sure
- 4% Access to transport, technology and public facilities
- 2% Other
- 0.93% None.

# ENVIRONMENT

For women in regional, rural and remote NSW, engagement with the environment often intersects with issues such as land ownership, access to water and participation in policy decision-making and their input into decision-making process is vital. Research shows that the inclusion of diverse perspectives, especially those of women, can lead to more effective and equitable outcomes in the management of natural resources (Miller, 2021; Johnson et al., 2022).

## What environmental concerns matter most to women in regional, rural, remote communities in NSW/ACT?

- 26% Water security
- 22% Land degradation
- 10% Climate change
- 8% Impact of energy infrastructure
- 7% Farming practices
- 6% Other
- 6% Mining and resource extraction
- 6% Government policy
- 4% Forestry and habitat loss
- 3% Biodiversity
- 2% Not sure.

## What actions do women want to take to protect the environment?

- 28% Improvements to water management and security
- 17% Enhanced soil protection and erosion control
- 15% Renewable energy and sustainable development
- 10% Stronger regulation of mining and rehabilitation
- 9% Other (recycling, reduced foreign ownership, protection agricultural land)
- 6% Forest protection and habitat conservation
- 6% Targeted government policy
- 5% Feral pest control and wildlife management
- 3% Not sure.

# AGRICULTURE

In February 2024, women comprised 33.2% of Australia's agricultural workforce, a figure that has fluctuated between 30% and 37% over the past decade<sup>1</sup>. In 2023, more than 88,000 women were employed in agriculture, accounting for over a third of the sector's workforce<sup>2</sup>.

## What support do women working in the agricultural sector in NSW/ACT need to succeed?

- 31% Unsure about what is required
- 16% More education and training
- 14% Increase in workplace equity initiatives
- 10% More community networking opportunities
- 10% Increase support services
- 9% Financial support
- 5% Recognition and visibility
- 2% Mental health and wellbeing
- 2% Other
- 1% None.

1. <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/agricultural-labour-factsheet-april-2024.pdf>

2. <https://www.miragenews.com/putting-spotlight-on-inspiring-women-in-1190318>





# WHERE TO NEXT?

The CWA of NSW is committed to conducting this survey annually. This ongoing engagement will not only help us track progress and challenges over time but it will also ensure that we remain responsive to the evolving needs of women in regional, rural and remote areas. By conducting this survey annually, we not only track progress but ensure that we can effectively advocate for the changes needed to improve the lives of women in regional, rural and remote NSW.