

HEALTHY WOMEN HEALTHY GIPPSLAND 2025

The State of Women's Health and Safety in Gippsland

**GIPPSLAND
WOMEN'S
HEALTH**

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY
REPORT**

The Healthy Women Healthy Gippsland 2025 Report Card has found that Gippsland women and gender diverse people face significantly poorer health and safety outcomes than Victorian averages – from higher cancer deaths and record rates of family violence to barriers in accessing care, late diagnoses and systemic barriers in service access. These inequities are made worse by geographic isolation, gendered norms and structures at home, in the workplace and in the community.

Informed by over 200 women's voices and supporting statistics, the Healthy Women Healthy Gippsland (HWHG) report tells the story of women and gender diverse people's health and safety in our region. Learn about the key findings, recommendations and what GWH is doing to address the inequities and concerns detailed in the report.

Broader social determinants, including extremely high rates of alcohol use among men in Gippsland, challenges around healthy eating and physical activity, and significant health literacy gaps, further exacerbate health inequities and women and gender diverse people's safety.

Climate change and related disasters amplify the existing issues, disproportionately affecting those in caregiving roles and female-dominated industries like healthcare. Disaster recovery periods often see spikes in family violence, further compounding vulnerability.

The energy transition will also bring surge workforces—predominantly male—into the region, straining housing, health, and social services. Without inclusive planning, this can exacerbate gendered violence and economic challenges, particularly for women from marginalised communities.

We rolled out of years of drought, straight into bushfires, straight out of bushfires and literally had a breather of about 3 weeks and then COVID hit. So it was smack after smack after smack.

– HWHG focus group co-facilitator

Victorian Government-funded women's health initiatives (including the Mobile Women's Health Clinic, the Virtual Women's Health Clinic, sexual reproductive health (SRH) hubs and the new multidisciplinary women's clinic at Latrobe Regional Hospital) as well as mental health investments (such as the Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals and Mental Health Connect services) are showing signs of success but further work is required to connect women with these important initiatives.

HWHG 2025 provides a clear roadmap for stakeholders across all levels of government, health services, and regional organisations to work collaboratively toward a more equitable, inclusive, and healthy Gippsland. The recommendations outlined call for sustained investment, gender-responsive planning, and a commitment to systemic change. By embedding gender equity into health, safety, climate adaptation, economic participation, and regional development, Gippsland can lead the way in creating a region where all people—regardless of gender—can thrive.

KEY FINDINGS

1 There are persistent challenges with accessing health care for women and gender diverse people in our region

2 Service gaps exist across the health system for most women and gender diverse people living in Gippsland, with particular gaps in availability of primary care, women's health, child health, aged care, mental health, and medical specialists.

3 Women in Gippsland experience significant variability in health care quality. While some positive experiences are reported, there are consistent challenges with continuity of care, health professional knowledge gaps, and a lack of inclusive and respectful care

4 Health care access and quality issues have gendered impacts – poor access to quality healthcare impacts women's and gender diverse people's health and wellbeing

5 Women in Gippsland want more control over their own health through health promotion, education and preventive health

6 Women in Gippsland experience poorer health outcomes than both other Victorian women and Gippsland men in a range of areas. Key health inequities experienced by women in Gippsland exist in relation to mental health, sexual and reproductive health, chronic disease, and cancer.

7 Gendered and family violence is a critical and persistent issue for women in Gippsland, with rates among the highest in the state and at record levels in some parts of the region

Women are over-represented in part-time work, while men dominate full-time roles, contributing to a persistent **gender wage gap**.

Fewer Gippsland women earn above the minimum wage compared to men, reflecting structural barriers to economic advancement.



8 Women and gender diverse people have variable experiences with the quality and availability of family and sexual violence support services

9 Women in Gippsland need more effective housing and criminal justice system responses to family violence in their community

10 Women and gender diverse people in Gippsland continue to experience harmful community attitudes and norms and want continued and expanded efforts to prevent gendered and family violence

11 Women in Gippsland face higher relative economic disadvantage relative to men and are underrepresented in leadership positions

12 Women and gender diverse people in Gippsland experience gendered impacts in times of disaster and are often excluded from disaster planning

13 Challenges accessing disaster recovery support across the region disproportionately impact women and gender diverse people

14 Women are at risk of being left behind in Gippsland's clean energy transition, but a 'gender just' energy transition can mitigate the impacts

Female homelessness is alarmingly high, with **East Gippsland, Latrobe, and Wellington** ranking **4th, 7th, and 9th** respectively in Victoria.



1. HIGHER RATES & POORER OUTCOMES FOR CERTAIN CANCERS

Compared with Victorian women as a whole, those in Gippsland are more likely to be diagnosed with certain cancers and more likely to die from certain cancers. Closing this gap is possible based on outcomes for other forms of cancer.

What We're Doing

- Promoting and assisting women to access the BreastScreen Victoria Women's Health Mobile Clinic.
- Participating in the statewide Gender Equity in Cancer Care Project with key partners including Women's Health Victoria, the Gippsland Regional Integrated Cancer Service, and Transgender Victoria.
- Promoting Counterpart regional wellbeing days for Gippsland women with cancer.

Our Impact

- From 2016 – 2022, breast (and bowel) screening rates in Gippsland have been at or above the Victorian average for women.
- Through the Gender Equity in Cancer Care project, we will build the evidence on the impact of gender on cancer care experiences in rural and regional areas, and strengthen cancer services' capacity for intersectional, gender-responsive care.

MELANOMA

47% ↑ diagnosis
60% ↑ mortality

OVARIAN

Similar diagnosis
70% ↑ mortality

BOWEL

14% ↑ diagnosis
40% ↑ mortality

LUNG

20% ↑ diagnosis
31% ↑ mortality

Source: Cancer Council Victoria – Data Explorer – Diagnoses & Deaths (2025)

Some of the women were actually cancelling their radiotherapy appointments in Traralgon because they didn't have enough money to pay for petrol to get from (their home) to drive to the next city to get radiotherapy.

– HWHG survey participant

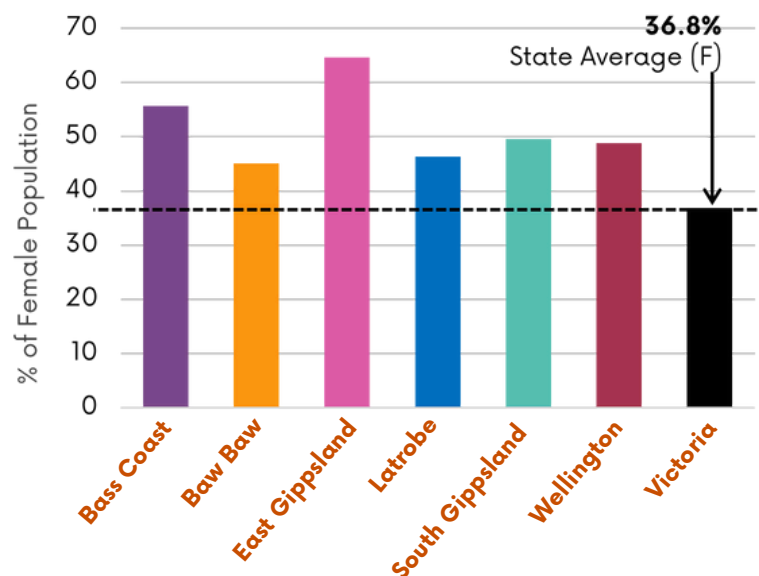
Despite **higher educational attainment** compared to men, Gippsland women face **lower labour force participation and earnings**, driven by **occupational gender segregation**, **gender discrimination**, and the **burden of caregiving** responsibilities.



Health and safety isn't just access to support services. It's the ability to walk safely down the street... The mental load of bracing myself each time is exhausting - being cat called, followed, brushed up against or being forced into polite conversation with creepy people makes me not want to leave my house, for work, study, survival or support services. I'd rather put up with feeling unwell than having to dodge the many obstacles to recovery.

– HWHG survey participant

Waited longer than acceptable to see a GP (%) - females: Gippsland LGAs vs Victoria (2023)



Source: Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS) (2023)

2. HEALTH LITERACY AND SERVICE KNOWLEDGE GAPS

Healthy Women Healthy Gippsland (HWHG) participants reported challenges with health literacy, especially around women's health issues, and a lack of awareness of available services. Better information about services and how to access them was repeatedly highlighted as an area of need.

What We're Doing

- Sharing data and research and supporting the co-design of the new *Women's Health Clinic* at Latrobe Regional Health (LRH).
- In 2025 GWH initiated a series of *Women's Wellbeing Groups* across the region on sexual and reproductive health and mental health to build health literacy and support Gippsland women and gender diverse people to learn about where to access help.
- GWH socials keep our 7,750 followers informed and updated about women's health issues and services in Gippsland.

I know a lot of people that are reaching that late 20s, early 30s and discovering they have endometriosis or things like that or struggling to fall pregnant and then discovering there's these sort of issues going on and I think that's something that wasn't really talked about a lot when I was in high school.

– HWHG focus group participant

Our Impact

Our collaboration with the LRH *Women's Health Clinic* will ensure the service is fit-for-purpose to meet Gippsland women's needs, including timely access to women's health professionals and access to gendered care in their local area.

"Thank you so much for running these perimenopause events! I attended one and was thrilled to learn of the checklist on the Jean Hailes website. I went home, printed it out, completed it and took it to my next doctor's appointment..."

– Foster Women's Wellbeing Group participant

"I like the way Gippsland Women's Health handles marketing in a positive, inclusive & trendy way that a lot of people can relate to."

– HWHG survey participant

3. HEALTH PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND MEDICAL MISOGYNY

Many women and gender diverse people we heard from shared experiences of health professionals' lack of knowledge of women's health, or misogynistic or dismissive attitudes leading to missed or late diagnoses or lack of appropriate treatment.

"I have had 3 scans in recent years in Gippsland that have missed very important and life-threatening issues including an ectopic pregnancy. Even the surgeon was unsure how it could have been missed."

– HWHG survey participant

"GPs need to be better educated about perimenopause and menopause. When I visited a male GP at age 48, he told me I was too young for menopause and dismissed it as an issue."

– HWHG survey participant

What We're Doing

- Building health professionals' capacity in gender-responsive health care through educational events including:
 - our annual *Sexual & Reproductive Health (SRH) forum*.
 - health professional capacity-building in some of our regional *Women's Wellbeing Groups*.
- Building health service leaders' capability in gender equity.

Our Impact

- *SRH forum* attendees value connecting with regional colleagues and updating their knowledge.

"Loved meeting other colleagues in the SRH sector in Gippsland and learning about Sexual Health Victoria's new menstrual education program - fantastic initiative." – 2025 SRH Forum attendee.

- Health professionals who attended the *Women's Wellbeing Groups* appreciated gaining insights into women's health needs and concerns.
- We delivered *Leading for Gender Equity* training to 50 executive leaders, including health service executives, in the first half of 2025.

4. CHALLENGES WITH ACCESS AND CONTINUITY OF CARE

Poor access to healthcare – long waitlists, shortage of bulk-billed services, burdensome travel requirements – and high turnover of health professionals were common experiences among HWHG participants.

What We're Doing

- Helping improve access to women's health care by supporting and promoting BreastScreen Victoria's *Women's Health Mobile Clinic*, LRH's *Women's Health Clinic*, the *Virtual Women's Health Clinic* and Gippsland's *SRH Hubs*.
- Our *Women's Wellbeing* groups and *In the Know* sessions are improving access by informing women and gender diverse people of available services in their towns and LGAs.

Our Impact

- "After today's session I will make an appointment with the women's health bus." – 2025 Foster Women's Wellbeing Group participant.
- Establishing two new SRH Hubs in Gippsland has improved medication abortion access – prescribing rates have risen in 4 LGAs since 2021.



4 out of 5 women leave the region for health care and especially for women's health issues

Women from priority population groups shared the additional barriers they face:

- Language and cultural barriers for some migrant and refugee women.
- NDIS funding 'disappearing' on travel for women with disabilities when family members couldn't take them to appointments.
- Lengthy waitlists at some Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations for First Nations women who didn't always feel safe or welcome at mainstream services.
- For LGBTQIA+ participants, well-informed, non-judgemental health professionals were rare.

"Well, to compare to Melbourne, where I had the same doctor for 45 years and ready access to specialist services on the doorstep, literally. In the seven years I've been living in Gippsland, I've already had probably four doctors. Doctors that have come and gone, done their time in the country and moved back to the city."

– HWHG focus group participant

5. POOR ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTHCARE IMPACTING WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND RELATIONSHIPS



In 5 out of Gippsland's 6 LGAs, more women than men experience loneliness

Source: *Victorian Population Health Survey (2023)*

"When you're already down and out, the process of getting a referral, finding a suitable provider, booking an appointment and waiting two months for it is worse than just living with depression."

– HWHG survey participant

"In terms of unpaid care, women's friendships provide a lot of unrecognised support in the mental health space. It's great that we've got women standing by each other, but it's something that isn't spoken about in terms of the toll that takes."

– HWHG focus group participant

Women and gender diverse Gippslanders pay a price for inequitable access to quality healthcare, with impacts on their mental and physical health, social connectedness, and caregiving responsibilities.

What We're Doing

- Supporting social connection and information through our regional women's wellbeing groups.
- Offering a new Caring for Self & Others module in our Learning & Development Framework.
- Our recent scoping review of the mental health and wellbeing of Gippsland women and gender diverse people is guiding our activities in 2025-26.

Our Impact

- We supported 79 women to participate in 3 women's wellbeing groups in the first half of 2025.
"I didn't realise all the support available for carers..."
– Bairnsdale Mental Health W/W Group participant
- Our Caring for Self & Others module had 130 enrolments in its first three months, reflecting strong demand.

6. RECORD RATES OF FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE FOR GIPPSLAND IMPACTING WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Rates of family violence and sexual violence in East Gippsland, Latrobe and Wellington are some of the highest in the state, have been rising since COVID and are now at record levels.

Rates of men at risk of alcohol-related harm are significantly higher than state average in all Gippsland LGAs, putting women and children (and other men) at risk.

Family and sexual violence impact women's health – physical health (injury or death, foregone healthcare-seeking) and their mental health, adding to the burden on the health system

What We're Doing

- Leading the *Respectful Gippsland* partnership, an alliance of organisations providing regional leadership, advocacy and evaluation of primary prevention activities across Gippsland.
- Delivering gendered violence prevention education for Gippsland TAFE Community Services students.
- Leading the annual *Let's Chat* Gippsland campaign during the UN 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence to encourage conversations about gender equality.
- Supporting annual *Candlelight Vigils*.
- Leading the *Champions of Change* initiative with men to prevent gender-based violence.

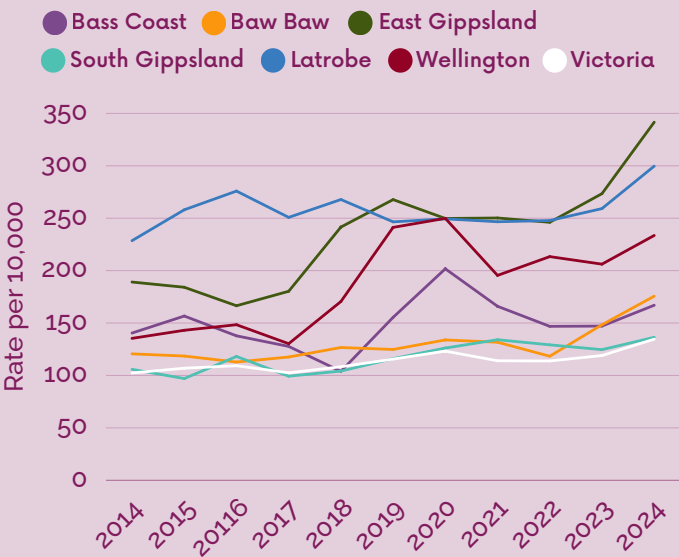
Our Impact

- Our gendered violence prevention presentation at Gippsland TAFE reached over 130 staff and Community Services students.
- In 2024, *Let's Chat* Gippsland involved:
 - A record of 61 partners and 26 partner events for 16 Days of Activism.
 - 5 Walks Against Family Violence attended by over 560 people with community leaders delivering speeches.
 - 1,133 views of the *Let's Chat* Gippsland toolkit on the GWH website.

Thank you for 'calling us in' to this important discussion. I look forward to progressing the conversation on actions we as individuals and as organisational leaders can take to end violence against women.

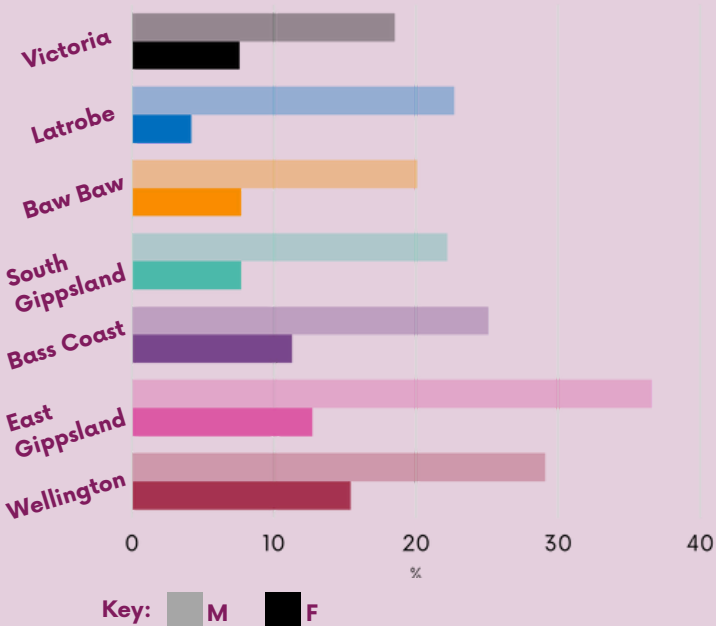
- Champions of Change participant

Rate of family violence incidents (female Affected Family Member) per 10,000 - Gippsland LGAs vs Victoria (2014 - 2024):



Source: Victorian Women's Health Atlas / Crime Statistics Agency, Victoria

Proportion of adults at increased risk of alcohol-related harm (females vs males): Gippsland LGAs vs Victoria (2023)



Source: Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS) (2023)

Gippsland women are less likely to be at increased risk of alcohol-related harm than Gippsland men but are **exposed to Gippsland men's greater risk of alcohol-related harm**



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Improving Gippsland women and gender diverse people's health and wellbeing

1.1 Sustain uplift funding for women's health services to secure current investment in the health, safety and wellbeing of Victoria's women beyond 2026 and to sustain our services and safeguard the value we generate now and into the future through ongoing and indexed funding rather than time limited funding.

1.2 Sustain ongoing funding for multidisciplinary women's health clinics in regional centres co-designed with local stakeholders.

1.3 Expand the Mobile Women's Health Clinic to provide increased frequency and reach to more women living in rural and remote areas.

1.4 Address medical misogyny

1.5 Continue to increase the reach of comprehensive sexual reproductive health services

1.6 Sustain funding for wellbeing support groups and service navigation programs

1.7 Resource and develop a regional cancer strategy targeting high mortality and high prevalence cancers

1.8 Gippsland hospitals and health services collaborate on co-design of funded women's health initiatives

1.9 Gippsland hospitals and health services to improve gender responsive care

1.10 Gippsland hospitals and health services collaborate on a regional cancer strategy

1.11 Gippsland hospitals and health services to address workforce gender inequities and adopt equitable workforce strategies

1.12 Intersectional gender lens applied to primary healthcare pathways to build GP capacity

1.13 Improve GP management of SRH services including **abortion and contraception**

1.14 Elevate women's voices in service design, commissioning and delivery of federally funded services **through the Primary Health Network**

2

Preventing gendered and family violence in Gippsland and supporting victim-survivors

2.1 Improve primary prevention of violence against women funding that recognises and plans appropriately for the disproportionate rate and impact of gendered and family violence in Gippsland.

2.2 Gippsland Local Government and regional organisations commitment to violence prevention in their communities and workplaces

2.3 Promote the Equitable Leadership Program for male leaders across Gippsland

2.4 Support the Gippsland Family Violence Alliance (GFVA) call for better resourcing of family violence case management, therapeutic services, men's behaviour change programs and exit pathways.

Nearly **10,000 Family Violence reported incidents** in the year to July 2025, including serious assaults and breaches of family violence orders. Additionally, **almost 2,100 sexual offences** were reported



3

Supporting Gippsland women's adaptation to climate change and clean energy transition leadership

3.1 Local Government and emergency management stakeholders to apply a gender lens to climate change and related disaster planning

3.2 Gender responsive budgeting at a State level for emergency management planning

3.3 Energy and supply chain providers operating across Gippsland commit to social impact initiatives benefitting women, girls and gender diverse individuals

3.4 New energy providers and supply chain commit to activating strategies and workplace policies to increase women's workforce participation, retention, safety and leadership opportunities.

3.5 The Net Zero Economy Authority continue to engage and consult with GWH and expand consultation to other key health and social services stakeholders

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS CONT.

4 Increasing Gippsland women's economic participation and leadership

4.1 Regional organisations embed strategies to **increase women's workforce participation, retention, safety and leadership opportunities**

4.2 Fund and establish a **women's leadership mentoring program**

4.3 Establish **targets for increasing the number of women** in leadership roles

4.4 Create **workplace cultures that value work-life balance**

5 Embedding inclusive regional planning

5.1 Ensure the **Gippsland Regional Plan 2026** and beyond prioritises actions to reduce gender inequities

5.2 Address the **housing crisis in Gippsland**, focusing on women facing violence, older women experiencing homelessness and the surge workforce.

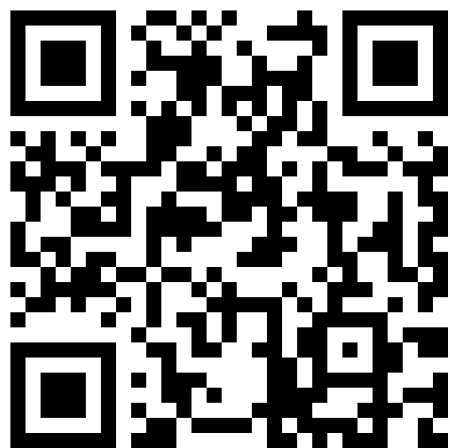
5.3 Strengthen **data collection about and in consultation with underserved communities**

Discover all the detailed recommendations in the full report - just scan the QR code or follow the links below.

READ THE FULL REPORT ONLINE!

AVAILABLE FROM 6 NOVEMBER 2025

Scan the QR code to download the Report or visit www.gwhealth.asn.au/hwhg2025



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