



CONSUMER CONSULTATION SUMMARY QUEENSLAND WOMEN'S HEALTH STRATEGY

January 2023

About the project

The development of a new Queensland Women's Health Strategy will be led by the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and is a signature action of the **Queensland Women's Strategy 2022-27** (Queensland Women's Strategy) released in March 2022.

As outlined in the Queensland Women's Strategy, the Queensland Government is committed to advancing the rights and interests of women and girls and to work to achieve gender equality in Queensland.

Specifically, the Queensland Women's Strategy commitment is:



Strengthening the health and wellbeing of women and girls, including through a new dedicated Queensland Women's Health Strategy.



Scan to download the Queensland Women's Strategy



Scope of a Queensland Women's Health Strategy

A Queensland Women's Health Strategy aims to address health inequity and improve accessibility to health services for Queensland women and girls (including transgender individuals and non-binary people) through consideration of social determinants and development of key focus areas for Queensland Government.

The project scope reflects that many women and girls throughout Queensland are not achieving their full health potential. There are levers for change that may address the barriers and challenges that impact the health of women and girls across their life span.



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Government**

HCQ

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Consultation purpose

Health Consumers Queensland was contracted by the Queensland Health Child and Family Policy Unit, System Policy Branch to undertake consultation with Queensland women and girls during November 2022 to support the development of a new Queensland Women's Health Strategy.

The consultation was to be led by health consumers with strong community connections and be representative or able to reach women of all ages including the priority communities identified in a Queensland Women's Health Strategy, noting some women and girls may be included in multiple communities:



First Nations women and girls



Women and girls from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities



LGBTIQ+ sistergirl and brotherboy communities



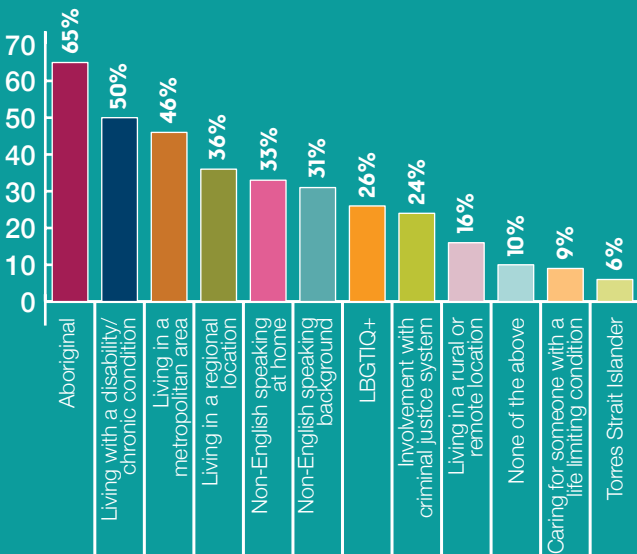
Women and girls with disability



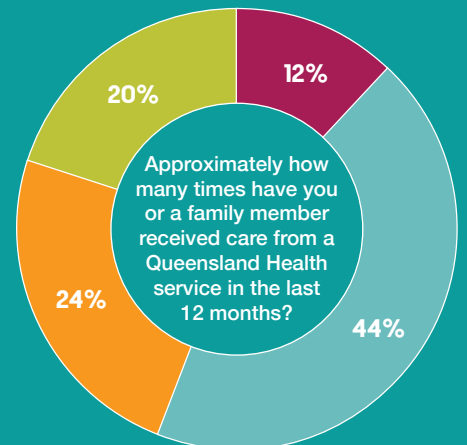
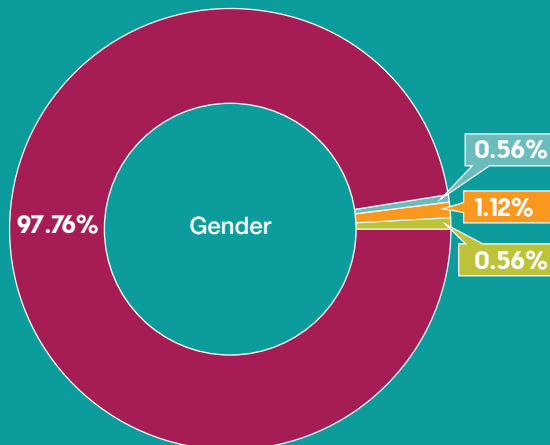
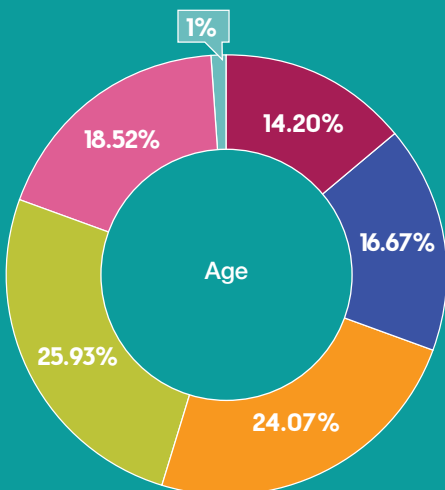
Women and girls in custody and those who have recently left custody

197 women and girls were consulted over a two week period, the following represents their demographics.

Identified as:



Place of residence:



<24	25-34	35-44
45-60	61-80	>81

Woman	Genderqueer
Transgender Man	Non-binary

0	1-5	6-10	>11
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Key themes



The following highlights some of the key themes identified by the women and girls.

1. Women and girls want education, knowledge, resources, and information to:

- Know about women's health issues, better know their bodies and how to look after their health.
- Better understand the health system and know what services and supports are available to them, where to go, who to speak to, who to reach out to for support, to know what a 'normal' experience is, and when to see a health professional.
- Have access to more specialized women's health clinics for girls to learn about everything to do with women and girls.
- Improve health literacy and create a more level playing field for women and girls accessing health services.
- Improve sexual health knowledge and reproductive resources for girls and provide better health support for queer and trans people.
- Reduce language barriers and support for new women arrivals.

“Inability to understand comes in many forms and it is not just about English as a second language. It is about ability to hear the doctor. It is about the ability to understand what the doctor is telling you. It is about the ability to understand and retain the medical information given to the patient by the doctor.”

2. Mental health is a barrier for many and is seen as a major health issue that may stop women and girls looking after their health. The women and girls want:

- The stigma of mental health to be removed.
- Improved access to mental health services including places for younger women and girls.
- Mental health and wellbeing services provided in a gender sensitive, culturally appropriate way.
- More community mental health services and access to after-hours care.
- More access to mental health services for children, teens, young women, and trans and queer people.

Consultation questions

A set of six (6) discussion questions outlined below were provided to each host to guide their session and ensure consistency of feedback with an additional question for final comments.



What do you think might stop women and girls looking after their health?



What do you think would help women and girls to look after their health?



Tell us what Queensland Health services you think need more support to help improve the health of women and girls?



What other activities outside of the health system would help improve the health of women and girls?



Queensland Health thinks they need to focus on improving the health of priority communities. Priority communities are groups of women whose health is not as good as other communities.



These are some of the things Queensland Health needs to think about to make the health strategy work:

- Consider social determinants of health - Social determinants are things outside of health services that can affect people's health and include things in people's lives like the place where they live, their education, their job and family life.
- Address domestic, family, and sexual violence.
- Empower women and girls to address their health needs. When we say 'empower' we mean to make them stronger and more confident.



The health strategy may have focus areas. Focus areas are the things that Queensland Health can look at doing differently or better.



Any additional areas or issues Queensland Health should include in the strategy?



Do you think any programs and services for women and girls could be enhanced? If you know of a health service that is working well to improve the health of women and girls, please tell us about it.



Key themes continued

3. Increase access to health services and supports for:

- Women and girls impacted by domestic and family violence, sexual violence, and homelessness.
- Women and girls in detention, in custody and on release from custody.
- Women and girls living with disability and/or a chronic complex condition.
- Women and girls living in rural and remote regions.
- Women and girls in the LGBTIQ+ community.
- Women and girls in the lesbian community regarding risks they face that lead to not engaging with the proper preventative health.
- Pregnant women and girls, young mothers, mothers, and women of all ages including older single women.
- All women and girls.

“ Fear of judgement, my symptoms being ignored, being spoken over, being shut down by a doctor in the past, embarrassment and stigma around women’s issues, the cost and lack of available health services prevent me from looking after my health. ”

4. Provide culturally safe and appropriate services that meet the needs of First Nations women and girls:

- Equity of access to health services.
- Acknowledge and respect cultural and language barriers, cultural beliefs, and cultural ways.
- Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing in all areas of health care.
- Shame and trauma stops a lot of First Nations women and girls accessing health care and is particularly concerning for women who are expected to talk to a non-Indigenous man about personal health issues.
- Availability of more First Nations women and girls health workers.

5. Provide culturally safe and appropriate services that meet the needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women and girls:

- A same gender health professional is preferable from a multicultural perspective.
- More culturally and linguistically diverse specific services available in all areas.
- Having the knowledge and language skills/support to access services.
- Some women look after others first. Some women think about themselves last.
- Availability of more Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women and girls health workers.

“ Women don’t value their health and understand why they may need to go. They don’t understand the consequences of not going to seek help. What they may think is just a little issue, may actually be part of a bigger problem or it will get much worse later but so many women from Pacifica and Islander backgrounds have never had much education around their bodies and health. ”



Additional areas or issues Queensland Health should include in the Queensland Women’s Health Strategy:

- Mothers, domestic violence survivors, low-income women and people who are isolated or have lack of support should be a priority for inclusion.
- Focus on increased support for single parents and holistic care with wrap around services.
- More inclusivity/representation of cultures in health care who work with different health conditions.
- Doctors and nurses to undertake an exam every five or 10 years to test their empathy levels.
- Consultation to occur with First Nations Elders, along with women and girls.
- Empathy is needed from health staff. Have male health care workers think of and treat their female patients as equal to themselves and their male peers.
- Early pregnancy care for those who have health issues.
- Sex workers are an area not talked about but should be included.
- Climate change will impact on all areas and levels of health including physical, mental, and financial and should be addressed.
- Publicly funded home birth and independent, midwifery-led maternity care that the woman chooses.
- More community clinics, rural birth centres outside of the hospital, and a focus for family planning.



Health Consumers Queensland would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to the women, girls, transgender individuals and non-binary people who participated in the consultation to inform a new Queensland Women’s Health Strategy.