

WOMEN AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

*Being a woman or a man has a significant impact on health. This is a result of both biological and gender-related differences. The health of women and girls is of particular concern because, in many societies, they are **disadvantaged by discrimination rooted in sociocultural factors such as:***

- *Unequal power relationships between men and women;*
- *Social norms that decrease education and paid employment opportunities*
- *An exclusive focus on women's reproductive roles; and*
- *Potential or actual experience of physical, sexual and emotional violence.¹*

GLOBALLY

- Every day, 800 women² and more than 10,000 newborns³ **die from preventable complications** during pregnancy and childbirth.
- Almost 99% of maternal and 90% of **neonatal mortalities** occur in the developing world.⁴
- All women have a significantly higher risk of becoming visually impaired than men. Even so, women **do not have equal access to health care to treat eye diseases**. This is often due to their inability to travel unaccompanied to health facilities and cultural differences in the perceived value of surgery or treatment for women.⁵
- Even when presenting with identical symptoms, women are more likely to be diagnosed as depressed than men, more likely to be prescribed medication for mental health problems, and less likely to be diagnosed as having problems with alcohol.
- Gender bias in treatment like this is a problem for both men and women.⁶
- Gender bias has also skewed the research agenda. The relationship of women's reproductive functioning to their mental health has received protracted and intense scrutiny over many years while **other areas of women's health have been neglected.**⁷

IN AUSTRALIA

- Community based health services are defined as **all health services that do not involve admission for an overnight stay in a hospital** – irrespective of who funds/provides those services or whether they are curative or preventive.⁸
- While life expectancy is higher for women than men, women generally have a lower quality of life and poorer health due to **unequal access** to information, care and basic health practices.⁹

¹ World Health Organisation *Women's Health* 2013 http://www.who.int/topics/womens_health/en/

² World Health Organisation *World Health Statistics 2013* http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/82058/1/WHO_HIS_HSI_13.1_eng.pdf?ua=1

³ World Health Organisation *Newborn Death and Illness 2011* http://www.who.int/pmnch/media/press_materials/fs/fs_newborndeath_illness/en/

⁴ World Health Organisation *Maternal Mortality 2014* <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs348/en/>

⁵ World Health Organisation *10 Facts on Women's Health* (2009) <http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/women/en/>

⁶ World Health Organisation *Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence: Gender Disparities in Mental Health*

http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/genderwomen/en/

⁷ World Health Organisation *Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence: Gender Disparities in Mental Health*

http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/genderwomen/en/

⁸ ACT Health *Improving Women's Access to healthcare services and information: A Strategic Framework 2010-2015*

<http://health.act.gov.au/c/health?a=d1pubpoldoc&document=2073>

⁹ RACGP *curriculum statement Women's health The RACGP Curriculum for Australian General Practice* (2011)

<http://curriculum.racgp.org.au/media/12308/womenshealth.pdf>

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- **Discrimination on the basis of their sex** leads to many health hazards for women, including physical and sexual violence, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, malaria and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.¹⁰
- **57%** of Australian general practice consultations are with female patients.¹¹
- **43%** of GPs and **34%** of specialists in Australia in 2011 were women.¹²
- **Female general practitioners** have a tendency to give longer consultations, focus more on preventive health measures and provide more mental health/counselling.¹³
- Women fill more prescriptions than men (84% compared to 78%), they also have more pathology (55% compared to 42%) and imaging (37% compared to 25%) tests, and ask for more pharmaceutical advice (28% compared to 14%).¹⁴
- Marginalised women, those who are discriminated against, or who cannot find culturally appropriate services, have been known to **withdraw from seeking help altogether**. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, migrant, refugee, abused, homeless, LGBTI and disabled women can experience this. Avoiding treatment is a contributing factor to poorer general health standards amongst these groups.¹⁵
- **57%** of Australian general practice consultations are with female patients.¹⁶
- 43% of GPs and 34% of specialists in Australia in 2011 were women.¹⁷
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¹⁰ RACGP curriculum statement Women's health The RACGP Curriculum for Australian General Practice (2011)

<http://curriculum.racgp.org.au/media/12308/womenshealth.pdf>

¹¹ Britt H, Miller G, Charles J, et al. General practice activity in Australia 2009–10. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; 2010

¹² ABS Australian Social Trends (April 2013) <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20April+2013#p2>

¹³ RACGP curriculum statement Women's health The RACGP Curriculum for Australian General Practice (2011)

<http://curriculum.racgp.org.au/statements/womens-health/>

¹⁴ ABS Australian Social Trends (April 2013) <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20April+2013#p2>

¹⁵ RACGP curriculum statement Women's health The RACGP Curriculum for Australian General Practice (2011)

<http://curriculum.racgp.org.au/statements/womens-health/>; Victoria Department of Health Services

Gender and Diversity Lens for Health and Human Services, Victorian Women's Health and Wellbeing Strategy Stage 2: (2006-2010)

¹⁶ RACGP curriculum statement Women's health The RACGP Curriculum for Australian General Practice (2011)

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¹⁷ ABS Australian Social Trends (April 2013) <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20April+2013#p2>

¹⁸ RACGP curriculum statement Women's health The RACGP Curriculum for Australian General Practice (2011)

<http://curriculum.racgp.org.au/statements/womens-health/>

¹⁹ ABS Australian Social Trends (April 2013) Accessed on 17 March 2014

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features20April+2013#p2>

²⁰ RACGP curriculum statement Women's health The RACGP Curriculum for Australian General Practice (2011)

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