



Priority area

# 4 Women's health and wellbeing

## Life expectancy

In the three years 2018–2020, females had a life expectancy of 85.1 years at birth, compared with 80.6 years for males.<sup>1</sup>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females had life expectancy of 76.4 years at birth in 2015–2017, higher than for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (72.0 years), but 8 years lower than for non-Indigenous females.<sup>2</sup>

## General health status

Most females considered themselves to be in 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good' health, with little difference between females (85.4%) and males (84.3%) in 2020.<sup>3</sup>

In 2020, a slightly higher proportion of females (62.5%) than males (60.5%) reported experiencing at least one personal stressor in the previous 12 months. Common stressors for both females and males were illness, death of a family member or friend and unable to get a job.<sup>4</sup>

## Pregnancy and childbirth

Of the total 61,735 births registered in Queensland in 2019, 48.5% were female babies and 51.5% were male babies, resulting in a sex ratio at birth of 106.2 male births per 100 female births.<sup>5</sup>

Females had an average of just under two children during their reproductive life at the total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.72 babies per female in 2019 — nationally TFR was 1.66.<sup>6</sup>

Females had a median age for childbirth of 30.6 years in 2019, compared with 32.7 years for the median age of father.<sup>7</sup>

The median age of Queensland's first-time mother was 29.4 years in 2019.<sup>8</sup>

Of the 59,559 mothers who gave birth in 2019<sup>9</sup>:

- about three-quarters (75.2%) were aged 20–34 years. A further 2.9% were teenage

mothers and the remaining 22.0% were aged 35 years and over.

- 7.5% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers.

## Healthy weight and food

Females aged 18 years and over were more likely than males to be in the healthy weight range in 2020 (41.8% compared with 32.3%, based on self-reported data).<sup>10</sup> The difference was mainly due to the higher prevalence of self-reported overweight for males (41.9% compared with 28.9%), while obesity was similar (24.5% compared with 25.2%).

Females aged 18 years and over were more likely than males to consume the recommended daily serves of fruit (57.6% compared with 47.3%) and vegetables (11.1% compared with 4.7%) in 2019.<sup>11</sup>

## Physical activity



Females aged 18 years and over were less likely than males (**55.8%** compared with **61.8%**) to be sufficiently active for health benefits<sup>12</sup> in 2020.<sup>13</sup>

Girls aged 5–17 years were less likely than boys of the same age to be active every day of the past week (41.6% compared with 49.7%), with the 12–15 years age group being least active for girls (24.8%) compared with the 16–17 years age group for boys (27.6%) in 2020.<sup>14</sup>

Just over half of females (54.5%) and males (52.9%) participated in sport and physical recreation activities in the previous 12 months in 2013–14<sup>15</sup>, showing the lowest participation rate in Australia — nationally 59.4% for females and 61.0% for males.



## Cancer screening

Females in the target age groups for cancer screening programs participated in a Pap Smear or Cervical Screening Test at 51.8% of those aged 25–69 years in the two years 2017 to 2018, and breast screening at 55.1% of those aged 50–74 years in 2017–18.<sup>16</sup>

## Mental health and wellbeing



In 2017–18, 24.3% of females reported having mental and behavioural health problems in the previous 12 months, which lasted or were expected to last at least six months or

more, compared with 21.2% of males.<sup>17</sup>

Anxiety related problems were the most commonly reported mental and behavioural conditions for all Queenslanders, but at a greater rate for females (17.9%) than for males (13.0%) in 2017–18.<sup>18</sup>

Females (15.4%) were more likely to experience a high to very high level of psychological distress in the previous four weeks, compared with males (12.5%) in 2017–18<sup>19</sup>:

The 45–54 years age group showed the largest difference between females (18.0%) and males (13.4%) experiencing a high to very high level of psychological distress.

Deaths from suicide (intentional self-harm) were less likely to occur among females, compared with males.<sup>20</sup> In 2020, of 759 suicide deaths of Queenslanders, 21.2% were female deaths.

- The highest number of suicide deaths in females (32) occurred among those aged 25–34 years, while for males (125) it was among 35–44 year olds.<sup>21</sup>

## Smoking and drinking

- Females 18 years and over were less likely to smoke daily (8.9%), compared with males (11.8%) in 2020.<sup>22</sup>
- Daily smoking rates were highest for those aged between 35–54 years with male rates peaking at 35–44 years (15.5%) and females at 45–54 years (11.8%).<sup>23</sup>
- In 2020, females aged 18 years and over were far less likely to drink alcohol at

‘lifetime risky’<sup>24</sup> levels (11.5%), compared with 33.9% for males.<sup>25</sup>

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers were significantly more likely to smoke during pregnancy than non-Indigenous mothers (42.5% compared with 9.1% in 2019).<sup>26</sup>

## Falls

- Females comprised the majority of fall-related hospitalisations in Queensland for patients aged 65 years and older (63.0% in 2019–20).<sup>27</sup> Nationally, females also comprised the majority of fall-related deaths for people aged 75 years and over (55.1% of deaths caused by accidental falls in 2017–19 in Australia).<sup>28</sup>

## Diseases and causes of death

Of the 16,893 male deaths in 2020, ischaemic heart disease was the leading cause (11.9%), followed by lung cancer (6.4%) and dementia (6.2%).<sup>29 30</sup>

The leading cause of death among females in 2020 was dementia, accounting for 12.0% of the 14,474 deaths, followed by ischaemic heart disease (9.4%) and cerebrovascular disease (7.2%).<sup>31 32</sup>

Premature mortality, where age at death is less than life expectancy, can be measured using years of potential life lost (YPLL). Looking at the leading causes of death this way gives a different picture of causes:

- among females, dementia accounted for only 0.9% of YPLL, while lung cancer accounted for 7.1%. This is because the median age at death for dementia is much higher than that of lung cancer.
- among males, while suicide accounted for only 3.5% of deaths in 2020, it accounted for 16.5% of YPLL. In contrast, ischaemic heart disease accounted for 9.2% of YPLL.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, the most common cause of death was ischaemic heart diseases, followed by diabetes for females and suicide for males.<sup>33</sup>



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- <sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, *Life tables, states, territories and Australia, 2018–2020*, 'Table 1: Life tables, States, Territories and Australia - 2018–2020, Table 1.3 Life tables, Queensland, 2018–2020', cat. no. 3302.0.55.001.
- <sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, *Life tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2015–2017*, 'Table 1.4 Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Queensland, 2015–2017', cat. no. 3302.0.55.003.
- <sup>3</sup> Queensland Health. Queensland survey analytic system (QSAS), Detailed Queensland and regional preventive health survey results, accessed 17 June 2021.
- <sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, *General social survey, Australia, 2020*, 'Table 1.3 Persons aged 15 years and over, Types of Personal stressors – by Queensland and Australia, proportion of persons', customised data.
- <sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020, *Births, Australia, 2019*, 'Births, summary, by state', cat. no. 3301.0.
- <sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020, *Births, Australia, 2019*, 'Fertility, by age, by state', cat. no. 3301.0.
- <sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020, *Births, Australia, 2019*, 'Confinements, by nuptiality, by state', cat. no. 3301.0.
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> Queensland Department of Health, 2021, *Queensland perinatal statistics 2019*, 'Perinatal statistics 2019 annual report tables' 'Table 1.01 Selected variables by year - number of mothers'.
- <sup>10</sup> Queensland Health, 2020, *The health of Queenslanders 2020*. Report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland.
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> Participating in at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity over five or more sessions in a week for adults.
- <sup>13</sup> Queensland Health, 2020, *The health of Queenslanders 2020*. Report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, *Participation in sport and physical recreation, Australia, 2013–14*, 'Table 1 Persons participating in sport and physical recreation, states and territories, by sex and age', cat. no. 4177.0.
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, *National health survey: first results, 2017–18*, 'Table 22: Queensland, Table 3.3 Long-term conditions, proportion of persons – persons', cat. no. 4364.0.55.001.
- <sup>18</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>19</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, *National health survey: first results, 2017–18*, 'Table 22: Queensland, Table 7.3 Psychological distress, proportion of persons', cat. no. 4364.0.55.001.
- <sup>20</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, *Causes of death, Australia, 2020*, '11. Intentional self-harm (Suicide) (Australia)', cat. no. 3303.0.
- <sup>21</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, *Causes of death, Australia, 2020*, '4. Underlying causes of death (Queensland), Table 4.3 Underlying cause of death, selected causes by age at death, numbers and rates, Queensland, 2020', cat. no. 3303.0.
- <sup>22</sup> Queensland Health, 2020, *The health of Queenslanders 2020*. Report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland.
- <sup>23</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> Consuming two or more standard drinks per day (greater than 14 per week) at risk of harm/developing health problems over a lifetime.
- <sup>25</sup> Queensland Health, 2020, *The health of Queenslanders 2020*. Report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland.
- <sup>26</sup> Queensland Health, 2021, *Queensland perinatal statistics 2019*, 'Perinatal statistics 2019 annual report tables' 'Table 5.07 Mothers birthing in Queensland, 2019, smoking status by number of cigarettes after 20 weeks gestation'.
- <sup>27</sup> Queensland Department of Health, 2021, Queensland Hospital Admitted Patient Data Collection, prepared by Statistical Reporting and Coordination Unit, Statistical Services Branch.
- <sup>28</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021, *Deaths in Australia web report supplementary tables*, Table S3.2: Leading causes of death, number and crude rates (deaths per 100,000 population) by age group, 2017–2019.
- <sup>29</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, *Causes of death, Australia, 2020*, '4. Underlying causes of death (Queensland), Table 4.1 Underlying cause of death, all causes, Queensland, 2020', cat. no. 3303.0.
- <sup>30</sup> Using International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 10th Revision blocks of categories.
- <sup>31</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, *Causes of death, Australia, 2020*, '4. Underlying causes of death (Queensland), Table 4.1 Underlying cause of death, all causes, Queensland, 2020', cat. no. 3303.0.
- <sup>32</sup> Using International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 10th Revision three-character categories where total deaths are greater than 30.
- <sup>33</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021, *Causes of death, Australia, 2020*, '12. Deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Table 12.5 Underlying causes of death, Leading causes by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, NSW, Qld, SA, WA and NT, 2016–2020', cat. no. 3303.0.