

# Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW

A report of NCOSS survey findings

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# About NCOSS

The NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS) works with and for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage to see positive change in our communities.

When rates of poverty and inequality are low, everyone in NSW benefits. With 80 years of knowledge and experience informing our vision, NCOSS is uniquely placed to bring together civil society to work with government and business to ensure communities in NSW are strong for everyone.

As the peak body for health and community services in NSW we support the sector to deliver innovative services that grow and evolve as needs and circumstances evolve.

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## Introduction

The social services sector is an essential industry, anchored by a female workforce. In NSW, it is a major employer of women with three out of four employees in the sector being female. With an annual economic output valued at \$15.4 billion<sup>1</sup>, it is a growth industry that makes a significant contribution to the NSW economy, and has been identified by the World Economic Forum as a key emerging job cluster.

However, it is also an industry that is highly gender-segregated, and beset by a high gender pay gap, low wages and workforce shortages.

### About our survey

For International Women's Day 2022, NCOSS partnered with Impact Economics and Policy to examine issues affecting women and their careers in the NSW social services sector. As one input to this research, in February 2022, NCOSS conducted a 14-question survey to hear from those employed in the sector about the career barriers and opportunities they face. The survey was promoted through NCOSS regular communication channels and via other peak bodies to employees in the sector over two weeks (Thursday 3 February and Monday 21 February 2022).

The survey asked respondents how their organisation fares when it comes to career development and support for women in the workplace, including women from diverse backgrounds. It asked respondents to identify specific barriers to career progression in their organisation, whether they would still be in the sector in five years' time and whether they would recommend working in the sector to a female friend. 654 responses<sup>2</sup> were received. This data report serves as a supplementary report to '[A long way to the top – career opportunities and obstacles for women in the social services sector in NSW](#)', released by NCOSS and Impact Economics and Policy in March 2022. It presents the data from the responses to the survey in more detail.

### Limitations of the survey

It is important to note that the survey represents a snapshot-in-time of the population and relies heavily on self-reported data. Involvement in the survey was voluntary, respondents were a non-representative sample of the sector and all questions in the survey were optional.

The survey results provide a snapshot of the issues confronting women in the sector when it comes to career development, highlighting the barriers faced, where organisations are doing well and where they can do better. It provides a good basis for future exploration.

### Participant demographics

A total of 654 survey responses were received. 96% of respondents identified as female; 2.9% as male; and 0.8% as non-binary, gender-diverse or other.

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<sup>1</sup> Equity Economics (2021), [The Social Sector in NSW: Capitalising on the Potential for Growth](#), A Report Prepared for the New South Wales Council of Social Service, Sydney

<sup>2</sup> The survey questions were all optional therefore not all 654 respondents answered all questions. Each question in the report states the number of total responses for that question.

There was a good representation of people identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (17.2%)<sup>3</sup>; and as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Intersex (LGBTQI) (23.2%)<sup>4</sup>. However, representation of people living with disability (14.7%) was less than their representation in the overall Australian population (18%).

The largest cohort of respondents was aged between 45-54 years of age (27.5%); followed by those in the 35-44 year age group (24.7%). Young people between 18-24 years of age made up only 4.9% of respondents.

59.8% of respondents worked in metropolitan Sydney; 28.1% worked in a regional centre, and 12.2% worked in a rural or remote location in NSW.

Of the 258 respondents who worked in a rural/remote location or a regional centre in NSW, 58.9% were aged over 45 years old; while 51.8% of the 320 working in metropolitan Sydney were aged over 45 years. This is higher than the 46.4% of people in the general workforce population who are in this age group<sup>5</sup>.

The top three 'service types' (as identified by the organisation's main activity) where respondents worked were:

- child and family services (38.4%);
- homelessness support and accommodation (23.2%); and
- domestic violence services (19.8%)

Of the 331 respondents who were able to identify their organisation's annual revenue:

- 63% worked in organisations with annual revenue of \$5 million or less
- 12.6% were in organisations with revenue between \$5 million and \$15 million
- 5.7% worked in organisations with annual revenue of between \$15 million and \$25 million
- 18.4% were in organisations with annual revenue of \$25 million or over.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) Census QuickStats, as accessed through [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/1RNSW](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/1RNSW)

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) Australia's health 2018. Australia's health series no. 16. AUS 221. Canberra: AIHW, as accessed through <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/61521da0-9892-44a5-85af-857b3eef25c1/aihw-aus-221-chapter-5-5.pdf.aspx#:~:text=Based%20on%20the%20Australian%20Bureau,people%20of%20the%20opposite%20sex.>

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) Census QuickStats, as accessed through [https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/1RNSW](https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/1RNSW)

## Key Findings

Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected through the 654 survey responses has produced a range of results, set out in detail in the attached report. Key findings drawn from this are provided below.

### Most would recommend working in the sector to a friend

Approximately two thirds (66.2%) of respondents would recommend working in the sector to a friend. The categories that generated the highest proportion of ‘yes’ responses to this question were:

- organisations with annual revenue between \$6m and \$10m (87.1%);
- organisations based in rural or remote locations (77.3%); and
- organisations where the main activity was identified as drug and alcohol rehabilitation (81.6%), followed by employment and training (76.7%), and tenants advice/community legal centres (75%).

Approximately 10% of respondents would not recommend working in the sector to a friend. The categories that generated the highest proportion of ‘no’ responses were:

- organisations with annual revenue between \$21m and \$25m (12.5%);
- organisations based in a regional centre (12.7%); and
- organisations where the main activity was identified as neighbourhood centres (24.5%), followed by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (19.2%), and organisations providing financial/psychological/relationship counselling (16.3%).

### The rate of those contemplating leaving the sector is a concern, particularly for neighbourhood centres

Almost half of the respondents (49.2%) did not see themselves or were unsure if they would be working in the sector in five years’ time. The service types that generated the highest proportion of ‘no, I won’t be’ or ‘I’m not sure if I will be’ responses to the question of whether they would still be in the sector in five years’ time were:

- neighbourhood centres (69.4%);
- organisations with the primary activity of emergency relief (61.9%); and
- financial/psychological/relationship counselling (57.1%)

Neighbourhood centres and emergency relief organisations also generated the highest rate of straight ‘no’ answers to this question (26.5% and 23.8% respectively).

The ‘no’ result for neighbourhood centres on this issue aligns with that on the question of ‘would you recommend working in the sector to a friend’ and underscores that this part of the sector may be experiencing particularly difficult conditions, in need of further exploration.

Approximately half (50.8%) of respondents saw themselves still in the sector in five years’ time. The service types that generated the highest proportion of ‘yes, I’ll still be here’ responses were:

- drug and alcohol rehabilitation (63.2%);
- homelessness support and accommodation (58.9%); and
- tenants advice/community legal service (57.1%).

## **Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and smaller organisations perform strongly when it comes to giving women the same career development opportunities as men**

When it comes to offering women the same opportunities as men to update their skills, progress into more senior roles and develop a rewarding career, the organisations most likely to be doing this were:

- those with annual revenue of \$5m or less (71.2%);
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (80.8%); and
- those based in regional centres (67.1%)

## **Rural and remote organisations lead the way on measures to retain, support and develop women employees**

The largest organisations – those with annual revenue over \$25 million - performed best on the provision of:

- acting up/higher duty opportunities (52.5%);
- parental leave (75.4%);
- domestic violence leave (63.9%); and
- EEO and diversity policies (52.5%).

The smallest organisations – those with annual revenue of \$5 million or less – out-performed larger organisations on:

- flexible work arrangements (80.4%);
- professional development, including training (70.8%); and
- on the job mentoring and support (47.8%).

Organisations outside metropolitan areas generally rated more highly when it came to identified initiatives to retain, support and develop women employees. Those located in regional centres out-performed other locations on:

- above award pay (25%);
- acting up/higher duties opportunities (39%); and
- on the job mentoring and support (40%).

Organisations in rural and remote locations outperformed other locations on:

- flexible work arrangements (70%);
- parental leave (65%);
- domestic violence leave (49%);
- professional development (65%); and



- EEO and diversity policies (38%).

## Promoting diversity in the sector is a work in progress, with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations out in front and larger NGOs needing to do more

Just under half of all respondents (46.3%) identified that their organisation has made progress, but more needs to be done to attract, support and promote women of diverse backgrounds.

A further 19.8% rated their organisation as not doing enough in this regard.

Respondents from organisations with annual revenue of \$5m and below, and those with annual revenue between \$6m and \$10m, were most likely to rate their organisation's performance as strong in terms of attracting, supporting and promoting women of diverse backgrounds (35.7% in both cases). Larger NGOs, with revenue of \$15m - \$25m and above \$ 25m, were the most likely to be rated as not doing enough on this issue (26.3% and 26.2% respectively).

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (57.7%), followed by domestic violence services (45.5%) and neighbourhood centres (42.9%) were the service types most frequently rated as performing strongly in attracting, supporting and promoting women of diverse backgrounds.

Counselling services (financial/relationship/psychological), 'other' health services (excluding mental health) and employment and training organisations were most frequently identified as not doing enough to attract, support and promote women of diverse backgrounds (at 26.5%, 25.8% and 23.3% respectively).

## Stress and burnout is the number one barrier, with child and family services and organisations with revenue under \$5 million most impacted

When it comes to developing a rewarding career, updating skills and taking on more senior or specialist roles, the top three barriers for women in the social services sector were identified as:

- stress and burnout (65%);
- better pay and conditions outside the sector (47%); and
- lack of available positions (45%).

Service types where stress and burnout were more likely to be reported as an issue were:

- child and family services (44.9%);
- homelessness support and accommodation (25.4%); and
- domestic violence service (22.8%).

Respondents located in metropolitan Sydney reported higher levels of stress and burnout (55.6%) when compared to respondents in rural or regional centres (14.6% and 29.8% respectively). Over a third of respondents (35.7%) working in organisations with annual revenue of less than \$5 million reported stress and burnout as a perceived barrier for women. When compared to respondents from medium to large organisations (7.4%), large organisations (3%) and very large organisations (11.7%) organisations, this was significantly higher.

## Working in the sector is highly rewarding but the short-term nature of funding, uncompetitive pay and inadequate conditions are serious impediments

Thematic analysis of qualitative feedback provided through the survey identified the five most frequently mentioned issues as:

1. Uncompetitive rates of pay and inadequate conditions – including lack of access to paid maternity leave, portable long service leave, and job security
2. Short term nature of funding – making it difficult to attract and retain experienced staff, properly develop, establish and evaluate worthwhile programs, and creating inefficiencies
3. Working in the sector is highly rewarding but impacted by negative features
4. Inflexible work practices, particularly in senior positions – not enough recognition of flexibility required for transition periods such as motherhood, caring for elderly parents, and impending retirement
5. Increasing expectations without increased funding leads to overwork, working for free, stress and mental health challenges

## Conclusion

The results of the ‘Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW’ survey provide insight into the views and experiences of the 654 respondents who voluntarily participated in the survey, drawn from a diversity of social service organisations across NSW.

While not drawn from a representative sample, the results present a snapshot of the sector and how women are faring within it. They bring to light a range of issues and concerns worthy of further exploration.

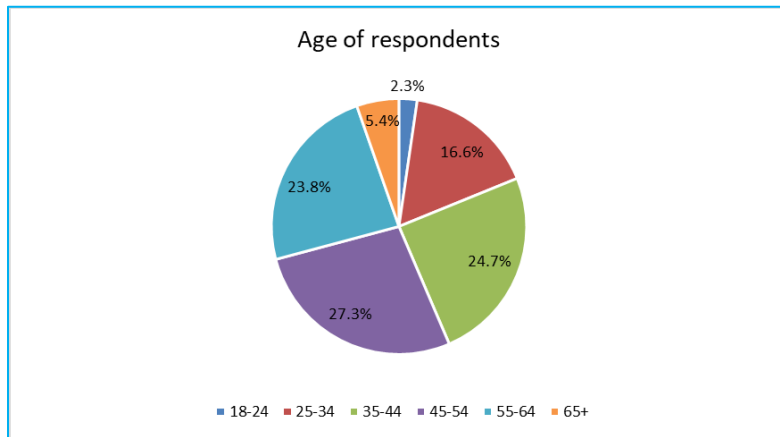
Analysis of the results suggests that different parts of the sector are experiencing different challenges and opportunities when it comes to supporting its predominantly female workforce. These should be of particular interest to Boards, leadership teams and funding bodies who are keen to ensure a strong and vibrant sector in NSW that values and looks after its staff, and can sustainably develop and grow into the future.

The results support and reinforce the findings and recommendations of the main research report *“A long way to the top: career opportunities and obstacles for women in the social services sector in NSW”*.

# 1.0 Demographics

## 1.1 Age

Figure 1: Age of respondents (total responses = 652)



### Key findings

- The majority of respondents (75.8%) to the survey were aged between 35 and 64 years old.
- 53.3% of frontline workers were aged between 35 and 54 years old.

Table 1: Age of respondents by role (total responses = 583)

Role	Age Group (%)						Total # of respondents
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	
Frontline service delivery	4.9	19.7	25.8	27.5	19.7	2.5	244
Policy/advocacy role	1.3	26.7	33.3	16.0	17.3	5.3	75
Administration/office support	2	22.5	24.5	18.4	26.5	6.1	49
Management/Executive role	0	10.8	23.2	30.5	29.1	6.4	203
Volunteer	0	0	16.7	25.0	41.7	16.7	12

## 1.2 Gender identity

Table 2: Gender identity of respondents (total responses = 650)

Gender	# of respondents	%
Female	624	96
Male	19	2.9
Non-binary/gender diverse	4	0.6
Prefer not to say	2	0.3
Other	1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>100</b>

### Key findings

- While the number of male respondents was significantly lower than female, a higher proportion of male respondents (50%) were in a management/ executive role than female respondents (34.5%).

Table 3: Gender by role (total responses = 581)

Role	What gender do you identify as? (%)			
	Female	Male	Non-binary/gender diverse	Prefer not to say
Frontline service delivery	42.4	25	75	0
Policy/advocacy role	12.7	18.8	0	0
Administration/office support	8.2	6.2	25	0
Management/Executive role	34.5	50	0	100
Volunteer	2.2	0	0	0
<b>Total # of respondents</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

## 1.3 Identity

Table 4: Identity of respondents (total responses = 285)

Identity	# of Respondents	%
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	49	17.2
LGBTIQ+	66	23.2
A person with a disability	42	14.7
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	49	17.2
Other	79	27.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100</b>

### Key findings

- Of the total of 49 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander respondents, 14 (28.6%) held a management or executive role.
- 21 respondents who identified as LGBTIQ+ were in management/ executive roles.
- 11 of the respondents who stated that they had a disability held management or executive positions.

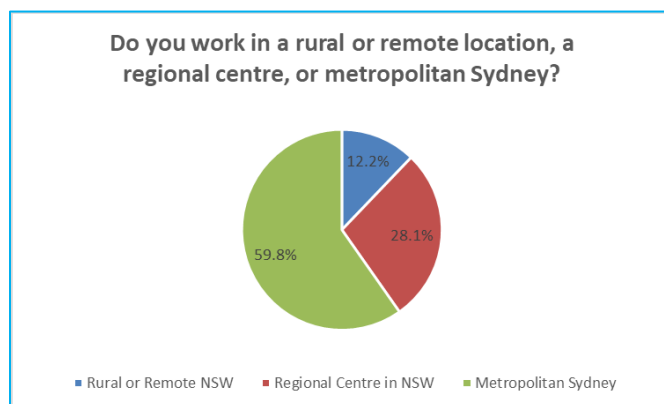
Table 5: Identity of respondents by role (total responses = 157)

Role	Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (%)	LGBTIQ+ (%)	A person with a disability (%)
Frontline service delivery	44.9	33.3	40.5
Policy/advocacy role	10.2	16.7	16.7
Administration/office support	12.2	3	2.4
Management/Executive role	28.6	31.8	26.2
Volunteer	0	3	7.1
<b>Total # of respondents</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>42</b>

## 2.0 Organisation

### 2.1 Work location

Figure 2: Work location (total responses = 641)



#### Key findings

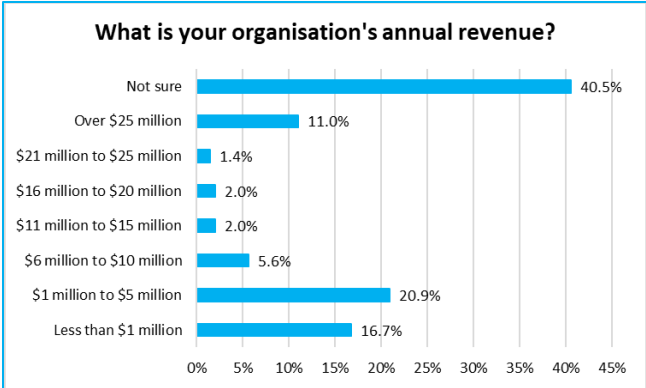
- The majority of respondents (59.8%) worked in metropolitan Sydney while 40.3% of respondents worked in a rural or remote area or regional centre in NSW.
- 162 (58.9%) of the 258 respondents that worked in rural/ remote NSW or in a regional centre of NSW and 166 (51.8%) of the 320 respondents who worked in metropolitan Sydney were aged over 45 years.

Table 6: Work location by age (total responses = 560)

Age group	Metropolitan Sydney	Regional Centre in NSW	Rural or Remote NSW	Location not stated
18-24	7 (2.2%)	3 (1.8%)	3 (4.5%)	0 (0%)
25-34	62 (19.4%)	15 (9.1%)	17 (25.8%)	1 (11.1%)
35-44	84 (26.3%)	35 (21.2%)	14 (21.2%)	2 (22.2%)
45-54	78 (24.4%)	53 (32.1%)	15 (22.7%)	3 (33.3%)
55-64	70 (21.9%)	48 (29.1%)	16 (24.2%)	1 (11.1%)
65+	18 (5.6%)	10 (6.1%)	1 (1.5%)	2 (22.2%)
Age not stated	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total # of respondents</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>9</b>

## 2.2 Organisation’s annual revenue

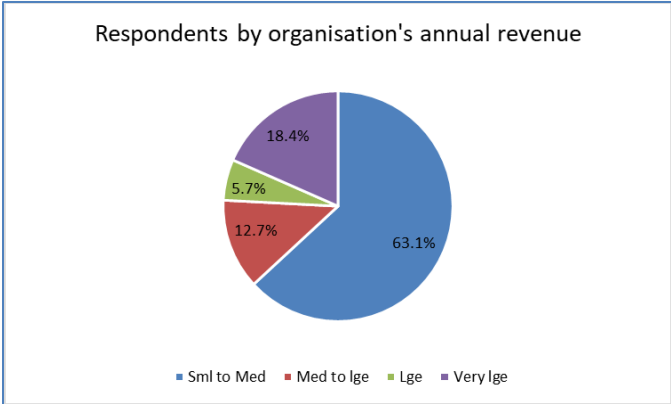
Figure 3: Organisation’s annual revenue<sup>6</sup> (total responses = 556)



**Key findings**

- 209 respondents (37.6%) worked in a small to medium-sized NGO, 42 (7.6%) worked in a medium to large NGO, 19 (3.4%) worked in a large NGO and 61 (11%) worked in a very large NGO.

Figure 4: Respondents by organisation's annual revenue (total responses = 331)



<sup>6</sup>Size of organisation in relation to revenue is defined as: \$5m or less – small to medium; \$5 to \$15 – medium to large; \$15m to \$25m – large; \$25m + - very large. This classification was drawn from Powell, A., Cortis, N., Ramia, I. and Marjolin, A. (2017). Australian Charities Report 2016. Centre for Social Impact and Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW Australia. The report was published for The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

## 2.3 Main activity of the organisation

Table 7: Main activity of organisation (total responses = 560)

Main activity of organisation	# of Responses	%
Homelessness support and accommodation	130	23.2
Child and family services	215	38.4
Youth service	101	18.0
Domestic violence service	111	19.8
Neighbourhood centre	49	8.8
Tenants advice and/or community legal service	28	5
Emergency relief	42	7.5
Financial/psychological/relationship counselling	49	8.8
Aged care	49	8.8
Disability support	65	11.6
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation	26	4.6
Mental health	105	18.8
Drug and alcohol rehabilitation	38	6.8
Other health service	31	5.5
Housing	47	8.4
Employment and training	30	5.4
Other	108	19.3

### Key findings

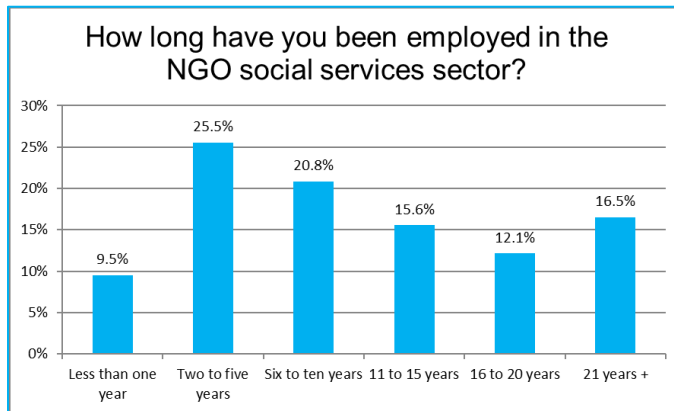
- The top 3 organisation types (as defined by the organisation's main activity) that respondents worked in were:
  - Child and family services (38.4%)
  - Homelessness support accommodation (23.2%); and
  - Domestic violence services (19.8%).
- Female respondents were most likely working in the following sectors:
  - Child and family services (44%)
  - Homelessness support and accommodation (27.4%)
  - Domestic violence service (22%).



## 3.0 Role and experiences of respondent

### 3.1 Number of years employed in the NGO social services sector

Figure 5: Length of time working in the NGO sector (total responses = 643)

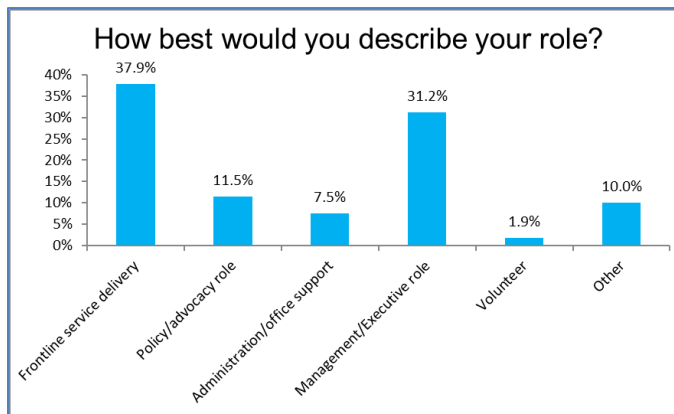


#### Key findings

- Respondents were more likely to have worked in the sector between two to five years (25.5%), followed by six to ten years (20.8%).
- Only 9.5% of respondents had worked in the sector for less than a year.

### 3.2 Type of role

Figure 6: Current role (total responses = 650)



#### Key findings

- The greatest proportion of respondents (37.9%) worked in frontline service delivery.
- Just under a third of respondents (31.2%) were in a management or executive role.

## 3.3 Recommend working in the NGO social services sector to a female friend?

Figure 7: Would you recommend working in the NGO sector to a female friend? (total responses = 559)

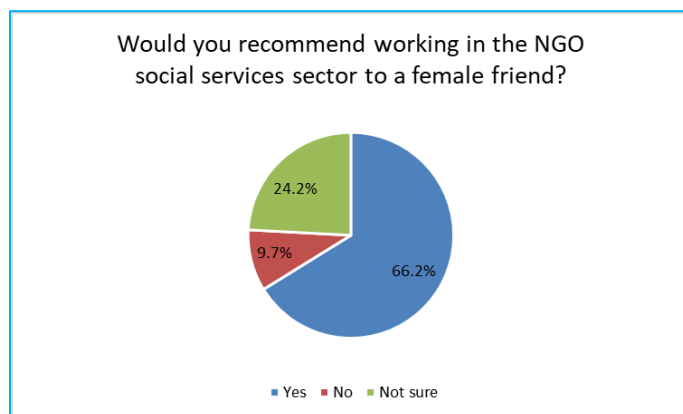


Table 8: Would you recommend working in the NGO sector to a female friend by size of organisation (total responses = 554)

Size of organisation	Recommend working in the sector		
	Yes	No	Not sure
Less than \$1 million	67.7	11.8	20.4
\$1 million to \$5 million	60.3	11.2	28.5
\$6 million to \$10 million	87.1	6.5	6.5
\$11 million to \$15 million	81.8	0	18.2
\$16 million to \$20 million	72.7	9.1	18.2
\$21 million to \$25 million	62.5	12.5	25
Over \$25 million	67.2	8.2	24.6
Not sure	64.6	9	26.5

### Key findings

- The majority of all respondents (66.2%) would recommend working in the NGO social services sector to a female friend.
- Of the 533 female respondents who answered this question, 66% reported that they would recommend working in the NGO social services sector to a female friend.
- Approximately a third of respondents working in organisations with annual revenue of \$5 million or less and over \$21 million stated that they would not or were not sure if they would recommend working in the sector.
- While the majority of respondents stated that they would recommend working in the sector, over a third of respondents working in a regional centre in NSW (34.5%) and metropolitan Sydney (35.8%) stated that they were not sure or would not recommend working in the sector.
- 50% of respondents working in emergency relief and 46.9% working in financial/psychological/relationship counselling were not sure or would not recommend working in the sector.

## Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW – data report

Table 9: Would you recommend working in the NGO sector to a female friend by work location (total responses = 549)

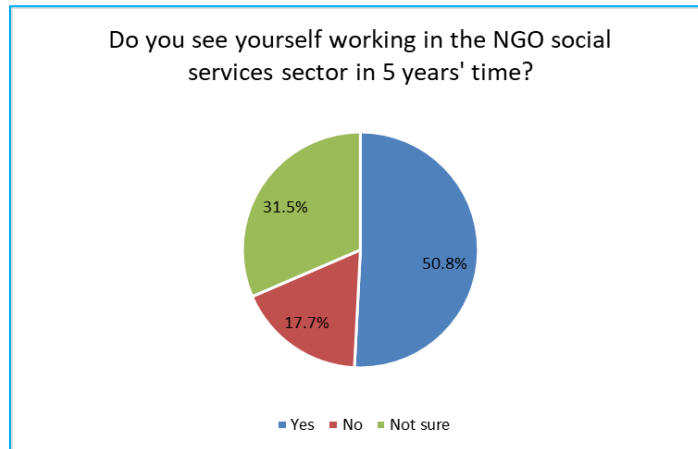
Work location	Recommend working in the sector (%)		
	Yes	No	Not sure
<i>Rural or Remote NSW</i>	77.3	6.1	16.7
<i>Regional Centre in NSW</i>	65.5	12.7	21.8
<i>Metropolitan Sydney</i>	64.2	8.8	27

Table 10: Would you recommend working in the NGO sector to a female friend by activity of organisation

Main activity of organisation	Would you recommend working in the sector (%)		
	Yes	No	Not sure
<i>Homelessness support and accommodation</i>	70.5	10.9	18.6
<i>Child and family services</i>	65.9	8.9	25.2
<i>Youth service</i>	65.4	11.9	22.8
<i>Domestic violence service</i>	69.1	7.3	23.7
<i>Neighbourhood centre</i>	61.2	24.5	14.3
<i>Tenants advice and/or community legal service</i>	75	3.6	21.4
<i>Emergency relief</i>	50	14.3	35.7
<i>Financial/psychological/relationship counselling</i>	53.1	16.3	30.6
<i>Aged care</i>	61.2	10.2	28.6
<i>Disability support</i>	72.3	9.2	18.5
<i>Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation</i>	73.1	19.2	7.7
<i>Mental health</i>	65.1	10.7	24.3
<i>Drug and alcohol rehabilitation</i>	81.6	0	18.4
<i>Other health service</i>	61.3	12.9	25.8
<i>Housing</i>	74.5	8.5	17
<i>Employment and training</i>	76.7	10	13.3

## 3.4 Do you see yourself working in the NGO social services sector in 5 years' time?

Figure 8: Do you see yourself working in the NGO sector in 5 years' time? (total responses = 559)



### Key findings

- Just over half (50.8%) of respondents saw themselves still working in the NGO social services sector in 5 years' time.
- In comparison, 49.2% answered no or were not sure if they would still be working in the sector in 5 years' time.
- Of the respondents that stated that they were not sure or would not be working in the sector in 5 years' time:
  - 178 (31.9%) were aged between 18 and 54.
  - 102 (47.7%) worked in front line service delivery.
  - 87 (49.4%) worked in management/ executive role.
  - 104 (18.8%) worked in an organisation with an annual income that was \$5 million or less.
- More than half of the respondents working in neighbourhood centres (69.4%), emergency relief (61.9%) and financial/psychological/relationship counselling (57.1%) were not sure or would not be working in the sector in 5 years' time.

## Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW – data report

Table 11: Do you see yourself working in the sector in 5 years' time by main activity of organisation

Main activity of organisation	Do you see yourself working in the NGO social services sector in 5 years' time? (%)			
	Yes	No	Not sure	Total # of respondents <sup>7</sup>
<i>Homelessness support and accommodation</i>	58.9	17.8	23.3	<b>129</b>
<i>Child and family services</i>	49.8	16.3	34	<b>215</b>
<i>Youth service</i>	48.5	18.8	32.7	<b>101</b>
<i>Domestic violence service</i>	53.2	14.4	32.4	<b>111</b>
<i>Neighbourhood centre</i>	30.6	26.5	42.9	<b>49</b>
<i>Tenants advice and/or community legal service</i>	57.1	14.3	28.6	<b>28</b>
<i>Emergency relief</i>	38.1	23.8	38.1	<b>42</b>
<i>Financial/psychological/relationship counselling</i>	42.9	18.4	38.8	<b>49</b>
<i>Aged care</i>	51	20.4	28.6	<b>49</b>
<i>Disability support</i>	50.8	18.5	30.8	<b>65</b>
<i>Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation</i>	52	16	32	<b>25</b>
<i>Mental health</i>	54.8	21.2	24	<b>104</b>
<i>Drug and alcohol rehabilitation</i>	63.2	13.2	23.7	<b>38</b>
<i>Other health service</i>	45.2	12.9	41.9	<b>31</b>
<i>Housing</i>	46.8	17	36.2	<b>47</b>
<i>Employment and training</i>	46.7	20	33.3	<b>30</b>

<sup>7</sup> The total number of respondents is equal to the number of respondents in each activity that answered whether they saw themselves working in the sector in 5 years' time. Since respondents to the survey were able to choose more than one activity, one respondent could be included under different activities.

## 4.0 Opportunities and barriers facing women in the NGO social services sector

### 4.1 Do women have the same opportunity as men in your organisation?

Figure 9: Do women have the same opportunity as men in your organisation? (total responses = 558)

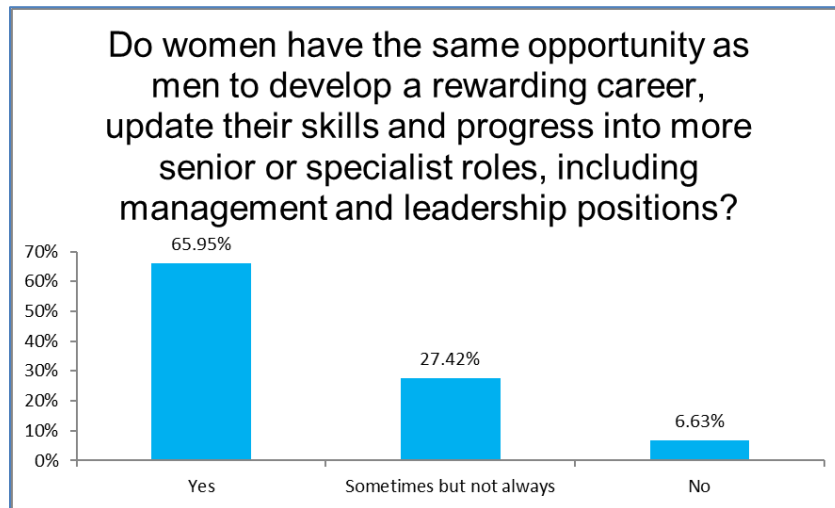
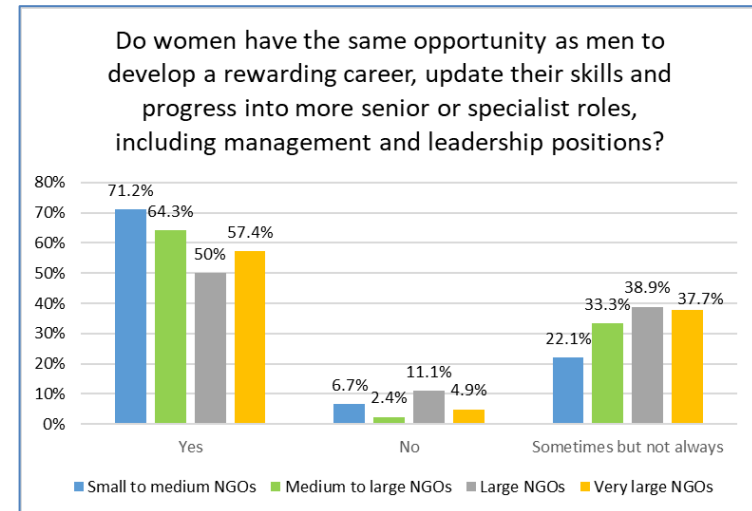


Figure 10: Do women have the same opportunity as men in your organisation by organisation size (total responses = 553)



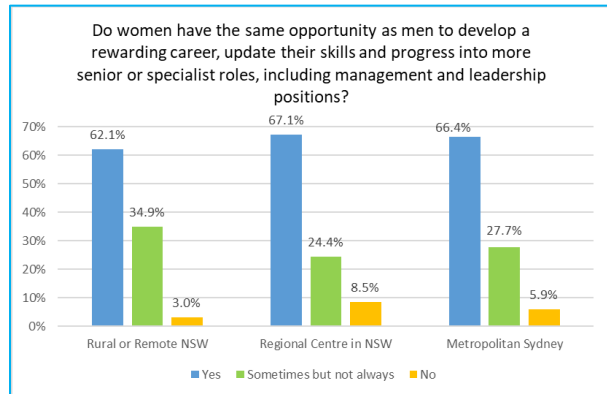
## Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW – data report

Table 12: Do women have the same opportunity as men in your organisation by activity of organisation

Main activity of organisation	Same opportunity as men			Total responses
	Yes	Sometimes but not always	No	
<i>Homelessness support and accommodation</i>	81 (62.8%)	38 (29.5%)	10 (7.8%)	<b>129</b>
<i>Child and family services</i>	141 (65.6%)	60 (27.9%)	14 (6.5%)	<b>215</b>
<i>Youth service</i>	65 (65%)	30 (30%)	5 (5%)	<b>100</b>
<i>Domestic violence service</i>	71 (64%)	33 (29.7%)	7 (6.3%)	<b>111</b>
<i>Neighbourhood centre</i>	30 (61.2%)	15 (30.6%)	4 (8.2%)	<b>49</b>
<i>Tenants advice and/or community legal service</i>	18 (64.3%)	9 (32.1%)	1 (3.6%)	<b>28</b>
<i>Emergency relief</i>	25 (59.5%)	16 (38.1%)	1 (2.4%)	<b>42</b>
<i>Financial/psychological/relationship counselling</i>	28 (57.1%)	16 (32.7%)	5 (10.2%)	<b>49</b>
<i>Aged care</i>	34 (69.4%)	15 (30.6%)	0.0%	<b>49</b>
<i>Disability support</i>	41 (64.1%)	20 (31.3%)	3 (4.7%)	<b>64</b>
<i>Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation</i>	21 (80.8%)	1 (3.9%)	4 (15.4%)	<b>26</b>
<i>Mental health</i>	67 (64.4%)	31 (29.8%)	6 (5.8%)	<b>104</b>
<i>Drug and alcohol rehabilitation</i>	27 (71.1%)	10 (26.3%)	1 (2.6%)	<b>38</b>
<i>Other health service</i>	19 (61.3%)	9 (29%)	3 (9.7%)	<b>31</b>
<i>Housing</i>	28 (59.6%)	15 (31.9%)	4 (8.5%)	<b>47</b>
<i>Employment and training</i>	17 (56.7%)	10 (33.3%)	3 (10%)	<b>30</b>

# Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW – data report

Figure 11: Do women have the same opportunity as men in your organisation by work location (total responses = 548)



## Key findings

- Out of the 558 responses to this question, the majority of respondents (65.9%) indicated that women and men in their organisation have the same opportunity to develop a rewarding career, update their skills and progress into more senior or specialist roles, including management and leadership positions.
- A higher proportion of respondents (71.2%) from small to medium-sized NGOs stated that they believed that women in their organisation had the same opportunity as men to develop a rewarding career, update their skills and progress than respondents who worked for very large NGOs (57.4%).
- Out of the 531 female respondents, 65.3% said that they believed that women had the same opportunities as men in their organisation.
- Respondents in rural and remote areas and regional centres were generally more likely than respondents from metropolitan centres to report that their organisation had in place a range of measures to retain, support and develop women employees.
- Rural and regional respondents are most likely to report professional development and training, parental leave, domestic violence leave, flexible work arrangements and EEO/diversity policies; regional centre respondents are more likely to report above award pay, acting up/higher duties and on the job mentoring and support.
- A slightly larger percentage (37.9%) of respondents from rural or remote NSW believed women had access to the same opportunities as men in their organisation either sometimes or none of the time, compared to respondents in regional NSW (32.9%) or metropolitan areas (33.6%).
- The majority of respondents (64.2%) across all sectors believe that women and men have the same opportunities in their organisations.



## 4.2 How does your organisation retain, support and develop women employees?

Table 13: How does your organisation retain, support and develop women employees? (total responses = 545)

Retain, support and develop women through	# of responses	%
<i>Above award pay</i>	136	25
<i>Other non-financial forms of recognition and reward</i>	136	25
<i>EEO and diversity policies</i>	207	38
<i>Flexible work arrangements</i>	406	74.5
<i>Domestic violence leave</i>	233	42.8
<i>Parental leave</i>	333	61.1
<i>Professional development, including training</i>	359	65.9
<i>On the job mentoring and support</i>	235	43.1
<i>Acting up/higher duty opportunities</i>	212	38.9
<i>Other</i>	40	7.3

# Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW – data report

Figure 12: How does your organisation retain, support and develop women employees by organisation size

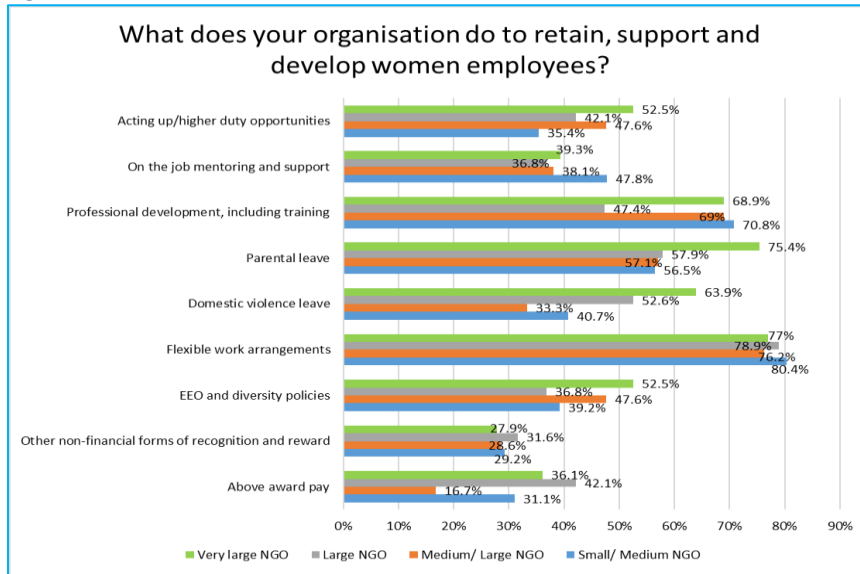
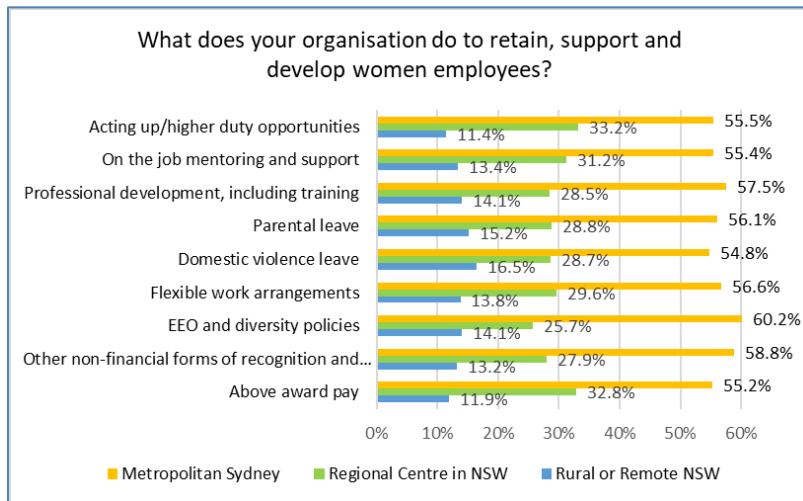


Figure 13: How does your organisation retain, support and develop women employees by work location



## Key findings

- According to respondents, the top three supports available to women in their organisations were flexible work arrangements, professional development including training and parental leave.
- Only 25% of respondents reported that women had access to above award pay or other non-financial forms of recognition and reward in their organisations.
- A higher proportion of respondents from small to medium NGOs, compared to respondents from large and very large NGOs, reported having access to the following supports from their organisation:
  - On the job mentoring and support
  - Professional development, including training
  - Flexible work arrangements
- Of the supports that were reported by respondents from medium/ large and very large NGOs, the following were proportionally higher than from respondents in other NGOs:
  - Acting up/higher duty opportunities
  - EEO and diversity policies
- A proportionally higher number of respondents from large NGOs reported receiving above award pay and other non-financial forms of recognition and reward.
- All respondents regardless of location reported that they had the most access to the following supports:
  - Flexible work arrangements
  - Parental leave
  - Professional development, including training
- Across all sectors, the majority of respondents reported having access to flexible work arrangements as the top support provided to women. Respondents working in Emergency Relief and Education and Training also reported having access to parental leave (see Appendix B for detailed numbers).

## 4.3 Does your organisation do enough to attract, support, develop and promote women from diverse backgrounds?

Figure 14: Does your organisation do enough to attract & support women from diverse backgrounds (total responses = 555)

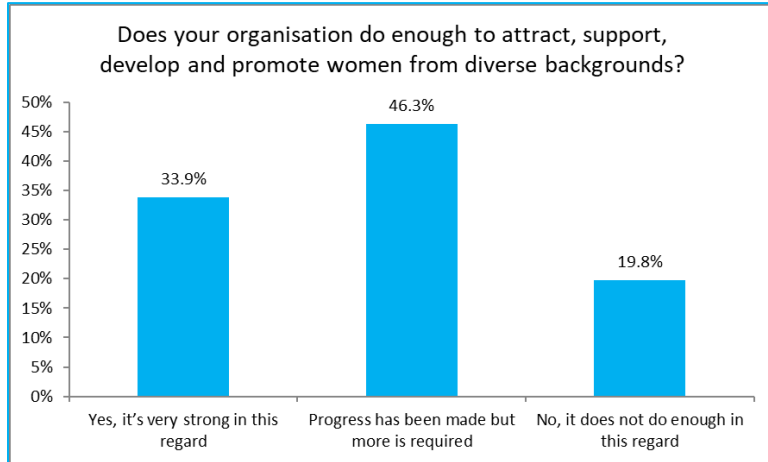
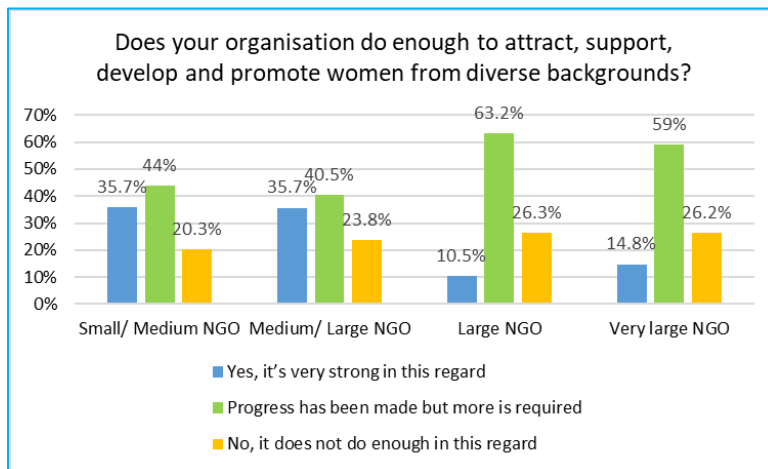


Figure 15: Does your organisation do enough to attract & support women from diverse backgrounds by organisation size (total responses = 550)

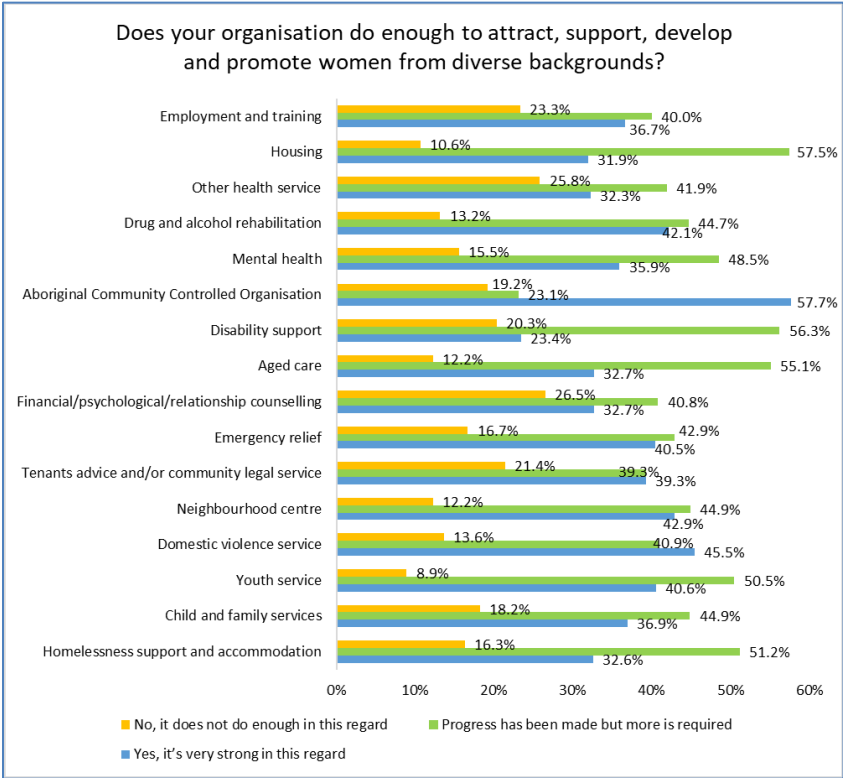


### Key findings

- Less than half of the total respondents (46.3%) stated that their organisations were making progress but more was required to attract, support, develop and promote women from diverse backgrounds.
- A larger proportion of respondents (35.7%) who work in small/ medium and medium/ large NGOs reported that their organisation was doing enough to attract support, develop and promote women from diverse backgrounds.
- Respondents working in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations were most likely to rate their organisation as doing enough to attract, support and retain women from diverse backgrounds (57.7%), followed by those working in a domestic violence service (45.5%), and a neighbourhood centre (42.9%).

# Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW – data report

Figure 16: Does your organisation do enough to attract & support women from diverse backgrounds by activity of organisation



## 4.4 Perceived barriers facing women when it comes to developing rewarding careers, updating their skills and taking on more senior or specialist roles

Figure 17: Perceived barriers faced by women in your organisation (total responses 529)

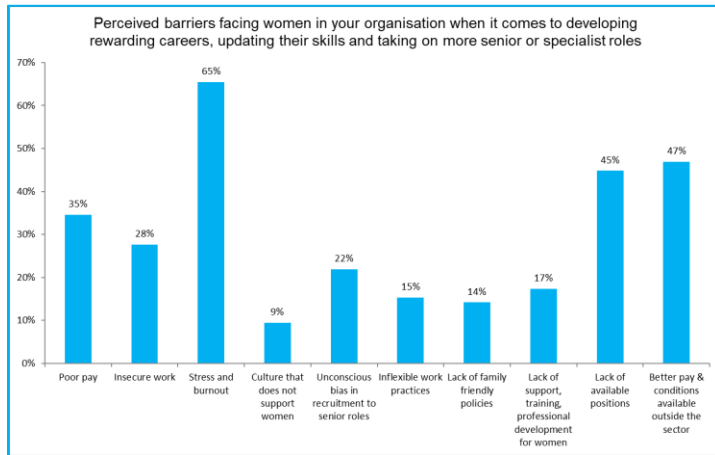
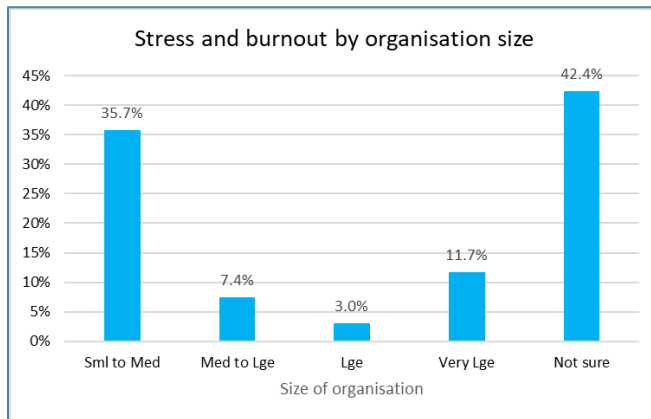


Figure 18: Respondents that perceive stress and burnout as a barrier by organisation size (total responses = 342)



### Key findings

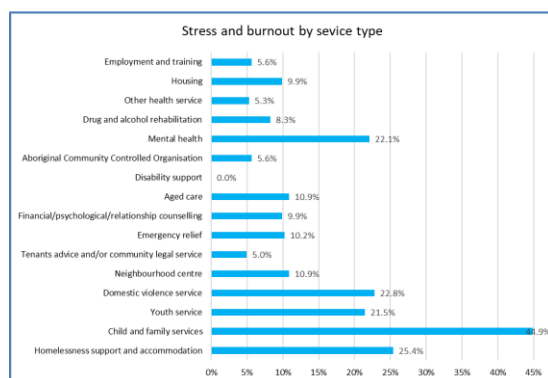
- The top three perceived barriers facing women in the social services sector were stress and burnout, having access to better pay and conditions outside of the sector and the lack of available positions.
- Just under half of the respondents who reported these barriers would still recommend working in the NGO sector to female friends.
- Of the respondents that reported that they did not or were not sure if they would be working in the sector in 5 years' time, 62.3% also reported that poor pay was a barrier facing women in their organisation.
- Despite reporting that stress and burnout and a lack of available positions were perceived barriers facing women in their organisation, 61.7% and 60.3% of respondents respectively reported that they would recommend working in the sector to a female friend.
- 58% of respondents that reported that a culture that does not support women was a perceived barrier in their organisation was also would not recommend working in the sector.
- Service types where stress and burnout were more likely to be reported as an issue were (see Appendix C for detailed numbers):
  - child and family services (44.9%);
  - homelessness support and accommodation (25.4%); and
  - domestic violence service (22.8%).
- Over a third of respondents (35.7%) working in organisations with annual revenue of less than \$5 million reported stress and burnout as a perceived barrier for women. When compared to respondents from medium to large organisations (7.4%), large organisations (3%) and very large organisations (11.7%) organisations, this was significantly higher.

# Women in the NGO social services sector in NSW – data report

Table 14: Perceived barriers faced by women in your organisation by whether the respondent see themselves working in the sector in 5 years' time or whether they would recommend working in the sector to a female friend

Barriers	Working in the NGO social services sector in 5 years' time? (%)			Would you recommend working in the sector to a female friend? (%)		
	Yes	No	Not sure	Yes	No	Not sure
Poor pay	37.7	24.6	37.7	48.9	17	34.1
Insecure work	41.8	23.3	34.9	53.1	15.9	31
Stress and burnout	47.8	16.5	35.7	61.7	11	27.3
Culture that does not support women	40	22	38	42	22	36
Unconscious bias in recruitment to senior roles	46.6	24.1	29.3	50	20.7	29.3
Inflexible work practices	40.7	27.2	32.1	50.6	18.5	30.9
Lack of family-friendly policies	40	22.7	37.3	54.7	17.3	28
Lack of support, training, professional development for women	41.3	20.7	38.0	47.8	18.5	33.7
Lack of available positions	47.3	18.1	34.6	60.3	11	28.7
Better pay and conditions available outside the NGO social services sector	42.3	24.2	33.5	58.7	12.6	28.7

Figure 19: Stress and burnout as perceived barrier by main activity of organisation (total responses = 303)



## 5.0 Voices of women in the NGO social services sector

### 5.1 Summary of comments

This section summarises and highlights key issues captured in open-ended comments from the survey. Below is a list of key findings that were identified through a thematic analysis of comments.

#### Key findings:

- Low pay (and for some, conditions) was the issue most frequently mentioned by respondents.
- Many respondents commented on the rewarding nature of working in the sector but a majority of these qualified their positive comments.
- Several thought the rewards were non-financial in nature only.
- Many respondents had issues with the short term nature of funding cycles across a range of impacts including barriers to professional development.
- Many also outlined how inflexible work arrangements, especially in senior roles, was a significant barrier to women's advancement.
- Several respondents felt that women, and for some, First Nations women, in particular, experienced discrimination in the workplace, being passed over for acting up opportunities or for promotion.
- Several commented that their workplace was diverse in terms of employing CALD women but not in terms of First Nations representation.
- In addition, several felt that senior management, CEO positions, and boards did not reflect the mostly female workplace.
- Some respondents also mentioned discrimination against or a lack of support for LGBTIQ+ workers, older women, CALD workers, or women with disability.
- Several respondents felt that their organisation was too small and needed more funding and/or support to reflect diversity across their organisation.
- Some also felt that lip service was paid to diversity but that there was no real commitment to cultural or structural change.
- Diminishing resources and increasing demands was a concern mentioned by several respondents, noting impacts such as working for free/exploitation, stress, and other mental health challenges.
- In addition, a lack of support for dealing with vicarious trauma and stress/burnout was commented on by several respondents.
- Several thought a lack of funding and flat organisational structures were a significant barrier to women's advancement, with more funding needed for specialists, administrative support, training and professional development.
- The need for more recognition and support for women's leadership was noted by several respondents.
- A concern for several respondents was unethical, unscrupulous, or unskilled managers with little or no commitment to staff training, collaboration, or development.
- Several respondents also felt that there was inconsistency across the sector and that support for women needed to be embedded in workplace policies across the sector.

## 5.2 What does your organisation do to retain, support and develop women employees?

The following summarises all comments made with comments grouped in themes. Where similar comments have been made more than a couple of times numbers have been given in brackets.

The support that some respondents reported that their organisation provided included:

- Mental health support
- Positive culture and strong female leadership
- Bonus payments and salary packaging
- Cultural support

Respondents that stated that they did not see any specific support for women commented:

- Nothing provided specifically for women (4)
  - Very high staff turnover
- No development support (5)

*“Difficult to answer – we are a women’s service. Development is zero.”*

- Opportunities (e.g. to act up) not fairly shared around or fairly remunerated (4)
  - Aboriginal women not invited

*“Only certain staff are provided with the opportunity to act up in management roles - definitely not Aboriginal women”*

- Dependent on managers’ “favourites”
- Highly susceptible to bias (4)

*“Flexitime, training and higher duties are all at (the) manager’s discretion so highly susceptible to bias (unconscious or otherwise)”*

- Lack of knowledge around available supports

## 5.3 Does your organisation do enough to attract, support, develop and promote women from diverse backgrounds including women with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds?

*“Although diversity policies and meaningful engagement and support (help) - through formal and informal mentoring; regular training and acting up opportunities; showing that leadership presents in different forms; cultural awareness and understanding - there needs to be continued advocacy on issues including domestic and family violence, housing, racism etc. to ensure there is lasting and generational change.”*



## Positive Measures

- Recruitment Strategy for women with disability
- New hires chosen strategically to ensure diversity including older people
- Designated inclusion and diversity staff member

*“We have a designated employee who keeps us up to date with issues of inclusion and diversity”*

- Strong but only because of philanthropic support

*“We are lucky that we have philanthropic support at moment but that has not been the case for 20 years previous and could be the same again in future as ACCOs are not recognised or supported as they should be. So we are strong now, but might not be in future.”*

- (First Nations organisation) We advertise and network in the community
- Board and volunteers reflect women, First Nations women, and women with disability
- Aboriginal identified positions
- A high percentage of staff with lived experience of mental health issues
- Advertise in those demographics

## Diverse but only in some areas

- CALD representation is strong but few or no First Nations staff (10)

*“We have a lot of women from diverse backgrounds in our organisation, however no Indigenous men or women”*

*“Very strong proportion of women from CALD backgrounds, however, we struggle to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and we don't have a measure of people with disability”*

*“We have a strong workforce of women from CALD communities, and a high percentage of employees with a lived experience of mental health challenges (themselves or as a carer) however more can be done to recruit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the organisation, as well as women with physical or intellectual disabilities. I would like to see us improve in this regard.”*

- Intersectionality needs to be addressed
- Need to pay more attention to supporting and developing staff (3)

*“We are good at attracting and promoting, but could do more in supporting and developing”*

- Diverse organisation but not reflected in upper management/Board (3)
- Need to try and attract people with intellectual and physical disabilities

## Lack of Diversity, and Discrimination

*“The issues in the sector go beyond gender.”*

- The organisation is very white (6) and middle class (especially in management)

*“While the organisation is mostly women, there are a disproportionate number of men in exec and senior leadership and the women who are in senior leadership are almost all White women.”*

*“Clearly White people - men and women - are still viewed as more capable in the NGO sector, since they hold the majority of leadership roles. There's still sexism, but it's not the biggest equality problem in our sector.”*

*“In a room full of leaders and managers, I remember seeing only 2 x CALD Team Leaders, and I was one of them. The rest 'Aussie’”*

- The organisation is not LGBTIQ+ friendly and LGBTIQ+ staff are not protected from bullying/ harassment

*“Most Queer people are not out in my organisation”*

- CALD staff are employed but not supported

*“Many people from CALD backgrounds are employed but I would not say they are supported. It almost feels like they are employed as they are the only option in rural areas rather than being seen in a positive way and supported as the essential workers they are.”*

- No staff with disabilities

*“Disabilities are ignored, hidden and not acknowledged although on paper we tick boxes for inclusiveness (in other areas).”*

*“A new clause has been added to our contracts stating we must disclose health issues (or) else we may be dismissed if this information has been 'suppressed'.”*

- No measure of disability for staff in the organisation
- Unique strengths that cultural diversity brings are not valued
- Bad behaviour and abuse are tolerated.
- Work requirements

*“Limited flexibility for part-time work and educational requirements can be a barrier. Few roles available and no identified positions.”*

## Structural and Cultural Issues

- Too small, no opportunity or funding for diversification (8)

*“Our organisation is small and we are all overworked in our capacity to meet the increasing community demands on the frontline. This leaves little or no time for further professional development and training.”*

*“We are at the mercy of competitive tendering”*

*“We are a small organisation with very specialised skills required. We can meet CALD backgrounds but Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is more difficult...We have an issue competing with these specialist skills against the private, uni, and public sector due to the higher wages they can pay. We cannot afford to compete due to our funding.”*

- No cultural or structural change or training to support diversity (7)

*“Though lip service is paid to diversity no structural or cultural steps have been taken to address the barriers”*

*“They know they need to do it but have been talking with no action for so many years”*

- Basic recruitment processes preclude the ability to attract and support diversity
- No EEO Policy
- Need more visibility for those groups
- Not always easy to find diverse staff in rural areas

### 5.4 What do you perceive as the barriers facing women in your organisation when it comes to developing rewarding careers, updating their skills and taking on more senior or specialist roles, including stepping into management and leadership positions?

#### Discrimination

- Men are being promoted, and taking up board positions ahead of women. (11)

*“Women work extra hard in senior roles to show that they deserve to be there. In my role, I play a key role in scaffolding my manager who is male in order to ensure he can support my work in an organisation that does not value the role of community development and youth work.”*

*“I have experienced and observed on more than one occasion that male staff who have less experience in the sector get ... opportunities in shorter timeframes and often get headhunted... women often have to apply multiple times for the same opportunity.”*

- Structural pay inequalities – salary packages not commensurate with independence especially when childcare is taken into account. Faith-based organisations can discriminate in favour of men as the head of the family. (9)

*“Discrepancies around pay equity - ie roles that traditionally are filled by men (and in practice, are) attract much higher salaries (because) organisations are 'competing' with private sector for staff. Traditional areas of women's work with same levels of competence and responsibility don't have this 'competition' so are paid less. Front-line, care and casework for example.”*

*“I work in an organisation that is purely female - even so I don't think we always pay appropriately and expect a lot. The flexibility is great but often offset with an expectation of constant availability.”*

- Male disrespect and sexism towards women including dominating meetings and work conversations. (3)

*“Male CEO does not like to be challenged. He has all the answers”*

- Negative attitudes towards women's employment in senior roles.

*“Unfortunately the decisions to support particular people to progress within this organisation is biased. I have seen brilliant young women frustrated by statements such as ‘you need to focus on your children for now and later we will look at supporting your professional development in management.’”*

- Perception of women as too aggressive when they challenge management.
- Discrimination/bullying against women with disability.
- Depends on the gender of the CEO as to how much women are supported and valued

*“It depends on the gender of senior managers, at times we end up with a boys club at the top but then it can change. The gender of the CEO also appears to be a deciding factor. So it goes through waves of development, depending on who is at the top.”*

- Ageism (5)

*“I have managed neighbourhood centres in crisis, have run frontline services, worked in local government arts development, the media, and have a lot of experience. But I can't even get an interview. There's a lot of ageism out there, and it's really palpable”*

*“I want poor management called to account, and better protections for mature female workers from ageism and discrimination and bullying when it comes to promotion and acting up opportunities.”*

### Flexible work arrangements

- Inflexible work arrangements especially in senior roles (21) – are particularly needed during life transitions – motherhood, caring for elderly parents, impending retirement etc. Also, arrangements are too dependent on the manager's/CEO discretion - should be embedded in workplace arrangements.

*“More senior roles are less flexible and not available on a part-time basis, nor (considered for) job-sharing arrangements.”*

*“My current organisation could do with some improvement in flexible work practices to support staff with caring and support responsibilities for children, and aging parents - such as capacity to work from home (outside of COVID lockdowns) and temporarily change work hours/days. This is also relevant prior to and when returning from maternity leave and*

*transition to retirement. My previous NGO workplaces have been very good in providing this kind of flexibility, resulting in better staff retention."*

- Parental leave (5)
  - connections, training and opportunities should be offered while women are on parental leave.

*"(We need) opportunities for keeping up skills while on parental leave e.g. paid development days if a parent wants to take up the opportunity. Ensuring staff on parental leave are aware of promotions and other opportunities that come up while they're on leave."*

- organisations try to avoid paying it.
- none provided or too short.
- often frowned upon especially if you take parental leave more than once.

*"I have taken maternity leave twice at my current job, and had comments like "didn't you JUST come back (a year prior), and well you haven't really been here X years, because you have two kids..."*

### Inadequate resources, increasing demands

- Lack of funding and flat organisational structures – need more specialists and funding for admin, training and development (10)

*"As a "community centre", much of our funding goes on infrastructure, rather than on increasing staffing, and improving staffing opportunities. There's nowhere to grow."*

*"Our main client is female. All our workers are female. We have a female-dominated board. Our funding enables us to provide the absolute minimum in terms of staffing, professional development and future growth - in fact, we couldn't afford a professional development budget this year."*

- Increasing expectations without increased funding leads to overwork, working for free, stress, and mental health challenges (12)

*"Women are basically being abused and exploited by the funding bodies, their workplaces, and the culture of "caring" – it has to stop."*

*"We are a smaller org, and despite massive population growth not one additional cent from funders. We keep doing more with less. Staff working unpaid. With pandemic we all face burnout."*

*"Increasing accountabilities, governance and admin by funders in the name of "outcome-based" work, yet decreasing funding that is short term, that expects us to change the world in 12 short months, and somehow (they do) not want to fund admin costs or staff costs and expect us to find that money elsewhere. ... It has reached the point where we feel we are not recognised as a professional, skilled workforce, but rather desperados who work for free or little pay because we "care".*

## Short term nature of funding

- Several impacts of short term funding were identified (31):
  - harder to attract experienced and diverse workers
  - harder to build skills/competencies over a working lifetime
  - wastes valuable time and creates inefficiencies as services spend so much time chasing grants, dealing with recruitment and stress due to job insecurity
  - worthwhile programs can't be developed, established, and evaluated properly
- harder to connect and build relationships with communities.

*“Lack of sustainable program funding leads to accessing limited resources and workers insecurity and loss of experienced workers to the private sector.”*

*“Having positions funded through grants/insecure work means staff have trouble obtaining loans, committing to long term plans, may look to other organisations where employment is secure. Have trouble planning programmes... if funding does come through super high amounts of work in a short time to get those programmes out and delivered. Then spending too much work time looking for grant opportunities rather than getting the job done. “*

*“Uncertainty/lack of long term project funding impacts on pay available, program resources available and also on job security for some positions, so these factors can contribute to stress.”*

*“Short term funding contracts from Government (e.g., 1 year) mean that there is also uncertainty in job roles, as often we are not advised of funding agreement renewals until after people have already sought new roles...”*

## Other structural and cultural barriers

- Unethical, unscrupulous, or unskilled managers with no commitment to staff training, collaboration, or development (11)

*“Total negligence in providing training, won't recognise staff who want support to build a career...no training budgets, bias/favouritism, very poor senior management decisions”*

- Qualifications are expensive (3)
- TAFE cuts
- Structural nature – managers as “generalists” – favours men
- Community development roles undervalued
- Lack of succession planning – external applicant process favours men

## 5.5 Would you recommend working in the NGO social services sector, as a rewarding career with diverse opportunities, to a female friend?

### Positive Features

- Working in the sector is very rewarding (29 comments with 25 of those qualified)

*“It is a sector that is rewarding and filled with passionate, driven, inspiring, and successful women, who are often battling against the odds but who do so because they genuinely believe in the impact of their work.”*

*“It's a brilliant, rewarding career where you'll meet passionate, educated women who will value your life experience, education, and value who you are as a person and your values, and you'll get to make positive changes in the lives of the community.”*

*“it's a very rewarding sector to work in - you can see the positive impact of your work in the community and have the opportunity to work with some amazing and passionate people as colleagues.”*

- Flexibility, responsiveness, and opportunities for creativity, and implementing social change/social justice - rewards are non-financial (10)
- Family-friendly
- Women are encouraged, empowered and elevated to more powerful positions

### Structural or cultural issues

#### Pay and conditions

- Uncompetitive pay rates and conditions (e.g. paid maternity leave, long service leave, job security) (40)

*“Work is great... support from government is almost non-existent”*

*“I do it because I love this work, but the poor pay is making it harder to remain in my current position, and it is only a matter of time when I will be forced to look elsewhere.”*

*“I have no access to long service leave. Funding restrictions and changing jobs ...mean I work full time for years without accruing leave “*

*“The wages are a factor for attracting and retaining our teams. We need people who are appropriately qualified to work with vulnerable communities and humanities degrees are costly and not prioritised...Frankly, I have been offered roles in Government which would have more than doubled my wage but I feel more valuable to the community working in the NGO sector right now. For women who are less financially secure, they may not be able to make the decisions I have been able to.”*

- Low pay rates contribute to a lack of diversity and make it even harder to find staff in regional areas where larger organisations tend to outcompete smaller organisations

*“In our rural area equivalent positions in government or corporate roles pay much higher so tend to suck up all the higher-performing up and coming leaders.”*

- Needs better balance between financial and non-financial rewards so it becomes a real choice (3)

*“Financially, I am worse off for working in the sector and I do so as our household income can support this. In my direct team, the staff are attracted to the very supportive 'family friendly' environment but they are relatively poorer off financially for working in the NGO sector relative to opportunities in the government sector.”*

*“The low pay is not something that everyone can afford to bear”*

*“If they wanted work that provided opportunities to address injustice, inequality and other social issues - I would recommend working in the social services sector. Unfortunately it's currently a case of weighing up the capacity to earn a decent wage with the desire to work for social change. It's an "either/or" proposition.”*

- Uneven pay rates within organisations for workers with varying professional status but similar responsibilities

### Inadequate resources, increasing demands

*“The pay is bad, the work is hard and the lack of political will to fix the systemic flaws in broken systems (is) just plain depressing. Homelessness is a problem that can be solved. Providing quality aged care is doable. Women and children can be protected from family violence. Governments - both state and federal - just have to care enough to do what needs to be done.”*

*“The resourcing of the sector is so woeful and so tenuous that it is hard for women to establish a 'career'.”*

- Stress and pressure combined with heavy workload (5)

*“Hard, unforgiving, low reward and very limited advancement”*

*“I am sick of being expected to jump through endless hoops for our polities and bureaucrats, yet I am paid at 28 hours per week and have to work over 40 hours per week. I am considering going back to the public service. The stress and pressure has taken a toll, this is not sustainable.”*

- Pressure to source philanthropic funding to cover gaps (3)

*“Very disheartening - we rely more on selling our souls to private philanthropy or business, who have their own agenda... we find ourselves conflicted ethically with getting some little buckets of money and then having clients personal info/ photos on company websites...”*



*“As a woman, with the current ridiculous funding environment and having to beg for private dollars at times it feels like we prostituting ourselves and our vulnerable clients (pardon my crass language). The pandemic has shown our sector is fragile and at breaking point.”*

## Short term nature of funding (See Question 12 also)

- Short term nature of funding precludes sustainability of employment or opportunities to build skills (6), and worthwhile programs are cut before they are even properly established or evaluated.

*“Continual fighting for long term funding to continue the sound work we do is exhausting.”*

## Managerialism

- Faith-based charities are big enough to offer development and advancement opportunities but they are too big to do meaningful community development work and suffer from “managerialism” (being too risk-averse and focused on bureaucratic processes).

## Support and recognition

- Need better recognition for women working in the sector and support for their leadership (9)

*“Rewarding work but not acknowledged or recognised, or even understood!”*

- Lack of support or opportunity for professional development and career progression (8)
- Lack of support for dealing with vicarious trauma and stress/burnout (9)

## Sector issues - inconsistency

- Too dependent on the organisation itself – no consistency within the sector (12)

*“It would depend on the individual organisation - some have better reputations than others for flexibility, transparency and work practices.”*

*“I am dismayed at the sometimes lack of professionalism within some organisations ... This contributes to burnout as you are not supported. Wish there were more industry-wide standards and adequate training/standards of team leaders to ensure a consistent and professional approach.”*

## Other

- Qualifications are expensive

*“Discrimination against, and lack of protection for people with caring responsibilities during covid.”*

*“I am about to lose my job due to the government’s handling of the coronavirus - I have a family member at home with severe underlying health issues and my place of work wants me back at schools and on the frontlines and I cannot put myself or my family at risk of getting covid. So I am in my last few weeks of work.”*

- Lack of diversity policies
- If vaccine mandates end

## 5.6 Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Many of the issues raised in this section have been touched on in previous questions. Only the comments that introduce a new idea or perspective are summarised here.

### Positive features of the sector

*“Love this sector - excited to see how it's already grown and continues to develop”*

*“Our org supports us when we challenge oppression.”*

*“My contribution to the NGO sector has been and will always be a source of pride for me”*

### Gender issues

*“There is only one man in this organisation. He is the CEO.”*

- Need a genuine independent investigation and audit of employment
- Older women in volunteer positions on boards can perpetuate male dominance in senior roles.
- Women are not immune to the politics of power (4) – they can be unprofessional, negative and unsupportive – staff need better support and access to services to mitigate their trauma and issues.

*“I see great workers overlooked, and eventually burnt out, I've seen poor female managers maintain their positions and use bullying tactics to ensure staff loyalty”*

- The focus is on making women more like men in their approach to their careers instead of trying to find better ways of doing things for both genders e.g. provision of more parental leave.
- The sector needs more men.
- The gender of the CEO correlates with the size of the organisation.

*“Are you doing a survey of the gender of the CEOs/senior executive across the sector? How does that compare with the overwhelming female workforce? I am sure there is a total mismatch!”*

### Resourcing

- Need to ensure retention of ERO payments.
- Covid has changed the way we work and operate but not enough planning is done or funding provided to ensure that people don't fall through the gaps.

### Professional development

- Would be good to have some scholarship opportunities to support women with their professional development

- Cross-sector mentoring and support are not appropriately funded.
- Better and more targeted training including more short courses e.g. in technology and social media.

## Disability

- Employment with a disability is tenuous and without access to positions of greater responsibility

## System abuse

*“ We are currently in crisis mode (seeing) clients suffering system abuse, makes it hard to want to remain (in this sector)”*

*“ With all the admin work we need to do and in order to maintain the funds and keep providing the support to the vulnerable community, there are so much paperwork we need to do that we do not have time to allocate to connect, consult, plan, etc with the community... We are tired... exhausted and this doesn't look like it will change”*

*“The government has potentially ruined my career in this sector because they have given me no protections like free access to RATs... I risk homelessness because of my situation - I am about to become a client for my organisation rather than a worker.”*

*“When will our parliamentary decision-makers realise we want children and young people to thrive not barely survive! ...The increase in poverty for so many at such an alarming rate is at a crisis in this country and the hard-working first responders, front line workers, community, health and education workers can't "plug" the size of this gaping hole!!!”*

## Smaller organisations

- Tenders geared towards larger organisations – it is impossible for smaller organisations to compete.
- Smaller organisations have the same pressures and responsibilities as larger ones but not enough funding to address the challenges.

## Elitism

*“This sector is becoming elitist and far too specialised at the expense of skilled workers with years of frontline knowledge and expertise.”*

*“There is too much focus on celebrating female leaders, and not enough on the workers that do the work. I want to see panels of frontline workers talking about how they have navigated the sector to get great outcomes for clients and the community, rather than panels on women talking about how they became a leader.”*

## Other

- Psychologists and CBT are prioritised over counsellors and diverse therapies.
- Few opportunities for fee for service work.
- The sector is changing – need to be looking at the important work in the arts in the community.

## Appendix A – survey questions

### Demographic questions

- 1) What is your age group?
  - 18-24
  - 25-34
  - 35-44
  - 45-54
  - 55-64
  - 65+
- 2) What gender do you identify as?
  - M
  - F
  - Non-binary/gender diverse
  - Prefer not to say
  - Other (please specify)
- 3) Do you identify as:
  - Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
  - LGBTQI+
  - A person with a disability
  - Other (please specify)
- 4) Do you work in a rural or remote location, a regional centre, or metropolitan Sydney?
  - Rural or Remote NSW
  - Regional Centre in NSW
  - Metropolitan Sydney
- 5) How long have you been employed in the social services sector? (including but not limited to your current job)
  - Less than one year
  - Two to five years
  - Five to ten years
  - Ten to 15 years
  - 15-20 years
  - 20 years +
- 6) How best would you describe your role?
  - Frontline service delivery
  - Policy/ advocacy role
  - Administration/office support
  - Management/Executive role
  - Volunteer
  - Other (please specify)

## About your organisation

7) What is the annual revenue of your organisation?

- Less than \$1 million
- \$1 million to \$5 million
- \$5 million to \$10 million
- \$10 million to \$15 million
- \$15 million to \$20 million
- \$20 million to \$25 million
- Over \$25 million
- Not sure

8) What is its main activity? (Choose up to three)

- Homelessness support and accommodation
- Child and family
- Youth service
- Domestic violence service
- Neighbourhood centre
- Tenants advice and/or community legal service
- Emergency relief
- Financial/psychological counselling
- Aged care
- Disability support
- Aboriginal community controlled organisation
- Mental health
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation
- Housing
- Employment and training
- Other (please specify)

9) In your organisation, do you feel that women have at least the same opportunity as men to advance their career and progress into more senior roles, including management and leadership positions?

- Yes
- Sometimes but not always
- No

10) What does your organisation do to retain and support women employees? (Choose as many that apply)

- Above award pay
- Other non-financial forms of reward and recognition
- EEO and diversity policies
- Flexible work arrangements
- Domestic violence leave
- Parental leave
- Professional development, including training
- On the job mentoring and support
- Acting up/higher duty opportunities

- Other (please specify)

11) Does your organisation do enough to attract, support and promote women from diverse backgrounds including women with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds?

- Yes, it's very strong in this regard
- Progress has been made but more is required
- No, it does not do enough in this regard

Comments

12) What do you perceive as the barriers facing women in your organisation when it comes to progressing their careers and taking on more senior roles, including stepping into management and leadership positions?

(Choose as many that apply)

- Poor pay
- Insecure work
- Stress and burnout
- Culture that does not support women
- Unconscious bias in recruitment to senior roles
- Inflexible work practices
- Lack of family friendly policies
- Lack of support, training, professional development for women
- Lack of available positions
- Better pay and conditions available outside the NGO social services sector
- Other (please specify)

13) Would you recommend a career in the social services sector to a female friend?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Comment

14) Do you see yourself working in the social services sector in 5 years' time?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

15) Is there anything else you would like to tell us

## Appendix B – supports available for women by activity of organisation

Main activity of organisation	Supports									Total # of respondents in sector
	Above award pay	Other non-financial forms of recognition	EEO and diversity policies	Flexible work arrangements	Domestic violence leave	Parental leave	Professional development, including training	On the job mentoring and support	Acting up/higher duty opportunities	
<i>Homelessness support and accommodation</i>	34	22	42	<u>92</u>	66	83	86	52	45	<b>130</b>
<i>Child and family services</i>	50	53	83	<u>164</u>	98	140	150	97	84	<b>215</b>
<i>Youth service</i>	17	15	39	<u>76</u>	40	68	66	46	37	<b>101</b>
<i>Domestic violence service</i>	28	24	46	<u>81</u>	56	77	79	57	41	<b>111</b>
<i>Neighbourhood centre</i>	7	7	19	<u>39</u>	16	27	28	26	17	<b>49</b>
<i>Tenants advice and/or community legal service</i>	11	5	11	<u>22</u>	12	18	18	13	12	<b>28</b>
<i>Emergency relief</i>	6	8	14	<u>28</u>	17	<u>28</u>	24	16	12	<b>42</b>
<i>Financial/psychological/relationship counselling</i>	7	5	21	<u>31</u>	15	24	29	23	20	<b>49</b>
<i>Aged care</i>	16	14	23	<u>40</u>	22	29	34	20	20	<b>49</b>
<i>Disability support</i>	12	23	28	<u>46</u>	30	43	39	27	30	<b>65</b>
<i>Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation</i>	8	10	11	<u>18</u>	7	11	16	14	12	<b>26</b>
<i>Mental health</i>	12	18	33	<u>73</u>	42	60	64	43	41	<b>105</b>
<i>Drug and alcohol rehabilitation</i>	10	7	17	<u>34</u>	23	28	24	20	16	<b>38</b>
<i>Other health service</i>	6	10	10	<u>20</u>	8	13	18	10	13	<b>31</b>
<i>Housing</i>	10	8	16	<u>33</u>	26	31	25	18	15	<b>47</b>
<i>Employment and training</i>	4	7	10	19	10	<u>21</u>	16	12	8	<b>30</b>
<b>Total # reporting support available</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>212</b>	

## Appendix C – supports available for women by activity of organisation

Perceived barrier	Main activity of organisation (%)																Total # of respondents that reported barrier
	Homelessness support and accommodation	Child and family services	Youth service	Domestic violence service	Neighbourhood centre	Tenants advice &/or community legal	Emergency relief	Financial/psychological /relationship	Aged care	Disability support	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation	Mental health	Drug and alcohol rehabilitation	Other health service	Housing	Employment and training	
<i>Poor pay</i>	22.6	43.4	16.4	21.4	12.0	3.1	9.4	14.5	9.4	11.3	5.0	21.4	6.9	9.4	6.3	7.6	<b>159</b>
<i>Insecure work</i>	27.6	43.3	20.5	25.2	16.5	3.9	11.0	12.6	7.1	7.1	7.9	22.8	7.9	5.5	9.5	10.2	<b>127</b>
<i>Stress and burnout</i>	25.4	44.9	21.5	22.8	10.9	5	10.2	9.9	10.9	14.9	5.6	22.1	8.3	5.3	9.9	5.6	<b>303</b>
<i>Culture that does not support women</i>	37.2	41.9	16.3	27.9	7	4.7%	14%	11.6	4.7	18.6	2.3	27.9	14	7	9.3	11.6	<b>43</b>
<i>Unconscious bias in recruitment to senior roles</i>	24.8	42.6	18.8	17.8	8.9%	3	8.9%	8.9%	7.9%	16.8	4	24.8	9.9	5.0	9.9	10.9	<b>101</b>
<i>Inflexible work practices</i>	25	44.1	10.3	20.6	5.9	7.4	5.9	14.7	10.3	10.3	4.4	19.1	7.4	7.4	5.9	7.4	<b>68</b>
<i>Lack of family friendly policies</i>	23.4	37.5	28.1	25	7.8%	3.1	10.9	14.1	6.3	10.9	6.3	28.1	9.4	10.9	9.4	7.8	<b>64</b>
<i>Lack of support, training, professional development for women</i>	26	48.1	23.4	16.9	13	7.8	13	5.2	5.2	16.9	6.5	15.6	6.5	7.8	10.4	11.7	<b>77</b>
<i>Lack of available positions</i>	25.9	42	19.8	20.3	12.7	6.1	6.6	7.1	8.5	12.3	2.8	16.5	4.7	6.1	7.1	4.3	<b>212</b>
<i>Better pay and conditions available outside the NGO social services sector</i>	24.2	47.4	17.7	22.3	8.4	5.6	8.8	9.3	9.3	13.5	5.1	20.5	6.1	7.4	6.1	6.1	<b>215</b>