

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCORECARD

Towards equity for women



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About the Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation



Our vision is Better Care, Better Equity, Better Health.

Established in 2006, the Monash Centre for Health Research and Implementation (MCHRI) builds on a strong partnership between one of Australia's largest health networks, Monash Health, and its largest university, Monash University, with national and international reach and partnerships.

We are international leaders in women's health, public health, healthcare improvement and equity. We are committed to empowering a voice for women in healthcare, policy and social determinants and bring together diverse, cross disciplinary experts with community and stakeholders to improve health and wellbeing for and with the community.



Executive Foreword

This report highlights key health and wellbeing indicators where women have poorer outcomes compared to men — this should not be the status quo.

Urgent action to address women's health and wellbeing, through a women-centred, evidence-based, systems level approach — is imperative now.

Women have lower income, less engagement in the labour force, lower superannuation and poorer health. This inequality costs \$55 billion in lost GDP.

Equitable health and wellbeing of the community is a social justice issue, and is also essential for social and economic growth. This report examines the financial security, socioeconomic status, and health intersections, emphasising the gender disparities that Australian women face. Notably, this inequality results in \$55 billion in lost GDP associated with women's labour force absence. Financial, health, and wellbeing indicators paint a picture of persistent inequity, even against the backdrop of some areas of progress.

The report focuses on 2020/21 which, marked by global upheaval due to COVID-19, witnessed significant social unrest with over 110,000 taking to the streets to protest the treatment of women in Australia. In tandem, there was a concerning dip to 50th in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap index. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) and National Health Surveys confirms these gender disparities, highlighting these enduring challenges.

Financial gap for women in 2021:

- **21% gap in full-time employment.**
- **Annual income difference of \$23,885.**
- **Retirement savings shortfall of \$44,746.**

Concerningly, in all domains except one, more women reported experiencing poor health. Most alarmingly in this report is the dramatic rise in psychological distress among young women aged 18-34. This pronounced surge underscores the gravity of this issue and necessitates targeted interventions and comprehensive support mechanisms.

However, 2023 heralds a glimmer of hope. Australia's ascension from 50th to 26th in the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, driven by decisive political actions, positions us for transformative change. As we reflect upon the pandemic's initial year, this report's significance is accentuated, underscoring the imperative for immediate, impactful action.

**Professor
Helena Teede**



**Professor
Emily Callander**

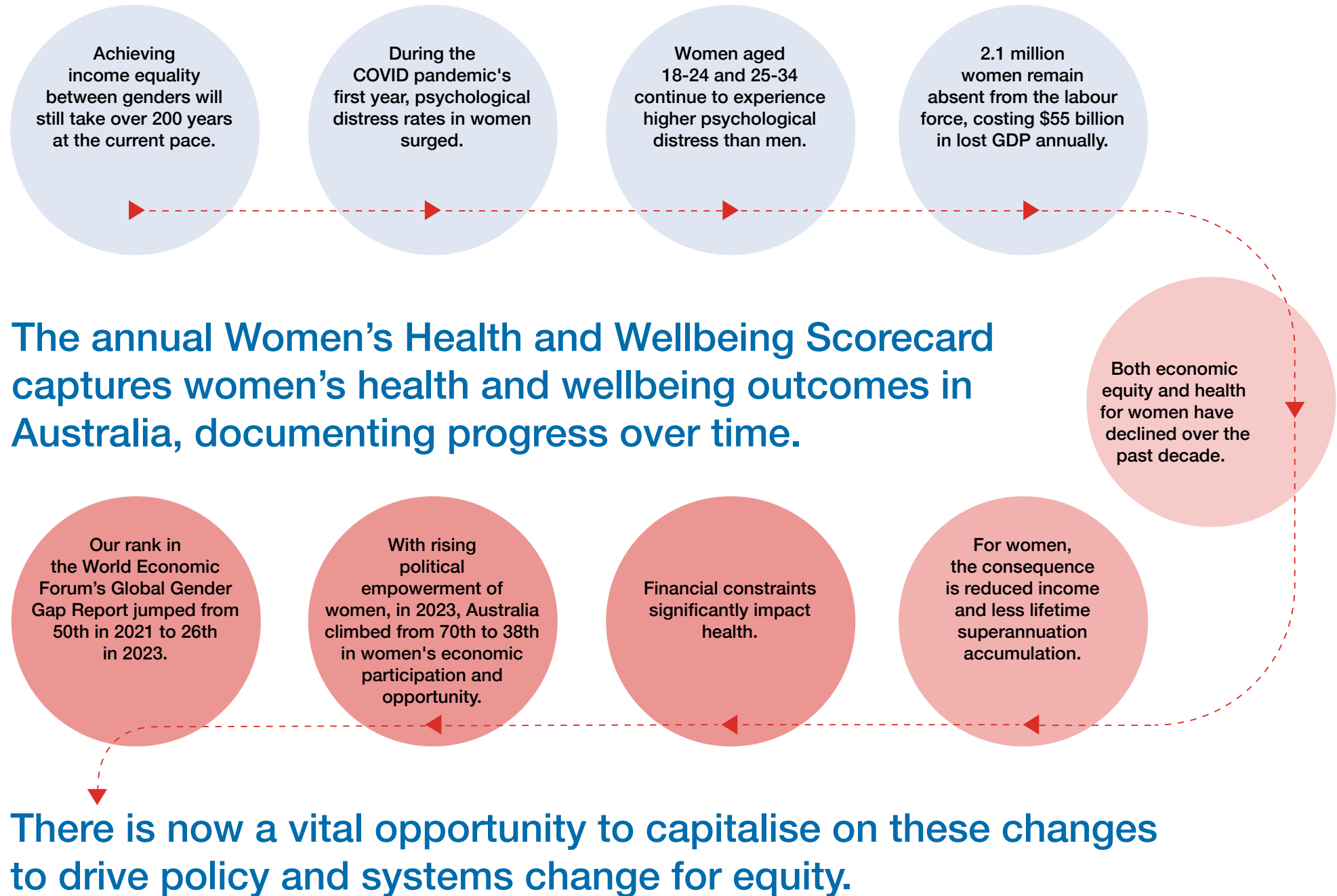


**Associate Professor
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It will take:

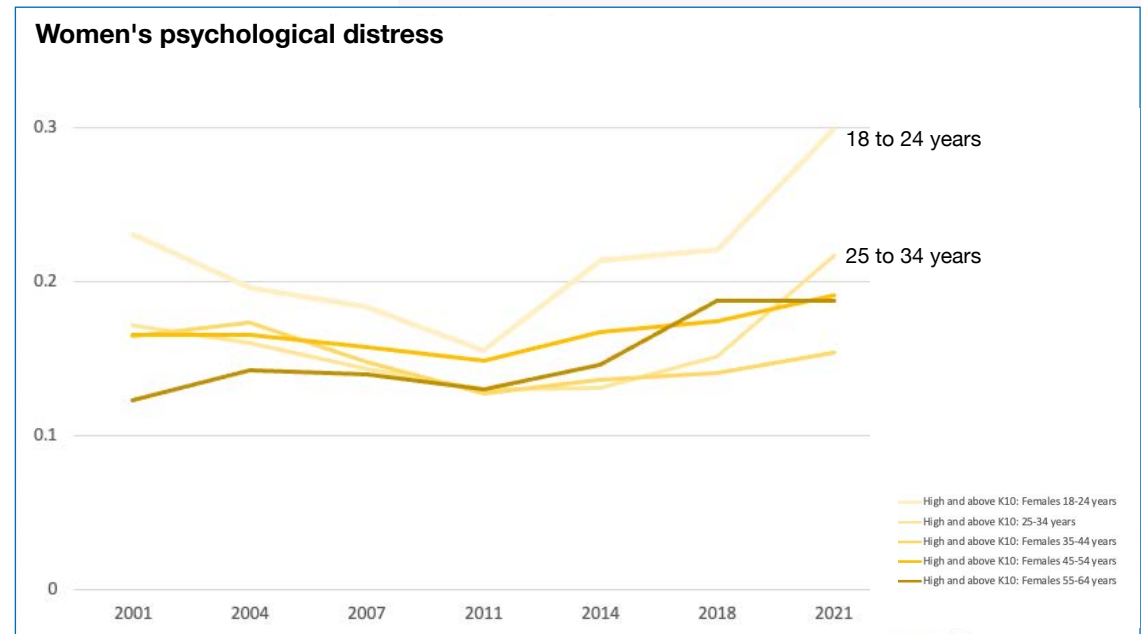
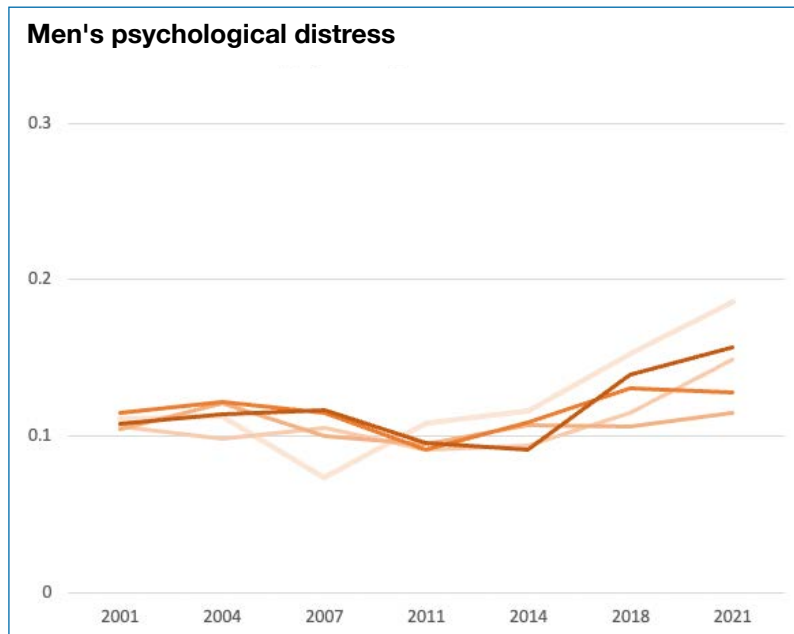
- **50 years to achieve equality in full-time employment.**
- **Over 200 years to close the income gap between men and women.**



Psychological distress

More women than men have reported elevated levels of psychological distress. During the first year of the COVID pandemic, there was a sharp rise in psychological distress among women aged 18-24 and 25-34. Women aged 18-24 consistently reported the highest levels of distress across all years. Women aged 55-64 experienced a significant shift in reported psychological distress moving from the lowest levels in 2001, up to the second highest by 2018 and remained high in 2020/21. A sharp rise in mental disorders in young women is also confirmed by the 2020-2022 National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing.

The data underscores a concerning trend: young women, particularly those aged 18-24, are facing heightened levels of distress with a very high prevalence at a population level. We must respond immediately and prioritise their health and well-being.



Summary of health indicators

In 2021, compared to the year before, women reported worse health in nearly all areas, with the exception of general health.

Women's health is declining

This report focuses on data from 2021 and compared to the year before, women reported worse health in nearly all areas, with the exception of general health.

Over the last two decades, from 2001 to 2021, there's been a noticeable drop in women's social interactions and their emotional and physical capability to handle their responsibilities. Currently, about two-thirds of women say they have physical issues, feel drained, and rate their overall and mental health poorly.

Health domain	% of women in 2001 reporting poor health	% of women in 2020 reporting poor health	% of women in 2021 reporting poor health	Gender Gap in 2021 (percentage point difference between men and women)
General Health	66.8	63.7	65.4	0.4 lower for women
Mental Health	67.6	63.4	65.1	5.5 higher for women
Physical Functioning	72.2	65.9	66.4	4.2 higher for women
Social Functioning	57.4	61.8	61.9	6.0 higher for women
Emotional Ability to Perform Role	36.2	41.5	41.6	4.9 higher for women
Physical Ability to Perform Role	39.3	40.5	40.2	2.1 higher for women
Vitality	65.0	63.0	65.0	7.5 higher for women
Bodily Pain	70.7	58.9	59.7	3.6 higher for women

Summary of wellbeing indicators

Over two decades there was a positive shift: more women found full-time jobs and fewer faced unemployment or lived in poverty. However, the percentage of women living in both income poverty and with multidimensional poverty has increased after 2020

In 2021, despite some advancements, a gender disparity still existed. Fewer women were in full-time roles, more were out of the workforce, and more experienced both income and combined poverty. The only equal ground with men was in the unemployment rate.

Women saw an upswing in their average income and retirement savings between 2001 and 2021. But the financial gap with men was still stark: 21% fewer women in full-time roles, a yearly earnings gap of \$23,885, and a retirement savings difference of \$44,746 in 2021.

Financial disparities with men in 2021 were pronounced:

- 21% gap in full-time employment.
- Annual income difference of \$23,885.
- Retirement savings shortfall of \$44,746.

It will take:

- 50 years to achieve equality in full-time employment.
- Over 200 years to close the income gap between men and women.

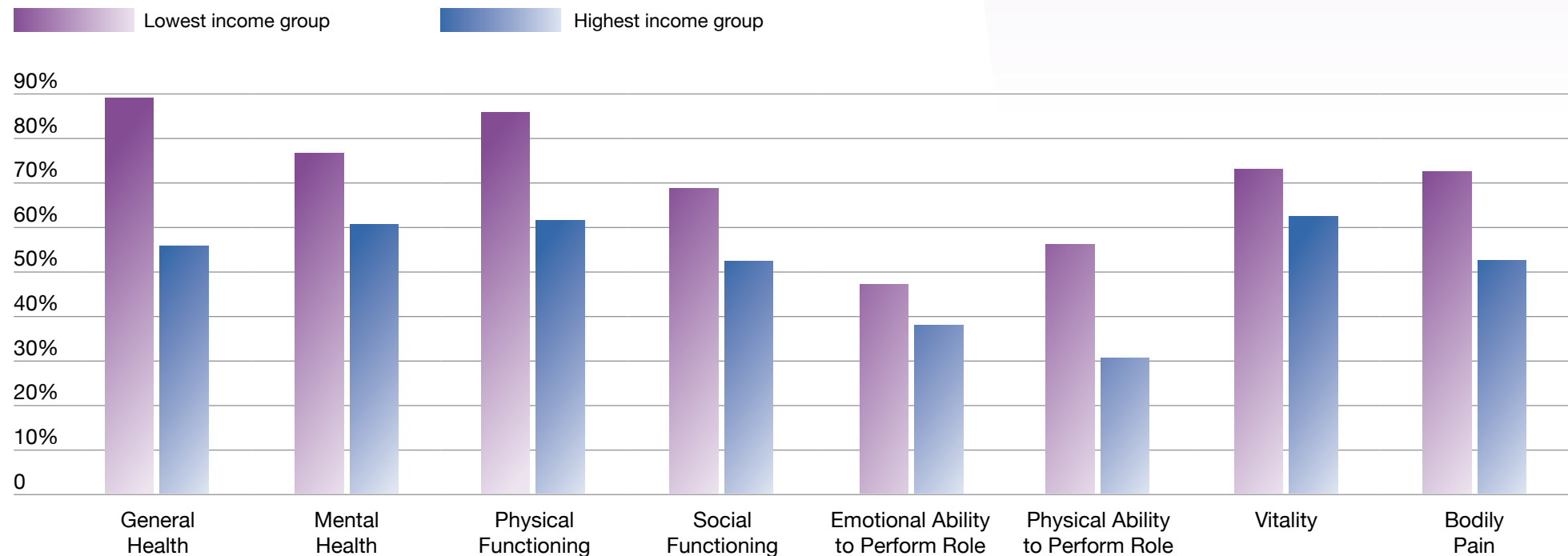
Wellbeing Indicator	% of women in 2001	% of women in 2020	% of women in 2021	Gender Gap in 2021 (percentage point difference between men and women)
Full time employment	28.1	29.7	31.0	21.3 lower for women
Part time employment	25.3	28.4	27.6	13.7 higher for women
Unemployment	3.4	3.6	2.8	0.4 lower for women
Not in the labour force	43.2	38.4	38.6	8.0 higher for women
Income Poverty	16.2	11.8	13.7	2.1 higher for women
Multidimensional Poverty	12.3	7.7	8.8	1.9 higher for women
			Mean income for women in 2021	Persisting Gender Gap in 2021 (difference in means between men and women)
Annual personal income	32,703	\$52,149.46	\$54,155	\$23,885 lower for women
Superannuation balance	Not measured	\$62,742.57	not measured	\$44,746 lower for women (based on last time point)

Summary of Health and Wellbeing Intersection

In 2021, low-income women had poorer health than high income women in every domain of health assessed; which was similar to 2020. There was a more than 20 percentage point gap between lowest and highest income women for most domains. The largest gap was for physical ability to perform role where 56% of women in the lowest income group experienced poor health in this domain; but only 30% of women in the highest income group did. Similar differences were seen for general health, physical and emotional ability to perform role, physical functioning, and bodily pain.

- Low income can lead to worse health and vice versa
- We can't look at health without considering overall well-being.

Poor Health Status – Income Group Comparison



[Read the full statistical report for the Women's Health and Wellbeing Scorecard](#)

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