



RRR WOMEN

QUEENSLAND RURAL, REGIONAL, REMOTE WOMEN REPORT 2026



About RRR Women

Rural, Regional and Remote Women (RRR Women) is an independent, membership charity established in 1993 to connect, develop and inspire Queensland women. Through events, networking, leadership development, advocacy and research, RRR Women works to ensure rural, regional and remote women's voices, needs, wants and experiences are represented in decision-making and policy conversations.

Our members are individuals, small businesses and organisations who represent the length and breath of the state and come from a variety of industries, demographics, regions, sectors and backgrounds. Our research extends beyond our members to all rural, regional and remote women.

This research is conducted and published by Rural, Regional, Remote Women.

A note from the President

This year, Queensland women have described a snapshot of adaptable and optimistic Queensland communities navigating increasing and compounding complexity.

The Queensland Rural, Regional, Remote Women 2026 Report measures conditions impacting women in Queensland, alongside your wants, needs and where you see hope and optimism in the future.

This report presents findings from the 2026 research and builds on the inaugural 2025 report. It identifies emerging issues, tracks year-on-year changes and highlights the evolving realities of women living, working and playing across rural, regional and remote Queensland.

The aim is to understand the evolving realities of Queensland women across a series of measures like news, digital access and connectivity, employment, industry representation and volunteering, community services and accessibility, connection and social cohesion, disaster impact, climate and energy, future opportunities and leadership.

While women continue to demonstrate strong leadership and community commitment, they also report persistent challenges in accessing essential services, responding to disasters and managing the urban rural divide. Key data stories are:

- The evolving nature of multi-generational leadership and regional diversification
- The gap between digital reliance and digital access

- The hidden volunteer economy
- Persistent challenges in service accessibility
- Supply chain disruptions are the most common disaster impact
- Women are increasingly influencing decision making in areas like investment and energy policy
- Value of social connectivity for support

This research provides rich data to help decision makers, corporates, not-for-profits and community groups deliver services, investment and resources for rural, regional and remote women and your communities best suited to your needs and wants.

It also means we are able to deliver the best value to our members, responsive to what you're telling us.

Contributing to this research is rural, regional and remote women's opportunity to foreground your wants and needs and have your valuable insight, thoughts and perspective make a difference to women like you across the state. Thank you to the hundreds of women who contributed to this research again in 2026.

We're working to ensure your voice is heard and your insights are acted on.

Emma Clarke

President



2026 Snapshot

Overall, the 2026 findings present a story of optimism, innovation and adaptability, alongside persistent challenges. Compared to 2025, the findings reveal encouraging improvements across some indicators, alongside emerging pressures that continue to shape life across rural, regional and remote Queensland.

A significant finding this year is the continued shift towards **digital** reliance. While there are some positive improvements in access, there is still work to do. Technology and digital services recorded the strongest improvement in accessibility and while internet and telecommunications, news services and banking improved compared to 2025, digital exclusion remains a major barrier, with **more than half of respondents reporting they have been unable to access essential services due to poor internet connectivity**. There is an ongoing gap between increasing reliance on digital services and equitable access.

Supply chain disruptions became the most commonly reported disaster impact, affecting almost nine in ten respondents, while road closures, telecommunications outages and infrastructure damage is widespread. More women also reported disaster impacts lasting between one and five years than in 2025.

The report also highlights the enormous contribution women continue to make to regional Queensland through work, volunteering, leadership and community service. **More women reported combining paid and unpaid work** than in previous years, reflecting increasingly diverse careers and portfolio work.

At the same time, respondents expressed growing concern about volunteer fatigue, workforce shortages and the long-term service sustainability that rely heavily on a small number of highly committed community members.

Women **increasingly value social connectivity as essential to wellbeing**. References to social connection, belonging and purpose appeared consistently throughout qualitative responses and represented one of the strongest recurring themes in the 2026 survey while family and friends are again the strongest support networks for women.

In community services and accessibility there is improvement in technology and digital and service connectivity, contrasted with worsening perceptions of grocery affordability and ongoing concerns around health and childcare services. **The most accessible services and resources are food and water, fuel, news and information while the least accessible are childcare and children's support, health and mental health and banking and financial.**

And women want to be part of the future, **increasingly influencing policy and decision making in areas like investment and energy policy**. More women are in leadership, governance and advocacy roles while skills development programs would be the most significant contributor to women in their community having a stronger voice in decision-making and ensuring their communities' needs and wants are considered.

Respondent demographics

Age profile

3.8%

18-30 years

40.2%

31-50 years

49.3%

51-70 years

5.7%

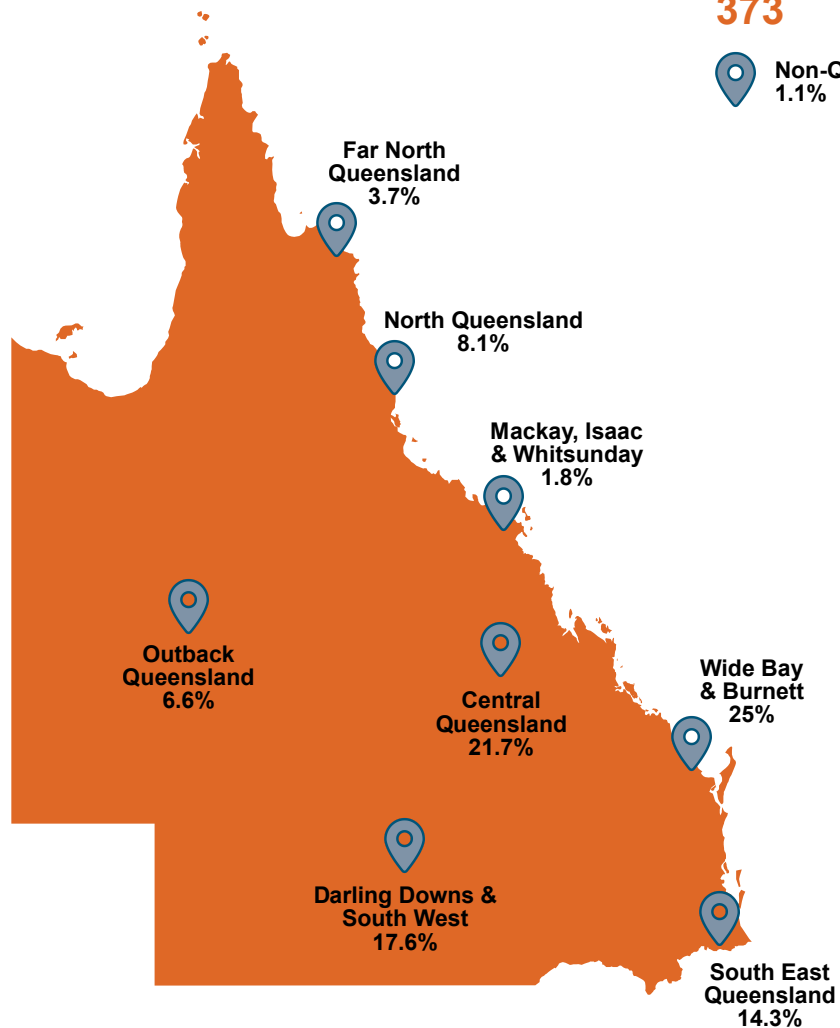
71+ years

Geographic representation

No. of survey respondents

373

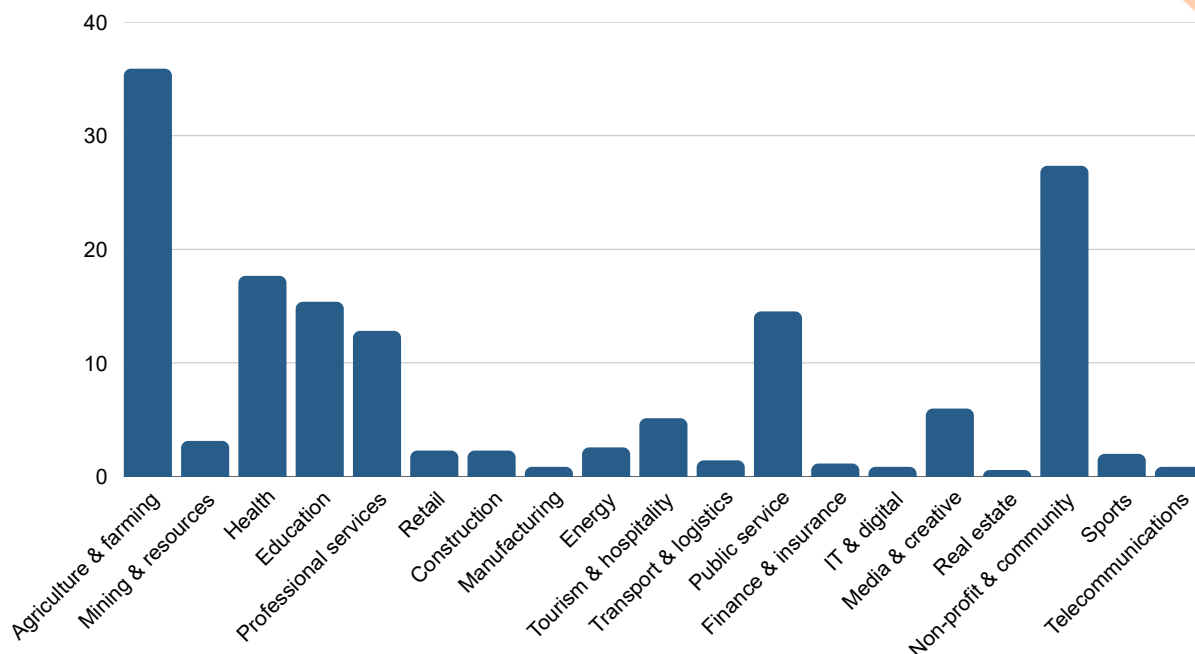
 Non-Queensland
1.1%



Compared to 2025, in 2026 there is:

- Continued engagement from working-age women balancing employment, caregiving and volunteering responsibilities
- Representation from younger women entering leadership and professional roles
- Ongoing participation from retired and semi-retired women contributing significantly through unpaid community work, reflecting a multi-generational nature of leadership and community participation in rural and regional Queensland.

Industry representation



Compared to 2025:

- Representation from health and community services increased by close to 5 percentage points.
- Participation from professional services and consulting roles was consistent, with about 1 in 6 respondents.
- Agriculture remained the largest represented industry, although its proportional share of respondents decreased slightly as participation diversified across industries.
- Beef was again the most highly represented agricultural industry.

Agricultural industry representation

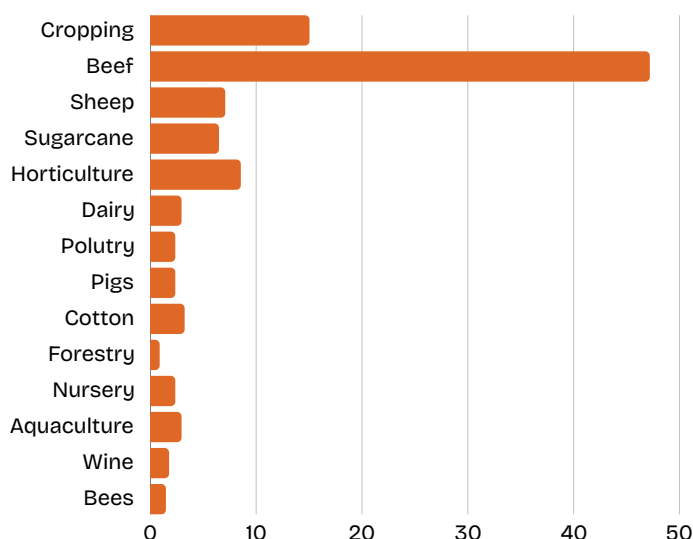
Data story: Regional diversification

The 2026 survey revealed strong representation across a broad range of industries.

Agriculture and farming were again highly represented; however, participation from other sectors increased significantly, reflecting the increasing diversification of regional economies and the evolving professional landscape for rural and regional women.

Emerging trend: Portfolio careers and multi-sector participation

A notable trend in the 2026 data was the number of respondents identifying with multiple industries, consulting roles or hybrid careers, driven by the increasingly flexible and multifaceted nature of work.

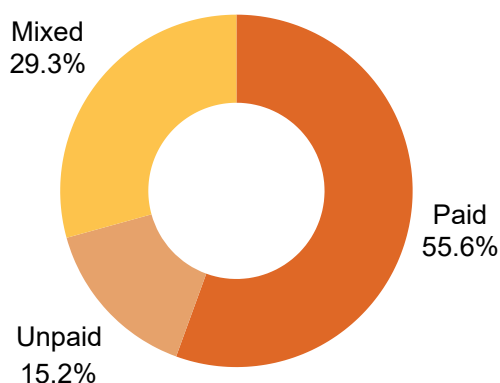


Examples included:

- Women combining agricultural work with consulting or coaching.
- Semi-retired professionals continuing volunteer leadership.
- Women operating businesses while also contributing to governance and advocacy roles.
- Respondents balancing caregiving, paid work and community leadership.

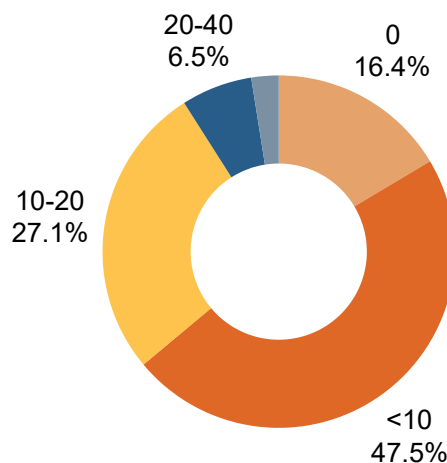
Work and volunteer time

Paid vs unpaid work



Volunteer hours per week

40+ hours per week: 2.5%



Why women volunteer

To educate and assist those who have difficulty accessing some services.

To give back to the community, to share expertise and knowledge, to build towards a better region.

Because community doesn't work without volunteers. I try and be what I'd like to see in the world.

For connection and I enjoy positive social and community benefits.

To help people who can't help themselves.

To ensure my children have a thriving community to grow up in.

Communities only thrive when you support them. We need to generate opportunity in our own spaces due to our locations.

I enjoy being part of groups that bring joy to people.

Meeting people in my new community and filling in time meaningfully. The world will not function without volunteers.

Because I love where I live and I love the people and community.

To fulfil a part of me that living rurally hasn't allowed me to do in a "paid job" while working in our own ag business.

Volunteering

Data story: The hidden economy

The 2026 survey confirmed volunteering is central to the social and economic fabric of rural and regional communities.

More than a quarter of respondents reported volunteering between 10 and 20 hours a week, across sectors including:

- Schools and sporting clubs
- Agricultural organisations
- Emergency services
- Disability support
- Arts and culture
- Governance and boards
- Advocacy organisations
- Community events
- Youth development
- Faith-based organisations

Compared to 2025, the proportion of women volunteering between 10 and 20 hours, 20 to 40 hours and more than 40 hours was relatively consistent year on year; however, 47.5% of women in 2026 reported volunteering less than 10 hours per week (down from 63.7% in 2025).

29% of respondents work in a mix of paid and unpaid roles (compared to 24% in 2025), while 15% work entirely unpaid (down from 26% in 2025).

Emerging trend: Volunteer sustainability

While community commitment was strong, the 2026 survey identified growing concern around volunteer sustainability.

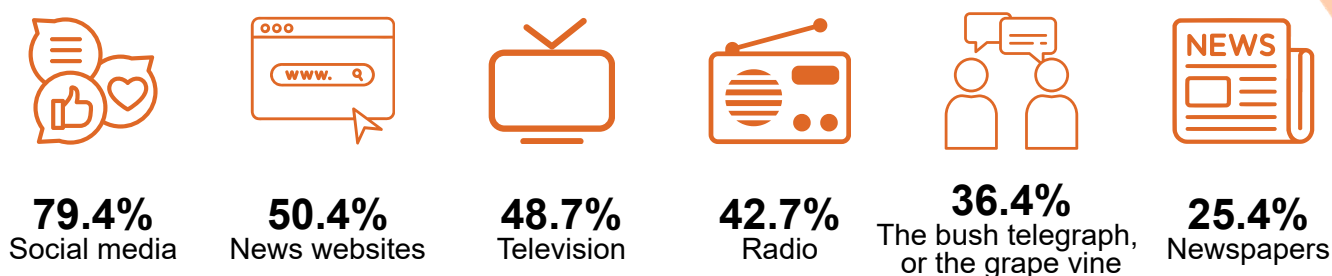
Respondents increasingly referenced barriers to volunteering like burnout, few younger volunteers, time pressures, balancing paid work and volunteering, health limitations and difficulty sustaining services without volunteer support.

Several respondents noted communities increasingly rely on a small number of highly engaged individuals.

At the same time, many respondents reported volunteering because they felt there was 'no one else to do it', and raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of volunteer-led services and organisations.

Access to news

How survey respondents access their news:



58.2% of respondents said they use social media multiple times a day, and **32%** at least once a day.

Data story: The gap between digital reliance and digital access

Social media is increasingly being used not only socially, but professionally and strategically and indicates digital platforms are more important as professional and social infrastructure in rural and remote communities.

Close to a quarter (24%) of women rely on social media and digital platforms for support in 2026 while high levels of daily social media engagement increased from 55% in 2025 to 58% in 2026. 79% of respondents reported social media was their main source of news, while 50% rely on news websites.

Despite this, more than 56% of respondents said they had been unable to access essential services due to poor internet connectivity in the past and 43% of respondents reported average or below average access to internet and telecommunications.

27.3% said they experience poor internet connectivity every day and 17% multiple times a day.

There is still a gap between reliance on digital platforms and actual digital accessibility.

Conversely, consistent with 2025, women rely on a blend of traditional and digital media to stay informed and ongoing importance of the bush telegraph demonstrates the strength of informal community networks in regional Queensland.

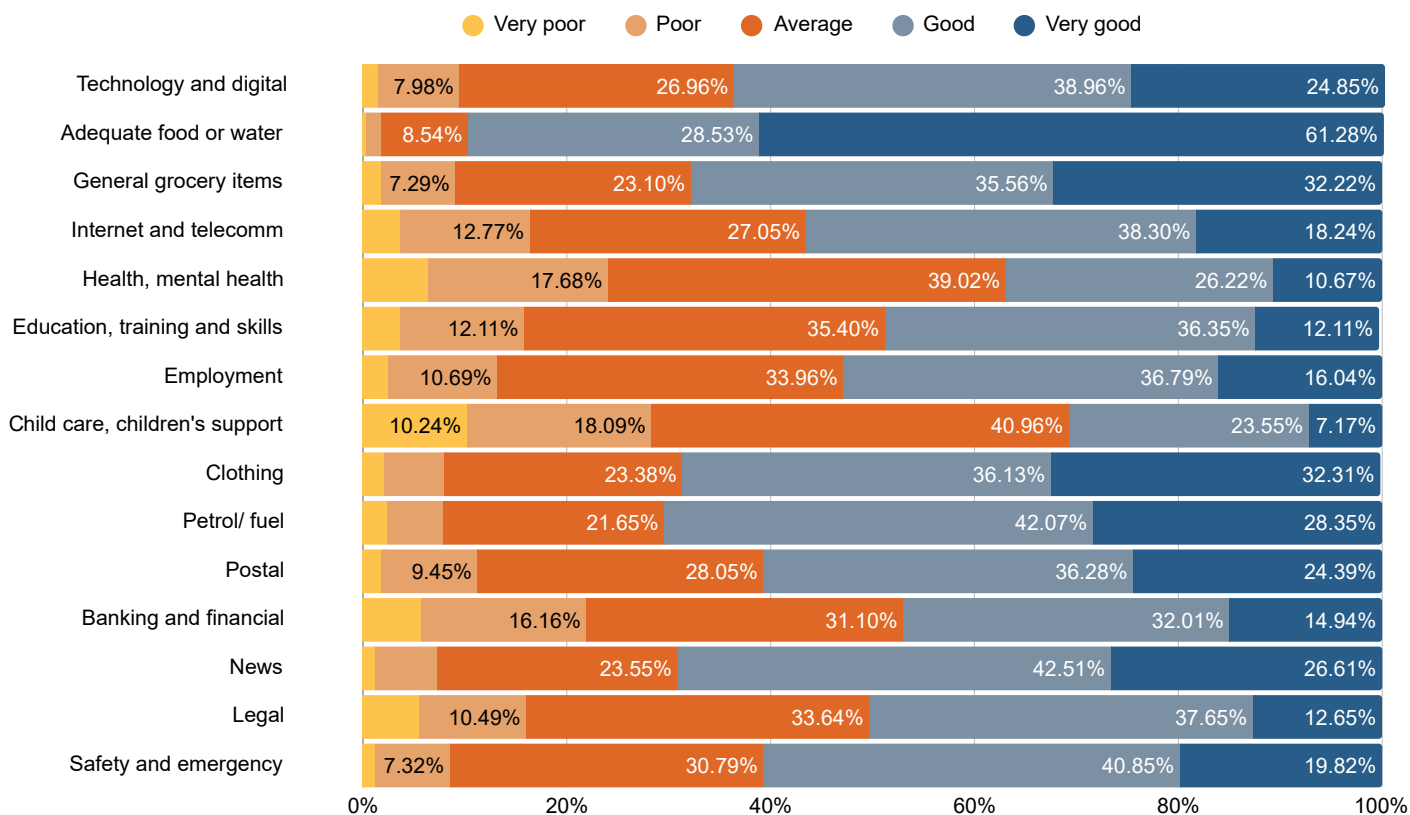


More than 56% of respondents said they had not been able to access essential services like education, banking, health or emergency services due to poor internet or telecommunications.



Community services and accessibility

Survey respondents rated their access to the following services



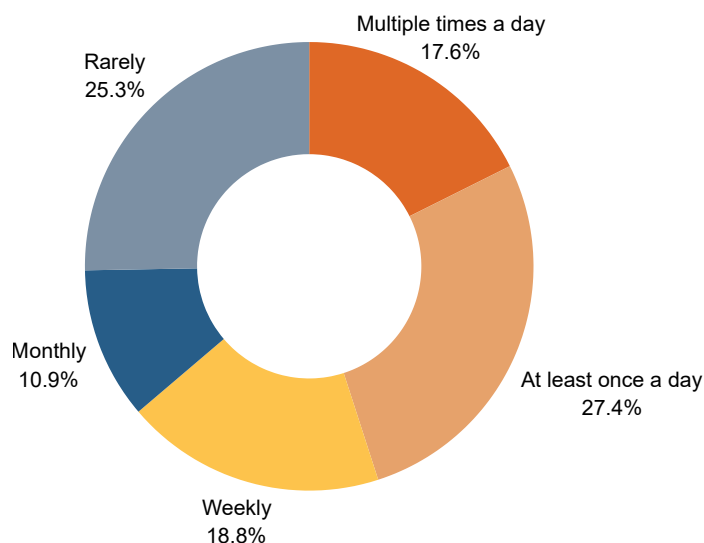
Most accessible services

- Adequate food and water: 89.6%
- Petrol/fuel: 70.4%
- News and information services: 69.1%
- Clothing: 68.4%
- General grocery items: 67.8%

Least accessible services

- Legal: 50.3%
- Education and training: 48.4%
- Banking and financial services: 47.0%
- Health and mental health services: 36.9%
- Child care and children's support 30.7%

Poor internet and telecommunications connectivity experiences



Community services and accessibility

Data story: Systemic challenges persist in service accessibility

The strongest story in the 2026 community services and accessibility results is the significant improvement in technology and digital and service accessibility, contrasted with worsening perceptions of grocery affordability and ongoing concerns around health and childcare services.

Emerging trend: Technology and digital services showed the strongest improvement

Positive ratings increased from 52.2% in 2025 to 63.8% in 2026, the **strongest improvement** across all categories.

News and information services improved significantly

Positive ratings increased from 59.0% to 69.1% and negative ratings decreased from 11.3% to 7.3%.

Internet and telecommunications improved

Positive ratings increased from 47.5% to 56.5%. While still not among the highest-rated services, the improvement is substantial.

Banking and financial services recorded a notable turnaround

Positive ratings increased from 38.7% to 47.0% and negative ratings fell from 33.3% to 22.0%. It is the **largest reduction in dissatisfaction** across all categories.

Emerging trend: General grocery items experienced the largest decline

Positive ratings fell from 76.1% to 67.8% and negative ratings nearly doubled from 5.1% to 9.1%. This is the **most significant deterioration**.

Health, mental health, and childcare services continue to receive some of the lowest satisfaction ratings despite small improvements in some areas, suggesting these remain systemic challenges for respondents.

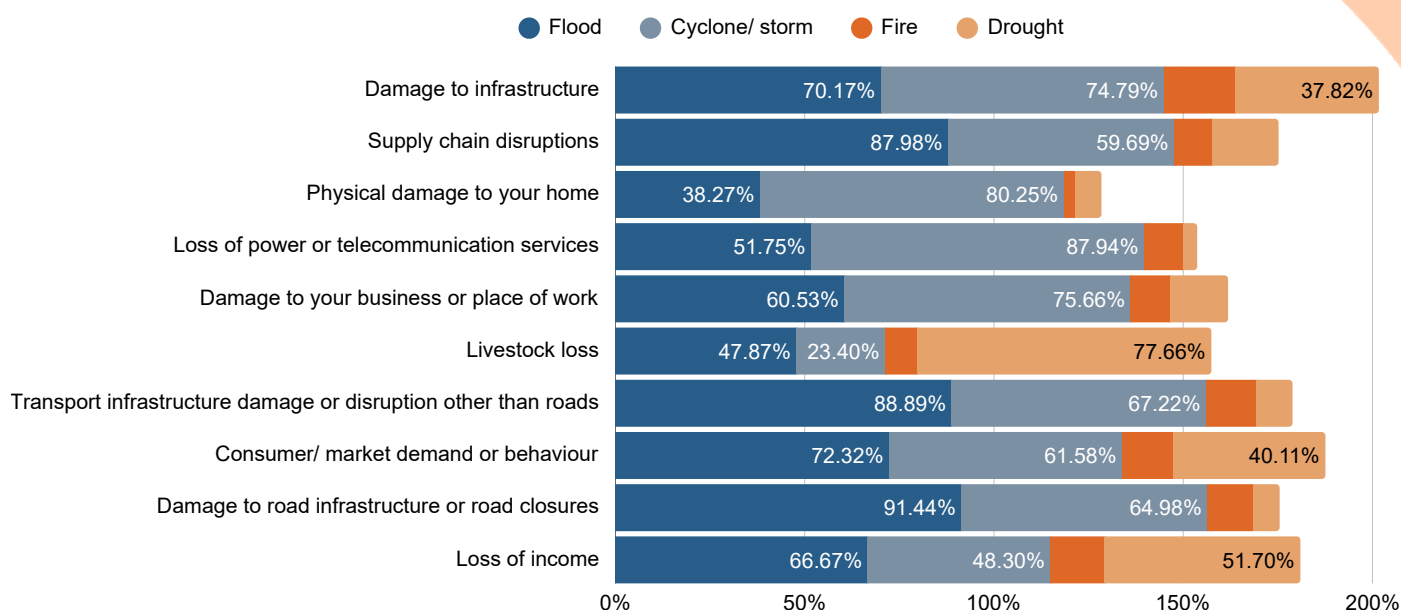
Health and mental health services remain challenging

Positive ratings remained largely unchanged (37.2% to 36.9%). Close to one-quarter of respondents still rate these services as poor or very poor (24.1%). This remains one of the weakest-performing categories.

Child care and children's support remains a concern

Although positive ratings improved from 26.1% to 30.7%, it remains the **lowest-rated** category overall and the category with the **highest negative rating** (28.3%).

Disaster impacts



Data story: Supply chain disruptions the most common disaster impact

The 2026 findings show while some direct impacts such as livestock loss, road closures and business damage have reduced slightly, extreme weather continues to have a profound effect on rural, regional and remote women through infrastructure disruption, supply chain impacts and economic insecurity.

Supply chain disruptions have become the most significant impact, increasing from 86.5% in 2025 to 89.3% in 2026. Although slightly lower than 2025, infrastructure-related impacts are widespread:

- Road closures: 92.8% in 2025 compared to 88.9% in 2026
- Power and telecommunications outages: 92.0% in 2025 compared to 88.9% in 2026
- Infrastructure damage: 84.4% in 2025 compared to 82.4% in 2026

Close to nine in ten respondents continue to experience disruption to essential infrastructure during extreme weather events.

Emerging trend: Disaster impacts are lasting longer

While close to 50% of respondents reported disaster impacts lasted on average for less than a month, more than 16% reported impacts lasting between one and three months and 13% reported impacts lasting between one and five years. Compared to 2025, more respondents reported disaster impacts lasting between one and five years (9% in 2025 and 13% in 2026) and fewer reported impacts lasting less than one year (56% in 2025 and 48% in 2026).

Emerging trend: Changing with the climate and weather

More than 55% of respondents reported they changed their household or business practices due to climate or extreme weather event impacts, for example:

"We manage drought constantly - thinking, planning, building resilience into business models and human capacity."

"We have business flexibility to adapt quickly to the prevailing season."

"Exclusion fencing, rotational and sustainable grazing, improvements to water infrastructure, land and soil improvements."

"Installed solar for power."

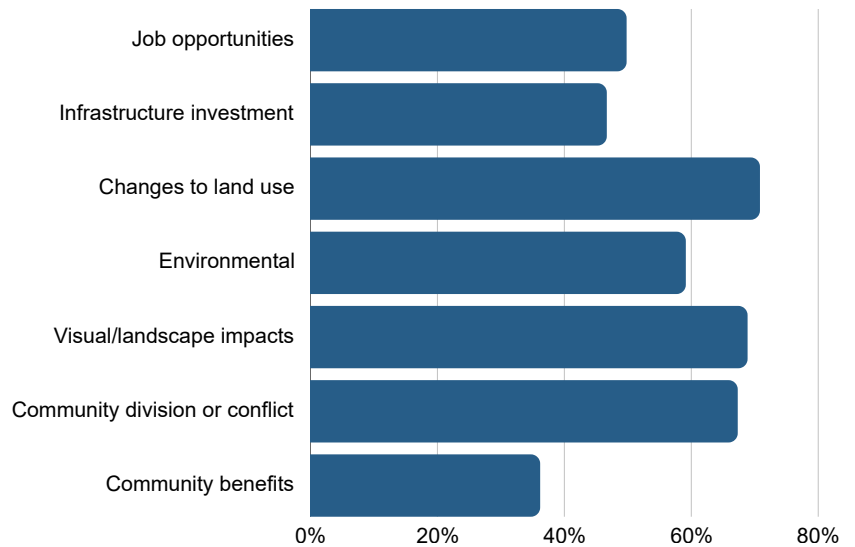
Climate and energy

77% of respondents said climate change was at least somewhat important to them personally, of which 25% say it is extremely important.

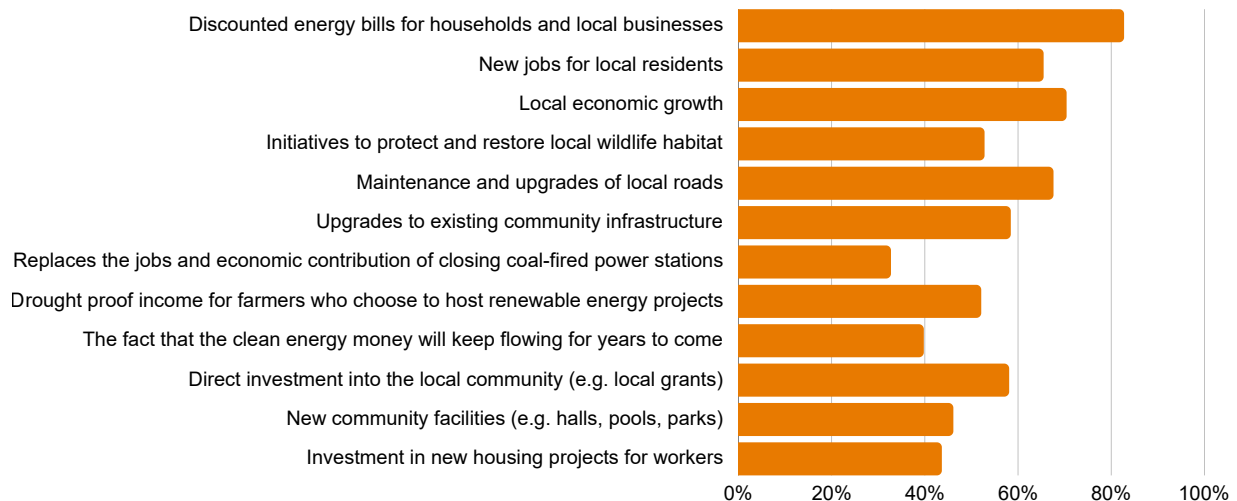
25% think climate change will harm future generations a moderate amount and 49% think a great deal.

59% support Queensland shifting to renewable energy.

Renewable energy impacts respondents have observed in their communities



Benefits respondents expect renewable energy will deliver to their community



Leadership and advocacy

Data story: Women are increasingly influencing policy and decision making

The 2026 survey demonstrated growing evidence of women in leadership, governance and advocacy roles including:

- Board positions
- Advocacy work
- Community organising
- Women's leadership networks
- Mentoring
- Research and policy engagement
- Industry representation
- Governance

Compared to 2025, there is stronger recognition among respondents of:

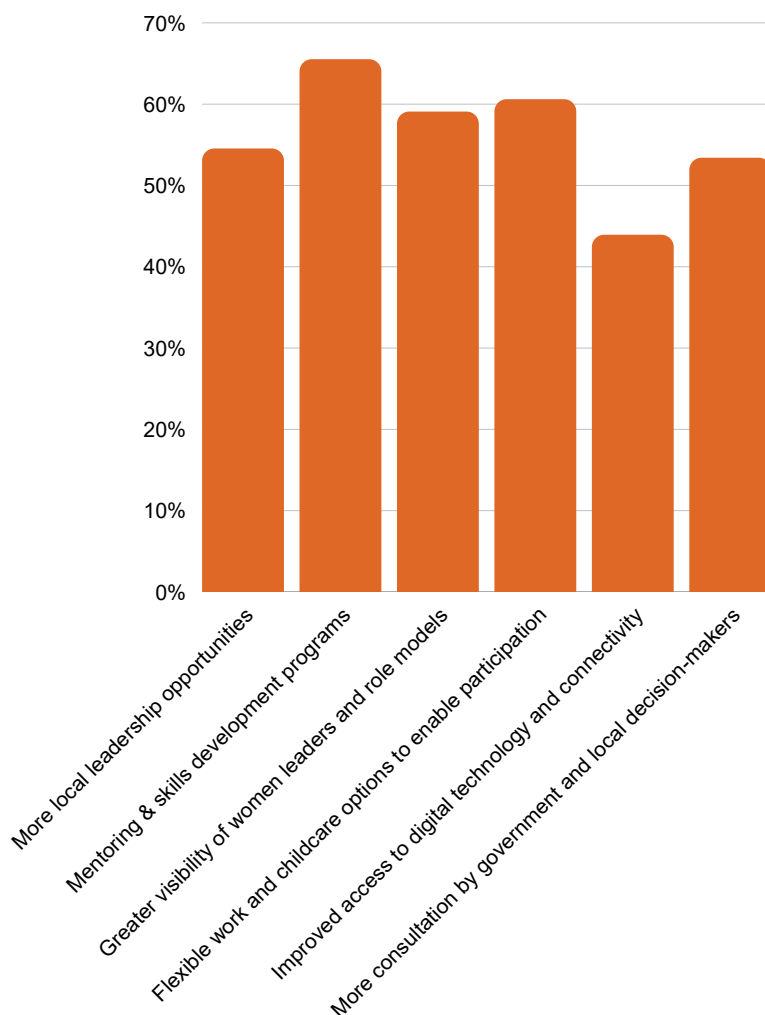
- Women's leadership influence
- Advocacy as a form of volunteering
- The importance of representation in decision-making
- The role of lived experience in shaping policy and services

Close to 65% of respondents said mentoring and skills development programs would be the most significant contributor to women in their community having a stronger voice in decision-making.

Emerging trend: Extending impact beyond traditional volunteering

Women are increasingly extending their impact beyond traditional volunteering roles and into positions where they can shape policies, governance and strategic decisions.

Growth in board participation, advocacy, community organising, research and policy engagement, and industry representation indicates a shift from service delivery and community support towards influencing the systems that affect women and communities.



Survey respondents were asked what would help women in their community have a stronger voice in decision-making

Mental health and community connection

Personal mental health concern:



57.4%

were **somewhat or very concerned**

Community mental health concern:



94.2%

were **somewhat or very concerned**

Social connectivity:



55.3%

feel highly connected to their **family** and **30.1%** to **friends**



18.7%

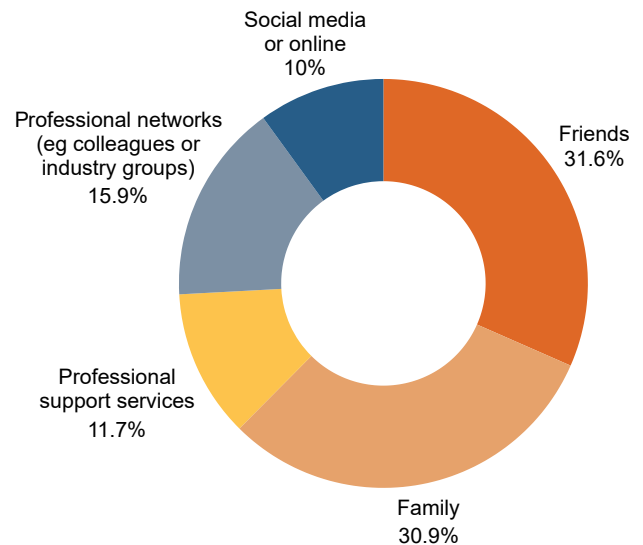
feel highly connected to a **professional network** and **15.7%** to **peers** and **14.2%** to their **community**

Data story: Value of social connectivity for support

A major theme across the 2026 survey was the importance of connection, belonging and community identity. References to social connection and purpose appeared consistently throughout qualitative responses and represented one of the strongest recurring themes in the 2026 survey. Women increasingly value social connectivity as essential to wellbeing and resilience.

Compared to 2025, fewer respondents reported feeling highly connected to their friends (36% in 2025 compared to 30% in 2026), however family and friends were consistently the highest ranked sources of connection year on year.

Sources of support



Emerging trend: Social connection is becoming more important, even as some connections are weakening

Connection, belonging and community identity emerged as some of the strongest recurring themes in the 2026 survey, highlighting the growing importance women place on social connectivity as a source of wellbeing, support and resilience.

At the same time, there are signs that maintaining strong social connections may be becoming more challenging. Compared to 2025, fewer respondents reported feeling highly connected to their friends. Despite this decline, family and friends remained the highest-ranked sources of connection, reinforcing their ongoing role as critical support networks.



Where do you see opportunities for you, your family or your community in the next decade?

Advocating for green energy. Supporting projects in the community. Holding government accountable and asking for action and leadership.

Our young family is in the early years of growth and progression following two years of succession planning. We're excited to embrace new technology and access to professional networks and we're in the early stages of diversifying to grow crops for fodder and later to sell commercially as an additional income stream.

Being a self sufficient community during extreme events

Rural living is what we love best; continuation of what we have if possible without the development which will remove our ability to produce from that land.

Australia being self sufficient.

Opportunity through education. Higher education is more accessible via online methods so having that availability hopefully provides opportunities for our children to get the education they deserve and desire but still stay in our small communities and be part of building their own ag opportunities on top or alongside their education.

Good health and education, supported by real local food. Less reliance on money, and more trading, bartering. Increased use of micro grids so not all disasters affect everyone in a city or region.

Improving community culture to better support each other's initiatives, continually building farming scale and adaptability to react appropriately to seasonal conditions and new markets (eg renewables) and personally as an advocate for remote and agricultural industries and communities, particularly the rangelands which spans state boundaries.

Building my own business - I create my own opportunities by offering services to local community that noone else is.



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