

# Western & Far West NSW Population Health Profile 2025

The Western NSW Primary Health Network (WNSW PHN) is one of 31 PHNs in Australia that work to support and strengthen primary health care and improve health outcomes for our communities

## Area Profile



Size:  
**433,379 km<sup>2</sup>**



We cover the largest area of any PHN in NSW



**27** Local Government Areas



**2** Local Health Districts (LHDs)



**320** General Practitioners (GPs)



**110** General Practices (including Aboriginal Medical Services (AMSs))

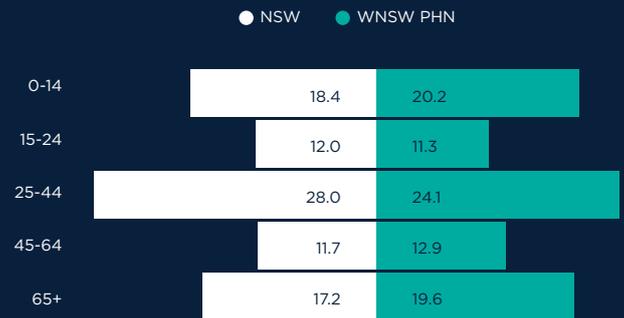
## Demographics



Over **310,000** people live in our region (ABS Census 2021)

**90.5% live in Western NSW and 9.5% live in Far West NSW**

## Proportion of Population by age group



Compared to the NSW population, **our region has a greater proportion of people under the age of 24 years and older adults 65 years or over**

From 2021 to 2041, the population is expected to increase by **6.7%** to

**333,485**



**35,244 people (11.4%) identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**

The WNSW PHN region has the third highest proportion of total population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander behind Northern Territory and Western Queensland PHNs



From 2022 to 2041, many LGAs in our region are expected to experience steady population growth, including:

- Bathurst** +0.88% per year
- Forbes** +0.90% per year
- Dubbo** +0.76% per year
- Mid-Western** +0.66% per year
- Orange** +0.53% per year

In contrast, some LGAs are projected to see a gradual population decline:

- Bourke** -0.49% per year
- Brewarrina** -0.45% per year
- Walgett** -0.30% per year

## Determinants of Health



More than three quarters of the LGAs (21 out of 27) are classified among the **50% most disadvantaged in the country**



One third of LGAs are classified as rural or remote



**Low Levels of education** attainment in the WNSW PHN region - **38 per 100 people** left school at Year 10 or below compared to 28 per 100 people in NSW



All LGAs in our region have higher proportion of **low-income households** than NSW - highest proportion reported in **Brewarrina (65.6%)** and **Central Darling (64.6%)**



**Higher rates of young people** aged 16 to 21 (**7.9%**) receive **unemployment benefits** in the **WNSW PHN region** compared to 3.8% in NSW



50% of all WNSW PHN LGAs have **higher rates of inadequate transport access** than NSW with the highest rates in Broken Hill, Central Darling and Parkes



**1/4 of all LGAs** have higher rates of people **experiencing homelessness** in the WNSW PHN region than NSW



**4% of people aged 0-64 years** are living with a **profound or severe disability** in the WNSW PHN region, including those in long-term care accommodation compared to 3.2% in NSW

## Vulnerable Population

### Aboriginal People

Burden of disease among Aboriginal people was 2.3 times that of non-Aboriginal Australians

Aboriginal people were hospitalised for potentially preventable conditions at 3 times the rate of non-Aboriginal Australians



### Health of Children & Young people

In 2023, **young people aged 16-24** had the **highest rate** of current use and **ever-having-used e-cigarettes across NSW**



**5.4%** of people over 16 **currently use e-cigarette/vapes**

**14%** of children considered **developmentally vulnerable** on two or more domains by the Australian Early Development Census Indicators in 2021 (compared to 10.5% in NSW)

### Older People's Health

**19% of the WNSW PHN population is aged 65+ years**, which is expected to increase to 24% by 2031

Dementia is the 4th leading cause of death for people living in the WNSW PHN region



**20%** **higher rate of fall related hospitalisation** in Far West NSW as compared to Western NSW between 2017/18 - 2021/22

### Maternal & Infant Health

The rate of teen pregnancies in the WNSW PHN region was **2.5 times** that of NSW in 2022

Between 2018 and 2022, the rate of stillbirths in the WNSW PHN region was **34% higher** than that for NSW

**Higher rates** of smoking among women during pregnancy in the WNSW PHN region (**2.3 times** that of NSW) between 2018 and 2022



## Burden of Disease

**13%** higher rate of people with one or more long-term health condition in the WNSW PHN region than in NSW (34.8 per 100 vs 30.8 per 100) in 2021

**20%** higher rate of potentially preventable hospitalisations in the WNSW PHN region than in NSW between 2017-18 and 2021-22

## Health Risk Factors

**72.8%**  of adults were overweight or obese in the WNSW PHN region compared to 59.4% in NSW in 2023

**17%**  of people aged 16 years and over in the WNSW PHN region were current smokers, 45% higher than that in NSW in 2023

**40.4%**  of people aged 16 years and over in 2023 had a high rate of risky alcohol consumption (two or more standard alcoholic drinks in a day), 20.6% higher than that in NSW

## Cancer



Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide. In the WNSW PHN region, cancer was the cause of

**26% of all deaths** in 2021

In 2017-21, the leading cancer types diagnosed in our region were **Prostate cancer** (16.1% of all cases), **melanoma of skin** (11.2%), **Breast cancer** (11.1%), **Lung cancer** (9.9%) and **Colon cancer** (7.4%)



In 2017-21, **lung cancer** was the leading cause of death in the WNSW PHN region (19.8% of all deaths)

The age-standardised rate (per 100,000) of **cancer deaths** in our region was statistically **significantly higher than that of NSW by 13%** between 2017 and 2021

## Chronic Disease

In 2021, nearly **35 per 100 people aged 15 years and over** reported they had one or more long term health conditions in the WNSW PHN region (vs 31 per 100 in NSW)

Between 2017/18 to 2021/22, the **rates of hospitalisation for these chronic conditions were higher in the WNSW PHN region** compared to NSW by:



**Cardiovascular disease** (by 18%)



**Diabetes** (by 54%)



**Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease** (by 65%)



**Dialysis** (by 3%)

Between 2017/18 to 2021/22, **the mortality rates for these chronic conditions were higher in the WNSW PHN region** compared to NSW by:

- Cardiovascular disease (by **27.3%**)
- Diabetes (by **46%**)
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease (by **75%**)

## Oral Health

In 2019-20 and 2020-21, the rate of oral health hospitalisations for all ages was slightly higher in the WNSW PHN region (510 per 100,000) than in NSW (490.6 per 100,000)

Between 2017-18 and 2021-22,

**11.6%**

of all **potentially preventable hospitalisations** (PPH) were for **dental conditions** in the WNSW PHN region, 50% higher than the rate in NSW



# Mental Health & Wellbeing



In 2021, **12%** of the WNSW PHN population had an **active depression** diagnosis with a GP



In 2021, **10.7%** of the WNSW PHN population had an **active anxiety** diagnosis with a GP



Higher rates of women (13.9 per 100) experienced **high or very high psychological distress** in Western NSW compared to men (11.1 per 100) in 2017-18



Between 2018-19 and 2022-23, **61%** higher rate of **mental health related ED presentation** in the WNSW PHN region than in NSW

Men in Far West NSW experienced **25% higher rates** of **high or very high psychological distress** compared to men in NSW between 2015-17 to 2019-21



Between 2017 and 2021, **the annual rates (per 100,000) of suicide** in the WNSW PHN region was **higher than that of NSW by 53%**



**17%** increase in **suicide rates** in the WNSW PHN region from 2017 to 2021



Between 2017-18 and 2021-22, **significantly lower rate of mental health related hospitalisations** in the WNSW PHN region (31% lower than NSW)

# Alcohol & Other Drugs

**16.6%** decrease in the rate of **alcohol and other drug related hospitalisations** in the WNSW PHN region from 2020-21 to 2022-23



**17% higher rate of ED presentation due to alcohol problems** in the WNSW PHN region (302.9 per 100,000) compared to NSW (258.5 per 100,000) in 2022/23

Rate of **alcohol-attributable deaths in the WNSW PHN region** in 2020-21 was 26.5 per 100,000 population,

**41%** higher than the rate in NSW



In 2023, the WNSW PHN region had the **highest rate of closed episodes** (per 100,000 population) for **illicit drugs** including buprenorphine, codeine, methadone, oxycodone, amphetamines, cannabis and morphine compared to other NSW PHNs

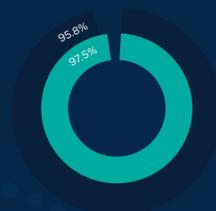


Alcohol, amphetamines and buprenorphine were the major drugs of concern among all in the WNSW PHN region

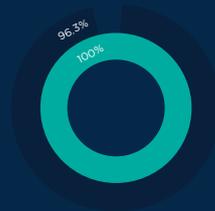
# Immunisation



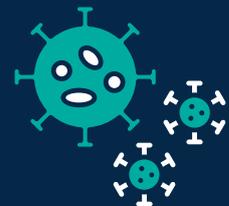
High rates of immunisation for children up to 5 years for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children



In 2023, **97.5% Aboriginal children** aged 5 years and **95.8% non-Aboriginal children** aged 5 years were fully vaccinated in Western NSW



In 2023, **100% Aboriginal children** aged 5 years and **96.3% of non-Aboriginal children** aged 5 years were fully vaccinated in Far West NSW



Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the average **annual percentage of older people vaccinated for influenza** was **73%** in the WNSW PHN region

## Service Utilisation

8.2%

of people **attended medicare-subsidised after hours GP services** in the WNSW PHN region, which was lower than the NSW rate of 16.6%



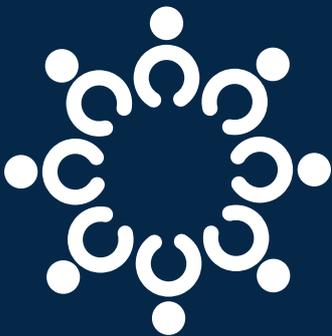
2.7%

of those **after hour attendances were urgent**

**Lower rate of medicare-subsidised allied health service utilisation** in the WNSW PHN region (36.61%) compared to the NSW rate of 39.37% in 2022-23

In 2020-21, **WNSW PHN had the highest all-hours lower urgency ED presentation of any PHN nationally** (392.3 per 1000 people; of which 245.4 per 1000 were in-hours and 146.9 per 1000 were after hours)

## Recommendations from our Health Needs Assessment



Greater focus on **Aboriginal involvement in service design and delivery**

Improvements in **culturally safe and inclusive care** for Aboriginal people



Continue to address **health workforce shortages** across the region



**Increased alcohol and other drug services** that are locally delivered

**Greater access to preventative and early intervention** services for chronic disease, including cancer

**Increased access to mental health and wellbeing services** for mild to moderate illness

**Greater support for suicide prevention**, particularly in young men



**Support people to address health risk behaviours** such as excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, including smoking during pregnancy, and improve healthy eating and exercise



**Greater access to diagnosis and intervention** for early childhood development



**Provision of local, place-based design of services**, including involvement of local services in codesign activities

## Data Sources

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework - Summary Report, August 2024 Available at: <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/report-overview/overview/summary-report>
2. Aboriginal Population data compiled by PHIDU based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing February 2021 Available at: <http://www.phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases/data>
3. Area of Land "NSW Local Government Area ASGS NonABS Structures Edition 2014", article no: 1270.0.55.003
4. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimated resident populations (ABS 2021)
5. Australian Government Department of Health (2015), Western NSW PHN Fact Sheet
6. Australian Government Department of Health (2017) Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/primary-health-networks-phns-collection-of-concordance-files>
7. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Alcohol & Other drug treatment services Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services/alcohol-other-drug-treatment-services-australia/contents/about>
8. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Medicare-subsidised GP, allied health and specialist healthcare across local areas 2022-23 Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/primary-health-care/medicare-subsidised-gp-allied-health-specialist/data>
9. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Use of emergency departments for lower urgency care Available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/primary-health-care/use-of-eds-lower-urgency-care-2017-18-to-2022-23/contents/about>
10. Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health Available at: [www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au](http://www.healthstats.nsw.gov.au)
11. Compiled by PHIDU based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2023 Available at: <https://phidu.torrens.edu.au/social-health-atlases/data>
12. NSW Cancer Institute, Available at: <https://www.cancer.nsw.gov.au/research-and-data/cancer-data-and-statistics/data-available-now/cancer-statistics-nsw/cancer-incidence-mortality-survival/detailed-cancer-incidence-mortality>
13. Population projections based on data from NSW Department of Planning and Environment
14. WNSW PHN Practice Aggregation Tool for Clinical Audit Tool (PATCAT)
15. WNSW PHN Health Needs Assessment 2024-25 to 2026-27 Available at <https://wnswphn.org.au/about-us/publications-achievements/#needsAssessment>