

5 GENDER EQUALITY







Brazil's Pathway to Closing the Gender Gap: Challenges and Opportunities

Dr Flavia Bellieni Zimmermann, The University of Melbourne, School of Social and Political Sciences

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) discussed in this contribution is SDG 5 Gender Equality and how this goal is performing in Brazil. Addressing gender inequality and its root causes in Brazil is instrumental to closing the vast social inequities in the country. Gender equality policy also contributes to other SDGs, especially SDG 1 No Poverty and SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities.

This contribution explores Brazil's overall performance when dealing with gender equality, and the centrality of targeting the country's high numbers of femicides and violence towards women.¹

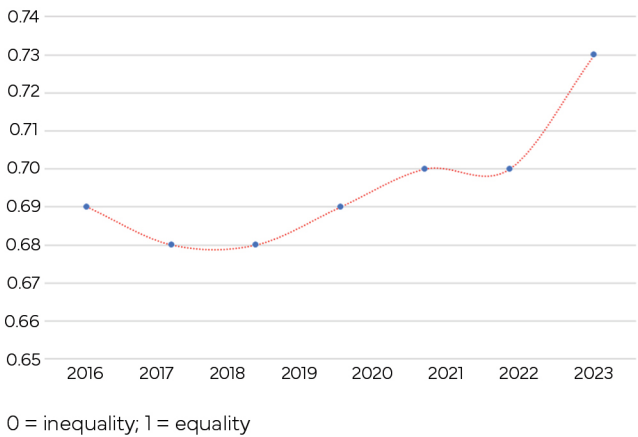
In Brazil, women experience high levels of inequality throughout society.² For example, women from lower socio-economic backgrounds and of African descent are at greater risk of experiencing violence or a violent death. Traditional views towards gender roles are central to the matrix of inequality experienced by women.

Gender Inequality in Brazil: An Overview

Brazil ranked 57th out of 146 countries in the 2023 Global Gender Gap Index, up from 94th in 2021, and "its

highest parity level since 2006."³ Despite this overall improvement in rankings, high levels of gender imbalance between men and women remain in areas such as political empowerment (0.26) and economic participation (0.67). The overall gender gap index score in Brazil for 2023 stood at 0.73 (see Figure 5.1). On average, women in Brazil have 27% fewer opportunities than men.

FIGURE 5.1 GENDER GAP INDEX, BRAZIL (2016-23) ¹

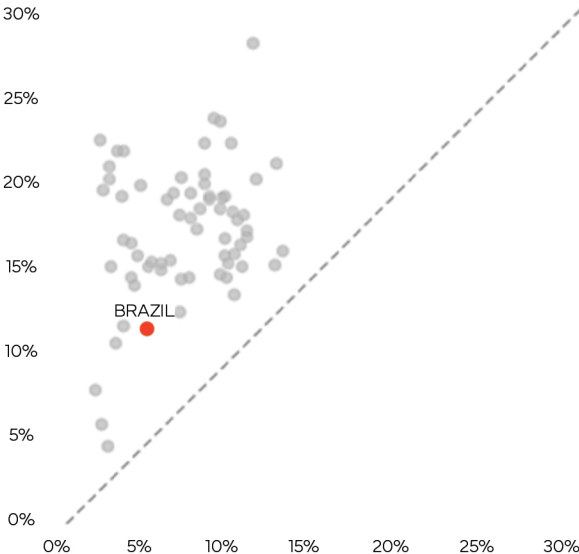


Over the years, there has been progress towards women's workforce participation in Brazil. Nonetheless, data from Brazil's Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) indicates that Brazil's gender gap continues to be significantly high. Another example being that women in Brazil remain underrepresented

in leadership and parliamentary positions.⁴ Brazilian women’s low levels of representation in these areas are a matter of concern, as political participation is a key mechanism to close Brazil’s gender gap.

One key factor that prevents women from achieving gender equality is workforce participation, and, relatedly, income parity. Recent IBGE data⁵ shows that workforce gender participation has oscillated over the last decade. In 2022, workforce participation rates for men stood at 72% compared to 53% for women. And, in terms of management roles, men and women accounted for 61% and 39% respectively of relevant roles. The under-representation of Brazilian women from all socio-economic strata in the workforce is symptomatic of deeply rooted traditional socio-cultural views on the role of women. Put crudely, they should be primary home-carers. In Brazil, the estimated daily hours women spend on unpaid domestic/care work in Brazil is “2.3 times as much as...men”. Women spend almost 12% of the day on unpaid domestic/care work relative to around 5% for men (see Figure 5.2).

FIGURE 5.2 PROPORTION OF TIME SPENT ON UNPAID DOMESTIC AND CARE WORK, BY WOMEN (% OF 24-HOURS DAY)⁶



The inequalities endured by women are compounded further by race/ethnicity and geography. In Brazil, women of African and Indigenous descent experience relatively high levels of disadvantage and discrimination.⁷ According to the World Bank, race and geography both increase Brazilian women’s likelihood of a violent death. In 2017, Brazil ranked fifth highest in

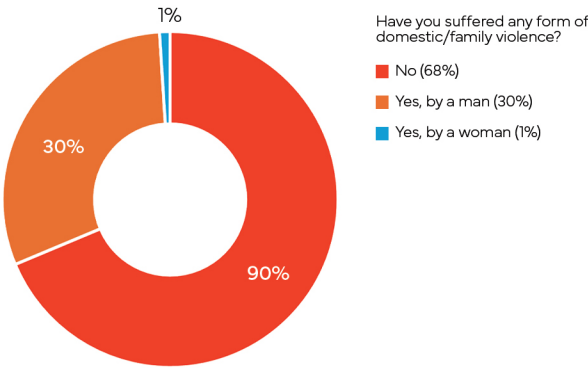
highest in Latin America for the number of femicides.

The south of Brazil had the lowest rates of femicides in the country and was the only region to record a decline in the killings of women between 2003-13.⁸

Conversely, in the North and Northeast of Brazil, total femicides increased by 70% during the same period. Women of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous descent were the primary victims. In the Northeast region, femicides among Afro-Brazilian women increased by 103% between 2013-23. In Brazil, Indigenous women are highly vulnerable to violence, accounting for 4.6 per 100,000 registered homicides, and with suicide rates of 5.8 per 100,000—more than twice the national average of 2.2 females per 100,00.⁹

Brazil’s most recent annual Report of National Security¹⁰ indicates that the levels of violence against women and femicides increased 6.1% on the previous year. It is believed that real numbers are even higher, as femicides can incorrectly be classified as homicides. Results from the National Research on Violence Against Women highlight that almost a third of women in Brazil have been the victims of domestic violence at some point in their lives (see Figure 5.3).¹¹

FIGURE 5.3 LEVELS OF DOMESTIC/FAMILIAL VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL, 2023¹²



Policy Proposals/ Recommendations

Although gender inequality has diminished in the last 20 years women in Brazil still have less opportunities have one of the highest rates of gendered violence globally. The condition of women will improve in Brazil only when traditional socio-cultural views towards women are addressed and discussed in depth by policy makers and reflected in policy action. Effective policies to tackle violence against women and the crimes of femicides are central to closing the gender gap. New strategies need a subsidiarity and intersectional framework, developed at different levels of governance—regional, state and municipal—reflecting the country's diverse needs.

What then, could Brazil do to tackle gender inequality, especially, inequality premised on inter-partner violence and domestic violence? In short, traditional views towards honour and religion negatively impact gender relations in Brazil, and as such, these factors need to be at the core of all future policy and strategies to reduce gendered violence.¹³ Relatedly, a multi-level governance approach is needed. Therefore, three policy recommendations are essential:

1 A new National Plan on addressing violence towards women. At the federal level, Brazil already has several policies and strategies designed to eliminate violence towards women. Unfortunately, these policies are out of date and in need of major reform.¹⁴

A more effective national strategy needs to apply the principle of subsidiarity, decentralising governance to the state and local levels, and setting up regular compliance mechanisms. Furthermore, given Brazil's complex regional and racial diversity, gender equality policy needs be framed through an intersectional lens.

The core elements of a new National Strategy on Gender Equality should include the following:

1. A plan with a clear gender equality matrix, integrating the Global Gender Index economic indicators, traditional socio-cultural values towards the role of women and impact assessments in the light of annual cases of femicides in the country.
2. The creation of pilot plans in the prevention of violence against women, in which state members of Brazil's federation design policy working in collaboration with state-based educational programs to raise awareness on the impact of traditional views on the role of women in Brazil.

3. Additional federal funding for research exploring how traditional views on the role of women impact female empowerment, violence towards women and gender equality outcomes.

4. The federal government needs an annual budget for research and strategy planning developed at the state and municipality (local) levels.

2 Establish state-level prevention plans to address variation in context and geography. Set out policy strategies and frameworks to access the progress of gender equality in the country. Traditional views on the role of women, for instance, demonstrate intra-cultural variation across the country, with significant regional development and racial differences. Such factors need to be considered by state governance, designing policy best suited for regional and state-specific perceptions on the family and the role of women. Given Brazil's huge social contrasts, states need to develop intersectional strategies, with more substantive funding and grants to less developed or lower socio-demographic regions.

3 Establish education programs to support transition to healthier relationships. Municipal (local) strategies should be designed using an intersectional framework, focusing on men's education programs and women's support groups and training. Early childhood, primary school, and high school policy planning on how to create healthier role models for the next generation are other targets that the local level of governance needs to consider. Local policies should include a window of two years from policy implementation to the first impact assessment. After the first four years there should be a review process to assess policy outcomes and to incorporate current research and developments.

Endnotes

- 1 World Economic Forum. (2023). *Global gender gap report 2023*. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/>
- 2 UNESCO Brasilia. (2023). *Gender Equality in Brazil*. UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/fieldoffice/brasil/expertise/gender-equality>
- 3 World Economic Forum. (2023). *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf
- 4 Feijó, J. (2023). *Diferenças de gênero no mercado de trabalho*. Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV). <https://portal.fgv.br/artigos/diferencas-genero-mercado-trabalho>
- 5 Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE). (n.d.). *Gender statistics: Social indicators of women in Brazil*. <https://www.ibge.gov.br/en/statistics/multi-domain/gender/20325-gender-statistics-social-indicators-of-women-in-brazil.html?=&t=o-que-e>
- 6 World Bank. (2022). *Brazil – Gender Data Portal*. <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/countries/brazil>
- 7 Gukovas, R., Muller, M., & Pereira, A. P. (2016). *A snapshot of gender in Brazil today: Institutions, outcomes, and a closer look at racial and geographic differences*. World Bank. <https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/25976>
- 8 In the South of Brazil over 63 percent of the population is of white European ancestry, with approximately 1 percent of African descendants. However, the racial composition in the North of the country is over 53 percent of African descents, with only over 31 percent of whites (source: IBGE, 2013).
- 9 World Economic Forum. (2023). *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*; The World Bank (2023). *Gender Landscape Brief 2021*. https://genderdata.worldbank.org/https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf
- 10 Anuario Brasileiro de Seguranca Publica 2023. Available at <https://forumseguranca.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/anuario-2023.pdf>. The original information, in Portuguese, was translated to English by the author.
- 11 Agência Senado. (2023, November 21). *DataSenado aponta que 3 a cada 10 brasileiras já sofreram violência doméstica*. <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2023/11/21/datasenado-aponta-que-3-a-cada-10-brasileiras-ja-sofreram-violencia-domestica>
- 12 Senate Institute. (2023). *National research on violence against women*.
- 13 Bellieni Zimmermann, F. (2023). *The politics of honour and gender: How honour consciousness and religion shapes Brazilian and Pakistani migrant lived experiences of gender in Australia* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Western Australia]. UWA Profiles and Research Repository. <https://doi.org/10.26182/z3j8-qx36>
- 14 The National Plan in the fight towards violence against women was introduced by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in 2007. There were impact assessments and increments during former President Dilma Rousseff's administration, the last one in 2011. Policy increments and regular impact assessments are central to any further progress in this space in Brazil. Traditional views on honour and religion have not been incorporated in policy addressing gender inequality and violence towards women in the country but are an important variable in the matrix of inequality.



Gender Diversity in Governance: A Different Take on Australia's Key to ESG Progress

Francesca Stewart, The University of Western Australia, UWA Business School

Introduction

The argument for more women on boards has been made clear. Centred on the belief that gender diversity leads to better outcomes across Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) objectives, this business case has been the key driver for corporations across Australia to open their boardroom doors to women, often for the first time.

However, the ESG argument relies on the assumption that gender diversity alone brings a broad range of perspectives leading to more sustainable and ethical decision making. This assumption not only risks creating another stereotype for women to overcome but also overlooks a critical opportunity. By relying on the business case to drive equal participation in the board room we fail to leverage governance as a crucial mechanism in securing the financial futures of women and their families, especially those from minority backgrounds, and thus directly advancing SDG 5 Gender Equality.

Commission on the Status of Women 64 - Economic Security

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women priority theme for 2024, *Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the*

empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective, set the tone for International Women's Day 2024 and directed collective action around the world towards SDG 5.

At its core, the 2024 priority theme related to economic security which is measured at national levels by key gender and financial wellbeing indicators. These indicators tell a story about how gendered experiences shape access to resources, opportunities, and stability. They reveal disparities in income, employment, caregiving responsibilities, and safety, highlighting the systemic barriers that women and marginalised groups face in achieving economic security. Such insights are essential for designing policies that promote equity, resilience, and inclusive growth.

As recently as 2018 in Australia, The Treasury predicted that, a girl born to a working single mother would grow up to experience poor educational outcomes, erratic work and unstable housing, likely retiring with inadequate superannuation and/or ending up in social housing on the aged pension. To think that we cannot imagine better for our girls is alarming.¹

What is even more alarming is the compounding effects of intersectionality. We know that First Nations people, ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse people, those identifying as LGBTQIA+, and people living with disability face more severe structural economic disadvantage on average. When entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage and intersecting identities are taken into consideration, the opportunities and prospects of girls and women over the life course are severely limited.

As a result of SDG 5 and its underlying targets, much discussion has developed around improving women's economic security in Australia, particularly in relation to increasing participation in paid work, boosting superannuation, enhancing access to housing finance and imaginative solutions to the HECS debt problem. However, women cannot truly realise economic security unless their base income is at an adequate level. Doing more with less is not the answer.

The Path of Resistance

Women face numerous headwinds as they seek to develop and advance their careers. Gender stereotypes combined with individual and institutional biases against women are still common in the workplace. Terms such as 'the broken rung', 'the glass ceiling', and 'the double bind' neatly encapsulate the systemic issues undermining women's career advancement. These issues are all the more deep-rooted for women from marginalised backgrounds.

The Chief Executive Women's Senior Executive Census found that women account for less than 8% of ASX300 CEOs in Australia.² At the current rate of change, it will take over half a century before gender balance in CEO positions is achieved in the Australian private sector.

As of 2025, women accounted for 37% of corporate board members. The vast majority (91%) of female directors are from Anglo-Celtic backgrounds. Although women directors make up just 19% of the total, they occupy 45% of the board seats held by women.³ Put simply, there is a lack of cultural diversity

and an over-concentration of opportunity, wealth and power amongst a selective and broadly similar group of women on corporate boards.

The stark under-representation of diverse women in boardrooms merely serves to perpetuate the status quo and path dependency in the corporate sector.

The women that have made it on to corporate boards is to be commended. However, the prospects of this being replicated by women from minority backgrounds is fraught with structural challenges. Women on ASX boards tend to be more educated than men. The 2025 Watermark Board Diversity Index, for example, found women directors have higher completion rates of undergraduate degrees, master's and PhDs than their male counterparts. Put another way, it would seem that women need to be more exceptional than men in order to get onto boards in the first place. Furthermore, they also need to be the 'right fit'.



Coupled with this, the Chief Executive Women 2024 Census found that of the 25 current women CEOs in the ASX300, 84% of them had P&L experience. However, 8 in 10 pipeline roles are still held by men. These statistics suggest that in order for women to get a seat at the table a very specific formula must be followed, notwithstanding the bias and systemic challenges they may face along the way.

This matters because leadership that does not mirror the rich tapestry of our broader society risks inadvertently perpetuating exclusion and discrimination, both internally and externally, further entrenching social disparities and overlooking the needs and perspectives of marginalised populations.

The overly homogenous nature of boardrooms reinforces the stereotypical notion that leadership qualities reside predominantly within a narrow demographic.

In other words, women from socially and culturally diverse backgrounds are deemed to lack the essential attributes to ascend to board-level positions. Although this perception may not be spoken aloud it is acutely sensed and undermines the self-esteem and aspirations of women as they do not see themselves reflected in the corridors of power.

A Different Economic Argument

Despite the progress that has been made in relation to women represented on boards, this has not been done with sufficient care or diligence. Creating space for women is a good first step but to have done so under the guise of ESG without much focus on diversity and lived experience has prevented true progress.

There is a need to move beyond positioning gender equal boards as simply a corporate ESG benefit. Rather, serious consideration needs to be given to the ethics and opportunity costs of not having diverse women on boards.

Under-investing in minority persons progressive career pathways not only denies representation

at the board table, but has major impacts on their short- and long-term economic outcomes. Furthermore, it reinforces perceptions of where power belongs, who makes decisions, and, who participates in building the future.

The economic argument can be summarised in a simple premise. Based on the average salary in WA, employee earnings over 40 years amount to approximately \$4.5m. We know that in single parent households, incomes tend to be less stable and the majority of earnings are swallowed up by cost of living expenses. Furthermore, these groups are much less likely to occupy higher paid roles. Consequently, home ownership levels and superannuations balances tend to be much lower.

By contrast, director lifetime earnings, combining the employee phase, executive phase, and board member phase, total approximately \$7.8m, not accounting for additional financial opportunities made available through networks, experience or access to investments. The lifetime earnings difference between directors and employees is about \$3.3m.

SDGs and Heterogeneity - Not Another Glass Cliff

The primary argument for women on boards has been to improve ESG outcomes. Interestingly, due to a relatively small number of women on boards, plus a lack of systemic empirical data on the impacts of women on boards, this ESG claim is somewhat questionable. Ultimately, there is risk of creating another stereotype - the failed superwoman.

Appointing women onto boards in the faint belief that this will be enough to turn around a corporation's decision-making, risk appetite and value set in relation to ESG is unfair and unwarranted. There is a danger in assuming gender is some kind of panacea for ESG progress.

When women appointed to boards come predominantly from the same backgrounds and circumstances this raises serious questions about the diversity of thought around the board table, the ability

to understand and advocate for marginalised groups and the implications this has for ESG outcomes.

Policy Proposals/ Recommendations

In order for change to begin, a two-fold solution is necessary.

First, organisations should take meaningful steps to identify talented diverse women to fill executive roles and ultimately the CEO role. This will take some rethinking about traditional views of leadership potential, assured pathways and a challenging of corporate leadership identity.

Secondly, boards need to rethink traditional governance pathways and play a part in reshaping what directors look like, and as such, address their policies and processes in order to support diverse applicants.

However, organisations and their boards should not be singly charged or relied upon to change the trajectory for diverse women. Far beyond being a corporate issue this is a governance issue, a policy issue, and a societal issue. Government can support the progression of marginalised women onto corporate boards and advocate for their complete acceptance as full, equal, and remunerated participants.

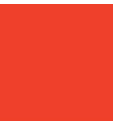
- 1 Funding research** for working class origin, LGBTQIA, culturally diverse and disabled women in leadership.
- 2 Funding governance credentials** for minority women.
- 3 Providing grants** for governance leadership programs for diverse women.
- 4 Incentivising corporate boards** to participate in mentoring and traineeships.
- 5 Requiring mandatory reporting over and above gender pay gaps** reporting in relation to diverse women's executive leadership and career progression, as well as diversity hiring processes at executive and board levels.

Endnotes

1 Economic Security for Women (Economic S4W). (2018). *Defining the concept of economic security for all women: Policy recommendations to boost women's economic security.* Economic S4W.

2 Chief Executive Women's (CEW). (2024). *Senior Executive Census 2024: Keeping score of a losing game.* CEW

3 Watermark Search International. (2025). *Board Diversity Index 2025.* Watermark Search International 2025.





Environmental Heat Exposure and Pregnancy Outcomes in the Face of Climate Change

Associate Professor Caitlin Wyrwoll, The University of Western Australia, UWA School of Human Sciences and Telethon Kids Institute

Dr Aster Gebremedhin, The University of Western Australia, UWA School of Human Sciences

Dr Aunty Mara West, Telethon Kids Institute

Dr Erin Kelty, The University of Western Australia, UWA School of Population and Global Health

Framing the issue: climate crisis

Climate change is recognised as the biggest global health threat of the 21st century, and efforts to combat it present an unparalleled opportunity for global health development. A broad set of factors such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, education, and indigeneity determine vulnerability to climate change. One of the foremost issues concerning climate change is its potential to exacerbate existing social and health inequities; women, girls, and gender-diverse people are disproportionately affected by the consequences.

While integrating gender considerations into climate action is crucial, it is noteworthy that no Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have health indicators that specifically address the issue of environmental change on sex and gender-related health outcomes. Instead, this issue is at the intersection of targets related to maternal and reproductive health (SDG 3), gender equality (SDG 5), poverty (SDG 1), and climate change action (SDG 13).

The consequence of climate change increasing heatwave severity imposes significant human health implications. The Australian Climate Service's National

Climate Risk Assessment underscores the escalating health risks driven by increasing heatwave events. The effects of heat exposure take the largest toll on vulnerable groups including pregnant people. Pregnancy is a time in the life-course that is especially susceptible to environmental exposures, particularly heat exposure. Such exposures not only put maternal health and fetal development at risk but also likely impact long term health outcomes.

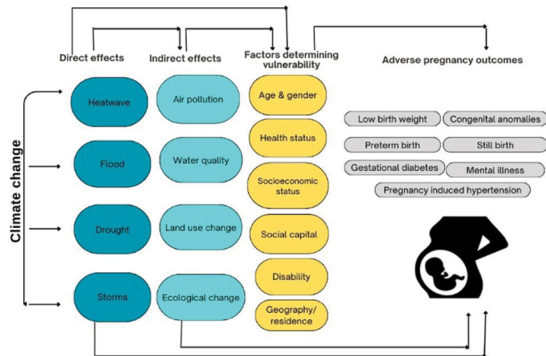
This contribution presents the impacts of heat extremes on pregnancy outcomes, highlighting evidence gaps, and proposing policy and practice considerations.

Extreme heat exposure and pregnancy outcomes: Unveiling Evidence Gaps

Heatwave frequency, duration, and intensity is increasing globally. Associations of health data with climatic conditions, including in Australia, reveal that heat exposure adversely impacts pregnancy outcomes. These include but are not limited to, increased risk of congenital anomalies, preterm birth, stillbirth, low birth weight, miscarriage, gestational

diabetes, pregnancy-related hypertension, perinatal mental health conditions, and maternal mortality. These risks are further pronounced in certain populations including low socioeconomic groups, people with chronic conditions, and Indigenous and rural communities (Figure 5.4).

FIGURE 5.4 THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON PREGNANCY OUTCOMES¹



While these health associations are becoming increasingly well established, the key physiological mechanisms that underpin these associations are poorly understood. In addition, the epidemiology behind many adverse pregnancy outcomes is diverse in methodological approaches. Thus, there remains considerable uncertainty regarding how the pregnant body responds to heat, what heat exposure conditions are of concern, and how heat affects pregnant biology such as changes in placental blood flow, pathways in labour onset, inflammation, and infection.

Collectively, these observations indicate both a gap in biological understanding and a lack of engagement with people who are living with extreme heat. Indeed, embedded policy and health interventions to prevent pregnancy complications during extreme heat are challenging to put into practice. While ultimately biological pathways that are altered lead to the pregnancy complications, the overlay of socio-economic and cultural characteristics have a profound impact.

Divergence between policy and community requirements

Heat-related health complications are avoidable and the current health advice and embedded policy around heatwaves are logical. These include: staying indoors; using air-conditioning or a fan; wearing light



coloured clothing and; drinking more water. However, not all people or communities have equitable access to the cooling strategies.

Energy insecurity and high costs are pressing issues across Australia; one in five Australians are underserved, with remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities more likely to be affected.² Indeed, in remote Northern Territory communities, households with high energy use had a one in three chance of electricity disconnection during very hot or cold days.³ Further, low-wealth households are disproportionately impacted by heatwaves due to their inability to access energy efficient homes.

Additionally, while many would assume that Australia meets SDG 6 Clean Water for All. This is not the case, with over 600,000 Australians accessing drinking water that does not comply with health-based or aesthetic guideline values for good quality drinking water. Alarming, 40% of locations with health-based non-compliances are remote Indigenous communities.⁴ This highlights the urgent need for stakeholders to come together to ensure policy and health recommendations align with community requirements.

The Australian Context

Australia is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Extreme events such as heatwaves are projected to become more widespread and more intense nationally. The continent consists of strikingly diverse climate zones which are changing rapidly. Further, Australia has a diverse population, with 3.8% of Australians being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, and 29% were born overseas—proportionately the highest migrant population in the OECD.⁵ This context highlights the complex considerations for mitigating the effects of extreme heat on pregnancy complications in Australia.

Policy Proposals/ Recommendations

With the changing climate, it is imperative to deepen our understanding, identify and respond to the damaging effects of heat exposure, and develop and implement effective, evidence informed, and inclusive adaptation policies.

1 Narrowing the evidence gap by addressing the biological unknowns of how extreme heat is contributing to pregnancy complications and understanding the physiological processes involved aid in directing future research—for prevention and targeted interventions, clinical management and the formulation of policy decisions.

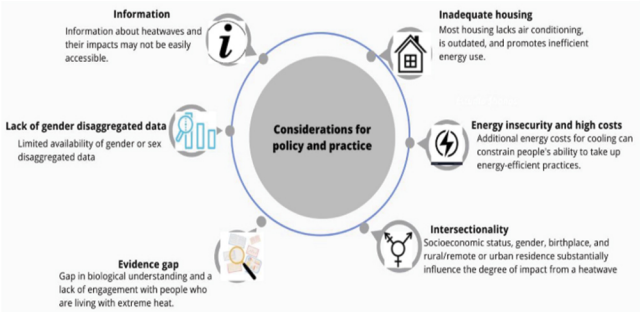
The Wellcome Trust has funded a group of researchers worldwide (including Extreme Heat and Pregnancy Complications (EHPC) a project led by UWA's Assoc. Prof. Caitlin Wyrwoll) to establish the biological vulnerability to extreme heat in pregnancy. For this knowledge to be useful for informing preparedness, response, and secondary prevention for pregnancy health complications in extreme heat, it is critical to be working directly with priority populations to co-design the required health interventions and communications.

2 Ensuring policies align with community requirements. Policies designed to address climate change should be closely aligned with the needs, priorities, and values of the community they impact. In addition, there are growing calls for transformative adaptation to the impacts of climate change. Community-led initiatives are vital for understanding the specific needs and risks of vulnerable communities and innovating more equitable solutions.

An example of how this can be achieved is through the Communities of Practice (CoP) embedded within the Healthy Environments and Lives (HEAL) Network, Australia's first nationally funded research network at the nexus of climate-health.⁷ Within the CoPs embedded in each state, research, policy, and service provision is co-designed by bringing together people with diverse lived experiences, community organisations, policymakers, service providers, academic researchers, and other stakeholders. This ensures that those most affected by climate change lead change and improve the health and wellbeing of their communities. In Western Australia (WA), the HEAL WA Aboriginal steering group, chaired by Dr Aunty Mara West, provides cultural advice, leadership, governance, and recommendations to the HEAL Network and projects such as EHPC.

3 There is an urgent need for disaggregated data, Given the limited availability of gender-related environmental statistics. International organisations such as the United Nations (UN) Women and UNICEF report that there is a near total absence of gender disaggregated data related to the environment or environmental policymaking.⁷ Such data is a crucial foundation for evidence-informed policymaking and the achievement of gender-transformative climate goals. While the work outlined here focuses on female-specific context of the impact of climate change on health in pregnancy, it provides a template for consideration of other points in the life course and broader gender-related health issues. A critical example is the impact of extreme climatic events and increased rates of domestic violence. In Australia, data on this issue remain scarce. Given that violence against women and girls has been declared a national emergency by the Australian Government, addressing this knowledge gap is urgent. Integrating gender-sensitive strategies into disaster response planning is essential to ensure that the needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls are adequately considered during extreme events.

FIGURE 5.5 CONSIDERATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE



Conclusion

Climate change is increasing the risk of extreme heat, which is having critical public health implications for pregnancy care. Unlike previous strategies, addressing climate change induced health crisis will require a data driven research approach, undertaken by a transdisciplinary team and codesigned with communities to incorporate local knowledge and perspectives. In addition, policies that consider an inequality lens and gender disparities to the links between climate change and health should be in place.

Endnotes

1 Watts, N., Adger, W. N., Agnolucci, P., Blackstock, J., Byass, P., Cai, W., Chaytor, S., Colbourn, T., Collins, M., Cooper, A., et al. (2015). Health and climate change: Policy responses to protect public health. *The Lancet*, 386(10006), 1861–1914.

2 White, L. V., Riley, B., Wilson, S., Markham, F., O'Neill, L., Klerck, M., & Davis, V. N. (2024). Geographies of regulatory disparity underlying Australia's energy transition. *Nature Energy*, 9(1), 92–105

3 Longden, T., Quilty, S., Riley, B., White, L. V., Klerck, M., Davis, V. N., & Frank Jupurrurla, N. (2022). Energy insecurity during temperature extremes in remote Australia. *Nature Energy*, 7(1), 43–54

4 Wyrwoll, P. R., Manero, A., Taylor, K. S., Rose, E., & Quentin Grafton, R. (2022). Measuring the gaps in drinking water quality and policy across regional and remote Australia. *npj Clean Water*, 5(1), Article 32

5 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022, April 22). Australia's population by country of birth. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/australiaspopulation-country-birth>

6 Vardoulakis, S., Matthews, V., Ford, L. P., Oyarce, D. E., Farrant, B., Johnston, F., Cass, A., Bentley, R., Williams, C., & Chu, C. (2022). Healthy Environments and Lives (HEAL): Australian research network in human health and environmental change. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 6, S15.

7 UN Women, & UNICEF. (2019). Gender and age inequality of disaster risk. https://wrds.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/72229_bsl19312unwdisasterriskreport003web%283%29.pdf