

# Australian women's concerns about their brain health

We live in a busy, distracting world with many competing demands on our time and attention. Along with everyday stressors, those competing demands can overload the brain, making it harder to concentrate, persevere and remember things.<sup>1</sup>

To understand the challenges with attention and memory that Australian women experience in everyday life, the 2025 National Women's Health Survey asked them about experiences in the past year that may have made them concerned about their brain health.<sup>2</sup>



Younger women were more likely than older women to report **being concerned about their attention and short-term memory.**

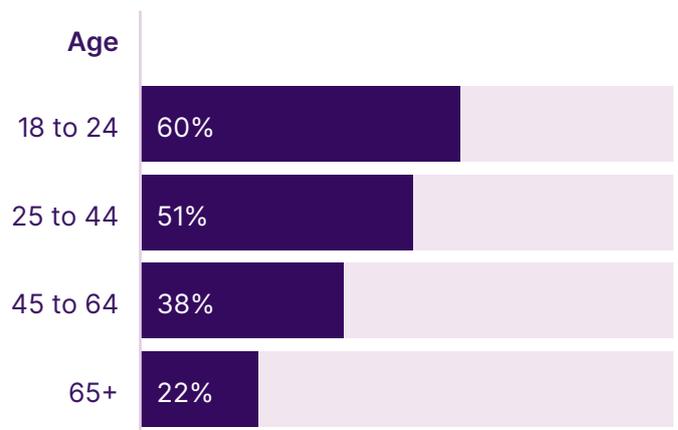
## Attention difficulties

To assess women's experiences with attention difficulties, we asked if any of the following situations in the past year had made them concerned about their brain health:

- Getting easily distracted
- Frequently finding it hard to concentrate
- Frequently tuning out instead of focusing
- Having difficulty organising tasks that have many steps

On average, 4 in 10 (41%) Australian women said that these attention difficulties had made them worry about their brain health. However, younger women were much more likely than older women to report being concerned about their attention. For example, 6 in 10 (60%) women aged 18 to 24 reported concerns about their attention, compared with 2 in 10 women (22%) aged 65 and over.

Figure 1. Percentage of women reporting concerns about their attention



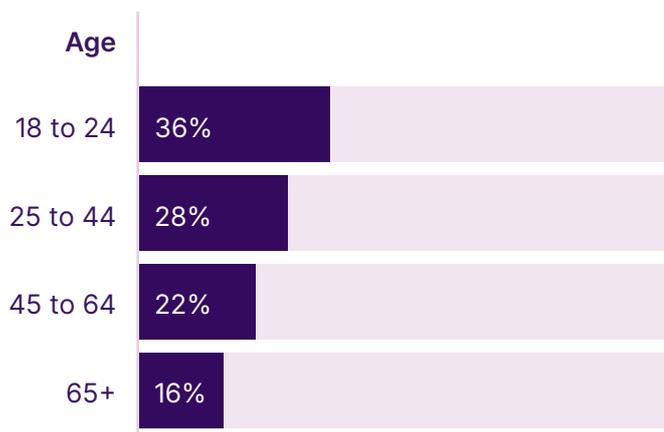
## Memory difficulties

To assess women's experiences with memory difficulties, we asked if any of the following situations in the past year had made them concerned about their brain health:

- Frequently misplacing their wallet, keys or glasses
- Frequently forgetting to do everyday tasks like errands, returning calls, or paying bills
- Friends or family members telling them that they're often forgetting things

On average, around 2 in 10 (24%) Australian women said that these memory difficulties had made them worry about their brain health. Younger women were more likely than older women to report being concerned about their memory, although the age difference was smaller than that for attention concerns. For example, around 4 in 10 (36%) women aged 18 to 24 reported concerns about their memory, compared with around 2 in 10 women (16%) aged 65 and over.

**Figure 2. Percentage of women reporting concerns about their memory**



### So what?

- Health promotion programs are increasingly recognising brain health as an important part of people's overall health and wellbeing.
- Sex and gender differences have important influences on brain health, making women a key target audience for tailored brain health promotion programs.<sup>3,4</sup>
- Findings from the 2025 National Women's Health Survey show that many Australian women, especially those in younger age groups, are concerned about their brain health, including their attention span and short-term memory.
- These findings highlight the importance of promoting brain health across the life course, with policies and programs tailored to different stages of life. They also point to the need for practical, age-appropriate strategies to support women to optimise their attention and memory at any age.

## References

- 1 Lavie N. Attention, Distraction, and Cognitive Control Under Load. *Curr Dir Psychol Sci.* 2010;19(3):143-148. doi:10.1177/0963721410370295
- 2 Elliott ML, Caspi A, Houts RM, et al. Disparities in the pace of biological aging among midlife adults of the same chronological age have implications for future frailty risk and policy. *Nat Aging.* 2021;1(3):295-308. doi:10.1038/s43587-021-00044-4
- 3 Smith E, Kawaguchi N, Chapman SB et al. Closing the brain health gap: Addressing women's inequalities. *Oxford University Press.* 2021. <https://blog.oup.com/2021/08/closing-the-brain-health-gap-addressing-womens-inequalities/>
- 4 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Dementia in Australia. 2025. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/dementia/dementia-in-aus/contents/about>

## About this short report

The Jean Hailes National Women's Health Survey (NWHs) is an annual survey designed to help us better understand the issues that affect women in Australia, their attitudes and behaviours, and the health information and policy changes that will help improve their health and wellbeing.

The 2025 NWHs explored Australian women's concerns about their brain health, including their experience of attention and memory difficulties.

It was conducted online in mid-2025 with a national sample, but only in English. A total of 3,629 women aged 18 and over residing in Australia participated in the survey.

The 2025 NWHs was conducted with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

For more information about the NWHs, see the technical report on our [website](#).