



Gender & Disaster Australia

# Gympie

DISASTER CONTEXT

Socio-demographics from  
a gendered perspective





# Gympie



The Local Government Area (LGA) of Gympie.  
From <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA33620>





## INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Area (LGA) of Gympie is located in southeast Queensland. The region includes several towns and rural communities, including the city of Gympie in its centre, the towns of Kilkivan and Goomeri to the west, and the rural communities of the Mary Valley to the south.<sup>1</sup> The region contains most of the Mary River watershed.<sup>2</sup> To the east, there is the Cooloola Coast.

The traditional owners of the lands are the Kabi Kabi / Gubbi Gubbi people (whose ownership extends over the majority of country within the Gympie LGA), the Wakka Wakka in the west, and the Butchulla people in the northeast.<sup>3</sup> Several mountain ranges (including the Burnett, Coast and Jimna Ranges) form the main parts of the western and southwestern borders of the region. The Mary River and other rivers and creeks flow from these areas.<sup>4</sup>

The region extends over 6,898 square km.<sup>5</sup> The population of the area is 53,242<sup>6</sup> with predicted growth of up to 60,600 people by 2036.<sup>7</sup> The region has a strong agricultural economy, with the main industries including beef, dairy, livestock and horticulture. In June 2021, there were 4,422 GST registered businesses in the region, 26.2% of which were in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing industry (compared to 8.8% in Queensland).<sup>8</sup> The largest employer in the region is health care and social assistance, generating 3,119 local jobs in 2021-2022.<sup>9</sup> There are seven aged care facilities and four retirement and mature age living villages.<sup>10</sup> Tourism and hospitality sales grossed \$102 million in 2019-2020.<sup>11</sup>

The city of Gympie is located in the centre of the region, 145 km north of Brisbane and approximately 45 km from the coast. It is situated on the Bruce Highway and on the main northern rail line to Brisbane. The city was previously known as "Nashville" (after James Nash who found gold there in 1867), and its current name Gympie comes from *gimpi-gimpi*, the Aboriginal word for the stinging tree.<sup>12</sup> The city is located on the Gympie Creek and on the Murray River. The Borumba Dam - built in the 1960s to mitigate floods and trap water for irrigating the area - is located 48 km south-west of the city of Gympie.<sup>13</sup>

The disasters that affect the region include:<sup>14</sup> severe storms and tropical cyclones, flooding, severe weather events, coastal inundation, tsunami (rare), heatwaves, bushfires, landslides and sinkholes.<sup>15</sup> The most recent disaster is the 2022 floods, which took place over January, February and May of that year. In January 2022, the region recorded extreme rainfall (400mm in the hills to the north-west of Gympie, 600-700mm in some areas of Goomeri, Kilkivan, Woolooga, Boobyjan and Tansey), causing flash flooding and severe impacts to roads and rural areas, and the Mary River to peak at 13.7 metres. From 23 February to 2 March, the rainfall caused the Mary River to peak at 22.96 metres (its highest peak since the 1893 floods) and widespread flooding throughout the entire catchment. Transport corridors were inundated, and Gympie city was cut in half, isolating the north, south, east and west parts of the city. The last rainfall and flooding event, from 6 to 20 May 2022, caused the Mary River to peak just above 16 metres, cut off the Bruce Highway and flooding at Dagun, Gympie and Miva.<sup>16</sup>

1 <https://www.visitsunshinecoast.com/place/gympie>

2 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/3888/local-disaster-management-plan>, P34

3 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/residents/your-community/reconciliation>

4 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/3888/local-disaster-management-plan>, P34

5 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/gympie-region>

6 <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA33620>

7 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/gympie-region>

8 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/3888/local-disaster-management-plan>, P40

9 <https://economy.id.com.au/gympie/employment-by-industry>

10 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/3888/local-disaster-management-plan>, P37

11 Ibid. P40

12 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Gympie>

13 Ibid.

14 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/3888/local-disaster-management-plan>, P44-49

15 A sinkhole is "a cavity in the ground caused by water erosion and providing a route for surface water to disappear underground." <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/3888/local-disaster-management-plan>, P49

16 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4365/gympie-region-flood-recovery-plan-2022-2024>



Several studies have been conducted on flooding in the Gympie region. One case study (Singh-Peterson and Underhill, 2017) was conducted in the Gympie region to develop a framework to monitor communities' levels of resilience (understood as the community's ability to understand and cope with disaster risks and impacts, and to self-organise) across multiple scales: household, community, and LGA. The authors explain that flooding occurs almost every year in the wider Gympie region, particularly along the Mary Valley. At the time the article was written, the region had higher rates of unemployment and greater disadvantages than other rural areas of Queensland and the state. During the study, many participants discussed communication methods and recounted stories of miscommunication during disasters. Some observed that in the past, rural communities were used to not having news for days during a disaster, and that they were less reliant on being told what to do. Participants from Imbil (in the southern part of the Gympie LGA) talked about the culture of flooding and how they had accepted it as part of their life. Evacuation routes were the main concern for people in the city of Gympie, but were less important for people in rural areas, who were more interested in getting information about the safety of evacuation centres.

Several factors were found to influence resilience levels in the region, including:

- Levels of support for local leaders and assistance towards vulnerable people
- Educational institutions promoting preparedness
- The level of vulnerability regarding dependence on large employers, industries or natural resources
- Encouraging buying local produce to reduce dependence on outside markets
- Knowing when to act

- Fostering social cohesion and networks of support
- For the LGA: connecting with neighbouring regions and authorities, sharing resources and coordinating responses and plans
- Consistent reflection on prior disasters.<sup>17</sup>

Scott et al. (2013) reflect on planning and flood risk management. The authors explain that community perception of the risks and impacts of the floods is important. They use the city of Gympie as a case study: although its centre is frequently flooded, the community, instead of moving the city centre, has chosen to live with the risk.<sup>18</sup>

In a talk (Williams, 1993), the Head of the Division of Community Services Development, from the Queensland Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs explained that women play a crucial role in disaster recovery, even while they are subject to more stress and vulnerable to male violence. Firstly, the author explains that women sustain community relationships before, during and after disasters. For example, during the 1992 Gympie floods, the 10 positions for recovery assistance work were filled by women. Women often occupy key roles within informal networks during disasters, predominantly organise recovery structures, shoulder family responsibility and the needs of distressed children, and are usually the ones who present for emergency payments. All these roles create additional stress, and the author suggests that efforts should be made during the recovery effort to minimise this stress, such as through providing emergency child care. Disasters will impact women in particular and varied ways (contraceptive needs, pregnant women, nursing mothers, disabled women, older women, etc.). Women's health and security is directly affected by the impact of the disaster, and women are also particularly vulnerable to male violence. Floods and cyclones create a particular emergency situation of domestic violence, mostly impacting women.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Singh-Peterson, L., & Underhill, S. J. (2017). A multi-scalar, mixed methods framework for assessing rural communities' capacity for resilience, adaptation, and transformation. *Community Development*, 48(1), 124-140.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, M., White, I., Kuhlicke, C., Steinführer, A., Sultana, P., Thompson, P., ... & Russell, E. (2013). Living with flood risk/The more we know, the more we know we don't know: Reflections on a decade of planning, flood risk management and false precision/Searching for resilience or building social capacities for flood risks?/Participatory floodplain management: Lessons from Bangladesh/Planning and retrofitting for floods: Insights from Australia/Neighbourhood design considerations in flood risk management/Flood risk management-Challenges to the effective implementation of a paradigm shift. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 14(1), 103-140.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, J. (1993). Responding to women in emergencies and disasters: the role of community services development. *The Macedon Digest*, 8(4), 32-36.



### DISASTER BACKGROUND

Kind of disasters affecting this region/city: severe storms and tropical cyclones, flooding, severe weather events, coastal inundation, tsunami (rare), heatwaves, bushfires, landslides and sinkholes<sup>20</sup>

Past disasters include:<sup>21</sup>

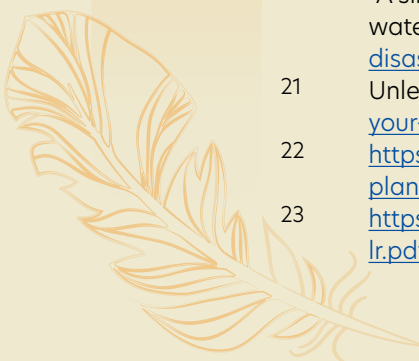
EVENT NAME	HAZARD TYPE(S)
January/February/May 2022 Extreme rainfall and floods/ Ex-Tropical Cyclone Seth22	Floods
2019-2020 Eastern Queensland bushfires <sup>23</sup>	Bushfires
January 2013 - Cyclone Oswald and floods	Cyclone, floods
February 2012 - floods	Floods
January 2011 - Gympie floods	Floods
2010-2011 Queensland floods	Floods
March 2010 floods	Floods
August 2009 severe thunderstorm	Severe storm
May 2009 East Coast Low	Severe storm
April 2009 flash flooding, heavy rain	Severe storm, floods
March 2009 East Coast Low	Floods
February 2009 East Coast Low	Severe storm
June 2008 East Coast Low	Severe storm
April 2008 Severe Thunderstorm	Severe storm
August 2007 Floods	Floods

<sup>20</sup> "A sinkhole is a cavity in the ground caused by water erosion and providing a route for surface water to disappear underground." <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/3888/local-disaster-management-plan>, P49

<sup>21</sup> Unless specified, all the information comes from this source: <http://hardenup.org/be-aware/your-area/gympie>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4365/gympie-region-flood-recovery-plan-2022-2024> P7

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.qra.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/2019\\_qld\\_bushfires\\_recplan\\_2019-201r.pdf](https://www.qra.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/2019_qld_bushfires_recplan_2019-201r.pdf)







Recent major disaster: January/February/May 2022 Extreme rainfall and major flooding

- Fatalities: 2<sup>24</sup>
- People displaced:
  - In January 2022, 100 families were isolated at Borumba Deer Park in Imbil.<sup>25</sup>
  - On Saturday 26 February, 700 residents in Gympie were told to leave and evacuated.<sup>26</sup>
  - In total in January and February, 800 properties were impacted by the floods, and 240 were declared inhabitable.<sup>27</sup>
  - On 28 March, people from more than 100 properties were still displaced.<sup>28</sup>
  - Evacuation centres:<sup>29</sup>
    - January 2022: places of refuge were established at Kilkivan, Goomeri and Imbil;
    - February 2022: more than 460 people were hosted in four evacuation centres.
    - May 2022: an evacuation centre was opened mostly for stranded travellers.
  - There was an increase in demand for services from service providers (such as the neighbourhood centre Gympie Community Place and key community services such as St Vincent de Paul and Salvation Army).<sup>30</sup>
- Properties and infrastructure affected:<sup>31</sup>
  - Extensive damage and loss to agricultural properties and production (fencing, irrigation, livestock, dam walls, destroyed crops).
  - In February 2022, 143 commercial and industrial properties had suffered minor to severe flood damage.
  - Severe damage to small and large businesses in Gympie, including in the CBD.
  - Some tourism attractions (The Rattler, Glen Echo Park and Gympie Historical and Gold Mining Museum) and hotels and accommodation were moderately to severely damaged - the latter resulting in a temporary accommodation crisis.
  - There was extensive damage to the urban landscape, including to Gympie CBD, parks and playgrounds, Kandanga/Goomeri/Gympie community pools, community halls and public amenities.

24 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4365/gympie-region-flood-recovery-plan-2022-2024>

25 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4365/gympie-region-flood-recover%C3%A5y-plan-2022-2024>

26 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-26/gympie-floods-residents-told-to-evacuate-police-find-man-s-body/100863848>

27 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-03-28/gympie-flood-recovery-residents-homeless-amid-housing-shortage/100938470>

28 Ibid.

29 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4365/gympie-region-flood-recovery-plan-2022-2024>

30 <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4365/gympie-region-flood-recovery-plan-2022-2024>

31 Unless specified, the information comes from: <https://www.gympie.qld.gov.au/downloads/file/4365/gympie-region-flood-recovery-plan-2022-2024>



- o Telecommunications: in January, approximately 800 customers lost phone connection near Kilkivan and approximately 10,000 customers lost mobile coverage and internet services in Gympie and surrounds. In February, more than 20,000 customers lost mobile coverage and internet services in Gympie and surrounds and Oakview and Cinnebar were considered to be in isolation due to loss of both mobile and fixed line services.
- o Electricity: in February, damage to the network resulted in 6900 individual customer power outages at the peak of the disruption.
- o Sewage: in January, the water damage to three sewage treatment pumps and leads caused sewer overflows and discharges from manholes. In February, 27 sewer pump stations were without power.
- o Roads closed at the peak of the floods:
  - January 2022: 17 main roads and 23 council LGA roads.
  - February 2022: 20 main roads and 28 council LGA roads.
  - May 2022: 16 main roads and 34 council LGA roads.

According to the independent Deloitte Report, the South East Queensland floods impacted 23 LGAs and cost the Queensland Government approximately \$7.7 billion.<sup>32</sup>

Insurance statistics:<sup>33</sup> According to the Insurance Council of Australia, more than 97,000 residential and commercial claims have been lodged in Southern Queensland after the floods, with a total value of \$1.36 billion, leaving approximately \$646 million in uninsured residential and commercial losses.

## ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

- Gympie LGA is ranked: <sup>34</sup>
  - o 99 out of 544 LGAs in Australia (where 544 is most advantaged)
  - o in the 2nd decile (out of 10, where 10 is most advantaged)
  - o in the 19th percentile (out of 100, where 100 is most advantaged)

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.qra.qld.gov.au/2021-22-Southern-Queensland-Floods#Deloitte-independent-report-estimates-\\$7.7-billion-cost-from-floods](https://www.qra.qld.gov.au/2021-22-Southern-Queensland-Floods#Deloitte-independent-report-estimates-$7.7-billion-cost-from-floods)

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.qra.qld.gov.au/2021-22-Southern-Queensland-Floods#Deloitte-independent-report-estimates-\\$7.7-billion-cost-from-floods](https://www.qra.qld.gov.au/2021-22-Southern-Queensland-Floods#Deloitte-independent-report-estimates-$7.7-billion-cost-from-floods)

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012016?OpenDocument>  
(third data cube LGA Indexes, SEIFA 2016)



## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS

- Housing affordability
  - o Median rent: \$290/week (QLD: \$365/week | Aus: \$375)<sup>35</sup>
  - o Renter households where rent payments are greater than 30% of household income: 42.1% (QLD: 32.3% | Aus: 32.3%)<sup>36</sup>
  - o For a household on the median income for Gympie LGA (around \$60,000<sup>37</sup> rental accommodation is classed as "Unaffordable" for postcode 4580 - East of Gympie region and for postcode 4570 - Centre of Gympie region (Gympie, Kandanga) in postcodes 4570 (central) and 4580 (eastern).<sup>38</sup> Postcodes 4600 and 4601 are also in the Gympie LGA, but data were not available for these postcodes.
- Homelessness:<sup>39</sup>
  - o In 2021-22, 526 people accessed Specialist Homelessness Services in the LGA of Gympie, equating to 0.99% of the population, or 99 per 10,000
  - o 146 of these were men (55 per 10,000) and 380 were women (142 per 10,000)



## MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health conditions (any): 12.0% (QLD: 9.6% | Aus: 8.8%)<sup>40</sup>

In Statistical Area 3 Gympie - Cooloola, there were 52 deaths between 2017 and 2021.<sup>41</sup>

Age-standardised suicide rate (2017-2021) for Statistical Area 4 (SA4)<sup>42</sup> Wide Bay in which Gympie sits, the state of Queensland, and Australia as a whole:<sup>43</sup>

Area	SA4 Wide Bay	Queensland	Australia
Age-standardised suicide rate per 100,000 population	22.8	15.6	12.6
Rate for males	39.2	24.3	19.2
Rate for females	7.2	7.2	6.1

<sup>35</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA33620>

<sup>36</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA33620>

<sup>37</sup> weekly income X 52; weekly income data available at: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA33620>

<sup>38</sup> <https://sgsep.com.au/projects/rental-affordability-index>

<sup>39</sup> Data cube: SHSC geographical location of client—LGA. Available here: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/shsc-data-cubes/contents/specialist-homelessness-services-collection-shsc-data-cubes>

<sup>40</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA33620>

<sup>41</sup> Data table: 2021 National Mortality Database - Suicide, available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/data-downloads>

<sup>42</sup> SA3 and SA4 areas can be found here: <https://sosearch.com.au/australian-sa-printable-maps/>

<sup>43</sup> Data table: 2021 National Mortality Database - Suicide (table 10 for SA4 and 11 for SA3), available at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/data/data-downloads>







## GENDER EQUALITY

### *Lone parent status<sup>44</sup>*

- One-parent families (Gympie LGA): 17.0% (QLD: 16.8% | Aus:15.9%) - 81.2% female-led (QLD: 80.0% | Aus: 80.4%)

### *Mothers' index<sup>45</sup>*

- Gympie is ranked 56 out of 74 LGAs in QLD, where 1 is the 'best place for a mother to live'.

### *Unpaid care<sup>46</sup>*

- Unpaid domestic work
  - o 9181 men did more than 5 hours of unpaid domestic work per week compared to 13681 women
- Unpaid assistance to a person with a disability
  - o 2501 men compared to 3892 women provided unpaid assistance
- Unpaid childcare
  - o 4060 men compared to 5910 women provided childcare (whether for their own child or other children)

### *Violence against women*

- In 2022, in the Gympie division:<sup>47</sup>
  - o 85 sexual offences were recorded (compared to 79 in 2021). This is a rate of
  - o 387 domestic violence protection orders were breached (compared to 306 in 2021).

<sup>44</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA33620>

<sup>45</sup> The mothers' index consists of composite scores from five different indicators relating to maternal wellbeing (maternal health, children's wellbeing, educational status, economic status and socio-economic disadvantage), with each indicator given equal weighting. Scores were sorted from low to high and ranked from 1 to 74 (1 being the best place for a mother to live) to give the overall Mothers Index rank for each LGA in QLD. <https://apo.org.au/node/63692>

<sup>46</sup> ABS General Community Profile for LGA Gympie, Tables G24-G26, available here: <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA33620>

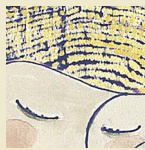
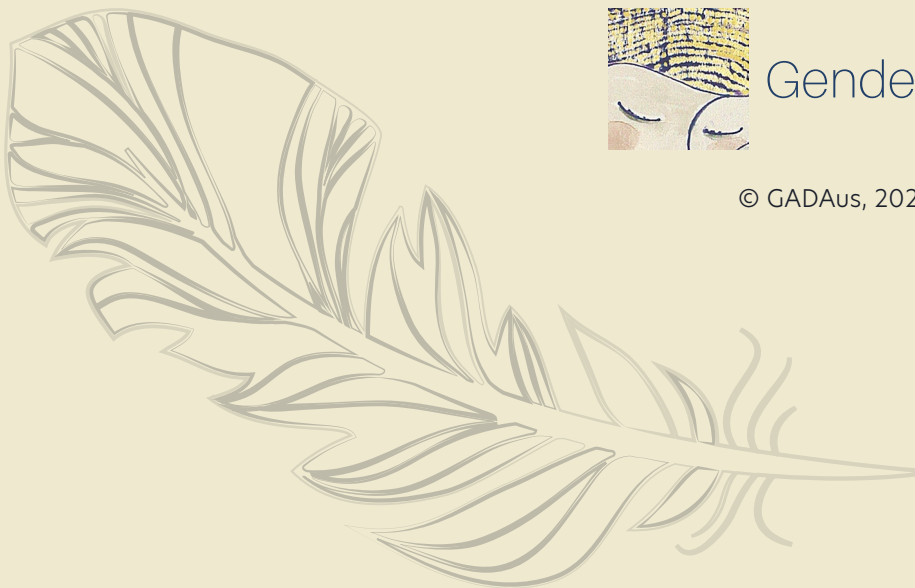
<sup>47</sup> <https://mypolice.qld.gov.au/gympie/queensland-crime-statistics/>

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR GYMPIE LGA COMPARED TO QUEENSLAND AND AUSTRALIA**

	Gympie LGA <sup>48</sup>	Queensland	Australia
Median age	48	38	38
Indigenous status	4.4%	4.6%	3.2%
Both parents born in Australia	68.4%	53.4%	45.9%
Non-English language used in household	4.2%	15.6%	24.8%
With university education	10.3%	21.9%	26.3%
Year 10 as highest qualification	17.8%	11.9%	10%
Part-time workers	36.5%	30.5%	31.2%
Unemployed	5.9%	5.4%	5.1%
Personal income	\$554/week	\$787/week	\$805/week
Household income	\$1,115/week	\$1,675/week	\$1,746/week
Rate of people on Disability Support Pension per 10,000 population <sup>49</sup>	707	309	296

<sup>48</sup> <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA33620>

<sup>49</sup> <https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/dss-payment-demographic-data> calculated by dividing number of DSP recipients listed in March 2021 spreadsheet by population of LGA (<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA24780>) state (<https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/2>), and country (<https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/AUS>) multiplied by 10,000



# Gender & Disaster Australia

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