



Health and Wellbeing of Women in Farming Survey: Key Messages

In the summer of 2025, we conducted a survey investigating the health and wellbeing of women in farming across England and Wales. Over 2,000 women, across a range of ages, farm types and farm sizes and with a variety of roles on the farm, took the time to complete the questionnaire. Here we highlight the key messages emerging from our findings. Further details can be found in the Preliminary Survey Findings report, available at: <https://sites.exeter.ac.uk/womeninfarming/publications>

- **There's lots to love about being a woman in farming:** Many aspects of farming were seen as positive by our respondents. The majority enjoyed a connection to nature, working with animals, providing a positive place to raise children, working with family and being their own boss.
- **Feeling valued is essential:** Feeling valued for their contribution to the farm is a significant predictor of wellbeing for women in farming.
- **Women are key decision-makers:** The majority (66.4%) of respondents have decision-making responsibility on the farm, either alone or with someone else, and most are satisfied with this. 39.2% of those excluded from decision-making would like more of a say.
- **Managing the juggling act:** Respondents were typically responsible for a striking number of tasks on and off the farm, but most were either satisfied (51.7%) or neutral (23.5%) about this balance. Most (63.7%) were also satisfied with the amount of care-giving they provided to children and others.
- **General health could be better:** Most respondents said their general health was 'fair' (25.1%) or 'good' (46.5%), but they were less likely to report 'very good health' than the wider population (23.6% compared to 47.1%).
- **Some women are limited by health conditions:** Over a third (35.4%) of respondents said they were living with a health condition that limits their daily activities a little or a lot.
- **Sleeping badly:** Women in farming report significantly poorer sleep quality than women in the national population (38.6% said their sleep was 'fairly' or 'very' bad, compared to the UK figure of 28.2%). Poor sleep is associated with worse self-rated health.
- **Mental health and wellbeing are a cause for concern:** In every age group, women in farming had lower mental wellbeing scores than the national population. 35.9% reported low wellbeing and only 4.4% had high wellbeing. Furthermore, 36.7% reported 'high' anxiety, compared to 26.1% of women in the UK population.

Best things about being a woman in farming



- **Farm-related stress is having an impact:** Women in our sample reported significantly higher levels of perceived stress than women in the wider UK population (the mean score on the perceived stress scale was 7.0, compared to 6.4 among women in the wider population). Perceived stress is associated with worse anxiety, sleep quality and wellbeing. Of the farm-related stressors we listed, the three most frequently identified as sources of stress were 'a lack of support and understanding', 'bureaucracy and red tape' and 'the pressure to succeed/the future of the farm'. However, the stressors that were the most significant predictors of poor mental wellbeing were 'isolation and loneliness', 'work-life balance/workload', and 'relations with others'.
- **Too many women in farming are lonely:** Overall, just over 3 in 5 women (60.9%) were found to be 'sometimes' (42.9%) or 'most often' (18.0%) lonely. Loneliness is not only affected by satisfaction with socialising and belonging to the local and farming community, but also with farm-related stress. We also found that loneliness is associated with having less involvement in decision-making on the farm. Conversely, feeling valued for contributions to the farm is a protective factor against loneliness.
- **Being emotionally supported is important:** Women who reported receiving higher levels of emotional support also reported higher wellbeing, emphasising the need for spouses, friends and families to ensure women feel heard, valued and supported. Women's roles supporting others also emerged as important, as providing practical support to others was associated with better wellbeing, despite also being associated with increased stress.
- **Close confidants:** Most respondents selected at least one confidant that they could turn to if they needed to talk about something personal. Farm support organisations were only selected by a small proportion of women, suggesting scope for greater awareness of how these organisations can help at an early stage.
- **Open to asking for help, but perhaps underestimating health issues:** Most respondents were open to seeking help for health issues and making time to do so, but many (40.9%) felt that their health problems were not bad compared to other people and did not warrant a health professional's time.
- **Areas of support that would be beneficial:** 61.0% of respondents would like to see more support around succession and inheritance, and half (50.7%) would like support around financial and/or legal issues. Business skills (36.0%), mental health and wellbeing (35.7%) and physical health issues (23.9%) also scored relatively highly.

What Next?

The next stage of our research will explore some of these findings in more detail through one-to-one interviews with women across England and Wales. These will provide greater depth and context on some of the issues raised by the survey findings, as well as exploring wider questions about women in farming's experiences of health and wellbeing throughout their lives. We will also be working with women in farming through focus groups and creative workshops to help identify effective ways of fostering positive wellbeing and providing more targeted, appropriate forms of support where needed. Further information and updates on progress are available on the project website: sites.exeter.ac.uk/womeninfarming

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