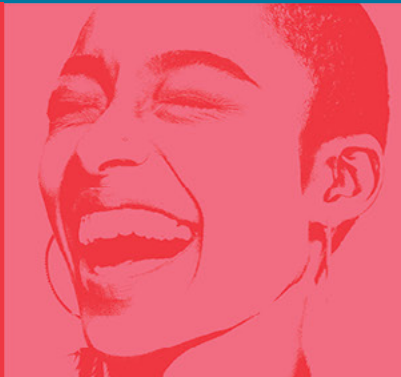




UNLOCKING WOMEN'S POTENTIAL

Labour force
participation in
Western Sydney





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

With respect for Aboriginal cultural protocol and out of recognition that its campuses occupy their traditional lands, Western Sydney University acknowledges the Darug, Eora, Dharawal (also referred to as Tharawal) and Wiradjuri peoples and thanks them for their support of its work in their lands (in Western Sydney and beyond).

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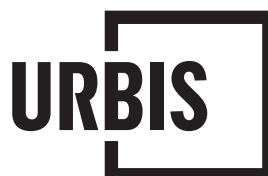
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	6	7. Beyond gender: exploring employment challenges for diverse women	67
Women and work in Western Sydney	7	8. Local, state and federal policies and programs	81
Executive summary	8	9. Unleashing women's labour force potential in Western Sydney	87
1. Introduction	13	Research team	91
2. Women's labour force disparities in Western Sydney	17	Case studies and research spotlights	92
3. Snapshot: Women's labour force participation in Western Sydney	21	Definitions and abbreviations	113
4. Stakeholder consultations	31	List of tables and figures	115
5. A spatially divided city: How location shapes work, mobility and gender equality	33	Notes & References	116
6. Valuing the unseen labour of care in Western Sydney's economy	50	Appendices	121

| FOREWORD

Professor Jennifer Westacott AO

CHANCELLOR, WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Making it easier for women to enter or return to well-paid and meaningful work and advance in the careers of their choosing is a social and economic imperative.

Unlocking women's workforce potential across the nation is about maximising the talents of 50% of the population. That some of those talents remain ignored or hidden, especially in Western Sydney, is a travesty.

So too, is the fact that women in the region earn less than their female counterparts in the Rest of Sydney. The gender pay gap also persists, with women in the Hills Shire among our most educated but earning \$12 less an hour than their male colleagues.

How is that fair?

And it is not just an issue about accessing paid work, but also about advancing at work. It is about unlocking potential.

As the nation's third-largest economy, Western Sydney is home to an increasingly well-qualified, skilled, young, culturally diverse, dynamic and entrepreneurial population. Our people are our greatest strength.

But Western Sydney is not a homogenous area. Within each suburb, there are differing levels of opportunity.

As this report illustrates, while some women battle the proverbial glass ceiling, too many others face an employment brick wall. Many are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, refugees, Indigenous Australians, and women with disabilities.

Systemic and deeply entrenched barriers mean these women are unfairly held back from reaching their potential and participating fully in our community. This is especially acute for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, where being in paid work enhances a sense of belonging and delivers social inclusion, confidence, and financial security.

Crucially, when women are locked out of paid work, there is both a social and economic cost. Personally, it is the loss of a sense of purpose, income and often independence. For the nation, it means we miss out on the valuable skills and knowledge that grow the economy so it can benefit all citizens.

Roadblocks to women's workforce participation take many forms, including a lack of affordable and accessible childcare, limited public transport options, long commutes, tolls and parking, language barriers, limited digital literacy,

discrimination, the failure to recognise international qualifications, and family and social expectations of women as caregivers.

One of the first and most important steps we must take for everyone in Western Sydney, regardless of gender, is to create more well-paid jobs closer to home.

By attracting investment and developing new globally significant industries in Western Sydney, the jobs of the future and cutting-edge skills, we can realise the region's unlimited potential. Doing this, means we also increase liveability and strengthen our communities.

Making the leap to future industries and future communities will need to be backed by taking the leap on developing future skills.

I strongly believe that as a university, it is our mission and moral responsibility to correct the skills deficit, especially in areas such as literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Let's get better at matching the education and training we provide with the new skills that emerging jobs will demand. Universities and TAFE have a greater role to play – working in partnership with the community and industry, they can create new, shorter courses and micro-credentials that enable people to rapidly upskill.

And Western Sydney University is leading the way in ensuring people from disadvantaged groups can access further education, with its recently opened Fairfield Connect hub providing tailored English-language and enabling courses.

Improving educational pathways is one of the many ways we can reverse a situation where just two in three women from Western Sydney – and as low as one in two women in Fairfield – are in paid work compared to 76% of women in the Rest of Sydney.

That figure demonstrates there is a wealth of untapped talent in our own backyard that, collectively, we need to empower to be part of Western Sydney's economic and social transformation.



WOMEN AND WORK IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Dr Rhonda Itaoui

DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR WESTERN SYDNEY

As the Director of the Centre for Western Sydney, it is my privilege to present this ground-breaking report on Unlocking Women's Potential in the Western Sydney region.

This report delivers a local analysis that speaks to the 'Count Her In' theme of International Women's Day 2024, which focuses on the need to invest in women to accelerate progress.

We, at the Centre for Western Sydney, align our vision with the global imperative to advance women's economic empowerment – because when women rise, we all win.

The Centre is committed to realising the full potential of our region for all its diverse residents, and this report marks the beginning of our dedicated research agenda on women and paid work.

The comprehensive analysis presented in Unlocking Women's Potential reveals a critical yet neglected aspect of the gender equity agenda – specifically, how a woman's geographical location is the most significant indicator of her economic prospects.

And as our intersectional approach uncovers, the spatial inequities in a woman's take-home pay are further entrenched for Indigenous women and those from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Women should not reap less benefits of their education because of where they live, or who they are.

Yet, although women in Western Sydney have made significant strides in educational achievements, they face a complex interplay of place-based obstacles that hold them back. The 'spatial leash' effect – which keeps women at home and far from jobs too – is more pronounced for women in Western Sydney due to limited local employment options, inadequate childcare, and poor transport links. These spatial barriers are compounded by entrenched gender norms and societal expectations that see caregiving responsibilities fall primarily to women.

Women in Western Sydney are a powerhouse of untapped potential, holding the key to unleashing the full economic strength of the area. Just imagine the possibilities if these women had the opportunity to work in high-quality, well-paying, flexible roles within 30 of their homes, coupled with access to childcare that respects their cultural needs and diversity.

As outlined in our report, if we elevated the participation of women in Western Sydney to match that of women in the Rest of Sydney, we could see up to 83,160 women entering the labour force, delivering a windfall of \$34.6 billion additional gross value added (GVA) for the NSW economy and placing an extra \$90,266 in the pockets of Western Sydney women each year. The ripple effects would be even more pronounced for women from diverse backgrounds, particularly in the LGAs facing higher levels of disadvantage. The transformative impact this could have on our economy and the lives of women is unlimited.

To realise these advantages, we require focused, location-specific strategies for achieving gender equity in employment. This must be supported by policymaking and initiatives that create meaningful opportunities while directly tackling the distinct obstacles encountered by women in suburban regions like Western Sydney.

To set this change in motion, we have set key priorities: eradicating disparities in pay due to gender and location, bolstering childcare resources, and facilitating the entry and progress of culturally diverse women in the labour market.

A collective effort is essential for these changes to materialise – involving government, the private sector, educational institutions, and community organisations.

As a proud woman of Western Sydney, I hold the conviction that the essence of gender equity lies in the power of choice resting firmly in the hands of all women.

Together, we must forge ahead towards a fairer and more thriving Sydney, ensuring that no woman is left behind.

Because we are worth it.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Advancing the participation of women in the workforce is integral to societal progress and economic prosperity. Through this research, the Centre for Western Sydney advances this agenda by mapping the geography of the labour force participation of women across Western Sydney compared to the Rest of Sydney and NSW.

The analysis presented here underscores (i) how geographical location compounds gender inequity in the labour force and (ii) how intersecting factors such as socio-economic status, identity and spatial proximity to jobs converge to shape women's economic circumstances.

Drawing together a spatial analysis of the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, evaluations of key policies and programs, and insights from key stakeholder consultations with government, community organisations and academia, this report reveals a complex interplay of opportunities and challenges in the Western Sydney region.

While tertiary qualification attainment among women in the region has surged, their participation in the workforce lags behind national averages, particularly in key LGAs such as Fairfield, Cumberland and Canterbury-Bankstown. The report finds that in addition to the limitations of traditional gender roles and caregiving responsibilities, women in Western Sydney also face place-based barriers such as limited local employment options, long commute times and insufficient affordable childcare options. These limit women's access to meaningful employment opportunities and their long-term social mobility.

The findings emphasise the importance of place-based approaches to gender equity in the labour force, considering how the labour force needs of women are shaped by where they live and who they are.



THIS REPORT:

- 1** | Maps the geographical profile of labour force participation rates among women in Western Sydney according to a range of socio-economic demographic factors across Western Sydney local government areas (LGAs) and three key benchmarks: the Western Sydney average, the Rest of Sydney average and the NSW average.
- 2** | Examines how labour force participation is shaped by key intersecting identities (Indigeneity, migration status, language, religion), geographical location and the provision of unpaid care.
- 3** | Documents the key strengths and challenges of women's labour force potential in Western Sydney based on consultations with stakeholders supporting women in the region.
- 4** | Quantifies the economic gains and value of achieving parity in labour force participation between women and men in Western Sydney, as well as women in Western Sydney and those residing in the Rest of Sydney.
- 5** | Advocates for key priorities to be addressed by policymakers, the private sector and community organisations to unlock women's labour force participation in Western Sydney.

KEY FINDINGS

1 | Spatial pay gap: women (and men) of Western Sydney earn less than women in the Rest of Sydney, making geography the key indicator of incomes in Western Sydney.

2 | Women in Western Sydney are spatially divided along socio-economic lines, with significant labour market variation between LGAs in the region.

3 | Despite working almost the same hours as women in the Rest of Sydney, women in Western Sydney are paid significantly less.

4 | More women in Western Sydney work in lower-paid roles in traditionally feminised sectors than in the Rest of Sydney.

5 | The gender pay gap between men and women is less pronounced in disadvantaged Western Sydney LGAs, reinforcing that the spatial pay gap is the most critical challenge facing women in Western Sydney.

6 | Women in Western Sydney are more educated, yet work and earn less than men.

7 | Less advantaged women bear the greatest impacts of dependent children and caring responsibilities, particularly solo mothers.

8 | Transport is a significant factor in women's workforce participation for more marginalised households and less of a factor for the more advantaged.

9 | Indigenous women in Western Sydney record lower participation rates and incomes than Indigenous women in the Rest of Sydney.

10 | Women from diverse backgrounds, including migrant and refugee women, face the greatest negative impacts on their labour force participation compared with other cohorts in Western Sydney.

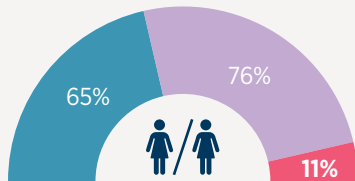
KEY PRIORITIES

The Centre for Western Sydney advocates for five key priorities to unlock the social and economic benefits of women's labour force participation in Western Sydney:

1

REDUCE THE GAP BETWEEN THE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF WOMEN IN WESTERN SYDNEY AND WOMEN IN THE REST OF SYDNEY.

Current labour force participation rates of women:



- Western Sydney
- Rest of Sydney
- Spatial gap

Lifting the labour force participation rates of **women in Western Sydney** to equal **women in the Rest of Sydney** could add:



+83,160
new women
into employment



\$90,266
to these women's
annual income

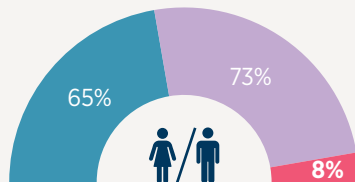


\$34.6
billion GVA to the
NSW economy

2

CLOSE THE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION DISPARITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN WESTERN SYDNEY.

Current labour force participation rates of women:



- Women in Western Sydney
- Men in Western Sydney
- Gender pay gap, Western Sydney

Lifting the labour force participation rates of **women in Western Sydney** to equal **men in Western Sydney** could add:



+59,970
new women into
employment



\$82,704
to these women's
annual income

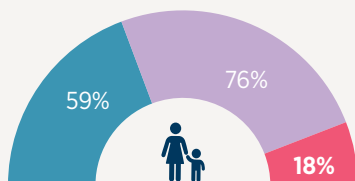


\$25
billion GVA to the
NSW economy

3

ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF CHILDCARE DESERTS IN WESTERN SYDNEY AND PROVIDE GREATER SUPPORT TO PARENTS, PARTICULARLY SOLO MOTHERS, TO ENABLE WOMEN TO ENTER PAID WORK.

Current labour force participation rates of women:



- Solo mothers in Western Sydney
- Women in Rest of Sydney
- Spatial gap

Lifting the labour force participation rates of **solo mothers in Western Sydney** to equal **women in the Rest of Sydney** could add:



+19,700
new women into
employment



\$84,117
to these women's
annual income

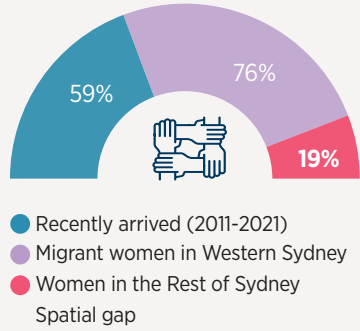


\$7.9
billion GVA to
the NSW economy

4

FACILITATE THE ENTRY OF WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS INTO MEANINGFUL, SECURE, AND FAIRLY PAID WORK.

Current labour force participation rates of women:



Lifting the labour force participation rates of **new migrant women** (arrived 2011-2021) in Western Sydney to equal **women in the Rest of Sydney** could add:



+22,830
new women into employment



\$94,360
to these women's annual income



\$9.4
billion GVA to the NSW economy

5

DEVELOP EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY THAT SUPPORTS TARGETED COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND SERVICE PROVISION BASED ON THE UNIQUE SPATIAL STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF LGAs IN WESTERN SYDNEY.

Current labour force participation rates of women:



FAIRFIELD

48%

28% lower than Rest of Sydney



CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN

58%

18% lower than Rest of Sydney



CUMBERLAND

58%

18% lower than Rest of Sydney



LIVERPOOL

60%

16% lower than Rest of Sydney

Lifting the labour force participation rates of **women in the most marginalised LGAs** of Western Sydney (Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Liverpool) to equal **women in the Rest of Sydney** could add:



+59,611
new women into employment



\$90,474
to these women's annual income



\$24.6
billion GVA to the NSW economy



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Women's workforce participation is a key marker of social and economic progress and a key public policy imperative across all levels of government. As a key national priority, the 2023 Status of Women Report Card found that Australia is ranked 43rd for gender equality internationally in 2022,¹ which has declined considerably since being ranked 35th in 2017 and slipping from a high point of 15th in 2006.² Australian women's employment rates also rank in the lower third of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, despite having the fourth-highest level of tertiary-educated women in the OECD.³

A large body of research has critically examined the gendered nature of the workforce, including marked disparities recorded in pay, job security and career progression for women in both Australia and around the world.⁴ This is intensified by traditional societal norms and gender roles, particularly around unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, significantly influencing women's work patterns and choices and, ultimately, their economic mobility.⁵

The broader Australian context shows a gradual increase in women's labour force participation. However, Western Sydney exhibits unique trends due to structural constraints, cultural norms, childcare availability, and transportation access, which intersect with broader societal and economic shifts in the region. In Western Sydney, the labour force participation of women reveals a complex tapestry of opportunities and challenges unique to the region.

As the Centre for Western Sydney's *Untapped Talent*⁶ report uncovered:

- 1. Women in Western Sydney are gaining qualifications rapidly, with over 140,000 women completing tertiary degrees over the last decade.**
- 2. Despite gaining tertiary qualifications, women's labour force participation in Western Sydney is significantly lower than for women residing in the Rest of Sydney.**
- 3. In Western Sydney LGAs like Fairfield and Canterbury-Bankstown, women's workforce participation rate is lower than the national average.**
- 4. Participation rates are highly gendered, whereby working-aged women have a lower total labour force participation and a lower full-time employment rate than men in Western Sydney.**
- 5. Compared to men, a higher proportion of women in Western Sydney are not in the labour force.**
- 6. Women in Western Sydney provide more unpaid childcare and earn less than women in the Rest of Sydney.**



Image credit: Kyisoe Han



These stark spatial differences in the labour force participation outcomes for women in Western Sydney region compared with the Rest of Sydney underscore the 'spatial leash'⁷ effects for women in Western Sydney, whereby the geographic distance between their homes and workplaces and caregiving responsibilities limits their mobility and access to employment opportunities.⁸ The disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, primarily shouldered by women, significantly impacts women's economic independence and labour force participation. This factor is especially pronounced in Western Sydney, where familial and cultural expectations often place additional caregiving responsibilities on women.

The role of limited local employment in hindering women's workforce participation in Western Sydney has been a key advocacy issue. The distances to employment opportunities across Sydney mean that commute times constrain the ability of women to participate in the labour force.⁹ These disparities have been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as women in Western Sydney faced additional labour market challenges, altering employment patterns and compounding existing barriers for women seeking to enter or re-enter the workforce.¹⁰

These spatial barriers and challenges make Western Sydney's distinct socio-economic landscape a unique context for a place-based analysis of women's labour force participation. The region is marked by a rich cultural diversity and a range of economic opportunities, yet significant levels of disadvantage persist in key areas of the region. In addition, key groups such as women, Indigenous communities, migrants and those with diverse abilities face compounding inequities across income and education.¹¹

The labour force participation of women in Western Sydney is deeply influenced by socio-economic factors and entrenched disadvantage, which limit long-term employment trajectories. This inequality is particularly marked in areas like Sydney's southwest, where high unemployment rates and socio-economic disadvantage are recorded. In addition, employment disparities, language barriers, discrimination and skill underutilisation further entrench socio-spatial inequality, restricting women's access to resources and capacity to participate in the labour force.¹²

Western Sydney University, a key driver of enhanced tertiary education and economic mobility of local communities, acknowledges that women have a critical role to play in realising the full economic potential of the region.¹³ The analysis presented in this report underscores the multifaceted strategies required to enhance women's labour force participation, including priorities for addressing the pervasive influence of socio-spatial disadvantages, intersectionality and systemic barriers that are limiting employment outcomes for women.

The report offers a detailed examination of women's workforce participation, addressing the unique and evolving challenges that impact women in Western Sydney. It presents community-informed recommendations aimed at boosting employment among women, emphasising the need for cooperative, multifaceted approaches across universities, government, community and the private sector to realise the full potential of women's participation in the Western Sydney labour market.

1.2 Methodology

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the labour force participation dynamics of women in Western Sydney. It draws together key statistics, data analysis, policy analyses, as well as economic modelling to provide a foundational analysis of women's labour force potential in the region. This analysis was informed by a review of existing academic literature, as well as reports produced by government, community organisations and industry, which provided additional context. Themes from stakeholder consultations were drawn upon to inform the research analysis.

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP

This broader project is guided by a Research Advisory Group (RAG), which comprises experts from various government, community and academic positions who specialise in this field. The RAG meets regularly to inform the research methods and interrogate the research findings of this stream of work. For details of the RAG membership, see Appendix 1.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Three stakeholder consultations were held with diverse practitioners working with women in Western Sydney on employment, training, entrepreneurship, economic empowerment and settlement issues. The three consultations were attended by 27 practitioners from 23 organisations (see Appendix 1 for the list of stakeholders and Appendix 2 for details of the consultations).

METHODS

Data analysis

ABS Census data from 2021 was extracted for 13 Western Sydney LGAs. This data was analysed against three benchmarks: the Rest of Sydney, the rest of NSW and NSW overall. The Rest of Sydney is a key comparator used by the Centre for Western Sydney to distinguish LGAs in the Greater Western Sydney region from LGAs elsewhere in Greater Sydney. In this report, the key benchmark of comparison used throughout is the Rest of Sydney.

Spatial mapping

ABS data was then interpreted and represented through maps, which visualise the spatial distribution of labour force participation in relation to other factors like distribution of wealth and public transport access.

Policy and program review

A review was undertaken of existing policies and programs at the local, state and federal levels that support the labour force participation of women (see Section 8 and the case studies throughout). This preliminary review aims to identify opportunities, existing good practices and policy gaps to inform recommendations that enhance women's labour force participation.

Economic impact analysis modelling

This report presents an economic impact analysis (EIA) on the positive economic impacts of increasing women's labour force participation rates across specific socio-demographic cohorts and geographical areas in Western Sydney. The modelling provided in this report examines the potential contribution to women's personal income, the GVA to the economy, and the contribution to gross state product (GSP) according to key scenarios. For a more detailed explanation of this method, and the appropriate qualifiers see Appendix 4.



SCOPE

The geographical scope of this report covers 13 LGAs of the Western Sydney region:

- › **Blacktown**
- › **Blue Mountains**
- › **Camden**
- › **Campbelltown**
- › **Canterbury-Bankstown**
- › **Cumberland**
- › **Fairfield**
- › **Hawkesbury**
- › **Liverpool**
- › **Parramatta**
- › **Penrith**
- › **The Hills**
- › **Wollondilly**

The data analysed from these LGAs has been benchmarked against data from the Rest of Sydney, which comprises the LGAs within the Greater Sydney region not listed above. This report uses the Rest of Sydney as a benchmark to compare key trends with Western Sydney to highlight the spatial inequities across the city.

The data analysed is sourced from the 2021 ABS Census and does not track changes over time.

Geographic scope

There are limitations to conducting a study over such a large and populous geographical region that contains rich demographic diversity. By focusing on LGAs, this report aims to attend to localised specificities of place within the region and disaggregate the data while also capturing the region's general features. This limitation should be addressed in future research that explores the specific dynamics within key localities to provide a more granular understanding of spatial trends within smaller geographic areas.

Disaggregation of socio-demographic data

While useful for providing an overview, the data available from the ABS is limited, in that it is not sufficiently disaggregated, and so does not capture enough nuance and diversity for a detailed examination of women's identifications and experiences. For example, the 'overseas-born women' category does not reveal which visa category women may have arrived on, which is required to better understand their workforce barriers and opportunities. To illustrate, a woman arriving on a skilled migration visa is likely to have greater opportunity in the workforce than a woman arriving on a humanitarian visa. Visa rules also dictate women's eligibility for subsidised childcare, further impacting their orientation to paid work.

Further gaps exist in care data from the Census. For example, the data broadly captures parents and carers with dependent children under 15; there is no distinction between women who have younger preschool children and those who have older school-aged children. This means that the ABS data cannot be utilised to comment on women's labour and care practices during the more intensive care years of a child's life, compared with the less intensive care years, when children are more independent.

In addition, the 2021 Census included limited questions on gender identity and no questions on sexuality. In 2021, for the first time, respondents were given the opportunity to select from male, female and non-binary gender identities. However, as it was the first time including this question, responses were varied and the ABS has determined that the results from the 2021 non-binary sex category do not provide data of high enough quality to be used.

Researching with community

A core value of the Centre for Western Sydney is to work with partners, stakeholders and the community to drive advocacy for the region. As a result, three consultation sessions have informed the approach of this report, and future outputs from this research will include further community-driven research with resident women of Western Sydney.



Image credit: Kyisoe Han

2. WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE DISPARITIES IN WESTERN SYDNEY

2.1 National context

Australia's labour market has evolved rapidly since the 1960s, with a significant increase in labour force participation rates, much of which has been driven by the increased participation of women.¹⁴

While the labour force participation rate of women in the 1960s was around 30%, today it stands at 62%.¹⁵

These shifts have been partly enabled by major legal and policy reforms that shape the lives of workers in Australia, such as paid parental leave, anti-discrimination laws, wider access to childcare arrangements and equal pay cases.¹⁶ As a result, the labour force participation gap between men and women of working age has steadily declined over the last 40 years.¹⁷

Despite these improvements on the national level, international comparisons show that **Australia is falling behind other countries in terms of women's workforce participation.¹⁸ Australia has some of the most expensive childcare and the least generous paid parental leave.¹⁹**

GENDER PAY GAP

While Australia has improved the rate of women's labour force participation, a significant gender pay gap persists between men and women.²⁰ Women working full-time earn, on average, around \$13,120 per year less than men working full-time.²¹ The current gender pay gap,²² which measures the difference in salary between men and women, stood at 13% as of May 2023.²³ This is the lowest level on record.²⁴ However, **once the gender differences in hours worked, overtime and bonuses are accounted for, the gender gap for total earnings stands at 28.7%.²⁵**

This pay gap is caused by the persistence of gender bias, stereotypes and discrimination; the gendered division of care responsibilities and the lack of workplace flexibility; the barriers to the career progression and leadership of women; and the undervaluation of many feminised sectors. A significant contributor to the gender pay gap is the high rates of part-time employment for women in Australia (the fourth-highest in the OECD).²⁶ While most men working full-time continue to do so after having children, many women either return to work part-time or leave the labour force completely.²⁷

GENDER SEGREGATION: INDUSTRIES AND TYPES OF WORK

In addition, many occupations and industries continue to be highly gender segregated. For example, sectors like health care, aged care, childcare and education are highly feminised sectors with generally lower rates of pay, while higher paid sectors like engineering and construction tend to be male dominated.²⁸ This over-representation of men or women in certain occupations or sectors, known as 'horizontal segregation', is further exacerbated by 'vertical segregation' in occupations.²⁹ Vertical occupational gender segregation sees a concentration of women and men at particular levels of responsibility and pay grades. Even within the feminised care sector, men are over-represented as managers.³⁰ These forms of segregation are of course not race neutral, and in many low-paid feminised sectors and occupations, migrant women and women of colour are over-represented, particularly in the healthcare and social assistance sector.³¹

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NORMS

Across all cultures, gender norms shape people's behaviour, the divisions of labour at home and in the workplace, the definitions of appropriate types of work, and how the state regulates the economy.³² Intersecting with gender, structural racism and other discrimination forms persist and are barriers to both entry and progression in the workforce. The current work and care arrangements in Australia maintain social hierarchies,³³ which are reflected in the unequal distribution of labour force participation. Not all women in Australia have experienced the same opportunity to participate, and more needs to be done to overcome entrenched disadvantage across social, spatial and intergenerational lines.³⁴ Despite the progress made in increasing the participation of women in the labour force, inequalities persist which marginalise certain geographical pockets of the country, such as Western Sydney.

2.2 Western Sydney context

SIZE AND GEOGRAPHY

The Western Sydney region comprises almost 9,000 square kilometres of Greater Sydney's 12,000 square kilometres. Western Sydney is home to around 10% of Australia's population and almost 50% of Sydney's population. And yet, this half of Australia's wealthiest city is routinely marginalised in how wealth, property and opportunity are distributed, with disadvantage in the region increasing since 2016.³⁵



POPULATION GROWTH AND DIVERSITY

Western Sydney's population is one of the country's fastest growing and has been rising steadily since 2006.³⁶ A substantial part of this growth owes to migration, with more than 45% of Western Sydney residents born overseas, making Western Sydney one of the country's most culturally and linguistically diverse regions.³⁷ The region is popular among new migrants, with most new arrivals to Australia (60%) choosing to settle in Greater Western Sydney.³⁸ This means the region is home to people from diverse countries of origin, many of whom are newly arrived and may need additional support to settle into the country and find work aligned with their skills and qualifications.

INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS IN WESTERN SYDNEY

The 2021 Census recorded almost 55,000 Indigenous residents of Western Sydney, with many LGAs seeing significant growth in Indigenous populations in recent years.³⁹ The custodians of Western Sydney are the Cabrogal, Darkinjung, Dharawal (Tharawal), Dharug, and Gundungurra peoples. People from many other Aboriginal nations also live in Western Sydney. LGAs with significant Indigenous populations include Blacktown, Penrith and Campbelltown.⁴⁰ In this context, where each suburb has its own rich cultural traditions, diverse communities and unique features, the sense of place and geographical identity strongly feature.

A YOUNG POPULATION

The population of Western Sydney is young, with a lower median age than Greater Sydney. The region has a greater percentage of people living in family households than the Rest of Sydney.⁴¹ Notably, across all Western Sydney LGAs (except for Parramatta) the largest age group is 0–14 years.⁴² This data on households and age groups points to the urgent importance of childcare and supportive work arrangements for Western Sydney parents.⁴³

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IN WESTERN SYDNEY

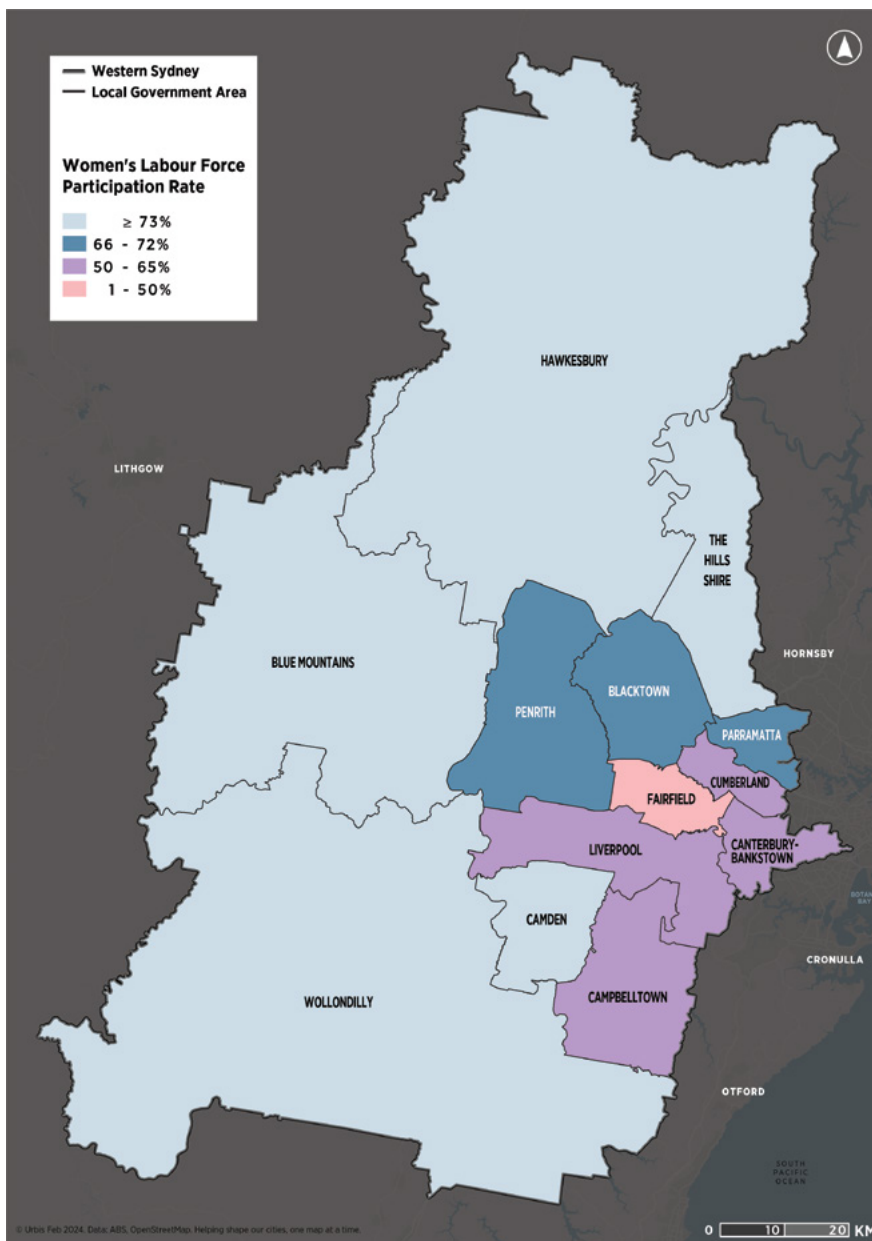
Western Sydney residents are rapidly attaining higher levels of university qualifications. However, this is unevenly distributed across the different LGAs in the region.⁴⁴ As is shown in this report and others, a lack of local jobs persists in line with not only population growth in the region, but also the education levels, skills and capacity of the Western Sydney population.⁴⁵ Despite this job deficit, Western Sydney continues to make a sizeable contribution to the economy. Contributing over \$100 billion annually, Western Sydney is Australia's third-largest economy after the Sydney and Melbourne CBDs.⁴⁶

2.3 The labour force participation of women in Western Sydney

Within this context of a dynamic and growing region, women’s labour force participation urgently requires better understanding and greater attention from government and industry. Despite all the strengths, untapped skills and potentialities of women in Western Sydney, many barriers to work exist, particularly for finding skills-appropriate, decent and fulfilling work.

The average labour force participation rate of women in Western Sydney is 65%, compared to 76% for women in the Rest of Sydney and 73% for men in Western Sydney.

Map 1 - Women’s Labour Force Participation Rate by LGA – Western Sydney



LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY WESTERN SYDNEY LGAS

There are wide-ranging differences in women’s level of access and participation in the labour force across the Western Sydney LGAs. As demonstrated in Map 1, the LGAs where women had an equal or higher participation rate than men of Western Sydney (73%) are Wollondilly (76%), Camden (76%), Hawkesbury (76%), The Hills (76%) and the Blue Mountains (74%). Areas also exist where multiple intersecting forms of structural disadvantage and discrimination are concentrated, and we see much lower participation rates by women (e.g., Fairfield 48%). Among these parts of the region, structures of class and race are compounded by geographic location, constraining the capacity of women to secure decent and fulfilling work.

Mapping these findings onto the Greater Sydney context (see Map 2), it is apparent that women’s labour force participation rates across the Rest of Sydney are generally higher than the average participation rate of men of Western Sydney (73%).

PLACE-BASED APPROACHES TO WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

To address these disparities across the city and within the Western Sydney region, place-based approaches are needed. Place is a crucial determinant of life outcomes, as around 70% of people continue to live in the same area and the same local labour market where they grew up.⁴⁷ This shapes the type of school people attend in a context of highly segregated schooling along social class lines. It also shapes the types of further education, training and job opportunities that are accessible to people. Moreover, space informs how we imagine future possibilities in terms of the places where we might aspire to live and work.⁴⁸

This report focuses on the importance of place within a spatially divided city, and how this combines with intersectional structural factors to constrain women's choices, opportunities and potential in Western Sydney, producing *socio-spatial disparity*.

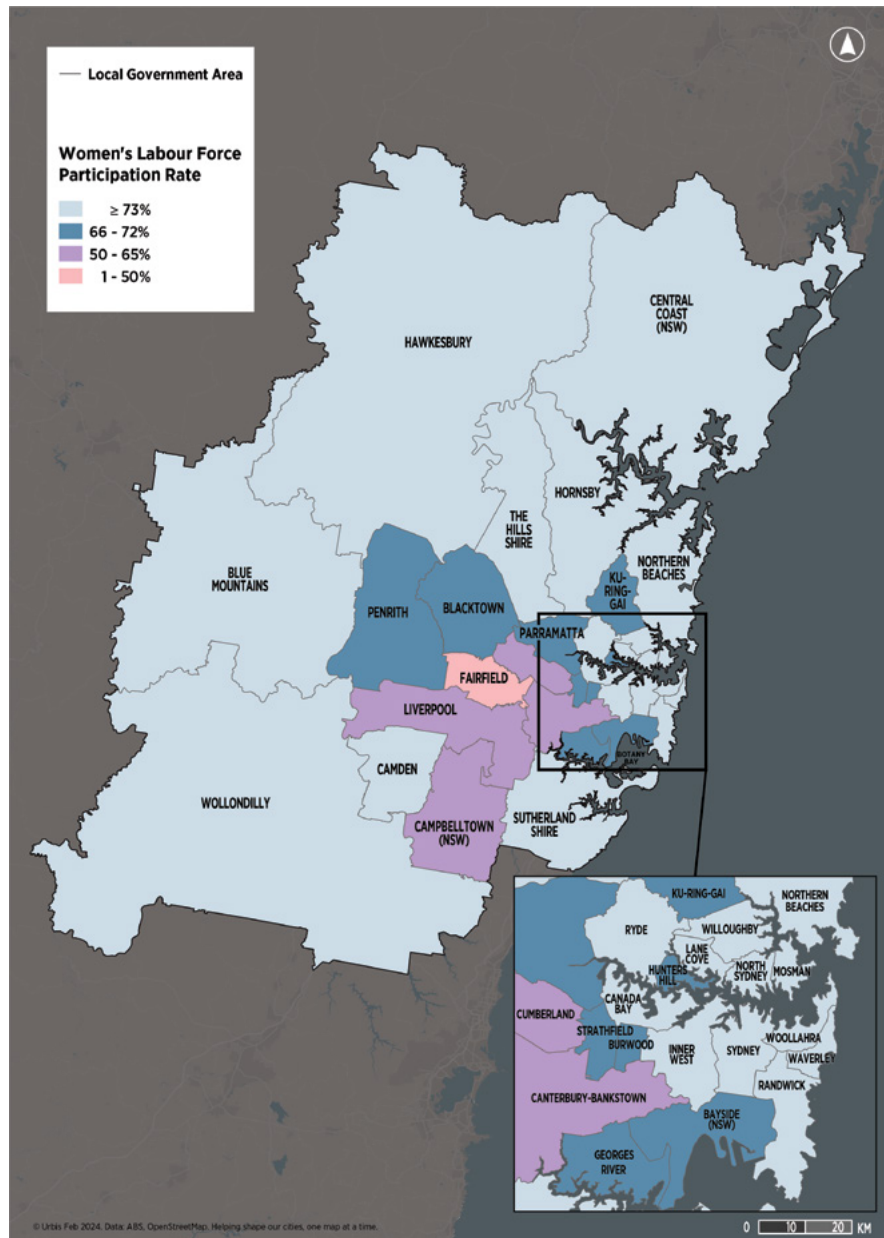
No matter what part of Sydney they are from, what languages they speak or what their class background is, all women should have the same opportunity to thrive, be economically empowered and fully participate in the city's communities.

While there are some existing studies related to women and work in Western Sydney,⁴⁹ far more research is needed to better understand how place, gender, identity and structural inequality and discrimination intersect to shape women's labour force participation in this region.

Access to work is not only important for the economic benefits to the individual, the household, or the state; it is primarily about equity, social justice, and inclusion. There is also an important wellbeing component – there is a relationship between workforce participation and physical, mental and social wellbeing.⁵⁰ For example, it has been found that, for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, workforce participation can enhance a sense of belonging, social inclusion, confidence and financial security.⁵¹

Enhancing the labour force participation rate of women in Western Sydney is the first step towards truly unlocking women's potential. This requires women having jobs with decent work conditions that satisfy their needs and allow women to work at their full capacity in terms of skills, experience and career progression.

Map 2 - Women's Labour Force Participation Rate by LGA – Greater Sydney



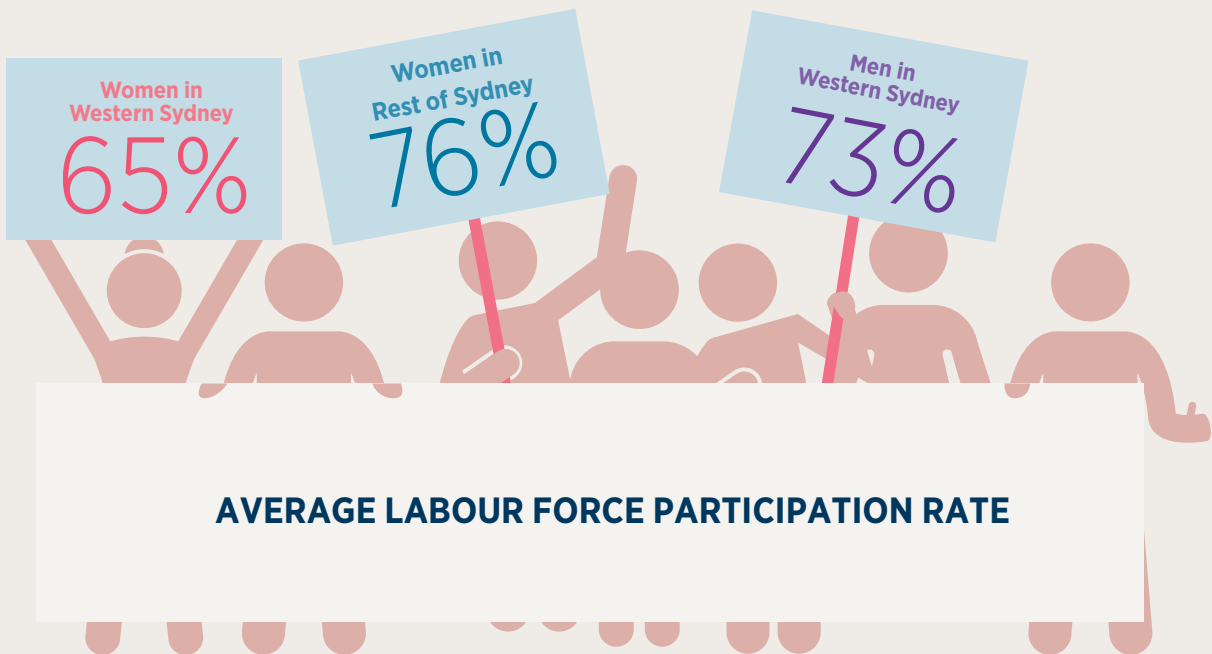
▶ **All women should have the same opportunity to thrive, be economically empowered, and fully participate in the city's communities.**

3. SNAPSHOT:

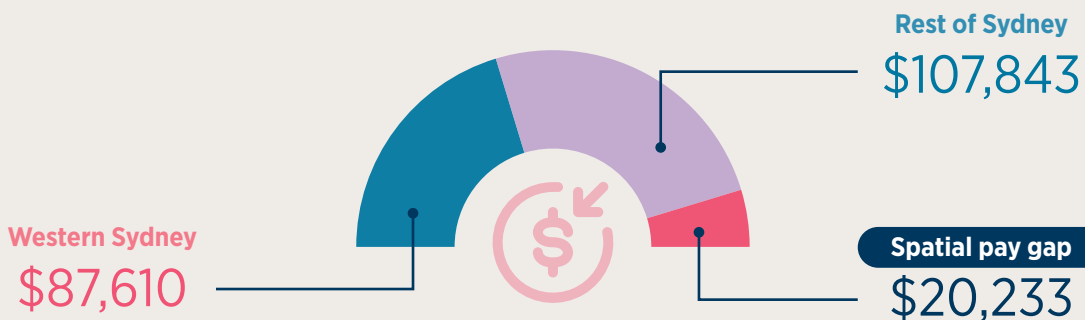
Women's labour force participation in Western Sydney

1

Geographical location and labour force outcomes

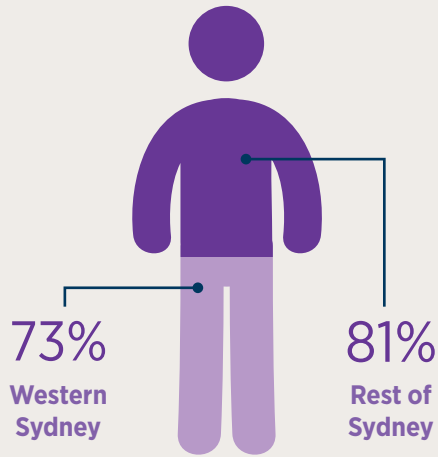


AVERAGE FULL-TIME INCOME, WOMEN

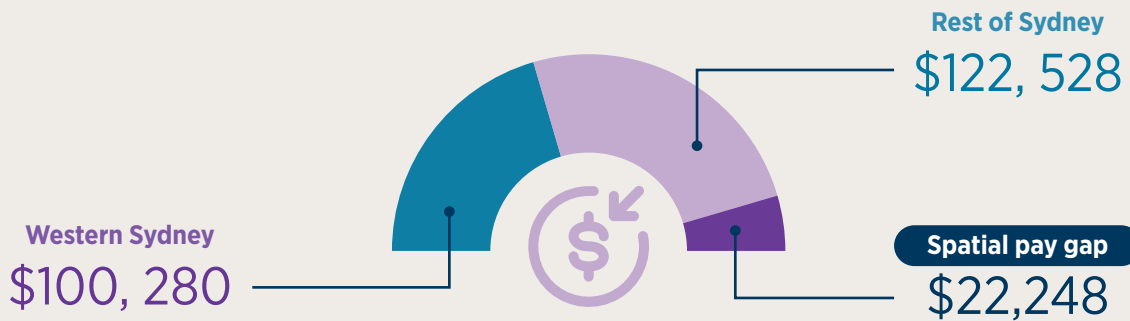


THE LABOUR FORCE OUTCOMES OF MEN

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF MEN



AVERAGE FULL-TIME INCOME, MEN

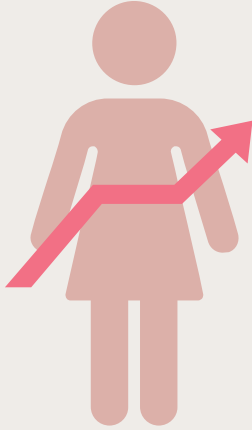


2

Socio-economic status and labour force participation

HIGH RATES OF PARTICIPATION

Camden,
Hawkesbury,
The Hills,
Wollondilly
76%



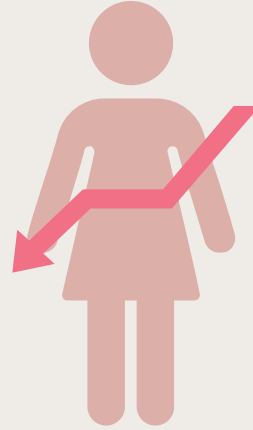
Rest of
Sydney
76%

LOW RATES OF PARTICIPATION

Fairfield
48%

Cumberland
58%

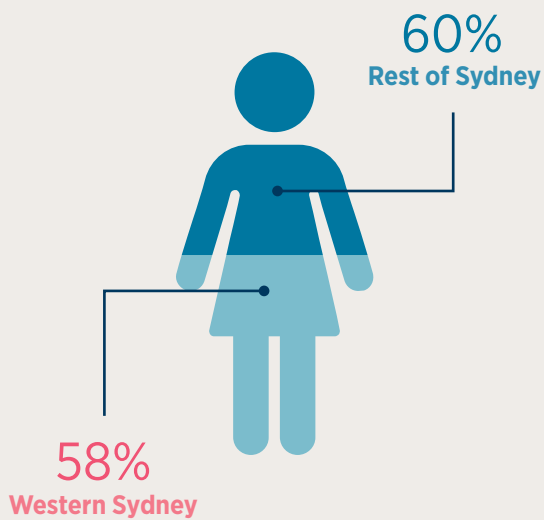
Canterbury-
Bankstown
58%



3

Work hours

WOMEN WORKING FULL-TIME



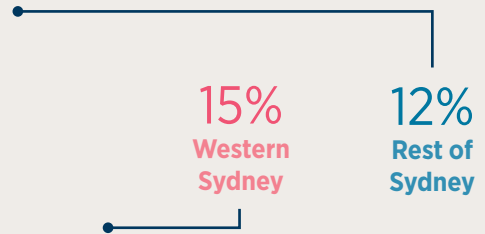
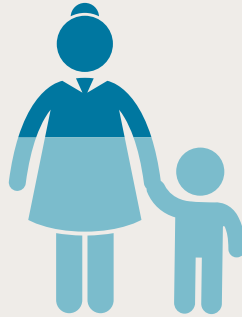
AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS WORKED



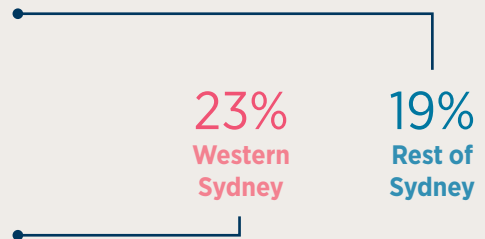
4

Fields of work

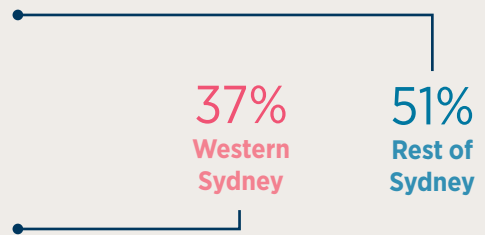
WOMEN EMPLOYED IN
community
and personal
service roles



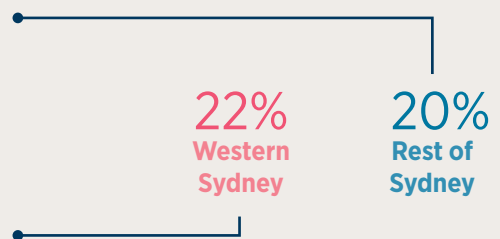
WOMEN EMPLOYED IN
clerical and
administrative
roles



WOMEN EMPLOYED AS
managers and
professionals

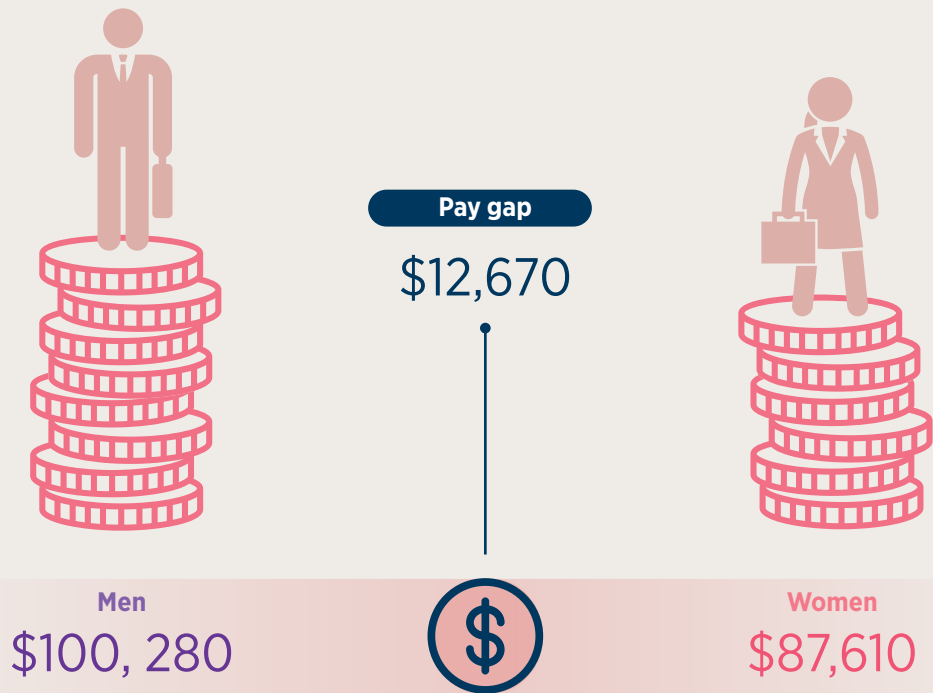


WOMEN EMPLOYED IN
health care and
social assistance



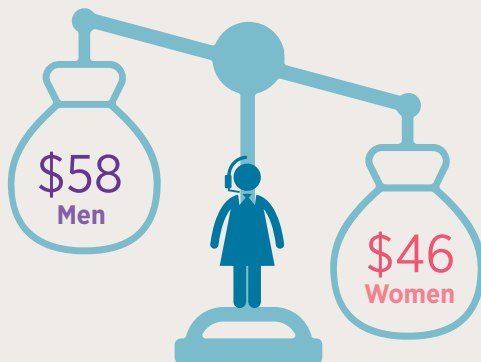
5

The gender pay gap in Western Sydney



AVERAGE HOURLY INCOME ACCORDING TO LEVELS OF ADVANTAGE

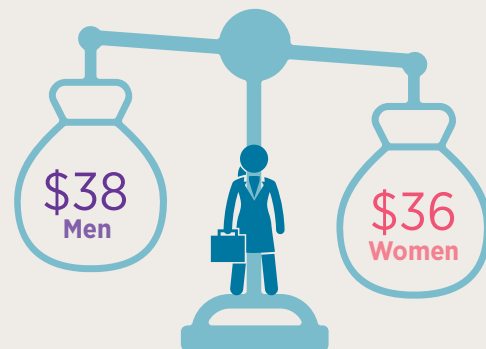
THE HILLS (most advantaged)



\$12/hr

Pay Gap

FAIRFIELD (most disadvantaged)



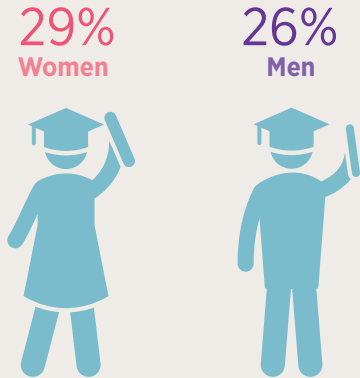
\$2/hr

Pay Gap

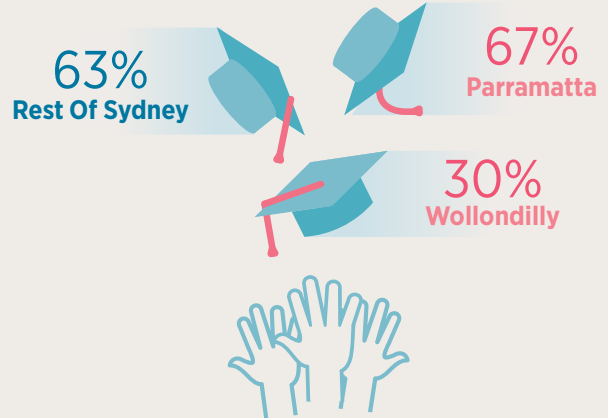
6

Education and work in Western Sydney

BACHELOR'S DEGREE ATTAINMENT IN WESTERN SYDNEY



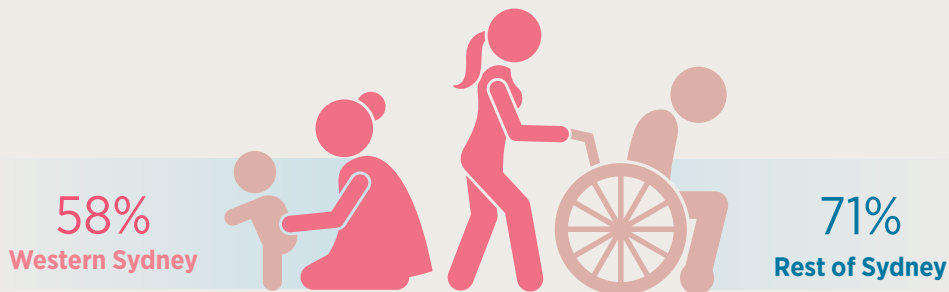
BACHELOR'S DEGREES AMONG FULL-TIME WORKING WOMEN



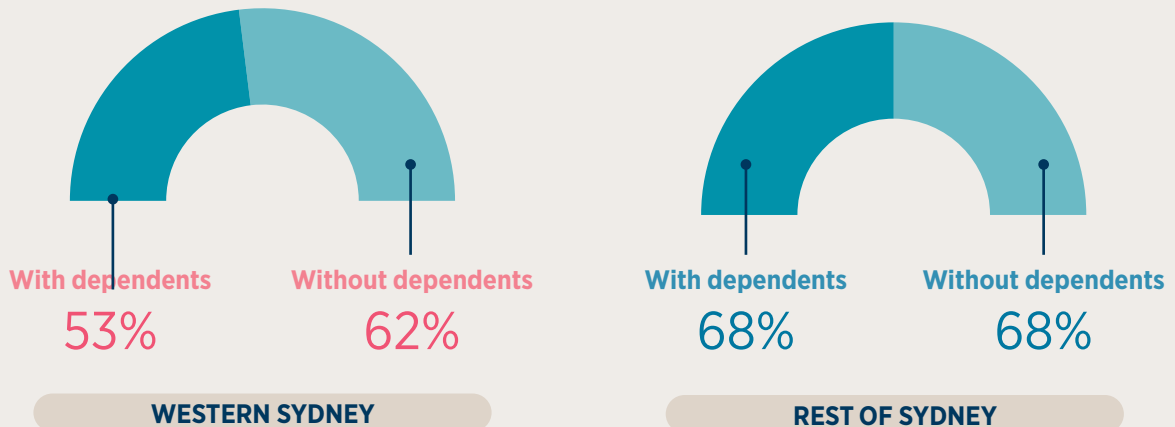
7

Caring duties and women's labour force participation

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF WOMEN WHO PROVIDE UNPAID ASSISTANCE



LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF SOLO MOTHERS



8

Transport and women's labour force participation



With no vehicle



With a vehicle

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES FOR WOMEN IN WESTERN SYDNEY

44%

64%

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES FOR WOMEN IN THE REST OF SYDNEY

64%

76%

WORKING-AGED WOMEN WITH A DRIVER'S LICENCE

78%
Western Sydney



65%
Rest of Sydney

9

Labour force participation of Indigenous women in Western Sydney



59%
Western Sydney

67%
Rest of Sydney

KEY WESTERN SYDNEY LGAS

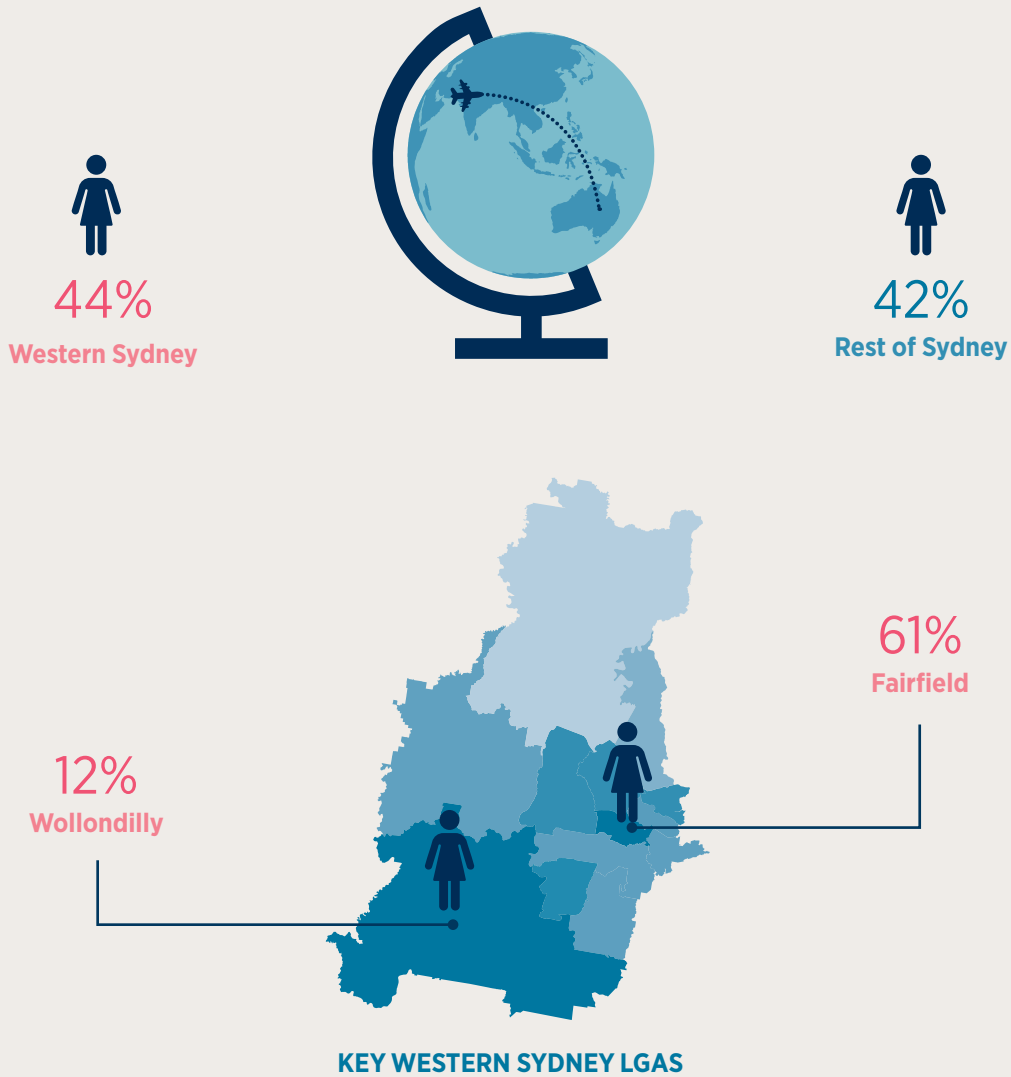
76%
Camden and
The Hills Shire

48%
Fairfield

10

Labour force participation of migrant and refugee women

% OF WOMEN BORN OVERSEAS:

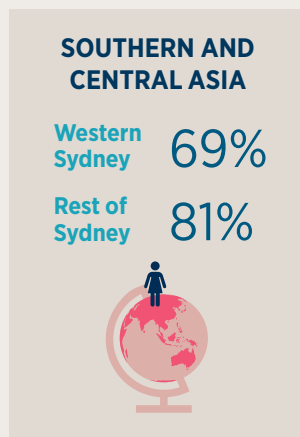
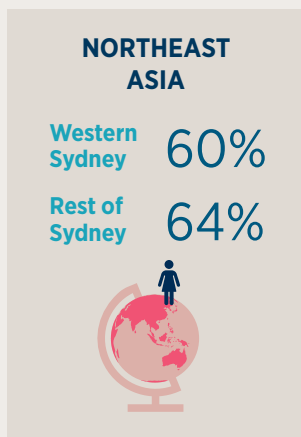
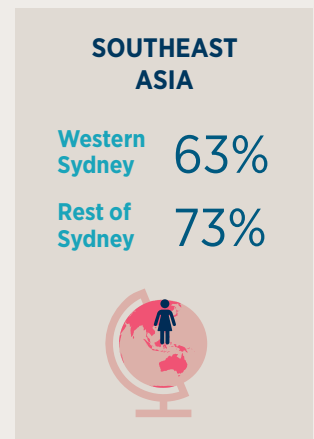
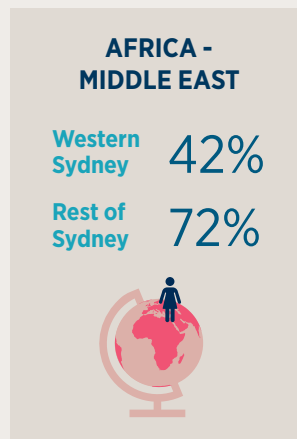
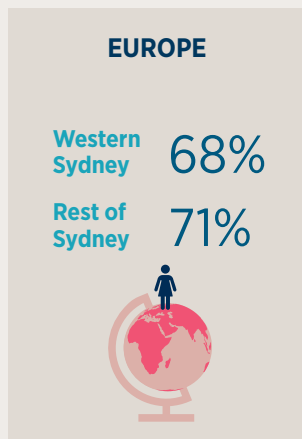
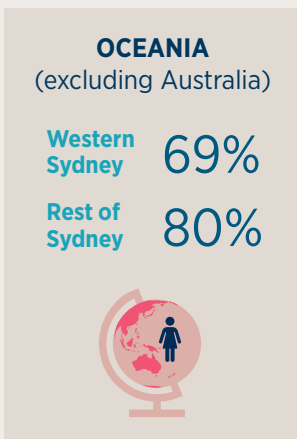


PARTICIPATION OF OVERSEAS-BORN RESIDENTS

AUSTRALIAN-BORN WOMEN

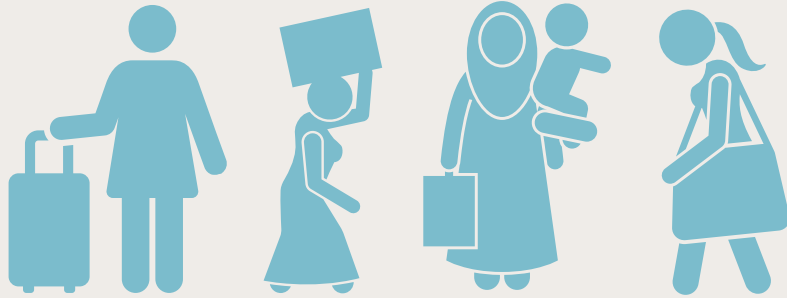


OVERSEAS-BORN WOMEN



PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN WHO ARRIVED BETWEEN 2011-2021:

54% Western Sydney **70%** Rest of Sydney **70%** Blue Mountains **25%** Fairfield



PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN BORN IN AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

42%
Western Sydney



72%
Rest of Sydney

4. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Tailored, place-based strategies are vital for navigating the complex landscape of labour force participation for women in Western Sydney. Such an approach would harness the unique strengths of the diverse women in the region, while addressing their specific needs.

Acknowledging the gaps in existing policies and the scarcity of targeted research, our approach prioritised consultations with key stakeholders in the community. A strength-based perspective underpinned the process, wherein the research team collaborated with a network of stakeholders and organisations deeply invested in uplifting the workforce engagement of women in the region.

The insights and priorities arising from these dialogues are instrumental in shaping the actionable recommendations presented in this report, aiming to create a more inclusive and empowering economic landscape for the women of Western Sydney.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:⁵²

- ▶ 4 x RAG meetings with 20 key stakeholders invited by the research team.
- ▶ 3 x virtual workshops with 27 stakeholders from community organisations, local councils, government agencies and advocacy groups working on issues related to women's labour force participation in Western Sydney.⁵³

Across the various engagement activities, all stakeholders were asked:



- 1 | What are the strengths that Western Sydney offers women residents in terms of participating in the labour force?
- 2 | What are the most significant barriers to the labour force potential of women in Western Sydney?
- 3 | What would help to enable and unlock the labour force potential of women?
- 4 | What specific interventions by different levels of government or industry would have the greatest impact on these barriers?
- 5 | How would we measure the impact of these interventions? What would success look like?

The workshops used plenary conversations and the virtual participatory tool GroupMap, where participants could brainstorm, prioritise and vote on ideas, providing insights into the most significant issues to generate grounded recommendations.

Key themes that emerged from these engagements are discussed below. These findings are organised according to the focus areas that emerged from the consultations: the role of geography and place, unpaid labour and care, and the role of intersectionality in shaping the labour force participation of women. Subsequently, the rest of the report aligns with this structure.

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE POTENTIAL IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Strengths



1. A collaborative and entrepreneurial spirit, bolstered by significant investment and infrastructure development, enhancing job opportunities.
2. Untapped labour market of diverse women who are eager to undertake training and qualifications to enter the workforce.
3. Demographic diversity in the region which includes both young populations and a rich cohort of migrants and refugees, offering a breadth of skills and life experiences.

Barriers



1. Inadequate public transport, high travel costs, housing unaffordability, safety concerns during commutes and insufficient local job and innovation opportunities.
2. Difficulties accessing formal childcare due to high costs, societal expectations of traditional caretaker roles, language and cultural differences, and formal childcare centres lacking the availability and time slots that women need.
3. Intersectional challenges such as limited recognition of international qualifications, language proficiency, ageism, racism, digital literacy, and limited professional networks and awareness of available resources.

Enablers



1. Innovative programs that leverage community connections for role model cultivation, peer support, sustained professional growth, affordable living solutions, enhanced education pathways, technology access and support for women entrepreneurs, all underpinned by long-term, adaptable investment strategies where possible.
2. Integrating flexible work arrangements, accessible and affordable childcare, and policy reform advocacy to support women to balance paid work and family commitments.
3. Empowering women, especially migrants and refugees, through professional development, equitable education, leadership training, paid internships and tailored support services.

THE CONSULTATIONS WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORTING THE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN WESTERN SYDNEY DREW THREE MAIN CONCLUSIONS:

1

A strong **community identity** characterises the workforce of women in Western Sydney. This is underpinned by a network of educational and employment services, active partnerships between universities and government and an entrepreneurial foundation. These strengths are further enriched by the region's broad cultural and generational diversity, being home to a rich community sector attuned to intersectionality. Moreover, the region is experiencing substantial growth, investment and infrastructure development that promises a wide range of opportunities aligned with the unique cultural identities of its residents.

2

Women in Western Sydney face **multifaceted barriers** to workforce participation. These include geographic limitations due to inadequate public transport and high travel costs; care-related challenges like accessing affordable childcare and societal expectations of traditional caretaker roles; and intersectional obstacles like recognising international qualifications, cultural and language barriers; and systemic biases such as ageism and racism. A lack of support programs, professional networks and the necessary resources for navigating the Australian job market compound these barriers.

3

The workforce potential of women in Western Sydney can be enabled by **community-driven initiatives**, adaptable educational programs, accessible resources and holistic support structures. There is a particular need to address housing affordability, flexible, high quality, affordable and culturally sensitive formal childcare services and dismantle systemic workplace biases. In addition, opportunities can be enhanced through professional development opportunities and tailored support, especially for migrant and refugee women, fostering an inclusive and diverse labour force.



5. A SPATIALLY DIVIDED CITY: HOW LOCATION SHAPES WORK, MOBILITY AND GENDER EQUALITY

Image credit: Kyisoe Han

5.1 Key findings

SPATIAL DIVISION OF WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

1. Women's labour force participation rate in Western Sydney (65%) is significantly lower than the average for the RoS (76%), and lower than men in Western Sydney (73%).
2. There are vast differences in women's labour force participation among the LGAs of Western Sydney: with the highest levels recorded in Camden, Hawkesbury, The Hills and Wollondilly (76%), and lowest levels recorded in Fairfield (48%).

THE GEOGRAPHY OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION ACCORDING TO GENDER

3. In economically privileged Western Sydney LGAs, working men are earning much more than working women.
4. LGAs where working women earn the most—The Hills and Parramatta—are also those where the biggest gaps are between women's and men's earnings.
5. In LGAs where full-time working women earn the least (such as Fairfield), there is a smaller gender gap with the earnings of men working full-time.
6. Men in Western Sydney are participating at significantly lower rates in the labour force (73%) than men in RoS (81%).

SPATIAL DIVISION OF WOMEN'S INCOME AND FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT

7. Employed women in Western Sydney earn less on average than women in the RoS. 13% of women in Western Sydney earn \$104,000 or more, compared to 25% of women across RoS.
8. Professional and managerial jobs are concentrated in The Hills, Parramatta and the Blue Mountains, while Fairfield has more women working as labourers.
9. More women in Western Sydney work in non-traditional roles as machinery operators and drivers, particularly in Fairfield, Blacktown, Campbelltown, and Liverpool.

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT AND WOMEN'S WORK

10. Women in Western Sydney who are unemployed or not in the labour force generally record lower levels of education.
11. Parramatta records a high level of educational attainment, with 53% of unemployed women having a bachelor's degree, which is much higher than in Fairfield (14%) and the RoS (43%).

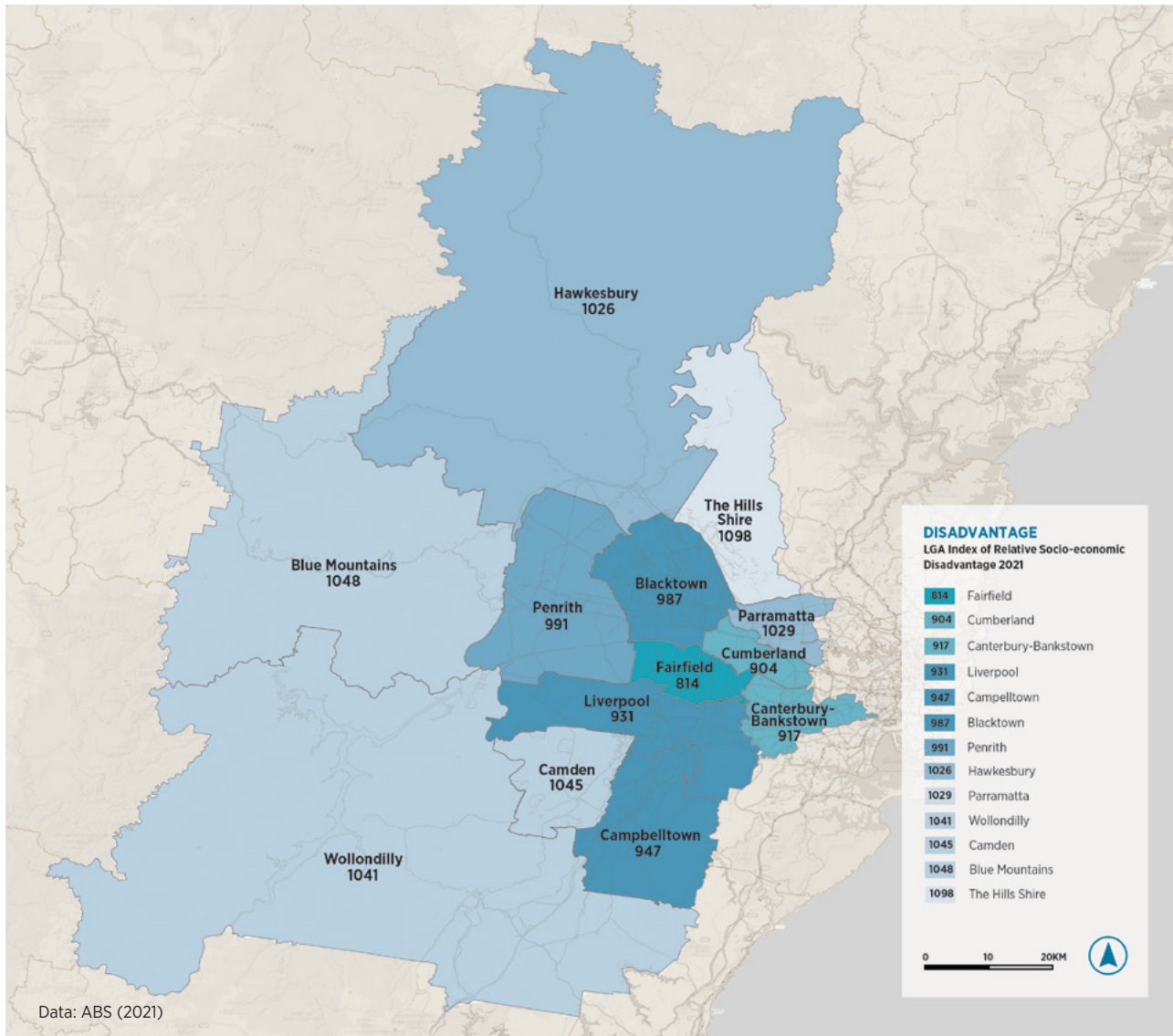
TRANSPORT, MOBILITY, AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

12. Some of the least well-connected LGAs in Western Sydney by public transport (Hawkesbury, The Hills, Wollondilly, Camden) have the highest rates of participation, but also the highest rates of vehicle ownership.
13. In Western Sydney, labour force participation rates for women fall significantly in households with no vehicle (44%) compared to those with a vehicle (64%),
14. The proportion of working-aged women in Western Sydney with a driver's licence (78%) is significantly higher than women in the RoS (65%).

5.2 Spatial inequalities of wealth and income

The wealth disparities dividing Western Sydney and the Rest of Sydney along the so-called 'latte line' are well evidenced.⁵⁴ This line of socio-economic division separates wealthier areas in the north and east of the city from the more disadvantaged areas in the city's south and west. As a class signifier, the latte is used to demarcate a segregated city.⁵⁵ This segregation is reflected in job availability, the housing market, service and infrastructure access and the intergenerational transfer of wealth and property. These disparities and spatial mismatches between populations and resources can compound and reinforce inequalities.⁵⁶ In Sydney, the spatial distribution of inequality is stark.

Map 3 - Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) – Western Sydney



Sydney is a wealthy city. However, its opportunities, resources, infrastructures, and amenities are far from evenly distributed and are distinctly segregated along spatial and social lines.⁵⁷ Australia's wealthiest local councils (e.g., Ku-ring-gai) sit within a 25 km radius of some of its most disadvantaged areas (e.g., Fairfield).⁵⁸ Poverty in the city is intensifying, with high concentrations recorded in Sydney's Western and southwestern suburbs, compared with far lower rates in the city's eastern suburbs.⁵⁹ However, these regional statistics do not apply evenly across Western Sydney. Rather, great diversity exists across the LGAs and different demographic groups, with some geographies and identities disproportionately impacted. Those aged 15–65 and not in the labour force, part-time workers, single parents, people with a disability, Indigenous people, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities are over-represented in data on poverty levels in NSW.⁶⁰

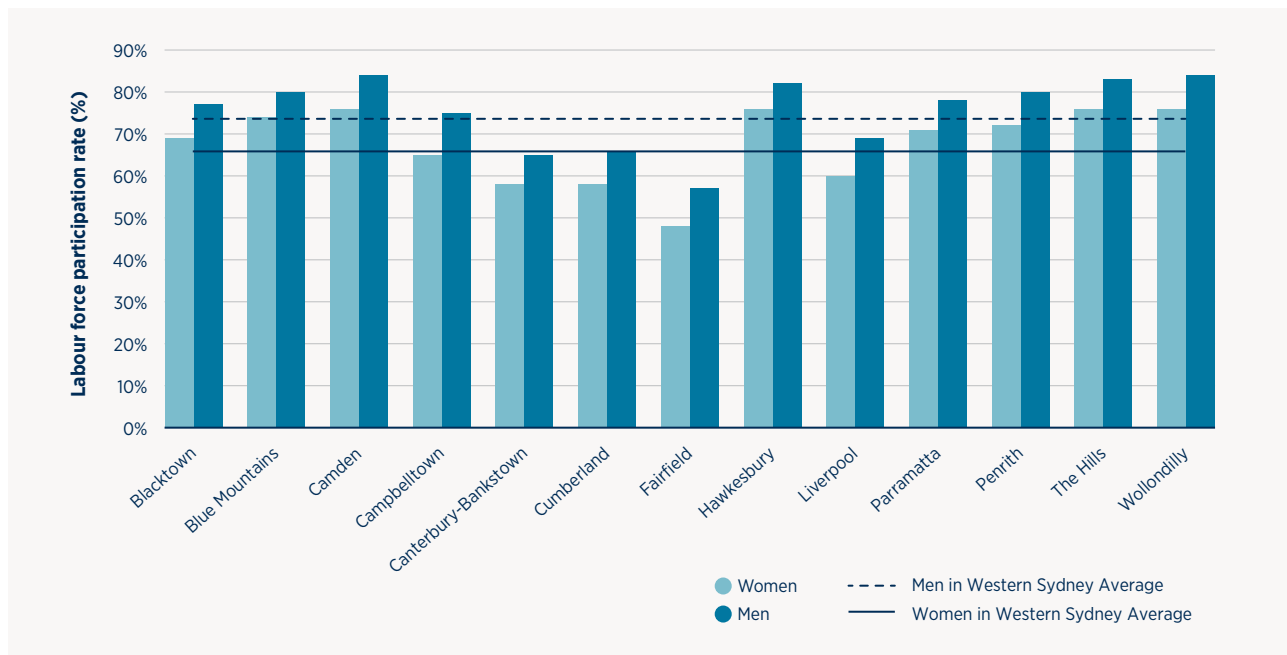
THE GEOGRAPHY OF WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The geographical distribution of women's labour force participation across Sydney and within Western Sydney's different LGAs is another form of spatial inequality which is also gendered. The average labour force participation rate for women of Western Sydney (65%) is significantly lower than the average for the Rest of Sydney (76%) and lower than that of Western Sydney men (73%).

However, these averages mask great differences between Western Sydney LGAs. The LGAs with the highest participation rates—Camden, Hawkesbury, The Hills and Wollondilly—are all on par with the Rest of Sydney (76%). Meanwhile, in southwest Sydney's more diverse LGAs—Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown and Cumberland—rates are much lower, with Fairfield registering under 50%.

Men of Western Sydney also participate in the labour force at lower rates (73%) than men in the Rest of Sydney (81%). In Western Sydney, there is a greater gap between the participation rate of men and women (8% difference) compared with the Rest of Sydney (5% difference).

Figure 5.1 Labour force participation rate - Western Sydney LGAs



AVERAGE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE



INCOME DISPARITIES

Employed women in Western Sydney earn less on average than their counterparts in the Rest of Sydney, with 44% of this cohort earning less than \$52,000 per year compared to just 34% in the Rest of Sydney. Fairfield, Cumberland and Hawkesbury are the LGAs where low-earning women workers are concentrated. At the other end of the scale, just 13% of employed women in Western Sydney earn \$104,000 or more annually, compared to 25% of women in the Rest of Sydney. Western Sydney LGAs with the highest earnings are The Hills Shire, Parramatta and the Blue Mountains.

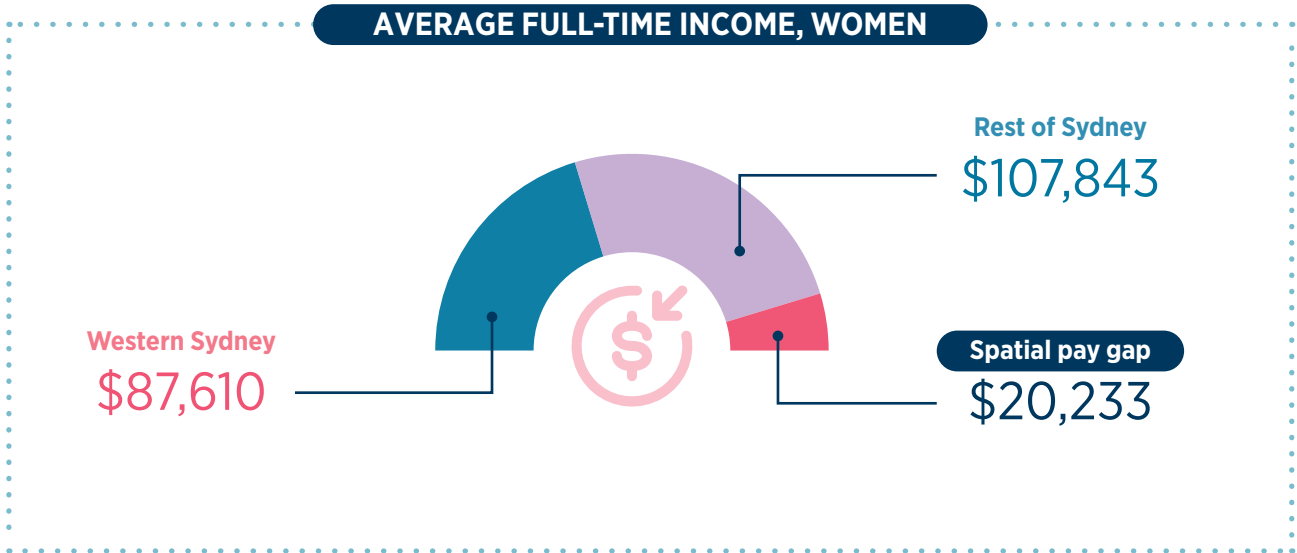


Figure 5.2 Hourly rate for men and women in Western Sydney: full-time

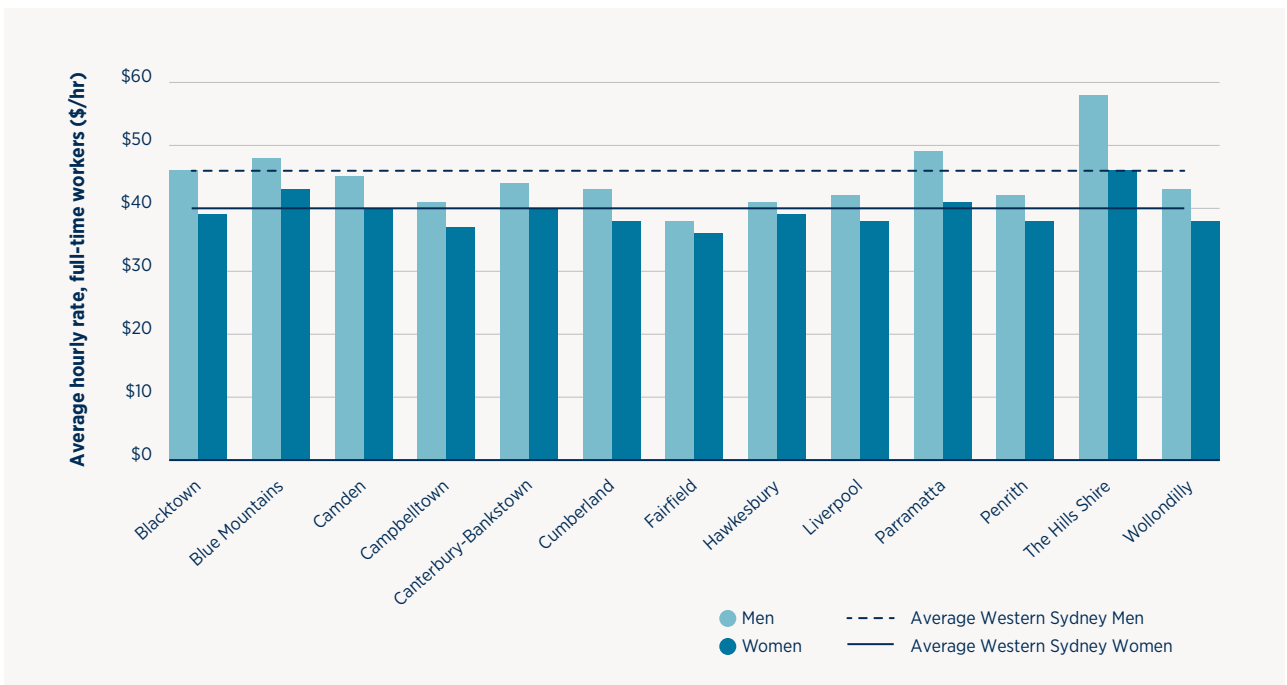
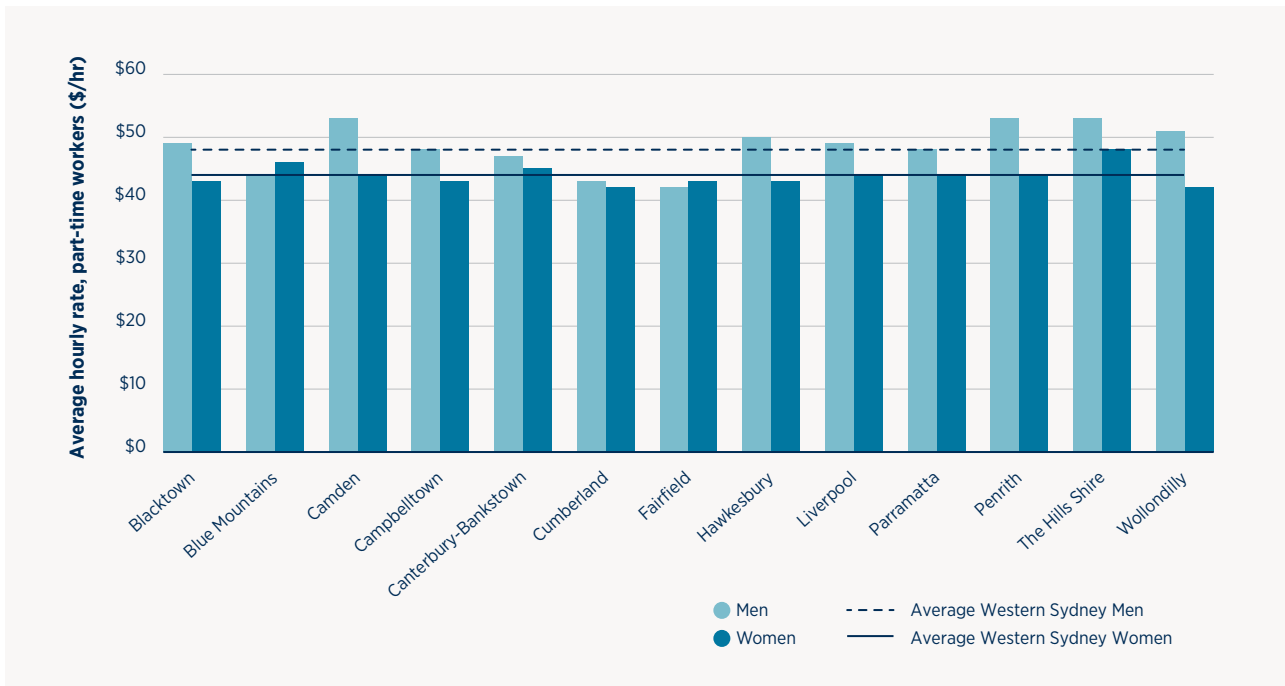


Figure 5.3 Hourly rate for men and women in Western Sydney: part-time



Across all LGAs, women working full-time in Western Sydney earn less than Western Sydney men hourly. The largest difference is seen in The Hills Shire (where men earn an average of \$12/hr more than women), and the least difference is seen in Fairfield (\$2/hr difference). This shows a greater gap between men’s and women’s salaries in the places where men earn higher incomes. In working-class localities, where men are also disadvantaged, the gender wage gap is much smaller. Among part-time workers, women of Western Sydney also generally earn less than men, with the greatest differences in Camden, Penrith and Wollondilly. Exceptions are the Blue Mountains (where women earn \$2/hr more than men) and Fairfield and Cumberland, where hourly earnings for men and women are equal.

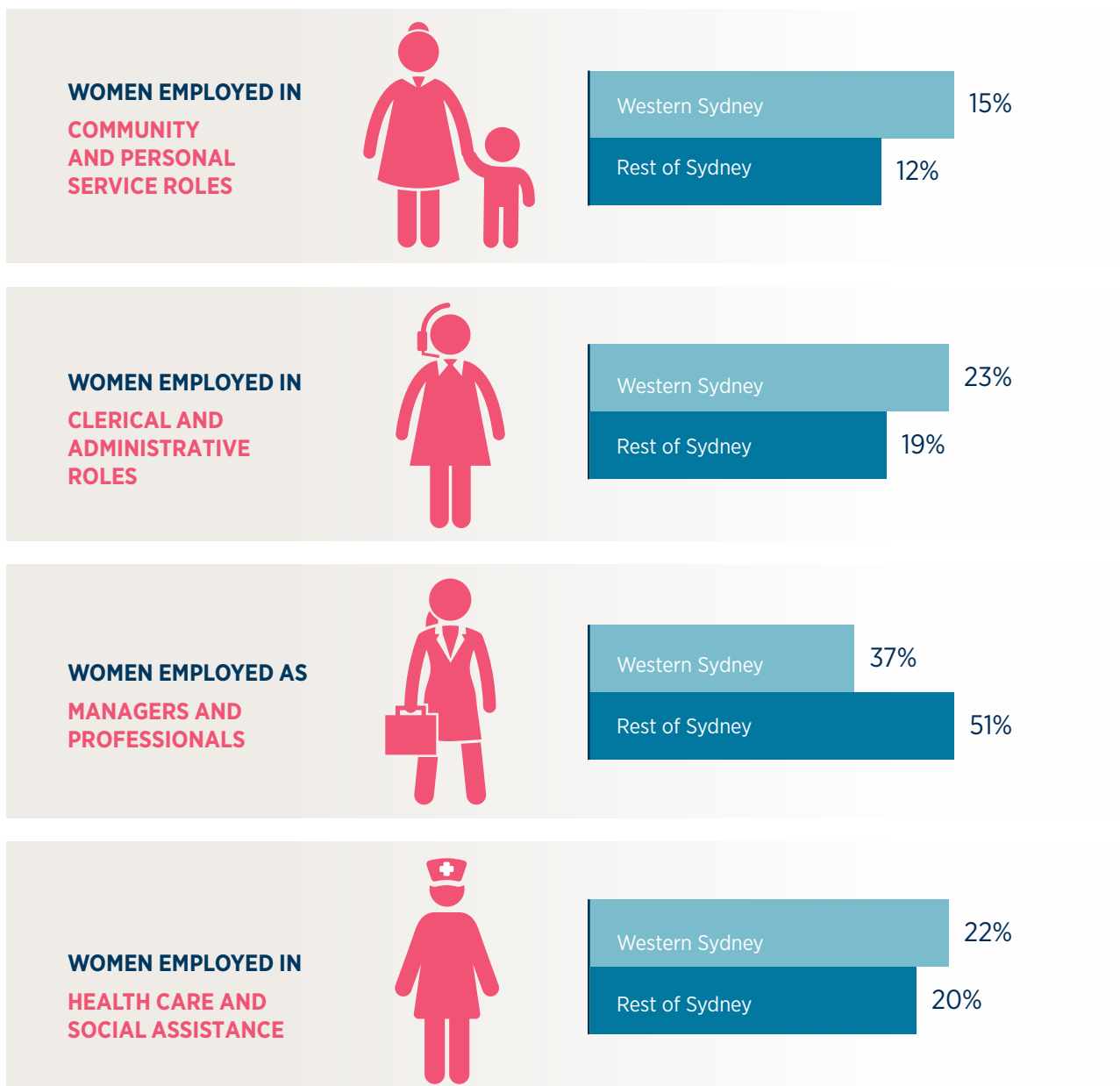


5.3 The geographical distribution of jobs

A key issue shaping the labour force participation of women is the division of housing and population growth in the western and southwestern suburbs, compared with the concentration of job opportunities in the city's eastern and northern regions.⁶¹ It is not only the job opportunities but also the type of work (and salaries) that are distributed in a spatially uneven way.⁶² White-collar jobs, in general, are concentrated in the city's central, northern and eastern parts, home to many professional and managerial

opportunities. In contrast, historically, blue-collar jobs are mainly located in the south and west of the city.⁶³ Western Sydney, once home to the city's manufacturing sector, has recently benefited from a construction boom that has provided male-dominated job opportunities for some labour force segments.⁶⁴ However, at the same time, the feminised 'community and personal care' sector has expanded exponentially.⁶⁵

PROPORTION OF EMPLOYED WOMEN BY OCCUPATION (%)



LOCATION AND OCCUPATION

A spatial and class division is reflected in the types of occupations women hold in Western Sydney. Around 37% of women in Western Sydney are employed in professional or managerial roles, significantly lower than the Rest of Sydney (51%). These types of occupations are generally attached to higher incomes.

The three LGAs with the highest concentration of women in professional or managerial roles are The Hills, Parramatta and the Blue Mountains, where the proportion of women employed as professionals is largely on par with the Rest of Sydney. Women from The Hills LGA are employed as managers, almost on par with those in the Rest of Sydney. The lowest proportion of women employed as managers and professionals is in Fairfield, Campbelltown and Penrith. Western Sydney has a slightly higher proportion of community, personal service, clerical and administrative workers than the Rest of Sydney.

In Fairfield, 12% of employed women work as labourers, double the Western Sydney average and triple the average for the Rest of Sydney. Women constitute 41% of all labourers in the Fairfield LGA. A much higher proportion of women from Western Sydney work as machinery operators and drivers than the Rest of Sydney, with concentrations in Fairfield, Blacktown, Campbelltown and Liverpool. Women working in these non-traditional roles in marginalised areas like Fairfield show how class and economic circumstances shape gender roles and, at times, necessitate that gender is done differently.

However, as demonstrated in Table 5.1, many women in Western Sydney remain employed in highly feminised industries, with health care and social assistance employing 22% of employed women in Western Sydney, followed by education and training (13%) and retail (11%). While the employment industries for women in Western Sydney are largely in line with the Rest of Sydney, the key difference is that far fewer women in Western Sydney are employed in the professional, scientific and technical services (7%), compared with 13% in the Rest of Sydney.

Table 5.1 Proportion of employed women by industry - Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

	WESTERN SYDNEY	REST OF SYDNEY
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	1%	0%
Mining	0%	0%
Manufacturing	5%	3%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1%	0%
Construction	3%	3%
Wholesale Trade	3%	3%
Retail Trade	11%	9%
Accommodation and Food Services	6%	6%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	3%	2%
Information Media and Telecommunications	1%	3%
Financial and Insurance Services	6%	7%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	2%	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	7%	13%
Administrative and Support Services	3%	3%
Public Administration and Safety	6%	5%
Education and Training	13%	13%
Health Care and Social Assistance	22%	20%
Arts and Recreation Services	1%	2%
Other Services	3%	3%
Not Stated / Inadequately Described	5%	4%
Total	100%	100%

5.4 Education and labour force participation

The Western Sydney workforce is rapidly changing in line with rapid population growth and shifting demographics.⁶⁶ From 2016, members of the 'professionals' category resident in Western Sydney were greater than any other occupation in the region; Western Sydney became a supplier of knowledge workers for other parts of the city.⁶⁷ And from 2021, Western Sydney residents recorded higher educational attainment levels than the national average.⁶⁸ Over 27% of Western Sydney residents hold a university degree, compared with 26.3% nationally, yet remain behind the Rest of Sydney average of 43.7%.⁶⁹

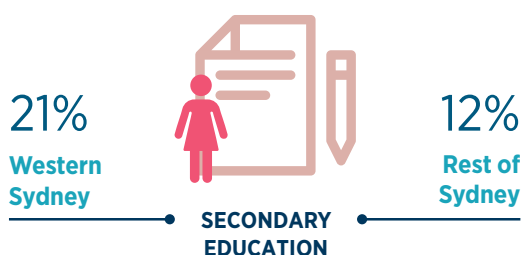
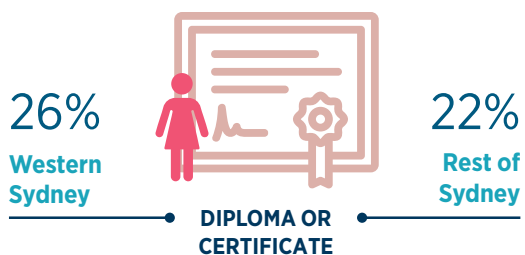
Table 5.2 Educational attainment and women's labour force participation rate - Western Sydney LGAs

EMPLOYED	POSTGRADUATE OR BACHELOR DEGREE	DIPLOMA OR CERTIFICATE	SECONDARY EDUCATION	NO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
Blacktown	83%	75%	52%	69%
Blue Mountains	85%	77%	60%	68%
Camden	88%	81%	65%	75%
Campbelltown	81%	73%	51%	64%
Canterbury-Bankstown	78%	66%	42%	61%
Cumberland	78%	65%	40%	58%
Fairfield	79%	61%	37%	57%
Hawkesbury	88%	81%	66%	77%
Liverpool	82%	68%	45%	62%
Parramatta	81%	73%	52%	68%
Penrith	86%	80%	62%	74%
The Hills	85%	79%	59%	73%
Wollondilly	89%	82%	66%	74%
Western Sydney	82%	73%	50%	66%
Rest of Sydney	86%	79%	59%	72%

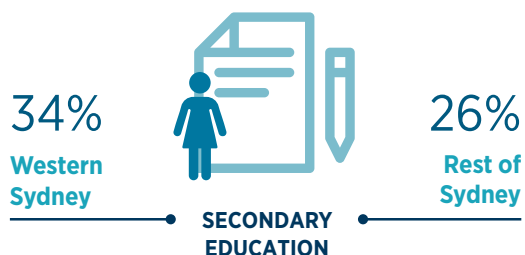
A clear connection exists between educational attainment and labour force participation rates of women across Western Sydney. Among Western Sydney women with a university degree, participation rates are high (82%) but still slightly short of the Rest of Sydney (86%). However, in certain LGAs—Camden, Hawkesbury, Penrith and Wollondilly—participation rates are on par or higher than the Rest of Sydney, while the Blue Mountains and The Hills are almost on par at 85%. Participation in the labour force is lowest across all LGAs for women who report finishing only secondary education. In contrast, women who have not completed secondary education participate in the labour force at higher rates, possibly due to economic necessity. Across all education levels, participation rates are lowest in Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland and Fairfield LGAs.

There is a correlation between women’s educational attainment levels and their participation as full-time and part-time workers (see Appendix 5 Supplementary Data). Few women working full-time in Western Sydney have a university degree (48%) compared to the RoS (63%). However, higher numbers of full-time working women in Western Sydney have diploma or certificate qualification levels (26%) compared to the RoS (22%). Western Sydney has far more women working full-time who have attained only secondary education (21%) compared to the RoS (12%). Similar trends can be observed among part-time working women in Western Sydney: 32% hold a university degree, relative to 43% across the RoS, and 29% hold a diploma or certificate compared to 26% across the RoS.

WOMEN EMPLOYED FULL-TIME BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

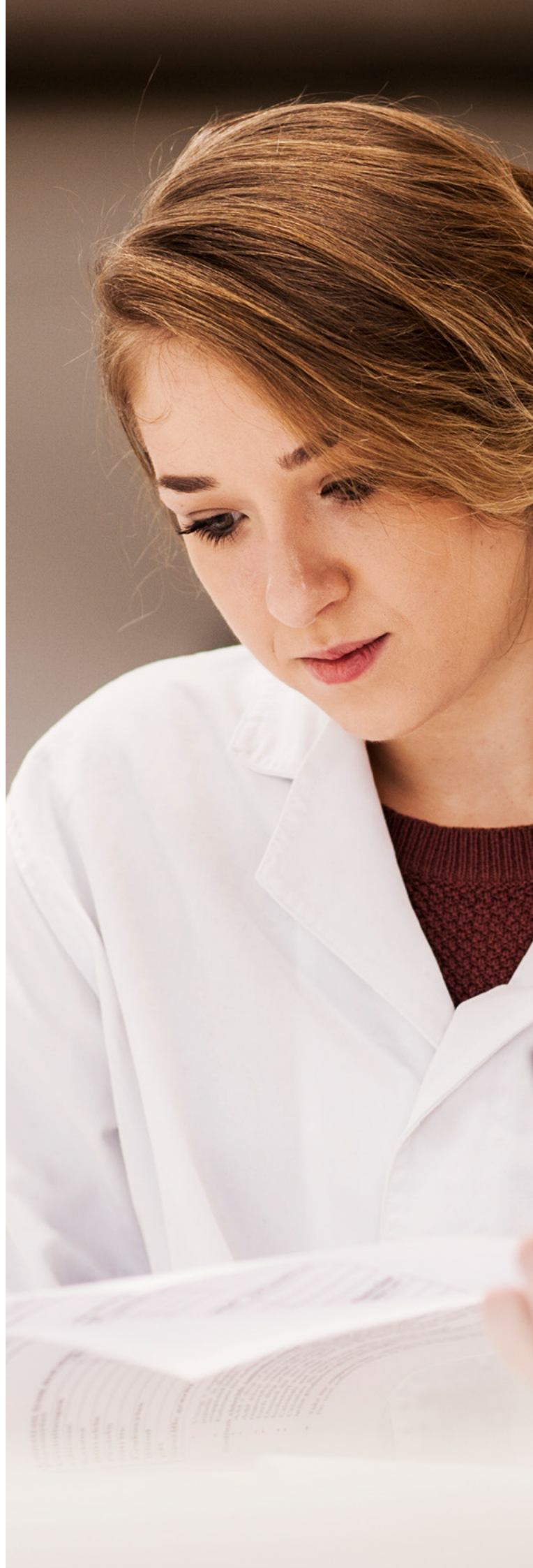
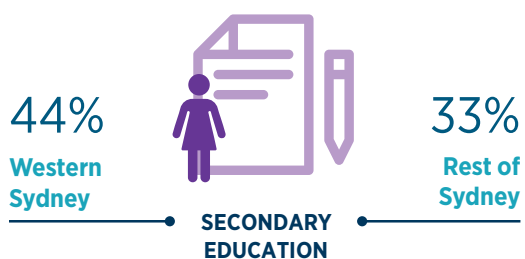
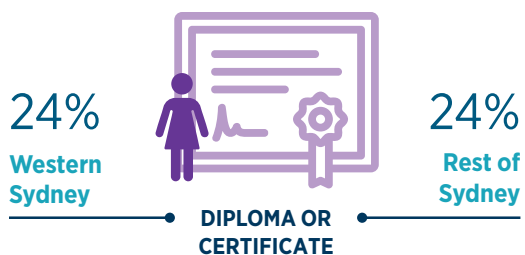


WOMEN EMPLOYED PART-TIME BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Conversely, unemployed women in Western Sydney as well as those not in the labour force record lower education levels; the majority have obtained secondary education (44% of unemployed and 59% not in the labour force). These are higher proportions than those in the RoS, highlighting the links between educational attainment and better job outcomes and how these outcomes are unevenly distributed across the city.

WOMEN WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT





THE ROLE OF LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The highest rates of education attainment are recorded in Parramatta. Among full-time women workers residing in Parramatta, 67% have a bachelor's degree or higher. This surpasses all other LGAs in the region and is higher than the average for the RoS (63%). While women working part-time tend to have lower levels of education overall, 48% of part-time working women in Parramatta have a university degree. This is higher than all other LGAs in the region and higher than the RoS (43%). Strikingly, among unemployed women, Parramatta still records a high degree of educational attainment: 53% of unemployed women in the LGA have a bachelor's degree, significantly higher than the RoS (43%) and far higher than other LGAs in the region (e.g., Fairfield 14%; Hawkesbury 16%). Among those not in the labour force, 34% of women in Parramatta hold university qualifications, compared to 29% in the RoS.

Parramatta therefore features a highly educated cohort of women, which includes those who are not in paid employment. However, employment rates suggest that there are highly qualified women in this LGA who may not be finding suitable work in line with their qualifications, skills, needs and aspirations. This pattern requires further research to better understand the labour force dynamics impacting women in Parramatta, including local employment and childcare needs.

Western Sydney records an overall jobs deficit due to the mismatch between the region's population size, qualification levels and locally available jobs.⁷⁰ This deficit forces many residents to undertake significant travel to access suitable work. Two groups that suffer from the lack of local jobs are entry-level, low-skilled workers, forced to take on short-term work in different locations, and degree-holding professionals or knowledge workers who commute to the city.⁷¹ Census data from 2021 shows that 30% of the region's residents, or 327,795 people, travelled from Western Sydney daily to access jobs.⁷² Over 134,000 of these people travel to Sydney city for work.⁷³

While one way to bridge the divide is to create more professional job opportunities in Western Sydney,⁷⁴ for now, commuting remains the primary means to cross the job divide for many Western Sydney residents.⁷⁵ Commuting patterns and preferences are highly gendered, with women balancing their multiple commitments at work and home. The geography of jobs and workers is therefore essential to understanding the gender wage gap.⁷⁶ International research shows the combination of gendered commuting patterns and spatial distribution of jobs ultimately determines the gender wage gap between men and women.⁷⁷

5.5 Gender and transport

Gender and mobility are interconnected: how people move, where they move, how fast, how often and by what method is highly gendered.⁷⁸ Patterns of movement, particularly for work, can also reproduce gender hierarchies. This is reflected in mobility patterns concerning work, where there is a strong link between gender, transportation and labour market outcomes for women.⁷⁹ Women generally travel shorter distances to work than men, which is attributed to gender roles and the household division of domestic work, care and employment.⁸⁰ Women often remain more responsible for care work and domestic duties and are more spatially constrained.⁸¹ Women are also more likely to travel under time pressures to meet school drop-off and pick-up times, frequently respond to ad-hoc care needs (i.e., when a child falls sick at school), and use slower and cheaper travel modes like walking and public transport.⁸² Even when women have high car ownership and driver's licence attainment, their travel time is often disproportionate for household-related duties.⁸³

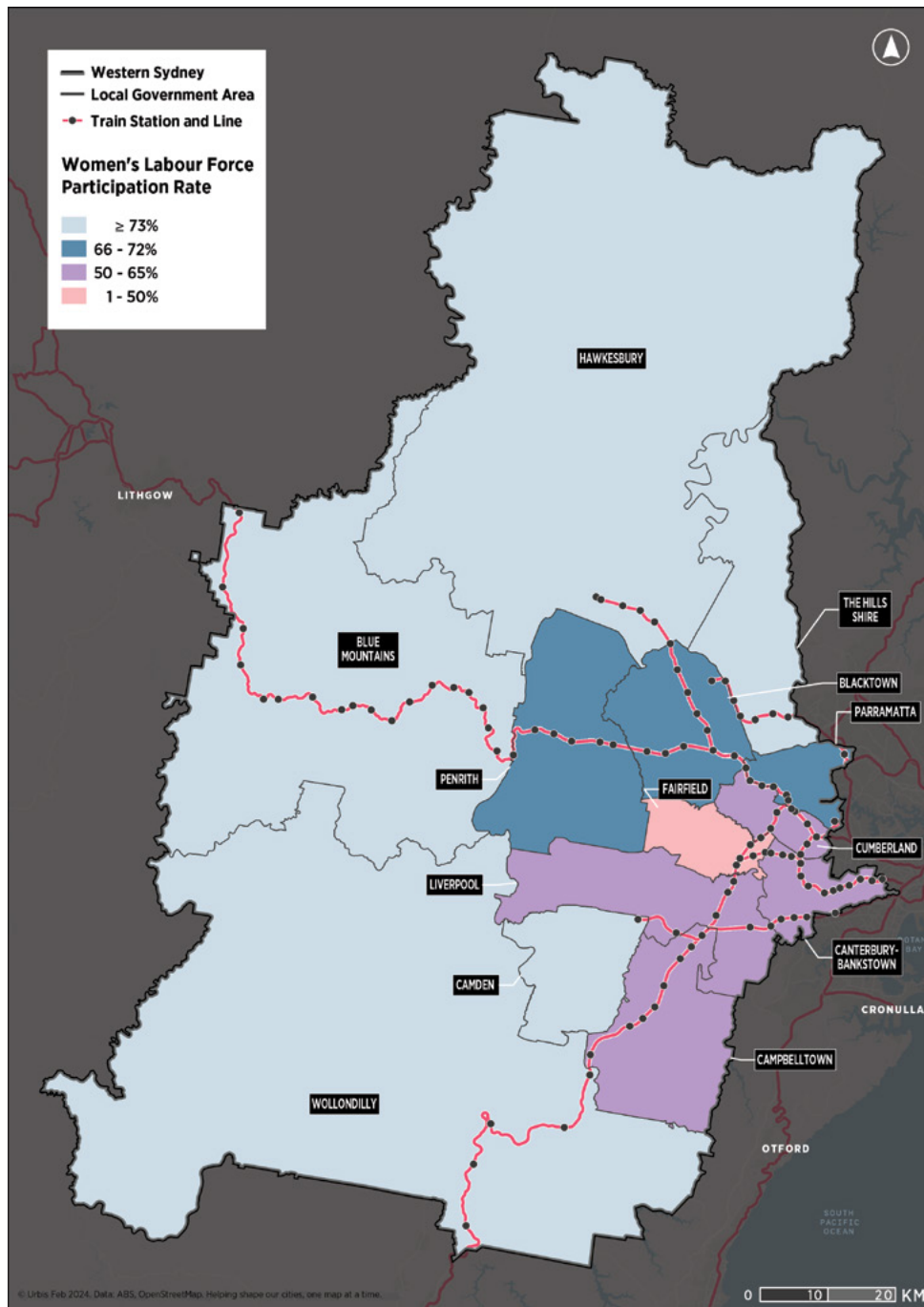
The division of labour within the home, including the care of children, influences the transport choices and mobility

patterns of women.⁸⁴ One way to think about the distance and direction of a person travelling from home is to consider their 'spatial footprint'.⁸⁵ Spatial footprints are shaped by ideas of what it means to be a good mother versus a good father. For many women, this means staying closer to the home and children. Women are more likely to take up jobs with flexibility, part-time options and predictable hours to meet their care responsibilities.⁸⁶ However, women often forego higher wages for these benefits, as these types of jobs will often be lower paid, contributing to the gender wage gap.⁸⁷

Choosing a job close to home and reducing commute time also often comes with a wage penalty.⁸⁸ If high-wage jobs are located far from workers' homes, such as in Western Sydney, workers will likely face a large wage penalty for choosing a shorter commute.⁸⁹ Many women do not earn salaries high enough to justify the commute to work outside Western Sydney, and the childcare costs. In community consultations, Western Sydney residents reported these key challenges, highlighting that transport in the region does not meet their mobility needs.⁹⁰

ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Map 4: Proximity to train station by LGA



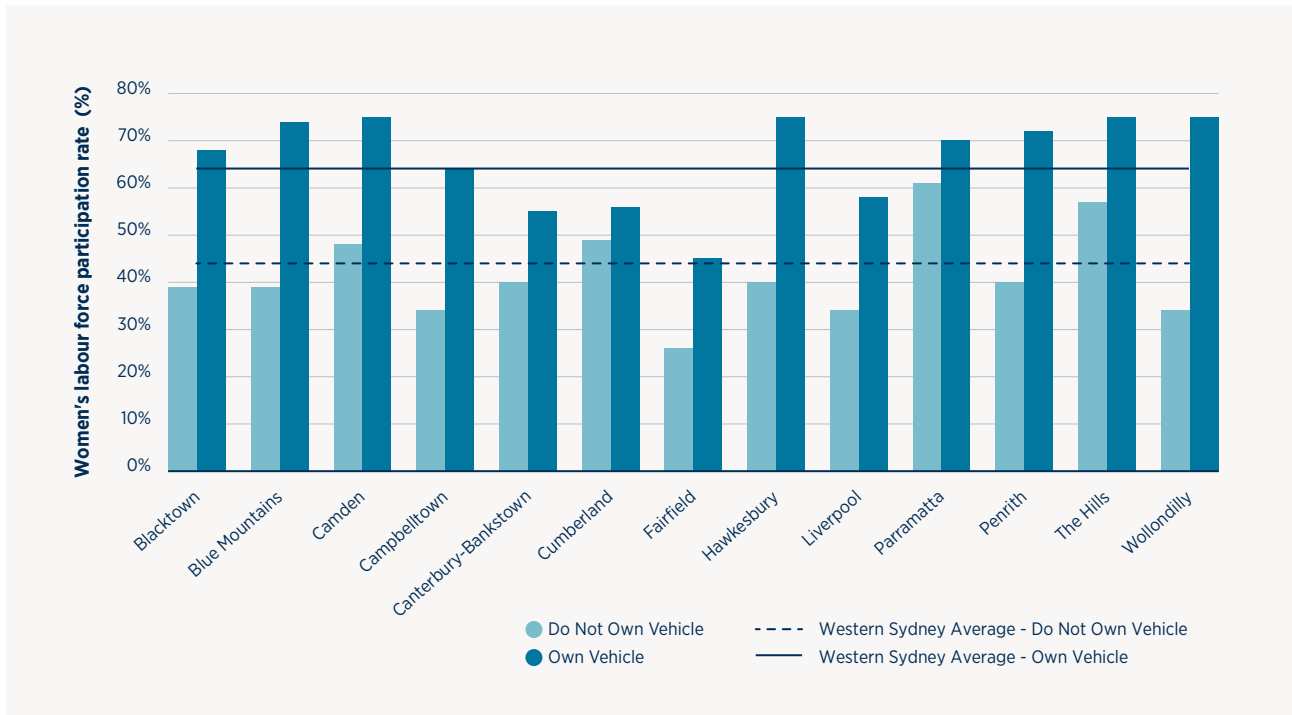
The LGAs across Western Sydney have vastly different public transport access levels. Examining the map of labour force participation for women regarding train station proximity (see Map 4: Proximity to a train station) illustrates that some of the least connected LGAs are, in fact, those with the highest labour force participation (Hawkesbury, Blue Mountains, The Hills, Wollondilly, Camden). At the same time, Sydney's inner southwest appears to have better connectivity and lower participation rates (i.e., Cumberland and Canterbury-Bankstown). However, this should not be interpreted to mean that transport is not an issue, but rather, a range of

other factors shape labour force participation.

Importantly, the type of work available in the local area is one relevant factor. Outer Western Sydney LGAs record the highest levels of women employed in professional, clerical and administrative occupations, which are more likely to have flexible work options like working from home.⁹¹ In addition, these LGAs (Blue Mountains, Camden, Hawkesbury, The Hills, Wollondilly) also record the highest vehicle ownership levels: 99%-100% of employed women in these LGAs have a household vehicle (compared to 92% on average in the RoS).

PRIVATE VEHICLE AND DRIVER'S LICENCE OWNERSHIP

Figure 5.4 Women's labour force participation rate by vehicle ownership - Western Sydney



TRANSPORT AND WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

WITH NO VEHICLE

44%
Western Sydney

64%
Rest of Sydney



WITH A VEHICLE

64%
Western Sydney

76%
Rest of Sydney



WORKING-AGED WOMEN WITH A DRIVER'S LICENCE

78%
Western Sydney



65%
Rest of Sydney

In Western Sydney, participation rates fall significantly in households with no vehicle (44%) compared to those with a vehicle (64%), which is comparatively lower than participation rates among those without a vehicle in the RoS (68%). In some LGAs (Cumberland, Parramatta and Canterbury-Bankstown), vehicle ownership does not correlate to a big difference in participation compared with other LGAs (Wollondilly, Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury) where vehicle ownership has significantly different participation rates. Among women who are unemployed and those not in the labour force, the highest proportion without vehicles is recorded in Parramatta.

Figure 5.5 Proportion of licence holders by gender (%)

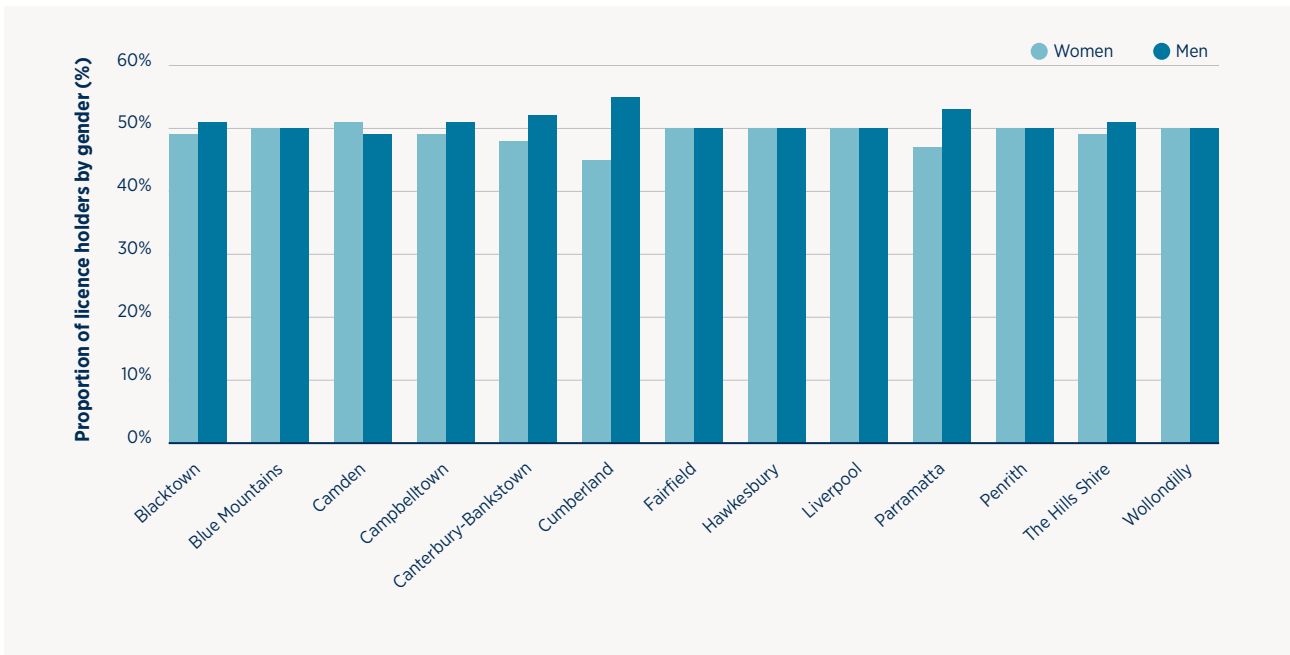
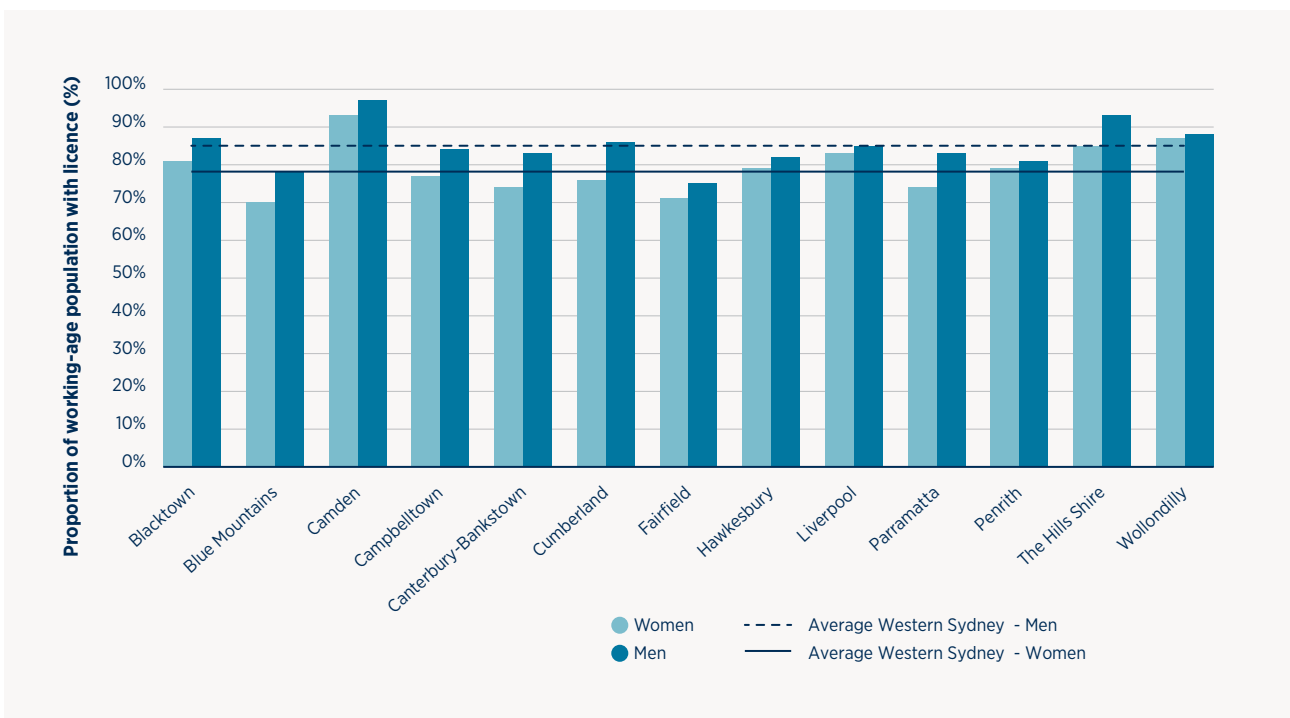


Figure 5.6 Proportion of working-age population with licence (%)



Women constitute almost half of all licensed drivers in Western Sydney (49%), higher than the RoS (48%). The proportion of working-aged women in Western Sydney with a driver’s licence (78%) is significantly higher than that of women in the RoS (65%). In some LGAs, women constitute 50% or slightly more of the licensed population (Blue Mountains, Camden, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly). Cumberland and Parramatta record the largest variance in licence ownership between men and women (10%), followed by The Hills (9%). Women in Camden have the highest licence ownership rate (93%), while women in the Blue Mountains have the lowest (70%).

Women constitute almost half of all licensed drivers in Western Sydney (49%), higher than the RoS (48%). The proportion of working-aged women in Western Sydney with a driver's licence (78%) is significantly higher than that of women in the RoS (65%). In some LGAs, women constitute 50% or slightly more of the licensed population (Blue Mountains, Camden, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly). Cumberland and Parramatta record the largest variance in licence ownership between men and women (10%), followed by The Hills (9%). Women in Camden record the highest licence ownership rate (93%), while women in the Blue Mountains record the lowest (70%).

TRANSPORT AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The correlation between labour force participation and transport is an area that requires further investigation. The analysis in Figure 5.4 on vehicle ownership and labour force participation shows that in well-connected LGAs with high labour force participation (e.g., Parramatta), vehicle ownership seems to have minimal impact on participation rates. In contrast, it registers a significant difference in participation rates in other high-performing LGAs like Penrith and the Blue Mountains. At the same time, in some LGAs with the lowest labour force participation and high train connectivity, we see high vehicle ownership rates (Canterbury Bankstown and Cumberland) and high rates of women with licences (e.g., Fairfield). In addition, certain cohorts are more likely to have limited access to transport. For example, transport can be a barrier for Indigenous jobseekers (depending on location), and people with a disability routinely describe transport as the biggest challenge they face regarding work.⁹²

Census data is limited because it cannot explain if women can access the household vehicle for work or if another household member uses it for their daily commute. While public transport may be 'accessible' in the sense it is nearby and affordable, women may face other barriers. In 2021-22, 80% of women surveyed reported that they did not use transport alone after dark.⁹³ Among those who did, 23% felt unsafe.⁹⁴ In a context like Western

Sydney, where health care and personal assistance are key industries that employ women, transport can pose a significant problem.⁹⁵ Women in these fields either often work shift work (e.g., hospital settings) and/or need a car to perform care and support work (e.g., aged-care and disability support services).

However, what is evident is that the commuting patterns of women in Western Sydney are determined not by gender and geography alone but, importantly, by socio-economic position. As demonstrated in Map 4, some of the most connected by public transport areas are the lowest income areas in the heart of Sydney's southwest. Here, the lowest labour force participation rates are observed amongst women. In one study in Brazil, researchers concluded that those living in whiter and higher-income communities had more access to quality jobs and education than Black and poor communities, regardless of the transport options available.⁹⁶ While transport is certainly an important enabling factor in the labour force participation of women, geographical location and socioeconomic position remain key contributing factors.

INTER-CONNECTED LIVES

It is clear that women's mobility and commuting patterns highlight that women do not live in isolation but, rather, their movements are interwoven with the lives of their loved ones.⁹⁷ Time is considered not only an individual resource but a family resource, and therefore, how one household member spends their time impacts how other members spend theirs.⁹⁸ This applies to decisions around work and care and is clearly the case with commuting. While these issues might appear to be private practicalities for couples and families to decide among themselves, such decisions and life arrangements cannot be separated from the local context.⁹⁹

Relevant here are urban planning policies, childcare policies and infrastructure, transport design and policies, access to shops and services, and the quality of schools, roads and other local infrastructure, all of which can reduce time pressures on parents.¹⁰⁰ In this way, urban planning and social policy form part of the care work needed to make life in the city liveable.¹⁰¹



Image credit: Kyisoe Han



6. VALUING THE UNSEEN LABOUR OF CARE IN WESTERN SYDNEY'S ECONOMY

6.1 Key findings

CHILDREN AND CARE WORK

1. The presence of dependent children has significant impacts on women's labour force participation in key LGAs such as Liverpool, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland and Fairfield.
2. In Western Sydney, there is a larger disparity (11% difference) in women's participation rate between solo parent families with dependents (53%) and without dependents (64%), compared with RoS (6% difference).
3. In some LGAs (The Hills, Wollondilly, Camden and Hawkesbury), participation rates of women in the labour force are less impacted by the presence of dependent children. This is in line with the Rest of Sydney.
4. Fairfield has the largest disparity between the labour force participation rate of women with dependents (41%) versus those with no dependents (53%), followed by Canterbury-Bankstown (11%) and Liverpool (10%).

UNPAID CARE

5. Regardless of whether they are in the labour force or not, women in Western Sydney, on average, provide more unpaid childcare than women in the RoS.
6. Women in Western Sydney who provide unpaid assistance to others (e.g., family members) participate in the labour market at much lower rates (58%) than those in the Rest of Sydney (71%).
7. Rates of unpaid childcare and assistance vary greatly among Western Sydney LGAs:
 - ▶ The Hills, Wollondilly, Blue Mountains, and Camden reported high rates of unpaid childcare and unpaid assistance.
 - ▶ Low unpaid care and assistance rates were reported in Fairfield, Cumberland and Canterbury-Bankstown. However, this may be due to language barriers in interpreting the ABS Census question or different cultural understandings around what constitutes unpaid labour and care.

HOURS OF PAID EMPLOYMENT

8. The proportion of employed women working full-time in Western Sydney (58%) is very similar to the average for RoS (60%).
9. The average number of hours worked by employed women in Western Sydney (32 hours) aligns with the RoS average (33 hours), with little variation across Western Sydney LGAs.
10. The gender gap between average hours worked by employed women (32) and hours worked by men (36) in Western Sydney is 4 hours, which is less than the 5-hour gap between women's average hours (33) and men's average hours (38) in the RoS.
11. Employed women of Western Sydney do not work fewer hours than those in the Rest of Sydney. However, given that women of Western Sydney, on average, earn less than women in the RoS, they likely also experience poorer working conditions and greater precarity in their contracts, as well as the lifetime impacts of earning a lower income.

6.2 Women's unpaid labour

The workforce participation of women is profoundly shaped by their unpaid work in the home, family and community. It is well documented that traditional gender roles persist across heterosexual households in Australia, with women performing the bulk of domestic work in the home. While attitudes towards men and fathering have changed significantly in recent decades, and progressive changes in parental leave provisions have taken place, women still perform most of the childcare and other care work in households and communities. Women remain fundamentally responsible for providing care to children, elderly family members and people with disabilities.¹⁰²



In 2020–21, **on average, women reported performing 4 hours and 31 minutes** of unpaid domestic, care and voluntary work daily, compared to 3 hours and 12 minutes on average for men.¹⁰³

When women in heterosexual households earn more than male partners or **work more hours, they still perform most of the housework,** and this only increases with the arrival of children.¹⁰⁴



Based on the ABS 'Time Use Survey', Treasury estimates the value of **unpaid care work** in 2020–21 was approximately \$165.1 billion, equivalent to around 8% of gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁰⁵ **Women perform this care work to the detriment of their careers, financial security and, often, wellbeing.**¹⁰⁶

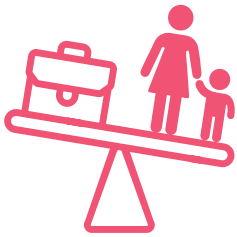
Care work has traditionally been seen as 'women's work' or a 'labour of love' and has, therefore, been largely undervalued. How we think about work within the home is not only shaped by norms around gender, but also race and class.¹⁰⁷ The feminised labour required to sustain families, communities and society has often gone unmeasured and unpaid, and the real value of this work is still insufficiently recognised.¹⁰⁸ This work, often called 'social reproduction',¹⁰⁹ consists of all activities needed to reproduce society and take care of its members, including children, the elderly and the sick. Much of this work happens within the home and domestic sphere.

A Centre for Western Sydney paper, *Untapped Talent*, uncovered that women in Western Sydney, on average, provide more unpaid childcare than women in the Rest of Sydney.¹¹⁰ This is true across all employment statuses—whether women are employed full-time, part-time, unemployed, or not in the labour force; women in Western Sydney, on average, provide more unpaid childcare than women in the Rest of Sydney.

UNPAID WORK AND WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

The dominant definitions of "work" exclude a wide range of activities largely performed by women outside formal workplaces and are essential for maintaining life.¹¹¹ This is important when analysing the labour force participation of women because, while some may not engage in paid employment, they may perform a huge amount of unaccounted-for work. Feminist scholars have argued we must broaden the concept of work to include a wider range of human activities—both paid and unpaid—including those that take place outside formal workplaces.¹¹²

- ▶ **Care work includes** 'the work of reproduction, sourcing food and cooking, cleaning, securing and making home, caring within households, and getting by in a community of strangers... practices on which all life depends'.¹¹³



▶ Women’s responsibilities to provide unpaid care and domestic work are barriers to workforce participation by reducing the hours available for paid work.¹¹⁴

▶ Almost one-quarter of Australian women and just 0.2% of men reported the main reason they could not start a job or work more hours in 2020–21 was due to caring for children.¹¹⁵

▶ A 2022 study estimates that 20% of the gender pay gap between women and men in Australia is caused by interruptions to women’s careers due to family and care responsibilities.¹¹⁶ A further 11% of the gender pay gap is attributed to women working part-time.¹¹⁷

WOMEN’S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY PROVISION OF UNPAID CHILDCARE

WESTERN SYDNEY

64%

Did not provide childcare

62%

Did provide childcare



REST OF SYDNEY

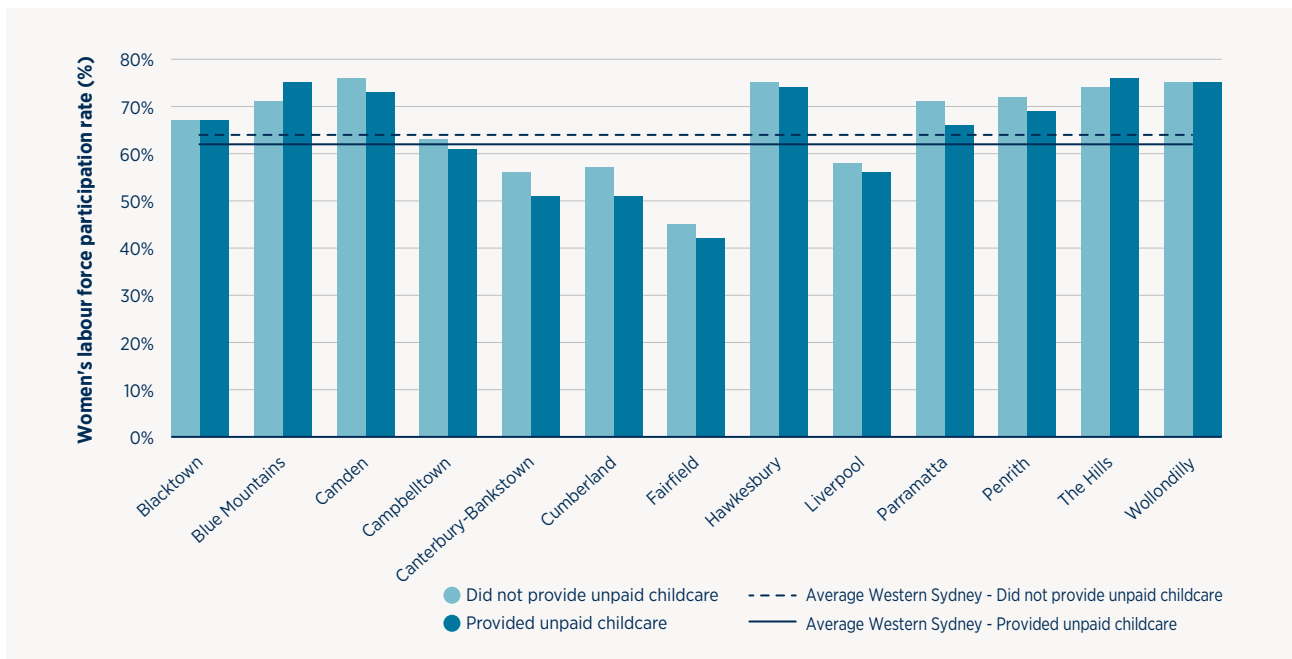
75%

Did not provide childcare

75%

Did provide childcare

Figure 6.1 Women’s labour force participation rate by provision of unpaid childcare - Western Sydney



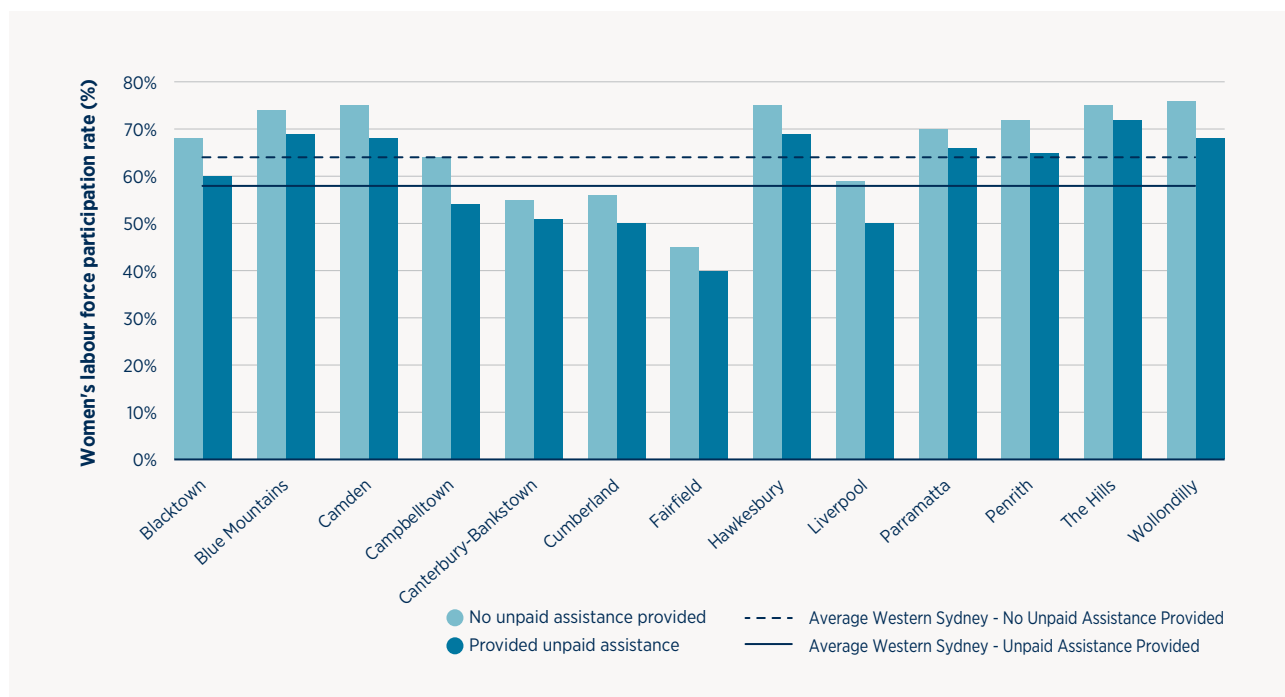
The effects of unpaid childcare on women in Sydney is not equally distributed across the city. Women’s labour force participation in the Rest of Sydney remains steady at 75% regardless of whether women provide unpaid childcare or not. Whereas in Western Sydney, there are slightly lower participation rates among women who provide childcare (62%) compared with those who do not provide childcare (64%). It is possible however that the rates of women’s unpaid childcare are being under-reported in the census due to language barriers in interpreting the ABS Census question, or different cultural understandings around what constitutes unpaid labour and care. If this is the case, then these statistics would reflect a greater impact of unpaid childcare on labour force participation.

The effects upon participation rates are more pronounced for women providing unpaid assistance. Only 58% of women in Western Sydney who provided unpaid assistance also participated in the labour market compared with 71% in the RoS.

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES OF WOMEN WHO PROVIDE UNPAID ASSISTANCE



Figure 6.2 Women’s labour force participation rate by unpaid assistance - Western Sydney



GEOGRAPHIC DIMENSIONS OF UNPAID CARE

The unpaid care and assistance rates across the 13 LGAs reveal a strong divide within the Western Sydney region. Labour force participation rates for those who provided unpaid childcare and assistance were highest in The Hills, Wollondilly, Blue Mountains and Camden, and lowest in Fairfield, Cumberland and Canterbury-Bankstown.

Across all employment statuses—full-time, part-time, unemployed, not in the labour force—the same LGAs register consistently higher rates of women performing unpaid childcare: Camden, The Hills, Wollondilly and the Blue Mountains (particularly for women employed part-time) and Penrith (particularly for women not in the labour force). These areas with high levels of unpaid childcare may have a higher rate of single-income families with one significant earner, and/or there could be a lack of provision of paid childcare in the area.

Table 6.1 Distribution of women by employment status and unpaid childcare provision

	EMPLOYED, WORKED FULL-TIME			EMPLOYED, WORKED PART-TIME			UNEMPLOYED			NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE			TOTAL		
	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	PROVIDED UNPAID CHILDCARE	TOTAL	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	PROVIDED UNPAID CHILDCARE	TOTAL	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	PROVIDED UNPAID CHILDCARE	TOTAL	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	PROVIDED UNPAID CHILDCARE	TOTAL	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	CARED FOR OWN CHILD/CHILDREN	TOTAL
Blacktown	63%	37%	100%	57%	43%	100%	59%	41%	100%	60%	40%	100%	60%	40%	100%
Blue Mountains	65%	35%	100%	55%	45%	100%	73%	27%	100%	66%	34%	100%	62%	38%	100%
Camden	62%	38%	100%	49%	51%	100%	54%	46%	100%	53%	47%	100%	55%	45%	100%
Campbelltown	67%	33%	100%	57%	43%	100%	58%	42%	100%	59%	41%	100%	61%	39%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	73%	27%	100%	62%	38%	100%	69%	31%	100%	64%	36%	100%	66%	34%	100%
Cumberland	71%	29%	100%	67%	33%	100%	67%	33%	100%	63%	37%	100%	66%	34%	100%
Fairfield	77%	23%	100%	69%	31%	100%	74%	26%	100%	71%	29%	100%	72%	28%	100%
Hawkesbury	68%	32%	100%	56%	44%	100%	65%	35%	100%	61%	39%	100%	62%	38%	100%
Liverpool	70%	30%	100%	59%	41%	100%	67%	33%	100%	64%	36%	100%	65%	35%	100%
Parramatta	70%	30%	100%	63%	37%	100%	64%	36%	100%	62%	38%	100%	66%	34%	100%
Penrith	66%	34%	100%	56%	44%	100%	65%	35%	100%	59%	41%	100%	61%	39%	100%
The Hills	61%	39%	100%	55%	45%	100%	60%	40%	100%	60%	40%	100%	59%	41%	100%
Wollondilly	62%	38%	100%	52%	48%	100%	61%	39%	100%	58%	42%	100%	57%	43%	100%
Western Sydney	67%	33%	100%	59%	41%	100%	65%	35%	100%	63%	37%	100%	63%	37%	100%
Rest of Sydney	72%	28%	100%	61%	39%	100%	73%	27%	100%	68%	32%	100%	68%	32%	100%

Notably, the data shows that among employed women (full-time and part-time), those reporting the lowest rates of unpaid childcare provision live in Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown and Cumberland, followed by Parramatta and Liverpool (see Table 6.1). A similar trend can be observed among women who are unemployed or not in the labour force. Women residing in these LGAs report the lowest rates of unpaid childcare. This is similarly reflected in the Blue Mountains, where low rates of unpaid childcare are reported among women who are unemployed or not in the labour force. It is important to note that the median age is much higher (44 years) in the Blue Mountains, compared to the NSW median of 38 years or other LGAs like Cumberland (32 years), suggesting more women in the Blue Mountains are older, retired and not undertaking childcare.

While women in key LGAs such as Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Parramatta and Liverpool have indicated that they perform less unpaid childcare, this seems unlikely given the younger populations, larger household sizes and lower household income levels in many of these areas. For example, only 17.7% of women in Fairfield reported providing unpaid childcare to their children, compared with 34.4% in Wollondilly. Fairfield women across all employment statuses reported providing less unpaid childcare than the average for women in the Rest of Sydney, a finding that will be critically examined further below.

UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK AND LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Similar socio-spatial patterns are observed in the data on unpaid domestic work. LGAs with the highest proportion of women employed full-time or part-time who do more than 15 hours of unpaid domestic work are Wollondilly, The Hills, Hawkesbury and the Blue Mountains. Across all employment statuses, including those unemployed and not in the labour force, the greatest proportion of women reporting undertaking zero hours of unpaid domestic work live in Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland and Liverpool.

There are several possible explanations for why women might under-report the amount of unpaid labour they undertake. One reason may be language; the Census is conducted in English only, and in these LGAs, the Census records the highest numbers of people who speak English either 'not well' or 'not at all'. Fairfield has the lowest rates of English proficiency, followed by Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Parramatta and Liverpool. Another factor shaping these results could be the role that extended family members, including older children, play in sharing care work, resulting in women reporting lower rates of unpaid care work. Another possibility is that these questions are misunderstood or misinterpreted due to cultural understandings of care, which do not locate caring for family members and the home within an economy of 'paid' and 'unpaid' labour. How care is understood and practised in different households and people is deeply influenced by socio-economic conditions, social identities and cultural norms.¹¹⁸ In order to better understand the dynamics of care and work in these LGAs and to truly apprehend the amount of unpaid labour performed by women beyond what is captured in Census data, further research is needed into this topic.



6.3 Diverse communities, migration and care

The LGAs where women reported performing lower rates of unpaid care and domestic work—such as Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Parramatta and Liverpool—are the same LGAs that have relatively higher percentages of overseas-born women. For example, in Fairfield, over 60% of resident women were born overseas, while in Parramatta and Cumberland, the figure is around 56% of women (see Figure 6.3). While women in these LGAs reported performing lower rates of unpaid care, racially and ethnically marginalised communities often do more care work, both paid and unpaid. This is due to the gendered and racialised nature of the formal care sector, as well as household and demographic factors. Women who migrate to Australia alone or with their partners leave behind extended families and social support systems in their home countries.¹¹⁹ Sole parents who are newly arrived migrants, especially women, tend to live in marginalised neighbourhoods with limited childcare amenities.¹²⁰

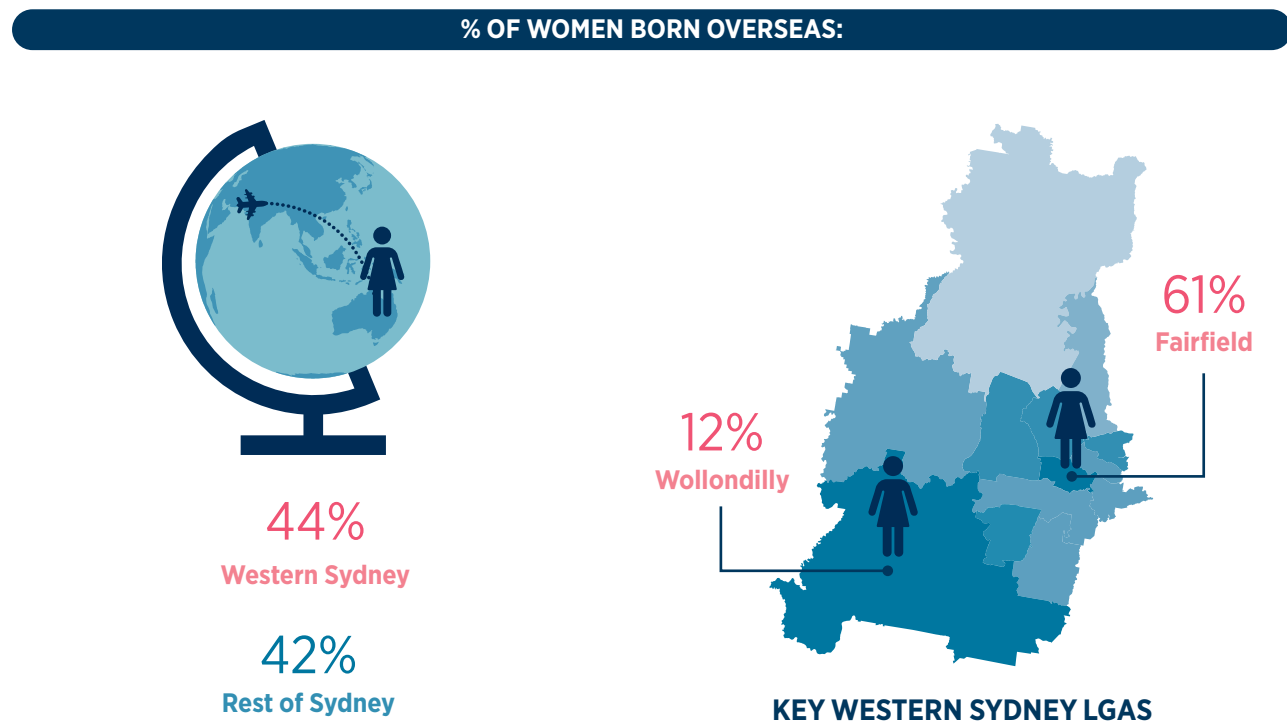
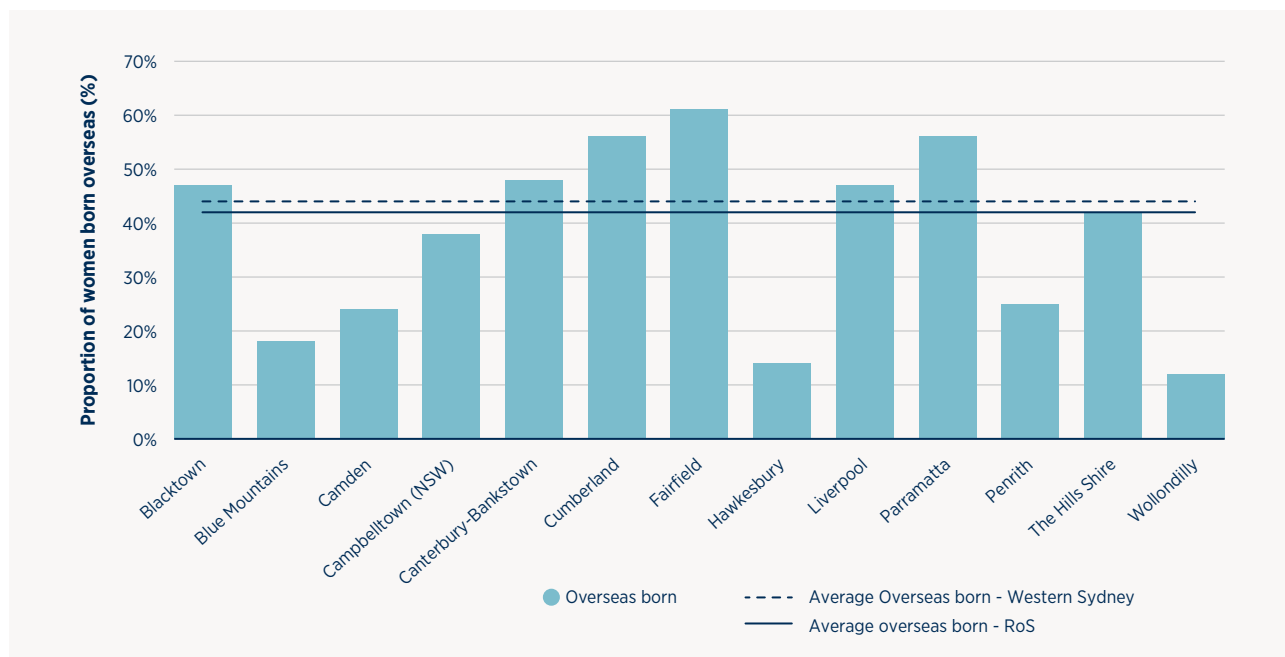


Figure 6.3 Proportion of women born overseas by LGA (%) - Western Sydney



Migration to Australia is often ‘staggered’ across multiple visa categories.¹²¹ Some visa types are ineligible for childcare subsidies, leaving many women without support.¹²² Despite being ineligible for support, the labour and economic contributions of these women—such as international students and migrant workers—are critical to the Australian economy.¹²³ Similarly, there are residency restrictions on accessing paid parental leave, which affects migrants’ parenting decisions and their ability to spend time with their newborn children. As a recent study on work and childcare in Western Sydney found, many migrants have lived, worked, and paid taxes in Australia for years before being eligible for paid parental leave, to the detriment of their family’s wellbeing.¹²⁴

Migration and visa regimes also make it difficult for migrant women in Australia to rely on the support of their parents to care for grandchildren and for these women, in turn, to care for ageing parents overseas.¹²⁵ Women who bring their parents to Australia to help care for grandchildren often find the grandparents are left vulnerable, without access to health care or social security during their stay.¹²⁶

Globally, the demand for childcare has meant that families increasingly rely on grandparents, particularly grandmothers, to provide this care.¹²⁷ The informal care work done by families to fill the gaps in the childcare system can be understood as ‘shadow care infrastructures’.¹²⁸ It is difficult to fully account for the extent of this form of care provision, particularly in marginalised and diverse communities. In southwest Sydney, while the Census data is unable to provide a full picture of the relationship between migration and care arrangements, it is likely that women are doing many more hours of unpaid care than is being captured by the Census.



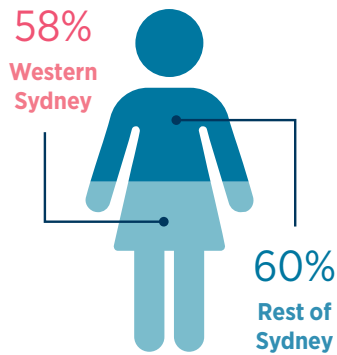
Image credit: Kyisoe Han

6.4 The career impact of women’s unpaid care work

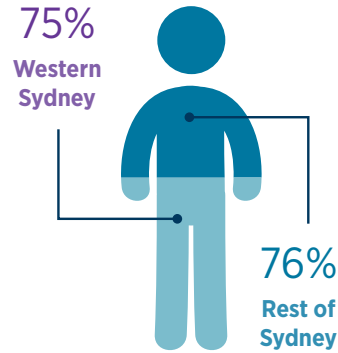
The unpaid care work of women not only contributes to women exiting the workforce or reducing their hours, but also influences their career trajectories. After having children, women tend to prioritise occupations and employers that offer them more flexibility and shorter commute times, even if these jobs are lower paid or less aligned with their qualifications.¹²⁹ Support for flexible working is less common in male-dominated industries, discouraging mothers from working in these sectors and making it difficult for fathers to share care responsibilities.¹³⁰ Women are over-represented in part-time and casual employment and, from the age of 35, are twice as likely as men to work part-time.¹³¹ Australia also has higher female part-time employment rates than other OECD countries.¹³²

Aside from the economic cost to women, working part-time and taking career breaks can also make it harder to return to the workforce at the same level due to a loss of certain skills, professional networks and confidence.¹³³ Promotion opportunities tend to rely on years of experience, further hampering women when they return to the workforce. Gender discrimination in promotion intersects with other forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. Women from diverse backgrounds may face more challenges in career progression.¹³⁴ The impact of reduced participation and flexible work compounds throughout the working lives of women, culminating in lower lifetime earnings and reduced superannuation and financial security in retirement.

PROPORTION OF WOMEN AND MEN EMPLOYED FULL-TIME - WESTERN SYDNEY

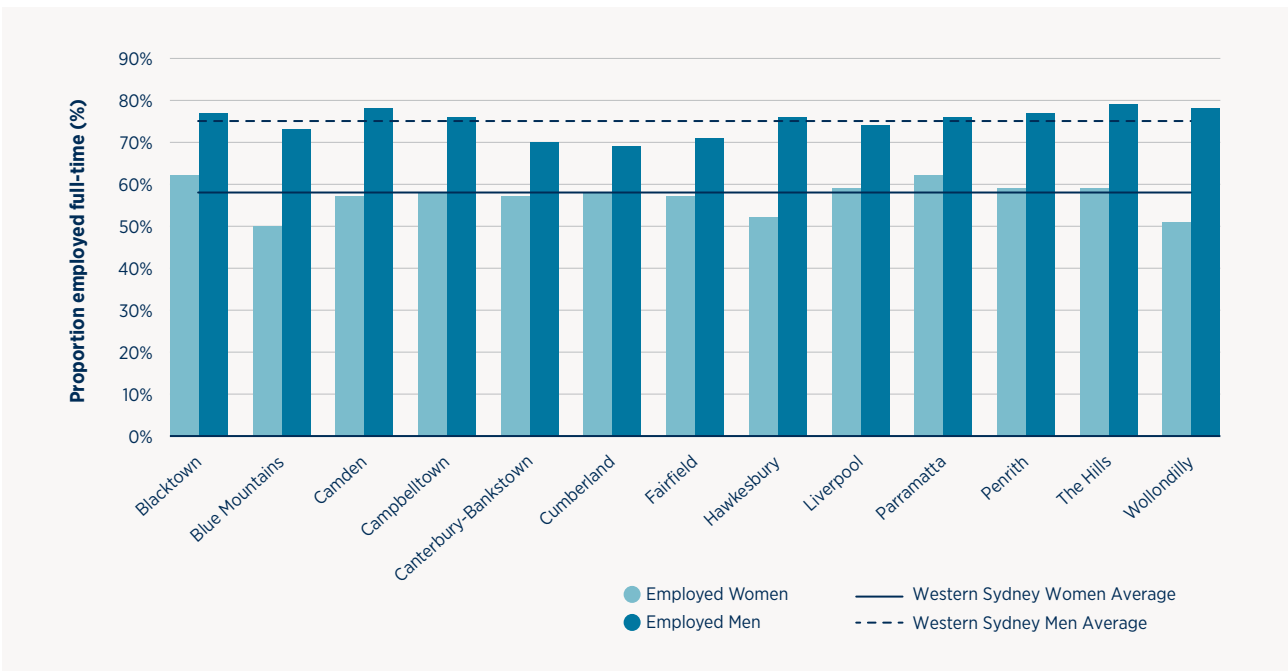


WOMEN WORKING FULL-TIME



MEN WORKING FULL-TIME

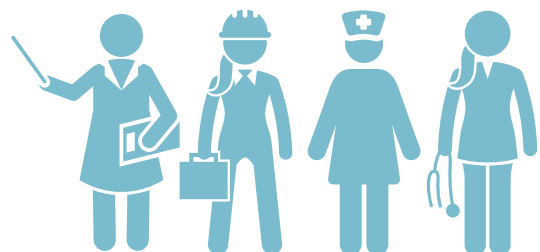
Figure 6.4 Proportion of employed women and men working full-time - Western Sydney



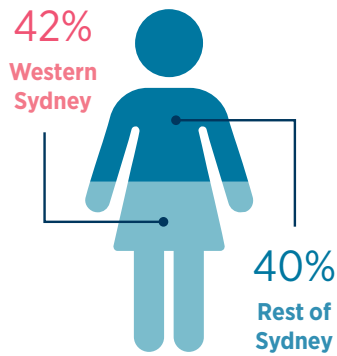
The proportion of employed women in Western Sydney working full-time is 58%, only slightly lower than the RoS (60%). This means more than half of all employed women in Western Sydney work full-time, while the remainder work part-time. The proportion of women employed full-time in Western Sydney is lower than that of men employed full-time (75%), but this gender differential is on par with the RoS. This is significant for two reasons.

First, among employed women across the city, full-time versus part-time divisions are similar. Second, it shows that there is also a similar gender gap between women’s rates of full-time employment and men’s rates of full-time employment (17% gender gap in Western Sydney and 16% gender gap in RoS).

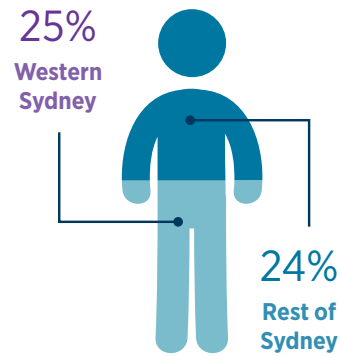
The Western Sydney LGAs with the highest proportion of employed women working full-time are Blacktown (62%) and Parramatta (62%). In comparison, those with the lowest rates are Blue Mountains (50%), Hawkesbury (52%) and Wollondilly (51%) (see Figure 6.4).



PROPORTION OF WOMEN AND MEN EMPLOYED PART-TIME - WESTERN SYDNEY

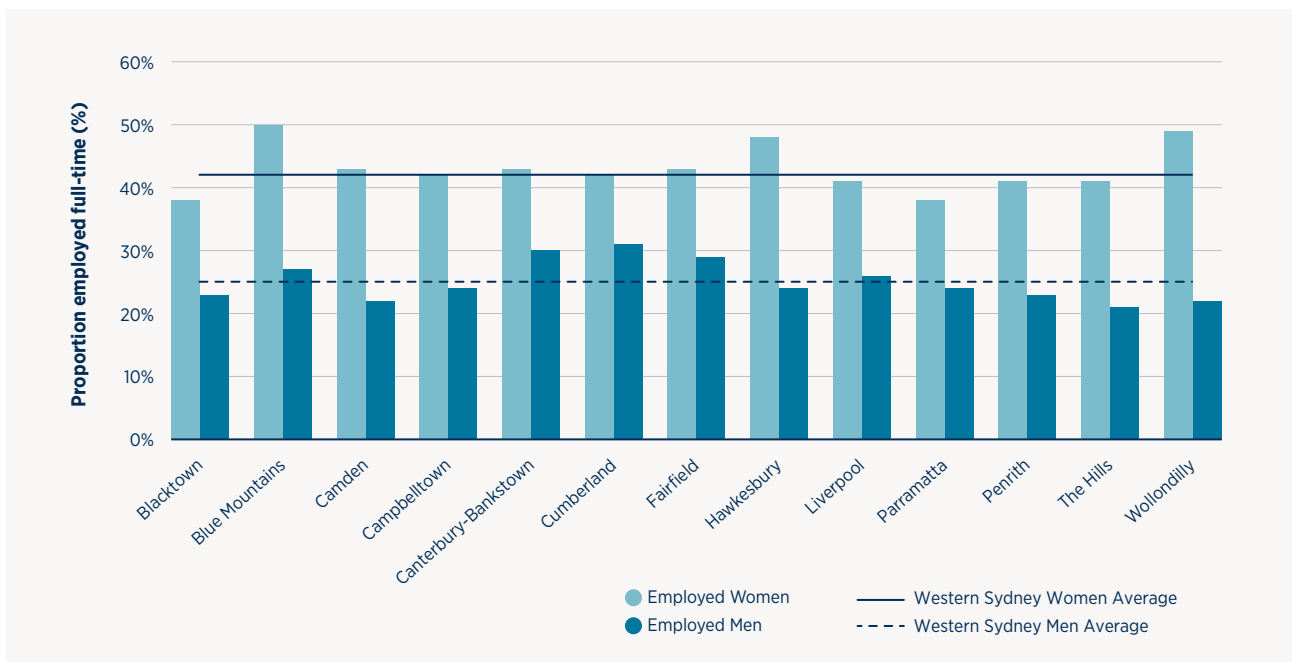


PROPORTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYED PART-TIME



PROPORTION OF MEN EMPLOYED PART-TIME

Figure 6.5 Proportion of employed women and men working part-time - Western Sydney



At 42%, the proportion of employed women working part-time in Western Sydney closely aligns with that of the RoS (40%). There is a similar gender difference in men’s rates of part-time employment in Western Sydney (25%) as in the RoS (24%). There are high rates of part-time work among women in Blue Mountains (50%), Hawkesbury (48%) and Wollondilly (49%).

AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS WORKED - WOMEN

AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS WORKED - MEN

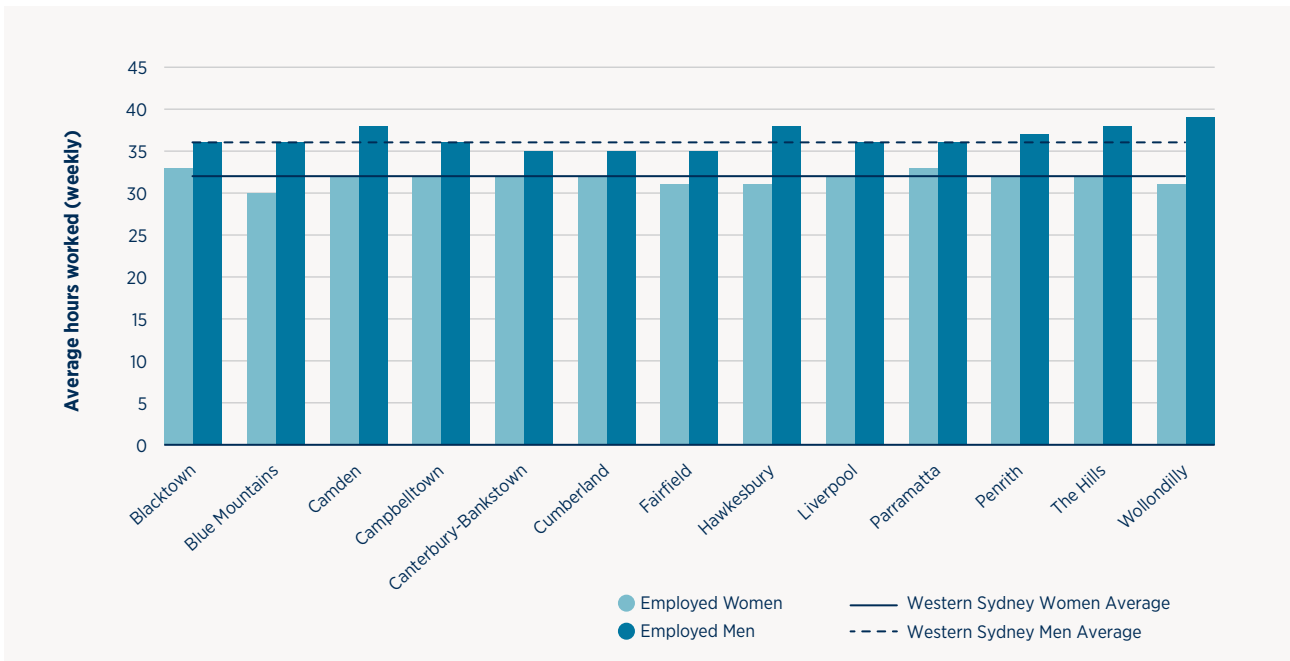


Western Sydney
32 hours
 Rest of Sydney
33 hours



Western Sydney
32 hours
 Rest of Sydney
38 hours

Figure 6.6 Average hours worked by employed women and men - Western Sydney



Examining the number of hours worked each week by employed women, Western Sydney women work an average of 32 hours per week. This is almost on par with the RoS average: 33 hours per week. Notably, very little variation exists across Western Sydney LGAs regarding hours worked; all LGAs report 31-33 hours on average, aside from the Blue Mountains, which reported 30 hours on average.

Table 6.2 Number of weekly hours worked by employed women

	1 TO 9 HOURS	10 TO 19 HOURS	20 TO 29 HOURS	30 TO 34 HOURS	35+ HOURS	MEDIAN HOURS WORKED
Blacktown	6%	10%	14%	9%	61%	37
Blue Mountains	9%	13%	18%	11%	49%	31
Camden	7%	12%	16%	10%	56%	35
Campbelltown	6%	11%	15%	10%	57%	35
Canterbury-Bankstown	7%	12%	16%	9%	56%	35
Cumberland	6%	11%	17%	9%	57%	36
Fairfield	7%	13%	15%	9%	57%	35
Hawkesbury	8%	13%	17%	10%	52%	34
Liverpool	6%	11%	15%	9%	59%	36
Parramatta	6%	10%	14%	8%	62%	37
Penrith	6%	11%	15%	10%	58%	36
The Hills	7%	11%	15%	8%	58%	37
Wollondilly	8%	14%	17%	10%	51%	34
Western Sydney	7%	11%	15%	9%	58%	36
Rest of Sydney	7%	11%	15%	9%	59%	37

The distribution of hours worked by employed women is almost exactly on par with the RoS. A small percentage of women (6%–9% across the LGAs) work 9 hours or less, while in all LGAs, most employed women work 30 hours or more. The data does not show how many hours women would like to work, but it does show that the hours worked by employed women of Western Sydney align with the rest of the city.

Notably, the gender gap between hours worked by women (32) and hours worked by men (36) in Western Sydney is 4 hours, which is less than the 5-hour gap between women’s average hours (33) and men’s average hours (38) in the RoS. This reflects men’s underemployment in Western Sydney and higher employment rates in the RoS.

These findings are significant in showing that the number of hours worked among employed women in Western Sydney and the differential gender gap with men’s hours is very similar to that of the RoS.

- ▶ **Employed women of Western Sydney do not work fewer hours than those in the Rest of Sydney. However, given that women of Western Sydney, on average, earn less than women in the RoS, they likely also experience poorer working conditions and greater precarity in their contracts, as well as lifetime impacts of earning a lower income in their working age.**

6.5 The childcare crisis in Western Sydney

For many women, access to work and training is out of reach given the limited support available within current work and childcare arrangements. This is particularly true for women who are marginalised by where they live, their gender and other intersectional factors, or both.

While providing adequate support for caring for families and communities is crucial to the workforce participation of women, care in Australia is in a state of crisis.¹³⁵ The formalised childcare sector has issues of both access and affordability. The cost, availability, proximity, flexibility and quality of care services influence the work and income decisions that women and families make.¹³⁶

High childcare costs are a barrier for women, who are more likely to have the cost of childcare weighed against their income rather than against household income.¹³⁷ Using an international affordability benchmark, which defines affordable childcare as no more than 7% of household disposable income, it is estimated that early childhood education and care is unaffordable for around 39% of families in Australia who use the childcare system.¹³⁸ For many women, no good option exists when weighing up the prohibitive childcare costs of paid work against staying out of the workforce and risking financial insecurity.¹³⁹

While women are under immense pressure to balance unpaid care work with paid labour, there is an unmet demand for care in existing relationships and infrastructures.¹⁴⁰ This is partly caused by changes to gender and work, such as the increased participation of women in the labour force, but also by the persistence of traditional gender roles and men's unwillingness to engage in care work, as well as the shrinking welfare state and the kind of support it provides.¹⁴¹ The deficit in care weighs most on socio-economically marginalised women, whose earnings cannot cover the high cost of formal childcare. These women are also more likely to be employed on contracts with shift work, irregular hours and precarity, all of which have implications for domestic care.¹⁴² This is even more difficult for sole parents; one recent survey shows only 35% of single-parent households could access paid childcare.¹⁴³

In Western Sydney overall, the proportion of women employed full-time who are in a couple with no children (36%) is higher than the RoS (32%), while the proportion of those employed full-time in a couple with children is lower (45%) than the RoS (48%). Fairfield has a relatively high proportion of women who work full-time and are in a couple with no dependents (46%) and a low proportion with dependents (27%), relative to the averages for Western Sydney (36% and 45%, respectively). This shows the significant impact of dependent children on the full-time workforce participation of women in Fairfield. Parramatta has a high proportion of women who are employed full-time and in a couple with dependents (52%), higher than the RoS average (48%). Parramatta and Camden have high proportions of unemployed women or those not in the labour force who live in a couple

with dependents. Among those not in the labour force, Penrith and Campbelltown have the highest proportions of women in one-parent families with dependent children (both 18%).

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

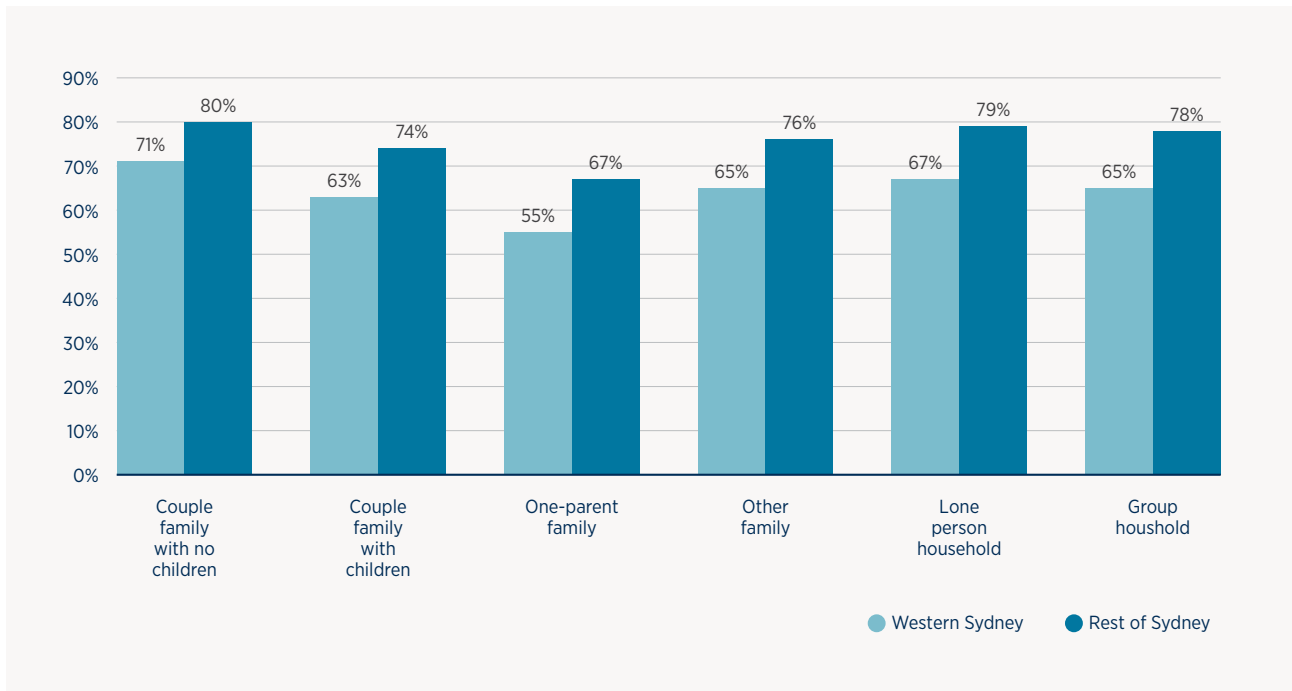
In terms of household composition, women in Western Sydney in one-parent families record the lowest participation rates of all household types (55%), with particularly low rates in Fairfield, Cumberland, Canterbury-Bankstown and Liverpool. This average is 12% lower than the Rest of Sydney, showing the intersecting forms of marginalisation in these Western Sydney LGAs. Fairfield and Penrith record the highest proportion of unemployed women as members of single-parent families.

Of women working full-time in Western Sydney, 54% are in a coupled family with children, which is much higher than the Rest of Sydney (39%). This is highest in the Hills, which may reflect how geography, class, gender, life stage and family formation intersect. For example, people with children may be more likely to need more space for their family and, therefore, choose to live in areas offering bigger properties at more affordable prices.

Parramatta is home to the highest proportion of women in coupled families with no children across full-time, part-time and unemployed statuses. This may reflect that the urban hub of Parramatta, with its concentration of apartment dwellings and higher rents, is more suited to those without children.

-
- ▶ **Notably, 22% of unemployed women in Parramatta live in a coupled family with no children, significantly higher than most Western Sydney LGAs but more in line with the Rest of Sydney. Given that the ABS definition of 'unemployed' means actively looking for work, women of Parramatta, who are a largely highly educated cohort, may struggle to find suitable work.**
-

Figure 6.7 Labour force participation rate of women by household composition



GEOGRAPHIES OF CHILDCARE

Geography plays a key role in accessing affordable, available, quality childcare.¹⁴⁴ There is great variation across the Sydney region. Mapping childcare disparities across Australia by the Mitchell Institute shows that some areas of Sydney are considered childcare ‘oases’ while others are childcare ‘deserts’.¹⁴⁵ In general, lower socio-economic areas have lower childcare availability, while the most advantaged neighbourhoods in Australia have the greatest childcare access.¹⁴⁶

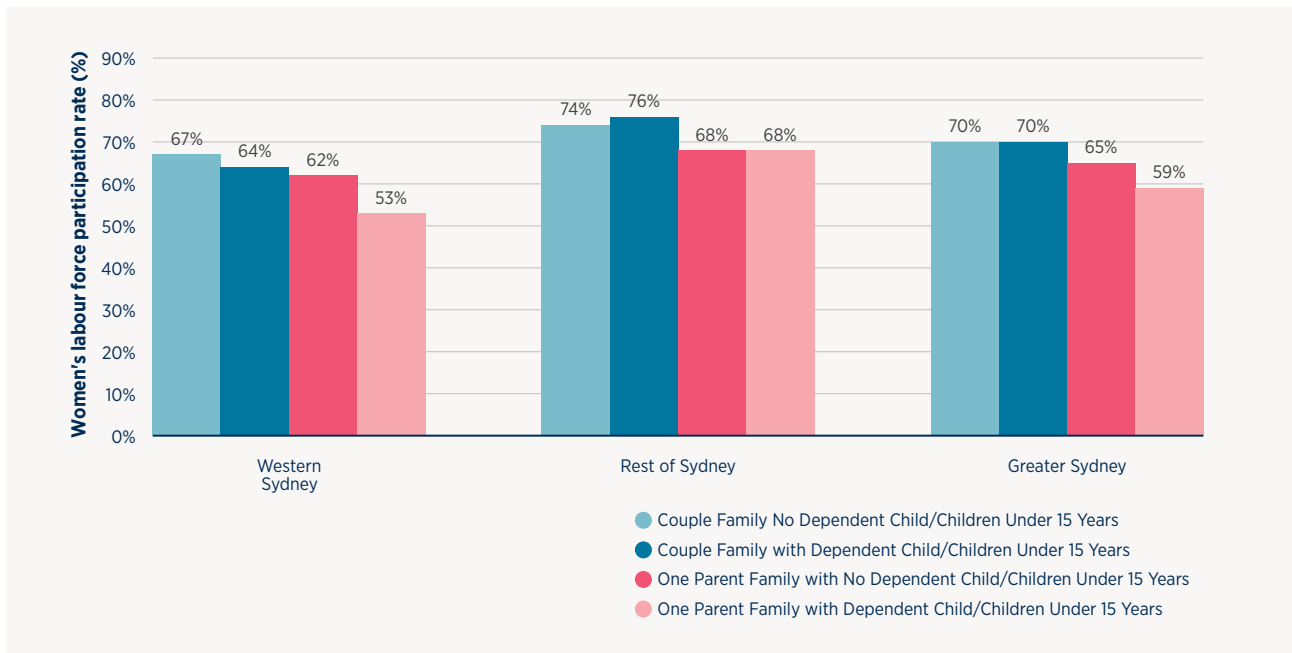
Of note, it is the most marginalised neighbourhoods where quality childcare is most important because of its link with educational and wellbeing outcomes over time.¹⁴⁷

In Sydney, there is a concentration of childcare oases around Sydney city, the Inner West and Northern Beaches, while much of the west and southwest is considered a childcare desert.¹⁴⁸



Image Source: Getty Images

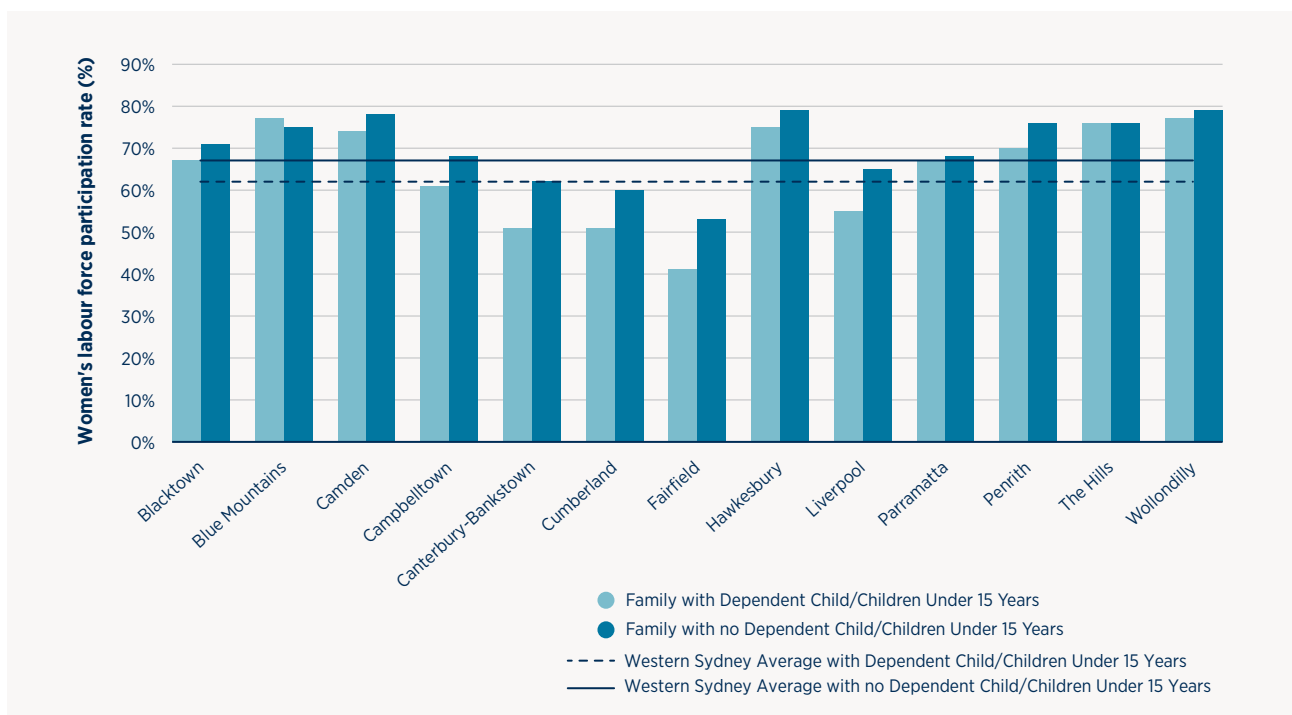
Figure 6.8 Women’s labour force participation rate by dependent children - Western Sydney and benchmarks



Among Western Sydney women who have children and live as a one-parent family, there is a significant difference in the labour force participation rates between those whose resident child/children are under 15 years (53%), and the participation rate of those whose resident child/children are over 15 years (62%). For the Rest of Sydney, this factor does not change the labour force participation rate of women (68%, regardless of the child’s age) (see Figure 6.8).

► The care work of women in Western Sydney impacts workforce participation, particularly for solo parents, in more pronounced ways than in the Rest of Sydney.

Figure 6.9 Women’s labour force participation rate by dependent children - Western Sydney



The data shows that in some Western Sydney LGAs (The Hills, Wollondilly, Camden and Hawkesbury), participation rates for women in the labour force are less impacted by the presence of dependent children (see Figure 6.8). In the Blue Mountains, women with dependent children participate slightly more than those without. In other LGAs (Liverpool, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland and Fairfield), a greater gap exists between women who have dependent children and those who do not. The highest disparity in participation rates is recorded in Fairfield between women with dependents (41%) and those without (53%). This suggests that, in these LGAs, women, in fact, undertake significant amounts of care and domestic work.

Overall, existing research has demonstrated that the market-based childcare system is not delivering what is required to meet the needs of parents.¹⁴⁹ When there are cuts to public sector services and support, care is cast as an individual responsibility.¹⁵⁰ That is, care is seen as something to be provided voluntarily by individuals and families within the private sphere.¹⁵¹ However, there are many other ways to imagine relationships and infrastructures of care, where social policy, government support, institutions and workplaces play a greater role. This is particularly critical in regions like Western Sydney, much of which is marked as a childcare desert and where communities face many challenges.



Image credit: Getty Images



7. BEYOND GENDER: EXPLORING EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES FOR DIVERSE WOMEN

Image credit: Kyisoe Han

7.1 Key findings:

employment challenges among diverse women

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

1. Indigenous women in Western Sydney record a lower participation rate (59%) than Indigenous women in the Rest of Sydney (67%).
2. There is significant variation in the participation rates of Indigenous women across Western Sydney, ranging from 76% in Camden and The Hills Shire, to 48% in Fairfield.
3. Within Western Sydney, Indigenous people are more likely than non-Indigenous people to be employed as managers (12% compared to 9%) and professionals (24% compared to 13%).

MIGRATION AND WORK OUTCOMES

4. Across Australia, employment rates for women born overseas are generally lower (59%) than those of men born overseas (70%) and women born in Australia (62%).
5. Women in Western Sydney, regardless of where they were born, recorded lower rates of labour force participation than women born in the same countries and living in other parts of Sydney.
6. Women born in Africa and the Middle East living in Western Sydney record a labour force participation rate of 42%. This is strikingly low compared to women born in these same regions living in the Rest of Sydney, who participate at a rate of 72%.
7. In Parramatta, there are very high and almost even participation rates across all regions of birth (74–75%), except for those women born in Africa and the Middle East (58%) and North-East Asia (64%).
8. Among those who arrived in Australia in 2011–21, there is a large variation between the LGAs of Western Sydney, ranging from 70% in the Blue Mountains women compared with 25% in Fairfield.

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND LANGUAGE

9. The English proficiency and employment variation is stark across Western Sydney LGAs. In the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Wollondilly, 92–94% of employed women only speak English. Whereas in Fairfield and Cumberland, just 26–30% of employed women only speak English.
10. Participation rates across all LGAs decline significantly between those who speak English 'well or very well' and those who speak English 'not well or not at all'.

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND RELIGION

11. Across all religions, participation rates in Western Sydney are lower than those in the Rest of Sydney, noting that Jewish women are too small in number in many Western Sydney LGAs to be statistically reliable.
12. The biggest gap is registered between the participation rates of Muslim women in Western Sydney (41%) and Muslim women in the Rest of Sydney (58%).

7.2 Social identities and employment

While women are disadvantaged in the workplace in many ways, not all women face the same obstacles. Many women face compounding inequalities in relation to race, class, religion and language, as well as geographical location. There are many ways that race intersects with gender in relation to recruitment, occupational segregation, organisational support, career progression and the ways that women are penalised for becoming parents.¹⁵² For example, women from diverse backgrounds may experience racial bias and discrimination based on their names during recruitment processes, as well as assumptions about gender norms regarding particular roles or occupations. Key cultural groups, such as Muslim women in Australia, have reported that wearing a headscarf is a barrier to employment.¹⁵³ This provides important context for understanding the data in the sections that follow, where, for example, there are lower rates of participation among Muslim women in Western Sydney.

Gender, as a social category, is not distinct from other categories like class and race but is constructed through various social relations in the workplace and at home.¹⁵⁴ In this way, the experiences of being a woman vary depending upon one's race, class, ethnicity and other factors. This is also the case in relation to employment. The workplace advantages or disadvantages associated with masculinity and femininity vary as they intersect with

class relations, labour market dynamics and the specific dynamics of different geographies.¹⁵⁵ For example, studies have shown how racial and gender stereotypes combine to influence the way that women are treated within an organisation, the types of resources and opportunities they receive, and the sorts of roles that are seen as "appropriate" for different groups of women.¹⁵⁶

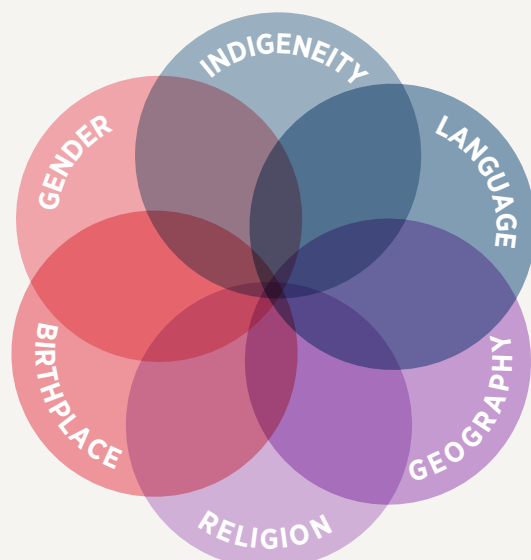
Inequality in relation to work is therefore not only about gender but is also structured by a range of other social categories, including race, class, ethnicity, Indigeneity, age, nationality, immigration status, language, religion, sexuality, disability and more. These are also crucial factors shaping the types of barriers and opportunities that individuals face at work, as well as impacting upon wages, hours worked, sectors of work, career opportunities and progression, lifetime earnings and financial security.¹⁵⁷

- ▶ While women are disadvantaged in the workplace in many ways, not all women face the same obstacles.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND DIVERSITY AT WORK IN WESTERN SYDNEY

Research has found that people with a disability, older people, the long-term unemployed, people with a criminal record, First Nations people, people of colour and people from diverse cultural backgrounds are more likely to face discrimination in recruitment processes, posing an initial barrier to accessing paid work.¹⁵⁸ These multiple social categories intersect to shape outcomes for women at work.¹⁵⁹

The concept of intersectionality is often used to describe the juncture of these different social categories shaping individual lives.¹⁶⁰



Given the diversity of women in Western Sydney and the divided geographies of race and social class in Greater Sydney, it is important to consider the workforce participation of women through an intersectional lens.

Applying an intersectional lens to women's uneven labour force participation across Western Sydney LGAs highlights the overlapping inequalities that shape women's experience of the labour force. For example, in Fairfield, where the labour force participation rates of women are generally the lowest in the region, many women are marginalised by structures of social class and race. The geographical disparities between Fairfield and other parts of Sydney highlight how intersectional inequality may incorporate, and be compounded by, geographical location (place).¹⁶¹

Intersectionality shines a light on how different systems of discrimination and inequality interact and offers new ways to understand how institutionalised norms, beliefs and values operate in workplaces.¹⁶² The norms, beliefs and values of organisations are not only expressions of gender norms and values, but also the way these intersect with racism, classism and other social structures. These norms and beliefs shape vertical and horizontal segregation of the labour market in terms of what kinds of women are seen to be suited to what kinds of roles and industries. For example, while paid care work is often relegated to 'women's work', it is also frequently seen as appropriate work for migrant women and women of colour. In Western Sydney, women are over-represented in this sector, in roles that are generally low status and low pay, compared to their counterparts in the Rest of Sydney.

Intersectionality in this report focuses primarily on the ways gender interacts with race, ethnicity, language, religion and migration status in a context where social class and income are distributed along geographical lines. The report does not consider other factors like disability and sexuality, which are also key intersectional factors shaping women's work lives in Western Sydney and which warrant further study. These have been excluded in order to narrow the scope of this report, while acknowledging the significance of these issues.

There is a lack of national data collected on the workforce experiences of sexual and gender-diverse populations, and advocacy is being undertaken for government to include questions on sexual and gender identity in the Census.¹⁶³ Given the diversity of identities within the LGBTIQ+ community, workforce experiences are certainly varied. However, data from 2020 shows higher unemployment rates in Australia among lesbian, gay or bisexual people (12%) compared to heterosexuals (6.1%),¹⁶⁴ as well as evidence of employment discrimination against particular groups.¹⁶⁵

Women with a disability face unique barriers in entering and progressing within the labour force, owing to the intersection of gender bias and disability discrimination.¹⁶⁶ Labour force participation rates among working-aged people with disability nationally are just 53% compared with 84% for those without a disability.¹⁶⁷ The level

of underemployment among people with disabilities in Australia is much higher than in other comparative countries.¹⁶⁸ However, the Census data currently only tracks the variable of whether or not people 'need assistance with core activity', rather than a more nuanced dataset on disability.¹⁶⁹ The more detailed national data from the 'Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers' is currently updated only until 2018, with the next release of data scheduled for June 2024.¹⁷⁰ To better understand the intersections of gender and disability, and diverse gender and sexualities, upon the dynamics of women's workforce participation in Western Sydney, further research is needed.

Together, the findings explored in this section underscore the pervasive gender inequalities that exist in both paid and unpaid work, emphasising how these inequalities intersect with various social categories such as race, class, religion, geographical location, English proficiency and more. It highlights how gender biases combine with these factors to impact wages, career opportunities, and the distribution of labour within both the workplace and the home.

Additionally, the analysis here shows the compounding effects of intersecting identities—factors such as race, Indigeneity, religion, language and social class—on women's experiences in accessing and progressing within employment. Finally, this section evidences the relationship between migration and work outcomes, emphasising how factors such as English-language proficiency and visa status impact the employment prospects of migrant and refugee women in Western Sydney.

► **Intersectionality in this report focuses primarily on the ways gender interacts with race, indigeneity, ethnicity, language, religion and migration status, in a context where social class and income are distributed along geographical lines.**

7.3 Indigenous women's labour force participation

The employment rate of Indigenous people in Australia remains significantly lower than that of non-Indigenous people, a gap that has persisted over the last three decades.¹⁷¹ An intersectional lens is helpful to consider how to ensure cultural safety in the workplace and counter stereotypes and discrimination,¹⁷² especially for Indigenous and racially or ethnically marginalised women. This is important to boost recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff, and close the gap on workforce participation rates of Indigenous women in Western Sydney.

This shows the importance of geographic location within Greater Sydney and how geography intersects with other structural factors such as race, class, ethnicity and gender for women of Western Sydney.

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN IN WESTERN SYDNEY



59%
Western Sydney

VS

67%
Rest of Sydney

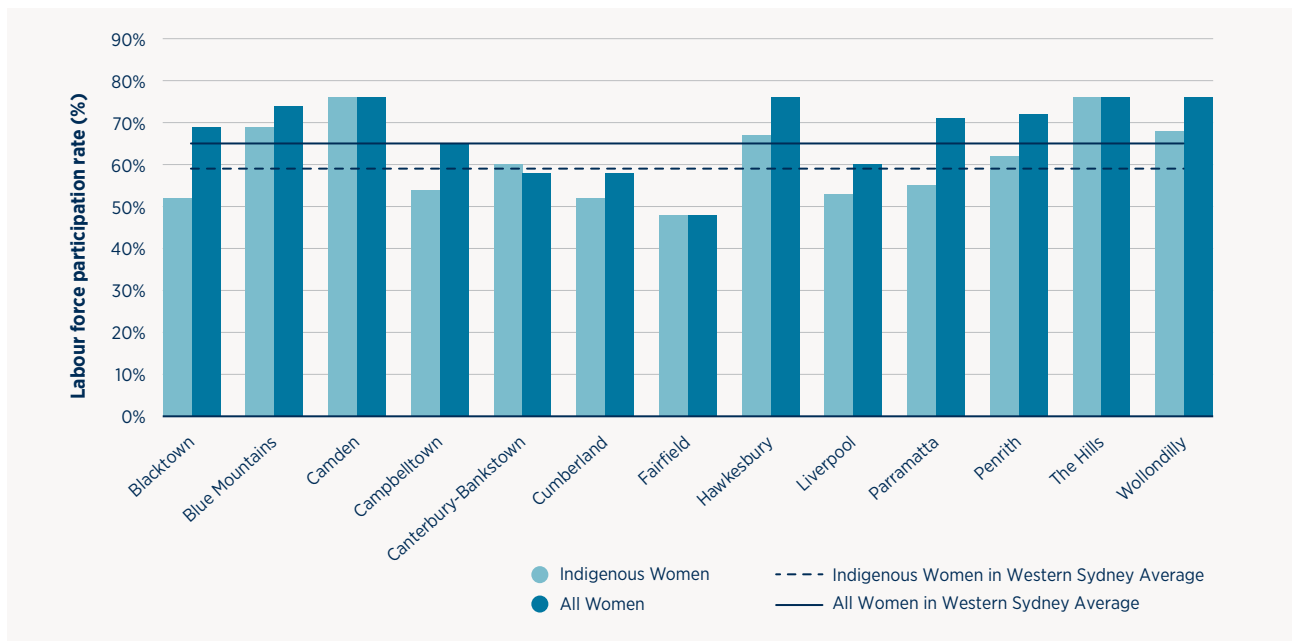
KEY WESTERN SYDNEY LGAS

76%
Camden and
The Hills Shire

48%
Fairfield

- ▶ Indigenous women in Western Sydney have a lower participation rate (59%) than the average rate for women in Western Sydney (65%).
- ▶ Notably, Indigenous women's participation rate in Western Sydney (59%) is significantly lower than Indigenous women's labour force participation rate in the Rest of Sydney (67%).

Figure 7.1 Indigenous women's labour force participation rate – Western Sydney



- ▶ In Camden and The Hills Shire, Indigenous women participate at the same high rate for women in these LGAs (76%), while in Fairfield, Indigenous women participate at the same low rate for women in that LGA (48%).
- ▶ In Canterbury-Bankstown, the participation rate of Indigenous women in the labour force (60%) is higher than the LGA average participation rate for all women (58%).

Similar to non-Indigenous populations in Western Sydney, Indigenous residents of the region find significant employment opportunities in health care and social assistance, as well as the construction industry, retail, public administration, education and training.¹⁷³ Within Western Sydney, Indigenous people are more likely than non-Indigenous people to be employed as managers (12% compared to 9%) and professionals (24% compared to 13%).¹⁷⁴ More non-Indigenous residents are employed as community and personal service workers (15%) compared with Indigenous residents of Western Sydney (10%).¹⁷⁵

Across Western Sydney, the employment landscape for Indigenous women is varied and marked by a complex interplay of historical injustices, systemic barriers and cultural factors. Despite efforts to address disparities, Indigenous women in some Western Sydney LGAs continue to face barriers to accessing and maintaining meaningful and culturally safe employment. Moving forward, it is imperative to adopt holistic approaches that centre Indigenous women's voices, address structural inequities and foster more inclusive workplaces.



7.4 Migration and work outcomes

The relationship between migration and work is particularly relevant to Western Sydney, home to most of Australia's new migrants and well-established multigeneration communities from diverse backgrounds.¹⁷⁶

Participation rates for women born overseas are generally lower (59.2%) than those of men born overseas (70.2%) and women born in Australia (62%).¹⁷⁷ While overseas-born women have increased their labour force participation in recent decades, this has not been to the extent of Australian-born women. The participation rates are even lower for women from refugee-source countries.¹⁷⁸

Migrants, regardless of gender, may face barriers in trying to have their overseas skills and experience recognised. They may possess limited local work experience (which is favoured among employers), and have limited local knowledge of recruitment processes and norms, lack social networks and suffer from discrimination.¹⁷⁹ Refugees are also more likely to arrive with health issues due to trauma, conflict, and lack of adequate access to healthcare during their displacement, which also impacts upon workforce participation.¹⁸⁰

Migrants, particularly new arrivals, are vulnerable to exploitation and poor working conditions. This is partly due to restrictive visa conditions, lack of knowledge of

local labour laws, reduced support systems and limited English-language proficiency.¹⁸¹

While Census data shows that migrants are more highly qualified than Australian citizens across all major occupational categories, migrants from particular countries also face key challenges in having international qualifications recognised in Australia.¹⁸² Migrant women, who are often 'secondary' visa holders tied to their partner's visa, may find that their qualifications are not recognised in Australia and face challenges in accessing work that is appropriate to their skills and experience.¹⁸³ While the Census data does not offer information on migration trajectories and visa types, it does provide data on country and region of birth, which can be used to gain insight on the relationship between migration and work outcomes for women in Western Sydney.

While paid employment supports migrant women financially, participating in the workforce can also assist with reducing isolation and growing a sense of belonging.¹⁸⁴ For the most marginalised women, workforce participation can support greater confidence, increase interaction with the broader community and relieve some of the many stresses associated with migration and resettlement.¹⁸⁵ This highlights the importance of providing enabling policies and creating opportunities to support migrant and refugee women.



PARTICIPATION RATES BY REGION OF BIRTH

According to the 2021 Census, women in Western Sydney, regardless of where they were born, recorded lower rates of labour force participation than their counterparts born in the same places and living in the Rest of Sydney (see Table 7.1):

- ▶ An 8% gap between Australian-born women, who recorded a participation rate of 70% in Western Sydney, compared to 78% for Australian-born women in the Rest of Sydney.
- ▶ The largest gap (30%) was found in the participation rates of women born in Africa and the Middle East living in Western Sydney (42%) compared with those from the same region living in the Rest of Sydney (72%).
- ▶ The smallest gap (4%) between Western Sydney participation rates (60%) and the Rest of Sydney participation rates (64%) was for those women born in Northeast Asia (which primarily includes China, Japan and the Koreans).

PARTICIPATION OF OVERSEAS-BORN WOMEN

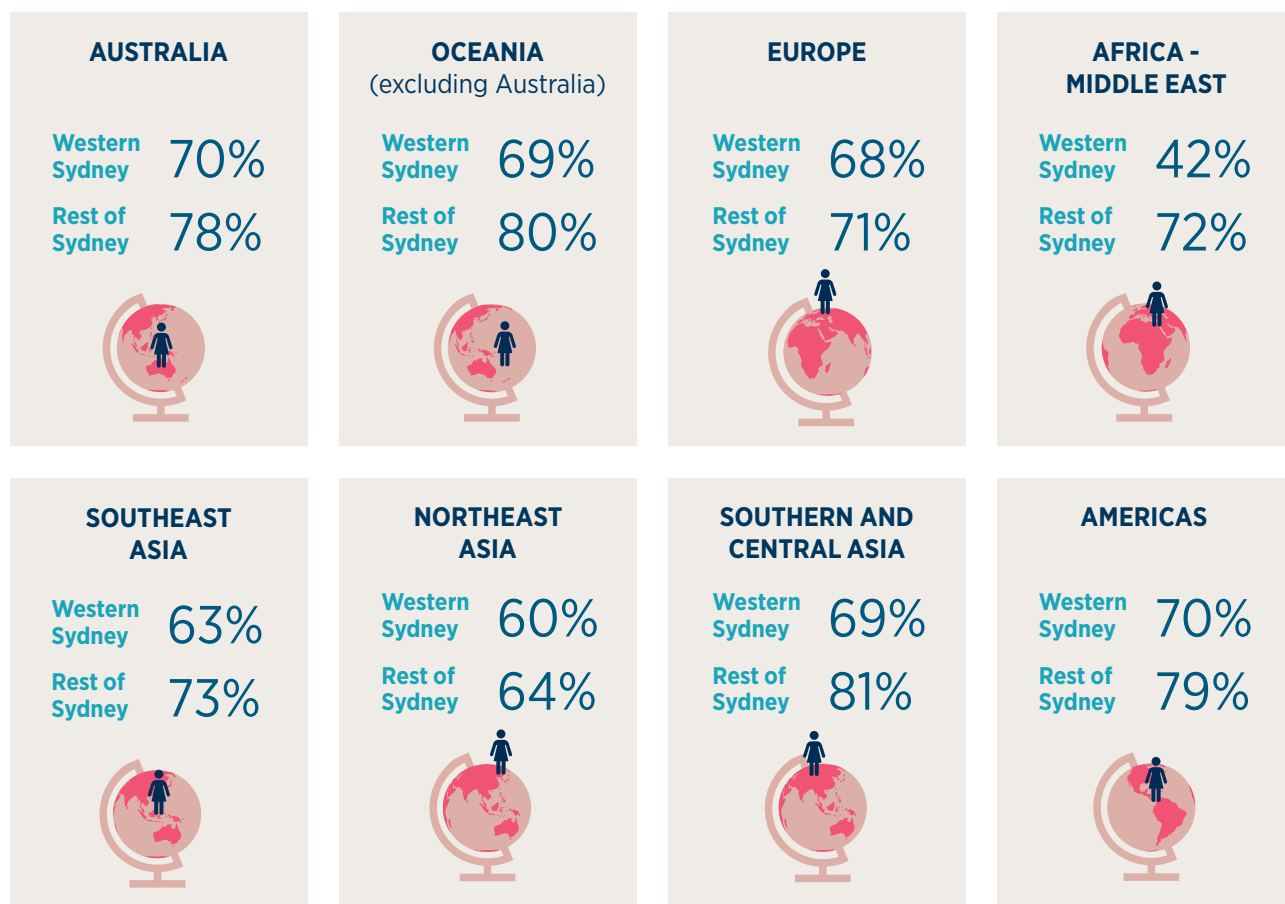


Table 7.1 Women's labour force participation rate by region of birth - Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

FEMALE	AUSTRALIA	OCEANIA (EXCL. AUSTRALIA)	EUROPE	AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST	SOUTH -EAST ASIA	NORTH -EAST ASIA	SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL ASIA	AMERICAS
Blacktown	69%	68%	68%	56%	75%	62%	71%	71%
Blue Mountains	75%	77%	74%	70%	68%	66%	78%	77%
Camden	78%	75%	72%	62%	73%	65%	71%	76%
Campbelltown	65%	66%	63%	49%	67%	60%	67%	69%
Canterbury-Bankstown	64%	66%	66%	36%	56%	55%	53%	63%
Cumberland	61%	68%	63%	35%	66%	53%	65%	65%
Fairfield	61%	61%	56%	23%	48%	49%	49%	60%
Hawkesbury	77%	73%	72%	75%	74%	63%	76%	71%
Liverpool	65%	69%	60%	37%	60%	60%	68%	67%
Parramatta	75%	75%	76%	58%	74%	64%	75%	75%
Penrith	74%	68%	71%	62%	73%	60%	69%	72%
The Hills	77%	80%	78%	72%	76%	66%	81%	77%
Wollondilly	77%	76%	72%	69%	69%	60%	70%	76%
Western Sydney	70%	69%	68%	42%	63%	60%	69%	70%
Rest of Sydney	78%	80%	81%	72%	73%	64%	81%	79%

The spatial variations in labour force participation among women born in key overseas regions reinforces how social and spatial factor intersect and impact the workforce participation of women. Similar variations in labour force participation rates are recorded across key LGAs of Western Sydney:

- ▶ Women with the lowest recorded labour force participation rates overall are those born in Africa and the Middle East who live in Fairfield (23%), Cumberland (35%) and Canterbury-Bankstown (36%).
- ▶ In Parramatta, labour force participation rates are very high and almost evenly distributed across all regions of birth (74–75%), except for those women born in Africa and the Middle East (58%) and North-East Asia (64%).
- ▶ Women born in Australia and the Americas recorded the highest participation rates in Western Sydney on average (both 70%), yet this is still notably lower than these cohorts in the Rest of Sydney (78% and 79%, respectively).
- ▶ Among women in Western Sydney who are employed (full-time and part-time), most are Australian-born (52% for full-time and 56% part-time). Australian-born women in Western Sydney account for a much lower percentage of unemployed women (41%) and those not in the labour force (44%).

However, there is great variation across the Western Sydney LGAs; around half of Western Sydney LGAs show the highest participation rates are among overseas-born women. For example, in Blacktown, the participation rate of Australian-born women (69%) is lower than those born in Southeast Asia (75%).

- ▶ Around 25% of women in Western Sydney who are employed full-time were born in Southeast, Southern or Central Asia, more than double the participation rates for these same communities in the Rest of Sydney (11%).
- ▶ The LGAs where overseas-born women account for the majority of unemployed women are Parramatta (77%), Cumberland (74%) and Fairfield (68%). In Fairfield, Southeast Asian, African and Middle Eastern-born women account for 57% of unemployed women. Parramatta has a high proportion of women not in the labour force born in Northeast Asia (32%).

The place where women were born is one key factor shaping their labour force participation across Western Sydney LGAs.

The data shows that this intersects strongly with geography, with women in Western Sydney participating in the labour force at lower rates than women born in the same places but living in other parts of Sydney.

PARTICIPATION RATES BY YEAR OF ARRIVAL

Migration and settlement experiences evolve with time, and the longer that migrant and refugee women have been in Australia, the more likely they will be employed. However, research has indicated that it remains unlikely that these women are employed at a level aligned with their skills and qualifications.¹⁸⁶ Newly arrived women are more likely to face more barriers and potential restrictions on their workforce participation, depending upon visa status.

The 2021 census indicates that the lowest participation rates are among women who arrived most recently (54%) and those who arrived before 1980 (54%). Given that this latter group comprises women who have been in Australia for almost 45 years, many may now be retired and, therefore, not in the labour force. Participation rates are highest (62–63%) among those who arrived between 1991 and 2010, which is also reflected in the data for the Rest of Sydney, with a high rate of 76% for women arriving in those years. This most likely reflects the fact that these women are mostly still of working age, but also have been in the country long enough to have gathered local experience, local qualifications, English-language proficiency, and social and professional networks. Further research is needed to uncover any favourable policies during this time that supported newly arrived women to enter the workforce.

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN WHO ARRIVED BETWEEN 2011–2021:

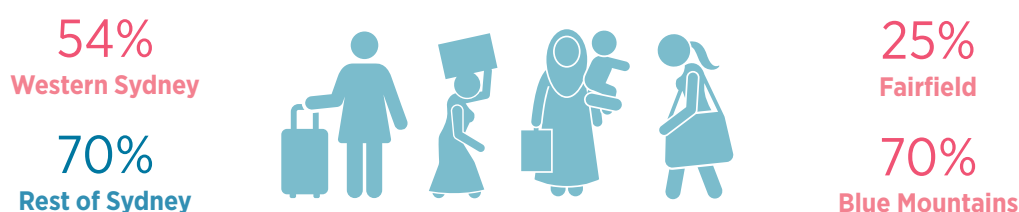


Table 7.2 Women's labour force participation rate by year of arrival - Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

	ARRIVED PRE-1980	ARRIVED 1981 - 1990	ARRIVED 1991 - 2000	ARRIVED 2001 - 2010	ARRIVED 2011 - 2021*
Blacktown	56%	66%	69%	72%	64%
Blue Mountains	66%	73%	75%	75%	70%
Camden	66%	71%	72%	71%	65%
Campbelltown	56%	61%	64%	67%	58%
Canterbury-Bankstown	45%	51%	53%	52%	42%
Cumberland	40%	52%	56%	55%	54%
Fairfield	47%	47%	46%	39%	25%
Hawkesbury	64%	73%	77%	73%	69%
Liverpool	53%	58%	59%	56%	43%
Parramatta	64%	66%	70%	71%	65%
Penrith	63%	70%	68%	70%	63%
The Hills	69%	72%	77%	77%	67%
Wollondilly	67%	72%	76%	71%	63%
Western Sydney	54%	59%	62%	63%	54%
Rest of Sydney	69%	72%	76%	76%	70%

Among those who arrived in Australia in 2011–21, there is a large variation between the LGAs of Western Sydney:

- ▶ A high participation rate (70%) is recorded in the Blue Mountains among newly arrived women, while a very low rate (25%) is found among women of Fairfield. These differences may also reflect migrants' different countries of origin in these LGAs and the types of linguistic, cultural, racial and passport privileges conferred on different groups of migrants. In the Blue Mountains, the top four overseas-born populations are from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Germany and the USA, while in Fairfield, the top three largest overseas-born groups are from Vietnam, Iraq, Cambodia and Syria.
- ▶ Across all arrival periods, the same LGAs appear with the lowest participation rates: Fairfield, Cumberland, Canterbury-Bankstown and Liverpool to a lesser extent. The most strikingly low participation rate across all LGAs and all periods of arrival is among women in Fairfield who arrived between 2011–21, their participation is at just 25%. This is much lower even than comparable LGAs such as Canterbury-Bankstown (42%), Liverpool (43%) and Cumberland (54%).

Several intersectional factors impact the labour force participation of women in Fairfield, including policies and services governing refugee resettlement, with many women arriving in Fairfield as humanitarian entrants from Syria and Iraq over the last decade. While women arriving as humanitarian entrants also bring rich work experience, education and qualifications, these women have not had to meet the same requirements as those arriving on a skilled migration visa, so are more of a mixed cohort in terms of their readiness to join the workforce. Women who have experienced protracted displacement may have missed years of education and employment.

PARTICIPATION RATES BY ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Country of origin and the length of time in Australia also significantly impact English-language proficiency, another core intersectional factor shaping employment outcomes for women. However, women with all levels of English proficiency, who live in Western Sydney, have lower participation rates than women in the Rest of Sydney (see Figure 7.2).

- ▶ Women in Western Sydney who report speaking English 'not well or not at all' have an average participation rate of just 28%, lower than the same cohort in the Rest of Sydney (37%).
- ▶ Participation rates unsurprisingly decline significantly between those who speak English 'well or very well' and those who speak English 'not well or not at all'. This is particularly pronounced in Blacktown (45% difference in participation rates) and The Hills (43% difference in participation rates).

Figure 7.2 Women's labour force participation rate by English-language proficiency – Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

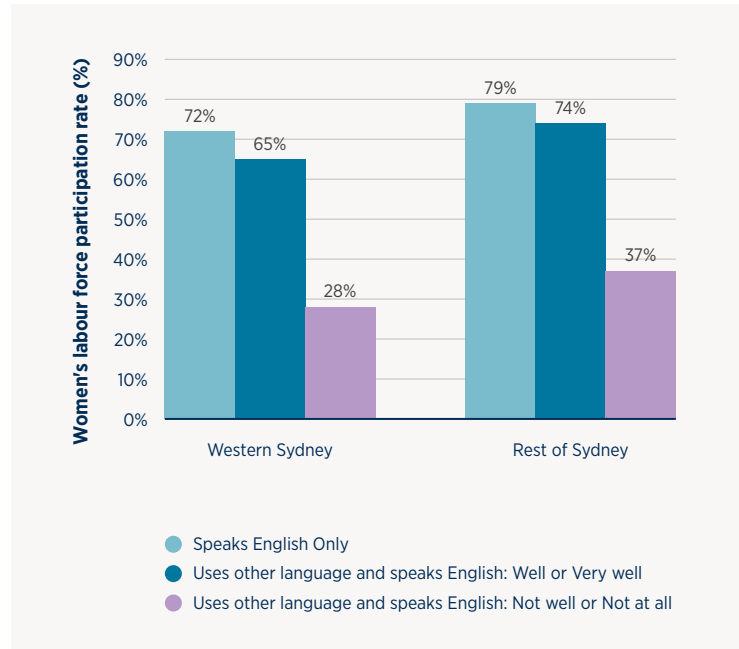
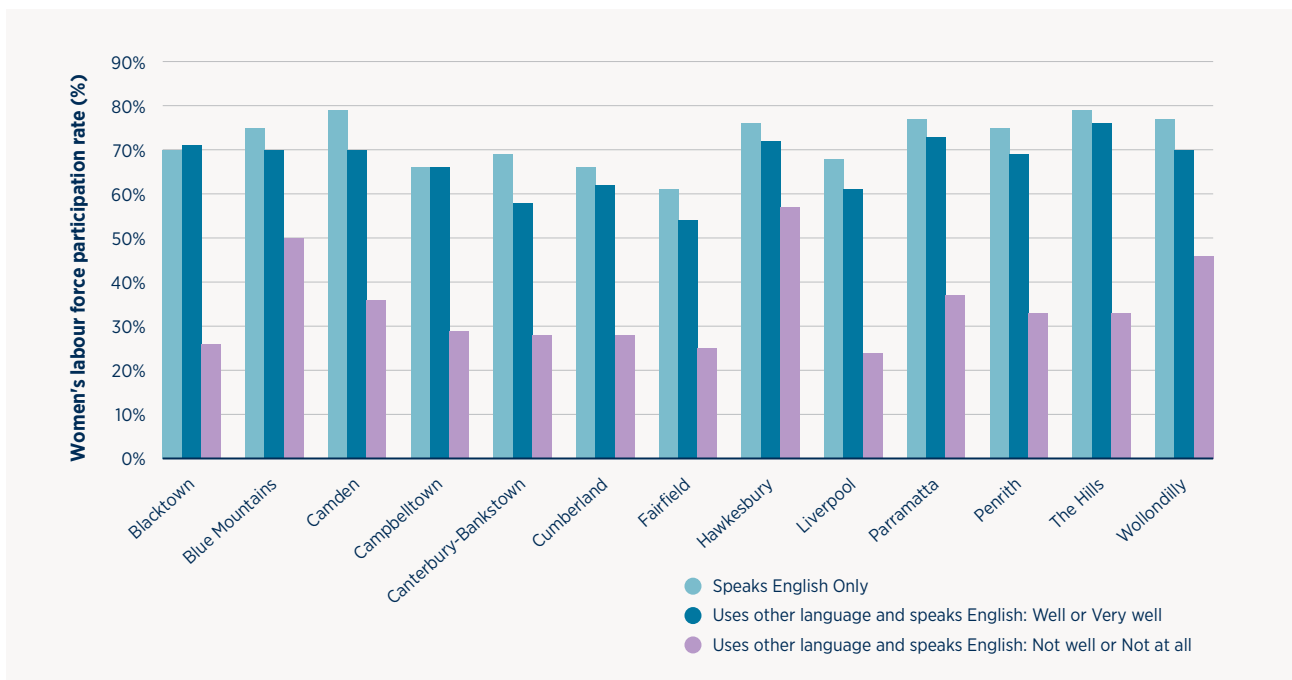


Figure 7.3 Women's labour force participation rate by English-language proficiency – Western Sydney



Overall, the proportion of women in Western Sydney who speak English "not well or not at all" and are unemployed or not in the labour force is significantly higher than in the Rest of Sydney. However, variation is also stark across Western Sydney LGAs in terms of English proficiency and employment:

- ▶ In the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Wollondilly, 92–94% of women employed full-time or part-time speak English only. In comparison, of the employed women in Fairfield (full-time and part-time), only 26–28% speak English.
- ▶ Among women employed full-time in Fairfield, 10% do not speak English well or at all, which is five times higher than the Western Sydney average (2%) and 10 times higher than the Rest of Sydney average (2%).
- ▶ Among women unemployed or not in the labour force, Fairfield has the highest proportion of those who speak English "not well or not at all", making up 27% of unemployed women and 37% of those not in the labour force.



7.5 Religion and workforce participation

Religion is another factor that can shape women's workforce participation rates. Across all religions, participation rates in Western Sydney are lower than those in the Rest of Sydney. The biggest gap is registered between the participation rates of Muslim women in Western Sydney (41%) and Muslim women in the Rest of Sydney (58%). This again reiterates the importance of place intersecting with identities and structural barriers.

- ▶ Across Western Sydney and benchmarks, the participation rate is lowest among Muslim women. This is particularly low in Fairfield (32%), Cumberland (34%) and Canterbury-Bankstown (36%).
- ▶ Fairfield also has a relatively low participation rate among Christian women (47%).
- ▶ In many Western Sydney LGAs, the sample size of Jewish women is too small to be statistically reliable. This is the case in Camden, Campbelltown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly.

WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION BY RELIGION

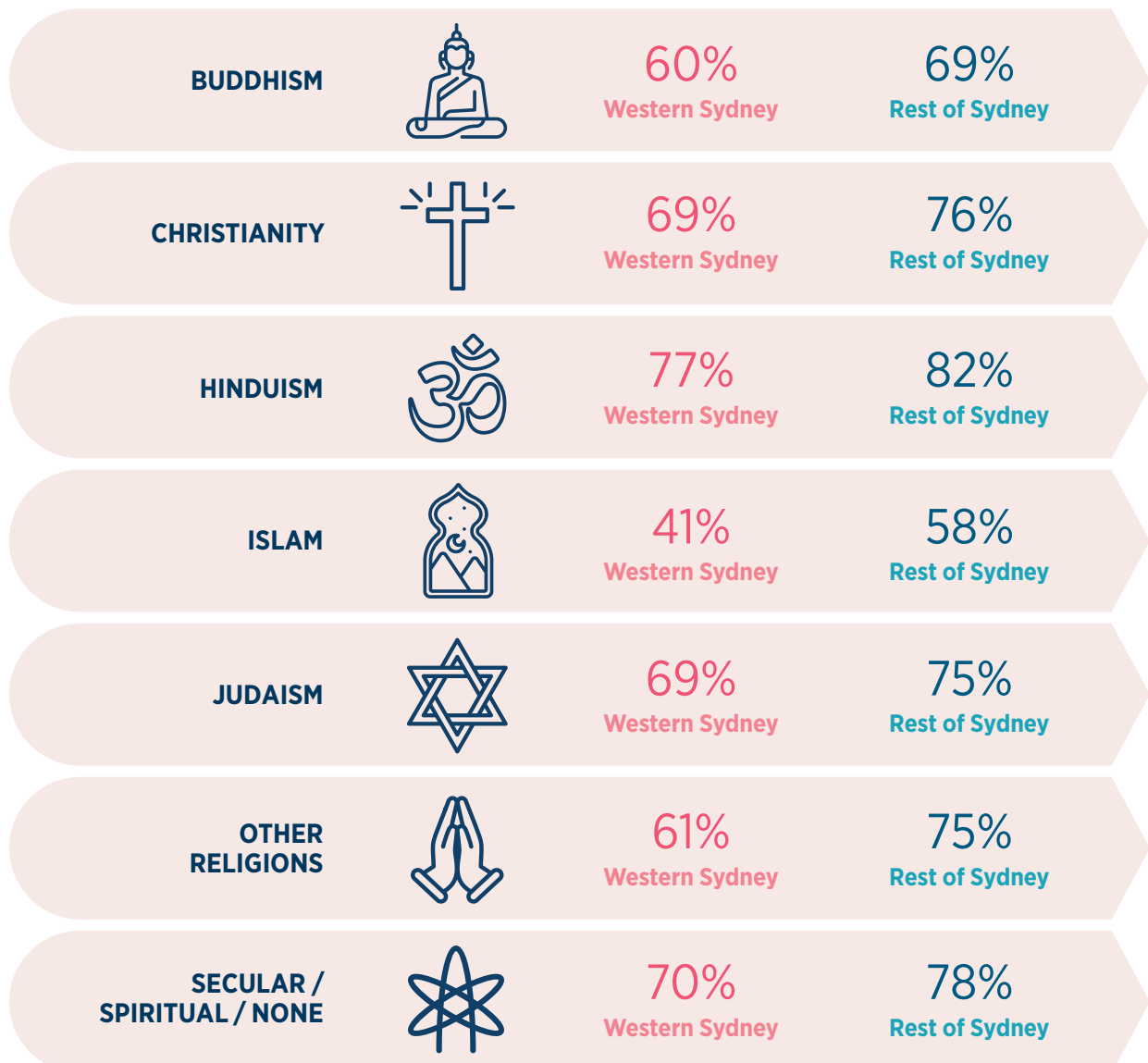


Table 7.3 Women's labour force participation rate by religion - Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

	BUDDHISM	CHRISTIANITY	HINDUISM	ISLAM	JUDAISM	OTHER RELIGIONS	SECULAR BELIEFS AND OTHER SPIRITUAL BELIEFS AND NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
Blacktown	70%	71%	77%	48%	71%	68%	68%
Blue Mountains	70%	74%	73%	55%	60%	67%	76%
Camden	71%	77%	78%	55%	76%*	63%	79%
Campbelltown	65%	67%	75%	49%	58%*	61%	66%
Canterbury-Bankstown	57%	66%	75%	36%	73%	60%	65%
Cumberland	63%	63%	76%	34%	68%*	62%	61%
Fairfield	53%	47%	72%	32%	64%*	33%	55%
Hawkesbury	71%	76%	84%	59%	67%*	75%	76%
Liverpool	60%	65%	76%	40%	75%*	31%	66%
Parramatta	70%	73%	77%	54%	74%	66%	72%
Penrith	69%	74%	74%	49%	56%*	69%	74%
The Hills	74%	77%	82%	62%	70%	76%	74%
Wollondilly	67%	77%	81%	58%	100%*	69%	76%
Western Sydney	60%	69%	77%	41%	69%	61%	70%
Rest of Sydney	69%	76%	82%	58%	75%	75%	78%

*Results based on small sample size (n < 20). Use caution when interpreting individual results.

The majority of women employed full-time in Western Sydney are Christian (52%), which is slightly higher than the Rest of Sydney (44%). One-quarter of women employed full-time in Western Sydney are secular/no religious affiliation, which is much lower than those in the Rest of Sydney (46%).

There is a higher proportion of Muslim women who are not in the labour force in Western Sydney (18%), which is much higher than the Rest of Sydney (4%). This reflects the fact that the majority of Greater Sydney's Muslim population lives in Western Sydney.

▶ Aside from Christian women and those with no religion, a high proportion of women employed full-time in:

- Cumberland are Hindu (22%)
- Fairfield are Buddhist (26%)
- Canterbury-Bankstown are Muslim (11%)

▶ A high proportion of women not in the labour force in:

- Parramatta and Cumberland are Hindu (10-11%)
- Fairfield are Buddhist (24%)
- Cumberland and Canterbury-Bankstown are Muslim (36%)
- Wollondilly, Hawkesbury, and Camden are Christian (60-63%)

In dissecting women's labour force participation in Western Sydney, it becomes evident that religion plays a pivotal role, intersecting with geographical dynamics. The pronounced contrast in participation rates among Muslim women within and outside Western Sydney highlights the influence of place on workforce participation rates. The data again shows stark geographical disparities, with certain areas like Fairfield exhibiting notably low participation rates across various religious groups. This underscores the interplay between geography, religious identity, and labour market dynamics. Addressing these disparities necessitates tailored interventions that acknowledge the unique challenges faced by women in different geographical contexts across Western Sydney, particularly those from religious communities facing structural barriers such as discrimination and cultural safety in the workplace.



8. LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

This section offers an overview of various policies and programs at the local, state and federal levels that aim to enhance the economic participation of women.¹⁸⁷ The review comes at a critical juncture, where there is an increased recognition of the need for a cohesive and targeted approach to harness women's full potential in the workforce.

The policy analysis presented in this section demonstrates the need for a more integrated governance structure and strategies to address the disparate needs of women across different demographics and regions. Further, while recent policies have begun to address these gaps, many initiatives remain narrow in their focus and in nascent development and impact assessment stages.

This analysis begins by examining the current policy environment for women's economic participation. It concludes with an appraisal of the strategic successes and areas for improvement highlighted by these various initiatives for women in the Western Sydney region.

8.1 Overview of current policies and programs

FEDERAL POLICIES

- ▶ Budget 2023–24: Women’s Budget Statement
- ▶ Women’s Economic Equality Taskforce (WEET): 10-year-plan to unleash the full capacity and contribution of women to the Australian economy 2023 – 2033
- ▶ Department of Health: National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030

FEDERAL PROGRAMS

- ▶ Department of Employment and Workplace Relations Career Revive Program
- ▶ Example programs funded under the Federal Government’s Women’s Leadership and Development Program:
 - GOGO Foundation Inclusive Work Program
 - Women for Election Australia, Enhancing Diverse Women’s Pathways into Leadership Roles
 - Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative, Yanalangami: Strong Women, Strong Communities Program
 - Integreat Queensland, Work Placement Participation for Skilled Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women
 - Inventorium, ReCareer Women Program
 - University of New South Wales, Attracting, Retaining and Empowering Women in Construction
 - Kalyuku Ninti – Punktuku Ngurra Ltd Empowering Martu Women Project
 - Australian Muslim Women’s Centre for Human Rights, Building Capacity for Safety and Success
 - Centre for Women & Co, Kickstarter Workshop Series
 - RTV Consultancy Women ‘n’ Work Boots

STATE POLICIES

- ▶ The NSW Budget 2022–23: Women’s Opportunity Statement
- ▶ The NSW 2023-2024 Gender Equality Budget Statement
- ▶ The NSW Women’s Strategy 2023-2026

STATE PROGRAMS

- ▶ Future Women Jobs Academy
- ▶ TAFE NSW / NSW Government, Women in Business initiative
- ▶ The NSW 2023-2024 Gender Equality Budget Statement
- ▶ The NSW Women’s Strategy 2023-2026
 - NSW Women’s Week Grants
 - Investing in Women Grants
 - Women in Business Networks Grants
 - Return to Work Pathways Program

LOCAL POLICIES

- ▶ Blue Mountains City Council Gender Equity Strategy 2021 – 2026
- ▶ Canterbury-Bankstown City Council Economic Development Strategy Plan 2036

LOCAL PROGRAMS

- ▶ Transport for NSW Safer Cities: Her Way Program
- ▶ Cumberland City Council Financial Wellbeing Spring Program
- ▶ Canterbury-Bankstown Chamber of Commerce BRAVE Return to Work Program
- ▶ Western Sydney Women Careers Connect, Wise Women, Build Your New Career, The Future is Bright, Women in Aviation programs, Empowering and Enabling the Women of Western Sydney
- ▶ Immigrant Women’s SpeakOut Association, Immigrant Women’s Resource Centre
- ▶ Settlement Services International (SSI) Return to Work program, Connecting Women to Trades program
- ▶ Sydney Metro Workforce Development & Industry Participation Plan
- ▶ Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre The MiLivelihood Initiative

8.2 Policy overview

KEY FINDINGS OF POLICY AND PROGRAM ANALYSIS

1. Federal policies that seek to enhance labour force participation and economic equality for women take a **multifaceted approach** that includes improving childcare access, promoting gender equity in the workplace and providing targeted support for education and career advancement.
2. State policies focus on economic opportunity and advancement, health and wellbeing, participation and empowerment.
3. Local programs are designed to **cater to the distinct challenges of specific groups** such as migrant, Indigenous, and CALD women. Whether overcoming language barriers or navigating complex healthcare systems, these initiatives consider the broader social context impacting economic participation.
4. Supports are **structured in phases**, first addressing foundational issues like language and safety before economic engagement.
5. Program designs reflect **cultural sensitivity**, with input from the communities they aim to serve.
6. Training and education programs are **personalised**, aiming to align with individual career goals and aspirations and foster confidence and self-efficacy among women as a basis for their professional advancement.
7. Strategies are in place in Western Sydney to facilitate the **entry of women into traditionally male-dominated sectors** like aviation and construction in preparation for the new Western Sydney International Airport.

POLICY AND PROGRAM STRENGTHS

1. Gender equity is **targeted in male-dominated industries** such as construction, trades and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), offering new opportunities for women's employment and career advancement.
2. The **safety and wellbeing of women in workplaces are prioritised**, leading to the development of more inclusive work environments.
3. **Culturally sensitive and cohort-specific support programs** delivered at local and state levels are aligned with broader Federal objectives, showing promise for effective scaling according to the diverse needs of various groups.
4. Support programs provide **comprehensive services**, including training and education, to empower women's career development.
5. **Confidence-building** is a core component of many programs to equip women for long-term professional success.
6. **Personalised support** measures are incorporated to meet women's specific educational and employment needs.
7. Programs are built on the idea that female representation can boost empowerment and help women support each other, leading to **broader social and economic benefits for women**.

POLICY AND PROGRAM GAPS

1. There is considerable variation in strategies and efforts across local councils, for the labour force participation of women across Western Sydney.
2. While impactful in their domains, narrowly focused programs sometimes **miss addressing interconnected barriers** that affect women's broader economic participation.
3. While acknowledging the critical role of childcare in women's workforce participation, **not all programs offer comprehensive solutions to this systemic barrier**.
4. There is an **absence of extensive data to measure the effectiveness of programs**, indicating a need for systematic evaluation mechanisms.
5. **The full impact** of federal and state government initiatives (i.e., providing new childcare places) on workforce participation is **not yet fully determined**.



FEDERAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The Australian Government currently supports the labour force participation of women through key policies and initiatives that seek to chart a course towards greater inclusion and equality. Among these initiatives is the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce's 10-year plan (WEET), which lays down a roadmap for unleashing the full potential of women in the national economy. Federal policies and programs seek to address the complex barriers that have historically hindered women's full economic participation. From enhancing childcare support to enacting mentorship programs for emerging female professionals, these policies and programs are designed to reshape the landscape of women's work and wellbeing in Australia.

Federal priorities for enhancing the labour force participation of women

- ▶ **CHILDCARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT:** improve access to affordable, quality early childhood education and care, recognising this as a crucial factor in enabling women's workforce participation. This includes increased childcare subsidies and expanded parental leave provisions to promote shared caregiving responsibilities.
- ▶ **WAGE EQUITY AND INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION:** review wages and conditions in female-dominated care industries and create strategies for women enter traditionally male-dominated fields. This approach aims to balance the wage disparities and ensure women have better opportunities across various sectors.
- ▶ **ECONOMIC AND GENDER EQUALITY LEADERSHIP:** a call for gender equity to be a cornerstone of all federal policies and budgeting processes. This includes investments that appreciate the value of care work and support systems that allow for more equitable sharing of family responsibilities.
- ▶ **REGULATORY AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM:** leverage regulatory, legislative and financial tools to facilitate safe, equitable and flexible working conditions for women. This includes reforms that promote accessible and sustainable education and skills development to address occupational segregation and the gender pay gap.
- ▶ **FINANCIAL SECURITY AND BIAS REDUCTION:** seeking to ensure financial security for women across their lifespan, including through financial literacy programs and tax reviews. This includes a focus on addressing intersecting barriers that affect women's economic participation.
- ▶ **HEALTH AND WELLBEING:** recognising the importance of women's health as integral to economic participation and security, addressing various health needs and the impact of violence against women.
- ▶ **WORKPLACE INCLUSION PROGRAMS:** initiatives like the Career Revive Program demonstrate government priorities for supporting businesses to create more inclusive cultures and practices, particularly to assist women in re-entering the workforce after career breaks.



STATE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

The NSW Government, recognising the pivotal role of women in fostering a robust and equitable economy, has put forth a series of initiatives as part of the NSW Budget 2022–23: Among these is the Working Women’s Centre, which will receive \$8 million over four years in collaboration with the Commonwealth. The centre will provide frontline services to help women navigate workplace issues, including sexual harassment, underpayment, wage theft and parental leave. Though still unfolding, these state-level policies and programs signify a commitment to enhancing economic participation and empowerment of women. From increasing childcare accessibility to facilitating entrepreneurship, each initiative aims to address existing gaps and foster an inclusive environment for women’s advancement. Among these is the Working Women’s Centre, which will receive \$8 million over four years in collaboration with the Commonwealth. The centre will provide frontline services to help women navigate workplace issues, including sexual harassment, underpayment, wage theft and parental leave. A thematic summary of state-level policies and programs is presented below, capturing the NSW Government’s strategic vision to support women today and invest in the next generation of women leaders.

State priorities for enhancing women’s labour force participation

- ▶ **CHILDCARE ACCESSIBILITY:** enhancing accessible and affordable childcare to support women’s workforce participation. While new childcare places are planned, the full impact on workforce participation is still being assessed.
- ▶ **WORKPLACE EQUALITY:** The NSW government is taking steps towards creating more equitable workplaces, and for the first time in NSW history, the NSW Cabinet is 50 per cent women. Initiatives to address the gender pay gap and support career progression for women are in progress, with outcomes expected to evolve over time.
- ▶ **BUSINESS SUPPORT FOR WOMEN:** nurturing female entrepreneurship through support programs and funding. The success of these ventures is anticipated to grow as more women engage with these resources.
- ▶ **WOMEN’S HEALTH INITIATIVES:** A commitment to improving health services for women is underway, with the goal of addressing specific health needs. The effectiveness of awareness campaigns and health services in changing outcomes will continue to be monitored.
- ▶ **SAFETY AND RESPECT:** Initiatives to improve safety for women and address violence are being implemented, including establishing new roles and services. The impact of these measures on women’s safety and wellbeing is an ongoing area of focus.
- ▶ **FINANCIAL STABILITY:** Steps are being taken to assist vulnerable women in achieving economic stability through housing schemes, with the longer-term impacts on financial security yet to be fully realised.
- ▶ **YOUTH SKILL DEVELOPMENT:** Programs are in place to empower young women with financial and career skills that potentially impact their future independence, forming a key area of long-term evaluation.



LOCAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

This review examined strategic plans from local governments in Western Sydney to understand priorities for women's labour force participation. This analysis revealed significant variation in local policies available to support the labour force participation of women across councils. Many policies were still in development or at an early stage, with research still underway to inform actions and initiatives needed at a council level. Complementing council efforts, community organisations administer key programs, addressing various aspects of improving women's economic participation.

Local priorities for enhancing the labour force participation of women

- ▶ **INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS** that aim to address sectors with potential in Western Sydney, such as construction, trade, aviation and STEM, aspiring to create growth and opportunity.
- ▶ **EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SAFETY FOR WOMEN** in Western Sydney are underway, intending to cultivate a secure environment that supports women's wellbeing and confidence.
- ▶ **COHORT-SPECIFIC INITIATIVES** strive to understand and meet the unique needs of diverse groups, including:
 - Refugees and migrant populations, with tailored programs for the diverse CALD population and other specific cohorts in Western Sydney seek to support their entry or return to the workforce.
 - Women re-entering the workforce and women entrepreneurs are provided support to empower their professional journeys.
 - Young girls in high school with the aim to foster an early interest in under-represented careers.
- ▶ **ENCOURAGING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION** in emerging industries, especially with the development of the Western Sydney International (Nancy-Bird Walton) Airport and broadening the reach of women in traditionally male-dominated fields.
- ▶ **PROMOTE CULTURAL AND PHYSICAL SAFETY FOR WOMEN**, with the aspiration to make re-entering the workforce a positive and secure experience.
- ▶ **EDUCATION, TRAINING AND MENTORING FOR WOMEN**, with the intention of equipping them with the necessary skills, networks and confidence to succeed in the workforce.



9. UNLEASHING WOMEN'S LABOUR FORCE POTENTIAL IN WESTERN SYDNEY

9.1 Towards spatial equity

The recommendations presented underscore the necessity for a coordinated approach in bolstering women's workforce participation in Western Sydney, calling for the mobilisation of multiple stakeholders. This unified effort should encompass educational institutions, local businesses, community organisations and all levels of government, working in concert to develop and implement strategies tailored to the varied needs of women in the region.

Emphasising inclusivity and equity, the recommendations span from enhancing educational pathways, to fostering workplace integration and reimagining childcare solutions.

There is a need for targeted place-based approaches and supportive frameworks that empower women from all backgrounds, particularly those facing the most significant barriers, ensuring their successful and sustained engagement in the workforce.



9.2 Getting the job done

1 | Invest in integrated place-based programs and initiatives for women in Western Sydney

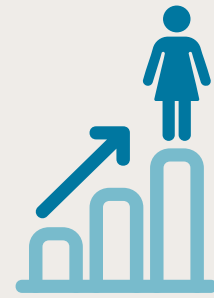
- 1.1** Develop a strategy around Western Sydney workers and the spatial location of jobs and housing, continuing to advocate for bringing jobs closer to residential areas of Western Sydney. This strategy should be developed based on local-level data on car reliance and cost, transport disadvantage and the barriers to travel to start or maintain paid work.
- 1.2** Combine place-based policymaking with dedicated funding to foster a community-centred economic environment where women can participate.
- 1.3** Leverage local expertise to tailor policies and programs to the distinct needs of women in Western Sydney.
- 1.4** Support local programs through sustainable funding models, including targeted long-term investments in neighbourhood centres, local government employment initiatives and support for multicultural community organisations. These funding models need to be multi-year, promote collaboration and remove competition among community organisations.
- 1.5** Broaden the current evidence base on the intricate dynamics of women and work in local areas. This research must be community-led to help develop adaptable policies tailored to the complex demands of women's work life, fostering solutions that significantly improve employment conditions and expand the professional prospects of women in Western Sydney. Key research priorities include:
 - ▶ A study on women and work in Parramatta to understand the impacts of visa limitations, over-qualification and generational shifts in education and work.
 - ▶ Women in disadvantaged LGAs of Fairfield, Cumberland and Canterbury-Bankstown to understand the dynamics of unpaid labour, the informal economy and the barriers for women currently not in the labour force.
 - ▶ Examining the distribution and cultural perceptions of unpaid work, including the demand for paid work, is also necessary.
 - ▶ Detailed childcare assessments, including affordability and accessibility, are also imperative to comprehensively address working parents' needs.



2

Remove spatial and socio-cultural barriers to connect women from Western Sydney across all qualification levels with appropriate and meaningful work opportunities

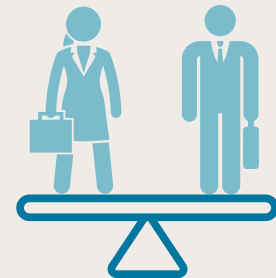
- 2.1** Reduce the 'spatial leash' on Western Sydney women by advocating to relocate professional opportunities and businesses to Western Sydney to utilise the skills and education in the region. Provide hybrid work opportunities where possible to support women's workforce participation.
- 2.2** Support women by providing robust networks that offer mentorship, recognition of qualifications and planning tools for long-term career development, focusing on the inclusion and belonging of Indigenous, migrant and culturally diverse women in the labour force.
- 2.3** Establish strategic partnerships for paid internships in diverse sectors across Western Sydney, coupled with dedicated career guidance services.
- 2.4** Enhance educational pathways and workplace integration for women through a cohesive strategy that includes tailored school, TAFE and university programs, free skills courses and workshops on soft skills such as confidence building and communication.
- 2.5** Undertake engaged research and consultations to capture ways to support women transitioning from the safety, security and healthcare that Centrelink income support provides towards meaningful, secure employment.



3

Address gender disparities in the workforce between Western Sydney women and men

- 3.1** Work to counteract gendered division of labour across work sectors in Western Sydney. This entails support for women joining non-traditional high-paid sectors that are the backbone and future of Western Sydney's economy, providing skill development for jobs in traditionally masculine industries such as high-tech infrastructure, STEM and construction. This should be accompanied by approaches that incentivise men to enter formal care work and support employers in diversifying the sector.
- 3.2** Advocate for improved salaries and labour conditions in the formal care sector, which is currently understaffed and unable to meet the needs of future Western Sydney populations. This includes promoting women to higher-paid managerial and leadership roles within the sector.
- 3.3** Advocate for parental leave provisions that support men in childcare responsibilities so childcare does not remain largely the domain of women.
- 3.4** Advocate for changes to men's working patterns, hours and industries to be more gender inclusive and for workplaces to offer more flexibility for men to engage in care work at home. This would help lift the spatial leash on women, allowing them to take up work opportunities further from their homes.



4

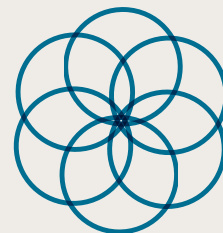
Develop a targeted strategy to address childcare deserts and support flexible work for women of Western Sydney



- 4.1** Introduce a national Childcare Stress Index to measure the pressure childcare places on families' incomes and the availability of childcare places.
- 4.2** Advocate for factoring geographical location into means testing for childcare subsidies since women in Western Sydney travel greater distances to work, resulting in longer hours and higher childcare costs.
- 4.3** Formulate a comprehensive strategy that prioritises expanding childcare services to improve affordability, hours of care outside of 9–5, accessibility and innovative care models like onsite school care and culturally informed approaches to care. Implement the strategy by collaborating with workplaces and government bodies for policy support and funding to create an environment conducive to women's labour force participation.
- 4.4** Mandate flexible work arrangements, encouraging employers through incentives to support diverse work schedules, particularly supporting women over 50, working families, solo mothers and those with caring responsibilities and women entering male-dominated fields.
- 4.5** Support both parents in participating in the paid workforce and sharing caring responsibilities through paid parental leave for both parents. Ensure that means testing childcare subsidies does not discourage women from undertaking paid work but rather allows for the support of both parents doing paid work.
- 4.6** Address care staffing shortages and provide culturally appropriate care through culturally informed approaches, developing a cadre of multilingual carers providing work for diverse women and culturally appropriate care that enables diverse women to use formal childcare.

5

Prioritise the inclusion and empowerment of the diverse women of Western Sydney



- 5.1** Develop intersectional policies that address the specific challenges that diverse groups of women face beyond gender identity.
- 5.2** Implement culturally safe and anti-racist recruitment and hiring practices and mentoring and retention practices per the Human Rights Commission National Anti-Racist Framework. Implement discrimination and harassment reporting mechanisms that are safe and transparent. Incentivise businesses and celebrate those modelling good practices in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- 5.3** Advocate for removing barriers to overseas qualification recognition to streamline the process and ensure a strengths-based approach is taken. Provide targeted pathway programs, such as language development for women and employer education, to promote a strengths-based approach to diversity in the workplace.
- 5.4** Include commitments to enhance the representation of women in leadership roles, especially Indigenous women and those from multicultural backgrounds.
- 5.5** Provide wraparound support to women: language lessons, mental health support, FDV recovery, housing support, childcare, skills training, driving lessons, transport support, digital literacy and access.

RESEARCH TEAM

Dr
Rhonda
Itaoui

**DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR
WESTERN SYDNEY**

Dr Rhonda Itaoui is a social researcher with expertise in human geography, and the geographies of diversity, and multiculturalism. As Director of the Centre for Western Sydney, she is committed to amplifying community voices and collaboratively working with various stakeholders, including researchers, industry professionals and government, to develop policies that meet community needs and foster the success of the Western Sydney region. Her research approach is community-centric, prioritising the needs and aspirations of the people in Western Sydney, a community characterised by its youth, cultural diversity and opportunities.

Dr
Angela
Smith

**POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH
FELLOW, CENTRE FOR WESTERN
SYDNEY**

Dr Angela Smith is an interdisciplinary social researcher with expertise in political and human geography, focusing on the relationship between people and their spatial contexts. She brings over a decade of experience as a practitioner working with diverse communities and international organisations. Through this expertise, Angela offers a nuanced understanding of migration and belonging, informed by both local realities and global geopolitical dynamics. Her research skills include qualitative and quantitative methods, monitoring and evaluation, research design and research project management. Her research interests include themes of human mobility, colonial histories and border dynamics, shedding light on contemporary global challenges.

Professor
Kate
Huppertz

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY**

Professor Kate Huppertz is Discipline Lead of Sociology and Associate Dean, Research (School of Social Sciences) at Western Sydney University. She specialises in the study of gender (especially women and girls), work, occupations and family. Her writing creatively engages with Pierre Bourdieu, feminist theory and intersectionality. Her recent empirical research has explored intersectional experiences of gender violence in workplaces and relationships as well as gender equity in academia. Dr Huppertz's publications include the books, 'The Good Mother' (with Sue Goodwin, 2010), 'Gender Capital at Work' (2012), 'Identity and Belonging' (with Hawkins and Matthews, 2016), and 'Gender, Work and Social Theory' (2023).





**CASE STUDIES
AND RESEARCH
SPOTLIGHTS**

BUSINESS WESTERN SYDNEY RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY:

Closer to Talent and Closer to Home Reports

“Women will travel less than men for work, often sacrificing years of training and education for jobs closer to home to better support a young family” Closer to Home report, 2021.

In 2021 and 2022, Business Western Sydney unveiled two reports, Closer to Home¹⁸⁸ and Closer to Talent.¹⁸⁹ Both reports uncovered that women often give up better work opportunities in favour of being close to home to care for children and others. This means businesses miss out on the diverse pool of female talent in Western Sydney while women miss out on career progression.

In Closer to Home, Business Western Sydney emphasises the benefits of relocating businesses to the region, particularly in tackling workforce participation challenges faced by women.

“We have a real chance to recoup women’s lost productivity gains and increase community connections.” Closer to Home report, 2021.

Both reports propose concrete recommendations to the public and private sectors, advocating for establishing metropolitan clusters, including satellite offices and co-working spaces, and investment in infrastructure that supports hybrid working. The research highlights that strategically located hubs foster an environment where employees can work closer to home, promoting a healthier work-life balance and a more sustainable and accessible working environment.

This approach ensures that not only businesses and women thrive, but they also contribute to the region’s economic growth.

“Being closer to employment has far-reaching benefits for people and place: getting back the time spent commuting, providing opportunities for graduates and early career workers, increasing the potential for women to participate in the workforce, and capturing and containing local economic activity so cafes, supporting services and other businesses can succeed together” Closer to Talent report, 2022.

This research provides benchmark advocacy for transforming traditional business models to address key spatial barriers faced by women in the workforce.



MULTIPLY CONSTRUCTIONS

Jump Start

The Jump Start Program aims to provide female students in Years 10–12 a deeper understanding of what a career in the built environment can offer.¹⁹⁰ A grassroots initiative that commenced in 2018, the program now forms an important part of the national diversity and inclusion commitment of Multiplex Constructions, aiming to widen the pool of female talent for the built environment industry. This includes disciplines such as construction management, architecture, engineering, design, community relations and trades.

The Western Sydney International Airport has been a key site delivering the Jump Start program for the last three years.

The Jump Start program is made up of a 12-month curriculum for high school students, offering a range of site walks, mentoring sessions, interactive workshops, panel discussions and more. Students are introduced to the built environment, learn about digital design and technologies, engineering and planning, hear from women in the industry and participate in site walks and university and careers days.

More than 400 students have participated in the Jump Start programs around Australia, with a positive response in engagement for careers in construction. Many participants highlighted a change of attitude to the industry overall with new positive perceptions, and the majority said their expectations had been well exceeded.



Jump Start participants attending a workshop at Western Sydney Airport Training Room.



A participant working on the workshop activity with a representative from one of Multiplex's subcontractors.



Jump Start Careers Day at Multiplex Head Office.

WESTPAC

EmPOWER UP Tech Returnship Program

EmPOWER UP is a new Westpac program that supports a return to work for people who have been out of the workforce for two years or more, whether for parenting responsibilities, caring for a loved one or due to health reasons or other barriers.¹⁹¹ The EmPOWER UP program contributes to Westpac's overarching diversity, equity and inclusion strategy to create a culturally diverse workplace.

The EmPOWER UP initiative aims to support under-represented people joining the technology industry. Participants in the 24-week EmPOWER UP Tech Returnship program receive extensive support and training, including seminars, workshops, podcasts and role-specific training. Previous technology experience is not essential to apply; however, some roles require technical skills such as engineering, information security and data analytics. The program is also open to people with generalist skills and experience across other areas like strategy, project management, implementation or change management.

Importantly, managers of people involved in the program will be provided with formal training to better understand the needs of someone returning to work after a long break. This will enable managers to support these staff—especially regarding flexibility.

Australia continues to face a talent gap in the tech industry. When it comes to people studying STEM subjects at university, only 1 in 3 are women, 1 in 20 have a disability, and only 1 in 100 identify as First Nations Australians. Closing these gaps requires more Australians to move into tech roles than ever before. It requires non-traditional pathways like EmPOWER UP to attract and retain culturally diverse and under-represented groups.

Westpac has a long and proud history of supporting female economic empowerment and continues to do so through its partnerships, policies and initiatives. EmPOWER UP aims to support women to re-enter the workforce and grow their careers in the fast-moving world of technology while helping the bank attract diverse talent in a highly competitive market.



L-R: Elizabeth Pilat, Renee Kirchner, Neesha Khushalani, Shilpa Lakeshri, Kirstina Bennett, Felicia Angkawijaya.



L-R: Anna Ottavio, Samira Bachir, Melissa Johnston.

TRANSDEV:

Great Women Join & Stay Program

Transport has always been a male-dominated industry, particularly on the front line. Transdev, which runs the Sydney Light Rail, has set itself a target of achieving gender parity with its drivers by increasing the number of female tram drivers.¹⁹² In late 2023, Transdev set up the first all-female training school for the Sydney Light Rail and will soon run another for the upcoming Parramatta Light Rail.

In recognising gender bias in employment starts right from the beginning of recruitment, Transdev began by re-wording their advertisements with the help of gender-decoding tools, changing the order of recruitment phases to be more flexible around women's needs,

increasing the visibility of women in their advertising campaigns and creating informational content like 'a day in the life of a female tram driver'. Transparency has become an important part of their recruitment process, with up-front information around salary, benefits and expectations, and often in conversation with potential applicants before taking up people's time with further recruitment phases. Transdev also utilises all-female interview panels and assessors, positively enhancing female recruitment.

The program began in October 2023 and is on track to reach 20% female drivers by the end of 2024.



First all-female training school.

ACADEMY U

Western Sydney University

The Academy U Program inspires and supports high-potential high school students to develop their potential through enriched and extended learning opportunities within and beyond the school curriculum. Students undertake a range of experiences to extend their leadership, critical thinking and personal capabilities. This culminates in undertaking a first-year subject, 'Leadership in Complexity', which is part of the Bachelor of Creative Leadership.



Academy U Leadership in Complexity event. Image credit: Kyisoe Han..

The program aims to provide participating high school students with:

- ▶ Enhanced employability and interpersonal skills
- ▶ Enhanced self-reflection, critical thinking, and communication skills
- ▶ Increased dedication to community engagement through participation in activities
- ▶ Increased knowledge and understanding of leadership theory and practice and how to practically apply it
- ▶ Increased knowledge of the importance of sustainability and sustainable development practices.

The program features 500 students in Years 9–12 from 15 partner high schools, around 70% of program participants are young women. Students undertake campus experience days, online and in-school activities and workshops. The program's content is designed around the UN Sustainable Development Goals, building students' critical thinking, problem-solving and leadership capabilities. A University-level learning experience, the 10-credit point 'Leadership in Complexity' subject, completed in Year 11, further enhances students' understanding of community and civic leadership.

SYDNEY METRO:

Workforce Development & Industry Participation Plan



Image credit: Charlie Fitzgerald

The Sydney Metro - Western Sydney Airport railway line is planned to service Greater Western Sydney, providing access to the new Western Sydney International Airport.¹⁹³ Six new stations have been proposed as part of its development, and the project will support 14,000 new jobs during its construction. The Workforce Development and Industry Participation Plan sets out how the project will build a pipeline of resources to design, construct and operate the railway, leave a lasting skills legacy

for industry and inspire future talent, while addressing challenges relating to skills, employment, diversity and the supply chain.

The Sydney Metro - Western Sydney Airport project provides a significant opportunity to support jobs and skills for a more diverse and inclusive workforce and supply chain. **The Plan seeks to provide employment options for traditionally under-represented groups, including women and Aboriginal people, with 20% of the workforce projected to be from Greater Western Sydney.**

As part of the NSW Infrastructure Skills Legacy program, Sydney Metro has committed to pilot mechanisms and initiatives to increase female representation in non-traditional employment and leadership. The program aims to double the number of women working in trade-related work across all major construction projects, providing women access to the traditionally male-dominated sector, which offers higher pay than traditionally female-dominated occupations.



Image credit: Yang Xia

TRANSPORT FOR NSW:

Safer Cities: Her Way Program

The Safer Cities: Her Way program is a collaborative program between Transport for NSW and 10 local councils to trial innovative ways to improve the safety of public spaces for women, girls and gender-diverse people.¹⁹⁴ Each of the 10 councils has been allocated \$1 m in funding to develop temporary demonstration projects that reflect local place identity, character and needs and aims to scale up to larger future projects.

The Safer Cities program aims to:

- ▶ Increase safety and access to public spaces for women, girls and gender-diverse people
- ▶ Enable women, girls and gender-diverse people to move freely and alone in their community
- ▶ Increase women's, girls' and gender-diverse people's engagement with how the spaces around them are designed and managed.

Place-based initiatives include investment in public infrastructure, amenities and activations. **Four of the 10 councils are in Western Sydney, including Blacktown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland and Fairfield.**



Image credit: Ryan Le

“In NSW, 59 per cent of women feel unsafe in public spaces after dark.”

Transport for NSW
Safer Cities Program



In Canterbury-Bankstown, community engagement activities explored women's and girls' experiences and perceptions of safety in the Lakemba town centre and the public domain in general. As a result, priority areas included the Women's Rest Centre, Station Railway Parade, Haldon Street and Gillies Street Reserve. Initiatives to make these areas safer, more accessible and enjoyable include lighting, wayfinding and signage, improved cleanliness, colour and public art.¹⁹⁵

Cumberland City Council is engaging with women and girls to understand their experiences and perceptions of safety around transport hubs in Auburn, Guildford and Westmead. They have conducted a series of 'walkshops' through areas of concern and co-design workshops.¹⁹⁶

In Fairfield City Council, key community-raised ideas have included additional lighting, temporary activations, improving public spaces' overall look and feel, more public art, night-life improvements and improved surveillance and wayfinding.¹⁹⁷

Blacktown City Council has undertaken community consultations to identify places where women, girls and gender-diverse people feel unsafe in Blacktown and Mount Druitt town centres. Acknowledging that safety concerns are a major barrier to women's and girls' use and enjoyment of public spaces, particularly after dark, Blacktown City Council are trialling initiatives for safer travel paths from train stations to town centres and the hospital.¹⁹⁸

PLACE-BASED EMPLOYMENT

and Enterprise of Newly Arrived Young Migrant Women, Western Sydney University.

**Associate Professor Sukhmani Khorana, Dr Ee Ling Quah,
Associate Professor Nida Denson & Dr Teddy Nagaddya.**

This upcoming project, supported by an Australian Research Council linkage grant, seeks to use place-based perspectives to map southwest Sydney's workforce and business landscape.¹⁹⁹ It will identify the types of industry and social enterprises, potential employment and enterprise opportunities, and local organisations' capacity to work with newly arrived migrant women in the context of socio-economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in southwest Sydney. Using a strengths-based approach, the research team will issue a survey and undertake interviews to understand young migrant women's potential, interests, skills and knowledge gaps in career advancement. Informed by data from the findings, the project will co-create an online career hub co-hosted with partner organisations, benefiting newly arrived communities in the long term.

The research questions to be addressed by this project include:

1. In what ways have newly arrived young migrant women's employment, livelihood and overall settlement in southwest Sydney been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How can migrant women's overall settlement be enhanced using a strengths-based and intersectional approach?
3. How can different place-based employment and entrepreneurship pathways for women be facilitated in collaboration with local businesses and Partner Organisations in Southwest Sydney?

The project will be delivered in partnership with key organisations, including Liverpool City Council, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, Navitas, Curious Works, Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections, Core Community Services and 15/15 Film Festival.



Associate Professor Sukhmani
Khorana



Dr Ee Ling Quah



Associate Professor Nida Denson



Dr Teddy Nagaddya

THE FUTURE OF WORK AND CHILDCARE:

Towards Equity and Justice for Western Sydney Communities.

Lead Authors: Dr Jenna Condie and Dr Liz Ayres. Co-authors: Dr Nicole Bridges, Dr Sheree Gregory, Professor Kate Huppatz, Dr Donna James, Dr Sukhmani Khorana, Professor Amanda Third, Dr Sharlotte Tusasiirwe and Associate Professor Christine Woodrow.

This white paper, developed by Western Sydney University researchers, advocates for more equitable models of work and childcare that prioritise gender equity, gentle parenting, community building, social support and climate justice.²⁰⁰

The paper highlights that the care economy in Western Sydney is under-resourced and inflexible, and current policies prioritise economic growth over family and community relationships. Women, especially those from disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds, face greater challenges in accessing education and earning less than men. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted these existing inequalities in work and childcare responsibilities.

The authors argue that meaningful change relies on a better understanding of the complex interplay between workforce participation and childcare at the local level. There is a particular need for qualitative data that records the lived experiences of women, children and their families to guide effective policy decisions in the Western Sydney region's childcare systems.

The white paper takes a place-based approach to influence and instigate socially just policies and practices that respond to intersecting crises. One opportunity developed from this work is a pilot of mobile childcare at Western Sydney University's Liverpool campus. This project, led by Dr Sharlotte Tusasiirwe and Dr Jenna Condie, is supported by several student and staff partners and the School of Social Sciences. It is delivered in partnership with Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections. This pilot project offers informal childcare to a disadvantaged region that needs more campus-based options for childcare and will produce an evaluation and recommendations for continuation and expansion.



HOUSE TO GROW:

Watering Women's Tree Program

House to Grow is a not-for-profit and charitable organisation focused on education, health and wellbeing. The Watering Women's Tree Program is designed to inspire, educate and empower participants by cultivating women's skills in business, with a strong focus on CALD.²⁰¹

The Watering Women's Tree program is designed to foster an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset and:

- ▶ Help female entrepreneurs overcome disadvantages in accessing education and support for their start-ups
- ▶ Enable CALD women to kickstart their start-ups for domestic and global markets and become self-sufficient
- ▶ Boost the economy by increasing the diversity and leadership of female start-up founders
- ▶ Increase the number of start-ups founded by CALD women
- ▶ Improve the earning potential of CALD women through entrepreneurship
- ▶ Increase flexible job creation.

Some of the activities offered include:

- ▶ Online emotional intelligence training
- ▶ Face-to-face mindset and empowerment session
- ▶ A series of weekly webinars facilitated by female experts on topics like business strategy, communication, finance, marketing, empowerment and wellbeing
- ▶ Networking events
- ▶ Mentoring and coaching
- ▶ Small funding support
- ▶ A professional business photography package
- ▶ Business clothing and accessories.

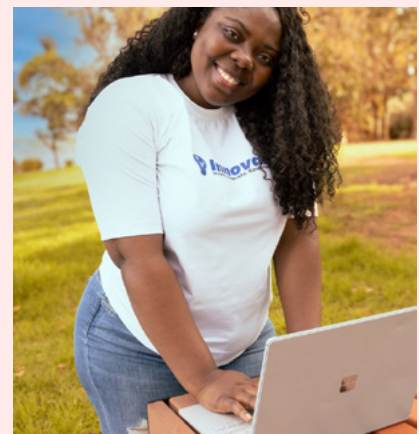
Since the program's launch in January 2021, it has supported 300 women from diverse backgrounds and the creation and development of more than 200 businesses in NSW, some now operating internationally. The program's flexibility has enabled women with family commitments and those studying or with casual jobs to pursue their projects. This has contributed to strengthening the female entrepreneurial fabric and also fostered women's leadership development and created more sustainable women-led businesses and families.



Sylvina Beleniski, Entrepreneur. Founder at Conscious Dance with Sylvina.



Katherine Monroy, Entrepreneur. Founder at Kate Wellness.



Ebere Angela, Entrepreneur. Founder at Innovamp. Image credit: Pilar Lopez Cardenas.

THE GENDER EQUALITY IN WORKING LIFE RESEARCH INITIATIVE, UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY.

In 2022, The Gender Equality in Working Life Research Initiative published the report, *What women want from work post pandemic: Experiences and expectations of Western Sydney working women.*²⁰² Based on focus group discussions with 45 diverse women, the research found that working women in Western Sydney expect and want to work in good jobs that provide economic security for themselves and their families. They want access to high-quality flexible working options, particularly hybrid working arrangements.

Women also want affordable good care systems that match the realities of their working lives and allow them to meet their economic and family needs. The report identified several barriers to achieving these aspirations, including current employment in insecure

work, undervaluation of their skills, a lack of good flexible working options and care systems that do not match the realities of work and family life.

The report proposes that moving into recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, working women have clear ideas about what they want from work and the kinds of policy measures that will support them in participating in the labour market.

The Gender Equality in Working Life Research Initiative, through The University of Sydney Business School, combines world-leading research capability with practical, evidence-based insights to examine gender disparities that shape women's working lives.



Image credit: Frank Flores

CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE: BRAVE Return to Work Pathways Program

The BRAVE Return to Work Pathways Program seeks to provide culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women in Western Sydney with wraparound skills and opportunities for a successful career comeback.

Part of the Canterbury-Bankstown Chamber of Commerce's (CBCC) BRAVE project, the program aims to empower women with confidence to achieve their work goals.²⁰³

legal literacy and tackling socio-cultural barriers. The CBCC also develops courses for participants to develop self-confidence and entrepreneurial skills, considering key socio-cultural factors relevant to CALD women.

“Research from LinkedIn revealed that one in five hiring managers rejected candidates who had taken an extended period off work. For women, a recent NSW study revealed that 51% of women returning to work lacked confidence, preventing them from getting ahead in their careers after taking a career break.” CBCC

“Mentoring is believed by many female leaders to be one of the top strategies to help close gender gaps, such as the gender pay gap, in business and industry. For women returning to work, mentorship can be a powerful connector to help boost their comeback to the workforce.” CBCC

The program includes mentorship and connections to a strong network of entrepreneurs and employers, as well as short courses and micro-credentials focusing on financial literacy, language proficiency, digital literacy,

The program is run through the support of Women NSW, in partnership with Western Sydney University and other corporate and organisational partners.



Participants of the CBCC BRAVE Micro-credential Dec 2023



Participants of the CBCC BRAVE Micro-credential Dec 2023

WSU MENTORING INDIGENOUS SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS

Western Sydney University is investing in strengthening Indigenous participation in higher education and leadership. Appointed in 2021 as Western's first Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership, Professor Michelle Trudgett is committed to mentoring Indigenous postgraduate students and early career researchers (ECRs).

A Wiradjuri woman from Dubbo, Professor Trudgett has spent the last decade in senior leadership roles to drive Indigenous knowledge and education. She is dedicated to growing Indigenous leadership within the education sector and, as part of this, has looked at how the sector can best support ECRs.

The early years of an academic career are difficult for many people. The first five years after completing a PhD is a challenging time with the pressure to publish, limited funding and institutional requirements like heavy teaching loads. For Indigenous ECRs, additional pressures include developing an Indigenous curriculum, mentoring students, advising non-Indigenous colleagues and serving on various committees.



*Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership,
Professor Michelle Trudgett.*

With Professor Susan Page and post-doctoral fellow Dr Michelle Locke, Professor Trudgett has conducted in-depth interviews with 30 Indigenous ECRs, following them for three years under an ARC-funded project. One outcome of this research is that 14 of the Indigenous ECRs have contributed to a book titled *Indigenous Early Career Researchers in Australian Universities: Our Stories*. The book, launching in mid-2024, aims to share the immense value Indigenous researchers bring to academic institutions.

To drive the University's commitments towards Indigenous knowledge, staff and students, Professor Trudgett has recently launched the University's 2023–2032 Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy. The Decadal Strategy builds on the strategic work of the 2020–2025 Indigenous Strategy and will position Western Sydney University as a place that fosters, develops and supports the next generation of Indigenous leaders. This will have a particular impact on women, as two-thirds of Indigenous students are female.

Professor Trudgett was also part of the team that successfully secured a \$78.5 million grant from the NSW Government's WestInvest program to establish the Indigenous Centre of Excellence, to be located on Dharug land at the University's Parramatta South campus. The Centre will include an Indigenous Research Institute, Badanami Centre, a First Nations library and archive space, an art gallery, auditorium, theatre, cinema, elders' rooms, children's play areas, meeting spaces and a yarning circle.



PhD supervisors Professor Michelle Trudgett and Professor Susan Page (middle and right) proudly attended Dr Stacey Kim Coates' (left) graduation ceremony in November 2023.

CORE COMMUNITY SERVICES:

Employment Pathways: Connecting Refugee Women to Meaningful Employment

The Employment Pathways project aims to assist women who have experienced long-term unemployment in Australia due to a lack of local experience and recognition of overseas qualifications, loss of confidence and self-esteem, limited professional networks and unfamiliarity with Australia's labour market.²⁰⁴ It also assists refugee female students completing their tertiary studies at university and vocational education institutions willing to connect with employers to explore meaningful employment and internship opportunities.

The project helps participants by:

- ▶ Developing achievable and personalised pathways to employment based on their professional needs and career goals
- ▶ Providing employability skills support and career advice in their desired field
- ▶ Providing ongoing support from project staff, volunteers, and internship providers to enable participants to build their confidence and networks and improve their conversational language skills
- ▶ Providing participants an opportunity to participate in unpaid internships or volunteering opportunities as effective employment pathways for refugee women jobseekers
- ▶ Facilitating effective mentoring for refugee women.

The project has supported a total of 52 refugee women to achieve various careers and employment goals since it began one year ago.



A session of employability skills development.



A mentoring session as part of the Employment Pathways program.

SYDWEST MULTICULTURAL SERVICES:

Supporting Migrant Women into Employment

SydWest Multicultural Services is a leading organisation for cultural diversity issues responding to community needs and opportunities throughout Greater Western Sydney.²⁰⁵ In 2023, it collaborated with employment support organisation MAS National, providing 20 CALD women with career advice and pre-employment support to help them develop confidence, independence and employability skills.²⁰⁶

Childcare was included in the Supporting Migrant Women into Employment program to enable mothers to attend sessions, helping break barriers for skill and confidence building. The program included information sessions, follow-up phone calls, career coaching, advice and pre-employment support. Discussions were also held around communicating confidently in English, including understanding local conversational English and slang terms that may be used in various workplace settings.



Participants with MAS National facilitator and SydWest staff attending an information session in Blacktown. Image credit: SydWest..

SETTLEMENT SERVICES INTERNATIONAL (SSI)

SSI is a national not-for-profit organisation providing dedicated human and social services to a diverse Australia.²⁰⁷ SSI delivers two programs to support the participation of women in the labour force:

1. Return to work program

Empowering CALD women to return to the workforce with confidence, this program was launched in October 2023 and aims to assist 60 women return to work after an extended period.²⁰⁸ The program comprises:

- 1-on-1 sessions to assess, build and refine the client's employability skills and set goals, aspirations and career pathways.
- Résumé and cover letter sessions.
- Linking clients to training programs and organisations to increase their skill sets.
- Connecting clients with relevant employers once they are ready to engage in employment.

SSI partners with supportive employers to help women make a smooth transition back to the workforce. In-language support and resources are available in an applicant's preferred language. The program is open to women aged 25 to 44 years who live in southwest

Sydney (Liverpool, Fairfield, Campbelltown and Canterbury-Bankstown LGAs).

2. Connecting Women to Trades program

This program provides tailored support to job-seeking women from CALD backgrounds interested in working in the construction industry.²⁰⁹ Launched in March 2023, the first intake worked with partners at Superior Training Centre (STC), with seven clients successfully completing the pre-employment program. They received essential information about the industry, basic training and a white card, and are expected to be employed in the industry by March 2024. The program is provided flexibly to support mothers, with in-language support and resources available, and involves:

- 1-on-1 sessions to develop client goals and aspirations
- Pre-employment programs to assist with relevant training and tickets
- Linking to employers in the construction field
- Post-placement support to ensure clients are comfortable and confident in their roles.



SSI's Connecting Women to Trades program is held at STC in Ingleburn. Candidates were supplied with hi-vis shirts, work boots and laptops to complete their study with STC. Image credit: Martin Heyes.

ARISE FOUNDATION:

Employment After Violence

Arise Foundation delivers trauma-informed and evidence-backed programs that support women survivors of domestic and family violence, including financial abuse.²¹⁰ While government job agencies and recruitment firms can help people find jobs, for a woman with trauma and lacking in confidence, it can be overwhelming. Additionally, many seek career clarity and confidence to go for a role. Arise Foundation addresses this through trauma-informed and evidence-backed programs and supports through their Arise Academy and Arise Recovery Hub.

The Employment after Violence program through the Arise Academy consists of:

- ▶ An 8-week Employment Ready program (4 hours per week) aimed at improving job readiness through empowerment and wellbeing, financial literacy and foundational work skills
- ▶ English and Digital Literacy programs
- ▶ Pairing clients with a Recovery Case Worker to assist clients with day-to-day challenges
- ▶ Providing Arise Women access to free laptops, wi-fi and childcare through their partnerships.

The Arise recovery hub provides access to wraparound services and supports through the foundation’s network of over 20 highly experienced, mostly national partners offering pro-bono or low-bono holistic wraparound services.

These aim to support women DFV survivors in the recovery and healing stages after escaping violence, including:

- ▶ Crisis Referral
- ▶ Financial and Mental Counselling
- ▶ Financial Assistance
- ▶ Job Ready
- ▶ Legal Aid
- ▶ Childcare and other Supports
- ▶ Further Education.

Arise delivered a highly successful pilot program in 2022 and won the Best New Community Project of the Year category at the 15th Australian Muslim Awards. Since Jan 2022, 144 DFV women survivors have been referred to the Arise Foundation, with the programs transforming the confidence of graduates in obtaining employment. Before the Employment Ready program, 87% of respondents felt neither confident nor neutral about getting a job; after it, 100% of respondents felt confident (80%) or neutral about getting a job.

These results show the success of this model, which Arise seeks to scale and replicate in other locations across Australia. The foundation strongly believes that its services help break the cycle of violence and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation.



Arise Foundation Founders Fariha Chowdhury and Tasnia Alam Hannan.
Image credit: Yve Lavine Photography



L-R: Top: Binowee Bayles, Arely Carrion, Bottom: Fariha Chowdhury, Macy Choudhury, Rosie Batty AO, Rebecca Glenn, Tasnia Alam Hannan, and Rebecca Nash at the International Economic Abuse Awareness Day breakfast. Image credit: Adiz Photography.

NOT LEAVING ‘LONE MIGRANT MOTHERS’ BEHIND:

The Role of Place-based Childcare Support in Australia’s Marginalised Neighbourhoods.

Dr Teddy Nagaddya & Professor Brian Stout

This research examined the experiences of lone migrant women accessing childcare support in the Western Sydney suburb of Liverpool in 2022.²¹ In the context of globalisation, the population of women migrating as lone parents to wealthy countries like Australia is growing. Many of these lone migrant parents tend to live in precarious conditions and within underprivileged and low-cost suburbs with no or limited access to affordable childcare support—areas considered childcare ‘deserts’. This situation not only impacts migrant women’s settlement and integration into Australia but also hinders their aspirations and stifles the local economy.

Drawing on the lived experiences of migrant women living in Liverpool, the study explored their experiences of using place-based childcare services. **Three major findings from the research:**

1. Place-based childcare (PBCc) is a tool for building localism, promoting community cohesion and a sense of belonging among lone migrant mothers living in underprivileged communities.
2. The provision of PBCc plays a vital role in building neighbourhood capacity through informal skilling and talent promotion. This enhances the potential of mitigating feminised poverty associated with childcare support inadequacies.
3. PBCc provides a holistic approach to promoting socio-economically healthy migrant families within disadvantaged neighbourhoods.



The research team with (middle) Pat Hall, CEO, Liverpool Neighbourhood Connections, and (right) Professor Brian Stout, Dean, School of Social Sciences, WSU.

This research informed a white paper titled ‘The Future of Work and Childcare: Towards Equity and Justice for Western Sydney Communities’, which was influential in establishing a pilot creche project within Liverpool to support student-parents in the area to access flexible childcare services.

THINK+DO TANK FOUNDATION: Seed of Hope Collective

“We learned a lot about ourselves, and we developed new skills and unlocked new artistic skills”.

Seed of Hope is a collective of migrant and refugee women seeking greater connection with the communities around them and a difference in their lives and those of their children.²¹² Program participants are supported to understand how they can be agents of change in their own lives and the communities they now call home.

The program empowers women by establishing a supportive and resourceful environment where they can leverage their artistic and culinary skills and cultural knowledge to generate income. It also aims to help women gain agency, a sense of belonging, build a social network and enhance their overall wellbeing. The collective meets weekly to work on art projects with artists-in-residence and multilingual community facilitators.

Some of the program activities include:

- ▶ Applying cultural and artistic knowledge in fashion design
- ▶ Using cooking skills to transmit cultural methods of food preservation and share traditional dishes
- ▶ Performing on stage, showcasing demonstrations of traditional culinary skills and cultural food techniques
- ▶ Developing community choirs to perform across stages at various events
- ▶ Spoken word and poetry to be showcased in various events.



Image credit: Romel Bahhi

“I wait for the day to come because it changes my mood and I feel we are all like sisters”.

PENRITH PERFORMING & VISUAL ARTS:

Women Out West (WOW)

Women Out West is a panel discussion series presented by Penrith Performing & Visual Arts (PP&VA) and hosted by author and presenter Lisa Finn Powell. WOW invites Western Sydney/Blue Mountains women, artists, creatives, and audiences in the region to come together to listen and learn, to be inspired and influenced—and to be part of the continuing advocacy for safety, equality, diversity and growth.

The panel discussion series has been running since International Women’s Day 2021, with seven events being held since and another two planned for 2024. Over its three years of growing popularity and reputation for quality, the program has built loyal and frequently sold-out audiences and achieved local, industry and metro media coverage.

Women Out West champions women who live, work or have a connection to Western Sydney. Audiences are local and come specifically to see and celebrate these women of the region. PP&VA believes in the importance of representation of equal voices, including First Nations, LGBTQ+, all ages, levels of ability, CALD backgrounds and gender identity.

Their first panel in 2021 addressed rebuilding after domestic violence and women at work, and there have been numerous panels on women working in various creative fields, including leadership, visual arts and performing arts.

The Women Out West program prides itself on providing inexpensive local access for audiences to join important discussions that showcase the voices and stories of Western Sydney women.



WOW Women in the Creative Arts panel, July 2023, L-R: Lisa Finn Powell (moderator), Madeleine Lobsey, Malvina Tan, Ann Niddrie (panelists), Susan Templeman MP.



WOW Women in the Arts panel, July 2022, L-R: Christine Dean, Linda Brescia, Claire Healy, Elly Chatfield, Lisa Finn Powell.

DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Africa and the Middle East: includes Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and the Middle East. Countries of birth in the Census are coded using the Standard Australian Classification of Countries.

Americas: includes North America, South America, Central America and the Caribbean. Countries of birth in the Census are coded using the Standard Australian Classification of Countries.

Childcare: the ABS defines formal care as regulated care away from the child's home. The main types of formal care are before and after-school care, long day care, family day care, occasional care and vacation care. Informal care is defined as non-regulated care arranged by a child's parent or caregiver in the child's home or elsewhere. It comprises care by (step) brothers or sisters, care by grandparents, care by other relatives (including a parent living elsewhere) and care by other (unrelated) people such as friends, neighbours, nannies or babysitters. It may be paid or unpaid (ABS).

Disability: a person with a disability includes those who report having a limitation, restriction or impairment that has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months and restricts everyday activities (ABS).

EALD: English as an Additional Language or Dialect. This term refers to people or communities who use English in addition to their first language and other possible languages.

Educational attainment: the highest level of educational attainment achieved by working-aged women (ABS).

Employment status: the ABS defines people as 'employed' if they work one hour or more in the reference week (ABS).

Equivalised household income: household income that has been adjusted by an equivalence scale to help compare income levels between households of differing size and composition. It reflects that a larger household would normally need more income than a smaller household to achieve the same standard of living (ABS).

Europe: includes Northwestern Europe and Southern and Eastern Europe. Countries of birth in the Census are coded using the Standard Australian Classification of Countries.

Family with children: a family with at least one child (either a dependent child under 15 years, a full-time student aged 16–24 or a non-dependent child; ABS).

Family with dependent children under 15 Years: a family with at least one child under 15 years usually resident in the household (ABS).

Family with no dependent children under 15 Years: a family with no dependent children under 15 years usually resident in the household. These families either have a dependent student (i.e., aged 15–24 and studying full-time) or a non-dependent child over 15 years (ABS).

Family with No Dependent Children Under 15 Years: a family with no dependent children under 15 years usually resident in the household. These families either have a dependent student (i.e., aged 15–24 and studying full-time) or a non-dependent child over 15 years (ABS).

Family: two or more people, one of whom is aged at least 15, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering and who are usually resident in the same household (ABS).

Full-time employment: a person working 35 hours or more in all jobs during the week before Census night (ABS).

Hours worked: number of hours worked by the employed persons in all jobs during the week before Census night. Excludes time off but includes overtime and extra time worked (ABS).

Indigenous Australians: this report adopts the term Indigenous Australians to refer to First Nations, Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in line with Western Sydney University's strategy.

Intersectionality: the ways that different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation.

Labour force participation rate: the participation rate expresses the labour force as a proportion of the relevant population, for example, people aged 15–64 years. The labour force comprises people in paid work (employed) or actively looking for and available to work (unemployed).

Labour force: those of working age actively engaged in the labour market, either by being employed or unemployed and looking for work (ABS).

Local government area (LGA): the geographic area that a local council is responsible for.

Licence holders: includes working-age population (16–64 years) who hold a car or rider (i.e., motorbike) licence (ABS).

No resident data: indicates Statistical Area 1s (SA1) with no residents, such as industrial precincts and bushland, for which no data is available (ABS).

Northeast Asia: Includes China, Japan and the Koreas. Countries of birth in the Census are coded using the Standard Australian Classification of Countries.

Not in the labour force: persons who were not in the categories employed or unemployed. They include people who undertook unpaid household duties or other voluntary work, were retired, voluntarily inactive or permanently unable to work (ABS).

One-parent family: consists of a lone parent with at least one child who is also usually resident in the household and has no identified partner or child of their own (ABS).

Oceania (excluding Australia): includes New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia (excludes Hawaii) and Antarctica. Standard Australian Classification of Countries.

Other family: a group of related individuals residing in the same household who cannot be categorised as belonging to a couple or one-parent family (ABS).

Other when referring to registered marital status: includes women who are widowed, divorced or separated (ABS).

Part-time employment: a person working less than 35 hours in all jobs during the week before Census night (ABS).

Personal income: total income (in ranges) a person usually receives each week (ABS).

Rest of NSW: This refers to NSW without the Greater Sydney region.

Rest of Sydney: for the purpose of this report, Rest of Sydney is referred to as all remaining LGAs of the Greater Sydney region apart from the 13 LGAs listed here as belonging to Western Sydney.

Southeast Asia: Includes Cambodia, Laos, Thai, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore. Standard Australian Classification of Countries.

Statistical Areas Level 1 (SA1): ABS-defined geographical areas for which the smallest unit of Census data is typically released. SA1s have a population of between 200 and 800 people, with an average population of 400 people (ABS).

Unpaid assistance: people who provide unpaid care, help or assistance to family members or others because of a disability, a long-term health condition or problems related to old age. This includes people who receive a Carer Allowance or Payment but does not include care provided through voluntary organisation or assistance (ABS).

Unpaid care: time caring for a child or children under 15 years without pay or unpaid help or assistance to family members or others because of a disability, a long-term health condition or problems related to old age. This includes people who receive a Carer Allowance.

Unpaid childcare: people who, in the two weeks before Census night, spent time caring for a child or children under 15 years without pay. It excludes care given through an organisation or club (ABS).

Unpaid domestic work: the number of hours people spent the previous week doing domestic work without pay. Domestic work is work for the individual or household, whether in the household or elsewhere (ABS).

Unpaid labour: unpaid household work and volunteer and community work. Unpaid household work consists of domestic work about the house, childcare, caring or assistance to others, shopping and associated communication and travel (ABS).

Vehicle: registered motor vehicles owned or used by household members. Includes vans and company-owned vehicles and excludes motorbikes, scooters and heavy motor vehicles (ABS).

Western Sydney: refers to the 13 LGAs of Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith, The Hills, Wollondilly.

Working-age population: includes the population aged 15–64 years, as defined by the OECD.

Year of arrival: applicable to persons born overseas and records the year they first arrived in Australia to live for one year or more (ABS).

Young people: Persons aged between 15 and 24 years (ABS).



LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

MAPS

Map 1 in this report was produced by the Centre for Western Sydney, drawing on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) data from 2021. Maps 2, 3 and 4 were produced by Urbis, drawing on the 2021 ABS Census Data.

Map 1: Women's Labour Force Participate Rate by LGA – Western Sydney

Map 2: Women's labour force participation rate by LGA – Greater Sydney

Map 3: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) – Western Sydney

Map 4: Proximity to train station by LGA

FIGURES

The data used in the tables and figures is drawn from the 2021 ABS Census.

SECTION 5

Figure 5.1 Labour force participation rate – Western Sydney LGAs

Figure 5.2 Hourly rate for men and women in Western Sydney: full-time

Figure 5.3 Hourly rate for men and women in Western Sydney: part-time

Figure 5.4 Women's labour force participation by vehicle ownership – Western Sydney

Figure 5.5 Proportion of licence holders by gender (%)

Figure 5.6 Proportion of working age population with licence (%)

SECTION 6

Figure 6.1 Women's labour force participation rate by provision of unpaid childcare – Western Sydney

Figure 6.2 Women's labour force participation rate by provision of unpaid assistance – Western Sydney

Figure 6.3 Proportion of women born overseas by LGA (%) – Western Sydney

Figure 6.4 Proportion of employed women and men working full-time – Western Sydney

Figure 6.5 Proportion of employed women and men working part-time – Western Sydney

Figure 6.6 Average hours worked by employed women and men – Western Sydney

Figure 6.7 Labour force participation rate of women by household composition

Figure 6.8 Women's labour force participation rate by dependent children – Western Sydney and benchmarks

Figure 6.9 Women's labour force participation rate by dependent children – Western Sydney

SECTION 7

Figure 7.1 Indigenous women's labour force participation – Western Sydney

Figure 7.2 Women's labour force participation rate by English-language proficiency – Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

Figure 7.3 Women's labour force participation by English-language proficiency – Western Sydney

TABLES

SECTION 5

Table 5.1 Proportion of employed women by industry – Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

Table 5.2 Educational attainment and women's labour force participation rate

SECTION 6

Table 6.1 Distribution of women by employment status and unpaid childcare provision

Table 6.2 Number of weekly hours worked by employed women

SECTION 7

Table 7.1 Women's labour force participation rate by region of birth – Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

Table 7.2 Women's labour force participation rate by English-language proficiency – Western Sydney and Rest of Sydney

Table 7.3 Women's labour force participation rate by English-language proficiency – Western Sydney

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

List of stakeholders consulted in the Unlocking Women's Potential study.

RESEARCH ADVISORY GROUP		
PARTICIPANT	ORGANISATION	POSITION
1. Tasnia Alam Hannan	Arise Foundation	Co-Founder/COO
2. Shama Pande	CORE Community Services	Manager of Multicultural Communities
3. Nicola Nelson	Greater Cities Commission	Director, Research
4. Hester Green	Office for Women	Director, Workforce Participation
5. Yamamah Agha	Settlement Services International	General Manager, Newcomers, Settlement and Integration
6. Jane Stratton	Think+DO Tank Foundation	CEO
7. Kylie Newcombe	Urbis	Associate Director, Economics & Market Research
8. Princess Ventura	Urbis	Regional Director
9. Dolla Merrillees	Western Sydney University	Director, Western Sydney Creative
10. Lauren Nicholls	Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue	Head of Policy & Analysis
11. Professor Alpha Possamai-Inesedy	Western Sydney University	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Engagement and Advancement
12. Professor Meg Smith	Western Sydney University	Interim Dean, School of Business
13. Melissa Monteiro	Western Sydney University	Adjunct Fellow, School of Psychology
14. Associate Professor Nida Denson	Western Sydney University	Associate Dean, Higher Degree Research, School of Social Sciences
15. Estelle Grech	Policy Manager	Committee for Sydney
16. Aman Pabla	NSW Treasury	Senior Advisor, Women's Economic Outcomes

CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS

PARTICIPANT	ORGANISATION	POSITION
1. Yamane Fayed	Arts and Cultural Exchange	Producer, Multicultural Women's Hub
2. Nafiye Mind	Blacktown Area Community Centres	Executive Officer
3. Anna Pijaca	City of Parramatta	Communications & Research Specialist
4. Anas Khawam	Community Migrant Resources Centre	Multicultural Business Advisor
5. Eshita Dutia	Cumberland City Council	Principal Smart Places Officer
6. Helder Guerreiro	Cumberland City Council	Coordinator Economic Development
7. Jamel Dibb	Deloitte	Associate Director
8. Tammy Diep	Fairfield City Council	Economic Development Project Officer
9. Sue Hardman	Hardman Communications	Managing Director
10. Pilar Lopez	House to Grow	Founder/CEO
11. Oggie Bosnjak	Sydney South West Local Jobs Program	Employment Facilitator
12. Dunya Lazar	Navitas Skilled Futures	Stakeholder Engagement Manager
13. Andrea Angeles	NSW Council of Social Service	Policy Lead
14. Daniel Dinale	NSW Treasury	Senior Advisor, Policy & Strategy
15. Aman Pabla	NSW Treasury	Advisor, Women's Economic Outcomes
16. Lee Holloway	NSW Treasury	Director, Women's Economic Outcomes
17. Sharon Stone	Older Women's Network NSW	Coordinator, Pathways to Employment
18. Regine Zopf	Premier's Department	Employment Facilitator
19. Amelia Chadwick	SpeakOut	Project Officer
20. Sonia Kalsi	SydWest Multicultural Services	Project Officer
21. Mereline Murimwararami	SydWest Multicultural Services	Aged Care Services Manager
22. Jessica Oliveri	UTP	Associate Director/CEO
23. Türkan Aksoy	Welcoming Australia	NSW Coordinator Welcoming Cities
24. Nadiana Albistur	Western Sydney Community Forum	Strategic Engagement Lead
25. Sophie Partridge	Western Sydney University	Director, Future Student Engagement
26. Dr Sharlotte Tusasiirwe	Western Sydney University	Lecturer of Social Work
27. Mortaza Hasani	Wise Employment	Industry Employment Partner

APPENDIX 2: DETAILED FINDINGS OF CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS	FINDINGS
<p>Strengths</p> <p>Place-based strengths: the unique attributes of Western Sydney</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Collaboration, rich community identity and a unified vision for the economic roles of women in the region. ➤ An extensive educational and employment service network that offers broad support across various life stages. ➤ Active collaboration between universities and government. ➤ A rich entrepreneurial foundation can be leveraged by equipping communities with resources to support various industries. ➤ Highly educated and motivated communities in the region. ➤ Government and private-sector investment in Western Sydney, driving growth and economic opportunities. ➤ Infrastructure development has opened access to key industries like construction and manufacturing. ➤ The upcoming Western Sydney Airport is a catalyst for industry and job creation. ➤ High labour demands present opportunities to attract diverse industries to the highly talented cohort in Western Sydney. ➤ Public transport and job availability across key suburbs. ➤ Access to work opportunities that align with the diverse cultural identities of residents. ➤ The available opportunities for upskilling and workforce re-entry for women, particularly as children grow older.
<p>Strengths</p> <p>Demographic diversity: a key strength of the labour force</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cultural diversity and a wide range of skills and experiences within these communities. ➤ Rapid growth in education levels, especially among migrants. ➤ Diverse experiences and insights that young people bring to their educational and employment pursuits. ➤ Resilience and valuable life experiences among migrant and refugee cohorts that can be utilised in the workforce. ➤ Available community networks and forums as important platforms for women from diverse backgrounds to engage and support their labour force participation. ➤ Community sector's understanding of intersectionality and ability to service the nuanced needs of women from diverse backgrounds through multidisciplinary approaches. ➤ Generational diversity across the region provides a network of childcare options.
<p>Barriers</p> <p>Place-based barriers: the unique labour force participation challenges for women in Western Sydney</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inadequate public transport infrastructure and the high cost of private transport. ➤ Financial burden of travel costs to work locations. ➤ Housing affordability limits the ability to reside near employment opportunities. ➤ Safety concerns around travel to and from work. ➤ Employment difficulties steering women towards entrepreneurship, with a noted lack of innovative support programs.
<p>Barriers</p> <p>Care-related barriers in Western Sydney</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Challenges accessing childcare due to language barriers, lack of extended family support and high private childcare costs. ➤ Societal expectations for women to fulfil traditional caretaker roles, including elder care. Different cultural norms and expectations across diverse communities also inform this, shaping career choices and standards around respectable work. ➤ Decisional conflict between the economic benefits of working and high childcare and after-school care expenses.

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

FINDINGS

Barriers

The intersectional barriers that diverse women in Western Sydney face

- › Limited recognition and transferability of international qualifications and skills alongside visa-related work challenges. For example, limited TAFE courses exist for women with overseas qualifications to transfer their skills, who are often placed in hospitality courses.
- › Barriers to employment entry include language proficiency, limited knowledge of workers' rights and local work experience requirements.
- › Societal and cultural norms restrict the participation of women in certain jobs and industries.
- › Ageism and racism affect job opportunities, especially for older women and specific ethnic groups.
- › Cultural and language barriers in education and training, with a lack of tailored courses for skill transfer.
- › Digital literacy barriers prevent access to online job markets.
- › Cultural barriers in navigating job application processes in Australia, such as tailored resume writing and interviewing.
- › Limited opportunities for paid internships and volunteering during early career phases.
- › Limited resource and support awareness, where women, particularly newly arrived migrants, often do not know of available opportunities or how to seek support with accessing employment.
- › Lack of professional networks, particularly for newly arrived migrants or refugees.
- › Experiences of domestic violence and personal issues negatively impact employment readiness and participation. In addition, women facing these issues need robust emotional support throughout their employment transition and experience.
- › Low self-confidence, self-esteem and experiences of discrimination and lateral violence limit the ability of women to access employment opportunities.
- › Limited access to start-up capital and challenges with navigating bureaucratic systems.

Enablers

Spatial enablers for unlocking the labour force potential of women in Western Sydney

- › Implement innovative programs that harness the strong community ties in Western Sydney to cultivate role models, establish peer support networks, ensure sustained support and professional growth, empower girls from an early educational stage, distribute skill-building resources like CV preparation, and bolster women's confidence in seizing opportunities. These programs must be supported by long-term investment and knowledge retention, adapting over generations according to the evolving needs of girls and women.
- › Provide career coaching, mentorship programs and leadership support.
- › Promote affordable housing, transport and childcare to alleviate living and work-related expenses.
- › Leverage the role of educational institutions like TAFE to provide skills, aid language development and provide access to bridging courses to align skills with industry needs. This can be enhanced by providing training incentives for vocational courses and more paid employment programs.
- › Ensure reliable connectivity and technology access, focusing on physical and digital infrastructures that enable women's mobility and access to employment.
- › Enhance grassroots organisation support and increase funding for women entrepreneurs.
- › Improve young people's understanding of available opportunities in the Western Sydney region.
- › Greater awareness and showcase opportunities and success stories of women in Western Sydney.

Enablers

Care-related enablers to unlock the labour force potential of women in Western Sydney

- › Expand acknowledgment and skills utilisation acquired through caregiving in professional settings.
- › Provide flexible working arrangements to accommodate family commitments.
- › Enhance the affordability and accessibility of childcare, with considerations for larger families and culturally sensitive needs.
- › Advocate for regulatory changes to offer more flexibility in childcare provision, including extended before and after-school care hours.
- › Promote alternative childcare arrangements and job-sharing opportunities for women.
- › Adopt local, place-based approaches and community campaigns to redefine traditional gender roles in relation to work.
- › Fund, through government support, programs and grants to help with childcare and flexible work arrangements.

STAKEHOLDER VIEWS

FINDINGS

Enablers

Intersectional enablers to unlock the labour force potential of women in Western Sydney

- › Develop personal and life skills, particularly for migrant and refugee women.
- › Offer comprehensive education and training for employers, policymakers and leaders to foster equitable opportunities for diverse women and address unconscious biases in traditional recruitment processes.
- › Provide comprehensive support for diverse women through educational pathways, entry points and retention strategies.
- › Offer a range of paid internships across diverse sectors to safeguard against exploiting vulnerable groups and broaden employment opportunities for women beyond traditional roles.
- › Deliver women-focused entrepreneurial programs and policies to address unique challenges that women of diverse backgrounds face.
- › Increase role model visibility and mentorship to inspire and guide young women, particularly migrants, refugees and those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- › Tailor services to individual needs with consistent support and advocacy.
- › Enhance funding for multicultural organisations providing culturally informed support for women from diverse backgrounds.
- › Facilitate bridging course access to help with qualification translation and navigate the employment process.
- › Advocate for gender equality and bias elimination in pay, opportunity and overseas qualification recognition.
- › Use institutional resources from universities, the private sector and other community organisations to connect newly arrived migrant women with established networks.

APPENDIX 3: RAG MEETING DETAILS

RAG Meeting 1: 1 November 2023

Agenda:

- › Presentation of the project, including an overview, research questions, methods and consultation topics.
- › Opportunity for feedback from the RAG members on the research questions.
- › Suggestions for relevant organisations, practitioners and community representatives to invite to consultations.

RAG Meeting 2: 5 December 2023

Agenda:

- › Update the RAG members on the project's progress.
- › Present consultation findings.
- › Present policy and program review.
- › Present recommendations and impact.
- › Opportunity for feedback from RAG members and input on how to implement the recommendations from the consultations.

Questions:

- › Does anyone have any broad reflections on what has emerged from the workshops?
- › What interventions may be useful in supporting the labour force participation of women in Western Sydney?

- › Are there any examples of these types of interventions in practice (i.e., somewhere else in the world where this is being done effectively)?
- › How can we tailor these interventions to Western Sydney women?

RAG Meeting 3: 17 January 2024

Agenda:

- › Update the RAG members on the project's progress.
- › Present key research findings and discussion.
- › Request for RAG members to provide any case study recommendations.
- › Input from the RAG members on the communication and outreach plan.
- › Discuss future research based on the findings.

RAG Meeting 4: 7 February 2024

Agenda:

- › Work through the priorities, asking RAG members to discuss framing the issues, prioritisation and key actors/stakeholders.
- › Seek ongoing RAG support to socialise the report findings.
- › Provide RAG members options for different future engagement levels in an advisory way or mail list updates.

APPENDIX 4: ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

Methodology

Urbis analysed the potential economic benefits that could be achieved by reducing the barriers to entry into the labour force and improving employment opportunities. They modelled these impacts against three benchmark regions that currently have a higher labour force participation rate than women in Western Sydney (i.e. women in Rest of Sydney, men in Western Sydney and men in Rest of Sydney). This enabled a uniform comparison across the scenarios.

The analysis was undertaken for three socio-demographic cohorts (i.e. all women, recent migrant women and solo mothers) in Western Sydney, which were identified as having particularly low labour force participation rates.

Urbis undertook an economic impact analysis for each scenario, which has been assessed against four key economic indicators:

- › Potential uplift in employment
- › Potential uplift in personal per capita annual income
- › Additional gross value-added (GVA)
- › Contribution to gross state product (GSP)

This data was used in the Key Priorities section of this report to quantify the impact of uplifting women's labour force participation rate.

CfWS notes that the regional input-output (IO) model used to generate the economic impacts of higher labour force participation requires a number of qualifiers need to be stated for the employment, income, and gross value added statistics provided on pages 10-11 of this report.

IO models are known to overstate the economic impacts of a change in the economy,²¹³ such as a change in the labour force participation of women. The detailed reasons are provided in Gretton (2013)²¹⁴ and ABS (2021)²¹⁵ and include IO assumptions around fixed coefficients in production, constant factor prices, and a lack of supply-side constraints. In the current context, the major issue is that the impact analysis assumes there is enough additional demand to satisfy or meet the additional output that would be generated by the increased labour force participation.²¹⁶ While the income accruing to the new workers provides additional demand, that is an indirect consumption effect in the impact analysis and does not satisfy the demand for the direct output produced by the additional workers.

We note here, too, that the impacts for gross value added and therefore the contribution to gross state product include both the direct and indirect (supply side and consumption) effect of the change in labour force participation. The IO assumption of no supply-side constraints is critical here because additional labour would be required to produce the indirect supply chain and consumption goods and services.

In addition, the impacts on "women's annual income" assume that the women entering the labour force have the same skills and qualifications as the average woman in the labour force in the reference region.

Nonetheless, we include the economic impact analysis because it highlights that if the economy was structured differently in the current time period, and assuming enough demand was present and labour available to produce the supply chain and consumption effects, the economic measures of welfare, such as gross value added, wages and salaries, and consumption, would be higher and there would be a fairer distribution of income and long-term wealth.

APPENDIX 5: SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Distribution of employed women (%) by annual personal income range

FEMALE	NEGATIVE/NIL INCOME	LESS THAN \$26,000	\$26,000 - \$52,000	\$52,000 - \$78,999	\$78,000 - \$103,999	\$104,000 - \$181,999	\$182,000 OR MORE	NOT STATED	TOTAL
Blacktown	1%	12%	31%	28%	16%	11%	1%	1%	100%
Blue Mountains	0%	15%	28%	22%	17%	15%	2%	1%	100%
Camden	1%	13%	29%	27%	17%	11%	1%	1%	100%
Campbelltown	1%	13%	35%	28%	14%	7%	1%	1%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	1%	14%	32%	25%	15%	10%	2%	1%	100%
Cumberland	1%	14%	34%	26%	14%	9%	1%	1%	100%
Fairfield	1%	17%	38%	25%	12%	6%	1%	1%	100%
Hawkesbury	1%	15%	32%	24%	15%	10%	2%	1%	100%
Liverpool	1%	13%	33%	28%	15%	9%	1%	1%	100%
Parramatta	1%	12%	26%	26%	18%	15%	2%	1%	100%
Penrith	1%	13%	32%	28%	16%	9%	1%	1%	100%
The Hills	1%	13%	22%	22%	18%	18%	4%	1%	100%
Wollondilly	1%	16%	33%	24%	15%	10%	1%	1%	100%
Western Sydney	1%	13%	31%	26%	16%	11%	2%	1%	100%
Rest of Sydney	1%	11%	23%	22%	17%	18%	7%	1%	100%
Greater Sydney	1%	12%	26%	24%	17%	15%	5%	1%	100%
Rest of NSW	1%	17%	35%	23%	13%	9%	2%	1%	100%
NSW	1%	14%	29%	24%	15%	13%	4%	1%	100%

Proportion of employed women by industry – regional benchmarks

	GREATER SYDNEY	REST OF NSW	NSW
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0%	3%	1%
Mining	0%	1%	0%
Manufacturing	4%	3%	3%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	0%	0%	0%
Construction	3%	2%	3%
Wholesale Trade	3%	1%	2%
Retail Trade	10%	11%	10%
Accommodation and Food Services	6%	9%	7%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	3%	2%	2%
Information Media and Telecommunications	2%	1%	2%
Financial and Insurance Services	7%	2%	5%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	2%	1%	2%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	10%	5%	8%
Administrative and Support Services	3%	4%	3%
Public Administration and Safety	5%	7%	6%
Education and Training	13%	14%	13%
Health Care and Social Assistance	21%	26%	23%
Arts and Recreation Services	1%	1%	1%
Other Services	3%	4%	3%
Not Stated / Inadequately Described	4%	3%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Educational attainment and women's labour force participation rate, regional benchmarks

EMPLOYED	POSTGRADUATE OR BACHELOR DEGREE	DIPLOMA OR CERTIFICATE	SECONDARY EDUCATION	NO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT
Greater Sydney	84%	76%	54%	69%
Rest of NSW	88%	82%	64%	72%
NSW	85%	78%	57%	70%

Number of weekly hours worked by employed women

	1 TO 9 HOURS	10 TO 19 HOURS	20 TO 29 HOURS	30 TO 34 HOURS	35+ HOURS	MEDIAN HOURS WORKED
Greater Sydney	7%	11%	15%	9%	58%	37
Rest of NSW	8%	13%	18%	12%	48%	31
Total	7%	12%	16%	10%	55%	34

Women's labour force participation rate by year of arrival – regional benchmarks

	ARRIVED PRE-1980	ARRIVED 1981 - 1990	ARRIVED 1991 - 2000	ARRIVED 2001 - 2010	ARRIVED 2011 - 2021*
Greater Sydney	61%	65%	68%	69%	62%
Rest of NSW	63%	71%	75%	78%	72%
NSW	62%	66%	69%	70%	63%

Women's labour force participation rate by religion – regional benchmarks

	BUDDHISM	CHRISTIANITY	HINDUISM	ISLAM	JUDAISM	OTHER RELIGIONS	SECULAR BELIEFS AND OTHER SPIRITUAL BELIEFS AND NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
Greater Sydney	64%	72%	78%	44%	75%	64%	75%
Rest of NSW	73%	75%	80%	52%	74%	67%	76%
NSW	65%	73%	79%	44%	75%	65%	75%

*Results based on small sample size (n < 20). Use caution when interpreting individual results.

Distribution of women by employment status and unpaid childcare provision, regional benchmarks

	EMPLOYED, WORKED FULL-TIME			EMPLOYED, WORKED PART-TIME			UNEMPLOYED			NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE			TOTAL		
	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	PROVIDED UNPAID CHILDCARE	TOTAL	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	PROVIDED UNPAID CHILDCARE	TOTAL	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	PROVIDED UNPAID CHILDCARE	TOTAL	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	PROVIDED UNPAID CHILDCARE	TOTAL	DID NOT PROVIDE UNPAID CHILDCARE	CARED FOR OWN CHILD/CHILDREN	TOTAL
Greater Sydney	70%	30%	100%	60%	40%	100%	69%	31%	100%	65%	35%	100%	66%	34%	100%
Rest of NSW	65%	35%	100%	55%	45%	100%	66%	34%	100%	63%	37%	100%	61%	39%	100%
NSW	69%	31%	100%	58%	42%	100%	68%	32%	100%	64%	36%	100%	64%	36%	100%

Proportion of Employed Women by Occupation (%)

	MANAGERS	PROFESSIONALS	TECHNICIANS AND TRADE WORKERS	COMMUNITY AND PERSONAL SERVICE WORKERS	CLERICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE WORKERS	SALES WORKERS	MACHINERY OPERATORS AND DRIVERS	LABOURERS	NOT STATED / INADEQUATELY DESCRIBED	TOTAL
Blacktown	9%	27%	4%	15%	23%	10%	4%	7%	2%	100%
Blue Mountains	11%	36%	4%	16%	19%	8%	1%	4%	1%	100%
Camden	11%	26%	4%	16%	24%	11%	2%	4%	2%	100%
Campbelltown	8%	22%	4%	18%	23%	11%	4%	8%	2%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	10%	27%	4%	15%	23%	11%	2%	7%	2%	100%
Cumberland	8%	27%	4%	16%	21%	9%	3%	9%	3%	100%
Fairfield	7%	21%	4%	16%	22%	11%	5%	12%	2%	100%
Hawkesbury	12%	21%	5%	17%	25%	10%	2%	7%	2%	100%
Liverpool	9%	25%	3%	15%	24%	11%	4%	7%	2%	100%
Parramatta	11%	36%	4%	12%	21%	8%	2%	4%	2%	100%
Penrith	10%	22%	4%	17%	26%	11%	3%	6%	2%	100%
The Hills	14%	35%	3%	11%	23%	9%	1%	3%	1%	100%
Wollondilly	11%	21%	5%	16%	25%	11%	2%	7%	2%	100%
Western Sydney	10%	27%	4%	15%	23%	10%	3%	6%	2%	100%
Rest of Sydney	15%	36%	3%	12%	19%	8%	1%	4%	2%	100%
Greater Sydney	13%	32%	4%	13%	21%	9%	2%	5%	2%	100%
Rest of NSW	11%	24%	5%	19%	19%	11%	1%	8%	2%	100%
NSW	12%	30%	4%	15%	20%	10%	2%	6%	2%	100%

Women who are employed full-time by educational attainment

EMPLOYED	POSTGRADUATE OR BACHELOR DEGREE	DIPLOMA OR CERTIFICATE	SECONDARY EDUCATION	NO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	TOTAL
Blacktown	51%	25%	20%	4%	100%
Blue Mountains	50%	31%	15%	4%	100%
Camden	38%	34%	24%	5%	100%
Campbelltown	39%	30%	26%	4%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	49%	25%	21%	5%	100%
Cumberland	54%	22%	19%	4%	100%
Fairfield	39%	25%	31%	5%	100%
Hawkesbury	31%	37%	28%	5%	100%
Liverpool	43%	27%	25%	5%	100%
Parramatta	67%	19%	12%	3%	100%
Penrith	32%	34%	29%	5%	100%
The Hills	61%	22%	13%	4%	100%
Wollondilly	30%	37%	28%	5%	100%
Western Sydney	48%	26%	21%	4%	100%
Rest of Sydney	63%	22%	12%	3%	100%
Greater Sydney	56%	24%	16%	4%	100%
Rest of NSW	33%	38%	24%	5%	100%
NSW	49%	28%	19%	4%	100%

Women who are employed part-time by educational attainment

EMPLOYED	POSTGRADUATE OR BACHELOR DEGREE	DIPLOMA OR CERTIFICATE	SECONDARY EDUCATION	NO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	TOTAL
Blacktown	34%	28%	33%	5%	100%
Blue Mountains	37%	33%	26%	4%	100%
Camden	25%	34%	36%	5%	100%
Campbelltown	26%	32%	37%	5%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	34%	27%	33%	6%	100%
Cumberland	37%	27%	32%	5%	100%
Fairfield	22%	28%	45%	5%	100%
Hawkesbury	20%	37%	39%	5%	100%
Liverpool	28%	30%	37%	5%	100%
Parramatta	48%	23%	24%	4%	100%
Penrith	21%	34%	41%	5%	100%
The Hills	40%	26%	29%	4%	100%
Wollondilly	18%	36%	40%	5%	100%
Western Sydney	32%	29%	34%	5%	100%
Rest of Sydney	43%	26%	26%	4%	100%
Greater Sydney	38%	28%	30%	5%	100%
Rest of NSW	22%	36%	37%	5%	100%
NSW	31%	31%	33%	5%	100%

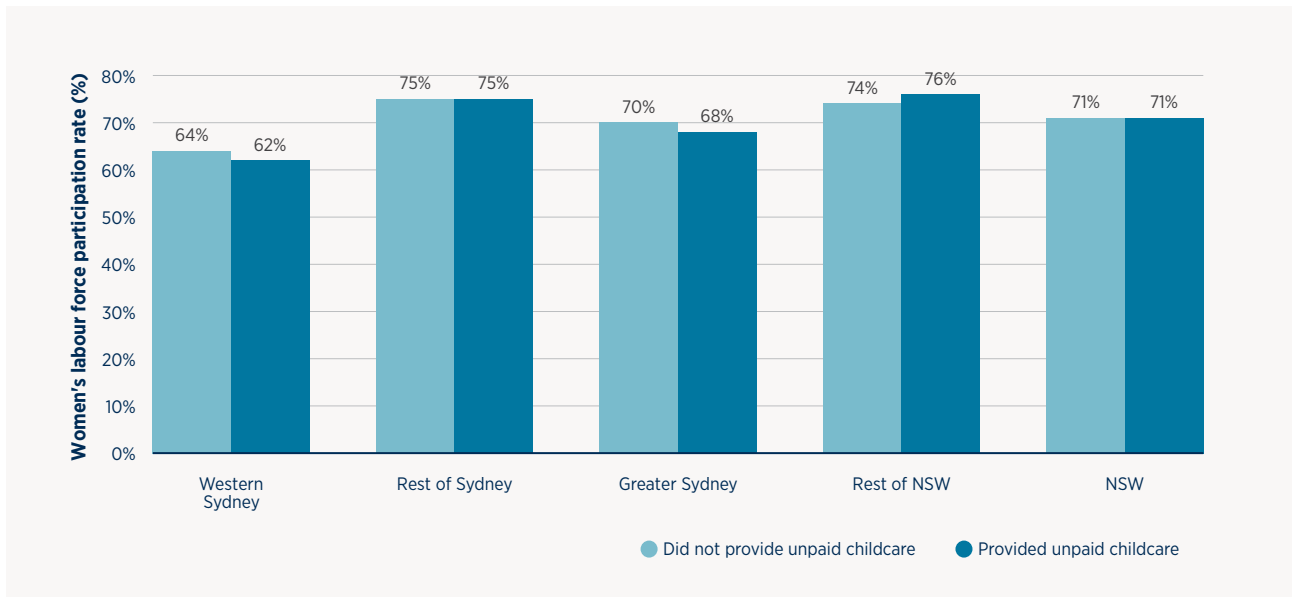
Women who are unemployed by educational attainment

EMPLOYED	POSTGRADUATE OR BACHELOR DEGREE	DIPLOMA OR CERTIFICATE	SECONDARY EDUCATION	NO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	TOTAL
Blacktown	32%	25%	43%	0%	100%
Blue Mountains	27%	34%	39%	0%	100%
Camden	21%	31%	47%	1%	100%
Campbelltown	25%	26%	48%	1%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	29%	23%	47%	2%	100%
Cumberland	36%	23%	40%	2%	100%
Fairfield	14%	21%	59%	6%	100%
Hawkesbury	16%	34%	50%	0%	100%
Liverpool	23%	27%	48%	2%	100%
Parramatta	53%	19%	28%	1%	100%
Penrith	17%	29%	53%	1%	100%
The Hills	43%	21%	37%	0%	100%
Wollondilly	8%	32%	60%	0%	100%
Western Sydney	30%	24%	44%	1%	100%
Rest of Sydney	43%	24%	33%	0%	100%
Greater Sydney	36%	24%	39%	1%	100%
Rest of NSW	14%	32%	54%	0%	100%
NSW	29%	26%	44%	1%	100%

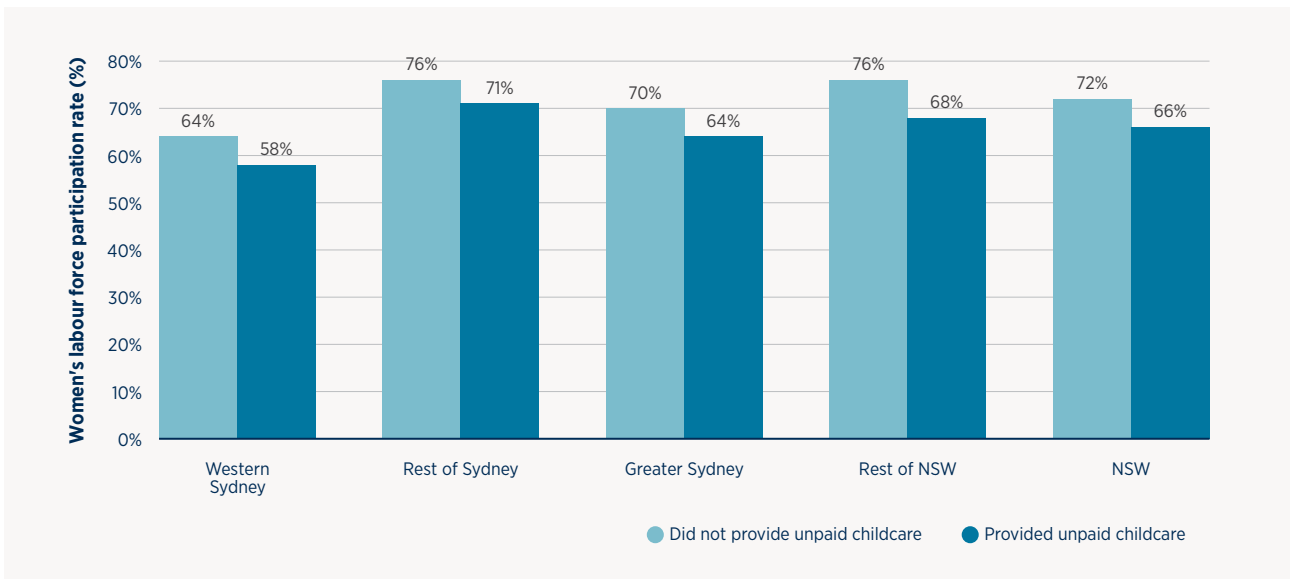
Women who are not in the labour force by educational attainment

EMPLOYED	POSTGRADUATE OR BACHELOR DEGREE	DIPLOMA OR CERTIFICATE	SECONDARY EDUCATION	NO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	TOTAL
Blacktown	20%	20%	58%	2%	100%
Blue Mountains	23%	30%	46%	1%	100%
Camden	14%	26%	58%	1%	100%
Campbelltown	14%	22%	61%	2%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	16%	20%	61%	4%	100%
Cumberland	17%	19%	58%	6%	100%
Fairfield	7%	16%	67%	10%	100%
Hawkesbury	11%	29%	60%	1%	100%
Liverpool	12%	21%	62%	5%	100%
Parramatta	34%	20%	45%	2%	100%
Penrith	12%	25%	63%	1%	100%
The Hills	28%	21%	50%	1%	100%
Wollondilly	9%	28%	62%	0%	100%
Western Sydney	17%	21%	59%	4%	100%
Rest of Sydney	29%	22%	47%	1%	100%
Greater Sydney	22%	21%	54%	3%	100%
Rest of NSW	12%	27%	60%	1%	100%
NSW	19%	23%	56%	2%	100%

Women's labour force participation rate by provision of unpaid childcare - Western Sydney and benchmarks



Women's labour force participation rate by unpaid assistance - Western Sydney and benchmarks



Distribution of women by employment status and unpaid domestic work provision (FT/PT)

	DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYED FULL-TIME BY HOURS OF UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK PROVIDED						DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYED PART-TIME BY HOURS OF UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK PROVIDED					
	NIL HOURS	LESS THAN 5 HOURS	5 TO 14 HOURS	15 TO 29 HOURS	30 HOURS OR MORE	TOTAL	NIL HOURS	LESS THAN 5 HOURS	5 TO 14 HOURS	15 TO 29 HOURS	30 HOURS OR MORE	TOTAL
Blacktown	24%	14%	34%	18%	9%	100%	27%	14%	26%	19%	15%	100%
Blue Mountains	8%	17%	47%	22%	6%	100%	9%	15%	36%	24%	15%	100%
Camden	17%	16%	40%	18%	8%	100%	18%	15%	30%	21%	17%	100%
Campbelltown	24%	16%	37%	16%	8%	100%	26%	14%	28%	18%	14%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	25%	18%	35%	15%	6%	100%	28%	14%	26%	18%	14%	100%
Cumberland	29%	16%	32%	16%	7%	100%	36%	13%	23%	16%	13%	100%
Fairfield	33%	19%	30%	13%	6%	100%	36%	15%	24%	15%	12%	100%
Hawkesbury	14%	17%	43%	19%	8%	100%	14%	14%	31%	22%	18%	100%
Liverpool	26%	16%	34%	16%	8%	100%	28%	14%	25%	18%	15%	100%
Parramatta	24%	18%	37%	16%	6%	100%	26%	15%	26%	20%	13%	100%
Penrith	19%	17%	40%	17%	7%	100%	20%	15%	30%	19%	15%	100%
The Hills	16%	16%	39%	21%	8%	100%	16%	17%	29%	22%	17%	100%
Wollondilly	13%	15%	43%	20%	8%	100%	14%	15%	31%	22%	18%	100%
Western Sydney	22%	17%	36%	17%	7%	100%	24%	15%	27%	19%	15%	100%
Rest of Sydney	16%	22%	42%	15%	5%	100%	18%	17%	32%	20%	12%	100%
Greater Sydney	19%	20%	40%	16%	6%	100%	21%	16%	30%	20%	13%	100%
Rest of NSW	14%	18%	44%	18%	6%	100%	15%	17%	34%	21%	14%	100%
NSW	17%	19%	41%	16%	6%	100%	19%	16%	31%	20%	13%	100%

Distribution of women by employment status and unpaid domestic work provision - unemployed

DISTRIBUTION OF UNEMPLOYED WOMEN BY HOURS OF UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK PROVIDED

	NIL HOURS	LESS THAN 5 HOURS	5 TO 14 HOURS	15 TO 29 HOURS	30 HOURS OR MORE	TOTAL
Blacktown	27%	13%	21%	15%	24%	100%
Blue Mountains	15%	17%	30%	20%	18%	100%
Camden	22%	15%	24%	14%	24%	100%
Campbelltown	27%	13%	20%	16%	24%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	32%	13%	21%	14%	19%	100%
Cumberland	33%	12%	18%	15%	22%	100%
Fairfield	37%	14%	19%	13%	17%	100%
Hawkesbury	17%	18%	21%	19%	25%	100%
Liverpool	32%	13%	20%	15%	21%	100%
Parramatta	30%	11%	20%	17%	22%	100%
Penrith	25%	15%	25%	16%	19%	100%
The Hills	19%	17%	22%	17%	24%	100%
Wollondilly	21%	19%	20%	14%	26%	100%
Western Sydney	29%	14%	21%	15%	21%	100%
Rest of Sydney	24%	18%	26%	16%	17%	100%
Greater Sydney	27%	16%	23%	16%	19%	100%
Rest of NSW	21%	18%	25%	17%	19%	100%
NSW	25%	16%	24%	16%	19%	100%

Distribution of women by employment status and unpaid domestic work provision (not in the labour force)

DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE BY HOURS OF UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK PROVIDED

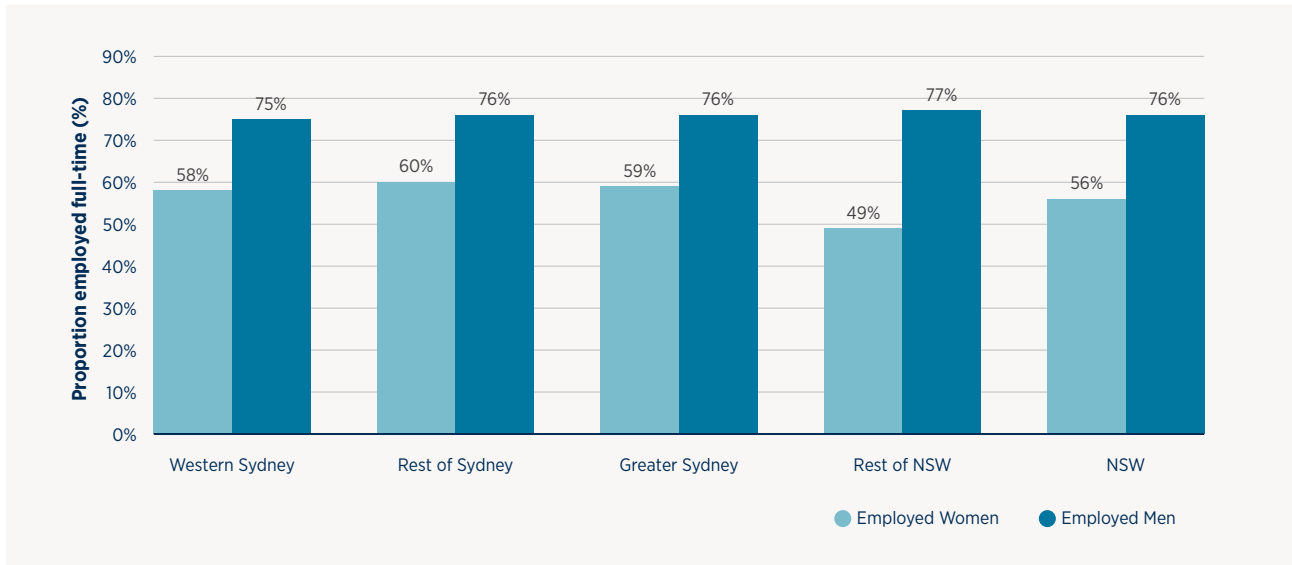
	NIL HOURS	LESS THAN 5 HOURS	5 TO 14 HOURS	15 TO 29 HOURS	30 HOURS OR MORE	TOTAL
Blacktown	39%	11%	14%	12%	25%	100%
Blue Mountains	16%	16%	22%	19%	27%	100%
Camden	29%	11%	16%	14%	29%	100%
Campbelltown	36%	11%	15%	12%	26%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	43%	10%	13%	11%	23%	100%
Cumberland	45%	9%	13%	11%	22%	100%
Fairfield	51%	9%	12%	9%	18%	100%
Hawkesbury	23%	11%	20%	16%	30%	100%
Liverpool	44%	10%	13%	10%	22%	100%
Parramatta	36%	11%	15%	13%	24%	100%
Penrith	31%	12%	16%	14%	27%	100%
The Hills	25%	15%	16%	15%	29%	100%
Wollondilly	21%	13%	17%	16%	33%	100%
Western Sydney	39%	11%	14%	12%	24%	100%
Rest of Sydney	29%	15%	18%	15%	22%	100%
Greater Sydney	35%	12%	16%	13%	23%	100%
Rest of NSW	26%	13%	20%	17%	25%	100%
NSW	32%	13%	17%	14%	24%	100%

Distribution of unpaid domestic work provision by all women

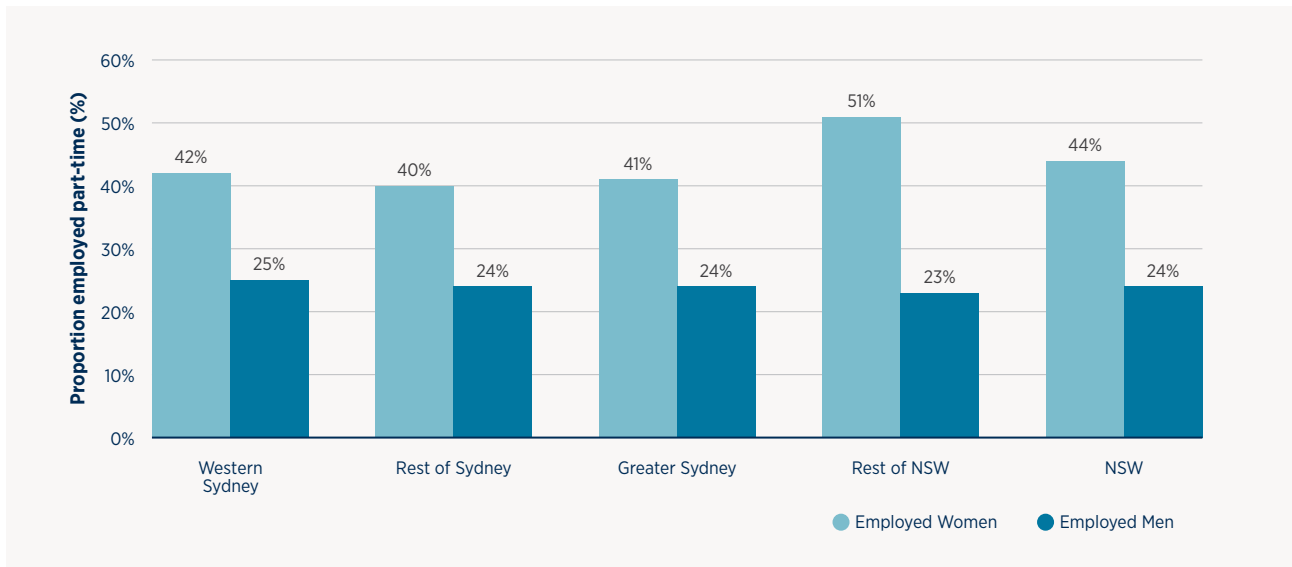
DISTRIBUTION OF ALL WOMEN BY HOURS OF UNPAID DOMESTIC WORK PROVIDED

	NIL HOURS	LESS THAN 5 HOURS	5 TO 14 HOURS	15 TO 29 HOURS	30 HOURS OR MORE	TOTAL
Blacktown	30%	13%	25%	16%	16%	100%
Blue Mountains	11%	16%	36%	22%	15%	100%
Camden	21%	15%	30%	18%	17%	100%
Campbelltown	29%	13%	26%	15%	17%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	34%	13%	23%	14%	16%	100%
Cumberland	38%	12%	21%	14%	16%	100%
Fairfield	44%	12%	18%	11%	14%	100%
Hawkesbury	16%	15%	32%	19%	17%	100%
Liverpool	35%	13%	23%	14%	16%	100%
Parramatta	28%	15%	27%	16%	14%	100%
Penrith	23%	15%	30%	17%	16%	100%
The Hills	18%	16%	30%	20%	16%	100%
Wollondilly	16%	15%	32%	20%	18%	100%
Western Sydney	29%	14%	25%	16%	16%	100%
Rest of Sydney	20%	19%	33%	17%	12%	100%
Greater Sydney	25%	16%	29%	16%	14%	100%
Rest of NSW	18%	16%	33%	19%	14%	100%
NSW	22%	16%	31%	17%	14%	100%

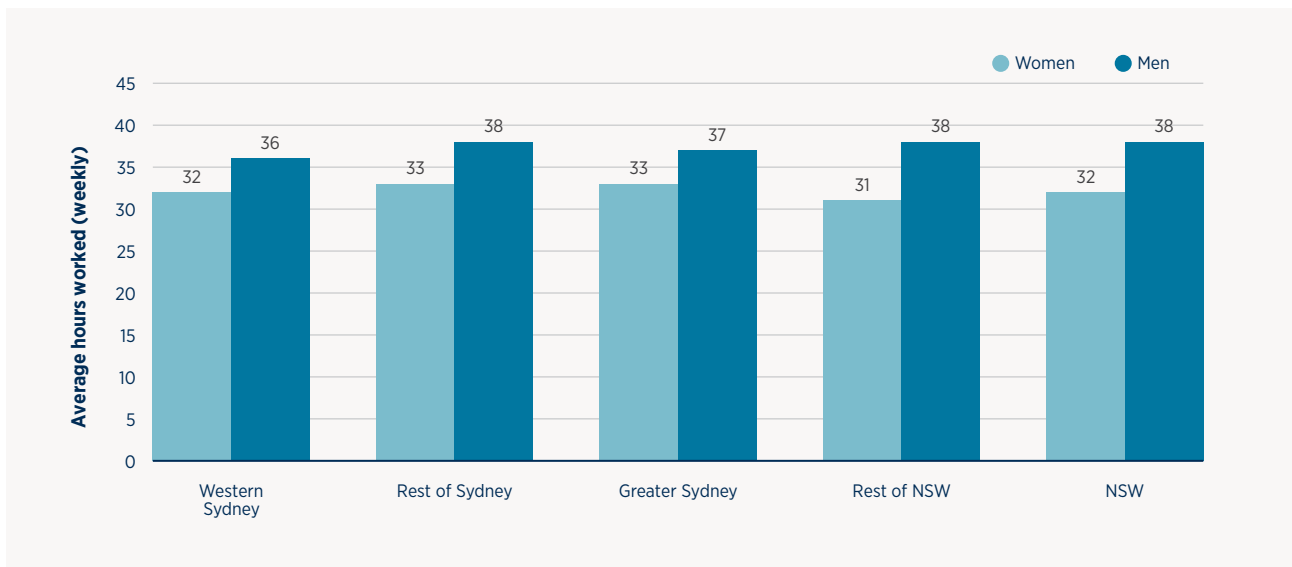
Proportion of employed women and men working full-time - Western Sydney and benchmarks



Proportion of employed women and men working part-time - Western Sydney and benchmarks



Average hours worked by employed women and men - Western Sydney and benchmarks



Proportion of women employed full-time/part-time by dependents

	PROPORTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYED FULL-TIME BY DEPENDENTS					PROPORTION OF WOMEN EMPLOYED PART-TIME BY DEPENDENTS				
	COUPLE FAMILY NO DEPENDENTS	COUPLE FAMILY WITH DEPENDENTS	ONE PARENT FAMILY NO DEPENDENTS	ONE PARENT FAMILY WITH DEPENDENTS	TOTAL	COUPLE FAMILY NO DEPENDENTS	COUPLE FAMILY WITH DEPENDENTS	ONE PARENT FAMILY NO DEPENDENTS	ONE PARENT FAMILY WITH DEPENDENTS	TOTAL
Blacktown	32%	51%	11%	6%	100%	29%	54%	9%	8%	100%
Blue Mountains	33%	46%	13%	8%	100%	30%	52%	9%	9%	100%
Camden	30%	51%	11%	8%	100%	27%	58%	7%	8%	100%
Campbelltown	33%	44%	14%	9%	100%	28%	51%	11%	11%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	40%	37%	15%	7%	100%	33%	46%	12%	8%	100%
Cumberland	37%	43%	14%	6%	100%	31%	51%	11%	7%	100%
Fairfield	46%	27%	19%	7%	100%	38%	37%	16%	10%	100%
Hawkesbury	39%	41%	13%	8%	100%	34%	49%	9%	7%	100%
Liverpool	40%	40%	13%	7%	100%	33%	49%	10%	8%	100%
Parramatta	29%	52%	12%	6%	100%	31%	53%	9%	7%	100%
Penrith	33%	44%	13%	10%	100%	29%	51%	10%	10%	100%
The Hills	37%	50%	8%	4%	100%	37%	52%	7%	4%	100%
Wollondilly	37%	48%	9%	7%	100%	32%	54%	7%	7%	100%
Western Sydney	36%	45%	13%	7%	100%	31%	51%	10%	8%	100%
Rest of Sydney	32%	48%	12%	8%	100%	32%	52%	9%	7%	100%
Greater Sydney	34%	47%	12%	7%	100%	32%	51%	10%	7%	100%
Rest of NSW	31%	46%	12%	11%	100%	27%	52%	10%	12%	100%
NSW	33%	47%	12%	8%	100%	30%	51%	10%	9%	100%

Proportion of women unemployed/not in the labour force by dependents

	PROPORTION OF UNEMPLOYED WOMEN BY DEPENDENTS					PROPORTION OF WOMEN NOT IN LABOUR FORCE BY DEPENDENTS				
	COUPLE FAMILY NO DEPENDENTS	COUPLE FAMILY WITH DEPENDENTS	ONE PARENT FAMILY NO DEPENDENTS	ONE PARENT FAMILY WITH DEPENDENTS	TOTAL	COUPLE FAMILY NO DEPENDENTS	COUPLE FAMILY WITH DEPENDENTS	ONE PARENT FAMILY NO DEPENDENTS	ONE PARENT FAMILY WITH DEPENDENTS	TOTAL
Blacktown	27%	50%	13%	11%	100%	26%	49%	11%	14%	100%
Blue Mountains	35%	31%	23%	12%	100%	32%	41%	14%	13%	100%
Camden	24%	50%	13%	13%	100%	24%	54%	9%	13%	100%
Campbelltown	25%	45%	15%	15%	100%	24%	46%	13%	18%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	30%	40%	17%	12%	100%	27%	48%	13%	12%	100%
Cumberland	27%	48%	15%	9%	100%	26%	52%	12%	10%	100%
Fairfield	35%	30%	21%	14%	100%	32%	40%	16%	12%	100%
Hawkesbury	31%	29%	21%	18%	100%	30%	42%	14%	14%	100%
Liverpool	32%	41%	13%	14%	100%	28%	47%	12%	13%	100%
Parramatta	24%	57%	12%	7%	100%	28%	52%	12%	8%	100%
Penrith	26%	38%	17%	19%	100%	25%	44%	13%	18%	100%
The Hills	35%	48%	11%	6%	100%	37%	49%	9%	5%	100%
Wollondilly	31%	44%	10%	15%	100%	30%	46%	10%	14%	100%
Western Sydney	29%	44%	15%	12%	100%	28%	47%	13%	12%	100%
Rest of Sydney	32%	40%	18%	11%	100%	32%	44%	14%	10%	100%
Greater Sydney	30%	43%	16%	11%	100%	30%	46%	13%	11%	100%
Rest of NSW	23%	33%	20%	23%	100%	24%	39%	16%	21%	100%
NSW	28%	40%	17%	15%	100%	28%	44%	14%	14%	100%

Labour force participation rate of women by household composition

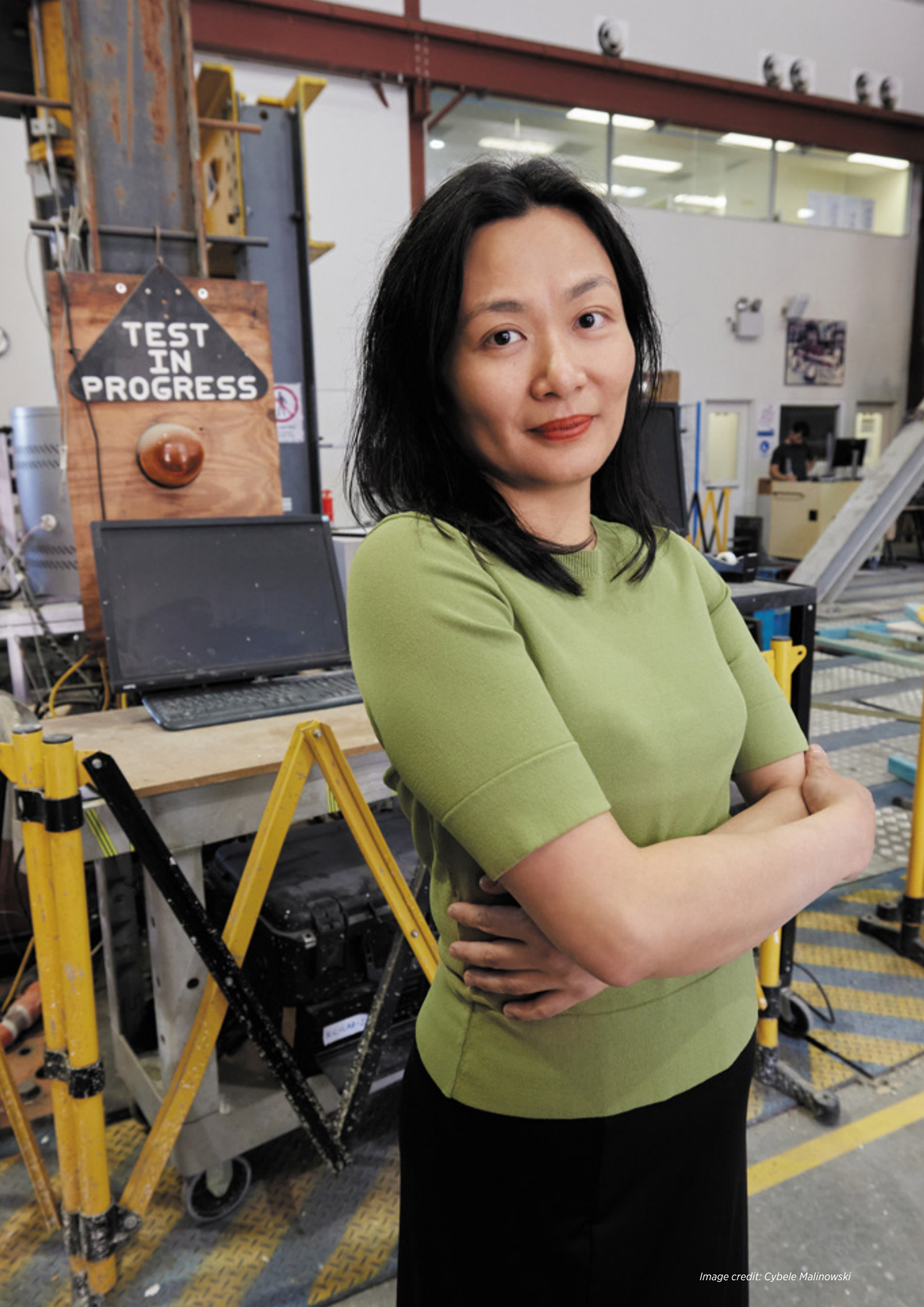
EMPLOYED	COUPLE FAMILY WITH NO CHILDREN	COUPLE FAMILY WITH CHILDREN	ONE PARENT FAMILY	OTHER FAMILY	LONE PERSON HOUSEHOLD	GROUP HOUSEHOLD
Blacktown	75%	68%	57%	68%	68%	65%
Blue Mountains	73%	76%	67%	66%	68%	66%
Camden	80%	74%	68%	79%	77%	69%
Campbelltown	71%	63%	54%	65%	64%	61%
Canterbury-Bankstown	63%	53%	48%	62%	61%	57%
Cumberland	67%	52%	48%	66%	61%	63%
Fairfield	50%	43%	42%	45%	48%	48%
Hawkesbury	77%	76%	66%	77%	70%	67%
Liverpool	68%	57%	50%	61%	60%	56%
Parramatta	77%	66%	62%	75%	76%	76%
Penrith	76%	72%	62%	69%	73%	67%
The Hills	77%	75%	71%	79%	79%	73%
Wollondilly	74%	78%	66%	68%	69%	61%
Western Sydney	71%	63%	55%	65%	67%	65%
Rest of Sydney	80%	74%	67%	76%	79%	78%
Greater Sydney	77%	68%	60%	71%	75%	75%
Rest of NSW	75%	79%	66%	69%	71%	74%
NSW	76%	71%	62%	70%	73%	75%

English proficiency by employment status – full-time/part-time

	WOMEN EMPLOYED FULL-TIME				WOMEN EMPLOYED PART-TIME			
	SPEAKS ENGLISH ONLY	USES OTHER LANGUAGE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH: WELL OR VERY WELL	USES OTHER LANGUAGE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH: NOT WELL OR NOT AT ALL	TOTAL	SPEAKS ENGLISH ONLY	USES OTHER LANGUAGE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH: WELL OR VERY WELL	USES OTHER LANGUAGE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH: NOT WELL OR NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Blacktown	45%	54%	1%	100%	50%	49%	2%	100%
Blue Mountains	93%	7%	0%	100%	93%	7%	0%	100%
Camden	76%	23%	1%	100%	78%	21%	1%	100%
Campbelltown	59%	40%	1%	100%	58%	40%	2%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	42%	55%	3%	100%	38%	56%	6%	100%
Cumberland	30%	66%	4%	100%	26%	67%	7%	100%
Fairfield	28%	62%	10%	100%	26%	60%	14%	100%
Hawkesbury	92%	7%	1%	100%	92%	8%	0%	100%
Liverpool	43%	55%	3%	100%	43%	53%	4%	100%
Parramatta	40%	58%	2%	100%	39%	55%	6%	100%
Penrith	79%	21%	0%	100%	79%	20%	1%	100%
The Hills	55%	44%	1%	100%	63%	35%	2%	100%
Wollondilly	94%	6%	0%	100%	94%	6%	0%	100%
Western Sydney	52%	46%	2%	100%	54%	42%	4%	100%
Rest of Sydney	69%	30%	1%	100%	69%	29%	2%	100%
Greater Sydney	62%	37%	1%	100%	62%	35%	3%	100%
Rest of NSW	92%	8%	0%	100%	92%	7%	0%	100%
NSW	71%	28%	1%	100%	74%	24%	2%	100%

English proficiency by employment status - unemployed/not in the labour force

	UNEMPLOYED WOMEN				WOMEN NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE			
	SPEAKS ENGLISH ONLY	USES OTHER LANGUAGE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH: WELL OR VERY WELL	USES OTHER LANGUAGE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH: NOT WELL OR NOT AT ALL	TOTAL	SPEAKS ENGLISH ONLY	USES OTHER LANGUAGE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH: WELL OR VERY WELL	USES OTHER LANGUAGE AND SPEAKS ENGLISH: NOT WELL OR NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Blacktown	40%	55%	5%	100%	44%	45%	11%	100%
Blue Mountains	89%	11%	1%	100%	90%	9%	1%	100%
Camden	59%	38%	4%	100%	65%	30%	5%	100%
Campbelltown	51%	44%	4%	100%	55%	37%	8%	100%
Canterbury-Bankstown	25%	60%	14%	100%	24%	54%	21%	100%
Cumberland	19%	68%	13%	100%	20%	56%	24%	100%
Fairfield	17%	56%	27%	100%	16%	48%	37%	100%
Hawkesbury	92%	8%	0%	100%	90%	9%	1%	100%
Liverpool	31%	58%	11%	100%	30%	51%	19%	100%
Parramatta	25%	64%	11%	100%	28%	53%	19%	100%
Penrith	72%	26%	3%	100%	72%	23%	5%	100%
The Hills	44%	51%	5%	100%	50%	40%	10%	100%
Wollondilly	92%	8%	0%	100%	91%	8%	1%	100%
Western Sydney	38%	53%	10%	100%	46%	40%	14%	100%
Rest of Sydney	54%	41%	5%	100%	90%	8%	2%	100%
Greater Sydney	45%	47%	8%	100%	46%	40%	14%	100%
Rest of NSW	89%	10%	1%	100%	90%	8%	2%	100%
NSW	59%	35%	6%	100%	59%	31%	10%	100%





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