



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Communities



# 2019 Women's Report Card

An indicator report  
of Western Australian  
women's progress



## About this Report

The 2019 Women's Report Card presents fact-based information to raise awareness of the status of Western Australian (WA) women. It contributes to the evidence base which underpins actions to address the barriers to women's progress and promote the benefits of greater gender equity.

This report provides reliable information to inform discussion, debate and advocacy. Public, private and community sector organisations can also use this information to develop policies and take action to support women's progress and to achieve gender equality. The report also fulfils the State Government's continuing commitment to provide regular updates on the status and progress of WA women. This report recognises that barriers to women's progress persist and that there is a shared responsibility to improve the status of women and address the barriers to their progress.

## About the Department of Communities, Government of Western Australia

The Department of Communities is a multi-function human services agency working to create pathways to individual, family and community wellbeing. The Department's direction centres on building safe, strong, secure and inclusive communities that empower individuals and families across Western Australia to lead fulfilling lives. The Department's functions and services include disability services; child protection and family support; social and affordable housing; community initiatives and remote regional services reform.

## About Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre is an independent economic and social research organisation located within the Curtin Business School at Curtin University. The centre was established in 2012 through the generous support of Bankwest (a division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia), with a core mission to examine the key economic and social policy issues that contribute to the sustainability of Western Australia and the wellbeing of WA households.

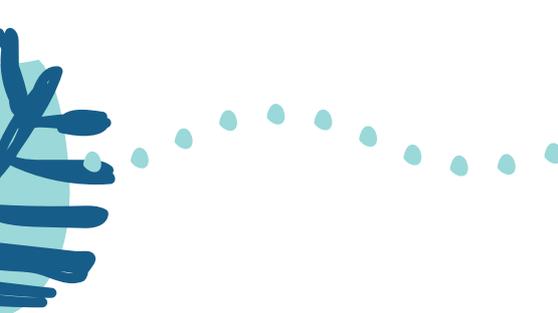
The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre is the first research organisation of its kind in Western Australia, and draws great strength and credibility from its partnership with Bankwest, Curtin University and the Western Australian government.

The centre brings a unique philosophy to research on the major economic issues facing the state. By bringing together experts from the research, policy and business communities at all stages of the process – from framing and conceptualising research questions, through the conduct of research, to the communication and implementation of research findings – we ensure that our research is relevant, fit for purpose, and makes a genuine difference to the lives of Australians, both in WA and nationally.

The centre is able to capitalise on Curtin University's reputation for excellence in economic modelling, forecasting, public policy research, trade and industrial economics and spatial sciences. Centre researchers have specific expertise in economic forecasting, quantitative modelling, micro-data analysis and economic and social policy evaluation. The centre also derives great value from its close association with experts from the corporate, business, public and not-for-profit sectors.

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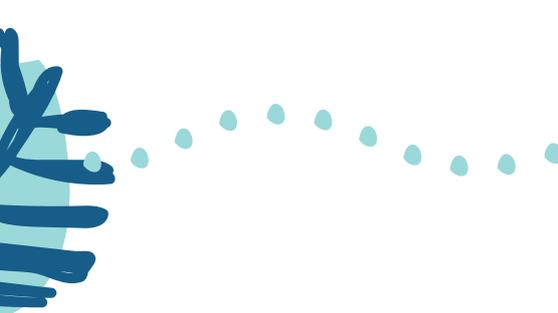
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# Minister's Foreword



I am pleased to present the *2019 Women's Report Card* – a report on how women are faring in Western Australia.

This report maps the progress of women in this state over time and expands the work of previous editions to provide a comprehensive evidence base outlining their status. Having a solid understanding of how women are faring ensures evidence-based, appropriate and well-targeted policy development and service delivery across government, the private sector and communities.

The indicators demonstrate women's contributions to the Western Australian economy and community, participation in the workforce and representation across a range of leadership roles. They also set out the challenges women still face in 2019, with the statistics painting a troubling picture. Western Australia's consistently high gender pay gap (22 per cent, compared with 14 per cent nationally and just 9 per cent in South Australia) is one such example. When it comes to diversity and equality, Western Australia risks being left behind.

The data shows women are still at considerable risk of violence and abuse – in both the private and public spheres – and that this negatively impacts not just their safety and security, but also the extent to which they participate in their communities.

The Western Australian Government recognises these issues and is committed to addressing gender inequality. We are developing a Women's Plan, which will articulate actions for government, business and communities to take, to achieve gender equality. The plan will be launched in 2020 and will outline actions for the next 10 years, to establish long-term change addressing the complex issues faced by Western Australian women.

I thank the organisations and individuals whose contributions have helped to guide and shape this report. It is an important document that provides valuable information for the community. As we work together to tackle this important issue, I encourage you to take the time to further explore the data through the Department of Communities' interactive data platform, which is available from [www.communities.wa.gov.au](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au).

## **Hon. Simone McGurk MLA**

[Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services](#)



# Executive Summary

In 2019, there were more than 1.3 million women and girls in Western Australia (WA), comprising 50.4 per cent of the WA population. Women can face gender-related inequalities, discrimination and disadvantage in various aspects of their lives. These factors impact negatively on women's ability to engage and participate fully in their communities, the economy and life more generally. While progress is being made, many inequalities persist. A critical and ongoing step to advancing gender equality is to provide reliable information to inform discussion, debate and advocacy – the primary objective of the *2019 Women's Report Card*.

The WA Government is developing a Women's Plan to address gender inequality in the state, which will be launched in 2020. The *2019 Women's Report Card* provides a critical input into that process, presenting fact-based information to raise awareness of the status and current state of play of women in WA. The report card is framed around the four priority areas identified by the WA Government – Health and Wellbeing, Safety and Justice, Economic Independence and Leadership. Across these four priority areas, more than 200 indicators are reported on, and in doing so the *2019 Women's Report Card* contributes to the evidence base which underpins actions to address the barriers to women's progress and promote the benefits of greater gender equity.

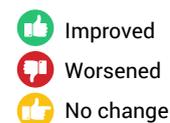
In addition to comparisons by gender, for many indicators, women's outcomes in WA are compared to that of women across other states and territories in Australia. Of course, not all women are affected by gender inequality in the same way. Therefore areas of intersectionality are addressed in this report, with a particular focus on women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. Data limitations along with the broad nature and scope of this report mean that not all groups are covered in detail here. Furthermore, many of the individual challenges

facing women and the indicators reported on are complex in nature. Therefore, the findings presented here should be viewed alongside other studies available.

The analysis presented in this report will ensure that informed decisions can be made by government, businesses, organisations and individuals, as steps are taken towards progressing gender equality in WA. In addition to interrogating various public and private data available at the time of research, the research process included critical engagement with stakeholders across the public, private and community sectors.

This is the sixth Women's Report Card for WA and builds on the reports published in 2004, 2006, 2009, 2012 and 2015. The report reflects the state government's continuing commitment to provide regular updates on the status and progress of WA women. In a further step towards delivering on the latter commitments, the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and WA Department of Communities have developed a Women in WA Data Insights Platform, to accompany this report. This platform will provide regular updates on a selection of key indicators, across the four key priority areas.

# Summary of Selected Indicators



## Health and wellbeing

Indicator				Long-run Change	Short-run Change
	1998	2014	2017	2017-1998 Change	2017-2014 Change
Life expectancy of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (years)	81.1	84.4	84.8	3.70	0.40
Life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (years)	57.0	59.7	58.2	1.20	-1.50
Teenage birth rates (per 1,000) (15-19 years)	27.6	22.2	13.9	-13.70	-8.30
Proportion of female general practitioners (Full Service Equivalent)	27.5	32.4	35.7	8.2	3.3
Prevalence of mental health condition (% population aged 16+)	15.9	16.1	22.1	6.2	6.0

Notes: The years reported for long-run and short-run changes differ for each indicator due to data availability. For many variables, the direction of change needs to be interpreted with caution. For example, an increase in mental health prevalence may be due to greater reporting and females seeking support, which is a positive development.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from various sources, detailed within the main body of the report.

## Safety and justice

Indicator				Long-run Change	Short-run Change
	2008-09	2014-15	2017-18	2018-2009 Change (Ppt)	2018-2015 Change (Ppt)
Family violence (assault) with a female victim, per 10,000 population	58.6	85.3	91.9	33.3	6.6
Sexual assault reported to WA Police Force, female victimisation rate, per 10,000 females	6.2	5.0	7.0	0.73	1.96
Total employment complaints by females to the Equal Opportunity WA Commission	201	136	165	-36	29
Imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females	866.7	931.0	1066.3	199.6	135.3
Imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the population, non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females	49.9	59.9	72.8	22.9	12.9

Notes: The years reported for long-run and short-run changes differ for each indicator due to data availability.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from various sources, detailed within the main body of the report.



## Economic independence

Indicator				Long-run Change	Short-run Change
Apparent retention rates Year 7-8 to Year 12 (%)	2010	2014	2017	2017-2010 Change (Ppt)	2017-2014 Change (Ppt)
	8	95.5	87.5	1.6	8.0
Female labour force participation (%)	2008	2014	2018	2018-2008 Change (Ppt)	2018-2014 Change (Ppt)
	61.0	60.6	62.4	1.4	1.8
Female unemployment rate (%)	2008	2014	2018	2018-2008 Change (Ppt)	2018-2014 Change (Ppt)
	3.3	5.1	6.0	2.7	0.9
Gender pay gap (%)	2008	2014	2019	2019-2008 Change (Ppt)	2018-2014 Change (Ppt)
	26.2	25.7	21.8	-4.4	-3.9
Superannuation gap (%), Women aged 55-65 years	2006	2012	2016	2016-2006 Change (Ppt)	2016-2016 Change (Ppt)
	61.0	62.0	48.0	-13	-14

Notes: The years reported for long-run and short-run changes differ for each indicator due to data availability.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from various sources, detailed within the main body of the report.

## Leadership

Indicator				Long-run Change	Short-run Change
Proportion of women in elected positions in WA Parliament – Legislative Assembly	2005	2013	2018	2005-2018 change (Ppt)	2013-2018 change (Ppt)
	22.8	22.0	32.2	9.4	10.2
Proportion of women in elected positions in WA Parliament – Legislative Council	2005	2013	2018	2005-2018 change (Ppt)	2013-2018 change (Ppt)
	41.2	41.7	30.6	-10.6	-11.1
Proportion of women in the WA public sector's senior executive service (SES)	2008	2013	2018	2018-2008 Change (Ppt)	2018-2013 Change (Ppt)
	23.7	29.2	33.3	9.6	4.1
Proportion of women local government officials (Councillors)	2005	2013	2018	2018-2005 Change (Ppt)	2018-2013 Change (Ppt)
	27.9	29.8	36.6	8.7	6.8
Percentage of women on government boards (WA)	2013	2015	2019	2019-2013 Change (Ppt)	2019-2015 Change (Ppt)
	41.0	43.6	48.0	7.0	4.4
Proportion of women as board chairs of Australian companies		2015	2018	2018-2015 Change (Ppt)	2018-2015 Change (Ppt)
		14.2	13.7	n/a	-0.58

Notes: The years reported for long-run and short-run changes differ for each indicator due to data availability.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from various sources, detailed within the main body of the report.

# Key Findings: WA Women at a Glance

## Demographic profile

### Number of women by age and location

- As of 2018, there were more than one million women in WA. After the Northern Territory (48.1%), WA has the lowest share of women across all states and territories (50.4%), with women comprising 50.9 per cent of the Australian population.
- For the Greater Perth region, there is a greater proportion of women in many areas particularly in the more metropolitan areas, coastal regions and also in the high population growth areas to the north-west, such as in the City of Joondalup and City of Wanneroo. Only 47.5 per cent of the population in Perth City were women.
- By WA region, lower proportions of women are evident in the following regions: East Pilbara, 20.4 per cent; Ashburton, 19.3 per cent; Roebourne, 31.5 per cent; Port Hedland, 36.0 per cent; Kalgoorlie, 46.0 per cent; and Pemberton, 48.4 per cent, among others.
- For the ages 0 to 49, there is a greater proportion of men than women in WA, with the largest gap evident in the 0 to 9 age cohort. From age 50 to 59 onwards, there is a greater share of women, which aligns with the longer life expectancy of women.

### Women by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status

- On Census night 2016, almost 45,830 (2.4%) of the adult population in WA identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, with women comprising 50.6 per cent (23,208) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult population.
- Relative to other states, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in WA (2.4%) compares to 21.8 per cent in the Northern Territory, 3.6 per cent in Tasmania, 3.0 per cent in Queensland, 2.2 per cent in New South Wales (NSW), and 0.6 per cent in Victoria.

- In 2016, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in WA had more of a pyramid age structure, relative to the total population, reflecting the higher fertility rate and lower life expectancy among the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.
- In fact, in 2016, almost 60 per cent of the WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was under the age of 30. This compares to 39.3 per cent of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

## Cultural diversity

- In 2016, 45.8 per cent of the 960,000 women (aged 18 years of age and older) living in WA were born overseas, with the remaining 54.2 per cent noting Australia as their place of birth.
- The most common region of birth for WA women born overseas was North-West Europe, 13.5 per cent compared to 7.2 per cent nationally. This is followed by South-East Asia at 6.4 per cent, (5.0% nationally). The share of women born in Sub-Saharan Africa is also noteworthy, constituting 3.6 per cent of overseas-born women living in WA, compared to a 1.5 per cent share nationally.
- Western Australia is home to people from more than 190 countries, with more than 240 languages (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages) spoken across the state in 2016. In 2016, 17.7 per cent of women spoke a language other than English (as well as English) at home.
- In 2016, 2.7 per cent of women (1.9% of men) in WA either had poor proficiency or no proficiency in spoken English. This is lower than many of the other states and territories, with the figure standing at 5.3 per cent for NSW, 5.2 per cent for Victoria, and 3.2 per cent for South Australia. The figure was lower for Queensland (1.9%) and Tasmania (0.78%), with a similar level to that of WA reported in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) (2.7%).

## Disability

- The number of women with a profound or severe disability in WA is 4.9 per cent, compared to 3.9 per cent of men. This compares to 6.4 per cent of women nationally (5.3% of men), with 6.8 per cent in NSW, 6.5 per cent in Victoria, 7.8 per cent in Tasmania, 6.2 per cent in Queensland.

## Marital status and family living arrangements

- On Census night 2016, 50.3 per cent of women in WA were married (49.0% nationally), compared to 51.9 per cent of men. A further 28.9 per cent of women in WA (29.1% nationally) were never married (35.4% of men).
- Consistent with the national average, 10.0 per cent of women in WA were divorced (7.6% of men), while 3.5 per cent of women in WA were separated (3.1% of men). A further 7.3 per cent of women were widowed, compared to only 2.0 per cent of men, which aligns with the longer life expectancy of women.
- In 2016, 24.6 per cent of households were couple families with no children. Couple families with children made up 29.0 per cent of households, with 9.3 per cent of households being one-parent family.
- Of the 93,180 one-parent families, 81.7 per cent were headed by a woman, similar to the national average.
- Women comprised 53.1 per cent of all single person households, slightly lower than the 54.7 per cent reported for Australia.
- In 2016, the proportion of women living in a registered opposite sex marriage in WA was 44.8 per cent, compared to 43.7 per cent for men. A further 10.0 per cent of women in WA were in de facto opposite sex marriages, compared to 9.6 per cent of men.

- There were more than 4,090 women (0.43% of the female population) in same sex de facto marriages, with a lower number of 3,330 estimated for men (0.35% of the male population).

## Religious affiliation

- In 2016, Christianity continued to be the dominant religion in WA, with 54.7 per cent of women and 47.4 per cent of men affiliated as such. This was lower than that reported across Australia, with the percentages being 56.3 per cent and 50.0 per cent respectively for women and men.
- Buddhism was the second largest religious affiliation among women in WA, standing at 2.7 per cent (2.0% for men, and 2.9% for women in Australia).
- A substantial number of women identified as having no religious affiliation (28.6%). This represents an increase since 2011, where 21.6 per cent of women reported no religious affiliation.

## Health and Wellbeing

### Lifestyle and risk factors

- The median life expectancy for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in WA stood at 84.8 years in 2017 (78.4 years for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men), up from the 81.1 years reported in 1998. Over the same period, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's median life expectancy increased from 57.0 to 58.2 years (53.5 years for men).
- In 2017, the gap in median life expectancy between non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in WA was 26.6 years, up from the gap of 24.1 years reported in 1998.



- The proportion of women who smoked cigarettes decreased from 18.3 per cent in 2002 to 9.1 per cent in 2017.
- There was far less improvement in alcohol consumption among women in WA over the same period. Alcohol consumption at levels likely to cause long-term harm only decreased by 3.3 percentage points, from 22.6 per cent of women in 2002 to 19.3 per cent in 2017.
- The proportion of women and men 18 years and over who had an insufficient level of exercise decreased, from 47 per cent in 2007 to 42.2 per cent in 2017.
- The proportion of obese women and men increased substantially between 2002 and 2017 in WA, with around one in five women and men classified as obese in 2002, compared to nearly one in three in 2017.
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers, the birth rate decreased by 57.8 per cent, dropping from 161.4 births per 1,000 women in 1983 to 68.1 births per 1,000 women in 2014. The decrease in the teenage birth rate was similar for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers (51.4%), with the rate decreasing from 21.6 births per 1,000 women in 1983 to 10.5 in 2014.
- In 1986, only 15.6 per cent of women gave birth by caesarean section. By 2014, this percentage more than doubled to 34.8 per cent of women.
- Notifications of gonorrhoea more than doubled for both women and men between 2009 and 2017.
- The primary cause of cervical cancer is the human papillomavirus (HPV). In WA, the percentage of females turning 15 who receive the human papillomavirus vaccination has been increasing. In 2017, the vaccination coverage was 89.9 per cent for dose 1 (81.2% in 2012), 86 per cent for dose 2 (78.3% in 2012), and 80.2 per cent for dose 3 (70.6% in 2012).

## Sexual, reproductive and maternal health

- The total fertility rate for women in WA declined from a peak of 2.1 children per woman in 2008 to 1.87 children per woman in 2016.
- The trend was similar for Australia, with the total fertility rate declining from a peak of 2.02 children per woman in 2008 to 1.79 children per woman in 2016.
- Between 2005 and 2016, there was a steady divergence between the total fertility rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and all women in WA. This difference in total fertility rates reached its maximum in 2015, with the total fertility rate of 3.01 children per woman for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, compared to 1.87 children per woman for all women in WA.
- The teenage pregnancy rate (women aged 15 to 19) declined by more than 50 per cent between 2002 (44.0 per 1,000 women) and 2015 (21.6% per 1,000 women).
- There was a substantial increase in the pregnancy rate for women aged 40 to 44, with pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 40 to 44 increasing from 13.7 in 2002 to 19.1 in 2015.
- Between 1997-98 and 2015-16, there was an 8.0 percentage point decline in cervical cancer screening participation in WA. This was similar to Australia, where there was a 6.6 percentage point decline over the same period.

## Illness, injury and access to services

- In 2017, the top five leading causes of death among women in WA were malignant neoplasms (cancer), malignant neoplasms of the digestive organs (for example, stomach, intestine and liver), other forms of heart disease, ischaemic heart disease (diseases related to reduced blood supply to the heart, e.g. coronary artery disease) and cerebrovascular diseases (for example, stroke and dementia, which are conditions caused by problems that affect the blood supply to the brain).

- There was a positive increase in breast cancer relative survival rates for women in the years following diagnosis between 1985 and 2014. The largest increase was for the relative survival rate five years after diagnosis, which increased from 74.4 per cent (1985-89) to 91.5 per cent (2010-14).
- In 2017, 27 per cent of women aged over 25 years had arthritis, compared to only 19.1 per cent of men.
- There was an increase in the prevalence of diabetes among both women and men between 2002 and 2017. For women, there was a 1.9 percentage point increase, increasing from 5.4 per cent in 2002 to 7.3 per cent in 2017. The increase was slightly higher for men, increasing by 2.8 percentage points between 2002 (4.2%) and 2017 (7.0%), but the overall rate remains lower than that of women.
- In 2017, the two most common causes of hospitalisation for both women and men were dialysis and chemotherapy.
- For women, the rate of hospitalisation for dialysis increased by 22.6 per cent between 2002 and 2017, from 52.2 hospitalisations per 1,000 women in 2002 to 64 hospitalisations per 1,000 women in 2017.
- Of all dialysis hospitalisations for women in 2017, 48.2 per cent were for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- The rate of hospitalisation for chemotherapy for women increased from 32.8 hospitalisations per 1,000 women in 2002 to 38.6 in 2017, an increase of 17.6 per cent.
- In WA, the proportion of female general practitioners (GPs) (headcount) has risen from 38.0 per cent in 2007-08 to 44.9 per cent in 2016-17.
- While the share of female GPs by the full service equivalent metric (37.5 working hours per week) has also increased (from 27.5% in

2007-08 to 35.5% in 2016-17), the gender gap remains more evident on this measure.

- In 2016-17, 71.1 per cent of women in WA had a preferred GP, compared to 52.6 per cent of men. Interestingly, 21.3 per cent of women could not see their preferred GP 'at some point in time' during 2016-17.

### Mental health and wellbeing

- In 2006, 15.9 per cent of women in WA experienced a common mental health condition. By 2017, this had increased to 22.1 per cent of women.
- Between 2006 and 2017, the proportion of women in Western Australia with anxiety problems, depression and stress-related problems increased, with the proportion of women with anxiety problems increasing from 7.7 per cent to 12.1 per cent, depression increasing from 7.8 per cent to 12.6 per cent, and stress-related problems increasing from 9.6 per cent to 12.5 per cent.
- The proportion of women receiving treatment for mental health conditions increased, from 7.6 per cent in 2007 to 12.1 per cent in 2017.

### Community involvement

- There has been a modest increase in the percentage of women volunteering in WA, increasing from 21.1 per cent in 2006 to 23.1 per cent in 2016.
- Women had a higher rate of volunteering for age groups from 15 to 19 through to 75 to 79, compared to men in 2016.
- In 2016, women aged 40-44 had the highest percentage of volunteers at 30.4 per cent, followed by women aged 45-49 at 28.5 per cent. Young women aged 15-19 had the third highest rate of volunteering at 27.1 per cent.



## Safety and Justice

### Safety in families and households

- In 2016, more than one in five women reported having experienced partner violence since the age of 15 in WA.
- Of those women in WA who experienced violence by a partner, 34.4 per cent noted that this violence occurred during pregnancy.
- For women experiencing partner violence in WA, 19.3 per cent reported that such violence occurred 'all of the time'.
- The hospitalisation rate per 10,000 of adult females with injuries related to family and domestic violence in WA in 2018 was 9.4, compared to an average of 8.6 over the 16 years since 2003.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women account for 67 per cent of hospitalisations due to family and domestic violence in WA.
- In 2016, 5.3 per cent of women in WA experienced emotional abuse by a partner over the previous 12 months. This compares to 3.3 per cent in 2012.
- At the time of an event of violence or assault from a partner, only 41 per cent of females (30% of males) in WA perceived the incident of violence as a crime.
- In 2016, 70 per cent of females that experienced partner violence in WA did not report violence or assault from a partner (68% for Australia).
- In WA, 17.5 per cent of women who experienced domestic violence noted that a restraining order was issued against their partner after experiencing such violence.
- However, 51.3 per cent of women in WA reported that further incidents of violence occurred after a restraining order was issued against a partner.

- Family and domestic violence is a leading cause of women's homelessness. Specialist homelessness agencies in WA have seen an 18 per cent increase in the number of female clients supported and/or accommodated between 2011-12 and 2017-18.

### Safety in the community, including perceptions of safety

- In 2017-18, the sexual assault victimisation rate for females in WA was 7.0 per 10,000 females, well above the 14-year average rate of 6.1.
- Almost 46 per cent of women in WA in 2017-18 reported being concerned or very concerned about being a victim of physical assault in a public place within the next 12 months.
- In 2017-18, 72 per cent of women in WA felt concerned or very concerned about being a victim of a housebreaking over the next 12 months.
- In 2016, more than 19 per cent of women in WA did not use public transport at night because they felt unsafe, down from the 25.9 per cent reported in 2005.
- In 2016, almost 27.7 per cent of women did not walk alone after dark because they felt unsafe. This is lower than the 35.6 per cent reported in 2005.
- Across WA, 11.2 per cent of females (2.3% of males) in WA did not feel safe while home alone after dark in the last 12 months (2016), down from the 13.9 per cent reported in 2005.

### Workplace safety and discrimination

- In 2017-18, there were a total of 264 complaints in the area of work (employment) to the Equal Opportunity Commission WA. Of these, 62.5 per cent (165 complaints) were made by females.
- While the total number of complaints is down on previous years, with a height of 453 in 2011-12, the share of women reporting

complaints is now at a historic high (62.5%), with an average share of 54.8 per cent over the nine years reported.

- For females, the most common area of employment complaints to the Equal Opportunity Commission WA in 2017-18 was sexual harassment, with 43 out of 48 (89.6%) such complaints made by women. This was followed by impairment, victimisation and pregnancy.

### Offending and imprisonment

- For females in WA, offender rates per 100,000 of the population have increased at an average of 7.9 per cent over the last three years, and now stand at 988.0. This compares to a rate of 910.4 for females nationally.
- In 2018, imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female adult population in WA stood at 1,066.3 (517.1 nationally) compared to 72.8 for all females in WA (36.2 nationally).
- Imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male population in WA stood at 7,352.3 (4,482.0 nationally), compared to 619.4 for all males (410.2 nationally).
- In 2017-18, there were 17,424 drug related arrests in WA, a 104 per cent increase on 2008-09. Women comprised 27 per cent of drug related arrests in WA in 2017-18, an increase from the 22 per cent share reported in 2008-09.

### Women working in the legal/justice system

- The share of female law students now sits just below 60 per cent, with an average of 58.5 per cent over the 13 years between 2005 and 2017.
- While the share of women in the legal practitioner space is close to 50 per cent, only

19.5 per cent of barristers are women, and only 15.8 per cent of equity partners are women.

- For judges, 43 per cent of High Court judges in Australia are women, with a figure of 38 per cent for Family Court and 26 per cent for Federal Court.
- At the Supreme Court level, only 18 per cent of judges in WA are women, the lowest of all the states, with the highest state female representation being in Queensland, standing at 33 per cent.
- Overall, 23.8 per cent of the 6,808 police staff in WA in 2018 were women.
- For police officers (with an overall count of 6,459 in 2018), 22.9 per cent were female, up over three percentage points since 2008.
- Of the senior police staff, 10 per cent were positions held by women in 2018, which is down from the height of 18.2 per cent in 2014. However, it should be noted that the overall count in these positions is low (10 reported in 2018, with a height of 12 in 2016), so a slight change nominally can make a large difference in share terms.

## Economic Independence

### Education and training

- Overall, WA women are more educated than men, and their educational achievement is on par with Australian women.
- The high-school retention gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has been narrowing over time in WA. However, the gap remains sizeable, with apparent retention rates of Years 7-8 to Year 12 of 87.5 per cent for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, and 53.0 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls.



- In 2017, 46 per cent of people enrolled in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses in WA were female and 54 per cent were male.
- For VET courses, women are far less likely to enrol in engineering (10.5%), architecture and building (10.5%) and information technology (22.5%).
- In terms of university education, women continue to have consistently higher enrolment levels relative to men, and in 2016, women represented 59.4 per cent of all domestic university students in WA.
- In 2016, more women (26%) than men (21%) hold a bachelor degree or higher in WA.
- Only 6.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have obtained a bachelor degree, compared to 26.2 per cent of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- There is a significant gender imbalance between different fields of study for university students, although not to the same extent as VET students. Men dominate engineering and related technologies (84% share), information technology (77% share) and, to an extent, architecture and building (60% share).
- Women dominate enrolments in the field of education (77% share), health (74% share) and society and culture (66% share).
- The rates of labour market participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men have decreased by 1.5 and 5.9 percentage points respectively from 2006 to 2016.
- Women have the largest share of workers in the health (80%) and education (74%) sectors, and also have higher representation in retail trade (60%), among others.
- On average, around one in two women work full-time, whereas almost four out of five men engage in full-time employment.
- Comparing women and men in WA of the prime working age between 30 and 55 years, there is, on average, a 35 percentage point difference between full-time employment rates, in favour of men.
- Young women in WA have lower unemployment rates than their male counterparts.
- Underemployment for women in WA has now reached an all-time peak of 12.9 per cent.
- In WA, almost 30 per cent of working women and 25 per cent of working men are employed casually.
- In 2017, 63 per cent of women in WA were satisfied with the job security provided by their current employment, lower than the 67 per cent reported nationally. This too is lower than the levels reported in 2007, when 75 per cent of women in WA declared that they were satisfied with their job security.

### Labour market outcomes

- In 2018, the labour force participation gap between men and women is the highest in WA's regions and has been narrowing over time across all jurisdictions.
- On average, during the year 2018 there was an 11.8 percentage point difference in labour force participation between men and women in Perth, while this gap reaches 14.3 percentage points in the rest of the state. For Australia, the gap is 10.5 percentage points.

### Financial and non-financial assets, including income and housing

- Women have significantly lower personal income than men. Thirty-seven per cent of women and 24 per cent of men live with less than \$400 per week.

- More than 10 per cent of one-parent households in WA live on less than \$400 per week, compared to 1.4 per cent of couple families with children.
- The gender pay gap in WA has historically been higher than national figures and currently stands at 21.8 per cent (May 2019 figure).
- Men working full-time in WA currently earn on average \$1,912.80 each week, whereas women working full-time can expect to earn \$1,471.50 on average – a difference of more than \$440 each week. Nationally, this difference is \$240 each week, with the gender pay gap among full-time workers in Australia at a 25-year low of 14.1 per cent.
- In 2005-06, 43 per cent of women and 26 per cent of men in WA held no superannuation. By 2015-16, this proportion had halved for both women and men to 22 per cent and 11 per cent, respectively. However, women remain half as likely as their male counterparts to hold any superannuation.
- The median superannuation of women 15 years and older in 2015-16 was \$32,272 in WA, almost half the superannuation balance of men (\$61,895).
- Financial literacy among women in WA is 6.4 percentage points higher relative to the average Australian woman. While women's financial literacy remains lower than that of men in WA, the gap of 9.2 percentage points is the narrowest across the states.
- Homelessness rates among women and men in WA have fallen over time. Between 2006 and 2016, homelessness rates have fallen from 36.8 to 30.6 per 10,000 among WA women, and from 47.8 to 42.2 per 10,000 among WA men.
- Around 40 per cent of WA women spend 20+ hours each week on active child care, compared to around 12 per cent of WA men.
- Western Australian working women were most likely to work flexible hours (43.8%) and have part-time jobs (36.3%) to combine work and caring for children.
- Attitudes towards mothers working have become more positive in the last 10 years in both WA and Australia.

## Leadership

### Senior positions in public authorities

- The WA Government made an election commitment to increase female representation on government boards to 50 per cent.
- As of August 2019, 48 per cent of government board positions are held by women.
- In 2018, the WA public sector employed 140,799 people – of these 101,886 (72.4%) were women.
- Overall, women's representation in leadership positions in the WA public sector is higher in lower-tier management levels than in top-tier. Women hold almost half (48.6%) of Tier 3 management positions and 43.4 per cent of Tier 2 positions.
- Representation of women in senior public sector leadership in WA has generally been increasing over the last 10 years, with strong growth in Tier 2 and Tier 3 leadership.
- The share of women who are Tier 3 managers increased by more than 15 percentage points since 2007, and by 12 percentage points among Tier 2 roles.

### Work and caring

- Across all measures, there is always a larger proportion of women in Australia and WA who undertake unpaid work relative to men.



- Tier 1 roles, which include Directors General, General Managers and Commissioners have seen an improvement in the share of women holding these positions in the last 10 years, increasing from 24.8 per cent to 28.8 per cent.
- However, this improvement has only been in the most recent two years, where prior to 2017, there was an overall deterioration of women holding Tier 1 roles.
- Tier 1 positions have the lowest share of female representation across all senior management positions in the public sector.
- There are no women employed as Tier 1 managers in local government outdoor leadership.
- The share of women Tier 1 managers in other public authorities has doubled since 2015.
- Three out of four Vice-Chancellors in WA are women.

## Business leadership

- Women employed as key management personnel has increased from 26.2 per cent to 30.5 per cent over the last five years.
- However, while women have been progressing into senior management roles, the most recent BCEC|WGEA (Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre|Workplace Gender Equality Agency) *Gender Equity Insights Series* has shown that they are unlikely to be able to access the same types of pay that men have access to in these roles.
- The share of women holding Board Chair roles is the lowest among senior leadership positions (13.7%) and has gone backwards slightly since 2015.
- Nationally, the proportion of women owner-managers without employees has risen from around 32 per cent in 2009 to 35.5 per cent in 2018. For WA, the increase has been more noticeable, rising from 30 per cent per cent to 36 per cent in the same time frame.

- Since 2012, the proportion of women who are owner-managers with employees has increased from 30 to 34 per cent in WA. Nationally, over this same time-frame the proportion has fallen slightly, from around 32 to 31 per cent.

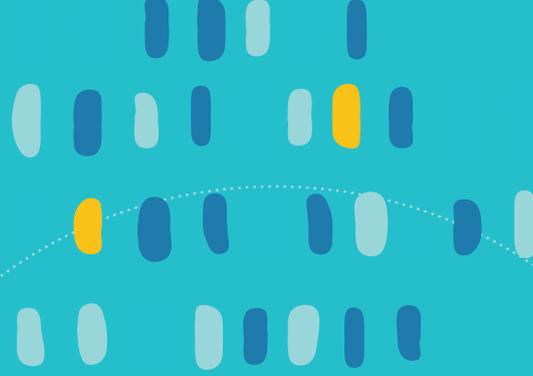
## Elected and appointed positions in government

- The proportion of women in elected WA Legislative Council positions has declined from 47% in 2008 to 31% in 2018.
- Women's representation in the WA Legislative Assembly has improved over time, from 22.8 per cent in 1996 to 32.2 in 2018.
- In the Australian Parliament, in the 2019 election, women held 43.8 per cent of WA seats in the House of Representatives and 41.7 per cent in the Senate. This is the highest level ever observed.

## Community leadership

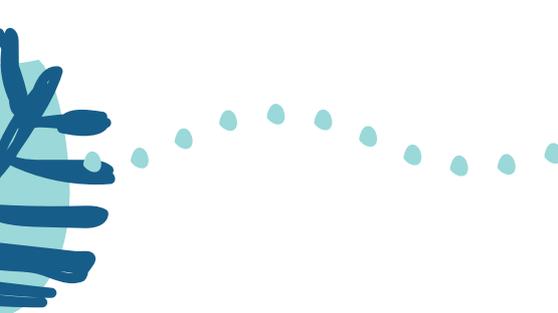
- Women are far more likely to hold leadership positions in smaller community sector organisations, where turnover is less than \$1 million.
- In these community organisations, more than 80 per cent of CEO positions are held by women.
- Of the 182 organisations represented by WA's peak representative organisation for the community Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS), around two-thirds of such organisations are led by a woman CEO or equivalent.

Over the last 15 years, the representation of women on the Council of UnionsWA has increased substantially, from 25.4 per cent in 2003 to 40.1 per cent in 2018. Representation of women at the executive level has also increased during this period, from 38.5 per cent to 44.8 per cent.



# 1

## Introduction



# 1 Introduction

The *2019 Women's Report Card* presents fact-based information to raise awareness of the status of Western Australian (WA) women.

It contributes to the evidence base which underpins actions to address the barriers to women's progress and promote the benefits of greater gender equity.

This report provides reliable information to inform discussion, debate and advocacy. Public, private and community sector organisations can also use this information to develop policies and take action to support women's progress and to drive gender equality. The report also reflects the state government's continuing commitment to provide regular updates on the status and progress of WA women.

This report recognises that barriers to women's progress persist, and that there is a shared responsibility to improve the status of women and address the barriers to their progress.

## Scope and structure of this report

This report presents information about both the status and progress of WA women. It is structured around four areas that are central to women's life experiences and opportunities, and gender equity in our community:

- Health and wellbeing
- Safety and justice
- Economic independence
- Leadership.

These areas align with the priorities in the Women's Plan, which is scheduled to be launched in 2020. Some of these indicators are interrelated and all are of critical importance.

This report includes a chapter for each of the four areas, together with a chapter covering the broader demographic profile of women in WA. In addition to outlining the number of women by

region, and by age profile, this chapter provides an overview of women's composition by ethnicity, cultural diversity, disability, marital status and religious affiliation.

## Outcomes and indicators

Enhancing the status and progress of women requires a multi-layered, cross-sector approach involving government; the corporate and not-for profit sectors; unions; community organisations (e.g. advocacy, cultural, social and sporting); academia; and individuals.

A range of international, national, local, public and corporate instruments advance goals, objectives and outcomes which contribute to improving the status and progress of women, and gender equity. Examples of these include:

- 1975 Declaration on Gender Equality (International Labour Organisation)
- 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (United Nations)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (C'wealth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA)
- ASX Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations on Diversity (Australian Stock Exchange)
- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (Australian Government)
- *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (C'wealth)
- Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia (Department of Training and Workforce Development)
- Department of Communities Strategic Plan 2019-2023
- 10 Year Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence in Western Australia 2020-2030 (forthcoming)
- WA Women's Health and Wellbeing Policy
- 30 per cent by 2018 (Australian Institute of Company Directors).

This report presents aspirational, desired outcomes for women in each of its four areas. These outcomes aim to capture the results of effective change and progress which improves the status of women and achieves greater gender equity.

Outcomes have been included only where a corresponding indicator could be presented. The indicators provide key statistics depicting change or providing evidence of progress towards these outcomes. Stakeholder feedback, existing policy issues and priorities, consideration of national gender indicators, comparable reports in other jurisdictions, and the availability of relevant, reliable data and resources informed which indicators were included in this report. When considered together, the outcomes and indicators provide a framework for readers to reach conclusions about the progress of WA women.

## Data

This report includes more than 100 indicators, many of which contain multiple individual statistics. Where possible, comparisons are drawn at the national level, and relative to the male population. Generally, the indicators in this report showcase whole-of-adult-population data. It is recognised that women are a diverse group and some disaggregated data is presented; however, data and resource limitations mean this diversity is not reflected across all indicators.

The report contains information from a variety of sources. While results are carefully checked for consistency with past results and every effort is taken to ensure the consistency of the queries and databases upon which the results are based, there remains the possibility that variations may impact the reported trend. Variations may be due to a number of issues, including amendments made to databases, changes in circumstances and variable coding, and variations in syntax used to perform the individual queries. Although all due care has been exercised in the preparation of this document, data is provisional and subject to revision, and no responsibility is accepted for any errors or omissions.

The report aims to raise awareness of these issues and act as a catalyst for community conversations and ultimately action.

The indicators provide key statistics depicting change or providing evidence of progress towards these outcomes.

All data are subject to measurement error, especially population estimates. Caution should be used when directly comparing change in results across data points within an indicator. Unless otherwise stated, the statistics refer to WA women aged 18 years of age or older.

## Who will find this report useful?

This report is designed to be accessible to a broad audience. Both women and men will find the report informative. The issues it highlights are important community issues. The report aims to raise awareness of these issues and act as a catalyst for community conversations and ultimately action.

It is also intended to be used by decision-makers in government, business and the community sectors, as well as members of the public. The report can inform action across government, business and community to further address the barriers and inequities impacting WA women. The information will also be of interest to students, researchers and academics.



## Roundtable stakeholder engagement and acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge and thank participants of the Roundtable held to inform the content and direction of this report.

Attendees included:

Title	Name	Position	Organisation
Dr	Rita Afsar	Senior Strategy Planning and Research Officer	Office of Multicultural Interests
A/Prof	Rebecca Cassells	Head of Research Impact and Engagement	Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre
Prof	Donna Chung	Social Work and Social Policy	Curtin University
Ms	Shari Cosgriff	Chief Operating Officer	Bankwest
Dr	Elaine Dowd	Senior Strategy Officer   Policy and Service Design	Department of Communities
Ms	Catherine Fletcher	Information Commissioner for WA	Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
Ms	Marion Fulker	Chief Executive Officer	Committee for Perth
Ms	Louise Giolitto	Chief Executive Officer	WACOSS
Ms	Jackie Jarvis	Chief Executive Officer	RRR Network
Ms	Samantha Jenkinson	Executive Director	People with Disabilities WA
Dr	Daniel Kiely	Senior Research Fellow	Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre
Ms	Nicole Leggett	Manager Policy	Family and Domestic Violence Unit, Department of Communities
Ms	Diana MacTiernan	Manager Commission Services	Equal Opportunity Commission WA
Ms	Jenny O'Callaghan	Service Co-Director	Women and Newborn Health Service, North Metropolitan Health Service
Dr	Silvia Salazar	Research Fellow	Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre
Dr	Richard Seymour	Research Fellow	Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre
Ms	Charmaine Tsang	President	Women Lawyers of Western Australia
Mr	Chris Twomey	Research and Policy Development Leader	WACOSS
Ms	Jennette Ward	Acting Chief Executive Officer	Council on the Ageing
Ms	Sue Young	Superintendent	Western Australia Police Force

Note: Ranked in alphabetical order.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre.



This group made valuable contributions to the selection of indicators, the development of the report structure, access to information to report on the indicators and the analysis of the indicators. Their expertise and commitment to this important initiative is greatly appreciated.

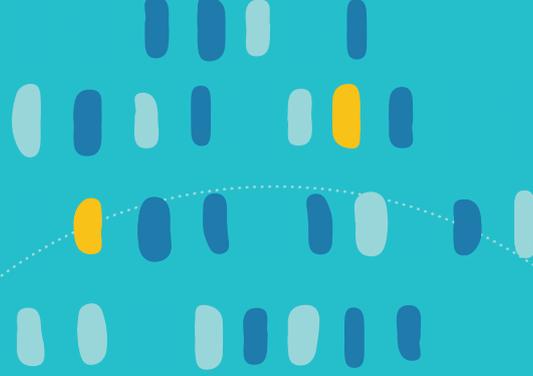
In addition to the reference group, staff from the following organisations also generously contributed ideas and/or information to the report:

- Department of Justice
- Department of Education and Training (Commonwealth)
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Health
- Department of Training and Workforce Development
- Equal Opportunity Commission WA
- Western Australia Police Force
- UnionsWA.

## Feedback

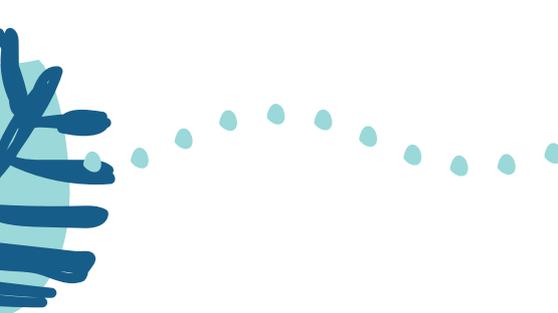
Your feedback on the *2019 Women's Report Card* would support the Department of Communities to improve future editions. Please contact [women@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:women@communities.wa.gov.au) with any feedback.





# 2

## Demographic Profile



## 2 Demographic Profile

### Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the demographic composition of women in WA. Age profile, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, as well as regional location and family composition are presented. Other factors that are discussed in more detail later in the report are also considered at a higher level here, such as life expectancy, fertility and disability rates, and unpaid work. In doing so, this chapter provides a context for the reporting of key indicators that follow in later chapters.

### Number of women by age and location

In 2018, women comprised 50.9 per cent of the Australian adult population (Table 1). After the NT (48.1%), WA has the lowest share of women across all states and territories (50.4%). In WA, there are now more than one million adult women.

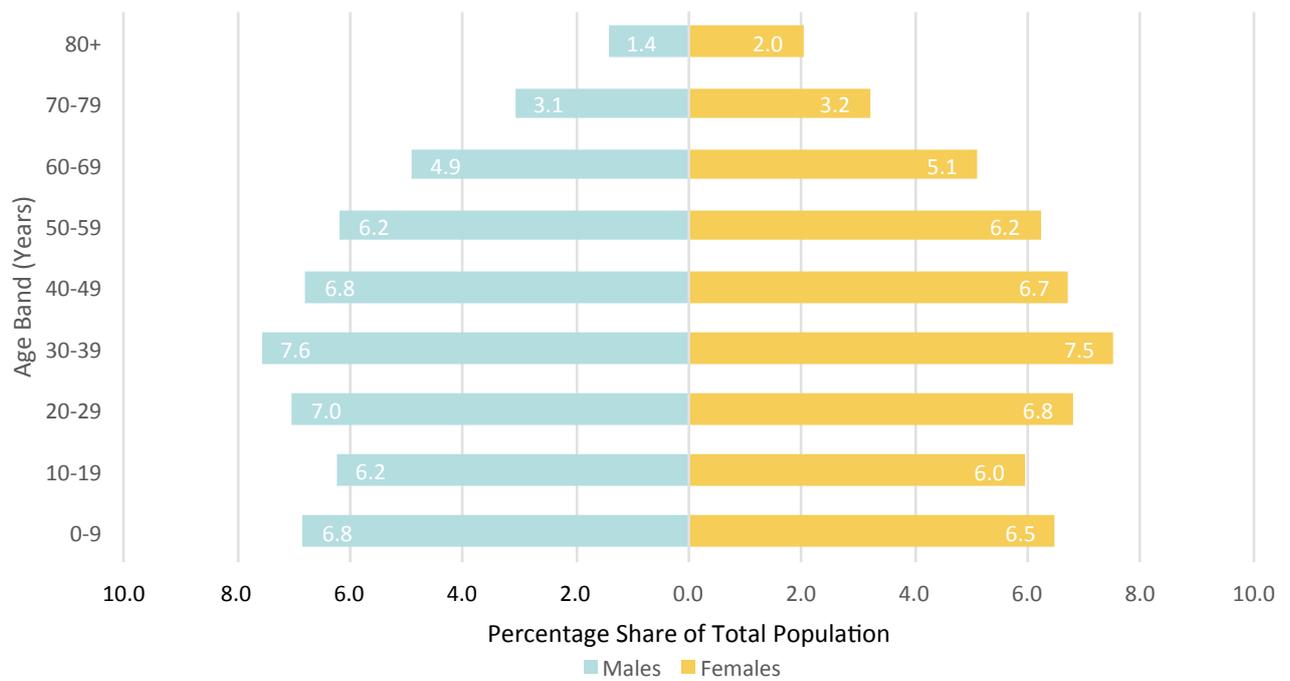
**TABLE 1:** Adult population of Australia, by state and sex, 2018

State	Total Adult Population		Men		Women	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%	
NSW	6,221,228	3,055,956	49.1	3,165,272	50.9	
VIC	5,059,381	2,476,881	49.0	2,582,500	51.0	
QLD	3,845,144	1,882,099	48.9	1,963,045	51.1	
SA	1,369,541	669,855	48.9	699,686	51.1	
WA	1,996,704	990,983	49.6	1,005,721	50.4	
TAS	415,834	203,417	48.9	212,417	51.1	
NT	184,610	95,835	51.9	88,775	48.1	
ACT	327,198	159,783	48.8	167,415	51.2	
AUS	19,423,338	9,536,832	49.1	9,886,506	50.9	

Note: Based on December 2018 data. Adults are the population aged 18+.  
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 3101.0.

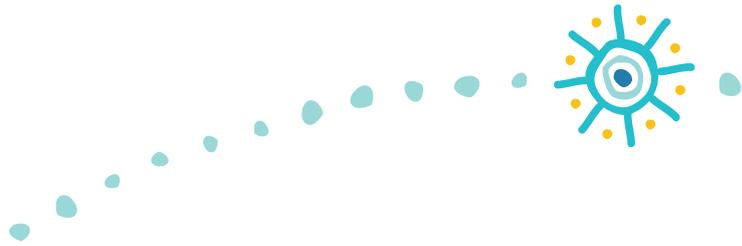
Up to the 40 to 49 age bracket, there is a greater proportion of males to females in WA (Figure 1), with the largest gap evident in the 0 to 9 age cohort. From age 50 to 59 onwards, there is a greater share of females to males. This is in part driven by the longer life expectancy of women, a point which will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

**FIGURE 1:** Share of population by gender and age band, WA, June 2018



Note: Based on June 2018 data.

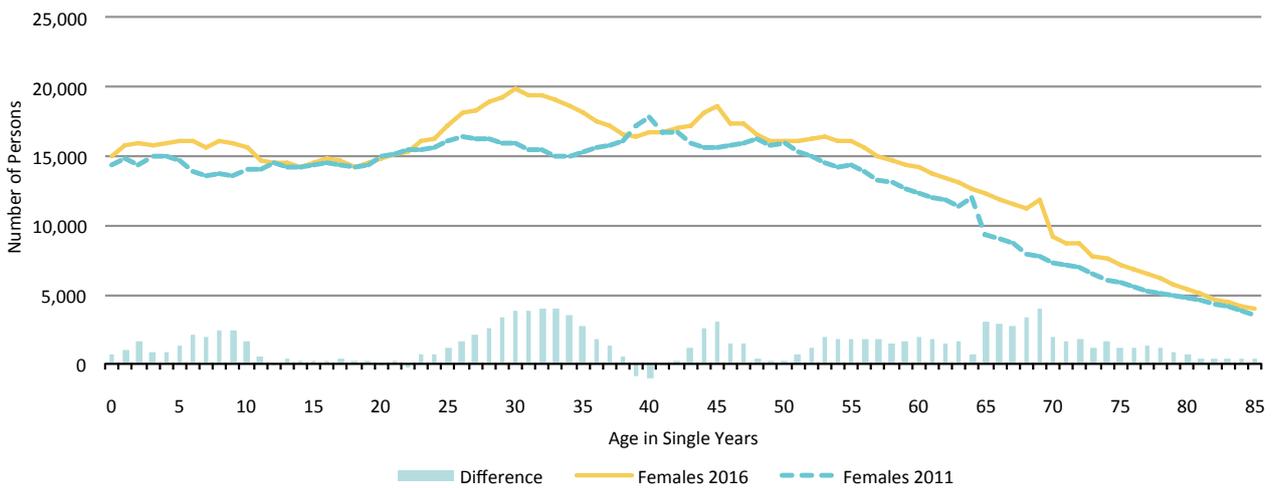
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 3235.0, Regional Population by Age and Sex, Australia.



In line with female population growth, there were more females in each single age year on Census night 2016, compared to 2011 (Figure 2), with the exception of the ages from 39 to 41 years and age 12, 20 and 22. The age 25 to 37 difference particularly stands out and aligns with migration during the boom years. Historically, economic migration tended to be a male-driven phenomenon, but with greater gender

equity, education and opportunities for females internationally, more recent decades of migration in developed economies have seen an equal influx of male and female economic migrants. For example, Dumont, Martin and Spielvogel (2007, p. 5) report that “women represent on average 51 per cent of the total foreign-born population of OECD countries in 2000”.

**FIGURE 2:** Number of females by age in WA, 2011 and 2016



Note: Person's place of usual residence. Age in single years.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of Population, Australia.

## Women across WA's regions

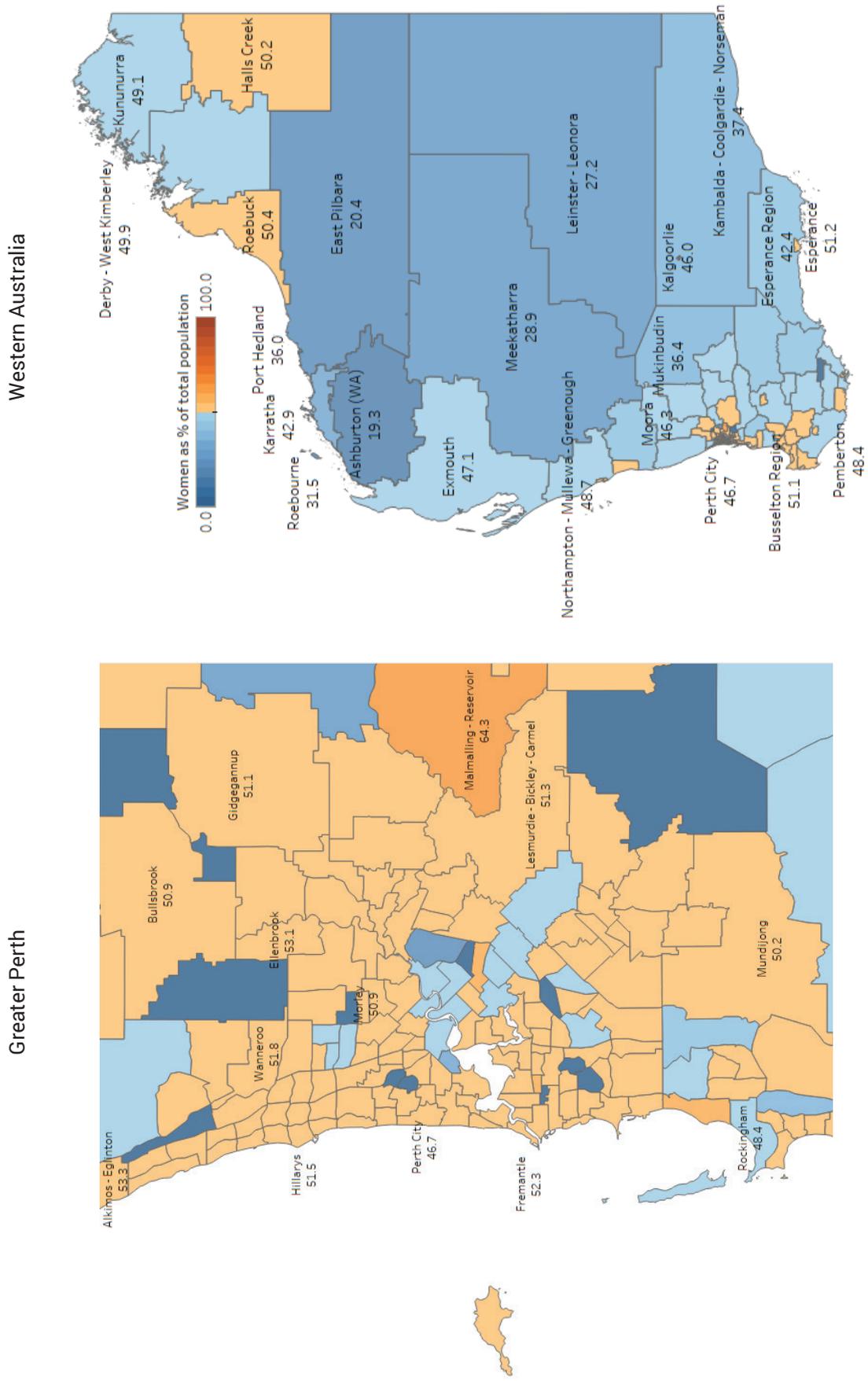
The proportion of women by SA2<sup>1</sup> region in WA is presented in Figure 3, with yellow denoting areas with a higher proportion of women than men and blue a lower proportion. Focusing on the larger WA map, lower proportions of women are evident in the following regions: East Pilbara, 20.4 per cent; Ashburton, 19.3 per cent; Roebourne, 31.5 per cent; Port Hedland, 36.0 per cent; Kalgoorlie, 46.0 per cent; and Pemberton, 48.4 per cent, amongst others. These regions have a greater level of remoteness, with the male-dominated mining sector likely to be driving these patterns. While also remote, Halls Creek and Roebuck have a higher proportion of women.

For the Greater Perth region, there is a greater proportion of women in many SA2 regions, particularly in the more metropolitan areas, coastal regions and also in the high population growth areas to the north-west, such as in the City of Joondalup and City of Wanneroo. Only 46.7 per cent of the population in Perth City were women.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2) are medium-sized general purpose areas built up from whole Statistical Areas Level 1. Their purpose is to represent a community that interacts together socially and economically (see ABS for more information).

FIGURE 3: Women as a proportion of the total population by SA2 region, WA and Greater Perth, 2016



Note: Age 18 and above. SA2 Region. Small population counts in Ashendon-Lesley and Malmalling-Reservoir imply caution with interpretation. Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of Population, Australia.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

On Census night 2016, almost 45,830 (2.4%) of the adult population in WA identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, with women comprising 50.6 per cent (23,208) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult population.

Relative to other states, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in WA (2.4%) compares to 21.8 per cent in the Northern Territory, 3.6 per cent in Tasmania, 3.0 per cent in Queensland, 2.2 per cent in NSW and 0.6 per cent in Victoria.

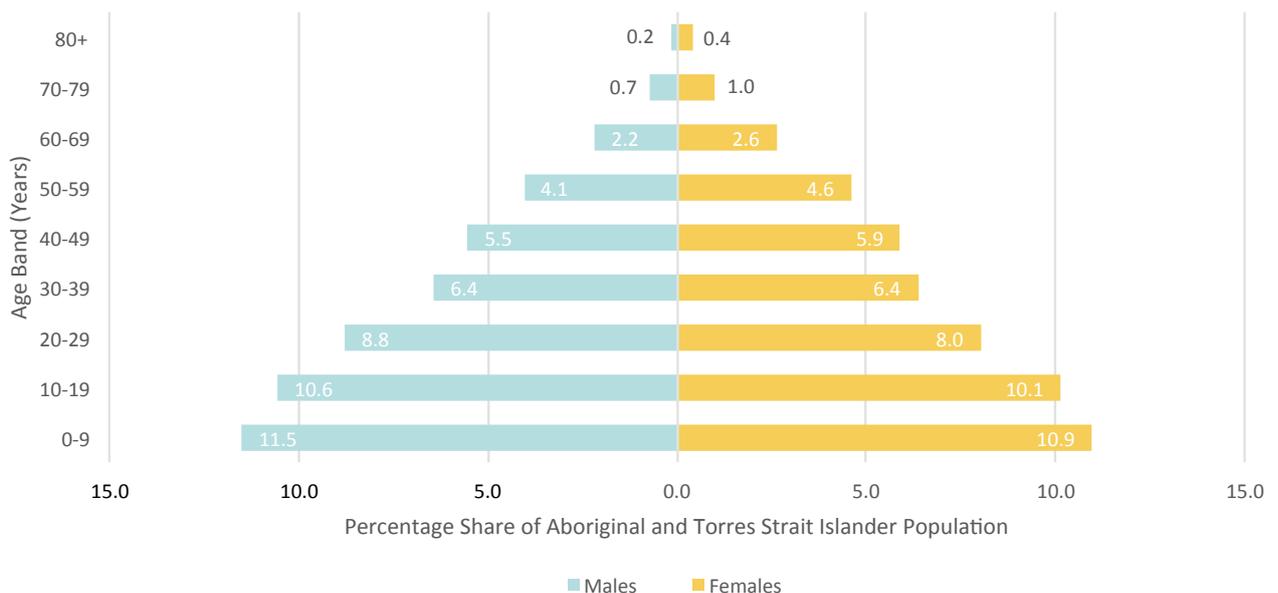
In terms of the total population of women in WA, 23,200 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Of these women, almost 32 per cent lived in the WA Outback – North region, and some 16 per cent in the WA Outback – South region.<sup>2</sup> There were also high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women relative to their overall population, in Perth South-East (12%), Perth South-West (8.2%), Perth North-West (7.7%) and Perth North-East (7.8%). This was followed by the Wheatbelt (6.8%), Bunbury

(5.0%) and Mandurah (2.6%), with only 1.9 per cent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female population in WA living in the Perth Inner region.

For the total Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, 22.5 per cent were aged under 10 years (Figure 4). A further 20.7 per cent were in the 10 to 19 years age group. In fact, in 2016, almost 60 per cent of the WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population were under the age of 30. This compares to 39.3 per cent of the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

There were more men than women in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population aged less than 40 years. However, from the age of 40 onwards, there are more women than men. In comparing Figure 4 to Figure 1, it is evident that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has more of a pyramid age structure, relative to the total population, reflecting the higher fertility rate and lower life expectancy among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. These factors are discussed further in the Health and Wellbeing chapter in this report.

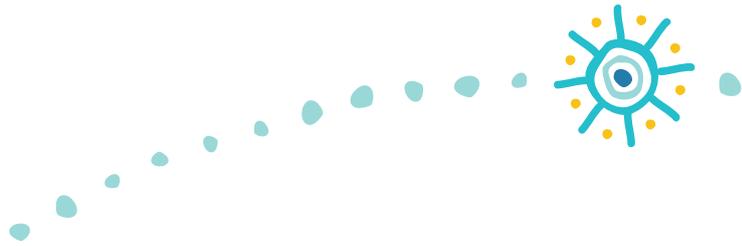
**FIGURE 4:** Share of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population by gender and age band, WA, 2016



Note: Age in 10-year bands.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of Population, Australia.

2 These regions are ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) regions.



## Cultural diversity and immigration

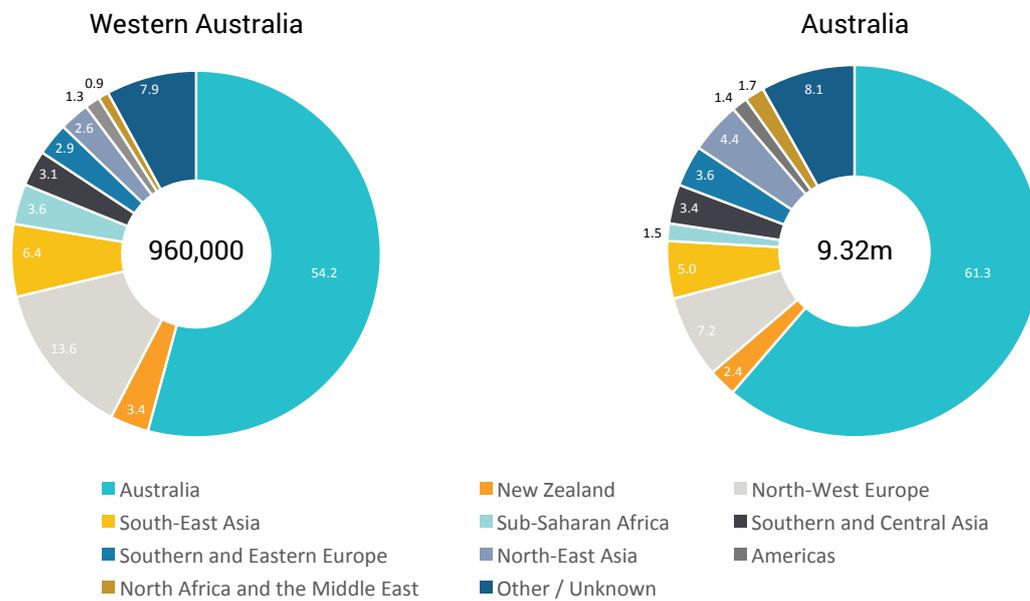
Western Australia has one of the most diverse populations in Australia, with a significant proportion of its inhabitants born overseas and a diversity of languages and dialects across the state.

In 2016, 45.8 per cent of the 960,000 women aged 18 years of age and older living in WA were born overseas, with the remaining 54.2 per cent noting Australia as their place of birth. This is well above

the national average of 38.7 per cent. Nationally, there were more than 9.32 million women living in Australia.

The most common region of birth (Figure 5) for WA women born overseas was North-West Europe, representing 13.6 per cent of women, compared to 7.2 per cent born in this region nationally. This is followed by South-East Asia at 6.4 per cent, (5.0% nationally). The share of women born in Sub-Saharan Africa is also noteworthy, constituting 3.6 per cent of overseas-born women living in WA, compared to a 1.5 per cent share nationally.

**FIGURE 5:** Place of birth, by broad region, WA and Australia, 2016



Note: Person's place of usual residence.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of Population, Australia.

Western Australia is home to people from more than 190 countries, with more than 240 languages (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages) spoken across the state in 2016.<sup>3</sup> In 2016, 17.7 per cent of women spoke a language other than English (as well as English) at home.<sup>4</sup> In 2016, 2.7 per cent of women (1.9% of men) in WA either had poor proficiency or no proficiency in spoken English. However, this is lower than many of the other states and territories, with the figure standing at 5.3 per cent for NSW, 5.2 per cent for Victoria, and 3.2 per cent for South Australia. The figure was lower for Queensland (1.9%) and Tasmania (0.78%), with a similar level to that of WA reported in the ACT (2.7%). Language is a critical factor for women towards integrating into society, whether it be through gaining access to the labour market, social networks and various healthcare and other support systems.

## Disability

The number of women with a profound or severe disability<sup>5</sup> in WA is 4.9 per cent, compared to 3.9 per cent of men. This compares to 6.4 per cent of women nationally (5.3% of men), with 6.8 per cent in NSW, 6.5 per cent in Victoria, 7.8 per cent in Tasmania, 6.2 per cent in Queensland. Women tend to have greater age-related disability due to their longer life expectancy<sup>6</sup>, whereas men tend to have higher levels of congenital and acquired disability.

Women with disability are more likely to experience physical assault (6.5% compared to 2.4% of women without disability) and physical threats (2.7% compared to 1.2% of women without disability).<sup>7</sup>

## Marital status, and family and living arrangements

On Census night 2016, 50.3 per cent of women in WA were married (49.0% nationally), compared to 51.9 per cent of men.<sup>8</sup> A further 28.9 per cent of women in WA (29.1% nationally) were never married (35.4% of men). Consistent with the national average, 10.0 per cent of women in WA were divorced (7.6% of men), while 3.5 per cent of women in WA were separated (3.1% of men). A further 7.3 per cent of women were widowed, compared to only 2.0 per cent of men, which aligns with the longer life expectancy of women.

In 2016, 24.6 per cent of households were couple families with no children. Couple families with children made up 29.0 per cent of households, with 9.3 per cent of households being one-parent families.<sup>9</sup> Of the 93,180 one-parent families in WA, 81.7 per cent were headed by a woman, similar to the national average. Women comprised 53.1 per cent of all single-person households, slightly lower than the 54.7 per cent reported for Australia.

In 2016, the proportion of women living in a registered opposite sex marriage in WA was 44.8 per cent, compared to 43.7 per cent for men. A further 10.0 per cent of women in WA were in de facto opposite sex marriages, compared to 9.6 per cent of men. There were more than 4,090 women (0.43% of the female population) in same sex de facto marriages, with a lower number of 3,330 (0.35% of the male population) estimated for men.

3 Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Office of Multicultural Interests, Government of Western Australia, WA Diversity and Statistics. Cited on 14 June 2019 from <https://www.omi.wa.gov.au/StatsInfoGuides/Pages/WA-Diversity-and-Statistics.aspx>

4 ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016.

5 ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016. As with the ABS Surveys of Disability, Ageing and Carers, the Census of Population and Housing defines the profound or severe disability population as: "Those people needing help or assistance in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication, because of a long-term health condition (lasting six months or more), a disability (lasting six months or more), or old age."

6 See for example, ABS Cat 4125.0, Gender Indicators, Australia, September 2018, Summary.

7 ABS Cat 4431.0.55.003 Experiences of Violence and Personal Safety of People with Disability, 2016.

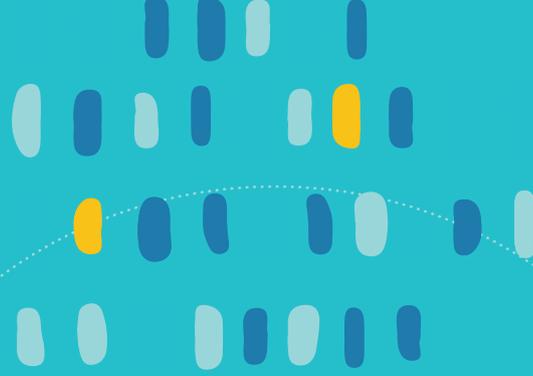
8 ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016.

9 ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016.



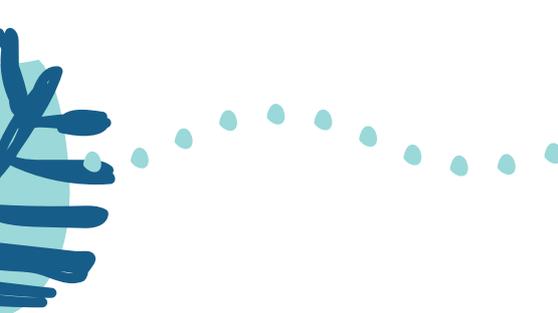
## Religious affiliation

In 2016, Christianity continued to be the dominant religion in WA, with 54.7 per cent of women and 47.4 per cent of men affiliated as such. This was lower than that reported across Australia, with the percentages being 56.3 per cent and 50.0 per cent respectively for women and men. Buddhism was the second largest religious affiliation among women in WA, standing at 2.7 per cent (2.0% for men, and 2.9% for women in Australia). A substantial number of women identified as having no religious affiliation (28.6%). However, this was lower than the 34.1 per cent of men reporting as having no religious affiliation. This represents an increase since 2011, where 21.6 per cent of women reported no religious affiliation.



# 3

## Health and Wellbeing



## 3 Health and Wellbeing

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the priority area of women's health and wellbeing. It examines a range of factors including life expectancy, lifestyle, reproductive and sexual health, leading causes of death and chronic illness and community involvement. These factors provide an indication of the physical and mental health and overall wellbeing of women in Western Australia. Women have particular health and wellbeing needs and can experience obstacles and opportunities that impact their health and wellbeing. Gender is a social determinant of health and can also influence exposure to various other social determinants of health – such as income, employment, education, social/physical environment, health practices and culture – that can lead to health inequalities (World Health Organization, 2008). Good health and wellbeing supports women to achieve their full potential.

### Outcomes

Desired outcomes in the area of women's health and wellbeing include:

- WA women are healthy and have a positive sense of wellbeing.
- WA women have access to health (including sexual and reproductive health) services that reflect their needs according to their life stage, race, social, cultural, psychological and economic circumstances.
- The gap in life expectancy and health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is closed.
- WA women lead healthy lifestyles and are not exposed to injury, illnesses and diseases.

### Indicators

The indicators in this chapter contribute to understanding how WA is progressing towards achieving these outcomes:

- Lifestyle and risk factors
- Sexual, reproductive and maternal health
- Illness, injury and access to services
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Community involvement.

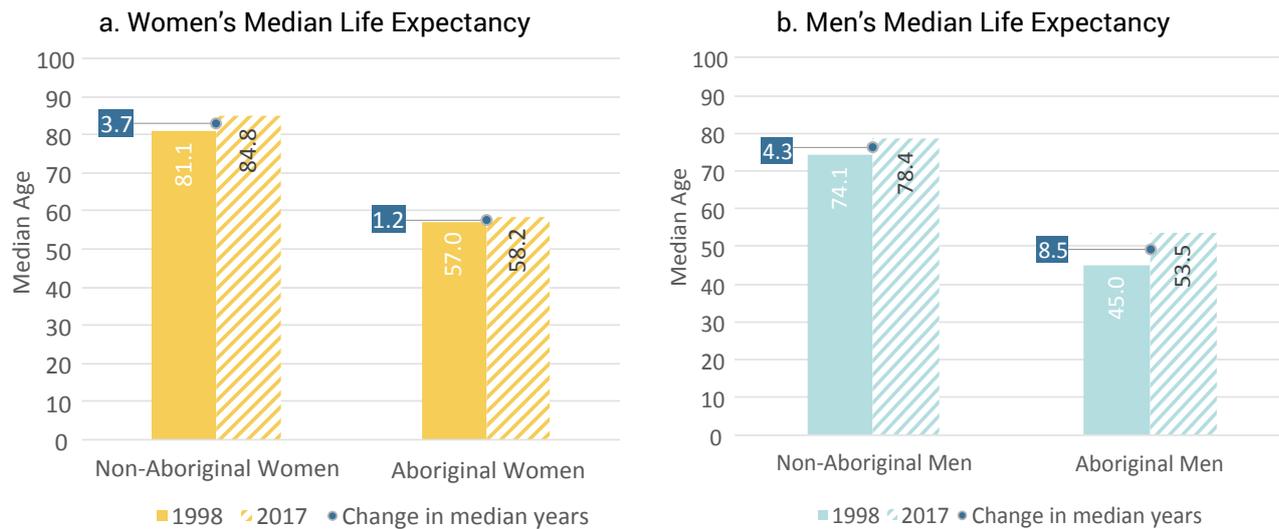
### Lifestyle and risk factors

#### Life expectancy at birth

The life expectancy of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men in WA provides an indication of the health of the population. Monitoring changes in life expectancy over time provides a proxy for measuring whether the population has adequate and timely access to health care, nutrition and sanitation. It also provides an indication of changing trends in lifestyle behaviours, diseases and illnesses. Between 1998 and 2017, there was an increase in the life expectancy of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men in WA (Figure 6). The median life expectancy for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women increased by 3.7 and 1.2 years, respectively.

The most substantial improvement in life expectancy was among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, with their median life expectancy increasing 8.5 years, from 45 in 1998 to 53.5 in 2017. Although the life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men has increased, there is still a disturbingly large gap between the median life expectancy of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in WA. The gap between the median life expectancy for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women actually increased from 24.1 years in 1998 to 26.6 years in 2017. In contrast, there was a slight improvement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, with the gap closing from 29.1 years in 1998 to 24.9 years in 2017.

**FIGURE 6:** Median life expectancy, by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, WA, 1998 and 2017



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Deaths, Australia, 2017, Cat. No 3302.0.

In 2017, the gap in median life expectancy between non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women was 26.6 years, up from the gap of 24.1 years reported in 1998.

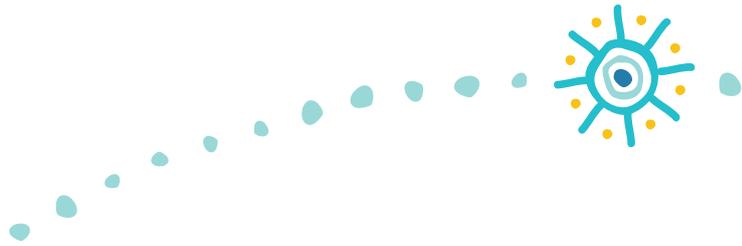
### Lifestyle behaviours

Lifestyle behaviours, such as smoking, excessive consumption of alcohol and insufficient exercise are all factors that contribute to poorer health outcomes and premature death (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014).

In addition to the negative direct effects of smoking on the consumer, smoking during pregnancy is considered to be the biggest contributing factor to the development of complications during a pregnancy (Quitnow, 2018). As can be seen from Figure 7, there has

been a decrease in the proportion of women and men in WA who reported smoking or engaged in excessive consumption of alcohol. The largest decrease was a 9.2 percentage point drop in the proportion of women who smoked cigarettes, decreasing from 18.3 per cent in 2002 to 9.1 per cent in 2017.

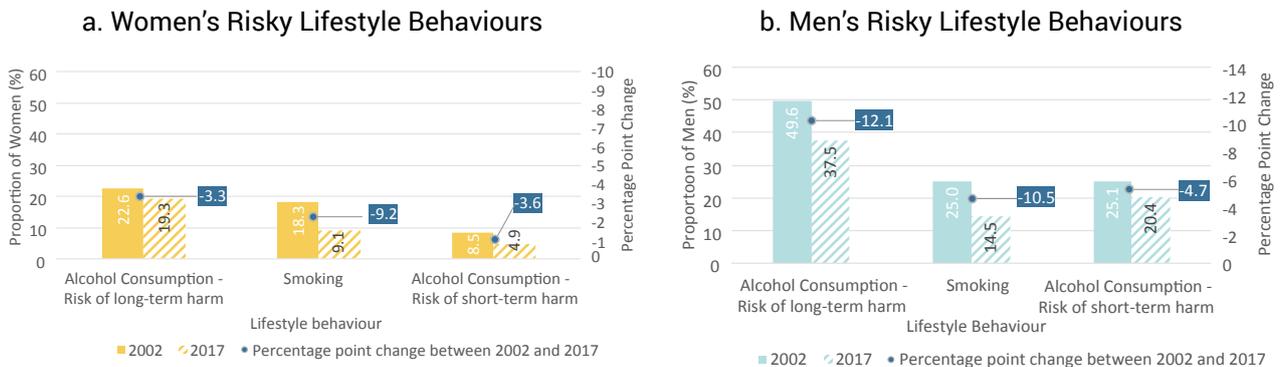
There was far less improvement in alcohol consumption among women in WA over the same period. Alcohol consumption at levels likely to cause long-term harm only decreased by 3.3 percentage points, from 22.6 per cent of women in 2002 to 19.3 per cent in 2017. Excessive alcohol consumption has been identified as a major cause of liver disease, brain damage, accidents including road accidents, domestic and public violence and crime (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014). The risks from excessive alcohol consumption during pregnancy include foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). FASD is an umbrella term for the range of physical, cognitive, behavioural and neurodevelopmental abnormalities that result from the exposure of a foetus to maternal alcohol consumption during pregnancy (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015).



In comparing 2002 to 2017, the proportion of men in WA engaging in risky lifestyle behaviours was substantially higher compared to that of women. For example in 2002, nearly 50 per cent of men in WA consumed alcohol at levels likely to cause long-term harm. This reduced to 37.5 per cent in 2017 but was still nearly double that of women.

Similarly, for alcohol consumption at levels likely to cause short-term harm, the proportion of men in 2002 was nearly triple that of women and just over four times that of women in 2017. Furthermore, a higher proportion of men smoked in 2002 and 2017 compared to that of women.

**FIGURE 7: Reported risky lifestyle behaviours, by gender and risk type, WA, 2002 and 2017 (%)**



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia 2017, Overview and Trends.

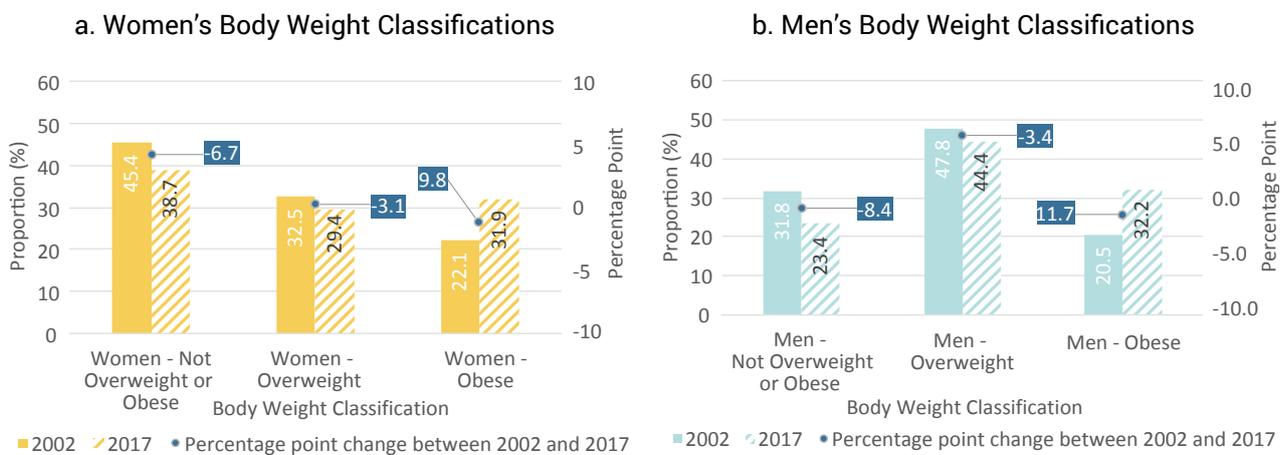
Between 2007 and 2017, in WA, the proportion of women and men 18 years and over who had an insufficient level of exercise also decreased slightly. Insufficient exercise is defined as less than 150 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical exercise per week (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014). For women, it decreased from 47 per cent in 2007 to 42.2 per cent in 2017. While for men, it decreased from 40.5 per cent in 2007 to 36.9 per cent in 2017 (Department of Health, 2017).

women and men were classified as being obese. By 2017, this had increased to nearly one-third of women and men being classified as obese. This increase in the proportions of obese women and men was matched by a decline in the proportions of either overweight or not obese or overweight women and men. In 2017, there was a greater proportion of not overweight or obese women (38.7%), compared to men (23.4%). Conversely, there was a far greater proportion of overweight men (44.4%), compared to overweight women (29.4%).

Being overweight or obese is another factor that contributes to poorer health outcomes. Overweight and obese individuals are significantly more likely to experience poor health outcomes including increased risk of injury, poorer outcomes from injury such as longer stays in hospital, and higher risk of complications and death (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011). For both women and men in WA, the proportion of obese individuals increased substantially between 2002 and 2017 (Figure 8). In 2002, around one-fifth of

The proportion of obese women and men increased substantially between 2002 and 2017 in WA. In 2002, around one in five women and men were classified as being obese. By 2017, this had increased to nearly one in three.

**FIGURE 8:** Percentage of Western Australian women and men aged 16 and over, by body weight classification, 2002 and 2017



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia 2017, Overview and Trends.



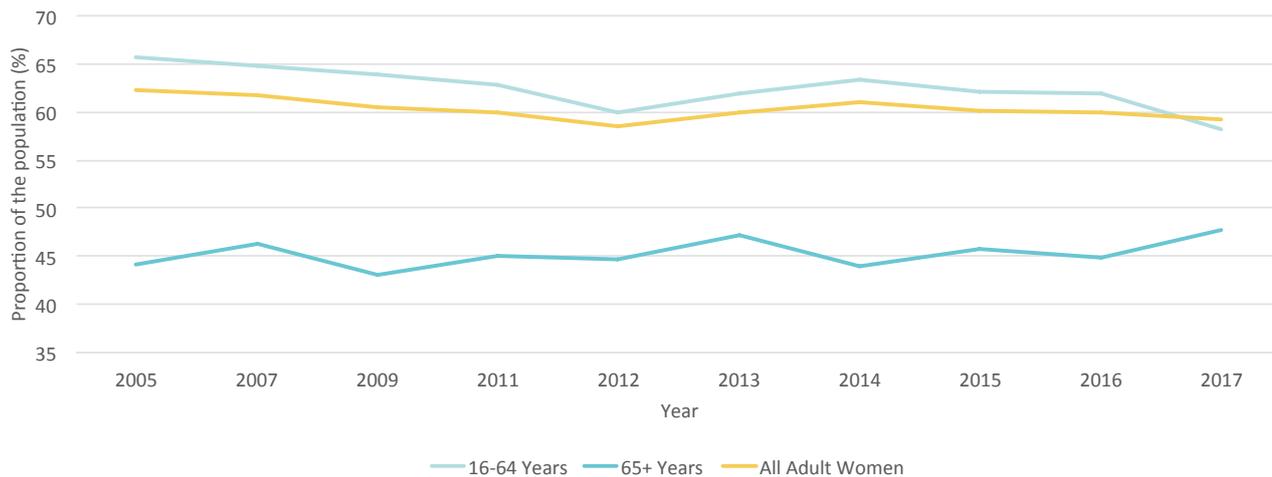
## Self-reported health status

The proportion of WA women who reported their health status as being excellent or very good did not vary much over the period between 2005 and 2017 (Figure 9). Notably, over the same period, there has been a small increase (3.5 percentage points) in the proportion of women aged 65 years and over who reported their health status as being excellent or very good. In contrast, there was a small decrease for all adult women (-3.0 percentage points) and women aged 16 to 64 years (-7.5 percentage points) between 2005 and 2017.

In summary, there was an improvement in most of the selected indicators of women’s lifestyle and risk factors. The best improvement was the decrease in the proportion of women who smoked

cigarettes, which declined by 9.2 percentage points between 2002 and 2017. However, there was a deterioration in some of the indicators of women’s lifestyle and risk factors. While the median life expectancy of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women has increased, there has been a widening of the gap in median life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, from 24.1 years in 1998 to 26.6 years in 2017. Another indicator that significantly deteriorated was in body weight classifications. There was a substantial increase in the proportion of women in WA who are classified as being obese, with the proportion increasing from around one-fifth of women in 2002 to nearly one-third of women in 2017.

**FIGURE 9:** Women self-reporting health status as excellent or very good, by age groups, 16 years and over, WA, for selected years



Note: From 2012 onwards, the percentage of women 16 to 64 years is based on the average for women 16 to 44 years and women 45 to 64 years.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 Overview and Trends; Government of Western Australia Department of Local Government and Communities, 2015 Women’s Report Card.

## Sexual, reproductive and maternal health

Women face particular sexual, reproductive and maternal issues that can affect their ability to experience good health and wellbeing.

### Pregnancies, births and terminations

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines the total fertility rate as representing the number of children a woman would bear during her lifetime if she experienced current age-specific fertility rates at each age of her reproductive life. As can be seen from Figure 10, the total fertility rate for women in WA declined from a peak of 2.10 children per woman in 2008 to 1.87 children per woman in 2016. The trend was similar for Australia, with the total fertility rate declining from

a peak of 2.02 children per woman in 2008 to 1.79 children per woman in 2016. Declining fertility rates can reflect women's increased participation in education and employment and also their experiencing higher general living standards. Women's increased access to birth control is another likely contributing factor (McDonald, 2000).

The total fertility rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in WA was much higher compared to that for all women in WA. Between 2005 and 2016, there was a steady divergence between the total fertility rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and all women in WA. This difference in total fertility rates reached its maximum in 2015, with the total fertility rate of 3.01 children per woman for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, compared to 1.87 children per woman for all women in WA.

**FIGURE 10:** Total fertility rates, WA and Australia, 2005 to 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the ABS, Births, Australia, 2016, Cat. No 3301.0

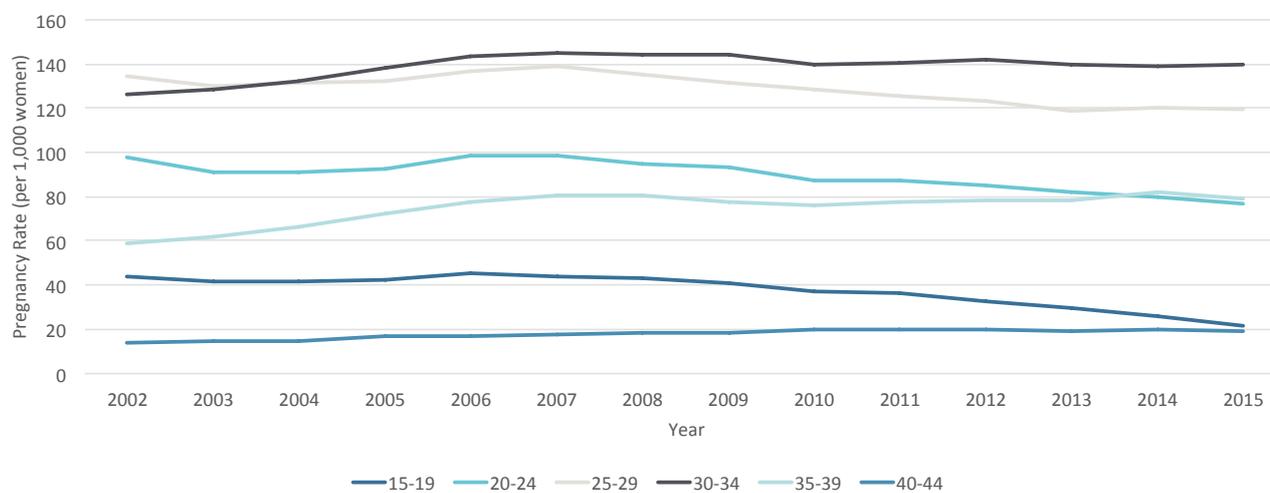


Figure 11 presents the pregnancy rates for WA between 2002 and 2015. One of the most significant trends was the substantial decline in the teenage pregnancy rate (women aged 15 to 19), which declined by just over 50 per cent between 2002 and 2015. The pregnancy rates for women aged 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 also declined, but to a lesser extent compared to that of women aged 15 to 19. The other significant trend was the substantial increase in the pregnancy rate for women aged 40 to 44, with pregnancies per 1,000 women aged 40 to 44 increasing from 13.7 in 2002 to 19.1 in 2015 – an increase of nearly 40 per cent over the 14 years reported.

There was a similar trend for women aged 35 to 39, with pregnancies per 1,000 women increasing by around 35 per cent over the same period.

**The teenage pregnancy rate (women aged 15 to 19) declined by more than 50 per cent between 2002 and 2015.**

**FIGURE 11:** Pregnancy rates, by age group, WA, 2002 to 2015

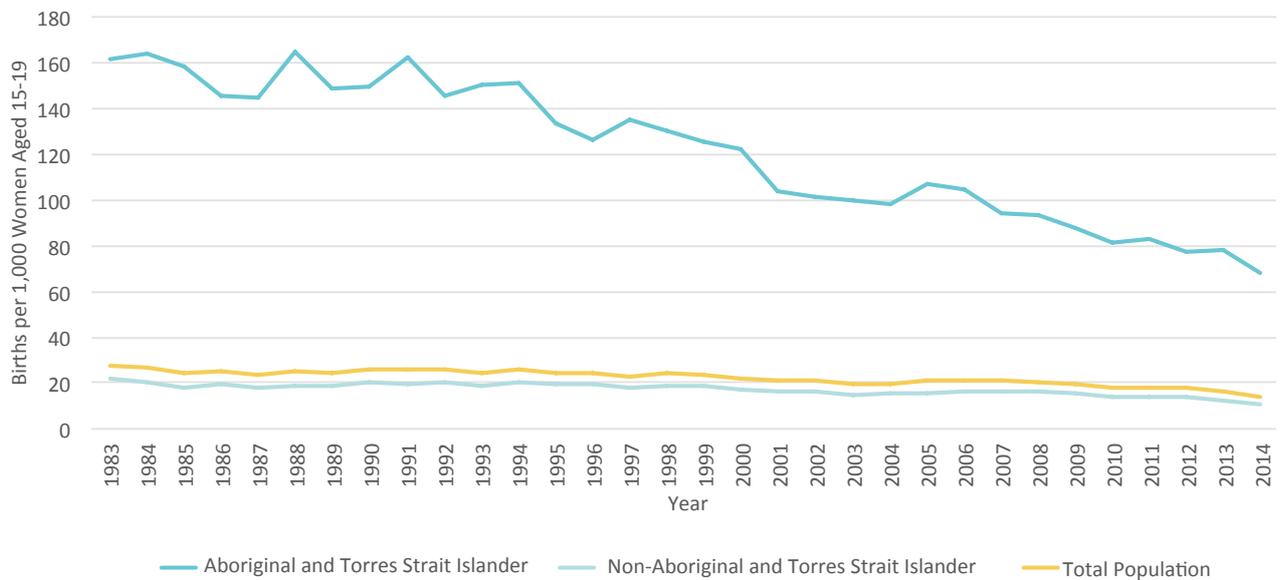


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Induced Abortions in WA 2013 to 2015.

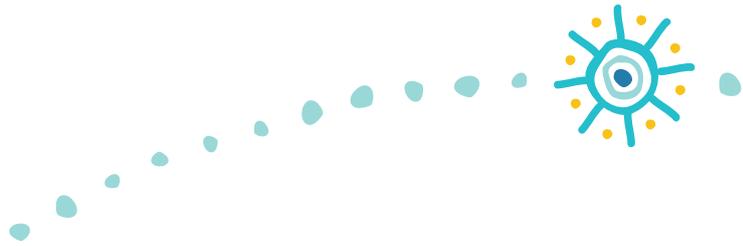
In line with the substantial fall in the teenage pregnancy rate, the teenage birth rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers both fell by over 50 per cent between 1983 and 2014 (Figure 12). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers, the birth rate

decreased by 57.8 per cent, dropping from 161.4 births per 1,000 women in 1983 to 68.1 births per 1,000 women in 2014. The decrease in the teenage birth rate was similar for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers (51.4%), with the rate decreasing from 21.6 births per 1,000 women in 1983 to 10.5 in 2014.

**FIGURE 12:** Teenage birth rates (per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 years), WA, 1983 to 2014



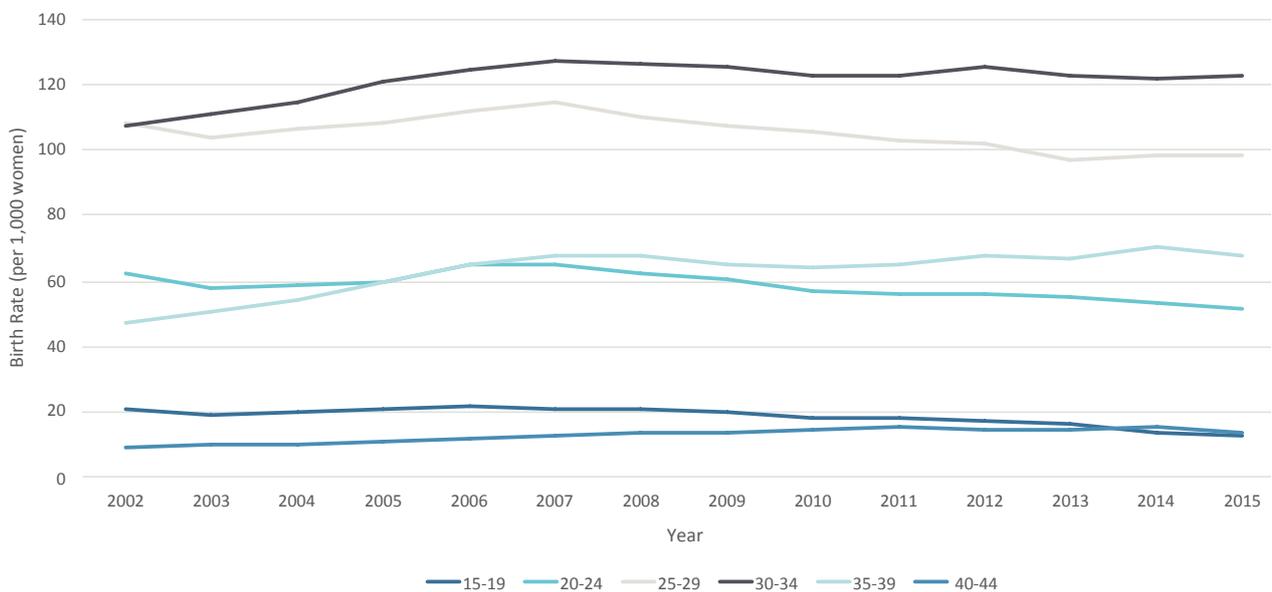
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Western Australia's Mothers and Babies, 2014, 32nd Annual Report of the Western Australian Midwives' Notification System, 2018.



Between 2002 and 2015, the birth rate (per 1,000 women) increased for women aged between 30 and 44 and declined for women aged between 15 and 29. The largest increase in the birth rate was a 57.5 per cent increase for women aged

40 to 44, increasing from 8.7 births per 1,000 women in 2002 to 13.7 births in 2015. Teenage women had the largest decline in birth rate (40.4%), with births declining from 20.8 per 1,000 women in 2002 to 12.4 in 2015 (Figure 13).

**FIGURE 13:** Birth rates, WA, 2002 to 2015

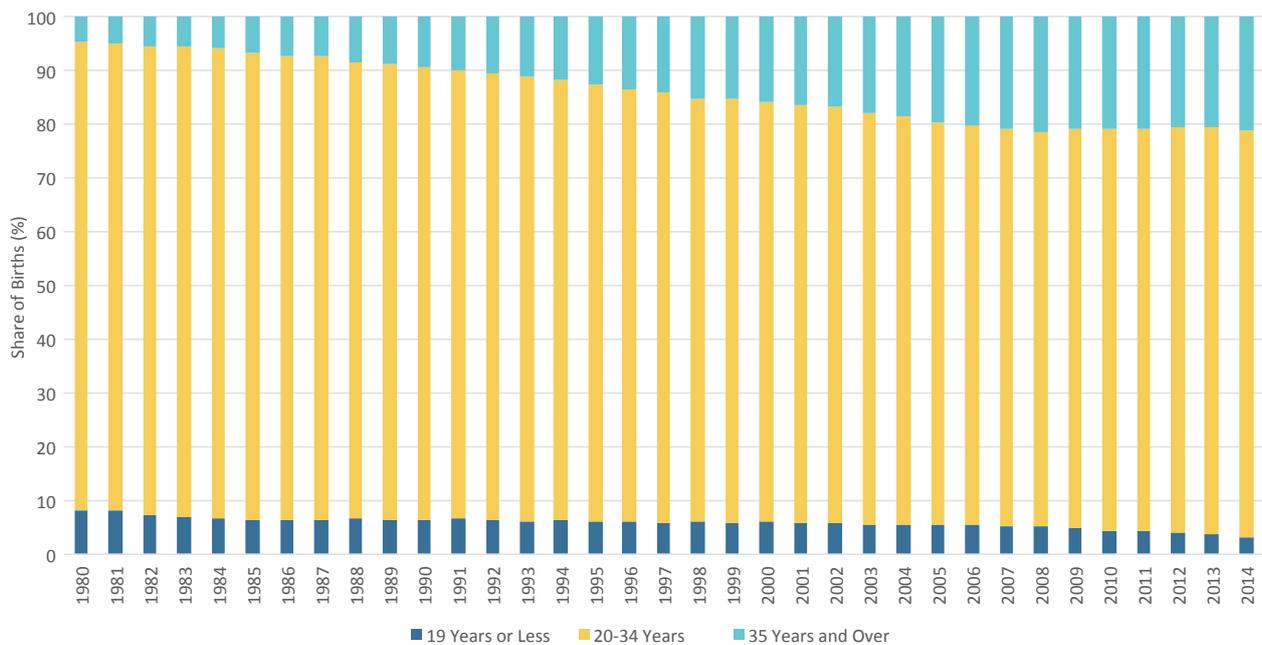


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Induced Abortions in Western Australia 2013 to 2015.

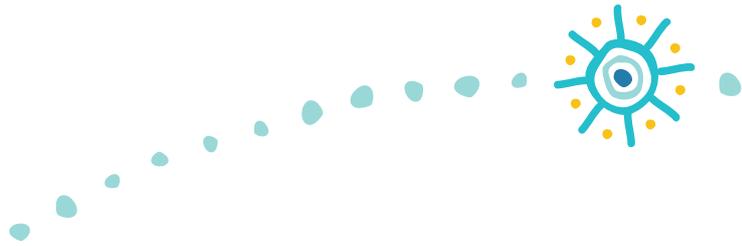
As Figure 14 shows, there has been a change in the age group compositions of mothers giving birth, with the trend moving to mothers having children at a later stage in their life. Between 1980 and 2008, there was a steady increase in the percentage of women aged 35 years and over giving birth. In 1980, only 4.7 per cent of mothers giving birth were aged 35 years and over; by 2008 this had increased to a peak of 21.5 per cent.

From 2008 up to 2014, this trend flattened out, with the percentage of women aged 35 years and over giving birth remaining at around the 21 per cent mark. Over the same period, the percentage of women in the 19 years or less and 20 to 34 years age groups both declined. The largest decline was in women aged 20 to 34, which declined by 11.3 percentage points over the period.

**FIGURE 14:** Age of mothers giving birth, WA, 1980 to 2014



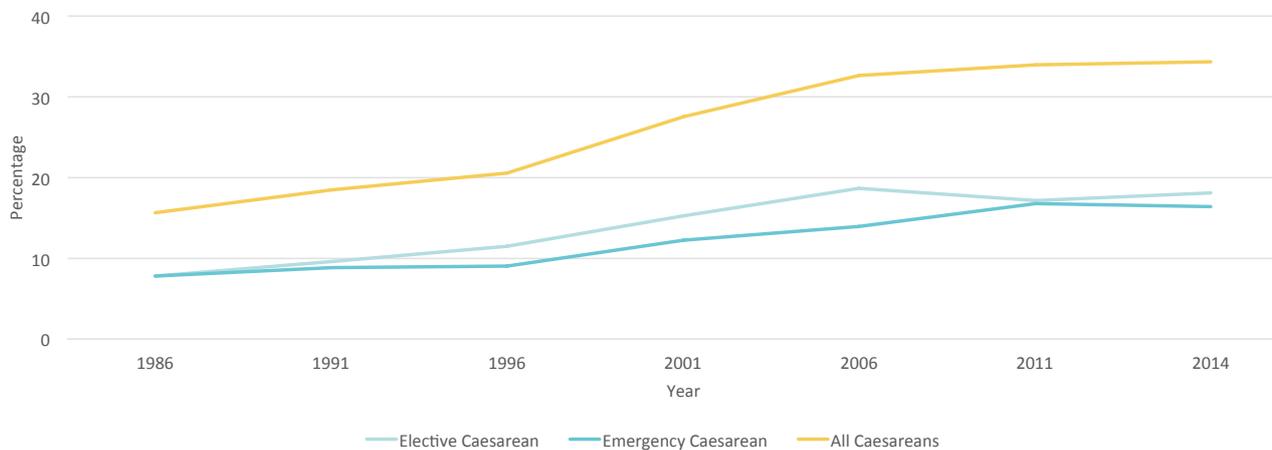
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Western Australia's Mothers and Babies, 2014, 32nd Annual Report of the Western Australian Midwives' Notification System, 2018.



The percentage of women giving birth by elective and emergency caesarean section in WA has been increasing (Figure 15). A planned (elective) caesarean section is performed if there are indications that a vaginal birth may be risky. An unplanned (emergency) caesarean section is performed if there are problems during labour (Better Health Channel, 2017). In 1986, only 15.6 per cent of women gave birth by caesarean. By 2014, this percentage more than doubled to 34.8 per cent of women. Studies into the 'ideal rate' for caesarean sections suggests that when the caesarean section rate increases towards 10 per cent, there is a decline in the maternal and newborn deaths. However, once the rate increases above 10 per cent there is no evidence of an improvement in the mortality rates (World Health Organization, 2018).

There is also emerging evidence that suggests caesarean sections increase the likelihood of adverse health outcomes for babies and mothers. The findings from a recent study of Australian mothers and babies suggest that children born by caesarean section were particularly at increased risk of infection, eczema and metabolic disorder, compared to spontaneous vaginal birth. Furthermore, children born by emergency caesarean section had a higher risk of metabolic disorder (Peters *et al.*, 2018). Other studies of caesarean deliveries have found evidence suggesting that there is a higher risk during infancy of type 1 diabetes, celiac disease, allergic diseases, asthma and obesity (Magne *et al.*, 2017).

**FIGURE 15:** Births by caesarean section, by urgency status, WA, selected years, 1986 to 2014

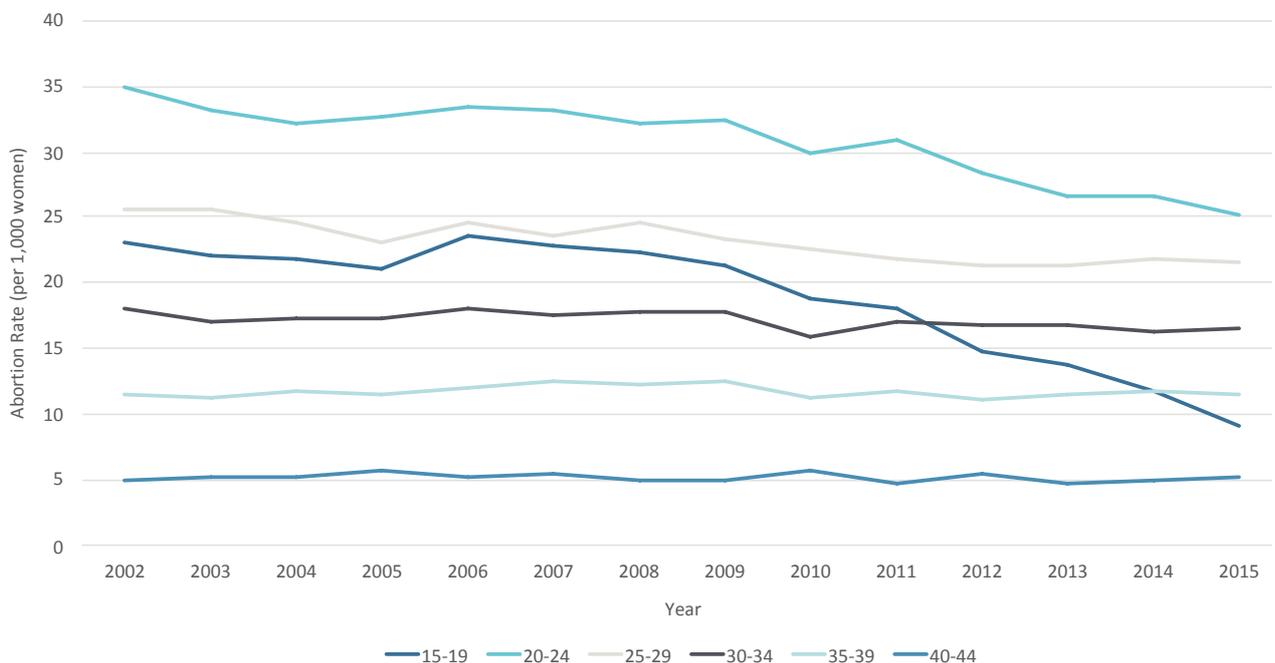


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Western Australia's Mothers and Babies, 2014, 32nd Annual Report of the Western Australian Midwives' Notification System, 2018.

A number of factors may be driving the high caesarean rate in WA. One of the drivers linked to the high caesarean rate is the older age at which women are having their first child. Other contributing factors also include obesity and in-vitro fertilisation (Collard, 2018). As discussed previously, both the percentage of mothers giving birth aged 35 years and over and the incidence of obesity among women in WA have been on the increase. Interestingly, the growth in the percentage of women giving birth by caesarean section flattened out around 2006 (Figure 15), which is approximately the same time at which the growth in the percentage of mothers giving birth aged 35 years and over also began to flatten out.

As can be seen from Figure 16, there was a substantial decline in teenage termination rates between 2002 and 2015. This reflects the substantial decline in the teenage pregnancy rate (women aged 15 to 19) over the same period (Figure 11). The teenage termination rate declined from 23.1 terminations per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 in 2002 to 9.1 terminations in 2015. The trend was similar for women aged 20 to 24, with terminations per 1,000 women declining from 34.9 in 2002 to 25.2 in 2015. That is, a decline of 27.8 per cent.

**FIGURE 16:** Termination rates, WA, 2002 to 2015



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Induced Abortions in Western Australia 2013 to 2015.



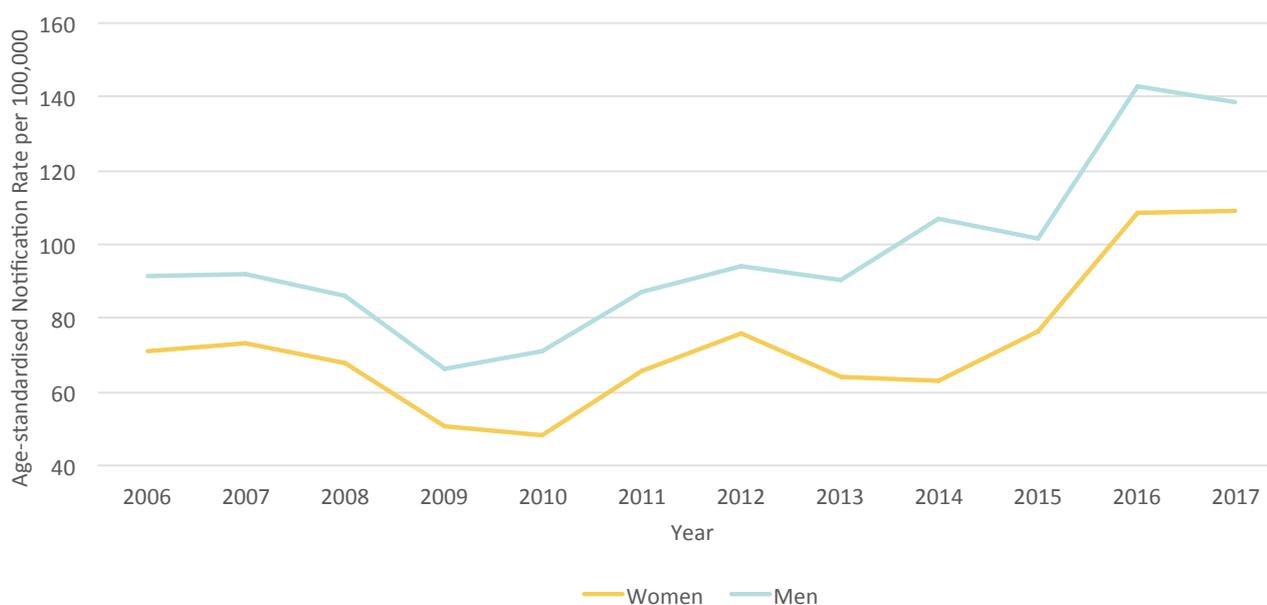
## Sexually transmissible infections

Incidents of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) is an important indicator of women's sexual and reproductive health. STIs represent a significant burden of disease in WA, with young people disproportionately affected. Between 2006 and 2010, notifications of gonorrhoea for women in WA declined. The trend was similar for men. However, since 2010, notifications of gonorrhoea have seen an increase for women in WA (Figure 17). In 2010, the age-standardised rate (ASR) of gonorrhoea notifications was 48.2 per 100,000 women in WA. By 2017, this rate had more than doubled to 109.3 per 100,000 women. For men, too, the rate of gonorrhoea notifications more than doubled between 2009 and 2017, increasing from 66.2 per 100,000 men in 2009 to 138.4 per 100,000 men in 2017. Notably, the rate of gonorrhoea notifications for men was on average 30 per cent higher, compared to women over the period between 2006 and 2017.

Notifications of gonorrhoea more than doubled for both women and men between 2009 and 2017.

If not detected and treated early, gonorrhoea can lead to infertility in both men and women. In rare cases, the infection can spread to the joints, heart and brain, causing permanent damage or even death. An infected mother can also pass gonorrhoea on to her baby during birth, which can cause blindness (Department of Health, 2018c).

**FIGURE 17:** Age-standardised rate (ASR) of gonorrhoea notifications by gender, WA, 2006 to 2017



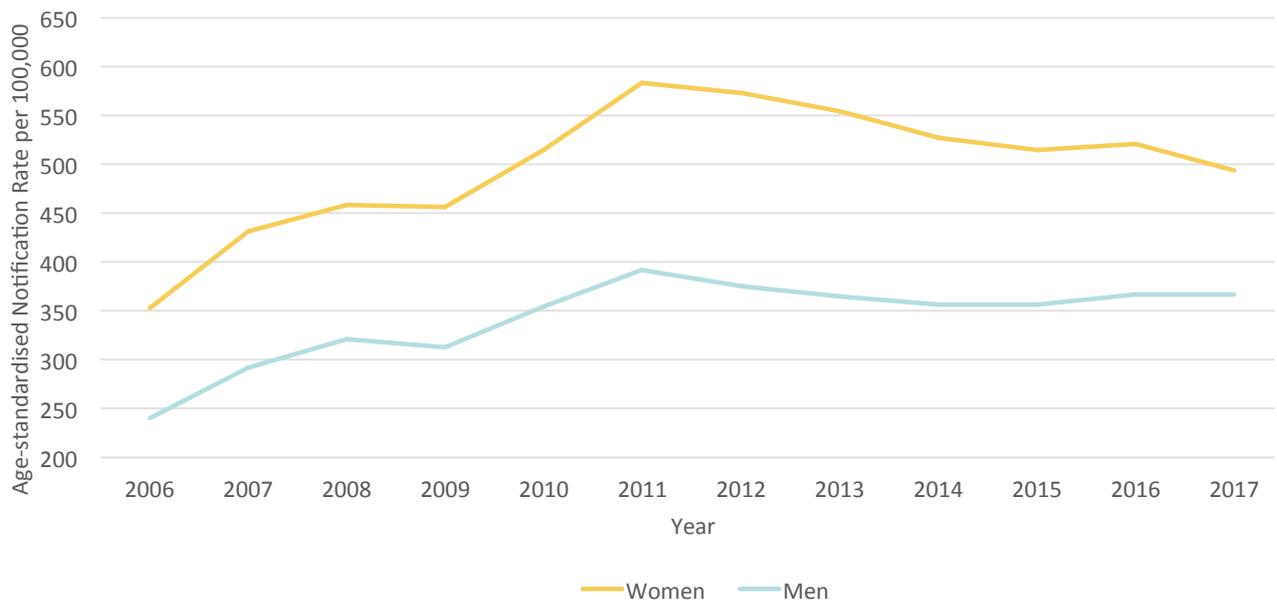
Note: The ASR is a weighted average per 100,000 persons, where the weights are the proportions of persons in each age group.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Immunisation, Surveillance and Disease Control Program, Communicable Disease Control Directorate, Custom Data Request, 2018.

chlamydia is the most frequently reported notifiable disease in Australia (Department of Health, 2018a). Without early treatment of chlamydia, women and girls can contract infections in their cervix, uterus and fallopian tubes. This can scar or even block the fallopian tubes. It can also prevent a fertilised egg from getting into the uterus, causing an ectopic pregnancy (when the egg grows in the fallopian tube) which requires emergency surgery and can result in death (Department of Health, 2018b).

In contrast to the trends in the rate of gonorrhoea notifications, the rates of chlamydia notifications have been in decline for both women and men in WA since 2011 (Figure 18). In 2011, the contract of chlamydia notifications was at its peak at 582.9 per 100,000 women in WA. By 2017, it had declined by 20 per cent to 494.3 per 100,000 women. For men, there was only a 10 per cent decline in the ASR of chlamydia notifications, falling from its peak of 392 per 100,000 men in 2011 to 366.7 per 100,000 men in 2017.

**FIGURE 18:** Age-standardised rate (ASR) of chlamydia notifications by gender, WA, 2006 to 2017



Note: The ASR is a weighted average per 100,000 persons, where the weights are the proportions of persons in each age group.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Immunisation, Surveillance and Disease Control Program | Authors' calculation from Communicable Disease Control Directorate, Custom Data Request, 2018.



## Cervical cancer

Cervical cancer affects the cells of the uterine cervix. It accounts for less than two per cent of all cancers among women in Australia. The primary cause of cervical cancer is the human papillomavirus (HPV). In Australia, the primary method of prevention of cervical cancer is through vaccinating against HPV (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018a)

HPV vaccinations for females turning 15 commenced in 2007.<sup>10</sup> In WA, the percentage of females turning 15 who receive the HPV vaccination has been increasing (Table 2). In 2017, the vaccination coverage was 89.9 per cent for dose 1, 86 per cent for dose 2 and 80.2 per cent for dose 3.

**TABLE 2:** Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination coverage for female adolescents turning 15 years of age, WA, 2012 to 2017

Year	Coverage Dose 1	Coverage Dose 2	Coverage Dose 3
2012	81.2%	78.3%	70.6%
2013	82.2%	79.8%	72.7%
2014	87.5%	85.0%	78.7%
2015	84.7%	82.1%	76.5%
2016	88.2%	85.0%	80.0%
2017	89.9%	86.0%	80.2%

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the National HPV Vaccination Program Register, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Routine HPV vaccinations for males did not commence until 2013 (National HPV Vaccination Program Register, 2018).

The secondary method of prevention of cervical cancer is through cervical screening (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). There has been a slight decline in the percentage of women aged 20 to 69 who are being screened for cervical cancer in WA and Australia (Figure 19). Between 1997-98 and 2015-16, there was an 8.0 percentage point decline in cervical cancer screening participation in WA. This was similar to Australia, where there was a 6.6 percentage point decline over the same period.

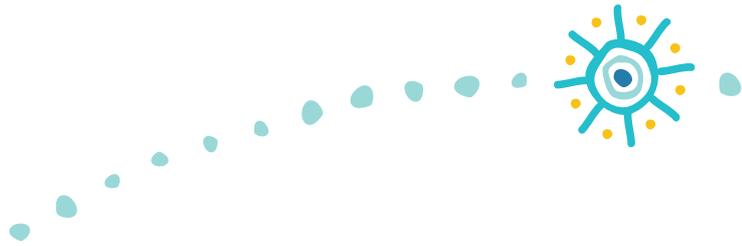
In summary, the indicators for women’s sexual, reproductive and maternal health in WA were mixed. Some of the main improvements include the declines in teenage pregnancy, birth and termination rates; the decline in the ASR of chlamydia notifications for both women and men since 2011; and the increasing percentage of females turning 15 who receive the HPV vaccination in WA. One of the main indicators that has continued to deteriorate is the rate of gonorrhoea notifications among women and men in WA. The other concerning indicator is the high caesarean delivery rate in WA.

**FIGURE 19:** Cervical screening participation of women aged 20 to 69, WA and Australia, 1997-98 to 2015-16



Note: B Prior to 2008-09, data is presented on a biannual basis.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Cervical Screening in Australia Data Report 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015 and 2018.



## Illness, injury and access to services

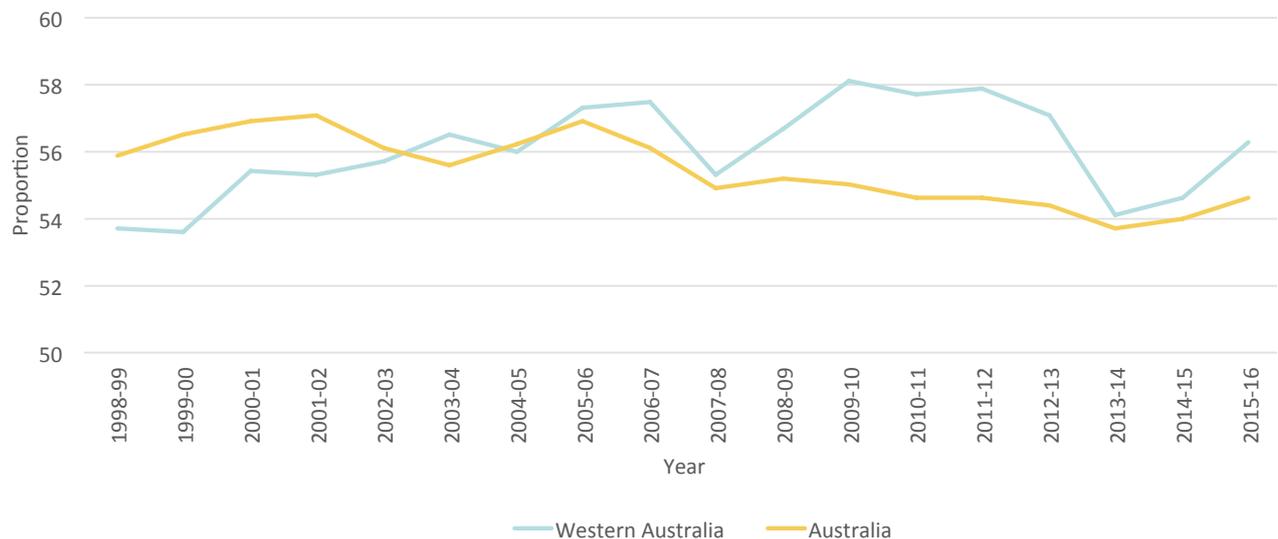
### Breast cancer screening

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australian women, representing 28 per cent of all female cancers, with an incidence rate of around 124 new cases per 100,000 women. The cause of breast cancer is not known, but several risk factors have been identified which increase the likelihood of a woman developing breast cancer. The greatest risk factor is age, with most breast cancers occurring in women aged over 50. Other risk factors include a family history of breast cancer and certain

reproductive or hormonal factors. Women 40 years and over are eligible for breast cancer screening in Australia. However, only women aged 50 to 74 are actively targeted for two-yearly screening mammograms (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018b).

There was little change between 1998 and 2016 in breast screening participation rates for women aged 50 to 69 in WA. In 1998-99, the breast screening participation rate was 53.7 per cent of all women aged 50 to 69. This only increased slightly to 56.3 per cent in 2015-16 (Figure 20). Although there was little change in the breast screening participation rate, there was a positive increase in breast cancer relative survival rates for women in the years following diagnosis.

**FIGURE 20:** Breast screening participation, women aged 50 to 69 years, WA and Australia, 1998-99 to 2015-16

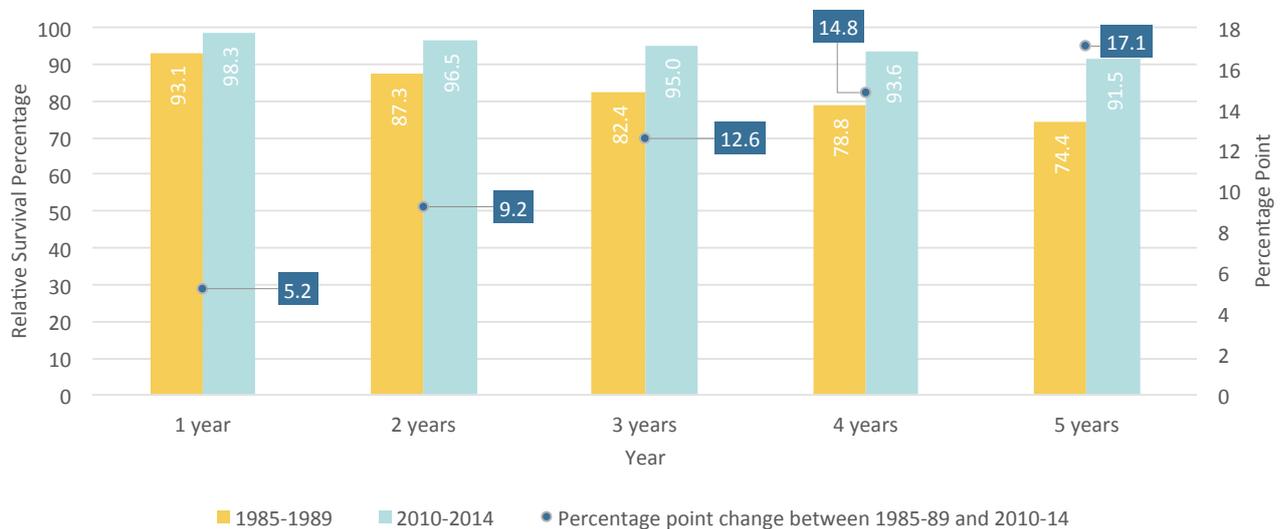


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing for the Breast Screen Australia Program, Breast Screen Australia Monitoring Report 2018.

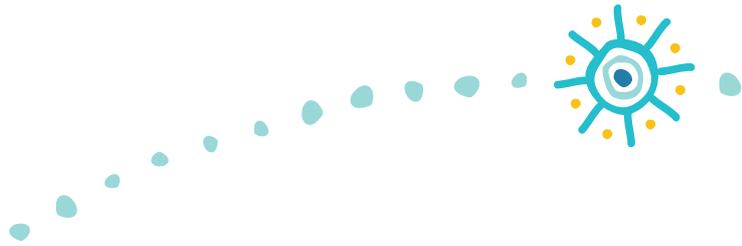
Figure 21 shows the relative survival rates one, two, three, four and five years after the diagnosis of breast cancer for the periods 1985-89 and 2010-14. The largest increase was for the relative survival rate five years after diagnosis, which increased from 74.4 per cent of women surviving five years after diagnosis in the period 1985-89 to 91.5 per cent of women surviving five years after diagnosis in the period 2010-14.

There was a positive increase in breast cancer relative survival rates for women in the years following diagnosis between 1985 and 2014. The largest increase was for the relative survival rate five years after diagnosis, which increased from 74.4 per cent to 91.5 per cent.

**FIGURE 21:** Breast cancer relative survival rates for women in the years following diagnosis, for the periods 1985 to 1989 and 2010 to 2014, WA



Note: The 1985-1989 and 2010-2014 blocks represent all patients who were diagnosed with cancer between those years.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Western Australia Cancer Registry, The Cancer Effect—Breast Cancer Relative Survival 1985-2014, No: 2018/02, Statistical Series: 108.



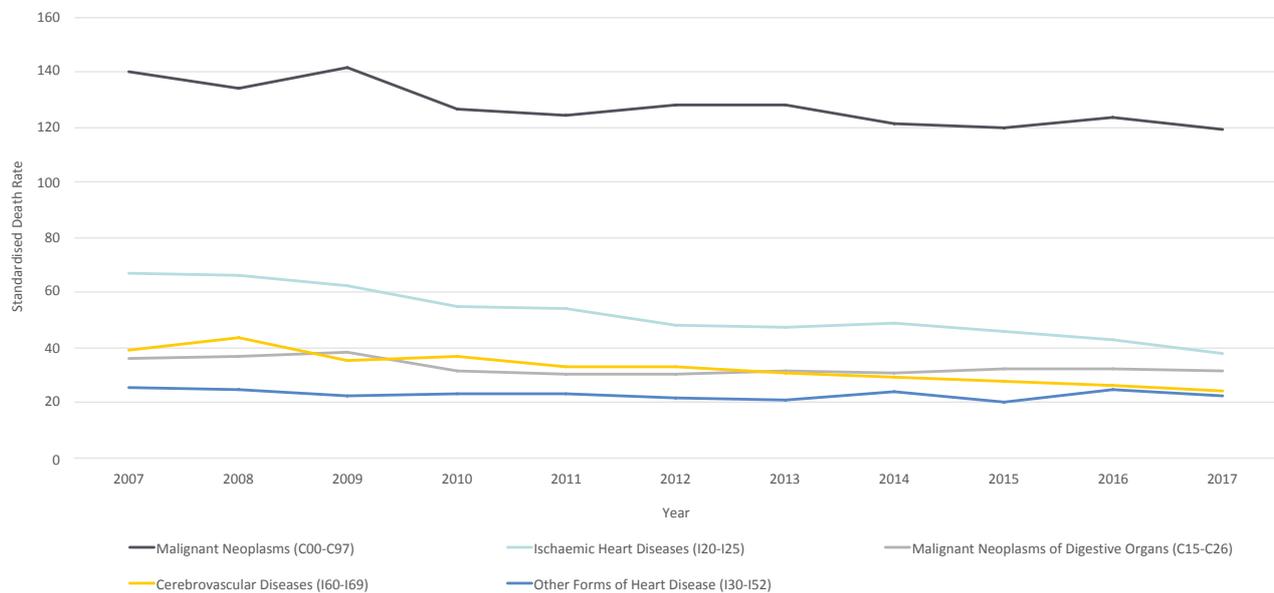
## Leading causes of death

In 2017, the top five leading causes of death among women in WA were malignant neoplasms (cancer), malignant neoplasms of the digestive organs (e.g. stomach, intestine and liver), other forms of heart disease, ischaemic heart disease (diseases related to reduced blood supply to the heart, e.g. coronary artery disease) and cerebrovascular diseases (e.g. stroke and dementia, which are conditions caused by problems that affect the blood supply to the brain).

Between 2007 and 2017 there was a decline in the instances of death from the five leading causes of death (Figure 22). The most substantial decline

was in the instances of death from ischaemic heart disease, with the standardised death rate per 100,000 females declining from 66.9 in 2007 to 38 in 2017; that is, a decrease of 43.2 per cent. This was followed by the instances of death from cerebrovascular diseases, which declined by 37.9 per cent over the same period, decreasing from 39.3 deaths per 100,000 females (standardised death rate) in 2007 to 24.4 deaths per 100,000 females in 2017. Over the same period, the standardised death rate per 100,000 females for malignant neoplasms, malignant neoplasms of the digestive organs and other forms of heart disease declined by 15.0 per cent, 12.3 per cent, and 9.9 per cent, respectively.

**FIGURE 22:** Top five leading causes of death for women, WA, 2007 to 2017



Note: Based on the top five causes of death for women in WA in 2017.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Causes of Death, Australia, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, Cat. No 3303.0.

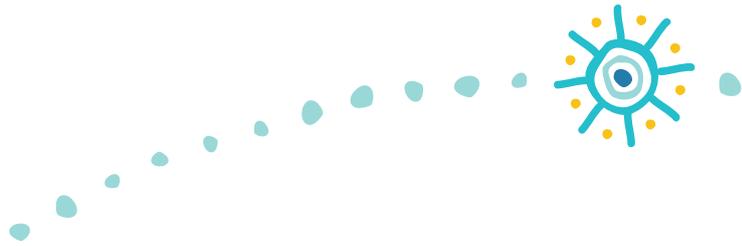
## Common chronic health conditions

Three of the most prevalent chronic health conditions among women in WA are arthritis, injury and mental health problems<sup>11</sup>. As is evident from Figure 23, the prevalence of arthritis in WA is higher among women compared to that of men. In 2017, 27 per cent of women aged over 25 had arthritis, compared to only 19.1 per cent of men. There has been little change in the prevalence of arthritis for both women and men over the period 2002 to 2017. For women, the proportion declined from 28.3 per cent in 2002 to 27.0 per cent in 2017, while for men the proportion declined from 21.0 per cent in 2002 to 19.1 per cent in 2017.

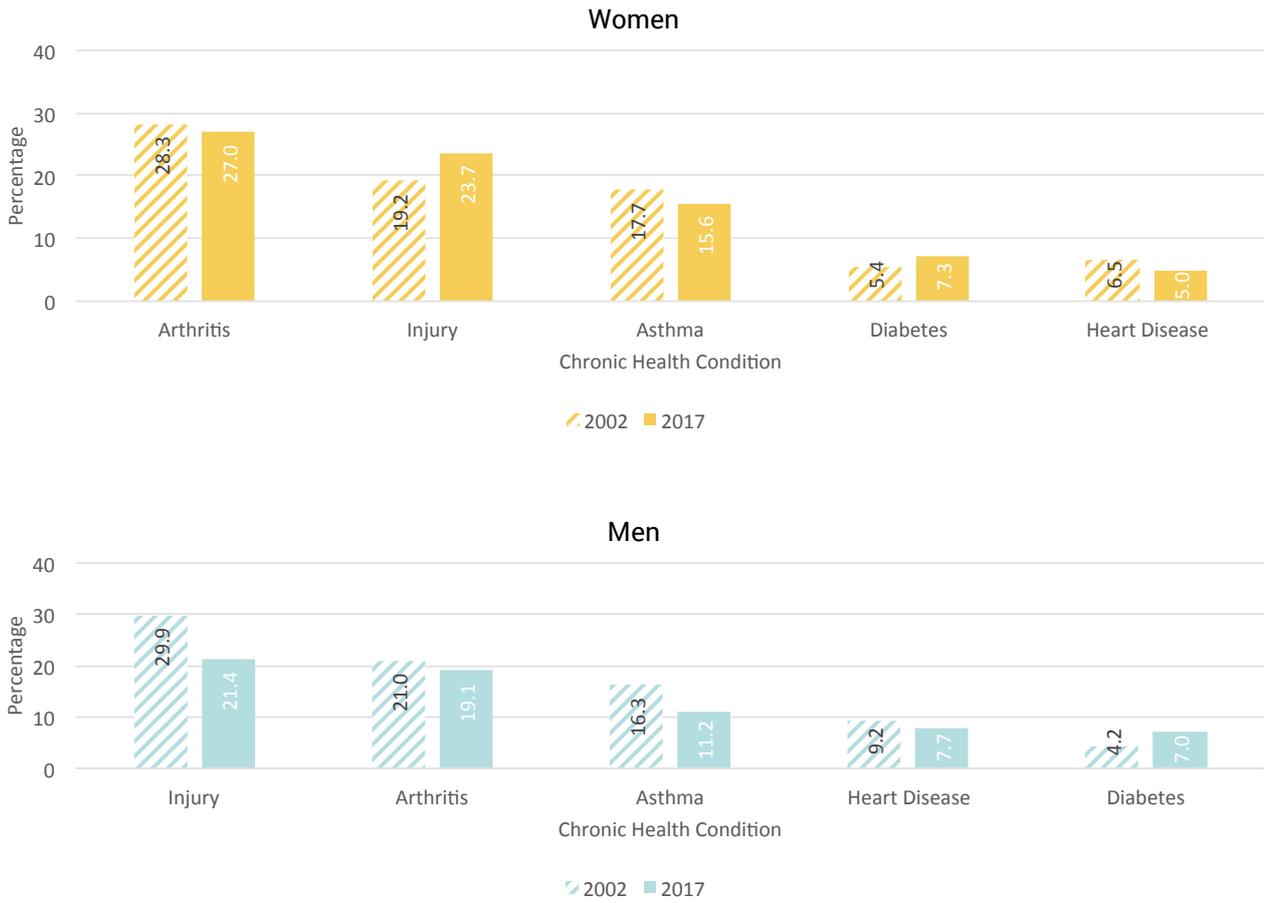
In contrast to arthritis, there was a slight increase in the prevalence of injury among women in WA between 2002 and 2017 (Figure 23), increasing from 19.2 per cent of women 16 years of age and over in 2002 to 23.7 per cent in 2017. In comparison, the prevalence of injury among men 16 years of age and over declined from 29.9 per cent to 21.4 per cent over the same period. Interestingly in 2017, the prevalence of injury among women surpassed that of men. In addition, there was also an increase in the prevalence of diabetes amongst both women and men between 2002 and 2017. For women, there was a 1.9 percentage point increase from 5.4 per cent in 2002 to 7.3 per cent in 2017. The increase was slightly higher for men, increasing by 2.8 percentage points, from 4.2 per cent in 2002 to 7.0 per cent in 2017.

Interestingly, the prevalence of heart disease among both women and men in WA declined by 1.5 percentage points during the period 2002 to 2017. The prevalence of heart disease among women decreased from 6.5 per cent in 2002 to 5.0 per cent in 2017, while for men it decreased from 9.2 per cent in 2002 to 7.7 per cent in 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Mental health problems will be examined in the next section.



**FIGURE 23:** Estimated prevalence of chronic health conditions by gender, WA, 2002 to 2017



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia, 2017, Overview and Trends.

## Causes of hospitalisation

In 2017, the two most common causes of hospitalisation for both women and men were dialysis and chemotherapy (Figure 24). For women, there were 64 hospitalisations for dialysis and 38.6 for chemotherapy per 1,000 women, while for men there were 86.5 hospitalisations for dialysis and 35.5 for chemotherapy per 1,000 men. Notably, of all the women hospitalised for dialysis in 2017, 48.2 per cent were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This is a disturbingly high rate considering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women only made up 3.3 per cent of women living in WA in 2017.

In 2017, the two most common causes of hospitalisation for both women and men were dialysis and chemotherapy.

Over the period 2011 to 2017, the rates of hospitalisation for both dialysis and chemotherapy have increased for both women and men. For women, the rate of hospitalisation for dialysis increased by 22.6 per cent over the period, from 52.2 hospitalisations per 1,000 women in 2002 to 64 in 2017. The increase for men was slightly lower, only increasing by 19.9 per cent over the period, from 72.2 hospitalisations per 1,000 men in 2002 to 86.5 in 2017.

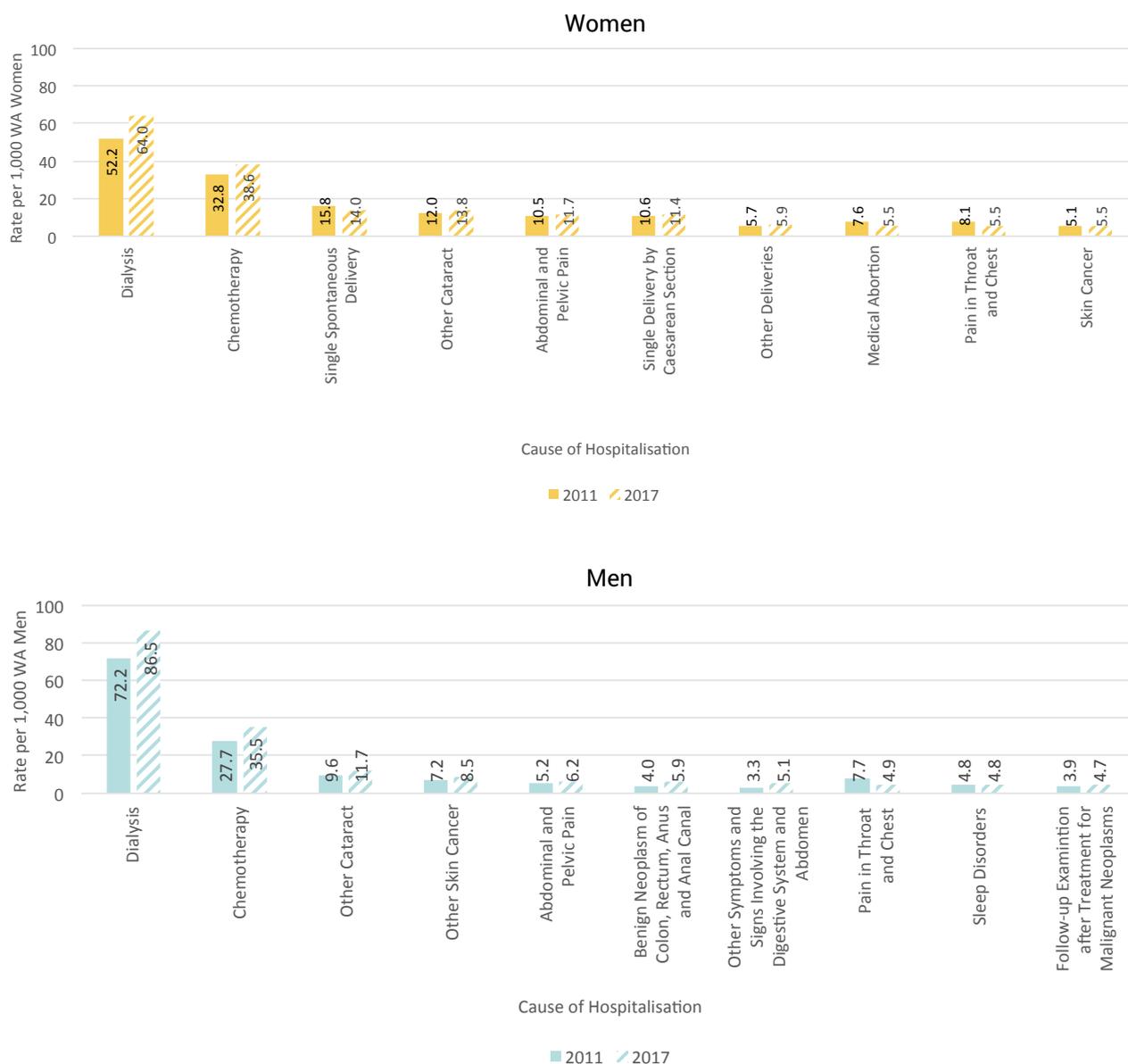
Over the same period, the rate of hospitalisation for chemotherapy for women increased from 32.8 hospitalisations per 1,000 women in 2002 to 38.6 in 2017, an increase of 17.6 per cent. For men, the increase was substantially higher, with hospitalisations for chemotherapy increasing from 27.7 per 1,000 men in 2002 to 35.5 in 2017; an increase of 28.1 per cent.

One of the other common causes of hospitalisation for women and men in 2017 was cataracts. A cataract is a clouding of the clear lens in the eye and is one of the leading causes of vision impairment. While cataracts most commonly occur in those who are older, they can develop in younger people as well. Some people are born with a cataract (Vision Australia, 2019). For women, the rate of hospitalisation for cataracts has increased by 15.0 per cent over the period 2011 to 2017, from 12.0 hospitalisations per 1,000 women in 2002 to 13.8 in 2017. In contrast, the hospitalisation rate for men increased by 22.9 per cent over the same period, from 9.6 hospitalisations per 1,000 men in 2002 to 11.7 in 2017. One of most probable causes of the increases in the rate of hospitalisation for cataracts for both women and men is an ageing population.

Of all dialysis hospitalisations for women in 2017, 48.2 per cent were for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.



**FIGURE 24: Top 10 causes for hospitalisation, by gender, WA, 2011 and 2017**



Note: The counts of inpatient separations from hospital differs from the count of persons, as the same person can have multiple hospital separations per financial year, e.g. patients have recurring admissions for dialysis and chemotherapy. Ranking based on 2017 data.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Data Collections Branch, Information and Performance Governance Unit, Information and System Performance Directorate, Purchasing & System Performance Division, Custom Data Request, 2018.

### Access to female general practitioners

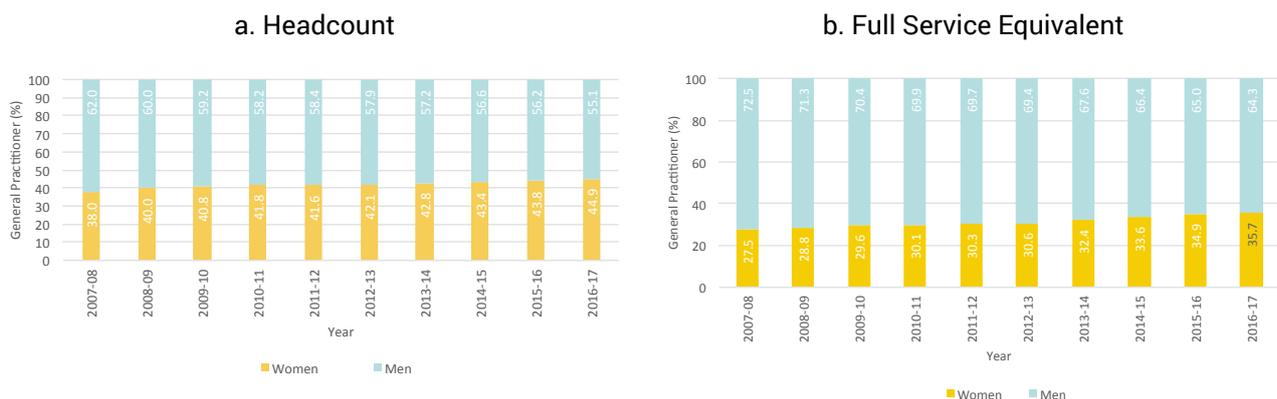
In WA, the proportion of female general practitioners (GPs) (based on the headcount of GPs) has been increasing, rising from 38.0 per cent in 2007-08 to 44.9 per cent in 2016-17 (Figure 25, panel a). However, the headcount of general practitioners does not provide a good indication of the actual availability of GPs because it does not take into account the number of hours each GP works, i.e. whether they work full-time or part-time.

A better measure of availability can be obtained by calculating the total hours worked by GPs and then dividing it by 37.5 hours to get the number of full-time equivalent GPs (full service equivalent). Figure 25, panel b shows the proportions of full service equivalent female and male GPs. Notably, the proportion of full service equivalent female GPs is on average 10 percentage points lower, compared to the proportion of female GPs based on the headcount of GPs.

In 2016-17, 71.1 per cent of women in WA had a preferred GP, compared to 52.6 per cent of men. Interestingly, 21.3 per cent of women could not see their preferred GP at some time during 2016-17. This is in contrast to only 12.3 per cent of men not being able to see their preferred GP (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

In summary, the indicators for illness, injury and access to services for women in WA were mixed. For instance, there was a positive increase in breast cancer relative survival rates for women in the years following diagnosis and a decline in the instances of death from the five leading causes of death. Conversely, the rate of hospitalisation for chemotherapy increased 17.6 per cent for women and 28.1 per cent for men between 2002 and 2017. Furthermore, the rate of hospitalisation for dialysis increased by 22.6 per cent for women and 19.9 per cent for men over the same period.

**FIGURE 25:** General practitioners by gender, WA, 2007 to 2017



Note: Full Service Equivalent = 37.5 working hours per week.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services, Chapter 10, 2018.

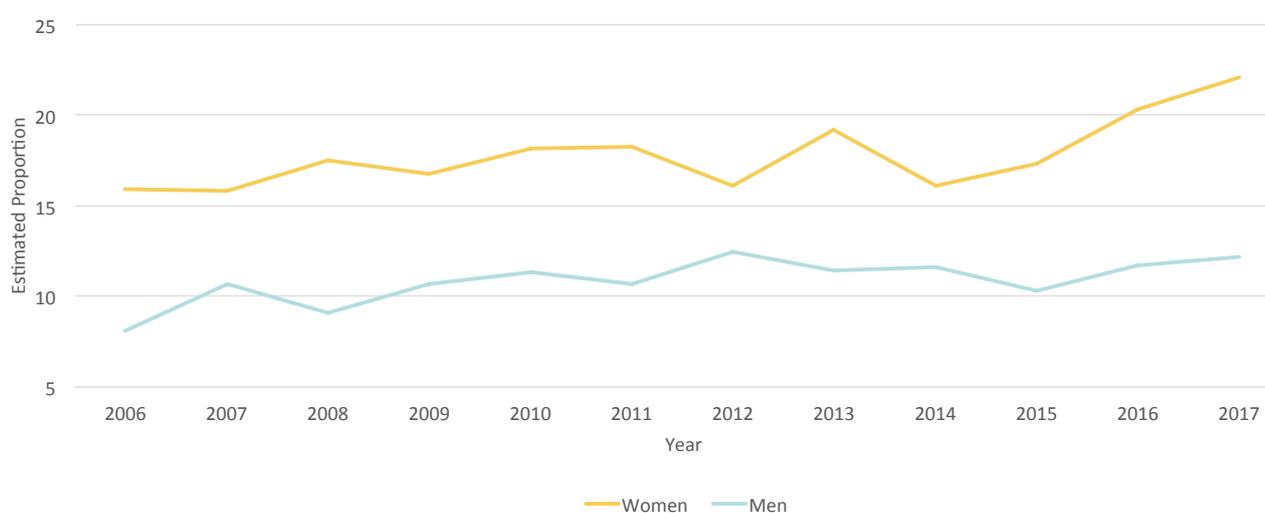


## Mental health and wellbeing

Mental health problems are one of the three most prevalent chronic health conditions among women in WA. Mental health is characterised by a person's ability to cope with daily stresses and make a productive and positive contribution to the community. The prevalence of common mental health conditions among women aged 16 years and over in WA has been steadily increasing, but one must use caution in interpreting such results, as changing attitudes towards mental health, and related better information, awareness and support

systems may be leading to higher levels of reporting and treatment. In 2006, 15.9 per cent of women experienced a common mental health condition. By 2017, this had increased to 22.1 per cent of women (Figure 26). The prevalence of common mental health conditions among women was on average nearly double that compared to the prevalence among men in WA. In 2006, 8.1 per cent of men experienced a common mental health condition, increasing to 12.2 per cent in 2017.

**FIGURE 26:** Estimated prevalence of common mental health conditions by gender for adults 16 and over, WA, 2006 to 2017

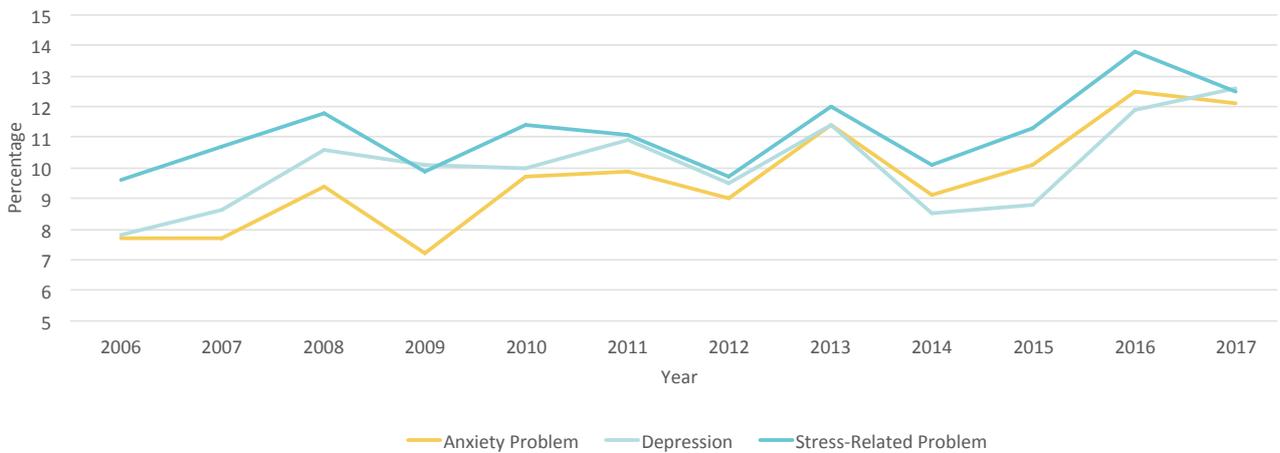


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia, 2017, Overview and Trends.

The mental health conditions most commonly experienced by women in WA are anxiety problems, depression and stress-related problems. Between 2006 and 2017, the proportion of women in WA with anxiety problems, depression and stress-related problems increased by almost 50 per cent, with the proportion of women with anxiety problems increasing from 7.7 per cent to 12.1 per cent, depression increasing from 7.8 per cent to 12.6 per cent, and stress-related problems increasing from 9.6 per cent to 12.5 per cent (Figure 27).

Between 2006 and 2017, the proportion of women in WA reporting with anxiety problems, depression and stress-related problems increased by almost 50 per cent.

**FIGURE 27:** Prevalence of common mental health conditions for women, WA, 2006 to 2017



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 Overview and Trends; Government of Western Australia Department of Local Government and Communities, 2015 Women's Report Card.

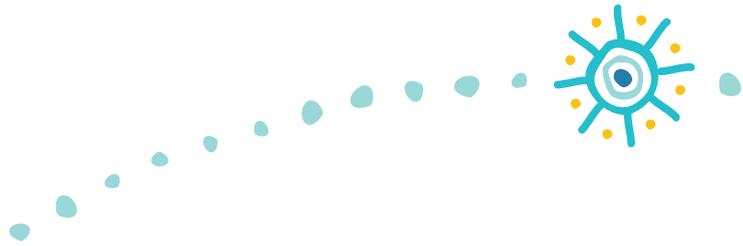
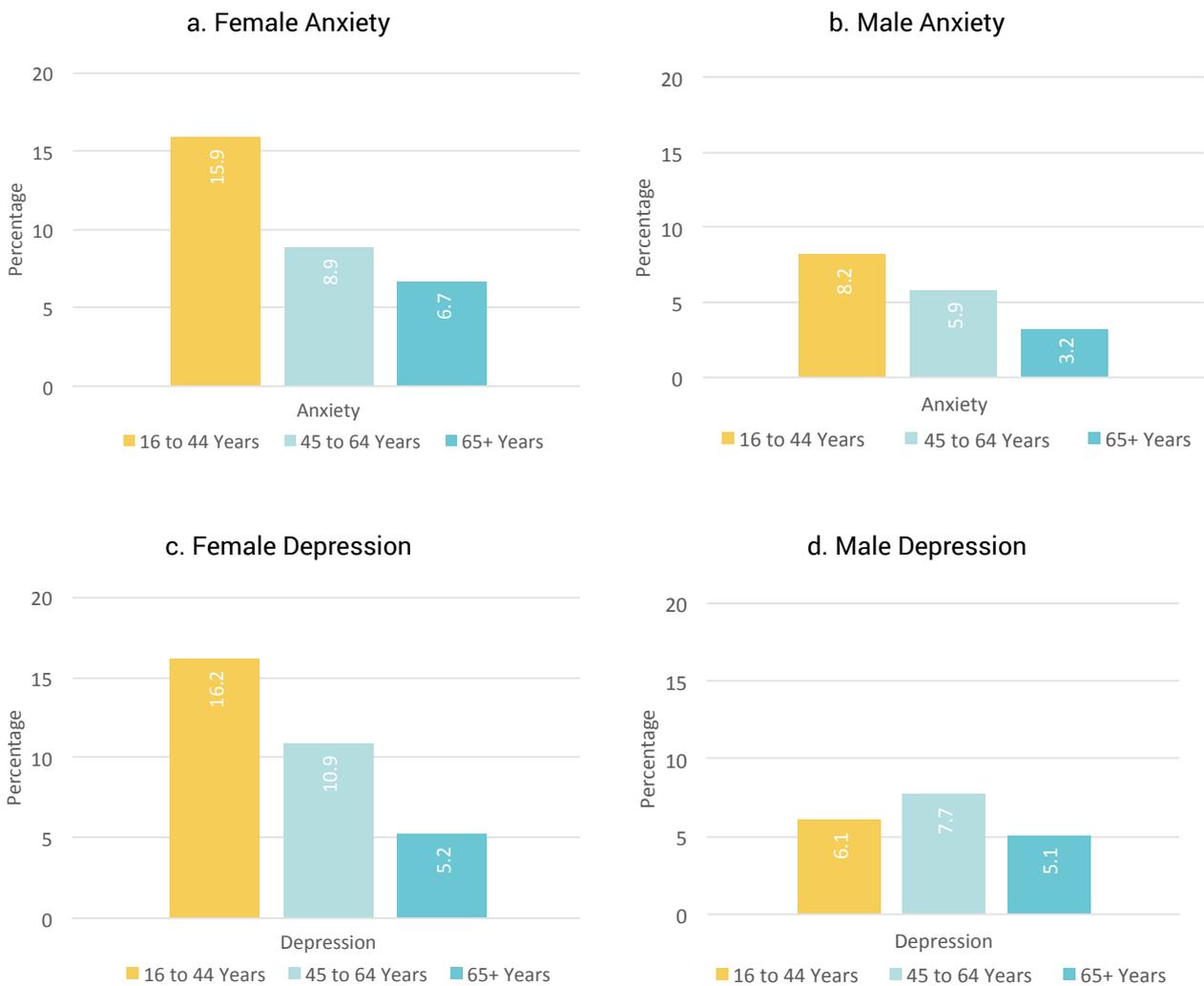


Figure 28 provides a breakdown of the prevalence of anxiety, depression and stress-related problems by gender and age group in WA in 2017. A number of interesting observations can be drawn from the six charts in Figure 28. One is that the incidence of anxiety, depression and stress-related problems decrease for each older cohort of women (Figure 28 charts a, c and e). Another is that only

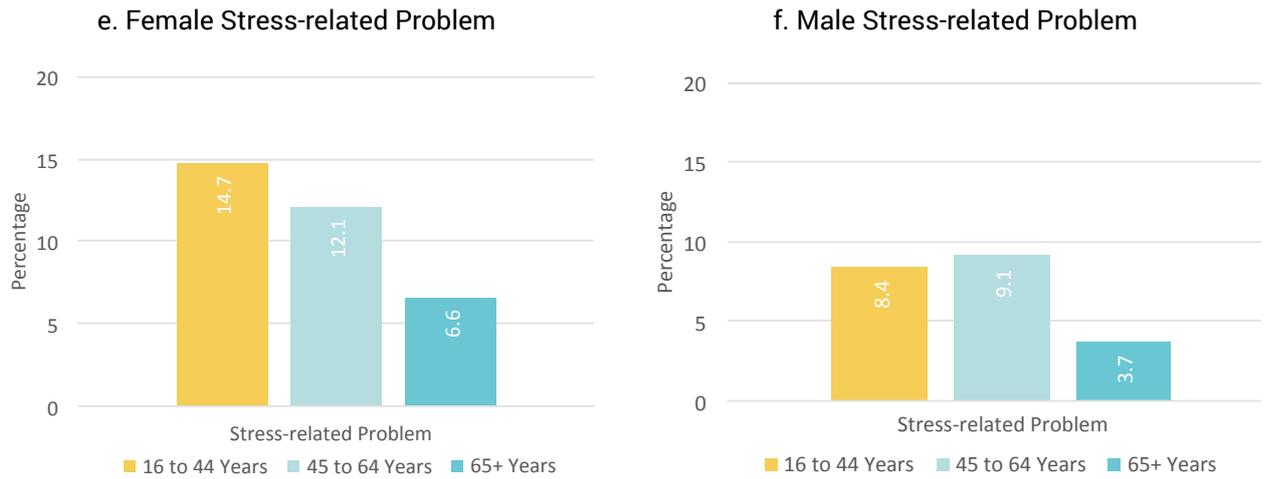
the incidence of anxiety decrease for each older cohort of men, while the incidence of depression and stress-related problems increase for men 45 to 65 years of age, and then decrease among men 65+ years. A final observation is that a higher percentage of women suffer from anxiety, depression and stress-related problems compared to men, across all age groups.

**FIGURE 28:** Mental health conditions, by gender and age group, WA, 2017



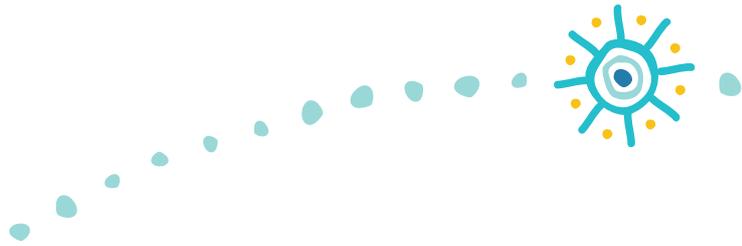
Note: Caution should be used with the percentages of men aged 16 to 44 years with anxiety, depression, and stress-related problems due to the estimates having a relative standard error between 25 per cent to 50 per cent.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia, 2017, Overview and Trends.

**FIGURE 28:** Mental health conditions, by gender and age group, WA, 2017 (continued)



Note: Caution should be used with the percentages of men aged 16 to 44 years with anxiety, depression, and stress-related problems due to the estimates having a relative standard error between 25 per cent to 50 per cent.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia, 2017, Overview and Trends.

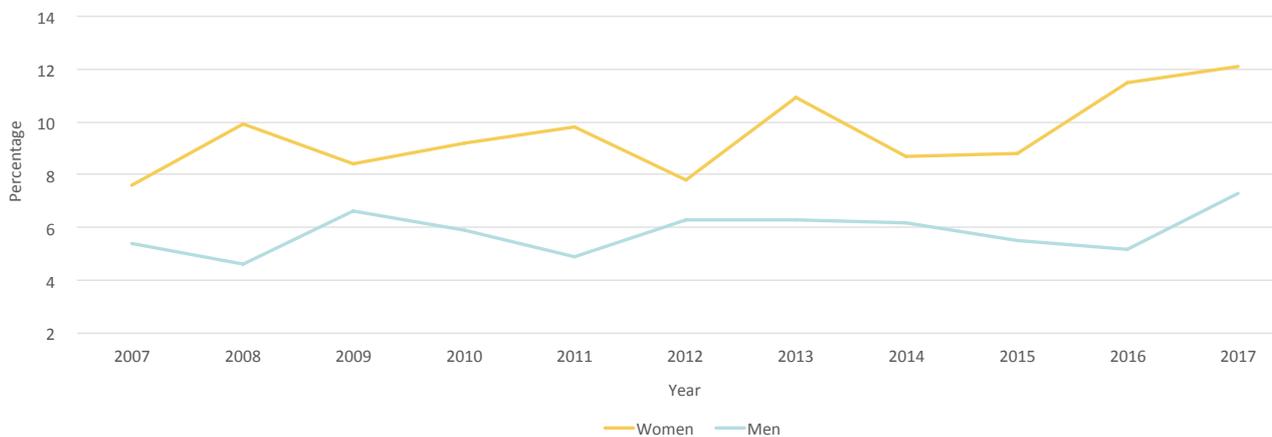


In line with the increase in the prevalence of common mental health conditions among women aged 16 years and over in WA, there has also been an increase in the percentage of women receiving treatment for mental health conditions (Figure 29). The proportion of women receiving treatment for mental health conditions increased from 7.6 per cent in 2007 to 12.1 per cent in 2017.

Consistent with the lower prevalence of men with common mental health conditions compared to women, there is also a lower proportion of men receiving treatment for mental health conditions. The increase in the proportion of men receiving treatment for mental health conditions is also lower compared to that of women, only increasing from 5.4 per cent in 2007 to 7.3 per cent in 2017.

In summary, there was an increase in reported mental health problems of women in WA between 2006 and 2017, with the proportion of women in WA with anxiety problems, depression and stress-related problems increasing by almost 50 per cent. Over the period, the proportion of women with anxiety problems increased from 7.7 per cent to 12.1 per cent; the proportion of women with depression increased from 7.8 per cent to 12.6 per cent; and the proportion of women with stress-related problems increased from 9.6 per cent to 12.5 per cent. As previously noted here, caution must be taken in interpreting such results, since greater awareness, information and related supports may be leading to increased reporting levels.

**FIGURE 29:** Percentage of adults receiving treatment for a mental health condition, WA, 2007 to 2017



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the Government of Western Australia Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 Overview and Trends; Government of Western Australia Department of Local Government and Communities, 2015 Women's Report Card.

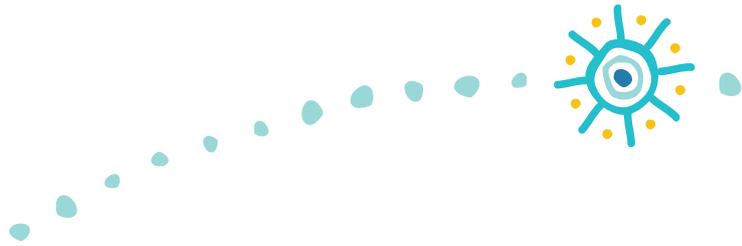
## Community involvement

Community involvement may have beneficial effects upon people's mental health and sense of wellbeing. Volunteering is one way people can get involved with their local community. There has been a modest increase in the percentage of women and men volunteering in WA. In 2006, 21.1 per cent of women and 16.1 per cent of men were volunteers. By 2016, this had increased to 23.1 per cent of women and 18.5 per cent of men.

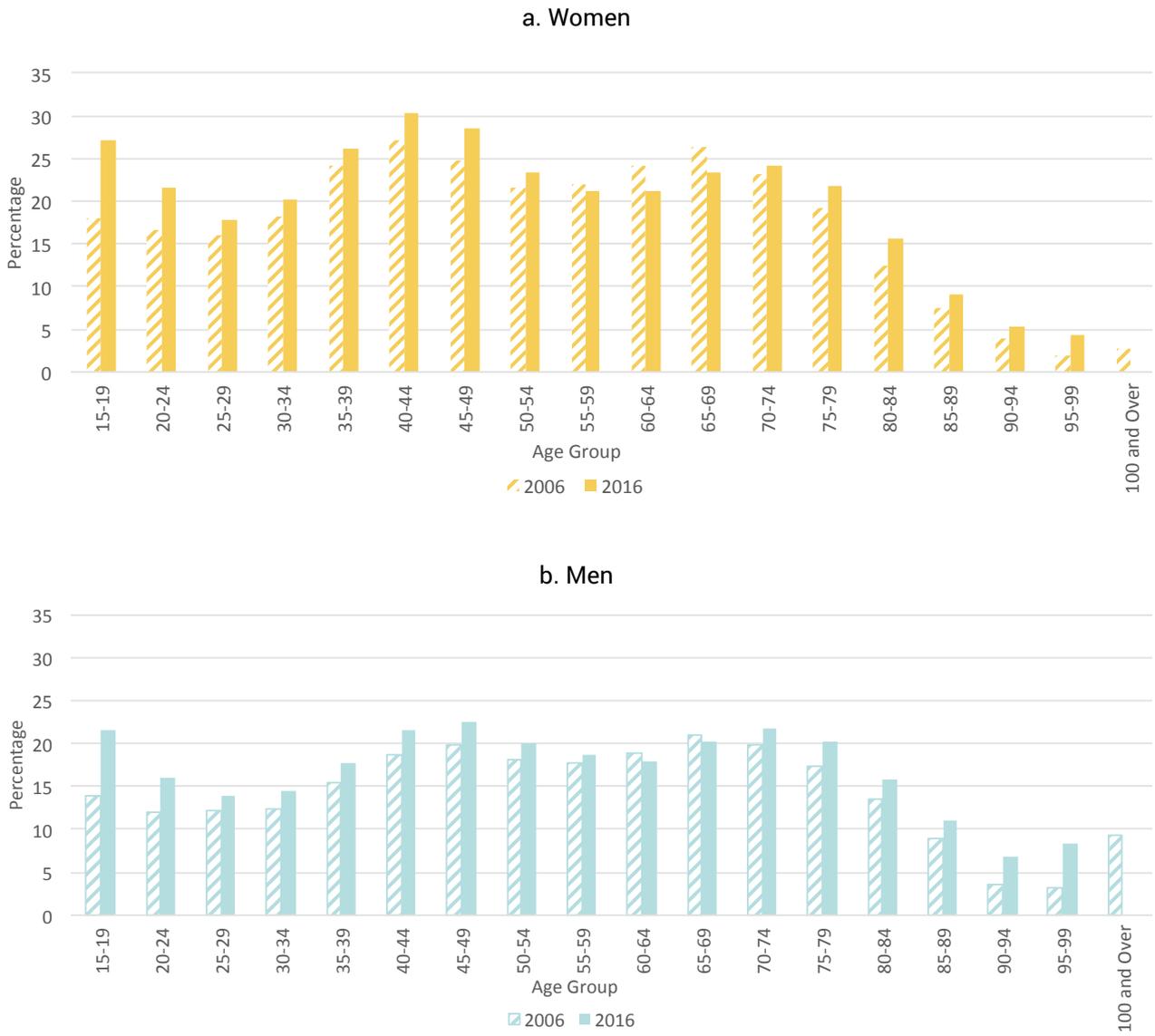
There has been a modest increase in the percentage of women volunteering in WA, increasing from 21.1 per cent in 2006 to 23.1 per cent in 2016.

As can be seen from Figure 30, the percentage of people who volunteer varies by gender and age group. In 2016, women aged 40 to 44 had the highest percentage of volunteers at 30.4 per cent, followed by women aged 45 to 49 at 28.5 per cent. Young women aged 15 to 19 had the third highest rate of volunteering at 27.1 per cent. Young women aged 15 to 19 also had the largest increase in the rate of volunteering, with a 9.1 percentage point increase between 2006 and 2016.

The second largest increase was for women aged 20 to 24, with the percentage volunteering increasing from 16.7 per cent in 2006 to 21.6 per cent in 2016, a 4.9 percentage point increase (Figure 30 a). For men, the highest percentage of volunteers in 2016 were aged 45 to 49 at 22.6 per cent, followed by men aged 70 to 74 at 21.8 per cent. As with young women, young men aged 15 to 19 had the third highest rate of volunteering at 21.6 per cent (Figure 30 b). Women had a higher rate of volunteering for age groups from 15 to 19 through to 75 to 79, compared to men in 2016. For age groups 80 to 84 and above, men had a higher rate of volunteering (Figure 30 d).



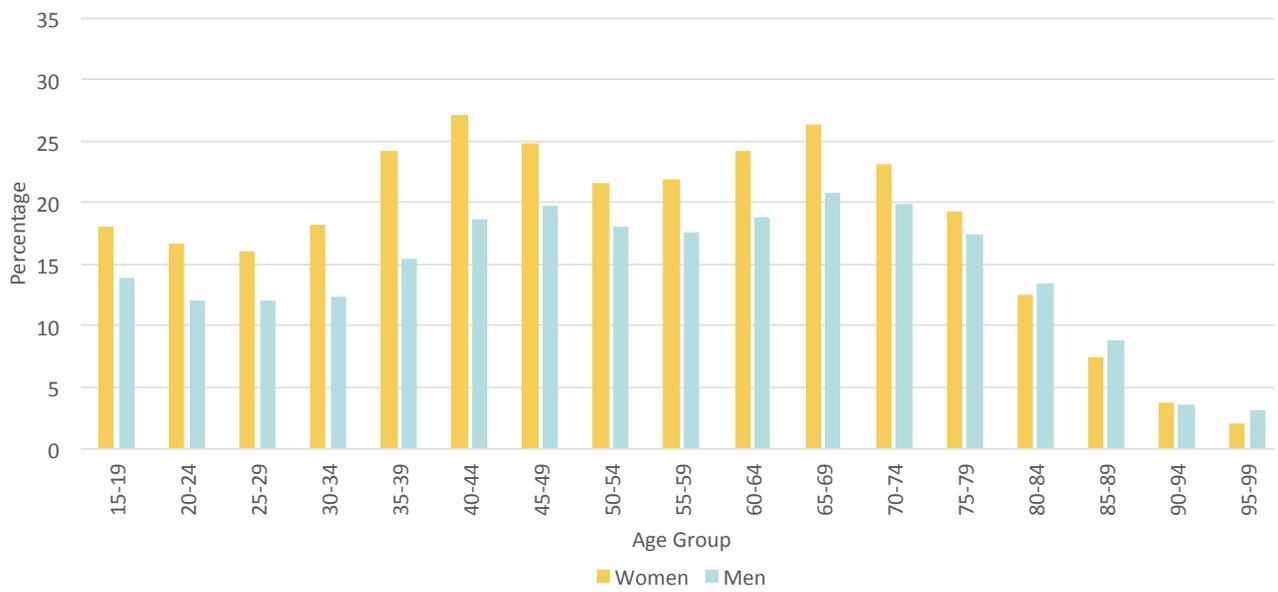
**FIGURE 30: Volunteering in the community by gender, WA, 2006 and 2016**



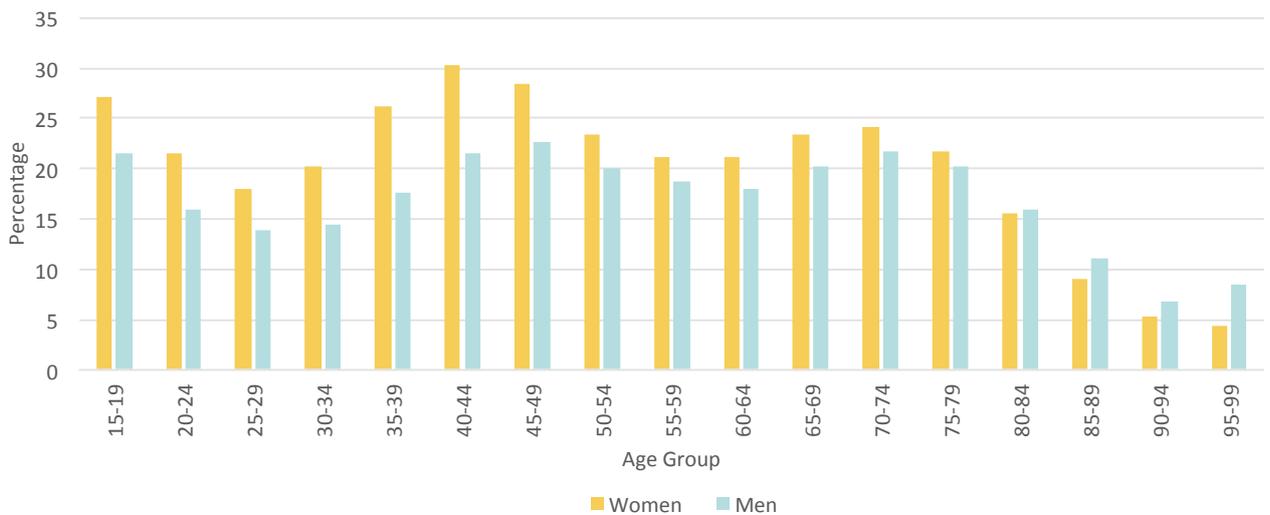
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2006 and 2016.

**FIGURE 30: Volunteering in the community by gender, WA, 2006 and 2016 (continued)**

**c. Women and Men, 2006**

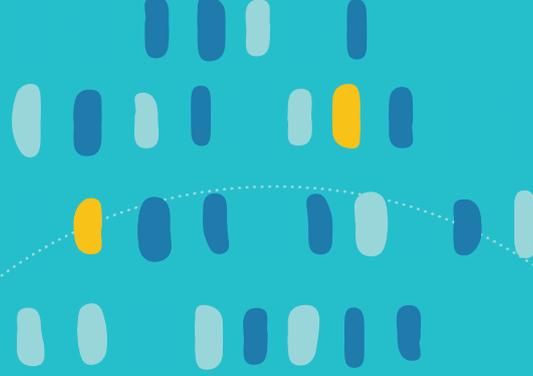


**d. Women and Men, 2016**



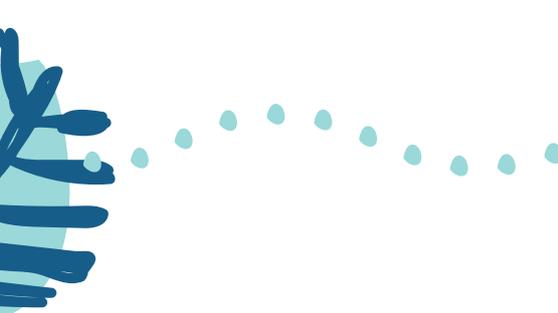
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2006 and 2016.





# 4

## Safety and Justice



## 4 Safety and Justice

### Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on women's experiences and perceptions of safety in their families, communities and workplaces. The risk of threat to life, domestic and family violence (or the threat of such violence), discrimination and sexual harassment can restrict women's full participation in society. It can also have social, emotional and financial implications for women and the overall economy. This chapter also provides information on women's interactions with the legal and justice system as victims, offenders and professionals.

### Outcomes

Desired outcomes in the area of safety and justice include:

- WA women are safe and free from violence, discrimination and harassment in their homes, at work and in the community.
- Perpetrators change their behaviour and are held accountable for their actions.
- WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's imprisonment and involvement in the criminal justice system are reduced.
- WA women fully participate in positions of influence and leadership in the justice system.

### Indicators

The indicators in this chapter contribute to understanding how WA is progressing towards achieving these outcomes:

- Safety in families and households
- Safety in the community, including perceptions of safety
- Workplace safety and discrimination
- Offending and imprisonment
- Women working in the legal/justice system.

### Safety in families and households

Family and domestic violence remains one of the greatest dangers to the safety and wellbeing of women and children in WA. In addition to looking at recent trends in domestic and family violence in WA (including emotional abuse), this section looks at the frequency of such violence, and whether women perceived the violence as a crime at the time of the event. A breakdown of the type of offence committed is provided, and data on restraining orders and the breach of such orders are also addressed.

### Family and domestic violence incidents

Family and domestic violence is the intentional and systematic use of violence and abuse to control, coerce or create fear.<sup>12</sup> Based on the information presented in Figure 31, in 2016, more than one in five women reported having experienced partner violence since the age of 15 in WA. Specifically, 20.2 per cent of women in WA have experienced current and/or previous partner violence prior to 2015, with 2.5 per cent having experienced such violence within the previous 12 months. As expected, both of these figures are higher than that of males, but more worrying is that they are also higher for females in WA relative to that of females across the nation.

In 2016, more than one in five women reported having experienced partner violence since the age of 15 in WA.

**FIGURE 31:** Whether experienced current and/or previous partner violence since age 15, Australia and WA, 2016



Note: Estimates of 0.0 should be interpreted as representing a very low incidence, but do not necessarily reflect a complete absence of the characteristic in the population.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety

<sup>12</sup> Department of Communities Child Protection and Family Support, Government of Western Australia. Sourced from <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/CrisisAndEmergency/FDV/Pages/Whatisfamilyanddomesticviolence.aspx>.



Of those women who did experience violence by a partner, 34.4 per cent of women in WA noted that this violence occurred during pregnancy. This compares to 41.3 per cent for Australia.<sup>13</sup> There is increasing evidence of the negative impact of violence during pregnancy, not only on the mother, but also on the developing child.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, 11.6 per cent of women in WA reported having experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15, compared to 5.6 per cent of men. Both of these figures too are higher than that reported for Australia, with the figure nationally being 10.7 per cent and 4.6 per cent for women and men<sup>15</sup>, respectively.

In terms of physical abuse, 8.8 per cent of females in WA (also 8.8% nationally) and 7.7 per cent of males (8.1% nationally) reported experiencing physical abuse before the age of 15.<sup>16</sup>

Of all women experiencing partner violence, 38.1 per cent reported that such violence occurred 'only once' (34.3% nationally), 22.0 per cent 'a little of the time' (22.4% nationally), 22.0 per cent 'some of the time' (26.5% nationally) and a staggering 19.3 per cent reported that such violence occurred 'all of the time' (17.4% nationally) (Figure 32).

For those women who experienced violence from a partner, 60 per cent in WA sought advice or support about such violence, compared to 62 per cent nationally. This compares to only 13.7 per cent of men in WA seeking advice when exposed to partner violence; a lot lower than the 38.6 per cent of men nationally.<sup>17</sup>

Of those women who did experience violence by a partner, 34.4 per cent noted that this violence occurred during pregnancy.

For women experiencing partner violence, 19.3 per cent reported that such violence occurred 'all of the time'.

13 Source: ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

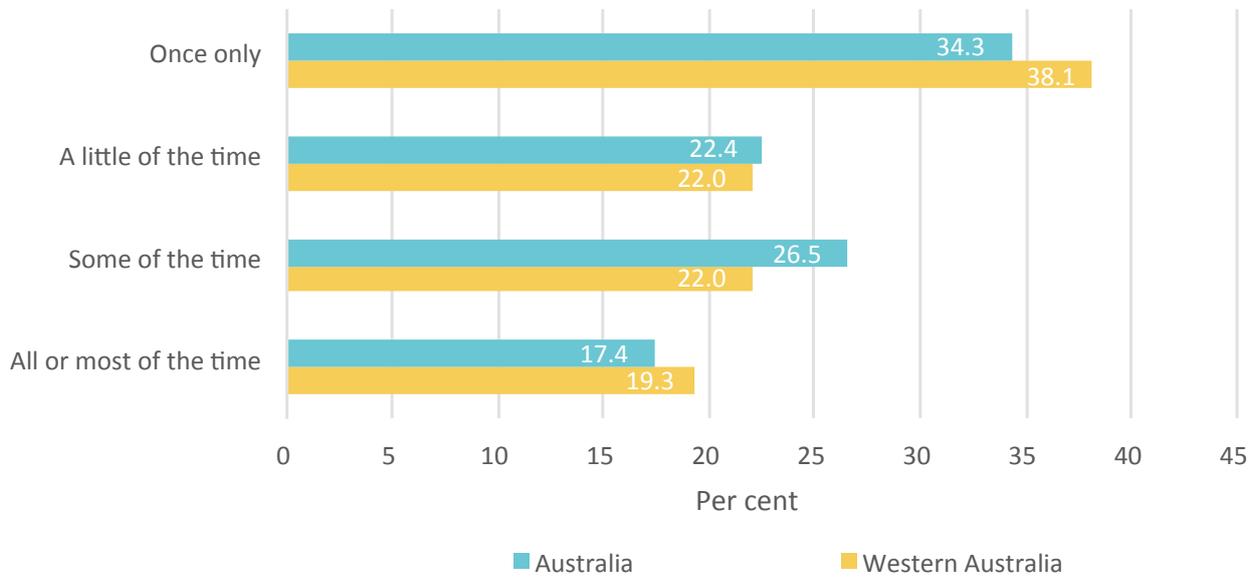
14 See for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jul/14/family-violence-can-affect-children-in-utero-royal-commission-told>.

15 Source: ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

16 Source: ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

17 Source: ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

**FIGURE 32:** How often partner violence experienced during relationship, for women having experienced violence, Australia and WA, 2016



Note: Partner violence refers to any incident of sexual assault, sexual threat, physical assault or physical threat by a current and/or previous partner. Partner violence does not include violence by a (ex-) boyfriend/girlfriend or date, which refers to a person that the respondent dated, or was intimately involved with, but did not live with.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.



In some instances, family and domestic violence leads to hospitalisation of women, with these reported in Table 3. There was a total of 936 hospital inpatient separations by women where injuries related to family and domestic violence in 2018, with the figure exceeding 900 over each of the last four years. The hospitalisation rate per 10,000 of adult females with injuries related to family and domestic violence in WA in 2018 was 9.4, compared to an average of 8.6 over the 16 years since 2003. Intimate partners continue to be the main perpetrators (78%), although there has been a notable increase in the share of other family members, from 12 per cent in 2003 to almost 20 per cent in 2018. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women account for 67 per cent of hospitalisations due to family and domestic violence in WA.

The hospitalisation rate per 10,000 of adult females with injuries related to family and domestic violence in WA in 2018 was 9.4.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women account for 67 per cent of hospitalisations due to family and domestic violence in WA.

**TABLE 3:** Hospitalisation with injuries related to family and domestic violence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander status and relationship type, WA, 2003 to 2018

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Status</b>																
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Count)	439	461	400	385	363	398	416	457	525	541	551	584	570	615	607	629
Share (%)	70.8	67.1	72.1	65.4	67.2	64.6	63.3	61.2	61.0	61.8	64.6	65.5	60.8	64.9	64.6	67.2
Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Count)	181	226	155	204	177	218	241	290	336	335	302	307	367	333	333	307
Share (%)	29.2	32.9	27.9	34.6	32.8	35.4	36.7	38.8	39.0	38.2	35.4	34.5	39.2	35.1	35.4	32.8
<b>Total (Count)</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>657</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>891</b>	<b>937</b>	<b>948</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>936</b>
<b>Perpetrator Type (rate per 10,000 women)</b>																
Intimate partner	7.4	8.0	6.0	6.6	5.8	6.3	6.2	7.0	8.1	7.2	7.4	7.5	7.9	7.8	7.4	7.4
Parent	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2
Other family member	1.0	1.2	1.2	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.9	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.9	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>9.4</b>

Notes: Preliminary data. These hospital inpatient episodes should not be considered to be the number of women; this is because the same woman can have multiple hospital episodes in the same year. Separation from a healthcare facility occurs anytime a patient (or resident) leaves because of death, discharge, sign-out against medical advice or transfer. The number of separations is the most commonly used measure of the utilisation of hospital services. Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Hospital Morbidity Data Collection, Inpatient Data Collections, Information and Performance Governance Unit, Purchasing and System Performance, Department of Health. WA, customised data, March 2019.

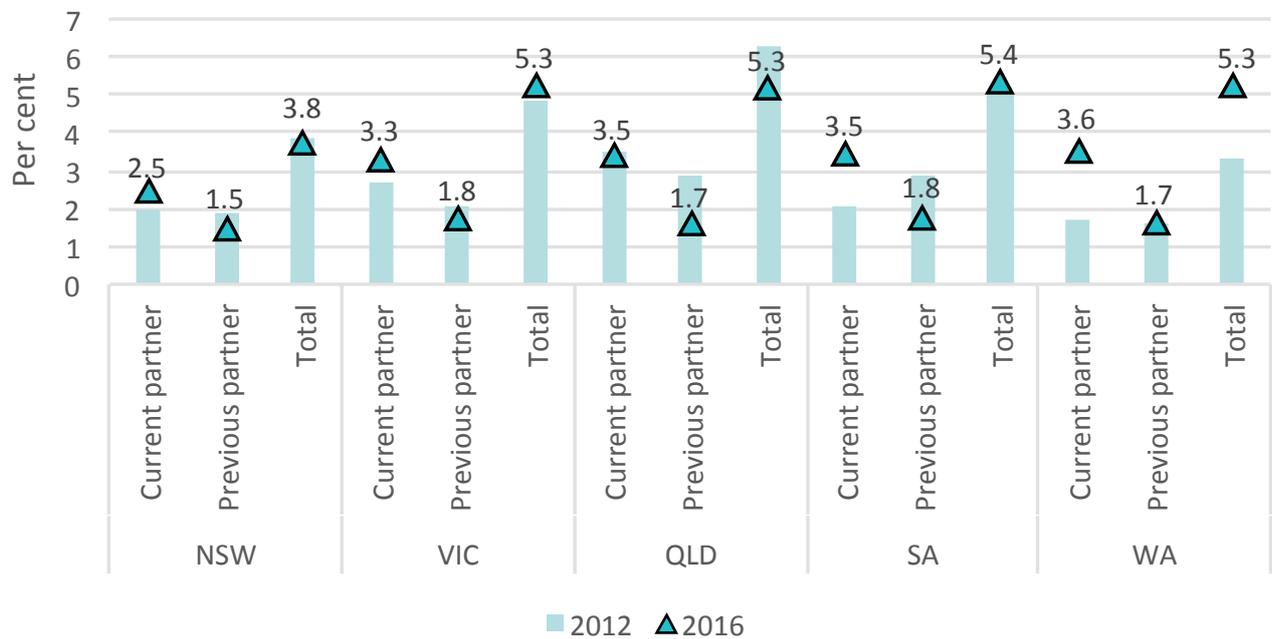
The fear of domestic and family violence has clear emotional impacts. In WA, 63.4 per cent of women have experienced anxiety or fear for personal safety resulting from partner violence. This compares to 62 per cent nationally.<sup>18</sup>

increase was not as evident across other states, with in fact a reduction in NSW and Queensland. This suggests that there may be a real increase in the incidence of emotional abuse in WA in more recent years.

Emotional violence, in and of itself, is an often less commented on form of domestic and family violence. In 2016, 5.3 per cent of women in WA experienced emotional abuse by a partner over the previous 12 months (Figure 33). This compares to 3.3 per cent in 2012. While increased awareness and willingness to discuss such matters are factors to consider, it is interesting that such an

In 2016, 5.3 per cent of women in WA experienced emotional abuse by a partner over the previous 12 months.

**FIGURE 33:** Women who experienced emotional abuse by a partner during the last 12 months, by state, 2012 and 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

18 Source: ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.



Table 4 presents WA Police Force data on family violence incidents with an adult victim, by victim gender, for the period 2008-09 to 2017-18. Both criminal and general incidents are reported. In 2017-18, the total number of distinct incidents stood at 38,075; the lowest reported since 2013-14.

In 2017-18, 20,445 incidents of a criminal nature had a female victim (6,114 for males), accounting for 53.7 per cent of the total incidents. The count of criminal incidents with a female or male victim is at its lowest since 2014-15. However, the corresponding count of general incidents containing a female (10,984) or male (2,879) victim is at an all-time high over the period reported.

**TABLE 4:** Family violence incidents with adult victims reported to WA Police Force by victim gender, 2008-09 to 2017-18

Incident Type	Victim Gender	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Criminal	Female	8,698	8,862	10,029	11,343	13,988	15,320	16,883	21,784	21,776	20,445
		54.5%	57.7%	59.7%	57.6%	56.4%	55.4%	54.8%	56.3%	55.9%	53.7%
	Male	2,480	2,509	2,770	3,365	4,342	4,630	5,127	6,604	6,186	6,114
		15.5%	16.3%	16.5%	17.1%	17.5%	16.8%	16.6%	17.1%	15.9%	16.1%
	Other/ Unknown	294	195	154	173	184	146	173	238	201	159
		1.8%	1.3%	0.9%	0.9%	0.7%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%
General	Female	4,338	3,723	3,840	4,688	6,143	7,529	8,623	10,293	10,677	10,984
		27.2%	24.2%	22.9%	23.8%	24.8%	27.2%	28.0%	26.6%	27.4%	28.8%
	Male	1,086	928	901	1,177	1,615	1,760	2,097	2,502	2,603	2,879
		6.8%	6.0%	5.4%	6.0%	6.5%	6.4%	6.8%	6.5%	6.7%	7.6%
	Other/ Unknown	44	21	23	32	57	55	78	85	69	82
		0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
<b>Total Incidents</b>		<b>15,958</b>	<b>15,357</b>	<b>16,799</b>	<b>19,682</b>	<b>24,793</b>	<b>27,630</b>	<b>30,829</b>	<b>38,671</b>	<b>38,987</b>	<b>38,075</b>

Notes: Figures only include victims that were 18 years or older at the time of the offence. As some incidents contain multiple victims (occasionally of different genders), the sum of the sub-totals will not equal the distinct total. For similar reasons, the percentages do not sum to 100. 'General' incidents are those recorded in the Incident Management System (IMS) where no discernible crime has occurred.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Incident information was extracted from the IMS, WA Police Force, customised data, 2019.

In 2016, 70 per cent of female victims in WA (68% for Australia) did not report violence or assault from a partner.

While the total number of incidents increased significantly in the years to 2015-16 (Table 4), this could be due to factors in addition to an increase in the actual number of incidents – for example, due to greater awareness among women leading to increased reporting to police, as well as greater response from police. However, it should also be noted that in 2016, the most recent year for which survey data is available, 70 per cent of female victims in WA (68% for Australia) did not report violence or assault from a partner.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, at the time of the event, only 41 per cent of females (30% of males) in WA perceived the most recent incident of violence as a crime;

50 per cent (33% of males) perceived the incident as wrong but not a crime; and 24 per cent of women (43% of males) perceived it as something that just happens (Figure 34). These figures suggest that more work needs to be done to inform women of their rights and the steps that can be taken as well as ensuring women feel secure in making complaints to police and the resulting legal processes that may result.

At the time of the event, only 41 per cent of females (30% of males) in WA perceived the most recent incident of violence as a crime.

**FIGURE 34:** Whether most recent incident of violence perceived as a crime at the time, Australia and WA, 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

<sup>19</sup> Source: ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.



## Offences type

In 2017-18, 14 women (8 males) in WA were victims of homicide due to family violence – higher than the annual average of 10 for women over the 10 years reported in Table 5. There were 206 sexual offences with female victims in 2017-18, which is above the 10-year average. There were 124 female victims of deprivation of liberty, which is above the ten year average of 109.

The number of victims of threatening behaviour, breach of violence restraining orders (reported on further in the next section) and property damage incidents all show a notable increase over the last 10 years. Greater reporting of such incidents, along with population growth are potential drivers of such trends.

**TABLE 5:** Family violence adult victims by offence type, victim gender, reported 2008-09 to 2017-18

Offence Type	Victim Gender	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Homicide	Female	7	5	8	10	14	11	6	12	9	14
	Male	5	3	4	11	9	4	6	9	11	8
	Other/ Unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sexual Offences	Female	116	114	131	169	131	131	150	178	193	206
	Male	3	1	4	2	3	4	1	5	3	8
	Other/ Unknown	5	-	3	-	-	-	1	1	-	1
Deprivation of Liberty	Female	112	100	96	100	94	88	122	119	135	124
	Male	5	3	3	3	4	2	5	3	4	4
	Other/ Unknown	1	-	1	3	1	1	-	-	4	1
Assault	Female	4,572	4,713	5,296	5,817	7,052	7,727	8,351	10,122	9,747	9,241
	Male	1,552	1,588	1,799	2,190	2,807	3,060	3,289	4,216	3,769	3,681
	Other/ Unknown	165	117	87	107	97	91	97	104	110	85
Threatening Behaviour	Female	519	515	597	632	784	874	989	1,523	1,706	1,605
	Male	164	145	179	204	282	255	334	480	442	453
	Other/ Unknown	17	18	14	9	7	6	11	14	18	21
Robbery	Female	20	22	16	24	21	23	38	26	37	21
	Male	5	3	5	3	2	4	3	2	10	13
	Other/ Unknown	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Breach of Violence Restraining Order	Female	1,664	1,735	1,866	2,104	2,525	2,624	2,811	3,473	3,503	3,395
	Male	278	280	306	366	449	446	524	607	612	691
	Other/ Unknown	61	33	28	31	31	23	33	45	36	29
Property Damage	Female	1,260	1,167	1,325	1,473	1,898	1,949	2,361	2,998	3,031	2,720
	Male	508	465	528	649	807	770	880	1,204	1,102	1,000
	Other/ Unknown	42	26	21	17	21	22	30	50	29	27
Other Offence Types	Female	516	471	524	575	651	659	779	981	1,014	901
	Male	216	172	156	176	223	199	179	243	248	226
	Other/ Unknown	18	10	7	1	9	7	10	9	7	5
Total Distinct Victims	Female	6,866	6,934	7,706	8,462	10,204	10,839	11,664	14,167	13,959	13,252
	Male	2,346	2,349	2,589	3,117	3,992	4,107	4,479	5,715	5,227	5,055
	Other/ Unknown	261	171	137	148	140	130	145	170	159	127
<b>Total Incidents</b>		<b>9,457</b>	<b>9,442</b>	<b>10,428</b>	<b>11,719</b>	<b>14,324</b>	<b>15,066</b>	<b>16,278</b>	<b>20,037</b>	<b>19,327</b>	<b>18,423</b>

Notes: Figures only include victims that were 18 years or older at the time of the offence. As some persons are victims of multiple types of offences, (and occasionally of different genders), the sum of the sub-totals will not equal the distinct total. Similarly, the percentages do not sum to 100.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Incident information was extracted from the IMS, WA Police Force, customised data, 2019.



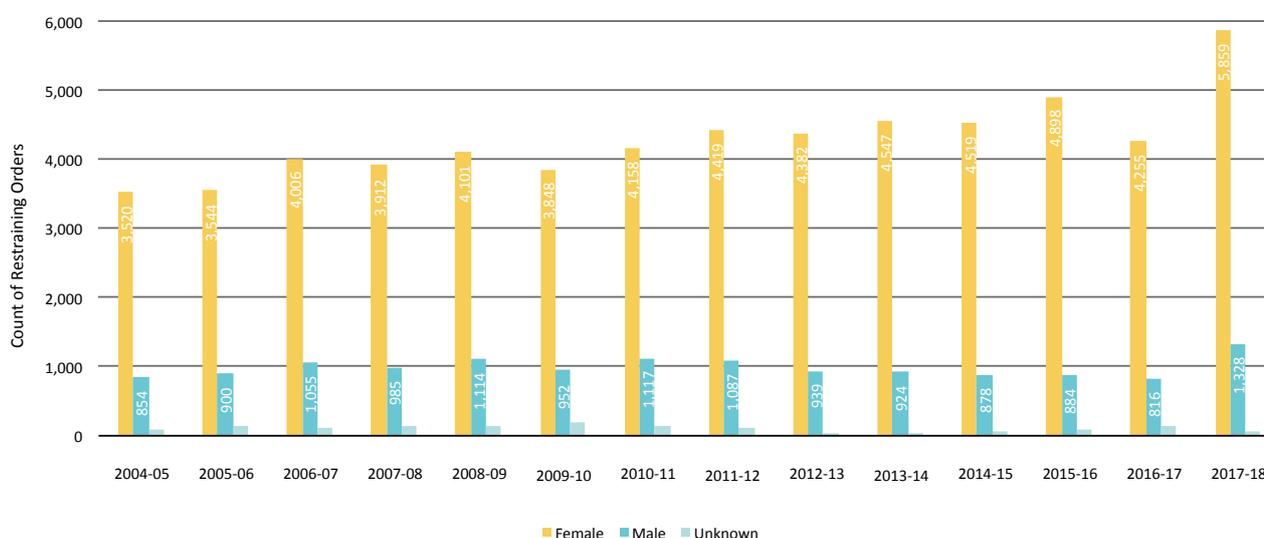
## Violence restraining orders

Under the *Restraining Orders Act 1997* (WA), a person can apply for a violence restraining order (VRO) for family violence or other non-family personal violence situations. The substantial increase in 'family and domestic violence' restraining orders granted in 2017-18 (Figure 35) compared to previous years is in part due to the introduction of the Family violence restraining order on 1st July 2017 and the improved categorisation of 'domestic' versus 'non-domestic' restraining orders that has resulted, and therefore

needs to be interpreted with caution. Previous categorisation means that violence restraining orders prior to July 2017 are likely to have underestimated those associated with family and domestic violence (for further details, refer to the notes beneath Figure 35).

Aside from the latter, it is clear that from 2009-10 to 2015-16, there was an increasing trend in the number of violence restraining orders granted relating to family and domestic violence, with a decline in 2016-17, meaning a return to the count reported in 2010-11.

**FIGURE 35:** Violence restraining order applications granted in WA by gender, relating to family and domestic violence



Notes: The increase in 'family and domestic violence' restraining orders granted in 2017-18 compared to previous years is in part due to the introduction of the Family Violence Restraining Order and the improved categorisation of 'domestic' versus 'non-domestic' restraining orders that has resulted. This is a count of applications granted, which does not translate to the number of people protected.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Department of Justice, customised data, 2019.

According to survey data,<sup>20</sup> of those women experiencing partner violence, only 17.5 per cent of women in WA noted that a restraining order was issued against their partner after experiencing violence. This compares to 21.3 per cent for Australia. Furthermore, 51.3 per cent of women in WA with a restraining order in place, reported that further incidents of violence occurred after a restraining order was issued against a partner, with the figure being 50.5 per cent in Australia. Such figures are supported by those reported in Table 5, which showed that there were a significant number of incidents where violence restraining orders were breached, with 3,395 such incidents containing a female victim (691 with a male victim).

Family and domestic violence is a leading cause of women's homelessness, with housing support from specialist homelessness services reported in Table 6. Such agencies have seen a 26 per cent increase in the number of female

clients supported and/or accommodated nationally between 2011-12 and 2017-18, compared to an 18 per cent increase for WA over the same period. The proportion of female clients related to domestic violence also increased since 2012-13. For WA, domestic violence now accounts for 55.8 per cent of the accommodation support from specialist homelessness agencies, up from 45.1 per cent in 2012-13. WA's figure is 2.2 percentage points higher than that reported for Australia (53.6%) and is in fact higher for each of the years reported since 2011-12.

Specialist homelessness agencies in WA have seen an 18 per cent increase in the number of female clients supported and/or accommodated between 2011-12 and 2017-18.

**TABLE 6:** Number of females assisted by specialist homelessness services, and the proportion experiencing domestic and family violence, Australia and WA, 2011-12 to 2017-18

		2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of female clients	Australia	139,630	143,054	149,455	151,707	165,765	172,530	175,632
	WA	12,595	13,093	13,201	14,225	15,232	15,452	14,843
Proportion related to domestic violence (%)	Australia	44.5	43.0	44.6	47.3	49.1	51.2	53.6
	WA	53.1	45.1	48.4	51.8	54.7	54.2	55.8

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Australian Institute for Health and Welfare "Supplementary tables - Historical tables Specialist Homelessness Services Collection 2011-12 to 2017-18.

<sup>20</sup> Source: ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.



## Safety in the community, including perceptions of safety

This section outlines women's safety in the broader community, including their perceptions of safety.

### Sexual assault against the person and related outcomes

In 2017-18, 700 women in WA reported being a victim of a recent sexual assault to the WA Police Force (Table 7). This is compared to 44 men. For women, the total number of female victims over the last two years is the highest reported over the period since 2004-05. While the number of women

In 2017-18, the sexual assault victimisation rate for females in WA was 7.0 per 10,000 females, well above 14-year average rate of 6.1.

in WA has also increased over that period (from more than 760,000 in 2004-05 to more than one million in 2017-18), the female victimisation rate in WA is also at an all-time high in recent years, with the current rate of 7.0 female victims per 10,000 of the population above the 14-year average of 6.1.

**TABLE 7:** Recent sexual assault adult victims reported to WA Police Force by victim gender, and victimisation rate against WA females, 2004-05 to 2017-18

Victim	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Female	475	489	553	515	532	504	547	559	508	546	489	616	708	700
	88.1%	90.9%	90.5%	88.8%	91.1%	90.8%	91.9%	93.6%	92.4%	94.5%	94.0%	94.3%	93.2%	93.5%
Male	24	28	33	43	40	41	40	34	38	28	28	34	47	44
	4.5%	5.2%	5.4%	7.4%	6.8%	7.4%	6.7%	5.7%	6.9%	4.8%	5.4%	5.2%	6.2%	5.9%
Other/ Unknown	40	21	25	22	12	10	8	4	4	4	3	3	5	5
	7.4%	3.9%	4.1%	3.8%	2.1%	1.8%	1.3%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>555</b>	<b>595</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>749</b>
Female Victimisation rate per 10,000 females	6.2	6.3	6.9	6.2	6.2	5.8	6.1	6.0	5.3	5.6	5.0	6.2	7.1	7.0

Notes: Figures only include victims who were 18 years or older at the time of the offence. Sexual assault is the physical contact, or the intent of contact, of a sexual nature against another person, which is non-consensual or where consent is given in proscribed circumstances. For example, sexual penetration, sexual coercion or indecent dealing. A 'recent' sexual assault is one which is reported to WA Police within 90 days of occurrence. Victimisation rates calculated by the authors using ABS Cat 3101, Table 55.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Incident information was extracted from the Incident Management System (IMS), WA Police, customised data, 2019; ABS Cat 3101, Table 55.

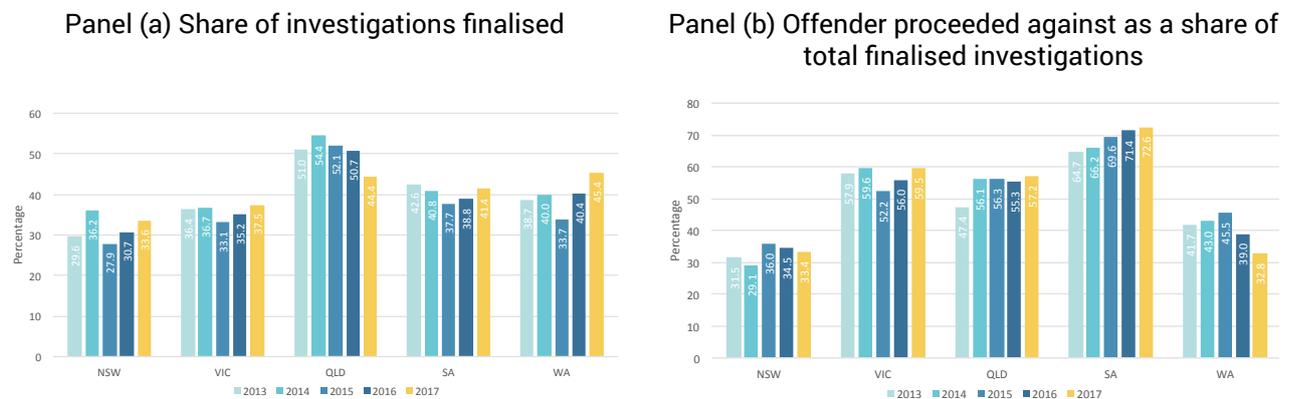
The number of investigations of sexual assault cases by state are reported in Table 8 and Figure 36, along with the number of investigations finalised and the proportion of cases where an offender was proceeded against. In WA, 45 per cent of cases were finalised in 2017, which is an improvement on all previous years reported here, and the highest across all states for that year (Figure 36, Panel (a)).

In 2017, WA has the lowest share of finalised investigations where an offender was proceeded against, standing at 38 per cent (Figure 36,

Panel (b)). This is the lowest share across the five years reported for WA. Furthermore, this rate for WA is the lowest across all the states, with NSW being the only state to report lower rates between 2013 and 2016. Such rates are as high as 72 per cent for South Australia, 57 per cent for Queensland and 60 per cent for Victoria.

In the *2015 Women's Report Card*, it was noted that "attrition along the justice chain is recognised as an issue that needs to be addressed to improve criminal justice outcomes".<sup>21</sup> It appears as though this is an issue that continues to exist.

**FIGURE 36:** Investigations and outcomes of sexual assault cases, by state, 2013 to 2017



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4510, Recorded Crime - Victims, 2013, 2015, 2017.

21 Government of Western Australia, Department of Local Government and Communities, *2015 Women's Report Card*, page 64.

**TABLE 8:** Investigations and outcomes of sexual assault cases, by state, 2013 to 2017

Year	Outcome of investigation	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA
2017	Total Investigations (count)	9,847	6,024	4,751	1,584	1,899
	Investigation finalised (count)	3,310	2,258	2,111	656	863
	Share of investigations finalised (%)	33.6	37.5	44.4	41.4	45.4
	Investigation finalised – offender proceeded against (count)	1,105	1,344	1,207	476	283
	Offender proceeded against as share of total investigations (%)	11.2	22.3	25.4	30.1	14.9
	Offender proceeded against as share of total finalised investigations (%)	33.4	59.5	57.2	72.6	32.8
2016	Total Investigations (count)	8,795	5,381	4,349	1,521	2,157
	Investigation finalised (count)	2,702	1,893	2,206	590	871
	Share of investigations finalised (%)	30.7	35.2	50.7	38.8	40.4
	Investigation finalised – offender proceeded against (count)	933	1,060	1,221	421	340
	Offender proceeded against as share of total investigations (%)	10.6	19.7	28.1	27.7	15.8
	Offender proceeded against as share of total finalised investigations (%)	34.5	56.0	55.3	71.4	39.0
2015	Total Investigations (count)	8,603	4,200	4,199	1,590	2,012
	Investigation finalised (count)	2,398	1,390	2,188	599	679
	Share of investigations finalised (%)	27.9	33.1	52.1	37.7	33.7
	Investigation finalised – offender proceeded against (count)	863	726	1,232	417	309
	Offender proceeded against as share of total investigations (%)	10.0	17.3	29.3	26.2	15.4
	Offender proceeded against as share of total finalised investigations (%)	36.0	52.2	56.3	69.6	45.5
2014	Total Investigations (count)	8,192	4,169	4,063	1,545	1,942
	Investigation finalised (count)	2,966	1,529	2,212	630	777
	Share of investigations finalised (%)	36.2	36.7	54.4	40.8	40.0
	Investigation finalised – offender proceeded against (count)	864	912	1,242	417	334
	Offender proceeded against as share of total investigations (%)	10.5	21.9	30.6	27.0	17.2
	Offender proceeded against as share of total finalised investigations (%)	29.1	59.6	56.1	66.2	43.0
2013	Total Investigations (count)	7,608	4,369	4,017	1,357	1,825
	Investigation finalised (count)	2,251	1,589	2,049	578	707
	Share of investigations finalised (%)	29.6	36.4	51.0	42.6	38.7
	Investigation finalised – offender proceeded against (count)	708	920	972	374	295
	Offender proceeded against as share of total investigations (%)	9.3	21.1	24.2	27.6	16.2
	Offender proceeded against as share of total finalised investigations (%)	31.5	57.9	47.4	64.7	41.7

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4510, Recorded Crime - Victims, 2013, 2015, 2017.

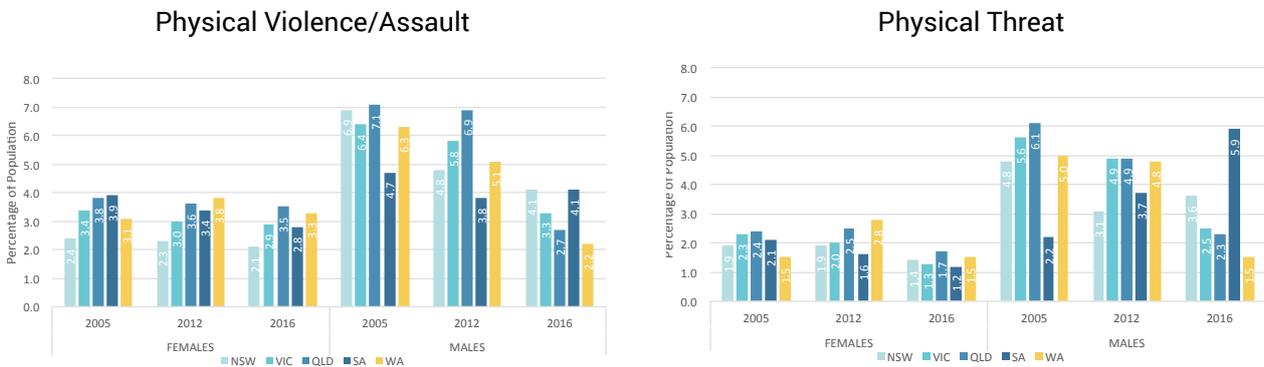
### Physical violence and physical threat, and misuse of drugs

In the years prior to 2016, women in WA were less likely to experience physical assault relative to men (Figure 37). However, in 2016, 3.3 per cent of women in WA were likely to experience physical violence, compared to 2.2 per cent of men. The latter change, however, is largely determined by the significant decline in males experiencing physical violence, with the figure standing at 5.1 per cent in 2012 and 6.3 per cent in 2005. For women in WA, the figure has remained in the

3 per cent range during that period. For women in 2016, the rate in WA is just below that of Queensland, but above that of the other states. This compares to 2012, when WA reported the highest rate of physical violence for women across all states.

In terms of physical threat (Figure 37), a similar decline to that of physical violence is observed for men, going from 5 per cent in 2005 to 1.5 per cent in 2016. For women, the proportion has declined from 2.8 per cent in 2012 to 1.5 per cent in 2016, now on par with the percentage reported in 2005.

**FIGURE 37:** Experience of physical violence and physical threat during the last 12 months, by state, 2005 to 2016



Note: This includes in the home and/or in public community.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.



Outside of the experience of physical assault, it is also important to gauge feelings of safety in our community, as such feelings can impact on how people use public spaces and amenities, and interact socially. Feelings of safety can be influenced by personal experiences, and knowledge and information based on other people's experiences.

Based on the *National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing (NSCSP)*, Figure 38 reports on persons who feel concerned or very concerned about being a victim of crime in WA by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. Almost 46 per cent of women in WA in 2017-18 reported being concerned or very concerned about being a victim of physical assault in a public place in the next 12 months (Figure 38, Panel (a)). This compares to 40 per cent of males. While the figure for women is down from the 55 per cent reported in 2008-09, it is now at the highest rate reported since then. For men, the rate is down on the peak of 58 per cent reported in 2008-09.

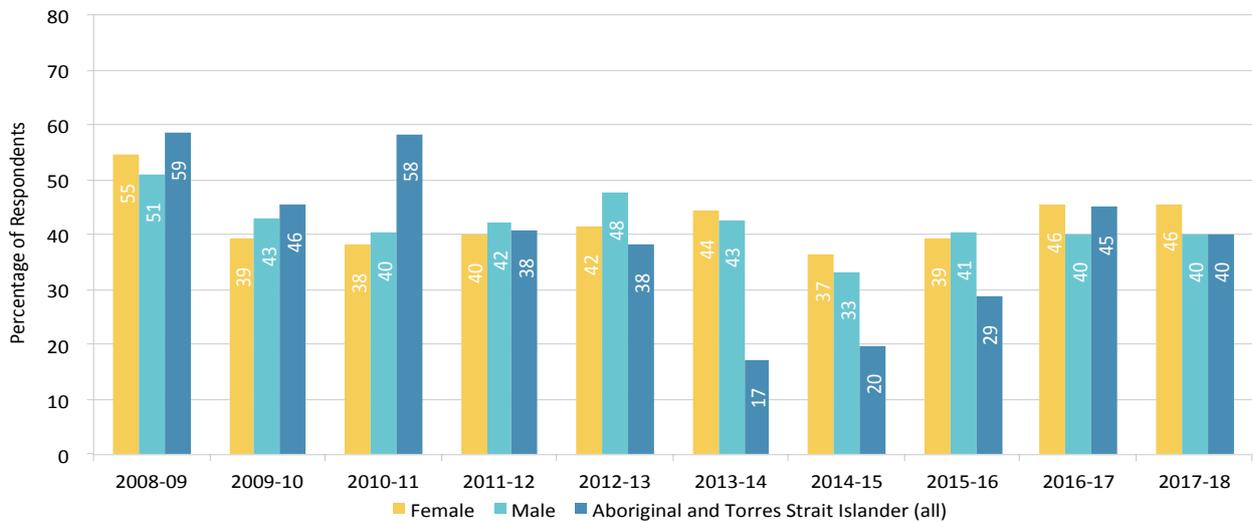
Panel (b) of Figure 38 shows the proportion of survey respondents that feel concerned or very concerned about being a victim of a housebreaking over the next 12 months. In 2017-18, some 72 per cent of women in WA report such concerns, compared to 62 per cent of men. The figure for women has ranged from 58 per cent (2009-10) to 73 per cent (2016-17) over the period reported, with the figures reported over the last two years being the highest across the period.

Almost 46 per cent of women in WA in 2017-18 reported being concerned or very concerned about being a victim of physical assault in a public place in the next 12 months.

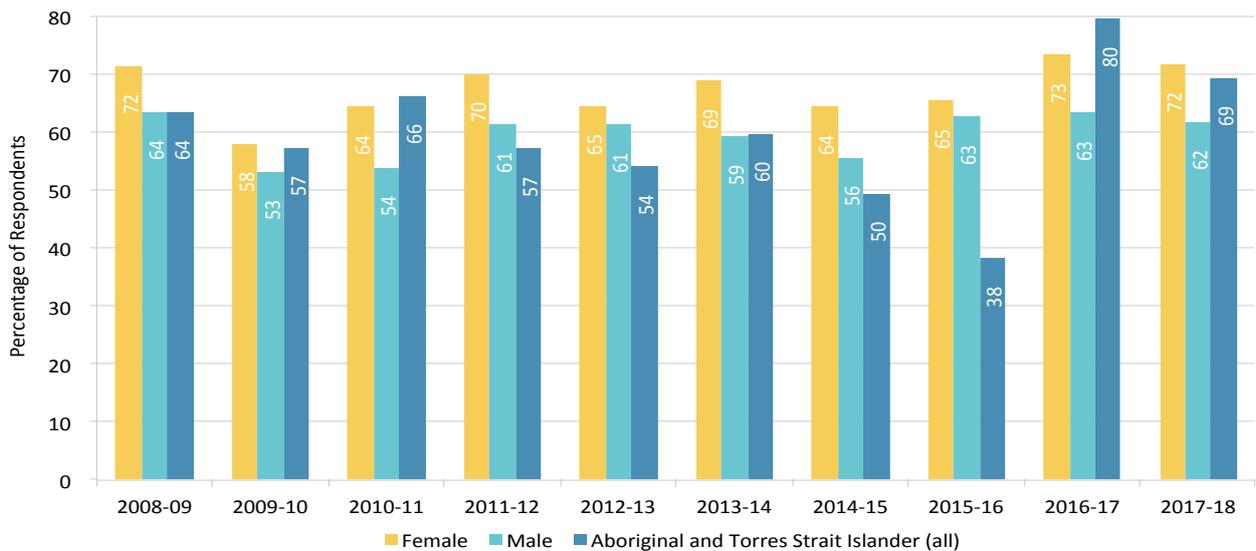
In 2017-18, 72 per cent of women in WA felt concerned or very concerned about being a victim of a housebreaking over the next 12 months.

**FIGURE 38:** Persons who feel concerned or very concerned about being a victim of crime, by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, 2008-09 to 2017-18

Panel (a) How concerned are you that you will become a victim of physical assault in a public place in the next 12 months?



Panel (b) How concerned are you that you will become a victim of housebreaking in the next 12 months?



Notes: The National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing (NSCSP) is commissioned by the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) and is conducted by the Social Research Centre. Survey responses are provided quarterly to the WA Police Force by the Social Research Centre, on behalf of ANZPAA. All survey respondents were 18 years or older at the time of the survey. Due to small count, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data is not available by gender for the purposes of this report, and reported results for this group should be treated with caution. Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing (NSCSP), WA Police Force, customised data, 2019.



## Safety on public transport, at home and in the local area

As previously noted, perceptions of safety can impact on how people interact with public amenities and in turn interact socially. In 2016, 19.3 per cent of females in WA (1.7% of men) did not use public transport alone after dark in the previous 12 months because they felt unsafe in doing so (Figure 39). This figure was 14.3 per cent for women across Australia. However, for WA, the figure is down from 25.9 per cent reported in 2005. This coincides with an increase in the number of females in WA who used public transport and felt safe in 2016, increasing from 10.2 per cent in 2005 to 14.2 per cent in 2016. However, the latter remains much lower than that of men (31.5%). Furthermore, across Australia, the proportion of both men and women feeling safe while using public transport at night was much higher, standing

at 20.7 per cent for women and 37.4 per cent for men – some 6.5 percentage points higher for both genders relative to that of WA.

Improvements in feelings of safety for WA are however also evident in the proportion of women that reported using public transport alone after dark and feeling unsafe, which declined to 5.4 per cent (2.8% of men), relative to 5.9 per cent in 2005.

In 2016, more than 19 per cent of women in WA did not use public transport at night because they felt unsafe, down from the 25.9 per cent reported in 2005.

**FIGURE 39:** Feelings of safety using public transport alone after dark in the last 12 months, WA and Australia, 2005 to 2016



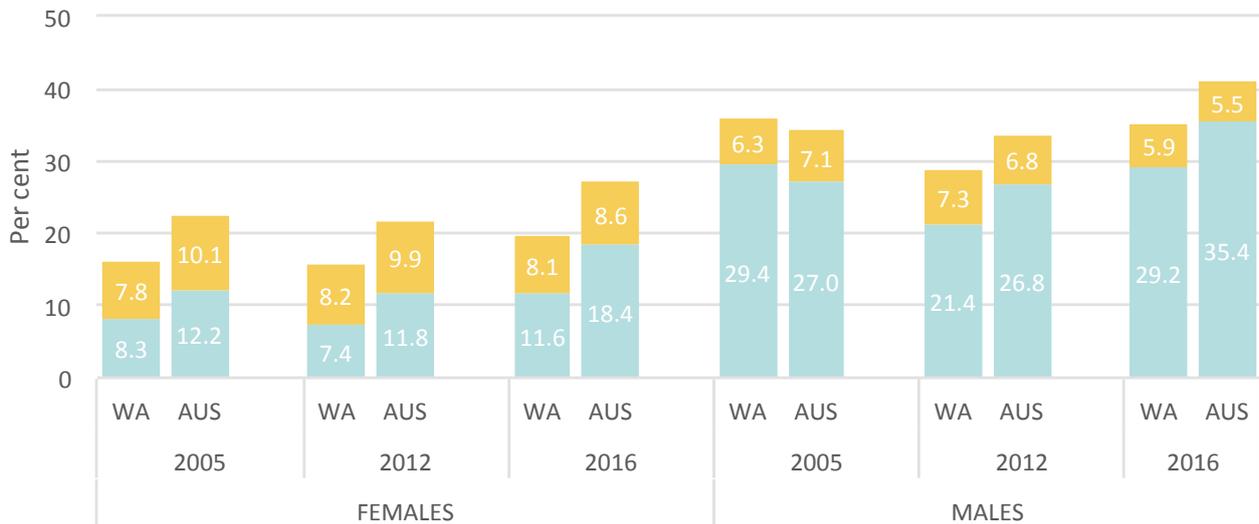
Note: The remaining population has not used public transportation for other reasons.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

In terms of feeling safe while waiting for public transport after dark (Figure 40), in 2016, 11.6 per cent of females in WA waited for public transport alone after dark in the last 12 months and felt safe, up on that figure reported in 2005 (8.3%).

However, the 2016 figure for women in WA is well below the 18.4 per cent reported nationally. Again, the comparison to males is striking, with 29.2 per cent of males in WA (35.4% nationally) waiting for public transport alone after dark and feeling safe in doing so.

**FIGURE 40:** Feelings of safety waiting for public transport alone after dark in the last 12 months, Australia and WA, 2005 to 2016

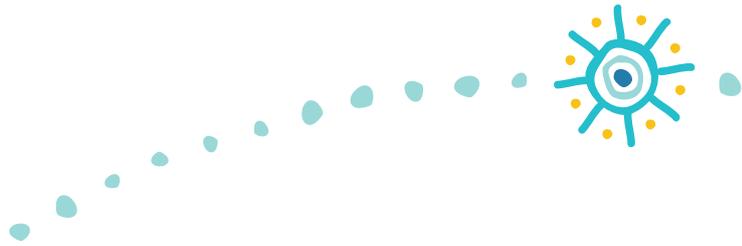


Notes: The remaining population has not waited for public transport alone after dark in the last 12 months. Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

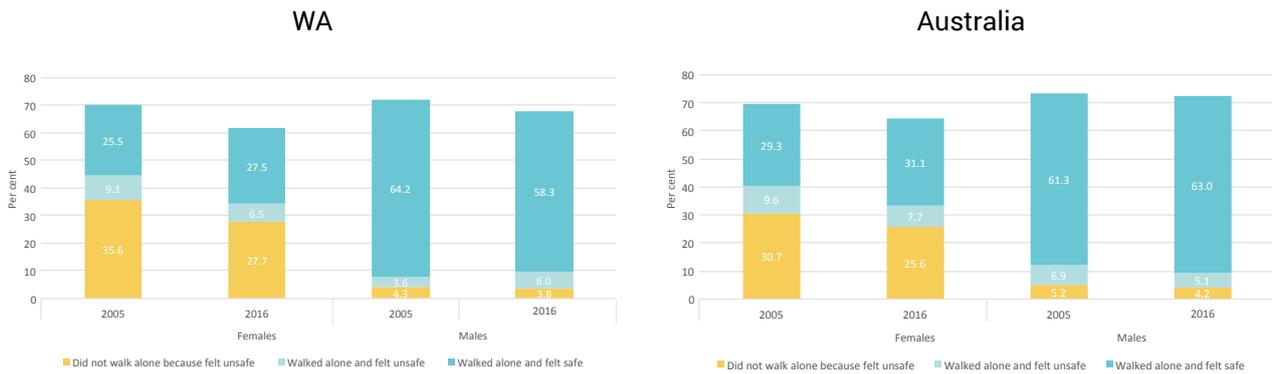
Data relating to feelings of safety while walking alone (in the local area) after dark also signals that women in WA, and nationally, are unable to engage in society to the same extent as that of men. In 2016, almost 27.7 per cent of women did not walk alone after dark because they felt unsafe (Figure 41). A similar figure is reported nationally (25.6%). For WA, this is lower than the 35.6 per cent reported in 2005. In 2016, 27.5 per cent of women walked alone and felt safe, up two percentage points on 2005. This is lower than that reported nationally, where the figure for women was 31.1 per cent. For males in WA, 58.3 per cent walked alone and felt safe in 2016, which interestingly is in a reverse

trend to that of women, with the figure for males being 64.2 per cent in 2005. For men, this figure is also lower than that reported nationally in 2016 (63%).

In 2016, almost 27.7 per cent of women did not walk alone after dark because they felt unsafe. This is lower than the 35.6 per cent reported in 2005.



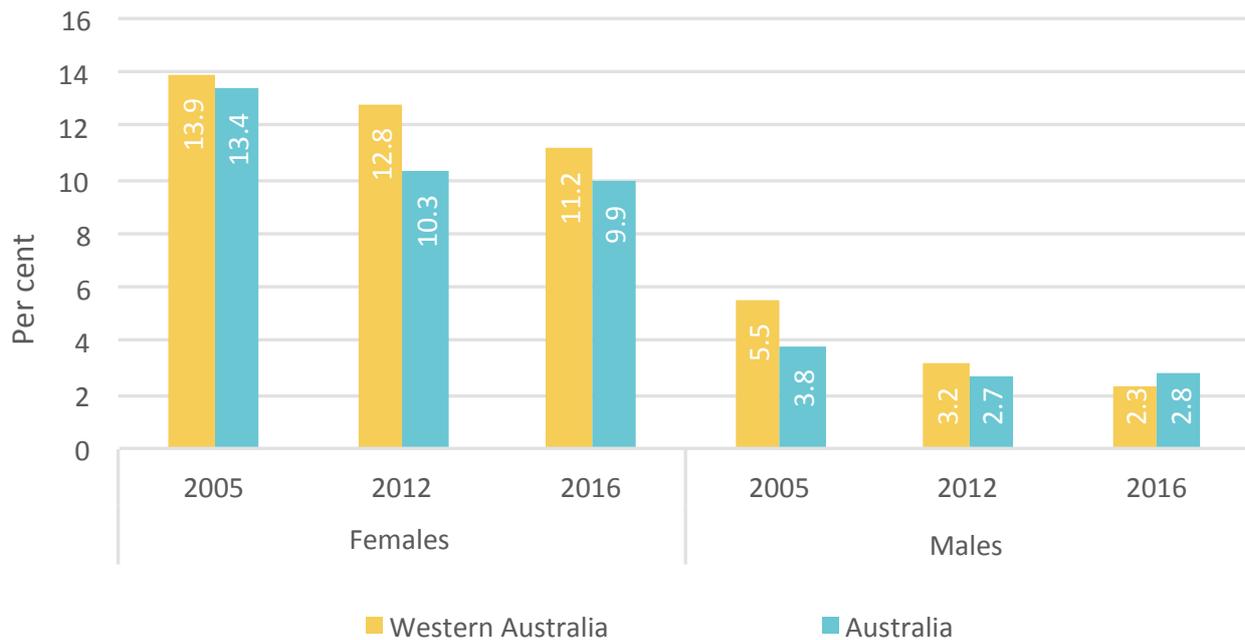
**FIGURE 41:** Feelings of safety walking in the local area alone after dark in the last 12 months, Australia and WA, 2005 to 2016



Note: The bars do not sum to 100% as the residual share of the population did not walk in the local area after dark for 'other reasons'.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

Feelings of safety while home alone after dark has displayed some improvement in recent years. Figure 42 shows that 11.2 per cent of females (2.3% of males) in WA did not feel safe while home alone after dark in the last 12 months, down from the 13.9 per cent reported in 2005 (also down from 3.2% for men). These figures remain higher for women in WA relative to their counterparts nationally, albeit only 1.3 percentage points higher.

11.2 per cent of females (2.3% of males) in WA did not feel safe while home alone after dark in the last 12 months, down from the 13.9 per cent reported in 2005.

**FIGURE 42:** Did not feel safe home alone after dark in the last 12 months, Australia and WA

Note: For those having stayed home alone.

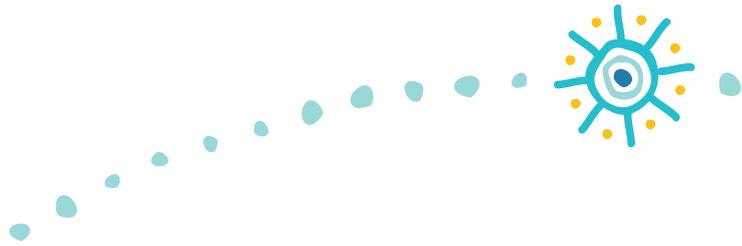
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4906, Personal Safety.

## Workplace safety and discrimination

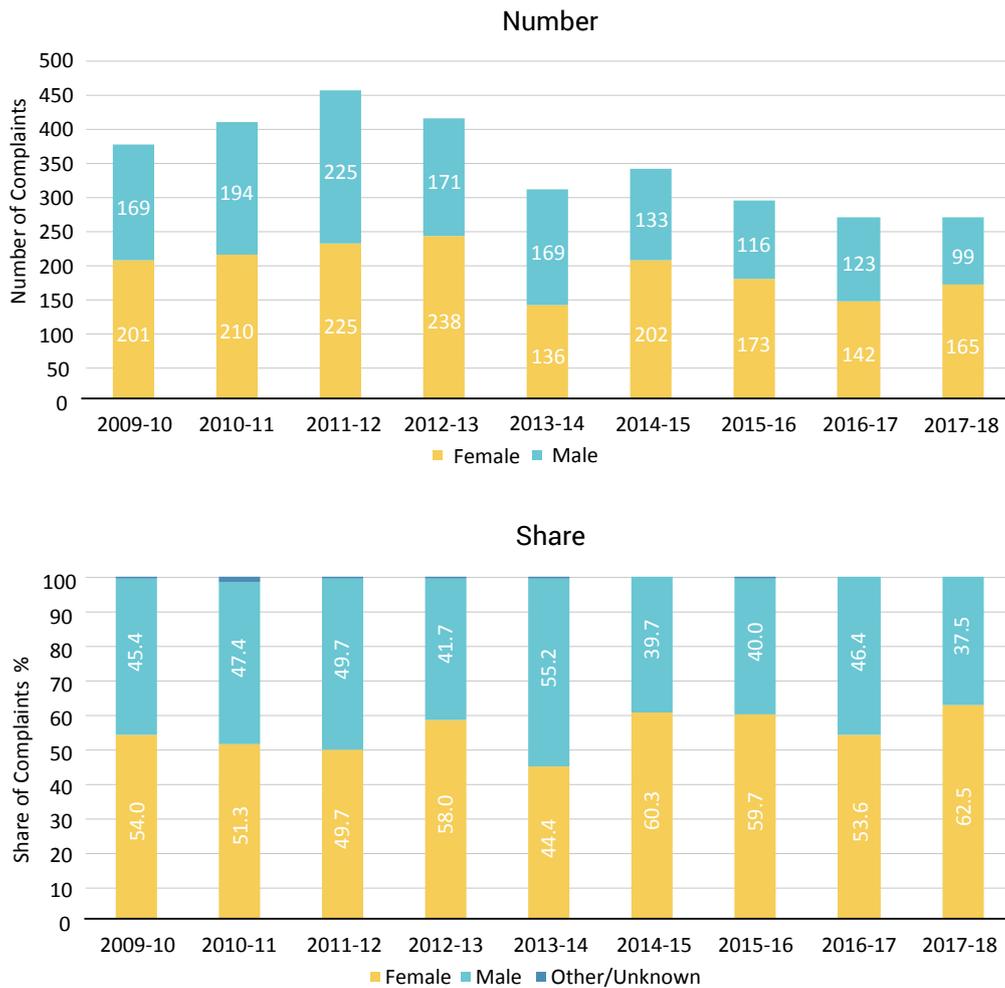
Under the Economic Independence indicator, the employment outcomes of women, among others will be discussed in some detail. Here, we look at the issue of complaints in the area of work (employment) and the grounds for such complaints.

## Complaints received by the Equal Opportunity Commission WA

In 2017-18, there were a total of 264 complaints in the area of work (employment) to the Equal Opportunity Commission WA (Figure 43). Of these, 62.5 per cent (165 complaints) were made by females. While the total number of complaints is down on previous years, with a height of 453 in 2011-12 (for women, the largest number of complaints was in 2012-13, standing at 238), the share of women reporting complaints is now at a historic high (62.5%) for the years reported here, with an average share of 54.8 per cent over the nine years reported.



**FIGURE 43:** Complaints in the area of work (employment) to Equal Opportunity Commission WA, 2009-10 to 2017-18



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Equal Opportunity Commission WA, unpublished and customised data, 2019.

For females, the most common area of employment complaints to the Equal Opportunity Commission WA in 2017-18 was sexual harassment, with 43 out of 48 (89.6%) such complaints made by women (see Table 9). This was followed by impairment, victimisation and pregnancy. Interestingly, the top six areas of complaint (rank) in 2017-18 is the same as the top six ranking in 2009-10. Despite an ageing workforce, the number of complaints based on age has not increased over time.

**TABLE 9:** Employment complaints to Equal Opportunity Commission WA, by grounds of complaint, WA, 2009-10 to 2017-18

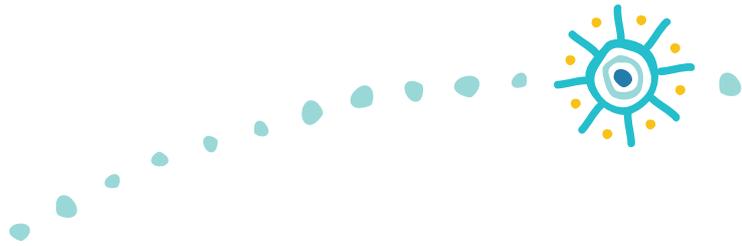
Ground	2009-10			2011-12			2013-14			2015-16			2017-18			Total (No.)				
	Female (No.)	Female (%)	Rank	Total (No.)	Female (No.)	Female (%)	Rank	Total (No.)	Female (No.)	Female (%)	Rank	Total (No.)	Female (No.)	Female (%)	Rank					
Sexual Harassment	54	88.5%	1	61	57	74.0%	1	77	25	86.2%	1	29	44	83.0%	1	53	43	89.6%	1	48
Impairment	33	46.5%	2	71	25	34.2%	3	73	22	37.9%	2	58	24	51.1%	2	47	23	48.9%	2	47
Victimisation	32	51.6%	3	62	35	52.2%	2	67	18	43.9%	3	41	20	55.6%	4	36	20	66.7%	3	30
Pregnancy	24	96.0%	4	25	14	100.0%	7	14	11	91.7%	6	12	22	100.0%	3	22	18	100.0%	4	18
Sex	15	71.4%	5	21	20	74.1%	4	27	12	57.1%	5	21	17	73.9%	5	23	15	78.9%	5	19
Family Responsibility	12	66.7%	6	18	18	75.0%	5	24	14	77.8%	4	18	13	68.4%	6	19	14	82.4%	6	17
Race	9	25.0%	8	36	15	28.3%	6	53	9	18.8%	8	48	10	32.3%	7	31	12	41.4%	7	29
Age	11	39.3%	7	28	13	43.3%	8	30	11	42.3%	6	26	9	69.2%	8	13	8	44.4%	8	18
Marital Status	2	66.7%	11	3	7	63.6%	10	11	1	50.0%	13	2	2	100.0%	10	2	4	0.0%	9	4
Racial Harassment	4	16.7%	9	24	8	20.0%	9	40	4	12.9%	10	31	1	5.0%	14	20	3	27.3%	10	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>54.0%</b>		<b>372</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>49.7%</b>		<b>453</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>44.4%</b>		<b>306</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>59.7%</b>		<b>290</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>62.5%</b>		<b>264</b>

Note: Ground of complaint is listed in order of 2017-18 rank. Rank is based on the number of females.

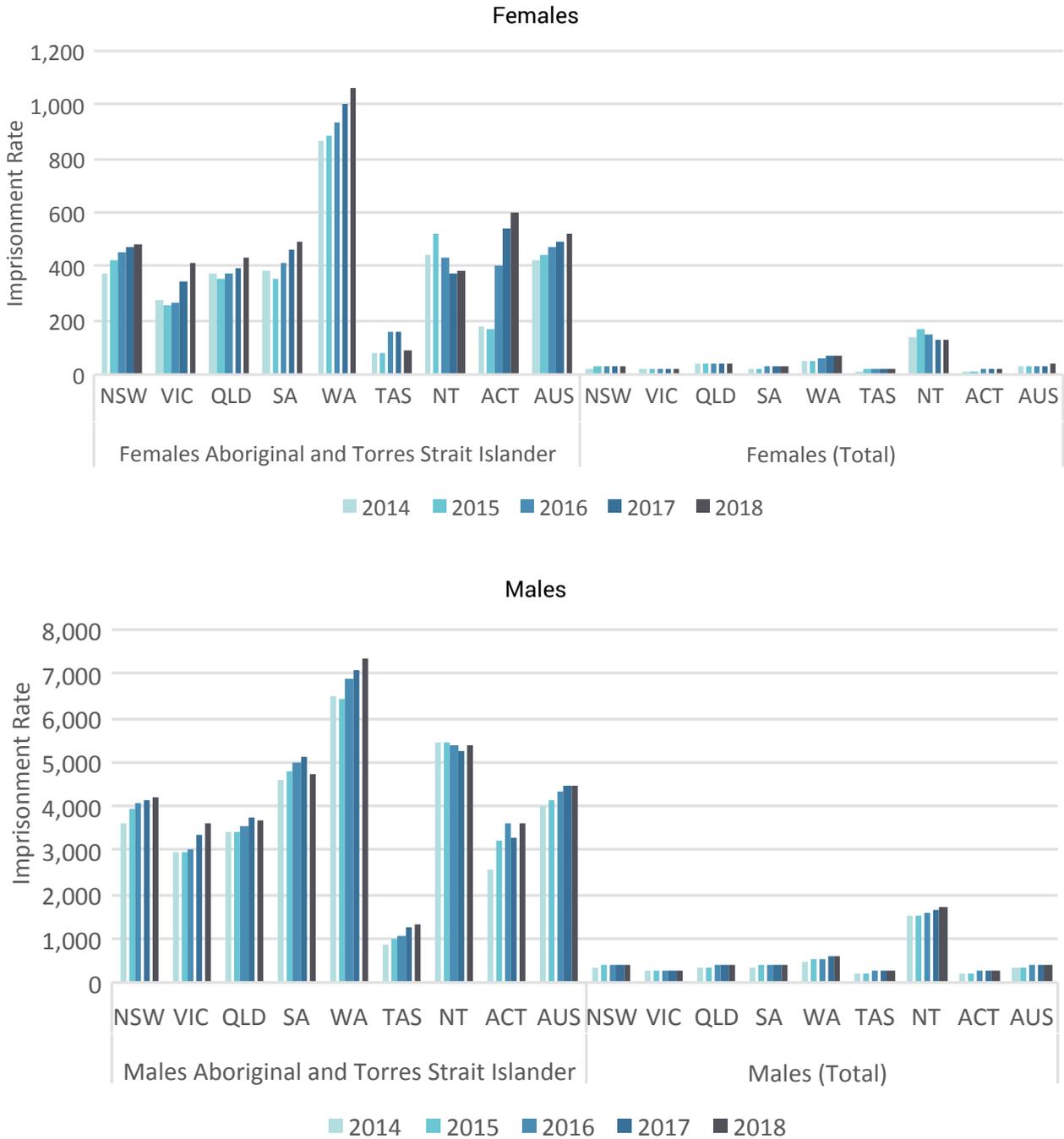
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Equal Opportunity Commission, customised data, 2019.

## Offending and imprisonment

Imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the population by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status for Australia by state and territory are presented in Figure 44 and Table 10, for the years between 2014 and 2018. A number of key points emerge. First, the higher imprisonment rates for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females across all states and territories is evident from Figure 45. Second, the imprisonment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females is highest in WA relative to other states and territories. Imprisonment rates in WA are also the highest across all states for all males and females, and lie only behind the Northern Territory when one also considers the territories.



**FIGURE 44:** Imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the population, by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, Australia and by state and territory, 2014 to 2018



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4512 Corrective Services, June Quarter 2018.

For WA, in 2018, imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female population (Table 10) stood at 1,066.3 (517.1 nationally), compared to 72.8 for all females (36.2 nationally). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, the rate was 7,353.3 (4,482.0 nationally), compared to 619.4 for all males in WA (410.2 nationally). This difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been highlighted in the recent WA Government's 'Our Priorities' vision announcement. One of the priorities is supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing through a preventative approach. The Government has set a target to achieve a 23 per cent reduction in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in prison by 2028-29.<sup>22</sup>

In 2018, imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female population in WA stood at 1,066.3 (517.1 nationally), compared to 72.8 for all females in WA (36.2 nationally).

**TABLE 10:** Imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the population, by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, Australia and by state and territory, 2014 to 2018

	Females Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander									Females (Total)								
	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUS	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUS
2014	375.3	278.6	371.3	386.9	866.7	78.4	441.6	174.2	427.6	25.5	18.1	35.9	25.4	49.9	14.4	137.4	12.0	28.9
2015	419.1	259.1	352.8	352.8	883.7	80.5	523.5	170.9	443.0	28.4	18.3	35.7	23.3	52.5	16.9	165.2	12.8	30.2
2016	457.8	269.3	378.8	410.3	931.0	155.1	436.4	407.3	467.9	31.5	18.2	37.0	27.9	59.9	24.8	148.9	17.5	32.6
2017	473.5	347.8	395.0	463.1	998.6	154.8	372.9	537.9	489.4	33.2	20.1	37.7	31.2	68.1	21.2	126.1	24.0	34.6
2018	478.4	411.2	436.2	496.7	1,066.3	87.0	380.9	602.4	517.1	32.7	21.4	42.3	32.0	72.8	20.3	131.6	23.5	36.2

	Males Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander									Males (Total)								
	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUS	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUS
2014	3579.1	2,963.8	3,386.5	4,577.7	6,497.4	885.3	5,418.6	2,557.1	4,018.1	348	258.4	354.5	365.6	475.9	218.1	1,495.6	215.2	349.8
2015	3911.7	2,967.5	3,384.9	4,819.0	6,453.9	986.4	5,423.0	3,213.7	4,136.2	377.5	259.0	363.9	394.5	501.9	234.9	1,542.9	234.1	367.2
2016	4042.8	3,002.9	3,575.3	5,014.5	6,904.8	1,038.5	5,407.3	3,601.4	4,307.4	398.7	266.4	386.6	415.4	551.7	253.0	1,598.2	264.0	388.4
2017	4128	3,379.9	3,755.2	5,106.8	7,114.7	1,251.0	5,266.7	3,284.0	4,433.1	406.1	275.8	412.5	425.6	602.0	277.0	1,617.3	272.3	403.7
2018	4200.8	3,583.4	3,703.7	4,708.3	7,352.3	1,291.5	5,377.1	3,638.7	4,482.0	409.4	287.8	419.4	414.9	619.4	287.7	1,678.6	280.3	410.2

Note: Imprisonment rates for 2018 have been calculated as the average of the March and June quarter.

Source: ABS Cat. 4512 Corrective Services, June Quarter 2018.

22 See Government of Western Australia Media Statements here: <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2019/02/150000-new-jobs-to-be-created-as-part-of-the-Our-Priorities-vision.aspx>.



In terms of offender rates per 100,000 of the population, Table 11 shows that while rates are lower than those recorded in 2008-09, such rates have increased substantially over the last three years in WA, for both males and females.

For males, after a five-year decline between 2008-09 and 2013-14, the most significant increase occurred in 2016-17, with a six per cent increase, from 2,586.4 per 100,000 to 2,741.9 per 100,000.

For females in WA, offender rates have increased at an average of 7.9 per cent over the last three years, and now stand at 988.0 per 100,000. The latter rate for females in Australia was 910.0 – 77.6 lower than that of WA. With the exception of

2012-13 to 2014-15, female rates have been higher in WA than those of females across the nation. Interestingly and conversely, male offender rates in WA have been lower than that of Australia since 2010-11.

For females in WA, offender rates have increased at an average of 7.9 per cent over the last three years, and now stand at 988.0 per 100,000.

**TABLE 11:** Offender rate per 100,000 by gender, Australia and WA, 2008-09 to 2016-17

		2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
WA	Males	3,424.8	3,420.6	2,973.3	2,639.9	2,498.8	2,445.4	2,572.9	2,586.4	2,741.9
	Females	1,085.6	1,125.8	1,000.8	894.4	858.1	787.1	852.8	916.2	988.0
AUS	Males	3,159.3	3,232.2	3,143.4	3,044.3	3,127.6	3,176.3	3,155.3	3,110.6	3,005.2
	Females	865.5	902.6	877.9	858.2	864.6	878.5	881.4	914.7	910.4

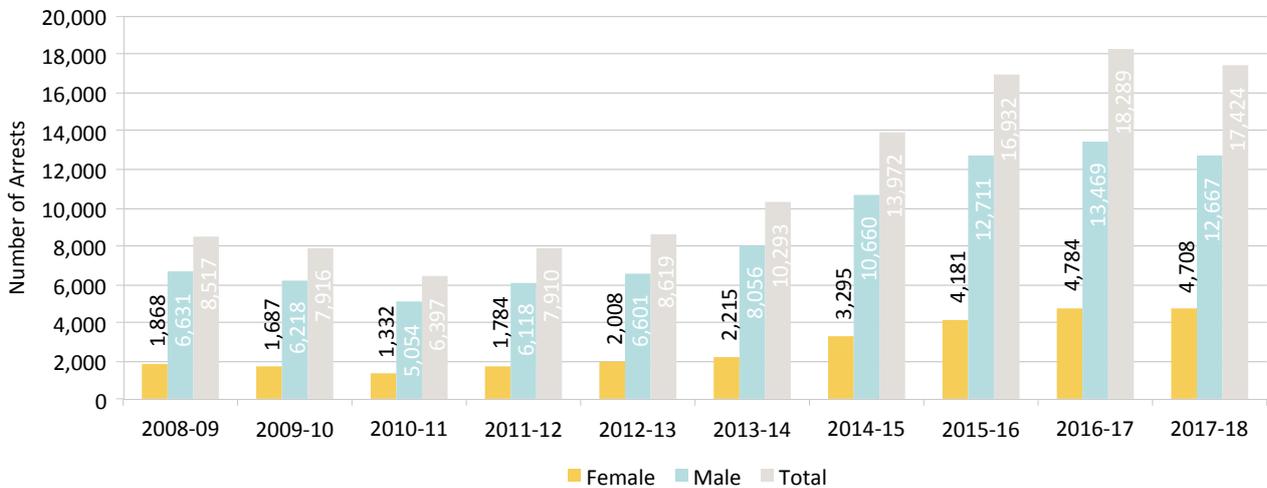
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 4519 Recorded Crime - Offenders, 2016-17.

One of the new metrics included in the 2019 *Women's Report Card* is arrests against the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1981* (WA). Illicit drug use has become a more concerning issue in WA and across the nation, with some details on this issue discussed in the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission released in July 2018. Using WA Police Force data, Figure 45 shows that in 2017-18 there were 17,424 drug-related arrests in WA. This is a 105 per cent increase in the number of drug-related arrests since that reported in 2008-09. Of the 2017-18 arrests, 27 per cent were of women. The share of women arrested for offences against the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1981* has risen over time, with women comprising only 22 per cent of such arrests in 2008-09.

In 2017-18, there were 17,424 drug-related arrests in WA, a 104 per cent increase on 2008-09.

Women comprised 27 per cent of drug-related arrests in WA in 2017-18, an increase from the 22 per cent share reported in 2008-09.

**FIGURE 45:** Arrests of adults made against the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1981* (WA), by gender, 2008-09 to 2017-18



Notes: Figures only include persons who were 18 years or older at the time of their arrest. Total includes those arrests where gender was other or unknown.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Arrest information was extracted from the Prosecution system on 4 February 2019, WA Police Force, customised data, 2019.



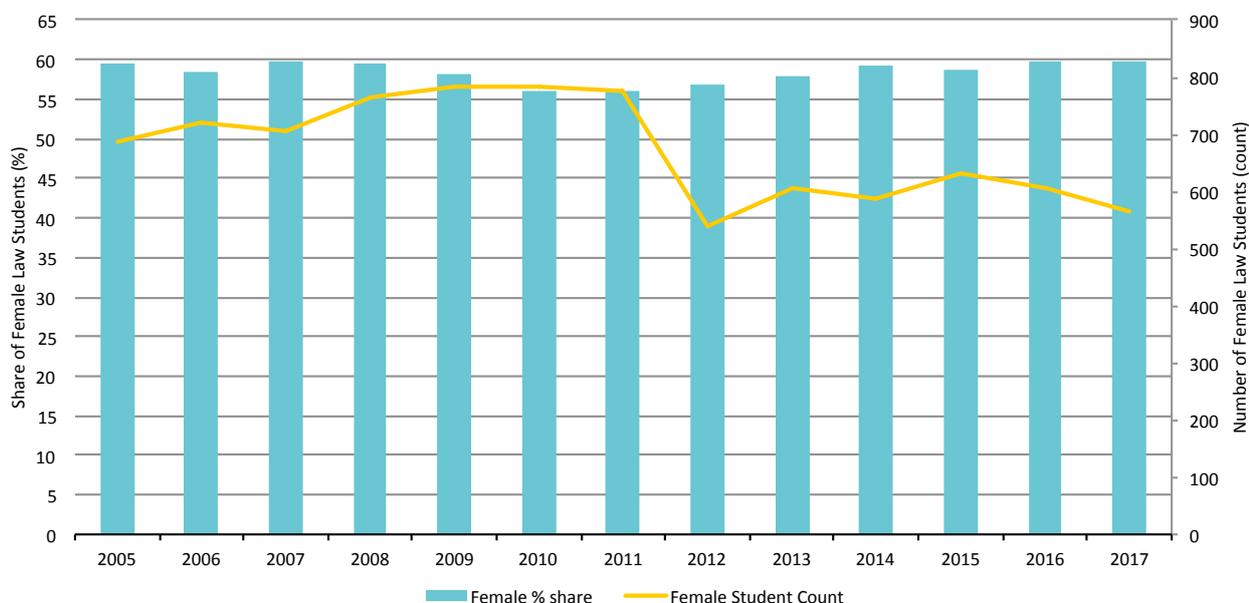
## Women working in the legal/justice system

While the number of women working in the legal/justice system is an indicator of leadership and labour market success, it is also important in terms of offenders' interactions with the justice system.

The number and percentage of female law students in WA between 2005 and 2017 are reported in Figure 46. While the count of female law students has declined from a peak of 785 in 2010 to 564 in 2017, such a decline is also evident among males. The share of female law students now sits just below 60 per cent, with an average of 58.5 per cent over the 13 years between 2005 and 2017.

The share of female law students now sits just below 60 per cent, with an average of 58.5 per cent over the 13 years between 2005 and 2017.

**FIGURE 46:** Number and percentage share of female law students in WA, 2005 to 2017

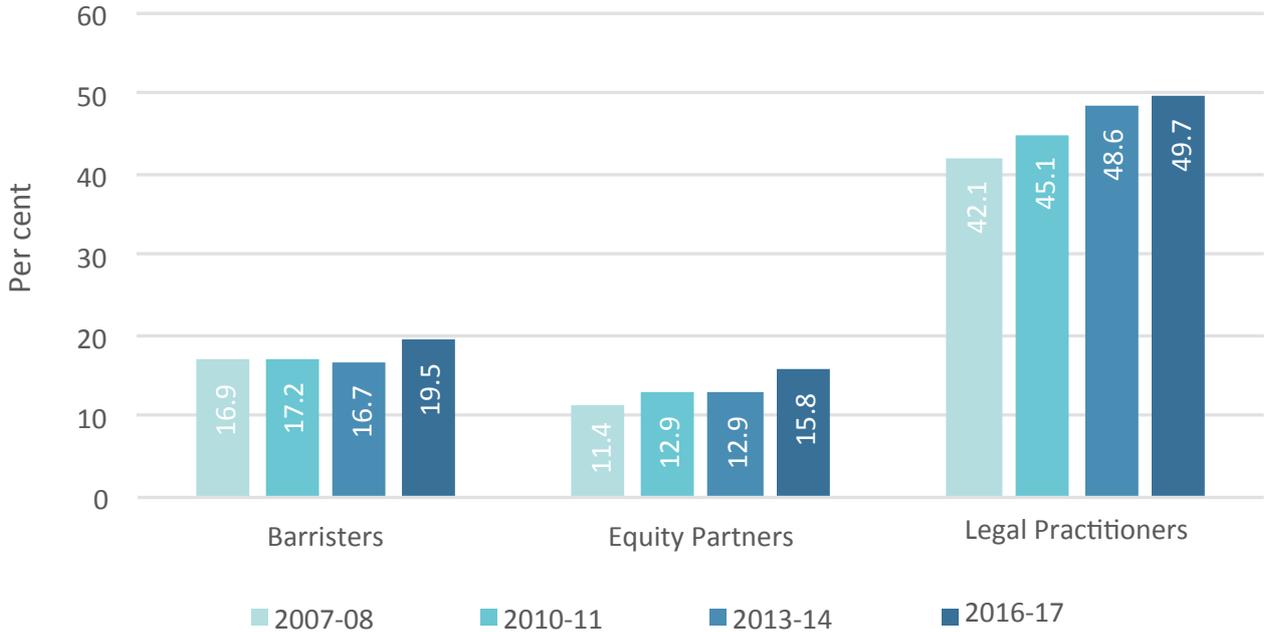


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Australian Government Department of Education and Training, customised data, April, 2019.

There have been small but positive improvements relating to the percentage of female barristers, legal practitioners and equity partners in WA, with the 2016-17 data showing the highest female representation since 2007-08 across all three categories (Figure 47). However, while the share of women in the legal practitioner space is close to 50 per cent, the gap between male and female representation among barristers and equity partners remains sizeable. For barristers, 19.5 per cent are now women, while only 15.8 per cent of equity partners are women.

While the share of women in the legal practitioner space is close to 50 per cent, only 19.5 per cent of barristers are women, and only 15.8 per cent of equity partners are women.

**FIGURE 47:** Percentage of female barristers, legal practitioners and equity partners, WA, 2007 to 2016



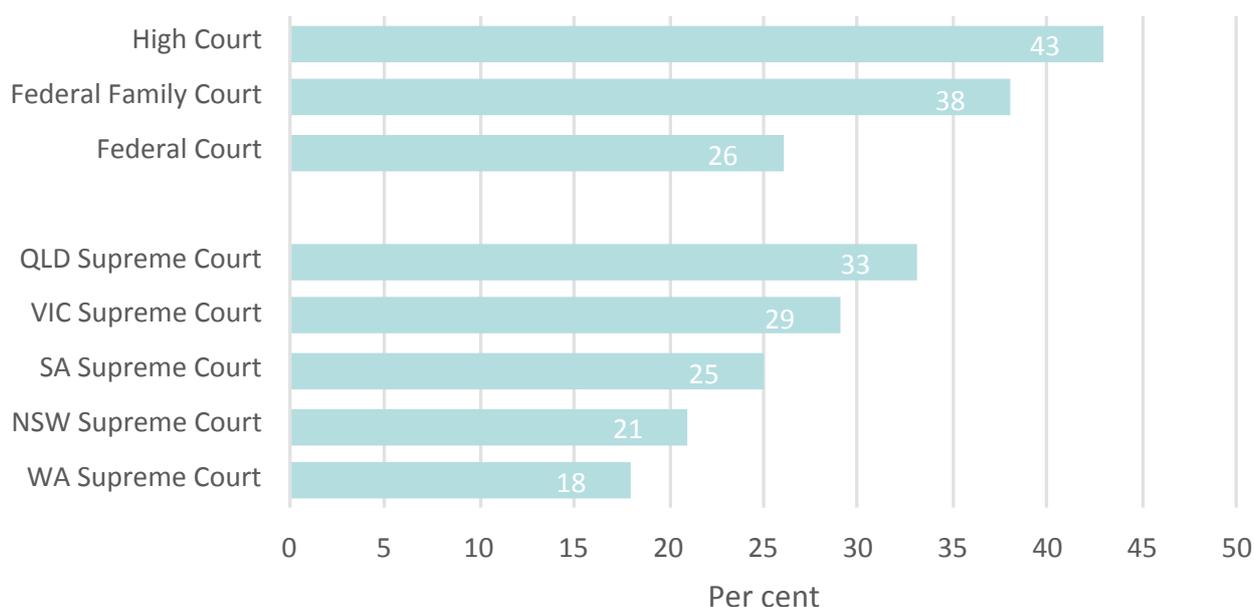
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Legal Board of WA, annual reports 2006-07 to 2014-15.



For judges, 43 per cent of High Court judges in Australia are women, with a figure of 38 per cent for Federal Family Court and 26 per cent for Federal Court (Figure 48). At the Supreme Court level, only 18 per cent of judges in WA are female, the lowest of all the states, with the highest state female representation being in Queensland, standing at 33 per cent.

At the Supreme Court level, only 18 per cent of judges in WA are female, the lowest of all the states, with the highest state female representation being in Queensland, standing at 33 per cent.

**FIGURE 48:** Representation of women judges in top courts, states, 2018



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Financial Review, July 2018.

Women working as police staff are also making gains, albeit slight, over the period reported in Table 12. Overall, 23.8 per cent of the 6,808 police staff in WA were women in 2018. Of senior police staff, 10 per cent of positions were held by women in 2018, which is down from the height of 18.2 per cent in 2014. However, it should be noted that the overall count in these positions is low (10 reported in 2018, with a height of 12 in 2016), so a slight change nominally can make a large difference in share terms.

Overall, 23.8 per cent of the 6,808 police staff in WA were women in 2018.

For police officers (with an overall count of 6,459 in 2018), 22.9 per cent were female in 2018, up over three percentage points since 2008. Women comprise 42.7 per cent of police auxiliary officers. Meanwhile, 50 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander police liaison officers are now female. Again, the overall count is low with only two female and two male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander police liaison officers in 2018.

**TABLE 12:** Gender profile of police staff, WA, percentage, 2008 to 2018

	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018
Female senior police	10.0	10.0	0.0	18.2	16.7	10.0
Female police officers	19.7	20.4	20.8	21.3	22.1	22.9
Police auxiliary officers	NA	52.6	40.8	40.0	42.0	42.7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander police liaison officers	33.3	27.8	26.7	18.2	22.2	50.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>22.1</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>23.8</b>

Note: Police auxiliary are not fully sworn police officers, but have undertaken a 12-week, role-specific training program at the WA Police Academy. In 2018, there were 10 Senior Police in WA, 6,459 Police Officers, 335 Police Auxiliary Officers, and four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Police Liaison Officers. Senior Police comprises the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners.

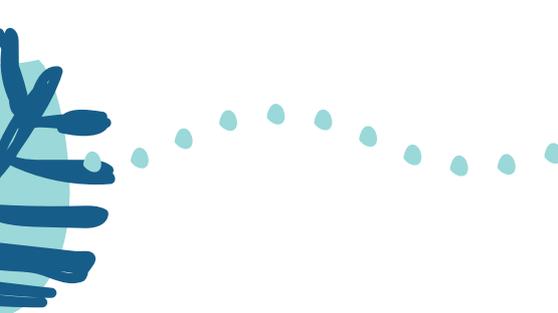
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Western Australia Police Force, Annual Report 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.





5

Economic  
Independence



## 5 Economic Independence

### Introduction

Economic independence is one of the most important steps towards, and indicator of, gender equality. It empowers women with the ability to make choices for themselves, enhancing their careers and overall wellbeing.

Women accumulate less financial and non-financial assets than men, such as superannuation, shares and labour income. Over a lifetime, the difference between earnings of men and women can extend to more than \$1 million.<sup>23</sup> The consequences of this can be multiple and extend across the life course and the economy more broadly.

Women are more likely to be living in poverty and at risk of homelessness in their older years; face greater exposure to domestic violence and economic insecurity; and have greater reliance on government welfare.

Equitable access to labour market opportunities and outcomes, along with fairer distribution of unpaid work are important components of progressing gender equality and greater economic independence among women. In particular, we should recognise and address how access to child care, housework and other caring responsibilities prevent women from taking full advantage of labour market opportunities and the outcomes this affords.

This chapter explores women's educational opportunities, their labour market involvement and unpaid production, and how WA compares nationally and over time.

### Outcomes

Desired outcomes in the area of economic independence include:

- WA women attain financial independence, including in retirement.
- WA women have educational outcomes in a broad range of education and training fields that allow them to join the labour force.
- WA women have access to secure and affordable housing.
- WA women receive the same pay as men for doing the same work or work of comparable value.
- The participation of WA women in the workforce is supported and expanded.
- WA women and men are supported to share caring and unpaid work responsibilities.

### Indicators

The indicators in this chapter contribute to understanding how WA is progressing towards achieving these outcomes:

- Education and training
- Labour force participation
- Financial and non-financial assets, including income and housing
- Unpaid work and caring responsibilities
- Social norms, cultural perceptions and life satisfaction.

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<sup>23</sup> Cassells R, Miranti, R, Nepal B. & Tanton R, (2009), *She works hard for the money: Australian Women and the Gender Divide*, AMP:NATSEM Income and Wealth Report No. 22.

## Education and training

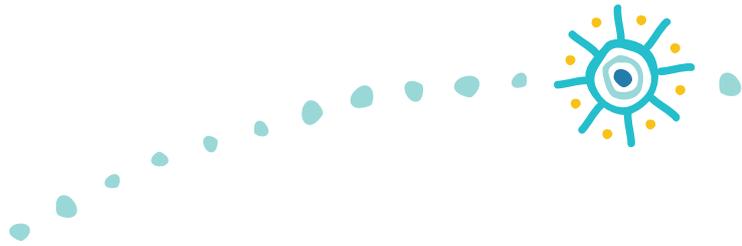
Education and training in school, vocational training and higher education are among the most important steps towards women's economic independence. Education sets a path for higher wages, labour market participation and career progression.

Overall, WA women are more educated than men, and their educational achievement is on par with the Australian average for women (Figure 49). A higher proportion of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (26.2%) have a bachelor degree or above and a larger share hold an advanced diploma or diploma level (11.3%) relative to men. WA men tend to specialise in technical professions, with a higher concentration of men having obtained a certificate – a difference of more than 16 percentage points between men and women. On the other hand, there is a larger proportion of women having reached, at most, secondary education (39.6%) relative to men (33.8%).

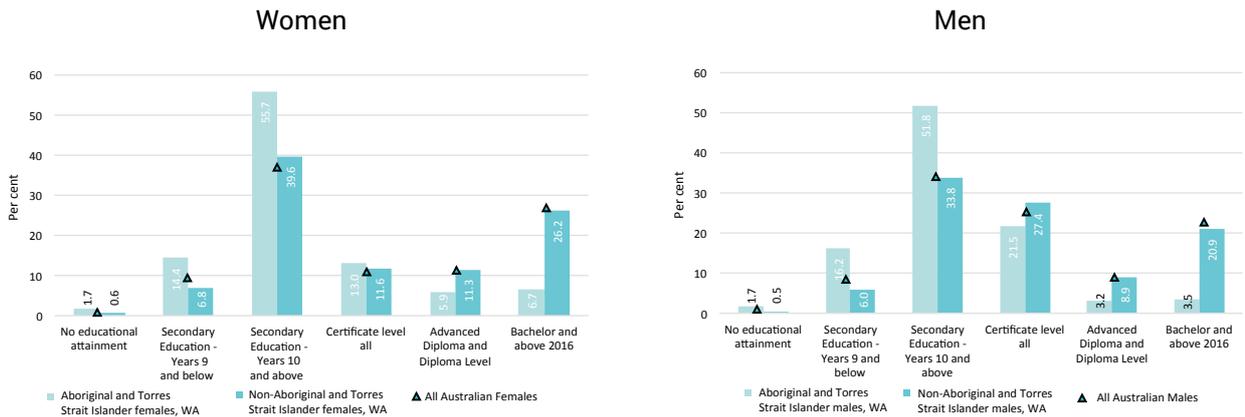
More women than men hold a bachelor degree or higher.

There is a striking difference between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in WA in terms of educational attainment. Only 6.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have obtained a bachelor degree, compared to over a quarter of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely to gain a certification qualification if they do go on to higher education, with 13 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women having reached this level. More concerning is the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men having achieved, at most, only secondary education. Overall, secondary level education is the highest level of education for 71.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and 69.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. This compares to 47 per cent and 40.3 per cent for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men, respectively.

Only 6.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have obtained a bachelor degree, compared to 26.2 per cent of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.



**FIGURE 49:** Highest educational attainment by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, WA and Australia, 2016



Notes: People aged 15 years and above.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of population and housing, 2016.

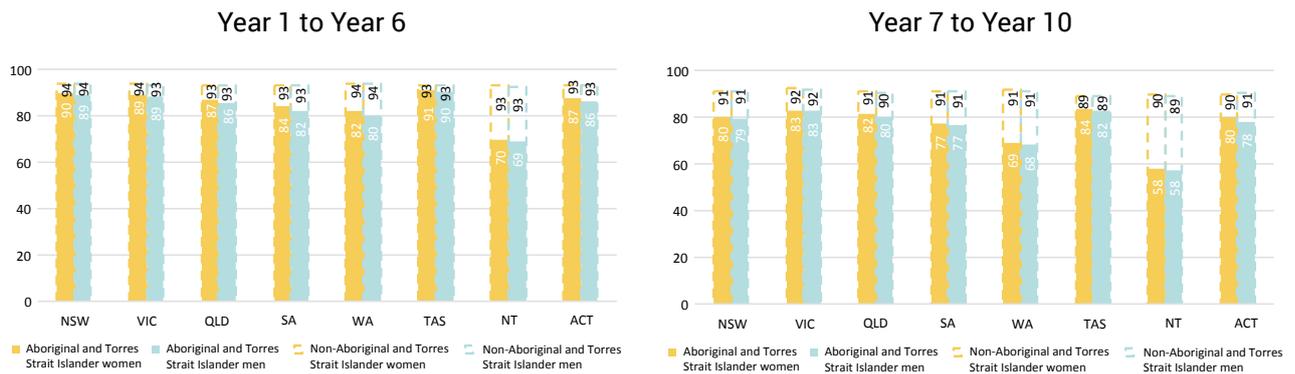
### Primary and secondary school

School education provides the foundation for lifelong knowledge. It is also the platform for vocational training and higher education and is a significant input into career pathways. Disparities in school education between different groups of the population create and perpetuate inequalities in society.

Attendance rates for Year 1 to Year 6 non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in WA, regardless of sex, are similar to other states and territories, at around 94 per cent (Figure 50). However, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in WA, attendance rates

are not only below non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, but also below that of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and girls in other states, with the exception of the Northern Territory. Only 82 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls in WA attended school from Years 1 to 6, compared to 90 per cent in NSW. The gap is slightly higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys, with a nine percentage point difference relative to their NSW counterparts. This difference in attendance rates is even higher in Years 7 to 10, with the gap increasing to 11 percentage points between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and boys in WA and NSW.

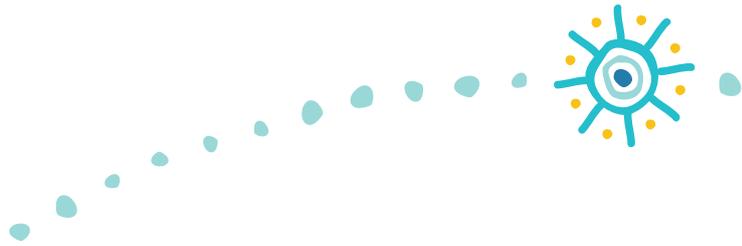
**FIGURE 50:** Attendance rates Years 1 to 6 and Years 7 to 10, by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, by state, 2018



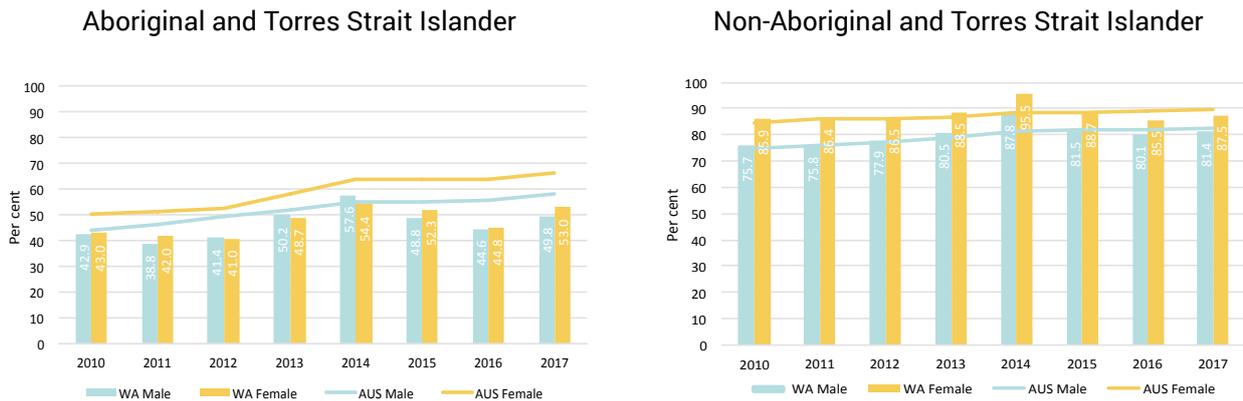
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, ACARA.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, retention rates (Figure 51) have increased over time for both WA and Australia (Figure 51). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls in WA, retention rates improved, from 43 per cent in 2010 to 53 per cent in 2017 and from 85.9 per cent to 87.5 per cent for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, which is encouraging as the gap is narrowing between the two groups. However, when comparing high-school retention rates among WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Australia, the gap has been widening over time.

The high-school retention gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has been narrowing over time in WA.



**FIGURE 51:** Apparent retention rates Years 7-8 to Year 12, by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, Australia and WA, 2010 to 2017



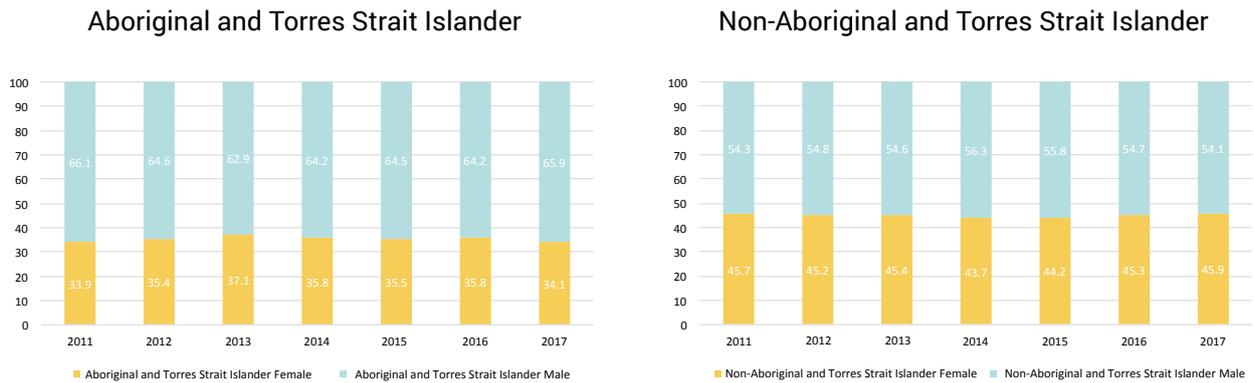
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 4221.0 Schools, Table 63a.

### Vocational education and training

Vocational education and training (VET) is a common career pathway, particularly for men, who are far more likely than women to report having obtained a certificate level as their highest educational qualification (Figure 49). Given this, one could expect significantly higher levels of enrolments of men in VET courses relative to women, but this is not necessarily the case. Among the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in a VET course in WA in 2017, 46 per cent were women and 54 per cent are men (Figure 52). However, the gender distribution for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is more skewed towards men. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men account for almost 66 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments, whereas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women only account for 34 per cent.

Among non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander VET enrolments, 46 per cent are women and 54 per cent are men. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander VET enrolments, 34 per cent are women and 66 per cent are men.

**FIGURE 52:** Vocational education and training enrolments by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, WA, 2011 to 2017



Notes: Percentages are calculated for people having declared Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Department of Training and Workforce Development, VET enrolment statistic unit, 2011-2019. Customised data 2018.

Women's participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects has become an important issue in women gaining greater access to higher paying jobs and reducing gender segregation in the labour market. Women are far less likely to enrol in engineering (10.5%), architecture and building (10.5%) and information technology (22.5%) VET courses, which may be seen as more traditional STEM fields (Table 13). Instead, women dominate health (80.8%) society and culture (60.8%), and hospitality (66.7%) enrolments in the VET sector.

While the proportion of women in those VET fields of study reporting the lowest proportion of women have changed very little since 2011, VET fields with the highest proportion of women have changed significantly. This is particularly evident in VET health courses, which have become extremely female-dominated, increasing from 68.5 per cent in 2011 to 80.8 per cent in 2017. Over this same time frame, the share of women in society and culture courses fell by 12 percentage points. The increased demand for VET health courses is likely driven by the expanding employment in aged, disability and childcare sectors.

Women are far less likely to enrol in engineering (10.5%), architecture and building (10.5%) and information technology (22.5%) VET courses.



**TABLE 13:** Field of education, VET course enrolment percentage, by gender, WA, 2011 to 2017

Field of Education	2011		2013		2015		2017	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Health	68.5	31.5	70.1	29.8	69.9	30.1	80.8	19.2
Food, Hospitality and Personal Services	68.8	31.1	66.2	33.8	66.9	33.1	66.7	33.3
Society and Culture	72.0	28.0	68.9	31.1	61.6	38.4	60.8	39.2
Management and Commerce	63.0	37.0	64.1	35.9	61.7	38.3	57.2	42.8
Mixed Field Programs	54.2	45.8	56.2	43.8	55.9	44.1	56.7	43.3
Creative Arts	57.2	42.8	55.9	44.1	56.4	43.6	55.0	45.0
Natural and Physical Sciences	52.4	47.6	52.6	47.4	49.7	50.3	54.8	45.2
Education	45.1	54.9	47.0	52.9	47.2	52.8	47.9	52.1
Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies	27.5	72.5	26.4	73.6	24.9	75.1	25.5	74.5
Information Technology	17.9	82.1	26.4	73.6	23.4	76.6	22.5	77.5
Architecture and Building	9.1	90.9	10.2	89.8	9.6	90.4	10.5	89.5
Engineering and Related Technologies	8.7	91.3	8.9	91.1	8.7	91.3	10.5	89.5

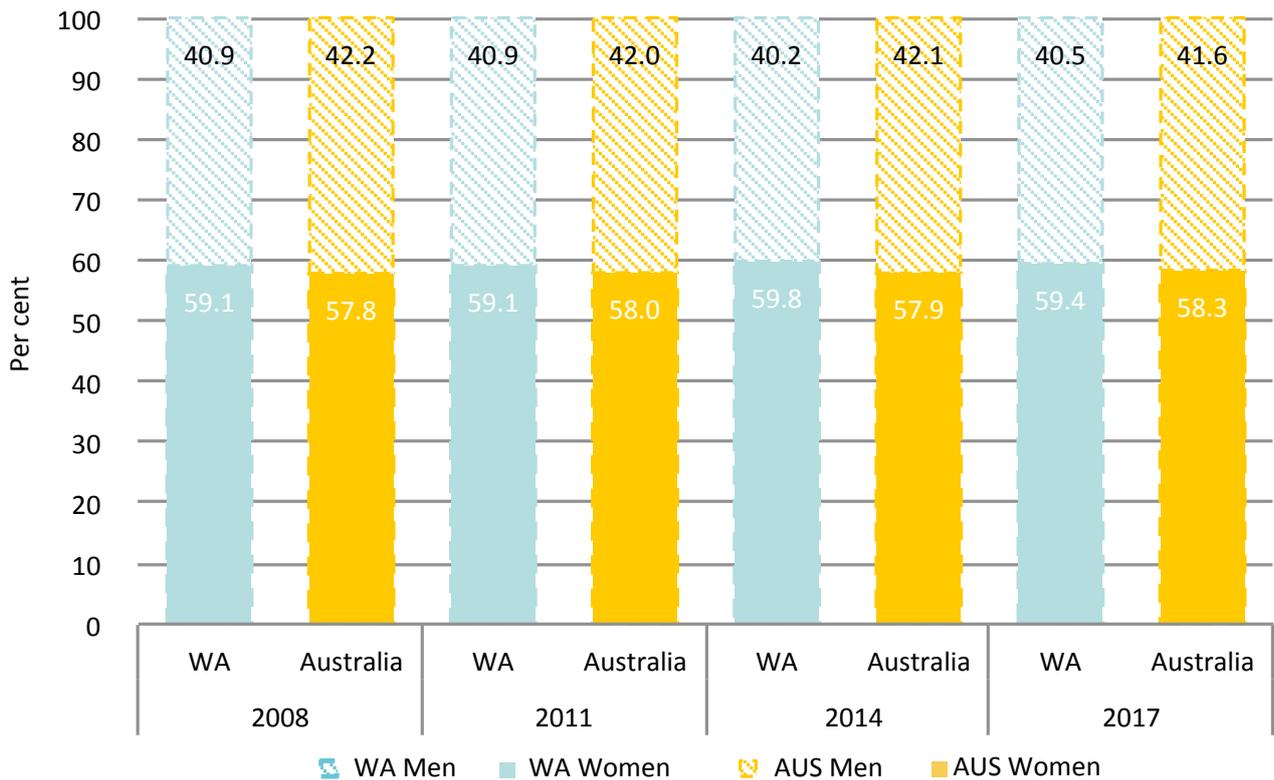
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Department of Training and Workforce Development, VET enrolment Statistics Unit, Customised data, 2018.

## University education

University enrolments have remained relatively unchanged between 2007 and 2016 (Figure 53). Women continue to have consistently higher enrolment levels relative to men and in 2016 represented 59.4 per cent of all domestic university students in WA. Over the period reported, representation of women in university in WA is slightly higher than women in university in Australia overall.

Women continue to have consistently higher enrolment levels relative to men and in 2016 represented 59.4 per cent of all domestic university students in WA.

**FIGURE 53:** Higher education domestic enrolments by gender (%), WA and Australia, 2007 to 2017



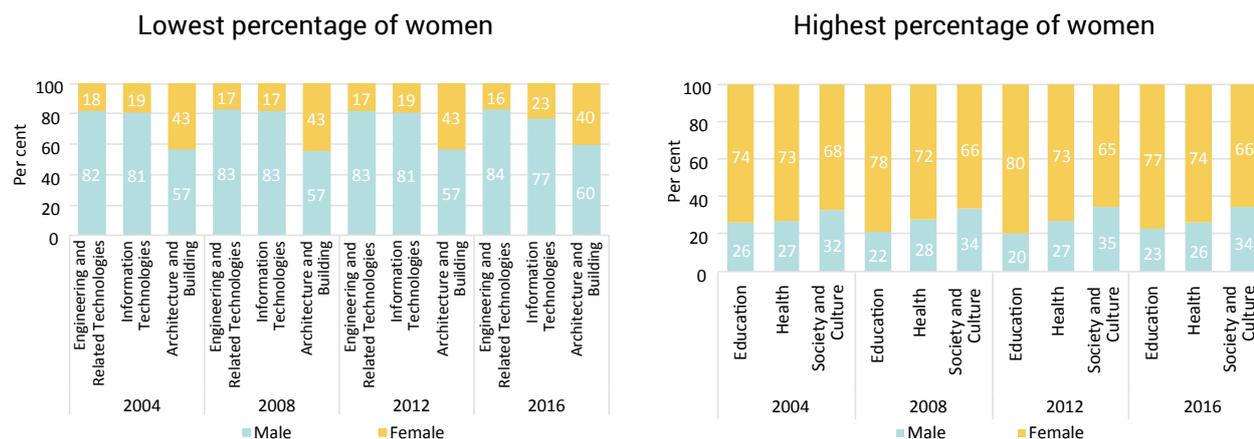
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Statistics, data cube.

Like VET enrolments, there is a large degree of gender segregation in field of study for university students (Figure 54). However, gender segregation is less severe than in the VET sector.

Over time, there has been very little change in the share of men and women enrolled in particular fields of study at university. Women dominate enrolments in the field of education, health and society and culture, whereas men dominate engineering and information technology, and to some extent architecture and building. It is important to note that many health degrees will fall within science fields, comprising physiotherapy, radiology, pharmacy and dietetics, which will serve to increase the share of women working in STEM fields.



**FIGURE 54:** Top and bottom three fields of study by enrolment in higher education, by women in WA, 2004 to 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Department of Education and Training, Higher Education Statistics, data cube.

## Labour market outcomes

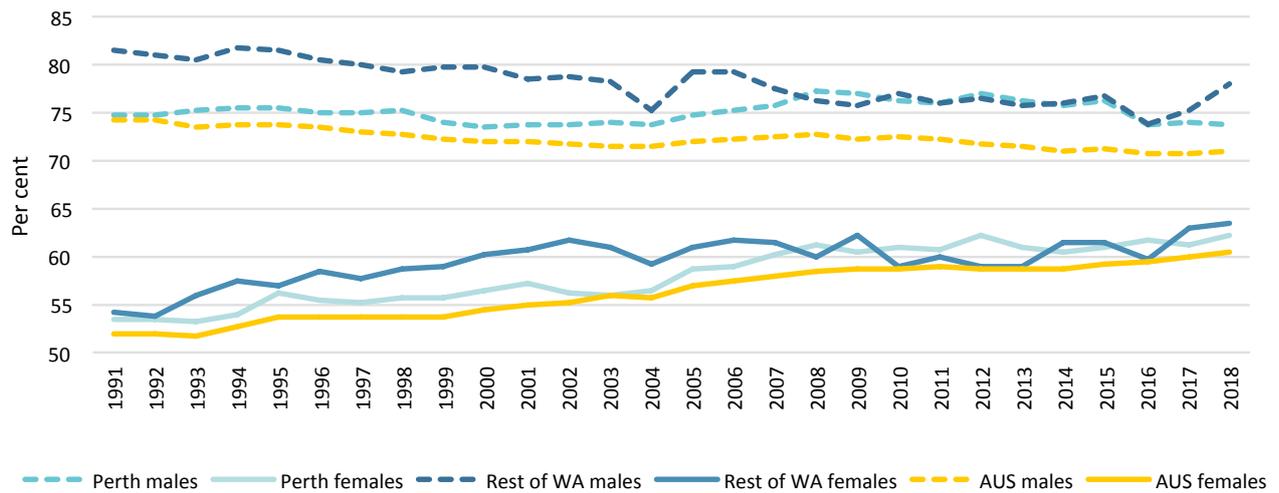
An inclusive labour market should aim for equal participation among men and women. Women have historically lagged behind men's labour force participation due to having and raising children, and the broader caring roles that women often take on. This has led to a higher share of part-time and casual employment among women, lower lifetime earnings and poorer economic outcomes.

This section focuses on the labour market outcomes of WA women in terms of participation, employment rates and their access to full-time employment. We also look at inclusive participation in the labour market in terms of quality and security of employment, which women often sacrifice for greater flexibility. Better labour market outcomes for women will ensure greater financial independence and security for women, reduce reliance on welfare and broaden the talent pool available.

## Labour force participation

Labour force participation includes people who are currently employed or looking for work. Nationally, women's labour force participation has increased steadily since 1991, from 52 per cent to 61 per cent, while men's participation has been falling over this same period, from around 74 per cent to 71 per cent (Figure 55).

**FIGURE 55:** Labour force participation, Perth, Rest of WA and Australia, 1991 to 2019



Note: Labour force participation rates are for those aged 15 years and above.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 6291, Labour force – Electronic delivery, April 2019.

Western Australia has a higher labour force participation rate among both women and men compared to the rest of Australia. This is linked to the younger WA population. From 1991 to 2009, WA women living outside of Perth had significantly higher participation levels than women living in Perth, with the mining boom driving higher participation rates in these regions. In the post-global financial crisis (GFC) period, this pattern reversed and Perth women surpassed the rest of the state participation, reaching 62 per cent in 2019. A similar situation occurred for men during the downturn, where for the first time since 1991 participation rates of men in WA's regions converged with Perth.

The labour force participation gap between men and women is the highest in WA's regions and has been narrowing over time across all jurisdictions. On average, during the year 2018, there was an 11.8 percentage point difference in labour force participation between men and women in Perth, while this gap reaches 14.3 percentage points in the rest of the state. For Australia, the gap is 10.5 percentage points.

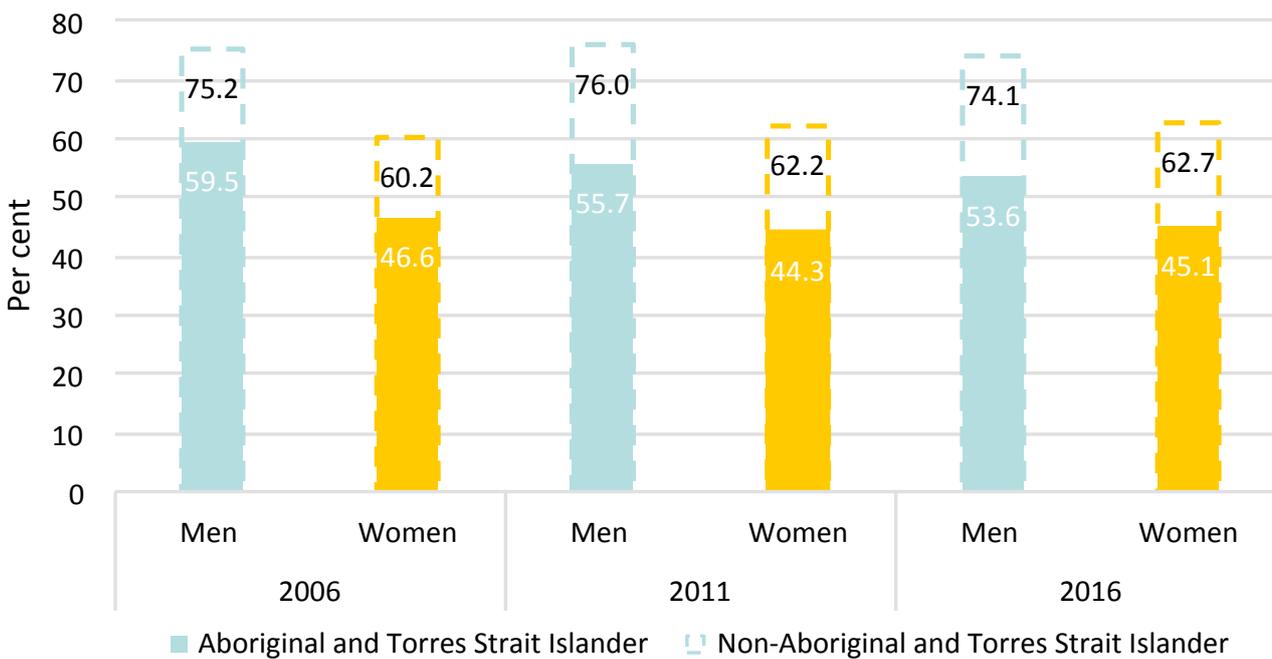
As of 2018, the labour force participation gap between men and women is the highest in WA's regions and has been narrowing over time across all jurisdictions.



Gaps in labour force participation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women are evident and have not improved over time (Figure 56). From 2006 to 2016 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men have decreased their labour market participation by 1.5 and 5.9 percentage points respectively. It's important to note that counting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population continues

to present a number of challenges, and therefore, these patterns may not necessarily reflect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population overall.<sup>24</sup> The gap in labour force participation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is around 17 percentage points, with very little change in the years between the 2006 and 2016 Censuses. For men, the gap appears to be widening over time.

**FIGURE 56:** Labour force participation by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, WA, 2006 to 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of population and housing, 2006, 2011 and 2016.

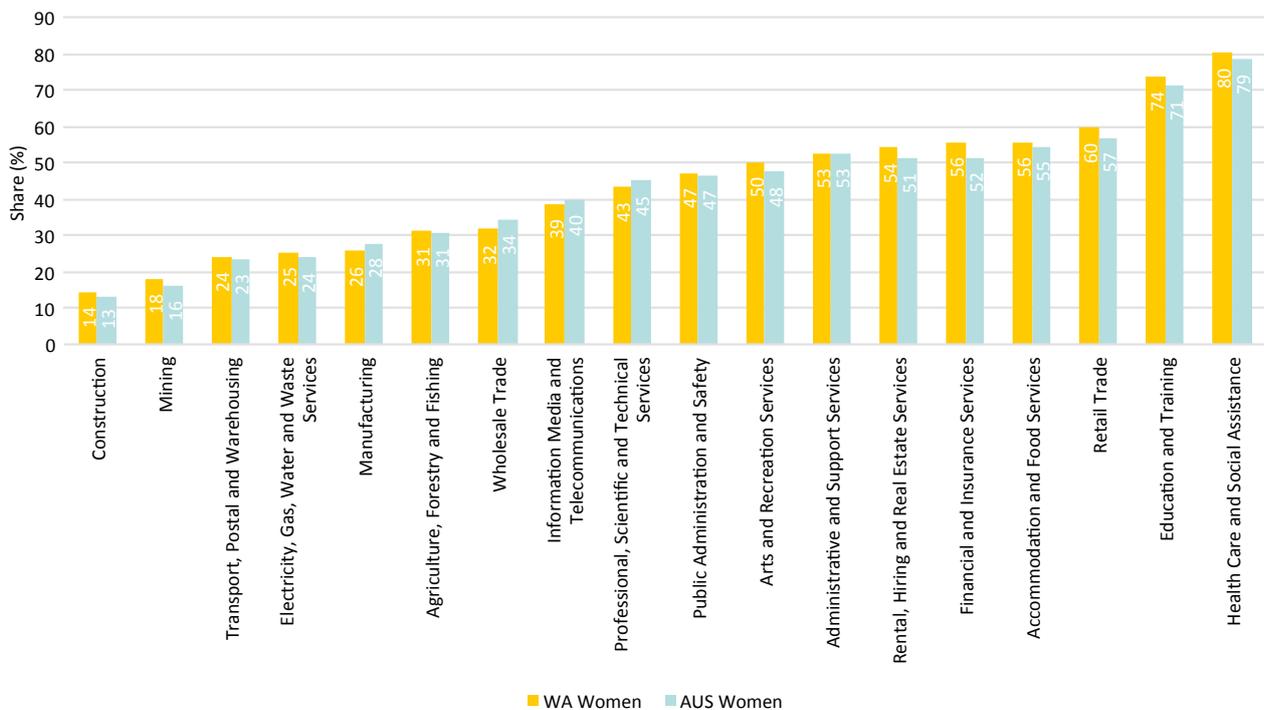
<sup>24</sup> For further discussion on Census of Population and Housing overcount and undercount see ABS Cat 2940.0.

### Industry of employment

Industry segregation between men and women has been a persistent feature of the labour market and one of the drivers of the gender pay gap (Figure 57). Women dominate the health (80%) and education (74%) sectors, and have higher representation in retail trade (60%). This is consistent with patterns in post-school education. Industries with the smallest percentage of women are construction (14%), mining (18%) and transport, postal and warehousing (24%). WA results are in line with the national average, only notable differences in favour of WA women relative to Australian women observed in financial and insurance services (+4.2ppts), rental, hiring and real estate services (+2.8ppts) and arts and recreation services (+2.8ppts).

Women in WA dominate the health (80%) and education (74%) sectors, and have higher representation in retail trade (60%).

**FIGURE 57:** Percentage share of employees by industry and gender, WA and Australia, 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of population and housing, 2016.



## Employment patterns

The ability to work full- or part-time can be related to a number of preferences or constraints. For women, most notably child care and caring responsibilities can be a significant barrier. Part-time work and taking time out from work can be detrimental to career progression, wages, wealth accumulation and leadership roles.<sup>25</sup>

To have a better understanding of the types of jobs that women perform, we compare women's and men's working patterns across age groups over time (Figure 58). On average, around one in two women work full-time, whereas almost four out of five men engage in full-time employment. Comparing women and men in WA of the prime working age between 30 and 55 years, there is on average a 35 percentage point difference between full-time employment rates.

For those in the labour force, around one in two women work full-time, whereas almost four out of five men engage in full-time employment.

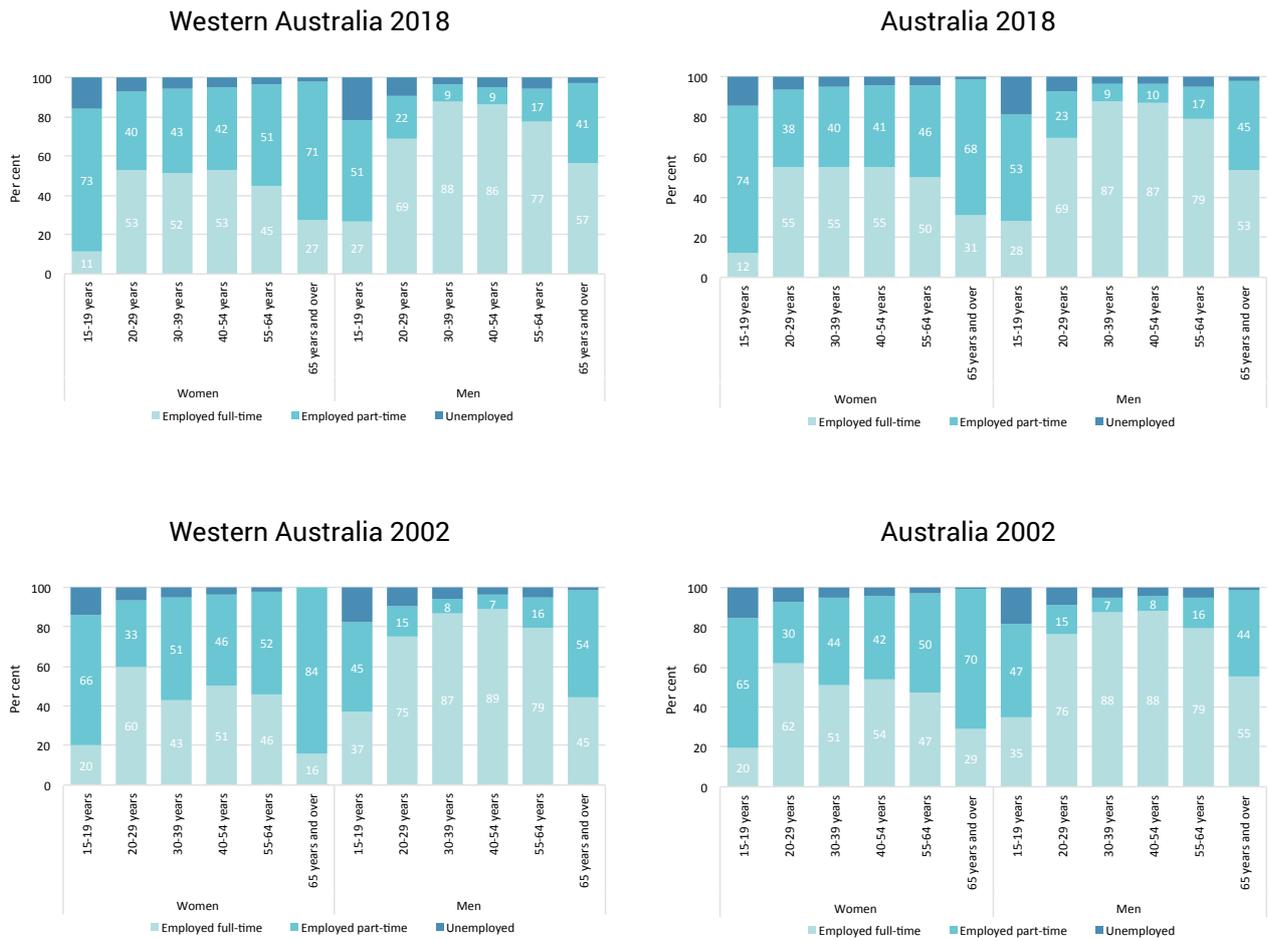
Over time, there has been a shift from full-time employment to part-time employment among younger age groups. Both men and women aged 15 to 29 years have a lower likelihood of full-time employment in 2018 than in 2002 and a greater likelihood of being employed part-time. An increase in the propensity of young people (particularly women) to continue studying at school until Year 12 and to continue on to higher education is likely to be one of the key drivers behind these trends.

Unemployment has also increased between 2002 and 2018 for the 15 to 19 age category, especially for WA men (+4ppts). However, nationally unemployment for this age group has decreased slightly in this same time frame.

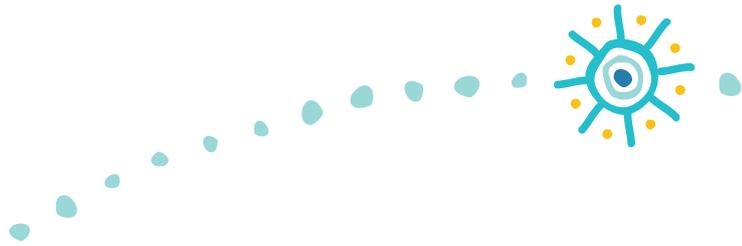
The share of older women (65+) in WA working full-time has increased from 16 per cent to 27 per cent between 2002 and 2018. Nationally, there has been little change among this same age group.

<sup>25</sup> OECD (2017). *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

**FIGURE 58: Employment patterns and gender, Australia and WA, 2002 to 2018**



Note: Employment rates in 2018 were constructed as the average of the available months (January to September).  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 6202, labour force, September 2018.

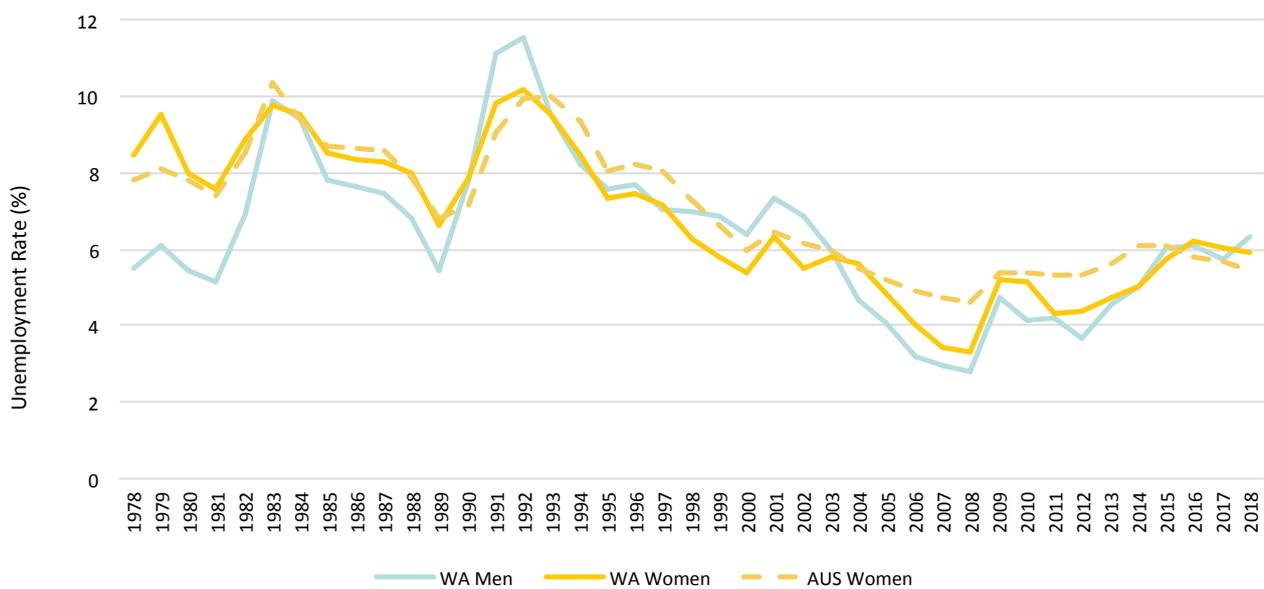


## Unemployment

Unemployment rates for men and women have generally tracked together over the last 40 years, with male unemployment generally more responsive to economic downturns and upturns (Figure 59). Since 2003, unemployment rates for men in WA have been lower than for women;

however, in the last five years there has been little difference between the two genders. Compared to Australian women, WA women have generally experienced lower unemployment. In recent years the unemployment rate among WA women has been higher than the national average – 5.8 per cent compared to 5 per cent.

**FIGURE 59:** Unemployment rate by gender, WA and Australia, 1978 to 2019

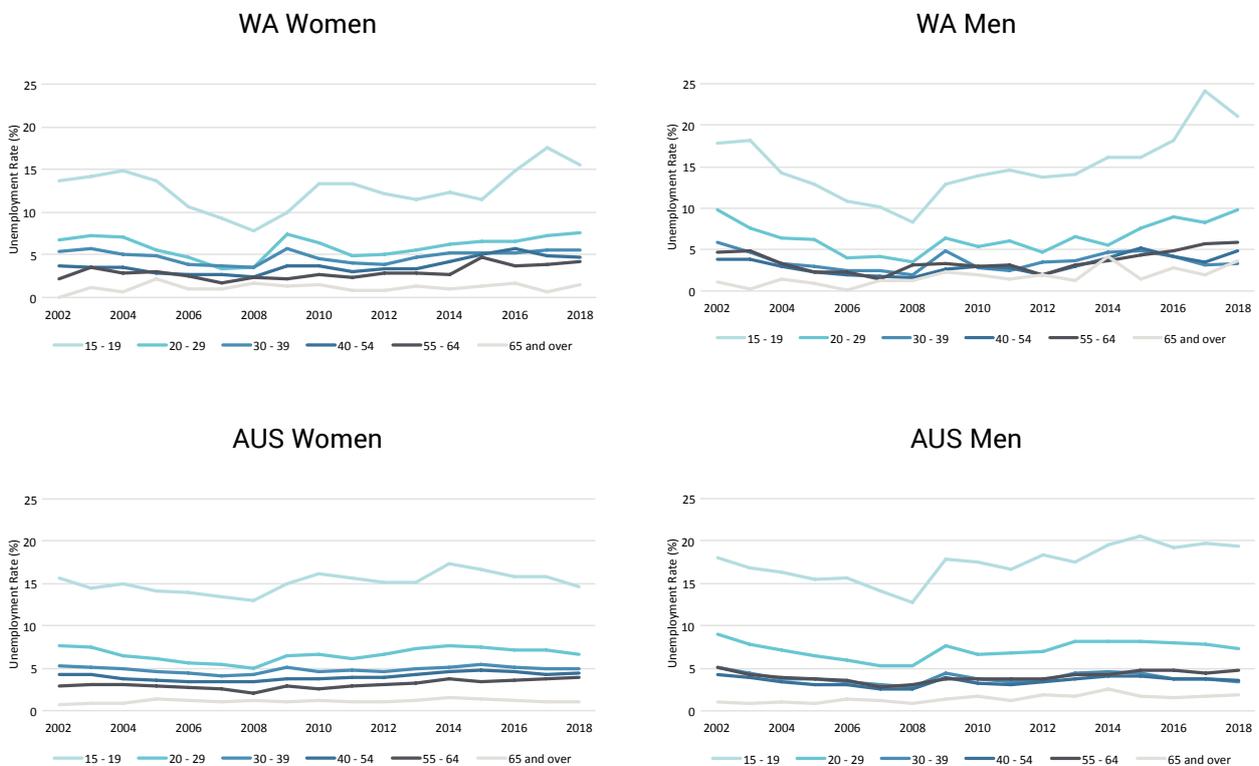


Note: Unemployment data has been annualised and trend data used.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 6202 Labour force participation.

Examining unemployment rates by age group, we can see that regardless of age or sex, and with the exception of women 65 years and over, unemployment rates in WA have increased since 2008 (Figure 60). Other patterns of unemployment are evident. First, unemployment rates in WA fluctuate much more than Australian rates. Second, young women (15-30 years old) have lower unemployment rates than young men – particularly in WA. Lastly, unemployment among WA and Australian men is generally below that of women for the age groups with the highest labour force participation (30-55 years); the trend for WA and Australian men is on average below that of women in terms of unemployment rates since 2002.

Young women in WA have lower unemployment rates than that of men, but for the age groups with the highest labour force participation (30-55), WA and Australian men have lower unemployment rates than than women.

**FIGURE 60:** Unemployment rate by gender and age, Australia and WA, 2002 to 2018



Notes: Employment rates in 2018 were constructed as the average of the available months (January to September).  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat. 6202, labour force, September 2018.

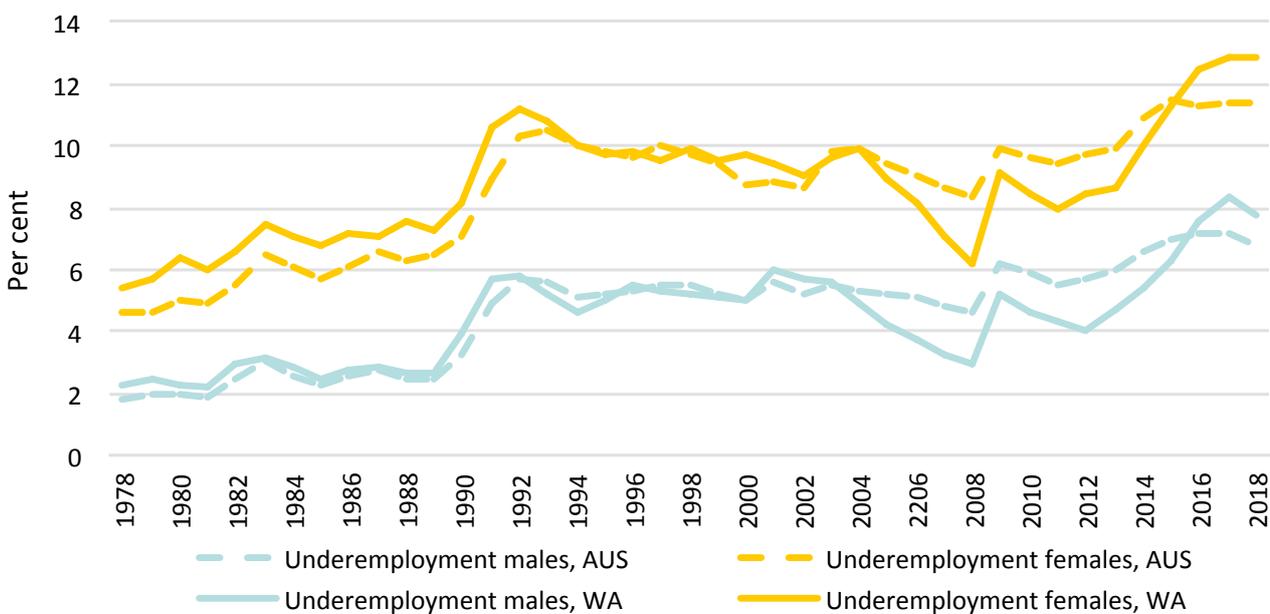


## Underemployment

Underemployment allows us to account for people who are employed but who would like to work more hours. Figure 61 tracks the underemployment ratio as a proportion of employed population since 1978. We observe that women are more vulnerable to underemployment than men and the ratio has increased since 1978. Underemployment for women in WA has now reached an all-time peak of 12.9 per cent. In the early 1980s underemployment for women increased at a faster pace than men, but since the late 1990s, this gap has remained stable. During the mining boom, underemployment was below the Australian average; however, since 2011 underemployment among WA women has risen sharply, and in 2014 it exceeded the Australian ratio. This has also been the case for WA men.

Underemployment for women in WA has now reached an all-time peak of 12.9 per cent.

**FIGURE 61:** Underemployment ratio by gender, Australia and WA, 1978 to 2018



Note: Underemployment ratio is the number of persons that worked part-time hours and wanted to work more hours as a proportion of the number employed.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat.6202.0, Table 23.

### Job security and precarious work

Creating quality jobs is as important as creating new jobs. Workers' protection in terms of job security, paid leave and long-term contracts are key to guarantee quality jobs in our economy.

Casual workers are defined as those not entitled to paid or sick leave and are mostly concentrated in the hospitality and retail sectors.<sup>26</sup> Casual work typically attracts a wage loading to compensate for the lack of leave entitlements. Women are more likely to be in casual employment than men in both Australia and WA; however, the rate of casual employment has fallen since 2005, especially among WA women (Figure 62).

More than one-third of WA women were in casual employment in 2005. This has fallen to 29.1 per cent in 2017. For men, the proportion of casual workers has remained relatively stable since 2005, fluctuating between 23 per cent and 25 per cent.

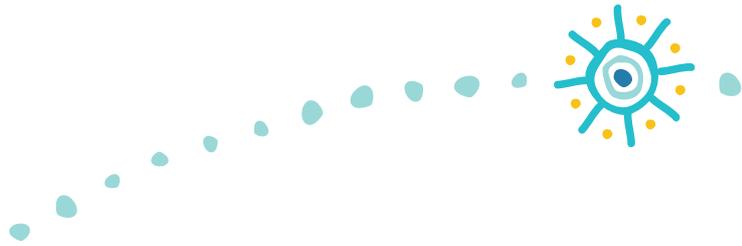
In WA, almost 30 per cent of women and 25 per cent of men are employed casually.

**FIGURE 62:** Casual workers by gender, Australia and WA, 2005 to 2017



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. Wave 17.

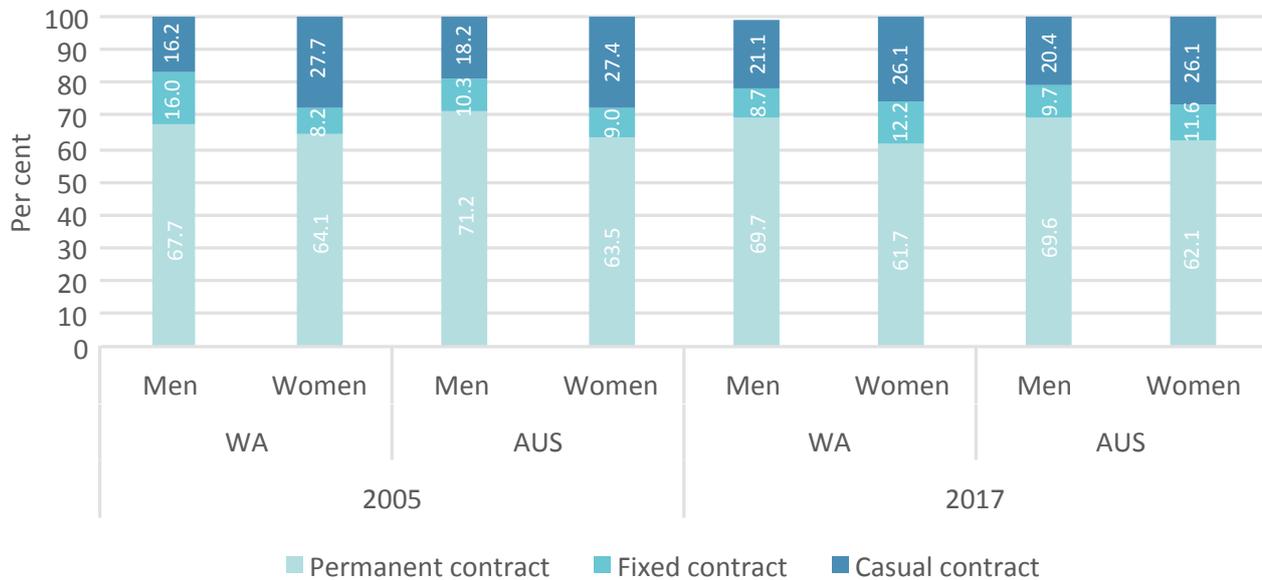
26 ABS, Characteristics of Employment, Cat. 6333.0.



Fixed-term and casual contracts are often considered to be less stable form of work compared to permanent positions, due to being temporary in nature. Since 2005, the proportion of women with a permanent contract has fallen slightly in both WA and Australia, and currently stands at 62 per cent for each jurisdictions (Figure 63).

The proportion of women on a fixed-term contract has increased, from 8 per cent to 12 per cent for WA women and 9 per cent to 12 per cent for Australian women over the same time frame. WA men, on the other hand, have seen a substantial fall in fixed contract employment, but a rise in casual work.

**FIGURE 63:** Employment contract by gender, Australia and WA, 2005 to 2017



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the HILDA Survey. Wave 17.

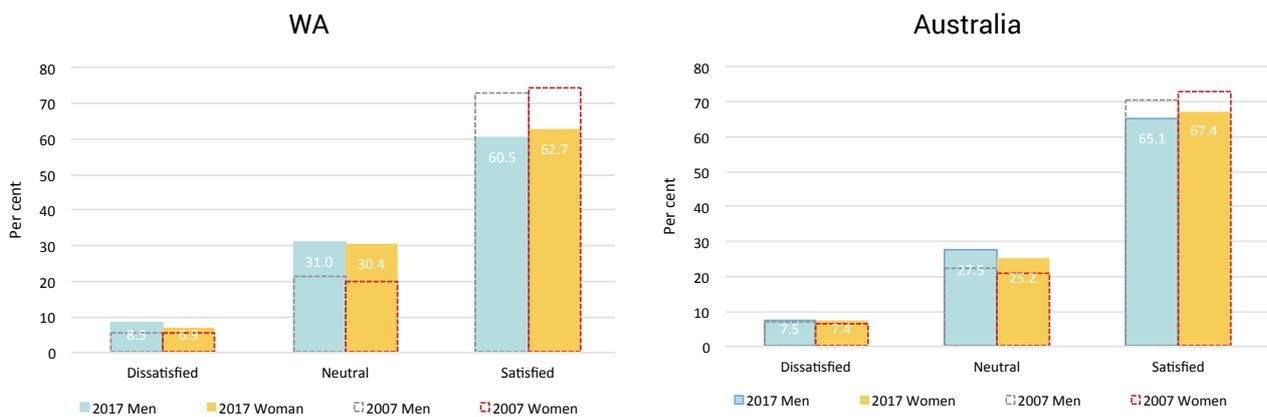
A permanent employment contract does not necessarily translate into job security, just as casual work does not always imply job insecurity. In fact, a high percentage of casual workers are expected to continue working for the same employer for the next 12 months.<sup>27</sup>

To provide a more comprehensive picture about job quality, we look at the level of (dis)satisfaction among workers in relation to job security. From Figure 64 we can see that, in 2017, 63 per cent of women in WA were satisfied with the job security provided in their current employment; lower than the 67 per cent reported nationally. This, too, is lower than the levels reported in 2007, when 75 per cent of women in WA declared that they were satisfied with their job security. For men in WA, the level of satisfaction with job security

declined in a similar fashion between 2007 (73%) and 2017 (61%). The latter shifts have led to a particular increase in those persons (both men and women) declaring a neutral position in relation to job satisfaction related to job security in WA. For women in WA, those declaring a neutral position increased from 20 per cent in 2007 to 30 per cent in 2017. A less evident increase in the dissatisfied category is observed between 2007 and 2017.

In 2017, 63 per cent of women in WA were satisfied with their current job security, compared to 75 per cent in 2007.

**FIGURE 64:** Level of satisfaction with job security by gender, Australia and WA, 2007 and 2017



Note: Authors' calculations using HILDA data Waves 5-7 and 15-17. Dissatisfied = score 0-3, neutral = 4-6, satisfied = 7-10.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the HILDA Survey, Wave 17.

27 Gilfillan, G. (2018). Characteristics and use of casual employees in Australia. Parliamentary Library, Statistical Snapshot, Research Paper Series 2017-18.



## Income and assets

Access to secure and reliable income and financial assets is a crucial aspect for women's economic independence. Income from wages is paramount, as it defines not only the current economic situation of women, but also future income through superannuation.

Financial and non-financial assets also include dividends from shares, bonds and investment, properties and welfare payments. All of these assets contribute to the economic independence and will be the subject of study in this section. We will also examine women's financial literacy, as it is an important criterion towards economic decisions, including enabling engagement in such decision-making.

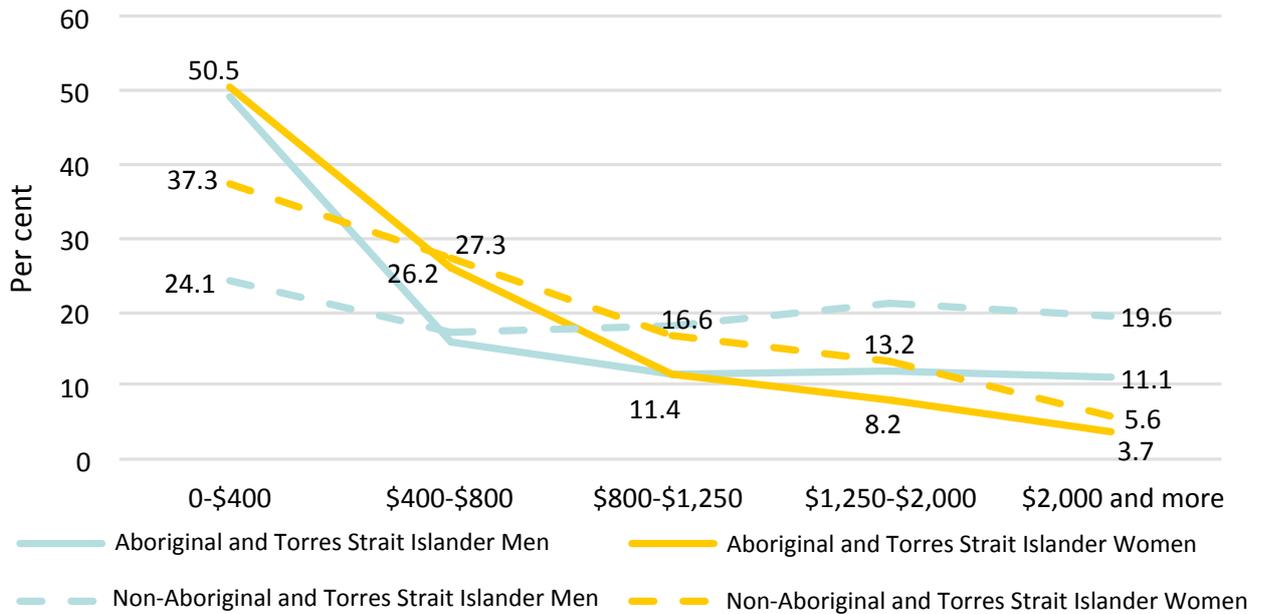
### Personal income

Figure 65 shows the distribution of income of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women in WA in 2016. The first insight is the unequal distribution of income between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Regardless of sex, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has much lower levels of income than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. In fact, half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population have incomes of less than \$400 per week. For non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, around 37 per cent have personal incomes of less than \$400 per week, compared to 24.1 per cent for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.

Women have significantly lower personal income than men and this gap is wider among the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. At the lower tail of the distribution (people living with less than \$400), a 13 percentage point gap separates men and women, and this gap is almost identical for people at the upper tail of the distribution (\$2,000+).

**Women have significantly lower personal income than men. 37 per cent of women and 24 per cent of men live with less than \$400 per week.**

**FIGURE 65:** Weekly personal income by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, WA, 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of population and housing, 2016.

### Gender pay gap

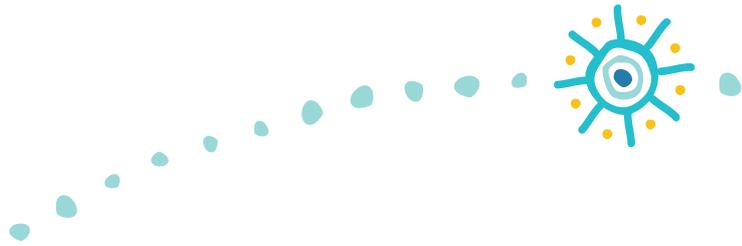
The gender pay gap in WA has historically been higher than national figures and currently stands at 21.8 per cent in May 2019 (Figure 66). Men working full-time in WA currently earn on average \$1,925.30 each week, whereas women working full-time can expect to earn \$1,505.90 on average – a difference of almost \$420 each week. Nationally, this difference is only \$242 each week, with the gender pay gap among full-time workers in Australia at a 25-year low of 13.99 per cent.

The gender pay gap in WA stands at 21.8 per cent, remaining higher than the 14.0 per cent reported nationally.

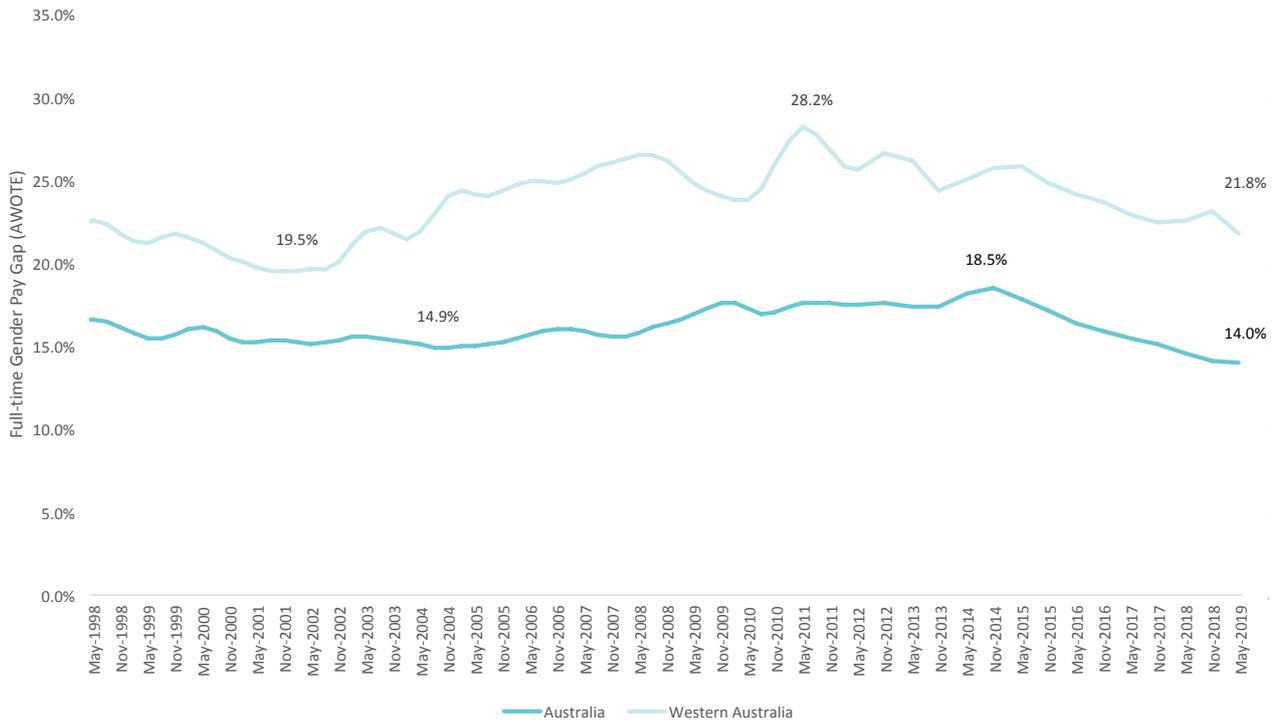
There are a number of drivers of the gender pay gap including differences in the industries and occupations men and women work in. In WA, industry segregation - where men and women tend to be clustered or grouped together in certain sectors - is a significant driver of the gender pay gap.<sup>28</sup>

The gender pay gap tends to follow the business cycle, expanding when the economy is booming and contracting in a downturn. The tendency for men to work in industries such as mining and construction means that their incomes also have greater exposure and will rise rapidly in economic upturns, but contract quickly in a downturn.

<sup>28</sup> Cassells, R., Dockery, M., Duncan, A., Gao, G, Leong, K. and Mavisakalyan, A. (2014), 'Workforce and Skills. Western Australian labour markets in transition', Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, *Focus on Western Australia Series*, Issue 14/3, August 2014.



**FIGURE 66:** Gender pay gap, full-time workers, Australia and WA, 1998 to 2019



Note: Full-time, adult, ordinary time earnings.  
 Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, Nov 2018. ABS Cat No.6302.0.

### Superannuation

Superannuation is an important income stream in retirement and generally provides a higher standard of living than reliance on the aged pension. Women's superannuation balances are typically lower than that of men, as they typically work fewer years and hours overall, and earn less on average, due to having and raising children. Women are also more likely to have no superannuation assets when approaching retirement (Figure 67).

In 2005-06, 43 per cent of WA women and 26 per cent of men in WA held no superannuation at all. By 2015-16, this proportion had halved for both women and men to 22 per cent and 11 per cent respectively; however, women remain half as likely as their male counterparts to hold any superannuation.

WA women approaching retirement are half as likely as their male counterparts to hold any superannuation.

**FIGURE 67:** Proportion of women and men aged 55 to 65 with no superannuation, WA and Australia

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the ABS Survey of Income and Housing.

On the lower half of Table 14, we can see that the median superannuation of women 15 years and older was \$32,272 in WA, just over half the superannuation balance of WA men (\$61,895). The median value of superannuation balances have almost doubled for both men and women in WA from 2005-06 to 2015-16.

In the upper half of Table 14, for those people closer to retirement age, that is, the 55 to 65 age cohort, in 2015-16, there was a 42 per cent gap in the superannuation balance between Australian men and women. If we compare this to WA, the gap is much higher, standing at 48 per cent. Women in WA are worse off, not only relative to WA men, but also relative to women nationally, with the latter gap equivalent to \$21,683.

Let us now focus attention on the evolution of the superannuation gap through time. In the case of Australia, the gap has decreased between men and women aged 15 years and older (from 42% in 2005-06 to 35% in 2015-16), with a smaller gap evident for people in the 55 to 65 age cohort (from 45% to 42%).

For the 55 to 65 age group, in WA, the superannuation gender gap decreased, from 61 per cent in 2005-06 to 48 per cent in 2015-16. However, a significant contributor to this decline in the gap is due to the large decrease in men's superannuation balance, from more than \$170,000 in 2011-12 to \$153,000 in 2015-16 (a 10% decline). Meanwhile, the overall superannuation gap for women aged 15 years and older in WA has increased, from 43 per cent in 2005-06 to 48 per cent in 2015-16.

The median superannuation of women 15 years and older in 2015-16 was \$32,272 in WA, just over half the superannuation balance of WA men (\$61,895).



**TABLE 14:** Superannuation balances by gender, median, Australia and WA, 2005 to 2016

	WESTERN AUSTRALIA			AUSTRALIA		
	Men	Women	Gap	Men	Women	Gap
<b>People close to retirement (55-65 years old)</b>						
2015-16	\$153,277	\$79,618	48%	\$175,159	\$101,301	42%
2011-12	\$170,455	\$64,587	62%	\$122,146	\$73,864	40%
2005-06	\$136,240	\$53,121	61%	\$109,439	\$59,946	45%
<b>People 15 years and older</b>						
2015-16	\$61,895	\$32,272	48%	\$63,291	\$41,328	35%
2011-12	\$45,714	\$27,397	40%	\$45,714	\$28,571	38%
2005-06	\$30,268	\$17,264	43%	\$34,200	\$19,920	42%

Notes: Estimates may differ based on data source used. The median is calculated for people with positive superannuation balances.  
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the ABS Survey of Income and Housing.

## Financial literacy and investment decisions

Financial and investment decisions affect women's income and economic status. Weak financial literacy could lead to debt accumulation,<sup>29,30</sup> disadvantageous borrowing deals,<sup>31,32</sup> lower level of savings<sup>33</sup> and poor investment decisions.<sup>34,35,36</sup>

Nationally, around one in two men and one in three women answer all five questions correctly. A further 77 per cent of men and 64 per cent of women answered at least four answers correctly. In both cases, women performed worse than men, regardless of the state in which they live.

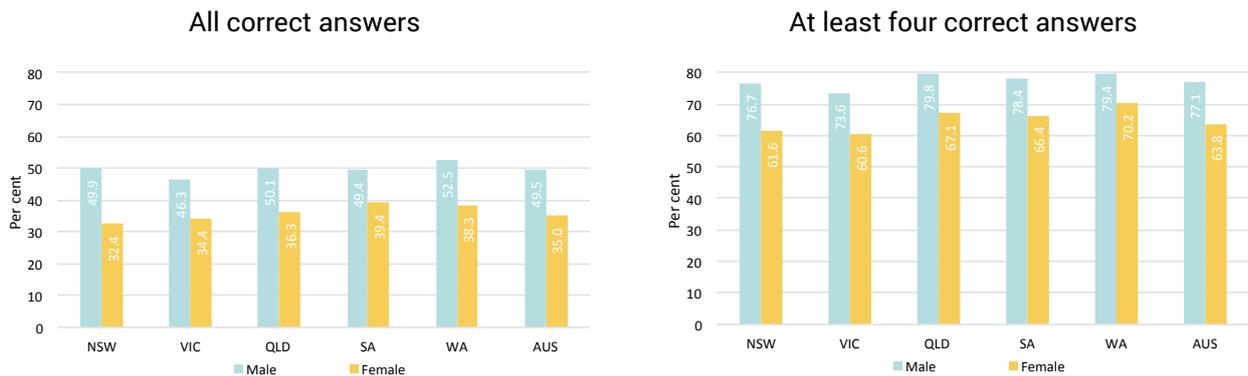
Figure 68 shows the result of a brief and simple financial literacy test conducted in Australia for the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey in 2016. This test asks five questions related to inflation, interest rates, investment decisions and purchasing power.

- 29 Lusardi, A., & Tufano, P. (2015). Debt literacy, financial experiences, and overindebtedness. *Journal of Pension Economics & Finance*, 14(4), 332-368.
- 30 Stango, V., & Zinman, J. (2009). Exponential growth bias and household finance. *The Journal of Finance*, 64(6), 2807-2849.
- 31 Lusardi, A., & Tufano, P. (2015). Debt literacy, financial experiences, and overindebtedness. *Journal of Pension Economics & Finance*, 14(4), 332-368.
- 32 Martin, M. (2007). A literature review on the effectiveness of financial education.
- 33 Hathaway, I., & Khatiwada, S. (2008). Do financial education programs work? New York University.
- 34 Thaler, R. H., & Benartzi, S. (2004). Save more tomorrow™: Using behavioral economics to increase employee saving. *Journal of Political Economy*, 112(S1), S164-S187.
- 35 Choi, J. J., Laibson, D., & Madrian, B. C. (2009). Why does the law of one price fail? An experiment on index mutual funds. *The Review of Financial Studies*, 23(4), 1405-1432.
- 36 Gentzkow, M., & Shapiro, J. M. (2010). What drives media slant? Evidence from US daily newspapers. *Econometrica*, 78(1), 35-71.

In WA, 52.5 per cent of men answered all questions correctly, compared to 38.3 per cent of women. This percentage increases to 79.4 per cent and 70.2 per cent respectively when comparing those that answered four or more questions correctly. WA women rank the highest among all states using this indicator, and the gap between men and women is the narrowest (9.2 ppts). In fact, financial literacy among women in WA is 6.4 percentage points higher relative to the average Australian woman.

Financial literacy among women in WA is 6.4 ppts higher relative to the average Australian woman.

**FIGURE 68:** Financial literacy by gender, states and territories, 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from the HILDA Survey. Wave 17.



## Household income

Table 15 displays the total equivalised income per week, per household in WA and Australia. The most important finding is that one-parent families are extremely concentrated in low income households. More than 10 per cent of one-parent households in WA live on less than \$400 per week, compared to 1.4 per cent of couple families with children. Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households, the share living on less than \$400 per week is double that of similar non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households – 20.6 per cent.

More than 10 per cent of one-parent households in WA live on less than \$400 per week, compared to 1.4 per cent of couple families with children.

An important characteristic of one-parent households is that they are mostly female headed households – around 82 per cent. These households face greater vulnerability to unexpected life events and economic shocks.

**TABLE 15:** Total income (weekly) by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status and family composition, WA, 2016

	Couple family with no children	Couple family with children	One-parent family	Other family	Total
<b>Household with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person(s) in WA</b>					
0-\$399	5.2	2.7	20.6	12.4	10.3
\$400-\$999	28.1	21.5	48.4	44.9	33.7
\$1000-\$1999	29.4	31.6	22.1	27.9	27.5
\$2000-\$2999	22.4	24.1	6.4	9.9	16.6
\$3000 and over	15.1	20.0	2.5	4.7	11.9
<b>Other households in WA</b>					
0-\$399	3.7	1.4	11.0	9.1	3.8
\$400-\$999	25.0	6.8	37.7	25.2	18.7
\$1000-\$1999	29.6	27.2	33.9	36.1	29.2
\$2000-\$2999	22.8	30.2	12.2	19.8	24.5
\$3000 and over	19.0	34.4	5.2	9.7	23.7
<b>All Australian households</b>					
0-\$399	4.0	1.4	10.6	8.7	4.0
\$400-\$999	28.4	8.9	40.9	29.3	21.9
\$1000-\$1999	31.4	30.6	33.7	37.6	31.5
\$2000-\$2999	21.0	29.1	10.5	17.2	22.8
\$3000 and over	15.2	30.0	4.3	7.1	19.8

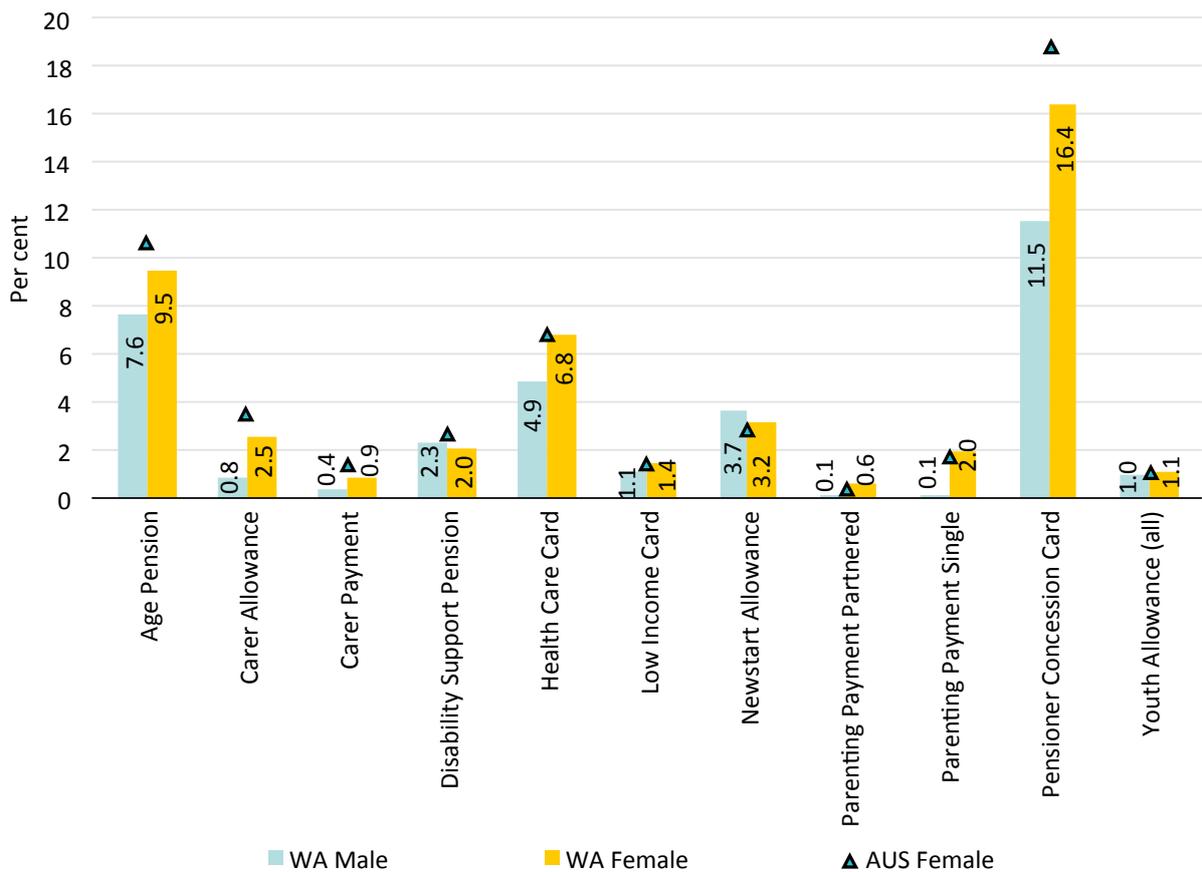
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of population and housing, 2016.

A number of welfare payments have been introduced over time to support families and individuals in times of need and at different stages of the life course. Welfare payments as a person's primary source of income can indicate lower levels of economic independence and overall wellbeing.

A higher proportion of women than men are in receipt of government payments, with the

exception of the Newstart Allowance and Disability Support Pension (Figure 69). Women are much more likely to be in receipt of the age pension and associated pension card, with smaller superannuation balances and longer life expectancy contributing factors. There is also a significant difference in the proportion of women and men who are recipients of the carer allowance – 2.5 per cent of women and 0.8 per cent of men.

**FIGURE 69:** Persons receiving welfare payments by gender, Australia and WA, March 2018



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 3101.0 Australian Demographic Statistics, March 2018; DSS Payment demographic data, March 2018.

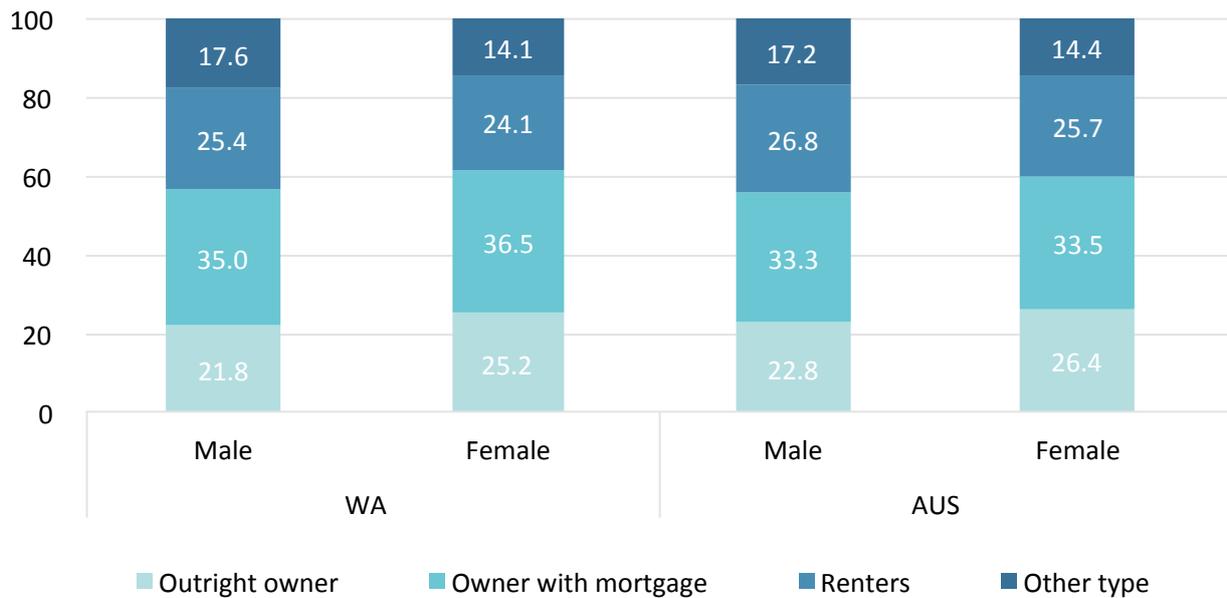


## Home ownership

Home ownership impacts an individual's current and future financial security. Not owning a home outright in retirement age can lead to financial pressures and increases the risk of poverty as retirement incomes are generally much lower.

Overall, WA has slightly higher ownership rates for men and women (56.8% and 61.7% respectively) than Australia (56.1% for men and 59.9% for women) (Figure 70). There is a five percentage point difference in home ownership rates in favour of women in WA relative to men (outright owners and owners with mortgages). This gap is wider in the state if we compare it to the national average of 3.8 percentage points.

**FIGURE 70:** Home ownership, by gender, Australia and WA, 2015 to 2016



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat 6503.0 Survey of Income and Housing, 2015-16.

## Homelessness

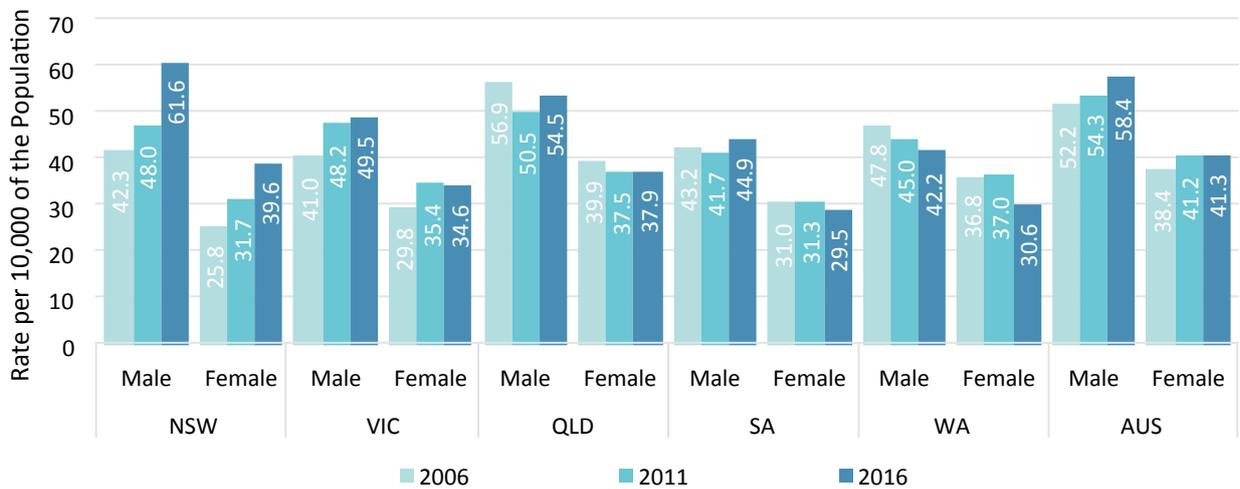
Homelessness is often associated with sleeping rough on city streets, but this challenging social issue extends far beyond this. A modern definition of homelessness takes into account dwelling adequacy, stability of housing tenure and the level of control that people have over their living space. Homelessness has a number of drivers including domestic violence, relationship breakdown, lack of employment opportunities and affordable housing.

Homelessness rates among both women and men in WA have been decreasing over time and remain lower than national trends (Figure 71).

This is in contrast to a general pattern of increasing rates of homelessness across most states and territories in the 10 years between 2006 and 2016. Homelessness rates have fallen from 36.8 to 30.6 per 10,000 among WA women, and from 47.8 to 42.2 per 10,000 among WA men between 2006 and 2016.

Homelessness rates among women and men in WA have fallen over time.

**FIGURE 71:** Rate of homelessness, by gender and state, 2006 to 2016



Note: Persons 12 years of age and over.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Census of population and housing, 2006, 2011, 2016.



## Work and caring

While women have increased their presence in the paid labour market, there is continued pressure on women to maintain primary care-giving and unpaid roles in our communities. Government and workplace policies that support combining work with caring roles, together with changing social norms and greater participation by men in unpaid work, are important factors in increasing the opportunities available to women. This section examines trends in these areas and the progress that has been made for WA women.

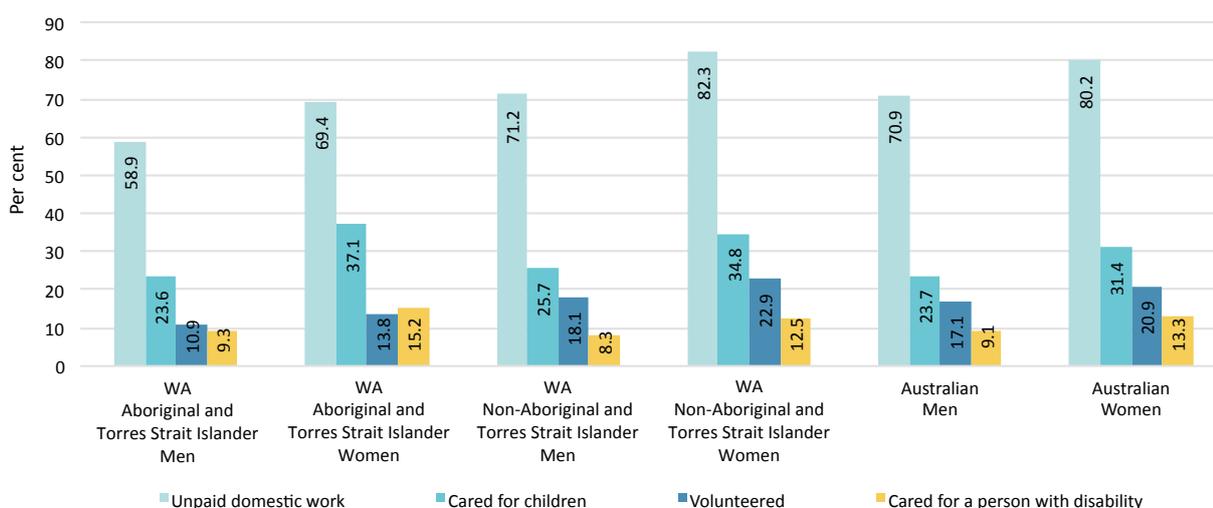
### Unpaid work

Women perform around 75 per cent of all unpaid work, including caring for children and others, housework and administration and volunteering. There is often a trade-off between unpaid and paid work, especially for women, and the consequences in terms of economic independence can be profound.

Figure 72 displays the share of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women having engaged in unpaid activities in 2016. Across all measures, there is always a larger proportion of women in Australia and WA who undertake unpaid work relative to men. The gap between men and women is similar for both domestic housework and caring for children – averaging around 10 percentage points when comparing men and women in each group. Smaller gaps are evident between women and men who have volunteered for an organisation in the last 12 months or cared for someone with a disability in the last two weeks.

Across all measures, there is always a larger proportion of women in Australia and WA who undertake unpaid work relative to men.

**FIGURE 72:** Unpaid work, caring and volunteer work, by gender, Australia and WA, 2016



Notes: People aged 15 years and older were asked if they provided unpaid care for children or assistance to a family member with a disability or long-term health condition in the past two weeks, whether they undertook unpaid household domestic work in the last week and whether they volunteered for an organisation in the last 12 months.

Source: ABS Census of population and housing, 2016.

### Caring for children

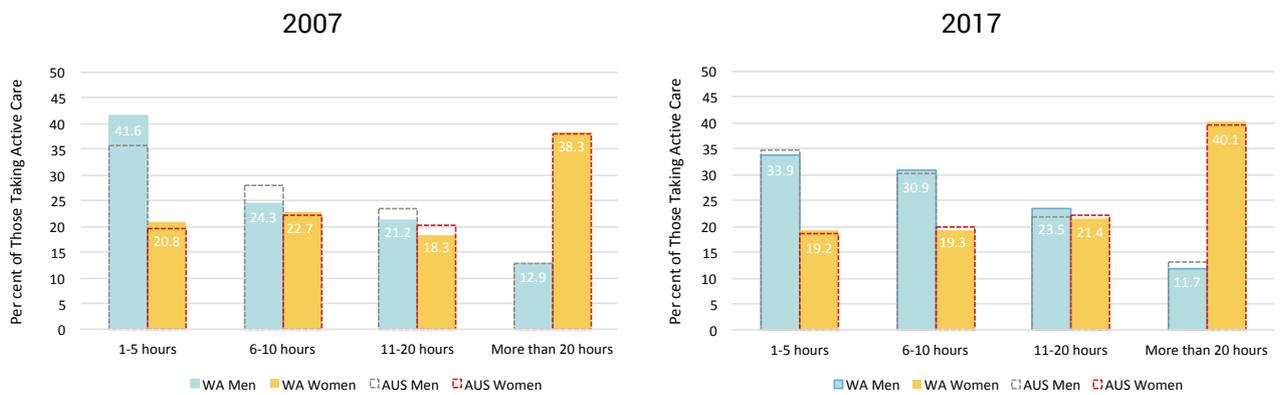
Women undertake longer hours of caring for children than men. Men are more likely to spend smaller amounts of time in active child care each week, with 33.9 per cent averaging one to five hours each week and 11.7 per cent of WA men doing more than 20 hours of child care on a weekly basis in 2017 (Figure 73). More than 40 per cent of WA women spend 20 or more hours each week actively caring for children (40.1%), with one in five women in WA spending six to 10 hours actively involved in childcare.

In the 10 years between 2007 and 2017, the share of WA women spending 20+ hours each week

taking active care of children has increased by two percentage points. For men, there was a 6.5 percentage point increase in the six to 10 hours category, coinciding with a decline in the proportion of those men engaged in the one to five hours range (-7.7 ppts).

In WA, 40 per cent of women spend 20+ hours each week on active childcare, compared to 12 per cent of men.

**FIGURE 73:** Weekly hours taking active care of children, by gender, WA and Australia, 2007 and 2017



Notes: Active care of children comprises the following activities: playing with children, helping them with personal care, teaching or coaching, getting them to child care, school or other activities.

Source: HILDA Survey.



## Combining work and care

Parents will use a number of options to combine work with caring for children. In 2017, the two main types of work arrangements used by women were flexible working hours (43.8%) and part-time work (36.3%) (Table 16). Men were also more likely to use flexible working hours (26.9%) to cope with childcare responsibilities, but the second most common arrangement was working from home (12.9%). The percentage of women working from home due to child care is higher than that of men, at 18.9 per cent, compared to 12.9 per cent.

Both WA women and men were less likely to report using flexible working hours and shift work in 2017 than in 2008, in order to care for children.

In fact, over this period, fewer women were reporting using any type of working arrangement to care for children – 70.8 per cent in 2017 compared to 77 per cent in 2008. Part-time work as a means to combine work and childcare has also decreased for women, while remaining stable for men.

WA working women were most likely to work flexible hours (43.8%) and have part-time jobs (36.3%) to combine work and caring for children.

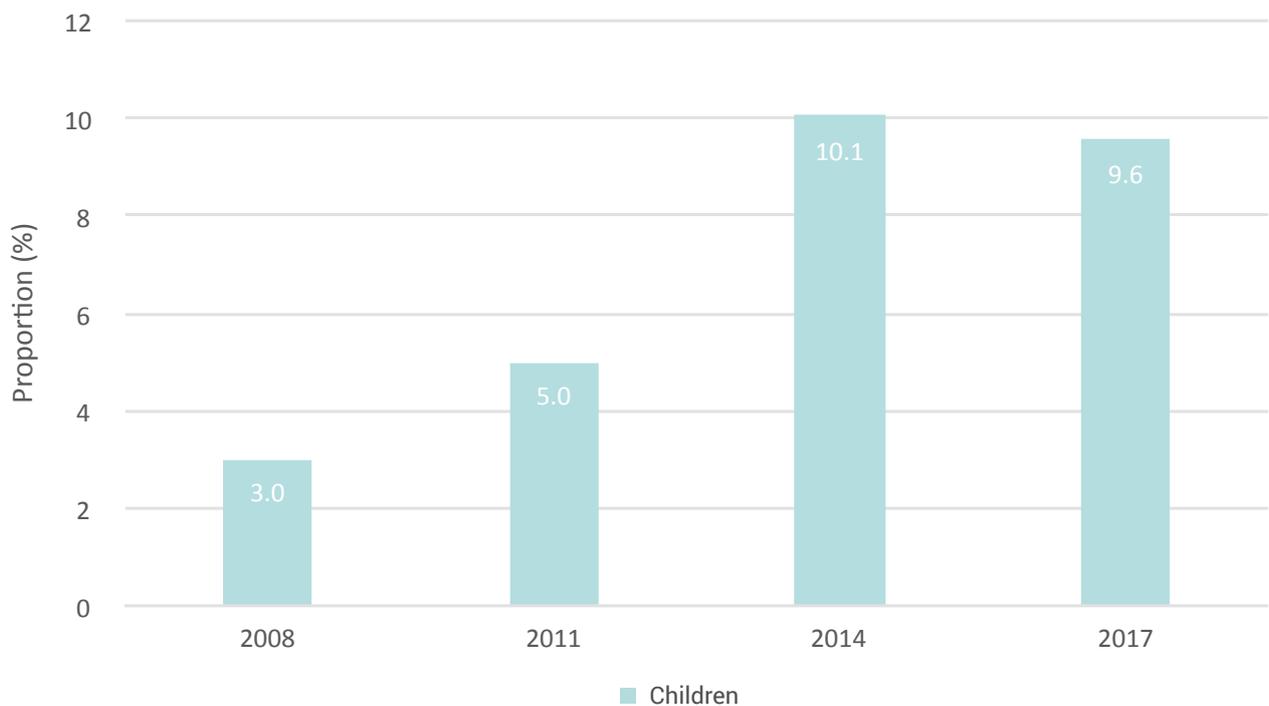
**TABLE 16:** Type of work arrangement used to care for child, by gender, WA, 2008 to 2017

	2008		2011		2014		2017	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Work arrangements used by parents</b>	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Flexible working hours	34.0	47.0	29.0	49.0	32.4	43.2	26.9	43.8
Part-time work	5.0	42.0	3.0	46.0	2.4*	39.0	4.2*	36.3
Shift work	12.0	21.0	9.0	14.0	7.0	4.8*	8.2	6.8
Work at home	-	-	-	-	10.5	18.1	12.9	18.9
Other	6.0	12.0	7.0	10.0	1.5*	5.6*	2.5*	3.4*
<b>Total used working arrangements</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>77.0</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>79.0</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>73.2</b>	<b>42.7</b>	<b>70.8</b>
<b>Parent did not use working arrangements</b>	<b>58.0</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>62.0</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>29.2</b>

Notes: Families with children aged 0-12 years and at least one parent employed. Fields with \* should be taken with precaution, as relative standard errors are higher than 25 per cent. Parents can choose more than one working arrangement.  
Source: ABS Cat 4202.0 Childhood Education and Care, 2008-2017.

Formal childcare is an important arrangement available to parents to participate in work, study and other activities. A greater proportion of children requiring additional formal care indicates unmet formal care needs for WA parents and carers. Over time, this proportion has increased, from 3 per cent in 2008, rising to 10.1 per cent in 2014, and falling slightly to 9.6 per cent in 2017 (Figure 74).

**FIGURE 74:** Children requiring additional formal care, WA, 2008 to 2017



Note: Families with children aged 0-12 years.

Source: ABS Cat 4202.0 Childhood Education and Care, 2008-2017.



Given the amount of hours that people allocate to childcare, it is important to look at the repercussions in terms of labour force participation. Table 17 shows the proportion of parents who wanted to work more, but were unable to due to a lack of child care. In WA, 57 per cent of women were not able to work because they did not have child care, this is almost double the number of men who could not work for the same reason. For both men and women, this percentage is higher in WA than in the rest of Australia (around a 5 ppt difference), meaning that, on average, lack of child care seems to be a bigger issue in WA than in the rest of the country.

In WA, 57 per cent of women were not able to work further because they did not have childcare.

**TABLE 17:** Whether parent prevented from working by lack of childcare, by gender, 2015 to 2016

	Men	Women	Total
Western Australia	31% (6.7)*	57% (44.6)	53% (52.9)
Australia	29% (60.3)	55% (334.8)	48% (396.7)

Notes: In parenthesis are indicated the number of people in thousands. \*Data for WA men should be taken with precaution, as standard errors are higher than 25 per cent. Sample includes parents and caregivers of children aged 0–12 years who were unemployed, did not have a job or worked part-time. Source: ABS, Cat. 6506, Survey of household income and housing, 2015-16.

## Social norms and attitudes

Social norms and cultural beliefs can shape our attitudes towards the roles that men and women play in society. Social norms are defined as the individual perception of group conduct or what is commonly accepted as usual behaviour. Some cultures and generations may be likely to have more traditional divisions of tasks between men and women, which can impact on both genders' ability to fully participate in work and family life.

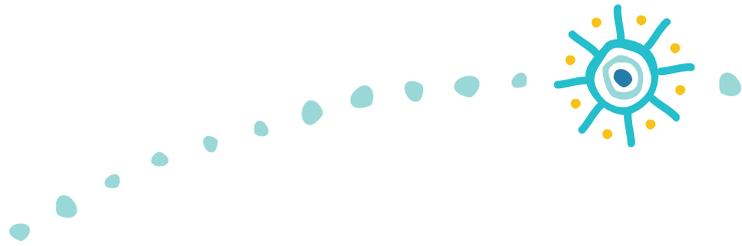
In the 10 years to 2015, there has been a significant change in people's attitudes towards childcare responsibilities, paid and unpaid work, and the expected roles of men and women in society (Figure 75).

In 2005, almost four out of 10 men and one in three women in WA agreed with the statement that mothers who really do not need the money should not work. Ten years later, in 2015, both men and women's attitudes towards mothers working had changed substantially. Only one in four men considered this statement to be true, and the share of women who believed mothers who do not need the money should not work fell to one in five. Australia and WA have very similar attitudes towards mothers working; however, WA men appear to be slightly more conservative than the average Australian male.

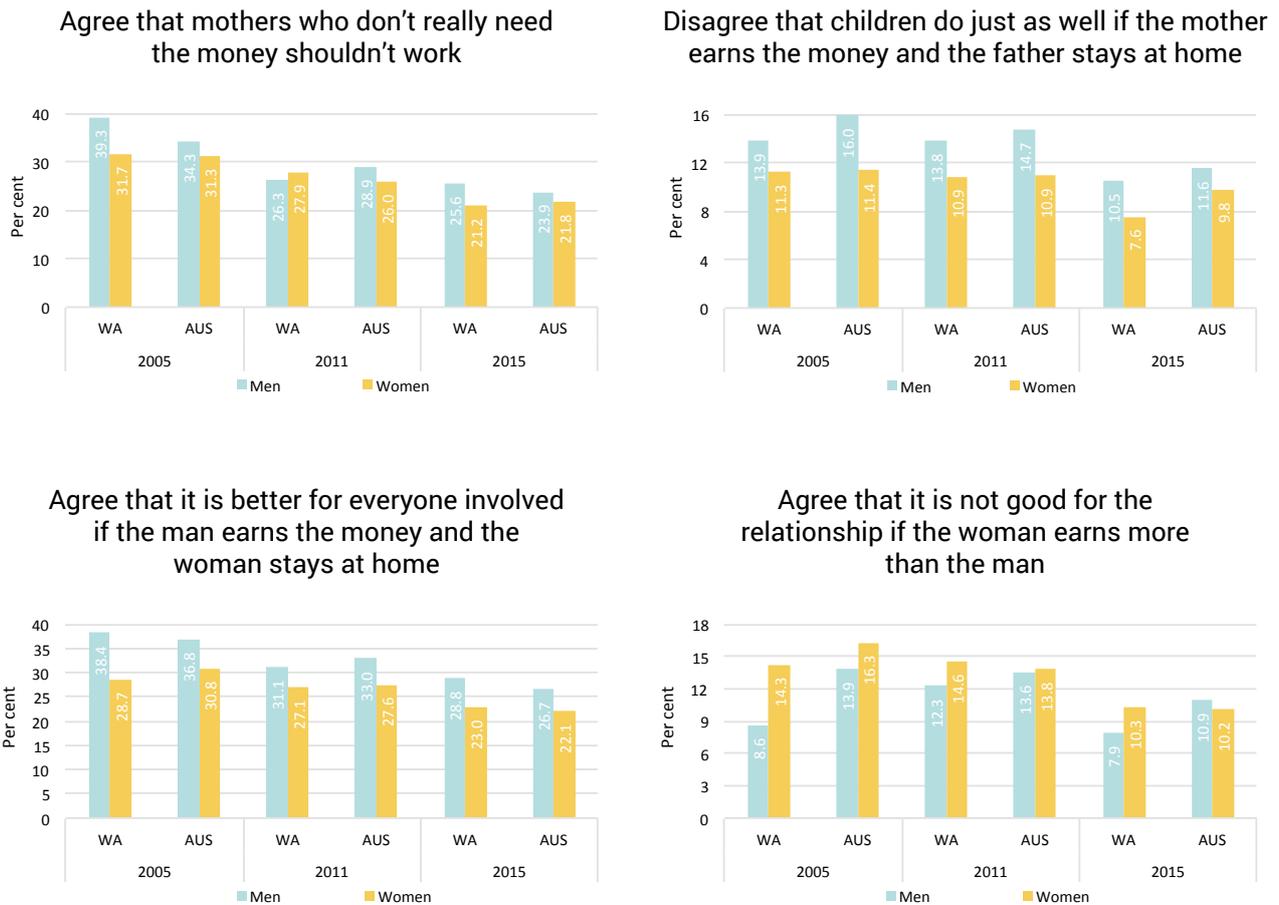
Attitudes towards working mothers have become more positive in the last 10 years in both WA and Australia.

There is still a proportion of women and men who are reluctant to accept the idea of mothers working when they do not need the money.

In WA, just 10.5 per cent of men and 7.6 per cent of women disagree that children do just as well when the father stays at home and the mother earns the money. Hence, most people believe that the gender of the 'breadwinner' in the couple does not affect a child's development.



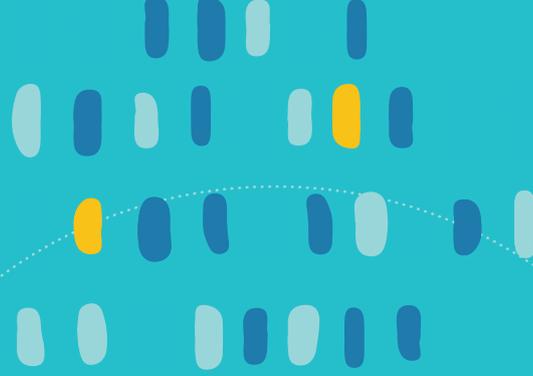
**FIGURE 75:** Attitudes to men and women’s roles, WA and Australia, 2005 to 2015



Note: Authors’ calculations using HILDA data Waves 5, 11 and 15. Disagree = score 1-3, Agree = 5-7.  
Source: HILDA Survey, Wave 17.

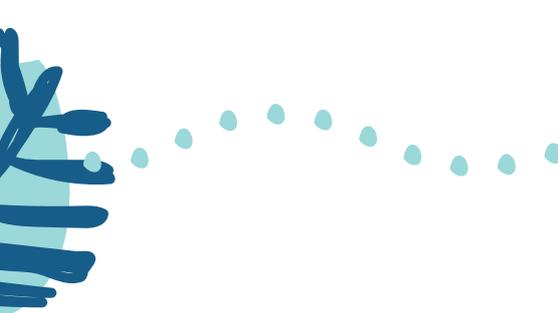
Changing attitudes are also apparent when looking at the share of women and men that think it is better if the man earns the money and the woman stays at home. In 2005, 38.4 per cent of WA men and 28.7 per cent of WA women agreed with this statement. This has fallen to 28.8 per cent and 23.0 per cent respectively in just ten years. West Australians continue to be more traditional than the rest of Australia in this area.

Despite the expected gender roles within a family that still exist, the sex of the person who earns the highest income in the couple is relatively unimportant. Only 8 per cent of men in WA believe that it is not good for the relationship if the woman earns more. Similar proportions of women in WA and Australia agree that it is not good for a relationship if the woman earns more.



# 6

## Leadership



## 6 Leadership

### Introduction

Greater gender diversity in leadership and decision-making roles can contribute to positive outcomes for organisations and communities.

Research shows that diverse groups make better decisions than homogenous groups and bring new information and perspectives which can enhance decision-making.

Diverse groups can also promote continuous learning within the group. Greater gender diversity in leadership can also make institutions and policies more representative. A 2012 World Bank report recognised that women's participation in decision-making institutions can result in "policies, programs, and laws that are quite different from those that would have emerged without it". This is particularly relevant for public authorities that act in the public interest to deliver improved community outcomes.

This chapter focuses on the area of leadership and examines the participation of WA women in leadership roles in the public, business and community sectors, and also elected government positions.

### Outcomes

Desired outcomes in the area of leadership include:

- WA women participate fully at leadership levels within organisations.
- WA women participate fully in appointed and elected offices.
- WA leadership comprises and benefits from the full range of human expertise, experience and skills.

### Indicators

The indicators in this chapter contribute to understanding how WA is progressing towards achieving these outcomes:

- Senior positions in public authorities
- Business leadership
- Elected and appointed positions in government
- Community leadership.

## Elected and appointed positions in government

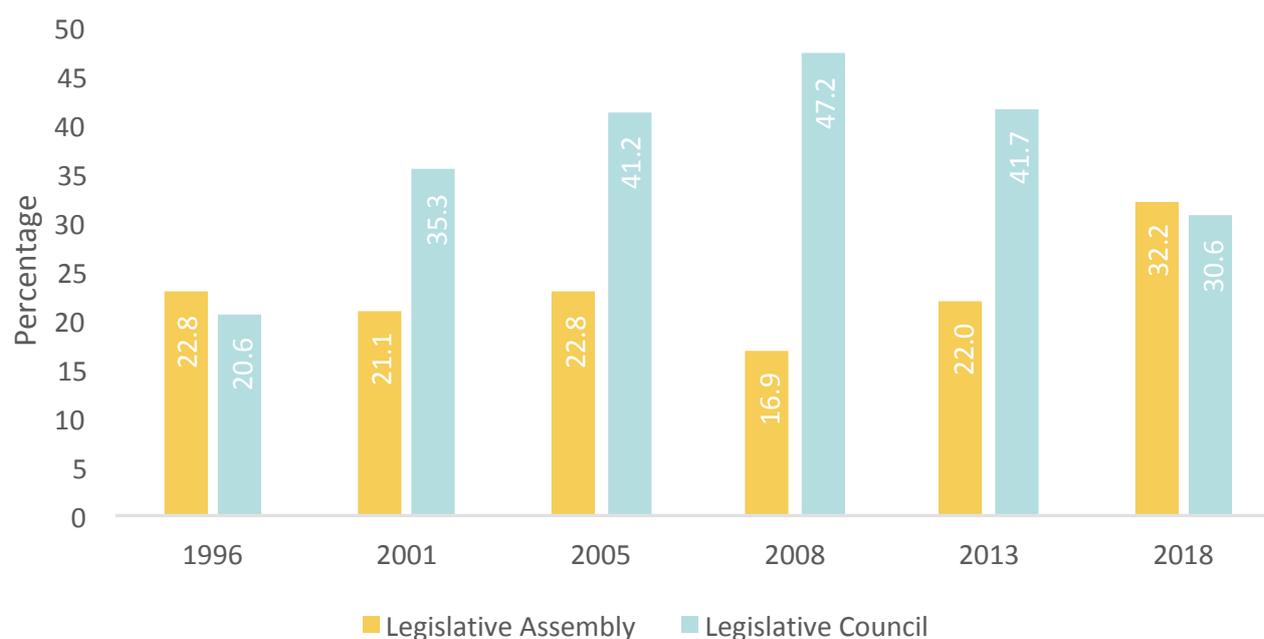
Over the last 15 years there has been In directly comparing 1996 to 2018 figures, there has been substantial improvements in the representation of women in the WA Parliament, both in the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council (Figure 76).

Female representation on the Legislative Council went from 20.6 per cent in 1996 to 30.6 per cent in 2018. However, there has been a sizeable backward step in recent years, with the share of females on the Legislative Council in WA standing at 47 per cent in 2008. In absolute terms, that is a decline from 17 women out of 36 members on the Legislative Council in 2008 to 11 women out of 36 members on the Legislative Council in 2018.

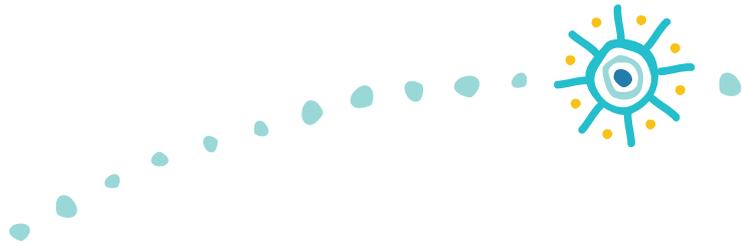
Women's representation in the WA Legislative Assembly has also improved over time, from 22.8 per cent in 1996 to 32.2 per cent in 2018. A substantial increase between the 2013 and 2017 elections has brought female representation to the highest level yet; however, it remains well below parity.

The proportion of women in elected WA Legislative Council positions has declined from 47 per cent in 2008 to 31 per cent in 2018.

**FIGURE 76:** Percentage of women in elected positions in WA Parliament, 1996 to 2018

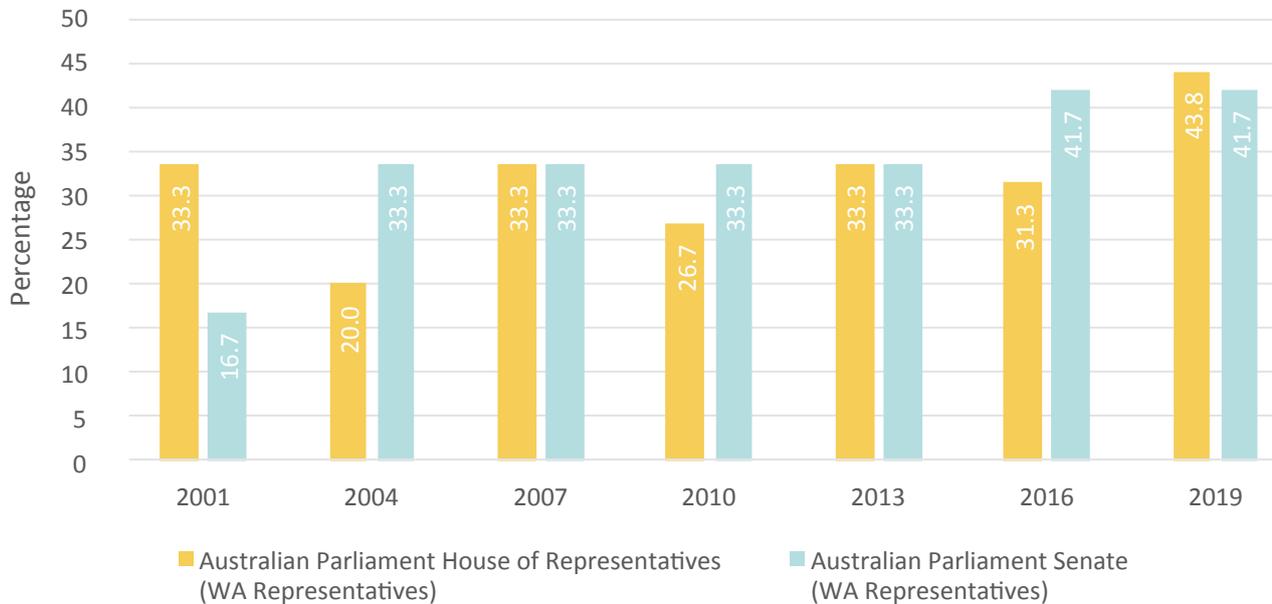


Source: Western Australian Electoral Commission <https://www.elections.wa.gov.au/elections/state/past-elections>.



In the Australian Parliament, the representation of WA women as a share of all WA representatives has increased over time in both the Senate and House of Representatives. In the 2019 election, women held 43.8 per cent of WA seats in the House of Representatives and 41.7 per cent in the Senate. This is the highest level ever observed.

**FIGURE 77:** Percentage of women in elected positions in the Australian Parliament, 2001 to 2019

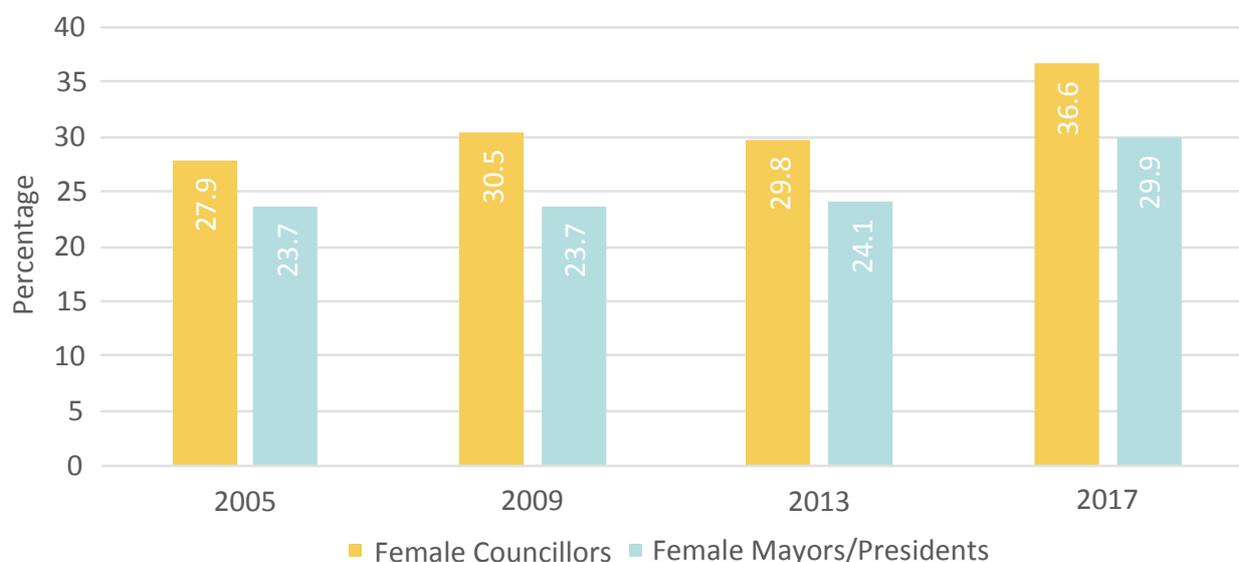


Source: Australian Electoral Commission: [https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/Federal\\_Elections/](https://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/Federal_Elections/)

There are currently 137 local governments (councils) in WA. Councils consist of a number of elected councillors, and depending on the classification of a council, may have either an elected-at-large mayor or president. Generally, councils classified as a shire have a president, while all other council types have a mayor. Ordinary local government elections are held every two years, on the third Saturday in October. At each election, approximately half of the councillor, mayor and president positions come up for re-election.

In 2005, 27.9 per cent of all elected councillors in WA were women. After the 2017 local government elections, this had increased by 8.7 percentage points to 36.6 per cent (Figure 78). This increasing representation of women on local government councils was also reflected in the percentage of female mayors and presidents. Between 2005 and 2017, the percentage of female mayors and presidents increased, from 23.7 per cent to 29.9 per cent – an increase of 6.2 percentage points.

**FIGURE 78:** Percentage of total elected female local government officials, WA, 2005 to 2017



Note: The percentages are calculated based on the total number of elected councillors, mayors and presidents, after each election year. Selection of years.  
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from *Report on Local Government Elections*, WA Department of Communities, 2017.

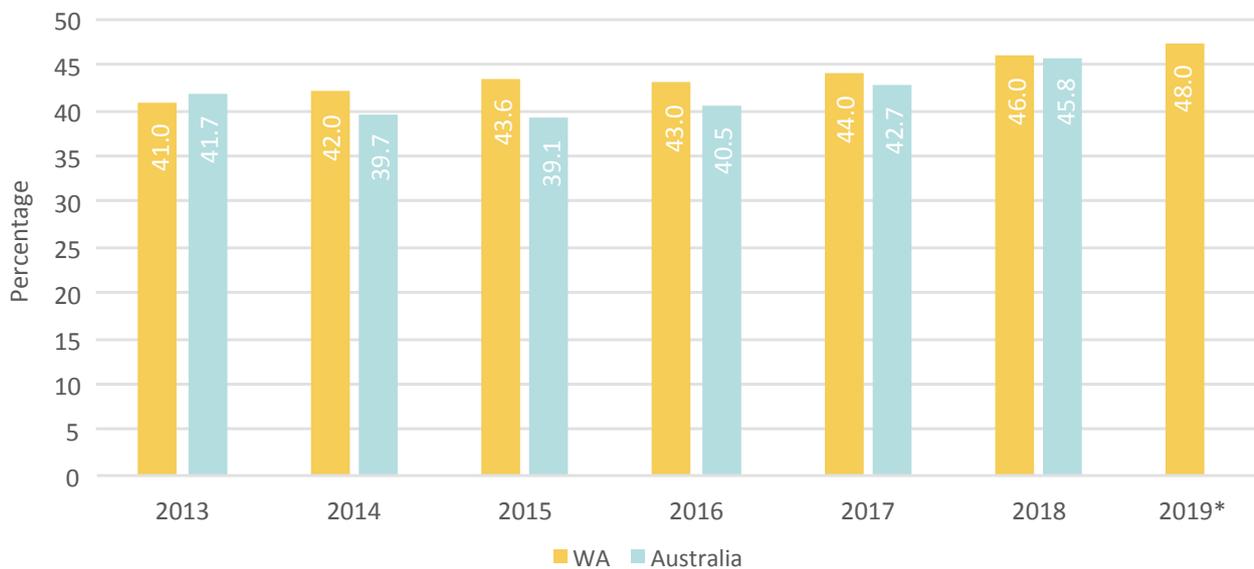


## Government boards and committees

Government boards and committees are important independent advisory and decision-making entities. The number of women serving on government boards and committees indicates the level of influence women can have in relation to public policy, infrastructure and services. In 2017, the WA Government made an election commitment to increase female representation on government boards to 50 per cent. In August 2019, the proportion of positions on government boards and committees held by women was 48 per cent (Figure 79). This represents a substantial increase from 41.0 per cent in 2013. WA is slightly ahead in representation of women on boards at the Australian Government level.

48 per cent of WA government board positions are held by women.

**FIGURE 79:** Proportion of women on government boards, Australia and WA, 2013 to 2019



Note: \*2019 figures captured in August.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from *Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards* reports, Office for Women. August 2019 data provided by the Department of Premier in Cabinet.

## Public authorities

### Public sector

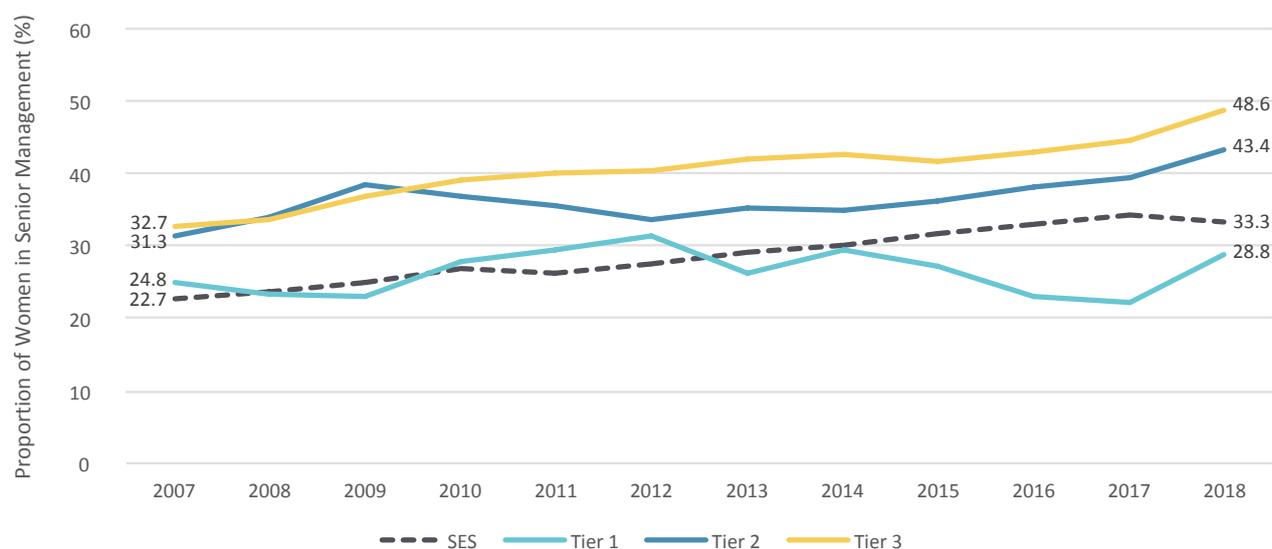
In 2018, the WA public sector employed 140,799 people – of these 101,886 (72.4%) were women.<sup>38</sup> Overall, women have higher representation in lower-tier management positions within the WA public sector, holding almost half (48.6%) of Tier 3 management positions and 43.4 per cent of Tier 2 roles (Figure 80).

Representation of women in senior public sector leadership in WA has generally been increasing over the last 10 years, with strong growth in Tier 2 and Tier 3 leadership. The share of women who are Tier 3 managers increased by more than 15 percentage points since 2007, and by 12 percentage points among Tier 2 roles.

Tier 1 roles, which include directors general, general managers and commissioners, have seen an improvement in the share of women holding these positions in the last 10 years, increasing from 24.8 per cent to 28.8 per cent. Tier 1 positions have the lowest share of female representation across all senior management positions in the public sector.

**Tier 1 positions have the lowest share of female representation across all senior management positions in the public sector.**

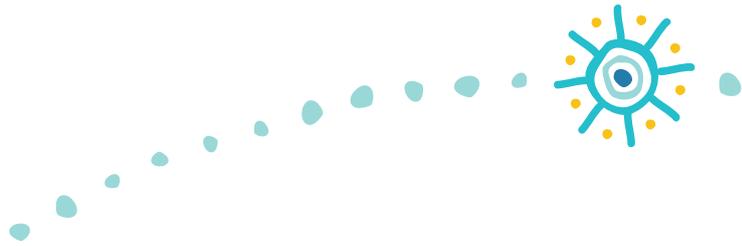
**FIGURE 80:** Women in senior WA public sector leadership, 2007 to 2018



Note: See Glossary and Technical notes for definitions of leadership tiers.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report 2012, 2013 & 2018.

<sup>38</sup> Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report 2018 | Breaking down barriers, Published by the Public Sector Commission.



In 2018, senior executive service (SES) roles comprised 33.3 per cent women. This represents a substantial change, increasing by more than 10 percentage points since 2007.

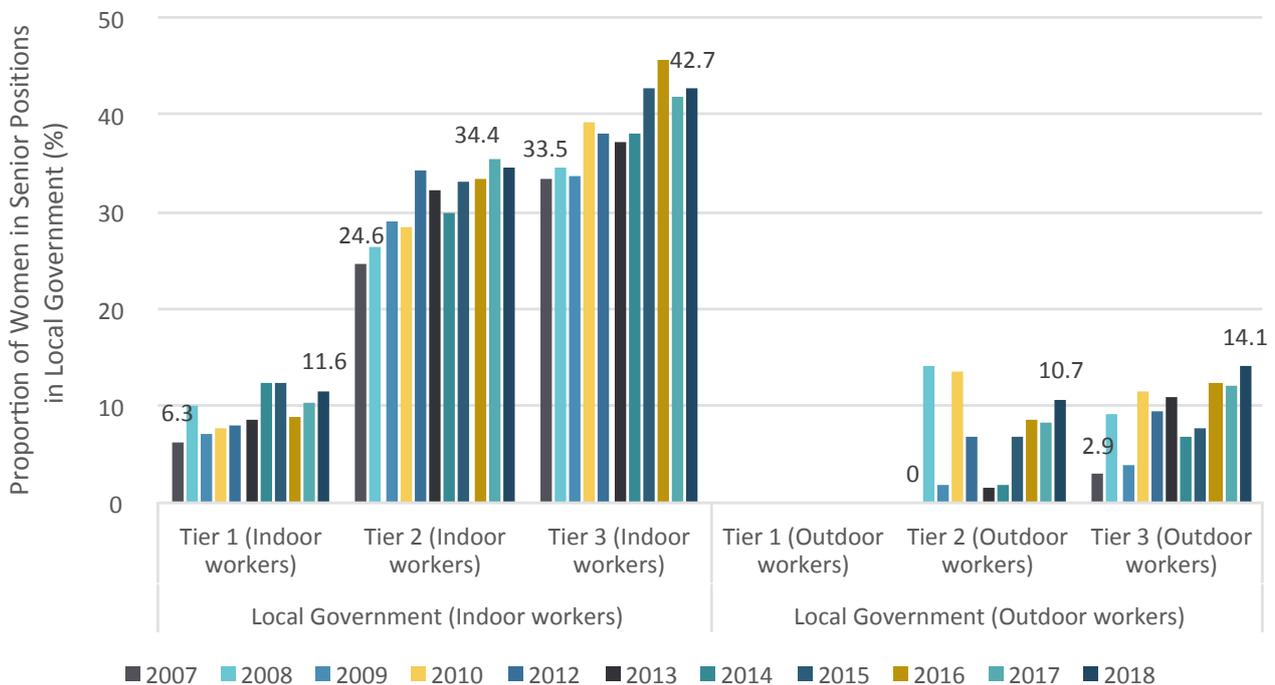
### Local government

Western Australia has 137 local governments, which in 2018 employed 24,545 persons, 54.1 per cent of whom were women.<sup>37</sup> The local government sector administers the *Local Government Act 1995* (WA) and provides local services for communities including roads, parks and playgrounds, and community services and events.

Local government leadership can be divided into those operating as indoor (office workers) and outdoor workers. Women are more likely to be employed within an office than outdoor environment, which relates to occupational segregation within the workforce.

As is the case with the general WA public sector, women are also more likely to hold lower tier management positions. In 2018, 42.7 per cent of Tier 3 indoor workers were women, while women represented 34.4 per cent of Tier 2 workers and only 11.6 per cent of Tier 1 workers (Figure 81). All management tiers have seen an improvement in the share of women in these roles over the last

**FIGURE 81:** Women in senior leadership in WA local government, 2007 to 2018



Note: There are zero women represented as Tier 1 managers in Outdoor roles across WA local governments. Data was not available for 2011 at time of print. Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from *Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report 2012, 2013 & 2018*.

<sup>37</sup> *Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report 2018 | Breaking down barriers*, Published by the Public Sector Commission.

decade. The representation of women in the highest management level (Tier 1) has almost doubled in the last 10 years, moving from 6.3 per cent to 11.6 per cent, but still remains well short of women's representation in the local government sector overall.

Among outdoor managers, there are very few women operating as senior leaders. As is the case with indoor leadership, the greatest representation of women is among the lower tier management levels. In 2018, there were 14.1 per cent of women in Tier 3 outdoor worker roles – an increase from 2.9 per cent in 2007. Among Tier 2 outdoor workers, women have increased their representation from zero to 10.7 per cent. There are no women employed as Tier 1 managers in local government outdoor leadership.

There are no women employed as Tier 1 managers in local government outdoor leadership.



## Other public authorities

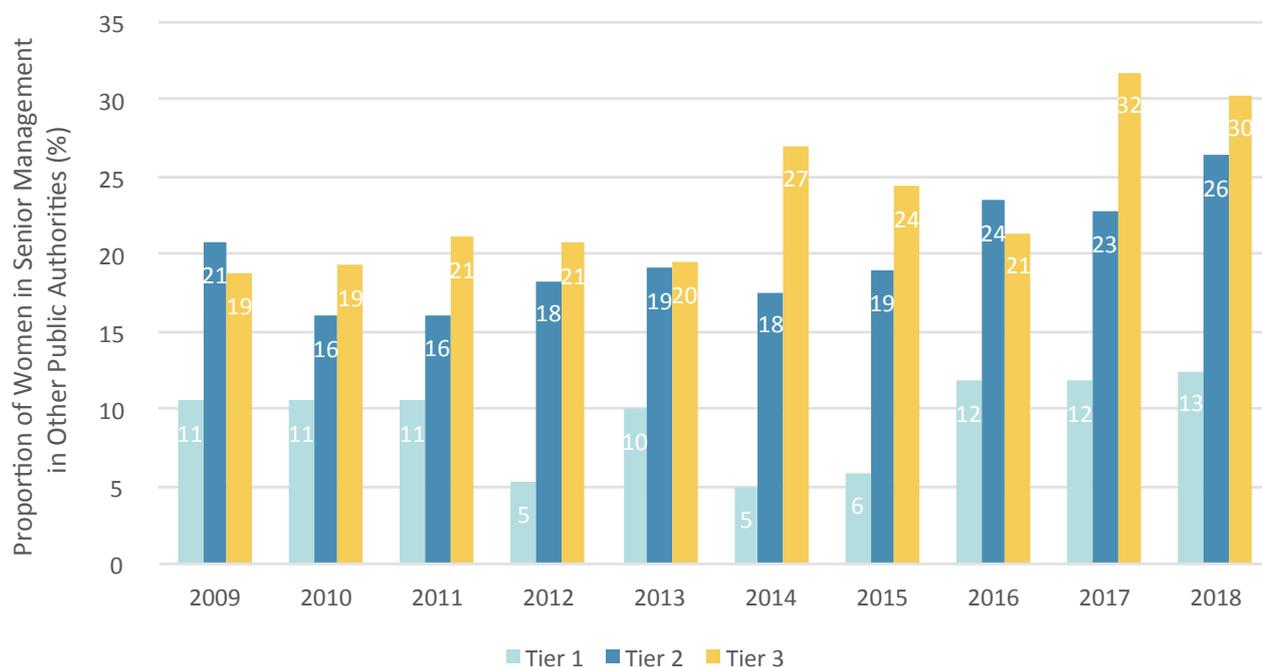
Other public authorities include the WA police force, electorate offices and government trading enterprises. In 2018, this sector employed just over 16,000 workers, with 29.4 per cent women.

Again, women are more likely to hold positions in lower management tiers, with the highest proportion of women in Tier 3 (30%) (Figure 82). This represents an increase of more than 10 percentage points since 2009. Around one-quarter of Tier 2 management positions and 13 per cent

of Tier 1 positions are held by women. Both Tier 2 and Tier 1 positions have seen little change when comparing 2009 and 2018. However, the share of women as Tier 1 managers has doubled since 2015, when female representation had fallen to five per cent.

The share of women Tier 1 managers in other public authorities has doubled since 2015.

**FIGURE 82:** Women in senior leadership in other WA public authorities, 2009 to 2018



Note: Other public authorities includes government trading enterprises, the WA Police Force and electorate offices.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from *Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report 2012, 2013 & 2018*.

### Public universities

Western Australia has four public universities – Curtin University, The University of Western Australia (UWA), Edith Cowan University (ECU) and Murdoch University. Together they employ almost 22,000 people (60.4% women) and in 2018 more than 132,000 students were enrolled to study at these universities.

Tier 1 managers are those holding the role of vice-chancellor within the public university sector and in 2018, three out of the four vice-chancellors were women. This included Professor Deborah Terry, Curtin University; Professor Dawn Freshwater, UWA; and Professor Eeva Leinonen, Murdoch University. Prior to 2017, only one in four vice-chancellors were women.

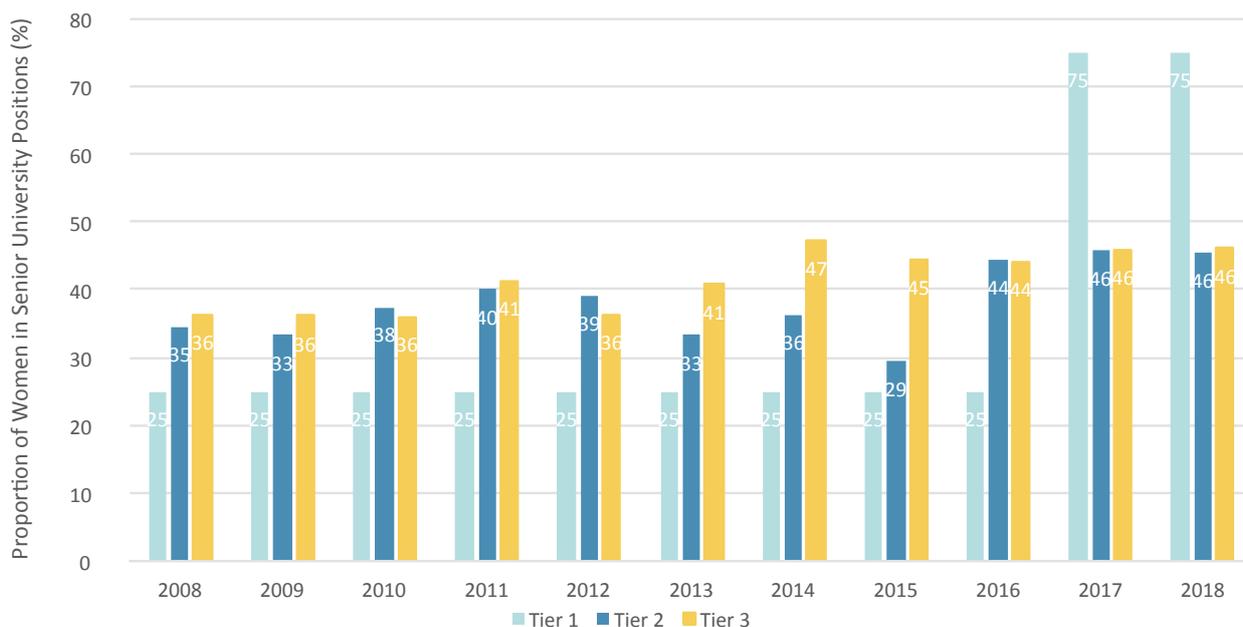
The representation of women in Tier 2 and Tier 3 management levels across WA’s public universities is currently very similar, at around

Three out of four Vice-Chancellors in WA are women.

46 per cent (Figure 83). Among Tier 3 leadership roles, women have increased their representation by 10 percentage points in the last decade, from 36 per cent in 2008 to 46 per cent in 2018.

The second highest leadership level – Tier 2 has seen considerable growth in women’s representation since 2015, having fallen to a low of 29 per cent. A stronger emphasis on gender equity overall and increasing women in leadership through programs such as the SAGE (Science in Australia Gender Equity) initiative are likely to be driving the changes seen in the sector in the last few years.

**FIGURE 83:** Women in senior leadership in WA public universities, 2008 to 2018



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from *Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Annual Report 2012, 2013 & 2018*.



## Business leadership

### Women as business leaders

Since 2014, more than 11,000 companies covering more than four million employees report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) annually on gender equity indicators including the representation of women in senior leadership roles in some of Australia's biggest organisations.

Over the past five years, the proportion of women holding senior positions across Australian companies has generally been increasing, with the exception of women's representation as board chairs (Figure 84).

Women employed as key management personnel has increased from 26.2 per cent to 30.5 per cent over the last five years. However, while women have been progressing into senior management roles, the most recent BCEC|WGEA *Gender Equity Insights Series* has shown that they are unlikely to be able to access the same types of pay that men have access to in these roles.<sup>39</sup>

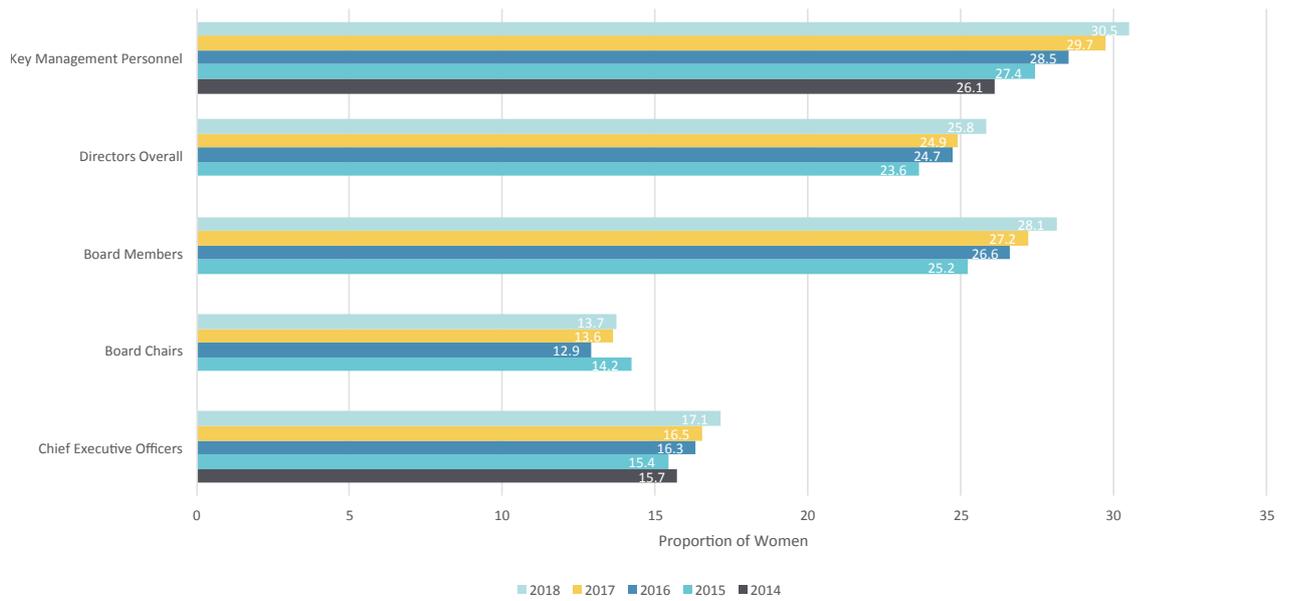
The share of women holding board chair roles is the lowest among senior leadership positions (13.7%) and has gone backwards slightly since 2015. Women holding director and board membership positions has been increasing by around one percentage point each year. Women as chief executive officers (CEO) has increased marginally, from 15.7 per cent in 2014 to 17.1 per cent in 2018. Recent research has estimated that women will not achieve parity in CEO roles until next century, if current patterns continue.<sup>40</sup>

The share of women holding board chair roles is the lowest among senior leadership positions.

39 Cassells R and Duncan A (2019), *Gender Equity Insights 2019: Breaking through the Glass Ceiling*, BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity Insights Series.

40 Ibid.

**FIGURE 84:** Women’s representation in leadership positions across Australian companies



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from Workplace Gender Equality Agency.



## Women as business owners

The proportion of women as owner-managers of businesses provides an insight into the extent to which women are taking on business leadership roles. This is particularly the case when examining owner-managers with employees, whereas owner-managers without employees are more likely to reflect independent contractors, which in some circumstances may be considered to be an alternative form of employment, where other options are not available.

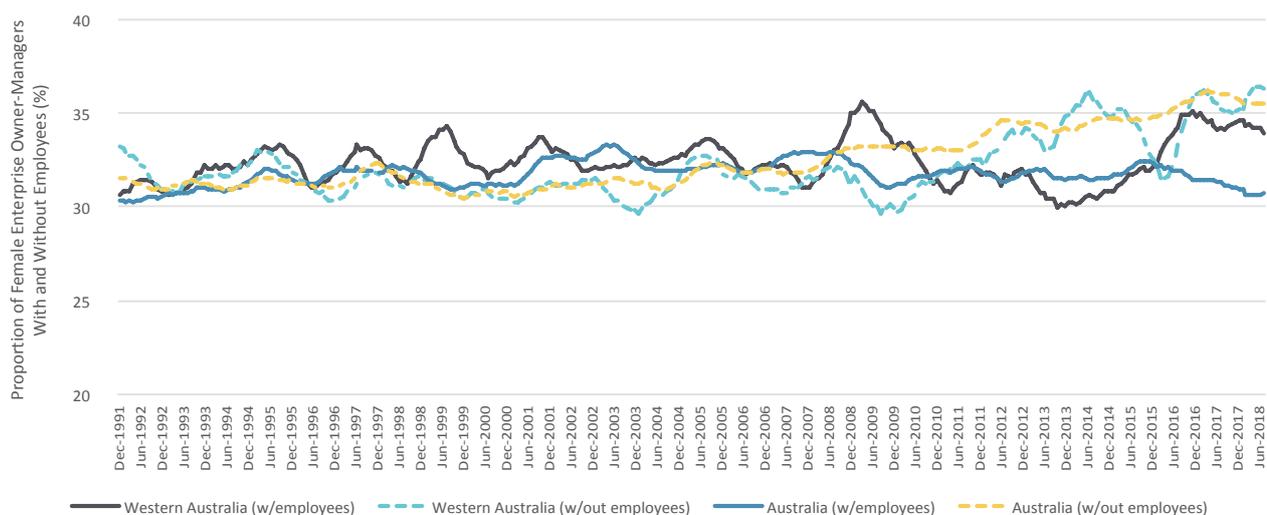
It's also important to note that this indicator will not necessarily capture business ownership in its entirety nor the degree of ownership or control that an individual may have. Additional information about the business, including other directors or owners and the size of the business including both number of employees and business turnover, is an important information needed to further gauge the relative position of women as

business owners in WA. This information is not available from any reliable data source at this time.

The proportion of women who are owner-managers (without employees) has been increasing over time in both WA and nationally, particularly since the global financial crisis in 2008/09 (Figure 85). Nationally, the proportion of women owner-managers without employees has risen from around 32 per cent to 35.5 per cent since 2009. For WA, the increase has been more noticeable, rising from 30 per cent to 36 per cent in the same time frame.

Since 2012, the proportion of women who are owner-managers with employees has increased from 30 per cent to 34 per cent in WA. Nationally, over this same time frame the proportion has fallen slightly, from around 32 per cent to 31 per cent.

**FIGURE 85:** Proportion of female enterprise owner-managers, with and without employees, WA and Australia, 1991 to 2018



Notes: Original data has been smoothed using a 12-mth rolling average. Owner-managers of incorporated and unincorporated enterprises have been included and combined to give a total operating with and without employees. OMIEs and OMUEs are described further in the Glossary. Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from ABS Cat No. 6291.0.55.001 – EM6a – Employed persons by Hours actually worked in all jobs, Sex and Status in employment of main job, and State, January 1991 onwards.

## Community leadership

### Community sector

The community sector provides important services to disadvantaged and vulnerable people, from financial support to disability and domestic violence services. The community sector in WA employs an estimated 136,024 people, the vast majority (80%) women.

The Western Australian Council of Social Service (WACOSS) is Western Australia’s peak representative organisation for the community and comprises 182 organisations, with a diverse portfolio of responsibilities and business size. Of these organisations, around two-thirds are led by a female CEO or equivalent (Figure 86). Women are far more likely to hold leadership positions in smaller organisations, where turnover is less than

\$1 million. In these community organisations, more than 80 per cent of CEO positions are held by women. As the size of the organisation increases, so too does the likelihood that it will be led by a man. Men hold more than 50 per cent of CEO roles in community sector organisations with turnover greater than \$2.5 million.

Women are far more likely to hold leadership positions in smaller community sector organisations, where turnover is less than \$1 million.

**FIGURE 86:** Proportion of female and male CEOs in community sector organisations, WA, 2018



Note: CEO is a generic term used for the leadership of an organisation and includes General Managers, Executive Officers, Centre Managers, Presidents and Directors.

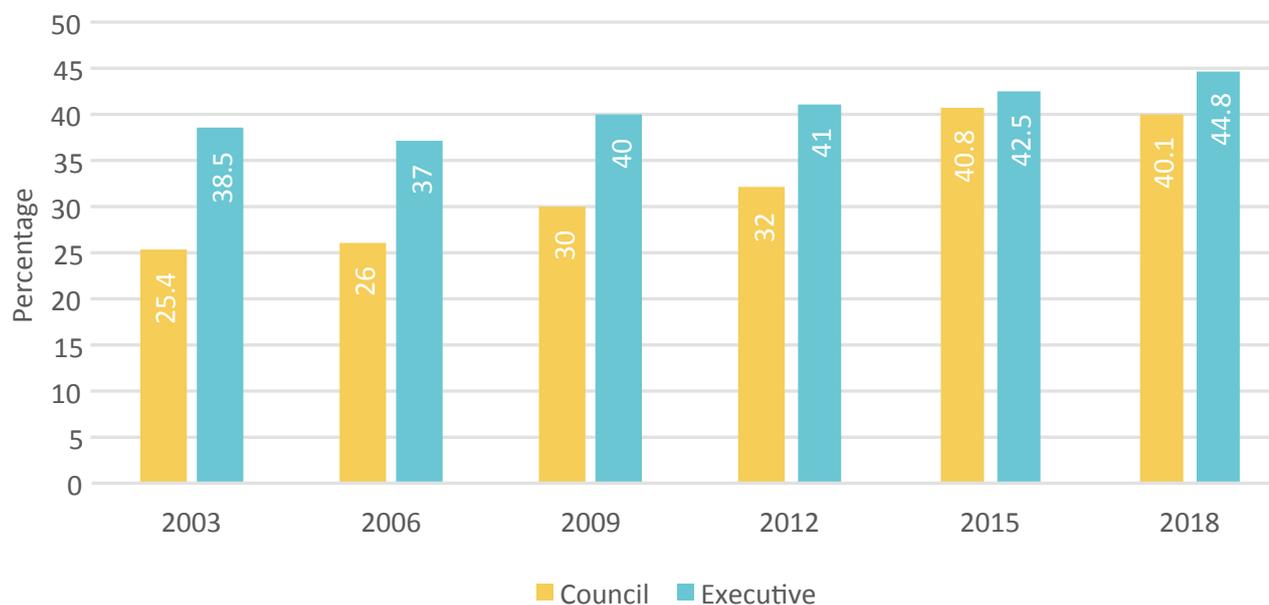
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from Western Australian Council of Social Services. Unpublished Data as of December 2018.



## UnionsWA

UnionsWA is the peak decision-making body for unions in WA. It represents more than 30 affiliated unions which have more than 150,000 members in the state and advocates for better employment conditions for workers. Over the last 15 years, the representation of women on the council of UnionsWA has increased substantially, from 25.4 per cent in 2003 to 40.1 per cent in 2018 (Figure 87). Representation of women at the executive level has also increased during this period, from 38.5 per cent to 44.8 per cent.

**FIGURE 87:** Proportion of female delegates to UnionsWA, for selected years



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from UnionsWA. Unpublished data.

## Civic awards

### Order of Australia

The Order of Australia was introduced in 1975 and recognises outstanding achievement and service. There are four levels within the Order of Australia including Companion of the Order (AC), Officer of the Order (AO), Member of the Order (AM) and Medal of the Order (OAM).

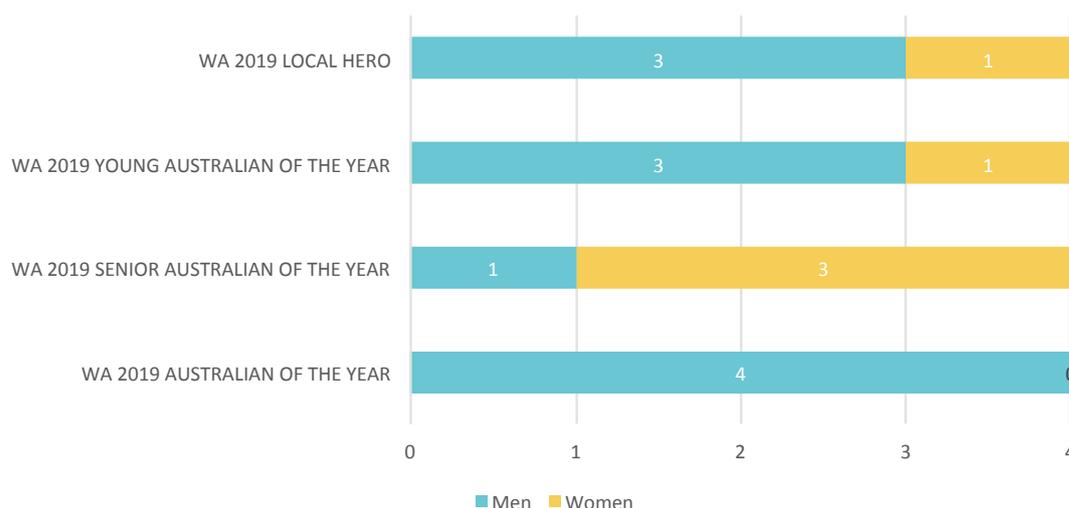
Nationally, women have been under-represented both in being nominated for and in receiving an award in the Order. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet cite a long-term average of around 30 per cent of women receiving an award in the Order, but an increase to 37.4 per cent in 2019 recognises that women are still under-represented.<sup>41</sup> In 2018, more women than men received the AC – the highest order.<sup>42</sup>

### Australian of the Year

The Australian of the Year Awards were introduced in 1960 and celebrate the achievements and contributions of Australians. The awards are announced in January each year and include Australian of the Year, Senior Australian of the Year, Young Australian of the Year and Australia's Local Hero. Each state and territory committee selects four nominees to put forward to the National Australia Day Council, which then selects a finalist to be considered for the national award.

In 2019, a total of 11 men and five women were the final nominees for WA (Figure 88). There were no women as final nominees for the Australian of the Year category and only one for the local hero and Young Australian of the Year Award. More women than men were nominated for the Senior Australian of the Year Award for WA.

**FIGURE 88:** Western Australian final nominees for 2019 Australian of the Year Awards



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from Auspire: <https://auspire.org.au/news/2019-wa-australian-of-the-year-award-nominees-announced/>.

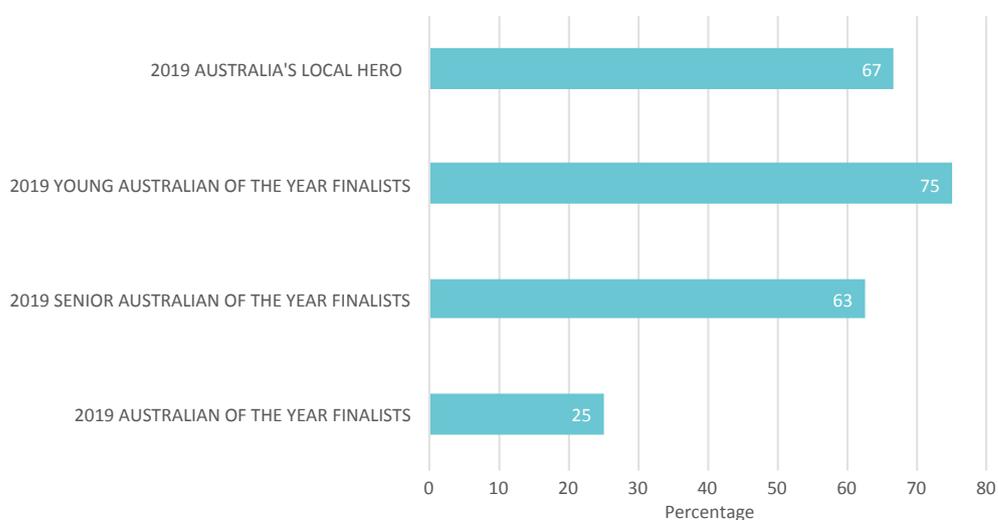
41 <https://www.pmc.gov.au/news-centre/government/australia-day-honours-2019>.

42 <https://www.pmc.gov.au/news-centre/government/more-women-receiving-australian-honours>.

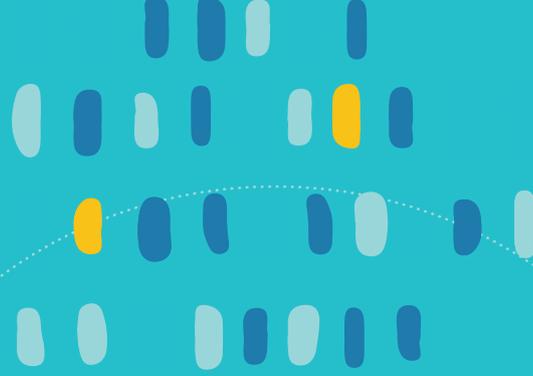


The WA finalists selected for the national awards included two men and two women. Nationally, a total of 19 women and 14 men were finalists in the Australia Day Awards in 2019. Women featured prominently in the Young Australian of the Year Award category, comprising 75 per cent of state and territory finalists (Figure 89). More women than men were also finalists for the Local Hero and Senior Australian of the Year awards. However, for the most prestigious award – Australian of the Year – only 25 per cent of finalists were women.

**FIGURE 89:** National finalists for 2019 Australian of the Year Awards

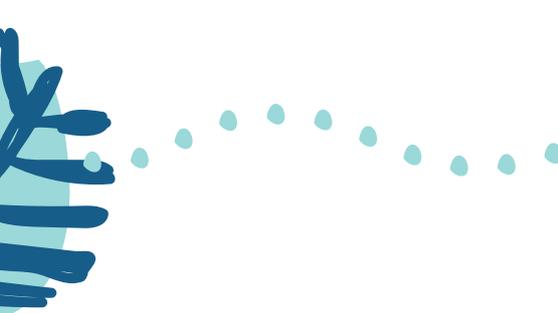


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from National Australia Day Council Ltd.



# G

## Glossary



## 7 Glossary

### Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2)

This is a construct of the ABS, and part of their Australian Statistical Geography Standard. An SA2 is designed to reflect functional areas that represent a community that interacts together socially and economically. The SA2 is the smallest area for the release of many ABS statistics.

### Indoor workers

Staff in local government authorities who are generally office based.

### Outdoor workers

Staff in local government authorities who generally work outdoors.

### Senior Executive Service (SES)

Generally comprises positions classified at Public Service and Government Officers CSA General Agreement 2017 equivalent Level 9 and above, with specific management or policy responsibilities.

### Management tiers

#### Tier 1 management

- Directs and is responsible for the organisation, as well as its development as a whole.
- Has ultimate control of, and responsibility for, the upper layers of management.
- Typical titles include director general, chief executive officer, general manager, executive director and commissioner.

#### Tier 2 management

- Is directly below the top level of the hierarchy.
- Assists Tier 1 management by implementing organisational plans.
- Is directly responsible for leading and directing the work of other managers of functional departments below them.
- May be responsible for managing professional and specialist employees.
- Does not include professional and graduate staff. For example, engineers, medical practitioners and accountants, unless they have a primary management function.

#### Tier 3 management

- Is responsible to Tier 2 management.
- Formulates policies and plans for their area of control.
- Manages a budget and employees.
- Is the interface between Tier 2 management and lower level managers.
- Does not include professional and graduate staff. For example, engineers, medical practitioners and accountants, unless they have a primary management function.

## Owner-manager

### **An owner-manager of an incorporated enterprise (OMIE)**

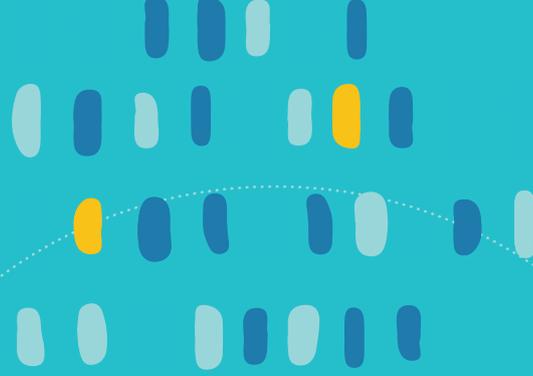
Is a person who works in his or her own incorporated enterprise, that is, a business entity which is registered as a separate legal entity to its members or owners (also known as a limited liability company). These people are employed by their business and are sometimes classified as employees in ABS surveys.

### **An owner-manager of an unincorporated enterprise (OMUE)**

Is a person who operates his or her own unincorporated enterprise, that is, a business entity in which the owner and the business are legally inseparable so that the owner is liable for any business debts that are incurred. It includes those engaged independently in a profession or trade. OMUEs can be further classified as employers if their business has employees, or own account workers (sole operators) if it does not.

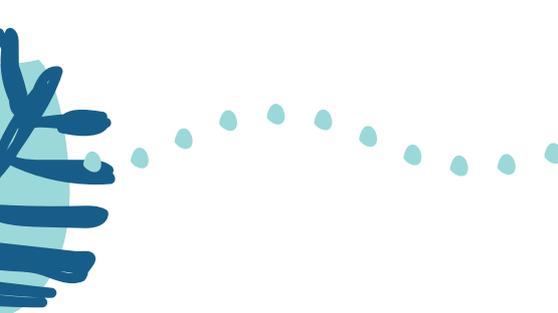
OMUEs can also be classified on the basis of their working arrangements as independent contractors and other business operators (see Chapter 9), which groupings do not correspond to employers and sole operators. Where these groupings are used, they are noted in the text and relate to specific contractor data (i.e. number of contracts) (taken from *A Profile of Australian Women in Business Report* prepared by the ABS for the Office of Women, 2015).





# R

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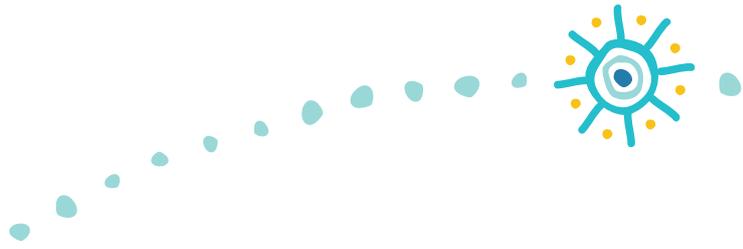
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