



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Communities**



Curtin University



# 2022 Women's Report Card

An indicator report of  
Western Australian  
women's progress



### **About this report**

The 2022 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. It was established in 2017 as part of a major reform of the Western Australian public sector. Everything we do is about people, place and home.

**People** reflects our focus on the needs and aspirations of the people we serve. We support people to be the best they can be, and to live a good and meaningful life, a life with opportunity.

**Place** relates to a collective sense of self and how and where people connect to the world around them.

**Home** is more than a building: it has a deep, emotional meaning. While home is different for everyone, it should provide both physical and emotional security.

### **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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## Minister's message



I'm proud to present the *2022 Women's Report Card* – a valuable tool to demonstrate progress for women in Western Australia and identify areas where outcomes still need to be improved.

The Report Card provides a picture of how WA women are doing in the areas of health and wellbeing, safety and justice, economic independence and leadership.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women is evident in many of the indicators in this edition of the Women's Report Card. Women were at the front lines of the pandemic in occupations such as child care, aged care, teaching and cleaning. Economic data shows us that women in Western Australia fared comparatively well in the labour market after the initial stage of COVID-19, and unemployment remains lower than the Australian average.

The indicators show that women still face significant barriers to fully participate as equals in all aspects of their lives and in our community. The Western Australian Government is committed to addressing gender inequality and leading the way to create a better future for everyone.

The Women's Report Card indicators align with the priorities in Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality (Stronger Together) and provide a framework for evaluation of population level progress towards gender equality. Stronger Together was launched in March 2020 and is supported by four action plans across 10 years to drive long term change in our workplaces, homes, education and training institutions, the justice system and the health system.

I encourage businesses and organisations to use this important resource as an evidence base for developing and evaluating policy, to inform initiatives and actions and to support work that advances gender equality in our communities. Everyone has a role to play to ensure that women and girls in WA are able to thrive.

**Hon Simone McGurk MLA**  
Minister for Women's Interests

# Executive summary



Launched in 2021, the Western Australian Government developed Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality. Stronger Together is the first plan of its kind for WA, with a vision that "women and girls in Western Australia live and work safely in a community where diversity is embraced and where access to rights, resources, opportunities and protections is not determined by gender."

A critical and ongoing step is to provide reliable information to drive discussion, debate, and advocacy – the primary objective of the 2022 Women's Report Card. The Women's Report Card sets out the status and current state of play of women in WA, and in doing so, helps to track progress to achieving better outcomes for women.

As is the case to varying degrees across the globe, women in WA face many inequalities, discrimination, and disadvantage across various aspects of life. Together these factors impact negatively on women's ability to engage and participate fully in their communities, the economy and life more generally.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the OECD has noted that it is imperative that policy responses account for women's concerns (OECD, April 2020)<sup>i</sup>. As is the case globally, women across WA have played a significant role during the COVID-19 pandemic, with women making up a critical mass of healthcare and emergency workers.

Furthermore, through lockdowns and working from home arrangements, the COVID-19 pandemic has created an environment where women's exposure to family and domestic violence may have been heightened. Working from home arrangements coupled with lockdowns have implied lower levels of traditional modes of social connection, with the potential to lead to feelings of isolation and poorer mental and physical health.

For many women, access to health services such as cancer screening and face-to-face mental health treatments also changed.

The 2022 Women's Report Card is framed around the four priority areas as part of the Stronger Together framework: Health and wellbeing; Safety and justice; Economic independence; and Leadership.

Complemented by the WA Women's Data Insights Platform, the 2022 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.

<sup>i</sup> Ramos, G. (2020). *Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis*. OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/#snotes-d4e2908>

# Executive summary (continued)



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 also included critical engagement with stakeholders across the public, private and community sectors.

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 data points are able to be disaggregated by group.

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 at the state, national and international level. In many instances, further and more detailed analysis is required.

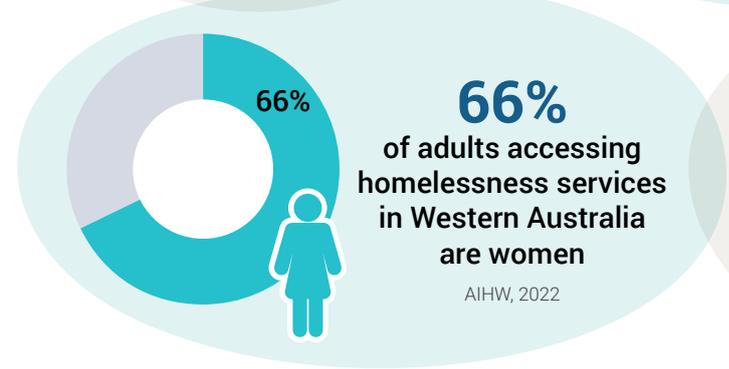
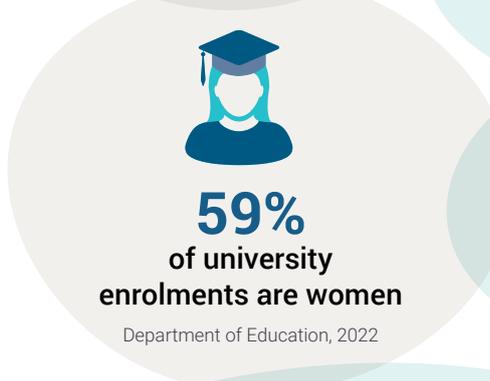
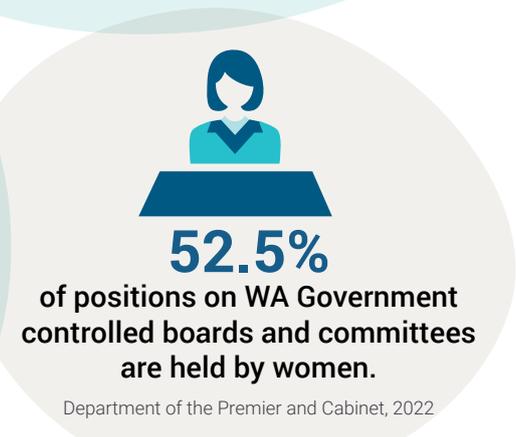
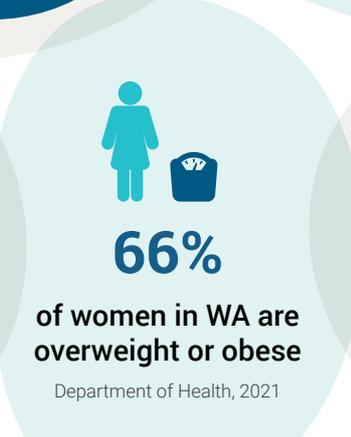
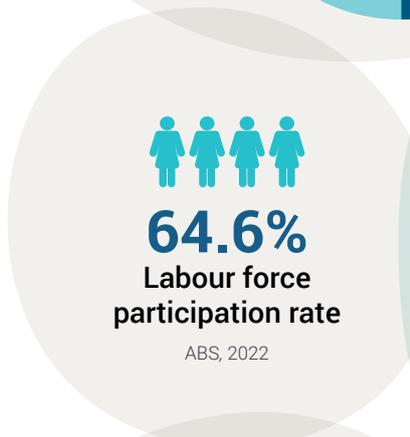
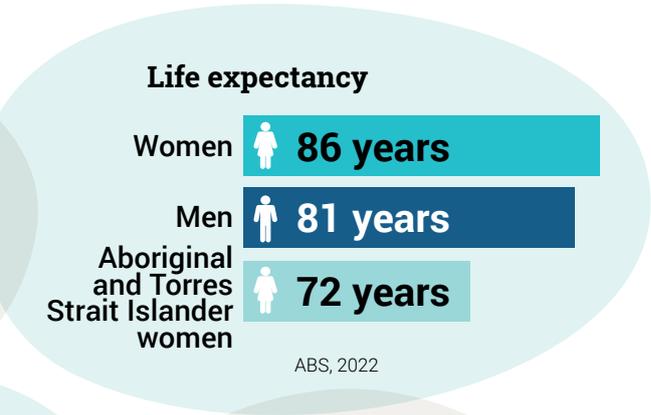
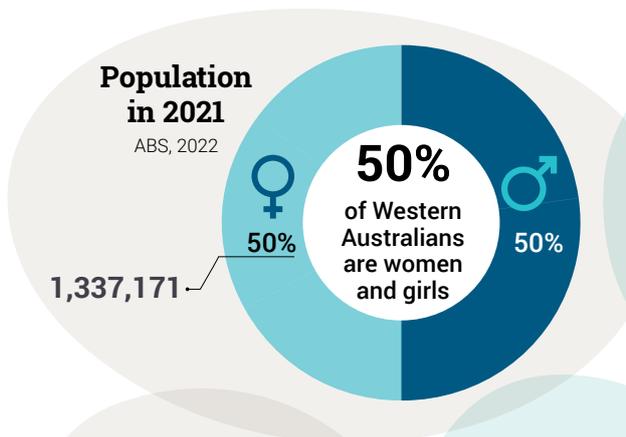
This is the seventh Women's Report Card for WA, and builds on the reports published in 2004, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2019. The report reaffirms the State Government's continuing commitment to provide regular updates on the status and progress of WA women.

In a further step towards delivering on the latter commitments, the BCECIWA Department of Communities Women in WA Data Insights Platform launched in 2019 is taking a new expanded format. This expanded platform ensures that regular updates on a selection of key indicators across the four key priority areas are provided.

As of 2021, there were just under 1.05 million adult women (aged 18 years and over) in WA, with women comprising 52 per cent of the WA adult population.

While this report card shows that progress is being made across many indicators of women's outcomes, many inequalities persist. A summary of these outcomes is provided in the pages that follow, with further details provided in the individual briefing notes across the four key domains.

# WA women at a glance



# Introduction



The 2022 Women’s Report Card presents fact-based information to raise awareness of the status of Western Australian women.

The 2022 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 is designed to be accessible to a broad audience, providing 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.

## Scope and structure of this report

The 2022 Women’s Report Card 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; and leadership.

The 2022 Women’s Report Card is presented in a different format to previous years. The report is delivered in a series of five briefing notes. This briefing note provides an overall summary of the key findings across the four key domains. Further detail on each of the individual domains is provided in four separate briefing notes. These domains are inter-related and all are of critical importance. Individual briefing notes can be accessed online.

The various briefing notes should be read alongside the WA Women’s Data Insights Platform, which provides a detailed set of metrics over time for the various indicators discussed here, with regular data updates provided on the platform.

## 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.

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.

The report aims to raise awareness of women's outcomes and act as a catalyst for community conversations and ultimately action.



# Demographic profile



**1.05 million**

**Number of Women**  
(aged 18 years and over)

ABS, 2022



**Disability**

**4.9%**

of women in Western Australia have profound or severe disability

ABS, 2021

**59%**



**Married women**  
(registered or de facto)

ABS, 2022



**3.3%**

of Western Australian women identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

ABS, 2021

**38%**  
**Born overseas**



ABS, 2022

**42.5%**  
**No Religion, so described**



ABS, 2022



## Priority area: Health and wellbeing



**Goal:** Women are healthy, active and lead fulfilled lives.

### Overview

This domain 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 at different life stages.

## Summary of selected indicators



Health and wellbeing					
Indicator				Long-run change	Short-run change
Life expectancy of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women	2011	2017	2020	2011-2020 change	2017-2020 change
	84.6	84.9	85.7	1.1	0.8
Life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women	2007	2012	2017	2007-2017 change	2012-2017 change
	70.4	70.2	71.8	1.4	1.6
Teenage birth rates (aged 15-19)	2007	2017	2020	2007-2020 change	2017-2020 change
	17.1	10.2	7.8	-9.3	-2.4
Proportion of women with a self-reported health status as very good/excellent	2007	2017	2020	2007-2020 change	2017-2020 change
	61.8	59.2	57.0	-4.8	-2.2
Breast cancer screening rates (% of population aged 50-69)	2006-07	2016-17	2020-21	2006-07-2020-21 change	2016-17-2020-21 change
	57.5	55.2	48.6	-8.9	-6.6
Prevalence of mental health condition (% of population aged 16+)	2007	2017	2020	2007-2020 change	2017-2020 change
	15.8	22.1	20.6	4.8	-1.5
Receiving treatment for a mental health condition (% of population aged 16+)	2007	2017	2020	2007-2020 change	2017-2020 change
	7.6	12.1	12.5	4.9	0.4
Proportion of female General Practitioners (Full Service Equivalent)	2014	2017	2020	2014-2020 change	2017-2020 change
	33.7	36.8	39.8	6.1	3.0

Notes: The reported long-run and short-run periods differ between indicators due to data availability and constraints. 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 better reporting and/or women feeling more comfortable to seek support, both of which are positive developments.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | based on various data sources as cited in the individual domain briefing notes.

## Discussion

The 2022 Women’s Report Card shows a mixed set of outcomes for women’s health and wellbeing over the period highlighted in the Health and wellbeing summary table.

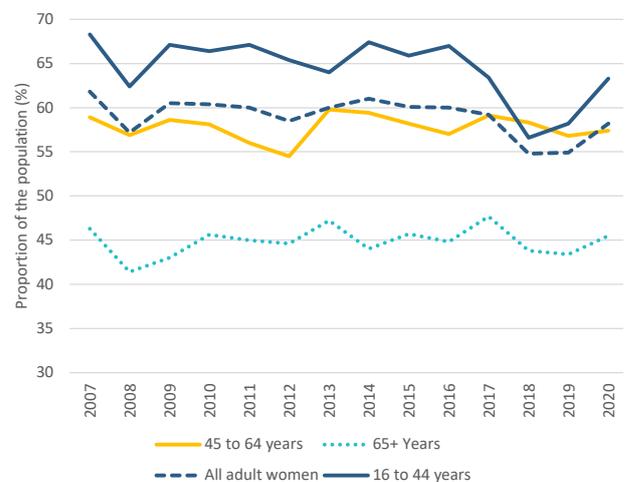
Life expectancy, a proxy for measuring whether a population has adequate and timely access to health care, good nutrition and changing trends in lifestyle behaviours, diseases and illnesses, continues to increase for women and is just under 86 years for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in WA, remaining above that of men (80.3 years). The life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women sits at almost 72 years with close to a 14-year gap to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in WA.

Other indicators of women’s lifestyle and risk factors paint a more multifaceted picture. Some 58 per cent of women in WA self-reported their health status as excellent or very good in 2020, a slight increase on 2019 (55%). However, this share has been declining over the longer-term period, with 62 per cent of women self-reporting their health status as excellent or very good in 2005.

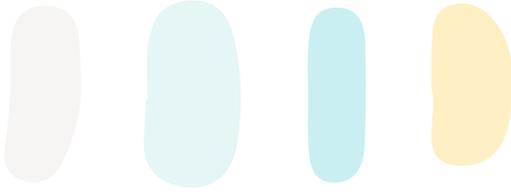
The life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women sits at almost 72 years with close to a 14-year gap to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in WA.

Some 58% of women in WA self-reported their health status as excellent or very good in 2020. This is lower than the share reported in 2005 (62%).

**FIGURE 1:** Women’s self-reported health status as excellent or very good, by age group, WA, 2007 to 2020

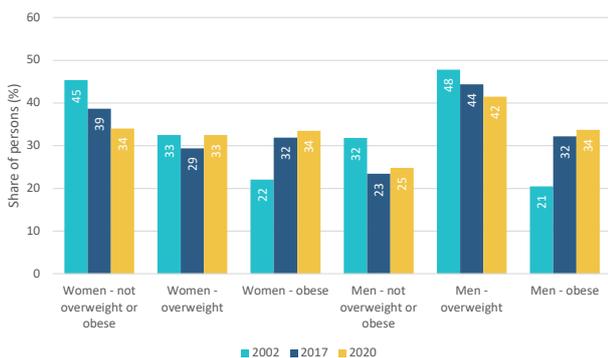


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Government of Western Australia, Department of Health, various years.



Such declines coincide with a concerning increase in the share of women who were classified as being either overweight or obese, with rates gradually increasing from around 56 per cent in 2005 to 66 per cent in 2020 (75% for men). As noted by the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW), “overweight and obesity increases the likelihood of developing many chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, asthma, back problems, chronic kidney disease, dementia, diabetes, and some cancers” (AIHW, 2017)<sup>ii</sup>. Such trends are concerning not only for the individuals, but for a health care system in WA that is already under pressure. More must be done to inform all genders and generations on the importance of healthy lifestyle to improve body weight classifications and general health.

**FIGURE 2:**  
Persons by body weight classification, by gender, WA, 2002, 2007 and 2020



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia, Health Department of Western Australia, 2002, 2007 and 2020.

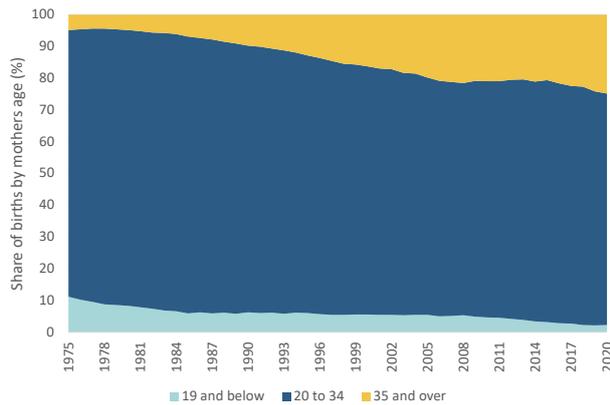
Similar campaigns to reduce the health risks from smoking and alcohol consumption appear to have been beneficial, with substantial declines in the share of women reporting health risks from smoking and alcohol over time. That said, alcohol consumption at levels associated with long-term health risks remains for 18.7 per cent of women (32.4% of men), with smoking a health risk factor for 9.2 per cent of women (11.5% of men).

Women’s sexual, reproductive, and maternal health generally shows continued improvements over time. Teenage pregnancy rates continue to decline with a rate of 75.4 per 1,000 women in WA reported in 2018. Declining fertility rates for WA’s non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (1.70 per 1,000 women in 2020) also continue, but despite some fluctuations, fertility rates for WA’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women remains higher with a rate of 2.55 per 1,000 women reported in 2020.

The age at which women give birth continues to increase in WA, with women aged 35 years and over now comprising 25 per cent of women giving birth in WA, compared to 5 per cent in 1975. This aligns with an increase in the number of births by caesarean section.

<sup>ii</sup> AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) (2017) Impact of overweight and obesity as a risk factor for chronic conditions: Australian Burden of Disease Study, AIHW, Australian Government, taken from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/overweight-and-obesity>, July, 2022.

**FIGURE 3:**  
Age of mothers giving birth, WA, 1975 to 2020



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | ABS, 2022. Accessed through ABS.Stat Data Explorer, 2022.

Despite a continued decline in the age-standardised death rate due to malignant neoplasms, cancer remains the leading cause of death for women in WA with 111.4 per 100,000 persons reported in 2020.

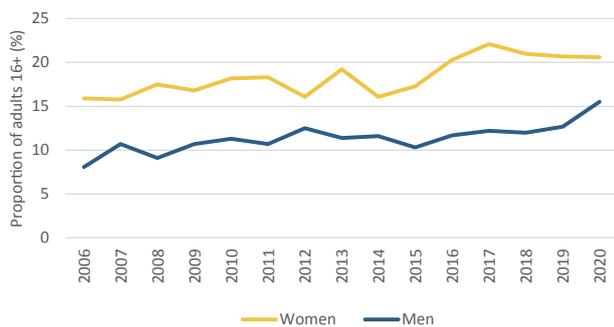
An aspect of service delivery that continues to improve is access to female general practitioners (GPs).

It is concerning breast cancer screening participation rates declined in WA during the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, from 53.7 per cent of women aged 50 to 69 years in 2018-19 to 48.6 per cent in 2020-21. This is a 5.1 percentage point decline, but is lower than the 7.4 percentage point decline observed nationally. It is important to monitor if such rates return to pre-pandemic levels in WA, and to ensure that women continue to have access to critical health screening and health services during state and national crises.

An aspect of service delivery that continues to improve is access to female general practitioners (GPs). On a headcount basis, 47.7 per cent of GPs available in WA in 2020 were women, implying 85.2 female GPs per 100,000 female population, the highest recorded. This does however remain below the national average of 91.9 female GPs per 100,000 female population.

The estimated prevalence of common mental health conditions for women aged 16 and over sits at 20.6 per cent of the population. The prevalence of all three main common mental health conditions - anxiety, stress, and depression, have fallen for women between 2017 and 2020. While current rates for these common mental health conditions remain higher than those observed over the longer term, this may well reflect the growing awareness and declining stigma associated with mental health across society. More work is needed to understand the greater prevalence of mental health conditions amongst the 16 to 44 age cohort relative to older women.

**FIGURE 4:**  
**Estimated prevalence of common mental health conditions, by gender, WA, 2006 to 2020**



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Health Department of Western Australia, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia, 2020.

A factor closely associated with mental health and wellbeing is that of community engagement. Social distancing and isolation measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic provided challenges to the way in which we have traditionally engaged with each other in society. This is evident with declining rates of volunteering, participation in social groups, and involvement in community support groups between 2019 and 2020, with factors such as volunteering rates displaying a decline over the longer term.

As more data becomes available, the coming years will tell us more about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women’s overall health and wellbeing. Declines in breast cancer screening rates provide an initial flag for concern. While the take up of mental health treatments has increased, there are likely divides across regions in WA in terms of ability to access internet services and online telehealth services during lockdown periods.

More comprehensive data and analysis is required to address such regional differences, as well as differences in outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women and other minority groups.





## Priority area: Safety and justice



**Goal:** Women live safely and have appropriate access to adequate legal protections.

### Overview

Safety and justice outcomes can have social, emotional, and financial implications for women and the overall economy. Providing an indication of the overall safety and justice of women in Western Australia, this domain addresses factors including the risk of threat to life, domestic and family violence, discrimination, and sexual harassment, all of which can restrict women's full participation in society.

Experiences of safety and justice have social, emotional, economic and financial implications for women and the overall economy.

## Summary of selected indicators



Safety and justice					
Indicator				Long-run change	Short-run change
Family violence assault reported to WA Police Force with a female <sup>^</sup> victim, per 10,000 population	2008-09	2017-18	2020-21	2008-09 to 2020-21 change	2017-18 to 2020-21 change
	51.0	91.5	101.5	50.6	10.0
Sexual assault reported to WA Police Force, female <sup>^</sup> victimisation rate per 10,000 females	2008-09	2017-18	2020-21	2008-09 to 2020-21 change	2017-18 to 2020-21 change
	1.3	2.1	3.2	1.8	1.1
Total employment complaints by women to the Equal Opportunity Commission	2009-10	2017-18	2020-21	2009-10 to 2020-21 change	2017-18 to 2020-21 change
	201	165	210	9.0	45.0
Imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women	2014	2018	2021	2014-2021 change	2018-2021 change
	866.7	1066.3	830.8	-35.9	-235.5
Imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the population, non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women	2014	2018	2021	2014-2021 change	2018-2021 change
	49.9	72.9	60.6	10.7	-12.3
The share of women legal practitioners	2007-08	2016-17	2020-21	2007-08 to 2020-21 change	2016-17 to 2020-21 change
	42.1	49.7	53.0	10.9	3.3
Total proportion of female police in WA	2008	2018	2021	2008-2021 change	2018-2021 change
	19.7	23.8	25.1	5.4	1.3

Notes: The reported long-run and short-run periods differ between indicators due to data availability and constraints. For many variables, the direction of change needs to be interpreted with caution. For example, an increase in family and domestic violence may be due to greater reporting by women. <sup>^</sup>Aged 18 years and over.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Based on various data sources as cited in the individual domain briefing notes.

## Discussion

Western Australia continues to report some concerning statistics on family and domestic violence. By state, WA displayed the highest overall rate of family and domestic violence-related assault with a female victim in 2021, sitting at 1,254 per 100,000 females. This compares to 720 per 100,000 females in South Australia, and 506 per 100,000 females in New South Wales – the next highest states for which data is available. For WA, this rate has also increased over the last three years.

**FIGURE 5:**  
Rate of family assault victimisation with a female victim, by state, 2017 to 2021



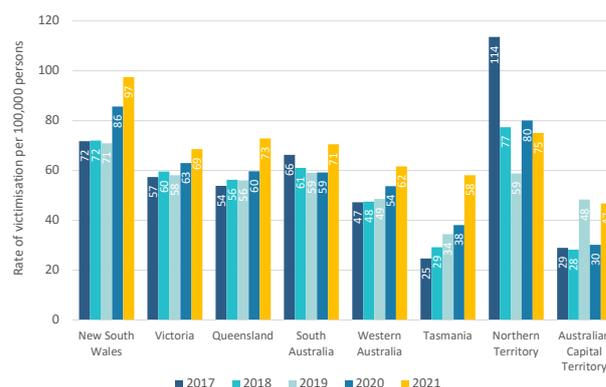
Note: Rate per 100,000 persons for the sex and state/territory of interest. Assault data not published for Victoria and Queensland.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | ABS Cat 4510, Recorded Crime - Victims, 2022.

Female victims of family and domestic violence-related sexual assault also increased in recent years and is up from 48.5 victims per 100,000 females in 2019 to 61.6 victims per 100,000 females in 2021.

The overall increase in the rate of family and domestic violence against women raises significant concerns relating to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and women’s safety during periods of movement restrictions and increased isolation resulting from social distancing rules.

**FIGURE 6:**  
Rate of family sexual assault victimisation with a female victim, by state, 2017 to 2021



Note: Rate per 100,000 persons for the sex and state/territory of interest.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | ABS Cat 4510.0, Recorded Crime - Victims, 2022.

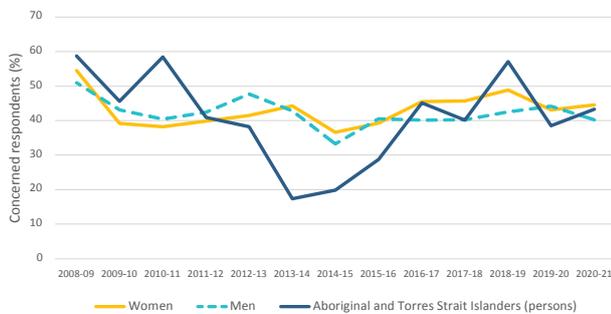
Under the *Restraining Orders Act 1997* (WA), a person can apply for a violence restraining order (VRO) for family violence or other non-family personal violence situations. For cases where restraining orders have been put in place in WA, there were 4,678 reports of a breach of VRO to WA Police in 2020-21, with women making up 85 per cent of adult victims of such breaches.

In addition to the physical and emotional trauma, family and domestic violence can result in women and children needing to leave their homes. Of the 15,486 women supported by specialist homelessness services in WA, 51.5 per cent (53.1% nationally) were related to domestic violence. The overall number of women assisted by specialist homelessness services in WA is up from 12,595 in 2011-12 to 15,486 in 2020-21 (a 23% increase; 20% increase nationally over the same period) and has averaged 15,380 over the last five years.

Beyond the home, women’s safety and perception of safety in the broader community remains a concern too in WA. In 2020-21, 45 per cent of women (40% of men) reported feeling concerned about being a victim of physical assault in a public place in the next 12 months.

This compares to an average of 43 per cent of women over the last ten years (41.5% of men).

**FIGURE 7:**  
Persons who feel concerned or very concerned about becoming a victim of physical assault in a public place, by gender and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status, WA, 2008-09 to 2020-21



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing (NSCSP), WA Police Force, customised data request, 2022.

Women were the victims in 93 per cent of sexual assaults reported to the WA Police Force in 2020-21, with a total of 935 victim reports by women. This is the highest recorded in the last 15 years, and is a 21.6 per cent increase on the previous high of 769 recent sexual assault adult victims reported by women to the WA Police Force in 2018-19, a rate well above population growth.

However, an increase in reported rates of family and domestic violence and violence in the community need to be interpreted with caution. Such incidents are under-reported for reasons such as fear and safety, trust and concern for being believed. An increase in reported incidents could therefore be due to more women feeling safe to report incidents, rather than an increase in the number of incidents.

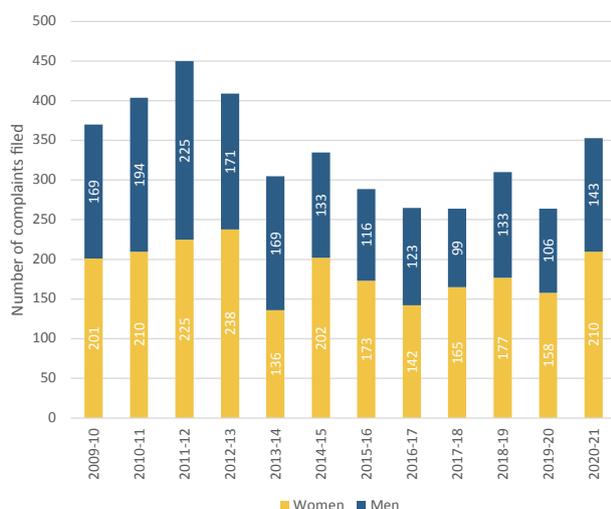
In 2020, the total number of investigations into sexual assault cases sat at 3,048 compared to an average of 2,813 over the previous two years. Some 47 per cent of sexual assault investigations were finalised in 2020, above the five-year average of 45.1 per cent.

Only 16.1 per cent of sexual assault investigations in WA resulted in offenders being proceeded against. This is in line with the five-year average in WA. This rate is higher than that reported for New South Wales in 2020 (8.1%) but below that reported for Victoria (16.7%) and Queensland (25.6%). In the 2015 Women’s Report Card<sup>iii</sup>, it was noted that “attrition along the justice chain is recognised as an issue that needs to be addressed to improve criminal justice outcomes”. With prosecution rates the same in 2022 as they were for the 2013 data reported on in the 2015 Women’s Report Card, this issue appears to remain today.

The workplace too is a place where women are victims of abuse and discrimination. In 2020-21, there were a total of 353 complaints in the area of employment to the Equal Opportunity Commission WA. Of these, almost 60 per cent were made by women. The most common grounds for complaint in the area of employment to the Equal Opportunity Commission WA was sexual harassment, with 60 out of 72 (83.3%) complaints made by women.

<sup>iii</sup> Government of Western Australia, Department of Local Government and Communities. (2015). *Women’s Report Card 2015*. Government of Western Australia. <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2021-01/Womens-Report-Card-2015.pdf>

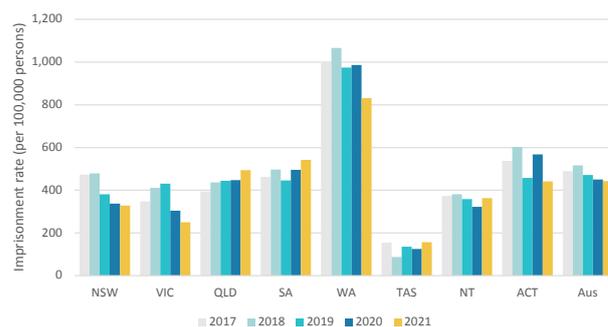
**FIGURE 8:**  
Complaints in the area of employment to Equal Opportunity Commission by gender, WA, 2009-10 to 2020-21



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Equal Opportunity Commission WA, customised data request, 2022.

Imprisonment rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women remain alarming. In 2021, imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female population in WA (830.8) were 13.7 times the rate of total female imprisonment rates in WA (60.6). However, there have been some improvements to these rates in recent years, with the current rate below the 5-year average of 971.4, and recent height of 1,066.3 reported in 2018.

**FIGURE 9:**  
Imprisonment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women by state, 2017 to 2021

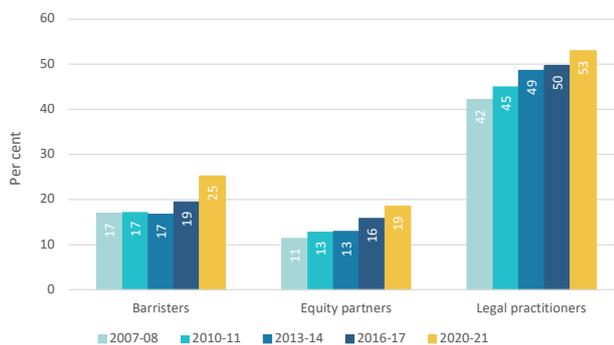


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Centre calculations from ABS Cat 4512.0, December quarter 2021.

It is important that women are well represented in the justice system, not just as an indicator of leadership and labour market success, but also to ensure that offenders face gender balance in the justice system. The share of women legal practitioners has risen from 49.7 per cent in 2016-17 to 53 per cent as of 2020-21. However, while good progress has been made on the latter metric, women comprised only 25.2 per cent of barristers and only 18.5 per cent of equity partners as of 2020-21 in WA.

In 2021, imprisonment rates per 100,000 of the adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female population in WA (830.8) were 13.7 times the rate of total female imprisonment rates in WA (122.5).

**FIGURE 10:**  
**Percentage of female barristers, legal practitioners and equity partners, WA, 2007-08 to 2020-21**



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Legal Practice Board of Western Australia, Annual Report, 2006-07 to 2020-21.

The total proportion of female police in WA sits at 25.1 per cent (1,679), up from 23.8 per cent in 2018 and 19.7 per cent in 2008. Female senior police also sit at a 25 per cent share in 2021 (3 out of 12 officers), up from 10 per cent in 2008 (1 out of 10). One of the three Aboriginal police liaison officers in 2021 was a woman.

While some progress has been made in areas such as women’s representation in the legal and justice system, and there have been reductions in incarceration rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, the latter rates remain at unacceptable levels, and well above those observed elsewhere across the nation.

No level of family and domestic violence is acceptable. The upward trend in rates reported in WA is a concern and the general safety for women during periods of increased isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic require additional focus, particularly if WA returns to social isolation measures in the future.

There is a need too to ensure that gaps in the data relating to the nature of family and domestic violence, safety in the community and outcomes in the justice system appropriately capture the outcomes of minority groups in society such as CALD women, women with disability, and women across regional WA. Without sufficiently disaggregated data, these women and their stories remain invisible.





## Priority area: Economic independence



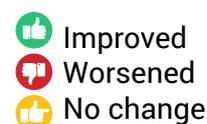
**Goal:** Women can be financially independent across all life stages.

### Overview

Economic independence is one of the most important steps towards, and indicator of, gender equality. It empowers women with the ability to make choices, enhancing their careers and overall wellbeing. This domain explores the trajectory of women's educational opportunities, their labour market involvement and unpaid labour, and how WA compares nationally and over time.

Economic independence is one of the most important steps towards, and indicator of, gender equality.

## Summary of selected indicators



Economic independence					
Indicator				Long-run change	Short-run change
Apparent retention rates Year 7/8 - Year 12 (%)	2008	2017	2021	2008-2021 change	2017-2021 change
	85.9	87.5	88.8	2.9	1.3
Female labour force participation (%)	2007	2018	2022	2007-2022 change	2018-2022 change
	61.33	63.27	64.60	3.3	1.3
Female unemployment rate (%)	2007	2018	2022	2007-2022 change	2018-2022 change
	3.49	5.98	3.25	-0.2	-2.7
Gender pay gap (%)	2007	2018	2021	2007-2021 change	2018-2021 change
	26.07	23.07	21.2	-4.8	-1.8
Average Superannuation Gap (\$)	2005-06	2015-16	2017-18	2005-06 to 2017-18 change	2015-16 to 2017-18 change
	-83,000	-73,000	-40,000	43,000	33,000
Female higher education enrolments	2006	2017	2019	2006-2019 change	2017-2019 change
	420,000	631,000	640,000	220,000	9,000
Full-time work (%)	2007	2017	2022	2007-2022 change	2017-2022 change
	51.9	49.8	51.5	-0.4	1.6
Part-time work (%)	2007	2017	2022	2007-2022 change	2017-2022 change
	48.1	50.2	48.5	0.4	-1.6
Underemployment (%)	2007	2017	2022	2007-2022 change	2017-2022 change
	6.8	12.2	8.6	1.7	-3.7
Childcare responsibilities <sup>^</sup>	2007	2017	2020	2007-2020 change	2017-2020 change
	38.3	40.1	37.6	-0.7	-2.5

Notes: The reported long-run and short-run periods differ between indicators due to data availability and constraints. For many variables, the direction of change needs to be interpreted with caution. <sup>^</sup>Per cent of women spending more than 20 hours taking active care of their children.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors calculations from various data sources cited in the Overall Summary and the Briefing Notes for the individual domains.

## Discussion

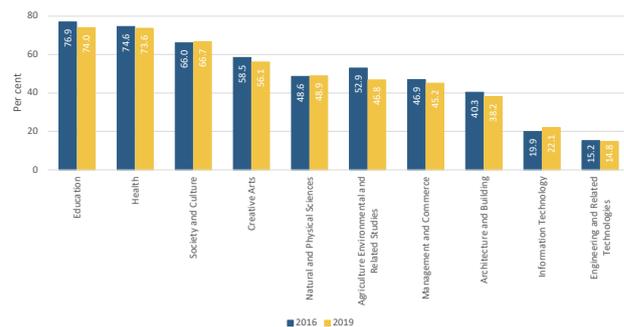
While more needs to be done, the 2022 Women's Report Card shows a generally positive set of outcomes for women's economic independence as is highlighted in the summary table above.

Obtaining high quality and relevant education and training provides people with the best opportunity to succeed in the labour market. Retention rates for students Year 7 to Year 10 are now at 88.8 per cent for non-Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young women in WA (82.2% for men). While retention rates for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women sit significantly lower at 58 per cent, this is a slight improvement of 5 percentage points on 2017 (53%).

As of 2019, almost 6 out of 10 domestic higher education enrolments in WA were by women. Women have seen improvements in vocational education and training (VET) course enrolments, and now comprise almost 50 per cent of all VET enrolments.

However, at the tertiary level, women remain underrepresented in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields of study. The lowest representation of women in higher education in WA was in the fields of engineering and related technologies (14.8% share of enrolments), information technology (22.1%) and architecture and building (38.2%). On the other hand, women continue to be over-represented in the traditionally female dominated occupations, with education (74%), health (73.6%) and society and culture (66.7%) having the highest share of women by field of study.

**FIGURE 11:**  
Share of domestic tertiary enrolments by field of study, women, WA, 2016 and 2019

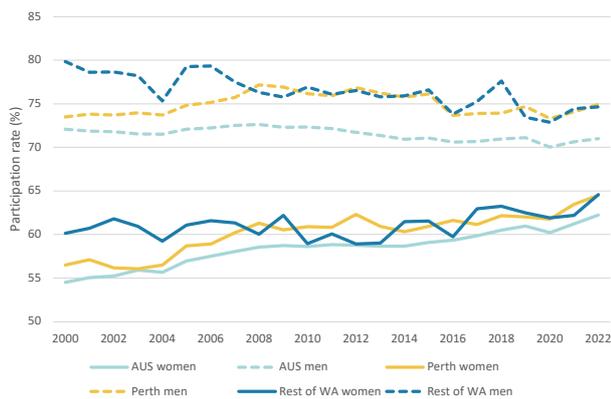


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Higher Education Statistics Data (uCube), 2021.

More needs to be done to keep young women engaged in, and attracted to, the STEM subjects. Also, with pressing skill shortages in health care and education, including early education, more must be done too to attract men into these fields of study and career opportunities.

In WA, women's labour force participation rate sits at 64.5 per cent as of 2022. This is the highest labour force participation rate reported for women in WA and suggests that for many women, the ability to access the labour market is improving. However, while the gap to male labour force participation rates is declining, it remains above 10 percentage points.

**FIGURE 12:**  
Labour force participation, Perth, WA and Australia, 2000 to 2022



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Centre calculations from ABS Cat 6291, Labour Force Detailed, June 2022 release.

Changing social norms are likely to be playing a critical role towards improving women’s labour force participation rates, with changing community opinion of gender roles over the last 15 years. For example, the share of men in WA who agreed with the statement that “mothers who do not really need the money should not work” fell from 49.1 per cent in 2005 to 27 per cent in 2019.

As of 2020, 24.4 per cent of women in WA reported that they were on casual contracts, slightly above the share reported for women nationally (22.9%) and men in WA (22.5%). Meanwhile, 66 per cent of women in WA reported being on permanent contracts in 2020, up from 62 per cent in 2017, with 9 per cent on fixed term contracts, down from 12.5 per cent in 2017.

**FIGURE 13:**  
Employment contract by gender, WA and Australia, 2017 and 2020



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Centre calculations from Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey, Wave 20.

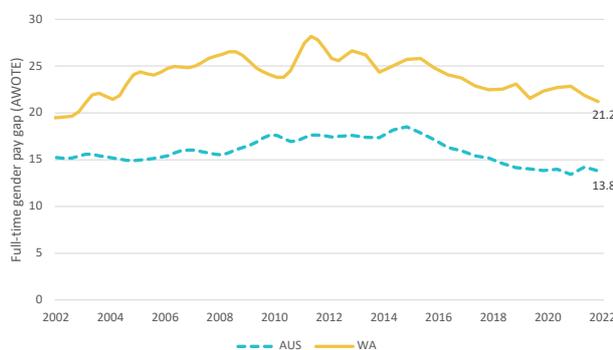
However, unpaid work and caring responsibilities continue to be primarily undertaken by women. Almost 26 per cent of women in WA provided unpaid childcare work in 2020, compared to 15.4 per cent of men. Women with children are more likely to work part time (47.7%) relative to men (7.8%) in order to fulfil childcare responsibilities.

Changing social norms are likely to be playing a critical role towards improving women’s labour force participation rates, with changing community opinion of gender roles over the last 15 years.

Childcare is one of many sectors of the economy feeling the impact of recent labour and skills shortages in WA. Given that over half of employed parents with dependent children use childcare whilst undertaking paid work, and given that childcare responsibilities already fall heavily on women, this is a critical area that must receive attention in the state's workforce and skills agenda. It is essential that women can take full advantage of labour market opportunities available and the outcomes this affords.

Women in WA continue to accumulate less financial and non-financial assets than men, such as superannuation and labour income. The gender pay gap in WA remains high and currently sits at 21.2 per cent. While this gap is on a downward trajectory from the 28 per cent gap reported in WA in 2011, WA's gender pay gap remains 7.5 percentage points higher than that reported nationally, with no sign of convergence.

**FIGURE 14:**  
Gender pay gap, full-time workers, Australia and WA, 2002 to 2022



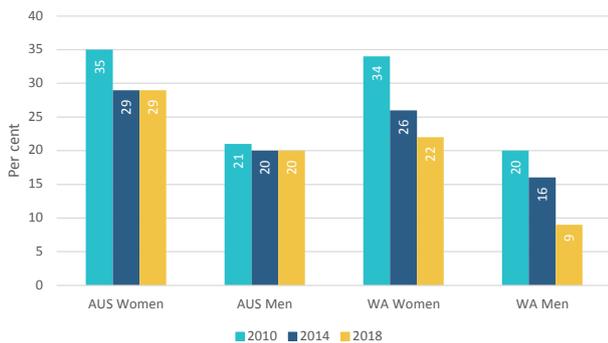
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Centre calculations from ABS Cat 6302.0, Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, November 2021.

The gender pay gap in WA remains high and currently sits at 21.2%. This is 7.5ppts higher than the the gap reported nationally.

As of 2018, women aged 15 years and older in WA have 50 per cent less savings in superannuation accounts relative to men in WA. The median superannuation of women 15 years and older in 2018 was just \$40,000 in WA (\$45,000 nationally).

For those closer to retirement (aged 55 to 65 years) in WA, 22 per cent of women (29% nationally) do not have superannuation compared to 9 per cent (20% nationally) of their male counterparts. The median superannuation gap between men and women close to retirement in WA shrank from 31 per cent in 2014 to 27 per cent in 2018.

**FIGURE 15:**  
**Proportion of women and men aged 55 to 65 with no superannuation 2010 to 2018, WA and Australia**



Notes: SIH data is only available every four years, HILDA data has been therefore used for this calculations. Observations for WA women should be taken with precaution as sample size is low.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Centre calculations from HILDA survey, waves 11, 15 and 19.

As highlighted elsewhere<sup>iv</sup>, homeownership not only provides shelter, but homes also provide a critical place in community, and a place to raise a family. Homeownership is also a major financial asset which is particularly important as one reaches retirement. And, the headline statistics provide some positive insights for women on this front in WA relative to that of men. Over 57 per cent of women in WA either own their home outright (24.4%; 20.8% for men) or are an owner with a mortgage (32.8%; 34.2% for men).

With significant pressures in the housing rental market in WA likely to remain for some time, this is an important metric to watch for women’s outcomes. Currently, almost 26 per cent of women in WA are living in rentals, up by 1.4 percentage points from 2016 rates. These rates are lower than those observed nationally (30.6% of women).

iv Crowe A, Duncan A, James A and Rowley S. (2021). *Housing Affordability in WA: A tale of two tenures*. Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre Focus on Western Australia Report Series, No. 15, June 2021. [https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2021/06/BCEC-Housing-Affordability-in-WA-Report-2021\\_WEB.pdf](https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2021/06/BCEC-Housing-Affordability-in-WA-Report-2021_WEB.pdf)



## Priority area: Leadership



**Goal:** Women's skills, achievements and strengths are valued, enabling them to participate equally in the community, including at leadership levels.

### Overview

This section focuses on the area of leadership and examines the participation of WA women in leadership roles in the public, business, and community sectors, and elected government positions. Greater gender diversity in leadership and decision-making roles contributes 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.

Greater gender diversity in leadership can make institutions and policies more representative.

## Summary of selected indicators



Leadership					
Indicator				Long-run change	Short-run change
Proportion of women in elected positions in WA parliament - Legislative Council	2007	2017	2021	2007-2021 change	2017-2021 change
	41.2	44.4	41.7	0.5 	-2.8 
Proportion of women in elected positions in WA parliament - Legislative Assembly	2007	2017	2021	2007-2021 change	2017-2021 change
	22.8	30.5	47.5	24.7 	16.9 
Proportion of women in the WA public sector's senior executive service (SES)	2007	2017	2021	2007-2021 change	2017-2021 change
	22.7	34.2	43.5	20.8 	9.3 
Proportion of women local government officials (Councillors)	2007	2017	2021	2007-2021 change	2017-2021 change
	32.5	39.9	43.5	11.0 	3.6 
Percentage of women on government boards (WA)	2013	2017	2022	2013-2022 change	2017-2022 change
	41.0	44.0	52.5	11.5 	8.5 
Proportion of women as board chairs in Australian companies (Aus)	2015	2017	2021	2015-2021 change	2017-2021 change
	14.2	13.6	18.2	4.0 	4.6 
Proportion of women as CEOs in Australian companies (Aus)	2014	2017	2021	2014-2021 change	2017-2021 change
	15.7	16.5	19.4	3.7 	2.9 
Owner-Managers with employees ('000)	2007	2017	2022	2007-2022 change	2017-2022 change
	32.1	34.8	31.5	-0.6 	-3.3 
Owner-Managers without employees ('000)	2007	2017	2022	2007-2022 change	2017-2022 change
	30.9	36.3	35.9	4.99 	-0.4 

Notes: The reported long-run and short-run periods differ between indicators due to data availability and constraints. For many variables, the direction of change needs to be interpreted with caution.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Based on various data sources as cited in the individual domain briefing notes.

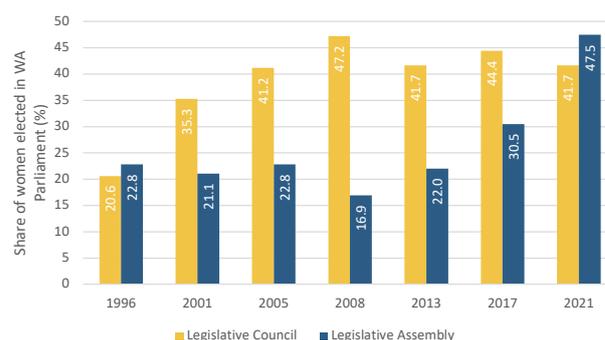
## Discussion

Diversity in leadership has many benefits and contributes to better outcomes for public, private and community sector organisations. It is essential that institutions and policies are designed to appropriately represent women, who comprise over 50 per cent of the adult population. The best way to achieve this is to have women represented and participate in critical decision-making positions to ensure that policies and laws appropriately represent the entire population.

Although more needs to be achieved, the 2022 Women’s Report Card shows that major strides in women’s leadership roles have been made in WA as outlined in the summary table above, with varying degrees of success across the public, private and community sectors.

The recent election cycles saw a substantial improvement in the share of women in elected positions in the WA Legislative Assembly, with women’s representation reaching an all-time high of 47.5 per cent (28 out of 59 seats), a 17 percentage point increase from the 2017 state election. The share of elected members in the WA Legislative Council that are women is 41.7 per cent and has remained above 40 per cent since 2005, with a peak of 47 per cent reported in 2008.

**FIGURE 16:**  
Percentage of women in elected positions in WA parliament, 1996 to 2021



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WA Electoral Commission, Legislative Assembly - Elected Members, 2021 State General Elections.

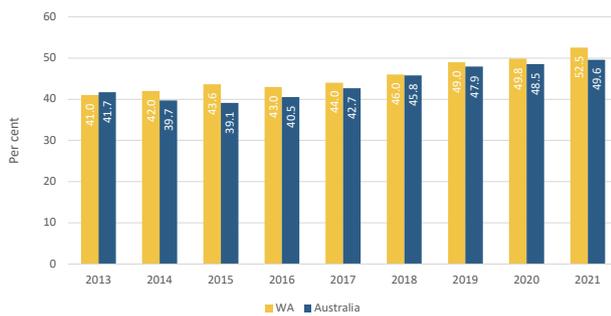
Nationally, out of a total of 151 seats, the total number of sitting women in the House of Representatives rose from 45 in 2019 to 58 in 2022, an all-time high. This represents a 38.4 per cent share, with women representing 46.8 per cent of the federal government’s elected Labor Party members in the House of Representatives.

Local governments have observed improvements too, with the percentage of women elected as councillors increasing from 39.9 per cent in 2017 to 43.5 per cent in 2021.

In 2021, the proportion of women on state government boards and committees exceeded 50 per cent (52.5%) for the first time in WA, having increased by over 10 percentage points since 2013 (41% share). This reflects the WA Government’s commitment to gender parity on government boards.



**FIGURE 17:**  
Share of women on Government boards and committees, WA and Australia, 2013 to 2021

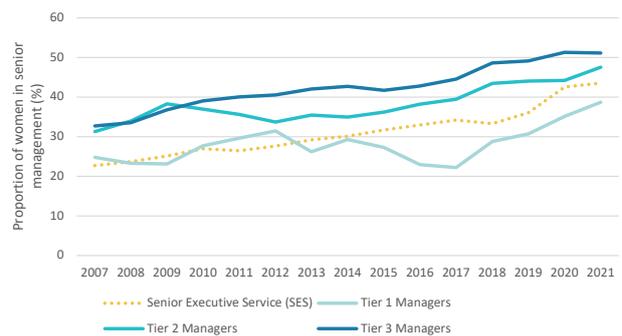


Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards 2020-21, data tables and Department of Communities customised data, received June 2022.

The proportion of women in public sector leadership in WA has also made steps towards greater representation of women in leadership roles. The share of women in the senior executive service (SES) tier increased from 34.2 per cent in 2017 to 43.5 per cent in 2021. Tier 1 managers saw the largest increase in women's representation over the same period, from 22.2 per cent in 2017 to 38.7 per cent in 2021.

A more moderate yet notable increase in representation at the Tier 2 management level was observed, from 39.4 per cent in 2017 to 47.5 per cent in 2021. As for the Tier 3 level, women saw a small increase from an already high base of 44.5 per cent in 2017 to 51.1 per cent representation in 2021.

**FIGURE 18:**  
Women in senior WA public sector leadership, WA, 2007 to 2021



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Government of Western Australia Public Sector Commission, Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, Annual Report 2020-21.

Between 2018 and 2022, women's representation as CEOs in community sector organisations in WA increased from 67 per cent to 72 per cent. Women are well represented as CEOs in community sector organisations across most organisations by annual turnover size.

However, the share of women CEOs by annual organisation turnover does display somewhat of a U-shape. The share of women CEOs steadily declines from 86 per cent for community sector organisations with an annual turnover between \$250,000 to \$500,000, to 45.8 per cent for community sector organisations with an annual turnover of \$5 million to \$15 million, the latter being the only turnover category with a women's share below 50 per cent. Women's share does however increase again, to 56 per cent for the \$15 million+ category.

**FIGURE 19:**  
Proportion of CEOs in community sector organisations, by gender and annual organisation turnover, WA, 2020-21



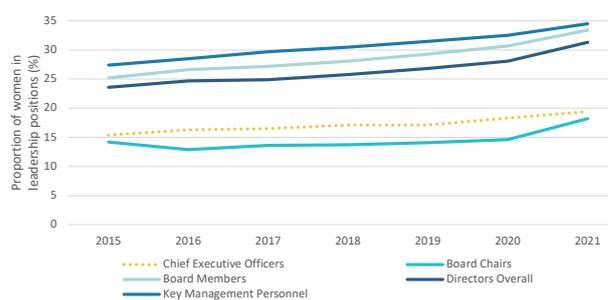
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Western Australian Council of Social Services, customised data request, 2022.

And what of the private sector? While progress is slow, and starting from a low base, women’s representation in CEO positions across Australian companies has increased from 16.3 per cent in 2016 to 19.4 per cent in 2021.

Board chair positions for women also increased, rising from 12.9 per cent in 2016 to 18.2 per cent in 2021. The pace of progress in relation to the proportion of women board members was faster going from 26.6 per cent in 2016 to 33.4 per cent in 2021, with the share of female directors rising from 24.7 per cent in 2016 to 31.3 per cent in 2021.

Furthermore, representation in key management personnel in Australian companies increased for women from 28.5 per cent in 2018 to 34.5 per cent in 2021.

**FIGURE 20:**  
Women’s representation in leadership positions across Australian companies, 2015 to 2021



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) data explorer, 2022.

There has been a general decline in the number of women who are enterprise owner-managers with employees from a peak of 31,640 in December 2017 to 25,100 as of May 2022. With declines too in the number of male enterprise owner-managers with employees during the period between December 2017 and May 2022, the proportion of owner-managers with employees in WA who are women actually increased slightly from 31.2 per cent in December 2017 to 32.0 per cent in May 2022. This proportion is in line with the national level.

As for the number of women who are enterprise owner-managers without employees in WA, there has been a steady increase over time, albeit with a slight decline from the peak of 54,890 in May 2021 to 49,190 in May 2022.

As more data becomes available, it will be important to analyse if, by the nature of the gender composition of owner-managers by industry, women have taken less advantage of the public sector emergency packages that have been delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic, with significant packages targeted particularly to male dominated housing and construction sectors.

# Appendix

## Note on data

The 2022 Women's Report Card includes over 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 while some disaggregated data is presented, 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, include 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.

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.

**Women** in the context of Stronger Together includes anyone who identifies and lives as a woman. However, definitions may vary across the wide range of data sources used in this report.

## Stakeholder engagement and acknowledgements

During the research of this report, key stakeholders were engaged through a roundtable discussion, which followed from a presentation of preliminary research findings. This group made valuable contributions to the final 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; WA Police; UnionsWA; and WACOSS.

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