



Budget

2023–24

WOMEN'S BUDGET STATEMENT

Statement by

Senator the Honourable Katy Gallagher

Minister for Finance, Minister for Women,
Minister for the Public Service of the Commonwealth of Australia

and

The Honourable Jim Chalmers MP

Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia

For the information of honourable members
on the occasion of the Budget 2023–24

9 May 2023

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Support and note on data

Support

This Statement includes information that may be distressing for some readers. It outlines the often tragic impacts of violence against women, including sexual assault, as well as issues such as suicide and self-harm. The Government respectfully acknowledges and regrets the loss of those who have died and the harm caused to those who are affected by violence, suicide or self-harm.

Help is available. Lifeline provides 24-hour support in Australia for those experiencing a personal crisis and can be contacted by calling 13 11 14 or visiting lifeline.org.au. If you, or someone you know, is experiencing family, domestic or sexual violence, you can contact 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visit 1800respect.org.au for support.

Note about data

This Statement endeavours to include data and analysis to demonstrate the outcomes experienced by different groups of women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, women with disability, women of different ages, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or other sexually or gender diverse (LGBTQIA+) populations. There are, however, limitations to data in some cases, particularly small population or sample sizes. The Government is committed to ensuring data are available to help inform better outcomes for all Australians, noting that this needs to be culturally appropriate and protect the right to privacy.

This Statement uses unit record data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The HILDA Project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) and is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (Melbourne Institute). The findings and views reported in this paper, however, are those of the authors and should not be attributed to either DSS or the Melbourne Institute.

The majority of the data collected and reported in this Statement relate to sex, not gender. *Sex* is based upon the person's sex characteristics, such as their chromosomes, hormones and reproductive organs. *Gender* is a social and cultural concept. It is about social and cultural differences in identity, expression and experience as a man, woman or non-binary person. This Statement uses the terms *women* and *men* in reference to both sex and gender, but the terms *female* and *male* are used when presenting data collected on the basis of sex.

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Foreword

Women's equality is at the heart of what we do as a Government. It is essential for strengthening our economy, our society and our nation.

A core test of the fairness of this country is whether we are a gender equal country. We will not achieve gender equality through a single budget, or single reform. Driving real change in the lives of women requires ongoing leadership and commitment. This Government will continue that work towards making Australia a more equal country.

Our budget investments are designed to create a fairer go for Australian women and a better country for all Australians. In everything from health to housing to safety to pay – the Albanese Labor government is determined to address inequality for women.

In the October Budget we introduced gender responsive budgeting, targeting key measures for gender impact assessment. This Budget we have gone further, applying an increased gender lens across many more Budget measures. Measures in this Budget have had to consider gender equality in the policy development process, with key measures subject to a more detailed gender impact assessment. From 2023-24 MYEFO, the Government will extend gender responsive budgeting across the budget. This delivers on our election commitment and is central to putting gender equality and impact on women at the centre of budget decision making.

This Budget has a particular focus on supporting women facing disadvantage, including single parents, and low-income workers across the care and support sector, including targeted and responsible cost of living relief for families to ease pressures on households.

The October 2022 Budget invested in cheaper child care, expanded Paid Parental Leave, a fair workplace relations system and in women's safety. In this Budget we are investing in women's economic equality, and continuing our investments in women's safety, and supporting women's health.

The Government is providing more support for single parents, the majority of whom are women, by expanding eligibility for Parenting Payment (Single) to single parents with dependent children aged under 14, 91.1 per cent of whom are women, increasing the base rate of payment for this group to \$922.10 per fortnight. The Government will also abolish the ParentsNext Program, removing compulsory aspects as soon as possible as an interim step to end the risk to parents of loss of payments, and introducing a replacement voluntary program from 1 July 2024.

The Government will permanently increase eligible working age and student income support payments, including the JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance, by \$40 per fortnight. The Government will also extend eligibility of the existing higher rate of JobSeeker Payment for single Australians aged 55 to 59 who have been on payment for 9 or more continuous months, to match that applying to those over 60, recognising that women are the majority of JobSeeker Payment recipients 55 and over.

The Government is making significant investments in housing to support the construction of more social and affordable dwellings and help people into home ownership. The government is also funding an increase to Commonwealth Rent Assistance, which will support the significant number of women, especially older women, experiencing housing stress.

The Government is also investing in a landmark package to tackle entrenched community disadvantage. Working differently across all levels of government and with philanthropy to partner with communities will help address the impact of concentrated disadvantage on communities, including for women and girls who can face compounding disadvantage.

The Government is committed to valuing work in the care and support economy, where the majority of workers are women. This Budget allocates funding to support the Fair Work Commission's interim decision in the Aged Care Work Value Case, and also invests in the professional development of early childhood educators.

Women cannot be equal and cannot reach their full potential if they are not safe. Violence against women and children is an urgent challenge in Australia, but we cannot accept it as inevitable. As a nation we can and should address the economic, social and cultural factors that underpin gender-based violence. The funding in this Budget builds on the Government's record investment to end violence against women. This Budget includes targeted investment in programs to address violence against First Nations women.

The Budget also tackles gender bias in the health system by building the women's health evidence base, investing in mental health supports, and providing tailored investments in women's health care.

There is much we can do as a government to strengthen equality between men and women – and we have taken strong action in our first year of Government. We have made long term plans and policies – which will have impacts over decades – to achieve gender equality. And we have made record investments to get there through our first 2 Budgets. As we make progress, we remain committed to listening, taking feedback and working with women across the country to make a real and positive difference in their lives.

The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister

The Honourable Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Finance
Minister for Women
Minister for the Public Service

A snapshot of women in Australia

<p>Median age Female: 39 years Male: 37 years</p>	<p>Female-to-male ratio 100.8 females for every 100 males</p>
<p>Share of women on ASX200 boards 35.7%</p>	<p>Proportion of 25–34 year olds with a Bachelor degree or above Women: 50.9% Men: 38.3%</p>
<p>Proportion of people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual Women: 4.6% Men: 3.0%</p>	<p>Proportion of people who were born overseas Women: 29.7% Men: 28.6%</p>
<p>Proportion of people with disability (2018) Women: 17.8% Men: 17.6%</p>	<p>Proportion of people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women: 3.9% Men: 4.0%</p>
<p>Average daily hours spent on unpaid domestic work, caring responsibilities and voluntary work Women: 4 hours, 31 minutes Men: 3 hours, 12 minutes</p>	<p>Gender pay gap (Nov 2022) 13.3% \$253.50 per week</p>

Overview

In 1984, the first Women's Budget Statement (or women's budget programme, as it was known) was introduced to Parliament. Driven by the leadership of Susan Ryan AO, the then Minister assisting Prime Minister Hawke for the Status of Women, Australia was the first country in the world to develop such a statement and paved the way for many countries to follow. In its foreword, the then Prime Minister Hawke promised that *'within the overall economic objectives of the government'* important budget decisions would from then on be made *'with full knowledge of their impact on women.'*

Nearly 40 years on, it is important to reflect on and celebrate the impressive progress that has been made towards achieving gender equality. There is, however, still work to be done. This Government remains committed to improving economic inclusion, reducing disadvantage, and prioritising actions to expand women's opportunities and choices.

The 2023–24 Women's Budget Statement explores factors influencing women's economic equality and outlines key measures to advance gender equality in Australia, focusing on achieving economic equality, ending violence against women, increasing women's representation in leadership and decision-making, and improving women's health and wellbeing.

These issues are interrelated and should be considered together. Poor health outcomes or family and domestic violence can significantly impact economic participation and, in turn, impact housing security and lifetime earnings. Underrepresentation of women in leadership and insufficient support for women with caring responsibilities can impact women's workforce participation, career progression and life satisfaction. Further, gender inequality can be exacerbated by intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage, including racism, homophobia, ableism and ageism.

For this Budget, gender impact assessments have been conducted on a number of measures and a gender lens applied across a wider range of proposals than has been done previously. From the 2023–24 MYEFO, gender responsive budgeting will be further expanded to embed gender analysis across all Government budget decision-making.

Women's economic equality

Achieving economic equality for women is a key priority for this Government. While the last 40 years have seen remarkable progress – across education, workforce participation and women in leadership – distinct challenges continue to impede women's economic security across their lives. Gender stereotyping in relation to caring responsibilities, lower-paid work within typically female-dominated industries, and the impact of discrimination and bias on women's professional lives contribute to a persistent gender pay gap. The Government's investments in the October Budget to make early childhood education and care more affordable from July 2023, expand the Paid Parental Leave scheme and reform the workplace relations system were critical first steps to breaking down these barriers.

In this Budget, the Government builds on these strong foundations with responsible, sustainable increases to support those facing financial hardship. Increases to income support payments such as JobSeeker and Youth Allowance – as well as energy relief – will provide much needed assistance to help with cost-of-living pressures, including for women facing housing and/or financial insecurity.

To support single parents, the Government will also provide \$1.9 billion over 5 years from 2022–23 to expand eligibility for the Parenting Payment (Single) for single parents whose youngest child is under 14. Eligible primary carers will receive a payment of \$922.10 per fortnight, an increase of \$176.90 compared to the current JobSeeker Payment (single with dependent rate). This will expand access to the higher payment rates for more single parents, overwhelmingly women, while maintaining important supports to build their connections with the workforce. The Government will also abolish the ParentsNext program from 1 July 2024 and develop a replacement voluntary program, with interim changes to be considered as soon as possible to move ParentsNext to voluntary participation. This will ensure that parents get the support they need to re-enter the workforce, while removing the risk that parents lose important payments and ensuring that all parenting payment recipients with children under 6 are treated the same with respect to mutual obligations.

The Government will also extend eligibility for the existing higher rate of JobSeeker Payment to single Australians aged 55 to 59 who have been on payment for 9 or more continuous months, to match that applying to those over 60. In September, around 52,000 eligible single Australians aged 55 to 59 (of which 55 per cent are women) will receive the higher basic rate. This reflects that women make up the majority of older people who have been on JobSeeker for 9 or more continuous months and can face significant barriers to work, including age discrimination or poor health.

In recognition of the value of caring work the Government is allocating \$11.3 billion to support the Fair Work Commission's decision to provide an interim increase of 15 per cent to modern award minimum wages for many aged care workers.

The Government is also increasing efforts to expand opportunities for women to enter male-dominated sectors and occupations. National Cabinet has affirmed the importance of women's participation and gender equality within skills and training, and additional supports will be provided to women under the proposed National Skills Agreement. The Government's Australian Skills Guarantee aims to see the proportion of women apprentices and trainees on major government construction projects more than double by 2030 and the proportion in trades apprenticeships triple.

These investments responsibly balance support for the women that need it most, while giving regard to fiscal sustainability and broader economic objectives.

Ending violence against women and children

Violence against women and children in Australia is unacceptable. Violence has significant impacts on women, not just on their safety but also their health and wellbeing, economic

stability and social participation. Experiences of violence are diverse and some women face additional challenges when escaping from family, domestic and sexual violence. The importance of a holistic and intersectional approach is reflected in the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*, which continues to underpin the efforts of all Australian governments to end violence against women and children in one generation.

The Government is building on its initial \$1.7 billion investment in women's safety in the October Budget with an additional \$589.3 million, which includes \$194 million for Australia's first dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. The dedicated Action Plan is being developed in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence to ensure the voices of First Nations people are at the centre of this work. The Government is also providing funding to support the development of a standalone First Nations National Plan for Family Safety. In addition, the Government is providing \$18.6 million to prevent and address sexual violence, and funding to support migrant women, including women on temporary visas, to escape violence. Funding is provided to extend the successful family law property pilot programs, and \$159 million to extend the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses with state and territory governments for a further 2 years.

Leadership and decision-making

The Government is committed to progressing women's representation, participation, and influence across the public, business, community and political spheres. Better representation of women in positions of leadership and in decision-making is essential to achieving gender equality across all facets of society. Though Australia has made progress, women remain underrepresented in leadership.

The Government is leading efforts to ensure women are at the centre of policy and decision making. For example, the Government established the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce to provide independent advice to Government, including their priorities and guidance on the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality.

Women's health and wellbeing

Gender and sex continue to influence experiences and outcomes in the health system. Building a better understanding of the impacts of gender in healthcare is fundamental to improving not only health and wellbeing, but also economic outcomes for women. To support this, the Government has committed \$26.4 million over 4 years to extend support for research and data collection activities that support women and girls' health outcomes, including the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health.

Additional investments that will improve women's health and wellbeing include a new Medicare Benefits Schedule item for longer GP consultations, increased incentives for bulk billing, changes to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme that will allow more than 300 medicines to be dispensed in greater amounts and investments to support children to build positive body image.

Women's economic equality

Women's workforce participation has increased significantly over the past 40 years and the gap in participation between women and men has narrowed. However, many women continue to face barriers to workforce participation, especially First Nations women, women with disability, and women with children, especially single mothers. Lower workforce participation rates and average hours worked have negative impacts on women's economic security, but women's caring responsibilities can make it more difficult to balance unpaid and paid work. This balance can be particularly challenging for single mothers.

One driver of the gender pay gap is the concentration of men in occupations or industries with higher earnings and women in occupations or industries with lower earnings. Industrial and occupational segregation can be explained in part by an undervaluing of many feminised jobs (particularly in the care and support economy), limited flexibility in male-dominated industries compared to female-dominated industries, the unequal division of unpaid care work within households, and education choices influenced by gender stereotypes. Women's lower workforce participation and lower pay per hour compound over a lifetime to leave older women more vulnerable to financial insecurity.

While gaps between women and men's economic outcomes continue to narrow, it is often the most disadvantaged who get left behind. The Government is providing responsible cost-of-living support for those most in need, which will particularly benefit women. The Budget provides \$4.9 billion over 5 years to increase rates of JobSeeker and other working-age and student payments, up to \$3 billion for energy bill relief in partnership with state and territory governments, \$2.7 billion to increase the maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance and, \$1.9 billion over 5 years to expand eligibility for the Parenting Payment (Single) to single principal carers whose youngest child is under 14. The Government will also abolish the ParentsNext program from 1 July 2024 and develop a replacement voluntary program, with interim changes to be considered as soon as possible to move ParentsNext to voluntary participation.

The Budget includes action to support wage equality. The Government is providing \$11.3 billion to support a wage increase for many aged care workers. The Government is also setting targets in the Australian Skills Guarantee to help reduce gender segregation across industries and occupations, which will contribute to closing the gender pay gap.

Women's economic equality – key statistics from 40 years ago to today

1984	Today
<p>Labour force participation rate (Mar 1984)</p> <p>Women: 45.0% Men: 76.6% 31.7 ppt gap</p>	<p>Labour force participation rate (Mar 2023)</p> <p>Women: 62.5% Men: 71.1% 8.5 ppt gap</p>
<p>Gender pay gap (Nov 1984)</p> <p>18.2%</p>	<p>Gender pay gap (Nov 2022)</p> <p>13.3%</p>
<p>Attainment of bachelor's degree or above, 25–34 years old (1984)</p> <p>Women: 9.5% Men: 14.2% 4.7 ppt gap</p>	<p>Attainment of bachelor's degree or above, 25–34 years old (2022)</p> <p>Women: 50.9% Men: 38.3% -12.6 ppt gap</p>
<p>Proportion of people aged 15–74 with superannuation (1988)</p> <p>Women: 19.6% Men: 47.5% 27.9 ppt gap</p>	<p>Proportion of people aged 15–74 with superannuation (2019-20)</p> <p>Women: 74.7% Men: 80.9% 6.2 ppt gap</p>

Women's workforce participation

Participation in the labour force supports both the financial security of women and Australia's long-term economic prosperity. The dramatic increase in women's workforce participation over the past 40 years reflects a range of trends including changing social attitudes, women's increased educational attainment and structural shifts such as caring work traditionally done unpaid in the home moving into the formal economy. Successive government policies over this period, including passage of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, the introduction of a Government-funded Paid Parental Leave scheme in 2011 and investments to expand access to early childhood education and care have further reduced barriers to women's workforce participation.

The gap in workforce participation has narrowed

The gender gap in labour force participation has narrowed from 31.7 percentage points in March 1984 to 8.5 percentage points in March 2023 (Chart 1.1). Employed women tend to work fewer hours than employed men, reflecting the prevalence of part-time work among women (Chart 1.2). The gap in average weekly hours worked between employed men and employed women was just under 7 hours in 2022, down from almost 10 hours in 1984. The narrowing of this gap has been mainly driven by a fall in average hours worked by men. Women are also more commonly employed on a casual basis than men and are more commonly underemployed.

Chart 1.1: Participation rates

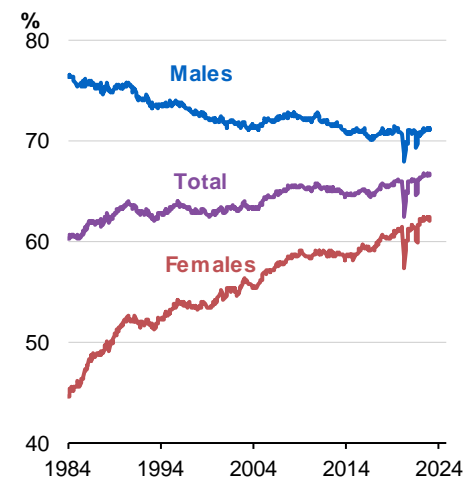
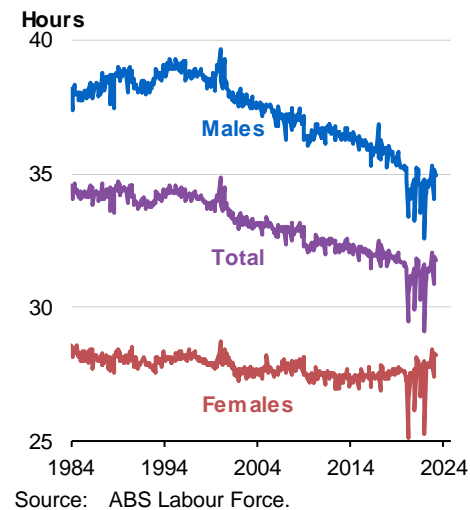


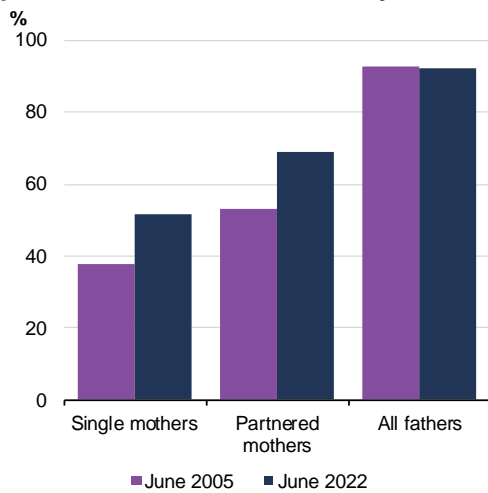
Chart 1.2: Average weekly hours worked per employed person



The participation gap between women and men is largest in their prime child-rearing years. While mothers' attachment to the workforce has been supported by the introduction of Government-funded Paid Parental Leave and the expansion of private sector schemes, their participation rates remain much lower than for fathers (Chart 1.3). Treasury research finds that a woman's likelihood of being employed drops by around 45 per cent in the year

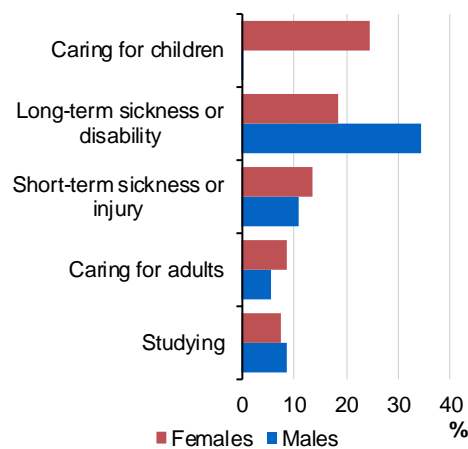
of their first child's arrival, with little recovery in the following 5 years, while fathers' employment is little changed.¹ In addition, surveys show that women report caring for children to be the main barrier to finding a job or increasing their hours in paid work (Chart 1.4), whereas for men it is long-term sickness or disability. While the unequal division of caring responsibilities and other unpaid work is largest among parents of young children, women without children also perform more unpaid work each day on average than men without children.

Chart 1.3: Participation rates of parents with children under 5 years



Source: Treasury analysis of ABS Labour Force Status of Families.

Chart 1.4: Main reason not available to start a job or more hours, 2020–21



Source: ABS Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation.

The persistent differences in labour supply patterns between men and women suggest that the skills and knowledge of women are not being fully utilised in the labour market. Reducing barriers to women participating in paid work is crucial to unlocking women's labour supply and supporting more efficient matching of jobs to those best able to perform them. It will also give families more choice in how they balance work and care during the critical early years of a child's life. Importantly, addressing these barriers will have a lasting positive effect on women's economic equality and potential lifetime earnings.

Box 1: Government actions to support parents' workforce participation

Improving access to high-quality, affordable early childhood education and care is a key priority for the Government and makes it easier for parents and carers, particularly women, to participate in the workforce. In the October Budget, the Government committed \$4.6 billion to increase Child Care Subsidy rates. These changes will come into effect in July 2023 and make early childhood education and care more affordable for around 1.2 million families.

The Government is committed to identifying solutions that can chart the course for access to universal, affordable early childhood education and care. The Productivity Commission and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) have both commenced inquiries in the early childhood education and care sector. The ACCC will report to Government in December 2023 on rising early childhood education and care fees and the Productivity Commission's complementary inquiry into the sector will report by 30 June 2024.

The Government has passed amendments to the *Paid Parental Leave Act 2010*, giving effect to the first stage of paid parental leave reforms announced in the October Budget. From 1 July 2023, Parental Leave Pay and Dad and Partner Pay will combine into a single 20-week payment that can be shared between parents. To improve flexibility and gender equality, either parent can claim Paid Parental Leave first, making it easier for fathers and partners to take time off work to be with their children, and the entitlement can be taken in multiple blocks, as small as one day, with periods of work in between. To encourage shared care, a proportion of weeks will be reserved for each parent on a 'use it or lose it' basis. Single parents will be able to receive the full 20 weeks, up from 18 weeks currently. A new family income limit of \$350,000 per annum will also see nearly 3,000 additional parents become eligible for the entitlement. The Government will introduce legislation to expand the scheme by 2 weeks each year from July 2024 until reaching 26 weeks in July 2026.

The experiences of women in the labour force are varied

Australian women are diverse and have distinct experiences in the labour force that can change over their life course. It is difficult to fully characterise the experiences of all groups of women, and a lack of quality and timely data remains a barrier to addressing entrenched labour market disadvantage for some cohorts. The Government is improving data collection for diverse cohorts, which will promote further research and public awareness of the experience of people in the labour force as well as facilitate more targeted and timely policy design.

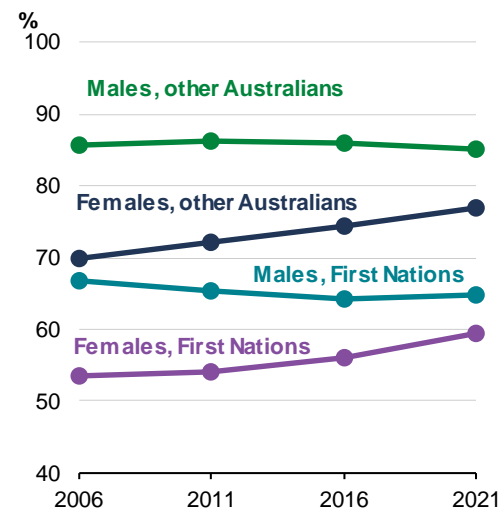
First Nations women have persistently lower workforce participation than other Australian women. Ongoing experiences of intergenerational trauma, racism and workplace discrimination for this cohort, alongside increased likelihood of being carers that provide care to multiple people, all impact the ability of First Nations women to participate in the workforce. Over the past decade, the Census suggests that the participation rate of First Nations women has been 18 percentage points below other Australian women (Chart 1.5). The participation rate of First Nations women has also been lower than First Nations men, although the gap was smaller than the national average.

The challenges intensify for First Nations women and men in rural and remote areas, with the participation rate lower in more remote geographic areas.

Women with disability also have persistently lower workforce participation than other women (Chart 1.6). The 2018 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers found that women with disability had a participation rate nearly 30 percentage points lower than women with no reported disability. Women with disability also have lower rates of participation than men with disability.

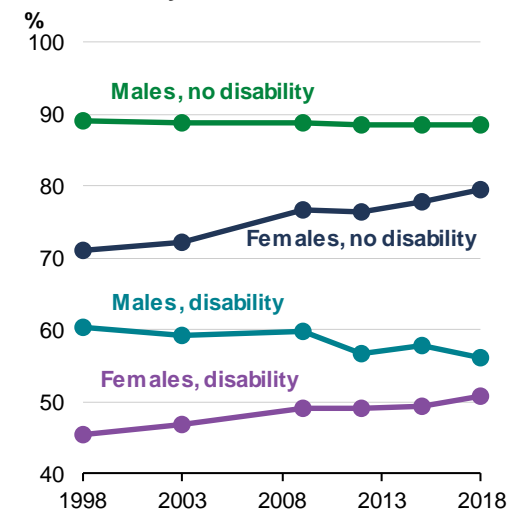
People with disability face unique and wide-ranging challenges that affect their ability to engage in the workforce. Women with disability who are employed are more likely than the national average to work part time and report higher rates of underemployment. More recent data suggest that a lack of suitable jobs in their locality or line of work is a key reason why people with disability struggle to find a job or more hours.

Chart 1.5: Participation rates by sex and First Nations status



Note: Persons aged 25–64 years.
Source: ABS Census.

Chart 1.6: Participation rates by sex and disability status



Note: Persons aged 15–64 years and living in households.
Source: ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers.

Women who identify with multiple groups can have more complicated experiences of the labour force. First Nations women and girls with disability, for example, can face compounding and intersectional discrimination and disadvantage. Disability is more prevalent among First Nations women compared to other Australian women (43.9 per cent and 28.6 per cent).

Improving economic inclusion for women experiencing disadvantage

The Government has a strong commitment to addressing disadvantage, promoting economic participation and ensuring no one is left behind. Supporting all members of the community to participate economically and socially to the full extent they can is vital for individual wellbeing and Australia's collective prosperity.

Sharp increases in the cost of living over the last 12 months have impacted everyone. However, the significant increases for non-discretionary items such as electricity and rent contribute disproportionately to these cost pressures for income support recipients, and those in low-paid, casualised or insecure work.

The Government's aim is that payments and supports provide a safety net for those most vulnerable in the community, while giving regard to fiscal constraints.

Cost of living relief

This Budget delivers a cost-of-living package that provides urgent relief to those experiencing the most acute pressures. This includes an increase to eligible working age and student payments, energy relief, increases to the maximum rates of Commonwealth Rent Assistance and expanding eligibility for Parenting Payment (Single).

The Budget also provides \$3.5 billion to triple the bulk billing incentive benefits for consultations for Commonwealth concession card holders and patients aged under 16 years old. This will support eligible patients to receive the care they need, without any out-of-pocket costs.

This cost-of-living package provides additional support to help keep pace with increases in the cost-of-living and reduce barriers to participation in society.

Increase to income support payments

The Government will provide \$4.9 billion over 5 years from 2022–23 to increase the rate of income support payments for around 1.1 million Australians. The basic rate of eligible working age and student income support payments such as JobSeeker Payment, Youth Allowance and Austudy will permanently increase by \$40 per fortnight in September, following the passage of legislation.

The changes to working age and student payments, along with the expanded eligibility for Parenting Payment (Single), will increase income support payments for approximately

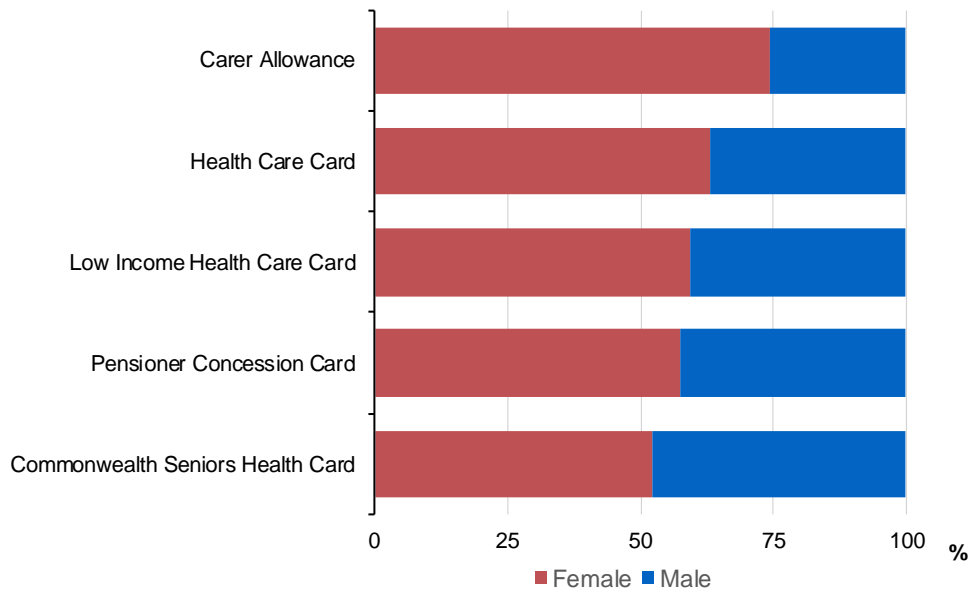
638,000 women. Women represent over half (approximately 53 per cent) of recipients whose payment will increase.

Energy relief

The Government has acted to shield households and businesses from the worst impacts of price increases through the Energy Price Relief Plan to deliver responsible and targeted relief. Following these actions, retail electricity price increases in 2023–24 are now expected to be around 25 percentage points smaller and retail gas price increases around 16 percentage points smaller than expected prior to the Government's interventions. As part of the Plan, the Government is partnering with states and territories to deliver up to \$3 billion of on bill rebates to concession card holders, those who receive family and carers payments and recipients of electricity concessions under existing state and territory schemes. As can be seen in Chart 1.7, a majority of each of these payments are targeted at women.

In particular, the Government is extending this support to Carer Allowance recipients and Family Tax Benefit A and B recipients. The majority of this support will flow to women who make up over 70 per cent of Carer Allowance recipients. Additionally, single parents receive about half of all Family Tax Benefit payments, of which approximately 90 per cent are women.

Chart 1.7: Household Energy Relief Plan payment recipients, by sex



Source: DSS Demographics information, December 2022.

Helping renters by increasing Commonwealth Rent Assistance

Stable and affordable housing is a key enabler of meaningful economic and social participation. The Government provides Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) to renting income support recipients to assist with the cost of housing. Single women make up 49 per cent of CRA recipients, whilst single men make up 30 per cent.

CRA has not kept pace relative to the growth of rents over time and different measures of rental stress show more CRA recipients experiencing rental stress now than in 2002. As at June 2022, 63 per cent of CRA recipients were paying more than 30 per cent of their income (including CRA) on rent. 23 per cent paid more than half of their income on rent.

Budget highlights: Commonwealth Rent Assistance increase

The Government is providing an additional \$2.7 billion over 5 years to support Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) recipients. From 20 September 2023, the maximum rate payable will increase by 15 per cent. Around 1.1 million households receiving the maximum CRA rate will receive an up to around \$31 per fortnight, helping CRA recipients keep up with cost-of-living pressures. This is the largest increase in more than 30 years.

CRA recipient households on the maximum rate will receive an increase of between \$15.73 to \$31.36 per fortnight depending on the household type (such as the number of children in the household) and amount of rent paid.

The boost to CRA will combine with targeted increases across other payments to make a difference to those Australians most in need, including older Australians, single parents and those who face significant barriers to work who rent. For Australians facing – or at risk of – extreme rental stress, the combined effect of the additional support could make the difference in preventing homelessness.

Housing insecurity

Single women who do not own their home are at greatest risk of poverty in retirement. Women make up the majority of all occupants, and older occupants, in public and community housing. During 2019–20, women accounted for 55 per cent of social housing occupants.² For women who are unable to save a deposit over their lifetime, housing insecurity presents a key concern as they go into retirement. Addressing the availability and price of housing in Australia will alleviate a significant concern for many older women.

Box 2: Improving housing security and affordability

The Government is working with states and territories to increase the supply of housing. This extends its existing ambitious housing agenda.

Helping to increase the supply of new housing by accelerating tax deductions for build-to-rent developments and reducing the tax rate for foreign investors investing in build-to-rent through managed investment trusts. This builds on the National Housing Accord announced by the Government in the October Budget. The Accord has brought together states and territories, the Australian Local Government Association, investors and the construction sector to set an aspirational target of one million new, well-located homes over 5 years from mid-2024.

Helping people into home ownership by broadening eligibility for the Home Guarantee Scheme. From 1 July 2023, the First Home Guarantee and Regional First Home Buyer Guarantee couple requirement will be expanded to allow any 2 eligible borrowers as well as non-first home buyers who have not owned a property interest in Australia in the previous 10 years. Australian Permanent Residents, in addition to Australian citizens will be eligible for the Home Guarantee Scheme. This will provide a pathway to those who have fallen out of home ownership to overcome the deposit hurdle and re-enter the property market.

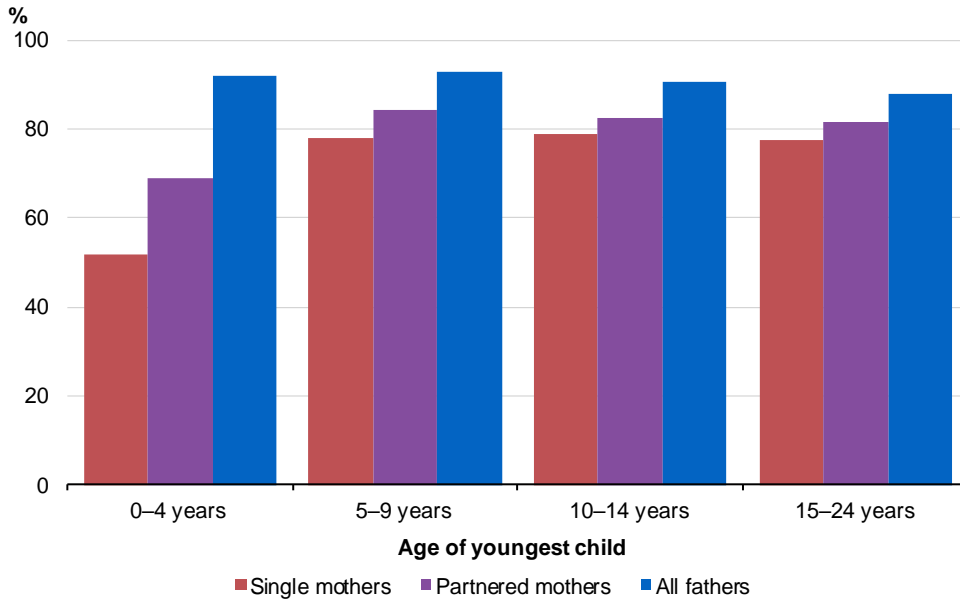
Supporting single legal guardians to access the Family Home Guarantee, in addition to single parents. Women represented 84 per cent of Family Home Guarantees in 2021–22.

Single parents face additional barriers to work

Single parents, overwhelmingly women (over 80 per cent), can face significant challenges and hardship when balancing the need to provide significant and essential care for children with paid employment, without the support of a partner.

In June 2022, the labour force participation rate of single mothers with a child under 5 years was 17 percentage points lower than partnered mothers and 40 percentage points lower than all fathers (Chart 1.8). While this gap narrows as children age, single mothers still report a lower participation rate than partnered mothers and all fathers when their children are older. Single fathers also tend to report lower participation rates than partnered fathers, although small sample sizes mean data for this group is volatile.

Chart 1.8: Participation rates of parents by age of youngest child, June 2022



Source: Treasury analysis of ABS Labour Force Status of Families.

Reduced opportunities to participate in paid work, coupled with the costs associated with raising children, make single mother households more vulnerable to economic insecurity. Single parents are at least twice as likely to experience financial stress than partnered parents and have considerably higher rates of reliance on income support than other family types.³ Single mothers, in particular, face greater risk of financial hardship and 60 per cent of women who are now single mothers have experienced violence by a previous partner.⁴

Parenting Payment (Single) currently provides a basic payment rate of \$922.10 per fortnight to single principal carers, whose youngest child is under 8 years of age. Currently, Parenting Payment (Single) supports 231,000 recipients, 95.5 per cent of whom are women.

Budget highlights: Expanding support for single parents

Expanding access to Parenting Payment (Single): The Government is providing \$1.9 billion over 5 years to expand eligibility for Parenting Payment (Single) to single parents who are principal carers and whose youngest child is aged from 8 to under 14 years old, of whom 91.1 per cent are women.

In September, around 57,000 eligible single parents will transition to Parenting Payment (Single) and receive a higher basic rate of \$922.10 per fortnight until their child turns 14. This is an extra \$176.90 per fortnight compared to the current JobSeeker Payment (single with dependent rate). This will also benefit around 110,000 children in these eligible families. Indexation will continue to apply.

Eligible recipients will also benefit from more generous income free areas, which apply to the Parenting Payment (Single), compared to JobSeeker. This means they can earn more before their payment reduces or stops altogether. Parenting Payment (Single) recipients with one child can earn \$202.60 per fortnight per child (and an additional \$24.60 per fortnight per child) before losing any of their payment. Compared to the income free area of \$150 per fortnight for the JobSeeker Payment (single with dependent rate), eligible single parents can now earn at least \$52.60 more per fortnight before losing any of their payment. Parenting Payment (Single) recipients can earn at least \$2,622.35 per fortnight (and an additional \$24.60 per fortnight per child) before receiving no payment, a \$569.10 per fortnight increase compared to JobSeeker settings. These income settings will ensure Parenting Payment (Single) recipients are encouraged to remain connected to the workforce and better support those who wish to increase their hours in paid employment as their children become more independent.

Mutual obligation requirements will be maintained from when a recipient's youngest child turns 6 to support single parents to maintain connections with the labour force or develop their skills. Supporting single mothers to build or maintain a connection to the workforce is critical to their financial and economic security.

Eligible single parents on low incomes will generally continue to receive Family Tax Benefit Part B until their child completes or leaves secondary school or claims Youth Allowance (once aged 18).

The higher Parenting Payment (Single) rate will provide greater assistance to single principal carers to help them balance caring responsibilities for their children during later primary school years and during the critical transition to high school. As eligible single principal carers are predominantly women, the measure will support women's economic equality by helping to improve earnings and financial security.

Supporting parents to be ready to transition to work

The Government will abolish the ParentsNext program from 1 July 2024 and finalise design work on a replacement voluntary program, with interim changes to be considered as soon as possible to move ParentsNext to voluntary participation, with final policy parameters to be announced.

This will end the risk to participants of suspension or loss of payments and remove undue stress and anxiety from participants, the majority of whom are women and single parents.

There have been strong calls from stakeholders through the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce, as well as the House of Representatives Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services' inquiry and the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee, to abolish the program and replace it with a more supportive service. These calls reflect concerns about the punitive nature of compliance arrangements and the impact of payment suspensions and penalties on parents and their young children. The most disadvantaged Parenting Payment recipients with young children are required to participate in ParentsNext, whereas less disadvantaged recipients do not have any requirements and do not face the possibility of payment suspensions or penalties.

In 2021–22, 25,920 or 22 per cent of ParentsNext participants had their payment suspended (put on hold) and 6 participants received a financial penalty, due to a failure to meet the obligations of the program. The Select Committee heard that the compliance regime had caused stress and harm to participants, including preventing participants from meeting their own and their children's basic needs.

Budget highlights: Abolishing ParentsNext

The Government will abolish the ParentsNext program. The Government will finalise the approach to a new voluntary program that better meets the needs of parents and sets them up for success, to commence at the earliest opportunity.

To support parents' agency and ensure that those currently on ParentsNext do not face loss of payment, the Government will move to an interim voluntary participation model as quickly as possible prior to abolishing the program. This will remove the punitive component of the program while maintaining access to support to help complete education, meet family needs and prepare for the workforce while a replacement program is developed. The Government will also ensure that participants in the interim program can continue to access up to 36 hours per fortnight of subsidised early childhood education and care through the Child Care Subsidy.

Child support reforms

Child support payments can make an important contribution to household income for single parents, helping avoid financial hardship. Of all parents receiving child support, around 84 per cent are women.

The child support system recognises that it is both parents' responsibility to financially support their child to the extent they can. Accurate child support assessments, which are crucial to a fair scheme, depend on timely lodgement of tax returns. Where tax returns are delayed or not lodged by an absentee child support provider, it may affect calculations of parents' entitlements, including accuracy of Family Tax Benefit payments, and reduce Services Australia's ability to intercept tax refunds to meet outstanding child support debts. This can effectively see child support payments withheld and, in some circumstances, former partners may do this intentionally to inflict financial abuse on women.⁵

Budget highlights: Improvements to the child support system

To further support single parents and make the child support system fairer, the Government has introduced legislation to improve the timely collection of child support owed to parents and help prevent future debt among low-income parents. The *Social Services Legislation Amendment (Child Support Measures) Bill 2023* proposes key changes including extending the circumstances in which Services Australia can deduct child support from a parent's wages, tightening departure prohibition orders and improving income accuracy for low-income parents who are not required to lodge a tax return.

The Bill is a first step to make the scheme better for those parents with sole caring responsibility and children. To improve the scheme over the longer-term, the Government has committed \$5.1 million over 5 years to implement key recommendations made by the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System:

- establish a Child Support Stakeholder Consultation Group to provide a strong voice to Government on issues impacting families
- commission expert research on the costs of raising children in Australia and consider whether changes are needed to the child support formula to ensure child support payments provide children with an adequate level of financial support
- review compliance in the child support scheme, with a focus on collection and enforcement
- review the interaction between the child support scheme and Family Tax Benefit to ensure vulnerable single parent families are financially supported after separation
- undertake an evaluation of separated families to understand what can be done to support parents with caring responsibilities where private collect arrangements have broken down.

Addressing challenges faced by older women

Lower workforce participation combined with lower levels of pay for women results in significantly lower lifetime earnings and lower superannuation balances upon retirement. For many older women, particularly older single women, this increases their risks of experiencing financial hardship and housing insecurity and makes them more likely to rely on government supports later in life.

Older women have increased their workforce participation

Older women's patterns of workforce participation have changed markedly over the past 4 decades. Since the first Women's Budget Statement in 1984, the labour force participation rate of women aged 55 to 59 years has increased from 30 per cent to 72 per cent in March 2023. Over the same period, the participation rate of women aged 60 to 64 years increased from 12 per cent to 56 per cent. Improved health and education outcomes, the availability of less physically demanding jobs, part-time hours and flexible work have all enabled the rising participation of older women and men in the labour force.

Certain barriers affecting younger women's workforce participation continue to impact older women. Caring responsibilities (for their own children, grandchildren, and/or ageing parents), for example, may also continue to impact some older women's ability to participate in the labour force through the later decades of their working lives. In 2021, 12.8 per cent of people aged 55 to 74 reported caring for other peoples' children. Two-thirds of these carers were women. Significantly more women than men aged 55 and over reported that caring responsibilities were the main reason they were not available to start a job or work more hours. More than double the number of women in that cohort also cited caring for a person with a disability, a person with an illness or an older person as the reason for retirement.

Older women face discrimination in the workplace

Older women who participate in the labour force face different barriers in the workplace, which may include age discrimination, stereotypes or myths associated with age. Nearly one third of employers reported they have an age above which they are reluctant to recruit workers, with many indicating an unwillingness to hire workers over the age of 50.⁶

Women and men, however, have different experiences of age discrimination in the workforce.⁷ A 2015 Australian Human Rights Commission survey of participants aged 50 and older found that of those who experienced discrimination, 51 per cent of women reported being more likely to be perceived by peers as having outdated skills, being slow to learn new things or as someone who would deliver an unsatisfactory job. This was compared to 38 per cent of men. Additionally, women were more likely than men (68 per cent compared to 52 per cent) to report age discrimination affecting their self-esteem, mental health or had caused them stress in the workplace.

As older women's participation rates increase, women experiencing menopause are increasingly likely to be in the workforce and may experience additional associated challenges. While there is limited research on the full extent of its potential impact, the

range of symptoms associated with menopause can impact women's needs in the workplace and experiences of work. Where supports are not adequate, older women may revert to part-time work, forgo leadership opportunities, or pursue early retirement.

Increases to income support payments for those aged 55 and over

The Government recognises the additional barriers older Australians face engaging with work, and the importance of the social safety net to ensure older Australians can live with dignity.

Among Australians aged 55 and over, a moderately larger share of income support recipients are women. In March 2023, women accounted for 56 per cent of all JobSeeker Payments for those aged 55 to 64, and 57 per cent for those aged 65 and over. Men, however, account for a higher portion of income support recipients for younger age groups.

The Government recognises that older Australians can face additional, persistent barriers to work and may become stuck on JobSeeker Payment for long periods of time.

In recognition of this, single JobSeeker Payment recipients aged 60 years or older who have been receiving the payment for 9 or more continuous months already benefit from a higher rate of payment than other JobSeeker Payment recipients, who are not principal carers. Currently the higher basic rate is \$745.20 per fortnight. Of the 82,000 recipients of this higher payment, women make up 58 per cent.

In this Budget, the Government will extend eligibility for this higher rate of JobSeeker Payment to those aged 55 to 59 years who have been on payment for 9 or more continuous months.

Budget highlights: Extending eligibility for existing higher JobSeeker basic rate for those aged 55 and above

The Government is extending eligibility for the existing higher rate of JobSeeker Payment for older Australians.

In September, eligibility for the higher rate of payment will be extended to single Australians aged 55 to 59 who have been on the payment for 9 or more continuous months. This will benefit around 52,000 recipients, 55 per cent of whom are women. This acknowledges the additional barriers these recipients have to re-entering the workforce, including age discrimination or poor health.

JobSeeker recipients aged 60 years and older will also benefit from the \$40 increase per fortnight to their basic payment rate.

Targeting entrenched community disadvantage

There are communities in Australia where disadvantage is concentrated, which can have devastating and intergenerational impacts, including for women and girls who can face compounding disadvantage.

Budget highlights: Partnering to achieve long-term positive change

The Government is investing \$199.8 million in an integrated package to target entrenched community disadvantage. The package takes a long-term approach to working in partnership with communities to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged Australians, including through place-based approaches and social impact investing initiatives. This package will see the Government working in partnership with state and territory governments, communities, and other key stakeholders including through a new strategy to partner with philanthropy.

As part of this package, the Government will develop a new strategy through the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children to partner with philanthropic organisations to better coordinate investments, share data, and improve outcomes, including for women, children, and families.

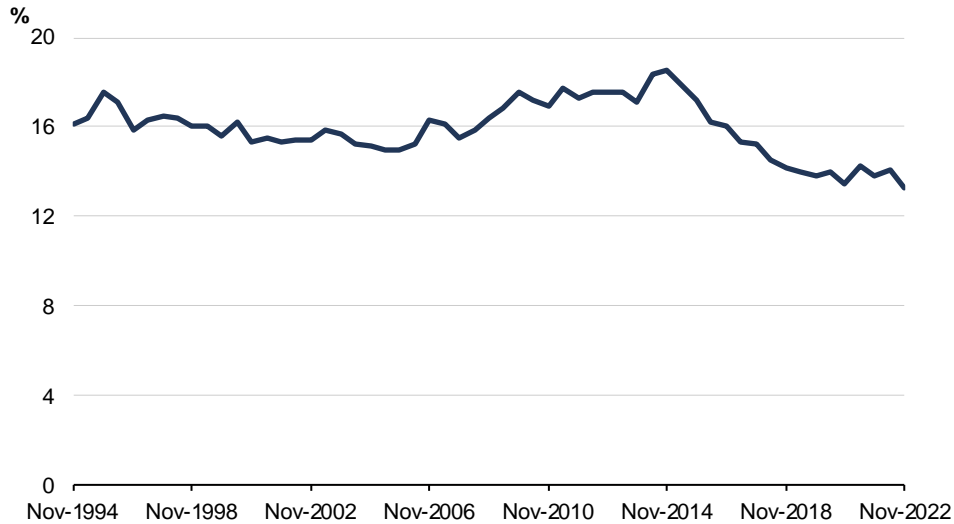
The gender pay gap

Despite progress made in the last 40 years, the gender pay gap persists. The gap is driven by a range of factors, such as the effect of caring for family on workforce participation, differences in gender representation and remuneration across occupations and industries, and gender discrimination and bias. These factors are complex and interrelated and can often compound over a woman's life.

The following sections build on the analysis undertaken in the 2022–23 Women's Budget Statement by more closely examining patterns of occupational and industrial segregation. This includes discussing the undervaluing of 'women's work', unpacking the role of flexibility offered by employers, and exploring the role of education choices. The Government is committed to supporting women's economic equality and to closing the gender pay gap. Reforms to the workplace relations system via the *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022* have put gender equality and pay equity at the heart of the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

The national gender pay gap, which measures the difference in base salary earnings between women and men in full-time work, has fallen to a record low of 13.3 per cent. This is lower than the previous gender pay gap of 14.1 per cent in May 2022, and marginally lower than the previous record low of 13.4 per cent in November 2020. While this is progress, the gender pay gap has remained relatively persistent over decades, falling only 2.9 percentage points in 28 years (Chart 1.9).

Chart 1.9: National gender pay gap 1994 to 2022



Note: Data are full-time adult ordinary time earnings, original series. November 1994 to November 2022.
 Source: ABS Average Weekly Earnings, Australia.

Women in full-time work earn a base salary of around \$1,654 each week on average, while men’s full-time earnings are around \$1,907. This means a woman working full-time earns, on average, \$253 less than a man working full-time every week. Over the course of a year, that adds up to \$13,156. Furthermore, a gender pay gap persists across all industries. Since 1994, the gap has declined across most industries, but it has increased in administrative and support services, health care and social assistance, and arts and recreation services.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) uses a different method to calculate the gender gap in earnings. Drawing from its annual employer census of non-public sector employers with 100 or more employees, WGEA estimates the gap to be 22.8 per cent.⁸ This measure of the gender pay gap covers additional factors to measure the difference between women and men’s total remuneration, including superannuation, overtime, and bonuses, and includes full-time, part-time and casual employees (converted into standardised full-time equivalent earnings).

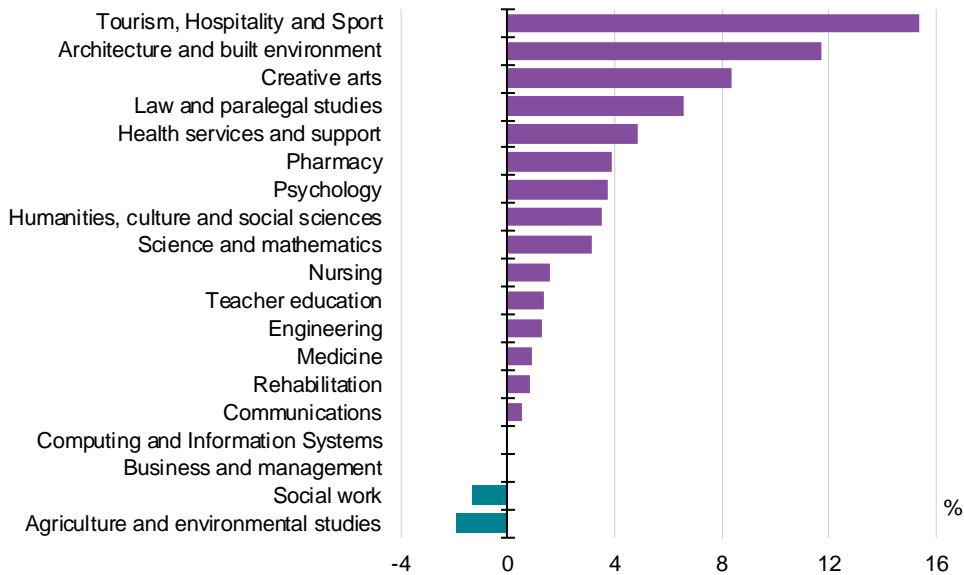
The gender pay gap varies significantly across Australia. Western Australia has the widest gender pay gap of 32.1 per cent and Tasmania the smallest of 10.4 per cent.⁹ Western Australia also has a larger share of people working in mining than other states, and the industry has high average earnings and a low representation of women.

Working in more remote locations can also impact the gender pay gap. Women in remote areas face a remoteness penalty. That is, the difference between women and men’s average base salaries is larger in more remote workplaces.¹⁰ Insights from WGEA data show a gender pay gap remains even when the comparison is between women and men with similar characteristics, such as industry, occupation, age and employment status. This suggests that part of the gender pay gap in remote locations is driven by fundamental gender biases.

From the start of their careers, women earn less than men

The gender pay gap is apparent from the start of women's careers. In 2022, the gender pay gap was 2.9 per cent among undergraduates who started full-time work after graduating (referred to as graduates). Women earned a median annual salary of \$67,400 and men earned \$69,400, despite similar levels of education.¹¹ While this gender gap in starting salaries is partly affected by men joining industries and occupations with typically higher levels of remuneration, a gender pay gap remains evident even within fields of study. Women graduates earn lower starting salaries than men in 15 out of 19 study areas (Chart 1.10). This suggests there are factors beyond subject choice driving the graduate pay gap.

Chart 1.10: Gender pay gap between graduates by study area



Note: Median full-time salary within 4 months of graduation. No data available for men in veterinary science and dentistry.

Source: Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching – 2022 Graduate outcomes survey, February 2023

Government action to introduce gender pay gap reporting improves transparency and gives employees the knowledge needed when applying to and choosing employers and may assist in negotiating pay increases.

Box 3: Government action to improve pay transparency and reduce the gender pay gap

The Government has passed reforms to the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* to improve the transparency of gender pay gaps. From early 2024, WGEA will publish the gender pay gaps of employers with 100 or more employees.

The changes deliver on the Government's commitment to introduce gender pay gap reporting at employer level and implement recommendations of the Review of the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012. International experience suggests that publishing employer gender pay gaps can motivate companies to prioritise gender equality and may result in a lowering of employer gender pay gaps.¹² The United Kingdom began requiring companies with 250 or more employees to report their gender pay gaps in 2017 and has since seen a narrowing of the wage gap between women and men.¹³

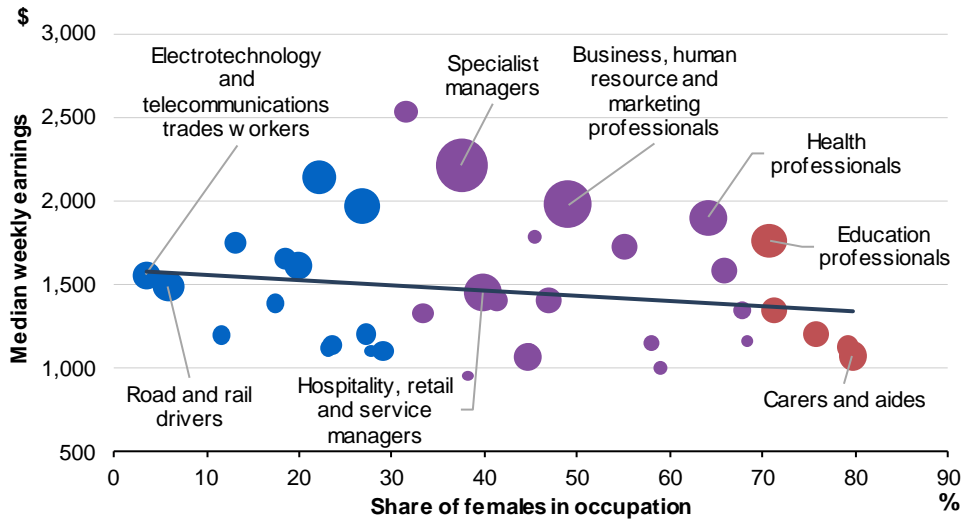
Following these changes, WGEA will publish gender pay gaps at an employer level, in addition to publishing the gender pay gap at a national, industry and occupational level. The first set of private sector employer gender pay gaps will be published in early 2024, and Commonwealth public sector employer gender pay gaps will be published in late 2024 or early 2025. If they choose to, employers will be able to provide additional context and information related to their gender pay gap and the actions they are taking to address it, to be available with their gender pay gap.

Industrial and occupational segregation is an important driver of the gender pay gap

Industrial and occupational segregation in the Australian labour market has remained persistent for several decades. Industrial and occupational segregation contributes to the gender pay gap through the concentration of men in occupations or industries with higher earnings and women in occupations or industries with lower earnings. This segregation is not unique to Australia, with similar patterns observed in the United Kingdom and across OECD member countries.¹⁴

Data on full-time median weekly earnings suggest that female-dominated occupations (Chart 1.11, red dots) are paid less on average than male-dominated occupations (Chart 1.11, blue dots). A similar pattern is also observed by industry.

Chart 1.11: Gender segregation and earnings by occupation, full-time workers



Notes: Colour of points indicates whether occupations are male-dominated (less than 30 per cent female – blue), female-dominated (more than 70 per cent female – red) or balanced (purple). Size of points corresponds to number of full-time workers in occupation. Some occupations with small sample sizes excluded. Median earnings for main job only.

Source: ABS Characteristics of Employment Survey, August 2022.

Gender segregation, combined with the influence of gender stereotypes in society, can restrict the ability of women and men to choose the career that best suits them or move between jobs. This can mean that workers’ skills are not used to their full potential, which risks dampening economic growth and reducing productivity.

A heavily gendered workforce may artificially constrain potential labour supply, which increases the likelihood of a skills shortage in an occupation or industry. This is particularly pertinent in the highly feminised care and support economy, which is experiencing growing demand, driven by an ageing population, transition from informal to formal care and increased citizen expectations of government. Around 65 per cent of occupations in shortage on the Skills Priority List have workforces that are over 80 per cent men or women.¹⁵

Gender segregation can have negative effects on firm performance, especially if women are not represented in leadership positions. Research from WGEA and the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre has found an increase of 10 percentage points or more in the share of women key management personnel is associated with a 6.6 per cent increase in the market value of ASX-listed companies.¹⁶ This is worth the equivalent of \$104.7 million for the average company. Increasing the share of women’s representation on boards by 10 percentage points was also associated with a 6 per cent increase in the likelihood of a firm outperforming its peers.¹⁷ While the gender composition of management personnel tends to be skewed to men, this is starker in male-dominated industries.

Trends in industry and occupational segregation are slow moving. Over the past few decades, there has been some progress to improve gender balance in some previously male-dominated professional and managerial roles such as accountants, solicitors, and general managers. However, over the past 35 years women's employment in aggregate has become more concentrated in female-dominated occupations, partly reflecting rapid growth in the highly feminised care and support economy. Addressing segregation requires a focus not only on getting more women into traditionally male-dominated industries and occupations, but also attracting men into traditionally female-dominated roles.

Valuing the work done by women

The reasons why some highly feminised industries and occupations attract below-average pay are complex, but there is evidence to suggest that gender segregation itself plays a role.^{18,19} This is likely driven by longstanding gender stereotypes around what are considered women's jobs and men's jobs, and perceptions about the value of these jobs in society.

The care and support economy is one example of a highly feminised workforce where wages and conditions may not reflect the true value of the work performed. Many caring roles were once performed for free by family members, mainly women. As these roles have transitioned to the formal economy, many have attracted below-average pay. The fact that these roles were once part of the informal economy can disguise the level of skill and experience required to perform them, as well as the additional qualifications that are now mandatory for some roles. Satisfaction with wages is particularly low for aged care workers compared to other industries.²⁰ Having access to or being covered by enterprise bargaining agreements can help workers to negotiate higher pay and better work conditions.

This Government understands and places value on the important role of caring. This is reflected through the development of a National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy, the Government's submission to the Aged Care Work Value Case and the creation of the Care and Community Sector Expert Panel in the Fair Work Commission as part of the *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Act 2022* reforms. The Government acknowledges the shifting preferences from informal to formal care. Improved options for formal care can reduce barriers to women's workforce participation, improving their economic security and financial independence. These changes can also support productivity to the extent that formal care arrangements allow for better matching between jobs and skills, and through economies of scale as the workforce expands.

The Senate Select Committee on Work and Care has examined the challenges many Australians experience trying to combine caring responsibilities with paid employment across the course of their lives. The low wages of many of those employed in care and support industries creates additional financial difficulties for those performing essential care services at home and in the community. The Committee tabled its final report on 9 March 2023 and the Government is considering its findings and recommendations.

Budget highlights: Valuing the care and support economy

The Government is committed to a sustainable and productive care and support economy that delivers quality care and decent jobs. The Government recognises and values the delivery of essential services to some of the most vulnerable people in society. Formal aged care, disability care and support, veterans' care, and early childhood education and care enable workforce participation, particularly for women, who would otherwise be unable to work due to caring responsibilities. The Government values the contribution these sectors make to our society and will continue to examine opportunities to support the professionalisation and recognition of these workforces.

Aged Care Work Value Case: The Government supports continuing to improve wages and conditions for aged care workers. Low wages for aged care workers undervalue their work, contribute to the gender pay gap and are a barrier to growing the workforce. Aged care workers provide care and support to many of the most vulnerable in our community. Despite this, Australia's 370,000 aged care workers can experience low wages and poor conditions. The Government delivered on its commitment to make a submission on the Aged Care Work Value Case to the Fair Work Commission and will provide funding to support resulting increases to award wages.

This Budget allocates \$11.3 billion to support the Fair Work Commission's decision to provide an interim increase of 15 per cent to modern award minimum wages for many aged care workers.

This pay rise will help aged care providers retain their skilled workforce, attract more people to the sector and stop paying high agency rates to fill the current gaps. It is Government's expectation that funding for the wage rise will be passed on directly to staff. The purpose of this pay rise is to ensure staff are remunerated fairly for their work.

continued on next page

Budget highlights: Valuing the care and support economy (continued)

Care and Support Economy Strategy: The Government is developing a National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy to set out a road map to a sustainable and productive care and support economy that delivers quality care and decent jobs. The strategy will set a long-term vision across the care and support economy sectors, including aged care, disability care and support, veterans' care and early childhood education and care.

The impact on women will be two-fold. Firstly, women perform a disproportionate share of unpaid care and support labour. Well-functioning formal care and support systems help free up women to participate in the broader workforce and have economic autonomy. Secondly, the majority of workers in the care and support economy are women, so ensuring that they have decent, safe, and well-paying jobs will boost women's economic security and help narrow the gender pay gap.

NDIS Workforce Strategy: The Government has committed to develop a comprehensive NDIS workforce strategy to ensure NDIS participants can access the supports they need. An independent NDIS Review is underway and is examining ways to build a sustainable workforce, consulting widely with participants, providers and the community. The Review will provide a report to Disability Reform Ministers by October 2023.

Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce: The Government is investing \$72.4 million to support, build and retain the early childhood education and care workforce. The investment will improve access to professional development opportunities for early childhood educators and teachers and provide financial assistance to educators to complete the practicum required for a Bachelor or Master's degree in Early Childhood Education.

Removing gender bias through Fair Work reforms

The Government has passed amendments to the *Fair Work Act 2009* that target gender-based undervaluation of work, which most impacts workers in low-paid, feminised workforces. The changes require that the Fair Work Commission's consideration of work value be free of gender-based assumptions and include consideration of whether the work has been historically undervalued based on gender. This change is relevant to work value cases, in which the Commission determines whether modern award minimum wages should be varied on work value grounds.

The changes also address issues with the previous framework for equal remuneration orders that made it difficult to establish a pay equity claim in the Commission. There has been only one successful case where the Commission issued an equal remuneration order. The previous provisions were interpreted as requiring a male comparator group performing work of equal or comparable value to the applicants. This was often unobtainable given Australia's highly gender-segregated workforce. The amendments ensure comparison between occupations and industries does not require a male

comparator group. The Commission also does not need to find discrimination on the basis of gender to establish the work has been undervalued. These changes will contribute to ensuring that all workers are paid equally for labour of equal or comparable value, regardless of their gender.

Two new expert panels for pay equity and the care and community sector have been established in the Commission to hear and decide these types of cases. This ensures the Commission has the expertise to appropriately address gender-based undervaluation and help improve pay and conditions in low-paid, feminised workforces.

Box 4: Government action to address work value

Annual Wage Review – supporting the wages of low-paid workers

The Government's submission to the Fair Work Commission's 2022–23 Annual Wage Review once again recommended that the Commission ensures the real wages of Australia's low-paid workers do not go backwards. Last year, the Fair Work Commission decision resulted in a 5.2 per cent increase in the national minimum wage and at least a \$40 per week increase to award pay rates for fulltime workers.

Award-reliant workers are more likely to be low-paid, women, young and employed on a casual basis. Of the 2.7 million award-reliant employees, 1.6 million (or 59 per cent) are women. Of all women employees, 27 per cent are on an award wage compared to 19 per cent of men.

High award coverage in female-dominated industries such as health care and social assistance (including child care), hospitality and retail trade, explain the imbalance in the award reliant population. As women are disproportionately represented in low-paid and award-reliant jobs, increases in the minimum and award wages are likely to help decrease the gender pay gap.

Review of modern awards

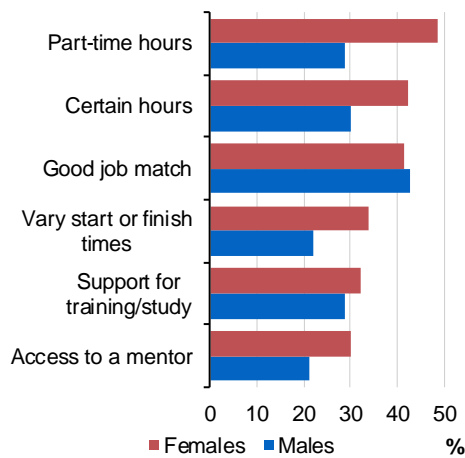
The Government is delivering on outcomes from the 2022 Jobs and Skills Summit by supporting the Fair Work Commission to conduct a review of modern awards. The targeted review, informed by stakeholder priorities, will consider whether modern awards provide a fair and relevant safety net in the context of the new job security and gender equality objects in the *Fair Work Act 2009*, and the updated modern awards and minimum wages objectives. The review will also include research on the impact of modern awards on work and care.

Balancing work and care – the case for flexibility

The unequal division of unpaid care work within Australian households also contributes to industrial and occupational segregation. Women tend to take on a larger share of unpaid work in households, and this gap widens when children arrive in the household. This not only contributes to lower workforce participation by women, but it may deter them from higher intensity and better paid occupations and industries.

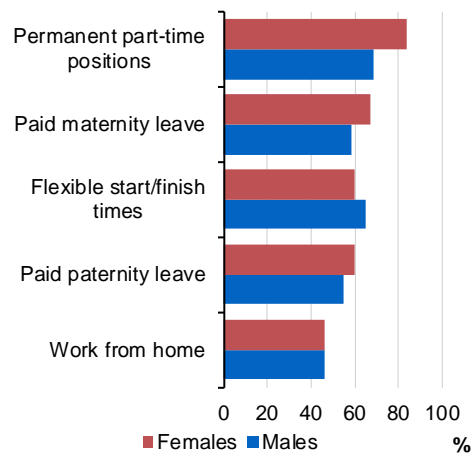
As a result, women are more likely than men to report flexibility and non-standard work arrangements as incentives for labour force participation, and to work in organisations that offer this flexibility. For example, almost 50 per cent of women report that the ability to work part-time hours is a very important incentive to increase participation, and over 80 per cent of employed women report that their organisation offers permanent part-time positions (Chart 1.12 and Chart 1.13). Treasury analysis suggests that many types of workplace flexibility, such as part-time work, flexible start and finish times, and the ability to work from home, are positively associated with job satisfaction for both women and men, even after accounting for job and individual characteristics.

Chart 1.12: Incentives to increase participation, 2020–21



Notes: Share of people that rated the incentives as 'very important'.
 Source: ABS Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation.

Chart 1.13: Share of employees with workplace entitlements, 2021



Notes: Share of employees reporting that they could access entitlement.
 Source: Treasury analysis of HILDA Release 21.0.

Research finds that firms are often willing to pay a premium to those who can work long and inflexible hours. Treasury analysis suggests that less flexible occupations pay on average about 30 per cent more than flexible occupations.²¹ The prominence of these higher paid but more inflexible jobs in many industries and occupations favours those who have few unpaid responsibilities (often men) and penalises those juggling non-negotiable caring responsibilities (often women). Australian research has found that occupations where there are high rewards for working long and inflexible hours tend to have the largest gender pay gaps.²² These occupations are also more likely to be male-dominated.

The presence of these inflexible but highly paid jobs makes it more costly for couples to choose to equally share the unpaid and paid work of their household. That is, equally sharing unpaid work within the household may preclude both partners from holding a highly paid but inflexible job. The effects of tax and transfer systems can compound this problem by reducing the financial incentive for a secondary earner (often a woman) to take on extra hours in paid work.

Gender stereotypes and the presence of inflexible jobs also disadvantage fathers who wish to take a more active role in the raising of their children. Men are more reluctant to request flexible working conditions than women because of perceived or actual negative effects on their career progression or because they do not believe it will be granted.²³ This is reflected in the availability and take up of paid parental leave. WGEA data reveal that paid parental leave for primary carers offered by employers is more common in female-dominated industries than male-dominated industries, and only 12 per cent of this leave is taken by men.²⁴ When men do request flexibility, they frequently face discrimination from managers or colleagues.²⁵ This 'flexibility stigma' perpetuates gender stereotypes and negatively impacts families.

Organisational policies can support families who desire to share paid work and caring responsibilities more equally. For example, firms can offer flexible working conditions and encourage its use by all employees. Men in senior roles can also model the use of flexible work policies, to demonstrate they are not just for use by women and their use will not be detrimental to career prospects. The evidence that job flexibility allows women (particularly mothers) to remain in the workforce suggests a role for reforming workplace settings and more considered job design to address gender inequality.

Box 5: Government action to improve workplace conditions and flexibility

The Government is committed to an improved workplace relations system that delivers more secure jobs and flexibility for all workers.

In December 2022, the Government legislated a range of reforms to improve job and income security and gender equality. Further reforms will come into effect later this year, including to strengthen the right to request flexible working arrangements and to request an extension of unpaid parental leave, and limits to fixed-term contract durations.

The *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Protecting Worker Entitlements) Bill 2023* also includes proposed amendments to unpaid parental leave to complement recent amendments to the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme and help families share work and caring responsibilities.

More work is underway to deliver better outcomes for all workers. The Government is consulting on further changes, including standing up for casual employees and improving fairness for workers such as gig workers and labour hire workers. This will support better pay and conditions while ensuring that the system is sustainable and promotes wellbeing.

A safe workplace for everyone

Gender bias and discrimination is prevalent in some male-dominated industries and can influence hiring decisions. Discrimination, harassment and inflexible work conditions can also discourage women from pursuing careers in these sectors. Many workplaces are making active changes to improve workplace culture for all employees, to increase their candidate pool and create a better working environment. Still, workplace harassment remains a barrier to women's full participation in some sectors. The Government is committed to eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace, because everyone deserves to feel safe at work. The successful implementation of the Respect@Work recommendations (discussed further in the Ending violence against women and children chapter) will contribute to ensuring all workplaces are safe for women.

Gender differences in education and workforce outcomes

Australian women are highly educated

Education and training are critical for employment and career prospects and play a key role in progressing women's economic equality. Australian women are now more educated than ever before and, increasingly, more educated than men. Four decades ago, women were less likely to attain degrees or participate in higher education than men. This trend flipped by the 1990s, and women now have higher levels of educational attainment.

Strong education performance of women emerges from early in school. Girls tend to outperform boys in all National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

domains across all year levels (Years 3, 5, 7 and 9), except in numeracy where boys slightly outperform girls. These gaps have remained relatively consistent since NAPLAN was introduced in 2008. This strong performance continues through to Year 12 or equivalent (Certificate III or above) attainment rates (92.7 per cent for women compared to 87.6 per cent for men between the ages of 20–24 years in 2022). University figures show around 50.9 per cent of women aged 25–34 having a bachelor's degree or above as their highest qualification, compared to 38.3 per cent of men, in 2022.

Despite educational efforts, there remain significant gaps in student outcomes for First Nations' girls, and girls with disability. In 2021, 71.7 per cent of First Nations women aged 20–24 years had attained Year 12 or equivalent, or Certificate III or above.²⁶ In 2018, only 68 per cent of students with disability completed secondary education, compared to 85 per cent of students without disability. The completion rate was higher for women with disability than men.

There are gender differences in course and subject enrolments that emerge early

Gender differences in education and training choices become apparent in secondary school. They continue to be observed in higher education and influence the industries and roles women and men are employed in after study. These decisions can be influenced by parents, role models, and peers, as well as gender stereotypes.

In Year 12, a higher proportion of boys study maths and technology, and more girls study English and science. Within science subjects, however, there are gender differences. More girls study biology and more boys study chemistry and physics. In addition, research shows that girls are more likely to report having lower confidence in their economics proficiency than other students, leading to lower participation in the subject.²⁷ These negative perceptions persist even after accounting for observed proficiency, indicating a confidence gap.

Similarly in universities, 2021 domestic undergraduate enrolment data show women continue to dominate enrolments in fields such as health (77 per cent), education (76 per cent), society and culture (67 per cent), creative arts (60 per cent), agriculture, environment and related studies (60 per cent), and natural and physical sciences (54 per cent). Men continue to dominate fields such as information technology (83 per cent), engineering and related technologies (82 per cent), architecture and building (57 per cent), and management and commerce (53 per cent).²⁸

Increasing women's representation in vocational education and training, including apprenticeships

Women have historically been underrepresented in vocational education and training (VET), but this trend is starting to change. Over the period 2015 to 2017, the number of women enrolled in VET has increased from 1.7 million to 2.0 million, an increase of more than 19 per cent.²⁹ The proportion of women studying VET programs, as a proportion of all program enrolments, increased from 46.3 per cent in 2015 to 48.5 per cent in 2021. Women are also showing stronger completion rates in VET than men, with 49.9 per cent of women

who commenced their qualification in 2017 having completed it, compared to 42.7 per cent of men.

For VET program enrolments in 2021, data shows that men continue to dominate enrolments in traditional STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Natural and physical science is an exception to this, where women account for 66 per cent of program enrolments. Women account for 11 per cent of engineering and related technologies, and 24 per cent of information technology program enrolments.³⁰ In addition, women account for only 10 per cent of architecture and building VET program enrolments.

While women now make up almost half of all VET enrolments, they use apprenticeships and traineeships at a much lower rate. Women represent around 31 per cent of all apprentices and trainees at September 2022. In practice, this means that fewer women are using apprenticeship pathways, which enable them to be paid while they gain work experience and their VET qualification in their chosen field, when compared to men.

Qualifications that require unpaid work experience impose financial burden on students and trainees, including reducing the hours of paid employment they can undertake. A study found that men are more likely to participate in unpaid work experience than women, but women participated for longer durations.³¹ In addition, during their unpaid work experience, men were more likely than women to receive financial compensation or reimbursement, such as an allowance or honorarium; or reimbursement for expenses such as parking or special clothing. The most common industries for unpaid work experience were education and training, social and community services, and health care, which are female-dominated.

Although the proportion of women in trade apprenticeships has been increasing steadily, a high level of gender segregation remains across some industries and occupations. Women remain under-represented in male-dominated trades (such as plumbing, carpentry or electrical) comprising just over 8 per cent of all trade apprentices.³² In 2021, more women were in shorter apprenticeships and traineeships in non-trade occupations than they were in trade occupations such as early childhood education and care, retail, administration, and hospitality.

In September 2022, only 5.2 per cent of all apprentices and trainees in the construction industry were women. Of those undertaking trade apprenticeships in this industry, only 3.4 per cent were women.³³ Government action will start to address barriers to women's participation in these sectors, and support women to complete their apprenticeships. Even though women have stronger completion rates than men overall, women in male-dominated trade apprenticeships have a lower completion rate than the general apprenticeship population.

Budget highlights: Improving pathways for women into trades and other male-dominated industries

The Government is focused on improving women's experiences of the labour market and ensuring equal opportunity and equal pay. This includes a commitment to lifting the participation of women in apprenticeships and across the VET system, focused on helping the economic security of women through access to jobs in higher-paying and traditionally male-dominated industries. Attracting more women to these sectors also requires a cultural shift to ensure women feel safe at work. The successful implementation of the Respect@Work recommendations will help achieve this.

Targeted support for apprenticeships: The Government is delivering on its commitment from the Jobs and Skills Summit to improve the apprenticeships support system, increase the diversity of the apprentice workforce and drive up apprenticeship completion rates. The Government is consulting on a redesign of the program that aims to support apprentices through their training to give them the best chance of completing their apprenticeship. This focuses on removing barriers for women seeking a career in male-dominated trade occupations and strengthening supports for apprentices with disability, First Nations apprentices, and remote apprentices. These key cohorts will be guaranteed access to personalised assistance and mentoring and receive additional support from commencement to completion of their apprenticeship. Past program experience shows that apprentices who receive support services like mentoring are significantly more likely to complete their apprenticeship.

Grant funding of \$5.0 million over 3 years from 2024–25 will be provided to organisations with appropriate expertise in supporting women in the workplace, to further support women in male-dominated trade apprenticeships. This will include providing education, advice or support to increase culturally safe and inclusive workplaces, reduce the cultural barriers to women's participation, address workplace challenges and support businesses to attract and retain women.

continued on next page

Budget highlights: Improving pathways for women into trades and other male-dominated industries (continued)

Australian Skills Guarantee (Skills Guarantee): To help address long-term structural problems of gender inequality in the apprenticeships system, the Government will introduce new national targets for women in apprenticeships and traineeships on major Australian Government-funded construction and information and communications technology (ICT) projects valued at \$10 million or more. Targets for women in construction will increase annually to reach 12 per cent for women in apprenticeships and traineeships and 10 per cent for women in trade apprenticeships by 2030. This would more than double participation for women in apprenticeships and traineeships, and triple participation in trade apprenticeships, on Skills Guarantee construction projects by 2030.

In recognition of the varied entry pathways of the ICT sector, targets will be negotiated with suppliers on a project-by-project basis for major ICT projects. The Skills Guarantee will also help to shift the culture on individual flagship construction projects valued at \$100 million or more by working with suppliers to develop even more ambitious targets for women on these projects.

Work to implement the Skills Guarantee will commence from 1 July 2023 ahead of targets coming into effect for new procurements from 1 July 2024.

Negotiating a new National Skills Agreement: The Government is negotiating a new 5-year National Skills Agreement with states and territories to boost productivity and support people to obtain skills to participate and prosper in the modern economy. The Agreement will ensure that all Australians have access to the education, training and support needed to obtain well-paid, secure jobs.

Women's participation and gender equality will be a major reform area of the Agreement. There will be a coordinated effort to support women to successfully enrol and complete VET courses and apprenticeships, with an emphasis on accessing skills in traditionally male-dominated, higher-paying occupations. Men will also be encouraged to participate and gain skills in fields where women have been historically over-represented, such as the care and support sector.

Women in STEM cadetships and advanced apprenticeships: Continued support for the Women in STEM program will assist in promoting increased diversity in the STEM-qualified labour force. The program has incorporated considerations for competing work and personal commitments, especially caring responsibilities, providing part-time pathways to facilitate easier completion of study. The extended timeframe will support more women to pursue industry-relevant STEM qualifications.

Ending violence against women and children

Every Australian deserves a life free from violence. All women and children should be able to live safely without fear, whether at home, at school, at work, in their community or online. Women and children are not a homogenous group, and every experience of violence is unique.

To further women and children's safety, including under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, the Government is investing \$589.3 million in addition to the initial record investment of \$1.7 billion in the October Budget to end violence against women and children in one generation.

Recognising that First Nations women and children experience unacceptably high rates of violence, the Government is investing \$194 million in specific funding to deliver priorities emerging from the developing dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. This will also support the development of a new standalone First Nations National Plan for Family Safety.

This chapter examines the impacts and drivers of gender-based violence and provides an overview of the complex and intersecting needs of victim-survivors, with emphasis on delivering targeted action.

Prevalence and impacts of gender-based violence in Australia – key statistics

One in 3 women (31% or 3.1 million) have experienced physical violence since the age of 15.	One woman was killed every 14 days by a current or former intimate partner in Australia in 2020–21. ³⁴
One in 5 women (22% or 2.2 million) have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 33 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than other Australian women. In 2020–21, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were killed at a rate 5.7 times higher than other Australian women from family violence.
One in 4 women (23% or 2.3 million) have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15.	Approximately one in 2 women (44.1%) who experienced intimate partner violence had children in their care.
One in 4 women (23% or 2.3 million) have experienced cohabiting partner emotional abuse since the age of 15.	An estimated one in 8 people (13%) have witnessed violence towards a parent by a partner before the age of 15 and an estimated one in 7 (14%) have experienced physical violence and / or sexual abuse by an adult before the age of 15.

Violence against women and children is a problem of epidemic proportion across Australia. Two large national survey collections on the prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence (the Personal Safety Survey) and community attitudes (National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)) have been released for the first time in 5 years. The results of these surveys highlight the complexity of this issue.

The 2021 NCAS findings showed that Australians' understanding and attitudes regarding violence against women and gender inequality have improved slowly but significantly since 2009.³⁵ Australians' recognition of behaviours constituting violence against women has improved. In 2021, 81 per cent of survey respondents identified controlling a partner by denying them money to constitute a form of domestic violence, up from only 53 per cent in 2013.

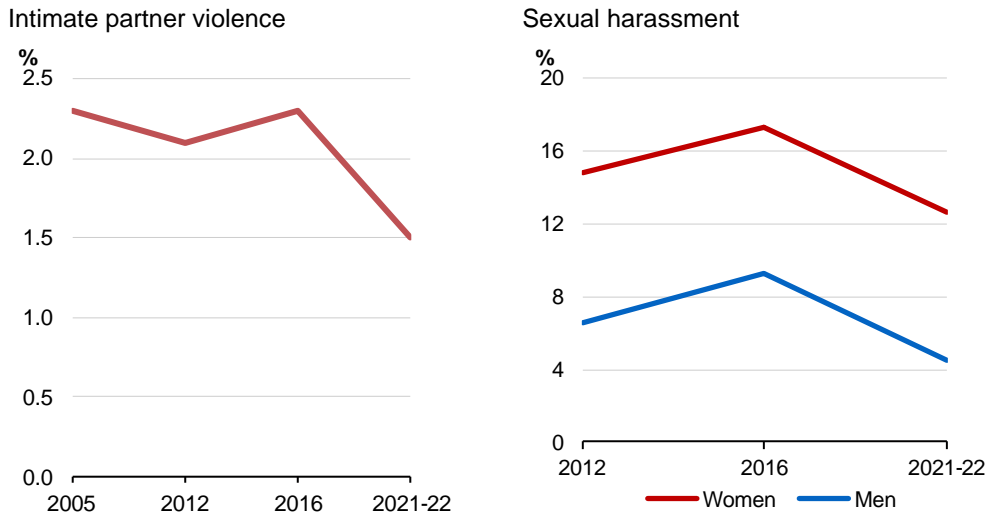
Despite progress, misconceptions persist and there has been a plateau in some attitudes towards domestic violence since 2017. In 2021, 41 per cent of Australians reported they believe domestic violence is equally perpetrated by men and women, and 2 in 5 Australians do not know how to access domestic violence services. Some Australians still endorse misconceptions that justify violence, consider it an issue that doesn't affect them or their community, and see violence as a private matter or partly blame victim-survivors for violence.

The prevalence rates of family, domestic and sexual violence have remained mixed. The 2021–22 Personal Safety Survey (PSS) showed there has been modest yet statistically significant decreases in intimate partner violence (-0.8 per cent), cohabiting partner violence (-0.8 per cent), cohabiting partner emotional abuse (women: -0.9 per cent, men: -1.7 per cent) and sexual harassment (women: -4.7 per cent, men: -4.8 per cent) since 2016 (Chart 2.1). The prevalence of stalking, sexual violence and physical violence against women has been relatively unchanged since 2016.

Data from the Australian Institute of Criminology's 2023 Homicide in Australia Statistical Report found that in 2020–21, on average, one woman died every 14 days at the hands of her former or current partner in Australia. This is an update on the previous statistic from the 2019–20 Homicide in Australia Statistical Report, which found that on average, one woman died every 10 days at the hands of her former or current partner in Australia.

While any reduction is positive, it does not detract from the overall impact and scale of violence against women. A sustained and united effort is still required to end it.

Chart 2.1: 12-month prevalence rates of intimate partner violence and sexual harassment over time



Note: Intimate partner violence statistics for men have a high relative standard error and are considered too unreliable to measure changes over time.
 Source: Graphed from tables in Australian Bureau of Statistics (2023) Personal Safety Australia 2021–22. Personal Safety, Australia, 2021–22 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au).

Rates of violence are higher for certain groups, such as First Nations women and women living with disability. Sexism, ableism and racism intersect and compound to drive high levels of violence, and particular forms of violence against First Nations women and women living with disability. For instance, women with disability are more likely to experience violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, and fare worse in institutional contexts such as group homes and boarding houses where violence may be more common.

Research indicates women and girls with disability are more likely to experience sexual violence (25 per cent compared with 15 per cent of women without disability) and physical violence (40 per cent compared with 26 per cent of women without disability) after the age of 15.³⁶ Women with disability experience specific forms of gender-based violence including reproductive coercion, forced sterilisation and forced medical interventions. Women with an intellectual or psychological disability are nearly 3 times more likely than women with a physical disability to experience violence.

National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

On 17 October 2022, the Australian, state and territory governments released the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan). The National Plan is the cornerstone of the Government’s strategy to address family, domestic and sexual violence.

The National Plan sets out the national policy agenda for the next 10 years to address family, domestic and sexual violence. It guides the work of all governments, family safety experts and front-line services, and importantly commits to ongoing engagement with victim-survivors in the development of policies and solutions. To drive change, the National Plan provides priority areas for action across the continuum of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

Actions by the Australian Government and the states to implement the National Plan will be detailed in two underpinning 5-year Action Plans and the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. The First Action Plan will span 2023–2028, laying the foundation for generational change. The Second Action Plan will build on the First Action Plan, spanning 2029–2033.

The Government's \$1.7 billion investment in the October Budget for women's safety initiatives laid a solid foundation for the Government's sustained focus on ending violence against women.

This included funding for a range of prevention activities to stop violence before it starts, including \$83.5 million for improving respectful relationships education in schools and \$42.5 million for responding to the Respect@Work inquiry. Significant investments were also made to improve the supports and services available for women and children experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence including \$169.4 million to fund 500 frontline community sector workers. This was bolstered by significant investments in housing, with \$100 million of returns from the Housing Australia Future Fund to fund crisis and transitional housing options for women and children impacted by family and domestic violence and older women at risk of homelessness.

The investments in women's safety through this Budget and the October Budget complement existing Government funding for ongoing initiatives and programs that are vital for women's safety. This includes ongoing funding to deliver 1800RESPECT, provide supports in the family law system for women and families experiencing family and domestic violence, and funding to prevent and respond to workplace harassment, including implementation of recommendations from the Respect@Work report.

This Budget builds on that with a further \$589.3 million funding to support women's safety, including dedicated funding for First Nations women's safety. This is complemented by funding to implement recommendations from the Set the Standard report, funding for the Office of the eSafety Commissioner, and increases in funding for community organisations that provide vital services to women and children experiencing violence, as well as the Government's reforms to improve access to social and affordable housing.

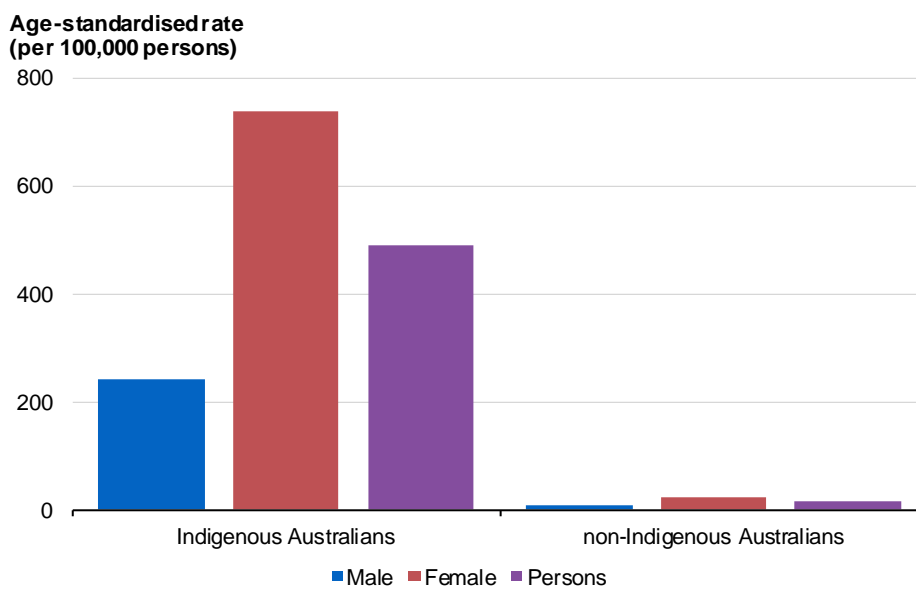
Supporting First Nations women's safety

First Nations women experience heightened vulnerability to harm because of intergenerational trauma and intersectional discrimination while caring for large and

extended families with their own compounding experiences of individual and systemic violence and discrimination.³⁷

In 2020–21, First Nations women were 33 times more likely to be hospitalised for injuries related to family and domestic violence than other Australian women (Chart 2.2). In the majority of these cases, hospitalisation was due to intentional injury from a spouse or domestic partner, a parent or another family member.

Chart 2.2: Family and domestic violence related hospitalisations 2020–21



Source: Graphed from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) Family, domestic and sexual violence data in Australia, Hospitalisations for family and domestic violence-Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au).

First Nations women living with disability or a long-term health condition experience higher rates of physical or threatened violence than First Nations women living without disability or a long-term health condition (24 per cent compared to 15 per cent). This demonstrates the ways First Nations women can experience cross-cutting issues, as outlined in the 2023 Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. It also shows how some women can face compounding issues and threats to their safety, requiring tailored supports.

Without the provision of tailored, dedicated supports these compounding issues contribute to further experiences of trauma, isolation and exclusion. This reinforces existing gaps and barriers to accessing community-led, culturally appropriate, trauma-aware and healing-informed service delivery.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan

Investment in First Nations family safety is informed by the emerging priorities of the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan, which is under development. Measures will acknowledge the connections between, and impact of, social and economic disadvantage from intergenerational and ongoing experiences of trauma. This includes the ongoing impacts of racism, dispossession and violence on First Nations people and communities.

First Nations people have the greatest knowledge about the issues that affect them, and the Government is listening and working in partnership to find solutions. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan is being developed in genuine partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence (Advisory Council). The Advisory Council is working with First Nations leaders, Elders, communities, community-led organisations and governments to build effective pathways, services and responses for both victim-survivors and perpetrators of family violence to inform the Action Plan.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan will recognise the intersectional approach needed to address family, domestic and sexual violence against First Nations women, Elders, children, people with disability, and the LGBTQIA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy communities.

First Nations National Plan for Family Safety

Building on the National Plan and the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan, the Government has also committed to deliver the first ever standalone First Nations National Plan for Family Safety (the First Nations National Plan) which will be a significant undertaking to address the complex and sensitive factors driving violence against First Nations women, children and communities.

The First Nations National Plan will be led by First Nations people and will explore solutions linked to the principles of truth-telling and self-determination. It will highlight the need to transform current prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing efforts to counter systemic racism and promote culturally safe practices and holistic approaches that respond to deeply held historical trauma and improve the wellbeing of First Nations people.

Budget highlights: First Nations women's safety

- This Budget provides \$194 million over 5 years to support Australia's first dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan for family violence. This includes:
 - \$145.3 million to support activities which address immediate safety concerns for First Nations women and children who are experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, family and domestic violence
 - \$23.2 million to partner with local organisations to design, deliver and evaluate community-led, place-based, trauma-aware and culturally responsive healing programs for First Nations children and families who are impacted by family violence or at risk of engagement with the child protection systems
 - \$17.6 million to deliver on family safety initiatives under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan
 - \$7.8 million over 5 years to support the development of a standalone First Nations National Plan for Family Safety, including governance, secretariat and data arrangements.
- The Government is investing \$68.6 million to support National Family Violence Prevention Legal Service providers to deliver legal and non-legal support for First Nations victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence. There will also be an initial review to inform the development of a national standard for government data on lost, missing or murdered First Nations women and children.
- This Budget also provides an additional \$9.2 million to address safety and early intervention initiatives for First Nations Australians in Central Australia, building on the \$48.8 million package announced in January 2023 to improve community safety in Alice Springs. This included funding for safety and community services, including to boost family and domestic violence services.

Addressing gaps across the National Plan

Strengthening actions to address sexual violence

Sexual violence includes – but is not limited to – all forms of sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, stalking and image-based abuse. It occurs within intimate relationships, and between people who are dating, friends, acquaintances and strangers.

The risk of sexual violence is higher for certain groups, including for young people during their early and formative experiences of dating and relationships. Young women (aged 18–34 years) are more likely to experience intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence than older women. Additionally, one in two women (53 per cent) has experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime. The NCAS reveals young people (aged 16–24), particularly young men, continue to hold problematic views that increase the risk of sexual violence. This includes a concerning proportion of Australians who mistrust women's reports of sexual violence (34 per cent) and who still agree that women often mean yes when they say no (10 per cent).

Justice responses to sexual violence, including laws and frameworks, can also re-traumatise and exacerbate the cumulative and long-lasting impacts of sexual violence, dissuading women from engaging with the justice system. Effective, transformational change to these justice frameworks and responses requires reform on multiple fronts as well as national leadership and inter-jurisdictional collaboration.

Supporting and building on implementation of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General Work Plan to Strengthen Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault 2022–2027, the Government is committed to providing sustained national leadership and action to work with states and territories to prevent and address sexual violence, including through strengthening and harmonising sexual assault and consent laws.

A comprehensive, whole-of-society approach is essential to achieve a meaningful reduction in the rates of sexual violence in Australia. The Government recognises the need for a robust evidence base to support effective action and long-term systemic change.

Budget highlights: Actions to prevent and address sexual violence

- The Government is committing \$6.5 million to strengthen sexual assault and consent laws and improve justice responses to sexual violence. This includes funding for a ministerial-level national roundtable, an independent national inquiry by the Australian Law Reform Commission into justice responses to sexual violence across Australia, and establishment of an expert advisory group to inform the inquiry.
- The Government is also investing \$12.1 million to develop and distribute social media resources for young people on consent with advice from an expert advisory group and to support community-led sexual violence prevention pilots. These pilots will be the first of their kind in Australia and will help establish what interventions work in practice and guide future funding.

Supporting migrant women and women on temporary visas escaping violence

The National Plan recognises that migrant and refugee women can face specific challenges when they experience family and domestic violence. Migrant and refugee women, including those on temporary visas, can face structural barriers which make it more difficult to leave a violent relationship, including uncertainty about the impact of leaving on their visa status, language barriers and restricted eligibility for accessing government support and services.

Research indicates that migrant women in Australia may not report incidents of family and domestic violence to police or government bodies for a range of reasons, including out of fear that doing so would impact their immigration status.³⁸ Temporary visa holders can also experience migration-related controlling behaviours from a perpetrator, including threats to withdraw visa sponsorship or have the victim-survivor deported.³⁹

There is a range of financial and other support mechanisms available for migrant women and temporary visa holders experiencing family and domestic violence. The Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot (TVP) provides eligible temporary visa holders experiencing family and domestic violence with financial support and legal assistance, including migration support. Over 2,700 eligible individuals experiencing intimate partner violence have been supported with financial packages through the TVP (as at 31 March 2023).

In addition, the Domestic and Family Violence Support Section within the Department of Home Affairs provides a central point of contact for family and domestic violence victim support service providers. It also assists victim-survivors who hold temporary visas to regularise their visa status, including through the provision of tailored case management support. The service commenced taking referrals on 7 October 2021 and has received 769 case referrals (as at 31 March 2023).

The family violence provisions in Schedule 2 of the *Migration Regulations 1994* allow certain visa applicants to be granted a permanent visa if their relationship has broken down and they have suffered family and domestic violence perpetrated by the sponsoring partner or the primary applicant. The provisions aim to ensure that visa applicants do not feel compelled to remain in a violent relationship to be granted a permanent visa.

Budget highlights: Support for migrant women and women on temporary visas

- The Government is extending the current Temporary Visa Holders Experiencing Violence Pilot to January 2025.
- The Government is also investing \$10 million to expand the family violence provisions within the *Migration Regulations 1994* to most permanent visa subclasses. The provisions aim to ensure that visa applicants, including secondary applicants for permanent visa subclasses, offshore temporary Partner visa applicants and Prospective Marriage visa holders, do not feel compelled to remain in a violent relationship to be granted a permanent visa.

Family law reforms

Access to practical, legal-based support to resolve property settlement is key to victim-survivors regaining their financial independence, financial security and wellbeing after separation. Currently, 7 in 10 women leaving violent relationships leave assets behind, and 90 per cent struggle to obtain a property settlement, limiting their ability to recover financially and move on with their lives.⁴⁰

Similarly, access to legal representation and other support for parents who are responding to an application for a child's return overseas, almost 80 per cent of whom are women, is important for improving legal justice and safety outcomes for women and children in international child abduction matters under the *1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction* (Hague Convention).

The Government is committed to ensuring the family law system is safer, more accessible and simpler to use, and delivers justice and fairness for all Australian families.

Box 6: Amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975*

On 29 March 2023, the Government introduced amendments to the *Family Law Act 1975* to create a more child-focused framework for making parenting orders.

With a focus on responding more appropriately to systems abuse and informed by the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC's) 2019 report *Family law for the Future: An Inquiry into the Family Law System (report 135)*, proposed changes include:

- repealing the confusing 'presumption of equal shared parental responsibility' and associated provisions about care time to make it clear that there is no legal requirement to agree to equal time arrangements, especially where they are unsafe
- clarifying the enforcement options available for noncompliance with parenting orders
- introducing the ability for the court to restrain a party from filing repeated, harmful applications by making a harmful proceedings order.

The Government is considering further amendments to the family law property division framework under this Act, including to address the financial impacts of family violence.

Budget highlights: Improving outcomes in family law property settlements and international child abduction matters

The Government is investing \$46.5 million to continue and expand 2 successful family law property programs to support access to quick, fair and affordable family law property settlement outcomes for separating couples, especially vulnerable women.

- This investment includes \$33.1 million to fund the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia and the Family Court of Western Australia to continue and expand the Family Law Priority Property Pool program nationally. This is to help separated couples resolve small property disputes through a streamlined court process. It supports vulnerable women to regain their financial independence and security after separation.
- In addition, the Government is providing \$13.4 million to extend the Lawyer-assisted Family Law Property Mediation program to assist separated couples to mediate and reach agreement on a family law property division.

To support Australia's efforts under the Hague Convention, the Government is providing \$18.4 million to make Australia's implementation of the Convention safer for women and children impacted by international parental child abduction. This includes:

- \$7.4 million to introduce a financial assistance scheme to enable eligible respondent parents to have equivalent access to legal representation as applicant parents
- \$5.3 million for a package of early alternative dispute resolution intervention measures, designed to divert families from contested Hague Convention proceedings and improve safety outcomes
- \$5.7 million to improve capability in the Attorney-General's Department to obtain and make evidence about family violence available to the courts in Hague Convention cases.

Further supports under the Action Plan

This Budget includes additional targeted investments to address gaps across the National Plan. These initiatives recognise the importance of a holistic approach to addressing violence as set out in the National Plan, including to prevent gender-based violence before it begins, to support early intervention so that violence doesn't escalate and perpetrators are held to account, and to respond to the needs of victim-survivors and support their recovery and healing.

Budget highlights: Additional investments to end gender-based violence under the Action Plan

- The Government is investing \$159 million to extend the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses with state and territory governments. This funding will continue to bolster frontline family, domestic and sexual violence supports to ensure women and children can access support when they need it.
- The Government is providing \$24.3 million to pilot an additional referral pathway for the Support for Trafficked People Program and restructure the program to better meet the needs of victim-survivors, while increasing ongoing funding to address current and projected demand.
- The Government is investing \$8.5 million for initiatives aimed at early intervention to prevent family, domestic and sexual violence, including by developing a national perpetrator risk assessment framework for frontline service providers, extending Mensline Changing for Good Service and developing a national perpetrator referral database of services to improve uptake of intervention services.
- The Government is investing \$3.3 million to review emergency accommodation services and their suitability for children and to conduct an independent evaluation of the 1800RESPECT service.
- The Government is extending the current Escaping Violence Payment to January 2025, providing much needed support for individuals leaving violent relationships.

Stewardship and oversight of progress

Measurement and monitoring of progress towards ending violence against women and children under the National Plan will be supported by the development of an Outcomes Framework. This will enable governments to track, monitor and report change over the life of the National Plan.

This Framework will be aided by efforts of the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting, consisting of Commonwealth, state and territory ministers, to align data and digital transformation policies and service across Australia. Ministers have agreed to explore ways to support the National Plan and identify opportunities to improve data sharing and advance a whole-of-society solution to end gender-based violence.

The Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council established under the National Cabinet architecture will also play a key stewardship and oversight role to drive national progress on women's safety. The work of the Council includes ensuring alignment of actions across the jurisdictions towards ending family, domestic and sexual violence and collectively responding to emerging issues and evidence relating to women's safety.

Budget highlights: Indexation funding for Community Sector Organisations

The Government has updated the indexation of funding for a range of programs tied to wages to ensure it is more responsive to economic conditions. This means that programs like Medicare Benefit Schedule funded services, community nursing and mental health services can keep their doors open.

Many community sector organisations provide vital support and services to women and children experiencing the impacts of violence. These reforms will help these organisations to address cost pressures and continue to deliver these services, which are overwhelmingly staffed by women.

Additional actions to support women's safety

In addition to the funding this Budget provides under the National Plan, the Government is progressing significant reforms and investments across a wide range of portfolios to support women's safety.

Keeping women safe online

Women experience disproportionate levels of online and technology-facilitated abuse. Since 2016, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) Women's program has provided specialised information and support for women to enable them to engage safely online. Two-thirds of complaints of cyberbullying and adult cyber abuse received by eSafety are made by women, and women are significantly more likely to report emotional and psychological impacts of technology-facilitated abuse.

Budget highlights: Supporting women online

The Government will provide an additional \$134.1 million over 4 years for the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to continue to support Australians online, including through enhanced educational, outreach and investigatory activities.

This funding will ensure eSafety can continue to fulfil its statutory obligations and support women's safety online. It also allows eSafety to continue providing webinars and workshops that complement the National Plan and help victim-survivors of technology facilitated abuse.

Safe and affordable housing for women and children, including those escaping violence

Rates of homelessness amongst women are increasing and can be caused by women and children escaping family and domestic violence.

While men make up the majority of people experiencing homelessness (56 per cent), women accounted for 81.7 per cent of the 6,067 increase of people experiencing homelessness in 2021. Women experiencing homelessness now represent 44 per cent of the total homeless population. In 2021–22, people who have experienced family and domestic violence made up 39 per cent of Specialist Homelessness Services clients, and 76 per cent of these clients were female. Nearly half of the Services' clients who have experienced domestic violence were living as a single parent with one or more children.

Unaffordable or insecure housing is a major barrier for victim-survivors to re-establish their lives after leaving a violent situation and a key consideration in their decision to leave.

Budget highlights: Increasing the supply of affordable and social housing

The Government is working with states and territories to increase the supply of housing including support specifically for women experiencing violence or at risk of homelessness.

- The Government is supporting more social and affordable dwellings through the Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator by increasing the liability cap by an additional \$2 billion. This will facilitate further lending to eligible Community Housing Providers for social and affordable housing projects. This builds on the \$10 billion investment in the Housing Australia Future Fund, which includes specific allocations for women and children impacted by family and domestic violence and older women at risk of homelessness. Increased access to safe, secure and affordable housing will benefit women broadly, with women accounting for 55 per cent of social housing occupants.
- The Government is working with states to reform Commonwealth funding arrangements from 1 July 2024 under a new National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA). The Government has offered to provide states with 12 months of transitional NHHA funding to 30 June 2024, including an extra \$67.5 million in 2023–24 to assist homelessness services, while arrangements for the new agreement are settled.

Safety in the workplace

Workplace sexual harassment is a pervasive form of gender-based violence experienced disproportionately by women. It often has significant and long-lasting economic implications for women, the community and businesses.

In 2022, one in 3 workers reported having experienced workplace sexual harassment in the last 5 years (41 per cent of women and 26 per cent of men).⁴¹ First Nations people are more likely to have experienced sexual harassment than other Australians (53 per cent compared to 32 per cent) and women with disability are more likely to have experienced sexual harassment than other Australians (52 per cent).⁴² Most people who experience sexual harassment never report it due to fear that complaining will negatively impact their reputation, career prospects and relationships within their community or industry.

The *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace* (Set the Standard report), led by the former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, found significant prevalence of bullying and sexual harassment within Australian Government parliamentary workplaces. The report found one in 3 people have experienced sexual harassment at work, with women experiencing higher rates of harassment than men. Women employees are more likely than men to experience bullying (42 per cent of women compared to 32 per cent of men), sexual harassment (40 per cent compared to 26 per cent) and sexual assault.⁴³

The Government is working towards full implementation of the 28 recommendations made in the Set the Standard report to ensure a safe and respectful work environment.

Budget highlights: Parliamentary Workplace Support Service

In addition to funding for the National Plan, this Budget provides \$51.7 million of funding to establish the statutory Parliamentary Workplace Support Service.

The support service will provide human resources functions for parliamentarians and their staff, provide support to other Australian Government parliamentary workplace participants, and support sustained improvement in the culture and safety of parliamentary workplaces. The support service will also address gender inequality in parliamentary workplaces through improved prevention of harmful behaviour, best practice training in respectful behaviour, creation of a professional development program and reporting on key indicators to monitor progress in the prevention of and response to bullying, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.

Box 7: Prohibiting sexual harassment at work (Respect@Work)

On 28 November 2022, the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Bill 2022* passed Parliament. This amended the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* to implement a number of recommendations of the *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report* (Respect@Work report), with the key reform being the introduction of a positive duty on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate certain forms of unlawful sex discrimination, including sexual harassment.

On 2 December 2022, the *Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Secure Jobs, Better Pay) Bill 2022* passed Parliament. This amended the *Fair Work Act 2009* to expressly prohibit sexual harassment in connection with work, implementing recommendation 28 of the Respect@Work Report.

These reforms contribute to the Government's commitment to supporting the full implementation of all 55 recommendations of the Respect@Work Report and complement other legislative amendments made by the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022*. It complements and mutually reinforces anti-discrimination laws that make sexual harassment unlawful, and work health and safety laws that require employers to eliminate risks to the health and safety of workers, including the risk of sexual harassment, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Empowering the Fair Work Commission to resolve disputes about workplace sexual harassment will lead to safer and more respectful workplaces for all workers, and women in particular. Workers will now have the choice to pursue their dispute through either the Fair Work Commission or the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Leadership and decision-making

Gender equality underpins any fair and inclusive society and is essential to our economic success. Without gender equality, women will continue to have limited access to financial, economic, and leadership opportunities, be held back by harmful stereotypes, and experience poorer health and safety outcomes. This chapter includes an update on women's equality in Australia across the public and private sectors. It outlines the importance of embedding diverse analysis in public policy and the Government's commitment to achieving gender equality.

Women's leadership – key statistics

Women make up 57.3% of the Senate in the 47th Parliament

Up from **52.6%** since the 2022 Federal Election

Women make up 39.1% of the House of Representatives in the 47th Parliament

Up from **31.4%** since the 2022 Federal Election

10 out of 23 Cabinet positions are held by women

Women hold 51.4% of Australian Government board positions

Women make up 35.7% of ASX200 directors, but only 14 women were CEOs in the ASX200 in 2022

39.6% of managers across the Australian labour force are women

Leadership, influence and decision-making

The Government is committed to driving the actions needed to progress women's representation in leadership across public, business, community and political spheres. Having women of all backgrounds and experiences in visible, influential and decision-making positions across all levels and sectors of society is vital to driving cultural change and ensuring diverse views and experiences are represented at decision-making tables. Evidence also indicates that increased representation of women on private sector boards leads to better economic performance and social outcomes, including across measures of productivity, decision-making, performance and culture.

Women in leadership

Women remain underrepresented across all management positions in Australia.

The Chief Executive Women's Senior Executive Census found that women's representation on private sector boards and in Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions declined in 2022, with fewer companies having gender balanced leadership teams and a slight increase in the number of ASX 300 companies having no women in their senior leadership teams, at 16 per cent in 2022, up from 15 per cent in 2021.⁴⁴ Women account for less than 25 per cent of CEOs in Australia and, at the current rate of change, it will take another century before gender balance in CEO positions is achieved in the Australian private sector.

The Government is committed to ensuring women are represented in leadership at all levels. The Government is working with business, industry groups, academics and civil society to support more women into leadership, building a better future for all women in Australia. The Women's Leadership and Development Program provides grant funding to a range of organisations that support diverse women to prepare for and enter leadership positions.

While business and the private sector have a vital role to play in actively lifting the rate of women in visible, decision-making and influential roles, the Government believes it should lead the way on setting the standard and driving gender equality.

The Australian Public Service (APS) has demonstrated that targeted gender equality strategies are an effective way to promote more women into senior leadership positions. Evaluation of the *Balancing the Future: The Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2016–2019* found that the strategy had a positive impact on progressing gender equality across the APS. In 2022, the proportion of women in senior executive roles in the APS increased to 52 per cent from only 26.8 per cent in 2001.

The *APS Gender Equality Strategy 2021–26* seeks to drive practical and impactful action for lasting change. This includes establishing minimum standards for agencies regarding leadership and accountability, respectful workplaces and empowered people, shifting gender stereotypes, flexible working, gender data and leveraging external influence.

The Government is exploring strengthened targets to improve women's representation on government boards. The overall representation of women on Australian Government boards at 30 June 2022 is 51.4 per cent. This result is the highest representation of women on Australian Government boards since the 50 per cent target was introduced in 2016. However, women's representation in chair and deputy chair positions on government boards is lower at 41 per cent.

As part of the 2022 Federal Election, the Government made a commitment to help enable a new generation of women across the country to enter public office. To achieve this, the Government is providing \$5 million over 5 years to Women for Election Australia to equip and encourage more women to enter politics. This funding is provided as part of the Women's Leadership Development Program.

Increase the influence of women's voices to Government

Women's Economic Equality Taskforce

To support its commitment to put women at the centre of policy and decision-making, in September 2022 the Government delivered on its election commitment to establish the independent Women's Economic Equality Taskforce (Taskforce). The Taskforce was made up of 13 eminent women, who drew on their own deep expertise, and their consultations with diverse women around Australia, to inform their advice. The Taskforce has been a valued source of advice to Government early in its first year of delivering on its commitment term as it sets its path to gender equality.

Ahead of the Budget, the Taskforce provided its short-term priorities to the Government to improve women's economic equality with a strong focus on women currently experiencing disadvantage and women from traditionally marginalised backgrounds.

Final advice from the Taskforce will include recommendations to inform Government's future efforts to improve the lives of women in Australia. The Government will consider the final report and its recommendations, along with options for any replacement body in the context of the Strategy due later this year. The Government has acted on a number of the Taskforce's recommendations through this Budget.

Embedding a gender perspective in government decision-making

Establishing a gender responsive budgeting system

Gender responsive budgeting weaves consideration of gender impact through the budget process and is a key way governments can identify and fund measures that close gender gaps. Just as importantly, gender budgeting helps governments avoid measures that inadvertently exacerbate gender inequality. It helps shine a light on the distributional impacts of government actions so that decision-makers can make choices based on the best information available about how potential budget measures support gender equality along with other priorities like boosting economic growth. Because government tax and spending

decisions shape people's choices regarding work and economic participation, gender equality should be a core consideration of the budget process.

The benefits of gender budgeting include:

- improving the evidence base to inform resource allocation decisions
- using the budget to close gender gaps
- greater transparency on the impact of the budget on different groups across the population
- creating better and fairer outcomes, so all people have access to opportunities and resources.

The Government is expanding its gender budgeting approach. From 2023–24 MYEFO, gender response budgeting will be embedded across the budget processes, implementing the Government's election commitment to reintroduce this important gender equality practice. All agencies will play a greater role in delivering gender equality outcomes through undertaking gender impact assessments and will be required to conduct gender impact assessments on policy proposals that meet a set of criteria. The key steps and processes for gender assessment and gender impact analysis will be incorporated into formal budget and Cabinet processes. Office for Women leads implementation of gender responsive budgeting and will continue to provide policy leadership for gender impact assessments, and monitor the gender equality outcomes across the budget cycle.

Expanding the scope of gender impact assessment

Gender impact assessment builds on gender assessment to identify the gender-specific impacts of a proposal and then uses this information to design policy that improves gender equality outcomes. Gender impact assessment is a practical way of embedding gender equality into the design of policy and the decision making process. Gender impact assessment is a well-established tool for implementing gender responsive budgeting. As of 2021, 26 out of 34 OECD countries reported that they have a formal requirement for gender impact assessment in place.

Government continued its pilot of gender impact assessment during this budget. This builds on the early work undertaken through the October 2022–23 Budget. For the 2023–24 Budget, gender impact assessments continued largely in the areas of jobs and skills, housing and the care economy. The pilots provided important insight and testing to inform the development and implementation of the Government's full-scale approach to gender responsive budgeting.

With the roll out of gender responsive budgeting, from 2023–24 MYEFO, a wider range of proposals, across different portfolios, will have a full gender impact assessment if they meet certain criteria.

The criteria to identify gender impact assessments have been designed to capture proposals that can have a significant impact on gender equality. The criteria will also consider factors like:

- the total value of the proposal being \$250 million or more over the forwards
- the proposal targets cohorts of people who can be typically disadvantaged
- the proposal relates to a gender-segregated industry
- the proposal establishes a National Partnership Agreement or like agreement.

Agencies will be required to self-assess against the criteria. Where a proposal does not meet the criteria for a detailed gender impact assessment, agencies will still apply preliminary gender analysis as part of their policy design.

The gender impact assessment criteria will be refined following the 2023–24 MYEFO process, in time for the 2024–25 Budget, to ensure the criteria are capturing the proposals that can advance gender equality. The Office for Women will monitor implementation of gender impact assessment to support ongoing refinement of the approach and the tools and guidance that support it.

Strengthening gender analysis

Gender analysis highlights how a policy proposal might impact people in different ways based on gender. All proposals considered as part of this Budget included some gender analysis, with select measures subject to a more detailed gender impact assessment. The Government will continue to strengthen the quality and use of gender analysis for proposals that do not meet the criteria for a gender impact assessment.

Building APS capability and improving data

Data initiatives to support gender responsive budgeting and gender impact assessment require robust gender disaggregated data and related research and analysis. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the ABS convene the Gender Data Steering Group which is working to maximise the impact of the government's major data holdings as an evidence base for gender equality policy.

In 2020–21, the ABS conducted the first Time Use Survey in 14 years. This collection is the only survey in Australia to provide accurate estimates of time spent on unpaid work and care, as well as employment, study, leisure and personal care. It is critical to understanding the gap in unpaid work and care done by women and men. The results were published in October 2022 and show that women of all ages spend over 9 hours a week more than men on unpaid work and care. Prior to 2020–21, the Time Use Survey had only been administered 3 times: in 1992, 1997 and 2006. The ABS has now received funding to ensure the Time Use Survey is an ongoing and regular collection and the next survey will be administered in 2024. This regular time use assessment will provide a rich and

contemporary source of information on the division of paid and unpaid work in Australia and how these patterns are changing.

Strong government structures to drive gender equality

Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council

The Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council (the Council), formally established as part of a renewed federal relations architecture, provides a forum for the states and territories, and the Australian Government, to drive national progress on gender equality and women's safety.

In addition to its work supporting the implementation of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, the Council is driving and supporting the implementation of the National Cabinet's commitment to provide public sector workforce data on 6 Gender Equality Indicators to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

The National Cabinet has also tasked the Council to explore opportunities to increase gender balance across the labour market through identifying appropriate targets which promote gender balance in the most highly gender segregated industries, and also consider how procurement can support gender equality outcomes. To deliver this priority the Council will work with the Council on Federal Financial Relations Women's Economic Outcomes Senior Officials Working Group, and consider the recommendations of the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce. A key element of this work will be consideration of the drivers of women's economic inequality and the necessary cultural change and conditions required to address industry gender segregation and improve women's economic equality.

The Council will also work together to see the Government's development and implementation of the forthcoming National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality aligns with and is informed by state and territory gender equality strategies and frameworks.

The Council will report annually to National Cabinet on their priorities and annual work plans and on other key national priorities affecting women and women's safety.

Next steps to drive progress

National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality

The Australian Government is developing the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality (the Strategy) to make Australia one of the best countries in the world to be a woman.

The Strategy will complement other efforts across the Government contributing to gender equality in Australia, including:

- the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032

- the Employment White Paper
- the implementation of the Respect@Work Report
- the National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030
- the National Housing and Homelessness Plan being developed.

The development of the Strategy is also being informed by the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Report, which highlights the needs and voices of First Nations women and girls.

There have been 2 rounds of consultations so far – a targeted consultation with stakeholders and advocates in late 2022 and public consultations in early 2023. So far there have been over 3000 contributions from individuals and organisations. The Strategy will be released in the second half of 2023.

Women's health and wellbeing

Gender and sex are significant determinants of a person's experience of the health system. Health and wellbeing outcomes can affect their economic and social participation. A tailored evidence base, targeted health care, and specialised services are all required to achieve better health outcomes for women and girls.

The Government is enhancing the evidence base to improve women's health by investing \$26.4 million to extend support for research and data collection activities, including the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, that support women and girls' health outcomes. The introduction of new supports under Medicare, including longer GP consultations, will also assist women to access appropriate physical and mental health services.

This chapter recognises that improving gender equality, addressing intersectional barriers, and increasing our understanding of the different health experiences due to gender or sex is essential to address the significant health disparities experienced by women and girls in Australia.

Improving women's access to tailored health care is essential to the wellbeing of women and girls in Australia and their economic success. Poor health outcomes lead to reduced economic and social participation, which can exacerbate the prevalence of physical and psychological health concerns.

Gender bias, a shortage of targeted services and a lack of appropriate research and data contribute to the structural obstacles to improving women's health outcomes. The Government recognises there are a range of health needs, risks, and influences that women and girls experience at different stages of life.

Gender equity and health – key statistics

<p>Life expectancy for people born in 2019–21</p> <p>Females: 85.4 years Males: 81.3 years</p>	<p>Life expectancy for First Nations people born in 2015–17</p> <p>Females: 75.6 years Males: 71.6 years</p>				
<p>Proportion of people experiencing a mental health disorder in the past 12 months (2020–21)</p> <p>Females: 24.6% Males: 18.0%</p>	<p>Likelihood of having one or more chronic health conditions (2020–21)</p> <p>Females: 49.0% Males: 43.9%</p>				
<p>Prevalence of adults experiencing pain (2020–21)</p> <p>Females: 73.9% Males: 68.2%</p>					
<p>Top 3 leading causes of death in 2021</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="352 1218 596 1245">Females:</th> <th data-bbox="1011 1218 1094 1245">Males:</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="352 1263 724 1350"> Dementia (including Alzheimer's) Coronary heart disease Cerebrovascular disease </td> <td data-bbox="868 1263 1240 1350"> Coronary heart disease Dementia (including Alzheimer's) Lung cancer </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Females:	Males:	Dementia (including Alzheimer's) Coronary heart disease Cerebrovascular disease	Coronary heart disease Dementia (including Alzheimer's) Lung cancer
Females:	Males:				
Dementia (including Alzheimer's) Coronary heart disease Cerebrovascular disease	Coronary heart disease Dementia (including Alzheimer's) Lung cancer				

Australian women and girls have good general health outcomes, but there is still work to be done to improve their quality of life. Women are more likely to experience multiple chronic health conditions as many conditions only impact women (for example, endometriosis) or affect women more frequently than men (for example, autoimmune diseases) due to differences in biology, genetics and hormones, as well as having a longer life expectancy.⁴⁵ People living with chronic pain are also more likely to have chronic health conditions.

The Government is progressing efforts to remove barriers to accessing women's health care and services, provide care for an ageing female population and address high rates of chronic health conditions and mental health conditions.

Significance of gender as a determinant of health and wellbeing

The *National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030* (Women's Health Strategy) highlights the significance of gender as a key determinant of women's health and wellbeing. It aims to strengthen gender equity and enhance women's and girls' engagement with the health system.

There is an increasing body of research on the health disparities between women and men and the impacts of gender bias in health care and data.⁴⁶ This includes misdiagnosis, delayed diagnosis and under-diagnosis of some diseases and chronic conditions for women and girls. For example, women and girls are more likely to experience delayed diagnosis across a wide range of conditions and diseases, including but not limited to cardiovascular disease, ADHD, autism, and endometriosis. We also know that certain population groups experience worse health care and health outcomes than the general female population.

First Nations women experience poorer health outcomes across many areas compared to other Australian women. This includes suicide rates, incidences of chronic conditions, sexual health, maternal health and hospitalisations. The impacts of intergenerational trauma, systemic racism and a lack of cultural safety remain significant barriers to health system access for First Nations women. Wider determinants of health, such as employment and housing adequacy, are also more likely to affect First Nations people.

Funding to strengthen the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector and support prevention and treatment of chronic disease will help support strong health outcomes for First Nations women. In addition, the Government is continuing to deliver the investment of \$22.5 million over 3 years (2022–23 to 24–25) to build a dedicated Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence in Nowra, New South Wales to ensure First Nations babies are born healthy and strong in a culturally safe environment. Birthing on Country returns maternity services to First Nations communities and enables self-determination, connection to family, culture and community throughout pregnancy and birth.

In 2020–21, 17 per cent of clients seeking alcohol and other drug treatment services aged 10 and over were First Nations people. First Nations Australians were nearly 7 times more likely to receive treatment for alcohol or drug use as other Australians after adjusting for differences in age structure.

The Glen for Women is a 20-bed residential program that provides a holistic approach to treatment, addressing the physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural aspects of addiction. Ongoing funding to The Glen for Women will ensure continuity of critical service provision for First Nations women and enhance the Government's commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Budget highlights: Extending alcohol and drug programs

The Government is improving health outcomes through extending existing alcohol and drug programs in the community, including \$3.5 million to The Glen for Women, which provides culturally appropriate alcohol and other drug treatment services to First Nations women.

Women and girls with disabilities, and their carers, also have a higher risk of poor mental health, early onset of chronic conditions, and social and economic disadvantage compared to the general population.

The Government is committed to seeing that every woman and girl in Australia has access to appropriate, safe, and tailored health care and services to ensure the best health outcomes.

Box 8: Addressing gender bias in the health system

The Government has established the National Women's Health Advisory Council (the Council), which will consider gender equity in the health system, including gender bias. The Council will advise the Government on targeted and effective healthcare options for Australian women to improve health outcomes, reduce health complications post-treatment, and invest more effectively in the nation's health. The Council also supports the implementation of the Women's Health Strategy.

Building the women's health evidence base

Women's health needs and outcomes shift as they move through different stages of life. This affects their health priorities and access to appropriate care and services. Improving the evidence base, including gender-disaggregated health data on the diverse health needs and risks across lifespans, is required to ensure appropriate and accessible health services and timely identification of preventive health interventions.

The Government provides funding for health and medical research, including research on diseases or issues relevant to women's health, through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF). NHMRC and the Department of Health and Aged Care (responsible for the implementation of the MRFF) are developing a Statement on sex and gender in health and medical research, reflecting a joint commitment by funders to improve the integration of sex and gender considerations in health and medical research. The Statement seeks to improve health outcomes by promoting greater diversity in research, more analysis and reporting of sex and gender

considerations in research, and greater consideration of inclusive, appropriate, and targeted implementation of research.

Between 2015 and 2022, the NHMRC awarded \$734.4 million for 737 new grants with a focus on women's health. These grants cover a broad range of research relevant to women's health, from discovery science through to clinical research, health services and public health research.

Over the same period, the Government provided \$196.4 million for 92 grants with a focus on women's health research through the MRFF. This constitutes 8.4 per cent of the total number of MRFF grants (1,100) and 7.4 per cent of the total value awarded (\$2.7 billion) to date.

MRFF investments in research that addresses issues impacting women's health will continue through the second 10-year Investment Plan. In particular, the MRFF's Preventive and Public Health Research Initiative will provide \$75 million over 10 years for research focused on improving maternal and early childhood outcomes, including those for vulnerable populations.

Box 9: Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health is a national population-based study that has been running for 27 years and explores factors that influence health across the lifespan of over 57,000 women in 4 age cohorts. This study provides insights into a wide range of health behaviours and outcomes, including contraception preferences, health experiences during COVID-19, menopause, chronic conditions, ageing and health service use.

Key findings from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health can be found below:

1 in 5 women aged in their 20s who spoke a language other than English at home did not know how to access cervical screening

Proportion of women^{a)} who rated their access to a female GP as fair or poor:
Rural or remote: 1 in 3 women
Major cities: 1 in 10 women

Women with premature, or early menopause have higher risk of cardiovascular disease than women who go through menopause later

1 in 3 women born 1973–78 reported fertility issues

Women who have experienced pregnancy loss are more likely to experience a stroke: 5.1% of women who experienced 2 or more stillbirths had a non-fatal stroke and 3.6% of women who experienced 2 or more stillbirths had a fatal stroke

46% of women born 1989–95 experienced a traumatic first birth

a) Women in their 20s and 40s.

Budget highlights: Support for research and data activities

The Government will provide \$26.4 million to extend support for research and data collection activities that support women and girls' health outcomes. This includes:

- funding to continue and strengthen the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) by establishing a First Nations data access strategy and governance mechanism, increasing the diversity of participants, and expanding the collection of comprehensive maternal and perinatal data
- support for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of *Woman centred care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services*, to ensure Australian maternity services are equitable, safe, woman centred, informed and evidenced-based.

Mental health

Mental health is essential to overall health and wellbeing, and it is well-recognised that poor mental health can have profound effects on social and economic outcomes. Mental health system reform will produce significant benefits, primarily from improvements to quality of life (up to \$18 billion annually) and increased economic participation (up to \$1.3 billion annually).

More than 2 in 5 Australians aged 16–85 years (43.7 per cent) have experienced a mental health disorder at some time in their life. In 2020–21, 21.4 per cent of Australians aged 16–85 years had a mental disorder. Females are more likely to experience a 12-month mental disorder than males (24.6 per cent compared to 18.0 per cent) and have higher rates of anxiety disorder (21.0 per cent of females compared to 12.4 per cent of males). In 2020–21, people who identify as LGBTIQ+ were also more likely to report an anxiety disorder in the previous 12 months.

Supporting a strong, responsive and adaptable mental health workforce is critical to supporting mental health outcomes for women, girls and all Australians, particularly to meet the changing needs and expectations of increasingly diverse consumers and emerging challenges, noting around 82 per cent of the mental health workforce is female.⁴⁷

There is a strong link between experiences of 'body discrimination' (due to body size, shape, or physical appearance) and negative mental health consequences.⁴⁸ Research indicates that 67 per cent of those experiencing repeated body discrimination can be expected to develop depressive symptoms, with around half (48 per cent) developing high levels of anxiety, and just over a quarter (26 per cent) injuring themselves or attempting suicide.⁴⁹

Supporting more young people – and young women in particular – to have a positive body image is important for improving mental health, wellbeing and quality of life.

Having a sustained unhealthy body image can also have a harmful effect on a person's mental health. Almost one-third (31.9 per cent) of females aged 16–34 years rated their weight and/or shape as being very or extremely important, with dissatisfaction about body image further heightened by exposure to social media. Research indicates a clear relationship between social media usage and disordered eating behaviours, particularly for adolescent girls.⁵⁰ Having an unhealthy body image can also increase the susceptibility of developing an eating disorder and has broader impacts on social participation and wellbeing.

Budget highlights: Strengthening existing mental health supports for Australians and their families

The Government will provide \$2.8 million to extend mental health supports for Australians living with eating disorders and their families. This includes:

- Wandi Nerida residential recovery centre
- the National Eating Disorder Collaboration
- the Eating Disorders Families Australia's Strive program, offering online carer support and education groups
- the Butterfly Foundation's Butterfly Body Bright program promoting healthy attitudes towards body image, eating and exercise in schools
- the Australian and New Zealand Academy for Eating Disorders (ANZAED) to continue operating the Eating Disorder Credential and expand its remit to include GPs.

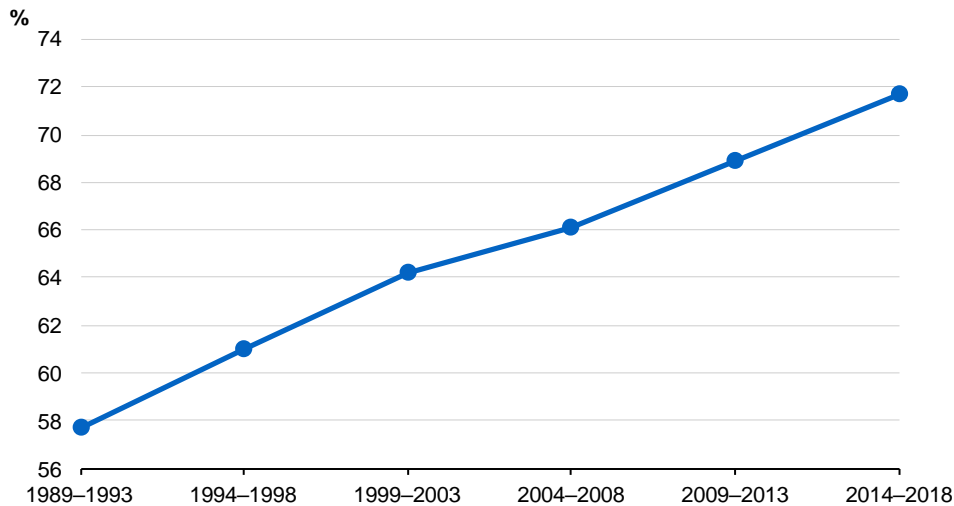
The Government will provide \$6.2 million to support children to build and maintain a positive body image and reduce body dissatisfaction and appearance pressures.

The Government is also providing \$91.3 million in funding to support the mental health workforce, including an additional 500 psychology postgraduate placements and other training programs.

The importance of tailored women's health care

In addition to the impact of broader inequalities on women's health, distinct biological, sexual and reproductive health needs for women require targeted supports to improve health outcomes. Evidence indicates that better health outcomes for women occur when there are improvements in detections, treatment and care, and increased community understanding of risk factors. For example, the 5-year cancer relative survival rates are improving with 71.7 per cent of women having survived a cancer diagnosis from 2014–18, up from 64.2 per cent in 1999–2003.

Chart 4.1: 5-year relative survival* in females for all cancers combined, 1989–1993 to 2014–2018



Notes: *5-year relative survival is the percentage of people diagnosed with a cancer who survived for at least 5 years after diagnosis, relative to people of the same age and sex in the population.
 1. Relative survival was calculated with the period method, using 5-year periods from 1999–2003 to 2014–2018. Note that the 2014–2018 period does not contain estimated incidence data. Estimated data include death certificate only cases for New South Wales in 2018, and national estimates of late-registrations in 2018.
 2. Records with unknown age at diagnosis and/or those who identify as intersex, non-binary or other were excluded from the analysis.

Source: [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Cancer data in Australia 2022](#).

While the improvement is encouraging, further support for women’s health is still required to achieve better outcomes for women. To achieve these outcomes, the Government is increasing support for longer GP consultations to ensure quality care of complex conditions.

Over 60 per cent of longer Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) consultations (over 20 minutes under level C items, over 40 minutes under level D items) are used by women. The new level E item will allow for consultations of 60-minutes or more and will enable access to higher rebates for longer consultations, for those with complex conditions and needs such as those related to mental health conditions, family, domestic and sexual violence, chronic conditions as well as reproductive health matters like menopause.

The higher Medicare rebate for these 60-minute consultations may also better support female GPs, many of whom support more patients with mental health and more complex care needs than male GPs.

Budget highlights: Strengthening Medicare and women's health

- The Government has committed \$3.5 billion to address the decline in general practitioners' bulk billing of patients on low incomes, and children. This funding will triple the bulk billing incentive benefits for consultations for Commonwealth concession card holders and patients aged under 16 years of age.
- The Government will provide over \$99.1 million to introduce a new Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item for consultations of 60 minutes or more to support improved access and affordability for patients with chronic conditions and complex needs.
- From 1 September, the Government will phase-in increases to the maximum dispensing quantities allowed for more than 300 Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medicines. This change will reduce the number of visits to a pharmacy and general practitioner, saving Australians time and more than \$1.6 billion in out-of-pocket costs over the next 4 years.
- From 1 July 2023, the Government will subsidise the storage costs of eggs, sperm or embryos for Australians with cancer, and those at risk of passing on genetic diseases or conditions who have undergone MBS-covered genetic testing.
- The Government will also provide \$16.8 million to introduce a new MBS item for an EndoPredict® brand gene expression profiling test to determine a patient's risk of recurrent breast cancer. The new item will commence on 1 November 2023 and will assist an additional 18,000 patients over 4 years.
- The Government is Strengthening Medicare with \$98.9 million to implement a model of care that connects frequent hospital users with general practices to receive comprehensive, multidisciplinary care in the community which will reduce the likelihood of hospital readmission. The Government is also increasing access to team-based care by providing an additional \$445.1 million to increase funding for the Workforce Incentive Program-Practice Stream to support general practices to engage multidisciplinary teams.
- The Government will provide funding of \$5.3 million to continue support for the Australian Breastfeeding Association's (ABA) National Breastfeeding Helpline.
- The Government will provide \$6.0 million to extend the Australian Red Cross Lifeblood's role to maintain and expand delivery of donor milk across Australia.

Box 10: Improving women's access to appropriate health care

The Government is ensuring women have access to appropriate health services and support. Longer GP consultations, cheaper medicines and increases to the maximum dispensing quantities will ease financial pressures for women. In applying a gender equity lens to its work, the National Women's Health Advisory Council will also work to improve access to timely, quality care for women in order to address known health disparities and delayed diagnoses, and increase awareness of women's health matters.

From 1 September 2023, many Australians living with chronic conditions will be able to buy 2 months' worth of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines in a single visit to the pharmacy. This is particularly important for women as 49 per cent are estimated to have one or more common chronic conditions. A range of medicines that treat conditions that disproportionately affect women will be cheaper and easier to access under the cheaper medicines measure, including medications like raloxifene for the treatment of post-menopausal osteoporosis and tamoxifen to reduce the risk of breast cancer.

These medicines are in addition to the oral contraceptive medicines which have had, for many years, arrangements in place that allow women to receive 48 weeks of treatment with a single prescription and 2 repeats. The Government has established 20 Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain GP Clinics (GP clinics) across Australia at a cost of \$16.4 million, to support those experiencing endometriosis and pelvic pain.

The GP clinics, across regional and metropolitan locations, will improve access to multi-disciplinary care, focusing on improving diagnostic delay and promoting early access to intervention, care, and treatment of endometriosis.

The GP clinics are part of a \$58.3 million suite of initiatives aimed at improving approaches to endometriosis and pelvic pain including establishing a digital platform for key resources and developing a new endometriosis management plan.

Support is also being provided through Medicare for women having difficulty conceiving by listing a new magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, following a recommendation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce.

How health outcomes for women affect economic and social participation

Achieving health equity is a priority for the Government. Poor physical and mental health reduces the ability of women to participate meaningfully in the labour force, lowers income, reduces wealth and limits access to healthcare services, creating a cycle of disadvantage and diminishes quality of life for women in Australia.⁵¹ We also know that lower socio-economic status is associated with higher morbidity, mortality rates, and health

risk behaviours, increased social isolation, low levels of health literacy and poorer access to health services.

Lower incomes, poorer job conditions and insecure work are risk factors for ill mental health, with women experiencing greater socio-economic risk factors. Evidence shows that economic downturns have the biggest impact on young women's psychological distress especially for women from lower socio-economic backgrounds who are in insecure work.⁵² Primary carers, who are predominantly female (71.8 per cent) also experience adverse changes to their health and wellbeing, with 27 per cent having high psychological distress.

Women in sport

Women and girls' participation in sport is important for health, social and economic benefits, and as a driver of gender equality. Women and girls, however, still face distinctive challenges to participation in the sports industry, including caring responsibilities, socio-cultural factors and lack of female role models within the industry to serve as motivators. In Australia, girls' participation in sport and physical activity is significantly lower than that of boys of a similar age. Only 56.4 per cent of Australian girls aged 0–14 play sport compared to 66.5 per cent of boys of the same age.

Throughout the next decade, Australia will host a number of events that showcase women's participation in sport at the most elite level and inspire women and girls to get involved in sport. Australia is set to host the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, Netball World Cup 2027 and the Women's Rugby World Cup 2029. The Government is investing in programs to ensure the benefits of hosting these events are maximised, including sports participation programs for women and girls.

Budget highlights: Supporting women's representation in sport

\$2.1 million to the Department of Health and Aged Care and the Australian Sports Commission to support women and girls' participation in talent and development programs to increase female representation in coaching, officiating and sports administration.

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