



Australian Government

Towards 2025

An Australian Government
Strategy to Boost Women's
Workforce Participation



Towards 2025 An Australian Government strategy to boost women's workforce participation

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Ministerial statement



Supporting women to participate in the workforce is an economic and social priority for the Turnbull Government — it's good for women, families, business and our economy.

Boosting women's workforce participation is essential to raising living standards and securing Australia's future prosperity. It has the potential to add up to \$25 billion to the Australian economy.

Harnessing the power of our most important asset — the human capital of all 24 million Australians — will allow our children and grandchildren to capitalise on the opportunities of the 21st century economy.

That's why, under Australia's presidency, G20 leaders committed to reduce the gender participation gap by 25 per cent by 2025. For Australia, this means decreasing the gap by three percentage points from 12.1 per cent to 9.1 per cent by 2025. On current results, we are on track to achieve this goal.

The Turnbull Government has a strong record of supporting women in the workforce, with women's employment at a record high of over 5.6 million, representing 46.5 per cent of employed Australians.

The participation gap is narrowing, but we are not complacent. We will continue to work to ensure that we achieve our target of reducing the gender participation gap by 25 per cent by 2025.

That is why this Government is implementing a new child care system to provide parents with more choice and opportunity to work. A more affordable, accessible and flexible child care system will support families so they can choose their child care around their work, rather than limiting their work hours to suit their child care.

We are also supporting more women into the jobs of the future and establishing the environment to encourage more women to own and run their own business.

We are increasing women's financial literacy and helping them boost their superannuation to ensure that they are economically secure and independent.

We are also ensuring the right incentives are in place so that women can see both the short and long-term financial benefits of maintaining a connection with the workforce.

The Government is leading by example. We have set goals for 50–50 gender balance at all leadership levels in the Australian Public Service and for women to hold 50 per cent of Government board positions. Our efforts are paying off with women now representing 43 per cent of our ongoing Senior Executive Service employees and just over 41 per cent of all Australian Government board members.

This Strategy outlines the practical work the Turnbull Government is undertaking to increase the opportunities for women to work if that is their choice. We note that this is not the sole responsibility of government – business, families and the community all have a role to play. The ultimate objective of this Strategy is to enable women, men and families to have the freedom to make choices that best suit their individual circumstances.

Michaelia Cash
Minister for Women
Minister for Employment
Minister Assisting the
Prime Minister for the Public Service

Women's workforce participation — an economic priority

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Increasing women's workforce participation leads to better living standards for individuals and families, improves the bottom line of businesses and is a significant driver of national economic growth.ⁱ

This is why, in 2014 under Australia's presidency, G20 leaders committed to reduce the gender participation gap between men and women (aged 15–64) by 25 per cent by 2025 in their respective countries (the Brisbane goal). For Australia, this means decreasing the gap by three percentage points from 12.1 per cent (the 2012 starting point) to 9.1 per cent by 2025.

ⁱ Workforce participation refers to the share of the working age population (aged 15 years and older) who are either in a job or actively looking for one.

Australia's record

Australia is faring well when it comes to increasing women's workforce participation. Women's workforce participation is at 72.0 per cent as of May 2017, meaning nearly 5.8 million women aged 15-64ⁱⁱ are in the labour force.¹

At the 2017 G20 Labour and Employment Ministers Meeting, Ministers agreed that while progress had been made towards reducing the gender participation gap since 2014, stronger efforts were necessary to achieve the Brisbane goal and to address other workforce gender gaps, including pay and career gaps.²

Early data indicates that Australia is progressing well toward the goal. In May 2017, the gender participation gap (for persons aged 15-64) was 10.4 percentage points.

Increasing Women's Workforce Participation

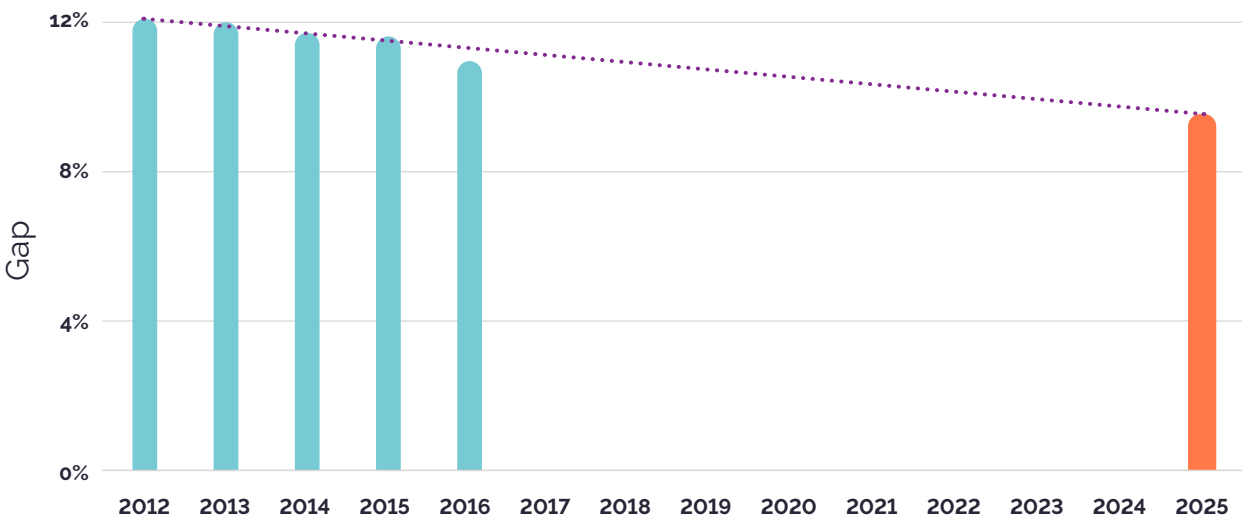
Good for women and families

Economic independence is an enabler — for both women and men — to exercise control over their lives and to make genuine choices.

At an individual level, the benefits of lifting women's workforce participation include additional financial security for women and their families by way of higher lifetime earnings, and increased savings for retirement.

The rewards grow into the future because a job today means more career opportunities and higher earning potential tomorrow. There are also social, health and wellbeing benefits of work to be gained for women and their families.

G20 target — closing the gap between the participation rates of men and women



Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Feb 2017, cat. no. 6202.0, four quarter average of seasonally adjusted data, persons 15-64 years

ⁱⁱ Australia's G20 goal is based on women's workforce participation rates for women aged 15-64. The majority of Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force data refers to a working age population of ages 15 years and over.

Some research shows the economic independence that employment provides can also assist women's decisions to leave violent relationships.³ It can bring financial security, confidence and, therefore, safety.⁴

Good for the economy and for business

Increasing women's workforce participation is an economic priority for Australia.

Successive Intergenerational Reports have highlighted the importance of higher women's workforce participation to improving Australia's productivity and prosperity, and to reduce the fiscal pressures associated with providing welfare support to an ageing population.

In 2012, the Grattan Institute found that if there were an extra 6 per cent of women in the workforce, we could add up to \$25 billion, or approximately 1 per cent, to Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).⁵ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also estimates that closing the gender participation gap by 75 per cent could increase growth in Australian GDP per capita from 2 per cent per annum to 2.4 per cent.⁶

That's why this Government has been so focused on increasing women's workforce participation. In 2015–16, a key driver of our employment growth was the increase in women's participation, with over 90,000 more women than men entering the workforce.

The Government is also working with the private sector to ensure they understand the benefits of increasing women's participation, and their elevation to senior leadership roles.

Encouraging more women to participate in the workforce, and at senior levels, makes clear business sense, because businesses that attract both men and women applicants can also access the whole talent pool, meaning better quality employees.

Breaking down gender segregationⁱⁱⁱ, whether by industry, occupation or part-time status, has clear economic benefits for business, allowing organisations to attract and retain high performing staff through accessing a wider and more diverse talent pool. Equally, we know that gender diversity at all levels — board level, executive level and team level — means better financial performance.



The Australian economy
would grow by about
\$25 billion
if we support more women into work

Source: Game changers: Economic reform priorities for Australia, Grattan Institute 2012.

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ⁱⁱⁱ The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) defines gender segregation as either an industry or an occupation in which one gender—either men or women—make up more than 60 per cent of all people employed in either the industry or the occupation [WGEA Gender Segregation in Australia's Workforce, August 2016]



Source: ABS Labour Force, Australia, Jan 2017 (cat. no. 6202.0)

The Strategy — at a glance

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The Strategy lays out the Australian Government's roadmap to meet its target of reducing the gap in participation rates between women and men (aged 15–64) by 25 per cent by 2025.

Meeting this target will mean that, on top of current projections, an additional 200,000 Australian women will need to enter the workforce.⁷

The Government has identified five areas which require continued action over the next decade:

- > Ensuring affordable, accessible and flexible child care,
- > Improving workplace diversity and flexibility,
- > Supporting women to innovate, succeed as entrepreneurs and thrive in jobs of the future,
- > Strengthening women's economic security, and
- > Enhancing financial incentives to work.

The Strategy identifies six groups of women who experience different or greater barriers in participating in the labour force:

- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women,
- > Culturally and linguistically diverse women,
- > Mature age women,
- > Rural and regional women,
- > Women with disability, and
- > Young women.

For these groups, factors such as language, geographical distance or isolation can reinforce existing barriers.

Government policies must also take into account women's personal preferences, including their own and others' attitudes to work and family, because these are critical factors in the decisions women make about working.

An integrated approach

The Strategy integrates the key factors affecting women's choices and opportunities to work to reflect the many inter-related influences on women's workforce participation. Dealing with these factors in isolation will not create the change needed to enable women to work and achieve economic independence.

The Strategy is flexible, allowing the Government to adapt, adjust and determine the next steps based on monitoring and evaluation of existing and new policies and prevailing social and economic conditions.

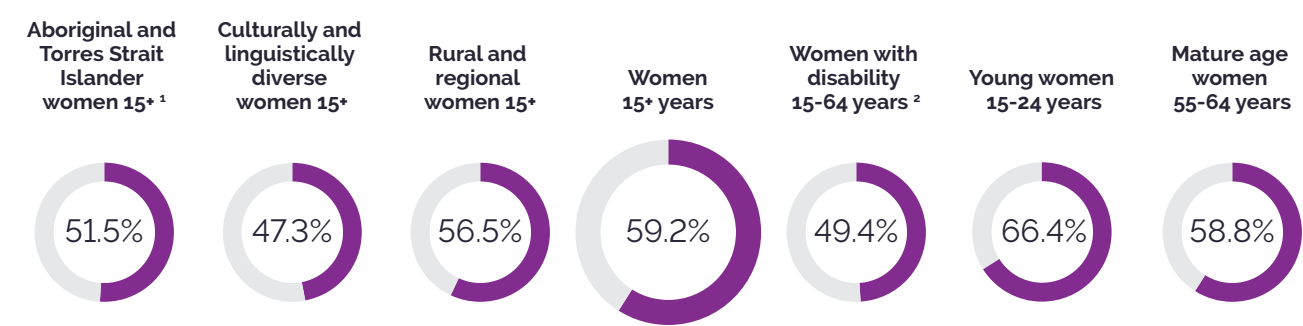
It also allows the Government to take into account the varied and complex reasons women have lower participation rates than men, including age, education, family status, cultural background and caring responsibilities.

Implementation and accountability

A new Implementation Plan will be developed each year which will outline action the Australian Government will take over the course of the next 12 months.

Implementation Plans will be released on an annual basis. Future Implementation Plans will also provide an overview of activity over the preceding 12 months and a summary of the key indicators used to measure progress towards meeting the 2025 target.

Workforce participation rates for different groups of women



Source: ABS, 2016, Labour Force, March 2016, cat. no. 6291.0.55.001, cat. no. 6202.0, 6250.0;

1 — National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.

2 — ABS, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings 2015, cat. no. 4430.0, persons 15-64 years

Action area: Child care

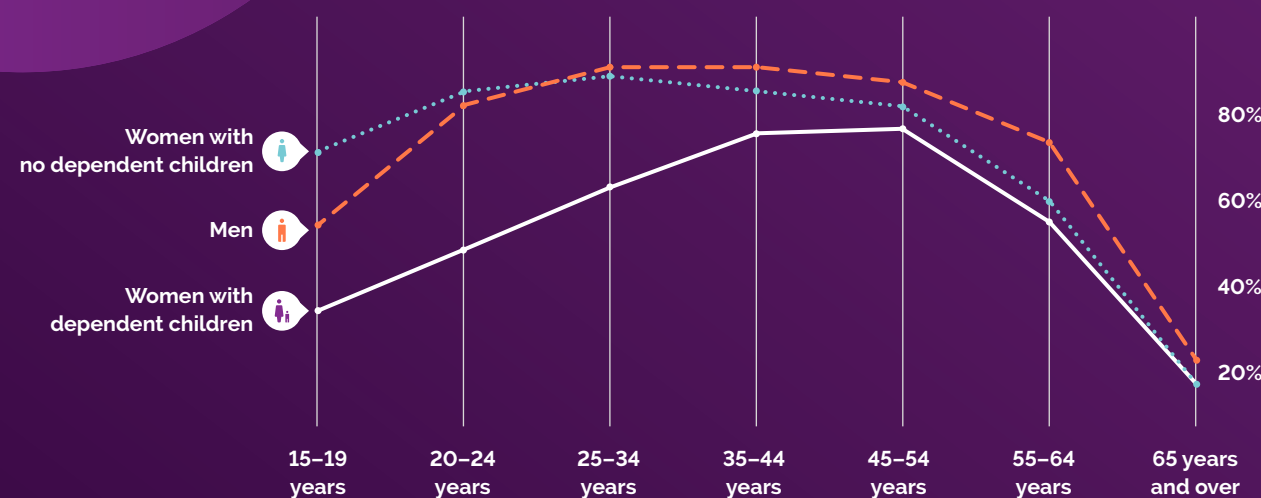


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The Government wants families to have choice when they are making decisions about child care and work.

There are many factors that affect women's decisions to work including that women still bear a higher proportion of responsibility for raising children.

Workforce participation rates by age



Women: ABS (2016), Labour Force, Australia: Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, June 2016, cat. no. 6224.0.55.001
Men: ABS (2017), Labour Force, Australia, Detailed — Electronic Delivery cat. no. 6291.0.55.001.
Feb 2017, three month average of original data, centred for June 2016



1 in 3 women said

caring for children

stopped them from starting a job
or working more hours

These factors are complex and affect individual women and their families differently.

Women's preference to care for their children themselves, their own and others' values and expectations, financial priorities and their share of unpaid work all interact in their decision making.⁸

While the workforce participation rate of women with children is increasing, the participation rate for mothers is still below that of fathers and is strongly related to the age of their youngest child.

Young men and women (15–24 years old) start out on a similar footing, but the workforce participation gap increases dramatically when women have children. The participation rate of mothers aged 25 to 54 years with children aged under 15 years old remains below that of women in the same age group without children. By contrast, having children has either no impact or increases workforce participation for men.

Access to child care places and financial assistance with child care costs were two of the top three incentives to increase labour force participation in 2014–15, with over half of all women considering these issues to be 'very important'.⁹

It is clear that more quality, affordable accessible and flexible child care will give more mothers greater opportunity to enter into or remain in the workforce, if they choose to do so — which is why the Government has made the most significant reforms to the system in 40 years.

Where are we?

The Government's Investment

The Government is investing around \$37 billion on child care support to help ease cost of living pressures for families balancing work and parenting responsibilities, including those that need before and after school care for their children.

It is estimated that the Government's new child care system will encourage more than 230,000 families to increase their involvement in workforce participation while also supporting early learning opportunities for children.¹⁰

The centrepiece of the new child care system, the Child Care Subsidy, will provide lower income families an 85 per cent rate of subsidy. This means that a family earning \$60,000, whose child care centre charges \$100 per day, will only pay around \$15 per day for child care.

The reforms also abolish the current \$7,500 Child Care Rebate cap to ensure parents on family incomes of around \$185,000 or less (in 2017 terms) are not limited by a cap on the amount of child care they can access per year per child. Families earning more than around \$185,000 will benefit from an increased annual cap of \$10,000 per year per child.

More than 1.2 million children attended approved child care during the 2016 September quarter, up 1.5 per cent on the previous September quarter. In the same quarter there were around 18,000 approved child care services operating across Australia — an increase of 2.2 per cent on the previous year.¹¹

Population growth will also play a key role in driving future demand for child care. The Productivity Commission estimates that just over 100,000 additional full-time formal early childhood education and care places will be needed by 2026.¹² The largest category of growth is estimated to be out-of-school hours and vacation care with population growth expected to lead to a 30 per cent increase in need for these services in 15 years.¹³

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to ensure Australian women have access to affordable, accessible and flexible child care.

Action area: Workplace diversity and flexibility



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The Government is committed to making flexible work a normal part of the workplace, for both men and women.

Workplace flexibility allows women and men more choice and opportunity in determining how they blend work and family and enables parents to work or work more.

Men who work flexibly are able to be more active and engaged fathers, take a greater share in unpaid work and create opportunities for women to increase their paid work. Although many Australian men want to work flexibly, they are almost twice as likely as women to have their request for flexible work declined.¹⁴

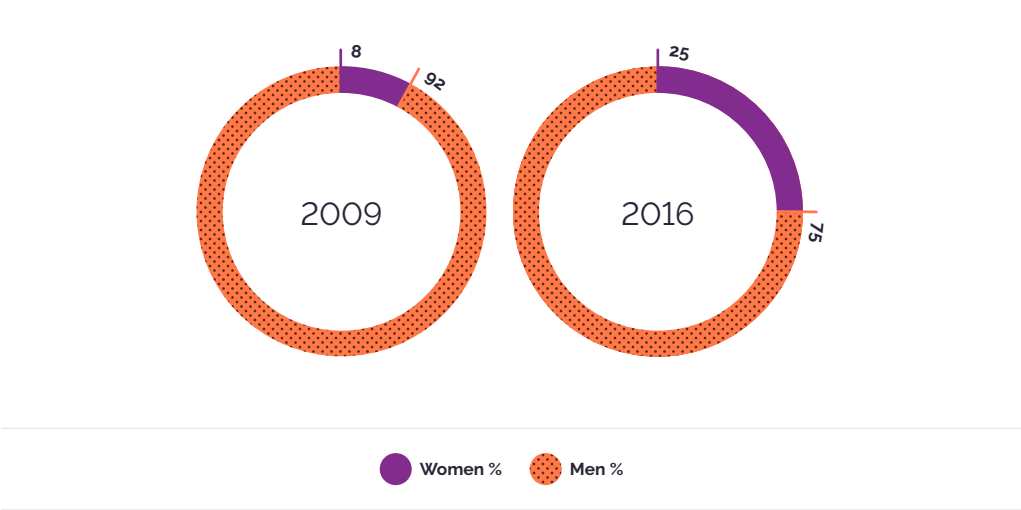
Whether an industry or occupation is seen to be flexible and have a family friendly culture is a driving factor for many women when making decisions about paid work, especially those returning to paid work after caring for children. This flexibility is needed, in part, because women do more unpaid work than men. Women spend 64 per cent of their average weekly working time on unpaid care work compared to 36 per cent for men¹⁵. We can see how this breakdown might affect women's decisions about work, for example, working

part time at higher rates than men or not working until their children are of school age.

The majority of industries with a large share of women also have the highest share of part-time employment and conversely for men, the majority of industries with a large share of men also have the lowest share of part-time employment.¹⁶ Flexibility should be encouraged and normalised for both men and women in all occupations and industries.

The Government is focused on promoting the economic and financial benefit to business from increased women's participation. Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15 per cent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.¹⁷ Companies with women board members outperformed others by 8.7 per cent over five years.¹⁸

25% of ASX200 board members are women



Source: AICD Gender Diversity Progress Report for September–November 2016

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) helps to improve gender equality in Australian workplaces, including by promoting flexible working and the need for more women in leadership positions, through advice and practical tools to help employers improve their gender performance.

WGEA administers the annual workplace gender reporting requirements for larger private sector entities and universities. This reporting includes gender equality indicators in Australian workplaces such as the availability and utility of employment terms, conditions and practices relating to flexible working arrangements for employees and to working arrangements supporting employees with family or caring responsibilities and the availability of flexible working provisions for employees, and provision of employer funded paid parental leave.

The Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Centre for Workplace Leadership and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency all provide information and tools for employers and employees to promote flexible working arrangements. For example, the Australian Human Rights Commission's Supporting Working Parents website provides information on rights and obligations in the workplace on pregnancy, parental leave and return to work.

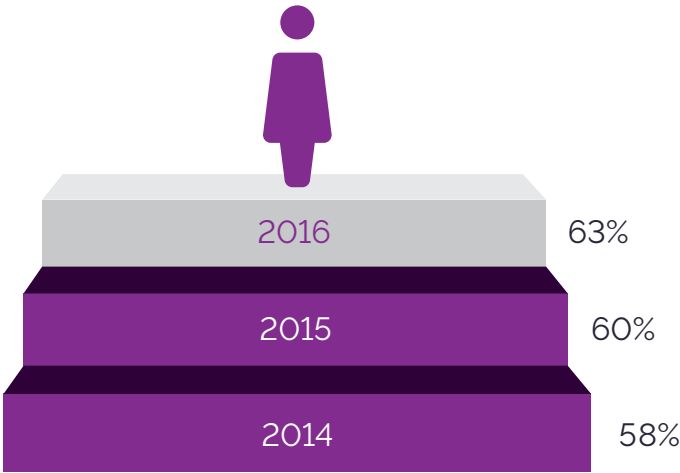
The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to promote flexible workplaces for both women and men.

Where are we?

Many Australian businesses have already taken substantive steps to reduce barriers to women's participation and increase the number of female employees, including into non-traditional roles in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The Government's Women's Leadership and Development Strategy provides funding support to organisations to improve gender equality and support women's economic empowerment, safety and leadership. This is achieved by promoting and supporting greater representation of Australian women in leadership and decision making roles, in particular in non-traditional fields of work.

Flexibility is on the rise



63% of employers have a flexible working policy

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency's dataset is based on 4,697 reports submitted on behalf of the 12,433 employers, accounting for around 40% of employees in Australia.

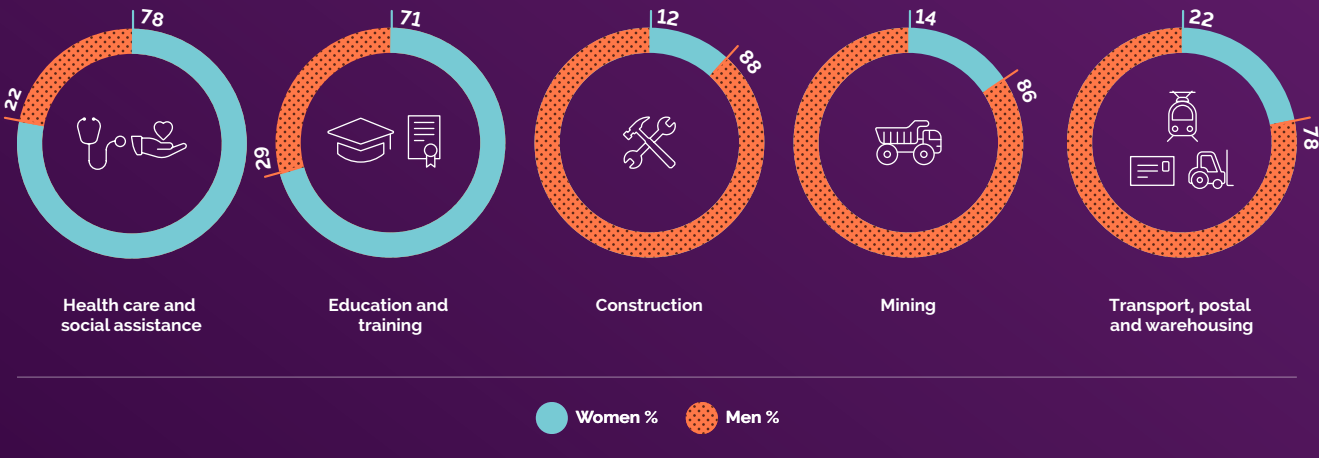
Source: Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard: Key Findings from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2014-2016.

Action area:
Jobs of the future



The Government is committed to preparing women for work in growth industries and getting women into the jobs of the future.

Men and women are concentrated in different industries



Source: WGEA (2016) Gender composition of the workforce: by industry

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) knowledge is associated with 75 per cent of the fastest growing occupations, innovations and higher paying jobs.¹⁹

The gender distribution of people with qualifications in STEM is highly skewed against women in Australia, with males making up 84 per cent of all persons with qualifications.²⁰ Only one in four information technology graduates, and fewer than one in 10 engineering graduates in Australia is female.²¹

Innovation is critical to maintaining living standards and creating more and higher paying jobs for Australians.

The Government's National Innovation and Science Agenda (NISA) is an important step towards embracing new ideas in innovation and science, and harnessing new sources of growth to deliver the next age of economic prosperity in Australia. It is also a critical element of the Government's plan to ensure that women are studying and working in the growth areas of STEM.

In April 2016, the Government released Australia's Cyber Security Strategy to meet the dual challenges of the digital age. The Government is committed to Australians having the cyber security skills and knowledge to thrive in the digital age. To achieve this, we need to understand and address the causes of low participation by women in cyber security careers. This is a focus of the Cyber Security Strategy's Action Plan as we work towards achieving Australia's cyber security goals by 2020.

The Government is also working to encourage more Australian women to start their own businesses and become entrepreneurs. The integration of STEM skills with other skills like entrepreneurship is key to the success of leading organisations in a large number of fields and industries. Australia will rely on STEM skills and innovation to support future economic growth.

The care economy is increasingly important — for both the national economy and the economic wellbeing of Australians. It will be the largest industry growth sector in

the Australian labour market to 2020 and currently has the highest proportion of female employees.²² This presents an opportunity to reduce gender segregation by increasing men's participation in these growth industries as the economy transitions.

Encouraging men into women-concentrated industries is as important as encouraging women into traditionally male-dominated fields. With the decline of many male-dominated industries, male workers are encouraged to consider growth industries such as health care and social assistance.

Where are we?

It is critical to get more women into STEM industries, which have experienced significant growth over recent years. Under the NISA, the Government has committed \$13 million to encourage more women and girls to pursue STEM related careers and to encourage women to become entrepreneurs. This includes a total of \$12 million for the expansion of the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) pilot, the establishment of a Male Champions of Change in STEM group and grants to organisations that support or engage school and university students, women starting their STEM careers, entrepreneurs and innovators.

The Government has also committed \$31.2 million in internships and post-school career advice to increase support for women and girls to study and work in STEM. This includes \$28.2 million from 2017 to 2020 for *Supporting more women in STEM careers: Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) National Research Internships Program*. The program will support 1400 new industry internships, with a particular focus on women researchers, through a nationally expanded PhD industry internships program run by AMSI. The funds will also deliver a new and contemporary National Career Education Strategy (NCES). The NCES will focus on

developing young people's 21st century skills to equip young people with the necessary skills to navigate complex careers across a range of industries and professions.

The Government is also providing \$15 million to establish a dedicated STEM academy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls. The academy aims to spark interest in STEM careers and ultimately address the under-representation of women, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, in STEM fields.

Women in the Australian startup community had a record year in 2016 — women were 23.5 per cent of startup founders, up from 16.1 per cent in 2014.²³ In the decade from 2005 to 2015, the number of women running businesses has grown by 4.8 per cent, compared to an 8.7 per cent decline in the number of men operating a business.²⁴ Women now comprise just over one third of all Australian business operators (34 per cent or 668,670 business operators, up from 31 per cent in 1994).²⁵

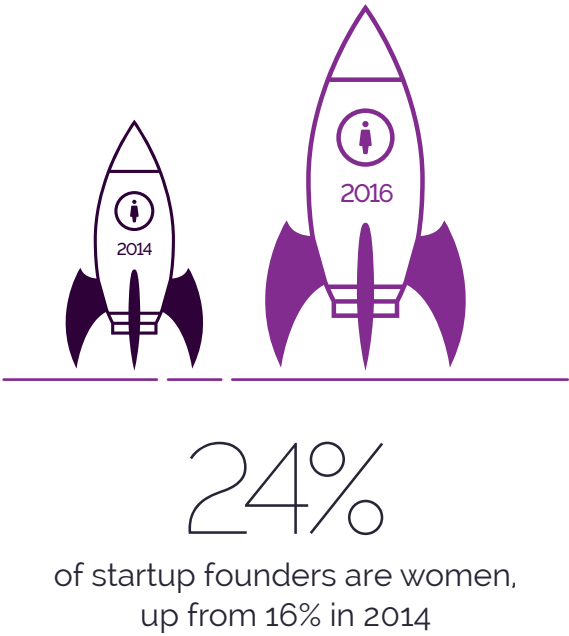
Employment projections to November 2020 show that some industries with large shares of female employment are likely to experience substantial growth.²⁶ The health care and social assistance industry (78.3 per cent women) is projected to make the largest contribution to employment growth, increasing by 16.4 per cent. The education and training industry (71.4 per cent women) is expected to increase by 13.0 per cent.²⁷

The disability sector workforce is estimated to more than double to meet the demand of the full National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by 2020.²⁸ A number of these workers will not require formal qualifications, but will need to possess the right skills, aptitudes and attitudes to support people with disability to exercise choice and control over the support they receive. The clientcentred nature of the NDIS is likely to create significant flexible or part-time employment opportunities that may be attractive to people wanting to return to work, particularly those who want to combine parenting and working responsibilities.

The male-dominated automotive manufacturing industry in South Australia and Victoria is set to close by the end of 2017. The successful redeployment of workers is dependent on their ability to develop new skills that are in demand in other industries.

To help facilitate these changes in the local labour market, the Government established the Geelong Employment Facilitator in 2013 to identify job opportunities for workers in the region, including establishing projects to encourage workers from traditionally male industries into non-traditional roles. One such project was the Retrenched Workers Community Services Taster Program, which particularly targeted retrenched workers to provide them access to opportunities in traditionally female focused areas.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to get more women into the jobs of the future.



Source: Startup Muster 2016 Annual Report

Action area: Economic security



The Government is committed to achieving economic security for all Australian women to enable them to be independent and empowered.

We know that a woman's level of paid and unpaid work determines her economic security over the course of her life — the more a woman undertakes paid work, the greater her likelihood of a financially secure working life and retirement.²⁹

We also know that the Australian labour market is highly gender segregated in both occupations and industries. Men tend to work in industries such as construction, mining and manufacturing. In contrast, women account for more than 70 per cent of all employees in the education and training and the health care and social assistance industries. Gender segregation also refers to the tendency of women and men to study different fields and how women and men participate (full-time or part-time) in the labour market.

Women are more likely to work part-time or casually, take breaks from paid employment to provide unpaid care for others, and be over-represented in lower paid industries and occupations, resulting in lower earnings and retirement savings compared to men.³⁰

That is why the Government has implemented a number of measures to enable women to boost their superannuation and reduce the gender pay gap.

Improving financial literacy will also help ensure women properly understand the financial implications of working, working more hours, getting a pay rise and what their retirement savings will look like.

Where are we?

The Government has taken significant steps to increase women's economic security in retirement through a number of measures designed to boost women's superannuation balances.

The Paid Parental Leave scheme aims to extend mothers' time away from paid work, while increasing lifetime attachment to the labour force. In 2015–16, 169,745 mothers started receiving Parental Leave Payment.

The Low Income Superannuation Tax Offset reduces the tax on superannuation contributions for low income earners, of whom a high proportion are women. The offset will ensure low income earners are generally not paying more tax on savings placed in superannuation than they do on income earned outside of superannuation.

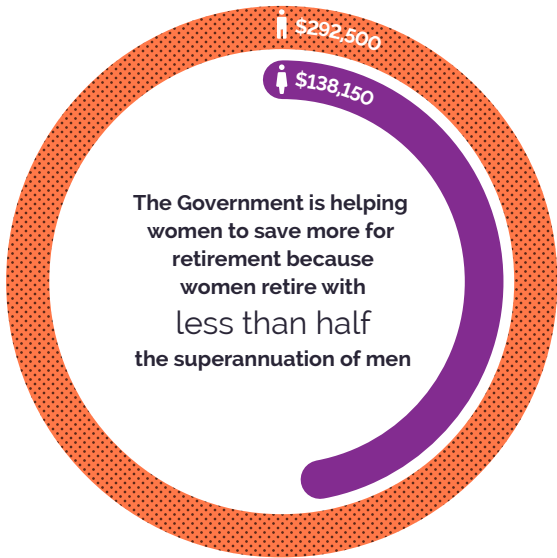
More people can claim a tax offset (up to \$540) for contributions to superannuation for their low income spouse by increasing the income test threshold for the recipient spouse from \$10,800 to \$37,000. This will allow more people who make contributions to their low income spouses to benefit from the tax offset, helping low income earners, a high proportion of whom are women, to build their superannuation balances.

From 1 July 2018, any unused concessional superannuation contributions will be able to be carried forward for up to five years for women with superannuation balances of \$500,000 and lower. The Government also contributes up to \$500 per year to low or middle income earners who make after-tax superannuation contributions. Women make up a majority of the beneficiaries of these contributions — in 2014–15, 300,000 low and middle income women were entitled to \$90 million of co-contributions.

Contribution splitting allows people to help their spouse accumulate their own superannuation by 'splitting' up to 85 per cent of their concessional contributions in a year, and broadens superannuation to individuals outside the workforce, a majority of whom are women.

The Government's efforts to close the gender pay gap also play a key role in increasing women's economic security. The WGEA works with the private sector and provides a number of resources to assist employers to close the gender pay gap.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to ensure Australian women are economically secure throughout life and in retirement.



● Women ● Men

Average superannuation 2013-2014

Source: Superannuation account balances by age and gender, December 2015, Ross Clare, Director of Research ASFA Research and Resource Centre

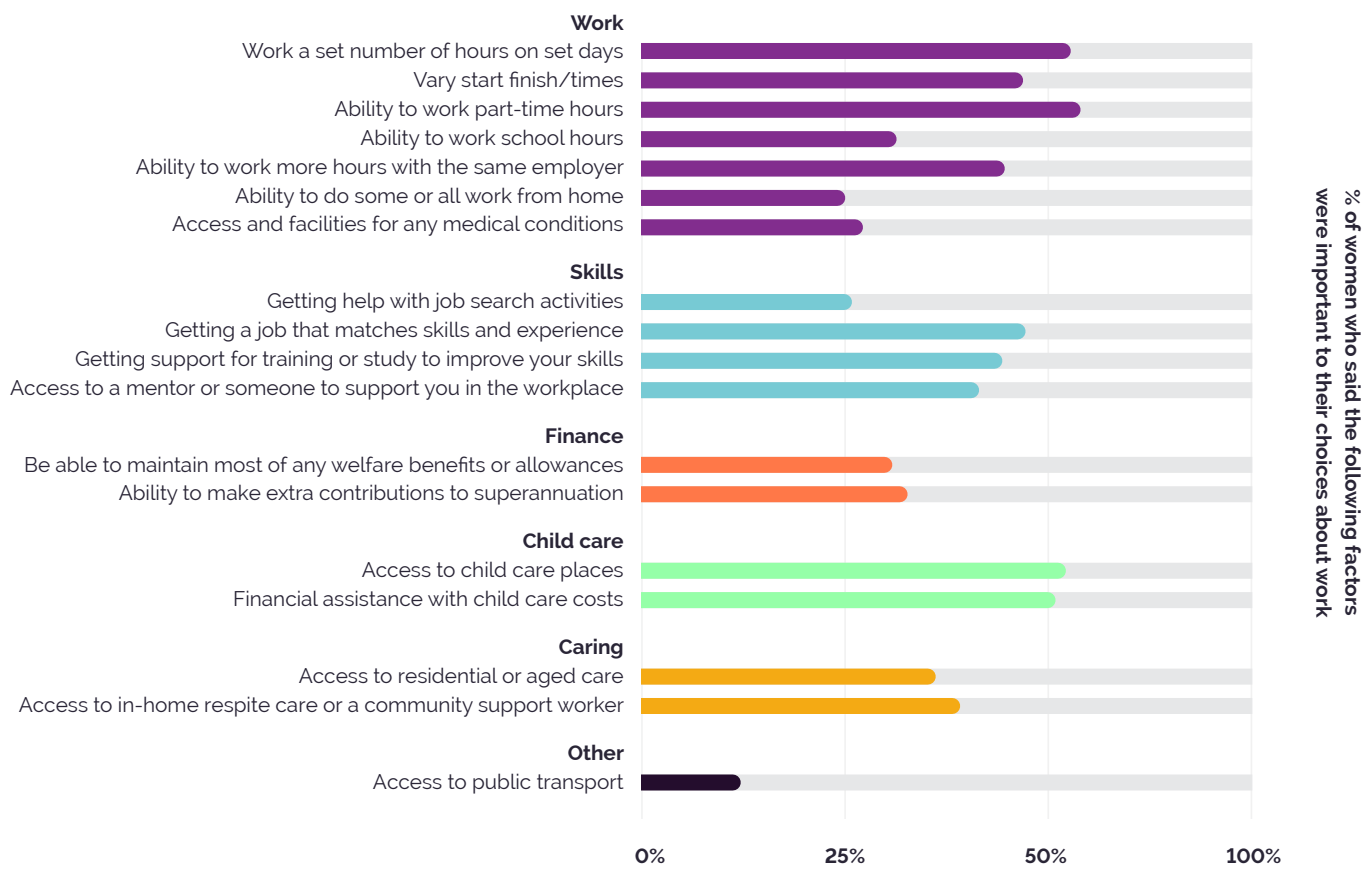
Action area: Financial incentives



The Government is committed to assisting women and their families to make well informed choices about work. Women's economic participation has a positive effect on economic growth which is good for all Australians.

Australians who work will also interact with the tax system. Australia has a progressive personal income tax system. That is, people with higher taxable incomes pay more tax as a proportion of their income than people on lower incomes. This reflects the belief that people who have more money should contribute more, so the Government can provide the services that Australians expect, such as health care, education and family payments.

Women's incentives to join/increase participation in the workforce



Source: 6239.0 — Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia, July 2014 to June 2015

Personal income taxes are only part of the story — Australia is well known for its targeted transfer system (or government payments to individuals and families). Progressive income taxes and targeted government payments work together to produce fairer outcomes — as a person's income increases, they pay more tax and may receive lower government payments.

Women's decisions about whether or not to work, or how much to work, play out differently for every individual and family.

The financial benefits of working are affected by specific circumstances such as salary, the

number and age of children in the family, use of child care and eligibility for government payments. While the combination of paying more tax and/or receiving lower government payments (effective marginal tax rates or EMTRs^{iv}) is one of the factors in these decisions, there are many others.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that women are influenced by factors such as caring for their children, flexible work arrangements and access to child care to a greater extent than the potential loss of government payments in their decisions about whether or not to work.

^{iv} An EMTR refers to the proportion of each additional dollar of income that is paid in tax or offset by the withdrawal of transfer payments (such as a welfare or family benefit). EMTRs—while a structural feature of Australia's tax and transfer system—are highly variable and calculating an individual's EMTR is dependent on their specific circumstances. EMTRs help us understand whether or not there are immediate financial incentives to work, or work more, but it is important to note that EMTRs don't apply to a person's whole income.

Women's decisions are also affected by their own and others' values and priorities, broader social expectations and the level of unpaid work that they undertake.

Where are we?

The Government is focused on ensuring that there are financial incentives for women to return to the workforce, particularly after having children.

The Government is ensuring women are aware of the long-term benefits of working, including maintaining connections with a workplace and their qualifications, and adding to retirement savings after taking a break from work to care for children.

The National Financial Literacy Strategy supports women to build an accurate picture of the financial implications of commencing or returning to work, working more hours, getting a pay rise and how income tax and government payments adjust with these changes. The Strategy also highlights how work improves retirement income long term.

Workforce participation and self-reliance are central to improving long-term wellbeing. The Government is committed to ensuring that all Australians who have the capacity to work do so, rather than being reliant on welfare. The Government is creating a clearer, more coherent set of mutual obligation requirements for working age welfare recipients and increasing support for them to get a job.

The Government is making a \$263 million investment in the successful ParentsNext pre-employment program which will help more parents of young children, who may be at risk of long-term welfare dependency, to plan and prepare for employment by the time their children start school. From 1 July 2018, ParentsNext will assist around 68,000 parents each year nationally — around 96 per cent of participants are expected to be women.

Unemployed Australians, particularly those 50 years and over, will benefit from increased services and resources to help them find

work and move off welfare. There will also be greater incentives for employers to offer work experience opportunities.

The Government is investing over \$100 million to assist mature age people, including women, to identify new labour market opportunities and reskill. This comprises the \$98 million Career Transition Assistance Program and a \$9.6 million investment to expand and enhance the National Work Experience Programme.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to help women make well informed decisions about working.

Government is setting the pace

As one of the largest employers in the nation, the Australian Public Service (APS) seeks to reflect the diversity of the community it serves. In 2016, the Government released its plan for addressing gender equality in the APS Balancing the Future: The Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2016-2019³¹ (the APS Gender Equality Strategy).

The APS Gender Equality Strategy requires every government agency to set targets for gender equality in leadership positions and boost gender equality in each workplace. Agency heads are accountable for meeting these gender equality targets on the way to achieving the overarching goal of 50–50 gender balance.

In the words of Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, the Minister for Women and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service:

"Improving gender equality and diversity ensures workplaces have greater depth of experience and perspective. To support Australia's G20 commitment to boost women's workforce participation and reduce the gender participation gap by 25 per cent by 2025, it is essential the APS shines a light on gender equality and leads the way to drive real and lasting change."

Of the APS's 153,000 ongoing employees, 58 per cent are women, 30 per cent of APS agency heads are women, 43 per cent of Senior Executive Service employees are women and 44 per cent at the Executive Level 2 level are women. The APS has achieved parity at the Executive Level 1 level.³² Women accounted for more than 50 per cent of all ongoing promotions to EL1 to SES Band 1 levels during 2016, most notably they accounted for almost 70 per cent of promotions at the SES Band 3 level. By comparison, in the ASX 200 8.7 per cent of Chief Executive Officers are women.³³

Principles

- The APS is achieving gender equality by driving the following principles:
- > Transformational change – public sector leaders, managers and supervisors will be bold in creating inclusive workplace cultures.
 - > Commitment – leaders will give priority to ensuring gender equality in their agencies and will allocate resources accordingly.
 - > Accountability – leaders at all levels are accountable for driving gender equality in their agencies.



Source: Australian Government Gender Balance on Australian Government Boards Report 2015-16. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Unpublished data December 2016.

Actions

The APS is setting the pace on gender equality by:

- > Driving a supportive and enabling workplace culture – including committing to implementing best practice strategies to ensure workplaces are as supportive and sensitive as possible for staff experiencing violence.
- > Achieving gender equality in APS leadership — including developing programs that support women's progression into senior leadership positions, particularly in priority areas such as information technology, science and finance.
- > Working innovatively to embed gender equality in employment practices – including working to build organisational capability to address unconscious bias and ensuring that all selection panels ask '50/50 – if not, why not?' for the purpose of gender balance in shortlisting processes.
- > Increasing take-up of flexible work arrangements by both men and women – including by adopting a 'flexible by default' approach.
- > Measurement and evaluation – including developing an evaluation framework so agencies can monitor their progress and adjust their approach as required.
- > Committing to develop training on the differential impact of gender in mainstream policy development.

Key initiatives

Secretaries Equality and Diversity Council (the Council)

Established in June 2016 to drive the implementation of the APS Gender Equality Strategy, the Council is comprised of all APS Departmental Secretaries along with two external members to provide insights and experience from outside the public sector.

Secretaries have committed to appear only at events and on panels that are gender balanced by taking the Panel Pledge.

The Council has also considered important issues relevant to staff with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex staff and staff from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. The Council is supported by a working group comprised of department nominated senior diversity champions and human resource representatives.

Gender Equality Action Plans

Every government agency has developed an individual Gender Equality Action Plan, with most now published on their respective websites. These plans outline each Agency head's commitment to achieving gender equality and include ambitious (stretch) targets over the life of the APS Gender Equality Strategy.

Flexible by default

The APS Gender Equality Strategy introduced the 'flexible by default' principle, which assumes that any role can be filled through a flexible working arrangement. This requires managers to challenge assumptions about how work should be done and how jobs are designed. This approach normalises the idea of flexibility and ensures that both men and women see flexibility as an option that will not curtail their career progression.

Target for Government Boards

In 2016, the Government announced a target of women holding 50 per cent of Government board positions overall, and men and women each holding at least 40 per cent of positions on individual boards. This new target came into effect on 1 July 2016 with Government reporting annually on its performance against the target.

Women now represent just over 41 per cent of all Australian Government board members.³⁴ By comparison, in 2016, 25 per cent of ASX 200 board members are women.³⁵

The different needs and experiences of women



Evidence shows us that different groups of women have a variety of experiences in the workforce.

The Strategy identifies six groups of women with specific needs and experiences:

- > Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women,
- > Culturally and linguistically diverse women,
- > Mature age women,
- > Rural and regional women,
- > Women with disability, and
- > Young women.

By focusing on these six groups, the Government acknowledges that efforts to improve women's workforce participation must recognise that women are a diverse group, and policy responses must be tailored to respond to the different needs, aspirations and challenges of all Australian women.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Where are we?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have a considerably lower rate of workforce participation compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men (51.5 per cent and 65 per cent respectively).

The Government is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women play a central role in a strong and diverse Australian economy — as employees, employers, business operators, entrepreneurs, and leaders. Indigenous women are achieving great things and are providing an example of success for future generations across Australia.

We are working in partnership with Indigenous women to ensure our First Australians are able to take up opportunities in our economy and be leaders in their communities. For example, under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the Australian Government is supporting the Wirrpanda Foundation's Deadly Sista Girlz Program to empower and enable young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls to make good choices for themselves.

We already have a strong record of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. From July 2015 the Government is spending almost \$49 million on education, supporting more than 9,200 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women continue to face unique challenges when joining the workforce. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls often have caring responsibilities at an earlier age — for children and for family. A third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have their first child by the age

of 20, often before connecting with the workforce.³⁶

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children experience disproportionately high rates of family and domestic violence throughout their lives, which has significant and long lasting impacts on their capacity to engage in education, work and community life.

The Government is working with Indigenous communities to address the scourge of violence through a \$46 million investment through the Women's Safety Package and Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children as well as significant investment under the IAS to address the drivers of violence.

Through the Indigenous Business Sector Strategy, the Government is investing in the next generation of entrepreneurs which breaks down barriers for future generations and creates a positive cycle of economic empowerment that will build over time. Indigenous women have a particularly important role to play as entrepreneurs, bringing a unique perspective for their customers.

The Government continues to ensure its mainstream employment services feature a range of interventions, activities and complementary programs to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander job seekers, including women.

In December 2016, the Government started the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme Highly Disadvantaged Trial to help highly disadvantaged job seekers, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, overcome barriers to starting their own business.

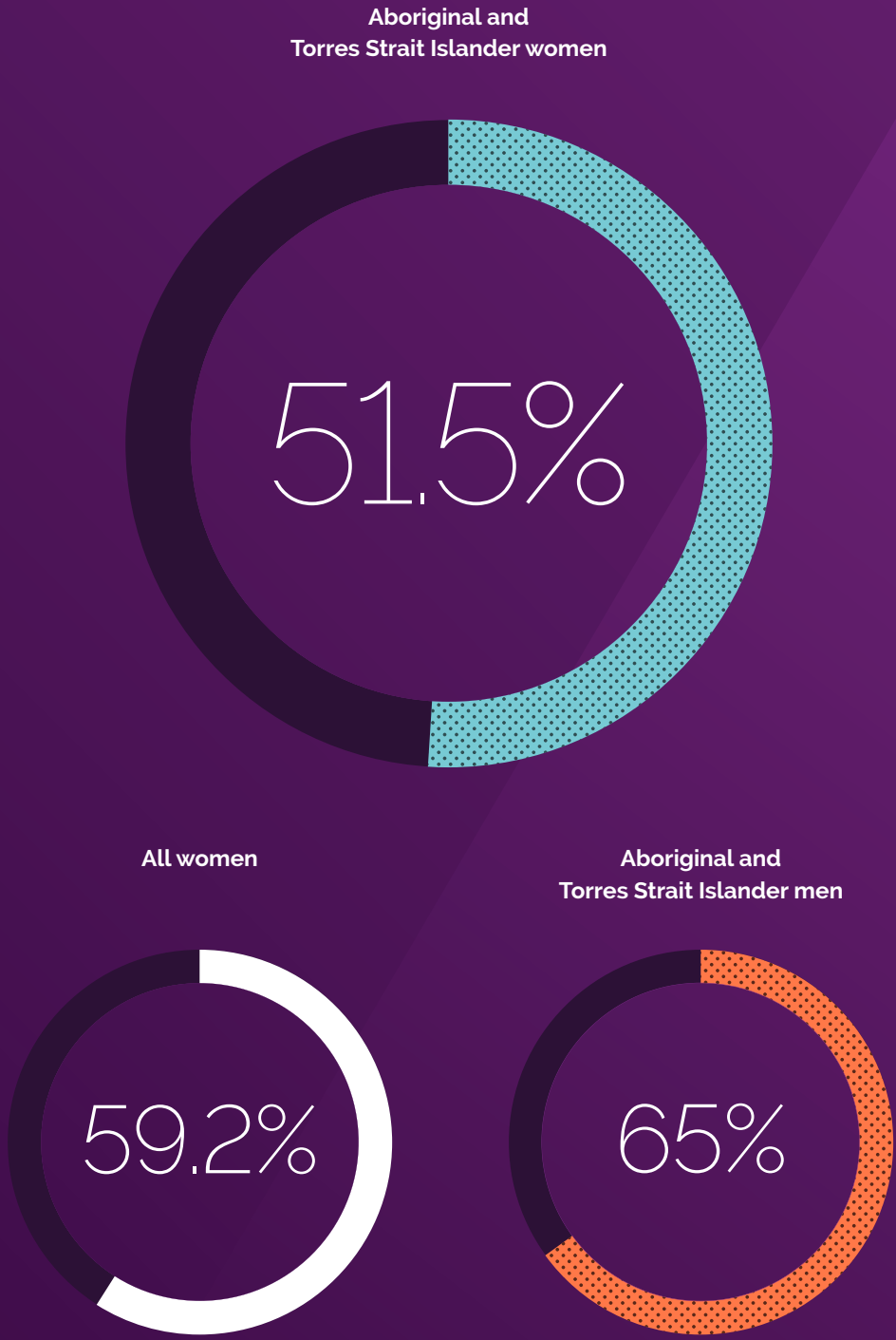
The Government is making a \$263 million investment to expand the ParentsNext preemployment program, including a more intensive stream of the program in 20 locations where a high proportion of Parenting Payment recipients are Indigenous. Eligible parents (largely women) in those locations will receive greater access to pre-employment training, mentoring, work experience, wage subsidies and job opportunities to help them to plan and prepare for employment by the time their children start school. This will help close the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

A new \$55.7 million Indigenous Employment package will create better opportunities for Indigenous Australians to find work, by offering mentoring and more support for Indigenous young people, and assisting people leaving prison to find work quickly and avoid re-offending.

The Government will also invest an additional \$138 million to increase opportunities and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through its 1967 Referendum 50th Anniversary Indigenous Education Package, including \$41 million to directly support Indigenous women and girls' access and engagement in education. As part of this package, the Government announced a new \$25 million STEM Fund to support Indigenous students to study and secure jobs in STEM fields; this includes a \$15 million contribution to a STEM academy for girls.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have the opportunity to participate in the Australian economy.

Workforce participation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women



Source: ABS, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014–15, cat. no. 4714.0, persons 15 years and over

Culturally and linguistically diverse women

Where are we?

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women have a significantly lower rate of workforce participation compared to CALD men (47.3 per cent and 69.5 per cent respectively).

Australia's success as a migrant country depends on the economic participation of migrants, both men and women. Migrant women face particular challenges when it comes to economic participation and financial security.

The key barriers to employment for skilled women who have migrated to Australia include women's lower proficiency in English and lack of local work experience, limited understanding of Australian workplace culture, and limited recognition of their skills/ qualifications.³⁷ Key barriers to employment for women humanitarian entrants include family and caring responsibilities, lack of work experience and lower educational attainment prior to arrival and mental and physical health issues.³⁸

Women from CALD backgrounds also experience limited opportunities to gain drivers licences, encounter traditional cultural expectations of women as domestic caregivers, and child care and community care responsibilities that inhibit employment opportunities.³⁹

That's why the Australian Government has a strong focus on the three Es — English language proficiency, employment and education — when providing settlement services to migrants and humanitarian entrants.

The Government continues to ensure its mainstream employment services feature a range of interventions, activities and complementary programs to help CALD and refugee job seekers, including women.

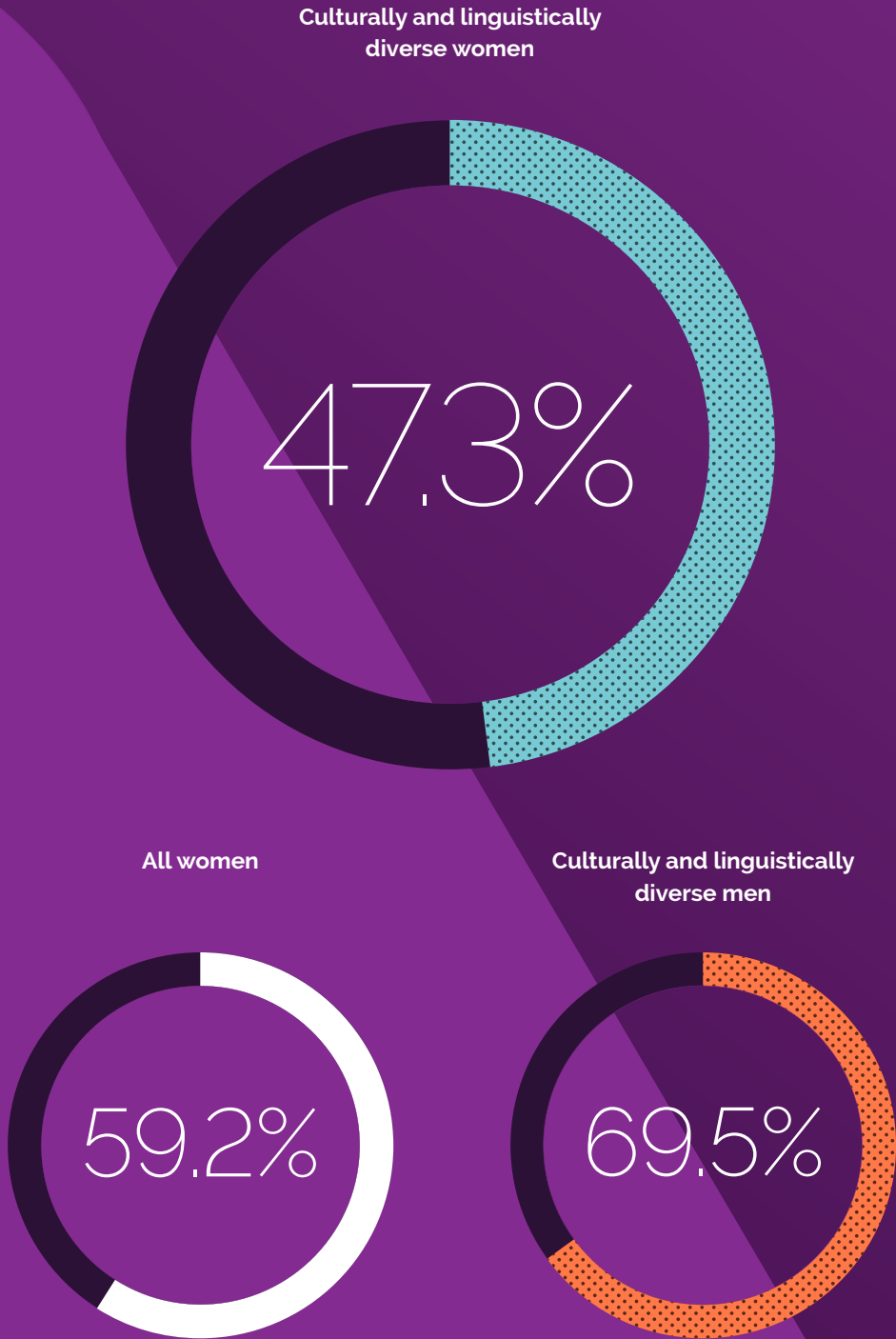
In December 2016, the Government started the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme Highly Disadvantaged Trial to help highly disadvantaged job seekers, including CALD women, overcome barriers to starting their own business.

A number of the Government's Empowering YOUNG Initiatives focus specifically on getting young refugees, including women, into jobs.

The Government also provides support to the Friendly Nation Initiative, a business-led strategy that seeks to increase employment, mentoring, training and internship opportunities for refugees and humanitarian migrants.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to ensure that culturally and linguistically diverse women have the opportunity to participate in the Australian economy.

Workforce participation rates for linguistically diverse women



Source: ABS, Labour Force, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, Feb 2017, cat. no. 6291.0.55.001, 12 month average of original data, persons aged 55-64 years

Mature age women

Where are we?

Mature age women have a considerably lower rate of workforce participation compared to mature age men (58.8 per cent and 71.9 per cent respectively).

With the ageing of the Australian population, it is now more important than ever to use the skills and experience of older workers and encourage them to remain in the workforce.

Some of the barriers to employment that older Australians face identified in the Australian Human Rights Commission's Willing to Work inquiry include age discrimination, difficulties accessing training and difficulties arranging flexible work opportunities.⁴⁰

The inquiry also heard that older women are more likely than older men to be perceived as having outdated skills and as being too slow to learn new skills.⁴¹ Additionally, although mature age people have a lower unemployment rate than younger people, they tend to have greater difficulty finding subsequent employment when they do become unemployed.⁴²

The Government continues to ensure its mainstream employment services feature a range of interventions, activities and complementary programs to help mature age job seekers, including women.

The Government is committed to giving older women the choice to remain in, or re-enter, the workforce. Our Restart wage subsidy program provides eligible employers with a subsidy of up to \$10,000 over six months if they hire an eligible income support or pension recipient, 50 years of age or older, who has been in

receipt of an income support payment or pension for six months. Since July 2014, over 5,000 women have been placed into a job with the help of a Restart wage subsidy.

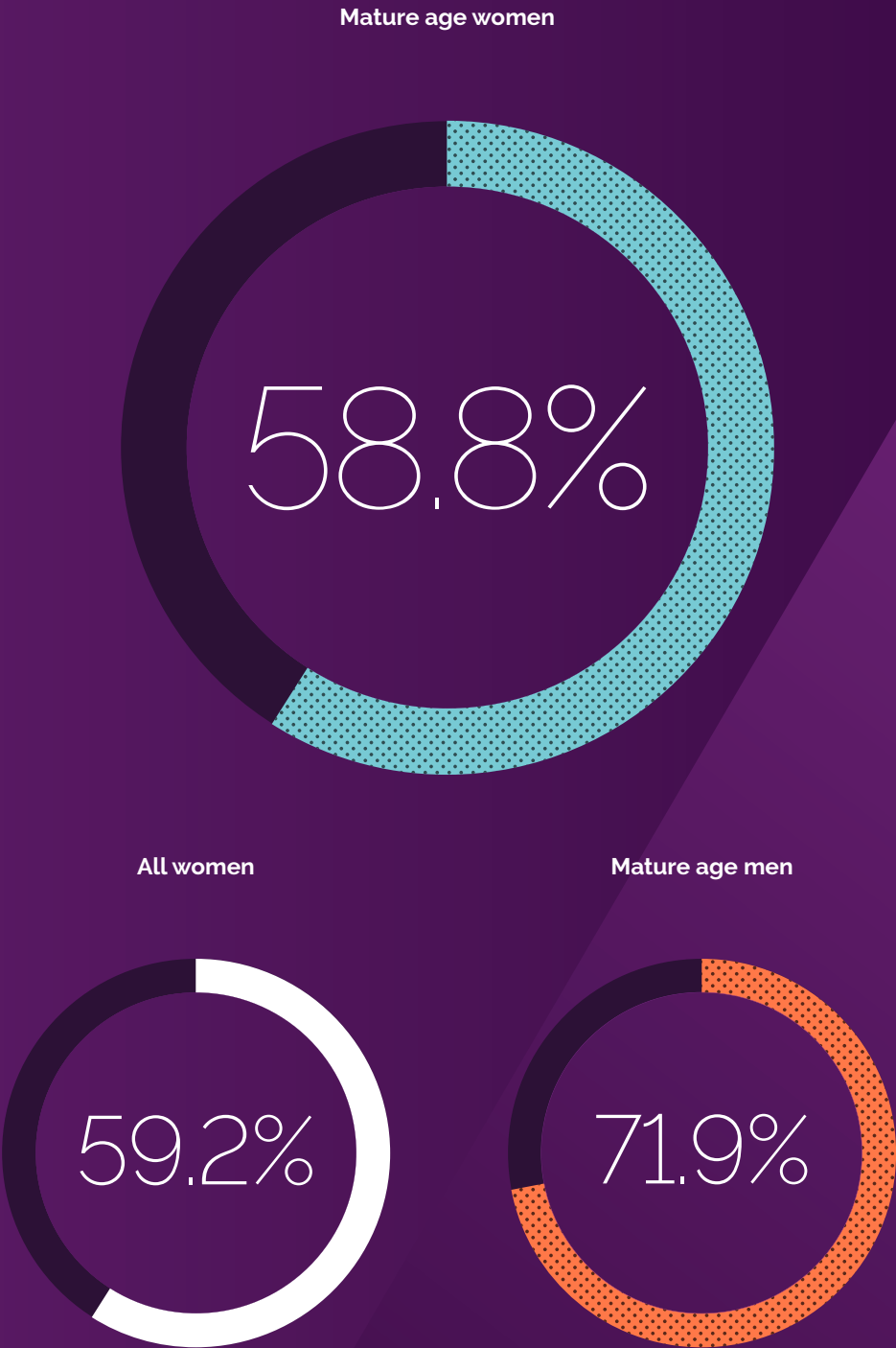
The Government recently piloted a pre-employment partnership with UnitingCare Australia. The pre-employment projects incorporated training, mentoring, work experience and employment for women in the community and aged care services network of UnitingCare. All thirty-five participants completed the program. The Government has now committed \$10 million for further partnerships with a range of employers and industries nationally as part of the Launch into Work program.

The Government is investing over \$100 million to assist mature age people, including women, to identify new labour market opportunities and reskill. The Government will:

- > Introduce a new \$98 million Career Transition Assistance Program to provide more opportunities for mature age Australians to reskill.
- > Invest \$9.6 million to expand and enhance the National Work Experience Programme.
- > Establish a series of Pathway to Work pilots in selected growth industries and/or large infrastructure projects.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to ensure that mature age women have the opportunity to participate in the Australian economy.

Workforce participation rates for mature age women



Source: ABS, Labour Force, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, Feb 2017, cat. no. 6291.0.55.001. 12 month average of original data, persons aged 55-64 years

Rural and regional women

Where are we?

Rural and regional women have a lower rate of workforce participation compared to rural and regional men (56.5 per cent and 66.8 per cent respectively).

One third of Australian women live in rural and regional areas.⁴³ These women play a crucial role in the growth and future of their economies and communities.

The Government continues to ensure its mainstream employment services feature a range of interventions, activities and complementary programs to help rural and regional job seekers, including women.

The Government is investing in the workforce participation of rural and regional women in a number of ways, as outlined in the recent Regions 2030 report. For example, through the Regional Jobs and Investment Packages, a \$220 million investment to help diversify regional economies, stimulate economic growth and deliver sustainable employment in ten pilot regions.

The 2017–18 Budget included a number of other measures such as an extension to the Building Better Regions Fund, investing in infrastructure and community development projects, and an additional \$272.2 million for large infrastructure projects in regional areas.

The Government will also lead by example in creating jobs in regional communities through its decentralisation policy. Decentralisation will benefit regional women through the creation of local jobs and career paths, increased economic diversification and the stimulation of economic growth.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to ensure that rural and regional women have the opportunity to participate in the Australian economy.

Workforce participation rates for rural and regional women



Data for rural and regional women is not readily available. Participation rates for people living outside capital cities has been used as proxy
Source: ABS, Labour Force, Detailed - Electronic Delivery, Feb 2017, cat. no. 6291.0.55.001.
12 month average of original data, persons aged 15 years and over

Women with disability

Where are we?

Women with disability have a considerably lower rate of workforce participation compared to men with disability (49.4 per cent and 57.8 per cent respectively).

The Government continues to ensure its mainstream employment services feature a range of interventions, activities and complementary programs to help job seekers with disability, including women.

The Government has a number of initiatives which aim to rectify this imbalance. Young people with disability are benefiting from the Government's Transition to Work and Empowering YOUTH Initiatives. Approximately seven per cent (or 528) of the Transition to Work caseload is young women with disability.⁴⁴ There are two Empowering YOUTH Initiatives focused on supporting skill development of approximately 100 young people with disability per initiative. There are a further three initiatives supporting young people living with mental health issues.

The Government is also investing \$9 million for a new national hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers, accessible through a website or over the telephone.

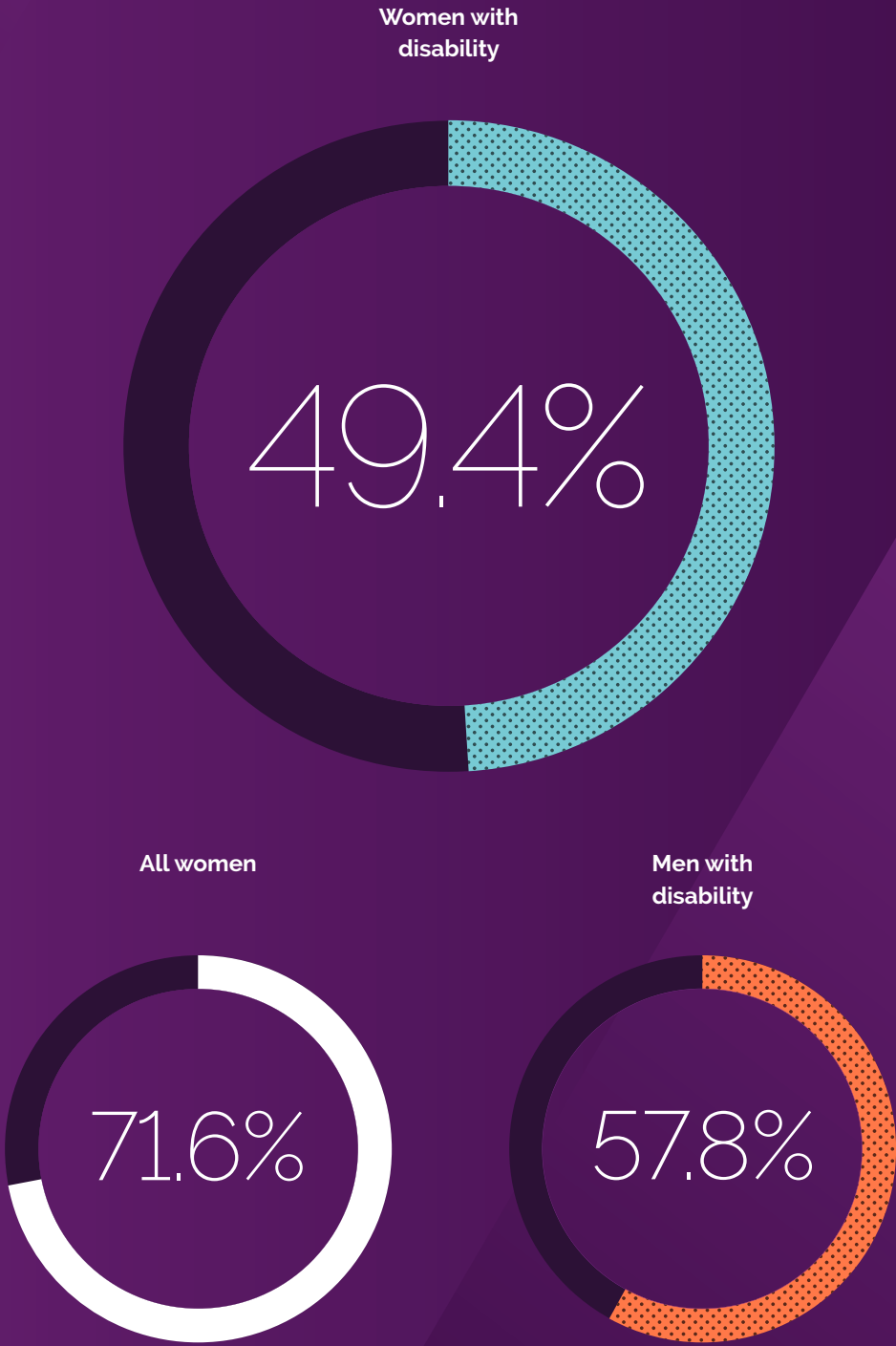
Following extensive public consultations — including on proposed changes outlined in the Discussion Paper: New Disability Employment Services from 2018, released in late 2016 — the Government announced changes in the 2017–18 Budget to improve the performance of Disability Employment Services (DES) to help people with disability find and keep a job.

Approximately 32 per cent of women participants remain employed three months after a period of assistance in DES. This proportion aligns with the general DES caseload employment rate.

As part of broader reforms to DES, the Government's Building Employer Demand package will engage with employers to raise the profile and create more demand from employers for people with disability. By raising awareness, the Government aims to increase the employment of people with disability, dismantle negative stereotypes and promote best practice in employing people with disability across the community.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to ensure that women with disability have the opportunity to participate in the Australian economy.

Workforce participation rates for women with disability



Data on labour force participation rates for people with disability is for persons 15-64
Source: ABS, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings 2015, cat. no. 4430.0, persons 15-64 years

Young women



Where are we?

The workforce participation rate of young women (15–24 years) is slightly lower compared to young men (66.4 per cent and 67.4 per cent respectively).

The Government continues to ensure its mainstream employment services feature a range of interventions, activities and complementary programs to help young job seekers, including young women.

In particular, young women are benefiting from the Government's \$855 million Youth Employment Package which will assist up to 120,000 young people take advantage of job opportunities as the economy diversifies and transitions to broader-based growth. At the core of the package is Youth Jobs PaTH (Prepare – Trial – Hire), a three stage pathway to work to help give young people the employability skills that employers want, opportunities for work experience and the support to move from welfare to work. The package also includes an expansion of the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme and other measures to encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment among job seekers, including among young women.

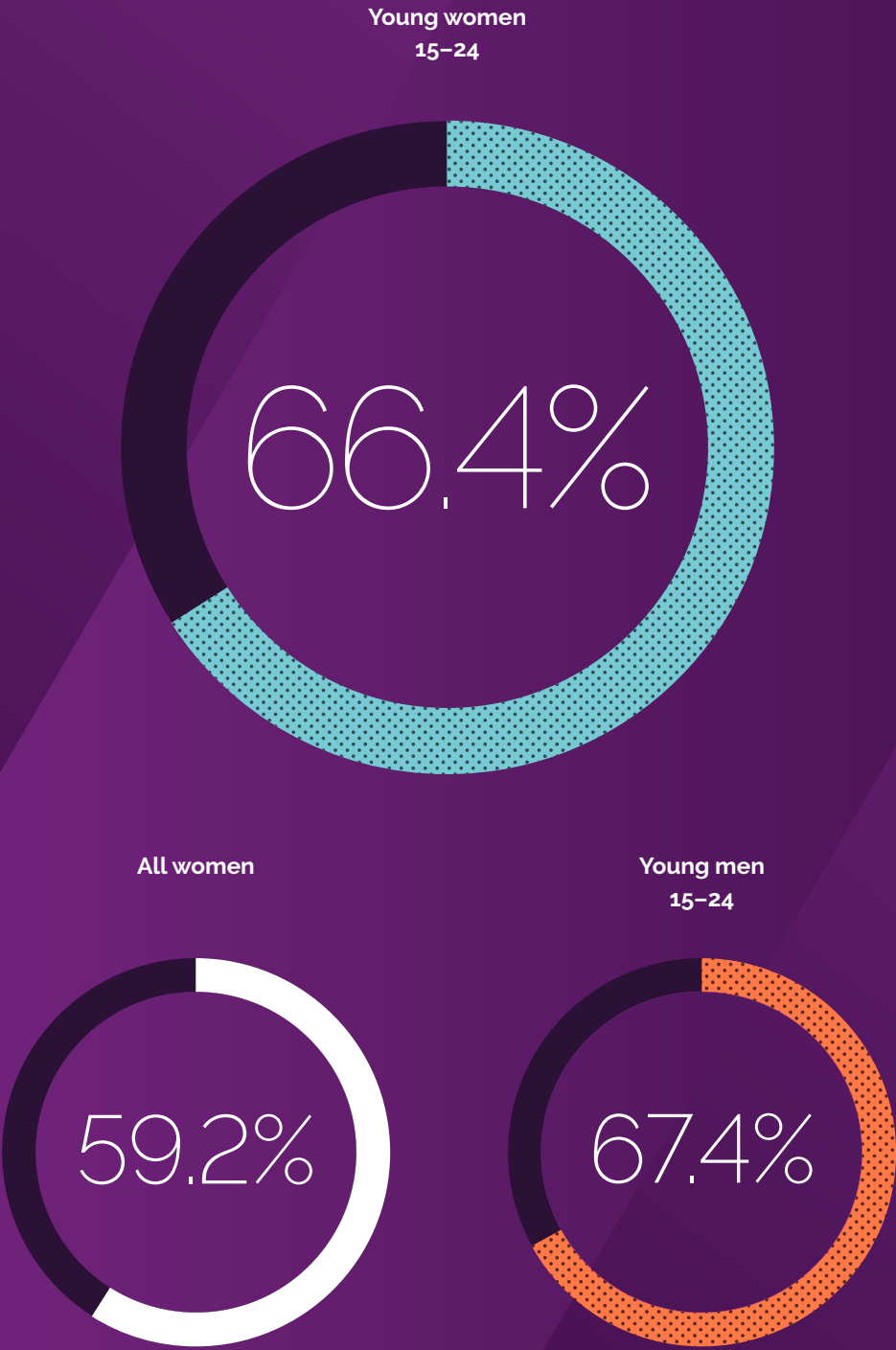
The package builds on earlier measures to assist young people into employment. A key Government initiative is the Transition to Work service, which provides intensive pre-employment assistance to young people who have disengaged from work and study and are at risk of longterm welfare dependence. In addition, Empowering YOUNg Initiatives support new, innovative approaches from not-for-profit and non-government organisations to help young people overcome the barriers they face and move into work.

The Australian Government is also investing \$96.1 million in the Try, Test and Learn Fund to trial new and innovative approaches to assist people with the capacity to work into stable and sustainable employment. Two of the initial priority groups for the Try, Test and Learn Fund are young parents and young carers. Both of these groups have a high proportion of young women.

The Government is making a \$263 million investment in ParentsNext which will help more parents of young children, who may be at risk of long-term welfare dependency, to plan and prepare for employment by the time their children start school. From 1 July 2018, ParentsNext will assist around 68,000 parents each year nationally — more than 96 per cent of participants are expected to be women. ParentsNext has a particular focus on helping young parents who have not yet finished secondary school to complete Year 12 or equivalent.

The 2017–18 Implementation Plan outlines key actions the Government will take to ensure that young women have the opportunity to participate in the Australian economy.

Workforce participation rates for young women



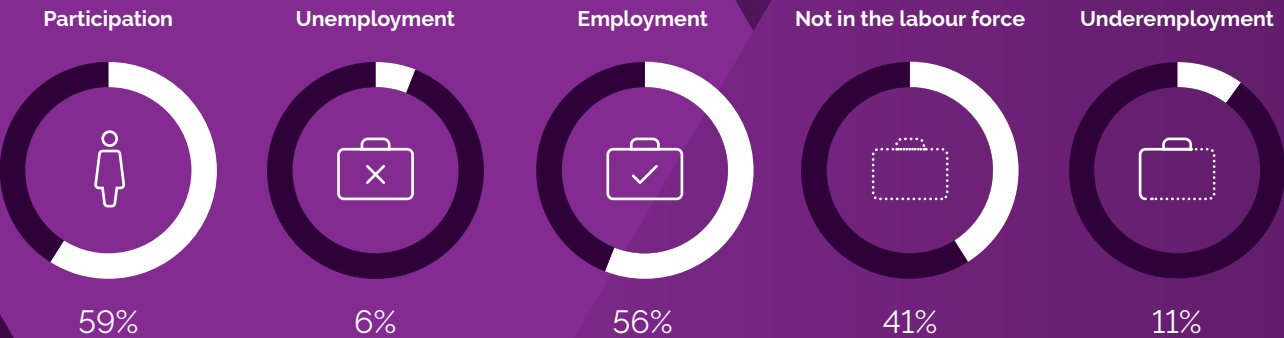
Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Feb 2017, cat. no. 6202.0, 12 month average of seasonally adjusted data, persons 15-24 years

Data Snapshot

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This data snapshot — along with the gender pay gap measures — will be included in each implementation plan. The snapshot will be used to track progress against our goal of closing the gender participation gap by 25 per cent by 2025.

Women's workforce participation rates



Source: ABS Labour Force, Australia, February 2017 (cat. no. 6202.0), seasonally adjusted

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