

# ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

## WOMEN & PAID WORK

How do women fare in the Australian economy? Do you recognise yourself, and women in your community, in these figures?

### Income & savings

- In 2008, Australian women earned 84 cents to every dollar earned by men.
- Over 90% of workplaces with more than two-thirds of female employees average an hourly rate of less than \$18 per hour.
- On average, Australian women have one third the super savings of men. Women between 45 and 59 have less than \$8,000 in superannuation.

### Child care

- In Australia, 57% of women return to work by the time their child is in their second year and 68% by the time their child is in their third year.
- In Denmark, where more than 70% of childcare costs are funded by the government, 92% of mothers and 96% of fathers were in the labour force.
- Lack of affordable, available childcare creates a significant amount of stress for women. A large amount of women's income goes toward costs of child care.

### Sexual harassment in the workplace

- Sex discrimination and sexual harassment continue to be among the most common complaints to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.

### Conditions & participation

- 'Home workers' (also referred to as 'outworkers') work from home, are not regulated and earn minimal wages.
- Employers of outworkers do not have to pay insurance, worry about health and safety legislation or bother with holiday and sickness pay or other benefits.
- Women make up 45% of the total paid workforce. While female participation is on the rise, the increase is in part-time rather than full-time work.

### Discrimination & disadvantage

- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds often work in jobs where they are poorly paid and have little chance of promotion or further training.
- The greatest hurdles for women with disabilities are often the attitudes they encounter – the stereotypical perceptions that they will be less reliable, take more sick leave, and if they get the job it's only because they have been given special treatment because of their disability.

*“Women’s workforce participation now stands at 58% and the educational achievements of women have never been higher, yet whether you’re behind the counter of a cafeteria or in the executive suite, if you’re female, wage parity is not guaranteed” (Maxine McKew)*

## WHAT IS WOMEN’S HEALTH IN THE NORTH DOING?

Immigrant women face many barriers trying to break into the job market in Australia.

Recent research found that just having an Anglo-Saxon name made it easier to get an interview. The research found ‘clear evidence of discrimination’ – people with Chinese and Middle Eastern names would have to submit at least 50% more job applications even to be called back. Indigenous people were also discriminated against. (Interestingly, in this research, people in Melbourne with Italian names suffered no discrimination.)

This confirms what WHIN has heard from women – getting a job when you are a new immigrant is hard, particularly for women.

One important problem is that overseas qualifications are often not recognised. We know from talking to women that this is a problem, but there is little research about this in Melbourne’s North. That makes it hard to push for change.

Women’s Health In the North (WHIN) is working with Whittlesea Community Connections, NMIT, Plenty Valley Community Health, the City of Whittlesea and Centrelink to fill this gap.

**We’re looking for women aged between 25–50 who live in the City of Whittlesea, have lived in Australia for less than two years and have an overseas professional qualification to tell their stories about looking for work.**

Your experience will help us tackle discrimination against immigrant women.

If you’d like to participate, contact Rosamaria Tascone-Marolda at Women’s Health In the North on 9484 1666.

This is one of four fact sheets, covering paid work, unpaid work, women as consumers and being consumed, and climate change. This information is drawn from Women’s Health In the North’s *Economic Participation: The Labour Market and Beyond* report – for more detail, including references, read the report at [www.whin.org.au](http://www.whin.org.au).

Why is a women’s health service talking about economics?

Because whether you can afford to meet your basic needs, what you earn, and how you earn it, could matter as much to your health as the genes you were born with and what you eat.