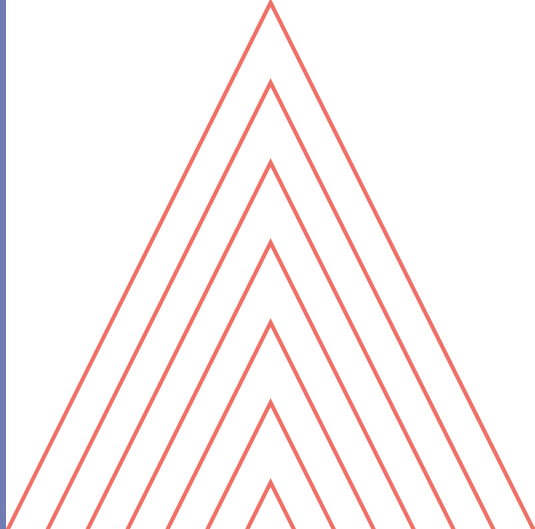
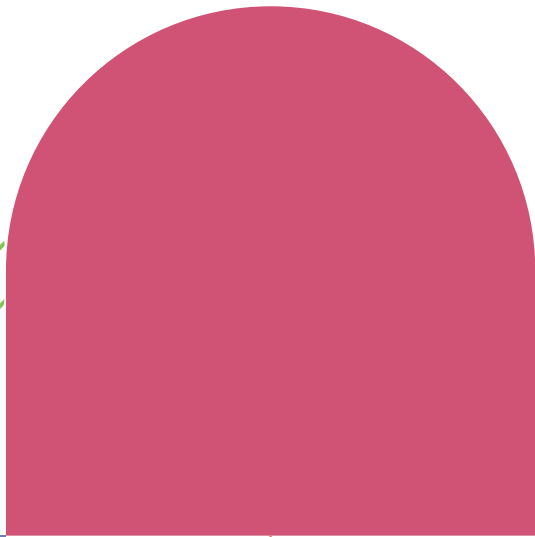
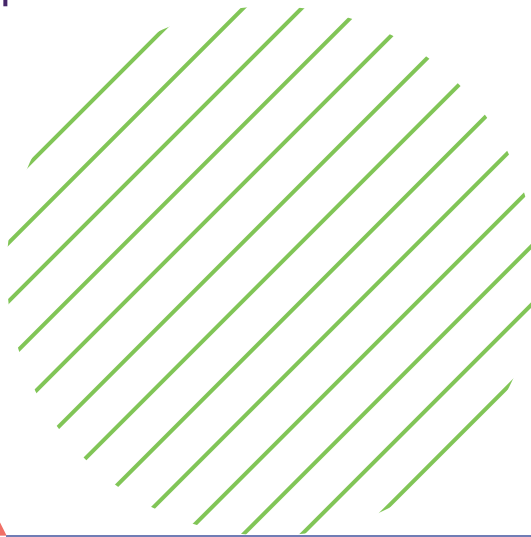
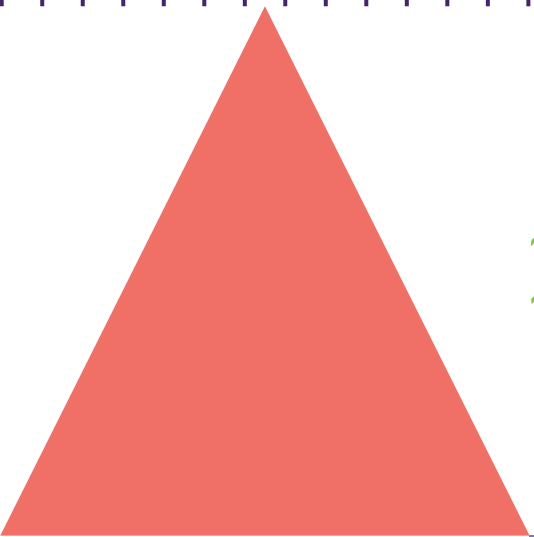
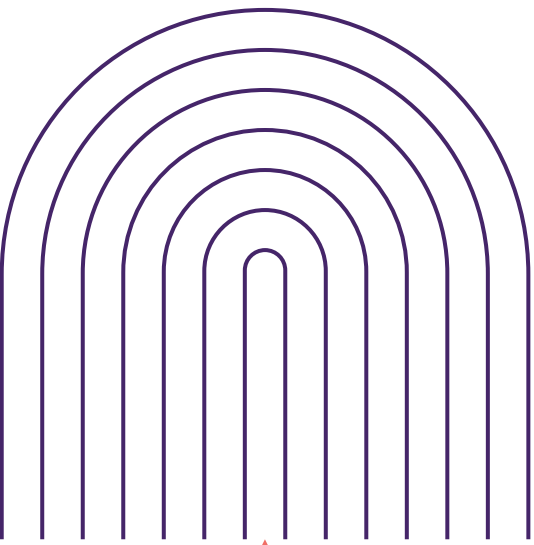


# Gender inequality in the Grampians region:

*Current trends and key indicators*

2nd edition - June 2024





June 2024

**Women's Health Grampians**

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Women's Health Grampians (WHG) is a not-for-profit organisation working to improve women's equality, health and wellbeing across the Central Highlands, Grampians Pyrenees and Wimmera areas of Victoria.

Established in 1991, WHG is one of twelve women's health services funded by the Victorian Government. WHG works closely with all levels of government, community and business partners to achieve better public policy and services for women, across our key priority areas: prevention of violence against women; increasing access to sexual and reproductive health services and improving gender equality outcomes in our region.

## Acknowledgment of Country

Women's Health Grampians acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways and skies where we live, work and play across the Gariwerd/Grampians region: the Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung, Djab Wurrung, Wurundjeri, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Peoples.

We recognise the strength and courage of Aboriginal women and girls in our communities who bravely speak up against oppression and the consequences of colonisation and generously share their wisdom on family, country and culture.

We celebrate that this is the oldest continuous living culture in the world, and that sovereignty was never ceded. This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

*Women's Health Grampians is grateful for the assistance of Dr Cathy Tischler, Future Regions Research Centre Team Lead and Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, Federation University in reviewing this report.*

*The responsibility for any errors or inaccuracies in this report remains with Women's Health Grampians.*

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# Key findings

## 1. Education

- Women in the Grampians region are accessing education opportunities at similar rates to men. There is a higher percentage of women than men completing tertiary education, however this is not translating to leadership positions.
- Not all women have equal access to secondary and tertiary education, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women significantly underrepresented compared to non-Indigenous women.

## 2. Employment and economic security

- Men are more than twice as likely as women to work in full-time employment and women are more than twice as likely as men to work in part-time employment.
- Trend data shows the gender gap in full-time and part-time employment has shrunk since the 2016 census, however when compared to the state average, the gap is more significant in the Grampians region.
- Majority-female industries such as healthcare and social services continue to attract lower wages.
- A higher percentage of women in the Grampians region compared with men earned below the minimum weekly wage. There has been little change since 2016.
- Women experiencing additional structural barriers such as racism and ableism are more likely to earn below the minimum weekly wage than men and other women.
- The cumulative effect of lower wages, part-time work, and being away from the labour market to undertake unpaid care work results in women receiving significantly lower superannuation than men. Women are more likely to face poverty in older age.
- The entrenched stereotypes and associated status and remuneration that dictate the type of work considered acceptable for men and women must be challenged.

## 3. Leadership and decision-making

- The Grampians region is already making change towards gender-balanced leadership in our local governments and institutions but sustained and meaningful action is needed if we are to reach gender parity in leadership.
- In Victoria in 2024, there were 23 out of 79 local councils with a majority of women councillors, compared with 15 in 2016. While female representation is increasing in the Grampians region, it remains lower than the state average.
- Men continue to dominate leadership positions in majority-female industries across the region.

## 4. Home, family and caring responsibilities

- Women complete significantly more unpaid domestic work and childcare than men.
- Childcare options across the Grampians region are limited, with many areas described as 'childcare deserts'. This has a significant impact on women's ability to work and long-term financial security.
- Across the Grampians region, women hold the greater weight of informal caregiving than men, and at a higher rate than the state average.
- Gender stereotypes limit the opportunities of both women and men. Urgent action is required to address the social norms associated with work and caring roles and foster more equitable access to opportunities.



# Introduction

In order to create a society that is safe, healthy and free from violence, we must ensure that everyone, regardless of gender and other intersectional factors such as ethnicity, disability and sexuality, are equal and respected in all areas of life. This report provides a snapshot of the current state of gender inequality in the Grampians region of Victoria across a number of indicators, as a way of measuring progress towards a safer and more equitable community.

In 2018, Women's Health Grampians (WHG) published the first *Gender Inequality in the Grampians Region: Current data and trends of key indicators*<sup>1</sup> report which provided a baseline against which to measure impact over the long term, following the establishment of the CoRE (Communities of Respect and Equality) Alliance in 2016. Eight years since CoRE began, and six years since the last report was published, WHG has revisited the report to gauge progress, unanticipated changes and areas to focus on across four key gender equality indicators for our region.

This report considers the gender gap between men and women across a number of measures of equality - noting that data on gaps for gender-diverse people is limited. The results continue to identify significant and entrenched gender gaps, and also highlight the impacts on women from diverse backgrounds, including First Nations women, women with disabilities, women from culturally and marginalised backgrounds, and people from LGBTIQ+ communities, where that data is available.

A projected timeline to reach gender equality across the different indicators based on the current gap and rate of change is also provided in this report. A comparison with the 2018 edition gender gap timeline shows that progress is underway across three indicators.

## About the CoRE Alliance

CoRE (Communities of Respect and Equality) is a partnership of organisations, businesses, clubs and groups who share a vision for safe, equal and respectful communities in the Grampians region. Led by WHG, CoRE member organisations commit to the *CoRE Strategy to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children 2021-2025*, which guides individual and collective work fostering communities of respect, equality and preventing violence against women.

## Selecting gender equality indicators

The indicators selected for this report are based on a 2018 review which identified local, measurable and publicly available indicators for the Grampians region which are aligned to those used by a range of bodies, including the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and the Gender, Institutions and Development Database. More information on how these were selected is provided in the original 2018 report. The indicators in the 2024 report are:

- Education
- Employment and economic security
- Leadership and decision-making
- Home, family and caring responsibilities

This edition of the *Gender Inequality in the Grampians* report has also gathered more information about the way in which these indicators impact on women from a range of different backgrounds and intersectional identities, where possible.

## Methodology

This report measured gender inequality across the following indicators:

- Education;
- Employment and economic security;
- Leadership and decision-making; and
- Home, family and caring responsibilities.

The report utilises publicly available quantitative data to provide a snapshot of the current state of gender inequality in the Grampians region.

The sources of data utilised for this project included:

- Census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Victorian Women’s Health Atlas
- Local government data including websites and annual reports
- Regional specific data sources
- Grey literature, insight papers
- Research reports and academic literature

Based on the methodology used within the Global Gender Gap Report<sup>2</sup> and the Gender, Institutions and Development Database<sup>3</sup> this research measures the gender pay gap on three key indicators. The closing of the gender pay gap is presented in an estimated timeline. A comparison against the 2018 *Gender Inequality in the Grampians Region* timeline is included and shows where progress has been made.

*Note: The 2021 census was collected during COVID lockdowns in Victoria and some data should be viewed as a unique point-in-time as a result.*

## Limitations

Any measure of gender inequality is limited by the data available within the resources of the project. This report’s ability to measure all the themes identified among existing measures of inequality was limited by a lack of publicly available data for this region, a lack of sex-disaggregated data, and limited intersectional data. This may unfortunately result in a picture of inequality being reflected that does not consider the experiences of all members of the community.

Throughout this report, intersectional perspectives have been provided by WHG’s Equality Advocates - women from diverse background employed by WHG to advise CoRE member organisations on discrimination and opportunities for change and action.

## A note on terminology

WHG acknowledges that while gender is often portrayed as a binary between men and women, gender is much more diverse than this. While this report will largely focus on the experiences of men and women, we acknowledge that transgender and gender-diverse people also experience gender-based discrimination in many of the ways experienced by women, as well as additional and unique experiences of discrimination. Furthermore, there is an intersectionality of discrimination that can mean that not all women experience discrimination in the same way.



# About the Grampians region

The Grampians region of Western Victoria spans the traditional lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Wadawurrung, Djab Wurrung, Wurundjeri, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Jupagulk, Wergaia and Wotjobaluk peoples.

It incorporates major growth centres, regional towns and isolated rural communities, spanning the regional hubs of Horsham, Ararat, and Ballarat. It covers more than 48,000 square kilometres and is made up of 11 Local Government Areas: Ararat, Ballarat, Golden Plains, Hepburn, Hindmarsh, Horsham, Moorabool, Northern Grampians, Pyrenees, West Wimmera, and Yarriambiack. It incorporates three sub-regions: Central Highlands, Grampians Pyrenees, and Wimmera.

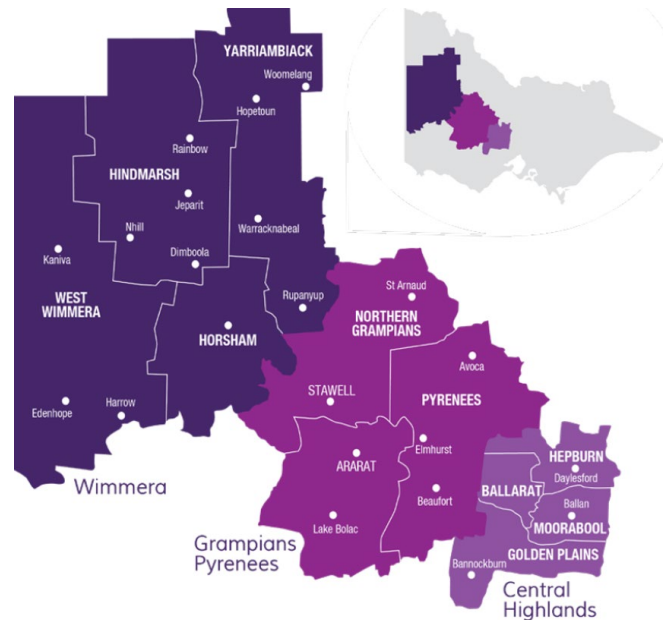
## Population

The Grampians region has a population of 261,192 people. People identifying as female represent over half of the population (132,411).<sup>4</sup> Since 2016, there has been a 2.35% population growth in the Central Highlands region<sup>5</sup> and 0.25% growth in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region.<sup>6</sup> Population levels expand considerably between ages 0 to 14, and again from age 55+ years.

## Rural / regional profile

The Grampians region comprises remote and outer regional areas to the west, and inner regional areas to the east.<sup>7</sup> People living in regional and remote locations have, on average, lower access to and rates of education, lower access to employment opportunities, poorer access to health and social services, and lower average incomes than people living in major cities or metropolitan areas.<sup>8</sup>

Women living in regional and remote locations experience further challenges. They are more likely to experience sexual harassment and violence, face workplace discrimination, and economic insecurity.<sup>9</sup> Cultural background, age,



ethnicity, and sexual orientation can further amplify barriers for women living in regional and remote locations.<sup>10</sup>

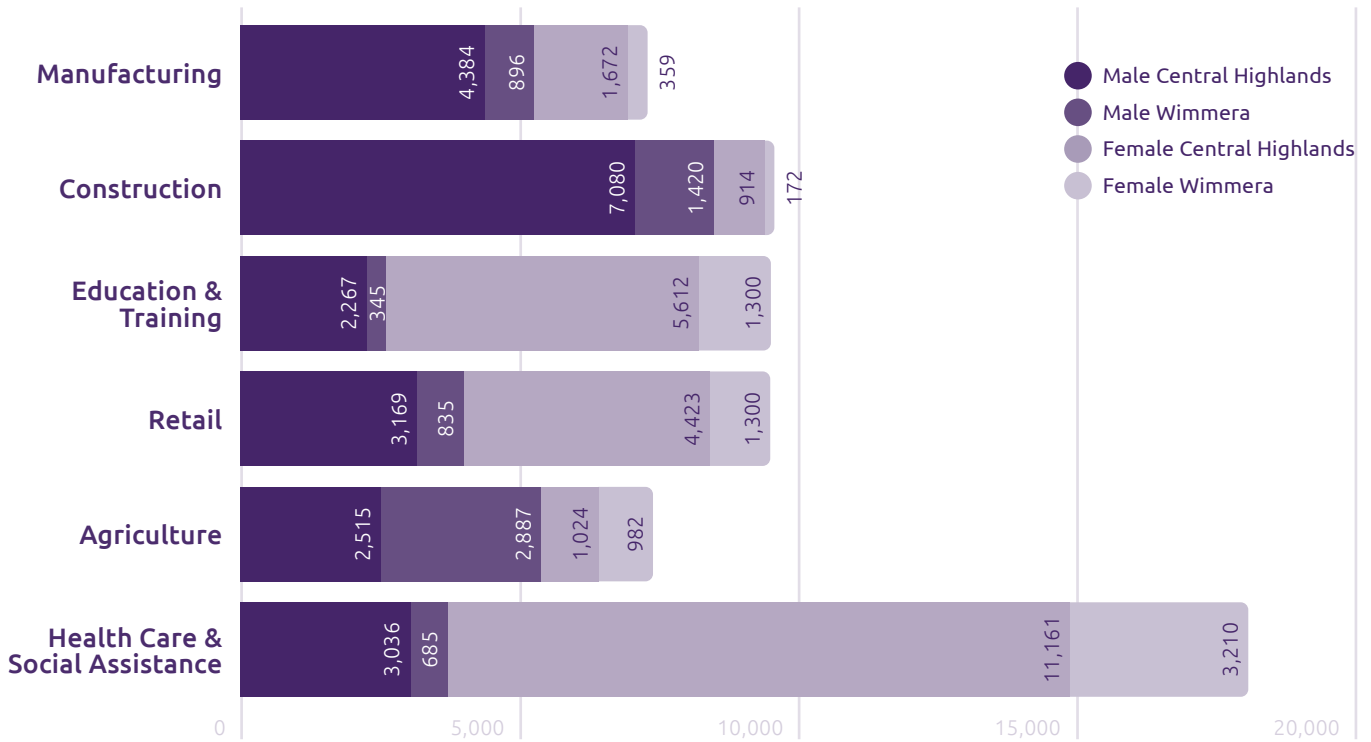
## Employment and industry profile

In the Yarriambiack, Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Horsham, and Northern Grampians local government areas, agriculture accounts for a fifth of the region's workforce.<sup>11</sup> Other major employers are the building and construction, manufacturing, health and community care, and retail sectors.<sup>12</sup> In the Wimmera, 9.8% of the construction sector are women. In agriculture, 24% of employees are women.<sup>13</sup>

Manufacturing and agriculture are also key industries in Ararat, Pyrenees, Ballarat, Hepburn, Moorabool and Golden Plains local government areas, however in Ballarat, health and education services account for half of the workforce. Ararat to the west and Bacchus Marsh to the east are smaller but also have significant service hubs.<sup>14</sup>

Healthcare and social assistance (majority-female sectors) are among the highest employers in the Grampians region, followed by agriculture, manufacturing, and construction (majority-male sectors). Healthcare and social services sectors employ women at much higher rates across the region (81.8% of employees), yet men dominate leadership roles and average remuneration in majority-female organisations is lower than in majority-male organisations.<sup>15</sup>

**Top 6 industries across the Grampians region**



Source: Victoria State Government. Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) Interactive Data Dashboard. NB. Database includes Grampians Pyrenees local government areas in the Wimmera. (Wimmera – inclusive of Northern Grampians,<sup>16</sup> and Central Highlands – inclusive Pyrenees and Ararat<sup>17</sup>)

**Socioeconomic status**

Socioeconomic variables such as employment status, working conditions, unskilled occupations, income, level of education, cost of living, unpaid work, food security, and low access to transport, housing and internet, are key determinants of opportunities and health outcomes. Lower socioeconomic status is associated with a greater risk of social isolation, illness, disability, and death.<sup>18</sup>

**Socioeconomic disadvantage ranking**

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average | Victoria State LGA Average |
|-------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2021        | 28.3                     | 40.4                       |
| 2016        | 27.1                     | 40.7                       |
| 2011        | 26.3                     | 40.3                       |

Source: 2021 Census, Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australian Bureau of Statistics.<sup>19</sup>

The Grampians region has a considerably higher rate of disadvantage. This data is not sex-disaggregated, however

a gendered analysis of the variables such as employment status and unpaid work discussed in this report provide insights. Women, people living alone, people with long-term health conditions, and lone parent households across all intersecting identities, are more likely to experience socioeconomic disadvantage.<sup>20</sup>

A report into the Wimmera Southern Mallee economic, industry, skills and demographic profile notes a correlation between low economic participation and socioeconomic disadvantage relating to regional/rural specific factors such as difficulty accessing the same services and opportunities as more populated areas.<sup>21</sup>

**First Nations people**

First Nations people have lived in Victoria for more than a thousand generations, maintaining complex societies with many languages, kinship systems, laws, polities, and spiritualities. Land, along with water and natural resources, is central to First Nations existence and identity. The devastation caused by colonisation, including the



separation of families, loss of ancestral lands, and attempted suppression of culture, are ongoing. First Nations peoples continue to engage in various forms of solidarity and resistance to the multiple economic, social, cultural, and geographic discriminatory factors that impact them.<sup>22</sup>

The Grampians region comprises the Traditional lands of the Wurundjeri, Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Warrung, Djab Warrung, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergeia, and Jupagalk people. The Grampians region has a higher percentage of First Nations people than the state average.

### First Nations People in the Grampians region

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |      | Victoria State LGA Average |      |
|-------------|--------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|
|             | Female                   | Male | Female                     | Male |
| 2021        | 1.6%                     | 1.7% | 1.4%                       | 1.4% |
| 2016        | 1.3%                     | 1.3% | 1.1%                       | 1.1% |
| 2011        | 1.0%                     | 1.0% | 1.0%                       | 1.0% |

Source: 2021 Census, General Community Profile by Local Government Area, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>23</sup>

## Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities experience multiple, intersecting layers of disadvantage such as economic insecurity, high levels of violence, social exclusion, and discrimination. Women with disabilities have reduced access to health information and are often excluded from conversations that affect their care and treatment. These factors, together with higher rates of all types of violence, lead to further physical and mental health impacts for women with disabilities.

The Census measures the number of people with a profound disability, using the definition 'people needing help or assistance in one or more of the three core activity areas (self-care, mobility and communication), because of a long-term health condition (lasting six months or more), a disability (lasting six months or more), or old age'.

In the Grampians region, there is a higher percentage of women with disabilities than men, and a higher percentage than the state average for both women and men.<sup>24</sup>

## People needing assistance with core activities

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |      | Victoria State LGA Average |      |
|-------------|--------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|
|             | Female                   | Male | Female                     | Male |
| 2021        | 7.4%                     | 6.9% | 6.7%                       | 5.9% |
| 2016        | 6.6%                     | 6.2% | 5.8%                       | 5.2% |
| 2011        | 6.9%                     | 6.4% | 5.8%                       | 5.2% |

Source: 2021 Census, Need for assistance with core activity by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>25</sup>

## People from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds (CARM)

Australia is a culturally and linguistically diverse nation – 29% of the population were born overseas; 48% had one or both parents born overseas; and there are 300 separately identified languages spoken in Australian homes.<sup>26</sup> Rates of low English proficiency can provide an indication of the cultural and linguistic diversity within a particular region.

### Low English proficiency

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |      | Victoria State LGA Average |      |
|-------------|--------------------------|------|----------------------------|------|
|             | Female                   | Male | Female                     | Male |
| 2021        | 0.7%                     | 0.7% | 2.8%                       | 2.5% |
| 2016        | 0.6%                     | 0.5% | 2.2%                       | 2.2% |
| 2011        | 0.4%                     | 0.4% | 1.9%                       | 1.9% |

Source: 2021 Census, Language spoken at home by proficiency in Spoken English Language by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>27</sup>

Overall, the Grampians region reports a lower percentage of people with low English proficiency than the state average, and a higher than state average percentage of people born in Australia (82.6% females; 82.8% males in the Grampians region compared to state average of 73.6% females; 74.1% males).<sup>28</sup>

## Country of birth (other than Australia)

A list of the top five countries of birth other than Australia for each regional hub (by local government area) in the Grampians region is provided below, to give some indication of migrant populations in those areas.

### Horsham Rural City Council

|                         | Nationality (number of people) |               |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
|                         | Female                         | Male          |
| England                 | 125                            | 105           |
| India                   | 91                             | 88            |
| New Zealand             | 45                             | 52            |
| China                   | 96                             | 44            |
| Philippines             | 26                             | 25            |
| <b>Total population</b> | <b>10,419</b>                  | <b>10,010</b> |

Source: 2021 Census, Horsham General Community Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>29</sup>

### Hindmarsh Shire Council

|                         | Nationality (number of people) |              |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
|                         | Female                         | Male         |
| England                 | 54                             | 59           |
| India                   | 66                             | 44           |
| New Zealand             | 40                             | 45           |
| China                   | 37                             | 12           |
| Philippines             | 10                             | 14           |
| <b>Total population</b> | <b>2,844</b>                   | <b>2,857</b> |

Source: 2021 Census, Hindmarsh Shire Council General Community Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>32</sup>

### City of Ballarat

|                         | Nationality (number of people) |               |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
|                         | Female                         | Male          |
| England                 | 2,353                          | 2,325         |
| India                   | 889                            | 1,082         |
| New Zealand             | 869                            | 791           |
| China                   | 420                            | 328           |
| Philippines             | 548                            | 299           |
| <b>Total population</b> | <b>59,025</b>                  | <b>54,740</b> |

Source: 2021 Census, City of Ballarat General Community Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>30</sup>

### Moorabool Shire Council

|                         | Nationality (number of people) |               |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
|                         | Female                         | Male          |
| England                 | 639                            | 572           |
| India                   | 354                            | 374           |
| New Zealand             | 250                            | 281           |
| China                   | 118                            | 114           |
| Philippines             | 94                             | 112           |
| <b>Total population</b> | <b>18,641</b>                  | <b>18,991</b> |

Source: 2021 Census, Moorabool General Community Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>33</sup>

### Ararat Rural City Council

|                         | Nationality (number of people) |              |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
|                         | Female                         | Male         |
| England                 | 109                            | 121          |
| India                   | 71                             | 109          |
| New Zealand             | 43                             | 89           |
| China                   | 53                             | 29           |
| Philippines             | 19                             | 22           |
| <b>Total population</b> | <b>5,606</b>                   | <b>6,273</b> |

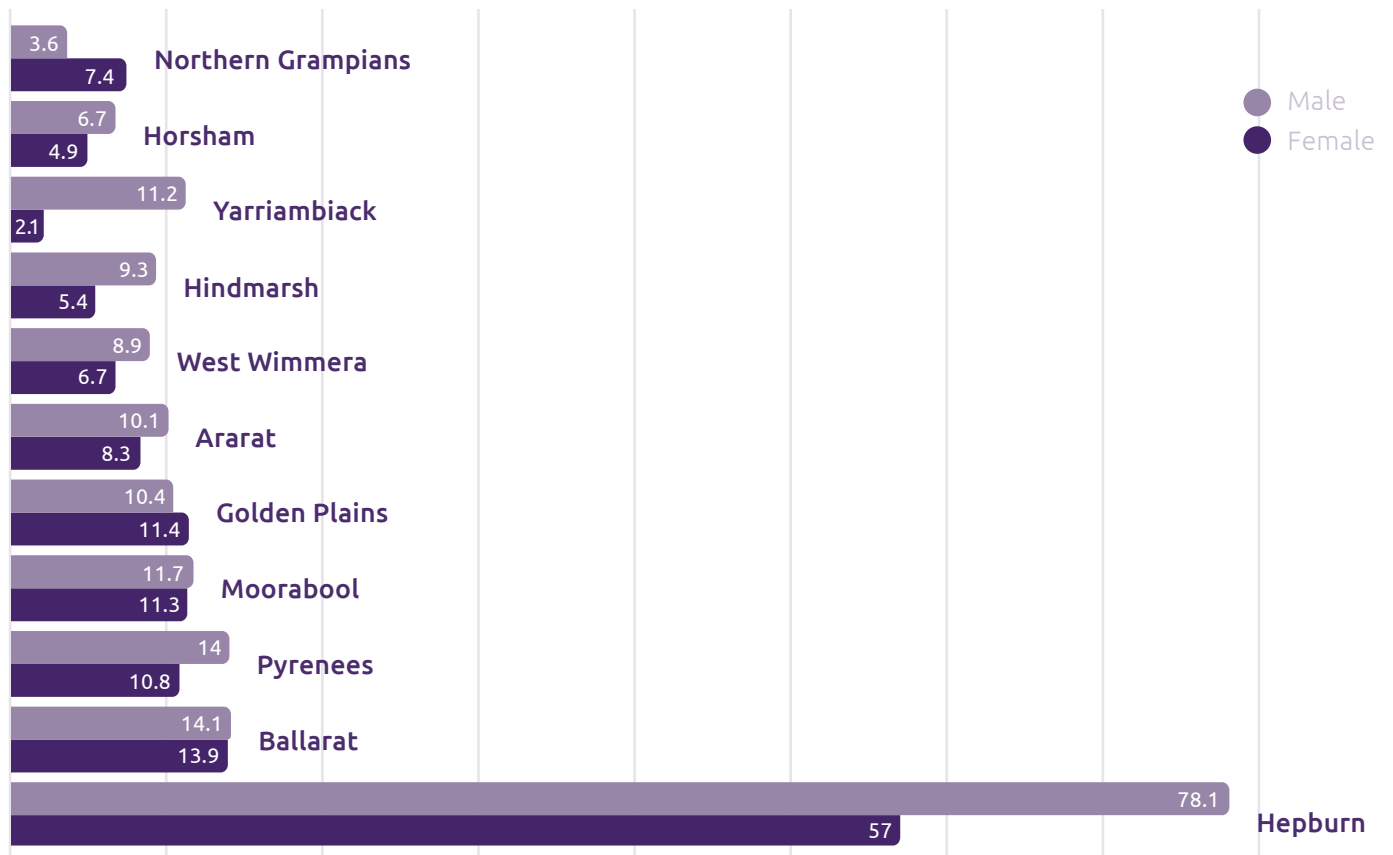
Source: 2021 Census, Ararat General Community Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>31</sup>

### Northern Grampians Shire Council

|                         | Nationality (number of people) |              |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
|                         | Female                         | Male         |
| England                 | 122                            | 95           |
| India                   | 83                             | 51           |
| New Zealand             | 34                             | 50           |
| China                   | 34                             | 41           |
| Philippines             | 50                             | 32           |
| <b>Total population</b> | <b>5,963</b>                   | <b>5,989</b> |

Source: 2021 Census, Northern Grampians General Community Profile, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>34</sup>

## LGBTQIA+ households in the Grampians region



Source: 2021 Census, Number and proportion of persons living in same-sex couples per 1,000 households, by municipality, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

## LGBTIQA+ people

LGBTIQA+ is an umbrella term encompassing a wide variety of sexual orientations and gender identities. It can refer to anyone who is non-heterosexual, non-heteroromantic, or non-cisgender. All sexual orientations and gender identities are represented in the Grampians region, with some local government areas servicing large LGBTIQA+ populations.

Hepburn Shire Council has the second highest number of people living in same-sex couples in Victoria and has a significantly higher proportion than other local government areas in the Grampians region.<sup>35</sup> While the Census only measures same-sex couples who live in the same household,<sup>36</sup> it does show a 67.7% increase in same-sex couples living together since 2016, and a 132.6% increase since 2011.<sup>37</sup>

LGBTIQA+ people face inequalities because of heteronormative assumptions and gender stereotypes that are perpetuated and reinforced through discriminatory policies, systems, structures, and cultures.<sup>38</sup> LGBTIQA+ people experience higher rates of sexual orientation / gender identity related abuse and harassment, higher rates of suicide attempts and ideation, and higher rates of homelessness relative to the general population.<sup>39</sup> This remains the case despite findings that show an increase in positive societal attitudes towards LGBTIQA+ people, and LGBTIQA+ individuals in Victoria self-reporting close community connections and healthy intimate relationships.<sup>40</sup>

## Gender Equality Indicator 1:

# Education

Educational achievement is key to advancing gender equality for women and girls. It contributes significantly to positive lifespan trajectories such as better health outcomes, stronger financial situations, employment in diverse sectors, increased political representation, more time in full-time work or study, and less time unemployed.<sup>41</sup> The completion of year 12 is a standard indicator of education attainment relating to these outcomes.

### Completion of Year 12

A number of challenges facing students in rural and regional areas in Victoria have been identified.<sup>42</sup> In regional centres (compared to rural and metropolitan areas), there are a higher proportion of disadvantaged schools as well as a higher proportion of vulnerable and disadvantaged students, and rates of absence are higher.<sup>43</sup> Rural areas (compared to regional and metropolitan areas) have the lowest access to funded kindergarten services; fewer secondary schools; a higher proportion of small schools (100 students or less); and a lower proportion of students who exit year 12 into further education and training.<sup>44</sup>

*“When I applied for special consideration for my year 12 exams, despite having reports from the Royal Children’s hospital I was told that they could not accept the recommendations. Their fear of me gaining an unfair advantage was more important than ensuring I had an equal opportunity to get into university.”*

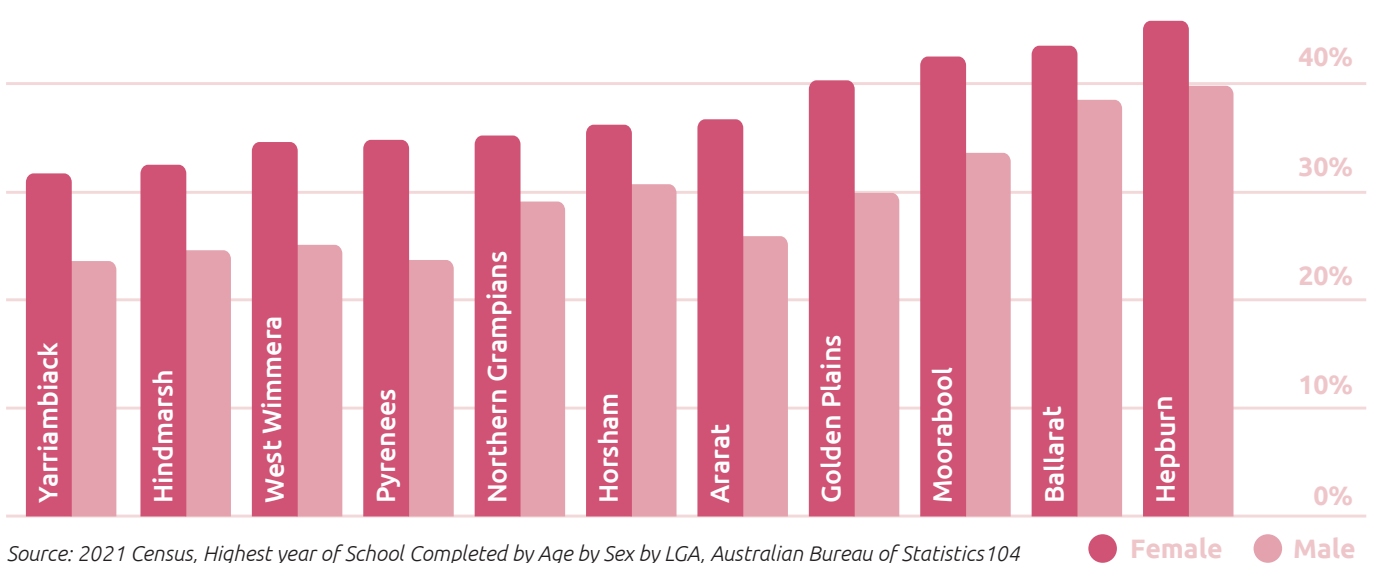
*Annabel, WHG Equality Advocate*

School communities across regional and rural areas are not homogeneous. While regional and rural centres experience barriers related to the above characteristics, they also differ from location to location and are contextualised through multiple variables including demographics, proximity to services / major population centres, local economies, housing, capacity to attract and retain teachers, and community size.<sup>45</sup>

Local, publicly available data on the rates of completion of Year 12 for young women with intersecting identities is limited.

### Completion of Year 12

State LGA average - 50%



Source: 2021 Census, Highest year of School Completed by Age by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics 104

## Higher education attainment

Across all local government areas in the Wimmera Southern Mallee region, women are more than twice as likely as men to hold a post-secondary qualification.<sup>46</sup> Despite this, institutional leadership roles in the region are largely held by men.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, women across Ararat, Pyrenees, and Central Highlands local government areas have higher percentages of tertiary education attainment than men across all qualifications.<sup>48</sup>

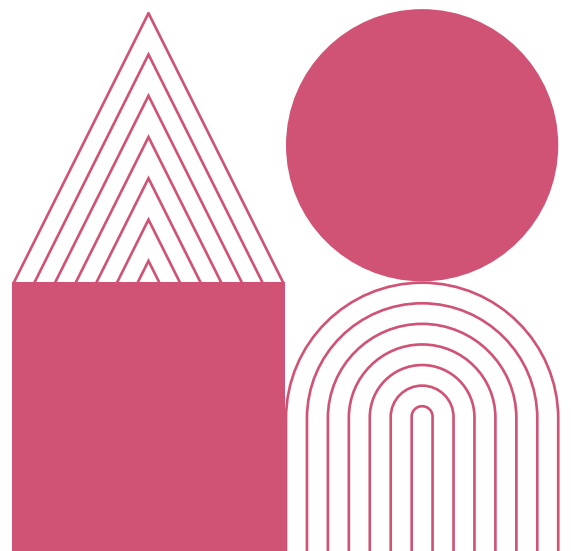
Local, publicly available data on the rates of higher education attainment for women with intersecting identities is limited.

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*“Navigating the realm of academia as a disabled student encompassed both tangible physical challenges and profound emotional costs... The physical environment often served as a barrier, and I was constantly left out because of it. The emotional toll was equally significant, as I grappled not only with the weight of my own limitations but also with the burden of being misunderstood and stigmatised by staff and students who believed disabled people just wanted more than other students.”*

*Christine, WHG Equality Advocate*

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## Gender Equality Indicator 2:

# Employment and economic security

Despite gains in women’s labour force participation, changing social attitudes towards women working and a strong rise in educational attainment, there remains a persistent gender gap in overall participation. Labour force participation and economic independence is necessary or women’s empowerment. There is also a growing recognition of all forms of women’s social and economic work, paid and unpaid.<sup>49</sup>

### Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is an internationally established measure of women’s position in the economy in comparison to men’s, measuring the difference between the average earnings of women and men in the workforce across their lifetime.<sup>50</sup> It is distinct from unequal pay, where two people are paid different amounts for performing the same work or role, which is unlawful.<sup>51</sup>

On average, women earn \$26,596 less than men in Australia each year; women are 1.5 times more likely to be in the lowest earning bracket and men are twice as likely to be in the highest; and every private industry with over 100 staff members in Australia has a gender pay gap that favours men.<sup>52</sup>

Majority-male industries play a greater role in higher gender pay gaps in relation to performance pay (i.e. bonuses / allowances) and other additional remuneration (i.e. superannuation).<sup>53</sup> The gender pay gap is even apparent in sectors which predominantly employ women, due to disproportionately low numbers of women in leadership roles.<sup>54</sup> The gender pay gap is influenced by a number of discriminatory social and workforce factors that contribute to women’s higher likelihood of reduced earnings compared to men, impacting on their lifetime economic security, including:

- Women’s disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and caring work
- High rates of part-time work across intersecting identities
- Discriminatory hiring and pay decisions
- Lack of or limited workplace flexibility (especially in leadership roles)
- Wage discrepancies across female-dominated and male-dominated industries
- Impacts on career progression and opportunities due to caring responsibilities<sup>55</sup>

*“First Nations children are so drastically over represented in foster care and out of home care. This often means being asked by family or community members to provide short or long-term care of kids who need a place. This impacts employment. More time taken away from the workplace leading to frustrations with the backlog of work. I no longer take kids into my home as it impacted so greatly on my employment. I miss this and would like to support my community more.”*

*Lyndel, WHG First Nations Health Promotion Officer*

## Rates of full time and part time employment

### Part time employment

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |       | Victoria State LGA Average |       |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Female                   | Male  | Female                     | Male  |
| 2021        | 48.9%                    | 20.3% | 46.4%                      | 21.6% |
| 2016        | 49.8%                    | 19.2% | 47.2%                      | 20.0% |
| 2011        | 48.9%                    | 17.4% | 46.1%                      | 17.8% |

*Source: 2021 Census, Labour Force Status by Employment type, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>56</sup>*

## Full time employment

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |       | Victoria State LGA Average |       |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Female                   | Male  | Female                     | Male  |
| 2021        | 39.1%                    | 69.9% | 41.4%                      | 67.9% |
| 2016        | 38.2%                    | 69.4% | 40.8%                      | 69.0% |
| 2011        | 39.7%                    | 72.4% | 42.2%                      | 71.5% |

Source: 2021 Census, Labour Force Status by Employment type, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>57</sup>

Broadly speaking, more men work full-time than women, however the gap between women and men in full-time or part-time work is decreasing. The imbalance in the proportion of women and men working in full-time roles is similar in the public sector to that in the private sector in Australia.<sup>58</sup> Consistent with the pattern across the rest of Victoria the female participation rate in the Grampians region is significantly lower than the male participation rate.<sup>59</sup>

Local, publicly available data on the rates of full time and part time employment for women with intersecting identities is limited.

*"A big percentage of women from migrant backgrounds are still living with the reality of underemployment, unemployment, and under-skilling in not just (locally) but whole of Australia because we have to start from scratch and all our experiences, qualifications, and skills are not considered."*

Leena, WHG Equality Advocate

## Below minimum weekly wage

In 2021, the Australian minimum weekly wage was \$772.60.<sup>60</sup> A much higher percentage of women in the Grampians region (48.2%) compared with men in the Grampians region (35.8%) earn below the minimum weekly wage. There has been little change since 2016.

*"As a woman from a migrant background on a student visa, I am not entitled to any Centrelink payments or any loans to ease the financial burden for me. I am emotionally drained and exhausted and constantly worried about meeting my financial commitments."*

Brenda, WHG Equality Advocate

## Below minimum wage

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |       | Victoria State LGA Average |       |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Female                   | Male  | Female                     | Male  |
| 2021        | 48.2%                    | 35.8% | 46.3%                      | 33.7% |
| 2016        | 48.2%                    | 35.7% | 45.7%                      | 32.5% |
| 2011        | 52.1%                    | 36.7% | 48.8%                      | 33.3% |

Source: 2021 Census, Total Personal Income (Weekly) by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>61</sup>

Local, publicly available data on the minimum weekly income for women with intersecting identities is limited.

A greater percentage of men in the Grampians Region (37.7%) compared with women (27.7%) earned above the minimum weekly wage.

The below table shows Above minimum wage - The percentage equals persons who are aged 15 years and over who are earning \$800 or more per week

## Above minimum wage

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |       | Victoria State LGA Average |       |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Female                   | Male  | Female                     | Male  |
| 2021        | 27.7%                    | 37.7% | 30.9%                      | 41.7% |
| 2016        | 26.4%                    | 36.9% | 29.3%                      | 41.0% |
| 2011        | 23.2%                    | 36.5% | 26.8%                      | 40.3% |

Source: 2021 Census, Total Personal Income (Weekly) by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>62</sup>

### First Nations women and work

As a result of historical and ongoing discrimination, First Nations people have, on average, lower employment rates than other Australians, are paid less, and are underrepresented in leadership roles. There is an employment gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians, with First Nations women experiencing worse employment outcomes.<sup>63</sup> Half of all First Nations people experience discrimination in the public sector workplace (50.4%), compared to only a third of non-Indigenous people (32.4%).<sup>64</sup>

*“As an Indigenous person, I can’t count how many times I’ve been told to get over it... Organisations can implement education. Education on the effects of those kinds of words and that kind of language.”*

*Shannon, WHG Equality Advocate*

### Women with disabilities and work

People with disabilities experience multiple challenges seeking and progressing at work, including attitudinal, physical and systemic barriers.<sup>65</sup> Approximately 18% of all Australians have a disability and just 53.4% of people with a disability who are of working age are in the labour force. By comparison, 84.1% of Australians without a disability and of working age are employed.<sup>66</sup> People with disabilities are less likely to be in full time employment (27%) compared to those without, and the median gross personal income is less than half that of those without disabilities.<sup>67</sup>

Women with disabilities face compounding discrimination in the workplace, impacting participation rates. They are more likely to work in jobs that are part-time, lower-paid, and informal, are less likely to be in the paid workforce, and receive lower incomes than men with disabilities.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, women with disabilities: experience higher rates of gendered violence (60% of those under 50) both within and outside of the workplace; experience sexual violence at three times the rate of women without disabilities; and are more likely to be sexually harassed in the workplace than women without disabilities.<sup>69</sup>

*“After my accident, I was even told that I would struggle to be a sales agent because I couldn’t wear high heel shoes anymore as I could only walk in sneakers at the time. Or that my disability would prevent me showing two story houses or blocks of land. Another company informed me I was unsuccessful for a position with their company because I did “not have the body profile of the type of person they like to employ.”*

*Christine, WHG Equality Advocate*

### Women from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds and work

People from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds are over-represented in insecure and low paid work, and face intersecting barriers to employment such as language barriers, accent bias or social exclusion.<sup>70</sup> These barriers may be attributed to a number of systemic workplace inequalities including: lack of recognition of overseas skills and qualifications; lack of access to upskilling opportunities; cost barriers to accessing job requirements; pre-migration experiences such as trauma; and lack of access to knowledge about Australian workplace processes and culture that result in taking low-paid and low-skilled positions that do not reflect previous experience and qualifications.<sup>71</sup>

Women from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds face particular challenges relating to employment and the workforce such as limited formal recognition of overseas qualifications, education and skills, and the need for access to childcare supports.<sup>72</sup> As a result, they are more likely to work in low income, low skilled, insecure jobs than Australian-born people, and have a significantly lower rate of workforce participation compared to culturally and racially marginalised men.<sup>73</sup> Women with low English proficiency may experience further barriers and psychological distress relating to isolation and communication problems that impact intercultural connections outside the home.<sup>74</sup>



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*"The interviewer told me that I am too qualified for this role, I don't have an Aussie accent, and his clients need people with that accent."*

*Leena, WHG Equality Advocate*

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### **People from LGBTIQ+ communities and work**

Trans women, men, and gender diverse people may experience complex forms of disadvantage and discrimination in workplaces. This cohort is also 23% more likely to be in casual employment than cisgender men and women, and more than twice as likely as cisgender men to be in part time employment.<sup>75</sup>

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*"Hyper fixing on intersectional identities is an incredibly common form of discrimination. Next time you're speaking to someone who is queer &/or disabled and are going to ask a question about either identity- please pause a moment and check, is this relevant to the discussion we're having? Or am I just personally curious and about to ask a very intrusive question?"*

*Annabel, WHG Equality Advocate*

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## Gender Equality Indicator 3:

# Leadership and decision-making

Gender parity in leadership within organisations has been shown to have a positive impact on organisations and the wider community. More women in leadership is a key element of equality as gender stereotypes are challenged and decision-making that is more representative of the community is supported.

### Chief Executives, general managers or legislators

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |       | Victoria State LGA Average |       |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Female                   | Male  | Female                     | Male  |
| 2021        | 27.2%                    | 72.8% | 30.5%                      | 69.5% |
| 2016        | 23.6%                    | 76.4% | 26.2%                      | 73.8% |

Source: 2021 Census, Labour Force Status by Occupation by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>76</sup>

There has been a small increase in women in CEO, General Manager, and Legislator roles (3.6%) and a small decrease in men in leadership roles (4.6%) in the Grampians region since 2018.

In the Grampians region, research has been conducted into the unique gendered challenges faced by women working in the Victorian public sector in a rural location. A lack of childcare availability, limited flexibility in senior management roles, fewer leadership opportunities due to executives (often men) staying in roles for lengthy periods, and career limitations based on location, are contributing barriers to women’s leadership in a rural Grampians setting.<sup>77</sup> This is despite the fact that women hold a higher rate of bachelor’s degree, graduate diploma or postgraduate qualifications compared with men.<sup>78</sup>

Local, publicly available data on leadership representation for women with intersecting identities is limited.

*“I have an undergraduate degree in Law ... and I have over five years of work experience so I was confident my skills, qualifications, and experience would be good enough to get a job in Australia. I was in for a rude awakening!”*

*Brenda, WHG Equality Advocate*

### Local Councillors

Throughout Victoria, female councillor representation reached a high of 43.8% in 2023, compared with 37% in 2016. There are now 23 local councils in Victoria with a majority of women councillors (out of 79 councils in total), compared with 15 in 2016.<sup>79</sup> While female representation is increasing in the Grampians region, it remains lower than the state average.

#### Local Councillors in the Grampians region

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |       | Victoria State LGA Average |       |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Female                   | Male  | Female                     | Male  |
| 2020        | 35.4%                    | 61.8% | 42.7%                      | 56.9% |
| 2016        | 29.0%                    | 71.0% | 37.1%                      | 62.9% |

Source: Victorian Electoral Commission. Gender equity in local government: research companion. Local Government Victoria<sup>80</sup>

## Intersecting identities and leadership

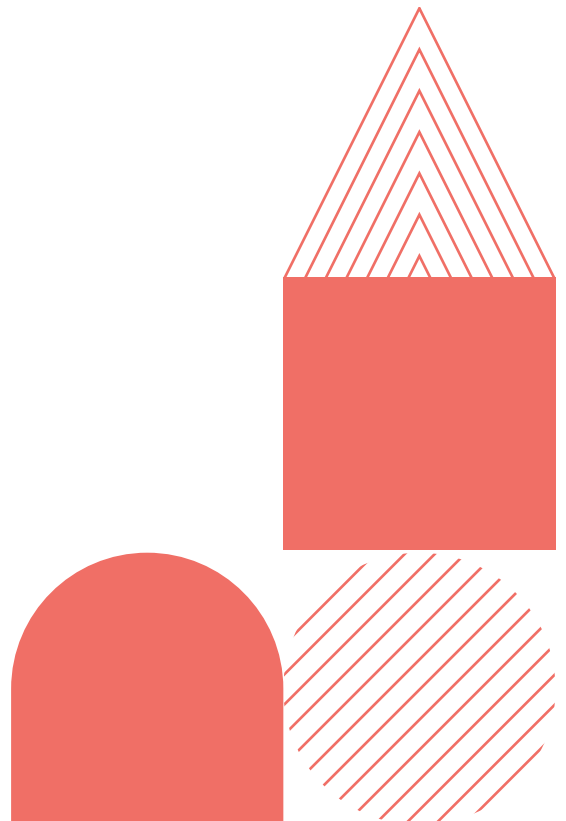
Women's intersecting identities also contribute to women accessing senior roles. Women with disabilities are underrepresented in leadership roles; culturally and racially marginalised women are underrepresented in leadership roles; some members of the LGBTQI+ community are less likely to access leadership opportunities and career progression opportunities (particularly bisexual and pansexual women); and transgender people and gender-diverse people are underrepresented in managerial roles - however this underrepresentation is greater for transgender women.<sup>81</sup> Lesbian women report holding senior managerial positions at similar rates to straight and gay men.<sup>82</sup>

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*"I don't see leaders who look like me. One thing I am looking forward to once I become an Australian citizen (dual citizen with Filipino citizenship) is being able to vote during election time and choose leaders whose policies, advocacies, and engagements contribute to making women like me more visible, heard, and considered in decision-making."*

*Katrina, WHG Migrant and Refugee Health Equality Advisor*

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## Gender Equality Indicator 4:

# Home, family and caring responsibilities

### Childcare

Research into the gendered challenges faced by women working rurally in the Grampians region found that a lack of childcare options, as well as challenges related to distance between their workplace and school or childcare, constrained women’s ability to participate in the workforce.<sup>83</sup> Further consequences include life-long financial and careers impacts on women, and child development concerns.<sup>84</sup>

A childcare desert is defined as a populated area where children under five outnumber the available childcare places by 3:1 or more.<sup>85</sup> Across the Grampians region there are approximately 3.9 children per childcare place available.<sup>86</sup> Hepburn and Moorabool local government areas have the highest childcare desert in the region (6.22 children per place in some areas).<sup>87</sup> People living in rural areas, and particularly women in the Wimmera Southern Mallee, are experiencing the financial, social and professional impacts of low kindergarten and childcare provision.<sup>88</sup> Research conducted by the Mitchell Institute at Victoria University found a distinct correlation between wealth and childcare availability: notably, that the lack of access to childcare costs women earning the median wage about \$118,000 in superannuation over their lifetime.<sup>89</sup> Women’s interrupted participation in the workforce means they face a greater risk of economic insecurity and poverty across their lifespan and in retirement than men.<sup>90</sup>

*“Being a woman, having kids under my care and not having permanent residency here, all those things started working against me... and actually impacts my ability to get the right kind of jobs.”*

*Sumira, WHG Equality Advocate*

### Informal caregiving

Informal caregiving relates to the supervision or help provided by one person to another to assist with long-term illness, disability or issues related to older age. The demands of caregiving can negatively affect people in a number of ways including employment and capacity to earn, restrictions to social connection, and impacts on health and wellbeing.<sup>91</sup>

Local, publicly available data on informal caregiving by women with intersecting identities is limited.

*“I loved learning but teachers didn’t understand that my inability to consistently attend school or complete homework assignments stemmed from the fact that I was often occupied with the responsibilities of caregiving for my parents and brother. I had to discontinue my education after Year 11, as the prevailing stigmatisation within the school system made it untenable for me to continue.”*

*Christine, WHG Equality Advocate*

Across all eleven local government areas in the Grampians region, women hold the greater weight of informal caregiving than the state average, and at a significantly higher rate than men.

### Informal caregiving

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |       | Victoria State LGA Average |       |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Female                   | Male  | Female                     | Male  |
| 2021        | 14.3%                    | 9.6%  | 13.4%                      | 9.1%  |
| 2016        | 12.8%                    | 8.5%  | 11.9%                      | 8.0%  |
| 2011        | 16.5%                    | 11.3% | 15.5%                      | 10.4% |

Source: 2021 Census, Unpaid assistance to a person by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>92</sup>

## Unpaid domestic work

Unpaid domestic work is defined as work such as housework / cleaning, meal preparation and associated work, washing, gardening and yard maintenance, home maintenance, shopping, managing financial affairs, and maintaining household technology.<sup>93</sup> It does not include childcare responsibilities.

### Unpaid domestic work

| Time Period | Grampians Region Average |       | Victoria State LGA Average |       |
|-------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|
|             | Female                   | Male  | Female                     | Male  |
| 2021        | 29.1%                    | 11.4% | 26.3%                      | 10.6% |
| 2016        | 30.3%                    | 11.2% | 26.7%                      | 9.5%  |

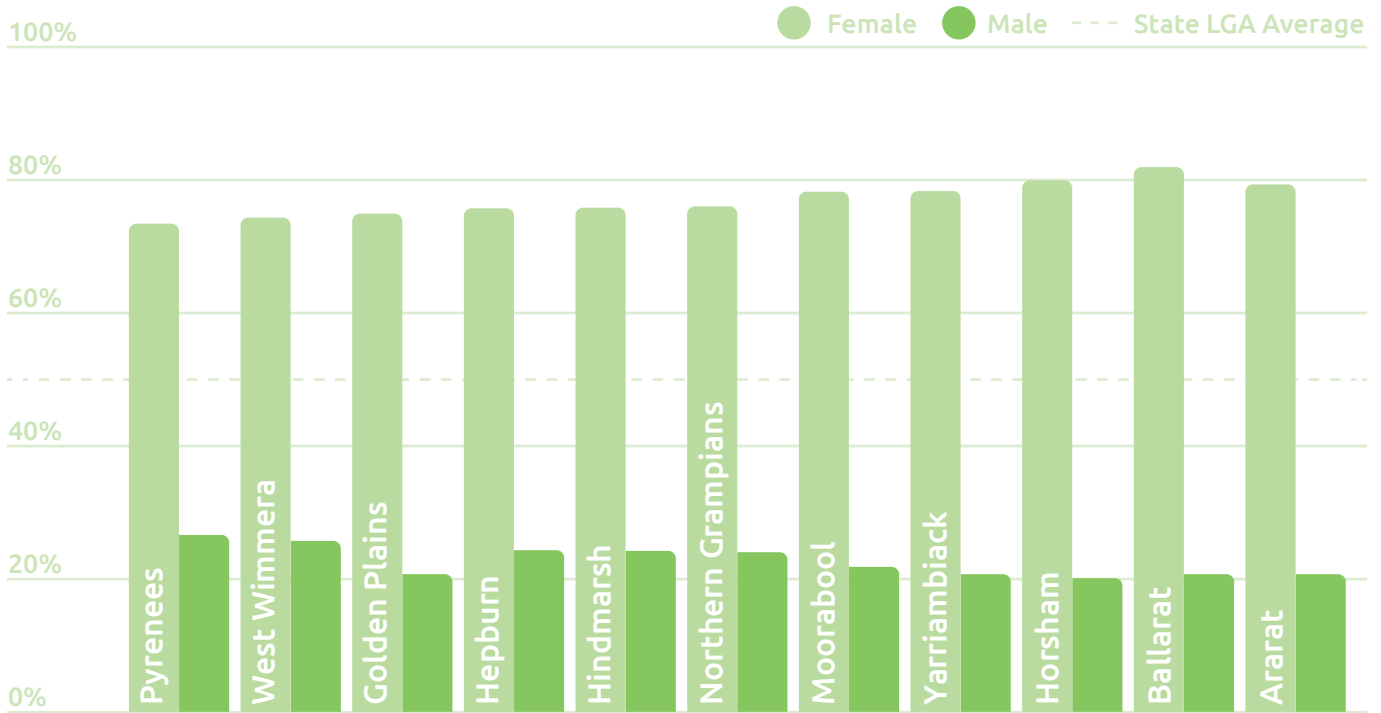
Source: 2021 Census, Unpaid domestic work by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>94</sup>

According to the 2021 Census approximately 26.3% of women across Victoria spent 15 or more hours on unpaid domestic work compared to 10.6% of men.<sup>95</sup> In the Grampians region, women in all local government areas undertake unpaid domestic duties above the state average - over twice the number of hours of unpaid domestic work compared to men. The discrepancy between men and women undertaking more than 15 hours of household duties per week is higher in many local government areas to the west of the region (greater distance from Melbourne), such as Hindmarsh (women 31.6% to men 11.9%); West Wimmera (women 32% to men 9.3%); and Yarriambiack (women 31.4% to men 12.2%).<sup>96</sup>

Women are significantly overrepresented in unpaid domestic work and continue to carry the burden of these responsibilities regardless of personal circumstances such as incomes, level of education, or relative location advantage. Similar to informal caregiving, unpaid domestic work is associated with harmful impacts of quality of life and mental health and wellbeing.<sup>97</sup>



### Lone-parent families



Source: 2021 Census, Lone parent status by Sex by LGA, Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>105</sup>

### Lone-parent families

The following table relates to a person with at least one child (dependent or non-dependent) usually residing in the household who has no partner residing in the same household.

Lone-parent families face greater financial hardship, with approximately 47% less disposable income than same-household partnered parents, and female lone parents are twice as likely to experience financial difficulties than female parents whose partner lives in the same house.<sup>98</sup>

In Victoria, female lone parents outnumber male lone parents by a ratio of four to one.<sup>99</sup> This ratio is higher than the state average across all Grampians region local government areas.

An estimated 34% of women living in lone-parent households are living in poverty, and approximately 25 to 40 percent of all lone-parent women have experienced family violence. This further compounds lone-parent hardship given the negative and pervasive impacts of family violence on health and mental health.<sup>100</sup>

*“I would say being a lone parent and First Nations woman, the issues I have faced have been multiple and complex. When seeking employment, I experience a lot of anxiety and trepidation when applying for a role. I go into a job interview explaining that I am a lone parent and will require flexibility around time to look after my child. I regularly feel like I am asking too much from the workplace and carry a great deal of guilt.”*

*Lyndel, WHG First Nations Health Promotion Officer*

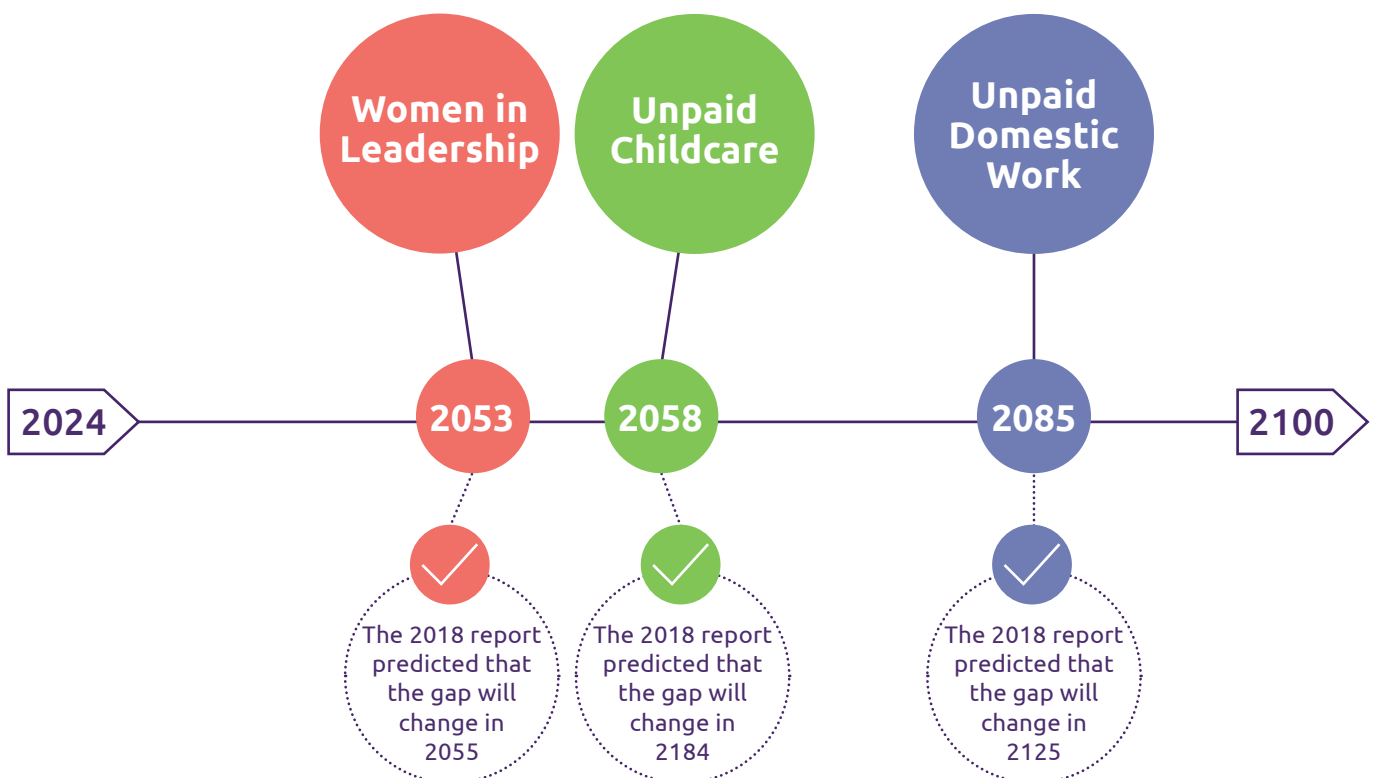
# Projected gender equality timeline

Measuring the gender gap, and the widening or closing of this gap across time, allows us to estimate the timeframe within which gender equality may be reached based on current trends. The following projected gender equality timeline is a measurement used within the Global Gender Gap Report<sup>101</sup> and the Gender, Institutions and Development Database.<sup>102</sup>

The timeline below shows positive trends toward closing the gender gap in three measures since the 2018 report - women in leadership, unpaid childcare, and unpaid domestic care.

Given the first edition of this report in 2018 demonstrated a widening of the gaps in the decade prior, this positive change could be reflective of a range of strategies. There are a multitude of factors that may contribute to the reduction in this gap, including policy and legislative changes, such as the Building Equality Policy or the Gender Equality Act; the impact of COVID 19 on flexible work practices; advocacy campaigns to encourage more women to stand for local council; or the ongoing work of the Communities of Respect and Equality (CoRE) Alliance. What is clear, however, is that intentional efforts to activate change are vital and organisations within the Grampians region must continue to commit to targeted actions in these areas to change these trends and close the gap completely, well before the projected timeline.

*The timeline below shows calculations of the projected timeline until gender equality is reached across three measures. It includes a comparison with the 2018 projected timeline.*



# Conclusion

This report provides a snapshot of the current reality of gender inequality in the Grampians region against select indicators. It shows where the indicators of gender equality are balancing in the Grampians region, and where progress toward closing the gaps are slow.

While these results provide an overview of the current gender inequality data and trends encountered by women in the region, they do not capture the disadvantage and discrimination experienced by local women with intersecting identities. First Nations women, women with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people, and women from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds are confronted with compounding forms of inequality across all indicators. Further research, supported by publicly available local data, is needed to assess the impact of intersecting structural oppression and barriers such as transphobia, racism, ableism, and homophobia on progress towards gender equality for all women and gender diverse people.

This report steers us towards opportunities for cultural change and progress towards safe, equitable and respectful communities free from violence. Although the gender gap is closing across women in leadership, unpaid childcare, and unpaid domestic care, the Grampians region continues to lag in comparison to the state average. Efforts toward closing the gender gaps across all measured indicators is required.





# Endnotes

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- 5 Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions Economics, 2023. Regional Economic and Development Strategy – Interactive Data Dashboard Central Highlands. Available at: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrJjoiMzc2NmVhNTItMzdjNy00NmNiLWJiZDI6ZTU4YTU4YmRmZTU2liwidCl6lcyMmVhMGJlLTNlMWMtNGlxMS1hZDZmLTk0MDFkNjg1NmUyNCJ9>
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# WHG women's health

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