

OLDER WOMEN in WESTERN AUSTRALIA

FACT SHEET

Produced for
International Year of Older Persons

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WOMEN'S POLICY
DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE

All of the information in this fact sheet refers to women in Western Australia, aged 60 years and over, unless otherwise specified. In some cases, these women have been referred to as 'Older Women'.

THE POPULATION

There are 140,118 women aged 60 years and over in Western Australia, representing:

15.4% of the female population in WA.

7.6% of the total population in WA.

There are 1,654,136 older women in Australia, representing 17.6% of the Australian female population.

Estimated Resident Population at 30 June 1998 (Preliminary).

Source: *Population by Age and Sex, Australian States and Territories*, June 1998, (ABS Cat. no. 3201.0).

PROJECTED POPULATION

In 2051, there will be 464,400 older women in Western Australia, representing:

29.7% of the female population in WA.

14.8% of the total population in WA.

There will be 4,214,000 older women in Australia, representing 31.6% of the Australian female population.

Source: *Populations Projections, 1997 to 2051*, (ABS Cat. no. 3222.0).

URBANISATION

75.2% of older women live in Perth and a further 3.2% live in Mandurah.

27.1% of Indigenous older women live in the Perth ATSIC Region.

Perth Statistical Division, City of Mandurah, Perth ATSIC Region.

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*.

OVERSEAS BORN

51,006 (38.8%) of older women were born overseas.

22,358 (17.0%) of older women were born in a non-English speaking country.

6,086 (27.0%) of these women do not speak English well or do not speak English at all.

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*, (unpublished data).

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Of the total population in WA

3.0% (50,793) are Indigenous persons.

1.5% are Indigenous females.

0.9% of all older women are Indigenous.

Of the Indigenous population in WA

4.8% (1,243) of women are older women.

4.0% (1,008) of men are older men.

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*.

MARITAL STATUS

	Women	Men
Married	51.4%	77.2%
Separated/divorced	8.3%	9.5%
Never married	3.7%	5.6%
Widowed	38.5%	10.2%

Percentage of each population group aged 60 years or more.

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*, (unpublished data).

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

	Women	Men
Living alone in private dwelling	30.1%	14.5%
Living in accommodation for the retired or aged (selfcare)	4.1%	1.8%
Living in accommodation for the retired or aged (cared)	3.1%	1.2%
Living in a Nursing Home	2.8%	1.4%

Percentage of each population group aged 60 years or more.

A person may be counted in more than one category.

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*, (unpublished data).

CULTURE AND LEISURE

Visited the cinema	40.0%
Visited National, State or local library	37.8%
Visited botanical gardens	36.2%
Visited animal or marine park	24.3%
Visited art gallery	18.1%

Participation Rates.

Source: *Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues*, March 1995, (unpublished data).

OTHER HEALTH INDICATORS

Have had mammograms	54.8%
Have had a hysterectomy	38.5%
Have had a pap test	60.6%
Currently use HRT	20.5%

Source: *National Health Survey*, 1995, (unpublished data).

HEALTH SYSTEM

80.6% of older women are Government Health Card Holders

49.7% of older women have Private Health Insurance

Source: *National Health Survey*, 1995, (unpublished data).

WOMEN PROVIDED WITH INFORMAL CARE

12.7% of older women are provided with care.

Informal care: Personal/self-care activities, mobility, verbal communication.

Source: *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers*, 1993, (unpublished data).

SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

25.6% of older women participate in sport or physical activities, compared with 68.6% of females aged 18 to 24 years. Main activities of older women include aerobics/fitness, lawn bowls, swimming and golf.

Source: *Participation in Sport and Physical Activities*, Australia, 1997-98, (unpublished data).

HEALTH INDICATORS

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Age (years)	Females	Males
0	81.6	75.7
60	24.3	20.1
70	16.0	12.7
80	9.1	7.2
90	4.6	4.0

Source: *Demography, Western Australia*, 1997, (ABS Cat. no. 3311.5).

LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH

	Women	Men
	%	%
Heart disease	30.4	30.3
Cancer	22.5	30.6
Cerebrovascular disease	14.0	8.4
Respiratory disease	8.0	10.6
Diabetes	2.8	2.7

Percentage of each population group aged 60 years or more.

Source: *Demography, Western Australia*, 1997, (unpublished data).

SELF ASSESSED HEALTH STATUS

Excellent	8.7%
Very good or good	60.7%
Fair or poor	30.6%

Source: *National Health Survey*, 1995, (unpublished data).

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

	1978	1998
Women	4.8%	9.1%
Men	23.0%	20.8%

Percentage of the civilian population in each group, aged 60 years or more, who were working or looking for work.

Source: *Labour Force Survey*, August 1978 and 1998, (unpublished data).

EMPLOYMENT

	Women	Men
Full-time	35.7%	68.9%
Part-time	64.3%	27.2%

Employed older persons as a percentage of the labour force in each group, aged 60 years or more. Full-time employment is more than 35 hours per week.

Source: *Labour Force Survey*, August 1998, (unpublished data).

MEDIAN WEEKLY INCOME

Women	\$ 178.00
Men	\$ 199.00

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*, (unpublished data).

LOW INCOMES

Living alone	78.5%
Partner in couple (without dependants)	84.0%

Percentage of older women in each group with individual incomes of less than \$16,000.

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*, (unpublished data).

PENSIONS RECEIVED

Age Pension	87,958
War Pension	1,496
Disability Support Pension	915
Widow Pension Class B	268

Source: Centrelink, September quarter, 1998, (unpublished data).

MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME

Government Benefits:

71.3% of older women and 60.7% of older men have Government benefits or pensions as their principal source of income.

Superannuation:

5.6% of older women and 12.1% of older men have Superannuation as their principal source of income.

Source: *Survey of Income and Household Costs*, 1996-97, (unpublished data).

SENIORS CARD HOLDERS

66.6% of women (91,258) and 63.5% of men (73,698) hold a Seniors Card.

Eligibility Factors: Persons need to be aged 60 years or over, permanent residents of WA, and, if in paid employment, working less than 20 hours a week.

Source: *Office of Seniors' Interests*, January 1999, (unpublished data).

AGE LEFT SCHOOL

	Women	Men
Never attended school	1.9%	1.5%
14 years and under	37.6%	41.4%
15	23.0%	20.8%
16	11.9%	11.0%
17	7.4%	7.3%
18 years and over	4.4%	6.6%

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*, (unpublished data).

EDUCATION

Among women whose highest qualification is a bachelor degree, 6.5% (3,200) are older women. 7.4% (354) of women with higher degrees are older women.

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*, (unpublished data).

WOMEN STUDYING

0.8% (1,080) of older women are studying, compared with 0.9% (956) of older men. Of those older women studying, 26.2% are studying full-time.

Source: *1996 Census of Population and Housing*, (unpublished data).

TIME USE OF OLDER PERSONS

	Women %	Men %
Personal care activities (including sleeping and eating)	48.3	46.7
Recreation and leisure	23.5	28.1
Domestic activities	13.8	10.6
Purchasing goods and services	4.2	3.5
Voluntary work and care activities	4.2	2.4
Social and community interaction	2.8	3.1
Employment and educational activities	2.6	5.0
Child care activities	0.6	0.3

Percentage of time spent on an average day.

Source: *Time Use Survey*, 1997, (unpublished data).

PRINCIPAL CARERS

4.3% (5,400) of older women are principal carers.

Persons aged 60 years and over who are the principal providers of care to people with disabilities or to older people.

Source: *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers*, 1993, (unpublished data).

RETIREMENT FROM FULL-TIME WORK

49.8% (76,869) of women aged 45-49 years of age have retired from full-time work, compared with 13.7% (22,192) of men.

45.7% of those women and 30.6% of those men continue to work part-time.

73.5% (89,383) of women aged 60 years and over have retired from full-time work, compared with 82.5% (91,637) of men.

4.4% of those women and 10.1% of those men continue to work part-time.

Source: *Retirement and Retirement Intentions*, November 1997, (unpublished data).

SMALL BUSINESS OPERATORS

Of the 60,200 female small business operators, 4.1% are older women. Of the 104,500 male small business operators, 6.1% are older men.

Percentage of all small business operators.

Source: *Characteristics of Small Business*, February 1997, (unpublished data).

Older Women in Western Australia, February 1999

DECISION MAKING

FEDERAL PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATION

House of Representatives	WA %	Aust %
Women	35.7	22.3
Older Women	0.0	0.7
Men	64.3	77.7
Older Men	7.1	6.8
Senate	WA %	Aust %
Women	16.7	31.6
Older Women	0.0	5.3
Men	83.3	68.4
Older Men	16.7	14.5

Percentage of members in each group.

Source: Internet www.apb.gov.au, December 1998.

STATE PARLIAMENT

Legislative Assembly

1.8% of all members are older women and 7.0% are older men.

Legislative Council

2.9% of all members are older women and 8.8% are older men.

Source: Parliament of Western Australia, December 1998.

STATE GOVERNMENT BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Older women represent 8.4% of all female members compared with older males representing 8.6% of all male members.

Source: Ministry of Premier and Cabinet, February 1999.

PERSONAL SAFETY

OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON

Assault victims:

Female	48.4%	
Young women (15-24 years)		19.1%
Older women	0.8%	
Older men		1.6%
Total assaults reported		14,597

Robbery victims:

Female	52.5%	
Young women (15-24 years)		10.6%
Older women	9.7%	
Older men		4.4%
Total robberies reported		1,770

For offences against the person reported to the police.

Source: Police Services, Crime Information Unit, December 1997 to November 1998.

BAG SNATCHING

There were 511 bag snatching offences, of which 27.0% (138) were against older women.

Source: Police Services, Crime Information Unit, November 1997 to October 1998.

OFFENCES AGAINST PROPERTY

Burglary and Stealing offences:

Female	45.8%
Young women (15-24 years)	8.7%
Older women	5.1%
Older men	5.8%
Total Burglary and Stealing offences	101,415

Reports of damage:

Females	45.0%
Young women (15-24 years)	9.2%
Older women	8.8%
Older men	6.5%
Total reports of damage	25,635

For offences against property reported to the police.

Source: Police Services, Crime Information Unit, December 1997 to November 1998.

FEELINGS OF SAFETY

69.1% of all women and 93.6% of older women do not walk alone in their local area after dark.

Of women not walking alone after dark:

58.8% of all women and 48.3% of older women choose not to walk alone because they feel unsafe.

67.5% of all women and 69.0% of older women stayed at home alone in the evening or night and felt safe.

Source: *Women's Safety Survey*, 1996, (unpublished data).

The Women's Policy Development Office provides expert advice to Government on issues affecting the status of women.

A team of consultants is available to work directly with public sector agencies to improve the responsiveness of government services to women customers. Consultants can provide strategic analysis and advice; expertise on women's issues; data about women customers; links with local, national and international women's networks; and staff development regarding gender issues. Contact Client Services Director Carey Drake-Brockman on (08) 9264 1920 or email wpdo@fcs.wa.gov.au or visit the website at www.wa.gov.au/wpdo/



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