



# Workforce Participation in the Illawarra

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Regional Development Australia - Illawarra

**By**  
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**IRIS Research** ABN 16 002 278 793

POST: Office A, Wing C, Level 1, iC Central, Innovation Campus, University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW 2522

OFFICES: iC Central, Innovation Campus, North Wollongong NSW 2500

Level 1, Suite F, 110 George St, Parramatta NSW 2150

Web: [www.iris.org.au](http://www.iris.org.au) | Email: [research@iris.org.au](mailto:research@iris.org.au)

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	i
List of tables and figures .....	i
Introduction.....	iii
Research approach.....	iv
Key Findings .....	v
Recommendations .....	ix
Environmental Scan.....	xi
<b>PHASE 1 - Qualitative Exploration.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Results of depth interviews with Illawarra residents .....	2
1.1. Sample profile .....	2
1.2. Perceptions of The Illawarra Region.....	2
1.3. Motivations to work for males .....	4
1.4. Motivations to work for females .....	6
1.5. Barriers to work .....	7
1.6. Impact on relationships .....	8
1.7. Feelings towards the Census trend data in the Illawarra .....	9
1.8. Case studies .....	11
<b>PHASE 2 - Quantitative Survey .....</b>	<b>16</b>
2. Results of Workforce Participation survey .....	17
2.1. Sample profile .....	17
2.2. Current workforce participation.....	18
2.3. Results of respondents who are currently in the workforce.....	19
2.4. Results of respondents who are not in the workforce, looking for work.....	26
2.5. Results of retirees .....	29
2.6. Results of redundancy receivers .....	34

### List of tables and figures

<b>Table 1.</b> Labour Force Statistics for 2016 (ABS Census).....	xii
<b>Table 2.</b> Illawarra – Comparisons with 2011 .....	xiii
<b>Table 3.</b> NSW – Comparisons with 2011 .....	xiii
<b>Table 4.</b> Australia – Comparisons with 2011.....	xv
<b>Table 5.</b> Illawarra – Differences over 25 years .....	xvi
<b>Table 6.</b> NSW – Differences over 25 years .....	xvi
<b>Table 7.</b> Australia – Differences over 25 years.....	xvi
<b>Table 8.</b> Selected Industries – Comparisons with 2011.....	xviii

<b>Table 9.</b> Selected Industries – Comparisons with 2001.....	xx
<b>Table 10.</b> Occupations – Comparisons with 2011 .....	xxii
<b>Table 11.</b> Occupations – Comparisons with 2001 .....	xxiv
<b>Table 12.</b> Sample profile.....	17
<b>Table 13.</b> Workforce participation by organisation .....	19
<b>Table 14.</b> Workforce participation by industry .....	20
<b>Table 15.</b> Last time actively looked for work .....	21
<b>Table 16.</b> Motivations to look for work by gender .....	23
<b>Table 17.</b> Challenges of looking for work by gender .....	25
<b>Table 18.</b> Motivations of look for work.....	27
<b>Table 19.</b> Challenges of looking for work .....	28
<b>Table 20.</b> Reasons of early retirement .....	30
<b>Table 21.</b> Motivations of look for work.....	32
<b>Table 22.</b> Challenges of looking for work .....	33
<b>Table 23.</b> Time of the redundancy payment.....	34
<b>Table 24.</b> Sector employed at the time of redundancy .....	35
<b>Table 25.</b> Company employed at the time of redundancy .....	35
<b>Table 26.</b> Effects redundancy .....	36
<b>Figure 1.</b> Working situation.....	18
<b>Figure 2.</b> Workforce participation by status.....	19
<b>Figure 3.</b> Working in an area below capability .....	21
<b>Figure 4.</b> Motivations when last looking for work .....	22
<b>Figure 5.</b> Challenges of looking for work.....	24
<b>Figure 6.</b> Retirement status .....	29
<b>Figure 7.</b> Look for ways to continue to work .....	31
<b>Figure 8.</b> Redundancy payments received .....	34

## Introduction

Over the past twenty years at least, there has been a notable deterioration in the level of workforce participation by males in the Illawarra, from already low levels relative to NSW and national levels. The Census data for 2011 indicated male participation in the workforce sits around 61%, versus 70% for NSW and 74% for males nationally; 10 points or more lower than elsewhere. This represents a large number of men of employable age who are not working and diminished productive capacity of the region. With regional unemployment for males also above State and national levels, this is a concern to Regional Development Australia (RDA) Illawarra. Simultaneously, the region has experienced a significant increase in female participation in the workforce, rising from around 45% in 1996 to over 50% in 2011.

In April 2017, the RDA Illawarra commissioned IRIS Research to explore and measure the attitudes towards and motivations of workforce participation in the Illawarra region which could provide insights that can help in future policy setting and advocacy to maximise regional productivity and community connectedness. The specific research objectives were:

1. Understand why the Illawarra experiences low levels of male participation and high levels of female participation in the workforce
2. Identify the motivations of, and barriers to, participation in the workforce in the Illawarra region; &
3. Identify the differences between females and males with regard to their attitudes and expectations of participation in the workforce.

## Research approach

A two-phase market research approach was taken for Illawarra Workforce Participation project.

**Phase 1** was a qualitative research piece designed to provide the 'story behind the data' and to inform the design of a secondary (Phase 2) quantitative market research project.

In-depth interviews were conducted from 6 to 9 July 2017. The target participants of telephone interviews were:

- ▶ Eight (8) males between 40 and 60 years of age who were not currently participating in full time work or who are not permanently in the workforce and had not worked in the last 6 - 12 months.
- ▶ Five (5) females of any age who were currently participating in the workforce and whose participation had increased in the last few years.
- ▶ Five couples (10 people) where the female was working whilst the male had not participated in the workforce in the past year.

**Phase 2** was designed to measure and test the motivations and barriers of workforce participation identified during the qualitative phase of the project. A total of 23 in-depth interviews were conducted with target sample groups; this was the best approach given the sensitivity of the topic and likely unwillingness of participants to share their stories in a focus group setting.

Quantitative market research was conducted 1 to 10 August 2017 via online survey. The target respondents of the survey were IRIS Research On-line Panel members who live in Illawarra region. Respondents were self-selecting and three \$75 prizes were offered as an incentive. Two hundred (200) completed responses were collected through the online survey.

## Key Findings

### Objective 1. Understand why the Illawarra experiences low levels of male participation and high levels of female participation in the workforce

According to results of ABS 2016 Census, male participation in the workforce has continued to decrease since 2011. In contrast, female participation has continued to increase, approaching national and NSW rates.

Males have continued to dominate sectors requiring labour such as manufacturing and construction as well as labour-intensive occupations (e.g. technicians, machinery operators and drivers).

Females, on the other hand, have started to dominate services by working as professionals or community and personal service employees working in sectors such as education, training, healthcare and social assistance.

Using qualitative and quantitative insights we have obtained through our research, we have identified the following findings addressing the decrease and increase in participation levels by gender.

1. **Low level of male participation** is indicated because:
  - 1.1. **Loss of traditional economy jobs**, especially coal mining, steel manufacturing and allied industries which have been dominated by males in the past. This has significantly limited job prospects for males in particular.
  - 1.2. **Redundancy payments have influenced male workforce participation rates, but more for psychological reasons than financial ones.** Redundancies have negatively impacted men's lives and family relationships. Regardless of the time of the redundancy, some males still experienced difficulties recovering from the negative impacts of the redundancy experience on their mental state and self-esteem. In turn, these men are less interested in, or are unable to find new work.
  - 1.3. **There is a trend among males to retire early.** Financial reasons were a major motivator for males to work. When they feel financially stable, they choose retirement to pursue their lifetime interests such as travel and spending time with their families.
  - 1.4. **Changing child care roles.** Men are more interested and willing to take-on larger childcare roles in their families than past generations, reducing their availability and interest to re-enter the workplace in traditional forms.

2. **High level of female participation** is indicated because:

- 2.1. **Cultural changes.** Females today are sought-after in the workplace and have few barriers to careers paths. Females also view workforce participation as increasing their sense of community connectedness.
- 2.2. **Equal access to education and training.** Females have more opportunities to obtain appropriate skills to participate in the workforce at the levels they seek than in the past.
- 2.3. **Financial challenges.** Rising costs of living on Illawarra's families are forcing more females to enter the workplace.

**Objective 2. Identify the motivations and barriers of participation in the workforce in the Illawarra region**

The survey respondents and in-depth interview participants, who either have looked for work in the past or are currently seeking work, do so for highly personal motivations. Their motivations fell into three main categories:

1. **to improve their skills**
2. **to be a good role model for their family**
3. **to receive personal rewards through work.**

Those who looked for work in the past felt they struggled to present relevant skills to employers and to meet formal minimum qualifications levels.

Those who are currently looking for work, find the level of competition challenging. They are also discouraged by the difficulties of finding relevant work in Illawarra.

### Objective 3. Identify the differences between females and males with regard to their attitudes and expectations of participation in the workforce

#### *General perceptions and attitudes*

Females are more open to consider working in the area even it is **below their capability** whereas males reject the idea of working in an area where they cannot use their real capabilities.

After retirement, males looked for ways to **continue working**. During that time, they witnessed discrimination on the basis of age, but not gender.

More males received **redundancy payment** than females. They experienced both positive and negative sides of redundancy. Regardless of whether they expected to receive the payment or not, the redundancy experience caused males to consider changes in their life plans to achieve financial stability. After receiving the redundancy males:

- Looked for work locally or out of the region
- looked for ways for self-employment
- Retired earlier than planned
- Their partners required higher earning capacity

#### *Current working status*

Males and females worked in the following sectors.

Males have **full time jobs** in a range of industries including:

- ▶ transport
- ▶ postal,
- ▶ warehousing,
- ▶ public administration,
- ▶ safety
- ▶ professional, scientific and technical services

Females have **part time jobs** in

- ▶ education
- ▶ training
- ▶ health care and
- ▶ social assistance industries

*Workforce Participation Motivations and Challenges*

Sex	Motivations	Challenges
<b>Male</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Do not display clear preference patterns.</li> <li>▶ Less motivated by extrinsically related features of a job such as personal improvement or being a role model, but more by intrinsically rewarding job features.</li> <li>▶ Family and social pressures of 'bread winner' status.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Transition from manufacturing to service-based economy</li> <li>▶ Lack of relevant skills</li> <li>▶ Lack of qualifications</li> <li>▶ Age discrimination</li> </ul>
<b>Female</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Females are more driven by personal motivations</li> <li>▶ They want to improve their personal skills where they can be good role models for their family.</li> <li>▶ Financial reasons are also important for females. Some have chosen to participate in the workforce to earn money.</li> <li>▶ They were forced to look for work since they needed a second income to reduce the pressure their partner felt.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Difficulty finding work related to their skills</li> <li>▶ Age discrimination</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

1. Develop a long-term strategy to create change in the attitudes of unemployed mature males towards acquiring new skills.
  - Collaboration with community capacity building agencies (including volunteer agencies) for programs aimed at re-engaging isolated, long-term unemployed males.
2. Collaborate with local education and training providers to develop professional development programs targeting isolated unemployed in the region.
  - Collaboration with local RTOs and skills programs to develop information, technology and communication (ITC) and other general employability skills for long-term unemployed.
3. Develop strategies with local RTOs to engage older ex-workers to deliver relevant training in labour-intensive skills such as construction and maintenance, which are in demand.
4. Develop strategies with local 'start-up' support agencies to support sole-trader business training for unemployed persons with labour-intensive skills such as construction and maintenance.
5. Advise Federal Government of Illawarra trends in mature age workforce participation and suggest ways of addressing the challenges they represent.
6. Advocate on the regional phenomenon of decreasing workforce participation by mature males and corresponding load of workforce engagement taken up by women.

### Policy and Advocacy Recommendations

Concerning gendered responses to mature age underemployment, government agencies responsible for labour market policy development should consider the impacts of increasing female participation in households where the male partner has been retrenched. Such advocacy would also address entrenched age discrimination in recruitment.

### Further Research Directions

In addition to public sector agencies involved in labour market analysis and policy initiatives, research institutes may also wish to study this shift in workforce participation patterns more closely. This would include bodies such as the National Institute for Labour Studies and the Centre for Future Work, with region-specific analysis by the University of Wollongong in conjunction with IRIS Research.

Key Actions:

IRIS Research and RDA Illawarra collectively propose the following actions being taken in order to contribute to the efforts made to improve workforce participation in Illawarra region.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1a. Advocate economic and social consequences of >45 year-old males low workforce participation rates in the region  1b. Advise Federal & State Governments of Illawarra trends in workforce participation and how to address them	Lead: RDA Illawarra Stakeholders: Advocate to Federal and NSW Governments and Illawarra stakeholders, including Illawarra Forum, Illawarra Shoalhaven Joint Organisation	December 2017 onwards
2. Develop strategies to address attitudes that prevent >45 year old males from acquiring new skills and choosing not to participate in the workforce	Co-ordinator: RDA Illawarra Stakeholders: Education and training providers, TAFE, Community Organisations, State & Federal Governments	a) Workforce Participation Innovation Sandpit – 6 December 2017 b) March 2018 strategies published
3. Develop strategies to re-skill mature aged males to meet the changing workforce demands	Co-ordinator: TAFE Stakeholders: UOW, RDAI, RTO's, State & Federal Government, Community organisations	March 2018

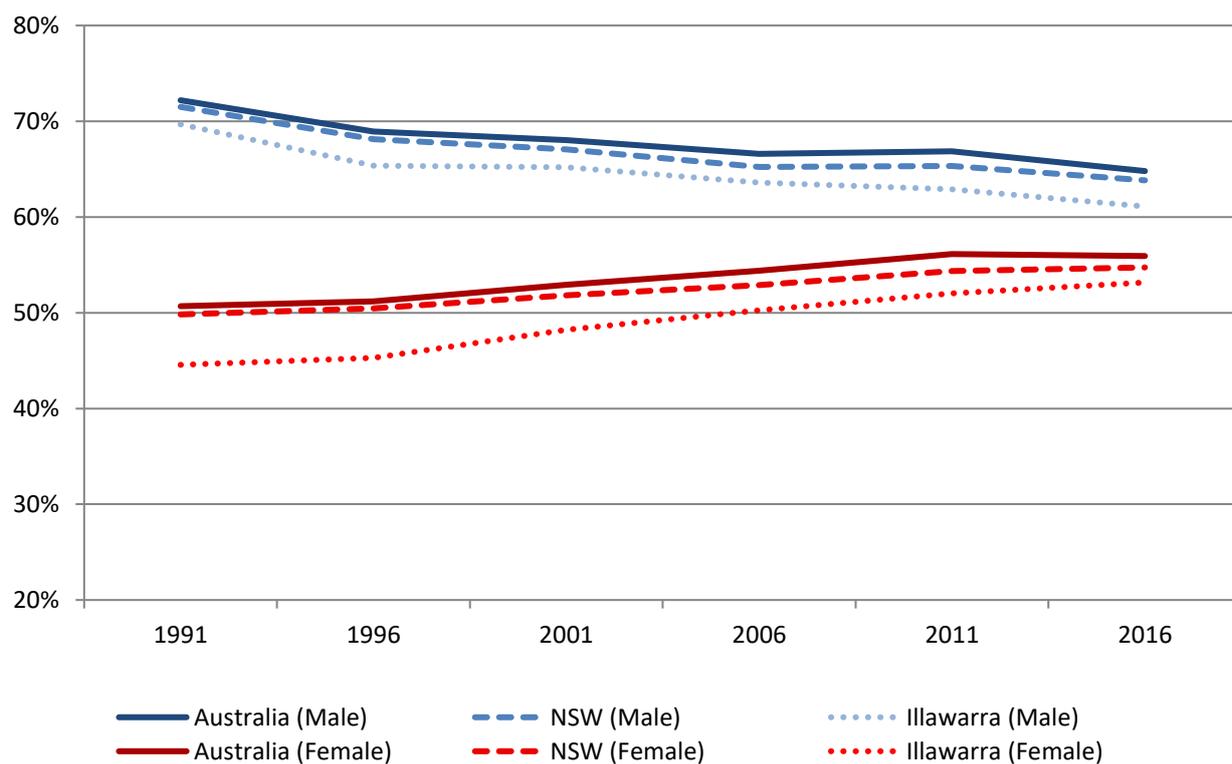
## Environmental Scan

### Census Definitions

- ▶ **'Labour force'** refers to both employed persons and unemployed persons who are actively looking for work.
- ▶ **'Working age population'** refers to all persons aged 15 years and over.
- ▶ **'Workforce participation'** is defined as the proportion of the working age population which is part of the labour force.

### Census 2016 results

According to labour force statistics from the ABS Census 2016, the decreasing trend of workforce participation among males living in Illawarra region continued. Female workforce participation, on the other hand, continued to increase to the point that the participation rate was close to state and national levels.



Labour force statistics from the ABS Census 2016 are presented in Table 1.

61.1% of the male working age population in the Illawarra participates in the labour force. This result lags behind both state (-2.7%) and national (-3.7%) levels. The population which is not part of the labour force includes students, retirees, stay-at-home parents/carers and unemployed persons who are not actively seeking employment.

The proportion which is not part of the labour force being overrepresented compared to NSW and Australia may be due to a disproportionately high number of 'sea-change' retirees attracted to the region and the growing tertiary student population attracted to University of Wollongong and other education institutions. For men in particular, another primary reason is the number of retrenched workers from traditional manufacturing industries who have not reskilled and/or re-entered the labour force.

53.2% of the female working age population in the Illawarra participate in the labour force. The Illawarra workforce participation rate for females also lags behind the NSW (-1.5%) and national (-2.7%) levels. The differences are lower compared to males.

**Table 1.** Labour Force Statistics for 2016 (ABS Census)

	Illawarra		NSW		Australia	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Labour force	71,421	65,297	1,898,353	1,707,533	6,029,727	5,441,565
Not in labour force	39,043	50,874	877,226	1,211,012	2,638,880	3,658,718
Not stated	6,426	6,661	198,479	201,292	637,206	631,184
<b>Working age pop.</b>	<b>116,890</b>	<b>122,832</b>	<b>2,974,058</b>	<b>3,119,837</b>	<b>9,305,813</b>	<b>9,731,467</b>
Workforce participation	61.1%	53.2%	63.8%	54.7%	64.8%	55.9%

### Trend Analysis – 5 years

Tables 2 to 4 compare the Census 2016 results with the Census 2011 results for Illawarra, NSW and Australia. The differences in workforce participation over the 5-year period are also reported.

For Illawarra, the male workforce participation rate has decreased 1.8% pts over the 5-year period. It is important to note that the labour force itself has not decreased over time. There are 2,790 more male workers in the Illawarra compared to five years ago. However, the increase in labour force has not matched the growth in working age population, resulting in a fall in the male workforce participation rate.

This result sits between the state and national levels. The male workforce participation rate in NSW decreased 1.5% pts while the national rate fell 2.1% pts. NSW accounted for over one third (34.6%) of the Australia-wide increase in the male labour force, which aids in explaining why the decrease in male workforce participation was lower for NSW than it was for Australia.

The Illawarra female workforce participation rate increased 1.1% pts over the five-year period, outpacing both the state and national levels. Female workforce participation in NSW increased 0.4% pts while the national rate fell 0.2% pts. Although female workforce participation in the Illawarra remains lower than NSW and Australia, it is climbing at a faster rate than elsewhere in the State or nation.

**Table 2.** Illawarra – Comparisons with 2011

	2011		2016		Difference (2016-2011)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Labour force	68,631	59,389	71,421	65,297	2,790	5,908
Not in labour force	35,238	50,014	39,043	50,874	3,805	860
Not stated	5,228	4,735	6,426	6,661	1,198	1,926
<b>Working age pop.</b>	<b>109,097</b>	<b>114,138</b>	<b>116,890</b>	<b>122,832</b>	<b>7,793</b>	<b>8,694</b>
Workforce participation	62.9%	52.0%	61.1%	53.2%	-1.8%	1.1%

**Table 3.** NSW – Comparisons with 2011

	2011		2016		Difference (2016-2011)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Labour force	1,779,793	1,555,066	1,898,353	1,707,533	118,560	152,467
Not in labour force	780,957	1,152,321	877,226	1,211,012	96,269	58,691
Not stated	163,558	153,459	198,479	201,292	34,921	47,833
Working age pop.	2,724,308	2,860,846	2,974,058	3,119,837	249,750	258,991

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Workforce participation	65.3%	54.4%	63.8%	54.7%	-1.5%	0.4%
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**Table 4.** Australia – Comparisons with 2011

	2011		2016		Difference (2016-2011)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Labour force	5,686,796	4,971,658	6,029,727	5,441,565	342,931	469,907
Not in labour force	2,304,959	3,424,348	2,638,880	3,658,718	333,921	234,370
Not stated	514,418	461,508	637,206	631,184	122,788	169,676
Total	8,506,173	8,857,514	9,305,813	9,731,467	799,640	873,953
Workforce participation	66.9%	56.1%	64.8%	55.9%	-2.1%	-0.2%

### Trend Analysis – 25 years

Tables 5 to 7 compare the male and female workforce participation rates in the Illawarra, NSW and Australia over the past 25 years. The differences between these rates over five-year periods are also reported. Over the past 25 years, the Illawarra male workforce participation rate has been decreasing at a slightly higher rate compared to the state and national level.

The Illawarra male workforce participation rate has decreased 8.6% pts over the past 25 years at an average rate of -1.7% pts per five-year period. The most significant difference occurred between 1991 and 1996 (down 4.3% pts).

For NSW, the male workforce participation rate decreased 7.7% pts over the past 25 years at an average rate of -1.5% pts per five-year period. Again, the most significant fall occurred between 1991 and 1996. 2011 saw a small rise in male workforce participation, up 0.1% pts.

At the national level, the male workforce participation rate fell 7.4% pts over the past 25 years at an average rate of -1.5% pts per five-year period. Similar to NSW, the male workforce participation saw its most significant decrease between 1991 and 1996 and saw a small increase in 2011 (up 0.2% pts).

Looking at female workforce participation, the Illawarra rate increased 8.6% pts over the past 25 years at an average rate of 1.7% pts per five-year period. This mirrors the degree at which the Illawarra male rate is decreasing.

For NSW, the female workforce participation rate increased 4.9% pts over the past 25 years at an average rate of 1.0% pts per five-year period. At the national level, the rate increased 5.2% pts at an average rate of 1.0% pts per five-year period.

**Table 5. Illawarra – Differences over 25 years**

	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2016</b>
Male participation rate	69.7%	65.3%	65.2%	63.6%	62.9%	61.1%
Female participation rate	44.6%	45.3%	48.2%	50.2%	52.0%	53.2%
Difference - Male		-4.3%	-0.2%	-1.6%	-0.7%	-1.8%
Difference - Female		0.7%	2.9%	2.0%	1.8%	1.1%

**Table 6. NSW – Differences over 25 years**

	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2016</b>
Male participation rate	71.5%	68.1%	67.1%	65.2%	65.3%	63.8%
Female participation rate	49.8%	50.5%	51.8%	52.9%	54.4%	54.7%
Difference - Male		-3.4%	-1.1%	-1.8%	0.1%	-1.5%
Difference - Female		0.6%	1.3%	1.1%	1.5%	0.4%

**Table 7. Australia – Differences over 25 years**

	<b>1991</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2016</b>
Male participation rate	72.2%	68.9%	68.0%	66.6%	66.9%	64.8%
Female participation rate	50.7%	51.2%	52.9%	54.4%	56.1%	55.9%
Difference - Male		-3.3%	-0.9%	-1.4%	0.2%	-2.1%
Difference - Female		0.5%	1.7%	1.5%	1.7%	-0.2%

### Industries worked in the Illawarra region in the last 5 years

Table 8 details workforce statistics for selected industries in the Illawarra using 2011 and 2016 ABS Census data.

The industry which saw the most significant increase in male employment was construction. The proportion of the male workforce which works in construction increased 3.5% pts to 16.6% with 2,625 new workers in the past five years.

Manufacturing was the industry which saw the biggest fall in male employment. The proportion of the male workforce which works in manufacturing decreased 6.2% pts to 9.5% over the past five years. 3,733 male workers in the Illawarra left the industry or were made redundant.

Health care and social assistance was the biggest growth industry for females. The proportion of the female workforce employed in this industry increased 1.4% pts to 24.3% over the past five years. This equated to 2,125 new workers.

**Table 8.** Selected Industries – Comparisons with 2011

	2011				2016				Difference (2016-2011)			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Manufacturing	10,040	15.7%	1,817	3.3%	6,297	9.5%	1,308	2.1%	-3,743	-6.2%	-509	-1.1%
Construction	8,383	13.1%	1,002	1.8%	11,008	16.6%	1,132	1.9%	2,625	3.5%	130	0.1%
Retail Trade	4,890	7.7%	7,638	13.8%	5,151	7.8%	7,665	12.6%	261	0.1%	27	1.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	3,516	5.5%	5,080	9.2%	4,069	6.1%	5,441	8.9%	553	0.6%	361	0.2%
Public Administration and Safety	4,787	7.5%	3,601	6.5%	5,078	7.7%	4,192	6.9%	291	0.2%	591	0.4%
Education and Training	4,034	6.3%	8,352	15.0%	4,194	6.3%	9,728	15.9%	160	0.0%	1,376	0.9%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,170	5.0%	12,688	22.9%	3,914	5.9%	14,813	24.3%	744	0.9%	2,125	1.4%

### Industries worked in the Illawarra region in the last 15 years

Table 9 shows industry statistics for the past 15 years as well as comparisons between 2001 and 2016.

Manufacturing was the industry which saw the biggest contraction over the past 15 years for both male and female workers. The proportion of the male workforce in the Illawarra who worked in manufacturing fell 12.4% pts to 9.5% over the past 15 years while the proportion of the female workforce fell 3.3% pts to 2.1%.

For males, the industry which has seen the most significant growth over the past 15 years was construction, up 4.6% pts to 16.6%. Health care and social assistance is another growth industry for males, with the proportion of the male workforce employed in this industry increasing 2.1% pts over the past 15 years.

For females, health care and social assistance, education and training, and public administration and safety were the primary growth industries. Meanwhile, the proportion of the female workforce employed in the retail sector declined 3.2% pts to 12.6%.

**Table 9.** Selected Industries – Comparisons with 2001

	2001		2006		2011		2016		Difference (2016-2001)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Manufacturing	21.9%	5.5%	18.9%	4.3%	15.7%	3.3%	9.5%	2.1%	-12.4%	-3.3%
Construction	12.0%	1.8%	13.1%	2.0%	13.1%	1.8%	16.6%	1.9%	4.6%	0.0%
Retail Trade	8.6%	15.7%	8.2%	15.5%	7.7%	13.8%	7.8%	12.6%	-0.8%	-3.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	4.9%	9.0%	4.9%	8.9%	5.5%	9.2%	6.1%	8.9%	1.3%	-0.1%
Public Administration and Safety	6.0%	5.3%	7.0%	6.2%	7.5%	6.5%	7.7%	6.9%	1.7%	1.6%
Education and Training	5.7%	13.8%	6.1%	14.3%	6.3%	15.0%	6.3%	15.9%	0.7%	2.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3.8%	18.5%	4.3%	20.2%	5.0%	22.9%	5.9%	24.3%	2.1%	5.8%

### Occupations worked in the Illawarra region in the last 5 years

Table 10 shows ABS Census data for occupations in the Illawarra for 2011 and 2016. The male workforce is primarily comprised of technicians and trades workers (25.5%), professionals (17.2%), managers (12.5%), and machinery operators and drivers (12.3%).

In the past 5 years, the most significant change to the male workforce by occupation was a 1.4% pts fall in machinery operators and drivers to 12.3%. This equated to 484 fewer jobs within this occupation. This trend is likely to continue due to automation. The biggest increase was in managers, up 0.6% pts to 12.5%.

The female workforce is primarily comprised of professionals (25.7%), clerical and administrative workers (22.3%), and community and personal service workers (18.1%). The most significant changes within the female workforce by occupation over the past five years include a 1.9% pts decrease in clerical and administrative workers to 22.3%) and a 1.3% pts increase in community and personal service workers to 18.1%.

**Table 10.** Occupations – Comparisons with 2011

	2011				2016				Difference (2016-2011)			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Managers	7,508	11.9%	4,184	7.6%	8,279	12.5%	4,991	8.2%	771	0.6%	807	0.6%
Professionals	10,775	17.1%	13,559	24.6%	11,430	17.2%	15,703	25.7%	655	0.1%	2,144	1.1%
Technicians and trades workers	16,088	25.6%	2,542	4.6%	16,911	25.5%	2,753	4.5%	823	-0.1%	211	-0.1%
Community and personal service workers	4,345	6.9%	9,244	16.8%	4,890	7.4%	11,066	18.1%	545	0.5%	1,822	1.3%
Clerical and administrative workers	3,432	5.5%	13,313	24.2%	3,534	5.3%	13,588	22.3%	102	-0.1%	275	-1.9%
Sales workers	3,758	6.0%	7,433	13.5%	4,119	6.2%	7,869	12.9%	361	0.2%	436	-0.6%
Machinery operators and drivers	8,615	13.7%	453	0.8%	8,131	12.3%	488	0.8%	-484	-1.4%	35	0.0%
Labourers	7,267	11.5%	3,576	6.5%	7,861	11.9%	3,724	6.1%	594	0.3%	148	-0.4%

### Occupations worked in Illawarra region in the last 15 years

Table 11 shows the changes to the Illawarra workforce by occupation over the past 15 years.

The most significant change in the male workforce by occupation over the past 15 years has been a 2.0% pts fall in machinery operators and drivers to 12.3%. There has also been a 1.1% pts fall in technicians and trades workers to 25.5% over the period. These changes reflect wider structural change towards a service-based economy in Australia.

The proportion of the male workforce who identified as professionals increased 2.0% pts to 17.2%. This was followed by community and personal service workers, up 1.5% pts to 7.4% and reflecting the emergence of health care and social assistance as a growth industry in the Illawarra over the past 15 years.

Looking at the female workforce by occupation over the past 15 years, the most significant changes have been increases in proportions identifying as community and personal service workers, up 4.9% pts to 18.1%, and professionals, up 4.4% pts to 25.7%.

**Table 11.** Occupations – Comparisons with 2001

	2001		2006		2011		2016		Difference (2016-2001)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Managers	11.2%	6.9%	12.0%	7.5%	11.9%	7.6%	12.5%	8.2%	1.3%	1.3%
Professionals	15.3%	21.3%	16.3%	23.2%	17.1%	24.6%	17.2%	25.7%	2.0%	4.4%
Technicians and trades workers	26.6%	4.7%	26.1%	4.8%	25.6%	4.6%	25.5%	4.5%	-1.1%	-0.2%
Community and personal service workers	5.8%	13.2%	6.1%	14.9%	6.9%	16.8%	7.4%	18.1%	1.5%	4.9%
Clerical and administrative workers	5.8%	26.6%	5.6%	24.9%	5.5%	24.2%	5.3%	22.3%	-0.5%	-4.3%
Sales workers	6.6%	15.8%	6.1%	14.8%	6.0%	13.5%	6.2%	12.9%	-0.4%	-2.9%
Machinery operators and drivers	14.2%	2.4%	13.9%	1.5%	13.7%	0.8%	12.3%	0.8%	-2.0%	-1.6%
Labourers	12.3%	7.2%	11.9%	7.2%	11.5%	6.5%	11.9%	6.1%	-0.5%	-1.1%

# **PHASE 1 - Qualitative Exploration**

## 1. Results of depth interviews with Illawarra residents

### 1.1. Sample profile

Qualitative research was conducted with three groups of respondents, all of which must have lived in the Illawarra region for at least 3 years:

- ▶ Eight males between 40 and 60 years of age who were not currently participating in full time work or who are not permanently in the workforce and had not worked in the last 6 – 12 months. Three had been unemployed for more than 3 years. Two had been unemployed for between 2 and 3 years, and three were made redundant in the last 2 years.
- ▶ Five females of any age who were currently participating in the workforce and whose participation had increased in the last few years. Participation in the workforce was in any capacity and included full time, part time, casual and permanent work.
- ▶ Five couples where the woman was working whilst the male had not participated in the workforce in the past year.

### 1.2. Perceptions of The Illawarra Region

All respondents had lived in the Illawarra for at least 3 years, with longevity in the area ranging from those who had moved from Sydney in the last 5 years to those who had lived in the Illawarra all their life.

Regardless of the length of time they had lived in the region, perceptions of its strengths and weaknesses of the area were similar. Positive aspects of living in the Illawarra centred around the natural beauty of the area and the relaxed, almost rural feel. The natural beauty was mentioned by all respondents with a combination of the ocean, lake, trees and land considered to be an attraction.

***“Absolutely love it! Culturally a lot more things are coming down from Sydney. Theatre, music, food, cafes...”*** – Male, 43 years.

The relaxed almost country ‘vibe’ of the area was both a positive and a negative for some. This slower pace was welcomed by many, with it considered to be better for family life and good for bringing up children with more space to play.

***“Originally we spent every weekend for 2 years here because of it's natural beauty. So we thought about moving here as it is a commutable distance from Sydney but we still get the lifestyle here. It's a slow paced lifestyle. Like a country lifestyle but close to the ocean.”*** – Female, 46 years.

For some the country feel meant that it was too quiet, with a lack of social life/and a little too traditional and “old fashioned.”

***“The area as totally family oriented, so that if that’s not you then it’s boring. There’s not much else to do.”*** – Male, 28 years.

The close proximity to Sydney was another commonly acknowledged advantage with the term ‘commutable distance’ often used. That said, those interviewed acknowledged that the practicalities of commuting full time to Sydney could be very draining and difficult to maintain full time and/or long term.

***“We had thought about moving further South but we like it here because it’s a commutable distance to Sydney.”*** – Female, 46 years.

***“It’s nice, not as busy as the city, but not too far from it.”*** – Male, 43 years.

Public transport was seen as below par and investment in infrastructure such as roads, parking and drainage reported as poor.

***“It depends on where you live but transport can be difficult in some places, like access to trains or buses. For example there is no link to Campbelltown. I’ve lost work opportunities because of this, because I couldn’t get there.”*** – Male, 55 years.

The area was acknowledged as having limited employment opportunities, particularly for males with traditional industry experience and a perception of limited employment opportunities.

***“The worst thing about living here is how hard it is to get a job.”*** – Male, 40 years.

***“There’s been a huge reduction in construction jobs and mining. We lost at least 27,000 jobs alone at Bluescope. Its quite devastating for a lot of men who are unable to get work like they used to. Lots are having to move into fly-in fly-out roles.”*** – Male, 50 years.

### 1.3. Motivations to work for males

The males interviewed had varied attitudes and perceptions regarding employment and work:

- ▶ Group 1) Not working by choice and doesn't want to work, now or in the future.
- ▶ Group 2) Not working by choice currently, but intend to work in the future.
- ▶ Group 3) Not working but wanting to work.
- ▶ Group 4) Black market hidden employment - through the interview process 2 respondents revealed they were in fact receiving cash in hand for work to avoid tax and child support payments, but did not reveal this officially.

***"I'm declaring less work (getting cash jobs) so that I don't have to pay as much child support to my ex."*** – Male, 34 years

Motivation for work appears to decrease in males who have economic stability and no financial imperative to work. There was a correlation here with age and redundancy.

***"One of the biggest things that helped us make the decision for (husband) to stop work is that we have paid off our mortgage. That's the advantage of buying in this region rather than Sydney and having kids late! If we were living in Sydney we wouldn't be able to do it, as our house would have cost twice as much!"*** - Female, 39 years.

The majority of males interviewed who wanted to work spoke about 'having to' work rather than 'wanting to', and talked in terms which centred about motivations linked to financial safety and security.

***"For the money, I'm always looking for work cause I've got my debts."*** – Male, 40 years.

Some males who wanted to work, either now or in the future, were motivated by the need to still feel relevant and were searching of new ways to learn, improve their skills and invest in themselves.

***"I do miss the mental stimulation of working. That's more of a motivation than the money."*** – Male, 43 years.

One 52 year old male had stopped worked when he was 44. This was his long term goal. He aimed to work hard whilst young doing 80-100 hours per week to enable him to retire early.

***"I'm living the dream! I couldn't do a 9-5 job anymore! I'd chuck it in."*** – Male, 52 years.

Overall it seemed that older males were less motivated by extrinsically related features of a job, but more by intrinsically rewarding features of a job.

**Redundancy** was seen as one of the most stressful events experienced by those interviewed, with all acknowledging that it affected their self-esteem and confidence. One in particular experienced difficulty adjusting to the situation with it impacting on his mental health and leading to a period of depression making looking for work impossible. This man, a 51 year old recently separated steel worker with a large mortgage, equated it to a death - started with shock and disbelief then anger and depression.

***“I had lost my self-esteem and my motivation. It was hard to even get out of bed and do anything apart from sit on the lounge, watch TV. I’d wait until 3 o’clock and then open a can (of beer) to try to feel better.”*** – Male, 54 years

***“As a man I feel useless. I feel insecure and hopeless which causes us to argue a lot.”***  
– Male, 55 years

#### 1.4. Motivations to work for females

The women who participated in the research nominated more reasons to want to work than the men, who tended just to focus on financial benefits.

Women were more likely to nominate factors beyond monetary, including:

- ▶ Career advancement - wanting to achieve, get positive feedback and a sense of accomplishment
- ▶ Authority – need to lead, make an impact and be heard by others
- ▶ Affiliation – need for friendly social interactions and to be liked.

***“Career progression, it was an easy choice for us for me to be the one who continued to work as there are opportunities to move up, and to get higher pay etc, where as there wasn’t in my husband’s job.”*** – Female, 39 years

***“I like to work. We don’t need the money. I like having a purpose and I enjoy the social part. I really do like my job. It’s fantastic. I’m blessed. It’s easy for me. I still do work at all hours but I have no problem with that.”*** – Female, 46 years

Some women spoke about being more adaptable than men – one feeling was that males who were made redundant were less able to adapt to change in work.

The women who cited financial pressure as a main motivation did so mainly due to their husbands or partners not working, rather than needing a second household income.

***“ I have to because my husband’s not. I’d love him to have a high paying job so that I wouldn’t have to work.”*** – Female, 45 years

## 1.5. Barriers to work

### Barriers to finding work in the Illawarra included:

- ▶ Conscious or unconscious discrimination in employment on the basis of age and gender from employers.

***“I feel like they are interviewing him but always already have in their head that their not going to take him on, that they already have that negative thing in their head.”*** –

Female, 45 years

- ▶ Care-giving responsibilities, particularly those parents of young children that could not afford the high cost of child care.

***“It was very hard, as a single father of 3 trying to raise kids on my own, I can only work 10-2 and no-one wants to hire someone for 4 hours a day.”***

- ▶ Mature age job seekers can have trouble finding employment because of outdated job search skills and that may discourage them from seeking employment.

***“I found it hard to find work. Maybe my age or skills set? I've only had 3 jobs in my whole working life! I haven't had time to do courses. I've always worked.”*** – Male, 52

years

- ▶ Desire of some to retire early to pursue leisure activities

### Barriers to finding work in the region included:

- ▶ Mis-match of skills and experience with industry demands - changes in the local economy in recent decades, including a decline in manufacturing, meaning that some (particularly mature age males) have skills less suited to the modern economy.

***“He doesn't even know how to use computers etc. he cant even enter the job interviews he's been to online with Centrelink - so I have to do it. Another thing I have to do.”*** – Female, 45 years

- ▶ Lack of prior qualifications and reliance on the availability of appropriate training opportunities, as well as their aspirations to upgrade their skills
- ▶ Fear of rejection and failure
- ▶ Unsure of reason for failure to gain an interview – lack of feedback from applications very common
- ▶ High proportion of available jobs being in female associated areas of admin, retail and hospitality

***“I feel like hospitality is driving the increase in female workers, and the reduction in construction jobs and the construction industry making it harder for men.”*** – Male, 50 years

Women appeared to be more flexible in their attitude to employment, with even highly skilled women happy to take work below their capability and expertise, whilst some of the males interviewed were less open to this.

#### 1.6. Impact on relationships

- ▶ The number of unemployed males who had broken up with their long term partners either just before or just after losing their job was very high, with 6 of the 8 men interviewed being single fathers.

***“ I moved here because it is safe and secure, and to be near my daughter.”***– Male, 40 years

***“It’s stressful because I’m qualified to work in hospitality, but I’m a single dad, and no one wants to babysit three kids at night, so I can’t work at night and I can’t find work during school hours.”*** – Male, 34 years

***“Yes I have two kids, but I don’t see them.”*** – Male, 28 years

- ▶ Males where their partners worked but they did not, tended to think the relationship impacts were negligible or none. Upon prompting however, they recalled some judgement from outside the relationships – particularly by family and older friends.

***“I’m happy, it was planned that my wife would be the provider, I always wanted to look after our child. But, I don’t like the social judgment that I’m lazy, and always getting asked am I looking for work.”*** – Male, 30 years

- ▶ Females whose partners did not work were more vocal about the impacts on the relationship with some resentful towards their partners lack of employment or the lack of support at home.

***“I like my job but it’s hard. I have to keep increasing my hours and my shifts the longer he is without work.”*** – Female, 48 years

***“I feel like I am working all the time, that life revolves around working to pay the bills. I hardly even see friends anymore, it feels like I’m wasting my life, all I do is work to pay the bills.”*** – Female, 45 years

### 1.7. Feelings towards the Census trend data in the Illawarra

When we explained to respondents the trend over the last decade of an increase in female participation in the work force, and a similar decrease in males in the work force, some were surprised in the increase of females, but most were not surprised regarding the decline of males. This is because respondents were generally aware that unemployment was a real issue within the region, in large part due to the closure of mines and steelworks, and the significant impact these events had on unemployment rates.

Some respondents also believed that women have had to share the burden and pick up more work to support their households, particularly when other family members have been unable to find work.

***“There’s less men working because of big close downs. Not much local work for men. The big jobs are in the city. There are smaller building jobs for houses around here because of the boom but my partner only does big commercial work. He could find a job here but the rate of pay drops ALOT! He’s job at the moment is at North Ryde so it takes a few hours to get there and back.”*** Female, 27 years.

***“Those guys (miners) are finding it hard to find work. Not so long ago over 300 guys were put off. Bluescope and the mines and the airlines are the big employers around here.”*** – Female, 55 years

***“It’s dramatically impacted men, particularly young men, as organisations like mines and bluescope aren’t taking on apprentices anymore, so the young guys are having to travel or move to Sydney.”*** – Male, 50 years

***“The males get redundancy but they can’t re-skill.”*** Male 30 years.

Many respondents felt the main reasons for the increase of women participating in the workforce simply reflect the wider social trend changes both nationally and internationally.

These include:

- ▶ Easy access to higher education such as diploma’s, bachelor degrees, master degrees etc.

***“I think it’s a good thing for women because there is more opportunity, so they are not just staying at home on benefits.”*** – Female, 27 years

- ▶ Couples marrying later in life
- ▶ Men staying at home to take care of children

***“I don’t find it surprising. I think that makes sense, I think more men have the option of staying at home with the kids now.”*** – Male, 43 years

- ▶ Subsidises and greater access to child care
- ▶ Greater independence

***“I’m trying to think about it from a perspective of people who are going through separations. The males worked quite hard and females don’t feel as supported. So more women returning to workforce because they are finding themselves again.”*** – Female, 46 years.

- ▶ Decrease in the average number of children per couple
- ▶ Higher cost of living resulting in a greater need for multiple incomes per family

***“More pressure on the females to find work as rents here are really high and costs of houses! You have to buy a fibro shitter for \$1.3 million it’s unheard of!”*** Female 45 years.

- ▶ Broader opportunities for women to work outside of traditional “women” jobs i.e. teaching and nursing.
- ▶ Greater flexibility in the working force including working from home to part time and casual work.

## 1.8. Case studies

### Peter's case

Peter, 54 worked at Illawarra Coal's Bulli Seam Operations and was made redundant in 2015. Peter had lived in the region since he was in his early 20's with established connections within the community. The redundancy was unexpected and unfortunately occurred shortly after his marriage of over 20 years had broken up, leading to mental health issues (depression) which he is only now feeling like he is coming through.

Peter was already feeling emotionally vulnerable prior to the redundancy. This was a "forced" redundancy and was in Peter's words – "completely unexpected." Peter felt he had no skills outside the mining industry and had little confidence in gaining employment.

The redundancy "felt like a death" for Peter, which caused him to experience shock, depression and anger. Peter was left with a significant mortgage after his financial settlement with his wife so the redundancy, whilst significant, was quickly eaten up on the mortgage.

Peter admitted that after the redundancy he ***"spiralled into a really dark place, I isolated myself from friends and my kids and pretended everything was OK but in reality, I was falling apart – drinking every day, sleeping the morning away, and not answering the phone. What was the first 18 months like after I left work? Absolutely miserable. I had lost my self-esteem and my motivation. It was hard to even get out of bed and do anything apart from sit on the lounge, watch TV. I'd wait until 3 o'clock and then open a can (of beer) to try to feel better."***

Whilst Peter wanted to and felt that he needed to (financially) gain employment, the shock and subsequent depression left him completely ill-equipped to find new employment. It took around 18 months for Peter to accept his situation - the loss of his marriage and his job. Now that the worst is behind him he has begun to look for work, which for him, is just ***"putting feelers out to friends, family and other contacts in the community for casual cash labouring work."*** Peter doesn't feel that he has the skills for the type of jobs he sees advertised and assumes that he would be considered too old by most employers.

His motivation for work is twofold, financial and self-esteem. ***"Financial, so I don't need to go on benefits or sell the house. I don't have champagne tastes so I don't need a lot of money week to week but obviously the day to day expenses don't stop when you leave a job. I also want to work just to give my self-esteem a boost and be able to say that I am doing something and contributing."***

### Darren's case

Darren 51, was made redundant from the BlueScope steelworks in early 2016. Darren is married to Michelle, also 51, who works 4 days a week as an admin assistant at one of the local public high schools. Darren and Michelle have a son (21) and a daughter (23) and have lived in the region all their lives. They love the Illawarra; it's natural beauty and the ocean and have lots of social connections particularly in the life saving community.

Darren and Michelle had already paid off their family home before Darren got redundancy and considered themselves **"quite comfortable but not flush with money"**. They had always wanted to travel but hadn't travelled outside of Australia so took the opportunity to spend most of the first year after redundancy planning their once in a lifetime trip to Europe.

Having come home after the cruise and European holiday, Darren is now actively looking for work. He has been shocked at the little work there is available locally and is not prepared to travel to Sydney for work. **"I have applied – or should I say Michelle has applied for me- for about 15 jobs in the last 3 months or so, mainly in small manufacturing, landscaping and janitor type jobs. I haven't had any luck and I don't know why. I couldn't tell you why I can only guess as only a few have even replied and it's all generic ... sorry you have been unsuccessful... blah blah blah..."**

Whilst Darren hasn't given up finding employment, he is starting to consider it a real possibility that he may not be able to obtain a full-time job and be the bread winner he saw himself as. Michelle and Darren would both like Darren to work at least part time **"so that we can still have a comfortable lifestyle and be able to travel more."** In addition, Darren sees himself as **"too young to retire – although I think once you are over 50 you are seen as over the hill– particularly for men who are looking at manual jobs or who need to re-skill."**

Similarly, to Peter, Darren feels that it will be personal contacts which will deliver opportunities rather than formal application for employment – due to conscious or unconscious employer age and industry bias.

The redundancy and Darren's difficulty in securing employment lead to Michelle increasing from a five-day fortnight to accepting four days a week work. She is happy with this and feels it is **"her duty to take the lead after Darren working his ass off for 30 years."**

They have a close and strong relationship and claim the redundancy has made their relationship even stronger **"but this isn't usually the case – we know other marriages which have really struggled under the stress of redundancy."** Michelle is more than

willing to increase her work and plans to continue to work 4 days a week if Darren can only get casual or part time employment.

Looking to the future, as they become grandparents, they would both like Michelle to be able to offer to care for the grandchild a few days a week so her daughter can work. They are concerned that she may not be able to do this or afford to travel if Darren can't find paid employment.

#### Michael's case

Michael is 43 and had a career as a pilot. He is separated from his wife, has 3 children (aged 9, 6 and 4 years) and currently lives in Port Kembla. He was made medically redundant in 2015 after working 13 years for Qantas.

Michael currently spends his time looking after his children, studying and taking care of the household and yard. Whilst Michael found his job as a pilot stressful and involved being away from home a great deal he misses it and still thinks of it a lot. ***"It was quite difficult to adjust in some ways. I would have liked to have left on my own terms. I still think about it a lot which is hard."***

Michael reported a decline in his physical and mental health (but did not wish to specify these declines further) saying he really missed the mental stimulation of work. Michael will start to look for work soon and plans on using the services of a recruitment company. He is confident that he will find suitable employment but he may need to travel to Sydney to do so.

Michael didn't want to discuss the impact of the redundancy on his marriage but said ***"it certainly didn't help my confidence or my state of mind."***

His redundancy payout is spent and he now plans on meeting with a recruitment company. The redundancy made it easier not to work but Michael felt mentally he wasn't prepared to go back into full time employment after leaving Qantas, separating from his wife and suffering with a physical work-related injury.

The motivation for returning to work for Michael stems around self-esteem and professional standing, with the financial imperative an important but secondary factor.

### Julie's case

Julie is aged 46, works 2-3 days a week, and has two boys aged 9 and 6. Julie moved from Cronulla to the Illawarra 10 years ago because of its natural beauty.

Her typical week is described as 'crazy but wonderful'. She works for a local orthodontic practice and is responsible for their marketing promotion, web presence and practice management. Julie dictates her own hours which are built around school hours. Her job gives her a lot of flexibility which means her children don't have to be put in child care. Her husband works in the financial service sector, working full time in Sydney.

Julie enjoys her job, ***"I really do, it's fantastic. I'm blessed. I still do work at all sorts of hours, sometimes at night checking emails when the boys are in bed, but I have no problem with that."***

Her primary motivation are social aspects of work, and keeping her mind active. She enjoys talking to people about a variety of things other than children as it gives her a different conversation. Financial motivation was moderately important but less so than other factors.

Julie believes her work life balance is excellent and recognises her situation is quiet unique. ***"It's perfect. Last year was a little light on (hours worked) so I created some more work for myself this year, but still giving me enough time with my boys. I have a husband who is very supportive and I have lots of other support also – my mother is a big supporter and I have made a pointed effort to connect with new girlfriends and we really help each other out."***

Julie did not find the changing work force trend in the Illawarra surprising as she has observed lots of men retiring, and has seen a change in the Illawarra from a traditional work place where men worked and females didn't, to more woman entering the work force ***because "they are finding them selves again."*** ***"In my circle of friends there are mums who want to feel like they are making a contribution to the household and are willing to do all sorts of work. Some are highly skilled, competent woman with double degrees who are working part time in shops."***

Julie recognised that for some local men who were made redundant from traditional positions, they would find it hard to secure employment in the local area. ***"I just went through recruiting for a full time reception roll. We had 160 applicants and I guess 150 were female. We did have some males apply. But to be honest we as employers do judge them. I have to admit I did wonder if they would suit this type of role, and there is a bias against older men, when looking at applicants age I was asking myself would***

***we get 10 years out of this person. It reminds me of another situation where a 60 year old man was recently employed in one of my friends child care centres, and there has been all sorts of complaints about him not because of what he has done, but people don't understand why a man of his age would want to work in that field. – It's sad but it's reality."***

#### Melissa & Rowan's case

Melissa (39) and Rowan (37) have lived in the Illawarra for over 20 years, and have a 2 year old daughter together. After the birth of the child, Melissa took a year maternity leave from her position in security at Sydney Airport. Rowan who has been working in IT at a small design company continued to work fulltime until the end of Melissa's maternity leave.

Initially they both returned to work part time, and their daughter went to childcare 2 days a week, however after what they described as a very stressful year of juggling work and family, and feeling as though they never saw each other, they made the decision for Rowan to become a stay-at-home dad, and Melissa return to work full time.

Rowan says ***"I enjoyed my job, it was easy, low stress, but I wasn't particularly passionate about it though. I was as happy to leave."*** Melissa went on to say that ***"it was an easy choice for us for me to be the one who continued to work as there are opportunities to move up, and to get higher pay etc, where as there wasn't in Rowan's job."***

The couple also admitted that a big factor that allowed them to make this decision was that they have paid off their mortgage already. They claimed that if they still had a mortgage they would both still be working. Financial security and stability was a big factor in allowing them to be comfortable and a one income family. ***"If we were living in Sydney we wouldn't be able to do it, as our house would have cost twice as much!"***

With Melissa as the sole worker in the household, they are earning the same as when they were both working part-time, however they now enjoy much more family time together, as Melissa roster gives her 4 days on and 4 days off. The whole family is much happier.

## **PHASE 2 - Quantitative Survey**

## 2. Results of Workforce Participation survey

### 2.1. Sample profile

Of the 200 complete responses collected from the online survey, the number of females (54%) was higher than that of males (42%) (see Table 12).

Most respondents are married or in a domestic partnership (66%). The sample generally contains highly educated individuals who are older than 55 years old.

**Table 12.** Sample profile

<b>Gender</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>n</b>
Male	42%	84
Female	54%	108
Prefer not to say	4%	8
<b>Age</b>		
18 to 44	20%	20
45 to 54	19%	38
55 to 64	36%	72
65 to 74	21%	42
75 years and older	10%	20
Prefer not to say	4%	8
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married or domestic partnership	66%	132
Divorced	11%	22
Single, never married	7%	15
Separated	6%	11
Widowed	5%	9
Prefer not to say	6%	11
<b>Education</b>		
Primary school	1%	1
School certificate or equivalent	20%	40
Higher school certificate or equivalent	6%	11
Advanced diploma or diploma level	19%	37
Bachelor degree	16%	32
Graduate diploma or graduate certificate	11%	22
Postgraduate degree	18%	35
Other	7%	13
Prefer not to say	5%	9

Base: All respondents (n = 200)

## 2.2. Current workforce participation

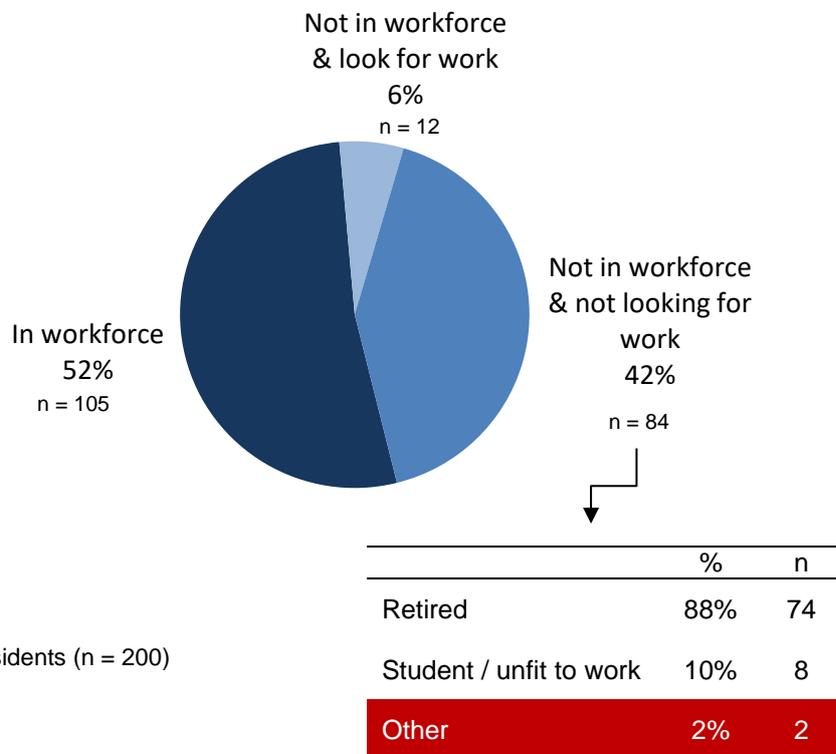
52 percent of respondents are currently in the workforce (see Figure 1). 42 percent of respondents are not currently in the workforce and are not looking for work. A further six percent are currently not in the workforce but are looking for work.

**According to comparison tests run to identify the significant differences between subgroups including age and gender**, the number of females who are in the workforce (48%) is not statistically different from that of males (56%). Not surprisingly, respondents who are 18 – 54 years old participate in the workforce (88%) with significantly higher numbers compared to 65+ years old respondents (15%).

Of those not looking for work, 88 percent are retired from the workforce. 10 percent are students or unfit to work.

**Two respondents who do not actively look for work** are currently on a break and will look for work when they are ready. They currently help their family business occasionally or actively volunteer in the community.

**Figure 1.** Working situation



Base: Illawarra residents (n = 200)

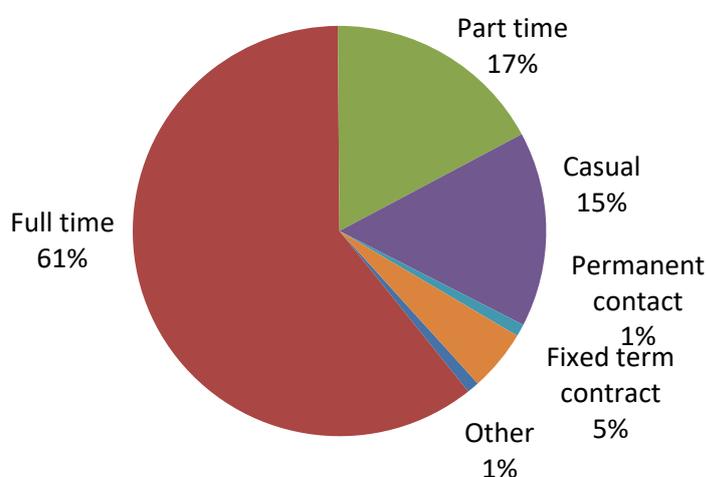
### 2.3. Results of respondents who are currently in the workforce

#### Working Status

52 percent of respondents are currently in the workforce (105 respondents). Of these, the majority [61%] are employed on a fulltime basis (see Figure 2). This was followed by respondents employed as part time (17%) and casual (15%).

Comparison tests show that more females have part time (24%) jobs compared to males (11%). Moreover, more residents who fall into 65+ age bracket have casual jobs (56%) compared to all other age groups.

**Figure 2.** Workforce participation by status



Base: Currently in the workforce (n = 105)

Private for profit organisations are the main employers [42%] followed by a government / public company [35%], which comprised primarily of education roles (see Table 13).

Although the differences are not statistically significant, results show that more females are self-employed in their own unincorporated businesses and professional practice (12%) compared to males (6%).

**Table 13.** Workforce participation by organisation

Private for profit company, business or individual, for wages, salary or commissions	42%
Government / public company (University etc.)	35%
Private not for profit company, tax-exempt, or charitable organization	12%
Self-employed in own unincorporated business, professional practice, or farm	9%
Self-employed in own incorporated business, professional practice, or farm	2%

Base: Currently in the workforce (n = 105)

The education and training industry (25%) is the largest source of employment for survey respondents (see Table 14). The education and training industry is followed by health care, social assistance (12%), and administrative and support services (12%). 10 percent of respondents work in the public administration and safety industry.

The education, training (37%), health care and social assistance industries (19%) are occupied by females. On the other hand, males seem to work in a wider range of industries including transport, postal, warehousing (15%), public administration, safety (13%), professional, scientific and technical services (9%).

**Table 14.** Workforce participation by industry

Education and training	25%
Health care and social assistance	12%
Administrative and support services	12%
Public administration and safety	10%
Transport, postal and warehousing	8%
Professional, scientific and technical services	7%
Retail trade	6%
Financial and insurance services, rental hiring and real estate services	5%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3%
Information, media and telecommunications	3%
Construction	2%
Manufacturing	2%
Accommodation and food services	2%
Mining	1%
Other	4%

Base: Currently in the workforce (n = 105)

### Work Search Status

48 percent of those currently participating in the workforce indicated they had not needed to look for work in over ten years (see Table 15). 25 percent, on the other hand, had looked for work within the last six months. On average, participants who are currently in the workforce, last looked for work about 7.2 years ago.

Although the difference is not statistically significant, females looked for work more recently (approximately 6.7 years ago) compared to males (approx. 7.8 years ago).

**Table 15.** Last time actively looked for work

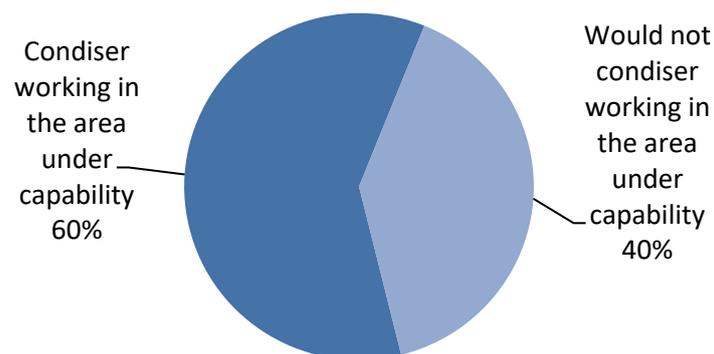
Less than six months ago	25%
Six months to one year ago	6%
Two to five years ago	12%
Five to ten years ago	8%
More than ten years ago	48%
<b>Average (year)</b>	<b>7.2</b>

Base: Currently in the workforce (n = 105)

Respondents, who are currently in the workforce, do not reject the idea of working in an area that is below their capability (60%) (see Figure 3).

Females are more open to consider working in the area even it is below their capability (63%), compared to males (55%).

**Figure 3.** Working in an area below capability

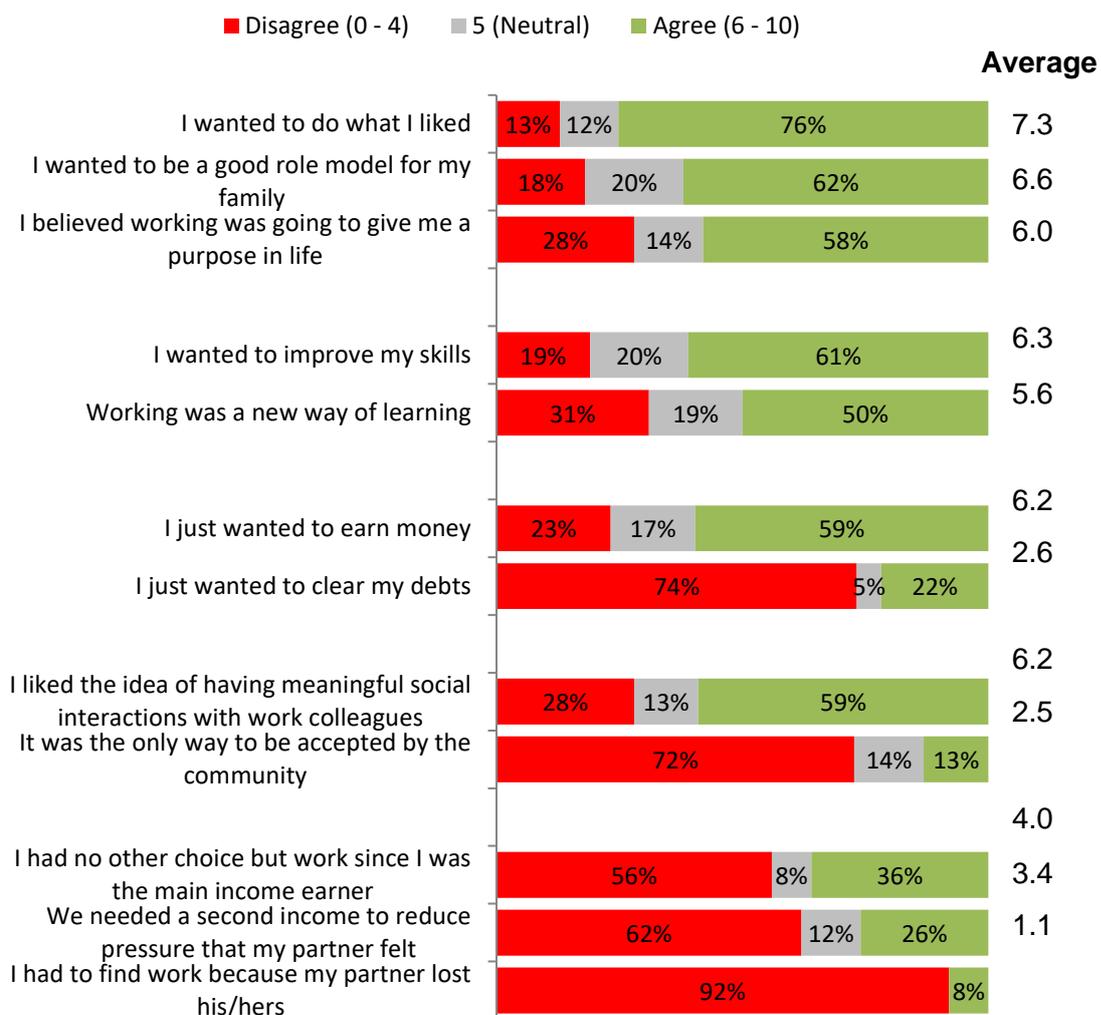


### Motivations to look for work

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement levels with a series of statements related to the motivations they had at the time they looked for work. A 10 point scale was used, with 0 meaning strongly disagree and 10 meaning strongly agree.

Results indicate respondents were mainly motivated by personal reasons (see Figure 4). They wanted to do what they liked while they were looking for work (7.3). They also wanted to be a good role model for their family (6.6). Personal improvement was another motivation for respondents. They wanted to improve their skills through work (6.3). Personal motivators are followed by financial and social factors. Respondents wanted to earn money (6.2) and liked the idea of having meaningful relationships with their future colleagues (6.2). Personal and family relationships were secondary drivers. Some respondents agree they had to work because they were the main income earner (4.0).

**Figure 4.** Motivations when last looking for work



Base: Currently in the workforce (n = 105)

Females and males currently in the workforce were motivated by similar factors while looking for work (see Table 16). Females were driven by motivations that are more personal. They wanted to do what they liked (7.7), be a good role model for their family (7.2) and improve their skills (6.7). Financial reasons were also more important for females. They just wanted to earn money (7.1). It seems more males had to find work since they were the main income earner in the family (4.2). Finally, females were forced to look for work since they needed a second income to reduce the pressure their partner felt (4.3).

**Table 16.** Motivations to look for work by gender

	<b>Female (n = 56)</b>	<b>Male (n = 49)</b>
I wanted to do what I liked	<b>7.7</b>	6.7
I wanted to be a good role model for my family	<b>7.2</b>	5.8
I believed working was going to give me a purpose in life	5.9	5.9
I wanted to improve my skills	<b>6.7</b>	5.7
Working was a new way of learning	5.7	5.3
I just wanted to earn money	<b>7.1</b>	5.5
I just wanted to clear my debts	2.8	2.6
I liked the idea of having meaningful social interactions with work colleagues	6.6	6.0
It was the only way to be accepted by the community	2.8	2.3
I had no other choice but work since I was the main income earner	3.5	<b>4.2</b>
We needed a second income to reduce pressure that my partner felt	<b>4.3</b>	2.5
I had to find work because my partner lost his/hers	1.6	0.5

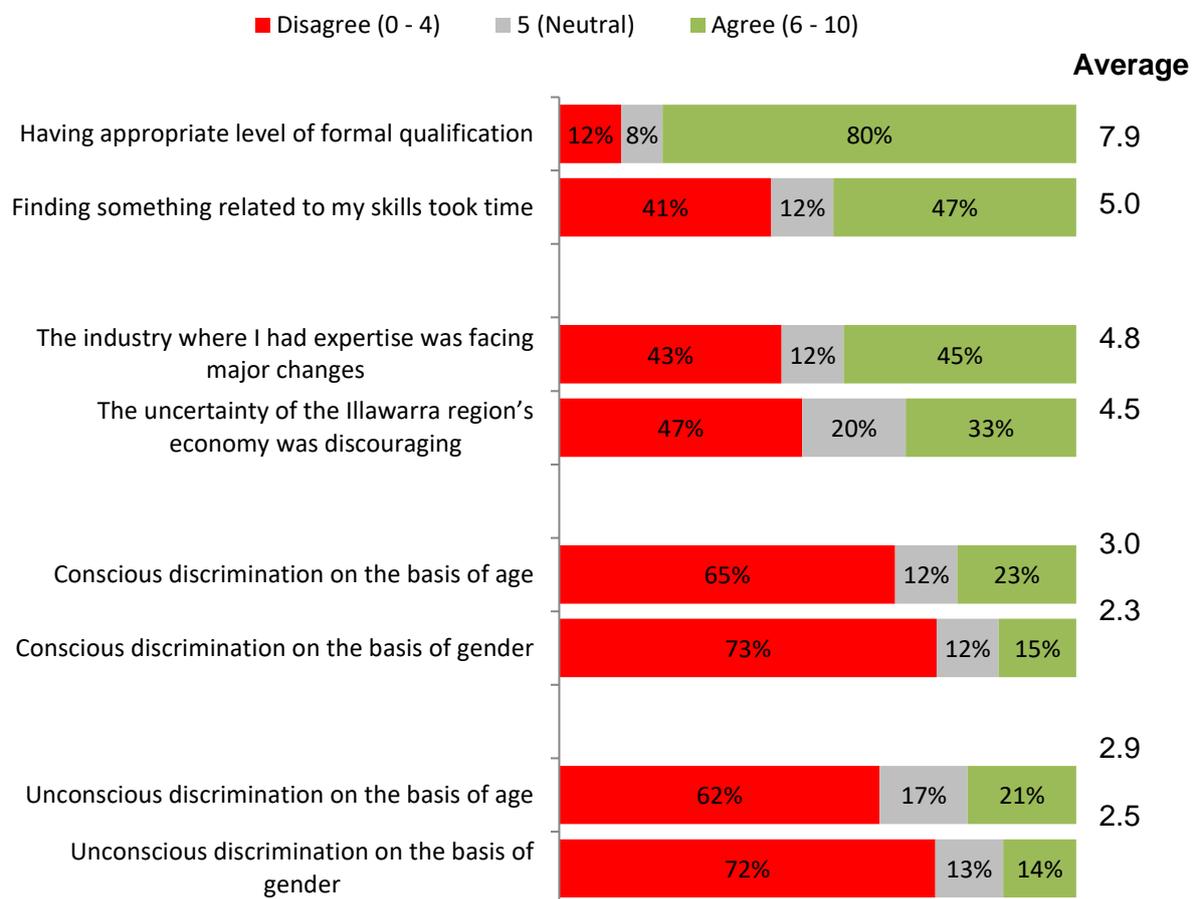
Base: Currently in the workforce

## Challenges of looking for work

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement levels with a series of statements which they found challenging at the time they looked for work. A 10 point scale was used where 0 meaning strongly disagree and 10 meaning strongly agree.

The most significant challenge respondents faced was having the appropriate level of formal qualifications (7.9) and finding something related to their skills (5.0) (see Figure 5). At the time they looked for work, the industry they had experience in was facing major changes. The success of work seekers in the late 2000s may have been negatively affected by structural change in the Illawarra economy, globalisation and technology impacts, as well as global shocks like the Global Financial Crisis.

**Figure 5.** Challenges of looking for work



Base: Currently in the workforce (n = 105)

Females and males who are currently in the workforce faced similar challenges while looking for work about 7.2 years ago (see Table 17). It took females time to find something related to their skills. Males faced challenges because the industry in which they were experienced, and familiar with, were undergoing major changes.

**Table 17.** Challenges of looking for work by gender

	<b>Female (n = 56)</b>	<b>Male (n = 49)</b>
Having appropriate level of formal qualification	7.9	7.9
Finding something related to my skills took time	<b>5.5</b>	4.5
The industry where I had expertise was facing major changes	4.4	<b>5.3</b>
The uncertainty of the Illawarra region's economy was discouraging	4.4	4.7
Conscious discrimination on the basis of age	3	2.9
Conscious discrimination on the basis of gender	2.6	2.6
Unconscious discrimination on the basis of age	2.9	3.2
Unconscious discrimination on the basis of gender	2.1	2.6

Base: Currently in the workforce

#### **2.4. Results of respondents who are not in the workforce, looking for work**

##### **Looking for work**

Six percent of respondents indicated they are not currently in the workforce and currently look for work (12 respondents). Out of 12 who currently look for work, eight respondents were female and four were male. Eight of them are between 18 – 44 years. Four respondents who look for work are in 55 – 64 year age brackets.

Respondents have been looking for work for about a year (seven respondents). Females look for work in health care, social assistance (two females), accommodation and food services (two females) whereas males look for work in electricity, gas, water, waste services (two respondents), information, media and telecommunications (one respondent).

Respondents look for work in private for profit companies or they prefer to have self-employed businesses. They would like to work either full-time (six respondents) or part-time (six respondents). Eight of them would consider working in an area that is below their capability.

### Motivations of look for work

Respondents currently seeking employment want work in their areas of interest and to improve their skills while being a good model for their family (see Table 18). They also think working is a way of learning and would give them a purpose in life.

**Table 18.** Motivations of look for work

<b>Number of respondents*</b>	<b>Disagree (0 - 4)</b>	<b>5 (Neutral)</b>	<b>Agree (6 - 10)</b>
I want to do what I like	-	-	12
I like to improve my skills	1	-	11
I want to be a good role model for my family	-	1	11
Working is a new way of learning	-	2	10
I believe working is going to give me a purpose in life	2	-	10
Having a career is my lifetime plan	2	2	8
I just want to earn money	1	2	9
I just want to clear my debts	1	2	9
I like the idea of having meaningful social interactions with work colleagues	4	-	8
It is the only way to be accepted by the community	4	2	6
I have no other choice but work since I am the main income earner	2	2	8
I had to find work because my partner lost his/hers	6	-	6
We need a second income to reduce pressure that my partner feels	8	-	4

\* Number of respondents was reported due to small sample size

### Challenges of looking for work

Respondents, who are currently look for work, agree that the level of competition for work is high (see Table 19). They also think finding suitable work in the Illawarra is discouraging. Moreover, some have witnessed unconscious and conscious discrimination on the basis of gender.

**Table 19.** Challenges of looking for work

<b>Number of respondents*</b>	<b>Disagree (0 - 4)</b>	<b>5 (Neutral)</b>	<b>Agree (6 - 10)</b>
The level of competition for work is high	-	1	11
Finding something related to my skills is taking time	1	3	8
Updating my job skills is challenging	2	2	8
Finding suitable work in the Illawarra is discouraging	1	-	11
My skills do not match the demands of the Illawarra region anymore	3	-	9
I witness an act of conscious discrimination on the basis of gender	2	-	10
I witnessed an act of unconscious discrimination on the basis of gender	3	-	9
I witness an act of conscious discrimination on the basis of age	7	-	5
I witnessed an act unconscious discrimination on the basis of age	6	2	4
The industry I have expertise in is facing major changes	2	4	6
My wages expectations could not be met	4	1	7

\* Number of respondents was reported due to small sample size

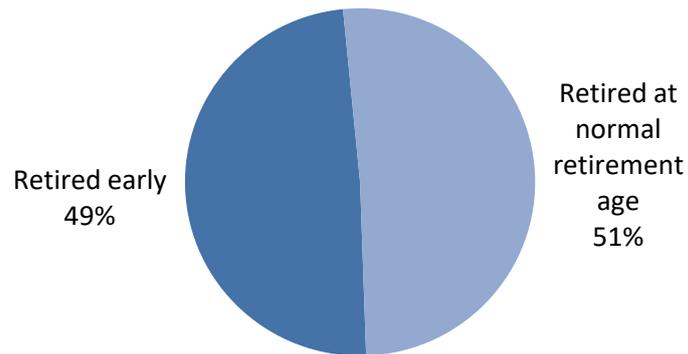
## 2.5. Results of retirees

### Retirement status

74 retirees do not participate in the workforce and did not look for work. Retiree respondents are both female (52%) and male (48%).

51 percent of retirees retired at normal retirement age (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Retirement status



Base: Retirees (n = 74)

Respondents retired early for several reasons (see Table 20). According to open-ended comments, respondents have retired early because they could afford not to work anymore. Some respondents have chosen to retire early due to family commitments. Frustration at work and health issues also caused some respondents to retire earlier than planned.

**Table 20.** Reasons of early retirement

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**Financial security**

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I retired at the age allowed by my super fund to receive my full benefits  
 Financially a good time  
 I could, due to good financial investments  
 The opportunity was available and it was financially viable to do so  
 No longer wish to work and can afford not to  
 We moved and my husband has a high paying job  
 Financially ok with wife still working fulltime  
 I was able to access my superannuation at the time

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**Family commitments**

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To care for elderly parents and grandchildren  
 My husband wanted to retire and move from Sydney  
 I had a very close friend who was very ill and wanted to spend time with her  
 Husband ill  
 Helping out looking after grandkids

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**Frustrations at work**

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Not enjoying work  
 There were no suitable positions available  
 Voiced my frustrations, which made work place uncomfortable so decided to retire 2 years earlier  
 Completely burnt out  
 I had had enough

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**Health issues**

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I was struggling with health issues & I could finish earlier  
 Disability and not enough work in my field, or that I'm qualified to do  
 Due to the health problems  
 Ill health

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**Injury at work**

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An accident (fall) gave significant health complications. I was unable to work after this. DVTs and pulmonary embolism and triggered other problems

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**Redundancy**

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Redundancy was available  
 Retrenchment  
 BHP's VRS (Voluntary Redundancy Scheme) enticement 1994  
 Took Golden Handshake

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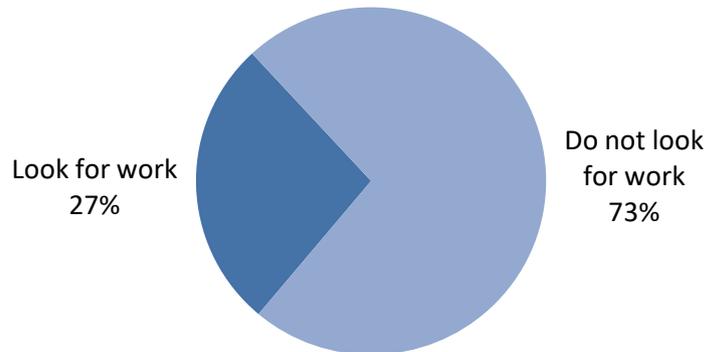
Base: Early retirees (n = 36)

### Look for work

27 percent of retirees looked for ways to continue working (see Figure 7).

More males looked for ways to continue working (78%) compared to females (68%).

**Figure 7.** Look for ways to continue to work



Base: Retirees (n = 74)

Retirees mainly looked for similar work to that they had been doing before they retired (eighth respondents). Six retirees looked for volunteering opportunities after they retired.

### Motivations of look for work

Retirees have looked for ways to continue working because they wanted to do what they like and improve their skills (see Table 21). They believed working would be an opportunity to learn new things and knew they would have meaningful social interactions with work colleagues.

**Table 21.** Motivations of look for work

<b>Number of respondents*</b>	<b>Disagree (0 - 4)</b>	<b>5 (Neutral)</b>	<b>Agree (6 - 10)</b>
I wanted to do what I like	4	2	14
I wanted to improve my skills	4	2	14
I wanted to be a good role model to my family	10	3	7
I believed working would be an opportunity to learn new things	4	4	12
I believed working was going to give me a purpose in life	7	2	11
I just wanted to earn money	6	3	11
I just wanted to clear my debts	16	-	4
I knew I would have meaningful social interactions with work colleagues	5	2	13
It was the only way to be accepted by the community	15	2	3
I had no choice but work since I am the main income earner	16	-	4
We needed a second income to reduce pressure that my partner felt	19	-	1
I had to find work because my partner lost his/hers	20	-	-

\* Number of respondents was reported due to small sample size

### Challenges of looking for work

Retirees face several challenges while they look for ways to continue working (see Table 22). Finding something related to their skills was difficult. They also witnessed an act of conscious discrimination on the basis of age.

**Table 22.** Challenges of looking for work

<b>Number of respondents*</b>	<b>Disagree (0 - 4)</b>	<b>5 (Neutral)</b>	<b>Agree (6 - 10)</b>
Finding something related to my skills	4	3	13
Having an appropriate level of formal qualification	8	-	12
The uncertainty of the Illawarra region's economy was discouraging	12	-	8
I witnessed an act of conscious discrimination on the basis of age	6	-	14
I witnessed an act of conscious discrimination on the basis of gender	11	3	6
I witnessed an act of unconscious discrimination on the basis of age	8	-	12
I witnessed an act unconscious discrimination on the basis of gender	12	2	6
The industry I have expertise in was facing major changes	8	-	12

\* Number of respondents was reported due to small sample size

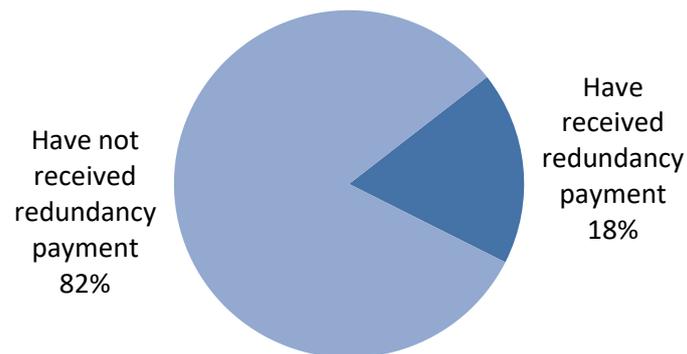
## 2.6. Results of redundancy receivers

18 percent of respondents have received redundancy payment(s) in the past (see Figure 8).

Twenty-five percent more males have received redundancy payment(s) than females (11%).

All 36 (18%) redundancy receivers are older than 35 years. 81 percent of redundancy receivers are currently in the workforce and working full time (48%).

**Figure 8.** Redundancy payments received



Base: All respondents (n = 200)

81 percent of payment receivers have received one payment. They received their payment about 9.9 years ago (see Table 23).

**Table 23.** Time of the redundancy payment

Less than six months ago	0%
Six months to one year ago	6%
Two to five years ago	9%
Five to ten years ago	23%
More than ten years ago	63%
<b>Average (year)</b>	<b>9.9</b>

Base: Redundancy receivers (n = 36)

Seven redundancy receivers worked for government & public sector at the time of their redundancy (see Table 24). Steelworks, coal mining, IT and manufacturing are the other sectors mentioned by the redundancy receivers.

**Table 24.** Sector employed at the time of redundancy

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Government & public sector (x7)  
Steelworks (x5)  
Coal mining (x3)  
IT (x3)  
Manufacturing (x3)  
Insurance (x2)  
Engineering (x2)  
Banking  
Financial  
Freight / postal  
Legal  
Media  
Museum  
Oil & gas

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Three redundancy receivers worked for BHP at the time of their redundancy (see Table 25). Bluescope Steel and General Motors Holden are the other companies mentioned by the redundancy receivers.

**Table 25.** Company employed at the time of redundancy

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Bluescope Steel (x5)  
General Motors Holden (x2)  
AHM  
Australian Museum Sydney  
Canberra  
Credit Union  
Cronulla  
Federal Dept Environment  
Illawarra Mercury  
Manildra group  
Neighbour Aid  
Orange NSW for Suncorp  
S&G Engineering  
South Australia FIFO  
St George Bank  
Sydney Water  
Wongawilli Colliery

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Redundancy payments had both positive and negative impacts on the life of redundancy receivers (see Table 26). Those who shared positive comments mention the relief they felt at the time of their redundancy. Redundancy payment particularly had financial benefits. On the other hand, some needed to go back to work to maintain their financial stability. Some redundancy receivers were affected negatively by the payment in terms of their physical and mental health.

**Table 26.** Effects redundancy

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**Positive impacts**

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It was great! I started my own business  
 I requested it and was happy  
 I asked for it  
 I was excited, ready for a change  
 It was quite positive, I was young and ready for a new company to expand experience and I had a nice lump sum of \$\$  
 Made it better financially  
 For the better  
 Greatly, after brief depression I started to look for work and found it  
 Much more relaxed, I never really liked work  
 A relief because it ended the uncertainty at work wondering what was going to happen. The redundancy gave me a "soft landing", allowed me to do other things with my family

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**Negative impacts**

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A lot. I no longer had an income so struggled with living expenses. It took over 6 months for me to gain employment again. I was 'over-qualified' for most jobs  
 Depressed, financial stress  
 Despondent with feelings of what now  
 Destroyed  
 Changed everything, unexpected and unplanned  
 Devastation  
 Devastated- 12 months to control my blood pressure and stress levels  
 Disastrously  
 Uncertainty regarding my future  
 Large impact, emotional stress, feelings of under appreciation for my efforts, feelings of conspiracy to clear out staff, who cared about helping people in reality rather than looking good on paper

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**Initial positive financial impact**

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Initially it was a relief, but then I was unemployed for 5 months. I had to move to take a similar job in Sydney. I was heartbroken about leaving my home  
 Positive financially to pay off mortgage/negatively in the long run had to buy our own business  
 Had to find work immediately

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**Neutral impacts**

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A little but not badly  
 Not radically  
 After 6 months enjoyed retirement. I was 59 by then

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**Learning**

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Showed poor planning  
 Change in long term retirement strategies  
 Totally turned it around

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