



# Inclusive work and economic security for humanitarian migrant women

RESEARCH & POLICY CENTRE

**Seuwandi Wickramasinghe**

[Swickramasinghe@bsl.org.au](mailto:Swickramasinghe@bsl.org.au)

2018 ECCV Biennial State Multicultural Conference

18 May 2018

# The idea of security

“Human happiness requires security –  
know what to expect in given  
circumstances” (Hobhouse 1922)



# Outline

- Inclusive work is interconnected with economic security
- An understanding of inclusive work from the perspective of economic security
- A focus on humanitarian migrant women
- Diversity or inclusion?
- Some takeaways
- Questions

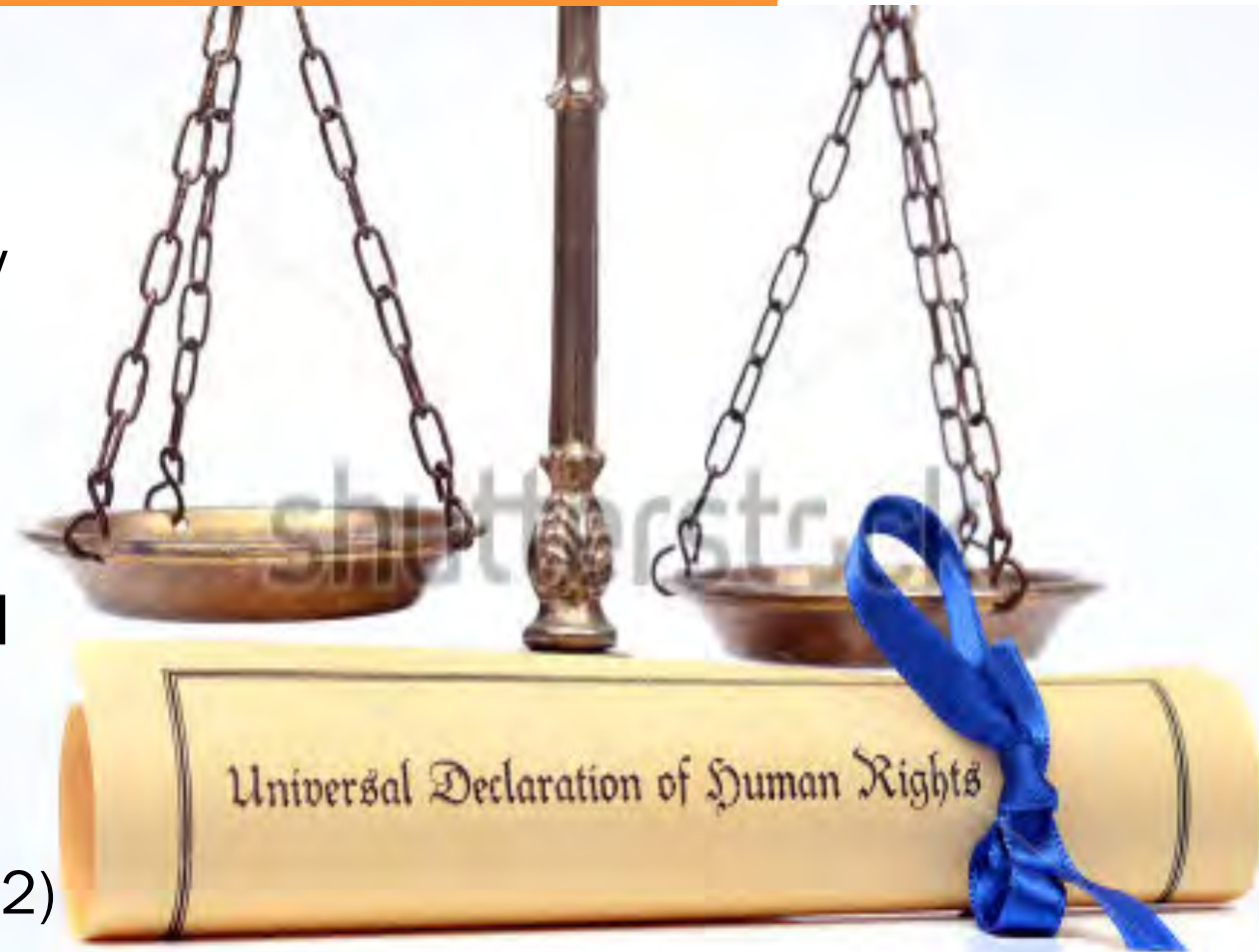


# Basic economic security as a human right

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) considers basic economic security as a human right

## Basic security matters

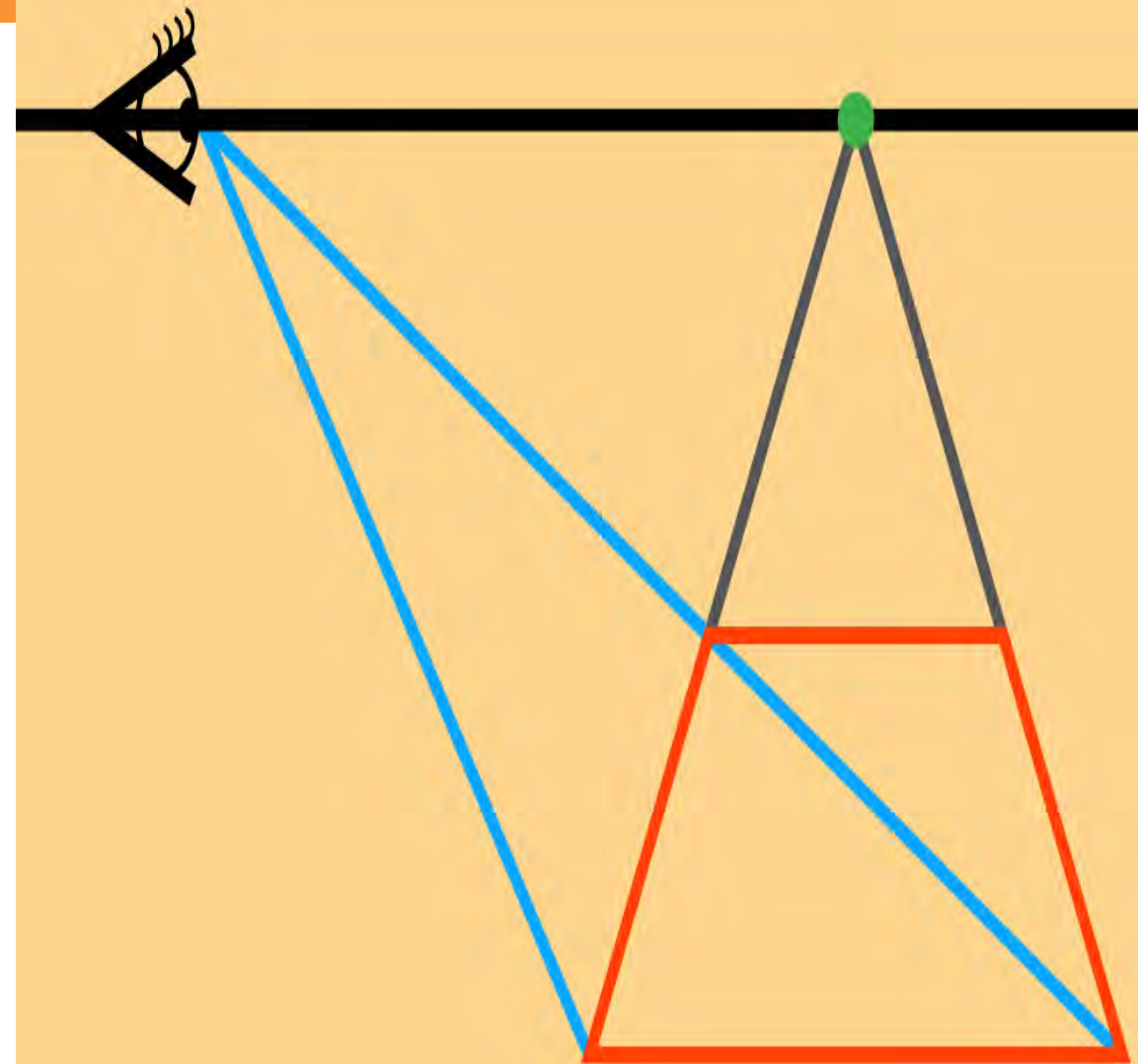
Without it, incentives to work, learn and develop shrivel, and confidence wanes. Without it, people lose all sense of having control over their lives (Stock 2002)



www.shutterstock.com · 482366494

# Defining economic security

Understanding of social disadvantage in marginalised communities should not be solely represented by economic indicators, but by a multidimensional view of people's lived experiences (Bowman & van Kooy 2016)





# Farah

With getting good job I can help my family financially. When you have money, I'm talking this time, you feel stronger. When you have money you can have voice in the community. With good job and good health and all this stuff you can save money

- Poor English skills
- Partner's long and uncertain work hours
- Family/care issues
- Double shift of work and family
- Cost of child care is a barrier to training
- Flexible work arrangements
- Lack of contacts
- Lack of work experience

# Inclusive employment & economic security



Bowman and van Kooy 2016

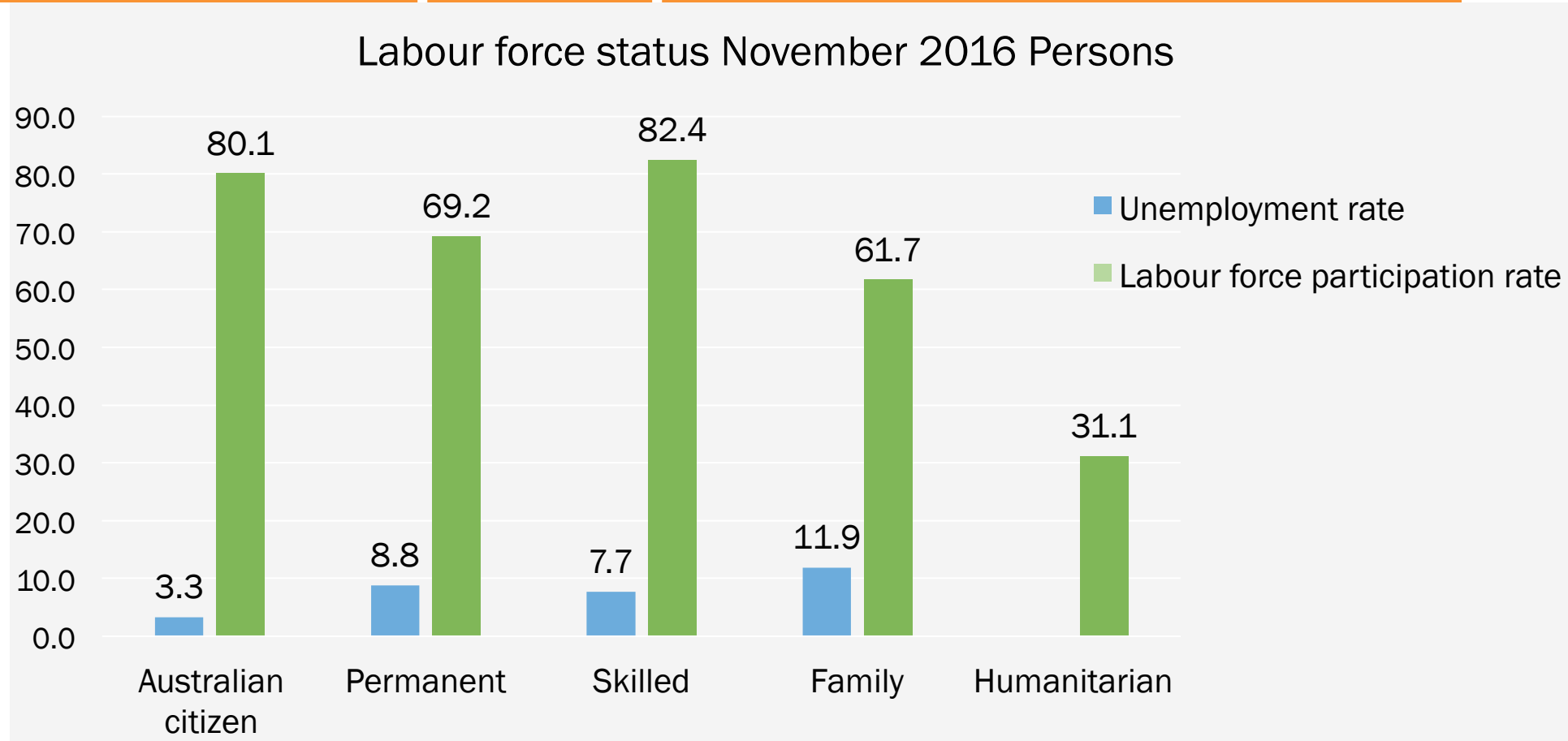
[http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/9350/3/Bowman\\_vanKooy\\_Inclusive\\_work\\_econ\\_security\\_framework\\_2016.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/9350/3/Bowman_vanKooy_Inclusive_work_econ_security_framework_2016.pdf)

# Economic security and humanitarian migrant women



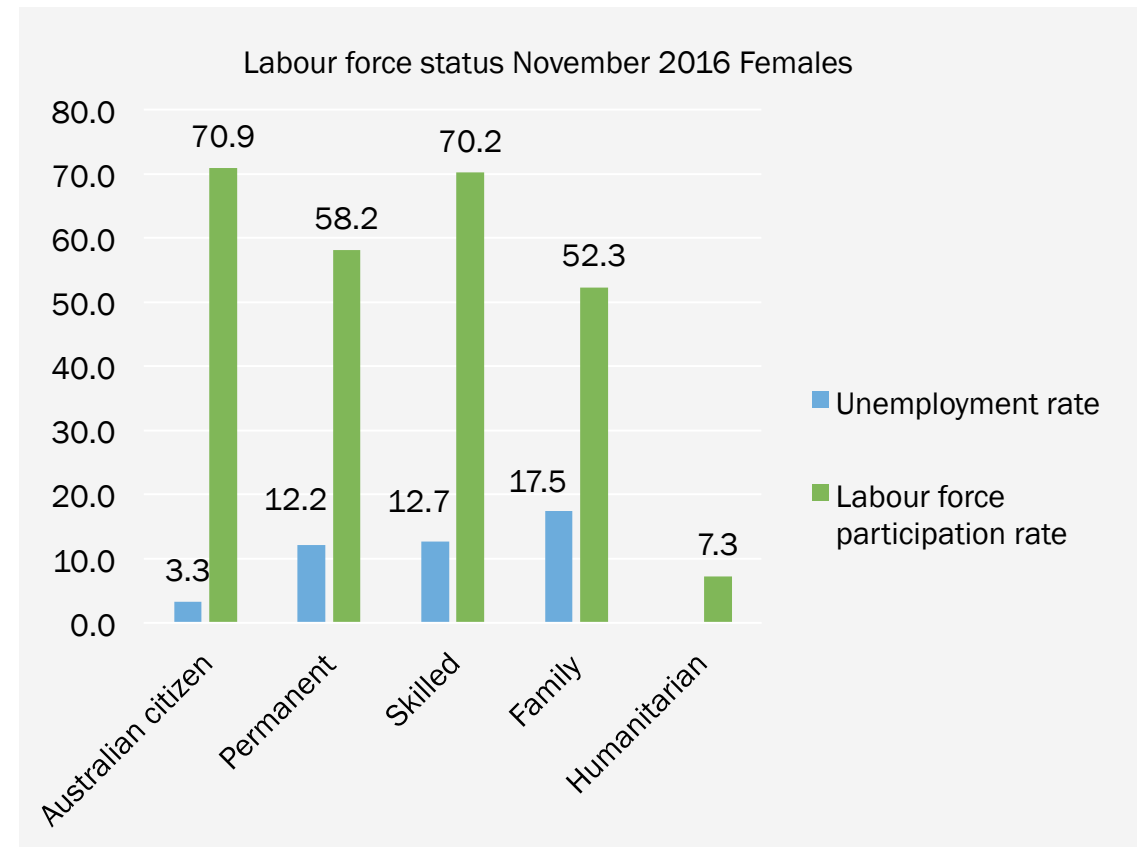
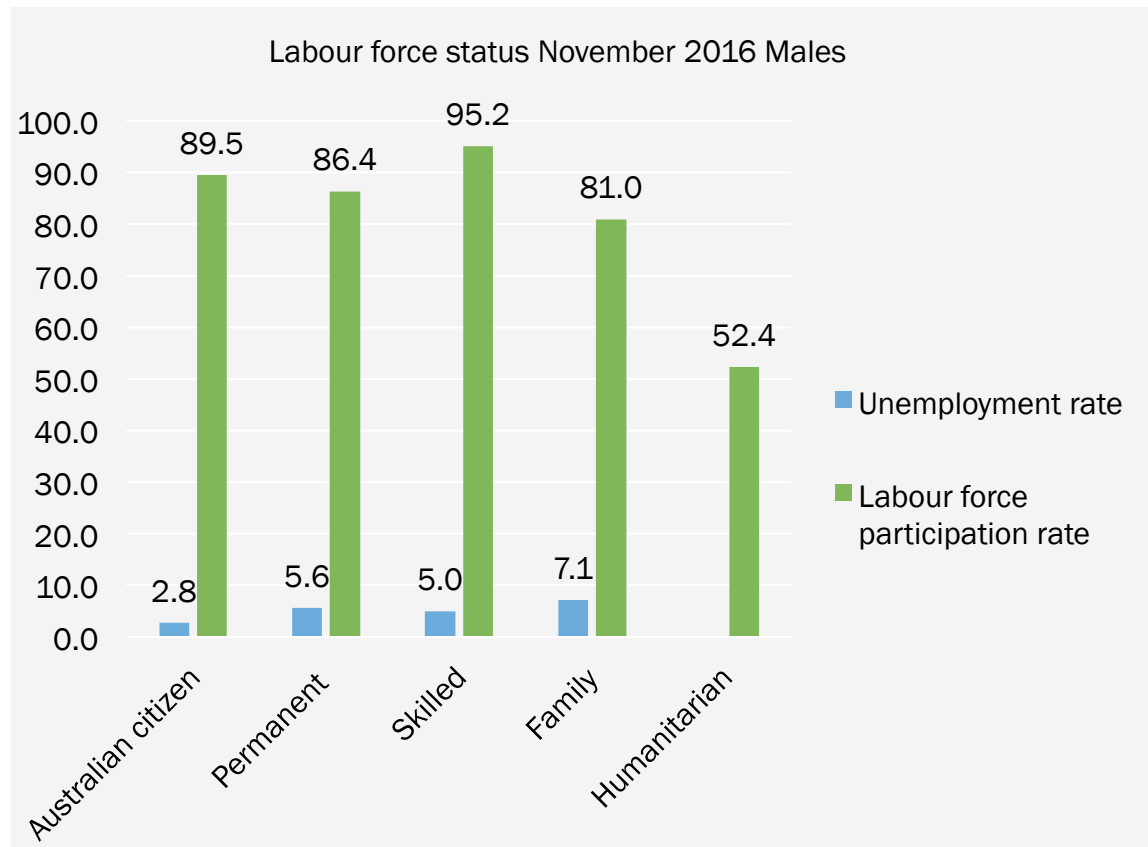


# Humanitarian migrants have low levels of labour market participation



Source: ABS 2016, Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, Nov 2016, Cat No: 6250.0, ABS, Canberra

# Humanitarian migrant women have very low levels of labor force participation



Source: ABS 2016, Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia, Nov 2016, Cat No: 6250.0, ABS, Canberra

# Precarious work and bad jobs

People from refugee backgrounds tend to be segmented in a secondary labour market of 'low-status, difficult, unhealthy, insecure and exploitative jobs (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006))





# Feminised work and job insecurity

- Australia also has a highly gender-segregated labour market
- Women are disadvantaged in the labour force – lower pay, feminised work, more likely to work part-time (often casualised)
- Increasingly women work informally (micro enterprises, cash in hand etc) without the protections of the standard employment relationship – as they attempt to meet care responsibilities and gain some kind of economic security



# Humanitarian migrant women face the ‘triple jeopardy’

- Disadvantage is compounded when women are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Historically been employed in lower-paying and lower-status occupations relative to Australian-born women
- Some jobs are considered out of bounds for some CALD women, locking them into low paid care or service sector work
- Lower bargaining power and open to exploitation



# Having a job doesn't guarantee economic security

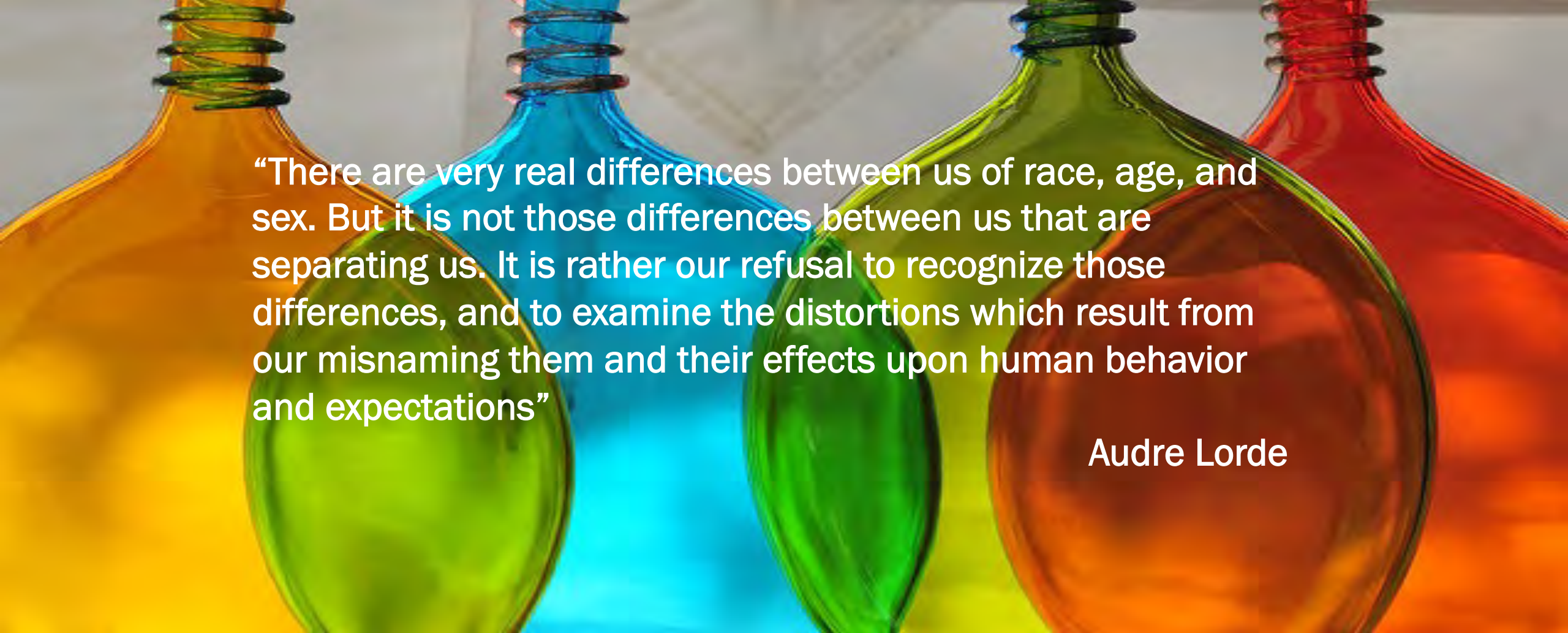
Demand and supply-side factors, combined with the increasing cost of living—particularly of housing mean that paid work no longer guarantees economic security



www.shutterstock.com · 1009220239



# Inclusive work and economic security



“There are very real differences between us of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectations”

Audre Lorde

# Diversity or inclusion?

- Discussion about and understanding of social or economic implications of unemployment, underemployment or labour market inequity.
- It requires more than just willing employers and incremental and individual employer strategies/policies (van Kooy 2015 )

<https://www.bsl.org.au/research/browse-publications/employer-toolkits-building-more-inclusive-workplaces/>



# From diversity to inclusion

A focus on **inclusion** rather than **diversity** to prevent reproducing stereotypes and conventional assumptions

- Involve the voices, insights and experiences of jobseekers in the labour market and with employers to inform policy, strategies and practice
- Understanding the implications of federal policies
- Building a better understanding of employment barriers
- Target macro-level change (instead of focusing on individual employers)
- Consider a combination of employer and labour market intermediaries



# Key points

- Inclusive work needs to be understood within the framework of economic security
- Economic security doesn't mean just paid employment - need to acknowledge the interrelationships between individual, social, economic, technological and other structural factors
- The Australian labour market is highly gender-segregated
- Women from refugee backgrounds experience higher job insecurity and uncertainty with greater implications for their financial security in later life
- A move away from *diversity* to *inclusive work* ensures access to decent employment satisfactory pay and conditions, career prospects and opportunities for social integration for all persons regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity

# Questions

**Seuwandi Wickramasinghe**

Research Officer

Work & Economic Security

e | [swickramasinghe@bsl.org.au](mailto:swickramasinghe@bsl.org.au)

Thank you

<https://www.bsl.org.au/research/research-themes/work-and-economic-security/>