

Fact Sheet – Children in Willoughby (0 to 11 years)^

Key insights

Willoughby saw a significant decline in the number of babies and toddlers between 2016 and 2021.

Families with children in Willoughby are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Willoughby has a lower proportion of single parent households compared to Greater Sydney.

Families with children in Willoughby are more likely to rent, and significantly more likely to live in high density dwellings compared to Greater Sydney.

Willoughby has seen a decline in the number of babies and toddlers.

The 2021 Census recorded 3,946 children aged 0 to 4 and 7,321 children aged 5 to 11 years in the Willoughby LGA.

Between 2016 and 2021, Willoughby's population of 0-4 year olds have declined significantly. While the proportion of 0-4 year olds declined across Greater Sydney, Willoughby saw a disproportionate drop in its population of babies and pre-schoolers, shrinking by 24%. Meanwhile, the number of primary school-aged children remained relatively steady.

Figure 1. Change in 0-11 year old population for Willoughby LGA, 2016 to 2021

| | 2016 | | | 2021 | | | change 2016- 2021 |
|-----------------------------------|--------|------|------------------------|--------|------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | no. | % | Greater Sydney % | no. | % | Greater Sydney % | |
| Babies and pre-schoolers (0 to 4) | 4,896 | 6.6 | 6.4 | 3,946 | 5.2 | 6.0 | ↓ 950 |
| Primary schoolers (5 to 11) | 7,152 | 9.6 | 8.8 | 7,321 | 9.7 | 8.8 | ↑ 169 |
| Total children aged 0 to 11 | 12,048 | 16.2 | 15.2 | 11,267 | 14.9 | 14.8 | ↓ 781 |

Population forecasts estimate that by 2036, the proportion of 0 to 4 year olds will see a modest increase to 6% of the population, while 5 to 11 year olds will decline proportionally to 9%¹.

[^] All figures are sourced from the ABS Census via analysis from .id (profile.id.com.au/Willoughby) unless otherwise stated.

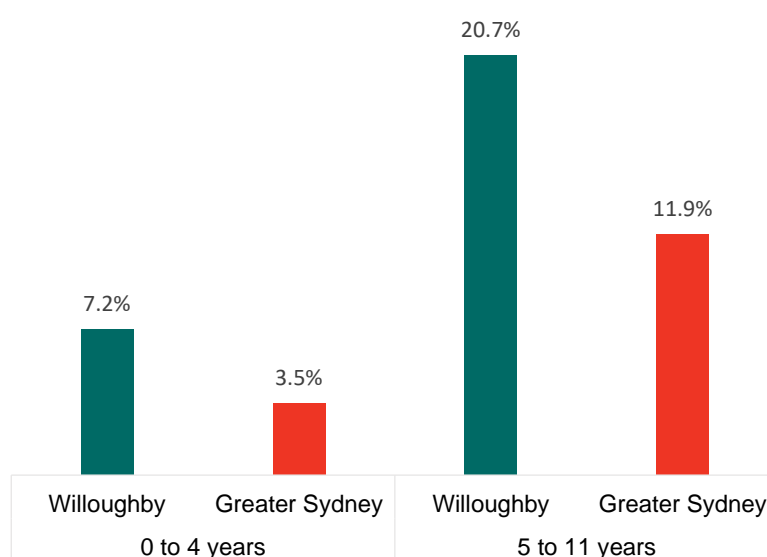
¹ Forecast.id, 2023. <https://forecast.id.com.au/willoughby>

Children in Willoughby are culturally diverse.

In 2021, 39% of 0 to 11 year olds spoke a language other than English at home, a higher proportion compared to Greater Sydney (33%). The top languages other than English spoken among children in Willoughby were: Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean and Hindi.

7% of 0 to 4 year olds and 21% of 5 to 11 year olds in Willoughby LGA were born overseas, a higher proportion compared to Greater Sydney, as illustrated in the Figure 2. These numbers reflect the cultural diversity of families in Willoughby and may suggest a need for culturally appropriate family and parenting support.

Figure 2. Percentage of children born overseas, ages 0-4, 5-11 years



Students in Willoughby are predominantly enrolled in public schools.

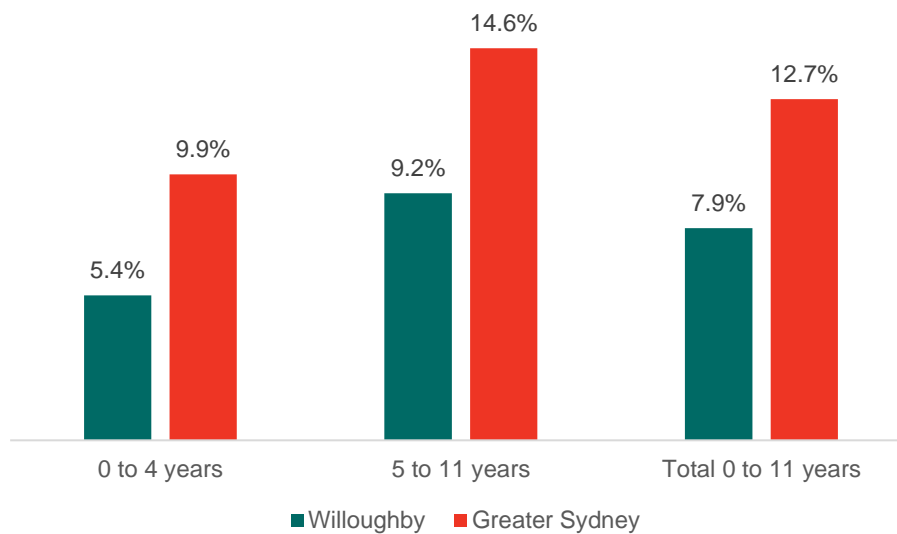
Primary school students in Willoughby LGA are mostly enrolled in public schools (78%), while 14% of primary students attend Catholic schools and 8% attend Independent schools. Public schooling is stronger in Willoughby compared to NSW, where an average of 68% of primary students are enrolled in public schools.²

Willoughby has a lower proportion of single parent family households compared to Greater Sydney.

Most children in Willoughby live in two-parent family households, while 8% are in single parent households. As shown in Figure 3, Willoughby consistently has a lower proportion of children in single parent households compared to Greater Sydney. This may be attributed to single parent families moving away due to a lack of affordable housing options in the area.

² Caroll, L and Gladstone, N. 'The map that reveals Sydney's flight from public primary schools', *Sydney Morning Herald* September 24 2024. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/the-map-that-reveals-sydney-s-flight-from-public-primary-schools-20240921-p5kcfk.html>

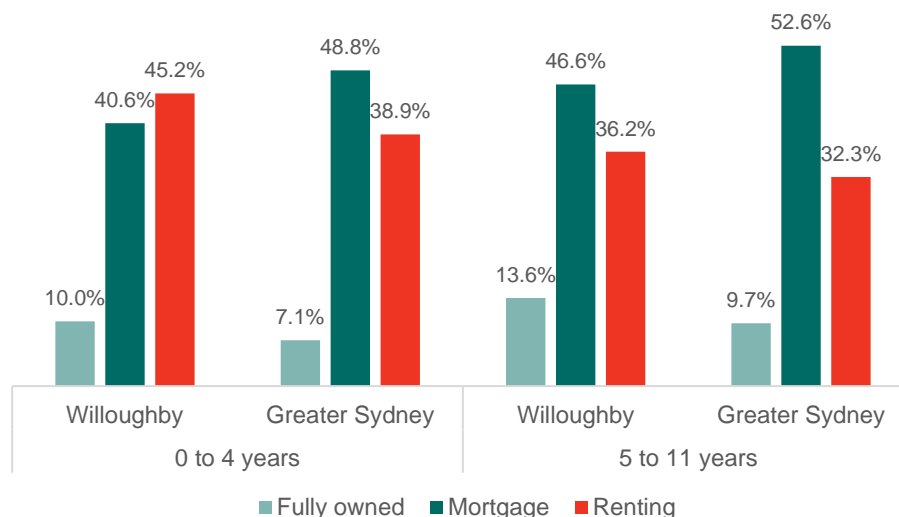
Figure 3. Proportion of children in single parent family households in Willoughby and Greater Sydney



Children in Willoughby are more likely to be in rental households compared to Greater Sydney.

As shown in Figure 4, a significant majority of households with children were renting or mortgaging their home in Willoughby, with only a fraction of households owning their home outright. Almost half of 0 to 4 year olds, and more than a third of 5 to 11 year olds lived in rental households, with Willoughby families more likely to rent compared to their counterparts in Greater Sydney.

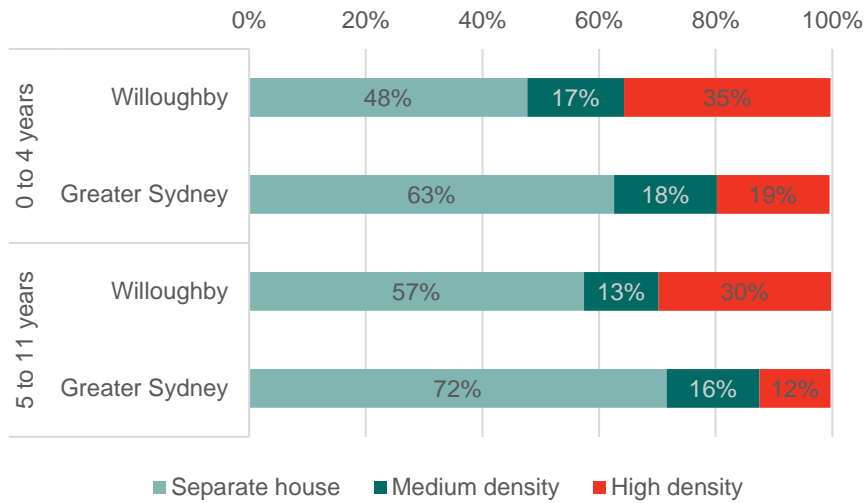
Figure 4. Proportion of children by household tenure type in Willoughby and Greater Sydney



Children in Willoughby are significantly more likely to be living in high density dwellings compared to children across Greater Sydney.

As shown in Figure 5, less than half of children aged 0 to 4 years, and under 60% of children aged 5 to 11 years lived in a standalone house, with the remainder living in medium or high density dwellings. Children aged 5 to 11 years were more than twice as likely to live in a high density dwelling compared to their peers across Greater Sydney.

Figure 5. Percentage of children by household dwelling type in Willoughby and Greater Sydney



Research has highlighted the impact of high density living on the wellbeing of families and children³. A recent guide released by Western Sydney Local Health District emphasised the role of quality building and neighbourhood design in determining the health and wellbeing of families living in high density households⁴. Affordable, well-designed high-density dwellings with accompanying amenities can support strong wellbeing outcomes for these families.

Willoughby residents are more likely to provide unpaid care to children compared to Greater Sydney.

There are over 50 childcare facilities within the Willoughby LGA and more than 3,000 childcare spaces (Figure 6). At least 80% of those childcare facilities have vacancies available.

Figure 6. Number of childcare spaces available (as of June 2024)⁵

| | Number of facilities | Number of childcare spaces |
|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Chatswood | 19 | 1090 |
| Artarmon | 11 | 808 |
| Castlecrag and Castle Cove | 3 | 190 |
| Northbridge | 1 | 50 |
| Middle Cove | 2 | 78 |
| Naremburn | 5 | 262 |
| St Leonards | 5 | 321 |

According to the 2021 Census, 29% of Willoughby residents aged 15 and over provided unpaid care to children, higher than the average for Greater Sydney (25%). This is likely reflective of a high number of older people providing unpaid care to grandchildren.

³ Andrews, F 'More children are living in high-rise apartments, so designers should keep them in mind', *The Conversation* August 7 2018. <https://theconversation.com/more-children-are-living-in-high-rise-apartments-so-designers-should-keep-them-in-mind-100756>

⁴ Centre for Population Health, Western Sydney Local Health District. 2024. 'Healthy Higher Density for Living for Families with Children: An Advocacy, Planning and Design Guide'. <https://www.wslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Population-Health/Programs-Services/Places/Shaping-healthy-places-spaces/healthy-housing>

⁵ Based on data from Care for Kids. <https://www.careforkids.com.au>