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Western Sydney: exploring the  
role of housing tenure**

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## **Defining Social Exclusion in Western Sydney: exploring the role of housing tenure**

### **Abstract**

Over the past decade social exclusion has increasingly been positioned at the forefront of political, academic and lay discourse as the cause of disadvantage (Marsh, 2004). While the definition, measurement and solutions to social exclusion remain open to debate, housing has progressively been positioned as a central variable creating neighbourhoods of exclusion. Much of this debate has positioned areas of public housing as the most disadvantaged and socially excluded neighbourhoods. However, the multiplicity of social exclusion questions the simple identification of areas of public housing as the most excluded. By exploring six dimensions of exclusion (neighbourhood, social and civic engagement, access, crime and security, community identity and economic disadvantage) we argue that there is relatively little difference between areas dominated by public housing and those characterised by private rental for each of these individual dimensions of exclusion (with a number of exceptions). Rather, it is the experience of multiple dimensions of exclusion which marks areas of public housing as unique.<sup>1</sup>

KEY WORDS *Social exclusion, western Sydney, public housing, private rental, disadvantage*

## **Introduction**

Over the past decade social exclusion has increasingly been positioned at the forefront of political, academic and lay discourse as the cause of disadvantage (Marsh, 2004). However, while it has been mobilised for many years in the UK and Europe as an alternative to the concept of poverty, it represents a relatively new addition to Australian housing and urban policy debates (Arthurson, 2004; Arthurson and Jacobs, 2004). While the definition, measurement and solutions to social exclusion remain open to debate, housing has progressively been positioned as a central variable creating neighbourhoods of exclusion. Internationally, social exclusion has primarily been viewed as an issue associated with social housing, with many social exclusion initiatives and analyses being aimed at large housing estates (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Lee, 1999; Marsh, 2004). However, in the Australian context, public housing accounts for less than five percent of the housing stock, while the private rental market has assumed the role of the primary housing tenure for most low income households, especially single person households, those without children and those in work (Randolph and Holloway, 2007).

Given the large disparity between available public housing and housing need, low-income households rely largely on private rental, often in undesirable and disadvantaged suburbs. Thus, in the Australian context, social exclusion should not be positioned as a problem associated with social housing, with the majority of disadvantaged suburbs in both Sydney and Melbourne characterised by low levels of public housing (Randolph and Holloway, 2005). Further, Hulse and Burke (2002) argue that individuals who are forced to rent privately have a higher risk of being socially excluded than those in public

housing, given the lack of security of tenure or cap on the proportion of income paid in rent. A similar argument could be made for low income homeowners (Lee and Murie, 1997). In order to explore the role that housing plays in defining the experience of social exclusion for communities in the most disadvantaged areas of cities, and to question the assumptions of tenure based classifications of social exclusion, four suburbs in western Sydney are explored here: two dominated by public housing (Villawood and Shalvey) and two by private housing (Fairfield and Auburn town centres). The research concludes that, despite suggestions that social exclusion is confined to areas of public housing, residents of all case study areas experienced similar levels of social exclusion for the six dimensions explored here. It is rather the frequency that individuals experience multiple dimensions of exclusion and locational factors that differentiate areas dominated by public housing.

This paper builds on the work of Arthurson and Jacobs (2003; 2004) to explore the complexity of social exclusion and housing in the Australian context. The paper begins with a review of social exclusion literature. This research focuses on six dimensions of social exclusion commonly identified in the literature, issues of: 'neighbourhood', 'social and civic engagement', 'access', 'crime and security', 'community identity' and 'economic disadvantage'. By drawing on these themes, social exclusion is positioned as a manifold and diverse process which differentially impacts upon urban locations. Following a discussion of the case study areas, the methodologies employed are reviewed. The fourth section analyses each dimension of social exclusion. The final section presents social exclusion, not as a single factor directing the lives of residents, but

rather as a scaled entity which, through the experience of multiple dimensions of exclusion, identifies locations and individuals as more or less excluded.

### **Social Exclusion, Housing Tenure and Place**

Over the past decade and on an international scale, social exclusion has increasingly been positioned at the centre of policy programs which attempt to confront issues of disadvantage (Marsh and Mullins, 1998; Arthurson, 2004; Arthurson and Jacobs, 2004). Yet despite an increasingly powerful position in policy discourse, social exclusion is both a contested and imperfectly defined concept. From its earliest versions in French policy debates of the 1970s and 80s, the concept has evolved both in scope and complexity (Arthurson and Jacobs, 2003). Social exclusion has come to represent the multiple and complex interactions of disadvantage that coalesce in the identities of individuals and communities (Walker and Walker, 1997). While offering a broad interpretation of disadvantage, many commentators still argue that labour market position and poverty are fundamental components of social exclusion (Levitas, 1998; Anderson and Sim, 2000). However, Rowland (2000) argues that the crucial difference between social exclusion and poverty is that the former is both a state and a process. In contrast to the notion of poverty which emphasises material conditions of deprivation, the notion of social exclusion focuses on processes of access and engagement which mediate the multiple social, economic, political and cultural positions of individuals and communities (Blanc, 1998).

Exclusion has been associated with a wide range of compounding and related issues, making a definition, research focus or policy response difficult. Somerville (1998)

suggests that the cause of social exclusion is made of three interrelated dimensions: economic, legal/political, and cultural/moral/ideological, while Arthurson (2002) adds a social realm. Some commentators stress individual attributes that make people vulnerable to exclusion (unemployment, low educational attainment, etc.), while others stress more structural factors such as access to services, adequate health care and housing (Hastings, 2004). Further, others position exclusion as a failure of civic engagement and low social connectivity, resulting in inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power (Murie and Musterd, 2004). Marsh and Mullins (1998) discuss social exclusion as the failure of a particular populace to benefit from what is theirs through citizen rights. However, to complicate matters, Walker and Walker (1997) contend that to experience one or more of these conditions does not necessarily mean someone is socially excluded.

Somerville (1998) suggests that two components of social exclusion are important to housing related analyses: first that social exclusion relates to an exclusion from the labour markets of advanced capitalist economies; and, second, it relates to the denial of social citizenship status to certain groups. In terms of those living in rental properties, it is those citizenship rights tied to dwelling ownership which are most often cited (Marsh, 2004). While social exclusion is increasingly present in discussions of disadvantage, Levitas (1998) positions the term as problematic, given that it divides society into two groups (the excluded and the non-excluded), creating an identifiable 'other' (Young, 1990; Cresswell, 1996), and that this involves a static view of who is excluded and neglects those who are on the margin or experience certain dimensions of exclusion and not others. It is this

complexity of exclusion which this paper explores, as it is possible for some individuals to be excluded from one aspect of social life but equally have access to others.

Importantly, the processes of social exclusion have predominately been identified as a product of place(s) within the wider spatial economy. Lee (1999) suggests that the additional quality social exclusion brings to the analysis of disadvantage is the vital role of place and space. While social exclusion is often theorised as the product of individual and collective characteristics of disadvantage due to weak labour market positions and/or limited or deteriorating social associations, it has traditionally been recognised as a place based phenomena. As a result, Forrest (2004) argues that ‘there is an increasing coincidence between socially excluded people and socially excluded places’ (p. 7), while, more focused in her spatial analysis, Power (2000, p.1) suggests that ‘social exclusion is almost an entirely urban problem’, an assertion that is plainly not true in the case of Indigenous communities in Australia. Moreover, to simply suggest that social exclusion is an urban problem down plays the specificity of its impacts across urban environments. Thus, while locations (such as our case studies) may broadly be defined as socially excluded, these sites differ substantially in material and social manifestations of this exclusion.

In recognition of placed based expressions of social exclusion, much recent research (Murie and Musterd, 2004; Atkinson and Kintrea, 2002; Buck, 2001; Cresswell, 1996; Gleeson, 2002) identifies residential location as a significant factor in one’s experience of crime, social engagement opportunities and the development of one’s views on issues



such as the importance of the family unit, a job and education. Atkinson and Kintrea (2002) suggest that 'neighbourhood' or 'area effects' form an important contribution to the experiences and aspiration of residents. Whilst deprived areas are less likely to have the same services, facilities and employment than less deprived areas, the lack of accessibility may be in fact secondary to the lack of need or willingness to want these things (Forrest, 2004). Thus, the effect that living in a deprived area can have on an individual's life outcomes are moulded by local social processes and norms (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2002).

Importantly, Lee (1999) argues that housing is central to any discussion of social exclusion as it is the driving force in determining how areas are excluded through both the impact housing has on the physical characteristics of an area and the defining role that housing tenure and price plays in the socio-spatial structure of urban areas. Much of this placed based expression of social exclusion is attributed (at least in popular discourse, through the media, professionals and politicians – a process which enforces the conception [Taylor, 1998; Hastings, 2004]) to public housing estates (Lee and Murie, 1998). As a result, a significant number of initiatives have been targeted at public housing estates and their residents, such as urban renewal and changing social mix (Randolph and Wood, 2004; Randolph and Judd, 2000). However, such policy responses to social exclusion sit uneasily with housing management policies that have increasingly positioned public rental as a residual tenure for those in greatest social need.

Moreover, the emphasis on public housing estates as the site of social exclusion has underplayed the extent to which residents in private housing experience social exclusion (Arthurson and Jacobs, 2004). This is particularly the case in the Australian context, where public housing accounts for a relatively small proportion of the total housing stock (4.5% in 2001) and large public housing estates are relatively few in number. These characteristics result in a significant spill-over effect where many low income and otherwise disadvantaged households who do not meet the strict needs based eligibility criteria for public housing, have little choice but to rent in the private sector where they are often faced with poor quality and unaffordable housing in low amenity suburbs. These trends were confirmed by Randolph and Holloway (2005) who, in analysing areas of the most severe disadvantage in Sydney in 2001, found that only 38% of households experiencing the most severe disadvantage lived in areas dominated by public housing. Comparable trends were found in Melbourne. In a similar vein, Lee and Murie (1997) support a holistic approach to urban based social exclusion by arguing that research should include both private renters and owner-occupiers given that their deprivation can at times be worse than in public housing.

In terms of social exclusion, low-income private renters are potentially positioned at a further disadvantage to public tenants given their inability to access the same support through guaranteed affordable housing and long-term stable tenure (although, through the implementation of time-limited leases, this situation may be changing in NSW), and access to appropriate facilities and services (Mee, 2002; Hulse and Burke, 2001; Arthurson and Jacobs, 2003). In a more nuanced reading of place based policy

interventions, Marsh and Mullins (1998) suggest that programs aimed at improving the lives of residents in socially excluded public estates potentially work to exclude the excluded, by failing to address the wider and private expressions of disadvantage.

We conclude this review of the social exclusion literature by suggesting that while there is no doubt that many areas of public housing exhibit the characteristics of socially exclusion, in the context of the Australian housing market, it is also the case that some low income areas predominately characterised by private housing, especially rental, are also likely to be associated with characteristics synonymous with aspects of social exclusion.

### **The Dimensions of Social Exclusion**

But what exactly is social exclusion? Reviewing recent literature on social exclusion suggests that there are number of (inter-related) dimensions which can be defined and measured. Following Burchardt *et al.* (1999) and Arthurson and Jacobs (2003) this research suggests that social exclusion is not a homogeneous entity, rather it is manifest through multiple and shifting experiences and influences. The major dimensions of social exclusion identified in this literature and which form the empirical focus of this paper, are centred on notions of: neighbourhood, social and civic engagement, access, crime and security, community identity and economic disadvantage. This section attempts to briefly define these dimensions and outlines the variables used to assess their prevalence in the case study survey reported upon in the last part of the paper.

*Neighbourhood*

The first dimension of exclusion analysed here is that focused on the notion of neighbourhood association. Neighbourhood is defined as the ‘bundle of spatially based attributes associated with clusters of residences, sometimes in conjunction with other land uses’ (Galster, 2001, p. 2112). Neighbourhood is a conceptually ambiguous term at best, due to the multiplicity of variables which are manifest at the neighbourhood level and are invoked to define the term (Buck, 2001; Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Galster, 2001; Kearns and Parkinson, 2001). As social exclusion is the heterogeneous expression of multiple social, cultural and economic disadvantage, so socially excluded neighbourhoods are the place-based expressions of these same attributes. Hinds *et al.* (2000) discuss the fact that socially excluded individuals are often clustered together in a spatial sense, increasing the probability of there being neighbourhoods of high social exclusion. In terms of social construction, neighbourhood is seen as an area of predictability and as a source and purveyor of status (Kearns and Parkinson, 2001). Such arguments are supported by the increasing literature concerning the neighbourhood effects of social exclusion. Researchers such as Buck (2001) and Atkinson and Kintrea (2001) explore the influence that the neighbourhood has on the life-chances of individuals and identify the fact that social exclusion may be associated with neighbourhood characteristics, such as tenure composition. Some commentators have suggested that the decline in neighbourhood interaction of a friendly, social nature has led to the increasing breakdown of social bonds and increased feelings of isolation (Guest and Wierzbicki, 1999; Ziller, 2004). Nevertheless, in line with increasing concern over the place based erosion of social bonds and cohesion, Forrest (2004) positions the neighbourhood as a ‘potentially important site

for rebuilding cohesion from the bottom up with active, empowered citizens practicing mutuality and reciprocity' (p. 6).

In this reading neighbourhood becomes the spatial expression of the virtues of social capital, where local placed based interactions, of the bonding type, facilitate inclusion, sense of belonging and interaction (Stone, 2001; Taylor, 1998). Nevertheless, Forrest (2004) has suggested that effective neighbourhood ties may not rely solely on strong neighbourhood friendships, but rather, on friendships and associations with neighbours on a superficial level, which in turn offer a sense of 'feeling at home', 'security' and 'practical as well as social support' (p. 11). For the purposes of this paper, neighbourhood cohesiveness is measured by a range of more or less subjective questions on: resident's satisfaction/dissatisfaction with their area; perceptions that the neighbourhood would change in the future; the presence of friends and family; perceptions of trust; attraction of the neighbourhood; interaction with fellow residents; and, neighbourhood as the foundation of feelings of community.

### *Social and Civic Engagement*

The second dimension of social exclusion explored here centres on social and civic engagement. Atkinson and Kintrea (2004) contend that people's prospects for social engagement and economic activity are related to the neighbourhood where they live. Social and civic engagement, however, is not solely the responsibility of individuals, rather it is an area responsibility. Thus, any location which fails to create the opportunities for social engagement is potentially just as, if not more, detrimental than an

individual who does not seize the opportunities in an area with many. Social and civic engagements are positioned as central to reducing the levels of social exclusion and increasing social capital, as Forrest (2004, p. 7) suggests:

A society in which people are actively engaged as neighbours is, it is argued, also likely to be one where there is a healthy, vibrant civic culture.

In this study, social and civic engagement variables focused upon: resident's membership of local organisations; their attendance at local events; their participation in a community project; the tendency to take action over neighbourhood issues; the extent to which residents believe they can influence their neighbourhood; and, the level of interest they have in what happens in their neighbourhood.

#### *Access*

The third dimension of exclusion covered here refers to the level and type of access available at each location. It is suggested that easy access to facilities and services within local areas, such as public transport, shops, doctors and local employment services, can greatly impact upon an individuals' quality of life (Witten *et al.*, 2003; Ruming *et al.*, 2004). It has been argued that the social exclusion within certain neighbourhoods is compounded by a lack of goods and services or adequate access to such services in places elsewhere (Taylor, 1998). Further access to such services is positioned as a key feature of locations, which shapes and signals social status along with social and economic opportunity (Cowan and Marsh, 2004). Access, or more precisely the lack thereof, has

often been identified as central to location-based readings of social exclusion and neighbourhood disadvantage (Randolph, 2004; Randolph and Holloway, 2005). For those persons who spend much of their time spatially confined within their neighbourhood (especially the elderly, unemployed, disabled, stay at home parents), easy access to services not only facilitates an easier day-to-day existence, but has the ability to influence residents propensity to walk and the nature and intensity of social relations with neighbours (Witten *et al.*, 2003). Access variables of social exclusion focused upon here include the ease by which residents could get to services (such as, inter alia, corner shop, doctor, bank, bus stop, place of worship, council office and Department of Housing office), in addition to their access to a car and the presence or absence of personal savings, shares or investments.

#### *Crime and Security*

The fourth dimension of social exclusion covered here is crime and security. At its most superficial crime represents one of the most commonly identified expressions of anti-social behaviour, opposing the central tenets of social capital and social cohesion. In a more intricate reading, crime, or its perception, represents a central component in mediating social interaction, neighbourhood level interaction and social exclusion (Palmer *et al.*, 2005). Fear of crime has the ability to inhibit people's propensity to walk within neighbourhoods or use local facilities (Palmer *et al.*, 2005).

Crime, and the fear thereof, has often been identified as an expression or cause of social exclusion with high correlations to housing tenure. Taylor (1998) discussed the

process of social exclusion in public housing estates as one spurred on by compounding factors, including crime and disorder. In perhaps a confirmation of public discourse, Samuels *et al.* (2004) found that crime victimisation in Australian public housing estates was a more frequent occurrence within the estate compared to surrounding areas. The variables used in this research focused upon exploring exclusion through experience and perceptions about crime and security including: the extent to which residents worried about having their properties broken into; being mugged/robbed in the neighbourhood; physically attacked due to race; different types of attack; the level of experience of crime; and, feelings of safety in their neighbourhood and at home at night.

#### *Community Identity*

As with the notion of neighbourhood, the concept of community is complex, drawing from a wide range of aspects, associations and expressions. Community has increasingly been positioned as a locality-based system of interrelated social institutions and relationships (Silk, 1999). According to Willmont (1989) community is that shared element between people, whether it be area-based (eg neighbourhood), interest-based or feeling (association)-based (cited in Ziller, 2004). Many researchers (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Peel, 1995; Palmer *et al.*, 2005) have suggested that one of the most important functions of community is the provision of mutual support, and the fact that communities form on the basis of joint hardships and social disadvantage. Recent housing centred research on community has suggested that public housing residents, especially those confined to housing estates, are less likely to have overlapping community associations (Taylor, 1998). Nevertheless, this is not to say that they don't have strong place based



associations to neighbours or fellow residents, often of a 'bonding' nature which involves trust and reciprocity in closed networks, and helps the process of 'getting by' under similar conditions of material disadvantage (Ruming *et al.*, 2004; Stone, 2001). However, contrary to the idealised notion of community associations, a number of researchers such as Young (1990), Dwyer (1999), and Peel (1995), have argued that the most serious consequence of the desire for community is that it often operates to exclude or oppress those perceived as different. In order to explore residents' feelings of exclusion from their local community we focused upon whether residents believed the area had a good community spirit and their overall level of attachment to the local community.

#### *Economic*

The final dimension of exclusion here relates to the economic position of residents. This dimension recognises the structural aspects of social exclusion and role that poverty plays in limiting life chances. The role of labour market position and access to employment opportunities in determining this fundamental dimension of social exclusion has been extensively recognised (Walker and Walker, 1997; Arthurson and Jacobs, 2003). Analysis of economic exclusion centred on: residents employment status; whether they received an earned income or were welfare dependant; and, finally, their position in comparison to the Henderson Poverty Line.

#### **An analysis of social exclusion in western Sydney**

Western Sydney has long been positioned in policy and public arenas as the receptacle of disadvantage primarily driven by low household income and employment levels (Powell,

1993; Murphy and Watson, 1997; Mee, 2002; Searle, 2002; Fagan and Dowling, 2005). While this represents a gross generalisation of the complexity of place identity in western Sydney – given the emergence of both areas of extreme of poverty and luxury privatopias (Dowling and Mee, 2000; Gleeson, 2006) – much of the discussion of disadvantage in western Sydney has centred on the social problems of the large public housing estates (Randolph and Judd, 2000; Arthurson, 2004). More recently, this association has been questioned, with Randolph and Holloway (2004) arguing that disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the region are as likely to be found in private housing market areas as they are in public housing estates. This paper takes tests this assertion through the analysis of four case study locations within the broader western Sydney region. Two sites were chosen that are dominated by public housing – Shalvey and Villawood – while a further two locations displayed an over representation of private housing (both ownership and rental) – the town centre areas of Fairfield and Auburn. A statistical profile of these four areas compared to Sydney as a whole using data from the 2001 Census is presented in Table 1 and the location of the areas is shown in Figure 1. The four case study areas selected, comprising contiguous groupings of census collector districts among the highest levels of disadvantage, were chosen as typical of highly disadvantaged areas where either private or public housing predominated. These areas were identified from an analysis of the census collector districts in 2001 that fell below the lowest 15% of scores on the ABS SIEFA Index of Disadvantage for Sydney. A full explanation of this analysis can be found in Randolph and Holloway (2005). As Figure 2 shows, the overall household income profile of these four areas is significantly different to that of Sydney as a whole, with a substantially skewed distribution towards lower incomes.

**Insert Figure 1 around here**

**Insert Table 1 around here**

**Insert Figure 2 around here**

*Areas comprised predominately of public housing*

The case study areas of *Shalvey*, with a population of 10 521, and *Villawood*, with a population of 6 332 in 2001, are dominated by public rental (42% and 58 % respectively). In terms of dwelling type, separate houses dominate. Both sites display levels of single parent families more than twice the Sydney average with higher divorce and separation rates. Further, both are characterised by high youth and overall unemployment rates (the Shalvey youth unemployment rate is almost three times the Sydney average). Villawood also is also characterised by high levels of lone person households and a higher proportion of persons born overseas compared to greater Sydney. Both Shalvey and Villawood display high levels of residential stability with almost 60% of residents living in the same address as 1996. Villawood is serviced by a local railway station and neighbourhood centre, however, each is located some way from the main residential area. Shalvey is located on the edge of the city several kilometres from the nearest rail and bus stations.

*Areas comprised predominately of private housing*

In contrast, the case study areas of *Fairfield*, with a population of 7 758, and *Auburn*, with 10 511 residents, are the private rental case study locations. Both sites are characterised by levels of private rental in excess of 45% (more than 20% above the Sydney average). Further, the sites are characterised by higher dwelling densities, both with levels of flats and units more than twice the Sydney average. Similar to the public cases, both sites displayed very high levels of youth and overall unemployment. Fairfield displayed the highest unemployment and youth unemployment of all sites (both more than three times the Sydney average). Another distinguishing feature of the private rental locations is the over representation of persons born overseas – both more than twice the Sydney level. The sites displayed lower levels of residential stability with approximately 40% of residents living at the same address as five years previously. Importantly, both the Fairfield and Auburn study areas are located close to rail and bus stations and the civic, commercial and social facilities of town centres.

**Methodology**

The data on which the analysis of social exclusion is based was derived from a random stratified face-to-face survey of households in the four case study areas conducted during mid-2002. The survey was undertaken for the researchers by AC Nielsen, a nationally based market research company. Surveys were administered to 612 households in the case study areas. Surveys were evenly distributed across the case study sites of Villawood (150 households or 25% of responses), Shalvey (149 household or 24% of responses) Fairfield (158 household or 26% of responses) and Auburn (156 households or 25% of

responses). The survey focused upon the six dimensions of exclusion discussed above. In order to identify those cases which could be considered as being excluded on based each of these dimensions, a factor analysis involving a selection of variables from the survey questionnaire was undertaken. A k-means cluster analysis was then performed for each of the resulting social exclusion factors (neighbourhood, access, area definition, social and civic engagement, crime and security and economic). In the analysis of each factor, four clusters were created in an effort to extract those individuals who are most socially excluded. This was done via nearest centroid sorting that involves assigning each case to the cluster with the smallest distance between the case and the centre of the cluster (Pallant, 2002). By grouping like cases that had similar answers for the variables included, the k-means cluster analysis isolates those cases that are most socially excluded by grouping them together in one cluster. An ANOVA test was then run on the resulting clusters to highlight those variables that are significant, and those variables that make the largest contribution to the separation of the clusters. A Cronbach's coefficient alpha was run for each of these factors to ensure internal consistency and reliability of the questions included in each factor. The reliability test measures for high correlations between questions (Cronbach's alpha of 1 is perfect) to discover whether or not the questions measured the same dimension of exclusion. The results of the analysis are set out in Table 2, which suggest that the resulting clusters identified from the analysis had a high degree of significance overall.

**Insert Table 2 around here**

### **The findings: a profile of exclusion**

This section explores the characteristics of social exclusion in the case study areas and is divided into two sections. The first explores the characteristics of residents who experience each of the exclusion dimensions. The second section provides a more in-depth analysis of the characteristics of residents who experience no exclusion, moderate exclusion and multiple exclusion.

#### *The individual experience of exclusion*

The characteristics of those residents who experienced each dimension of exclusion is now explored. It is illustrated that, with a few exceptions, there is little difference between tenures and their experience of each dimension of exclusion.

#### *Neighbourhood*

In total, 104 cases (17% of participants) were deemed to be socially excluded from their neighbourhood. Persons excluded from their neighbourhood were not friends with their neighbours, were dissatisfied with living in their neighbourhood and, consequently, wanted to move. They were also negative about the neighbourhood's future. They were most likely to be employed persons (42%), a level above the sample average (36%). This suggests a greater association with locations away from their immediate neighbourhood. Residents excluded from feelings of neighbourhood displayed high personal incomes, with 37% having a weekly household income of between \$690 and \$2000. Thus, residents excluded from neighbourhood associations are less spatially bound by affordability criteria, a factor associated with higher place based associations (Ruming *et*

*al.*, 2004). Furthermore, the socially excluded group was compiled of 42% men and 58% women (a slight over representation of women when compared to the sample average: 53%).

In opposition to tenure based interpretations of social exclusion, those excluded from their neighbourhood illustrate a diverse tenure make-up, with 36% of excluded respondents living in Shalvey (25% of Shalvey residents), whilst only 17% were living in Fairfield (11% of Fairfield residents), 22% in Villawood (15% of Villawood residents) and 25% in Auburn (17% of Auburn residents) (see Table 3 for an overview of dimensions of social exclusion by case study site). In terms of tenure differences across all case study locations, private renters accounted for the highest proportion of residents excluded from neighbourhood, with 35% (or 18% of private renters). Public renters recorded the next highest proportion of persons excluded from neighbourhood, with 31% (19% of public renters). Homeowners and home purchasers accounted for a lower proportion of residents excluded from neighbourhood, with 18% and 17% respectively (or 12% of homeowners and 20% of home buyers) (see Table 4 for an overview of dimensions of social exclusion by tenure). While exclusion from neighbourhood centres on the perceptions and associations of place, social interaction in these locations plays a central component in mediating exclusion or facilitating social capital through social and civic interaction they foster (Galster, 2001; Silk, 1999).

*Social and civic engagement*

In total 273 participants (46%) were deemed socially excluded from social and civic engagement. In general these residents were not actively involved with their community, but were still interested in what happened. The distribution of those socially excluded from social and civic engagement also displayed little area based variation, with 28% excluded in Shalvey (52% of Shalvey residents), 25% residents of Villawood (45% of Villawood residents), 28% lived in Auburn (49% of Auburn residents) and only 20% were Fairfield residents (34% of Fairfield residents) (Table 3). At an aggregate level, public renters and private renters each accounted for 30% of residents excluded through social and civic engagement (or 48% of public tenants and 42% of private renters). In contrast homeowners accounted for 23% of those excluded from social and civic engagement (42% of homeowners) and home buyers 15% (46% of home buyers) (Table 4).

Further aligning with the characteristics of those excluded from neighbourhood, 54% excluded from social and civic engagement were women. With regard to employment, persons excluded reflected results found in the overall sample. Unlike those excluded from their neighbourhood, those residents excluded from social and civic engagement were characterised by lower income levels, with a third of respondents earning between \$426 and \$690 per week. Although perceptions and associations of neighbourhood and social and civic engagement represent social axes of exclusion, equally important are those excluded from service and access.



*Access*

Only 59 cases (10%) were members of the most excluded group with regards to access. On average, survey participants excluded from access found it difficult to get to varying places, with 68% of respondents reportedly never having access to a car, a level dramatically higher than the average for all respondents (30%). There were also a high proportion of elderly people in the group (49% aged over 55 years) which may partially explain the high proportion of persons with no access to a car. Of this excluded group, only 12% were employed (significantly lower than the sample average of 36%) and a further 22% stayed at home and were not looking for work, with the remaining being mostly retired persons (30%). Further, 31% of residents excluded via access had low weekly household incomes of between \$426 and \$690. Also, the number of females who were socially excluded was significantly higher than the number of males (68% and 32% respectively), conforming to some extent the tendency of females to remain at home, and, in turn, be denied access to those services often necessary for the home based economy (such as supermarkets, doctors and hospitals).

Of the social exclusion factors, access showed the greatest tenure based differences. In regard to exclusion through access, public housing tenants experienced a much higher level of exclusion. Of those residents excluded via access, 42% were residents of Villawood (17% of Villawood residents) and 37% of Shalvey (15% of Shalvey residents). In comparison only 12% and 10% of access excluded residents lived in Fairfield and Auburn respectively (only 4% of both Auburn and Fairfield residents) (Table 3). As suggested previously, the level of persons excluded through access is a product of spatial

variables. It is unsurprising to find public tenants over represented in terms of their exclusion from access to services given that neither Villawood nor Shalvey are serviced by local shopping facilities, while in contrast both Fairfield and Auburn are serviced by established town centres. This spatial configuration of services, in turn, places increased emphasis on access to transport (both private and public). At an aggregate level public housing was home to 60% of residents excluded via access (22% of public tenants). Homeowners recorded the next highest proportion with 17% (7% of homeowners), while private rental accounted for 12% (4% of private renters). Home buyers only represent 5% of residents excluded via access (5% of home buyers) (Table 4). In line with the tenure based division of exclusion via access, almost two thirds of persons who were socially excluded through access lived in separate houses, significantly over represented in this cluster are “older single adults” (19%) and “single adults with children” (31%), and a much higher proportion of Australian born persons (53%), all of which parallel the general profile of public housing estates in Australia.

#### *Crime and security*

There were 125 (20%) survey participants who were found to be the most socially excluded due to issues of crime and security. Despite suggestions that crime and anti-social behaviour are characteristic of public housing estates (Samuels *et al.*, 2004; Palmer *et al.*, 2005), the survey findings suggest little difference in tenure based social exclusion related to crime, with only a slight over representation in areas dominated by public housing. The most common residential area for those socially excluded through issues of crime and security was Shalvey, accounting for 32% of responses (26% of Shalvey

residents). Villawood and Fairfield had relatively similar figures with 26% and 23% of excluded participants respectively (21% of Villawood residents and 18% of Fairfield residents). Only 19% of those socially excluded with regards to crime and security were residents of Auburn (15% of Auburn residents) (Table 3). Overall, private rental was home to the largest proportion of persons excluded for crime and security reasons, with 29% (19% of private renters). This was closely followed by public renters who accounted for 28% (21% of public tenants) and homeowners with 27% (22% of homeowners). Home buyers represented the smallest component of residents excluded for crime and security reasons (14%, or 20% of buyers) (Table 4).

Following expansive literature on gender based fear of crime (Pain, 2001; Panelli *et al.*, 2004), two-thirds of those in the most socially excluded group were female. Those most excluded through crime and security reflect the overall sample in terms of employment status. Importantly, these findings suggest that those residents more likely to spend more time in their homes are more likely to experience feelings of exclusion based on crime and security issues.

#### *Community identity*

Ninety-seven survey participants (16%) were excluded based on community identity. Those excluded did not feel a part of their local community and did not believe that the area had good community spirit. Over one third (37%) of these excluded participants were residents of Shalvey (24% of Shalvey residents). The next highest proportion was found at Auburn (30%, or 19% of Auburn residents), whilst only one fifth (21%) lived in

Villawood (13% of Villawood residents). Fairfield was home to the smallest proportion of persons excluded from their local community (12%, or 8% of Fairfield residents) (Table 3). In terms of tenure differences across all case study locations, public dwellings represented 34% of these excluded via community identity (19% of public tenants). Homeowners and private renters both accounted for 26% of residents excluded from community identity (16% of homeowners and 13% of private renters) (Table 4). These findings suggest that tenure plays a minimal role in the exclusion of residents from community; rather strong feelings of association are fostered through the interaction of similar individuals, such as a high percentage of non-Australian born residents or public housing tenants (Ruming *et al.*, 2004).

Women (59%) were more likely to be socially excluded from feelings of community than men. This runs somewhat contrary to expectations, given a tendency for women to spend more time in their home locations compared to males, however, it confirms the findings of social exclusion through neighbourhood discussed above. Interestingly, one third of those excluded from community had high weekly household incomes (\$690 - \$2000 per week), while a further 30% were members of households with low weekly incomes (\$0 - \$288 per week). This bi-modal income structure has important implications, as it can be suggested that those residents earning high incomes may be more likely to have associations away from their area of residence and therefore be excluded through community identity, while alternatively those on low incomes are less likely to interact at the local level due to low disposable incomes which decreases the propensity to socially interact.

*Economic*

In total 227 respondents (37%) were deemed excluded for economic reasons. All were welfare dependent, had incomes that fell under the Henderson poverty line and only two were employed (one part-time and one casual). Those residents economically excluded were older; with 49% of respondents being aged over 55 years, while 22% were “older single adults”. Following from this, there was an over representation of persons in other employment groups such as retired persons (34%; sample: 19%), unemployed persons (22%; sample: 13%) and long-term sick and disabled persons (16%; sample: 8%). Fifty-five percent of those excluded for economic reasons were members of households with incomes under \$288 per week and government payments were the main source of income for all in this group.

Those excluded through economic means are over represented in areas of public housing, especially Villawood, home to 33% of economically excluded residents (50% of Villawood residents), while Shalvey was home to a further 26% (40% of Shalvey residents). Residents of Fairfield and Auburn were less likely to be excluded for economic reasons, accounting for 25% and 16% of excluded respondents respectively (35% of Fairfield residents and 24% of Auburn residents) (Table 3). Overall, public rental was home to 47% of residents excluded for economic reasons (63% of all public tenants). Homeowners and private renters accounted for 24% and 23% of those excluded through economic means respectively (35% of owners and 23% of private renters). Home buyers

represented only 6% of residents excluded for economic reasons (15% of home purchasers) (Table 4).

**Insert Table 3 around here**

**Insert Table 4 around here**

*Summary*

It becomes clear then, that to focus on any single dimension of social exclusion downplays its multiple and compounding impacts on the lives of residents. Thus, while exclusion from any aspect potentially has significant implications for individuals, it is those individuals which experience more than one dimension of exclusion which are at the greatest disadvantage. The follow section explores how, despite a relatively even spread of exclusion of each individual dimension between areas of public and private housing, social exclusion is compounded in locations where a high proportion of individuals experience multiple dimensions of exclusion.

**The incidence of social exclusion**

While these dimensions of social exclusion provide a complex picture of the causes, mechanisms and expressions of social exclusion, given its heterogeneity and multiplicity, it is likely that a proportion of residents of disadvantaged locations experience multiple forms of exclusion. Results showed that one fifth of persons surveyed had not experienced any of the six dimensions of social exclusion studied. Just under two thirds

(64%) of survey participants were found to be moderately socially excluded – defined here as being excluded through only one or two dimensions. The remaining 16% of respondents experienced multiple social exclusion – exclusion through three or more dimensions (Table 5). Importantly, the analysis of individuals who experience multiple levels of social exclusion suggests a much clearer delineation based on tenure, with persons living in public housing significantly more likely to experience multiple dimensions of exclusion compared to residents of areas dominated by private rental.

**Insert Table 5 around here**

*No social exclusion*

In total 120 surveyed residents (20%) experienced no exclusion on the basis of the six dimensions analysed here. Further, those who experience no social exclusion were evenly balanced in terms of gender (47% males and 53% females) but are more likely to be middle aged (34% aged between 35 and 44 years) and employed (62%; sample: 36%). Given the dominance of employed persons, a significant proportion were members of household with high incomes (41% earning \$690 - \$2000 per week). Importantly, family structure is also positioned as a variable which impacts upon residents tendencies to experience social exclusion, with over half (56%) of those non-excluded members of households consisting of couples with children.

Perhaps counter intuitively, there was also an under representation of Australian born persons (27% compared to 38% in the total sample). This is in part a reflection of the fact

that just over one third (34%) of respondents who did not score on any of the exclusion dimensions were residents of Fairfield (accounting for 26% of the total Fairfield sample) where only 21% of residents are Australia born. Of the remaining non-excluded respondents, 31% were residents of Auburn (accounting for 24% of the Auburn sample), 19% of Villawood (15% of the Villawood sample) and only 16% were residents of Shalvey (13% of the Shalvey sample) (Figure 3). A clear tenure division is observed, with the proportions of persons experiencing no social exclusion living in areas dominated by public rental being almost half that of areas dominated by private rental. Thus, for all case study areas, private renters, purchasers and homeowners accounted for 47%, 22% and 21% of residents experiencing no social exclusion respectively. In contrast, public rental was home to only 11% of residents who experienced no social exclusion (Figure 4).

#### *Moderate social exclusion*

Moderate social exclusion is defined here as those residents who experience one or two dimensions of exclusion. This group accounts for 64% of survey respondents. The distribution of cases experiencing moderate exclusion was representative of the sample in terms of gender, household type, employment status, age, country of birth, tenure and dwelling type. Overall there was little difference in terms of tenure and location of those experiencing moderate social exclusion: 27% were residents of Fairfield (accounting for 66% of the Fairfield sample), 26% were residents of Auburn (64% of Auburn the sample), 24% were residents of Villawood (63% of the sample at Villawood) and the remaining 23% were residents of Shalvey (accounting for 62% of the Shalvey sample)



(Figure 3). In terms of tenure composition of those experiencing moderate social exclusion across all case study sites there is also little difference. Of those residents experiencing moderate exclusion, 30% lived in private rental, 29% owned their home and 28% lived in public rental. The lowest concentration was found in persons purchasing their home, accounting for only 13% of persons experiencing moderate social exclusion (Figure 4).

#### *Multiple social exclusion*

A person defined as experiencing multiple social exclusion is any person who is characterised by three or more dimensions of exclusion. Unsurprisingly, the characteristics of those residents experiencing multiple dimensions of social exclusion are the inverse to those experiencing none, with an over representation of young persons (32% aged between 19 and 34 years; sample: 23%), single adults with children (22% of multiply excluded respondents; sample: 15%), 48% of respondents were members of low income households, a higher proportion of Australian born persons (47%; sample: 38%) and 62% of respondents resided in separate houses.

The frequency of residents experiencing multiple social exclusion is divided along tenure lines with residents of areas dominated by public housing much more likely to experience multiple social exclusion. Of those multiply excluded, public housing locations were over represented with 36% of cases residents of Shalvey (24% of Shalvey residents), 27% residing in Villawood (17% of Villawood residents), levels slightly above 24% of multiply socially excluded persons residing in Auburn (15% of Auburn residents), and

significantly above the 14% multiply excluded residents living in Fairfield (9% of Fairfield residents) (Figure 3). Further, an analysis of tenure across the case study sites illustrates an over representation of public housing which is home to 50% of multiply excluded residents. Private rental recorded the next highest concentration of persons experiencing multiple social exclusion, accounting for 21% of recorded cases. In contrast, homeowners and home purchasers accounted for relatively small proportions of persons experiencing multiple social exclusion, with 18% and 10% respectively (Figure 4). Importantly, while social exclusion through access represented the only dimension of social exclusion in which public housing areas significantly differed from private locations, this research suggests that residents who experience one dimension of social exclusion in public housing areas are much more likely to be excluded on multiple levels.

**Insert Figure 3 around here**

**Insert Figure 4 around here**

## **Conclusion**

This paper has presented an insight into the complexity and multiplicity of place based experiences of social exclusion. Our findings follow the work of Murie and Musterd (2004) who argue that social exclusion is an inherently context specific entity, and that context plays a vital role in both the type and level of exclusion experienced. Further, we argue that housing, and tenure especially, does not represent a surrogate for social exclusion. By identifying six dimensions of exclusion (neighbourhood, social and civic

engagement, access, crime and security, community identity and economic characteristics), the division of social exclusion based on tenure characteristics alone is questioned. Rather, it is the experience of public housing residents of multiple dimensions of exclusion which is the most significant tenure based difference.

In regard to exclusion from neighbourhood, social and civic engagement, crime and security and community identity no significant differences were identified between those areas dominated by public housing or private rental. Nevertheless, it is important to note that exclusion through access to services and economic capacity represent two areas of divergence between locations of public and private rental. However, rather than the product of agency characteristics of local residents, exclusion through access and economic capacity represent structural outcomes of Australian public housing policy (Arthurson and Jacobs, 2004; Randolph and Judd, 2000). The accessibility of public housing estates in the Australian context is driven largely through historical land purchase and development policy of social housing providers in the 1960s and 1970s (Randolph, 2004; Randolph and Wood, 2004). While fringe residential development was rapid, the majority of these locations were developed in the absence of coherent and funded infrastructure provision plans (Troy, 1999). It is these historical developments which play a significant role in present day exclusion for public residents in areas such as Shalvey and Villawood. In contrast, the private case study locations analysed here are well serviced by public transport, shops and social services. Further, these issues of exclusion through accessibility in areas with high concentrations of public housing are compounded by low levels of car ownership.

Although the exploration of social exclusion through six dimensions presents a picture which destabilises notions of social exclusion centred on tenure alone, this reality is more complex, given the increased frequency by which public housing residents experience multiple dimensions of exclusion. Thus, while for four of the six exclusion dimensions little difference is present between areas of public and private housing, individuals in areas of public housing are significantly more likely to experience multiple dimensions of exclusion compared to residents in areas dominated by private rental and home ownership. The highest proportion of individuals who experienced no dimensions of exclusion are found in areas of private rental, together accounting for 65% of those who do not experience social exclusion (25% of private tenants surveyed) while only 35% of participants who were not socially excluded lived in public housing (14% of public tenants surveyed). Mirroring these findings, significant differences are observed between areas for residents experiencing multiple levels of social exclusion, with areas of public housing home to 62% of persons who experience multiple social exclusion (21% of public tenants surveyed), a level almost double that of private rental (12% of private tenants surveyed). While each dimension of social exclusion has significant impacts on the life chances of residents, these impacts are compounded for those residents who experience multiple exclusion – something more prevalent in areas of public housing.

Social exclusion is not a coherent and holistic entity capable of explaining the situation and experience of disadvantaged persons. Rather, it is a heterogeneous construction of multiple aspects (neighbourhood, social and civic engagement, access, crime and

security, community identity and economic characteristics), none of which can act as surrogates for the complexity manifest in individual locations. While little difference is observed for the majority of the dimensions of exclusion between private and public areas, it is the presence of multiple social exclusion which mark areas of public housing as unique.

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**Captions for figures**

Figure 1 Location of four case study areas and the Index of Disadvantage, 2001, Sydney.

Figure 2 Household income profile of the four case study areas and Sydney (*Source: ABS CDATA 2001*).

Figure 3 Percentage of those who experienced no social exclusion, moderate social exclusion and multiple social exclusion in the case study areas.

Figure 4 Percentage of those who experienced no social exclusion, moderate social exclusion and multiple social exclusion by tenure.

**TABLES**

Table 1 A profile of the four case study areas and Sydney Statistical District, 2001 (*Source: ABS CDATA 2001*).

	<b>Shalvey</b>	<b>Villawood</b>	<b>Fairfield</b>	<b>Auburn</b>	<b>Sydney SD</b>
Persons	10521	6332	7758	10511	3997321
Households	3402	2143	2610	3372	1438394
Dwellings	3544	2259	2784	3697	1546691
Owner Occupation	19%	18.2%	27.1%	28.2%	39%
Being purchased	21.4%	9.5%	10.2%	12.4%	23.7%
Rent (Public)	42.2%	58%	4.6%	2.6%	5.1%
Rent (Private)	9.6%	6.8%	50.3%	45.7%	23.6%
Age 0-14 yrs	29.5%	22.6%	21.9%	23.5%	20%
Age 65+yrs	5.8%	14%	11%	7.9%	11.8%
Separate House	87.2%	68.1%	32.7%	30.6%	63.1%
Semi-detached	8.2%	13.2%	15.1%	6%	11.3%
Flat/Unit/Apartment	4.0%	18.2%	51.4%	62.2%	23.9%
Couple with children	23.4%	23.1%	31.7%	37.8%	28.8%
Couple without children	17.2%	14.5%	20.3%	17.8%	23.1%
One parent family	28.6%	22.2%	16.1%	10.3%	10.7%
Lone person households	16.3%	29.4%	18.8%	15.7%	21.3%
University qualifications	2%	3.4%	7.5%	11.4%	16.2%
Youth unemployment rate	29.4%	19.7%	33.5%	23.7%	10.9%
Unemployment rate	18.5%	18.5%	22.9%	17.8%	6.1%
Indigenous population	7.6%	1.3%	0.2%	0.4%	1%
Overseas born	20.3%	44.8%	69%	63%	30.9%
Lack fluent English	1.9%	15%	24.7%	23.8%	4.7%
Same address as 5yrs ago	59.8%	58.8%	40.5%	39.9%	51.6%
Separated/divorced	16%	14.3%	11.2%	9.6%	10.1%

Table 2 Cronbach coefficient alpha for six social exclusion dimensions.

<b>Dimensions of Exclusion</b>	<b>Number of survey questions assigned to social exclusion factor</b>	<b>Cronbach coefficient alpha</b>
Neighbourhood	18	0.872
Social and Civic Engagement	6	0.611
Access	16	0.937
Crime and Security	11	0.895
Community Identity	2	0.726
Economic	3	0.984

## Defining Social Exclusion in Western Sydney

Table 3 Overview of dimensions of exclusion by case study site.

Dimensions of Exclusion	Fairfield		Auburn		Villawood		Shalvey		Total
	% of dimension of excluded	% of Fairfield population	% of dimension of excluded	% of Auburn population	% of dimension of excluded	% of Villawood population	% of dimension of excluded	% of Shalvey population	% of excluded residents
Neighbourhood Social and Civic	17%	11%	25%	17%	22%	15%	36%	25%	17%
Engagement	20%	34%	28%	49%	25%	45%	28%	52%	45%
Access	12%	4%	10%	4%	42%	17%	37%	15%	10%
Crime and Security	23%	18%	19%	15%	26%	21%	32%	26%	20%
Community Identity	12%	8%	30%	19%	21%	13%	37%	24%	16%
Economic	24%	35%	16%	24%	33%	50%	26%	40%	37%

Table 4 Overview of dimensions of exclusion by tenure.

Dimensions of Exclusion	Home Owner		Home Buyer		Public Rent		Private Rent		Total
	% of dimension of excluded	% of homeowners	% of dimension of excluded	% of home buyers	% of dimension of excluded	% of public renters	% of dimension of excluded	% of private renters	% of excluded residents
Neighbourhood Social and Civic	18%	12%	17%	20%	31%	19%	34%	18%	17%
Engagement	23%	42%	15%	46%	30%	48%	30%	42%	45%
Access	17%	7%	7%	5%	60%	22%	12%	4%	10%
Crime and Security	27%	22%	14%	20%	28%	21%	29%	19%	21%
Community Identity	26%	16%	14%	15%	34%	19%	26%	13%	16%
Economic	24%	35%	6%	15%	47%	63%	23%	27%	37%

Table 5 The incidence of social exclusion by respondent.

Level of Social Exclusion	Number of cases	Percentage
No social exclusion	120	20%
1 dimension of social exclusion	233	38%
2 dimensions of social exclusion	161	26%
3 dimensions of social exclusion	67	11%
4 dimensions of social exclusion	27	4%
5 dimensions of social exclusion	4	1%
6 dimensions of social exclusion	1	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>100%</b>

FIGURES



Figure 1 Location of four case study areas and the Index of Disadvantage, 2001, Sydney.

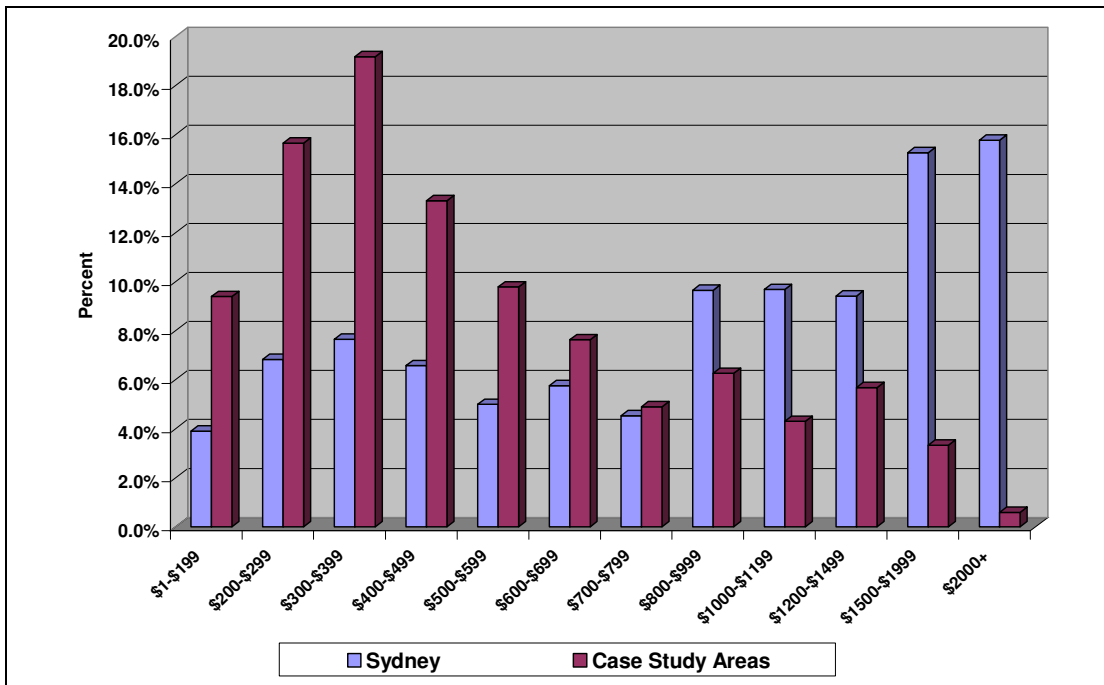


Figure 2 Household income profile of the four case study areas and Sydney (Source: ABS CDATA 2001).

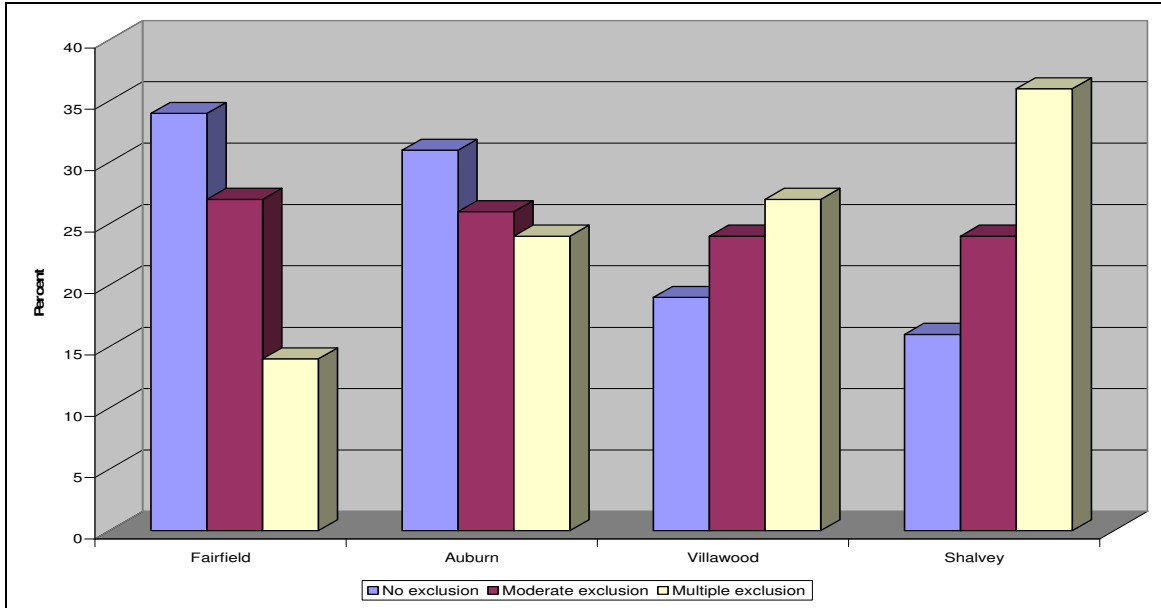


Figure 3 Percentage of those who experienced no social exclusion, moderate social exclusion and multiple social exclusion in the case study areas.

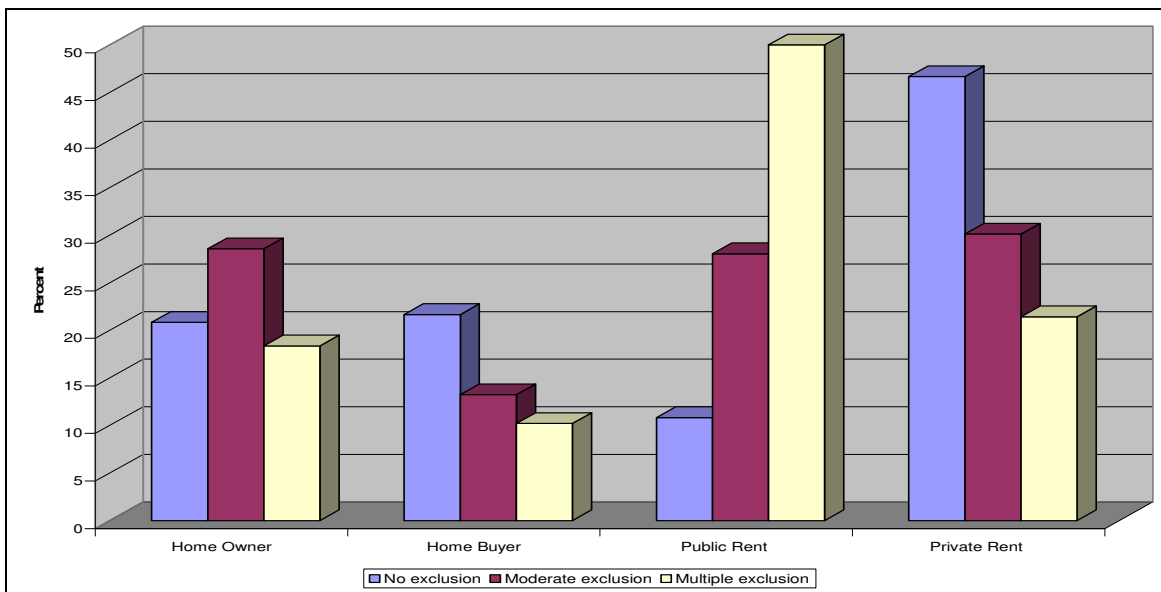


Figure 4 Percentage of those who experienced no social exclusion, moderate social exclusion and multiple social exclusion by tenure.

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