

# Regional Population Data 2020-21



RDA Illawarra  
April 2022

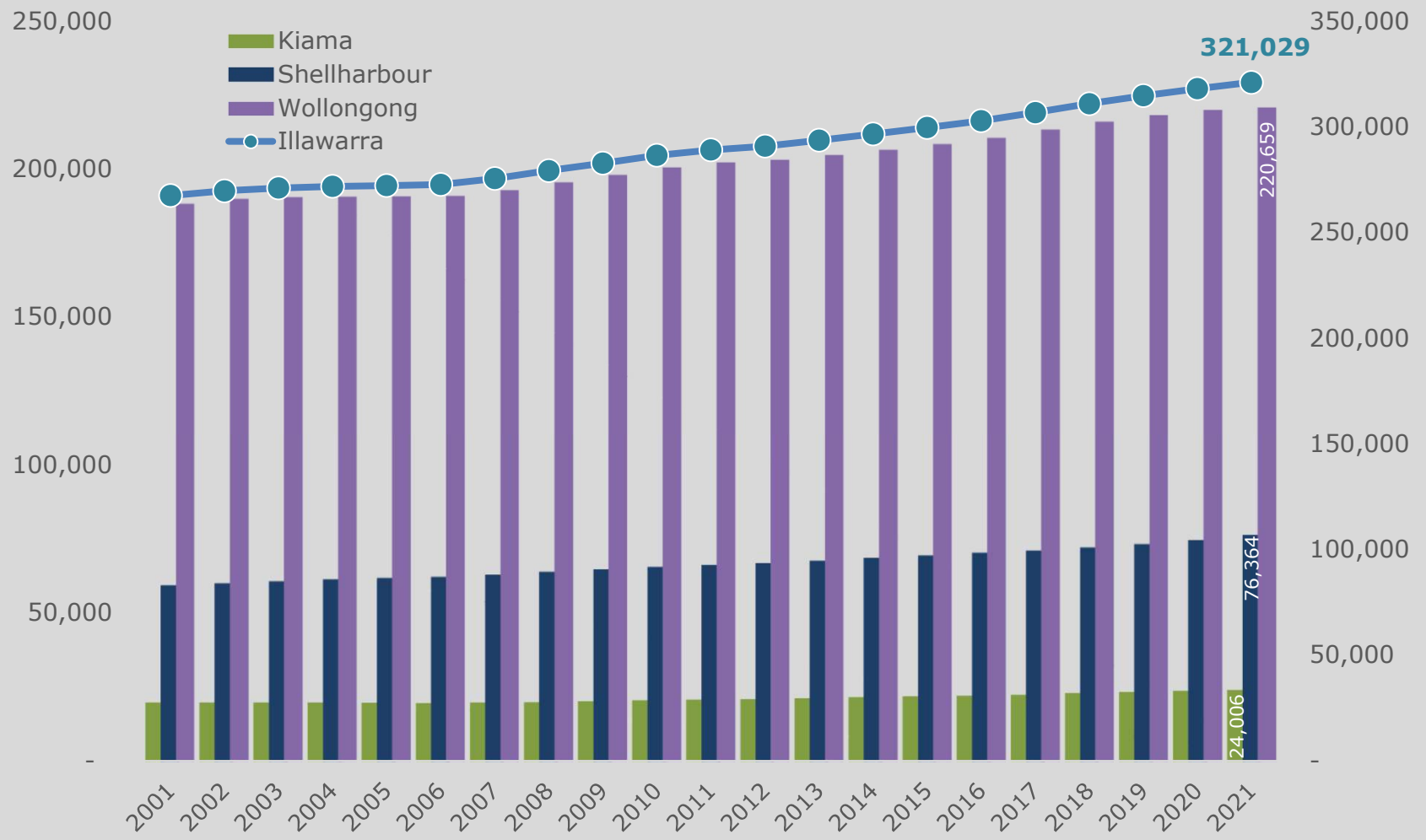


# Our Region's Population is growing



Estimated Resident Population of the Illawarra grew by 2,924 in the year to June 2021, to just over 321,000 – an increase of just 0.9% (Wollongong 0.4%, Shellharbour 2.3%, Kiama 1.4%)

Estimated Population by LGA: 2001 - 2020

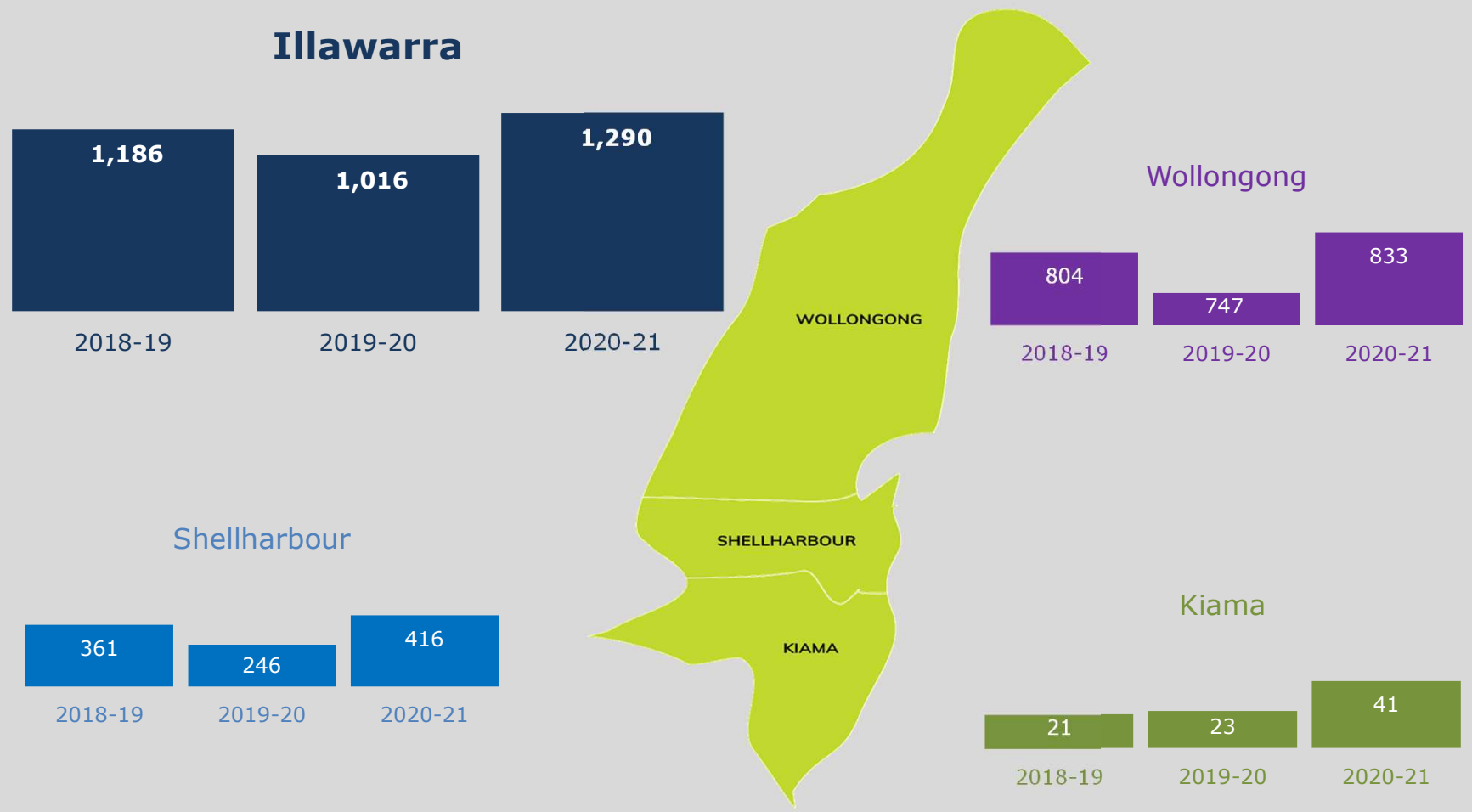


Source: 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia - Population Estimates by Local Government Area, 2018 to 2021

# Natural increase in population has made a bigger contribution

Despite deaths due to COVID, it seems that enforced lockdowns have seen couples get closer to each other – with a resultant increase in population.

Natural Increase  
(Illawarra + LGA)



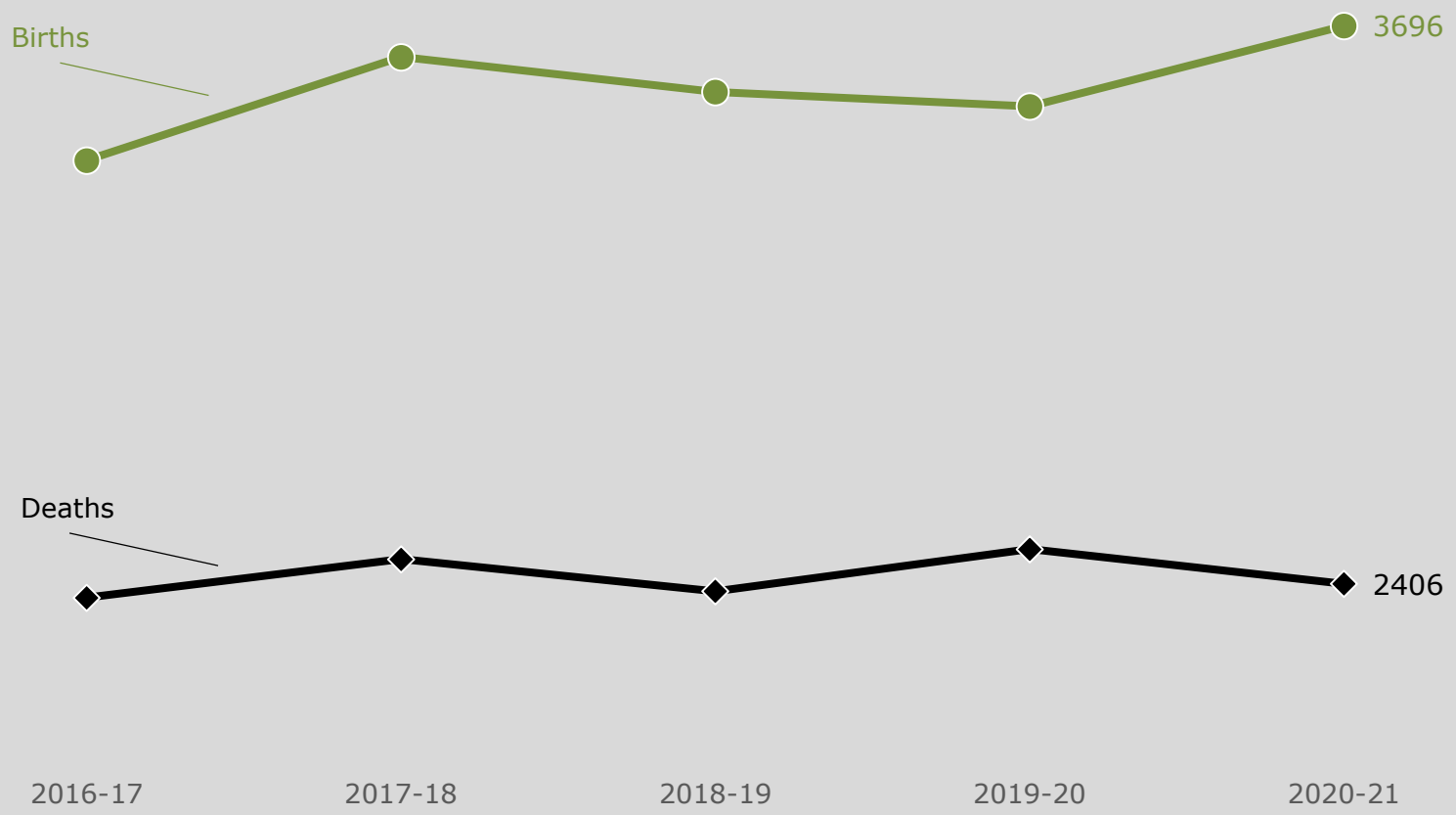
Source:  
 • 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia - Population Estimates by Local Government Area, 2018 to 2021  
 • RDA Illawarra Analysis

# Natural increase: more births, fewer deaths despite COVID



The regional birth rate has increased over the past five years, but death rate is flatlining – indicating our population is living longer.

Births & Deaths Impact on Population Growth  
(Five -year trend)

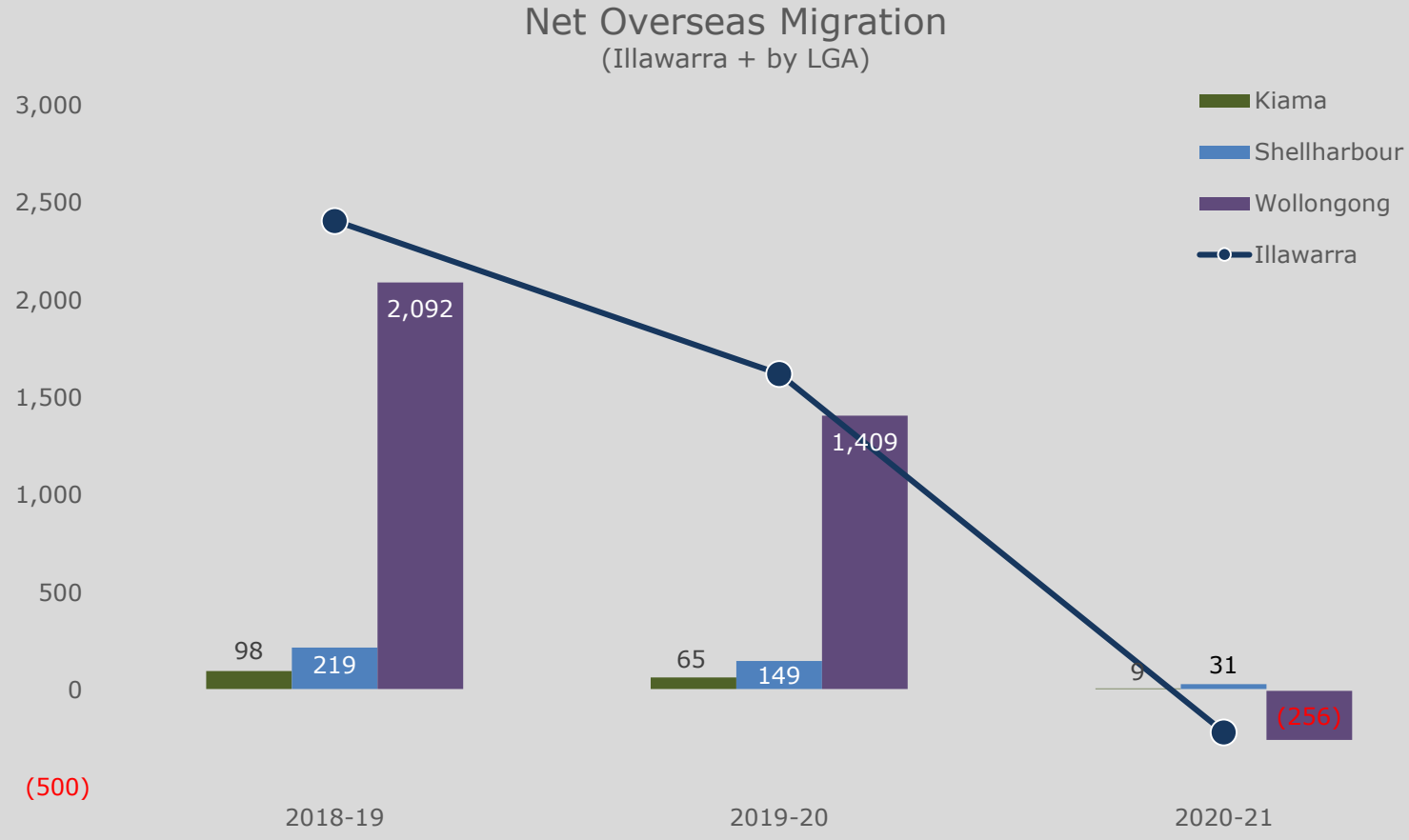


Source:  
• 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia - Population Estimates by Local Government Area, 2018 to 2021  
• RDA Illawarra Analysis

# Population growth in the Illawarra has been significantly affected by border closures



International migration has dropped to almost zero, with a net loss of migrants from the Wollongong LGA from a high of over 2,000 per year pre-COVID.



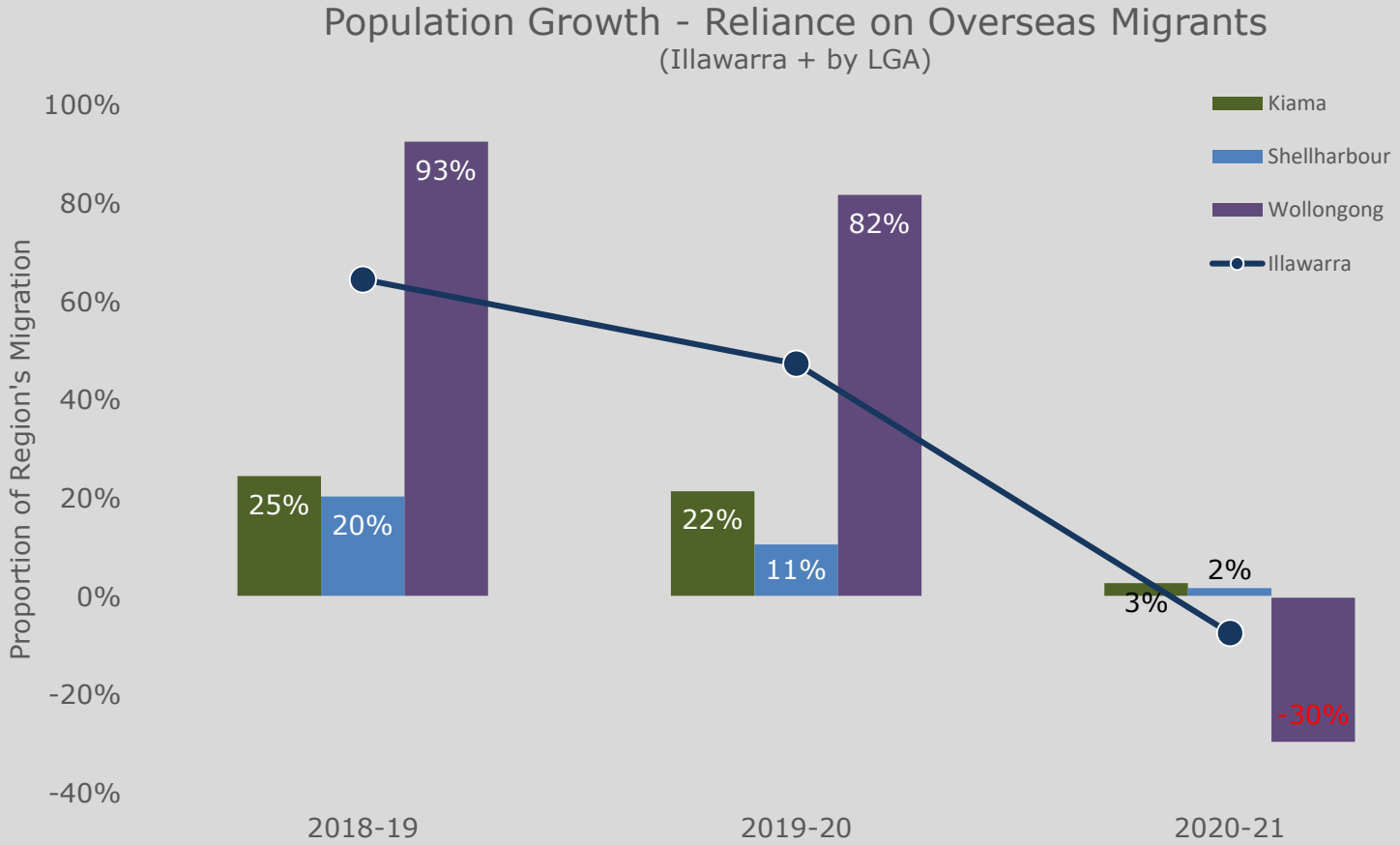
Source:  
• 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia - Population Estimates by Local Government Area, 2018 to 2021  
• RDA Illawarra Analysis

# Loss of international migration has a significant impact on the region



Wollongong has been particularly reliant on international migrants for its population growth, with 80-95% of that growth historically from overseas migrants.

The impact on other LGAs is not as pronounced, but follows a similar trend.



Source:  
• 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia - Population Estimates by Local Government Area, 2018 to 2021  
• RDA Illawarra Analysis

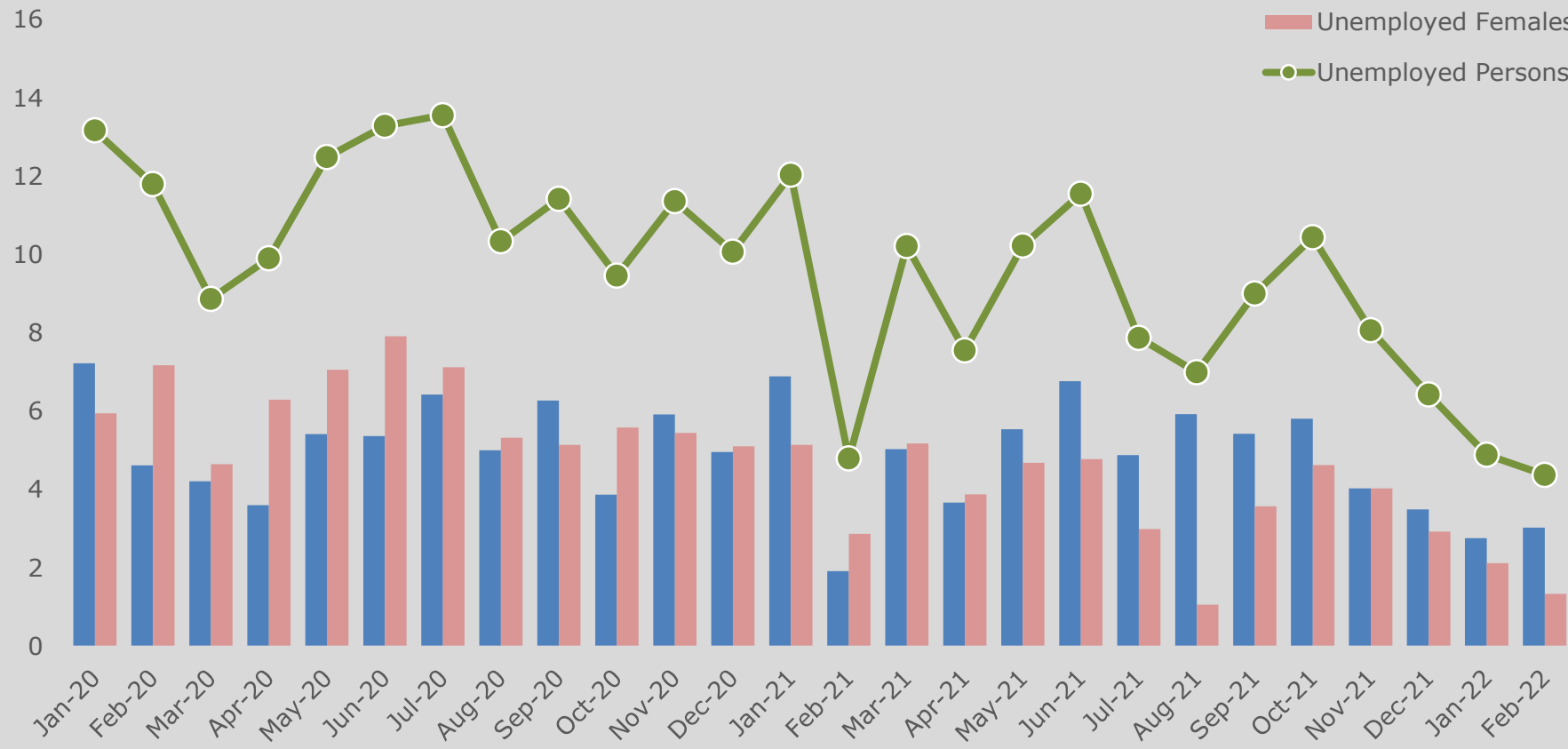
# At the same time, the Illawarra is moving towards full employment



COVID had a significant impact on unemployment but the reopening of the economy has created job opportunities for locals.

Illawarra - Unemployed People  
(,000's)

Unemployed Males  
Unemployed Females  
Unemployed Persons



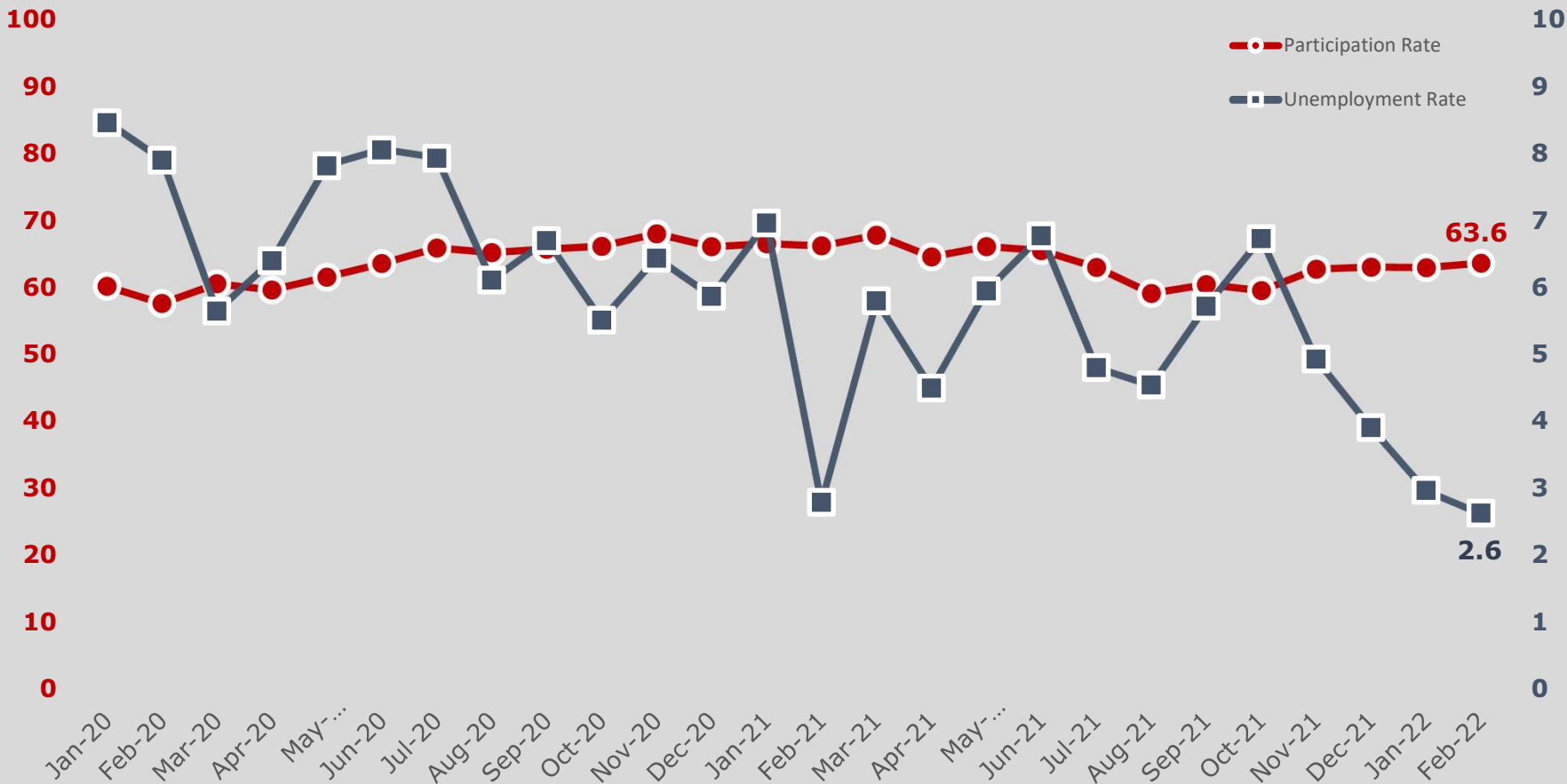
Source:  
 • 6291.0.55.001 Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Australian Bureau of Statistics  
 • RDA Illawarra Analysis

# With historically low levels of unemployment and an increasing participation rate



Unemployment trend has been down for the past four months and is now below 3%, against a background of an improving participation rate. Does the region now have more jobs than skilled people to fill them?

Illawarra - Participation and Unemployment Rates (%)



Source:  
 • 6291.0.55.001 Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Australian Bureau of Statistics  
 • RDA Illawarra Analysis

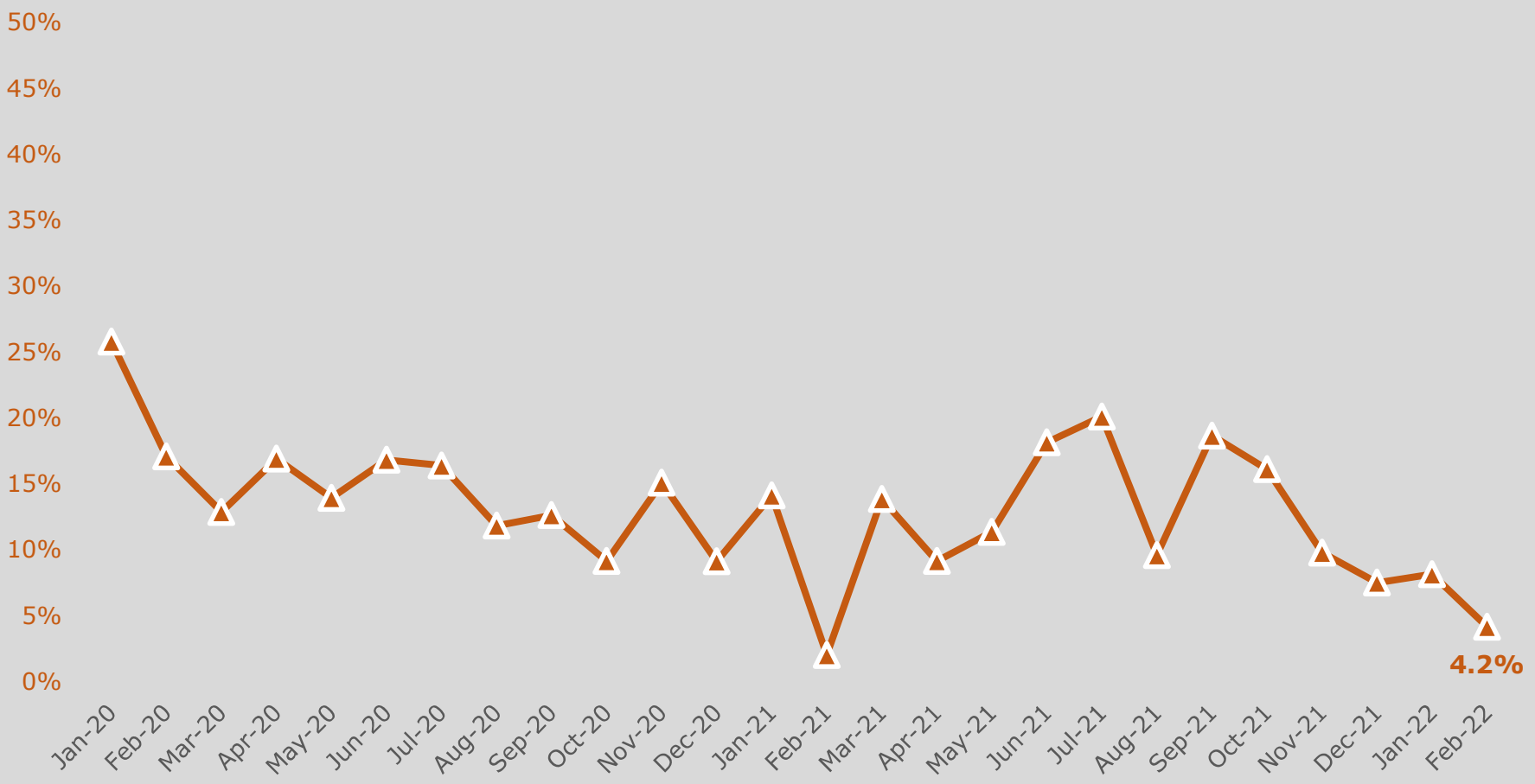


# Youth unemployment has also decreased to historically low levels



One of the lowest levels of youth unemployment in the Illawarra...

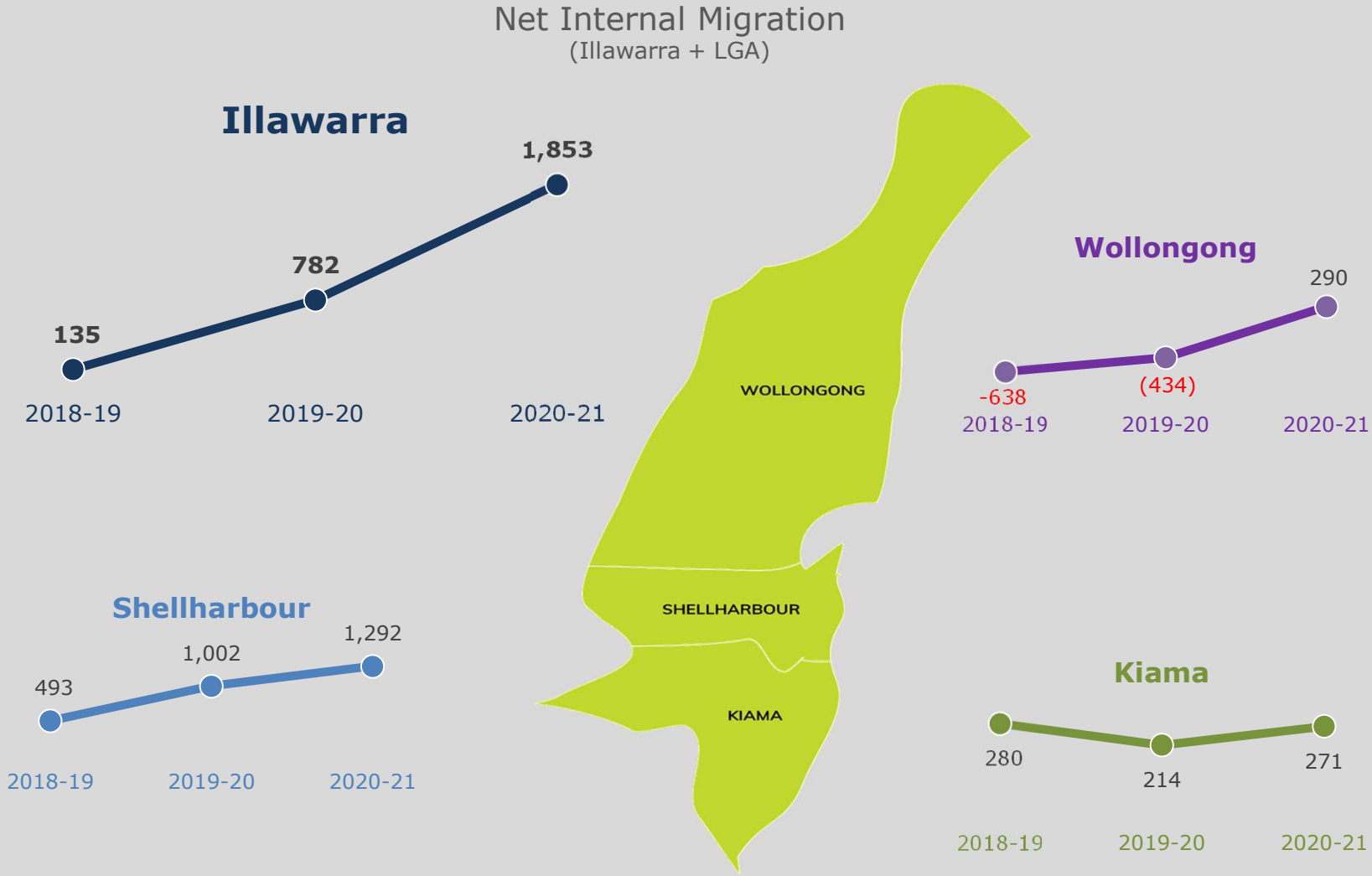
Illawarra - Youth Unemployment (15-24y.o)  
(%)



Source:  
• 6291.0.55.001 - RM1 - Labour force status by Age, Labour market region (ASGS) and Sex, Australian Bureau of Statistics  
• RDA Illawarra Analysis

# Internal migration has not replaced international migration, but has increased

The trend of internal migration to the Illawarra continues, particularly to Wollongong and Shellharbour with Kiama relatively stable as a new residential location.

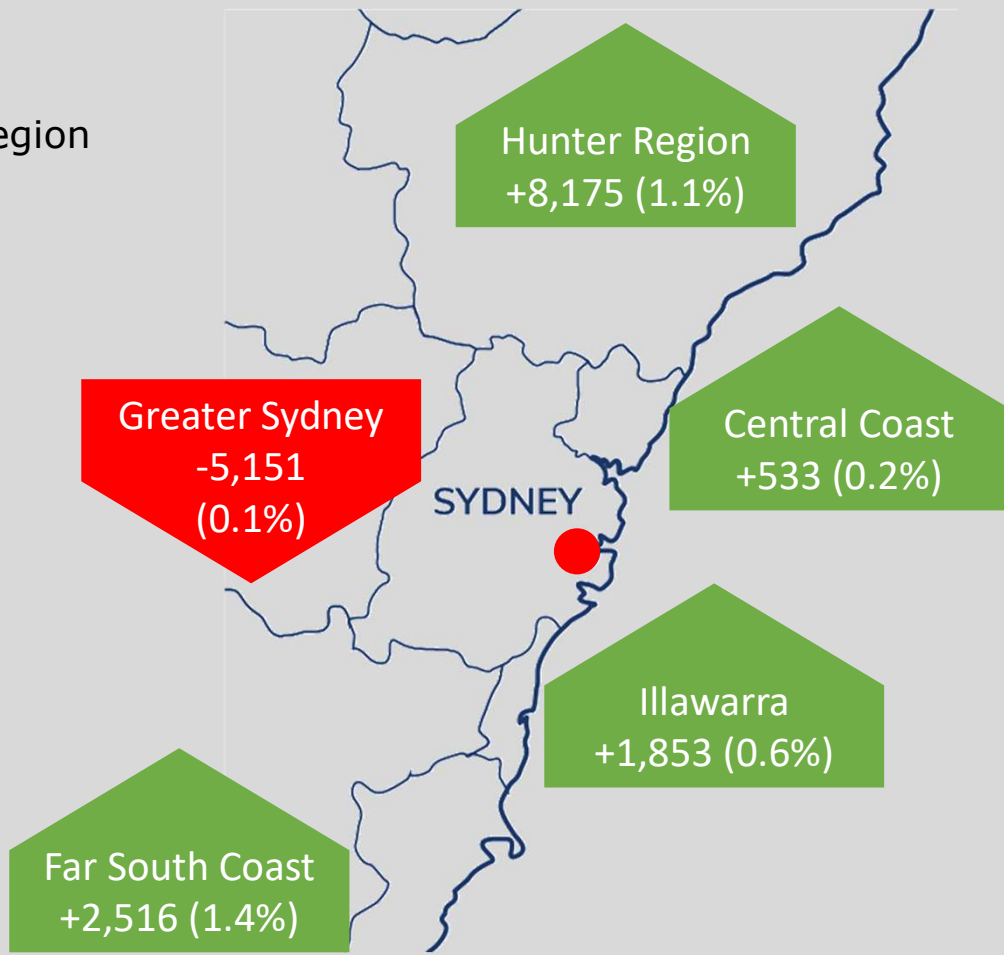


Source:  
• 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia - Population Estimates by Local Government Area, 2018 to 2021  
• RDA Illawarra Analysis

# In the east, the move from city to regions continues...

In eastern NSW, the internal relocation of people from Sydney - and towards regional areas - continues. The Hunter and Far South Coast regions gained a higher proportion of 'sea or tree-changers' than the Illawarra and Central Coast.

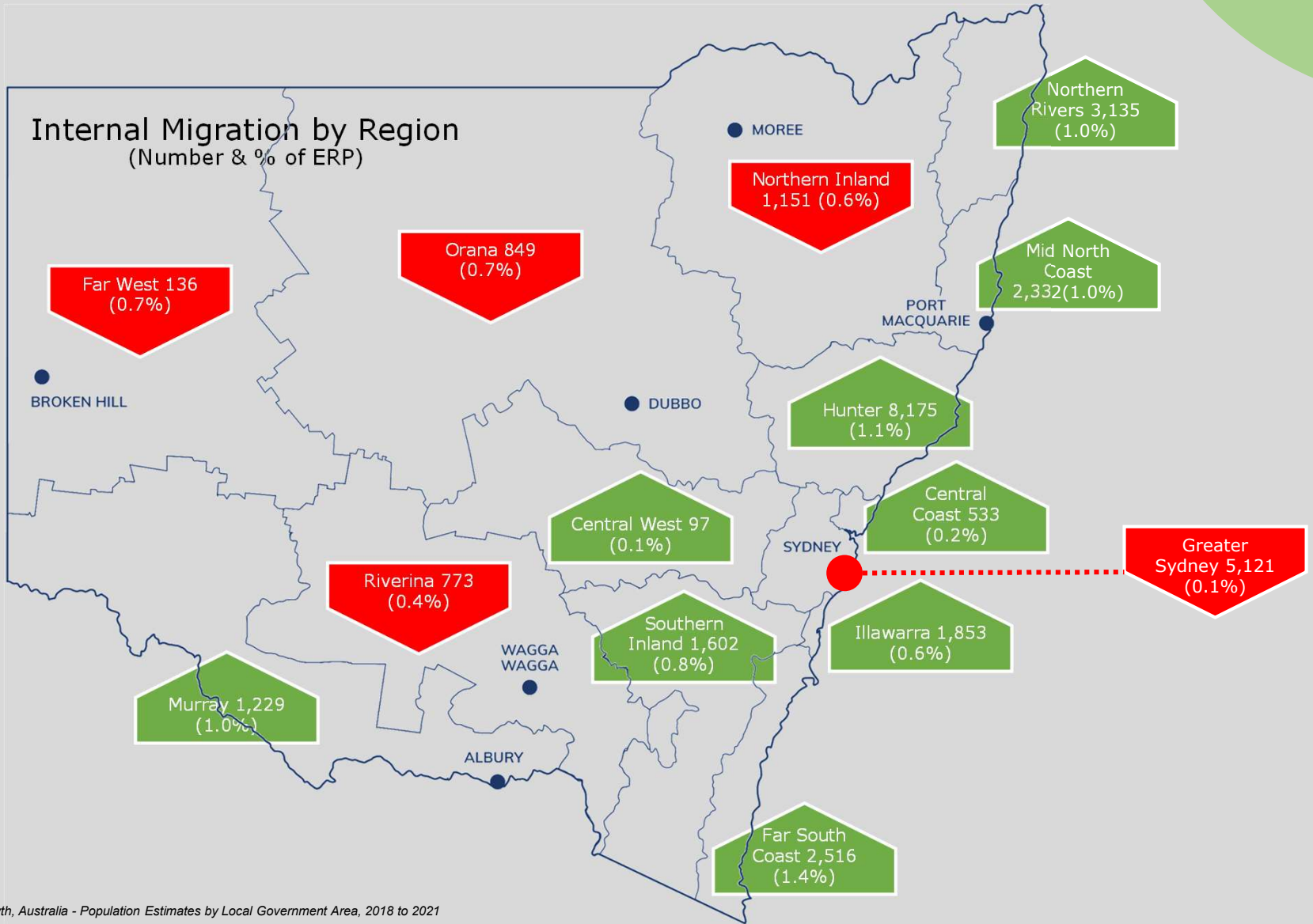
Internal Migration by Region  
(Number & % of ERP)



Source:  
• 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia - Population Estimates by Local Government Area, 2018 to 2021  
• RDA Illawarra Analysis

# ...& that trend continues in other regions of NSW

Regionalisation continues throughout NSW driven by lifestyle choice, housing affordability, employment opportunities or the increased flexibility of working options provided by COVID lockdowns

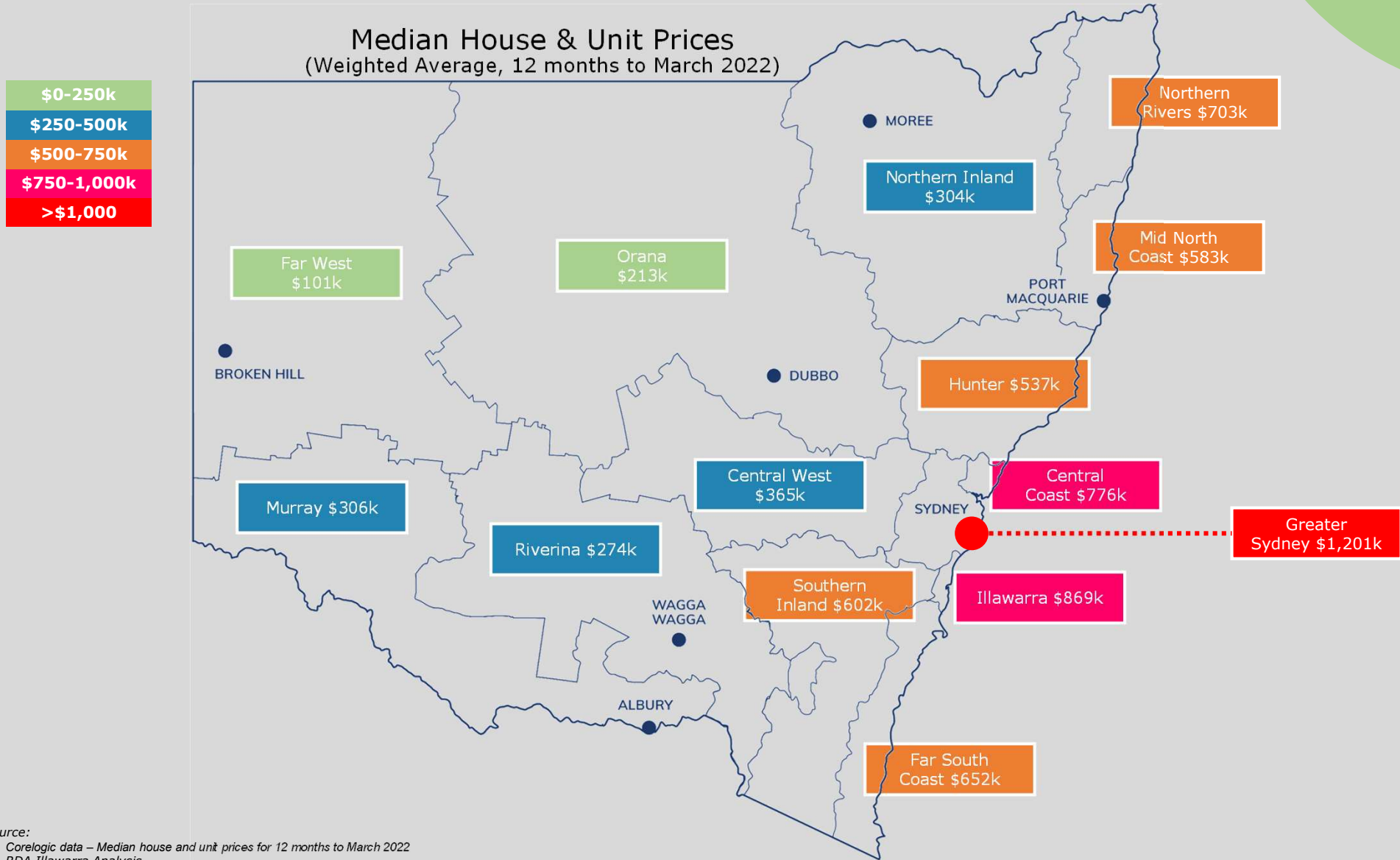


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# Are property prices driving relocation decisions?



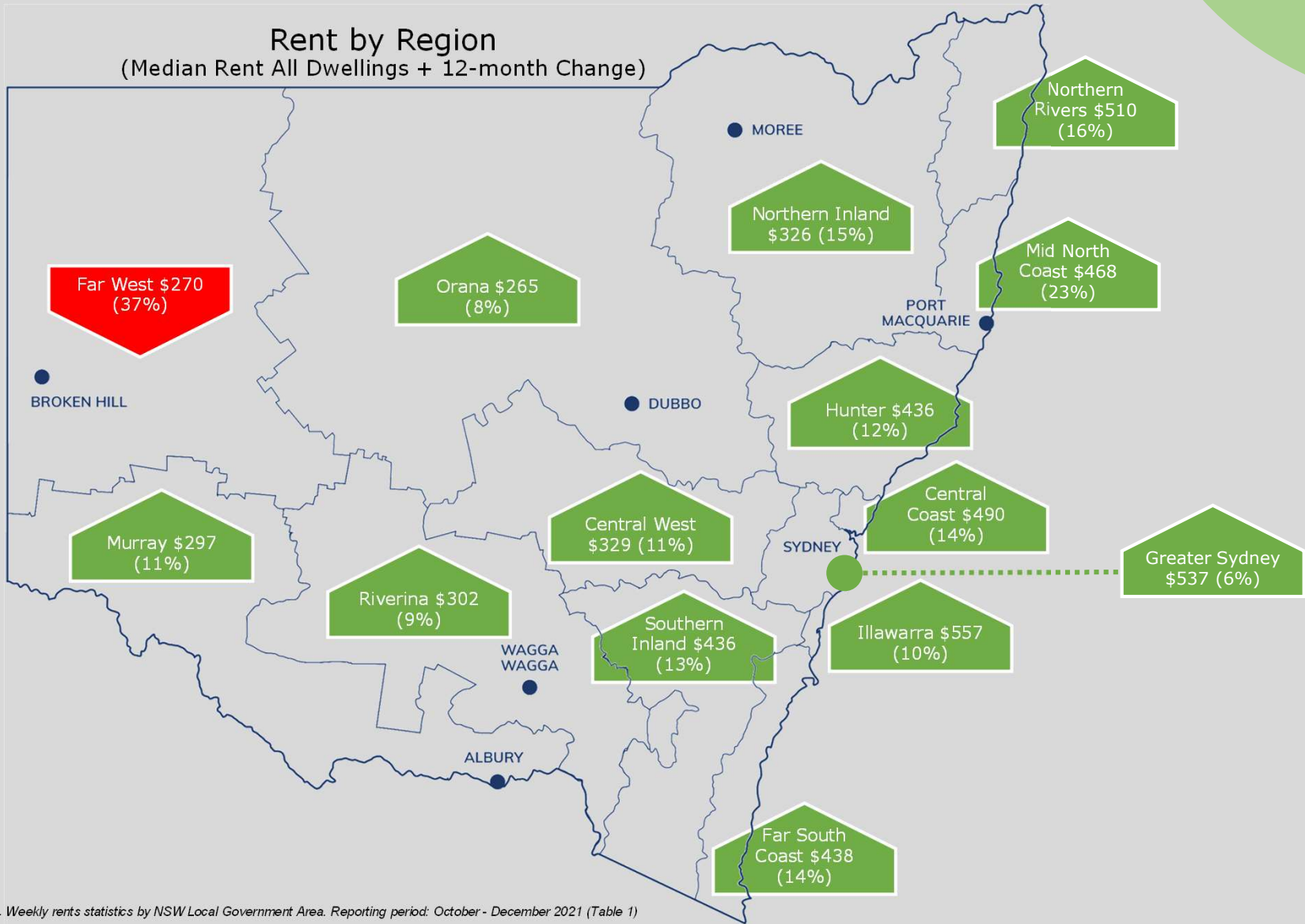
Illawarra's proximity to Sydney makes it the second most expensive region in NSW. Buyers are looking beyond the region to relocate due to price and availability of housing.



Source:  
• Corelogic data – Median house and unit prices for 12 months to March 2022  
• RDA Illawarra Analysis

# Can't afford to buy: why not rent?

Rental affordability has also decreased in the past year, with rents increasing in most regions at over twice the rate of wages. Based on median prices, it is now more expensive to rent in the Illawarra than it is in Greater Sydney.



Source:  
• NSW Dept Communities & Justice. Weekly rents statistics by NSW Local Government Area. Reporting period: October - December 2021 (Table 1)  
• RDA Illawarra Analysis

# Potential Impact for the Illawarra



COVID-related border closures have resulted in slower population growth and a halt to skilled migration. Changed work habits (more flexibility) are stimulating increased regionalization.

- ▶ Loss of overseas migrants means Illawarra's population growth has slowed, but not halted
- ▶ Natural increases (more births, fewer deaths) and internal migration are at higher levels than in previous years
- ▶ More skilled migrants are required to meet regional skills needs and for population growth
- ▶ The region is heading for full employment, at which time even more skilled migrants will be needed
- ▶ Despite an increase in internal migration to the region, the Illawarra is receiving fewer new residents than the Hunter and Far South Coast regions
- ▶ Potentially this is due to relatively higher property prices, high rents, lack of suitable employment or lifestyle choice
- ▶ The Illawarra needs more workers, but where will they live – affordably?
- ▶ The continued regionalisation of NSW will require expenditure on infrastructure and services outside metropolitan areas, if sustained
- ▶ There is an immediate opportunity for accelerated training of workers in several industry sectors