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Measure For Measure: Gender Equality in Australia

About Per Capita

Per Capita is an independent progressive think tank, dedicated to fighting inequality in Australia. We work to build a new vision for Australia based on fairness, shared prosperity, community and social justice.

Our research is rigorous, evidence-based and long-term in its outlook. We consider the national challenges of the next decade rather than the next election cycle. We ask original questions and offer fresh solutions, drawing on new thinking in social science, economics and public policy.

Our audience is the interested public, not just experts and policy makers. We engage all Australians who want to see rigorous thinking and evidence-based analysis applied to the issues facing our country's future.

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Executive Summary

The World Economic Forum has, since 2006, produced an annual report to measure the global gender gap. The Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) collects gendered data across four thematic areas: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Australia has dropped from a ranking of 15th in the world when the GGGI commenced to 44th in 2020 – a decline of 29 places in just 14 years¹.

Over the same time period, Australia's commitment to measuring gender equality has been in retreat: 2006 was, for example, the year the federal government stopped funding the Australian Bureau of Statistics to undertake the *Time Use Survey*, which measured the hours of paid and unpaid labour performed by men and women in Australia.

Globally, gender development analysis has improved over the same period, with more countries developing comprehensive national plans to address deficiencies identified by the UN and WEF.

Yet Australia is one of few developed nations that does not actively set targets for gender equality and measure progress towards nationally agreed goals. As a result, we are falling behind.

Most countries that are now out-performing Australia on the GGGI produce an annual review of national performance against gender equality targets. They also have gender budget units in their treasury, as well as

gender architecture and appropriate levels of funding to monitor performance and drive innovation.

The reality is that, without monitoring and action, Australia's gender equality performance will continue to decline.

Ultimately, what is required to rescue Australia's deteriorating global gender equality performance and deliver meaningful progress towards achieving gender equality in Australia is a bi-partisan commitment to the necessary legislative framework, and the reinstatement of the machinery of government to measure and track progress towards that commitment.

To inform such a framework, it is necessary to understand that the causes of women's economic, social and material disadvantage in Australia begin shortly after birth, and compound across the life course, resulting in a stark and pernicious inequality between Australian men and women in their older age.

Executive Summary

This report brings together, for the first time, an overview of the evidence of this accumulated disadvantage to Australian women with an analysis of its causes and recommendations for change; and makes the case for a national, bi-partisan commitment to measure, evaluate and take action to close the gender equality gap in Australia.

Gendered data matters. Regular, transparent reports on performance against an agreed set of indicators are critical if we are to achieve the goal of gender equality. Without accountability, closing the gender gap in Australia and across the globe will remain merely an aspirational goal, rather than an achievable target.

This report is intended to provide the foundation for a long-term project to produce a national, comprehensive longitudinal study of the progress towards gender equality in Australia.

In Part 1, we examine Australia's global gender performance, exploring the indicators being used by the United Nations, World Economic Forum and other international entities to measure gender equality.

In Part 2, we bring together disparate gendered data and qualitative research from a range of institutions to present a picture of how Australia provides opportunity and economic security for women and girls. Taking a life course approach, we examine the impact of gender inequality on women from infancy to old age.

In Part 3, we look at the impact of inequality on women's physical wellbeing, through an analysis of the prevalence of family violence and our institutional responses, and an examination of the way women's health is treated differently from that of men.

Part 4 presents a critical analysis of the role of the representation of women in public discourse and culture in exacerbating or alleviating inequality. We then turn our attention to the issue of women in leadership. We evaluate Australia's progress towards achieving parity for women in leadership positions in politics and public and community service, in business and the economy, recognising that securing equal representation of women in the formal sites of institutional power is critical to fostering gender equality across society and throughout the life course.

Throughout this report, we attempt to identify gaps in data collection and analysis, and to make recommendations for policy development and social improvements to drive change. We conclude with a call for an Australian Gender Equality Dashboard, a tool which, once fully developed, could provide an 'at a glance' gender data set to enable comparative analysis, and provide policy makers with the information to implement programs and services to close the gender equality gap in Australia.



Estimated time before global gender equality is achieved:

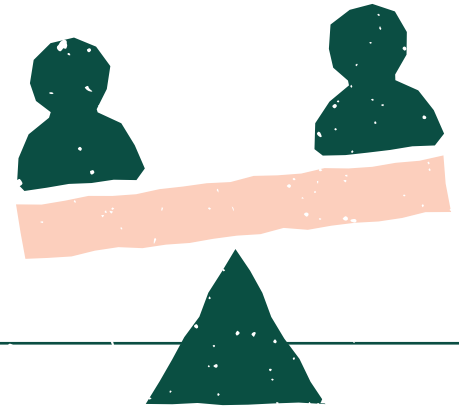
200
years

Australia's position on the global Gender Development Index:

42
/ 166



When it comes to the gender inequality gap, Australia no longer sets targets or measures progress.



Introduction

12,595,459.

That's how many women and girls there were in Australia at the last population census update.² There are more women than men in Australia, as in other developed countries - 197,569 more, to be precise.

We know this because our national data collection institution, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), collects information from the community every five years through a national census. With this snapshot of Australia, governments use data to shape investments in health, education and other government services, and to plan the annual budget.

Given women make up slightly more than half the Australian population, and assuming our progress through life is the result of our own merit and effort, women should expect to occupy a roughly equal number of leadership positions in our parliaments, our business institutions, our civic and community institutions, on the sports field and in the home. They should expect to be economically equal and financially as well off as men, and to share evenly in the benefits of living in one of the most prosperous and socially cohesive nations on earth.

Yet, just as in virtually every other society, there is very little in Australia that is shared equally between women and men. Across the life course, from infancy to old age, Australian girls and women struggle to access the same opportunities and rewards as Australian boys and men.

Of course, Australians, on the whole, enjoy amongst the highest living standards in the world, but the fact remains that the benefits of living in our wealthy, secure and democratic society are not distributed equally.

The shameful gap between the life chances of First

Nations people and settler Australians is widely acknowledged, and although it is measured and reported on annually through the federal government's *Closing the Gap* initiative, progress to close it remains unacceptably slow. We know we are failing to close the gap for First Nations people because the machinery of government put in place to measure our performance tells us so.

When it comes to the gender inequality gap, though, Australia no longer bothers to set targets or measure progress. In recent years, we have deliberately dismantled the machinery of government that tracked our performance against the goal of achieving gender equality in Australia.

The United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI) measures four indicators of human development – life expectancy, years of schooling, means of schooling and gross national income per capita. Australia ranks very highly in human development, sixth in the world behind only Norway, Switzerland, Ireland, Germany and Hong Kong.³

Yet when the UN disaggregates the data used in the HDI along gender lines, we see a shocking result: under the Gender Development Index (GDI), Australia's rank is just 42, positioning at the lower end of first tier nations in global gender development.⁴

This means that while Australia is a high performing nation in the development of men, it is not for women. Australian men are benefiting from world-leading living standards, employment and leadership opportunities, but Australian women are not.

Australia once led the world in the pursuit of gender equality and the rights of women – or, at least, white women. Australian suffragettes were among the

Introduction

Without monitoring and action, Australia's gender equality performance will continue to decline.

most powerful and influential advocates for women in the world, and Australia was the fourth country in the world to enfranchise white women, which it did initially in the Colony of South Australia in 1894 and then nationally at Federation in 1902. The political and social empowerment of women changed the shape of Australia, but in recent years, Australia's progress towards gender equality has slowed dramatically.

On some metrics of gender equality, Australia is ahead of the pack; on others, we are falling behind. Until recently, we have not fully understood the complexities of Australia's gender inequality but, thanks to the growing international focus on gendered data and the creation of tools for measuring the gender performance of nation-states, we have a much clearer picture of just how Australia is performing, in relative terms, on achieving true equality between men and women.

The World Economic Forum has predicted that it will take another 200 years before we achieve global gender equality. To realise genuine equality in Australia we need a longitudinal approach to social change, where monitoring, reporting and learning from evidence shapes our collective effort. Because without data and monitoring, there is little prospect of increasing the pace of change.

Gender inequality in Australia is a feminist issue and a matter of human rights protection, but it is also a barrier to Australia's economic growth and potential, with millions of under-valued women blocked from full participation in the Australian market because of cultural barriers to women's leadership and employment. First Nations women living in a range of locations suffer this more acutely on every measure.

Gender inequality is a drain on the public purse with violence against women, particularly in the home, costing the economy billions of dollars. It is also a public health burden, with women experiencing poor health outcomes due to gendered bias in the provision of health care. And, finally, gender inequality also reduces our collective wealth and economic growth, with women bearing a disproportionate burden of unpaid work and care for others, leaving them less able to participate fully in the labour force.

It's fundamental that women and girls, who make up over half the population of the country, share equally in our common wealth, our national opportunities and social benefits.

Introduction

What follows is an analysis of gender inequality across the life course, which demonstrates the risk to women's social and economic wellbeing due to gender inequality at particular points of life transition.

Whether it is hormonal changes and first experiences of society's sexualisation of the female form at the nexus of early childhood and teenage years, or at the transition from high performing student to unequally paid worker, or at the point of becoming a first-time parent or retiring from the workforce altogether, women are most vulnerable to the impact of gender inequality at these points of change.

In undertaking this analysis, we have identified clear gaps in the data available to Australian researchers to accurately assess the causes and effects of discrimination and inequality on women throughout their lives.

In addition to a qualitative assessment of gender inequality, then, we also point to the areas in which we need more quantitative data to allow us to develop a comprehensive set of analytical tools to measure and track our progress as a nation towards genuine gender equality.

Finally, a note on the report's limitations, and our hopes for its future.

What follows is by no means a comprehensive assessment of the myriad ways in which Australian women from different racial, cultural, or socio-economic backgrounds, most especially First Nations women, experience inequality; nor is it able to fully explore the nature of inequality and discrimination imposed upon women with diverse sexual orientations or gender identities, or those living with disabilities.

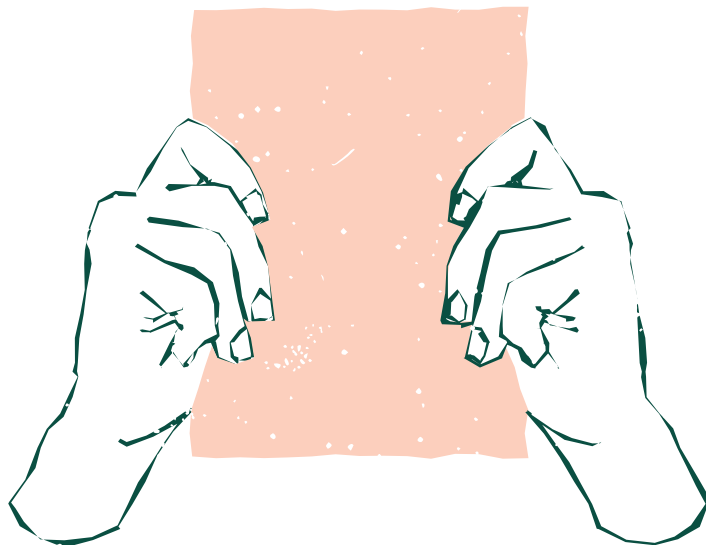
Where possible, we have pointed to the exacerbation of discrimination and inequality due to intersectional factors amongst the majority of Australian women who do not enjoy the privileges of a white, English speaking,

able-bodied, heterosexual and cis-gendered life with comfortable levels of wealth and income. However, as our research has made all too clear, there is currently a woeful lack of data available to adequately assess the impact of discrimination and inequality across all these metrics. Further, to do justice to the experiences of women with diverse backgrounds and experiences of life in Australia, we would need to produce this report eight times over – and to engage women with expertise and experience beyond that which is currently available within our own small team of researchers.

It is our sincere hope that, in future years, we can partner with organisations and individual women with real expertise and lived experience of intersectional disadvantage and discrimination, in order to build an adequate and informed understanding of the complex and varied elements of gender inequality. We hope to learn how we can discover and embrace our commonalities and solidarity to achieve change that will allow all Australian women to achieve their full potential and share equally in the fruits of life in the wealthiest nation on earth.

For our first year, though, we focus on the available data to provide a broad assessment of inequality between men and women as it is generally experienced across the nation. We hope our findings will start many conversations and, ultimately, lead to a national, non-partisan commitment to eradicating gender inequality.

Welcome to the inaugural Per Capita Gender Equality in Australia Report.



Part 1

International Gender Reporting: The Australian Scorecard

Australia has, since becoming a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, been subject to international obligations to report on its performance on gender equality. As a member of the United Nations, the World Economic Forum and signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the federal government is required to provide regular reports on the steps it is making to end discrimination against women and promote equality.

Australia has been a signatory to CEDAW since 1980 and to its Optional Protocol, which enables enforcement of the Convention, since 2008. Article 18 of CEDAW requires Australia to report every four years to the International Committee overseeing monitoring of CEDAW compliance.

Traditionally, CEDAW reporting has been qualitative in nature, requiring the Australian government to provide a narrative-style report on its progress implementing each article of the convention. There has been no

expectation in Australia's CEDAW reporting to provide data-driven accountability for improving on gender equality for its citizens.

Australia's most recent CEDAW State Member Report, its eighth since signing the convention, was submitted on the 8 December 2016.⁵ It is an 86-page document, focussed on addressing each of the articles of the convention, rather than reporting against any agreed gender equality performance indicators.

Part 1

International Gender Reporting: The Australian Scorecard

While other countries invest in national gender policy, target setting, data monitoring and evaluation to satisfy international commitments and drive excellence in gender equality, Australia is getting left behind.

Once a global leader in gender equality, Australia now finds itself frequently behind most OECD nations.

The CEDAW Committee's Concluding Recommendations to the State Report in 2018 criticised several aspects of Australia's reporting under the convention, but in particular the lengthy delay in its submission (it was two years overdue), as well as the lack of appropriate data. It recommended the following changes to Australia's national machinery for the advancement of women:

The Committee recommends that the State party, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 28, adopt a comprehensive national gender equality policy with performance indicators to address the structural factors resulting in inequalities between men and women and ensure that the Office for Women has a strong mandate and sufficient human and financial resources to coordinate and monitor the implementation of that policy throughout the territory of the State party.⁶

Although there is clearly an increasing desire from the CEDAW Committee for sex and gender disaggregated data, it has not formulated a full list of the information it expects Australia, or indeed any country, to report on.

However, while CEDAW is still developing mandated gender indicators, there are now a number of other international institutions

measuring the gender equality performance of Australia and other nations in this way.

The evolution towards quantitative measurement and global reporting on the progress of societies was made possible by the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which required nations to provide rigorous data driven accountability for reducing global poverty. When the MDGs' successor, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), included Gender Equality as an explicit target it intensified the interest in evaluating gender equality through measurable data and goal setting. Although still in their infancy, these tools are evolving to demand much greater rigour from nation-states about how they report on gender equality.

And Australia's results across many of these tools paint a grim picture.

As global gender equality assessment tools have become more sophisticated and detailed, Australia's performance has been revealed to be on a slippery slope of decline. While other countries invest in national gender policy, target setting, data monitoring and evaluation to satisfy international commitments and drive excellence in gender equality, Australia is getting left behind. Once a global leader in gender equality, Australia now finds itself frequently behind most OECD nations.

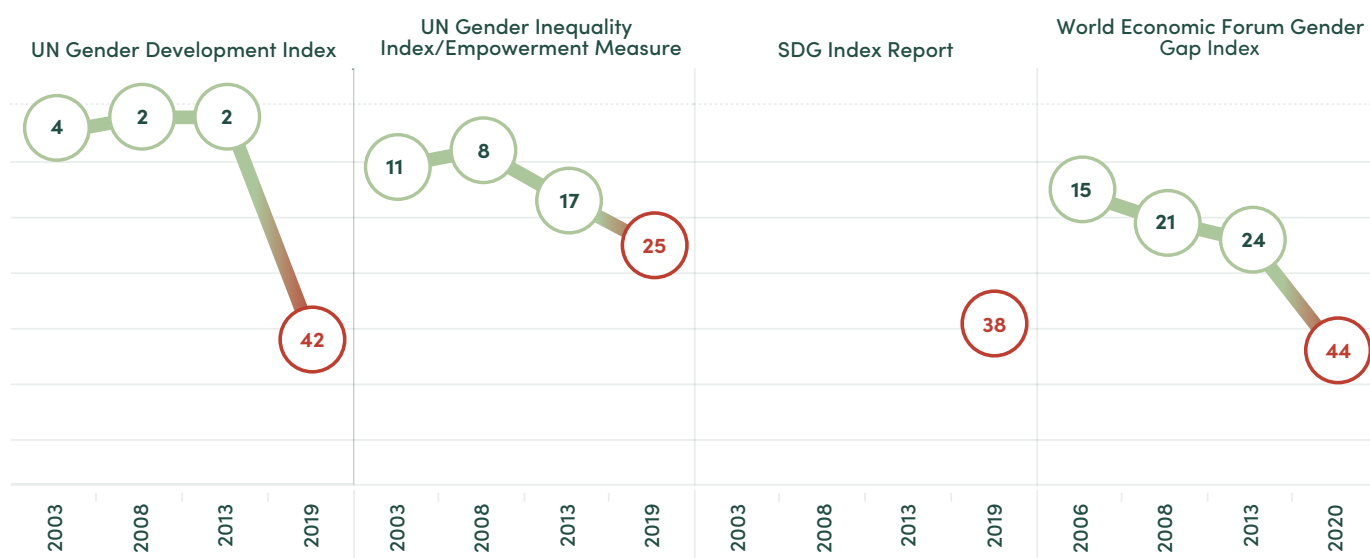
International Gender Equality Assessment Tools

There are several international tools being used to evaluate gender equality performance within nation-states. Australia has a number of competing obligations to provide accountability for its performance on gender equality in a range of different fora. The reports outlined below measure Australia's performance on gender equality in slightly different ways and for different purposes.

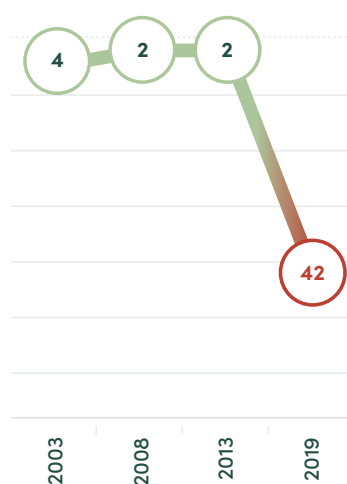
Some international gender equality assessment tools are indexes, which weight categories of data in a complex mathematical framework to deliver a global scorecard ranking. Other tools are more akin to a dashboard of gender data, where agreed gender indicators are reported on annually but there is no overall weighted score. Whether they are indexes or dashboards, global gender equality assessment tools share a common belief in the power of evidence-informed indicators to prioritise national effort, engage and develop community, and inform policy development through the best local data.

A full overview of the international gender equality reporting tools and Australia's performance is contained in Appendix A. But for the purposes of this report, we are focussing on four international tools – the UN Gender Development Index, UN Gender Inequality Index/Empowerment Measure, SDG Index Report, and World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index – which rate Australia's gender performance as follows:

Snapshot of Australia's Current International Gender Equality Performance



United Nations: Human Development Index (HDI) & Gender Development Index (GDI)



Current GDI ranking
(2019)

The first tool, the UN's Gender Development Index (GDI), is produced by sex-disaggregating data collected by the UN Development Program through the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures four indicators of human development – life expectancy, years of schooling, means of schooling and gross national income per capita.

According to the GDI, Australia ranks 42nd in the world, with a gender development value of 0.975. Although this ranking puts it in the top group for gender development, it is at the lower end of that list, behind Finland, Canada, Sweden, the USA and the Philippines.⁷ The seriousness of this ranking is only understood completely by referencing it to the Human Development Index. Australia performs highly in the HDI, where data relating to the human development of men and women is aggregated – it is sixth in the world behind only Norway, Switzerland, Ireland, Germany and Hong Kong.⁸

This means that while Australia is a very high performing nation in the development of men, it is far less so for women. There is a substantial gender development gap in Australia according to this tool.

The discrepancy between Australia's performance on the HDI and the GDI illustrates a clear policy problem: Australian men are benefiting from world-leading living standards, employment, and leadership opportunities; Australian women are not.

The indicator creating the greatest discrepancy in outcomes for men and women in Australia is the standard of living. The GDI, using Gross National Income per capita, shows a \$16,459 gap between female and male wages in Australia.⁹

Australia's ranking in the GDI has gone backwards in the last decade. In 2009 the CEDAW committee congratulated Australia for being "ranked first in the world in the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2009 with regard to its gender-related development index".¹⁰ While there have been some developments in the sophistication of the gendered data and indicators, these changes alone cannot account for the fact Australia is no longer in the Very High Group for development for women and girls.¹¹

United Nations: Gender Inequality Index (GII)



Current GII ranking
(2019)

The United Nations Gender Inequality Index (GII) examines the disparity between male and female achievements across an expanded list of gender indicators, to assess the disadvantages experienced by women. Datasets include maternal mortality, adolescent birth rates, the number of women in parliament, girls' completion of secondary school education, and women's labour force participation. Australia ranks 25th in the world on the GII, with poor results in women's parliamentary leadership and low levels of participation of women in the labour force contributing to the low ranking.

Sustainable Development Goals Index



Current GII ranking
(2019)

SDG Goal 5 commits nation-states to achieving gender equality by 2030. To measure performance towards this goal, measurable indicators of success have been set which include eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, recognising the value of unpaid care and domestic work, ensuring women's full participation in leadership and decision making in political, economic and public life, universal access to reproductive rights and sexual health, and equal rights for women to ownership and control over land and other forms of property.

Australia's reporting against SDG goals is entirely voluntary. In 2018, Australia submitted its Voluntary National Review to the SDG monitoring body, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, providing a four-page summary of achievements to date, mostly focussed on targets 5.2, 5.5 and 5A.¹² The report contains a limited amount of comparable economic data focussed on women's labour force participation and the gender pay gap, as well as the representation of women in parliament. However other targets are given little focus. It did not submit a report for 2019.

The SDG Index and Dashboard Report of 2019, *Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*, gives Australia an overall ranking for all SDG goals of 38th in the world,¹³ which is well behind many other countries in the OECD.¹⁴

One of the reasons for Australia's relatively poor performance is its ongoing failure to adequately resource the Australian Bureau of Statistics to identify key national indicators for monitoring SDG implementation, including those in gender equality. There is therefore a correlation between the lack of data collection and poor performance under the SDGs.

World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)



Current GII ranking
(2020)

The World Economic Forum, of which Australia is an active member, has also created its own measure of the global gender gap, with a highly interactive digital report providing detailed analysis of women's rights in 149 countries.

The WEF has been collecting gendered data since 2006 across four thematic areas: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Within each of these areas, performance is measured against a subset of key indicators.

Australia has dropped from a ranking of 15th in the world in 2006 when the GGGI commenced to 44th in 2020.¹⁵

The GGGI is published annually and provides the most regular reporting of Australia's gender performance at an international level. The GGGI is increasingly used by Australian NGOs and civil society organisations as a benchmark for Australian gender equality performance in the absence of any regular national documentation or reporting.

On balance, the GGGI is currently the most comprehensive and useful of all of the gender equality measurement tools surveyed here, providing both an index and a dashboard. It is the preferred global gender measurement tool for the purpose of this report.

However, all of these reports are informative and useful in understanding how Australia's gender equality performance compares to other countries.

Limitations of global gender equality reporting tools

Global gender equality measurement and reporting tools are relatively new, and are being refined and improved on as expertise in gender equality monitoring improves across the globe. However, there are two particularly significant gaps in the international reporting tools.

Firstly, there is a significant lack of data and analysis of violence against women (VAW). The only Index or Dashboard to include violence indicators is the Women's Empowerment Dashboard. The GGGI collects only two VAW indicators: the qualitative assessment of the presence of domestic violence legislation, and quantitative assessment of the prevalence of lifetime violence. All indexes and dashboards would benefit from interrogating violence against women in greater detail.

Global gender measurement tools are also failing to address the experiences of all women. Given a growing awareness of the interrelated and accumulative causes of disadvantage for women of colour, those with disabilities, LGBTIQ women and, particularly in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, an increased focus on the intersectional impact of gender equality is needed.

It is likely that the best gender equality assessment tool includes a mixed methodology of both quantitative and qualitative indicators.



Why global gender equality measurement matters

Australia should be internationally gender equality competitive.

Australia's economic gender apparatus has largely disappeared.

You cannot manage what you don't measure. It is common practice in any institution committed to continuous improvement, innovation and excellence to rely on data and rigorous analysis to make changes for the better. Australia's pre-eminence as a global sports power - in the pool, the tennis court or on the cricket pitch - would be impossible without the monitoring of athlete performance against indicators of success.

Despite the proliferation of global data telling us that Australia's gender equality performance is going backwards, achieving gender equality in Australia is arguably not given due attention by our political and civil society leaders. If Australia's Olympic Medal tally was as poor as our gender equality one, there would be a national outcry.

Australia should be internationally gender equality competitive. An economically and culturally advanced nation such as Australia should have concrete policies, coordinated programs and sustainable funding to address gender equality. Instead we lack national frameworks for regular accountability.

While the Sex Discrimination Commissioner (via the Australian Human Rights Commission) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency make annual reports to parliament, the remit of these statutory authorities is too narrow to encompass the breadth of gender indicators that now need to be monitored to meet global norms.

Australia was once a world leader in applying a gender lens in government, particularly in relation to gender responsive budgeting. But today, Australia's economic gender apparatus has largely disappeared.

A good example of this problem is the defunding of the ABS's Time Use Survey (TUS), which had previously enabled quantification of the unpaid care economy and the limits on women's economic productivity by gendered housework and care responsibilities. The last TUS was conducted in 2006, meaning that the data necessary to understanding the distribution of unpaid work is now 14 years out of date. Although it is a positive development that the TUS will be reinstated in 2020, the failure to collect this important piece of sex-disaggregated data has impeded gender policy development for more than a decade.

Why global gender equality measurement matters

What is required to rescue Australia's deteriorating global gender equality performance is a bi-partisan commitment to the necessary legislative framework.

Meanwhile, global gender development analysis has improved over the same period, with more countries developing comprehensive national plans to address deficiencies identified by the UN and WEF. Most countries that are now out-performing Australia on the GGGI produce an annual review of national performance against gender equality targets. They also have gender budget units in their treasuries, as well as gender architecture and appropriate levels of funding to monitor performance and drive innovation. Without monitoring and action, Australia's gender equality performance will continue to decline.

Ultimately, what is required to rescue Australia's deteriorating global gender equality performance and deliver meaningful progress towards achieving gender equality in Australia is a bi-partisan commitment to the necessary legislative framework. A common feature across high performance nations in the WEF Gender Gap Index is a Gender Equality Act of some sort at the national level, which embeds the necessity to report annually on gender equality data.

Apart from the need to put a commitment to gender equality at the centre of government, there are a range of policy specific challenges to achieving gender equality in Australia.

In Part 2 of this report, we explore the issues inhibiting gender equality progress across the life course for women in Australia, highlighting relevant global and national indicators and identifying gaps in the collection and analysis of gender data both qualitative and quantitative.

Part 2

Gender Equality in Australia Across the Life Course

"What we don't count, counts for nothing."
—Marilyn Waring

In order to develop a framework for annual gender equality reporting, we have undertaken a scoping exercise of current data and information on gender equality in Australia across the life course. This enables us to highlight the pervasive nature of gender inequality and its impact on women's total experience of life.

Our decision to adopt the life course approach was strengthened by review of research undertaken by the Nordic Gender Institute, based at the University of Oslo and incorporating the work of the Centre for Gender Research and Work Research Institute. The research into *Gender Equality and Quality of Life*,¹⁶ which involves a large qualitative survey of men and women in Norway, examines the connection between gender equality and quality of life, by framing questions themed around the life course – from early childhood and family relations, through schooling, work, the transition to partnership, parenting and running your own household, and into retirement and older age.

An analysis of gender inequality across the life course demonstrates the risk to women's social and economic wellbeing due to gender inequality at particular points of life transition. Whether it is hormonal changes and first experiences of society's sexualisation of the female form at the nexus of early childhood

and teenage years, or at the transition from high performing student to unequally paid worker, or at the point of becoming a first-time parent or retiring from the workforce altogether, women are most vulnerable to the impact of gender inequality at these points of change.

The life course approach exposes that the effects of gender inequality compound throughout women's lives to result in significant social and economic inequality for women.

Understanding the effect of gender inequality across the life course allows us to determine appropriate policy solutions by identifying the points at which targeted interventions will be most effective in reducing its impact on women.

Early childhood



What happens to girls in early childhood?



They experience gendered play spaces



They begin displaying gendered behaviour



They begin gendering appearance



They interact with gendered toys

Education



What happens to girls at school?



They stop studying maths & science

Only 16% of STEM graduates are women



They spend three hours a day on social media



They experience violence

47% of girls feel unsafe walking alone after dark



They stop playing sport

<50% of teenage girls participate in sport



Their physical health concerns are ignored



They experience serious mental health issues

Employment



What happens to women at work?



They experience a gender pay gap

There remains a gender pay gap of 14%



First Nations women experience unique, complex challenges



They work in underpaid feminised industries



They receive lower award wages than men



They experience a motherhood penalty



They suffer from the rigid structural organisation of work



Women experience discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace



If women live with a disability, they are further disadvantaged

Unpaid work: parenting and domestic labour



How does unpaid work affect Australian women?



Women shoulder a disproportionate load of unpaid domestic labour

Australian women spend 80.8% more time on unpaid household work each day than men



Women suffer from policy settings that encourage unequal division of unpaid work



Women spend much more time actively parenting than their male partners



Single mothers are doubly penalised

Retirement and old age



What happens to Australian women in old age?



They are more likely to live in poverty



They are more likely to rely on the age pension



They retire with significantly less superannuation savings than men

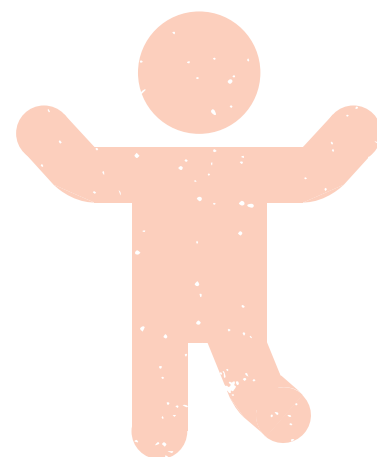
Women in Australia currently retire with 47% less superannuation than men



They are more likely to live in housing stress

Gender Equality in Australia Across the Life Course

Chapter 1 – Early Childhood



"When children play.....they create and recreate their understanding of what they believe to be normal behaviour for boys and girls, women and men. They construct their play using what they have distilled from the adult world about normal gendered ways of being, thinking and acting."

—Glenda McNaughton

In Australia, girl and boy babies are born in approximately equal numbers. In fact, there is a slightly higher number of babies recorded as female than there are male. We're fortunate in Australia that there are no social or cultural traditions which place a premium on the birthing of boy children, unlike other countries. While male and female infants are born in relatively equal numbers, it is unclear how many babies are born with non-binary sex organs. As data collection on sex and gender evolves, we anticipate the information about statistics on sex at birth to evolve and be more nuanced.


The different treatment of girls and boys begins at birth.

While birth-rates are equal, the different treatment of girls and boys begins at birth. Throughout early childhood, 'girls' and 'boys' are marked as different and treated differently. In the home, parents may have different expectations of male and female children, and different practices in raising them. They are likely to be dressed differently and given different toys according to their gender. In early

childhood care, they are likely to play differently, use space differently, and interact with the teacher differently.

These differences often reflect the gender stereotypes of our society and represent the early enforcement of gender roles on our children. The consequences affect their development, health, and wellbeing, into youth, adolescence, and beyond.

This chapter will bring together the Australian research on early childhood development and gender. It will show that children are introduced to and understand gender from a much earlier age than we might expect, and it will analyse the myriad ways in which gender inequality manifests in the early years. It will then look at the ramifications of this in later life, drawing on research that suggests such early establishment of gender roles and expectations has a direct impact on the gender inequality discussed in later chapters.



What do children understand about gender?

Children learn what ‘rules’ to follow so that their behaviour accords with their gender.

Even children whose parents have managed to avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes are exposed to gendered judgement from their peers.

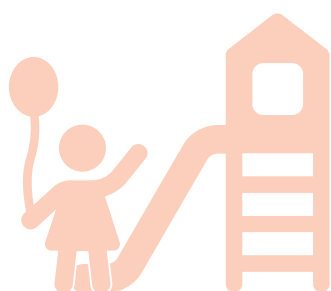
We know that children have a well-developed understanding of gender before they start school. By six months old, babies can distinguish between men and women’s voices; by nine months, they can distinguish between images of men and women; and by 14 months they can make associations between the images and the voices, understanding that the images of men match with lower voices, while the images of women match voices with a higher pitch.¹⁷

By the age of two, children are aware that some behaviours are associated with certain genders, and that some behaviours can be judged as ‘appropriate’ or ‘not appropriate’ depending on gender.^{18,19} By the age of two to three they can identify their own gender and are building their understanding of gender roles and stereotypes as they apply to their own selves.^{20,21} They learn what ‘rules’ to follow so that their behaviour accords with their gender²² – for example, they learn to like or dislike the colour pink and to express that preference strongly to their peers and to adults by the age of two and a half.²³ By the age of four, children are able to articulate a perception of what being a man or a woman ‘means’ in a social context.²⁴

This growing awareness does not take place passively in the background of a child’s life. Early childhood research shows that young children actually spend a lot of time thinking about the ‘proper’ way to be a ‘normal’ girl or boy in their context.²⁵ They pick up that adults respond positively or negatively to their behaviour based on whether it matches their gender, and they start to test and practice those behaviours, looking for more evidence to build their new understanding of these categories. They also start to mimic adult reactions when interacting with each other, so that even young children whose parents have managed to avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes are exposed to gendered judgement from their peers.²⁶

What happens to girls in early childhood?

They experience gendered play spaces



The study found that boys and girls were not 'naturally' segregating into gendered spaces. Rather, boys controlled their spaces using physical aggression to keep the girls out.

One of the world's most comprehensive studies of gender in early childhood was carried out by Australian researcher Glenda McNaughton in day-care centres across Melbourne.²⁷ It found that the learned behaviour about gender that young children brought into day-care impacted their patterns of play in a way that reinforced those gender roles.

The children in the study usually played in different spaces. Girls played in spaces that could be categorised as 'decorative', 'passive', or 'domestic', for example areas with dolls, art, or toy houses. They tended to be spaces that were relatively still and relatively quiet. By contrast, boys would play in spaces that were loud and full of movement, like construction, block play, or the sandpit.

Notably, the study found that boys and girls were not 'naturally' segregating into these spaces. Rather, boys controlled their spaces using physical aggression to keep the girls out. Boys denied girls entry to 'their' spaces based on the fact that they were girls. Boys would also attempt to make 'their' spaces larger by moving in to 'girl' spaces; girls would leave to avoid confrontation. Boys therefore took up more space in the play area and also both demanded and received more time from their teacher.

The researchers found that these patterns of play were remarkably difficult to shift. They tried to 'feminise' the block play areas by moving items from 'girl' spaces in, but boys would push to get to the area first and would then move the items out of the area. They tried to 'separate' by introducing girls-only time in the block play area, and while this tactic made it clear that girls were interested and excited to play with blocks, boys would disrupt their play using physical aggression or loud confrontation when the teacher wasn't looking, dissuading girls from returning to their area once girls-only time ended. They tried to 'fuse' the block play area with the 'home' area, but boys would create loud, physical, and aggressive storylines within the area that excluded the girls, meaning the girls ended up unable to play with blocks or with the 'home'. And they tried to 'police' the block play area by keeping a constant eye on it and intervening whenever the boys excluded the girls, but this took up too much of the teacher's time to maintain. As the girls learnt that their acceptance in the block area depended on the teacher's presence, they would leave as soon as the teacher turned away.

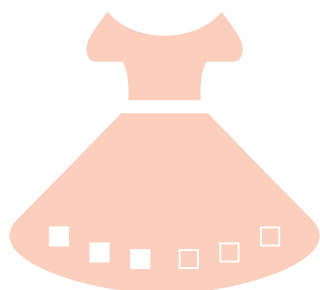
What happens to girls in early childhood?

They experience gendered play spaces

The researchers concluded that none of these approaches worked because they treated the symptoms, not the cause. 'Feminisation', 'separatism', and 'fusion' didn't work because they assumed that the girls were the problem, i.e. that they needed encouraging into the space. 'Policing' didn't work because, while it recognised that the boys were the problem, it reacted to their behaviour rather than addressing it at the root.

That root is the set of expectations around gender that children are taught to enforce from a very early age. In family environments, in childcare environments, and in the broader community, adults respond to children in ways that set gender-based expectations.²⁸

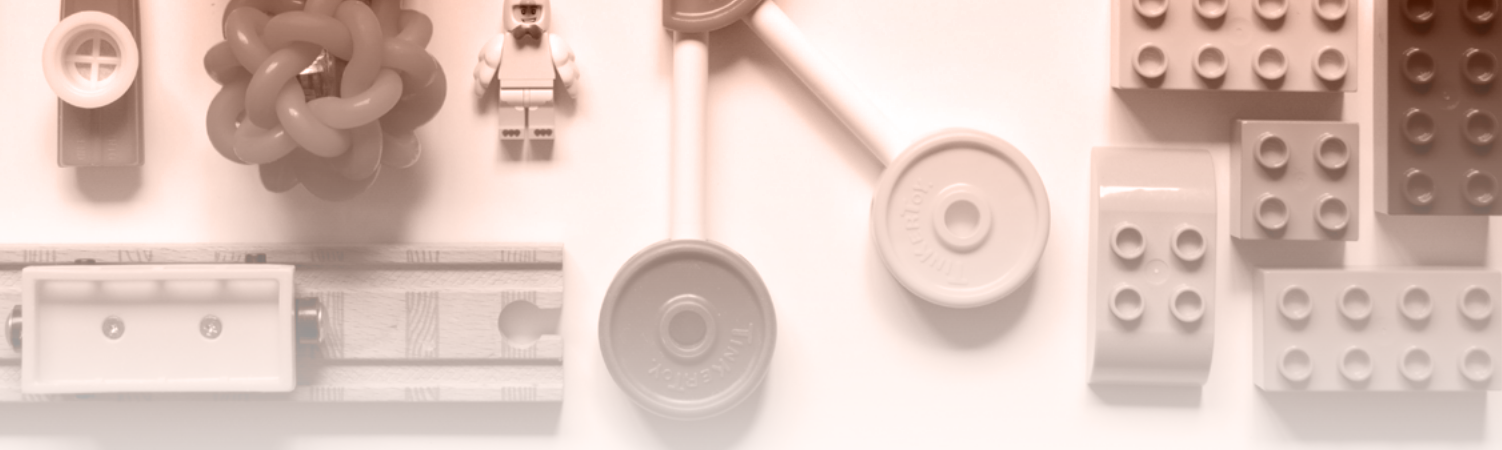
They begin gendering appearance



When the adult world not only assigns items genders but then assigns a negative value to items of the 'other' gender, children learn to assign the same values to genders.

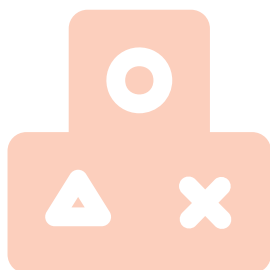
There is no biological basis for girls to prefer pink, or for boys to avoid it.²⁹ Likes and dislikes are learned; or rather, they are taught.³⁰ Parents (and to be fair to them, they often have very little choice) buy pink items for girls and blue items for boys.³¹ Parents also (and here they have some choice) reinforce the messages of their child's colour-coded environment by refusing items that aren't gender 'appropriate': *that's not for you, that's for girls; you don't want that, it's pink; that's not very girly; that's not very pretty.*

Australian parents can be even more restricted (and restrictive) when it comes to clothing; a recent uptick in demand for and supply of gender-neutral clothing³² has been met with backlash from conservative parents horrified at ads depicting "girls wearing mustard and blue trousers and boys wearing tops with coral and pink detailing."³³ When the adult world not only assigns items genders but then assigns a negative value to items of the 'other' gender, children learn to assign the same values to genders.



What happens to girls in early childhood?

They interact with gendered toys



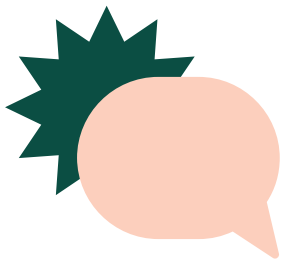
The gendering of toys has a direct impact on how children understand certain professions.

Children's toys are as gendered as children's clothes, and the way adults interact with children around toys and play reinforces gender stereotypes. These interactions can include adults directing and redirecting children towards and away from certain toys based on gender and questioning or shaming a child when they select a toy that is 'inappropriate' for their gender (*dolls are for girls; let's go to the boys' section; are you sure you want to play with that*).

Since children's toys often imitate adult occupations or activities, the gendering of toys has a direct impact on how children understand certain professions. Even parents that believe children should be treated the same regardless of gender are more likely to give their sons toys that mimic professional occupations and outdoor activities (driving, playing sports, building, science) while giving their daughters toys that mimic household occupations and indoor activities (mothering, cooking, dressing up, drawing).³⁴ In 2017, Target Australia started selling a 'My First Carry Along' plastic briefcase toy, which comes in pink and blue.³⁵ The blue briefcase is a 'Medical Centre' and includes a toy clamp, tweezers, syringe, and scissors.³⁶ The pink briefcase is a 'Beauty Studio' and includes a toy hair dryer, nail polish, and lipstick.³⁷

What happens to girls in early childhood?

They begin displaying gendered behaviour



Adults allow boys to be rowdy and noisy while asking girls to sit still and lower their voice.

Adults use phrases like "boys don't cry" or "don't be bossy" to police boys who are showing emotion or girls who are asserting themselves.³⁸ They allow boys to be rowdy and noisy while asking girls to sit still and lower their voice.³⁹ In Australia's outdoor, sporty culture, young boys are encouraged to develop active, gross motor skills (large movements that use bigger muscles like running and jumping) while girls develop passive, fine motor skills (smaller movements that use small muscles like picking up and using small objects) more quickly.⁴⁰ Research suggests that this contributes towards boys using much more physical force and aggression in their play, while girls move away from big physical movements and prefer to use verbal reasoning and negotiation.⁴¹

Gender inequality in early childhood lasts a lifetime

Gender stereotypes identified and established in very early childhood lead to a stronger expression of these stereotypical and often harmful beliefs later in life.

Manifestations of gender inequality so early in life have significant ramifications over the entire life course. Children's development is held back by these expectations. Young boys develop their muscle power and girls don't; girls develop social skills while boys are left behind.⁴² There are health implications as well, particularly for young girls who learn early that their social value is attached to their appearance: this is linked to body image issues and eating disorders later in life.⁴³

Furthermore, gender stereotypes identified and established in very early childhood lead to a stronger expression of these stereotypical and often harmful beliefs later in life. Current child development research indicates that the earlier a child can identify gender, the stronger their gendered preferences are later in life, and the more likely they are to adhere to and enforce gender stereotypes.⁴⁴ Research in Australia from *Our Watch* has also shown that where there is stronger prevalence of and adherence to gender stereotypes, there is a higher probability of violence against women.⁴⁵

How do we measure gender equality in early childhood and where are the data gaps?

The ABS collects sex-disaggregated data on birth rates in Australia which is reported on annually, with very regular updates, to ensure accurate population reporting. Birth data is collected from hospital and maternal child health records. To date, data collected on sex at birth does not allow for analysis of non-binary sex at birth. Improvements on research and data collection for infants born intersex or with multiple sex-organs is required.

In 2009, the Rudd Government launched the *Australian Early Development Index*, becoming the first country in the world to collect national data on the developmental health and wellbeing of all children at the start of their first year of school. Now called the *Australian Early Development Census* (AEDC), it tracks Australian children across the five domains most key to their later development. One of these domains relates to physical health and wellbeing, but the others all relate to social skills: social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive skills; and communication skills.

The AEDC scores children between zero and ten for each of the five domains and then reports its results as a percentage of children who are considered to be developmentally on track, at risk, and vulnerable. According to the 2018 AEDC Report, 21.7% of Australian children are developmentally vulnerable on one or more domain⁴⁶. Boys are twice as likely as girls to be developmentally vulnerable on two or more of these domains.⁴⁷ The largest gaps are in the social competence domain, where boys are more than twice as likely as girls to be developmentally vulnerable (and this is widening), and the emotional maturity domain, where shockingly boys are 3.4 times more likely than girls to be developmentally vulnerable and nearly twice as likely to be

Boys are **3.4 times more likely** than girls to be **developmentally vulnerable** in the emotional maturity domain⁵⁵



How do we measure gender equality in early childhood and where are the data gaps?

developmentally at risk.⁴⁸ By prioritising the emotional and social skills of girls in early childhood and ignoring those of boys, we are threatening boys' development as well; allowing problematic gender expectations to manifest so early in life is harming girls, but it's harming boys too.

The AEDC also gives us an insight into the many other axes along which early childhood development is threatened by demographics. Children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas, children living in very remote areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children all experience concerning rates of developmental vulnerability across the various domains. The 2018 AEDC report unearthed that more than 90% of children that were not proficient in English were developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains, and this gap is growing.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, the AEDC analyses these demographic characteristics in isolation and there is no data that shows the compounding disadvantage of multiple intersecting vulnerabilities; for example, there is no way to tell from the AEDC how boys compare to girls in remote areas, or how girls from remote areas compare to girls from major cities.

Important research undertaken by a consortium of research institutes into Foundational Community Factors in Early Childhood Development presents an opportunity to examine gender and other forms of disadvantage within a community context, taking into account geographic settings, social economic status of parents, housing affordability and other community-wide factors.⁵⁰ The AEDC's capacity to analyse compounding factors of disadvantage may be improved through the use of FCFs.

The government assesses and measures the quality of early childhood education and providers using the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care.⁵¹ Comprising seven 'Quality Areas',

the Framework does not include gender equality in early childhood as a measure of quality; in fact, it does not mention gender at all.

At the state level, the Victorian state government has outlined a commitment to respectful relationships and gender equality education in early childhood as part of its state gender equality strategy.⁵² The strategy mentions that such a commitment is mandated under Iceland's Gender Equality Act (Iceland is the top ranked country on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index). Norway, which places second on that Index, has a Kindergarten Act which prohibits kindergartens from gender stereotyping and states that kindergarten staff must actively promote gender equality in their work with children (although recent research in Norwegian kindergartens showed that traditional gender roles were still upheld).⁵³

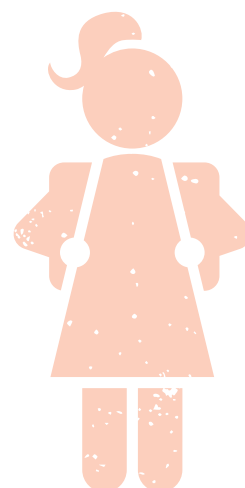
Finally, it is important to note that Australia ranks very low on funding early childhood education compared to other OECD countries.⁵⁴ The latest OECD data shows us spending 0.57% of our GDP on early childhood education, significantly lower than New Zealand's 0.96% of GDP. Sweden spends 1.92% of its GDP on early childhood education.

A funding boost could increase pay, training, and resources available to early childhood education providers at this most crucial time in our children's lives, when ideas about gender are beginning to form and stabilise.

The provision of increased hours for three-year-old kindergarten is emerging as a new policy battleground within Australia, with the Victorian Government the first state or territory to implement 15 hours of subsidised kindergarten to three-year-olds as well as four-year-olds, at a projected investment of \$5 billion.

Gender Equality in Australia Across the Life Course

Chapter 2 – Education



"Lately I have been very hard on myself, whether it's my body image (even though I have been trying so hard) or thinking I'm not good enough and I need to work harder."

—Respondent to the Mission Australia Youth Survey, female, 15, QLD

98% of school-aged girls in Australia say they are not treated equally to boys.⁵⁶

That figure – a near consensus – is overwhelming. How can it be possible that almost every single schoolgirl in Australia feels she does not receive the same treatment as the boys in her class?

Something happens to girls at school, which challenges their confidence, expectations, and choices. While 75% of girls entering high school believe they will "have every opportunity" to become a leader when they grow up, only 57% of girls still agree with this statement by the time they leave school – and 40% of those girls believe gender is the biggest barrier to their chances of becoming a leader. 56% of girls view themselves as confident at the age of 10; by 17, only 44% of girls describe themselves as confident. Girls leave high school feeling much less happy with their lives overall (59% compared to 68%) and much less positive about the future (60% compared to 67%) than boys do.⁵⁷

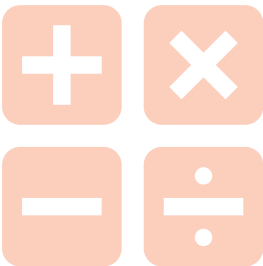
Although we know these figures, there is little research that actually analyses what happens to girls in school; what the patterns, practices, and institutions are

that lead them to feel unequally treated, to lose their confidence, to drop out of science and maths, to stop playing sport, to stop believing in their leadership potential. Most research focuses on young people, and fails to distinguish by gender, or focuses on women, to the exclusion of the specific experiences of girls. Furthermore, researchers can fall into the trap of treating women or girls as a monolith and failing to consider how other characteristics like class, race, sexuality, gender identity, and location might intersect with gender to produce a more complex picture of girls' experiences at school.

This chapter will look at that experience. It brings together existing quantitative and qualitative research to show where girls face inequities within the Australian schooling system and how girls feel about their treatment at school. We note, of course, that boys and young men also have negative experiences in high school that are linked to gender stereotypes and expectations of masculinity. However, this chapter will focus on the specific experiences of girls and young women.

What happens to girls at school?

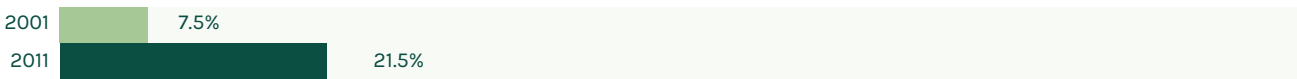
They stop studying maths and science



Australia’s STEM gender gap is well known. Only 16% of STEM graduates are women, and those graduates tend to be employed by traditionally ‘female’ sectors like healthcare and education. Traditionally ‘male’ sectors still employ very few female STEM graduates: only 12% of STEM graduates in construction and 15% in transport are female. 32% of male STEM graduates make their way to the top income bracket, earning over \$104,000, but only 12% of female STEM graduates do. Only 17% of STEM professors are women.⁵⁸

These outcomes reflect subject choices at the tertiary education level, but those choices are shaped during high school. Girls’ participation in senior secondary mathematics and science continues to decline at an alarming rate: a study in New South Wales found that the proportion of girls who chose to study no mathematics subjects after Year 10 tripled from 7.5% in 2001 to 21.5% in 2011;⁵⁹ in Victoria significantly more boys than girls complete all VCE STEM subjects except biology and psychology.⁶⁰ Australian students decide whether to follow a STEM-related career pathway by the age of 14.⁶¹

Proportion of girls not studying mathematics subjects after Year 10 (NSW)⁶⁸:



Girls’ participation in senior secondary mathematics and science continues to decline at an alarming rate.

The most recent Australian research shows that girls disengaging from STEM has nothing to do with their ability or performance in these subjects, which are generally equivalent to boys’. Rather, the disparity lies in attitudes and perceptions around gender and STEM. Girls under-estimate their skills in science and maths, are more risk averse, and have a higher level of anxiety around their academic performance, leading them to take subjects they believe they are better at to VCE level.⁶² The Office of the Chief Scientist places these influences on girls’ choices into three categories:

- Identity: “in the absence of female role models, girls lack evidence that careers in STEM are for them”
- Perceived ability: “a mismatch between girls’ STEM abilities and their confidence reduces female representation in STEM”
- Aspiration: “pervasive cultural beliefs that STEM is a male domain deter women from STEM careers, and prevent exposure to these fields”⁶³

What happens to girls at school?

They stop studying maths and science

Since STEM careers tend to carry higher salaries, the loss of girls from STEM subjects in high school has a significant impact on the gender pay gap.

The loss of girls from STEM subjects in high school means they are less likely to be able to study STEM subjects at university and therefore less likely to take up STEM careers.⁶⁴ Since STEM careers tend to carry higher salaries, this has a significant impact on the gender pay gap: in Australia, two thirds of the gender wage gap amongst new university graduates can be attributed to the STEM gender gap.⁶⁵ This trend affects the whole Australian economy, which will depend into the future on skilled STEM workers and cannot afford to exclude women from this labour pool.⁶⁶

Gender intersects with other demographic characteristics to produce a complex picture of STEM participation in Australia. For example, some indicators suggest that socio-economically disadvantaged students of all genders are less likely to choose STEM subjects, while students of all genders with a language background other than English choose STEM subjects more frequently.⁶⁷ In Australia, there is a need for more research to ascertain how cultural, socio-economic, and other factors impede STEM participation by girls.

They stop playing sport



<50% of teenage girls participate in sport

The 98% of school-aged girls who said they do not receive equal treatment to boys felt that unequal treatment was most profound in sports.⁶⁹ Mission Australia's youth survey found that while 68% of teenage boys had participated in sport in the last year, only 47% of teenage girls could say the same.⁷⁰

A key barrier that girls report to more physical activity is the worry that they will be judged, humiliated, or harassed while exercising, especially in the presence of boys or men. As adolescent girls go through puberty, their self-consciousness is heightened and they become more concerned about their body image; usually this manifests as concerns about the shape and weight of their bodies, which they have been taught is linked to physical activity (or lack thereof). Anxiety around physical activity is therefore exacerbated because adolescent girls, many of whom are highly uncomfortable about their body image, believe that since they do not see themselves as 'thin' this means they cannot be 'fit' or 'sporty', and also because they see physical activity as an arena in which their bodies will be on public display to others. To avoid the anxiety, girls avoid participating in physical activity.⁷¹



What happens to girls at school?

They stop playing sport

The fear of presenting outside gender norms was a key reason that high school girls stopped playing sport.

Limits on physical activity are also linked to safety concerns: girls are fundamentally less free to move around and be active than boys.

Gender norms also affect girls’ decisions to participate in sport. Traits such as “strength, competitiveness and aggression” are coded masculine, not feminine,⁷² and many girls will have internalised this from a very early age. A South Australian study found that the fear of presenting outside gender norms was a key reason that high school girls stopped playing sport.⁷³ Girls in the focus groups explained that it was not seen as ‘feminine’ for girls to play sport, and agreed that both girls and boys at school would judge girls for playing sport, especially sports that were coded as traditionally ‘masculine’. They repeated concerns that they would be labelled as ‘butch’ or ‘manly’ if they played ‘too much’ sport, either because they would physically develop muscles and therefore no longer look ‘feminine’, or because they would be teased by other girls for deciding not to partake in more traditionally ‘feminine’ activities, or because they would be put down by boys if they tried to participate in ‘their’ sports or if they outperformed them. The girls described a perception at school that girls who participate in sports are only doing it to flirt with boys.

Even the structure and timetabling of physical activity in the high school context can be uncomfortable for girls: attending other classes wearing sports clothes (which can be ill-fitting and ‘unattractive’ at one end of the spectrum, or highly sexualised on the other),⁷⁴ or returning to class sweaty and with messy hair after playing sports (especially when the school has strict neat appearance/uniform rules for girls), or the requirement to change and/or shower in front of other classmates, are all possibilities that can compound anxiety around physical activity.

Limits on physical activity are also linked to safety concerns: girls are fundamentally less free to move around and be active than boys. For example, parents are more likely to allow boys to walk or ride their bikes to their destinations or visit local parks and public outdoor spaces on their own, than they are to allow girls.⁷⁵

Participation in sport in the previous year⁷⁶:



What happens to girls at school?

Their physical health concerns are ignored



There are high numbers of girls in high school across the country who regularly experience significant pain from PCOS and endometriosis, alongside serious reproductive and mental health concerns that will impact the rest of their lives.

Lack of physical activity is not the only way in which the health of young girls is negatively impacted during school. In fact, research shows that most of the poor health outcomes young women experience are driven by gender norms and expectations.⁷⁷

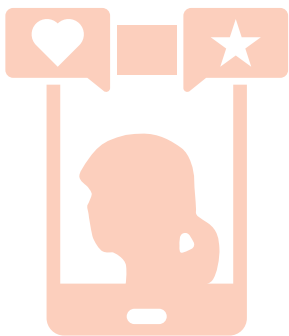
Two of the most common health conditions affecting women in Australia are polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), which affects 1 in 5 Australian women, and endometriosis, which affects 1 in 10.⁷⁸ PCOS, which is even more common among women with Indigenous, Asian, and North African backgrounds,⁷⁹ usually begins in adolescence, but 70% of women are not diagnosed.⁸⁰ Symptoms of PCOS in adolescence and beyond include menstrual irregularity, weight gain, acne, increased facial and body hair, depression and anxiety, difficulties getting pregnant, and higher risk of diabetes and heart disease.⁸¹

Endometriosis is a chronic condition that can cause extremely painful menstruation and sex, very heavy or irregular menstrual bleeding, painful sex, bladder and bowel problems, and infertility.⁸² It also begins in adolescence, but Australian women commonly wait an average of 8 years to be diagnosed, and report frustration and anger with healthcare providers ignoring their complaints, failing to diagnose them, or giving them bad advice.⁸³ There is no known cure for endometriosis (and research into such a cure is significantly under-funded), but women and girls in Australia are still wrongly informed that both pregnancy and hysterectomy are cures.⁸⁴

The high prevalence of PCOS and endometriosis in Australia, the fact that both conditions begin in adolescence, and the continued failure of healthcare providers to diagnose, manage, and treat these conditions, means there are high numbers of girls in high school across the country who regularly experience significant pain alongside serious reproductive and mental health concerns that will impact the rest of their lives.

What happens to girls at school?

They spend three hours a day on social media



70% of teenage girls in Australia report online bullying and harassment to be endemic.

Australian teenagers spend more than three hours every day on social media, and 60% of this activity goes completely unmonitored by their parents.⁸⁵ High school girls use social media more frequently than boys.⁸⁶

While social media has created new ways for young people to connect and communicate with each other, this instant and unregulated form of communication carries risks for young people, especially girls. Girls are significantly more likely to experience online harassment and abuse online, especially sexual harassment, and especially from male perpetrators.⁸⁷ A recent survey by Plan International Australia and Our Watch found that 70% of teenage girls in Australia report online bullying and harassment to be endemic, with types of abuse including receiving indecent or sexually explicit material, being pressured to produce and share indecent or sexually explicit photos or footage of themselves, having such material shared without their permission, online threats, cyberbullying, and cyberstalking.⁸⁸

Constant access to social media and the internet via smartphones increases the risk of this type of behaviour during the school years. Young Australians view sexualised images of women at earlier ages and with more frequency than previous generations, and are also exposed at a younger age to more pornography, which is more violent than ever before.⁸⁹ When young people are exposed to sexualised, objectifying, degrading, or violent images of women, whether in the traditional media, in pop culture, on social media, or in pornography, they are significantly more likely to replicate these images and these patterns in their real lives.⁹⁰

What happens to girls at school?

They experience violence



We have an epidemic of gender-based violence in Australia, and girls in school are not excluded from it. In fact, young women are subjected to violence at higher rates than women of any other age group.⁹¹ Of the 1 in 5 women in Australia who report experiencing coercion into unwanted sexual activity, half stated their first experience was before the age of 17.⁹² A quarter of sexually active Australian students in Years 10-12 reported an experience of unwanted sex to Our Watch.⁹³ Of students that have experienced unwanted sex, a significantly higher proportion of girls than boys reported that they did so because their partner thought they should (61% vs. 37%) or because they were frightened (34% vs. 15%).⁹⁴ And in a recent study of Australian primary schools, 40% of teachers reported observing problematic sexual behaviour, including rape threats, sharing and re-enacting violent pornography, sexually harassing behaviours, and sending violent or sexual messages online.⁹⁵

The Mission Australia youth survey revealed that teenage girls feel unsafe in their environments.⁹⁶ 47% of girls felt unsafe walking alone after dark, compared to only 18% of boys. 71% of boys felt comfortable using public spaces, compared to 63% of girls. Only 35% of teenage girls trust people in their local area, compared to 42% of boys. And double the number of girls reported that their security and safety would be a barrier to them moving out of home in the future.

There tends to be an assumption of hope for future generations in progressive and feminist discourse; a sense that teenage boys are learning in this era to be less violent men and that teenage girls will as a result experience less violence across the life course. Unfortunately, the data available in Australia does not reflect this. Young people aged 13-16 are more likely to express beliefs or attitudes that excuse or condone gender-based violence, and young boys in this age

group are three times more likely than girls to state that 'pressure for sex' is not abusive.⁹⁷ In the 16-25 age category, 1 in 5 younger people of both sexes believe a woman under the influence of drugs or alcohol is partly to blame if she's sexually assaulted; 1 in 5 believe men should take control in relationships; 1 in 4 thought it was normal for men to pressure women into sex; and 1 in 4 did not think it was serious if a man slapped his girlfriend when he was drunk.⁹⁸

The experience of violence in high school is not merely gendered; it is most severe at the intersections between girlhood and other experiences of marginalisation. Girls with disabilities are more likely to experience family violence and sexual assault; rural and regional girls are more likely to experience family violence and less likely to be able to take action where there is limited access to public services; trans and gender diverse people experience verbal abuse, physical abuse, and bullying at higher rates than other high school students.⁹⁹ We also know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls experience violence at a much higher rate than non-Indigenous women: 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence,¹⁰⁰ and 10 times more likely to die from assault.¹⁰¹ The violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls is not just perpetrated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, but is part of the ongoing experience of colonial violence and the

"intergenerational impacts of dispossession, the forced removal of children, the interruption of cultural practices that mitigate against interpersonal violence, and the ongoing and cumulative economic exclusion and disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These impacts include intergenerational trauma, lateral violence and internalised colonialism."¹⁰²

What happens to girls at school?

They experience serious mental health issues



According to the Black Dog Institute, just under a quarter of young people aged 15-19 meet the criteria for having a proper serious mental illness.¹⁰³ This is concerning enough as a standalone figure, but the experience is also highly gendered. Although the mental health of girls and boys is similar before puberty, during the teenage years girls' mental health outcomes worsen significantly compared to boys.¹⁰⁴ Teenage girls are twice as likely as males to deal with a probable serious mental illness, usually an anxiety or major depressive disorder,¹⁰⁵ and more than twice as likely to be hospitalised for intentional self-harm: nearly 1 in 4 girls aged 16-17 in Australia reports having self-harmed.¹⁰⁶

Poor mental health outcomes in young women are driven by high levels of stress about school, studying, and body image; two thirds of girls with a probably serious mental illness described themselves as 'extremely' or 'very' concerned about body image.¹⁰⁷ Girls are much more concerned than boys about coping with stress (56% compared to 26%), body image (42% compared to 15%), school or study problems (42% compared to 23%), mental health (39% compared to 20%), and social media (21% compared to 10%).¹⁰⁸ Boys are more likely to be concerned about drugs, alcohol, and gambling than girls, but at much lower rates in general (7%, 5%, and 4% respectively).¹⁰⁹ This research paints a sombre picture of girls in school dealing with an extremely high level of stress and anxiety. Only 59% report feeling

Teenage girls are twice as likely as males to deal with a probable serious mental illness, usually an anxiety or major depressive disorder.

happy with life overall, compared to 68% of boys, and 60% feel positive about the future, compared to 67% of boys.¹¹⁰

It would be irresponsible not to specify that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are our most at-risk group of young people when it comes to mental illness, with over 3 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents to the Black Dog Institute's study meeting the criteria for a probable serious mental illness.¹¹¹

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are far more likely to die from suicide than non-Indigenous young people and in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys are most at risk.¹¹² In 2017, suicide was the leading cause of death among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.¹¹³ In 2019, as Western Australia's coroner investigated the deaths of 13 young people over a three year period in the Kimberley, we tragically lost five Indigenous teenage girls in nine days to suicide in January, and a further five Indigenous teenagers in Queensland in March.¹¹⁴ In March 2019, peak medical health bodies called on the government to declare a national emergency and invest in Aboriginal-led and community controlled strategies in response.¹¹⁵ We echo that call.

Girls’ experiences at school affect the rest of their lives

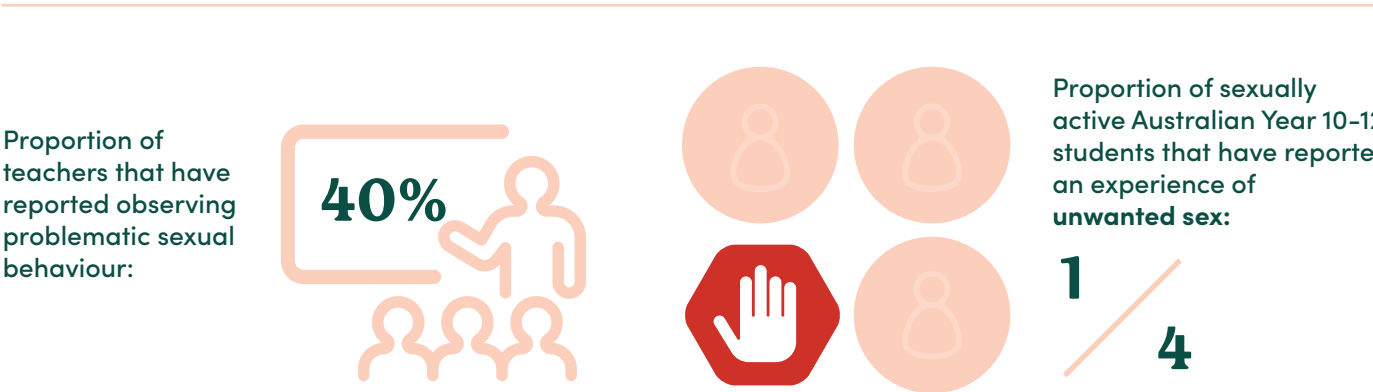
Girls leave high school less happy, less confident, and with less belief in their own potential than when they entered.

By the time girls reach high school, we can already see some of the effects of gender inequities in early childhood manifesting. Similarly, the impacts of the gendered experience of high school ricochet throughout young adulthood and across the life course.

Existing evidence suggests that [emphasis added]:

*"the **most** effective way to reduce the risk of poor physical, emotional and mental health outcomes for **women** is to create a more gender equal society for **girls** to grow up in."*¹⁶

Girls leave high school less happy, less confident, and with less belief in their own potential than when they entered. Subject choices in high school limit subject choices at university and ultimately impact career choices and progression. Mental health struggles that are rooted in stress, body image, social media, and pressure to perform certainly don’t fall away when the final school bell rings. Poor health outcomes linked to gender inequality – for example, the late diagnoses of PCOS or endometriosis – can have lifelong health consequences. Experiences of sexual and physical violence at a young age and, importantly, the responses to these events, embed long-lasting norms and beliefs, as we will see in later chapters.



How do we measure gender equality at school and where are the data gaps?

There is no national body or process through which we can effectively assess the emotional, physical and intellectual progress and wellbeing of girls in their school years.

Australia ranks first in the world on the WEF's Global Gender Gap Index for Educational Attainment, scoring a full 1 out of 1, signifying that we have closed our gender gap on education.¹¹⁷ In terms of access and participation there is an incredibly high rate of gender equality at primary and secondary school.

Although this is a cause of celebration and a gender indicator Australia should be proud of, the lack of analysis about how girls experience schooling, leaving with reduced confidence in their own abilities, is also an example of how data sets alone have limitations as a measure to reflect on the lived experiences of women and girls. The GGGI only measures literacy rate and enrolment in primary, secondary, and tertiary education, so while we may lead the world on ensuring girls can read as well as boys and attend school at the same rate, there are many other aspects to the high school experience that the GGGI is failing to capture effectively.

Australian student performance is now measured in some detail through the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The annual NAPLAN National Report provides detailed sex-disaggregated data on the performance of students at Years 3, 5, 7, and 9. The reports also examine results with concern for the impact of intersectional disadvantage, reporting comparatively on the performance of students from Indigenous, linguistic,

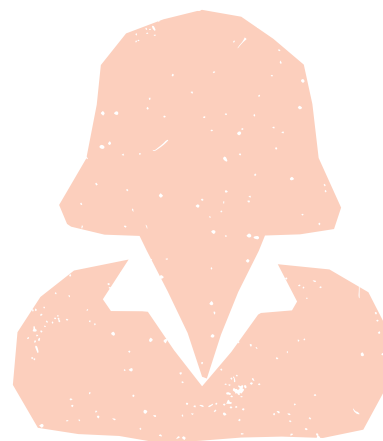
geographic, and parental educational and occupational backgrounds.¹¹⁸ The 2018 National NAPLAN report shows that in the early years of education, girls do not underperform boys in numeracy: in years 3, 5, 7, and 9, a slightly higher percentage of girls are graded as "at or above national minimum standard" than boys.¹¹⁹

National curriculum data is not collected or analysed in a detailed way in other areas of educational focus – such as STEM, social sciences, fine arts or sports – providing limited opportunities for inquiry into gender differences and disadvantages in these areas.

The Department of Education collects some data on STEM participation but not systematically or regularly. State government departments like VicHealth measure girls' participation in physical activity more thoroughly, but as has been tracked throughout this chapter, it is mainly NGOs and civil society organisations that are collecting quantitative, qualitative, and survey data on the broader experiences of adolescent girls in school. There is no national body or process through which we can effectively assess the emotional, physical and intellectual progress and wellbeing of girls in their school years.

Gender Equality in Australia Across the Life Course

Chapter 3 – Employment



"Any society that fails to harness the energy and creativity of its women is at a huge disadvantage in the modern world."

—Tian Wei, CCTV News Anchor, World Economic Forum, 2015¹²³

While women are now almost half of the paid workforce, their employment status remains far from equal to that of men.

Women are much more likely than men to be working part-time in Australia. And when women are in paid work, they are paid less than men.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) first published its standard Labour Force data series in 1978.¹²⁰ Women, at that time, comprised just 35% of the labour force. In the four decades since, women's employment has grown rapidly, and the latest ABS statistics, from January 2019, show that women now comprise 46.9% of all employed persons in Australia.

Yet while women are now almost half of the paid workforce, their employment status remains far from equal to that of men. With an unemployment rate of 5.2% as of the first quarter of 2019, women are slightly more likely than men, with an unemployment rate of 4.9%, to be out of work.

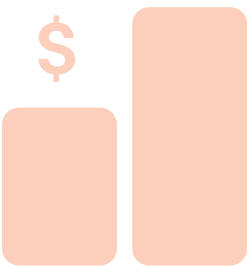
More significantly, though, the data also shows that women make up just 37% of full-time employees, but 68.7% of part-time employees. Women are much more likely than men to be working part-time in Australia – almost half (45%) of women in the workforce are in part-time roles, compared with just 16% of employed men.¹²¹

Among OECD nations, only in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Austria and Germany are a higher proportion of women working part-time. OECD figures also show the employment rate of women in Australia aged between 25 and 54 years is in the lower third of OECD countries.¹²²

And when women are in paid work, they are paid less than men.

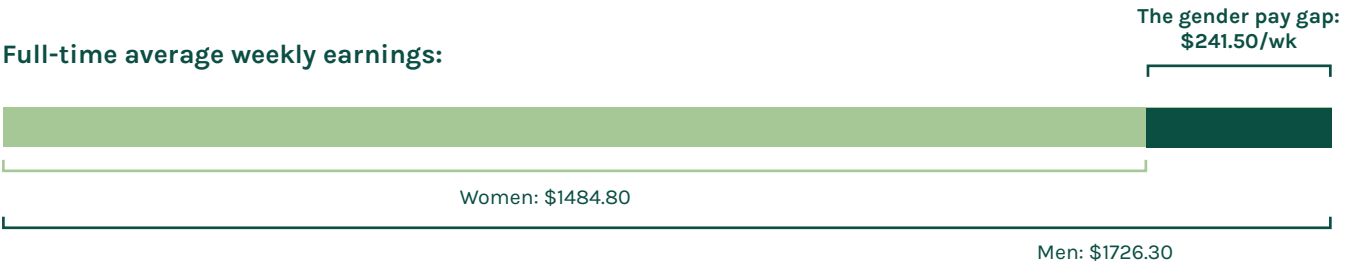
What happens to women at work?

They experience a gender pay gap



The gender pay gap is the difference between the earnings of men and women, expressed as a percentage of men’s full-time earnings. Amongst OECD countries, the gender pay gap fluctuates between 14 and 20 per cent. In Australia, currently the national gender pay gap sits at 14.0 per cent,¹²⁴ meaning that women earn, on average, \$241.50 less per week than men¹²⁵.

Critically, the gender pay gap, as it is commonly understood and measured, accounts for the difference between the incomes of men and women based on the average *adult weekly ordinary time earnings* (AWOTE) – that is, the income from working full time. The ABS notes the deficiencies of this measurement in providing a true picture of the earnings gap experienced by Australian women, due to the fact that it “omits a large proportion of female employees who... are more likely to be employed on a part-time basis”.



No matter how it is measured, the gender pay gap affects women’s financial independence and security, their ability to provide for themselves and their children, and their capacity to contribute to society to the full extent of their abilities.

Further, states the ABS:

“[a]s a weekly measure reliant on full-time status, this measure does not take into account the variation in the average number of hours worked between women and men employed full-time (36 hours for women compared to 40 hours for men).

An important consideration when interpreting this measure is in the differences in age for full-time employees, and in particular that earnings generally increase with age. The percentage of employed women who work full-time hours peaks in the late 20s age group [and] drops to between 54 and 61 per cent, up to the age of 60 years. Employed men, by comparison, do not experience the same changes, with the percentage employed full-time remaining at around 90 per cent for the majority of working years.”¹²⁶

What happens to women at work?

They experience a gender pay gap

As noted above, Australian women are far more likely than men to work part-time. When this is taken into account, and we compare the incomes of all workers by using the average *adult weekly (total cash) earnings (AWE)*, the gender pay gap increases to 31.5%.

For the purposes of this analysis, we use the accepted gender pay gap (GPG) measure of AWOTE, but the fact that the standard GPG is based on full time earnings, when, as we have seen, almost half of all Australian women in the paid work force work part-time, means that our policy responses to addressing the financial insecurity of women and their lower lifetime earnings than men are based on an incomplete understanding of the challenge.

An upcoming research report by Per Capita will delve more deeply into this problem and assess the real impact on women of substantially lower lifetime incomes, predominantly due to the need to engage in part-time paid work in order to accommodate significant unpaid caring and other domestic responsibilities.

No matter how it is measured, though, the gender pay gap affects women’s financial independence and security, their ability to provide for themselves and their children, and their capacity to contribute to society to the full extent of their abilities. Over a lifetime, the reduced level of income attributable to their gender

results in a compound impact that sees women retiring with significantly less individual wealth than men.

The gender pay gap starts when women enter the workforce, and only increases over time. As we shall see, the impact of the gender pay gap on women in lower-paid, part-time and casual jobs is significant; but even when women are highly qualified in professional fields, the gender pay gap remains a significant problem.

Australian girls and young women are out-performing men in the rate of school completion and tertiary education. Year 12 completion rates for women nationally now sit at 89.9% compared to 84.4% for men. And amongst young Australians today, 44.7% of women aged 25 – 29 have a bachelor’s degree or above, compared to just 32.1% of men in the same age bracket.¹²⁷

Yet when these undergraduates enter the workforce, women receive starting salaries 4.8% lower than those for men. For postgraduates, the gender pay gap widens to 14.6%.¹²⁸

As we have seen, much of this difference is due to the subjects girls choose to study at school, and the resulting courses and qualifications they gain at university; fewer women graduate with qualifications in the STEM subjects that often lead to more highly remunerated careers.¹²⁹



What happens to women at work?

They experience a gender pay gap

At the same time, though, women account for half of Australia's medical graduates, and have for two decades or more;¹³⁰ and the most recent data shows that almost two-thirds of graduates in law firms nationally are women.¹³¹ Starting salaries in these highly paid sectors tend to be the same regardless of gender, yet over the life course, women in medicine and law experience a significant gender pay gap.

The same is true of other professional women in Australia. Latest figures from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) show that, in "...non-public sector organisations with 100 or more employees, the gender pay gap for full-time annualised base salary is 16.2%, and 21.3% for full-time annualised total remuneration".

These figures relate to people employed full-time in large businesses, on salaries that often include salary packaging and additional sources of income such as annual bonuses, shares or vehicle subsidies. They reflect the fact that as women progress into executive and management roles, the gender pay gap increases.

Latest WGEA data shows that "...women hold 13.7% of chair positions and 25.8% of directorships and represent 17.1% of CEOs and 30.5% of key management personnel".¹³²

Governments are responding to this issue, both here and internationally, primarily through measures aimed at reducing the gender pay gap where it exists for women who receive less pay for doing the same work as men, and by encouraging large corporations to actively promote women to leadership positions and appoint more female directors to company boards.

While these measures really only address factors contributing to the gender pay gap for a relatively

small number of already highly-paid women, they do appear to be having some effect. Latest figures from the Australian Institute of Company Directors show that, while just 29.7% of directors in on the boards of companies in the ASX 200 were women as of December 2018, women comprised 45.4% of new appointments to such boards last year.¹³³

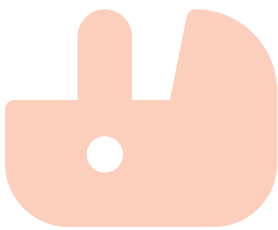
This work to address the gender pay gap in Australia is spearheaded by the WGEA. Its annual report tracks the number of women in senior executive roles and leadership positions. The Agency also gathers accurate data on the gender pay gap within and between industries; requires companies to record and report on the gender pay gap in their business; and publishes guides to encourage businesses and agencies to set voluntary targets for equal gender representation on government and corporate boards.

The fact is, no amount of reporting on salaries or setting targets for executive roles, or increasing the number of women on ASX 200 boards, will ever significantly reduce the gender pay gap, for the simple reason that these measures can't address the real cause of the gap in lifetime earnings between women and men. Even among professional women in Australia, the gender pay gap is primarily caused by lack of career advancement, and a high proportion of part-time work.

This is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the examples of women in medicine and law. Despite their equal or higher representation at graduate levels, as noted above, women are much less likely to advance to the highest professional levels in both medicine and law: just 12% of surgeons in Australia are women, and only 33% of women - half the rate of female graduates in the profession - go on to become equality partners in law firms. Why?

What happens to women at work?

They experience a motherhood penalty



Motherhood doesn't only result in years of unpaid work, and reduced hours of paid employment for women; it is also the primary reason for a lack of career advancement among professional women.

KPMG Research has identified that 21% of the GPG is attributable to the years women spend out of the workforce to care for children.¹³⁴

To a far greater extent than in most economically and socially comparable nations, families in Australia remain fashioned around the model of a male breadwinner and a female primary carer in the home.

When women in Australia have children, most of them stop working. The statistics don't lie. Australian women in the age bracket that aligns with childbearing (25 – 44) are more than two and a half times as likely as men of the same age to be out of the labour force altogether. For single mothers, the employment rate was just 50.8 per cent in 2014, the third lowest in the OECD after Ireland and Turkey.¹³⁵

But the real impact on women's careers is due to the overwhelming likelihood that, after becoming parents, they will work part time: ABS figures estimate that 82% of mothers returning to work after childbirth work in part-time rather than full-time roles.¹³⁶ Even where these roles are at the same or a similar level to the full-time jobs they held before having children, their opportunities for advancement are significantly curtailed due to a work culture that sees part-time workers as less committed to their careers, or less capable of taking on higher responsibilities.

So, motherhood doesn't only result in years of unpaid work, and reduced hours of paid employment for women; it is also the primary reason for a lack of career advancement among professional women.¹³⁷

The result is that, just as women are entering the period of their careers in which management and senior roles become available, they are taken out of the running for such opportunities and put on the infamous "mummy track".

Among Australian mothers with children under five years of age, the rate of part-time employment is 61%, compared to just 8.4% of fathers with young children. As we will see in the following chapter, the rate of part-time work among women in heterosexual, partnered households is significantly higher in Australia than in comparable industrialised nations.

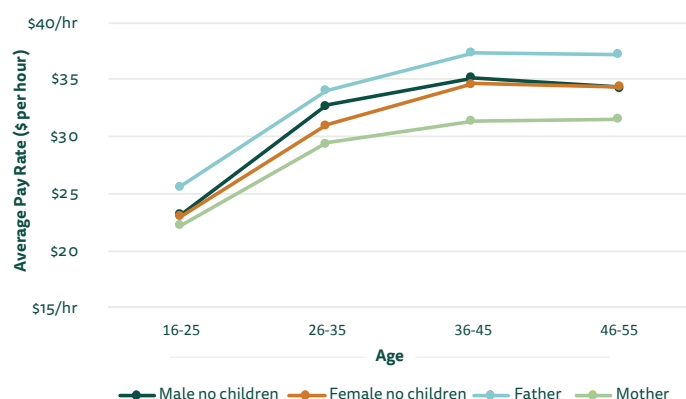
What happens to women at work?

They experience a motherhood penalty

Men in Australia are far less likely to reduce their working hours or experience career disruption due to the birth of their children. International research has demonstrated that becoming a parent has a diametrically opposed impact on the careers of men and women, with fathers enjoying an income “bonus”, earning more than men and women without children, and mothers suffering a penalty, earning less than all other workers.¹³⁸

An analysis of HILDA data demonstrates that the same effect is true in Australia:

Average pay rate – full time employees



In all, it is estimated that raising children accounts for a 17% loss in lifetime earnings for Australian women.¹³⁹ The need to fit working hours around the care of children – and later, of other adult family members – often lock women into working in low-paid, casualised jobs in feminised industries with comparably poor conditions.

There is a school of thought that holds that the loss of lifetime earnings caused by part-time work is

not something society should be concerned about, because women make the choice to sacrifice their careers to be with their children.

This ignores the obvious fact that women don't make such choices in a vacuum: someone must care for children, and the cost of outsourcing this work is often beyond the reach of low and middle-income women. As we shall see in the next chapter, there is an enormous amount of unpaid caring and domestic labour required to raise a family and run a household, and this labour almost always, in heterosexual relationships, falls disproportionately to women.

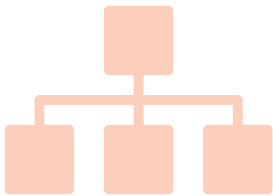
The intersection of a number of factors – part-time hours, low-paid jobs in industries dominated by women, the disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care – is poorly understood in relation to its cumulative impact on women's lifetime earnings, financial security and physical and mental health. Per Capita will examine these issues, which relate to the undervaluing of “women's work”, more extensively in an upcoming research report.

For the purposes of our examination here of paid employment, however, suffice it to say that the motherhood penalty is arguably the single largest contributing factor to the gender pay gap in Australia, and it affects women regardless of their differing levels of workforce participation and income.

Until we fundamentally rethink the structural organisation of work in our culture, this is unlikely to change.

What happens to women at work?

They suffer from the rigid structural organisation of work



Most jobs are structured in a way that assumes the incumbent has few responsibilities at home or outside the workplace.

Our workplace structures have failed to adapt to the obvious correlation that, with both partners in the labour force, neither has a full-time wife at home.

"The structural organization of work has proved more inflexible than women's ovaries."¹⁴⁰

The above quote is taken from an article discussing the relatively recent phenomenon of professional women in the US electing to freeze their eggs in order to avoid interrupting their careers just as they were taking off. For the fact is, women's fertile years haven't changed, and can't change: as we are all-too-regularly reminded, a woman's fertility generally begins to decline in her mid-to-late thirties, which is, coincidentally, around the time that workers in professional roles can expect to see their careers advance.

Our professional workplace structures in Australia, even more so than in many comparable countries, remain rigidly aligned with the male breadwinner model. It is striking to note that Australia has both a higher rate of part-time work among women, and a lower rate of children aged 0 – 2 in formal childcare, than the OECD average.

The fact is, most jobs are structured in a way that assumes the incumbent has few responsibilities at home or outside the workplace, and that someone else, traditionally known as a "wife", is taking care of the raising of the children, buying of the food, cooking of the meals, cleaning of the clothes and keeping of the home.

While married and partnered women have entered the paid labour force in great numbers over recent decades, to now be almost half of all paid workers in the Australian economy, our workplace structures have failed to adapt to the obvious correlation that, with both partners in the labour force, neither has a full-time wife at home. This situation was the subject of Annabel Crabb's 2015 book *The Wife Drought* and has since become the subject of furious agreement amongst working women in Australia, but little has changed in our workplaces.

What happens to women at work?

They work in underpaid feminised industries



Only 46.5% of employed Australians work in gender mixed organisations.¹⁴⁷

Jobs that involve caring for others are exceptionally gender segregated.

It is obvious, then, that professional women who begin their careers with the expectation of earning as much as their male colleagues suffer a significant lifetime pay gap due to the responsibilities of caring for children and undertaking a disproportionate share of unpaid labour.

However, the real impact of the gender pay gap is not felt amongst the wealthiest members of our professional class. Rather, it is women at the lower end of the income scale who suffer real poverty and disadvantage as a result of reduced lifetime earning capacity due to factors related to their gender.

The adult full-time average hourly ordinary time cash earnings for non-managerial women are 11.4% less than for non-managerial men.¹⁴¹ Cash earnings statistics are produced for employees on an hourly rate, rather than a salary not linked to hours worked. They therefore reflect the incomes of women less likely to be working in professional, salaried roles and more likely to be working in positions in retail, hospitality and other highly feminised industries.

The nature of work in Australia is highly segregated along gender lines. Australia has historically had a high rate of occupational gender segregation by OECD standards: in the 1980s, we had the most segregated labour force on gender lines of any OECD nation, and the segregation rate today remains relatively high.¹⁴² The latest data from the WGEA demonstrates that "...the majority of Australian employees continue to work in industries dominated by one gender. Only 46.5% of employed Australians work in gender mixed organisations."¹⁴³

This has a significant impact on the gender pay gap, because professions in which the workforce is dominated by women are significantly underpaid. The WGEA data conclusively shows that people working in industries with a predominantly female workforce have lower salaries than those working in male-dominated industries.

In particular, jobs that involve caring for others are exceptionally gender segregated: both education and training, and health care and social assistance, the sectors in which caring jobs are categorised, are heavily dominated by female workers.

Apart from school and higher education and nursing, these jobs that involve caring for others – childcare, aged care, disability care – pay qualified workers amongst the lowest salaries in our society.

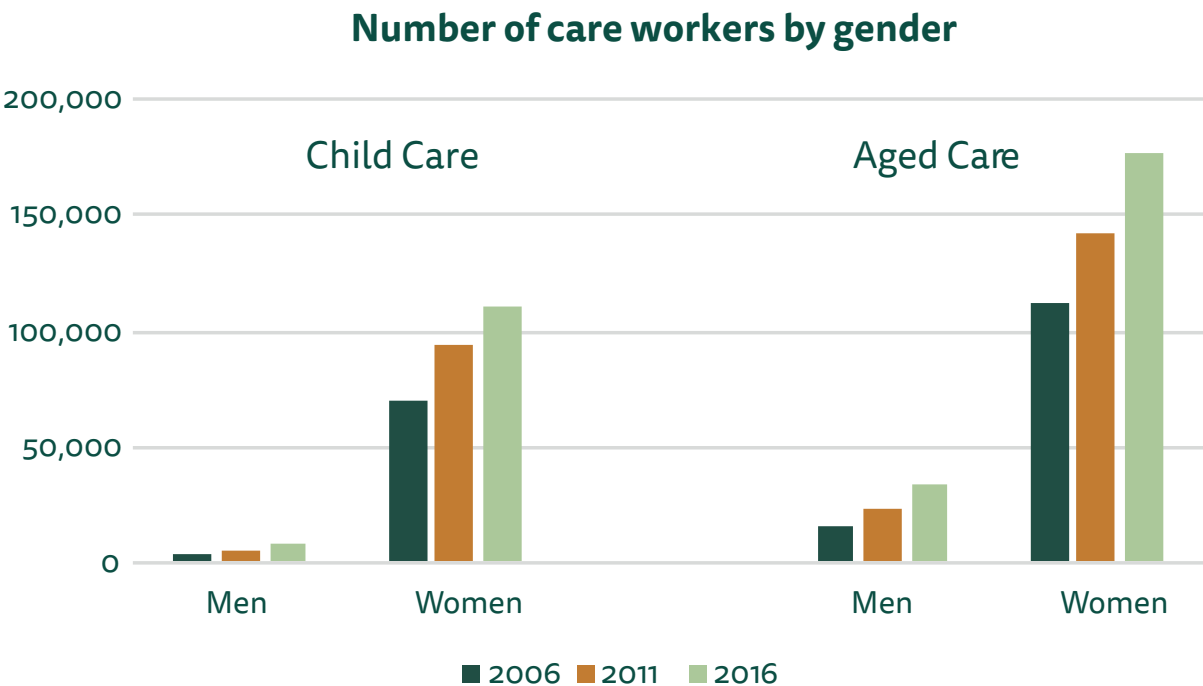
What happens to women at work?

They work in underpaid feminised industries

These low-paid caring professions are overwhelmingly dominated by female workers: 96% of childcare workers are women,¹⁴⁴ as are 87% of direct care workers in the residential aged care sector.¹⁴⁵

More men work in disability care, but that workforce is still female dominated, with 70% of disability support workers being women.¹⁴⁶

So how does the gender pay gap manifest in lower-paid industries in Australia?



What happens to women at work?

They receive lower award wages than men



While internationally the gender pay gap is often as high or higher among low-income workers as it is among higher income workers, in Australia the reverse is true. The gender pay gap amongst Australian workers on lower incomes is significantly smaller than it is among higher-income workers.

This is because of Australia's relatively high minimum wages,¹⁴⁸ which are set at various rates according to specific roles within different industrial sectors under the award system of wage setting.

Barbara Broadway and Roger Wilkins from the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic & Social Research at the University of Melbourne released a study in December 2017 that examined the effect of Australia's award wage system on the gender pay gap.¹⁴⁹

Broadway and Wilkins found that the gender pay gap amongst award wage earners was only 10%, compared to 19% amongst workers outside the award wage system.¹⁵⁰

They further found that women are more likely to be paid an award rate than men – 18.5% of women compared with 12.4% of men – and conclude that “[t]his suggests that the award wage system functions as a safety net that prevents women's wages from falling even further behind those of men.”¹⁵¹

The award wage system, then, can be seen to be reducing the aggregate gender pay gap in Australia, and helping Australia to avoid the situation that occurs in the US, where low paid women experience a significant gender pay gap.¹⁵² This is largely because the nature of the award system ensures that men and

women performing the same task under the same award are paid an identical rate of pay.

Why, then, does the gender pay gap persist amongst workers within the Australian award wage system?

Broadway and Wilkins found that the gender pay gap within the award wage system was “...unrelated to differences in education and experience”;¹⁵³ rather, it is almost entirely due to the comparative undervaluing of “typically female” work:

...it appears that there is indeed a strong penalty associated with working in an industry that is typically female. This penalty is found for male and female employees alike, and suggests that the award system sets systematically lower minimums the more heavily an industry employs women.¹⁵⁴

This important research proved that, not only are women in Australia more likely than men to be in a job that is award-reliant, but that such award-wage female workers are “...considerably better educated than the award-reliant male population, and more likely to have had median work experience of 5 to 20 years as opposed to very low work experience of 5 years or less.”¹⁵⁵

That is, women on the award wage in Australia are more highly qualified and experienced than men in similar employment circumstances, but they are paid less, and the only identifiable reason for this is that they are paid to do work typically done by women.

In short, our society doesn't value what it sees as “women's work” anywhere near as much as it does men's.

What happens to women at work?

If women live with a disability, they are further disadvantaged



While the unemployment rate of men with disabilities has decreased over the last 20 years, the rate amongst women has remained stable.

Australian women of all abilities, then, are employed in an economic system that forces them into part-time roles, fails to compensate for the interruptions to their careers, and generally undervalues their contributions. But for women with disabilities, the problem is even more acute.

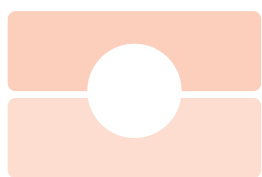
Around one in five women in Australia lives with a disability. They are less likely to be in paid work than are men with disabilities: while the unemployment rate of men with disabilities has decreased over the last 20 years, the rate amongst women has remained stable, at around 8.5%. Even in the public sector, which has formal targets for employing people with disabilities, there are around 25% more men with disabilities employed than women.

Research from Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) shows that:

Women with disabilities are less likely than their male counterparts to receive adequate vocational rehabilitation or gain entry to labour market programs. They earn less than disabled men, are in the lowest income earning bracket, yet pay the highest level of their gross income on housing, and spend a greater proportion of their income on medical care and health related expenses. When women with disabilities work, they often experience unequal hiring and promotion standards, unequal access to training and retraining, unequal access to credit and other productive resources, unequal pay for equal work and occupational segregation, and they rarely participate in economic decision-making.¹⁵⁶

What happens to women at work?

First Nations women experience unique, complex challenges



Not only are Indigenous women amongst the most at-risk groups for unemployment in the country, but the government program ostensibly designed to help them find work is actively causing them harm.

The Government's annual *Closing The Gap* report acknowledges that "the employment rate for Indigenous Australians has not improved over the past decade".¹⁵⁷

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, last conducted in 2014 – 2015, found that:

...less than three in ten (28%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over were working full-time, and a further 18% were working part-time. Males were more than twice as likely as females to be working full-time (38% compared with 18%), and were less likely to be working part-time (14% compared with 23%).

In non-remote areas, almost three-quarters (74%) of employed males were working full-time, compared with around two-thirds (68%) of those in remote areas. Among employed females, those living in remote areas were more likely to be working full-time than their counterparts in non-remote areas (52% compared with 43%).¹⁵⁸

As Dr Zoe Staines from the School of Social Science at the University of Queensland noted recently, Indigenous women in remote communities are particularly at risk from the federal government's employment program, the Community Development Program.¹⁵⁹

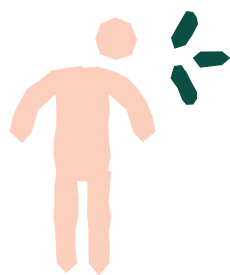
A Senate Inquiry into the CDP in 2017, found that 44% of participants in this much-criticised program are women¹⁶⁰. As Dr Staines reported:

According to a recent evaluation report, CDP activities are not always suitable for women; the government-commissioned report stated, "... young women were intimidated by a gender imbalance in the activity or 'unsafe' or 'culturally inappropriate' workspaces for women at the CDP." For instance, it is culturally inappropriate for some young women to be in the vicinity of men, particularly where this includes men from beyond their families and/or when there is a background of familial conflict. Of a survey sample of 314 CDP participants, women were less likely than men to say they felt 'good' in CDP activities (26% versus 39%, respectively). However, the choice not to attend can result in penalties and lost income.¹⁶¹

Not only are Indigenous women amongst the most at-risk groups for unemployment in the country, but the government program ostensibly designed to help them find work is actively causing them harm.

What happens to women at work?

Women experience discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace



Some of the earliest reforms made by gender equality advocates in Australia and the world were in reducing workplace discrimination and sexual harassment. Becoming a signatory to CEDAW committed nation states to enacting local laws to eliminate sexual harassment and workplace discrimination in a domestic environment. Australia fulfilled its obligations by legislating the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, which created civil remedies for individuals experiencing sexual harassment at work, either directly or indirectly.

Australia has prohibited sexual harassment in the workplace since the enactment of the SDA, empowering the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to report on sex-based complaints through the Australian Human Rights Commission's annual report to parliament. Data on complaint and conciliation processes initiated under the SDA is kept by the AHRC and reported on annually via a Complaints Statistical Report.

The 2017/2018 AHRC Statistical Report provides a five-yearly snapshot of the number of complaints received under the SDA. After a brief period of downward trend, 17-18 period shows a marked rise in complaints under the SDA.

Complaints received by AHRC under the SDA over the last five years:

2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
474	453 ▼ (down on previous period)	409 ▼	465 ▲	552 ▲

Of the 552 complaints lodged in the 2017-18 period, 27% or 321 of them involved the grounds of sexual harassment. It is not clear from the statistical report how many sexual harassment complaints were successfully conciliated or otherwise resolved, though it is clear that the majority of all of the AHRC matters are conciliated successfully.

Sexual harassment is revealed to be significantly more problematic for women with other intersecting attributes of difference and diversity.

Further, the report is limited in that it provides no information about how cases that were not resolved were taken further for review in formal legal proceedings. Based on Australian Research Council project into sexual harassment, conducted by Professors Sara Charlesworth and Paula McDonald, the numbers of matters proceeding to court are low, with only 41 court cases of sexual harassment between 2009-2015.¹⁶²

What happens to women at work?

Women experience discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace

In addition to annualised data on litigated matters, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner conducts a national survey investigating the prevalence, nature and reporting of sexual harassment in Australian workplace. There have been four National Surveys on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces since 2003, with the latest conducted in 2018.¹⁶³ The surveys examine both lifetime experience of sexual harassment as well as prevalence in the preceding five years.

The results of the 2018 survey revealed alarming statistics on the prevalence of sexual harassment in Australia, with 71% of respondents saying they had been sexually harassed in their lifetime. A gendered breakdown of the forms of sexual harassment experienced are:

Sexual harassment is also revealed to be significantly more problematic for women with other intersecting attributes of difference and diversity. Over the last five years, 83% of gay and lesbian people and 90% of people identifying as bisexual were likely

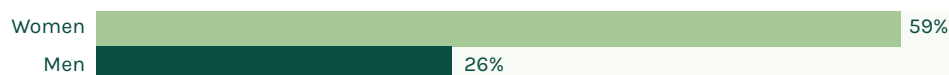
to have experienced sexual harassment, as were 89% of people who reported a non-binary gender identification. 89% of women with a disability experienced sexual harassment,¹⁶⁴ while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were more likely to have experienced workplace sexual harassment than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at 53% vs 32% respectively.¹⁶⁵

Across the whole population, the rates of sexual harassment of men and women over the last five years were found to be 39% for women and 26% for men.¹⁶⁶ The survey also found that 79% of all perpetrators are men.

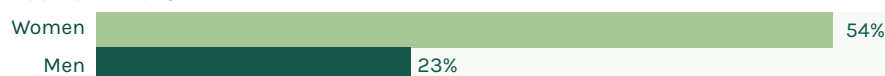
Despite these high levels of prevalence there is relatively low rate of complaint by victim-survivors – only 17%. This low level of reporting is likely connected to another important statistic revealed in the report – that almost half (45%) of formal complaints resulted in no changes or consequences for the perpetrator.¹⁶⁷

A gendered breakdown of the forms of sexual harassment experienced in Australia:

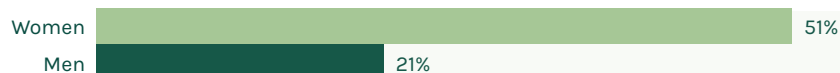
Offensive and sexually suggestive jokes



Inappropriate physical contact



Unwelcome touching, hugging, cornering or kissing



How do we measure gender equality in employment and where are the data gaps?

The WGEA tends to reduce many of the nuanced and complex causes of gender inequality at work, as outlined in this chapter, to the simple catch-all definition of "discrimination."

Since the establishment of the WGEA, measurement and tracking of the gender pay gap has improved considerably in Australia. However, despite the Agency's name, it does not pay sufficient attention to other metrics of gender equality in the workplace beyond rates of pay and the factors that directly and observably influence the gender pay gap; and the limitations on its remit under the Workplace Gender Equality Act mean that it is unable to reflect the complex intersectional causes of income inequality for the majority of Australian women.

Firstly, the WGEA tends to reduce many of the nuanced and complex causes of gender inequality at work, as outlined in this chapter, to the simple catch-all definition of "discrimination". As we have seen, the motherhood penalty, the highly gender segregated nature of Australian industries, and the relative underpayment of jobs in feminised industries through lower rates of award wages, are the real culprits, and while these stem from a discriminatory view that women's work, especially caring work, is of less value than men's, lumping them together as simply "discrimination" is not helpful to understanding the specific challenges we need to address.

Further, the scope and nature of the data gathered and reported on by the WGEA has significant limitations that restrict the measurement and understanding of the gender pay gap as it manifests among women outside of a relatively privileged class. The Workplace Gender Equality Act requires the Agency only to gather information from employers with more than 100 employees ("relevant employers", in the terminology of the Agency's reports). In practice, this means only around third of all employers are included in the agency's work.

Women are disproportionately employed in smaller workplaces, meaning that the WGEA data, though a valuable source of the information we need to track the gender pay gap over time, cannot provide a full picture of what is happening to most working women in Australia. It doesn't enable us to see with clarity what is happening in smaller workplaces in relation to the availability of flexible working hours, or the career paths and opportunities for advancement for mid-career women. Data about the nature and extent of contract work, especially work in the so-called gig economy, is both scarce and unreliable.

Most problematic, as we have seen, is the reliance on the measurement comparing the full-time earnings of men and women, which omits

How do we measure gender equality in employment and where are the data gaps?

More attention to the limitations placed on women's workforce participation and earning power due to social constructs around unpaid and low-paid 'women's work', especially care work, is essential if we are to address the real causes of the gender pay gap.

entirely the experience of almost half of working women in Australia who work part time. While using the AWOTE measurement allows analysts to compare 'apples with apples', and produce clear and unequivocal evidence of different rates of pay for the same work (which has been illegal in Australia for decades), this approach actively works against a complete understanding of the real causes of women's significantly lower levels of lifetime earnings.

While women may 'choose' to work part time, they do not make these choices in a vacuum; more attention to the limitations placed on women's workforce participation and earning power due to social constructs around unpaid and low-paid 'women's work', especially care work, is essential if we are to address the real causes of the gender pay gap. An upcoming Per Capita report will provide a more in-depth analysis of this problem and propose some measures for change.

Ultimately, in order to start reducing the discrimination that underpins much of the gender pay gap it will be necessary for regulatory bodies to recognise the complex structural causes that inform the excuses relied upon for not giving women the same opportunities as men to advance their careers and realise their full potential. This will also necessitate a focus on measuring progress towards shifting the structural organisation of work away from the full-time, male breadwinner model towards a more flexible and family-friendly arrangement over time.

In regard to harassment and discrimination on the basis of sex in the workplace, Australia's current Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, has announced a National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australia, to address challenges in the existing legislative complaint making system. The report, yet to be finalised, will be informed by the results of the most recent national survey, as well the Commission's own research and submissions made by non-government organisations and individuals. It will be a comprehensive national response, designed to present legislative and other reforms. This is a welcome development.



Gender Equality in Australia Across the Life Course

Chapter 4 – Unpaid work: parenting and domestic labour

“.... housework is everything. It’s a ubiquitous physical demand that has hamstrung and silenced women for most of human history.”

—Megan K Stack, *Women’s Work*, 2019¹⁶⁹

It would be natural to expect that the share of unpaid labour has seen a shift towards a more equitable distribution between men and women. This is not so.

As we have seen, women’s share of the paid labour force in Australia has increased from just over a third forty years ago, to almost half today. So, it would be natural to expect that the share of unpaid labour has seen a similar shift towards a more equitable distribution between men and women over the same time.

Unfortunately, this is not so.

Globally, women still undertake more than three-quarters of the world’s unpaid care work.¹⁶⁸ The largest discrepancies between women’s and men’s rates of unpaid work are found in developing countries, but even in relatively egalitarian nations like Australia, women continue to shoulder a disproportionate amount of unpaid domestic labour and care, even when they are in the paid labour force.

The estimated value of unpaid work and care in Australia in 2016–2017:

**\$824
billion**



Time Victorian women spend on unpaid work and care per week:

32.9 hours

The value of unpaid work and care in Australia

Domestic labour is still regarded as ‘women’s work’, and our economic systems refuse to recognise its value, or even to properly acknowledge it as work at all. When, almost 80 years ago, British economists James Meade and Richard Stone developed the system of national accounting that would become known as the Gross Domestic Product, they explicitly refused to include the value of women’s domestic and unpaid labour.¹⁷⁰

Meade and Stone calculated their accounting standard according to the measurement of goods and services that could be bought and sold. A young woman, Phyllis Deane, whom they had hired to apply their method in some remote British colonies, quickly realised that the omission of women’s unpaid domestic labour was a significant flaw in the model, excluding a massive amount of economic activity simply because it was not formally exchanged for money in the economy – in fact, as she recognised, because such activity was historically regarded as ‘women’s work’.

Deane recognised that if the purpose of the national accounts was to inform policies not only to increase national wealth, but to more equitably distribute it, then it was essential to count the contributions of all producers in an economy, which women working in the home most certainly were. Unfortunately, her pleading fell on deaf ears, and to this day, despite

Domestic labour is still regarded as ‘women’s work’, and our economic systems refuse to recognise its value, or even to properly acknowledge it as work at all.

further ground-breaking work in the 1980s by Marilyn Waring, the GDP standard does not account for women’s unpaid labour.¹⁷¹

Recently, a renewed push by feminist economists and public policy thinkers for women’s unpaid labour to be measured as a contribution to our economy has seen some research try to quantify the financial benefits afforded by the care and other domestic work predominantly done by women in our societies.

A recent report by Deloitte Access Economics, commissioned by the Victorian Government, put the value of unpaid work and care in Victoria at around \$206 billion in 2016-2017.¹⁷²

Extrapolating that to the Australian population at the time, of which Victoria comprised almost exactly 25%, we can reasonably assume that the value of unpaid work and care nationally is around \$824 billion. The GDP of Australia was, in that same year, \$1.69 trillion – so the value of unpaid work and care in our economy is equal to just under half of our total GDP.

That same report found that the value of women’s unpaid work and care is 60% higher than that of men. In Victoria, on average, women do 32.9 hours per week while men do 19.8 hours of unpaid work and care.

How does unpaid work affect Australian women?

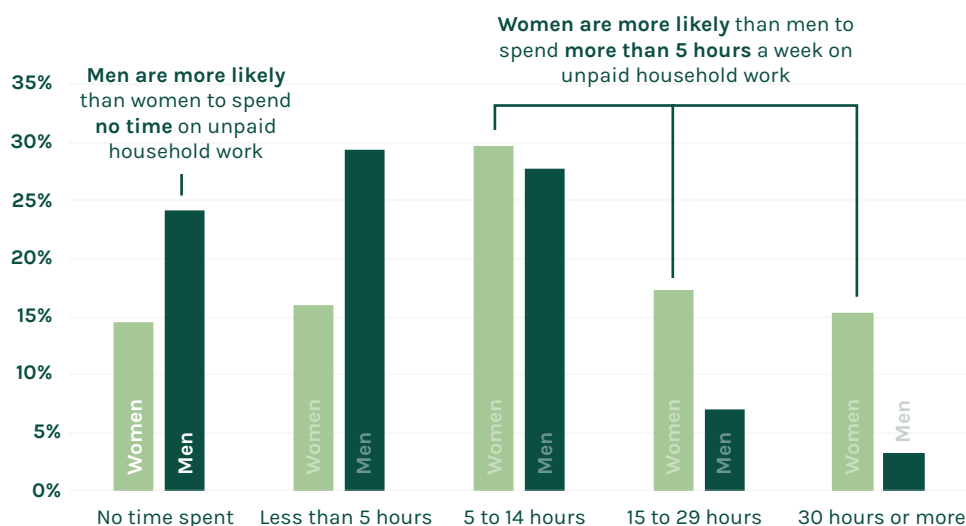
Women shoulder a disproportionate load of unpaid domestic labour

The 2016 report, *Women at Work: Australia and the United States* by Rae Cooper, Meraiah Foley and Marian Baird for the United States Study Centre at the University of Sydney, revealed interesting findings about the nature of women's work in Australia, and how it differs from other comparable countries.

The report found that "[w]omen in Australia spend 48.4 per cent less time in paid work, and 80.8 per cent more time on unpaid household work each day than men. This is significantly higher than the average for other industrialised countries in the OECD, where women spend 38.8 per cent less time in paid work and 49.3 per cent more time in unpaid work than men".¹⁷³

ABS data bears out this discrepancy between the hours of domestic work done by men and women in Australia, as shown here.

Hours in unpaid work per week
(percentage of Australian men and women ages 18-69):



How does unpaid work affect Australian women?

Women shoulder a disproportionate load of unpaid domestic labour

As outlined in the previous chapter, this unequal share of domestic labour reflects the fact that Australian women are more likely to work part-time than are women in other countries, especially in the US, where even women with young children are more likely to be in full-time, rather than part-time, employment.

Women at Work draws on a 2004 study for the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, *Family Structure, Usual and Preferred Working Hours, and Egalitarianism in Australia*, by Robert Drago from Pennsylvania State University, with Yi-Ping Tseng and Mark Wooden from the University of Melbourne. This study highlights the prevalence in Australia of the “neotraditional family”, in which “...both heterosexual parents participate in the labor market and in household and child care tasks, but the division of labor is highly unequal, with the man performing a disproportionate amount of paid work and the woman undertaking most unpaid work for the family”.¹⁷⁴

Certainly, this family model, in which the man works full time and the woman only part time in paid employment, while the woman undertakes the majority of unpaid care and domestic labour in the home, is the dominant one among Australian heterosexual couple households.

Drago et al posit that this is partly due to the relative security of part-time work in Australia compared to the US. Given that, “...part-time employees in Australia have been guaranteed pay equality since the 1970s, and typically lose neither superannuation nor health insurance benefits when switching from full- to part-time employment”, none of which benefits are accorded to part-time workers in the US, the authors

theorise that “[b]y making part-time employment relatively attractive, Australia may shore up inequality in the division of household labor”.¹⁷⁵

That inequality is striking. Cooper et al report that:

*Women in Australia spend an average of 311 minutes per day (including weekends) performing unpaid domestic work, including 168 minutes of routine housework, 64 minutes caring for household members, 36 minutes of shopping, and 43 minutes on other unpaid household activities, such as volunteering, driving to and from household-related activities, and caring for non-household members. Men in Australia spend an average of 172 minutes per day on unpaid household chores, including 93 minutes on routine housework, 27 minutes looking after household members, 22 minutes on shopping, and 30 minutes on other unpaid household activities.*¹⁷⁶

It is important to note, here, the inclusion of “caring for non-household members”: it is not just their own children that women care for. Almost twice as many women (540,000) as men (230,000) are the primary carers for friends or family members with disabilities or physical and mental illness, including end-of-life care, in Australia.¹⁷⁷

However, it is undeniable that of the most significant life transitions for any woman, in which the experience of gender inequality becomes acute, is becoming a parent.

How does unpaid work affect Australian women?

Women spend much more time actively parenting than their male partners

Thanks to advances in reproductive health care, Australian women today have far greater choices over when to become a mother than their forebears, but parenthood continues to effect far more significant changes for women than it does for men, as we have seen in the previous chapter on employment.

Becoming a parent is a highly personal decision, influenced by a range of factors including age and sexual reproductive fertility, access to a suitable partner as well as income, work and social stability. But it is also a decision that carries great political and economic weight.

There is considerable data available about the nature of parenting, its implications and costs, in Australia. The Australian National Census is formulated around the home, with most questions relating to the household and familial circumstances within the domestic sphere. Consequently, the Australian Bureau of Statistics produces regular statistics on a range of gender indicators related to parenting.¹⁷⁸

The HILDA Survey provides further insight into the economic and social wellbeing of parents, and the gendered division of parenting in Australia, while the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling produces regular data and reports on the impact of taxation and government benefits and how these policies affect families via “STINMOD”, a major modelling project relied on heavily by Treasury, Social Services and Employment.

As at March 2019, Australia has 3,087,386 couple families with children and a further 1,122,016 one parent families. Of those one-parent families, 202,638 are led by a male parent while the vast majority - 919,378 - are led by a single female parent. 82% of all single parents are women.¹⁷⁹

In both coupled and single parent families, gender inequality in parenting creates poorer social and economic outcomes for women, and while this is in large part due to the deep-rooted cultural norms that expect women to take primary responsibility for raising children, these norms are reflected in the public policy approach to supporting families and children.

In both coupled and single parent families, gender inequality in parenting creates poorer social and economic outcomes for women.

How does unpaid work affect Australian women?

Women suffer from policy settings that encourage unequal division of unpaid work

Apart from our unusually high level of part-time work, there are other uniquely Australian conditions that entrench the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid work in heterosexual couple households.

Tax and transfer policies

When women with children or other caring responsibilities try to re-enter the paid work force, or to move from part-time to full-time work, our high effective marginal tax rates make it extremely difficult for them to do so.¹⁸⁰ Faced with the phasing out of Family Tax Benefits, higher tax rates as their earnings increase, and the cost of childcare, women, particularly at the lower end of the income scale, often find that they will receive little or no extra income when increasing their paid working hours.

The 'choice' many women in couple relationships then make is to remain underemployed outside the home, and take on more of the unpaid domestic labour, but the decisions of working couple families to do this are dictated by our economic settings and work structures, rather than undertaken genuinely through free choice.

Many of these disincentives for women to work more hours are unintended consequences of the interaction between tax settings and the provision of benefits and services; that is, the design of one part of our tax system that applies equally to all income earners in a particular bracket does not adequately allow for the impact on women in particular circumstances when they also rely on transfers through child care subsidy or other forms of income support. This is essentially a problem of poor design, rather than intention; nevertheless, successive governments have failed to address it, despite it being repeatedly identified as a significant barrier to women's workforce participation.

But there are also features of the Australian tax and transfer system that quite deliberately encourage an unequal division of unpaid domestic labour and push women out of full-time paid employment. The structure of our Family Tax Benefits (FTB) system is explicitly designed to encourage the male breadwinner model in Australian couple households.

Barbara Broadway from the Melbourne Institute has found that "[w]hile not always the case, there are a lot of circumstances in which families with both parents working are very seriously penalised compared to one-earner families on the same income" due to the structure of Family Tax Benefits.

Broadway's modelling shows that, for example, a family of three, with a three-year-old child, in which both parents earn an equal share of a \$68,000 annual salary receive over \$150 per fortnight less in FTB than a similar family in which the man works full time for an equivalent income while the woman remains at home and does not undertake any paid employment.¹⁸¹

This, she says, "...is fundamentally unfair and sets all the wrong incentives. Family Tax Benefit Part A and Part B should be harmonised into one payment that financially encourages two-earner families". This would not only allow the woman to return to the workforce without financial penalty, thereby utilising her skills, and accruing an equal share of superannuation; it would incentivise an equal division of unpaid domestic labour and child-care.

How does unpaid work affect Australian women?

Women suffer from policy settings that encourage unequal division of unpaid work

Parental leave policies

It took considerable time for Australia to grant paid parental leave to working parents. Initially paid leave was made possible in limited industry settings, either at the discretion of employers or through negotiated employment agreements won by trade unions.

In 2010, following a Productivity Commission review, Australia adopted a policy of 18 weeks paid parental leave to be paid to the primary carer at the minimum wage for all workers by the government.

90% of primary carers supported by the scheme are women. There is some take up by men, but they are mostly at a management level. Only 4.6% of men who take up the scheme are in non-management positions.¹⁸²

This policy was soon followed by the provision of two weeks of Dad and Partner Pay (DAPP).¹⁸³ The allowance for DAPP in Australia is low compared to the OECD average, which is 8.4 weeks.

Australia has a very low rate of take up of parental leave by male parents in heterosexual couple relationships compared to other OECD nations. The take up of DAPP sits at a rate of 30% compared to the OECD average of 50%. In Slovenia, 90% of fathers take up the opportunity to spend time with their newborn, while in the Nordic countries that figure is at 70%.¹⁸⁴

Redesigning Australia's system to encourage men to take a greater role in the care of babies and young children is critical to improving the balance of unpaid care and domestic labour between men and women in couple relationships.

International comparison of utilisation data and parental leave policies show that the use of parental leave by fathers increases when entitlements are generous and when policies offer flexibility about when leave can be used.¹⁸⁵ Further, international experience shows that when parental leave is provided equally to men and women, and is not transferable between partners, men's take-up of parental leave is significantly higher, women are more likely to return to the workforce at the same level, and working the same hours, as before becoming a parent, and the economic penalty on mothers is vastly reduced.

The impact of paid parental leave on gender equality is significant, and redesigning Australia's system to encourage men to take a greater role in the care of babies and young children is critical to improving the balance of unpaid care and domestic labour between men and women in couple relationships.

How does unpaid work affect Australian women?

Women suffer from policy settings that encourage unequal division of unpaid work

Investment in early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Also important in reducing the social and economic imposts of parenting on women is investment in high quality, universal early childhood care and education. The accessibility, affordability and quality of childcare are significant factors in whether parents, particularly of children under the age of 12, can balance work and caring responsibilities.

Nationally in 2018, 31.4% of children aged 0–12 years attended Australian Government approved childcare, up from 31.3% in 2017 and 23.2% in 2009.¹⁸⁶ The majority of attendees, 64.3% are aged 0–5 years.

Nationally, 90.1% of children were enrolled in a preschool program in the year before school, down from 92.4% in 2016. Compared to all children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children had a higher preschool program enrolment rate in the years before school, at 94.8%.

Since 2011, formal day care use has risen from 33% to 44% in 2017,¹⁸⁷ but those levels remain relatively low. Significantly, 56% of women returning to work still rely on informal day care of grandparents or some other family member.¹⁸⁸

Australian Government Expenditure on ECEC Services in the last financial year was \$9.2 billion.¹⁸⁹ This is less than 0.7% of GDP. Australia's funding of ECEC is below the OECD average,¹⁹⁰ and is very far behind the best performers in ECEC service provision, with four of five of the highest government investors being from Nordic nations.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, those same nations perform very highly on the WEF Global Gender Gap Index. There is a clear correlation between government expenditure on early childhood education and care and gender equality performance.

In the absence of higher levels of government investment, the burden of childcare costs is born directly by families – which, as we have seen, means primarily by women.

In 2019, the median weekly cost for 50 hours of care for long day care was \$460, higher than for family day care (\$400). This was an increase of 2.8 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively.¹⁹¹

Parents in Australia pay more for childcare than parents in most OECD nations. For both single and coupled families in Australia, approximately 15% of net income is spent on childcare costs.¹⁹² Combined with the high effective marginal tax rates imposed on women returning to work through the operation of our family tax benefit system, as demonstrated earlier, this means that, for many mothers in couple relationships who earn below-average incomes, returning to work after parental leave is financially unviable.¹⁹³

How does unpaid work affect Australian women?

Single mothers are doubly penalised

In part, the impoverishment of single parent families led by women is due to failures of the Family Law Child Support system.

For single parent families, the vast majority of which (82%) are headed by women, the conflict between working for money and caring for children is even more fraught, with much greater implications economically. Single parents have the highest welfare reliance of any other cohort between the ages of 18-64. 39% of children in single parent families are growing up in poverty.¹⁹⁴

In part, the impoverishment of single parent families led by women is due to failures of the Family Law Child Support system. This system was designed to guarantee that following family separation, the parent with the responsibility for primary care, and commensurate reduced earning power, received income support from the working parent. According to the Council for Single Mothers and their Children's *Election Platform 2019*, Australia-wide there is a \$1.5 billion debt in unpaid child support.¹⁹⁵

The system suffers from inherent gender inequality in its framework: in the failure to prioritise improving enforcement mechanisms, trialling government guaranteed child support, and recording child support debts on individual credit ratings.

Single parents are also treated punitively within Australia's welfare system. While, as we have seen, our tax and transfer system is geared towards encouraging mothers in couple relationships to stay at home and care for children, perversely our system of income support for single mothers forces them into paid work when their children are still quite small.

In 2006 the Howard government made substantial changes to all parenting payments as part of its "welfare to work" program.¹⁹⁶ Under these changes, single parents applying for parenting payment after 1 July 2006 would receive it only until their youngest child turned eight, at which point they would be moved onto the much lower Newstart payment, and subject to "mutual obligation" requirements to look for work.

While single parents already parenting payment were "grandfathered" (meaning they could continue to receive it until their youngest child turned 16), this was reversed in 2013 by the Gillard government, so that now all single parents are moved onto Newstart and required to find employment when their youngest child turns eight.

How does unpaid work affect Australian women?

Single mothers are doubly penalised

In 2016, single mothers were further targeted with punitive welfare measures with the introduction of ParentsNext. A compulsory so-called “pre-employment program” primarily targeting women with children under the age of six who have been receiving a parenting payment for at least six continuous months and have not reported employment earnings in the previous six months, ParentsNext requires single parents to account for the hours they spend providing care to their children and to participate in “job readiness” programs. Through the imposition of a Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF), failure to account for activities results in loss of income support, putting parents and children at risk of poverty.

ParentsNext was initially piloted in 10 locations before being rolled out in a further 30 communities nationally. Today it is fully operational in all non-remote areas of Australia.

The Council for Single Mothers and their Children has heavily criticised the program, observing that 94.9% of participants are female and that over a quarter of those women have had payments suspended.¹⁹⁷

The Council identifies a number of failings, including the lack of school hour employment to enable parents to combine work and family responsibilities and the compulsory referral process six months after birth – before children are weaned from breastmilk, not sitting independently or responding to language cues. Further, they criticise the lack of expertise in agencies charged with supporting women into work and determining punishment.

The experience of ParentsNext has been particularly problematic for Indigenous mothers. Interference in parenting from when child is 6 months of age means the program is insensitive to the intergenerational trauma of the Stolen Generation, where Indigenous family life was ripped apart by a welfare scheme that took children away from their mothers. Indigenous women are choosing not to receive any pension support and go ‘underground’ for fear of ParentsNext, putting themselves and their children at risk of greater poverty and poor health outcomes.

Indigenous women are choosing not to receive any pension support and go ‘underground’ for fear of ParentsNext, putting themselves and their children at risk of greater poverty and poor health outcomes.



How do we measure gender equality in unpaid work and where are the data gaps?

Comprehensive data on unpaid work and care is critical to measuring progress towards gender equality.

There is significant academic research and information on the time spent by men and women on unpaid work, parenting and other forms of care, but gathering a comprehensive picture is a complex and time-consuming task. Since the dismantling of the Women's Bureau within the former Department of Employment, Education and Training, and the defunding of the Time Use Survey, Australia has had little machinery to gather accurate data on women's unpaid work and related issues.

The commitment by the ABS to reinstate the Time Use Survey from 2020 is welcome development. Comprehensive data on unpaid work and care is critical to measuring progress towards gender equality.

As noted in the previous chapter, understanding the complex interaction of paid and unpaid work for women, and the challenges faced by couple families when trying to negotiate the demands of the workplace and the home, is essential to recalibrating our social and economic settings in order to more equitably share unpaid work and care between men and women.

Gender Equality in Australia Across the Life Course

Chapter 5 – Retirement and old age



“Feminism looks at the structures of inequality that handicap women for their whole lives and, tragically, come home to roost when they are at their most vulnerable.”
—Jane Caro, 2017¹⁹⁹

Beyond life expectancy, on every measure of economic and social wellbeing, older women experience significant disadvantage compared to men.

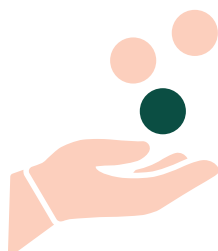
There is one metric on which Australian women hold a distinct advantage over their male compatriots: life expectancy. According to the latest data, a girl born in Australia between 2015 and 2017 can expect to live to 84.6 years, compared to 80.5 years for a boy.¹⁹⁸

But that’s where the good news ends, for on every other measure of economic and social wellbeing, older women experience significant disadvantage compared to men.



Single women over 60
in Australia living in
permanent income poverty:

34%

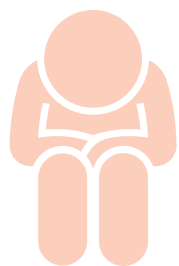


Proportion of women aged 65 and over
relying on the full age pension
as their sole source of income:

1 / 3

What happens to Australian women in old age?

They are more likely to live in poverty



Too often, women who have worked all their lives see their retirement savings and assets eroded to the extent that they are forced to live in penury in their older age.

There are around 1.6 million women over the age of 65 living in Australia; on average, they can expect to live for another 22 years. Forty-six per cent of these women were married, 38% widowed, 10% are divorced, and 5% have never been married.²⁰⁰ The majority of older women in Australia, then, are single.

According to Dr Susan Feldman and Dr Harriet Radermacher, who undertook a study of the circumstances of older women living in poverty in Australia for the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation in 2016, 34% of single women over 60 in Australia live in permanent income poverty, compared to 27% of single older men and 24% of couples.²⁰¹

Feldman and Radermacher found that "[t]he higher incidences of poverty among older women are rooted in the quality of their employment histories", including lower-paid work, career interruptions, and a higher incidence of part-time employment to accommodate unpaid domestic labour and care.

Too often in our wealthy country, women who have worked all their lives, many in low-paid feminised industries, others without the opportunities for advancement in their professional fields afforded to men, and who repeatedly take time out of the paid workforce to care for children or other adults, see their retirement savings and assets eroded to the extent that they are forced to live in penury in their older age.

We have examined the various causal factors leading to women's comparative disadvantage in retirement and older age – including their overrepresentation in lower paid occupations, the gender pay gap, high effective marginal tax rates, carer responsibilities and unpaid domestic work – in previous chapters.

This chapter will focus on the evidence that highlights the outcomes of a lifetime of gender inequality on older women.

What happens to Australian women in old age?

They retire with significantly lower superannuation savings than men

The superannuation system is systematically biased against women. It was designed around the 'male breadwinner' model of reliable, full-time employment that, even when compulsory superannuation was introduced in the early 1990s, was rapidly disappearing.

As we noted in our 2017 report, *Not So Super For Women: Superannuation and Women's Retirement Outcomes*, the assumption when the superannuation system was established was that:

Implicitly, the benefits of superannuation would largely flow to women through their male partners. What's happened since is that many more women have entered the workforce to earn and save independently, but the nature of work available to them has been more intermittent and lower paid than that of their male counterparts. This combined with the fact that women still do the overwhelming majority of unpaid housework, caring and parenting, means that the benefits of super, which move in direct proportion to pay, have not flowed to female recipients as hoped²⁰².

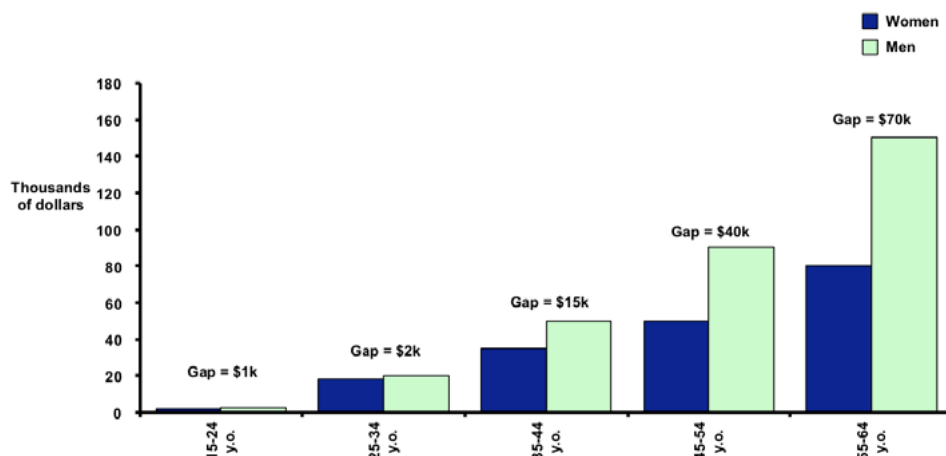
The result, as we demonstrated in 2017, is that women in Australia currently retire with 47% less superannuation than men.

The significant gap between the superannuation balances of men and women in Australia increases exponentially over the life course and begins to grow rapidly as women enter the years spent caring for children or other adults, and then experiencing part-time or lower paid work in older age.

Given the structure of our superannuation system, and its inherent assumption of constant, full-time work with increasing rates of pay over the life course, the inevitable result of a lifetime of interrupted careers and lower paid work for women is that fewer of them can expect to enjoy a 'self-funded' retirement with an income that provides a comfortable standard of living than can men.

Far more women than men rely on the age pension in Australia, and this is especially so for the 53% of women who find themselves single in older age.

Median Australian superannuation account balances by age bracket and gender (2013-14)²⁰³:



What happens to Australian women in old age?

They are more likely to rely on the age pension

As part of the research for our 2016 report, The Adequacy of the Age Pension in Australia, Per Capita conducted a series of focus groups with recipients of the age pension across Australia. The report notes that “... participants in every focus group indicated that the pension was insufficient for those wholly reliant upon it to fully participate in Australian society.”²⁰⁴

The figure below shows the number of Australians receiving either a full or part age pension in Australia.

Overall, 24.2% more women than men are in receipt of the age pension; there are 31.5% more women than men on the full rate age pension and 13% more on a part pension.

Fewer women in couple relationships rely on a full or part pension than do men, but more than twice as many single women rely on either the full or part pension than men.

More than half a million single women in Australia - around a third of all women aged 65 and over - rely on the full age pension as their sole source of income.

Domestic Age Pension Recipients²⁰⁶:

2017		Number of People			
		Full Pension	Part Pension	Total	No Pension
Male	Single	243,976	103,898	347,874	709,859
	Partnered	399,383	321,618	721,001	
	Total	643,359	425,516	1,068,875	
Female	Single	507,877	222,821	730,698	699,969
	Partnered	338,449	258,302	596,751	
	Total	846,326	481,123	1,327,449	

What happens to Australian women in old age?

They are more likely to rely on the age pension

That is, 60%, or three in five, single women in Australia rely on the full age pension and, as we have seen, more than half of them live in permanent income poverty.

Feldman and Radermacher identify family breakdown or the death of a spouse as key “triggers” that increase the risk of poverty amongst older women.

It is unsurprising that the title of the report of the Australian Senate Economics Reference Committee on the 2016 Inquiry into achieving economic security for women in retirement was titled “A husband is not a retirement plan”.

As the Australian Education Union told the Inquiry, the poverty experienced by many older single women in Australia today is due to inequities in the treatment of women in the workforce over previous decades:

For example, in some states, upon marriage, women were excluded from teachers' superannuation funds and only allowed access to 'married women' schemes with inferior conditions. In most states, superannuation was only available to 'permanent employees' and being a permanent employee meant being full time and available for any position across the state, thus excluding many women who were part time or were unable to move due to family responsibilities. Before unpaid maternity leave was secured in the mid 1970s, many women had to resign in order to have children...Many of these women took on primary care of children with the understanding that their husband's superannuation would provide the family's retirement income, but then lost access to this money due to marital breakdown.²⁰⁵

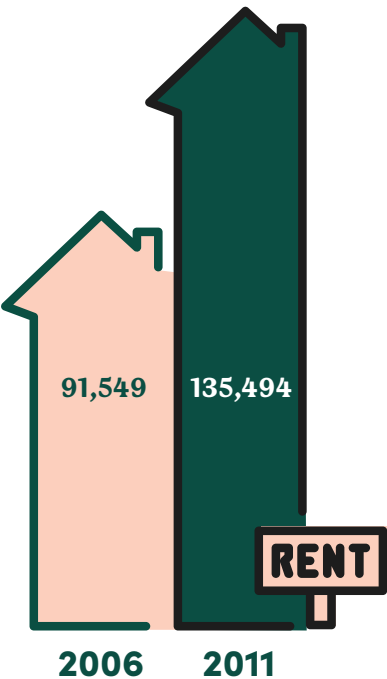
What happens to Australian women in old age?

They are more likely to live in housing stress

 Proportion of homeowners aged 55 to 64 years who still owe money on their mortgage:



The number of women aged 55 and older in the private rental market is increasing:



Many of the policy settings that explicitly limited women’s earning capacity and retirement savings have been addressed in recent years, but there remain intractable barriers within our retirement income systems that disproportionately affect women. The most obvious, as we have seen, is the structure of our superannuation system; but an emerging issue that will, if unaddressed, exacerbate women’s risk of poverty in retirement is the rapidly declining rate of home ownership amongst Australian retirees.

Outright ownership of one’s own home has long been the *de facto* ‘fourth pillar’ of Australia’s retirement incomes system; the assumption underpinning both the setting of the pension and the structure of our superannuation system is that the majority of retired people will have very low housing costs, either because they have paid off mortgage debt during their working lives or, for non-home owners, because they will be accommodated in low-rent social housing.

Yet the soaring cost of land and housing in Australia over the last three decades has effectively destroyed the asset-base on which our retirement income system relies. The proportion of homeowners aged 55 to 64 years who still owe money on their mortgage has more than tripled since the design of our compulsory superannuation system, from 14% in 1990 to 47% in 2015.²⁰⁷

For women – particularly single women relying on the full age pension – the implications of this shift are significant.

In 2011, there were 135,494 women aged 55 and older in the private rental market, up from 91,549 in the 2006 Census.

Recent research by Per Capita found that:

*The number of single older women experiencing housing stress has grown exponentially over the past ten years. Many women have never owned property, others are forced into private rental as a result of family breakdown and sole parenting, or family violence...*²⁰⁸

For single women relying on the age pension, renting in the private sector is a key determinant of poverty. As our own research showed, “...the division in quality of life between [full rate pensioners] who owned their own homes and those who were renting was starkly apparent...”²⁰⁹

What happens to Australian women in old age?

They are more likely to live in housing stress

A significant cause of housing insecurity is the dearth of appropriate housing for older women, especially an undersupply of social housing, leaving women reliant on the private rental market.

Again, our own research, which was conducted with older women who define themselves as experiencing disadvantage or financial insecurity, suggests that their relationship to home is a social one: it is a place to connect with others, somewhere they can sustain meaningful relationships and build a community.²¹⁰ Secure housing mitigates other vulnerabilities we experience in older age, particularly social isolation and loneliness, and recent research shows housing insecurity negatively affects the health of older people.²¹¹

It is alarming, then that the fastest growing group of homeless people in Australia are women over the age of 55.²¹² According to the 2016 Census, there were 6,866 homeless older women, an increase of 31% since 2011.

The most recent report on the state of homelessness amongst older women was published by the Australian Human Rights Council in April 2019. The paper noted that, beyond the 6,866 women currently experiencing homelessness, “[a] further 5,820 older women were living in marginal housing and may be at risk of homelessness.”²¹³

Homelessness for older women doesn’t necessarily look like the typical picture of someone sleeping on the street. A 2018 report from the Australian Association of Gerontology shows that:

[t]he greatest increases between 2011 and 2016 for older women were for the ABS homelessness categories: supported accommodation for the homeless (70.4 % increase); improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (50.5 %); and living in other crowded dwellings (46.9 %).²¹⁴

According to the AHRC, this means that “[o]lder women’s homelessness is often hidden from view... [because women] look to ‘self-manage’ their homelessness through strategies such as partnering up, moving between family and friends, and looking to take on jobs that provide housing”.

Further, the AHRC notes that:

Due to the hidden nature of women’s homelessness and the statistical methods used to count homelessness, ... these figures understate the true extent of the issue, particularly for women experiencing family or domestic violence, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The figures include but do not show the extent of the issue for older women with disability.²¹⁵

Critically, all the reports cited in this chapter note that women’s risk of poverty and homelessness in older age is the direct result of the compound impact of the gender inequality that women experience over their life course, as outlined in the previous chapters; and of the effects of poor outcomes in relation to health and safety, and lack of opportunity, as explained in Part 3 of this report.

As social commentator Jane Caro has said, it is as though we say to too many women, “thanks for spending your lives caring for others – now go and live in your car.”²¹⁶

How do we measure gender equality in retirement and where are the data gaps?

A commitment to measuring the real financial and social circumstances of older women in Australia as part of a comprehensive gender equality framework would more accurately portray the real disadvantage experienced by many older women.

While there is much data available on the status of women in retirement, it is necessary to delve deeply into census data and cross-reference this with academic research, as cited in this chapter, to produce a comprehensive picture of the relative disadvantage of older Australian women compared to their male compatriots.

Data snapshots on social security recipients and household income tend to be framed around socio-economic status with a focus on the “cost to the budget” of different income quintiles, without being adequately cross-referenced to gender or, importantly in this context, marital status.

Similarly, databases on the rates of home ownership are not easily searchable on gender lines, and measurements of the changes in household income over time do not adequately reflect the changed circumstances of older women experiencing retirement on the single age pension after enjoying the benefits of a male breadwinner partner’s income during their working years.

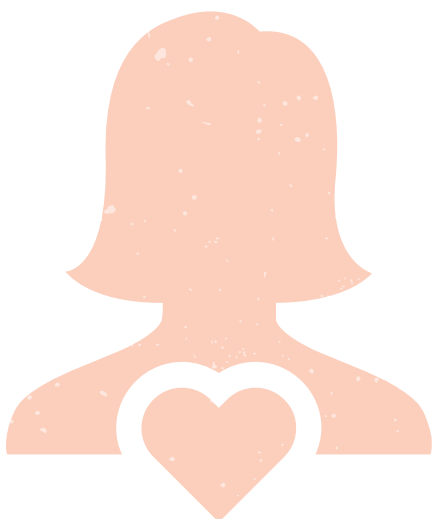
A commitment to measuring the real financial and social circumstances of older women in Australia as part of a comprehensive gender equality framework would more accurately portray the real disadvantage experienced by many older women, which is currently masked by the aggregate nature of data on retirement incomes.

Part 3

Gender Equality in Health and Safety

Chapter 6 – Health

“Women’s pain is all too often dismissed, their illnesses misdiagnosed or ignored. In medicine, man is the default human being. Any deviation is atypical, abnormal, deficient.”
—Gabrielle Jackson, *Pain and Prejudice* (2019)



Women’s health choices have been a contested space in Australian public policy and legislation for several generations. From legislative limits on access to reproductive healthcare and inequities in the funding of research into the causes of disease and morbidity in females, to the unavailability of obstetric and gynaecological services in rural and regional locations, Australian health services continue to deliver unequal outcomes for men and women.

Inequities in health are mostly driven by ‘social determinants of health’. The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes social determinants of health as “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age...shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.”²¹⁷ These conditions can include socioeconomic position, educational attainment, employment status and occupation, income and wealth, quality of housing and residential environment, and other social positions that impact people’s ability to look after their health or access healthcare services.²¹⁸

Chapter 6 – Health

In addition to hormonal and biological changes associated with fertility, social and cultural gender norms mean women can be treated very differently from men within the healthcare system.

Since at least 2002, when the WHO released the Madrid Statement on mainstreaming gender equity in health, sex and gender have been considered important social determinants of health.²¹⁹ This is because there are significant gender differences in the experience and management of a number of health issues, from sexual and reproductive health to mental health, from cancer to cardiovascular disease, from dementia to arthritis.²²⁰ Healthcare needs also fluctuate across the life course differently by gender, most obviously due to hormonal and biological changes associated with fertility. In addition to these differences, social and cultural gender norms mean women can be treated very differently from men within the healthcare system.

In recognition that women and girls need particular support for their specific health needs, the Turnbull government's Department of Health published the National Women's Health Strategy 2020-2030 to outline its plan for facilitating access to this support.²²¹ The Strategy recognises gender "as a key determinant of women's health and wellbeing" and accepts that "women's experiences of mental and physical illness are different from men's".²²² While the Strategy brings together a wealth of data and consultation about women's gendered experiences of *health* (which we will address later in the chapter), it contains very little about women's gendered experiences of *healthcare*.

What happens to women when they seek healthcare?

Their health concerns may not be acknowledged or recognised

When trying to access healthcare, women face both a “lack of awareness” (of the existence of their specific health need) and a “lack of acknowledgement” (of the fact that something can or should be done about that health need) from healthcare providers.²²³ In Australia, men are more likely than women to report that GPs and medical specialists always listen carefully to them, always show them respect, and always spend enough time with them.²²⁴

The most-cited examples of the way women experience gender inequity in Australia’s healthcare system are cardiovascular disease and endometriosis.

Men are more likely to deal with heart conditions than are women, but this fact has led to a gendered differentiation in how women with cardiovascular issues are treated and managed in the healthcare system. Diagnosis in women is often delayed, as lower health literacy around women’s heart conditions mean cardiac symptoms are attributed, by both themselves and by their doctors, to non-cardiac causes.²²⁵ Women are less likely to be offered cardiac rehabilitation.²²⁶ In general, medical procedures relating to cardiovascular disease are less likely to be offered to women, meaning heart disease in women “...is largely being undiagnosed, under-managed and under-reported, with a poorer prognosis, greater likelihood of disability and higher rates of illness and death compared with men.”²²⁷

Women with endometriosis wait an average of eight years to receive treatment in Australia. While approximately half of this time represents young

women not presenting to a doctor due to low health literacy around this condition, the second half represents the delay between first presenting to a doctor and receiving a diagnosis or referral.²²⁸ This delay is commonly explained by a tendency of medical professionals to dismiss women’s presenting symptoms, especially in relation to reproductive health and pain.²²⁹ Women with endometriosis in Australia commonly have to seek second, third, and even further opinions from different doctors before they find one who takes their complaints seriously, diagnoses them accurately, and treats them effectively.²³⁰

The government has promised action on both of these examples through the National Women’s Health Strategy for 2020 to 2030 and the National Action Plan for Endometriosis, a document that represented a breakthrough for women’s reproductive health in Australia and further proof of what can be achieved where information and data is systematically collected on women’s experiences.²³¹ As the decade progresses we hope to be able to update this chapter with improvements in these areas.

What happens to women when they seek healthcare?

Their experience of pain may be dismissed as trivial

Women are less likely to receive high-strength pain medication, more likely to be prescribed sedatives for pain, and more likely to have their pain attributed to psychological rather than physical causes.

The phenomenon of gender bias in pain management, wherein women are less likely to be treated properly for their pain because they are more likely to be considered to be exaggerating or misrepresenting their symptoms, also significantly affects women in the Australian healthcare system.²³² Data in this space is limited, but a recent study that collated and reviewed the existing research on how gender influences a patient's experience with doctors in a number of high-income countries including Australia found that women are treated differently from men when it comes to pain, and that this differentiation of treatment is driven by gender norms that portray men as "stoic" and women as "sensitive" or "hysterical".²³³ As a result, women are less likely to receive high-strength pain medication, more likely to be prescribed sedatives for pain, and more likely to have their pain attributed to psychological rather than physical causes.²³⁴

There is some information available that relates specifically to pain associated with maternal and gynaecological care in Australia. For example, increasing pressure on postnatal beds in Australia means new mothers are regularly being discharged from hospital earlier than planned, with little or no preparation or preparation for pain management. The length of postnatal hospital stays has declined dramatically since the 1980s, even though there have been no comprehensive trials to show that this does not have adverse outcomes.²³⁵ Studies of gynaecological cancer care in Australia have also shown that women are discharged without ongoing care and that they struggle to access good pain management during treatment.²³⁶

Although the National Women's Health Strategy for 2020-2030 acknowledges that there are biases related to sex and gender in the health system, the document makes no mention of gender bias in pain management.

What happens to women when they seek healthcare?

They may be exposed to experimental procedures or devices that are poorly researched and understood

Thousands of women have been exposed to dangerous health complications as a consequence of the use of transvaginal mesh to 'treat' women suffering pelvic organ prolapse or urinary incontinence, usually following childbirth.

Poorly manufactured breast implants in the 1980s led to many women, including breast cancer survivors, suffering severe health consequences following surgical intervention. Many women in Australia and across the world were provided with faulty products and given poor advice about possible complications.²³⁷

Regrettably, incidents such as this continue to be a health risk for women, with revelations that thousands of women have been exposed to dangerous health complications as a consequence of the use of transvaginal mesh to 'treat' women suffering pelvic organ prolapse or urinary incontinence, usually following childbirth. Poor Medicare coding means that it is not possible to assess accurate numbers of women affected, but the best estimates are that between 150,000 and 200,000 Australian women have received such treatment.²³⁸ Transvaginal mesh has been connected to recurrent prolapse/incontinence, the puncturing or lacerating of organs and nerves, debilitating pain, and haemorrhage.²³⁹ Hundreds of Australian women have reported lifelong complications from this treatment, with many informing a Senate Inquiry that the surgeries were undertaken without informed consent or knowledge of the possible complications, that those complications had devastating impacts on their lives, and that they struggled to find healthcare practitioners who could do anything about the complications or would even accept that their symptoms were related to the implants.²⁴⁰

There is no mention in the National Women's Health Strategy for 2020-2030 of women being at particular risk of damage from new medical devices like the transvaginal mesh implant or of a strategy to ensure that a similar situation does not happen again. The Strategy only recommends raising healthcare provider awareness of complications from existing or previous transvaginal mesh implants.

What happens to women when they seek healthcare?

They are at risk of being denied reproductive choice



In Australia, there are still many places where women who seek abortions are unable to access them safely, privately, and with dignity.

In Australia, there are still many places where women who seek abortions are unable to access them safely, privately, and with dignity. All people have the right to make decisions about their own bodies. Laws that restrict access to reproductive healthcare are examples of the way gender inequality manifests in healthcare. The criminalisation or restriction of access to abortion is a recognised form of sex discrimination in international human rights law.²⁴¹

A person's right and access to abortion in Australia is regulated at the state and territory level, with different laws applying depending on location. A person's *right* to abortion is defined by the laws that allow or prevent them from obtaining one, while a person's *access* to abortion is defined by whether there are other restrictions to them obtaining one: for example, where multiple or a panel of doctors must be consulted first, where abortions are only available in private clinics, or where anti-abortionists are allowed to protest in front of an abortion service.

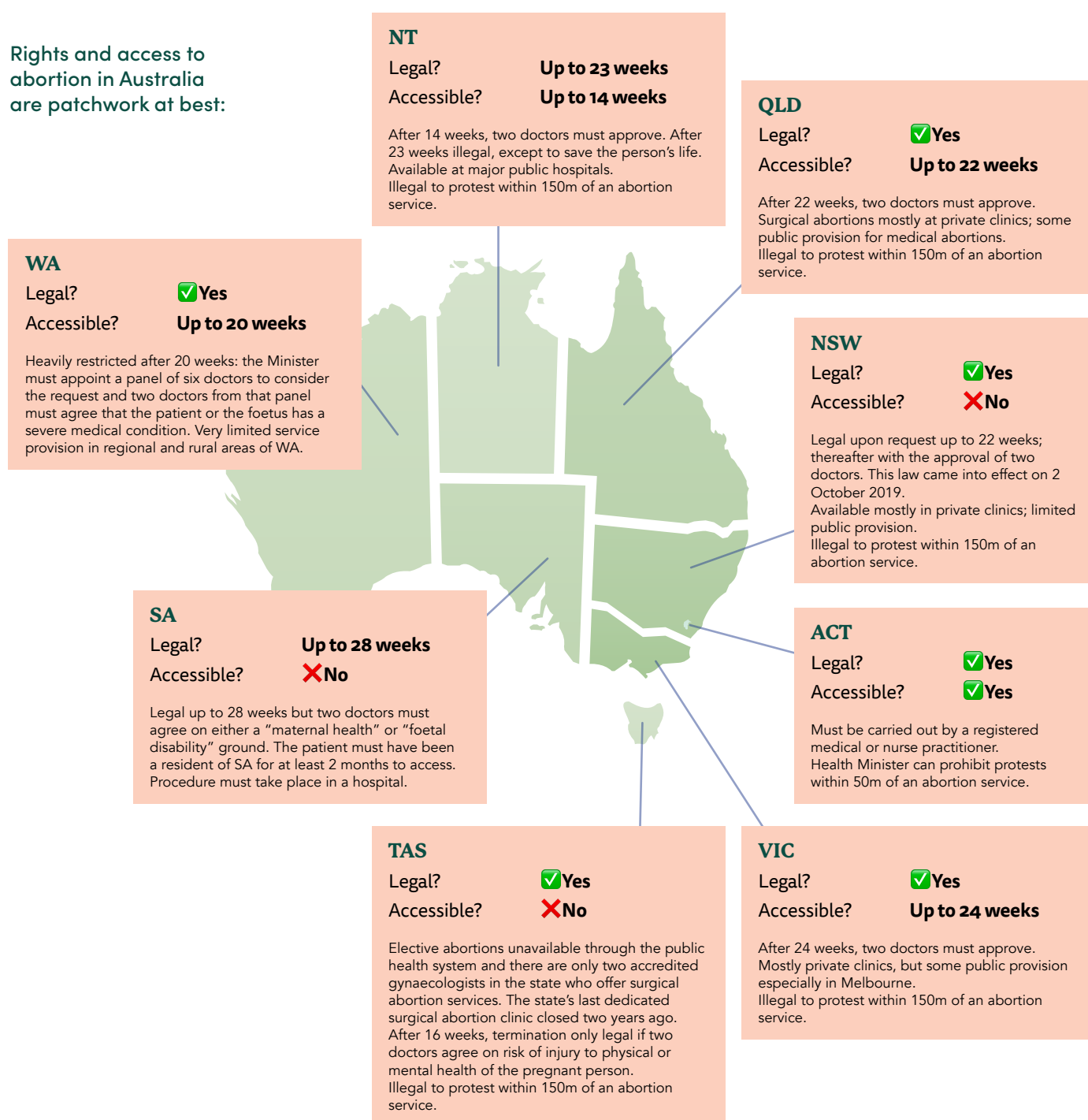
Rights and access to abortion in Australia are patchwork at best. There is limited public and affordable provision across the country with the situation particularly dire in Tasmania. While hard-fought battles for safe access zones have been won in some states like New South Wales and Queensland, in others like Victoria and Tasmania, those protections are currently threatened by High Court battles.

The National Women's Health Strategy for 2020-2030 lists "equitable access to pregnancy termination services" as one of its "key measures of success" but contains no details on its strategy to achieve it.²⁴²

What happens to women when they seek healthcare?

They are at risk of being denied reproductive choice

Rights and access to abortion in Australia are patchwork at best:



What happens to women when they seek healthcare?

They may be vulnerable to abuse and violence

In February 2019, an independent inquiry delivered its findings about former gynaecological surgeon Emil Gayed. Despite complaints made about him by his female patients from 1996 onwards, Gayed was permitted to continue treating women unrestricted until 2018.²⁴³ That's 22 years in which Gayed committed atrocities including performing an ablation procedure on a woman who had cancer, causing her death; forcing a woman to have an abortion; sealing a woman's cervix shut; stitching a woman's vagina shut; performing multiple unnecessary hysterectomies and oophorectomies without consent; stitching women up after childbirth without anaesthetic; and supervising births that caused significant trauma to both mother and child.²⁴⁴ Gayed is currently under criminal investigation.

In 2008, former dermatologist David Wee Kin Tong was pled guilty to and was convicted of seven counts of rape and seven of indecent assault of 14 women who were patients at his Melbourne clinic. The Victorian Board of the Medical Board of Australia was found to have dismissed two complaints about Tong in 2004 and 2006, before the issue came to light when one patient reported her assault to her friend, who was a police officer.²⁴⁵ Tong was sentenced to eight years and four months' imprisonment and in 2014 was extradited to New South Wales and sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for sexually assaulting five patients in his Sydney clinic prior to his Melbourne crimes.

In 1997, former gynaecologist and obstetrician Graeme Stephen Reeves was banned from practicing obstetrics after 35 complaints were made about him over 15 years.²⁴⁶ Although the restriction on his practice appeared in reference checks, Reeves was able to continue practicing in New South Wales until 2004, when further complaints brought him to the attention of the New South Wales Board of the Medical Board of Australia. In 2008 the New South Wales Police laid 17 charges relating to sexual and indecent assault and genital mutilation.²⁴⁷ In 2011 he was found guilty of maliciously inflicting grievous bodily harm on one of his patients, whose genitals he removed without her consent.²⁴⁸ Reeves was sentenced to two and a half years' imprisonment but was released in 2013 after an appeal to the High Court.²⁴⁹

Despite these recent, high profile cases, there does not appear to be any data or information collected in Australia relating to women's experiences of violence or abuse from healthcare providers. In America, a recent national investigation uncovered that hundreds of doctors every year are brought before medical regulators or courts for sexual misconduct or sex crimes, and that even doctors criminally convicted of those crimes are allowed to return to practice.²⁵⁰

How do we measure gender equality in health and where are the data gaps?

Australia was once something of a pioneer in women's health policy, enacting a National Women's Health Policy and Program in 1989.²⁵¹ As a result, women's health research is better-funded and data more widely available than other areas of research covered in this report. This fact can be linked to and highlights the importance of bipartisan government support for the need to track women's health, to inform the first National Women's Health Policy and its successors: the *National Women's Health Policy 2010*²⁵² and the *National Women's Health Strategy for 2020-2030*.²⁵³

However, there is arguably still a lack of gender awareness in much of our health data and Australia has fallen behind in incorporating social determinants like gender into health policy.²⁵⁴ Health policy in Australia is generally gender blind; gender mainstreaming is minimal at both state and federal levels; and gender equality is rarely an outcome measure for health policy and health programs.²⁵⁵ While we may now know which health issues affect women in different ways, quantifying something like the experience of gender bias in the Australian healthcare system is still extremely difficult, due to the lack of research or even adequate recognition of its existence. Similarly, further research is needed on other social determinants of health in Australia, such as the impact of unpaid and low paid care work, and the inherent male bias in the design of health services and treatment.

Australia is required to report to CEDAW on its efforts to comply with Article 12 on women's health, but its most recent report was notably light on any actual data about women's health. The report listed health issues faced by Australian women but did not

provide data on the prevalence of these issues nor on the success rates of the programmes and initiatives established by the government to address them.

On the WEF's Global Gender Gap Index, the 'health and survival' subindex shows most countries having almost completely closed their gender gap in this area, meaning that while this is our lowest ranking (103 out of 114, sliding from 57 in 2006), it's also one of our highest scores (0.971 out of 1). The index only measures sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy by gender, and therefore does not represent the experiences of women with their health and with the healthcare system throughout the life course.

Australia is investing in a major study of women's health outcomes in Australia, the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH),²⁵⁶ which has been collecting data from 50,000 Australian women since 1996. The ALSWH has produced hundreds of reports, identifying the health issues that are of particular concern for women in Australia. The evidence it has collected has been translated directly into policy (for example, the National Women's Health Strategy for 2020-2030's priority areas mirror those highlighted in the ALSWH's Major Reports), highlighting once again the importance of rigorous, systematic data collection for policy change on gender inequality. Its 2019 Major Report pinpointed our progress towards ensuring women have access to quality health services in the following areas:

How do we measure gender equality in health and where are the data gaps?

Sexual, reproductive, and maternal health

Australian women are significantly less likely to use long-acting reversible contraception methods than their counterparts in Europe and the United States.

The ALSWH identifies three key issue areas within sexual and reproductive health: sexually transmitted infections, contraception use, and the risk of chronic conditions following hysterectomy.²⁵⁷

In particular, the increase in the prevalence of chlamydia is of concern. Young women are more than four times more likely to get chlamydia now than they were in 1996: 12% will have contracted it by the time they are 25. The ALSWH notes that “additional and better” campaigns around chlamydia and STI prevention among young women are needed, and healthcare providers should be better educated on the predicting factors of STI contraction, including bisexuality, and better equipped to increase awareness of STIs and STI prevention among at-risk groups of young women.²⁵⁸

Australian women are significantly less likely to use long-acting reversible contraception methods (such as intrauterine devices and implants) than their counterparts in Europe and the United States.²⁵⁹ The ALSWH identifies that barriers to use include “concerns about side effects, lack of or inability to access information, and negative experiences with health services during attempts to obtain birth control” and recommends additional training on contraceptive-specific GP consultations to ensure women have positive experiences and are adequately informed.²⁶⁰

More than one in five women in Australia has had a hysterectomy by their mid-to-late 40s. These women are at higher risk of poorer health, including Type 2 diabetes, depressive symptoms, trouble sleeping, and limitations to physical function. The ALSWH recommends that doctors monitor women who have had a hysterectomy more closely for such chronic conditions.²⁶¹

The ALSWH identifies mental health during and after pregnancy as a key concern for Australian women. It identifies disparities in the provision of depression screening and psychosocial assessment across the healthcare system and recommends making changes to the Medical Benefits Schedule to prioritise perinatal mental health, and expanding training, resources, and data collection on mental health during and after pregnancy.²⁶²

How do we measure gender equality in health and where are the data gaps?

Chronic conditions

Chronic conditions are defined as those conditions that are “prolonged, rarely spontaneously resolve, and [are] rarely completely cured”²⁶³ such as arthritis, asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Chronic conditions impact women in a particular way that requires action to address gendered inequalities in their diagnosis, treatment, and management.

For example, women are more likely to be affected by arthritis (especially osteoarthritis) than are men, and spend around 30% more on healthcare costs for arthritis than do men.²⁶⁴ Women are also more likely to suffer from asthma, due both to sex-based biological differences in pulmonary and immune systems, reproductive factors such as use of hormonal contraceptives and menopause, and gendered lifestyle factors such as higher exposure to allergens and chemicals.²⁶⁵ Both men and women are affected by diabetes, but women’s experiences of post-menopausal diabetes and gestational diabetes,

and their greater likelihood of death, cardiovascular events, and psychosocial effects, also make diabetes a gendered health issue.²⁶⁶

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women’s Health (ALSWH) found that chronic conditions shared many common risk factors, including smoking, drinking, and weight gain.²⁶⁷ It recommended public health measures to address these risk factors and to encourage women to test for chronic disease risk factors and attend cancer screening, alongside measures to encourage greater health literacy about the gendered aspects of chronic conditions for both women and doctors.²⁶⁸

How do we measure gender equality in health and where are the data gaps?

Mental health

As expected, the mental health struggles experienced by Australian girls in high school continue to affect them into adulthood. The youngest cohort tracked by the ALSWH (born in 1989-1995 and aged 18-23 in 2013) had significantly worse mental health than other cohorts. 49% reported very high levels of psychological distress; 59% reported feeling that life wasn't worth living at some point in their lives; 45% reporting having self-harmed; and one in three had been diagnosed or treated for depression or anxiety.²⁶⁹

Poor mental health in women across all age groups was found to co-occur regularly with a number of other health issues, including sleep difficulties, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, polycystic ovarian syndrome, and endometriosis. A number of social factors were found

to be associated with poor mental health, including smoking, drinking, lower levels of physical activity, income stress, being unemployed, lower levels of education, poor social support, caring for others, and pregnancy loss.²⁷⁰

Bearing all of this in mind, the ALSWH recommends that screening for mental health problems should be routine practice whenever women interact with healthcare services as there are strong links between many health issues and poor mental health. Further, it recommends improving availability of mental health support services for women and particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged women living outside major cities.²⁷¹

Violence

Violence against women is the leading contributor to death, physical injury, and mental health disorders among Australian women aged 15-44.²⁷² A separate chapter below deals with gender-based violence, but we also know that experiences of violence cause lifelong health issues for women.

The ALSWH found that women who experienced violence and abuse in childhood dealt with poorer general health and mental health as well as higher healthcare costs in adulthood.²⁷³ Women who had experienced sexual abuse were more likely to experience mental health issues, while women who had experienced domestic violence experienced a "lifetime deficit in mental health".

Domestic violence survivors also had consistently poorer physical health and experienced a significant impact on health in older age, especially when domestic violence was combined with caregiving for children or

older relatives. A history of abuse is related to a higher likelihood of cervical cancer (linked to a lower likelihood of adequate cervical cancer screening) and a higher likelihood of cardiovascular disease later in life.

The ALSWH's results suggest a "cumulative impact of abuse on health over the life course", wherein abuse in childhood affects health in adulthood, and abuse in adulthood affects health as women age.²⁷⁴ It recommends that healthcare providers take this life course approach and recognise the long-term effects on health of any experience of violence and abuse; and that researchers work to design interventions and determine the life stage at which such interventions are best applied. It also identifies that women living in rural areas experience higher rates of domestic violence and suggests there is a need to improve service availability in rural Australia.

Other social determinants of health

Gender inequities aren't the only inequities experienced in the healthcare system. In Australia, there are numerous social determinants of health outcomes, and women who also belong to other marginalised groups can fall through the gaps created by even the most well-intentioned gender mainstreaming. More research is required in all these spaces to ensure policy responses serve all women and that existing inequities are not further entrenched.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

The life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is on average 17-20 years lower than that of non-Indigenous Australian women; First Nations women are three times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease; are more than twice as likely to be admitted to hospital; and have a maternal mortality rate nearly three times higher.²⁷⁵

Women from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Women from migrant and refugee backgrounds can arrive in Australia with multiple complex health issues. One in four refugees arriving in Australia has experienced torture, while three in four have experienced traumatic events.²⁷⁶ Refugee women are often attempting to deal with “chronic diseases; reproductive health issues; blood disorders such as anaemia; the physical and mental health consequences of rape and sexual assault; depression, anxiety and grief” but can struggle to access culturally competent health services as they cope with the stress of resettlement, unemployment, learning English, accessing housing, and facing discrimination.²⁷⁷

Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities face a number of barriers to accessing healthcare services.²⁷⁸ Facing discrimination across multiple intersecting axes, they are often ‘information poor’ with regard to health issues that affect them both as women and as people with disabilities. Despite this, they are also often expected to educate others, including healthcare professionals, about their conditions and needs. Health services can be physically or logistically inaccessible, and in general they have a more ‘fragmented’ experience of healthcare, often dealing with multiple providers who may fail to transfer health records to each other. Women with disabilities are also more likely to deal with breaches of their reproductive rights and are rarely adequately informed or supported when it comes to the sexual, reproductive, or maternal health.

Women living in poverty or insecure work

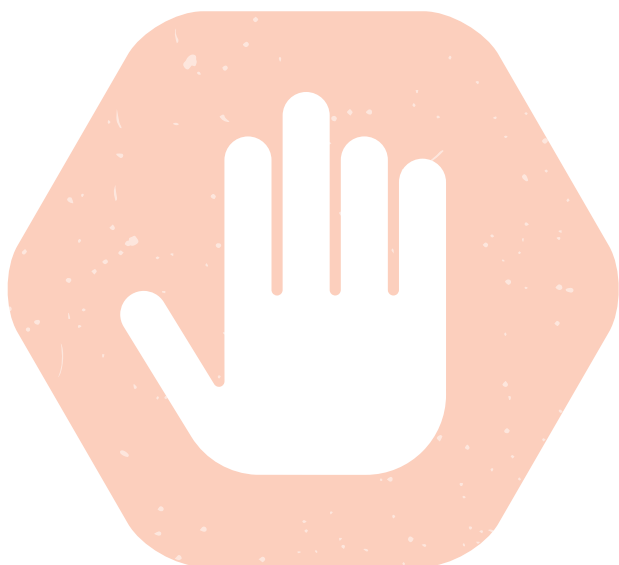
We have seen that major risk factors for poor health in women include smoking, alcohol, violence, poor nutrition, and being overweight. All of these factors have a causal link to poverty, low socio-economic status, and insecure work.²⁷⁹

Chapter 7 – Violence Against Women

“Family violence is an entrenched epidemic that we’ve lived with since time began, so we’ve got a long way to go. But I do believe the tide is turned. It’s no longer a subject that only occurs behind closed doors.”

—Rosie Batty

Violence against women is the leading contributor to the injury and death of women in Australia between the ages of 18-44.



Violence against women (VAW) is an impediment to gender inequality and a manifestation of it, in Australia and around the world. It is the leading contributor to the injury and death of women in Australia between the ages of 18-44 and is a violation of the fundamental human rights of women.²⁸⁰ As outlined in Australia’s National Framework for the prevention of violence against women, *Change the Story*,²⁸¹ gender inequality sets the necessary social context for violence against women to occur. Violence against women, as defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women (1993) is:

Any act of gender-based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life.²⁸²

This national framework and Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 draw on this definition.

The risk of violence keeps women from living lives at their full potential. Fear of death and injury inhibits women’s freedom of choice, particularly in the way that they behave in both public and private spaces. This risk is pervasive: no place is experienced as entirely safe, as the home, the workplace and the street are all sites of potential danger for women.

Chapter 7 – Violence Against Women

The risk of violence keeps women from living lives at their full potential.

Many women live with both a conscious and an unconscious fear of men's violence. Whether that violence is physical, sexual, financial or psychological control, women fear and worry about the risk of harm at the hands of men. We're only now coming to understand the health and other consequences for women living in a near constant state of fight or flight caused by gendered violence.²⁸³ Further, we are yet to fully understand the cultural and economic costs of unequal relationships and gendered violence which keep women trapped at the low end of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, missing out on opportunities for growth belonging, accomplishment and self-actualisation.

In Australia, there is growing support for the primary prevention of violence against women, embodied in the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022. However, as this plan draws to a close, there remain significant challenges for how we are measuring progress towards the goal of violence prevention. Although statistics on the prevalence of VAW are fundamental to tracking progress towards prevention,²⁸⁴ reporting remains patchy and inconsistent. The poor nature of incidence and prevalence data continues to act as an impediment to increased funding for violence prevention.

Violence against women takes many forms. Both quantitative and qualitative information is needed to help us understand the causes of, and solutions to, the problem of violence against women. In this report we bring together the most recent data on the scale of violence against women in Australia and call for annualized monitoring as an ongoing gender equality measure.

How do women experience violence in Australia?

Men continue to be the vast majority of perpetrators – a staggering 95% – regardless of whether the victim of violence is another man, woman, or non-binary person.

Violence against women in Australia takes many forms and is consequently measured in many ways.

Definitions of gendered violence have been evolving since the 1970s, as new relationships between victim and perpetrator have shaped our understanding of domestic violence to include recognition of de-facto and LGBTIQ couples as well as elder abuse. Likewise, the transformation in our understanding of violence as more than just physical abuse, to encompass psychological, emotional, financial and other harm, has also significantly changed overtime.

Comparing data over time while the definitional nature of gendered violence has been changing has complicated the measurement of it.

In some respects, the full scale of violence against women in Australia (and the world) is still unknown. However, as terminology has become more settled - and more particularized in different settings - a dangerous landscape for Australian women has emerged where:

- one in five women (18% or 1.7 million) compared to one in twenty men (4.7% or 428,800) are victims of sexual violence;
- women were nearly three times more likely to have experienced partner violence than men, with approximately one in six women (17% or 1.6 million) and one in sixteen men (6.1% or 547,600) having experienced partner violence since the age of 15; and
- in the last 12 months, one in six women (17% or 1.6 million) and one in eleven men (9.3% or 836,700) experienced sexual harassment.²⁸⁵

Although Australian men are more likely to experience violence in Australia across their lifetime (41% for men compared to 37% for women) incidents of violence are trending downwards for men and upwards for women.²⁸⁶ And men continue to be the vast majority of perpetrators – a staggering 95% - regardless of whether the victim of violence is another man, woman, or non-binary person.²⁸⁷

How do women experience violence in Australia?

They may experience family violence perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member

The leading source of data on the prevalence of intimate partner or family violence is the ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS). It is from this data that we now know that one in three Australian women have experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuse by an intimate partner since age of 15.²⁸⁸

The PSS has been incredibly important to Australian prevention efforts to date, but it has limitations. It does not drill down into the experience of VAW for different cohorts and demographics. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status is not available in the PSS. While other ABS datasets, such as the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey, estimate that the disease burden of family violence for Indigenous women is 15.3% for the same age cohort,²⁸⁹ there is a need for the PSS to improve its data on vulnerable populations.

The PSS is also limited by its infrequency. The first survey was conducted in 2005, with a seven-year gap to the next in 2012 and a four-year gap to the latest, 2016. Based on this trend the next PSS is due this year, 2020.

ANROWS, Australia's National Research Organisation on Women's Safety, also reports on prevalence by adopting a "burden of disease" approach. In its *Report on the Examination of the burden of disease of intimate partner violence against women in 2011*, it found that intimate partner and family violence was the leading contributing factor to disease and injury for women ages 18-44, accounting for 5.1% of the disease burden.²⁹⁰

Both of these data sources are estimations only, based on survey data. Attempts to move beyond estimation to concrete examples of incident rates comparable over time have been complicated by a lack of reliable data collection and inconsistencies in approaches across the country.

Australia is not alone with this challenge. At present, global gender gap indexes only capture rudimentary information about violence prevention and response work in nation-states.²⁹¹

Measuring incidents of intimate partner violence is a complicated process, because of the multiple possible reporting sites. Traditionally, crime statistics have driven data collection, but the reliability has

At present, global gender gap indexes only capture rudimentary information about violence prevention and response work in nation-states.

How do women experience violence in Australia?

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depended on if, when and how police flag an offence as family or domestic violence related. The most recent ABS data, analysing the relationship between victim and perpetrators of violent crime for the period 1 January – 21 December 2018, is still only recorded on a state/territory basis with no aggregate national data reported in its tables, making it difficult to extrapolate comparable national data over time.²⁹²

The ABS emphasises that there remain inconsistencies due to state/territory legislation, policing behaviours and government policy and investment that complicates its reporting.

But the criminal justice system is not the only site of incident disclosure. Hospitals, general practitioners and schools are all sites of disclosure of physical and mental injury, but the institutional data sharing – the infrastructure for collecting, analysing and publishing incidents in these settings remains limited. For example, there isn't a national database of hospital admissions or general practitioner reporting on family violence or consistent standards for capturing this data nationally. In November 2017, the federal Department of Health announced obstetric post-natal consultations would now be funded by Medicare, enabling assessment for mental health of new mothers, including screening for family violence.²⁹³

Key data sources for reporting on family, domestic and sexual violence:



How do women experience violence in Australia?

They may experience family violence perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member

In Victoria, where Family Violence Investment over the last four years has exceeded \$2 billion,²⁹⁴ the Victorian government has developed an Emergency Minimum Dataset, obtained from Victorian public hospitals with emergency departments, about the types of physical injuries sustained and the urgency of each visit. However, there is still not sufficient data of this type at a national level.

However, there are promising developments in data analysis on the levels of intimate partner violence in Australia.

The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare's Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Report²⁹⁵ is now bringing together key data sources reporting on family violence incidents each year to provide an annual snapshot. While it acknowledges that the data sources are imperfect, the consolidation of information in one report is incredibly useful. The report is only in its second year, but its focus on VAW data analysis for vulnerable populations in 2019, is highly commendable.

Likewise, OurWatch and ANROWS's joint guide, *Counting on Change: A Guide to Prevention Monitoring*,²⁹⁶ also acknowledges the challenges for Australian prevalence data proposing to address limitations via "a world first attempt to enable consistency when measuring progress towards prevention and the eventual elimination of violence against women over time". The guide focusses on medium term measures which address the drivers and reinforcing factors of violence against women – changing attitudes, increased gender equality, less rigid gender roles and more.

ANROWS and OurWatch predict it may take ten years or more of sustained and multipronged prevention efforts before there is quantifiable change against prevalence indicators.²⁹⁷

A space where there is reliable comparable data on the extent of intimate partner violence is in tracking the rates of homicide. The Australian Institute of Criminology produces a National Homicide Program Report on an ad hoc basis, which provides data on deaths connected to family violence. It uses offence records derived from Australian state and territory police services and coronial records.

The most recent report for 2012-2014 combines two years of data, together finding that of 487 homicides during this time, 200 of

It may take ten years or more of sustained and multipronged prevention efforts before there is quantifiable change against prevalence indicators.

How do women experience violence in Australia?

They may experience family violence perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member

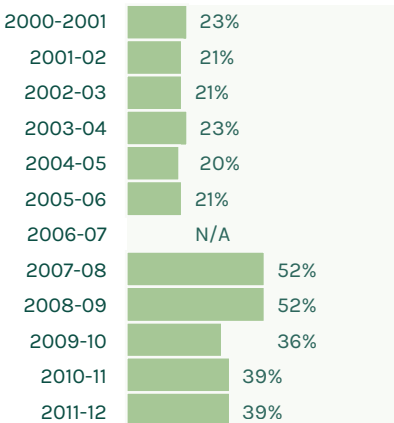
them were domestic homicides. From these figures comes the oft-quoted statistic that an average of two women a week are killed as consequence of domestic violence in Australia ($200/2/52 = 1.92$).

For the purposes of this report we have generated the following table comparing the percentage of intimate partner homicides as a total of all homicides, since the year 2000. It paints a concerning picture.

The National Homicide Program Reports reveal that while there has been an overall decline in homicides in Australia, the percentage share of domestic homicides is increasing. This may be explained by more accurate reporting and analysis of family violence, as more police receive education and training about identifying it.

Although this data is readily available from this report, it has not been well publicized or promoted in the community. The lack of accessibility of homicide data for intimate partner violence is one reason online women’s communities have emerged to provide a real-time toll of violent deaths of women in Australia. *Counting Dead Women*,²⁹⁸ a project of the feminist online organisation *Destroy The Joint* and Journalist Sherele Moody’s *Red Heart Project*,²⁹⁹ are designed to overcome the limits of institutional reporting on deaths of women. These projects also, however, have their flaws, in that they cannot always differentiate between intimate partner and stranger homicides.

% of Domestic Homicides as a proportion of total Homicides:



How do women experience violence in Australia?

They're at risk of 'stranger violence', such as rape and sexual assault, perpetrated by a non-intimate partner

In 2010 there were 18,862 incidents of sexual assault; by 2017 that figure had jumped to 24,957.

Only 30% of sexual assault reports lead to an arrest, summons or formal caution.

They may experience workplace violence, such as sexual harassment and bullying

In the last year, there have been a number of high-profile murders of young women committed by strangers, especially in Melbourne. The public outcry over these murders has been considerable, with public vigils and protest memorials marking each incident.

Formal reporting on stranger homicides is undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology, through its National Homicide Monitoring Program. Current statistics indicate that homicides perpetrated by strangers make up only 3% of female murder victims.³⁰⁰ The research again makes it clear that the majority of perpetrators of gendered homicide are known to the women victim and take place in the home.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Report on Recorded Crime in Australia³⁰¹ has been recording incidents of sexual assault since 2010. The statistics are alarming, and rising.

In 2010 there were 18,862 incidents of sexual assault; by 2017 that figure had jumped to 24,957. Women are the main victims of sexual assault, at 82%. A quarter of those victims were aged 19 and younger.³⁰²

Concerningly, a recent investigative report by the ABC's Digital Story Innovation Team, has revealed that 1 in 12 cases of sexual assault reports by victims are deemed "unfounded" by police, with this figure rising to 1 in 4 in some regions. Further, only 30% of sexual assault reports led to an arrest, summons or formal caution.³⁰³ This report suggests, as VAW advocates have known for some time, that incidents of sexual assault are far greater than crime statistics would indicate.

In Chapter 3, we examined sexual harassment and sex discrimination as impediments to gender equal rights in the workplace for Australian women. However, there is a growing recognition that sexualised and discriminatory workplaces are also a form of gendered violence. In July 2019, the International Labor Organisation adopted C190, a new convention which prohibits a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats, directed at persons because of their sex or gender that are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm.

What works in violence prevention?

Preventing violence against women – developing effective targeted programs that reduce rates of incidence of death and injury over time – depends on robust and comparable annual reporting.

To date, there have been inadequate resources allocated to collecting data on gendered violence, with a range of different governmental, statutory and other organisations responsible for disparate analysis. While data continues to be published in an ad hoc way, it will continue to be difficult for practitioners to understand whether the problem is getting worse and whether prevention initiatives are working.

A combination of lack of funding and siloing of the responsibility for data collection and analysis in competing organisations is making the prevention of violence against women more difficult than it should be.³⁰⁴

Further, the lack of easily accessible, annual data that can be compared year to year is also failing to engage the public in a shared project of driving those rates down. While there are promising emerging reports and national guides, they lack accessibility to the public. This is why we have seen the emergence of unfunded digital feminist collectives bearing the burden of communicating simple, compelling data and stories.

Recent investments in national and state based prevention initiatives, including mass marketing behavioural change campaigns, such as the Federal Government's *Violence Against Women: Let's Stop it at the Start*³⁰⁵ and Victorian Government's *Respect Women: Call it Out*³⁰⁶ are positive steps forward in responding to gendered violence in Australia, but these projects will be strengthened by accurate tracking of their impact on the perpetration of violence. *Counting on Change* recommends further investments in these projects and much more. The connection between violence prevention and the importance of annually accountable gendered data cannot be overstated.

Annually, \$120 million is spent on data analysis and prevention initiatives by the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) and \$148 million by Worksafe. Both organisations are statutory authorities with income protected by legislation.

Tolls have been used effectively to reduce injury and death in the workplace and on roads. States and territory insurance schemes for work and road accidents have necessitated the publication of regular statistics; and in turn the drive to reduce those statistics, and the costs for insurers, has led to mass prevention advertising campaigns, such as *Towards Zero* by Victoria's TAC and Worksafe's *Everyone. Every Workplace*. Victorian leadership has been replicated across the country in these areas of high-risk death and injury.

Why is there no equivalent toll or statutory prevention funding for gendered violence? Part of the reason could be gendered attitudes to death and injury. The majority of people who lose their lives at work and in cars are men. However, it is important to recognise that deaths on publicly funded roads or in workplaces are recognised as the responsibility of the state and of employers, and both fall under established areas of government regulation. Over time, advocacy to prevent high risk male mortality and disability has evolved into considerable investments of government and corporate resources for prevention.

Death and injury to women due to gendered and family violence has traditionally been seen as a domestic issue, one outside the responsibility of the state. Recently, this has begun to change, with statutory agencies such as *Respect Victoria* being established along with Our Watch, the national foundation to prevent violence against women to actively promote policies and programs to prevent gendered and family violence. As of 2019, these agencies are comparatively under-funded but their development is a welcome intervention by governments across the nation.

How do women experience violence in Australia?

Prevention agency	Features	Estimated prevention expenditure 15/16	Injury and death statistics and sex disaggregation 15/16
Safe Work Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Statutory Body Established through joint agreement between Commonwealth and states 	\$20 million annually ³⁰⁷	64% of all serious injury claims made by men ³⁰⁸ 168 deaths nationally, 92% men ³⁰⁹
Transport Accident Commission (TAC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victorian Statutory Authority to prevent and compensate for victims of transport accidents Dedicated and enduring funding via levy on car registration Behavioural change campaigns Investments in road repairs and safety Community partnerships 	\$120 million annually on marketing and road safety infrastructure ³¹⁰	6762 road injuries leading to hospitalisations; 55% men ³¹¹ 265 deaths; 70% men ³¹²
Worksafe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victorian Statutory Authority to prevent and Dedicated and enduring funding via levy on employers Behavioural change campaigns Community partnerships OHS Officers 	\$148 million annually on marketing and advertising and staffing of OHS inspectors	26,286 standard claims (not broken down by gender) ³¹³ 26 deaths; 96% men
OurWatch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National foundation to prevent violence against women Established through joint agreement between Commonwealth and states Prevention advertising & projects 	\$7 million annually on research staff and mass prevention advertising and prevention projects	1 in 3 women has experienced intimate partner violence since age 15 ³¹⁴
Respect Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victorian Statutory Authority Impermanent Funding, dependent on Government Budget cycle Behavioural change campaigns Community partnerships 	(Unfunded in 15/16 but since 17/18 allocated \$3 million annually)	78,628 family violence related police incidents; 74% women victims ³¹⁵ 2016 FV homicide data in Victoria inaccessible ³¹⁶

How do we measure gendered violence and where are the data gaps?

While a “Violence Against Women Toll” would be far more complicated than currently exists for injuries on the road and workplace, there is compelling evidence of the success of such initiatives to warrant investment in a similar tool for the prevention violence against women.

Measuring population level prevalence of gendered-violence in Australia requires a combination of surveys – such as the Personal Safety Survey and National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey – complimented by incidence data derived from disparate administrative sources.

Counting on Change anticipates a complex matrix of surveys – addressing the drivers and reinforcing factors of violence against women – as well as administrative data derived from a range of sources to produce a “nationally coordinated approach to data collection”.

Surveys must be complimented by continual improvement in ‘hard’ administrative data on yearly incidence. Although there will be some limitations in yearly incidence data, due to changing definitions of violence and the tendency of victim-survivors to make complaints beyond a twelve-month period of record keeping, incidence is critical in ensuring investments into violence prevention are having an impact. The reports now being produced by the Australian Institute of Health & Welfare are a promising development in this regard, though more effort is required to communicate data at a glance.

Ideally, both survey results and collated incidence data should be collected and reported on an annual basis via a digital dashboard of comparable figures that can be easily digestible by policy makers and the general public. While a “Violence Against Women Toll” would be far more complicated than currently exists for injuries on the road and workplace, there is compelling evidence of the success of such initiatives to warrant investment in a similar tool for the prevention violence against women.

Part 4

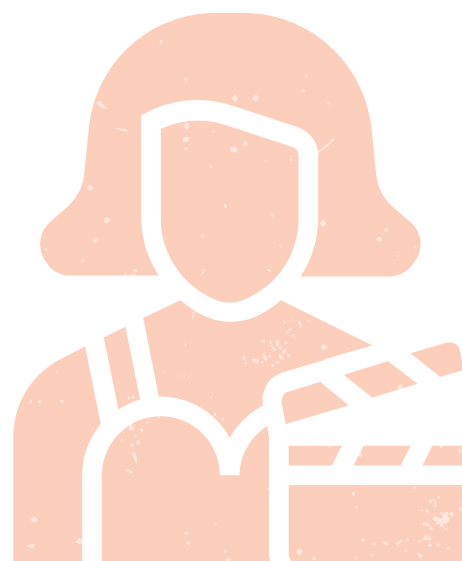
Gender Equality in Representation and Leadership

Chapter 8 – Representation

“All of Hollywood is run on one assumption: that women will watch stories about men, but men won’t watch stories about women.”

—Geena Davis, actor and activist,
interviewed for the documentary *Miss Representation*

In 2011 the American documentary *Miss Representation* premiered at Sundance Film Festival. The film explored the notion that the way in which women are portrayed in mainstream media and culture directly contributes to the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and influence.³¹⁷ The film’s tagline, “You can’t be what you can’t see”, spoke to this notion that when women see themselves devalued, disempowered, and demeaned on screen and in print, they struggle to envision more positive roles for themselves.



How are women represented in the Australian media?

They are segregated along gender lines by subject matter

The 2019 Women for Media Report, also titled “You can’t be what you can’t see”, analysed the representation of women in the Australian media by taking a snapshot of the top five news and opinion pieces on Australia’s most influential news sites between noon and 2pm on nine days between October 2018 and February 2019. The researchers acknowledge that the small sample size means the report is “just a glimpse...of a bigger picture”, but it does give us a sense of the representation of women in our media: as journalists, opinion writers, experts, sources, photographers, photo subjects, column writers, and so on.³¹⁸

The snapshot showed that female journalists are fairly well represented in the Australian media. Across all of the news sites analysed, the overall representation of male to female journalists was 52% to 48%.³¹⁹ There was a significant range depending on the site, with BuzzFeed publishing the highest percentage of female journalists during the snapshot at 70%, and the Herald Sun publishing the lowest at just 14%.³²⁰

When the researchers included what these journalists were writing about, however, some key representation issues emerged. While 76% of stories about celebrities were written by women, just 40% of stories about government, politics, business, finance, law, crime and justice, and just 12% of stories about sport, had female journalists as by-lines. Women were also significantly less likely to write opinion pieces, with just 30% of op-eds authored by women over the week analysed, and only 16% of opinion pieces about government and politics.³²¹

Under the by-line, the representation of women was more problematic. Just 34% of direct sources and 24%

of indirect sources quoted by journalists were women. Again, there was a range: 14% of the Australian Financial Review’s sources were women, while 59% of BuzzFeed’s sources were. Since BuzzFeed also had the highest proportion of female journalists during the snapshot, this supported the report’s finding that female journalists are significantly more likely to use female sources than male journalists. At the Australian Financial Review, 93% of sources used by male journalists were also male.³²²

Australia participates in the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which last reported in 2015. The GMMP measures the proportion of reports, presenters, and ‘people in the news’ – defined as “persons heard, read about or seen” in the news, including as subjects and sources – that are women on one day in the global media, and further breaks the data down by medium, topic, country, and a number of other metrics.³²³

The sample size is comparable to the Women for Media Report, and the findings are similar: while 45% of Australia’s reporters were women, just 27% of people in the news were women.³²⁴ Only 3% of sportspeople, 5% of lawyers, 7% of STEM professionals, 21% of academic experts, and 23% of politicians appearing in the Australian media were women, compared to 70% of health/social/childcare workers, 57% of office workers, and 60% of unemployed people.³²⁵ If we return to the moniker “you can’t be what you can’t see”, the Australian media is certainly sending a strong message to girls and women about what they can and can’t be.

How are women represented in the Australian media?

They are often stereotyped by media representation

Counting by-lines and sources is not the only way to assess how the representation of women in the media affects women in society. Another method is to analyse how the media reports and discusses issues that affect women, and what messages that discourse sends to women and to society about those issues. This kind of discursive analysis is complex and rare in the literature, but a strong example is the 2016 Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) report on media representation of violence against women and their children, in partnership with Our Watch.³²⁶

The ANROWS analysis found a number of issues with the way in which the Australian media reports violence against women:

- Focus on individual incidents rather than social context or underlying drivers of violence
- Lack of information on where to seek help
- Use of sensational headlines, graphic language, and photographs that minimised or trivialised the issue (although these were a minority)
- References to the behaviour of the women in the story, inferring mutuality in the abuse
- Lack of information about the male perpetrators of crime
- Ambiguity and ambivalence around the definition, dynamics, and harms of the violence
- Story angles, structures, and lexical features (e.g. word choices) that minimise the harms of the violence³²⁷

More discursive analysis of this kind is needed: not just the number of women that appear in the media, but how they appear in the media. What kinds of words are used to describe women, the things they do, and the things that happen to them; what kind of images portray them? What is the impact of those media messages on readers and viewers?

It's true that you can't be what you can't see, but you also can't see what you don't measure.

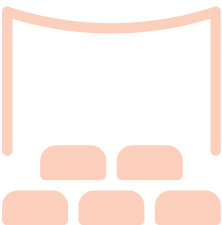
We need to measure the representation of women in the media both numerically and discursively. We should be tracking this on a regular basis and including different demographics of women in this analysis to get a full picture of the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and other women of colour, LGBTQI+ women, women with disabilities, and women from different socioeconomic backgrounds in our media. It's true that you can't be what you can't see, but you also can't see what you don't measure.

How are women represented on screen?

They are under-represented in leading creative roles in film and television

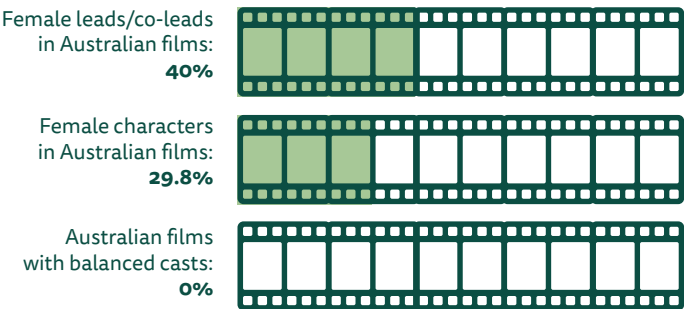
The representation of women in the Australian screen industry is dire, and by some measures worsening: while 19% of Australian feature films shot in the 1990s had women directors, only 15% did in 2017.³³⁶ From 1970 to 2014, women have made up 30% of producers, 16% of directors, and 21% of writers in the Australian film industry.³³⁷ The Australian documentary scene fares better, although it is still far from parity: between 1988 and 2014, 41% of producers, 34% of directors, and 37% of writers were women.³³⁸ Around half of Australian film school graduates are women, so this imbalance cannot be excused by women choosing not to train or work in film; the problem is within the industry itself.³³⁹

This results in an under-representation of female characters on screen



Since films made by male directors in Australia feature female characters or subjects only 24% of the time, compared to 74% for films with women directors, this gender disparity behind the camera has a direct impact on the portrayal of women on our screens.³²⁸ The global project *Gender Bias Without Borders* analysed every speaking or named character in films released across the 11 largest box office markets between 2010 and 2013, including Australia. A grand total of zero films from Australia were found to have balanced casts; only 30% of characters were female.³²⁹ Of the female characters in Australian movies, 37% were sexualised during the film; Australia had the second highest proportion of sexualised female characters in the study.³³⁰ Only 43% of female characters in Australian movies were employed, compared to 63% of male characters; of all the characters holding a job in our movies, just 23% are women.³³¹

Gender balance and representation in Australian cinema³⁴⁰:



How are women represented on screen?

This results in an under-representation of female characters on screen

In 2015 Screen Australia announced a Five Point Plan to move towards better representation of women in the screen industry. It introduced a new fund for projects that satisfy the '3 Tick Test' by having women in at least 3 of the key creative roles: director, writer, protagonist, producer.³³² It also changed its assessment criteria for funding to include "gender and cultural diversity" as an "additional point of consideration", noting that "preference may be given to those who have gender and cultural diversity in their teams" (emphasis added) but setting no mandatory targets.³³³ As critics have noted, this "rather vague" commitment may not do much to effect systemic change.³³⁴

Screen Australia has also undertaken some valuable research into representation in Australian television.³³⁵ By analysing TV drama characters and the actors who played them between 2011 and 2015, they found that people with Anglo-Celtic backgrounds are over-represented on television while people from European backgrounds, such as Greek or Italian, and from non-European backgrounds, especially Asian, African, or Middle Eastern, were significantly under-represented. Characters identified as Indigenous Australians were comparatively well represented but concentrated in fewer programs.

People with disability were also significantly under-represented on television compared to the Australian population, with just 4% of characters identified as having a disability.

People with disability were also significantly under-represented on television compared to the Australian population, with just 4% of characters identified as having a disability. Also under-represented were LGBTQI Australians, who see themselves in only 5% of characters on our television screens.

While this data on Australian television is extremely valuable, it does not include gender, while Screen Australia's data on gender in Australian film does not include other factors such as cultural background, disability status, sexual orientation or gender identity. As we have found in so many other sections of this report, this leaves a gap in the data through which women who are also members of other marginalised groups fall. We have no sense, for example, of the specific representation of women with disabilities, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, on our screens.

How are women represented in sport?

They suffer from “entrenched sexism” in the media’s coverage of sport



The Senate Inquiry into Women in Sport and Recreation in Australia reported in 2006. In assessing all the barriers to women and girls’ participation in sport at the grassroots, elite, and leadership level, it saw fit to include an entire chapter on the representation of women in sport in the media. The inquiry found an “entrenched sexism” in the Australian media’s coverage of sport, from the low rate of coverage (the latest research at the time indicated just 4% of print sports coverage and 2% of television sports coverage was about women’s sport), to the lack of female sports journalists, to coverage that reinforced gender stereotypes or undermined women’s achievements.³⁴¹

The report made a series of recommendations including a \$3 million per annum funding boost to the Australian Sports Commission for initiatives for greater coverage of women’s sport, and it asked the Senate to refer back to the committee by 2010. The government tabled its response in 2012, outlining the actions it had taken in response to the 2006 inquiry, including funding media training for Australian athletes, funding Women in Sport Media Grants to assist sports bodies to generate media exposure for women’s sport, and commissioning research to update the data on media coverage of women’s sport.³⁴² That research, carried out from 2008 to 2009, confirmed that female sport received “starkly disproportionate” coverage in the Australian media, making up 9% of all sports coverage: horse racing received more air time than all of women’s sport combined in Australian television news.³⁴³

Since then there has been very little follow up at the federal level. At the state level, a 2015 Sport and Recreation Victoria Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation concluded that greater positive media promotion and greater visibility of female athletes is one of the keys to increasing female participation in sport.³⁴⁴ It found that women’s sport accounted for just 7% of total television sport coverage and 6% of print sports coverage in Australia, despite there being clear evidence for a “strong appetite” for more women’s sport to be broadcast and reported on in the media: the first AFLW match broadcast on free to air television drew an audience of more than half a million.³⁴⁵

The issue of women’s absence from leadership roles has also not been resolved. Women still make up only 3.9% of key decision-making roles in sport and recreation, and the gender pay gap in the sporting sector is considerably higher than in the rest of the economy, at 35.1%.³⁴⁶ Australian research suggests this is due to organisational cultures in the sporting sector revolving around the values and experiences of men, as well as networking and hiring practices that exclude women.³⁴⁷

How are women represented in sport?

They reduce their participation in sport due to gendered judgements on their appearance and abilities

The way women are represented in sport - as being thin, fit, and muscular - creates the impression that if you don't fit that description, sport isn't for you.

The earlier chapter on Education noted a trend of low physical activity in teenage girls and identified some of the reasons for that trend: anxiety, self-consciousness, gender norms, and safety concerns. This trend continues into adulthood; half of Australian women exercise less than is recommended for good health and one in five do no physical activity in a typical week.³⁴⁸

VicHealth's research for its *This Girl Can* campaign found that more than half of women worry about being judged while exercising, 41% feel too embarrassed to exercise in public, half find gyms and sports clubs intimidating, and one in four worries about getting changed in front of others.³⁴⁹

Women know the health benefits of being active, and the health risks of low physical activity, but it's not enough to overcome the fear of judgement that starts in school and continues over the life course.³⁵⁰

The way women are represented in sport - as being thin, fit, and muscular - creates the impression that if you don't fit that description, sport isn't for you. Evidence shows that this gives rise to a fear of judgement that stops women getting physically active.³⁵¹

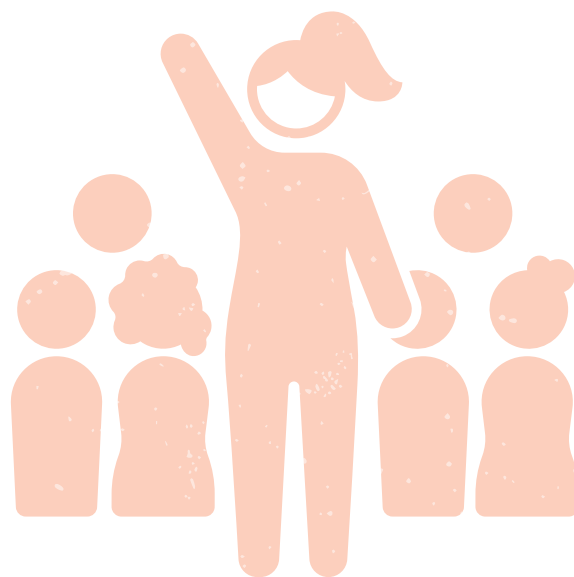
How do we measure the representation of women and where are the data gaps?

Measurement and assessment of the representation of women in Australian society has been left to academics and civil society. As we have seen, the 2019 Women for Media Report *You can't be what you can't see* provided a useful analysis of the representation of women in the Australian media, but resources allowed for only a small sample size; a fully representative analysis would require significantly more time and funding to produce a genuine quantitative data set to analyse the nature of representation of women and its impact on their material and social disadvantage.

Similarly, analyses of the representation of women in sport and other areas of civil society is in its infancy and relies on the individual efforts of academic researchers and peak bodies. There is no comprehensive analysis at a state or national level of how Australian women are represented in civil society.

Gender Equality in Representation And Leadership

Chapter 9 – Leadership



"All my life I've believed that men and women have equal capacities and talents – consequently, there should be equality in life's chances.

—The Hon. Julia Gillard AC, 8 March 2014

According to Conrad Liveris's annual *Gender Equality at Work* report, a man named Andrew is 27% more likely than a woman to be the CEO of an ASX200 company in 2019; and, despite a steady increase in the number of women on boards over the last decade, there are only 14 major Australian companies chaired by women, compared to 13 chaired by men named Peter, and 11 each by men named John and Michael.³⁵²

Recent coordinated efforts to get more women onto boards and into leadership positions in business are showing early, if slow, results, while progress towards gender equality in government and parliamentary leadership is similarly sluggish.

A Per Capita study of parliamentary representation released in January 2019 found that the proportion of women elected to Parliament had grown from 11.6% in 1988 to 33.2% in 2018 – that is, the proportion of parliamentarians who are women has grown from just over one in ten 30 years ago to three in ten today.³⁵³ At a rate of increase of 11% every 15 years, it would take a further quarter of a century for women to achieve parity with men as elected members of our Parliament.

The march of Australian women into positions of leadership is, essentially, one of incremental progress, but has recently been underpinned by concerted efforts by non-government and civic institutions such as the

Women's Leadership Institute of Australia (WLIA), Chief Executive Women (CEW), and the Australian Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) to provide targeted support to women with leadership potential, and to bring a greater focus to the problem through the media and public discourse.

It is important to note that the relatively high-profile and coordinated focus on 'women at the top' is sometimes criticised as being an exclusionary form of privileged feminism, which is preoccupied with gaining prestige for high-profile, already fortunate women at the expense of efforts to address the more consequential effects of gender discrimination on women from across society who lack access to power.

While it is true that gender discrimination has less material impact on the lives and financial wellbeing of women in senior leadership positions than it does on women in lower-income roles or those locked out of the workforce for long periods, only by ensuring that women are given an equal chance to lead and make decisions at the highest levels can we improve outcomes for all women.

This is why leadership matters. Having women in leadership roles within the formal realms of power and influence in society creates structural and cultural change, disrupting norms and providing role models for

Chapter 9 – Leadership

younger women. Critically, having more women in senior positions in both public, community and private sector organisations has been shown to improve decision making and organisational performance, and to increase trust in leadership.

If we hope to overturn centuries of embedded expectations that only men can occupy, and succeed in, leadership roles, we must actively demonstrate the social and economic benefits of women's leadership by promoting and supporting women to succeed at the highest levels, and to model pathways to power for all women and girls.

Critics of active programs, such as quota systems, to put more women into leadership positions across society often claim that such measures are a form of 'reverse discrimination' and undermine merit-based appointments to important roles with significant social, cultural and economic responsibilities.

Yet if leadership positions were genuinely assigned purely according to merit, we could expect to see women occupying around half of such roles across society, in accordance with their representation in the population. As we shall see below, Australia is far from achieving such parity.

As Professor Iris Bohnet, Director of the Women and Public Policy Program at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government has demonstrated, gender bias is deeply rooted in the human mind, and often manifests unconsciously in the decisions we make. This means that men in positions of leadership are more likely to recruit into other senior positions men that remind them of themselves, and who conform to traditional models of typical leaders.

Bohnet says that we need to see "counter-stereotypical examples" that challenge those gender biases to help us change our minds. Until we overcome the inherent gender biases in our thinking and social interactions, we must implement what Bohnet refers to as "behavioural

design" to ensure women are given equal opportunities to progress to leadership positions.³⁵⁴

Bohnet cites the example of orchestras in the US, in which only 10% of players in the 1970s were female. To overcome the inherent bias among orchestra directors towards hiring men, they began conducting "blind auditions", in which players performed behind a curtain, making their gender invisible. Research conducted by Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse showed that this approach led directly to an increase in the proportion of women in major US orchestras to 40% in two decades.³⁵⁵

Recent research in Australia by McKinsey and Company demonstrated that behavioural design practices are critical to promoting women to positions of leadership, and that within companies that are performing highly in this regard, leaders show a "high willingness to break through barriers and address challenges".

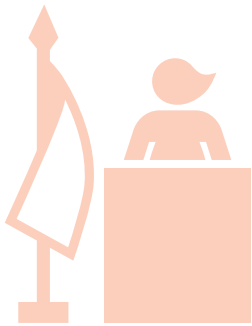
The 2018 report *Women In Leadership: Lessons from Australian companies leading the way*, found that, consistent with the conclusions from our own research as outlined in the previous chapter on Employment, "...[t]he factor most correlated to higher ratios of women in top roles is the percentage of managers who are on part-time programs, a practice classified as 'normalizing flexible work practices'".³⁵⁶

The report identified key practices used by businesses with high success rates of promoting women into leadership roles, including actively sponsoring and developing rising women, challenging the traditional views of merit in recruitment and evaluation, investing in frontline-leader capabilities to drive cultural change and – critically, reflecting the findings of this report – supporting talent through life transitions.

We know what works to promote women to an equal share of leadership roles, and we know why it matters. All that remains is to find the collective will to address the low numbers of female leaders in Australian society.

What is the state of gender equality in leadership?

To assess the state of gender equality in leadership for this report, we examined the role women are playing in the exercise of formal constitutional power.



Women occupy leadership positions across Australian society, from the management of large companies to running the school canteen. However, leadership is primarily conceived through reference to the magnitude of authority, power and influence an individual's position has in society.

To assess the state of gender equality in leadership for this report, we examined the role women are playing in the exercise of formal constitutional power. The positions of power outlined in the Australian Constitution shape and influence the machinery of government, giving officeholders the authority to make, implement and adjudicate on the laws of Australia, including laws about gender equality itself. This is why formal positions of power matter so much, and why international gender equality instruments, such as the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, prioritise the measurement of parliamentary participation of women when assessing progress towards equality.

However, analysis of gender equality in leadership that only focusses on constitutional power fails to understand the other important ways that authority and influence is exercised within Australian society. For this reason, we look at leadership in two other realms of power - business and the economy, and the media - to determine Australia's progress towards gender equality.

Of course, these are not the only realms of power, influence and leadership. Gender equality in leadership matters in our faith institutions, the community and non-profit sectors, as well as in sports administration and the arts, and many more sectors. In future iterations of this report, we hope to expand on the fields of leadership examined below.

What role are women playing in the exercise of constitutional power?

There have been too few Australian women heads of state

A woman has been Prime Minister of Australia for three out of 108 years.

Of all the measures included in the WEF's GGGI, Australia's performance is poorest in the Political Empowerment sub-index, where we have a gender gap of 77%. The GGGI uses three variables to assess political empowerment: the proportion of woman with seats in parliament; the share of women in ministerial positions; and the number of years with a female head of state in the last 50 years. In every category, most notably in the head of state indicator, Australia's performance lags behind nations of equivalent size and wealth.

Australia has had only one female Governor General, Dame Quentin Bryce AC, who served for five years from 2008-2014; and only one female Prime Minister, The Hon Julia Gillard AC, who served for three years from 2010-2013.

If we position this against the history of Australia as a federated nation, we find that a woman has been Governor General of Australia for five out of 108 years, or 4.6% of the time since Federation, while men have held the role for 95.4% of the time.

A woman has been Prime Minister of Australia for even less time: three out of 108 years, meaning women have been Prime Minister for 2.7% of the time since Federation, while men have held the position for 97.3% of the time. If this rate of change were to continue, Australia would not achieve gender parity in these positions for another thousand years.

Consequently, the GGGI gives Australia a poor ranking for its low number of years with a female head of state, affording us a very low score of 3 out of 50, which contributes to our overall weak performance on the political empowerment indicators.

At a state and territory level, Australia has had 11 female heads of government: seven Premiers of states (two each in NSW and Queensland, and one in each of WA, Tasmania and Victoria), and four Chief Ministers of a territory (three in the ACT and one in the NT). Fourteen women have also served, or are serving, as the deputy head of government in Australian states and territories: nine as the deputy premier of a state, and six as the deputy chief minister of a territory.

Eight women have been appointed Governors of states, and two the administrators of territories.³⁵⁷

What role are women playing in the exercise of constitutional power?

The numbers of women Members of Parliament remains low, but is improving slowly

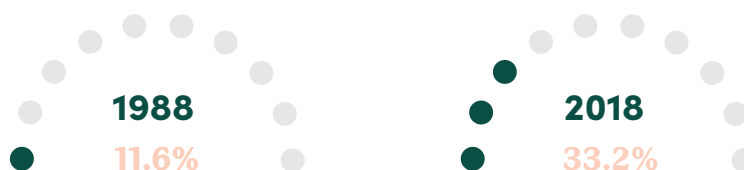


Sex-disaggregated parliamentary leadership data is tracked by the Australian Parliamentary Library's *Composition of Australian Parliaments by party and gender: a quick guide*.³⁵⁸ The document is updated regularly, usually immediately after an election or by-election to provide the most up to date statistics. Only the most recent version of the document is online, with no public access to historical data, although the Library publishes information on trends and changes over time.

The report records sex disaggregated parliamentary composition for the federal government and states and territories. Its most recent report was published on 1 July 2019, incorporating results of the last Federal Election, and clearly shows where Australia is performing well, and where it continues to perform badly in terms of equal representation.³⁵⁹

As we have seen, Per Capita's own analysis shows an increase in the proportion of female Parliamentarians from 11.6% to 33.2% over the last three decades. This improvement has largely been driven by the implementation of a quota system in the Australian Labor Party, which has seen female representation grow from 10.3% in 1988 to 46.3% three decades later, a fourfold increase; and the emergence of the Greens, with an even 50/50 split of Parliamentarians by gender, as a force in minority party representation. Progress in the conservative parties has, by contrast, been much slower, with both the Liberal and National parties only doubling the proportion of female MPs in the same 30-year period (for the Nationals, this meant adding just one female MP).

Proportion of women elected to Parliament in Australia:



What role are women playing in the exercise of constitutional power?

There are modest improvements in the number of female ministers in the Executive

Australia does not track the numbers of women at a ministerial level. The Australian Parliamentary Library's analysis of gender in parliament does not provide this level of detail, although it could do so with appropriate resourcing.

Nevertheless, it is possible to compile information about the gender composition of Federal and State Cabinet Ministries and Shadow Ministries through a review of websites of each Australian Parliament.

The representation of women in the current federal government cabinet is 26.1% or 6 of 23 positions.

The representation of women in the current federal shadow cabinet is 47.8% or 11 of 23 positions.

In addition to less than equal numbers of women in Australian cabinets, there is also the problem of gender segregation in portfolio allocations, with women often being allocated 'caring' portfolios and being kept at arm's length from Treasury and economic development.

Women dominate junior levels of the public service, but remain underrepresented at the executive level

While there is still a considerable gender gap at the ministerial level between men and women, at the bureaucratic level in departmental offices of the Australian Public Service (APS), women now exceed men nationally with the workforce now at 59% female.

Data on the gender composition of the APS is collected by the Australian Public Service Association and reported on annually as part of its APS Statistical Bulletin.³⁶⁰ While women's participation in the public service has been equal to or slightly greater than men for over a decade, there is still a significant gender gap at executive levels of the public service, with around 60% of the most senior positions occupied by men. However, the APS's own statistics show a "...consistent narrowing of the gap between women and men at all senior levels" over the last decade.³⁶¹

What role are women playing in the exercise of constitutional power?

We don't have enough gender data to know what is going on within local government

There is significant difficulty in gathering available data to undertake a similar gendered analysis of composition of local government across Australia. Local government is also excluded from consideration in most global gender indexes and dashboards.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) does not collect data on the representation of women in elected positions nationally. It does collect data on the numbers of women working for local government in its Local Government Workforce and Future Skills Report Australia,³⁶⁴ noting that in the last decade there has been an increase in the proportion of female local government staff to 47.4%.

The ALGA has committed to producing gendered data on elected representative in its strategic plan but has lacked resources to undertake this work to date.

States and territory local government organisations are also slow to develop sex-disaggregated analysis of elected officials. A rare exception to this is data recorded by the Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA), which has been tracking women's local government leadership, and running programs to increase that election of women, for 18 years. The Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy has set a target of 50% women councillors and mayors by 2025,³⁶⁵ with the VLGA currently working towards 50% for the 2020 October local government elections.³⁶⁶ Current representation of women in elected positions in local government in Victoria sits at 38%.

Men still dominate the judiciary

The total number of women in Commonwealth Judicial Positions is 57 out of 157, or 36%.

Gender statistics on the numbers of men and women presiding over courts is collected annually by the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration's *Gender Statistics Report*.³⁶² The data records both national and state/territory courts at the Supreme, District and Magistrates' Court levels.

Analysis of the gender breakdown of tribunals, those entities not exercising judicial power, is not included in this report. This means that some important adjudicating and review bodies, such as the Fair Work Commission, Migration and Refugee Review Tribunals and Social Security Appeals are not reported on centrally in the same way. While Annual Reports of these bodies list tribunal members there is no

obligation to report on the gender of members.

The gender breakdown of judicial leadership requires regular monitoring. Lack of diversity amongst judicial officers and a predominance of men at the bench has been observed to be one of the limitations for women getting fair and equal justice in rape and sexual assault cases, as well as for creating a re-traumatising experience for victims of family violence. Sentencing of perpetrators of violence against women is of particular concern to women's rights advocates.³⁶³ Ensuring women share in judicial decision making is essential to the public's faith and confidence in the judiciary and the legal system.

What leadership roles are women playing in the economy?

Economic leadership by women in Australia is critically important for gender equality.

The *McKinsey Global Institute* reported that the Australian economy would increase by 12%, or \$297 billion annually, if the nation could advance women's equality.³⁶⁷ There is much evidence to show that the various barriers to women's full economic participation, including the gender pay gap, the devaluing of work performed in feminised industries, the low levels of investment in early childhood education and childcare, and inflexible workplaces and practices, would be more rapidly addressed if more women were in positions of business and economic leadership across society.

In this section, we examine the data on the numbers of women participating as business and economic leaders as a way of understanding whether their inclusion or exclusion is having an impact on the economic outcomes for women across society.

Measuring the role of women's leadership in the economic realm requires analysis of women's participation in, and control of, market-based entities within the Australian economy: that is, of both large and small business. It also means understanding the role women play in key economic agencies and regulators, and in collectives of workers, such as the Australian Council of Trade Unions and its affiliate members.

What leadership roles are women playing in the economy?

Australian businesses have a long way to go before achieving gender equality

Persistent low levels of women's leadership in Australian businesses has resulted in the establishment of several forums for accountability and reporting on gendered data over recent years.

The *Gender Equality Insights 2019: Breaking through the glass ceiling*, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre & WGEA Report provides an analysis of senior level positions occupied by women in the economy as a whole and by industry.³⁶⁸ In 2019, only 16.8% of women hold positions as Chief Executive Officers or the equivalent in Australia.

The report also reveals how long it will be until the leadership gender gap in Australian business is closed, by listing the years by which women could, based on current trajectories, expect to achieve parity with men. The list is sobering reading for women aspiring to lead a company in Australia.

Another useful source of analysis is a report produced by McKinsey & Company in partnership with the Business Council of Australia and Workplace Gender Equality Agency in November 2017.³⁶⁹ The report provides a snapshot on women's leadership in listed companies, noting women make up 42% of the workforce in ASX200 companies, but only 25% of executives and 10% of CEOs.

More recently, the 2019 Chief Executive Women's ASX 200 Senior Executive Census found that the women now only hold 6% of ASX200 CEO roles, and that 17 companies in the ASX200 have no women in their executive leadership teams at all.³⁷⁰

The Australian Institute of Company Directors produces a regular report tracking progress towards the voluntary target it set of 30% women on corporate boards in 2015.³⁷¹ *Tracking the 30% target: Gender diversity progress report* is updated quarterly, and most recently recorded that ASX200 listed companies, which have been AICD's main focus to date, is just below target at 29.5%. However, during the first half of 2019, the AICD noted with disappointment that 30 of 39 appointments went to men, including nine out of nine CEO positions.³⁷²

The high levels of interest in tracking and monitoring sex-disaggregated data in corporate leadership is a positive development, however different agencies and researchers present slightly different findings according to the various methodologies, metrics and priorities in place at each individual organisation. More accurate and consistent data could be realised were the AICD, WGEA and other interested parties to work together to determine the appropriate indicators for inclusion in one annual report, with quarterly updates.

Position	Proportion of women in role in 2019	Year in which gender parity expected
CEO	16.8%	2100
Key Management Personnel	29%	2039
Executives	29%	2047
All Managers	36.3%	2042

What leadership roles are women playing in the economy?

There are increasing numbers of women in leadership positions in financial institutions and regulators

In the almost 60 years since the establishment of the Reserve Bank of Australia, no woman has yet held the position of Governor.

While traditionally women have been excluded from the highest ranks of financial institutions and regulators in Australia, recent years have seen considerable progress towards increasing the number of women in leadership positions within the governance of our economic systems.

In the almost 60 years since the establishment of the Reserve Bank of Australia, no woman has yet held the position of Governor.³⁷³ In 2019, while all three *ex officio* members of the board are men (the Governor, Deputy Governor and Secretary of the Treasury), 50% (three out of six) of the non-executive members are women. Within the senior management team, three of five Assistant Governors, including those for Financial Systems, Corporate Services and Economics, are women.

Similar progress towards gender equality in senior roles can be seen at the corporate regulator, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC), where the executive leadership team is exactly 50% female, with 19 women amongst the 38 senior management staff. Again, although the position of Chair has never been held by a woman, the Deputy Chair is Karen Chester, formerly in the same role at the Productivity Commission, and two of five other commissioners are women.

In Chester's former workplace, gender equality is some way behind, with four women amongst the seven part-time Productivity Commissioners,³⁷⁴ but only one of the seven full-time positions held by a woman.

At the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), things are a little more even-handed, with one of two Deputy Chairs being female, along with three of four Commission Members and two of four Associate Members. Yet again, however, Australia has never had a female Chair of the ACCC.³⁷⁵

What leadership roles are women playing in the economy?

Trade unions are leaders in gender equality, but there's still work to do to

Trade unions play a significant role in shaping economic outcomes in Australia and influencing economic and political decision making. Trade unions have traditionally been at the forefront of arguing for gender equality in Australia and have a variety of policies and procedures, including affirmative action strategies, to ensure women occupy positions of leadership at a national level.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) conducts a voluntary Women in Unions survey of member unions every three years, which is distributed internally to the ACTU executive to inform policy and practice for gender equality. For the purposes of this report we were given access to the most recent findings of the survey, which was conducted in 2014.

The survey found that women make up 54% of union members, 51.6% of union delegates and 59% of union branch committees. However, women are less well represented at an official level, with 38.5% of elected Presidents and Secretaries women, and 36.4% of Assistant Secretaries and 45.8% of Vice-Presidents.

The 2014 Women in Unions survey also notes with disappointment that representation of women at ACTU Congress had fallen by 10% on 2010 figures. It is not clear from the report how many union representatives form part of ACTU Congress, so this data can only be understood qualitatively.

The report also observes that “there is still a clear pattern of gendered hierarchical and occupational segregation within unions” with women in senior roles often placed in administration, support and speciality positions, rather than in centres of power.

The 2014 survey is six years old and it is unclear whether another one is being undertaken. Although the survey claims it is undertaken every three years, only three datasets are on record – 1999, 2010, and 2014.

The only current available data on leadership in trade unions can be derived from information from the ACTU's website about its current Board of Directors, which reveals gender balance on the executive with an equal number of men and women. Further, there is particularly strong representation of women in executive leadership positions at the ACTU, with both the offices of National Secretary and National President currently held by women: Sally McManus and Michelle O'Neil, respectively.

It is difficult to assess the gender make up of leadership of affiliated union members of the ACTU. The Women in Unions Survey is heavily caveated by the observation that respondents to the survey were largely women dominated unions. This means that the voluntary Women in Unions Survey is failing to be completed by male dominated unions, and therefore provides a skewed understanding of gender equality across the workforce.

What leadership roles are women playing in the economy?

Charity, non-profit and philanthropic sectors

There is currently no data or information about the number of CEOs, staff or volunteers in the non-profit sector, or a breakdown of positions by gender.

Charitable organisations may exist for social causes, but they are a significant part of the economic fabric of the country. The non-profit sector employs 1,222,676 people and manages just under 3 million volunteers.³⁷⁶

The *Australian Charities Report* is the leading governance report on charitable giving in Australia and is produced by the national regulator of charities, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). It provides detail about donations received, investments made and the numbers of employees and volunteers in the non-profit sector but makes no analysis of this data through a gender lens.

Similarly, at Philanthropy Australia, the peak membership body for the philanthropic community, there is a lack of easily accessible data on the participation of women in the sector, although the organisation does produce the *Genderwise Philanthropy Guide* and encourages investment in women and girls through the Women and Girls Funder Group, established in March 2018.

There is currently no data or information about the number of CEOs, staff or volunteers in the non-profit sector, or a breakdown of positions by gender.

In 2015 ProBono Australia published the *ProBono Sector Survey: Gauging the State of the Not for Profit Sector*, which surveyed 1,100 NFP employees about sector and organisational performance, human capital, funding sources and relationships. However, the analysis of human resources contained therein does not provide sex-disaggregated data of the make-up of the workforce or the survey participants.

Despite this oversight, ProBonoAustralia clearly has a strong awareness of gender inequality as an issue within the sector. On International Women's Day 2019, it reported on *The Fair Share Campaign*, a global initiative of ten of the largest NGOs in the world to correct gender imbalances in the charitable industry.

As part of the campaign, Kumi Naidoo, head of Amnesty International tweeted that "on average 70% of positions in NGO's are held by women but 70% of the leaders are men."³⁷⁷

What leadership roles are women playing in the economy?

The media

The control of media – broadcasting, the internet, radio and telecommunications – is a source of considerable influence in Australian politics and the broader community. Gender equality in this realm matters because of the role the media has in shaping public opinion as well as influencing the stories we share about Australian culture and power itself.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is responsible for regulating the industry and provides information about media ownership on its website. Although there is no explicit analysis of gender in the data provided, it is possible to deduce that women currently own only 20% of private media interests in Australia, with only one woman, Janet Cameron, holder of the family owned Grant Broadcasters.

The ACMA does not drill down into a gender analysis of the boards of private media holdings. Though it collects detailed information about the ownership of newspapers across Australia, it does not provide a gender analysis of the make-up of newspaper boards or editors. This is a significant gap in gender data on leadership in the media.

The gender breakdown of the two national public broadcasters, ABC and SBS is, far more transparent. The ABC Board is chaired by a woman, Ita Buttrose, and 66% of ABC directors are women. At SBS, women make up 44% of the Board. In both the ABC and SBS, women make up over half of the workforce, with the ABC providing very detailed data on the gender breakdown of content producers and executives.

Both public broadcasters also report on other attributes of diversity, such as Indigenous, CALD and non-binary gender identification.

How do we measure women's leadership and where are the data gaps?

Of all the areas of women's place in Australian society examined in this report, leadership is perhaps the most comprehensively measured and reported. Thanks to the efforts of the WGEA and WLIA in particular, there is significant data available to measure the presence of women in leadership positions across business, politics and civil society, as outlined in this chapter. This is almost certainly due to the significant power of women in leadership positions to drive change in this area, compared to the limited influence of women in low-paid work, those who spend their time doing unpaid labour and care for others, women from marginalized and disadvantaged communities, and the victim-survivors of domestic violence.

That women in leadership positions are now turning their attention to measuring and reporting on other areas of gender discrimination and disadvantage, most obviously in the field of violence, demonstrates the importance of promoting women's leadership to achieving gender equality throughout society.

Nevertheless, there remain gaps in the data available on women in local government, cabinet and the ministry, and areas of the judiciary and the law which could be addressed by an appropriate government agency as part of a comprehensive commitment to measuring and achieving gender equality.

Leadership Data Dashboard:

Indicator Description	Unit	
Political Leadership		
Federal		
• Years with a female head of state since Federation	5	4.6%
• Years with a female Prime Minister since Federation	3	2.7%
• Women in the House of Representatives	214	35.3%
• Women in the Senate	95	41.1%
• Women in Cabinet	5/23	21.7%
• Women in Shadow Cabinet	11/23	47.8%
State		
• Number of Female Premiers/Chief Ministers	2	25%
• Number of Female MP's		
o ACT	13	52%
o NT	12	48%
o NSW	45	33%
o QLD	30	32%
o VIC	53	41%
o SA	119	28%
o NT	23	58%
o WA	30	32%
Local		
• Number of Female Mayors	NA	NA
• Number of Female CEOs of LGA	NA	NA
Public Service		
• Women in Australian Public Service Workforce		59%
• Women in Executive Leadership		40%
Judiciary		
• Women in Commonwealth Judicial Positions	57	36%
• Women in Commonwealth Tribunal Positions	NA	NA
Economy		
• Women on the Reserve Bank of Australia Board	3	50%
• Women on the ASIC Board	3	50%
• Women on the ACCC Board	6	54%
• Women on the Productivity Commission Board	5	35%
• Number of Chief Executives in ASX200 companies	12	6%
• Women in the ASX200 Workforce	NA	42%
• Women in Trade Unions	NA	54%
• Women on the ACTU Executive	24	50%
Philanthropy		
• Number of women CEOs	NA	NA
• Number of women on Boards	NA	NA
Media		
• Number of women on ABC Board		66%
• Number of women on SBS Board		44%
• Number of women owners of private media		20%

Conclusion

Towards National Accountability for Gender Equality

Across the life course, gender inequality in Australia has profound consequences for women and girls: no area of a woman's life is immune to its influence. It is clear that Australian women face the greatest risk of falling behind their male compatriots at the points of transition between different stages of life.

Despite a strong history of achieving progress for women throughout the 20th century, Australia is now performing poorly on a number of global gender equality indices. As other nations make advancements for women, Australia's lack of institutional frameworks and performance monitoring is contributing to its decline as a global leader in gender equality.

Australia's international reporting suffers from a lack of quantifiable data that can be monitored for progress. Without an agreed set of indicators to measure gender equality, and a commitment to annual accounting, there is little prospect of Australia's performance against international benchmarks improving any time soon.

Moreover, narrative based reports to global bodies deliver limited national accountability. While ensuring we continue to improve our performance against globally accepted indicators, Australians should define our own measures of progress towards gender equality.

The time is now for an annual Australian Gender Equality Report. Ideally, this should be produced by an agency of government, and we call on the federal government to consider establishing such an agency to undertake this work.

In the meantime, there is considerable expertise amongst civil society institutions, academic bodies and other non-government organisations that can be drawn upon to develop a uniquely Australian set of indicators for assessing our progress towards gender equality and creating the basis for a strong annual report.

We hope our work might represent the start of a process to achieve this. By reviewing existing data and research, we have attempted to reveal a potential framework for the production of an annual analysis of Australia's gender equality performance.

It is the intention of the authors to collaborate with researchers and organisations whose work is referenced in this report, in order to address the gaps in gender analysis that we have identified and which are contributing to unequal outcomes for women.

Our hope is that, in time, an "Australian Gender Equality Dashboard" could be digitised and interactive, to engage Australian men and women in an ongoing discussion about gender equality, and to ensure the challenge of eliminating barriers to women's full participation in society are fully understood.

Ultimately, our goal must be an Australia in which women and girls are able to reach their full potential, and to live lives of equal opportunity to men and boys. Nothing less is good enough.

Appendix A

Overview of International Gender Equality Assessment Tools

United Nations - Human Development Index (HDI) & Gender Development Index (GDI)

The UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI)³⁷⁸ measures four indicators of human development – life expectancy, years of schooling, means of schooling and gross national income per capita. It is designed to measure long term progress in human development.

Australia performs highly in the HDI, where data relating to men and women is aggregated. It is ranked in the Very High Group, third in the world behind only Norway and Switzerland.³⁷⁹

However, sex disaggregated analysis of Australian performance under the HDI, known as the Gender Development Index (GDI), sees Australia slip down to 59th in the world, positioning it as a second-tier nation in global gender development.³⁸⁰

So, while Australia is a high performing nation in the development of men, it is not for women. There is a substantial gender development gap in Australia according to this analysis.

The indicator creating the greatest discrepancy in outcomes for men and women in Australia is standard of living. The GDI, using Gross National Income Per Capita, shows a \$16,534 gap between female and male wages in Australia.³⁸¹

Australia's ranking in the GDI has gone backwards

in the last decade. In 2009 the CEDAW committee congratulated Australia for being “ranked first in the world in the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2009 with regard to its gender-related development index”.³⁸²

The discrepancy between Australia's performance on the HDI and the GDI illustrates a clear policy problem: Australian men are benefiting from world-leading living standards, employment and leadership opportunities but Australian women are not.

United Nation's Gender Inequality Index (GII)

The United Nations Gender Inequality Index (GII) provides a deeper analysis than the HDI, by expanding the list of indicators to include selective gender related data, such as maternal mortality, adolescent birth rates, the number of women in parliament, girls' completion of secondary school education and women's labour force participation.

Australia ranks 23rd in the world on the GII, with poor results in women's parliamentary leadership and low levels of participation of women in the labour force contributing to a diminished ranking.

Appendix A

World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)

The World Economic Forum, of which Australia is an active member, has also created its own measure of the global gender gap, with a highly interactive digital report providing detailed analysis of women's rights in 149 countries.

The WEF has been collecting gendered data since 2006 across four thematic areas: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Each of these areas measures performance against a subset of key indicators.

The GGGI also includes a dashboard to report on quantitative and qualitative contextual data. The GGGI is published annually and provides the most regular reporting of Australia's gender performance at an international level.

Increasingly, this GGGI is used by Australian NGOs and civil society organisations as a benchmark for Australian gender equality performance in the absence of any regular national documentation or reporting.

Australia has fallen from ranking 15th in the world in 2006, when the GGGI commenced, to 44th in 2020.

Sustainable Development Goals Index

The SDGs commit nation-states to eradicating gender inequality by 2030.

SDG Goal 5 sets nine targets for achieving gender equality, including eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, recognising the value of unpaid care and domestic work, ensuring women's full participation in leadership and decision making in political, economic and public life, universal access to reproductive rights and sexual health, and equal rights for women to ownership and control over land and other forms of property.

In 2018, Australia submitted its Voluntary National Review to the SDG monitoring body, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, providing a four-page summary of achievements to date, mostly focussed on targets 5.2, 5.5 and 5A.³⁸³ The report contains a limited amount of comparable economic data focussed on women's labour force participation and the gender pay gap, as well as the representation of women in parliament. However other targets are given little focus.

The SDG Index and Dashboard Report of 2018, *Global Responsibilities: Implementing the Goals*, rates Australia's gender equality performance under the SDGs as Insufficient,³⁸⁴ three bases away from Role Model Status. Australia's overall ranking in the report for all SDG goals is 38th in the world,³⁸⁵ behind many other countries in the OECD.³⁸⁶

One of the reasons for Australia relatively poor performance is its ongoing failure to adequately resource the Australian Bureau of Statistics to identify key national indicators for monitoring SDG implementation.

Appendix A

UN's Gender Empowerment Measure

The United Nations first introduced a gender equality measure through its UN Development Program (UNDP) in the 1990s. The *Gender Empowerment Measure* collected data on:

- the number of parliamentary seats held by women;
- the number of women legislators, senior officials, and managers;
- the number of women in professional and technical positions; and
- the estimated earned income (at purchasing power parity US\$) of women in the state.

Data continues to be collected by the UNDP via the Life Course Gender Gap and Gender Empowerment Dashboards.

The Life Course Gender Gap Dashboard

The Life Course Gender Gap Dashboard breaks down gender data according to significant periods of life experience (Child and Youth, Adult and Older Age) aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.³⁸⁷

According to the UNDP's Human Development Report - 2019 Statistical Annex - Australia still does not provide data for all of the 12 indicators, with a notable absence of any information on the time Australian women spend on domestic chores and care work. Of the 10 indicators it does report on, it performs in the top percentile in 6/12 of the indicators, but in mid tercile on the proportion of unemployed young women and women on the old age pension and in the bottom tercile on pre-primary and secondary educational enrolment of girls.

Of the other nine indicators Australia does report on, it performs very well in six of those indicators.³⁸⁸

Women's Empowerment Dashboard

The Women's Empowerment Measure looks at women's status in the areas of reproductive rights and family planning, violence against girls and women, and socio-economic empowerment.³⁸⁹

Australia's performance on the Women's Empowerment Dashboard also highlights that Australia is not providing detail on four of the 13 indicators, including one in Reproductive Health & Planning, and two in Violence Against Women and Girls. Further, it is performing in the lowest tercile for non-intimate partner violence and the share of women graduates enrolled in STEM studies.

All of these reports are informative and useful in understanding Australia's progress towards gender equality, and how we compare to other countries.

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Per Capita is an independent progressive think tank, dedicated to fighting inequality in Australia. We work to build a new vision for Australia based on fairness, shared prosperity, community and social justice.

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