

Senate Inquiry on Gender Segregation in the Workplace – submission from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Background

On 9 November 2016, the Senate referred the issue of gender segregation in the workplace and its impact on women's economic equality to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by 30 March 2017. The committee invited written submissions by 10 February 2017, covering any or all of the following:

- a. the nature and extent of industrial and occupational gender segregation in Australian workplaces relative to comparable jurisdictions, including gender segregation in tertiary education courses;
- b. factors driving industrial and occupational gender segregation in the Australian context;
- c. economic consequences of gender segregation for women, including the contribution of industrial and occupational gender segregation to the gender pay gap;
- d. approaches to addressing gender segregation as it relates to economic inequality and the gender pay gap in comparable jurisdictions; and
- e. remedies appropriate for Australia, including but not limited to:
 - i. measures to encourage women's participation in male-dominated occupations and industries,
 - ii. measures to professionalise and improve conditions in female-dominated occupations and industries, and
 - iii. measures to promote pay equity.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is committed to providing leadership in the collection, monitoring and dissemination of gender statistics. We work with government, non-government and academic leaders to develop, refine and deliver official gender statistics which support the needs of society and the government. The inclusion of data to support analysis of gender equity is also available throughout the ABS work program.

This submission outlines key indicator information available in ABS products and surveys to assist in addressing the terms of reference for this inquiry.

Gender Indicators - gender in the workplace

Our flagship release of gender statistics, *Gender Indicators, Australia*, presents an annual set of national, gender-specific time series data in six areas of social concern for gender equity: Economic Security, Education, Health, Work and Family Balance, Safety and Justice, and Democracy, Governance and Citizenship. It was developed as a central access point to

explore the differences in these domains for women and men in Australia and also provide a broad basis for social analysis and research in the field of gender. A range of key indicators are also available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples, those with a disability, and those born overseas.

The latest release of *Gender Indicators, Australia*, published 31 August 2016, is publicly available on the ABS website. The data below comes from this release unless otherwise specified.

Participation in Employment

In 2015-16, 66% of Australian women aged 20-74 years were in the labour force, up from 64% a decade earlier in 2005-06. This compares with 78% of men in this age group. Participation for older women (55-64) increased by 13 percentage points over the decade, from 46% to 59%.

More than two in five employed women worked part time (44%), compared with 15% of employed men.

Industry and Occupation by gender

The gender make-up of the overall Australian workforce (for people aged 20-74) was 54% male and 46% female in 2015-16. In 2006-07, it was 55/45.

These proportions do not hold constant across industries and occupations: clear evidence exists to describe the gender segregation present across different areas of the workforce.

Industry

In 2015-16, the health care and social assistance industry employed the highest proportion of people (13%), of which women made up 78%. The next most common industry, retail trade (10% of employed people), was made up of 55% women. Construction (9% of employed people) had a significantly higher proportion of men (88%). Around three quarters of those employed in the education and training industry were women (78%).

In 2015-16, the industries with the greatest gender imbalances were as follows:

Male dominated industries	% male	Female dominated industries	% female
Construction	88%	Health care & social assistance	78%
Mining	85%	Education & training	71%
Electricity, gas, water & waste	78%	Retail trade	55%
Transport, postal & warehousing	77%	Accommodation & food services	53%
Manufacturing	74%	Financial & insurance services	53%

Occupation

Perhaps reflecting the increasing numbers of women with higher educational qualifications, over a quarter (28%) of employed Australian women aged 20-74 years were professionals, compared with 21% of employed men in this age group. The proportion of women who were professionals rose 4 percentage points over the past ten years, from 24% in 2006-07.

Women made up 54% of all professionals, but only 36% of managers. Women also made up 75% of clerical and administrative workers, 68% of community and personal service workers, and 60% of sales workers. They made up 15% of technicians and trades workers, 10% of machinery operators and drivers, and 34% of labourers.

Employment conditions

Employment conditions such as access to part-time working arrangements and leave entitlements can influence participation rates in certain industries and occupations, particularly for people with young children.

In 2015-16, over three in five (62%) employed women with a child under 5 worked part-time. Just over one in ten employed fathers of young children worked part-time (87%).

The absence of paid leave entitlements can indicate that people are employed on a casual basis. In November 2014, one in five employed women with dependent children did not have paid leave entitlements: 23% of partnered women, and 26% of lone mothers, compared with 11% of both partnered and single men with dependent children.

The majority of industries feature higher proportions of female employees without leave entitlements. Those with the greatest disparity by gender for those with no leave entitlements were:

- Arts and recreation services - 49% females with no leave entitlements, 28% males with no leave entitlements
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing - 61% females, 39% males
- Other services¹ - 37% females, 14% males
- Accommodation and food services² - 61% females, 49% males

¹ "Other Services" includes a broad range of personal services; religious, civic, professional and other interest group services; selected repair and maintenance activities; and private households employing staff. People in this division are mainly engaged in providing a range of personal care services, such as hair, beauty and diet and weight management services; providing death care services; promoting or administering religious events or activities; or promoting and defending the interests of their members. Also included are people mainly engaged in repairing and/or maintaining equipment and machinery (except ships, boats, aircraft, or railway rolling stock) or other items (except buildings); as well as people in private households that engage in employing workers on or about the premises in activities primarily concerned with the operation of households. For further information see [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5718D13F2E345B57CA257B9500176C8F/\\$File/12920_2006.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/5718D13F2E345B57CA257B9500176C8F/$File/12920_2006.pdf)

² Since 2008, the accommodation and food services industry has consistently had the highest proportions of employees without paid leave entitlements, notably higher amongst female employees.

Earnings

In 2014, the average female wage was 87% of the average male wage (non-managerial adult hourly ordinary time cash earnings). This gap has remained relatively steady over the past decade.

The construction industry had the lowest female to male wage rate ratio, with women earning 76% of the average male wage for that industry. Information media and communications had the next lowest, with women earning 78% of average male wages in this industry. Women employed as technicians and trade workers have historically had lower wages (currently earning 80% of the average male wage). Those employed as professionals earned 87% of average male earnings.

The closest to parity in wages was observed in the accommodation and food services industry, with women earning 96% of the average male wage in that industry. This was followed by women in the transport, postal and warehousing industry, who earned 95% of the average male wage for the industry.

Education

In 2015, around 60% of both men and women aged 15-64 years had a post-school qualification. Just over 29% of women and 24% of men had a Bachelor Degree or above. This was higher for those aged 25-29, at 40% and 30% respectively of women and men.

Since 2001, women aged 18-54 years have been consistently more likely than men to have attained a Bachelor Degree or above.

There are clear gender differences by field of education. In 2015, more women had completed a non-school qualification in Management and Commerce than in any other field (27%), while more men had completed qualifications in Engineering and Related Technologies (32%) than in any other field.

Overall, more women than men had completed qualifications in the fields of Management and Commerce, Society and Culture, and Health and Education, while men were more likely to have completed qualifications in Engineering and Related Technologies, Architecture and Building, and Information Technology. Women were least likely to have completed a qualification in Architecture and Building: men were ten times more likely to have qualifications in this field, which accounted for an average of just 1.2% of female graduates between 2005 and 2015. Women were three times more likely to have qualifications in Health or Education than men.

Interestingly, while women were less likely to study engineering or architecture, they tended to do so at a proportionately higher level than men who had qualifications in the field: 32% of women who completed a qualification in Engineering and Related Technologies had a Bachelor Degree in the field, compared with 13% of men; and 33% of women with a

qualification in Architecture and Building had a Bachelor degree in the field, compared with 6% of men. (Around three quarters of men with a qualification in Architecture and Building had a Certificate III/IV.)

The 2014 ABS publication *Perspectives on Education and Training: Australians with qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)*, shows that men account for around four-fifths (81%) of Australians with higher level STEM qualifications.

Self-employment

In 2014, the ABS prepared a paper for the Office for Women on self-employed women, *A Profile of Australian Women in Business*, which shows that Australian women are increasingly becoming business operators, perhaps to improve their family's social and economic wellbeing, remain attached to the labour force and better manage their work-life balance. Just over a third of Australia's business operators are women (34% in 2014), and their numbers are rising. At the time of writing:

- The greatest number of women business operators worked in the hairdressing industry
- The most common occupations were bookkeeper, retail manager, general clerk, office manager, secretary, and hairdresser.
- Women employers and sole operators had lower weekly cash earnings and disposable incomes than other employed people, but higher net wealth
- They were more likely to have dependent children or be primary carers of a person with disability than any other employed people
- 42% of women business operators had a diploma or degree
- 30% were born overseas
- 28% were aged 55 years and over
- 53% worked part-time, while 47% only or mainly worked from home

Unpaid work

What people do outside paid employment may have an effect on gender segregation in the workforce, particularly if the demands of certain industries or occupations are not flexible enough to cater for other responsibilities.

The most recent data available for work and family balance issues in the Gender Indicators publications shows that 5.8% of women and 2.6% of men provide primary care to a person with disability, 29% of men and 33% of women had done voluntary work for an organisation or group in the last 12 months, and just under 40% of employed men and 43% of employed women had provided care for someone in the past week, with 8% of these men and 10% of these women taking time off work to do so.

On average, men spent nearly twice as long as women on employment related activities, while women spent more time on domestic activities and childcare.

Around 35% of men and 42% of women felt they were always or often rushed or pressed for time (rising to 46% of male and 55% of female care providers). Around three in five Australians felt their work and family responsibilities were always or often in balance, although 16% of men and 15% of women felt they were rarely or never in balance.

Further work

The ABS is very happy to provide assistance for further analysis, should the committee require it.

Sources:

1. [Gender Indicators, Australia, August 2016 \(cat. no. 4125.0\)](#)
2. [A Profile of Australian Women in Business, 2015](#), Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
3. [Perspectives on Education and Training: Australians with qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics \(STEM\), 2010–11 \(cat. no. 4250.0.55.005\)](#)