



Australian Government



Jobs and Skills Australia

Jobs and Skills Australia JSCFADT inquiry into gender equality as a national security and economic security imperative submission

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) completed its Gender Economic Equality Study in October 2025, with data, findings and recommendations published at

<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/research/studies/gender-economic-equality-study>.

The study included new data, insights and policy recommendations in several areas relevant to the JSCFADT inquiry and why gender equality is a national security and economic imperative. For example, the JSA study found that gender inequality across the Australian labour market and skills system is a systemic productivity constraint and impacts Australia's economic capacity and our sovereign capability, due to highly gender segregated workforces in critical occupations that are consistently in shortage.

The study also highlighted detailed occupational and intersectional insights, along with ten next steps to shift complex and stubborn segregation patterns - across occupations and fields of study - that are critical in Australia's policy efforts to respond to climate change and other emerging threats.

More broadly, JSA emphasised that gender economic equality is a national economic strength issue, and that closing gender gaps would improve workforce resilience and agility, supply chain security, and long-term national productivity growth. As Nicol and Kim pointed out:

"Addressing gender inequalities can improve growth, productivity, competitiveness and the sustainability of economies. As an example, closing gaps in labour force participation and working hours may result in an average boost of 9.2% to GDP across OECD countries by 2060." (Nicol and Kim, 2023)

Key findings that are particularly relevant to this inquiry

While there are a broad range of findings that are relevant to this inquiry, there are three broad findings that are particularly relevant to an inquiry focused on gender equality and its national security and economic security implications.

1. Gender segregation is a key source of inequality and limits national productivity

Women and men remain clustered in highly gendered industries and occupations. This worsens skills shortages in high-demand areas and restricts Australia's ability to respond to emerging economic and security challenges. There is a particularly acute need to reduce gender segregation in VET pathways and occupations in shortage (e.g. electrical occupations, which are critical to Australia's Net Zero transition).

2. Early interventions are essential to shift the gendered education and training choices which shape the economy

Gender segregation in occupations and industries reflects the gendered segregation in education and training choices and pathways, which begin early in childhood. JSA has recommended introducing early career learning in primary schools, equipping young people with unbiased exposure to diverse occupations and reducing gender stereotyping and norms before it hardens into post-school study and work choices. Australia's economy and national security will benefit.

3. Care work norms and undervaluation of feminised work hold back labour force participation

The study identified men's low participation in unpaid care and domestic work and the undervaluation of feminised care industries as critical structural issues. Normalising men's engagement in care through policy settings such as paid parental leave and strengthening inclusive, safe and respectful workplaces are essential to expanding women's workforce participation and stabilising critical sectors such as health, aged care and early childhood education. Australia should be a leader in international best practice in our region in these areas and only minor shifts to policy settings are needed in some cases.

Why the findings and recommendations from the JSA study matter for this inquiry

Gender economic equality is central to Australia's national security and economic resilience. Countries with higher gender equality experience stronger economies and greater stability, underscoring its strategic importance.

Improving the economic participation and outcomes for women's (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrant, culturally and linguistically diverse, and people with disability)—through reducing gender segregation, enabling inclusive workplaces and more effective labour market settings—creates a more diverse and resilient workforce, strengthens supply chains, boosts productivity and enhances Australia's capacity to respond to climate instability, technological disruption and emerging security challenges across the region.

Inclusive labour markets are also essential for food security, climate resilience and effective humanitarian responses. Gender-segregated labour markets limit the capacity of key industries to respond to shocks, while women's leadership has also been important to disaster preparedness and community recovery. By emphasising early intervention in education and systemic reforms to the skills system, the JSA study highlights how reducing entrenched gender inequality would support longer-term security and productivity.

Promoting gender equality reflects and projects Australia's values, deepens partnerships, and supports regional leadership through alignment with international commitments such as the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The JSA study provides clear, evidence-based levers to address domestic economic structures that perpetuate different types of

compounding inequality and acknowledge the intersectional complexities of gender equality.

The Study is useful for positioning Australia as a principled and influential actor on the global stage. It also aligns strongly with DFAT's agenda and a range of other relevant work across the Australian Government, including the national Working for Women Strategy.

If you would like to discuss this submission or the JSA Gender Economic Equality Study further, please contact us at genderstudy@jobsandskills.gov.au. Dr Emma Cannen, who led the Study, can also be contacted directly at [REDACTED]

References

Nicol S and Kim J, 2023 [Gender Budgeting and intersectionality](#), OECD, accessed January 2026.