

MEDIA RELEASE

20 June 2024

New WGEA report brings most comprehensive analysis of gender equality in the Commonwealth public sector

A new report released today by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) provides the first comparable results of the gender pay gap and gender equality performance of the Commonwealth public sector, compared to Australia's private sector.

The WGEA [Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Scorecard: Key Employer Results from 2022](#) shows on average, women working in the Federal public sector earn 86 cents for every dollar men earn.

The total remuneration average gender pay gap of 13.5% equates to a difference of \$19,000 every year. This is 8.2 percentage points lower than the average total remuneration gender pay gap in the private sector of 21.7%.

The Scorecard is the first of a new annual report series publishing the results from Commonwealth public sector Gender Equality Reporting to WGEA against [the 6 gender equality indicators \(GEIs\)](#).

Other key results include:

- **The mid-point of employer gender pay gaps is lower than the private sector:** 50% of employers have a median total remuneration gender pay gap above 6.9%, compared to 9.1% for the private sector.
- **Management positions are gender-balanced overall:** Close to half (48%) of all Commonwealth public sector employers have a gender-balanced management team (compared to 27% in the private sector), 21% have a men-dominated management team and 31% have a women-dominated management team (57% and 23%, respectively, for the private sector).
- **Men are more likely to be higher paid:** Men are 2.5 times more likely to be in the highest paying quartile (this compares to 1.9 times in the private sector), driven in part by highly paid non-manager roles (professionals, trades and technicians) which predominantly employ men.
- **Many women and men are working full-time – flexibly:** Three quarters (75%) of employees in the Commonwealth public sector work full-time (compared to 54% in the private sector) and just 9% work part-time (21% in the private sector). Women are more likely to work full-time (73%) than in the private sector where almost 3 in 5 women (59%) are employed part-time or casually. This could reflect a normalisation of flexible working arrangements in the public sector.
- **Men account for 11% of universal or primary carer's leave taken** (compared to 14% in the private sector). And although 99% of employers offer paid parental leave, just 13% offer it universally without labels of 'primary' or 'secondary' carer. This is significantly lower than the private sector (21%).

WGEA CEO Mary Wooldridge said the Scorecard sets a baseline to inform employer action and improvement to accelerate progress to reduce the gender pay gap.

"A key message from this first *Commonwealth Public Sector Gender Equality Scorecard* is that good policies alone do not translate into outcomes. Positive change takes thought and deliberate action," Ms Wooldridge said.



“The Scorecard shows the Commonwealth public sector has benefited from clearly articulated commitments and sector-wide reforms in areas the private sector finds difficult to change, such as gender balance in management positions.

“Commonwealth public sector employers are also taking actions to deliver flexibility that helps empower more women to take leadership roles and drives gender balance in key management positions.

“But more does need to be done across all employers to continue to reduce the gender pay gap, including to combat stereotypes that deter men from taking parental leave and around women in non-manager roles.”

A recommendation from the Respect@Work Report and the subsequent *Anti-discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect@Work) Bill 2022* enabled the expansion of relevant employers under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act* to include the Commonwealth public sector. The GEIs are the same for both the Commonwealth public sector and the private sector. This enables comparison between the two cohorts.

Individual gender equality outcomes for the 116 Commonwealth public sector employers that reported to WGEA are published on [WGEA's website in the Data Explorer](#) today. This does not include Commonwealth public sector employer gender pay gaps. WGEA will publish these results for the first time in early 2025.

Publishing individual employer outcomes brings enhanced transparency for 37 public sector employers who have not previously been covered by either the Australian Public Service Commission or by WGEA's reporting. This includes NBN Co, CSIRO, the Australian Federal Police, the Reserve Bank and Australia Post.

Media contact: Emma Manser, *Media & Communications Manager* | **M** 0437 225 386 |
E emma.manser@wgea.gov.au

About the Agency

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is an Australian Government statutory agency charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces. Explore the gender equality data for your industry or employer on our Data Explorer at www.wgea.gov.au

Background

Further results from WGEA's reporting

- **Nearly 3 in 5 employers have a median gender pay gap in favour of men:** 59% of employers have a median gender pay gap in favour of men (5% or more), and 4% of employers have a median gender pay gap in favour of women (less than -5%)
- **The workforce is gender-balanced, but employs more men than women overall:** Nearly half of employers (48%) have a gender-balanced workforce (employing between 40% and 60% of men and women), compared to 27% in the private sector. In the Commonwealth public sector, women are 43.5% of the total workforce.
- **Women hold half of governing body positions, but fewer lead these bodies:** Despite equal representation of women and men members on Commonwealth public sector governing bodies, fewer women hold the Chair position (42%). However, this is significantly higher than the private sector where women hold 19% of Chair positions.
- **Flexible work is widely accepted and actively promoted:** 97% of Commonwealth public sector employers have a policy or strategy on flexible work and 94% promote these arrangements across the organisation.
- **A gap between analysis and action:** Although 64% of employers conducted a gender pay gap analysis, of those, 64% followed up with some form of action.

- **Narrow focus on pay risks missing other inequalities between women and men:** Of the 36% of employers who did not conduct a pay gap analysis, 69% said they made this decision because all or some of their employees' salaries are set by workplace agreements. However, gender pay gaps can persist even when salaries are set by industrial agreements. This could be due to a greater concentration of men in higher-paying roles, or a concentration of women in lower-paying roles.
- **Most employers focussing on recruitment, but scope to improve on retention and workforce planning:** More than 4 in 5 (85%) of Commonwealth public sector employers have a policy on gender equitable recruitment, but fewer have policies for talent identification of high potentials (47%) and succession planning (41%) and only 37% have key performance indicators (KPIs) relating to gender equality.

Where to find Commonwealth public sector employer results

Individual results reported to WGEA by Commonwealth public sector employers are published on WGEA's website in our [Data Explorer under 'Employer Results'](#).

This does not include employer gender pay gaps or gender composition per pay quartile for Commonwealth public sector employers.

WGEA will not publish employer gender pay gaps from Commonwealth public sector reporting, related to 2022 results. Legislation requires WGEA to publish the first Commonwealth public sector employer gender pay gaps from reporting related to data from the period 1 January to 31 December 2023. This means Commonwealth public sector employer gender pay gaps will be published by WGEA for the first time in early 2025.