

Deloitte.



Remaking the norm

In collaboration with Australians Investing
In Women and Minderoo Foundation

June 2024

Deloitte
Access Economics

Walking together with First Nations People, including First Nations women, girls and non-binary people.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country on all the lands we live, work and play. We pay our respects to the members of those communities, their Elders both past and present and we recognise and celebrate their continuing custodianship and culture.

This report explores the harmful gender norms that restrict the lives and experiences of women, men and non-binary people in Australia. We recognise that Western conceptions of gender norms may not be applicable to First Nations communities. We also know that systems of patriarchy interact with the impacts of colonialism and racism to compound disadvantage for First Nations women and girls.

This report does not seek to define what it means to achieve gender equality for First Nations people, nor how to get there. However, we recommend that intersectionality be embedded across gender equality initiatives.

We are privileged and grateful to include a case study of an incredible campaign to shift restrictive gender norms early in life by the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group in Alice Springs. This case study makes clear that initiatives for First Nations communities need to be designed and delivered by First Nations people. We continue to be guided and inspired by the First Nations women leading incredible change across Australia.

This original artwork titled Pathways to Country was created for Deloitte by Bundjalung Artist Lee-Anne Hall.



Why we undertook this research



Sruthi Srikanthan

Partner

Deloitte Access Economics



In our previous report – ‘Breaking the Norm’ – we estimated the economic value of dismantling harmful gender norms. The economy stands to benefit from adopting a more inclusive and progressive mindset on gender.

But ‘norms’ are in and of themselves a hard concept to grapple with. How do we – communities, philanthropists, businesses, households, governments – change the beliefs we hold on gender?

Practically, it feels as though it is a hard thing to do. And no single stakeholder can do it alone.

In this report, we wanted to show practical, evidence-based steps that we can take as a society to progress our gender norms to a place where we can realise the value of a more equitable Australia.



Julie Reilly OAM

CEO

Australians Investing in Women



The way we think about the world is framed by rigid gender norms which keep inequity in place for over half of Australia’s population. Efforts to address the problem have a mixed record, but they can be effectively tackled at home, in workplaces and across society as this timely report clearly sets out.

AllIW is thrilled to support ‘Remaking the Norm’ and provide case studies showing how gender-wise philanthropy can help tackle gender inequality in both action and impact. This report shows how sustainable progress comes from addressing the cause of the problem, and why philanthropy can play a key role in delivering systemic change for the benefit of all Australians.



Minderoo Foundation



Remaking the Norm highlights the rigidity of outdated gender norms that limit the freedoms and choices of people by virtue of their gender, but it also provides us with an inventory of practical options to build a fairer future.

From corporate Australia, to government, civil society and philanthropy - we are both beneficiaries of the social and economic dividends on offer, as well as responsible for shaping what our community stands for.

We hope that a world free of inequality is the only norm future generations will know. The question is – how long are we communally willing to wait before the next generation’s life choices are not limited by their gender?

It’s been Minderoo’s pleasure to contribute to the gender equality endeavours of Deloitte Access Economics’.

Every year, Australian governments, businesses, philanthropists and community groups invest in addressing gender gaps, but opportunities to accelerate change by addressing the underlying norm are missed. Rigid beliefs around gender influence individual and group perceptions and choices, that limit our social and economic outcomes. This report sets out six key actions that governments, businesses, philanthropists and community groups can take to maximise the return on our shared significant investment towards achieving gender equity. Addressing these six actions will help to dismantle harmful gender norms and in doing so, help to grow Australia's economy by \$128 billion each year.

Australians hold rigid views on gender...



1 in 4

Australians do not believe children do as well if the father stays home and the mother is the breadwinner.



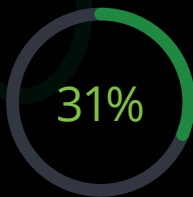
1 in 5

Australians think that women prefer men to be in charge of relationships.

...which has led to big gender gaps.

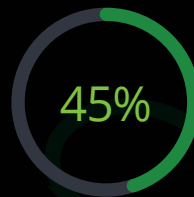
There is an opportunity to improve on current initiatives aimed at addressing gender equity by walking away from being:

Unintentional



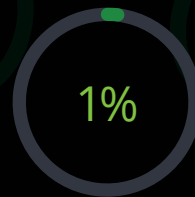
Only 31% of corporate givers and 40% of philanthropic givers consider gender in their philanthropy.

Misdirected



The most common gender equity action businesses take is hosting gender-related events, like International Women's Day (IWD). Awareness raising is important but does not drive change without further action. Nearly 1 in 2 businesses that celebrate IWD do not have a dedicated budget for gender equity.

Underfunded



Less than 1% of spending on women and girls in the 2023-24 Federal Budget was invested in changing restrictive gender norms – for example, through discussing gender stereotypes with children.

Six actions to dismantle restrictive gender norms

This report identifies six urgent actions for governments, businesses, philanthropists and community groups.



Engage children and young people in discussions about gender norms

01



Enable men to play a bigger role at home

02



Eliminate stereotypes in language and culture

03



Embed intersectionality across gender initiatives

04



Create accountable and transparent institutions

05

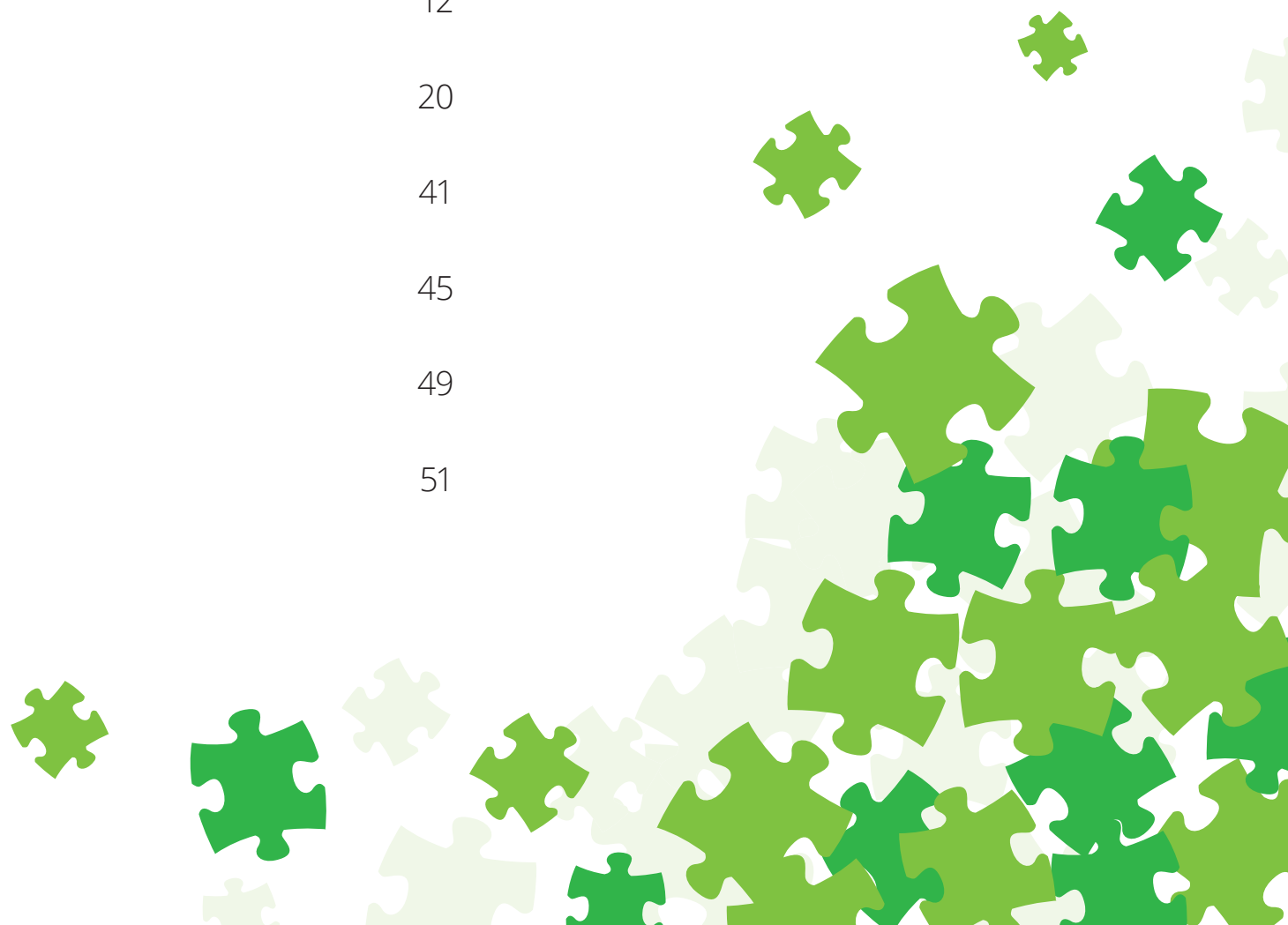


Create structured processes to reduce embedded bias in decision making

06

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Glossary and acronyms

Term	Definition
CARM	Culturally and racially marginalised
Gender	A social and cultural construct distinct from sex. There is a spectrum of gender identities, expressions and experiences that fall outside of the traditional gender binary. Gender is also not static; it exists along a continuum and can change over time.
Gender bias	The differing treatment of people that stem from beliefs about the differing characteristics, preferences and abilities between genders. These can be explicit beliefs but also deeply rooted intrinsic beliefs.
Gender discrimination	The differing treatment of people solely because they belong to a certain gender.
Gender equality	People of all genders are given equal treatment, such as resources or opportunities.
Gender equity	Recognising that people of different genders have different circumstances or 'starting positions', resources and opportunities are allocated such that there is equality in outcomes achieved across people of different genders. Gender equity should lead to gender equality.
Gender norms	<p>Gender norms can be thought of as beliefs, shared by men and women, about how men and women should or ought to behave or be. As such, gender norms tend to exaggerate small or simply perceived differences between men and women into stereotypes that are considered representative of all men and women.</p> <p>Gender norms contribute to gender bias by creating or reinforcing perceived differences between men and women. One reason this occurs is because of cognitive shortcuts used by the brain to generate expectations of others based on information about the group the individual belongs to rather than specific information about them.</p> <p>Gender norms can restrict people by manifesting in gendered attitudes and gendered behaviours.</p>
Intersectionality	Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of factors that are related to social status and power, such as race, sex, class, socio-economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability, which can create overlapping and interdependent systems of disadvantage.
IWD	International Women's Day
LGBTQ+ people	People of diverse sexualities and genders.*
Sex	A set of biological attributes and is usually categorised as female or male. However, there is variation in the biological attributes that comprise sex and how those attributes are expressed. Sex also includes intersex, being people with innate sex characteristics that do not fit binary medical and social norms for female and male bodies.
WGEA	Workplace Gender Equality Agency

*This definition has been adapted from ACON.

Focus and limitations of our report

We recognise the complexity and diversity of human gender and sex which encompasses both the biological and gender identity.

A person's sex refers to their biological classification of male, female or intersex based on hormones, chromosomes and reproductive anatomy.

A person's gender is a social and cultural concept that is different to a person's biological sex. How a person identifies within themselves or how they chose to express their gender outwardly is not limited to male or female - there is a spectrum of gender identities and expressions and this can change over time.

The analysis in our report looks at gender norms between men and women.

In the context of this report, woman/women/female refer to those who identify with the female gender and man/men/male refer to those who identify with the male gender.

There is much more to understand about the experiences of people in our community, that our report has not explored sufficiently. Our report has not looked deeply into how gender norms intersect with the experiences of people with a disability, people from culturally and racial marginalised groups, and people of diverse sexualities and genders (LGBTQ+). As one of our key recommendations, we have called out that intersectionality should be embedded across initiatives.

While our report looks at gender norms between men and women, we hope that by demonstrating the ways that our community can access the social and economic dividends on offer by breaking down stereotypes between men and women, our report contributes to a bigger conversation about stereotypes more generally.

This document contains references to sensitive topics including sexual assault. Reader discretion is advised.

A note on intersectionality

Intersecting identities, such as race, gender identity, culture, sexual orientation, class, disability, education, Indigenous status and regionality have a strong influence on an individual's life and experiences, including, and sometimes particularly for, women.

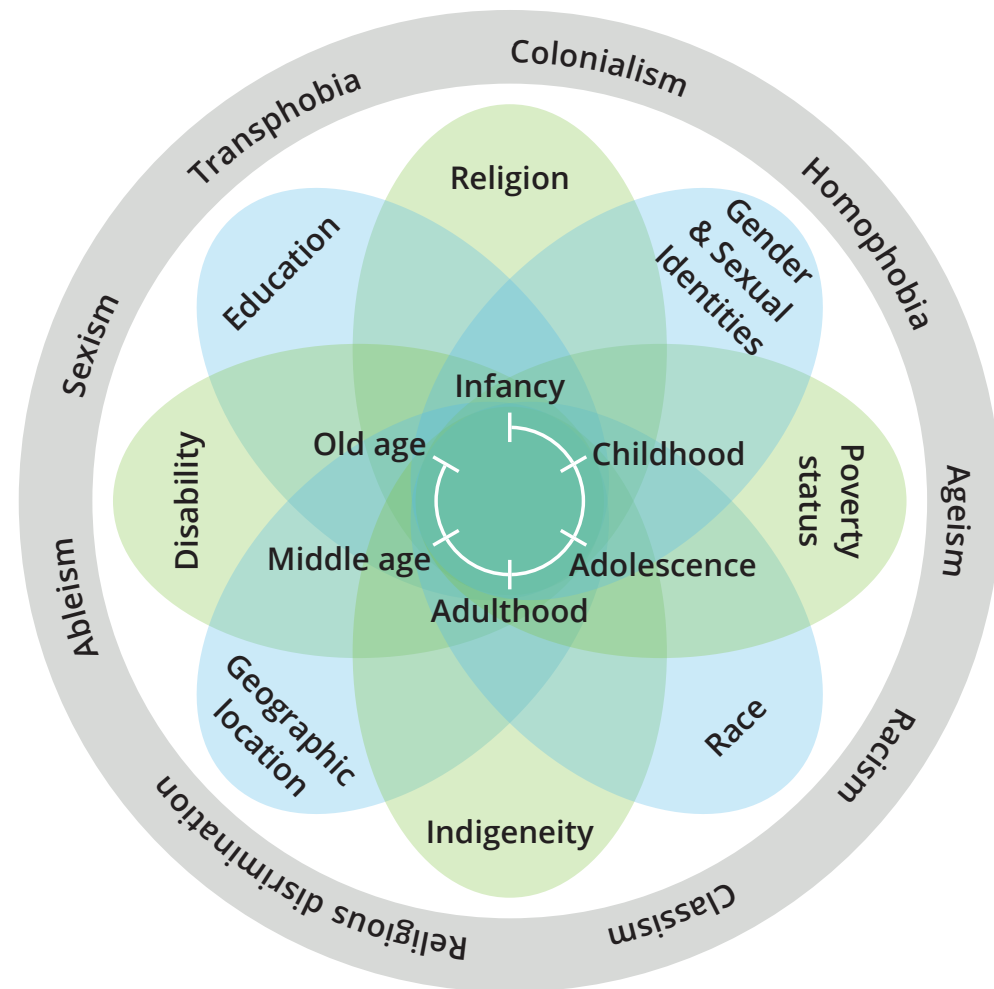
Lack of inclusion leads to compounding discrimination against groups of women. For example, in Australian legislative policy, women and girls with disability are often treated as asexual or genderless, which perpetuates gender-based discrimination and inaccurate assessments of outcomes for women with disability.¹ Similarly, queer people of colour often experience acts of violence against them as both racialised and anti-queer.²

Figure i depicts how people's lives are impacted by such characteristics, which interact with power and status.

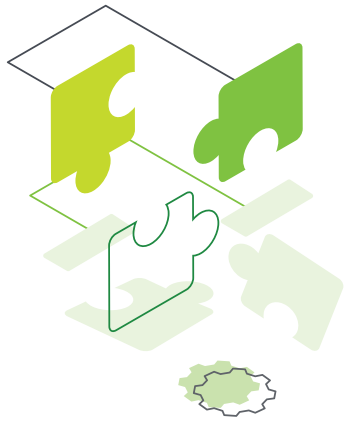
These characteristics play a role in the day-to-day lives of women and significantly influence their experiences.

A key finding of this report is that there is a gap in the literature on intersectionality and its interactions with gender norms. While a growing body of research explores how people experience and are impacted by gender norms, there is very little research into what works to close gendered gaps for marginalised groups of people. Further, research should be led by the communities who are impacted by the lack of inclusion of their intersecting characteristics.

Figure i: Intersectionality wheel



Source: UN Women Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit (2022).



Executive summary



Executive Summary

Australian women are disadvantaged relative to men in almost every measurable domain. From hourly pay and participation in the labour force to domestic labour and intimate partner violence; these gaps are well-known, and persistent.

What is less often discussed is that achieving gender equity will not only benefit women. Men, children and our broader economy would benefit too.

The first installment of this report found that gender norms – the beliefs and expectations people hold about how men and women behave – are the single most important driver of gender gaps in Australia today. Rigid gender norms constrain decision-making and produce gaps by incentivising people to act, treat others and structure society in ways traditionally expected of their gender.

When it comes to taking action on gender equity, opportunities to accelerate change by addressing the underlying norm are often missed. Instead, interventions are typically reactive. They respond to gaps – like gendered differences in pay – but do not shift the forces which ultimately cause those gaps to persist.

Every year, Australian governments, businesses, philanthropists and community groups invest in addressing gender gaps. These investments are important and have underpinned the progress made in gender equity to date. However, additional spending on responding to gender gaps – such as increased funding for frontline domestic violence services – is desperately needed. Current spending fails to address the underlying cause of these gaps, and as result, Australia continues to miss out on significant economic and social benefits.

This report offers a new approach for policymakers. Let's tackle the root cause: gender norms.

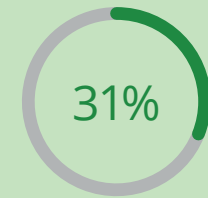
There are opportunities for stakeholders to accelerate change by addressing the underlying gender norms. At present:

- Only 4 in 10 philanthropists consider gender in their giving. Less than a third (31%) of corporate givers adopt a gender lens.¹
- The most common gender equity action taken by businesses is the hosting of gender-related events, including International Women's Day (IWD). Australian businesses spend roughly \$137 million each year on IWD.² To put this amount into perspective, the funding spent on IWD is larger than the amount the Australian Government spends on women's medical research through the National Health and Medical Research Council each year.³ While this spending is often well-intentioned and plays an important role in raising awareness of barriers to women's equality, it will not accelerate change unless backed up by dedicated strategies and funding. In fact, one in two businesses that celebrate IWD do not have a dedicated budget for gender equity.⁴
- Less than 1% of spending on women and girls in the 2023-24 Federal Budget was invested in changing restrictive gender norms – for example, through discussing gender stereotypes with children. Instead, the funding was spent on mitigating the harms caused by gender norms (e.g., the superannuation gender gap).⁶ Both types of funding are important, but investing in norms is underfunded.

This report identifies six key challenges and a series of remedying actions that will shift the focus from addressing the outcomes of gender inequity to tackling the norms which underpin them. These were selected by conducting a detailed literature review, grouping best-practice initiatives thematically into six gender transformative actions, and analysing them against the current state (using the Deloitte Access Economics Employer Survey, Workplace Gender Equality Agency data, the Women's Budget Statements and research reports). The recommended remedial actions are summarised in the table overleaf.

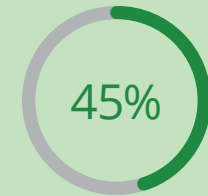
In directly addressing gender norms, these actions aim to transform the way people think about themselves and others based on gender, enabling all people to fulfill their full potential and contribute to Australia's economic prosperity without being constrained by rigid gender norms.

Unintentional



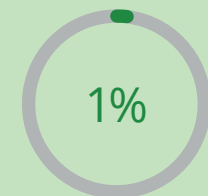
Only 31% of corporate and 40% of philanthropic givers consider gender in their giving

Misdirected



The most common gender equity action businesses take is hosting gender-related events, like International Women's Day (IWD). Awareness raising is important but does not drive change without further action. 1 in 2 businesses that celebrate IWD do not have a dedicated budget for gender equity.

Underfunded



Less than 1% of spending on women and girls in the 2023-24 Federal Budget was invested in changing restrictive gender norms – for example, through discussing gender stereotypes with children.



Executive Summary

Dismantling restrictive gender norms could generate a \$128 billion return each year for the Australian economy, as well as wellbeing benefits for women, men and children. This report suggests the six actions that would better target investment from government, business, philanthropy and community groups. If we continue to misdirect our investment, our gender gaps will persist and progress on gender equity will remain glacial.

Recommended actions	Their impact on norms	Key impacts on gaps	How does this drive the \$128 billion return for Australia?
1. Engage children and young people in discussions about gender norms.	Engaging youth stops rigid gender norms from being established and internalised, preventing these norms from affecting decision-making and contributing to gender gaps.	Occupational segregation Domestic and family violence	Through an increase in participation and wages, particularly for women who may choose to participate more fully in the economy or take on higher skilled roles as a result of not being constrained by rigid gender norms.
2. Enable men to play a bigger role at home.	Enabling men to play a bigger role at home confronts the norm that unpaid work and care is women's work and creates intergenerational shifts through role-modelling to children.	Unpaid work Labour force participation	In taking on a bigger role at home, men enable women to re-enter the workforce or work longer hours. This would offset any reduction in hours worked by men, leading to a net increase in participation.
3. Eliminate stereotypes in language and culture.	In considering how women and men are depicted and described in media, advertising and pop culture, this action helps reduce constraints placed on people on the basis of gender.	Domestic and family violence Occupational segregation	Removing the constraints that limit individual's aspirations will improve the allocation of talent across the economy.
4. Embed intersectionality across gender initiatives.	Considering and men in all of their diversity will break down norms around what a women should do or should look like.	Leadership Pay	Tackling the norms that impact and limit intersectional groups would allow more women to more fully participate in the economy, reduce pay disparities and improve representation experienced by marginalised groups.
5. Create accountable and transparent institutions.	Being accountable and transparent ensures that stakeholders deliver on promises to tackle restrictive gender norms, and prioritise action.	Leadership Pay	Creating accountable and transparent cultures will help address the pay gap and the lack of women in leadership, improving labour force participation and productivity.
6. Create structured processes to reduce embedded bias.	By changing underlying structures, this action creates incentives for people and organisations to act in a manner that shifts harmful gender norms.	Occupational segregation Leadership	Structurally addressing the unconscious biases that impact decisions across society will improve the allocation of talent through greater representation of women in leadership and a more even gender balance of industries.



Executive Summary

Everyone has a role to play to remake gender norms. Government, civil society and businesses have a responsibility to transform gender norms and improve outcomes for all women, men and future generations. Some top actions stakeholders can take are listed below; a detailed list of recommendations is in Chapter 3.



Business

Private sector enterprise and industries e.g., media and mining.



Government

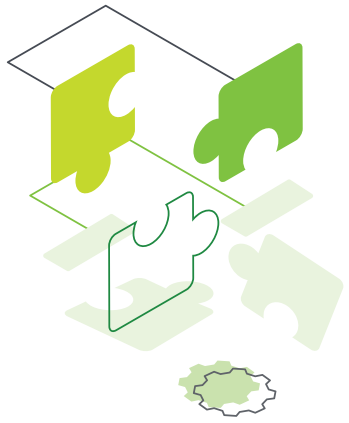
Councils and local, state and federal government bodies.



Philanthropists & community

Philanthropic funders, schools and sports teams.

1. Engage children and young people in discussions about gender norms.	Promote gender atypical professions, industries and leadership opportunities to young people.	Support teachers, educators and parents to have age-appropriate conversations about respect, consent and safety, through programs like respectful relationships education.	Empower community leaders to promote positive gender attitudes and inclusive spaces. For example, in sporting clubs, community organisations and public spaces.
2. Enable men to play a bigger role at home.	Create high-quality flexible working arrangements and develop peer networks to encourage men to use them, helping to tackle the norm that women are primarily responsible for care and household duties.	Improve parental leave arrangements to support shared care: increase government-supported paid parental leave to 52 weeks, raise the rate to at least 50% of the average pre-birth wage, and reserve leave for each parent.	Make public parenting spaces and parenting communities gender neutral to include men. For example, have 'parents play groups' as opposed to 'mothers groups'.
3. Eliminate stereotypes in language and culture.	Challenge gender stereotypes in content (e.g., advertisements, products, film and television), to counteract restrictive norms (e.g., men as sexually dominant).	Use government leadership positions to highlight the achievements of women – stand with women in construction sites, seek out women journalists to work with, demand gender diversity on panels, and seek out statistics and quotes from women experts.	Support parents in accessing information about limiting their children's exposure to gender stereotypes, preventing children from internalising restrictive gender norms (e.g., girls are passive).
4. Embed intersectionality across gender initiatives.	Recognise the achievements of a diverse range of women employees (e.g., ensure that racially marginalised women are paid equally and represented on panels), shifting gendered norms around who can achieve professional success.	Embed more intersectional data collection in government datasets (e.g., Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), the Census) to understand how restrictive gender norms impact woman who aren't white, cis-gender, able-bodied, straight and affluent.	Collect and analyse data on the identities of the beneficiaries of all philanthropic giving and social investments (e.g., gender, cultural and racial background), revealing how restrictive gender norms impact donations.
5. Create accountable and transparent institutions.	Establish well-resourced gender leads or panels with the power to review and overrule business decisions on equity grounds.	Use the Women's Budget Statement to show all changes in government funding for measures referenced in previous Women's Budget Statements.	Implement transparent targets for philanthropic giving to ensure that restrictive gender norms are being fundamentally changed, rather than reinforced.
6. Create structured processes to reduce embedded bias.	Report equity measures at the board level and publicly, ensuring accountability for action on addressing gender norms.	Adopt and fund best practice gender responsive budgeting across new and existing policy proposals.	Apply a gender lens to proactively address gender gaps in the design and delivery of community programs.



1. Introduction



Introduction

Background

The first edition of this report (Breaking the Norm) found that failing to address the underlying cause of gender gaps – gender norms – is a missed opportunity worth \$128 billion annually. Gender norms contribute to gender gaps by altering the way people perceive themselves and others, and embedding bias in the institutional structures that underpin government and business activity (see next page). These factors impact and limits who works, how much they work and the allocation of talent across the economy.

Gender gaps are stark and persist across a range of domains, for example:

- One in three Australian women have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or family member.¹
- Women earn 88 cents for every man's dollar, or \$12,376 less per year.²
- Only 9% of CEOs in the ASX300 are women.³
- Men complete only 14% of all paid primary carer's parental leave.⁴

These indicators of inequality are compounded by other intersectional factors. For example:

- The unemployment rate of First Nations women is double the national average.^{5,6}
- Women with disability in Australia are twice as likely to have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 years than women without a disability.⁷

Since the first instalment of this report, there has been some action on gender equity. The highest ever proportion of women was elected to Federal Parliament in 2023, causing Australia to jump 17 places in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (from 43rd in 2022 to 26th in 2023).⁸ The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) began publishing the gender pay gaps of all private sector employers with more than 100 employees. The Matildas' semi-final match against England became the most watched television program – sport or otherwise – since 2001 (when the existing rating system was established).⁹

Yet, we are collectively failing to maximise the potential impact of investments in gender equity by ignoring the root of all gender gaps: gender norms. For example, government and business efforts to close gender wage gaps and correct for occupational segregation in male-dominated industries could be enhanced if we changed the underlying norms that perceive men as more capable or view particular jobs as 'men's work'.



Introduction

This report

The purpose of this report is to focus on how businesses, government, community and philanthropy can dismantle restrictive gender norms and, in turn, shift the dial on gender equity. Insights drawn from a survey of over 200 Australian employers (see Box 1), together with an extensive literature review and a series of consultations have surfaced six key themes of action that business, government, community and philanthropy can adopt to better invest in gender equity.

This report is targeted at a range of stakeholders, because everyone has a role to play when it comes to dismantling gender norms. For instance, governments and businesses can design policy to shift what is perceived as acceptable behaviours for men and women, philanthropists and community groups can promote counter-stereotypical views of men and women through their programs and ensure their funding is distributed equitably, and people, who often internalise harmful gender norms, can try to challenge them in their own choices and treatment of others.

The rest of this report is set out as follows:

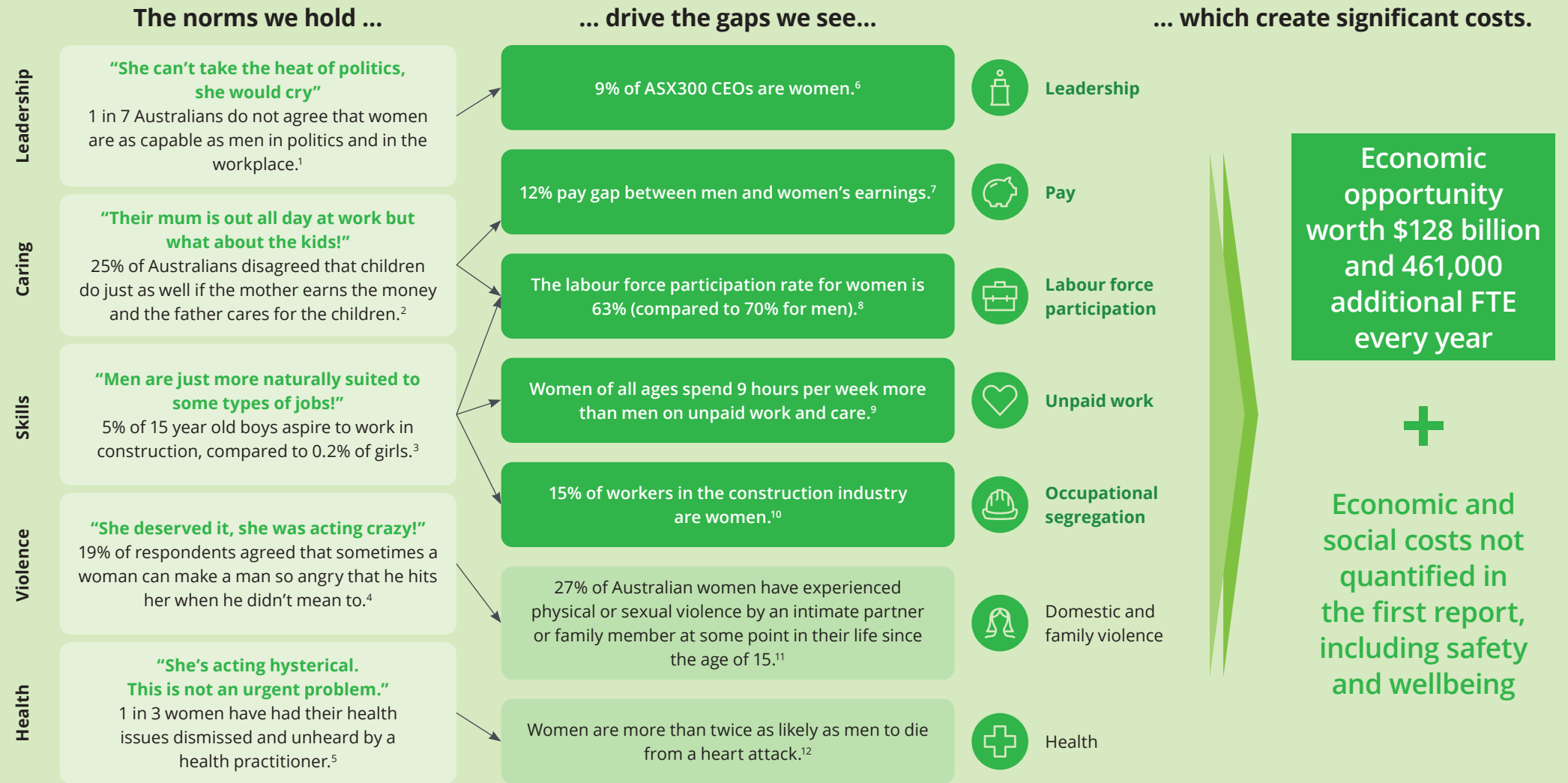
- **Chapter 1 (current chapter)** provides a theoretical framework explaining how actions can disrupt the gender norms that underpin Australia's gender gaps.
- **Chapter 2** discusses six challenges in the way stakeholders are currently addressing gender gaps in Australia and six actions that will address each of these challenges.
- **Chapter 3** provides a detailed list of recommendations for governments, businesses, philanthropists and community groups.

Deloitte Access Economics employer survey

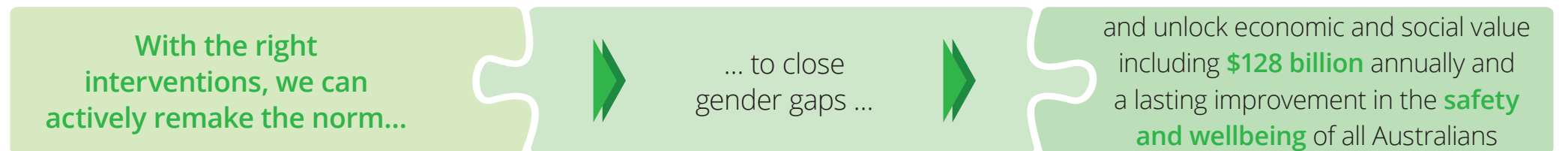
Deloitte Access Economics conducted a survey of 205 employers (including CEOs, Executives, Directors and Managers) to inform this report. The survey included representatives from small-to-large businesses (i.e., less than 20 employees up to more than 1,000), every state and territory, regional and metropolitan areas and a range of industries. All survey respondents were required to have a basic level of understanding of their business' gender equity strategy and/or initiatives.

The survey sought to uncover employer perspectives towards gender equality, current gender gaps within organisations and the types of gender initiatives utilised by employers to address these gaps. Five key types of gender initiatives were considered – leadership and company culture, hiring and recruitment, promotion and retention, development and training, sexual harassment prevention and workplace flexibility.

Breaking the Norm



Remaking the norm





Introduction

Gender gaps persist, but complacency and backlash are barriers to progress

Many people do not believe that gender inequality persists in Australia, and some actively resist efforts to reduce this inequality.

- The Gender Compass* found that 17% of Australians over 16 years old believe that gender equality is no longer an issue and that equality for women has gone too far. This is equivalent to 3.5 million Australians.¹
- The Global Institute for Women's Leadership found that 60% of Australian men believe that Australia has promoted women's equality to the extent that now, men are experiencing discrimination. This is five percentage points higher than the global average for men (Chart 1.1).
- Younger generations are not more progressive than older generations. A UK survey found that one in four men aged 16 to 29 years think it is harder to be a man than a woman today, the highest of all age groups (Chart 1.2).

According to the Deloitte Access Economics employer survey:

- Only one in ten employers think their business performs below average on gender equity when compared to other organisations in their industry.
- three in four employers believe their organisation will make progress in gender equity in the next five years, yet less than one in four have a dedicated gender equity budget.
- Only 55% of employers acknowledge that gender discrimination contributes to fewer women being in leadership positions than men, despite research suggesting it plays a key role.

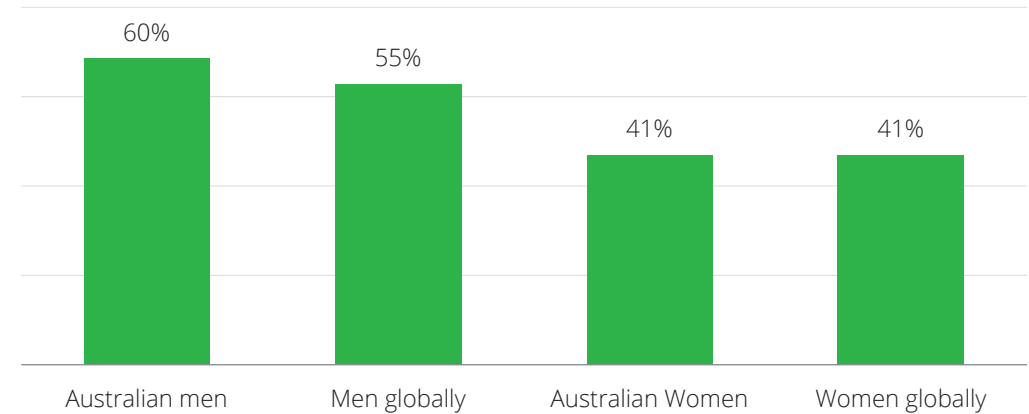
This research tells us that Australians hold vastly different views on the state of gender equality and what action should be taken. Ongoing action is required to demonstrate the importance of investing in gender equity and ensure hard-won victories to support women's equal participation in the economy and society are not challenged.

Even within different groups of Australians that are in favour of action and investment in gender equality, there are different opinions on how to make progress.

This report outlines evidence-based actions that we can take to maximise investment in gender equality in Australia.

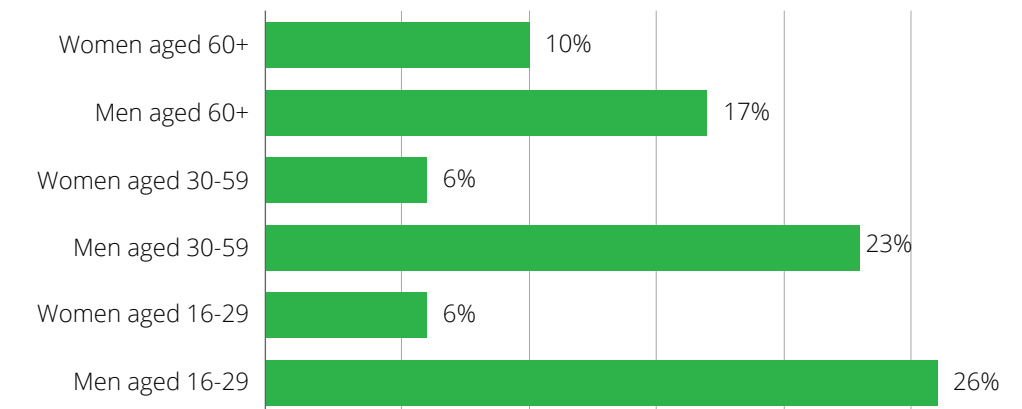
* The Gender Compass segments Australians into six groups according to their beliefs around gender equality using survey data of Australians over the age of 16.

Chart 1.1: Proportion of respondents who agree that 'We have gone so far in promoting women's equality that we are discriminating against men'



Source: Global Institute for Women's Leadership (2024).

Chart 1.2: Proportion of respondents who think that it is harder today to be a man than a woman (UK residents)



Source: Global Institute for Women's Leadership (2024).



Introduction

Current investment does not sufficiently target gender norms

Each year, stakeholders invest significant amounts of funding to address gender inequity. While this funding is important and has contributed to much of the progress to date, there are clear opportunities for governments, businesses, philanthropists and community groups to accelerate change by targeting gender norms.

Policies promoting gender equity sit on a scale from gender exploitative to gender transformative, with the latter being the most impactful. Gender initiatives that challenge the underlying cause of gender equality (gender norms) are referred to as gender transformative. Gender transformative policy design is key to shifting norms and driving long-term and sustained change in gender equity. In contrast, gender exploitative initiatives perpetuate gender inequality and may be harmful for gender gaps and outcomes.

The next page displays the gender transformative scale and examples of initiatives that fit into each category. This report has mapped gender equality initiatives against the scale to identify gender transformative actions. Stakeholders can adopt these actions to shift underlying gender norms and ultimately close the associated gender gaps.

Importantly, both gender transformative and gender responsive initiatives are essential. While this report is focused on addressing the underlying cause of gender inequality (gender norms), many women face immediate needs that can't wait for long term solutions. As such, the transformative actions in this report should be paired with gender responsive investments – for example, frontline domestic violence services require significantly more investment; with many across Australia turning women and children away due to a lack of capacity.

Box 1.1: The internet, backlash and engaging men and boys

The internet is a powerful vehicle for progressing social movements. The #MeToo movement raised awareness of sexual abuse and harassment and transformed the discourse of rape culture around the world. Social media's anonymity, accessibility and scalability can propel shifts in gender norms. Yet these same mechanisms also allow for backlash against feminist movements and can cause serious harm to progress.

Online violence poses a serious threat to the safety and wellbeing of women and girls. 30% of Australian women have experienced online abuse or harassment.¹ 47% of young women between the ages of 18-24 have experienced online violence.² Online abuse also intensifies with race, disability and sexuality.

Additionally, the internet has had a significant influence on men and boys and their relationship with gender norms. There has been a recent rise of anti-women hate groups on social media platforms. For example, the 'manosphere' is a collection of online groups of men that share misogynistic and anti-feminist views towards women.³ Those in the 'manosphere' appeal to real concerns of men and boys, such as mental health, masculinities, violence, romantic relationships, education and other outcomes. However, the 'manosphere' community posits the empowerment of women as the reason for the growing challenges men face.⁴ That is, suggesting that women's increasing freedoms must result in male disempowerment. Furthermore, it promotes a narrow idea of masculinity and imposes restrictive gender norms on men.⁵

Andrew Tate is a key figure in the 'manosphere'. In 2023, he amassed a Twitter following of more than 6.9 million.⁶ While he engages his audience with an "inspirational work ethic", he has also

promoted sexist opinions. He self-proclaimed to "absolutely [be] a misogynist" and said that women are "intrinsicly lazy".⁸ Concerningly, 92% of surveyed young men said they knew of Tate and despite his promotion of toxic masculinity, homophobia, sexism and conspiracy, 25% said they looked up to Tate as a role model.⁹

The impacts of the manosphere, similar groups and individual influential actors have been felt by teachers and parents. One educator noted a rise in hostility and aggression in attitudes towards women.¹⁰ In extreme cases, experts name those in the manosphere space as "extremist" or "terrorist" groups.¹¹

There are organisations that aim to engage men and boys, such as eSmart Programs or Project Rokit. However, if efforts to shift gender norms and close gaps are not proactive about engaging men and boys, they risk boys being increasingly drawn to harmful role models in the manosphere. As such, this report discusses effective ways to work directly with men and boys to shift masculinity norms (see Chapter 2). Further, there are vital roles for social media companies (e.g., through developing transparent human-rights based process for content moderation) and governments (for example, by regulating how social media companies must address harmful content) in addressing restrictive gender norms online.

30%

of Australian women have experienced gendered online abuse and/or harassment.

92%

of surveyed young men knew of Andrew Tate.

25%

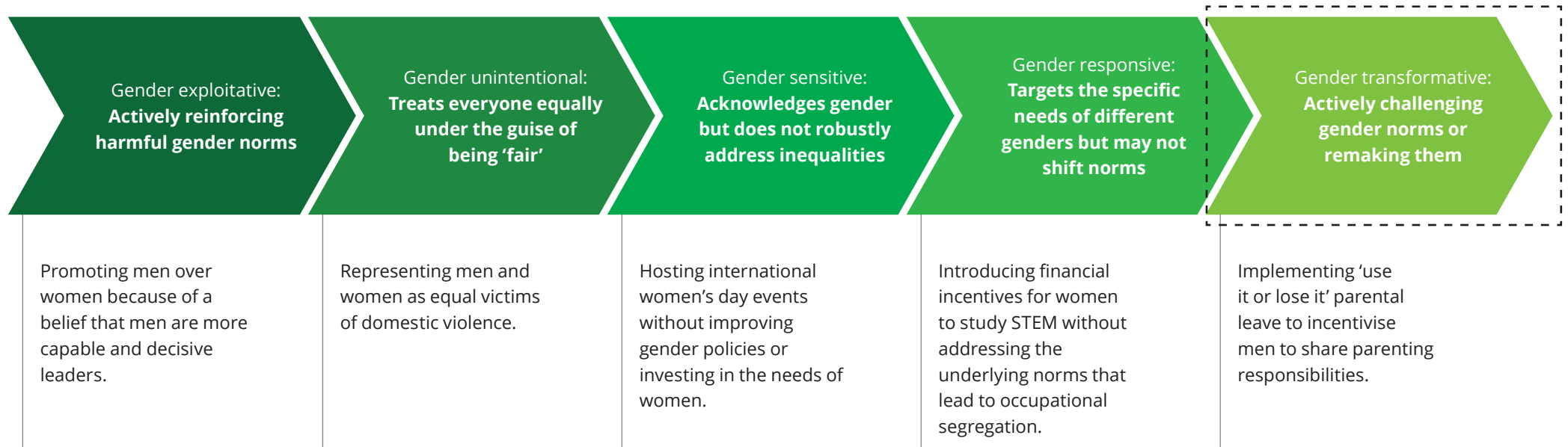
of young men said they "look up to" Andrew Tate as a role model.

Introduction

A framework for gender equity actions; from gender exploitative to gender transformative

Figure 1.1: Scale of gender related initiatives

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

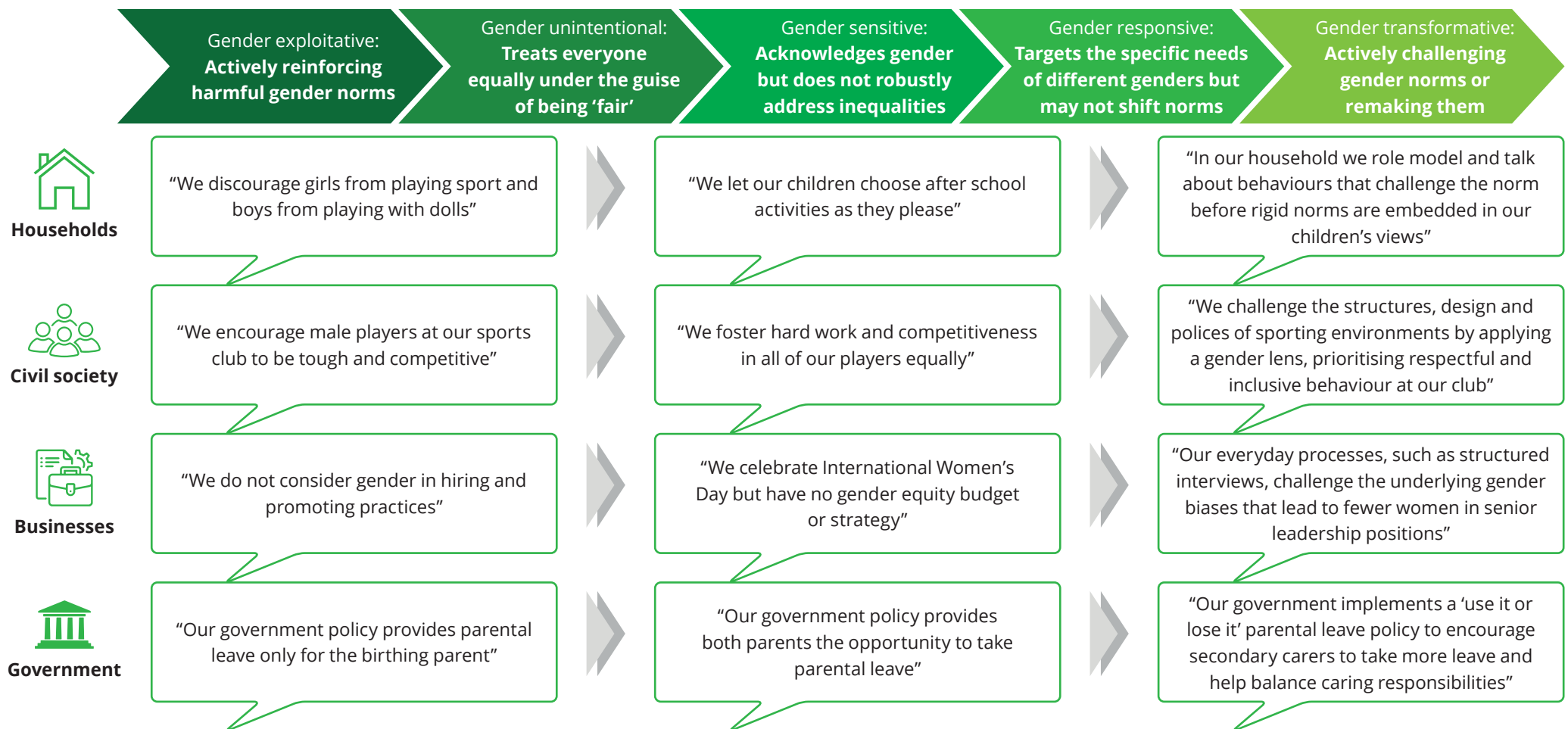




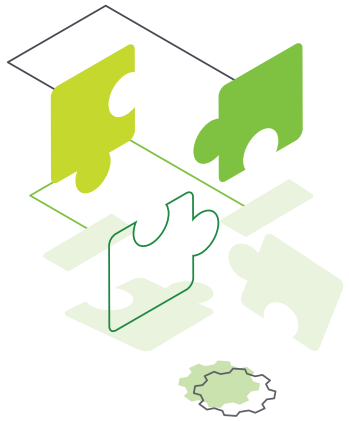
Introduction

Figure 1.2: Scale of gender related initiatives and examples for each stakeholder

WHAT DOES IT SOUND LIKE?



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024), adapted from Our Watch and UNFPA.



2. Six actions to remake the norm





How to remake the Norm

Six key challenges and the action needed to address them

Every year, Australian governments, businesses and philanthropists invest in addressing gender gaps. However, progress will continue to be hindered if investment does not target the root cause of inequality. This report identifies six key challenges and a series of remedying actions that will increase the focus on addressing the norms which underpin gender gaps.

Identifying current challenges and future best practice

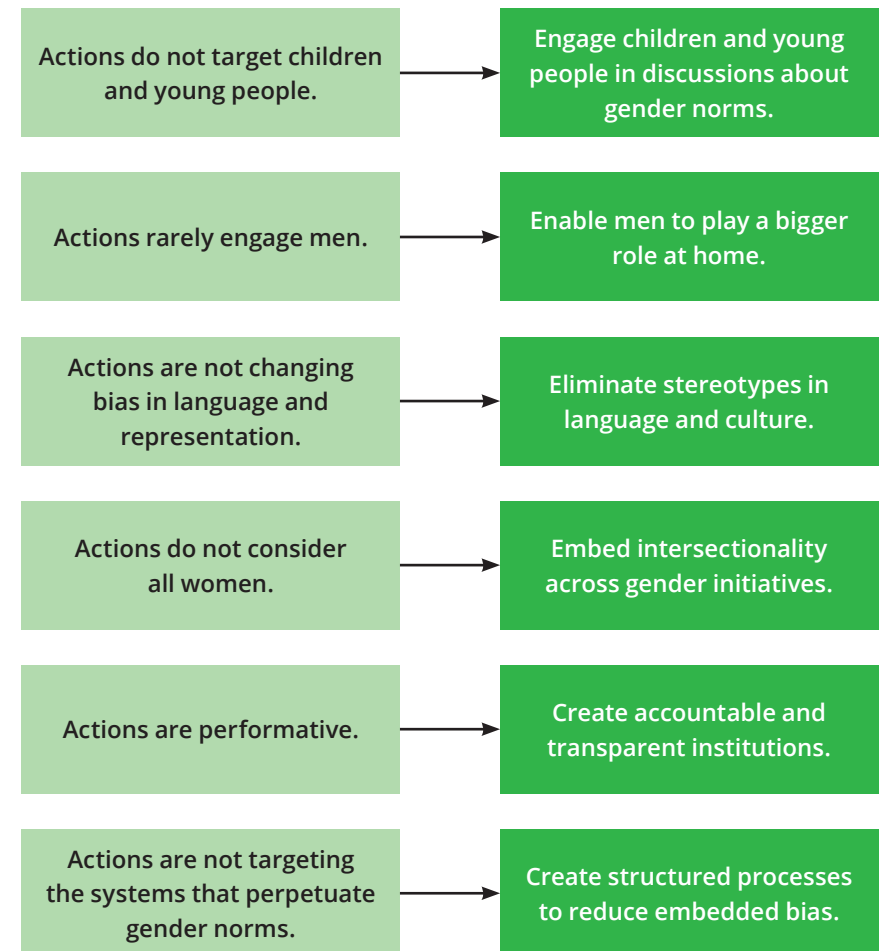
The following process was undertaken to help identify and prioritise the list of challenges and actions presented in this report:

1. A literature review was undertaken, focusing on the available evidence on what works to change gender norms. This process revealed the importance of gender transformative action. The research included a review of evaluations, government reports and academic literature.
2. The list of best practice initiatives was grouped thematically into six major actions that were gender transformative (would be effective at breaking down restrictive gender norms).
3. Data on the current state was drawn from the Deloitte Access Economics Employer Survey and WGEA data for businesses, from Women's Budget Statements for governments, and from research articles and reports for philanthropy, to understand which of these actions were currently being undertaken in Australia across various stakeholders.
4. The difference between the most effective actions identified under step 2 and actions currently being undertaken by stakeholders in step 3 represented the top opportunities for Australia to take action to remake the norm.

Further information on this process is provided in the Appendix A.

This chapter of the report first delves into a challenge in the current state followed by evidence-supported actions to address the challenge in a gender transformative way. For a summary page on how each action is gender transformative, refer to page 10.

Figure 2.1: Six current challenges and remedying actions



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024).



Challenge 1: Actions do not target children and young people

Childhood and adolescence are foundational periods for internalising gender norms

Gendered beliefs are transmitted to children through interactions with social institutions, such as family, schools, media and community groups. This process starts at birth and continues throughout adolescence. As a result, children begin internalising gender norms at a young age.^{1,2,3}

97% of 5-year-old boys reflected gender-typical stereotypes when asked to separate “girl toys” from “boy toys.”

91% of 5-year-old boys thought their father would not approve if they played with stereotypically “girl toys.”⁴

By age six, gender norms influence children’s perceptions of ability and personal aspirations.



Girls are less likely than boys to believe that members of their gender are “really, really smart” and begin avoiding activities for “really, really smart” children.⁵



Girls are more likely than boys to aspire towards jobs traditionally coded as feminine. In fact, the top three jobs chosen by Year 3 girls are a teacher, veterinarian or artist.⁶



Boys are more likely to aspire to traditionally male-dominated roles, such as professional sports, STEM-related jobs and policing/defence. Notably, gender is shown to be a stronger predictor of aspirations than socioeconomic background.⁷

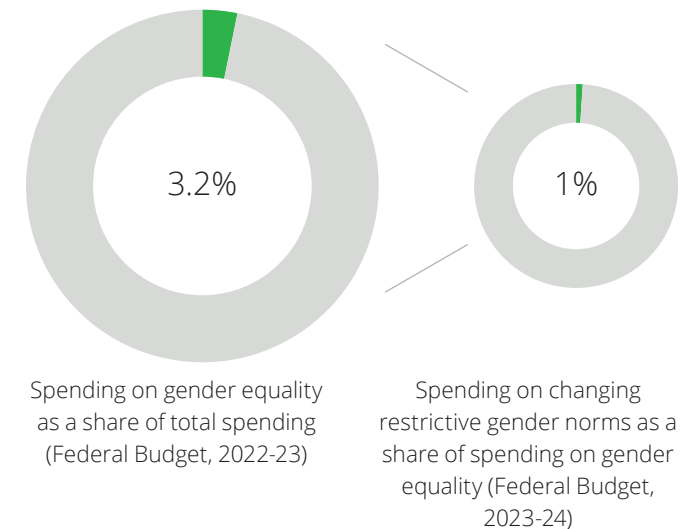
Gender norms are not becoming more equitable over time. Younger Australians (aged 16-24) are just as likely as other Australians to internalise harmful gendered beliefs around domestic, family and sexual violence.

1 in 3 Young people (33%) believe that it is common for sexual assault accusations to be used as a way of getting back at men. In reality, less than 5% of rape allegations are proven false.⁸

1 in 4 Young people (27%) disagree that violence against women is a problem in their local area despite one in four (27%) of Australian women having experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or family member at some point in their life since the age of 15.⁹

Interventions that are targeted early in the life course are highly effective because they can challenge harmful gender stereotypes at the stage they are being internalised. Early interventions allow young people to make choices around education, care and work that aligns to their individual interests rather than the influence of restrictive norms. It also promotes gender equity through promoting positive masculinities that reduce gendered violence and respectful relationships.

Chart 2.1: Spending on gender equality and changing restrictive gender norms in the Federal Budget



Source: Gender Budget Watch (2024) and Deloitte Access Economics (2024), using Women’s Budget Statements.



Only 3.2% of Australian Federal Budget is allocated to gender equality.¹⁰ Less than 1% of this funding is spent on changing restrictive gender norms such as teaching children about positive masculinities as opposed to addressing the harms they cause (see Chart 2.1).¹¹ This represents an opportunity for government and other stakeholders to accelerate change through investing more in gender equity and increasing focus on changing norms in the early years.

Many businesses also fail to realise their role in challenging gender norms in the early years – for example, by speaking to adolescents about gender atypical careers (see next page) or removing gender stereotypes from products and advertisements targeted to children (see Action 3).

Contributing to \$128 billion

Engaging young people increases participation and wages, particularly for women who may choose to participate more fully in the economy or take on higher skilled roles as a result of not being constrained by rigid gender norms.

KEY GENDER GAPS ADDRESSED

-  Occupational/industry segregation
-  Domestic and family violence

Action 1: Engage children and young people in discussions about gender norms

Childhood and adolescence are foundational periods for internalising gender norms

Early education centres and schools are powerful settings for remaking the norm

Early education settings and schools are effective settings for safe and appropriate conversations about gender norms. These settings provide ‘near universal reach to children in their formative years and to adolescents creating their first intimate relationships’¹

Actively engaging children and young people in activities and conversations about restrictive gender norms is demonstrated to be highly effective at preventing these norms from being internalised. For example, the early education program Girls Can, Boys Can improved attitudes to gender in 93% of cases (for more information, see case study on page 26). Moreover, a pilot program of respectful relationships education (RRE) in primary schools revealed that, after only six months, Year 1 and 2 students were less likely to display gender stereotypical attitudes (i.e., that certain jobs are “just for boys” or “just for girls”).² Similarly, the delivery of RRE in Victorian secondary schools increased the percentage of students who recognised that ‘slapping or pushing a partner to cause harm or fear’ was domestic violence by 15%.³

Historically, few Australian schools have engaged students in structured discussions about gender norms. Prior to 2021, Victoria was the only state where RRE was mandatory in state schools.⁴ More recently, it was announced that RRE and consent education will be included in the Australian Health and Physical Education Curriculum.⁵ While mandatory RRE is an important early intervention, its effectiveness depends on sufficient engagement with the underlying tackling gender norms and on schools receiving adequate support and funding from government. Additionally, ensuring that educators are sufficiently trained in RRE is essential to effectively engage students about gender norms and respectful relationships.⁶ See page 23 for a case study of a program that seeks to provide teachers with the skills and confidence to teach Respectful Relationships.

Educators, parents and other role models for children must be equipped to tackle gender norms

Discussions about tackling gender norms are more effective when they are reinforced and modelled at home.⁷ Despite this, many parents do not speak to their children about the impact of gender norms. While 89% of adults believe it is a parent’s responsibility to discuss respectful relationships with their children, less than half (44%) of all guardians have been open with their children about consent.⁸ Parents may also perpetuate restrictive gender norms and stereotypes through their language (e.g., “boys will be boys”) and behaviour. This suggests that the government should support schools in engaging parents in RRE delivery.

Beyond the classroom, facilitated conversations with children and young people in community settings have been shown to be effective at shifting norms. For maximum impact, these conversations should actively challenge underlying gender norms, mobilise a wide array of community members and be supported by local community leaders.⁹ Businesses can also engage by speaking directly to young people about gender atypical career paths. For example, construction company Alchemy Construct recognised that girls have already decided not to pursue a career in construction by high school. In response, they introduced their Yes You Can program in primary schools in Victoria, combining education with activities to spark early interest in the construction industry. Student feedback after the session included “Girls can be builders too” and “Men and women can build together.”¹⁰

Engaging boys and teaching positive masculinities is vital

Conversations about gender norms should actively engage boys and support them to understand positive masculinities. Approaches adopted by initiatives which have successfully taught positive masculinities include active peer engagement, leadership role-modelling behaviours, making people feel part of the process and equipping people with information and skills.¹¹ The framing of messages when engaging boys and men also has a large impact on how effective programs are, with best-practice suggesting that conversations should:

- articulate the rationale for challenging gender norms (e.g., reduced violence against women and improved mental health for men and boys)¹²
- provide real-life examples and compelling stories in relatable environments (e.g., romantic relationships, classrooms, sporting clubs)¹³
- use positive messaging and appeal to values (e.g., discuss the important of fairness in sporting clubs).¹⁴

There are several initiatives that use group discussions to shift masculinity norms in Australia including the Modelling Respect and Equality (MoRE) program and the Man Cave. The Man Cave runs a program engaging boys in schools to change their attitudes and behaviour, develop healthy relationships with themselves and others, and meaningfully contribute to their communities. Workshops can involve understanding how gender norms shape perspectives and exploring personal identity. After attending workshops, 90% of participants said that they felt they understood how gender stereotypes can have negative impacts on mental health.¹⁵

Importantly, educating boys about restrictive gender norms is primarily about dismantling a system that harms women and girls. As such, it is important that the benefits for boys and men are not positioned as the primary purpose of these initiatives, nor should they undermine the importance of female-focused programs.



Case study: Tackling unhealthy masculinities with The Modelling Respect and Equality pilot program in Victorian schools (The Men's Project, Jesuit Social Services)

In 2022, The Men's Project redesigned a version of their 'Modelling Respect and Equality' (MoRE) program for schools, aiming to leverage their expertise and teachers' influential roles with young people to tackle unhealthy masculinities which can lead to violence. The MoRE Victorian schools pilot brought an innovative approach to embedding Respectful Relationships school wide, by combining large scale awareness raising workshops with intensive professional development for select school staff – the 'MoRE Champions'. Across 83 participating schools, over 160 champions engaged with the pilot, and over 3000 school staff attended the awareness raising workshops.

Awareness raising workshops

The workshops presented research on the links between violence, risk taking behaviours, and internalised gender norms – making staff aware of the links between seemingly unserious jokes, comments and attitudes at a young age, and the more serious impacts at a societal level. External facilitators ask staff to consider their own beliefs about what it means to be a man or a woman and share their experiences – rather than going straight to how to 'correct' student behaviour.

- 72% of participants agreed that the whole school workshops deepened their understanding of the link between supporting healthier masculinities and preventing of violence against women.
- Participants also felt the training allowed them to talk more openly about gendered norms, and that they had a 'shared language and framework' for understanding concepts that were new or difficult for them to always put into words, and found the workshops increased their intention, confidence and skill to challenge unhealthy masculinities.

Intensive training for MoRE Champions

MoRE champions received offsite training for two days, which delved into prevention strategies that could be used in schools, while taking time to process and deconstruct attendees' own biases. This was critical, as the pilot aimed to empower school staff members to challenge unhealthy masculinities and promote healthier behaviours, using their positions as significant role models and adults with the power to either uphold or critique gender norms.

- The pilot inspired action as well as building confidence, with two out of three champions intending to make change in their school culture and environment.
- Impact was not only at the staff-student level, but at the peer level, with many champions feeling able to challenge even their peers' attitudes to gender.

The pilot illustrates that working with schools using a combined whole-school approach and tailored coaching for each school setting can be successful in supporting teachers and other school staff to deliver respectful relationships education and to embed the critical whole-school approach.

Figure 2.2: Findings from the evaluation of The Modelling Respect and Equality pilot program

72% of participants agreed that the workshops deepened their understanding of the link between supporting healthier masculinities and preventing of violence against women

2/3 champions intended to make change in their school culture and environment as a result of participating in the two days of MoRE training.

“
It's been a language that we're taking on... we're able to call each other out in a kind sort of way that's not confrontational.

MoRE champion

“
All of the schools mentioned that it's heightened their awareness of the social norms and the language we use.

Respectful Relationships workforce member



Challenge 2: Actions rarely engage men

Norms and policies re-enforce traditional stereotypes

Efforts to promote gender equity in recent years do not appear to be changing the attitudes of boys and men. In fact, many Australian boys and men still hold traditional views of gender which are not becoming more gender equitable over time. For example:

- **30%** of Australian men believe that gender inequality doesn't really exist (well above the global average of 21%)¹
- **20%** of men said that men should use violence to get respect if necessary²
- **56%** of Gen Z (1997-2012) men agree that children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and the children, a smaller share than both Gen X (1965-1980) and Millennials (1981-1996).³

Not only do these beliefs and attitudes contribute to gender gaps that limit opportunities for women and girls, but they also impact the choices available to boys and men. For example, stereotypes around what is men's and women's work disincentivises men from entering traditionally feminine occupations, engaging in domestic work, and working flexibly.^{4,5} The impact of these norms is most evident around the transition to parenthood which sees many families move towards a traditional male-breadwinner model. This gender division of paid and unpaid work among couples occurs even where it's not in a couple's financial interest and it persists years after the arrival of children.⁶

Adherence to traditional forms of masculinity negatively also impacts men's wellbeing and increases their likelihood of engaging in harmful behaviours. Research from the Men's Project finds that men who most strongly endorse restrictive masculine norms are substantially more likely than other men to have had thoughts of self-harm nearly every day and have consumed alcohol at least five days a week.⁷ Endorsement of restrictive masculine norms negatively affects others, with men who mostly strongly agree with traditional gender norms being more likely to have used violence in their intimate relationships and have perpetrated bullying and sexual harassment.⁸

Despite the lack of progress in changing the gender norms that limit men, actions on gender equity are rarely aimed at changing men's attitudes and behaviours. Among businesses, there is limited focus engaging men, with only 8% of firms setting targets for men's engagement in flexible work, 21% offering gender natural parental leave and the average period of employer provided paid parental leave available to fathers being only three weeks compared to 12 weeks for mothers.⁹

Outside the workplace there is also lack of initiatives aimed at engaging men. Studies have found that only 56% of initiatives targeting restrictive gender norms in health and wellbeing engaged men and boys, and only 8% of initiatives were gender transformative when engaging men and boys in sexual and reproductive health programming.^{10,11}

Despite the lack of action, there is emerging evidence that men and boys often do want to support gender equality efforts, and as such should be positively approached and engaged in initiatives that aim to remake gender norms. At the same time, not every initiative can nor should engage men and boys – but there is more that can be done to bring them into the solution.

Box 2.1 What's in gender equity for men

While many men inherently benefit from gender inequitable norms and structures, men benefit in a range of ways from more egalitarian beliefs and behaviours. For example, research shows that men's involvement as caregivers has benefits for them as well their children. These benefits include making them better fathers, enhancing their quality of life and improving the social and cognitive outcomes of their children.^{12,13}

Despite some of the documented short-term costs of father involvement for men such as stress and increased work-family conflict, these costs do not appear to reduce their overall satisfaction with parenthood.¹⁴ In fact, men's emotional involvement with their children has been found to act as a buffer against work related stress.¹⁵

Because gender equality is good for women and girls, it is good for men too. Men and boys share their lives with women and girls. The quality of every man's life depends to a large extent on the quality of those relationships.¹⁶ Men will also benefit from improved gender equity in workplaces though the resulting increases in productivity, creativity, and diversity because of the wider pools of talent and fairer processes on which they are based.¹⁷

Source: Diversity Council of Australia (2017)

Contributing to \$128 billion

Enabling men to play a bigger role at home would assist women to re-enter the workforce or work longer hours. This would offset any reduction in hours worked by men, leading to a net increase in participation and total hours worked.

KEY GENDER GAPS ADDRESSED



Unpaid work



Labour force participation

Action 2: Enable men to play a bigger role at home

Norms and policies re-enforce traditional masculine norms and stereotypes

Remaking the restrictive norms that prevent fathers from engaging in family life is an essential action not only for improving the wellbeing of men but closing gender gaps in pay, leadership and labour force engagement. Shifting the norms of parents can also act as an accelerator of long-term change through influencing the attitudes that are internalised by children and the decisions they make later in life. For example:

- Children whose fathers spend more time on childcare and housework are far more likely to have gender egalitarian attitudes as teenagers.¹
- Sons exposed to more progressive gender norms during childhood are more likely to work in care occupations that deviate from stereotypical gender roles.²
- Daughters whose fathers shared household labour are more likely to express an interest in working outside the home and working in a less gender stereotypical occupation.³

Engaging fathers in care from the outset

The literature finds that barriers in the health system perpetuate the traditional gender norm of mothers as 'caregivers' and fathers as 'supporters'.⁴ This includes guidelines for midwifery practice in Australia not including specific recommendations for father-inclusive care, and models for publicly funded maternity care not extending to the provision of care tailored specifically towards the needs of fathers.⁵

Although Australia is currently expanding the government funded Paid Parental Leave schemes to include six weeks for the non-birth parent (typically fathers), the amount available and payment rate is still well below that of leading countries.⁶ This is important as research from countries that have introduced long and well-paid parental leave reserved for fathers has found large and persistent changes in the division of paid and unpaid work between couples, as well as positive impacts on the birthing parent's (typically mother's) labour market outcomes.^{7,8,9} For example, in 2000, Iceland implemented parental leave policy that entitled both parents to 13 weeks of non-transferable leave and 80% of their income while on leave. The parental leave policy was embraced by 90% of fathers in Iceland who took their parental leave.¹⁰ Further, while the scheme has been designed to be gender-neutral, research states that specifically calling out leave as being for fathers is an important driver of uptake.¹¹

As father's uptake of expanded parental leave entitlements will ultimately determine the success of the change, government, philanthropists and community groups should actively encourage fathers to utilise leave. Business can encourage uptake by being supportive of both parents taking leave, by 'topping-up' the government payment to employee's full wage and offering longer periods of paid leave for all parents.

Flexible work arrangements need to be adopted by men

Enabling men to participate in flexible working arrangements can also contribute to a more gender equitable division of unpaid labour at home. While practices will vary across industries, engaging men in flexible working arrangements and removing long hours contracts have both been demonstrated to improve work-life balance and participation in domestic work.¹² In fact, research shows that men working flexible hours is associated with a significant increase in their wives' hourly wages, particularly for mothers (14.2% after four years).¹³

Despite the benefits of men working flexibly, Australian research has found that men are twice as likely as women to have flexible work requests denied and 1.5 times as likely to report facing discrimination and/or harassment for choosing to work flexible hours.¹⁴ Shifting attitudes and expectations around how men balance work and family will be essential for long-term change.

Male role models are a powerful driver of change

While these norms and attitudes are perceived as difficult to shift, evidence suggests that interventions targeted at the right men at the right time can result in rapid change. For example, studies that assess the introduction of new parental leave entitlements for fathers find that that brothers and co-workers of fathers taking up parental leave are themselves more likely to take, and take long periods of, parental leave.^{15,16,17} Over time this contributes to a domino effect that amplifies the impact of initially small changes. It also demonstrates the power that individual action can have.

In addition, leaders and informal influential actors can act as important role models in reducing the appeal of the 'manosphere' and promoting positive masculinities.¹⁸ Within organisations, securing the public support for the take-up of flexible and family friendly entitlements from men in leadership positions can normalise behaviours and shift expectations for men.



Case study: Challenging masculinity norms in sporting clubs

Defining manhood in sport

Sport is an important part of Australian society. In Australia, 47% of children (aged 0-14) participate in a sport-related activity at least once a week.¹ 76% of Australians watch sport weekly.² Sport can promote physical health, mental-wellbeing and social skills, fostering teamwork, discipline and close comradeship.

However, sport can also be a “stage where boys rehearse and learn negative, stereotypical male qualities.”³ Through sport, boys may learn to suppress their vulnerabilities and disregard their own pain – by age 11 or 12 “boys’ most common response to injuries...is a short burst of anger, followed by a posture of sullen determined silence.”⁴ They may be taught that male comradeship is solidified through locker room talk that platforms homophobia and the sexual objectification of women, including the branding of some sports as “for girls”. Boys may develop a winner-takes-all mentality as their acceptance from men becomes contingent on being a ‘winner.’ When sport is viewed as an arena of violent combat, boys may be encouraged to define their masculinity on their willingness to be violent.

The harmful lessons that are taught to boys have serious consequences. 4 in 5 children experience violence while participating in sport.⁵ On State of Origin game nights, there is a 41% surge in the domestic violence perpetrated against women and girls in NSW.⁶ Similar increases in family violence have been documented during the AFL Grand Final and the Melbourne Cup.

Direct participation programs in sport

Direct participation programs in sporting clubs have been found to be effective at challenging the harmful gender norms that drive violence against women. For example:

- The American *Coaching Boys into Men* program provides coaches with the training needed to deliver twelve workshops on building positive relationships to their players. At a 12-month follow-up, athletes who participated in the program reported less abuse penetration and less negative bystander behaviour (e.g., not saying anything or laughing) than those who did not participate.⁷

- The six-week *NRL Respectful Relationships: Sex and Ethics* program engaged professional NRL players in challenging gendered expectations of sex and developing the skills for ethical relationships. In a follow-up, survey conducted six months after the program finished, 100% of participants said they had used the program’s ideas and 66% said they had used the ethical bystander skills taught.⁸

Our Watch (2017) found that the success of direct participation programs in sport requires that actors:⁹

1. address the drivers of gendered violence against women, including the fostering of personal identities not constrained by gender norms,
2. focus on primary prevention,
3. consider the local sporting context,
4. partner with coaches and leading players, and
5. sustain effort over the longer term.

Raiise, a Respectful Club Environments program

In October 2023, the Office for Women launched *Raiise*, a Respectful Club Environments education program that is focused on challenging stereotypes in sporting environments and promoting respectful behaviour.¹⁰ The program involves trained facilitators running free 1.5-hour educational workshops at sports clubs. It is a part of the South Australian Government’s FIFA Women’s World Cup legacy project and is available to more than 50 clubs across the state. The workshops can be tailored to suit the needs of all groups involved with sporting clubs, including board members, coaches, players, volunteers, parents and supporters.

While it is too soon to assess the impacts of *Raiise*, its listed aims meet many of Our Watch’s criteria for success. By focusing on restrictive gender norms, *Raiise* addresses the drivers of gendered violence and targets primary prevention. Further, the program is designed specifically for sporting clubs and engages directly with coaches and leading players.

Case study: Changing minds on gender stereotypes with Girls Can, Boys Can (Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group)

Through uplifting community campaigns, the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group is changing minds on gender stereotypes. Two of the group's members, Warlpiri and Arrernte woman Shirleen Campbell and Carmel Simpson, have coordinated the campaign.

Launched in 2018, the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group's *Mums Can, Dads Can* project sought to positively challenge gender stereotypes in mixed gender parenting dynamics to improve equality, using posters depicting parents in diverse and non-stereotypical roles (see Figure 2.3). Carmel describes the campaign's conception:

“ We had seen a whole lot of anti-violence messaging that was very much in the negative, 'don't use violence', you know, all of those really hard-hitting images. And so what we wanted [*Mums Can, Dads Can*] to be was fun and strengths-based to be able to challenge gender norms.

A year later, the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group developed an associated primary prevention campaign *Girls Can, Boys Can*, designed to be delivered in early education settings. The program was born out of a desire to instigate a generational shift in gender attitudes, aiming to stop gender-based violence before it starts. The Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group provides curriculum programs and associated resource toolkits for educators, including a 'gender audit' activity to support early educators to address biases they may take into the classroom. Shirleen explains:

“ We've got to educate ourselves on our unconscious bias when we're talking to these young ones, ... because their little brains are like sponges.

The program's other resources include posters (see Figure 2.3), story books, and Feelings Cards, where a series of cards depict images of a non-binary First Nations child, Jessie, in a range of emotional states, that educators can then use to prompt discussion on different feelings. Carmel explains the importance of First Nations representation through the project:

“ We wanted to have images and resources that focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Because ... historically we've seen just a whole lot of white faces in the resources, in the imaging.

Both campaigns were funded through the Northern Territory Government's Safe, Respected, and Free from Violence Prevention fund, and developed in partnership with the local community. The Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group undertook extensive consultation with Women's and Men's family safety groups and community centres within the 16 town camps of Alice Springs, as well as educators and researchers. The Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group believes the project has the power to inform children's attitudes beyond the classroom: taking their knowledge into their broader lives to change norms with time.

Girls Can, Boys Can is now in its fourth year, and was given additional funding to upscale the program's reach across the whole of the Territory. In a survey of the target community in and around Alice Springs, Northern Territory, as part of a broader evaluation, exposure to the campaign was shown to improve attitudes to gender norms in 25 out of 27 (93%) of cases.¹ The evaluation found positive indications of shifting community attitudes towards gender equality. Carmel concludes:

“ If gender equality could get to that point where it was a whole of government approach and a whole saturation of messages across a whole cross-sector, then that's when we would be seeing like real change. *Mums Can, Dads Can* and *Girls Can, Boys Can* are only these small drops in the ocean, but they have made such a big impact and people really resonate with them.

Figure 2.3: 'Mums Can, Dads Can' and 'Girls Can, Boys Can' campaign posters⁵



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024).²



Challenge 3: Actions are not changing bias in language and representation

Gender bias in language and popular culture limits aspirations and reinforces gender roles

Gender bias is embedded in language and in content. Across books, news media, advertising, movies, school curricula and job advertisements, the stereotypes that associate women with the home and men with paid work (as one example of a persistent norm) are still widespread.

When German speakers were asked to describe a key to a lock, which is classified as masculine in the German language, they used masculine terms like “jagged,” “serrated” and “hard.” When Spanish speakers were asked to describe a key, which is feminine in Spanish, they used terms feminine terms like “little,” “shiny,” “golden,” and “intricate.”¹

Languages which use masculine or feminine pronouns demonstrate the impact that language can have on our understanding of the world. In fact, living in a country in which the dominant language is highly gendered is associated with a 25% increase in the gender wage gap.²

This language induced bias also has a meaningful impact on people’s behaviour. For example, evidence has found women are far more less to apply for jobs with masculine rather than gender neutral rather than (such as, ‘entrepreneurial’) rather than ‘must be willing to pursue new and creative ideas’).² In fact, one study found that using masculine language in job ads reduced the number of female applicants by 10%.³

Language bias has also been found to be prevalent in AI. One study found that across 133 AI systems, 44% showed gender bias, and 25% exhibited both gender and racial bias.⁴

Despite the powerful impact of language, government, business and groups in the community have been slow to realise the potential of messaging in remaking gender norms. Only 36% of business use gender-neutral language in their job postings and less than one in four remove gender identifiers from resumes (Deloitte Access Economics employer survey). Gender stereotypes remain prevalent across media (e.g., film and television) and while governments have taken steps to remove gendered language from policy documents and centre women’s voices, these actions are not yet widespread.



Only 1 female scientist is named in Australia’s Year 11 and 12 science curriculum, compared to over 150 male scientists.⁵



In G-rated movies, male characters outnumber female characters 2.6 to 1.⁶



30% of staffers in the Australian advertising industry are concerned ‘by potentially sexist content’, such as dangerous female stereotypes.⁷

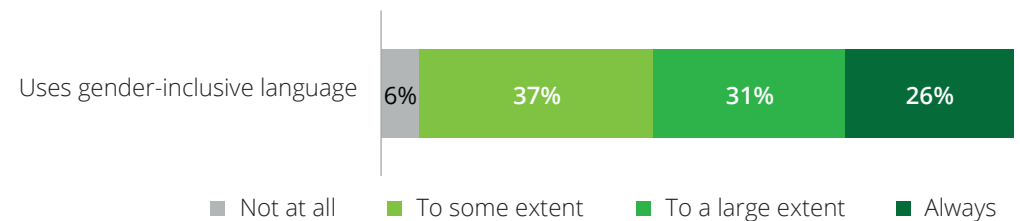


In books, women are five times more likely to be described using a negative verb associated with their appearance than men. Positive adjectives describing women are often related to their appearance (for example, beautiful), while positive adjectives describing men are often related to their behaviour (for example, brave).⁸



Writing samples of Australian children revealed that the most popular words for boys were soccer, footy and ninja, while cousins, party and cake were popular for girls.⁹

Chart 2.2: Businesses who use gender-inclusive language in their gender equity strategy, among businesses who have a strategy



Source: Deloitte Access Economics employer survey (2024). Employers (n=144) whose business has a gender equity strategy were asked ‘Do you agree with the following statements about your gender equity strategy - My organisation’s strategy uses gender-inclusive language (i.e. gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them/their)?’

Contributing to \$128 billion

Removing the constraints that limit individual's aspirations will improve the allocation of productive talent across the economy. This will occur through men and women being free to work or care in accordance with their preferences.

KEY GENDER GAPS ADDRESSED



Leadership



Occupational/industry segregation

Action 3: Eliminate stereotypes in language and culture

Gender bias in language and culture limits aspirations and reinforces gender roles

While language can reflect and reinforce harmful gender norms, it can also be used as a tool to challenge them. For example, a 2019 study found that adopting gender-neutral pronouns reduces support for traditional gender roles and leads to more positive attitudes towards women and LGBTQ+ people.¹ Similarly, the removal of instances where men are depicted as the 'default' and women are compared to them (e.g., "Do women lead differently to men?" "Girls are just as good as boys") improves perceptions of women.²

Remove gender stereotypes and promote a more balanced depiction of gender

Removing gender stereotypes from content has been shown to reduce belief in gender stereotypes, challenge rigid gender roles, reduce sexism, harassment and violence in men and increase career ambitions in women.³ For example, depictions of women in professional roles can increase women's political and career-related ambitions.⁴

Stereotypes are prevalent across all content types including film and television, books, children's toys, advertisements, social media and educational content.⁵ As such, eliminating gender stereotypes from content will require engagement from a broad range of businesses and content creators. Businesses can eradicate gender stereotypes in content by:

- subverting gender role expectations (e.g., showing men who are compassionate and women who are courageous)
- ensuring female characters are central to the action, in positions of authority and have significant speaking roles
- removing representations of women as passive objects of male desire, and
- depicting a range of different types of people (e.g., people with disabilities, women of colour).

The subversion of gender stereotypes can be highly effective at shifting norms. For example, the Future You online campaign, which featured an animation and original song showcasing how the characters use STEM in their jobs, significantly increased the share of participating children who reported being "very interested" in STEM after seeing the campaign.⁶

Adopt gender neutral language

Stakeholders need to adopt gender neutral language to limit the potential impact it can have on people's perceptions of gender.

At a minimum this involves:

- removing gender unequal references (e.g., describing male adults as 'men' and female adults as 'girls')

- replacing male-masculine forms (e.g., fireman) with gender-unmarked forms (e.g., firefighters)
- using a singular 'they' instead of a default 'he' or 'he or she' when referring to someone whose gender is not known
- avoiding unnecessary references to gender (e.g., a 'woman director' and 'male nurse'), and
- replacing gender coded words that have a strong gender bias ('driven' and 'competitive' for men versus 'supportive' and 'interpersonal' for women).^{7,8,9,10}

Businesses should present job requirements in behaviour terms – i.e., rather than asking for a candidate that is analytical, they should ask for someone who can analyse data – and limit the number of skills required. Women are far less likely than men to apply for a job when they do not meet all the criteria.⁷ This contributes to women applying for 20% fewer jobs than men despite similar job search behaviours.¹¹

Governments should, where relevant, adopt gender neutral language in Parliament, policy and public engagements. For example, in 2022, the ACT Government updated almost 40 pieces of legislation with gender-neutral language (e.g., replacing references to 'he or she' with 'they').¹² A year later, the SA Government announced it would be introducing gender-neutral titles and pronouns (e.g., 'chair' instead of 'chairman') into Parliament.¹³

Content directed at children can be particularly impactful

The removal of gender stereotypes is particularly important for content directed at children. By exposing children to gender-atypical representations in content, harmful gender stereotypes can be challenged before they are internalised. In fact, gender-atypical books have been found to increase children's play with gender-atypical toys, reduce their belief in gendered stereotypes about occupations and activities, and expand children's future goals and aspirations.^{14,15}

Parents have significant influence over children's exposure to gender stereotypes and should consider how they are communicating to their children about gender. For example, parents can help to explicitly combat harmful gender stereotypes – for example, by saying things like "boys like dolls" and "Dads are good at caring for babies." Parents can ensure the time and type of household chores assigned to their children is the same regardless of gender to counter stereotypes that women's work is in the home (for example, washing, dishes) and men's work is outside the home (for example, taking out the bins, mowing the lawns).¹⁶ Children should receive equal allowances, with evidence suggesting that, on average, girls earn less allowance than boys even when they do more chores.¹⁷

Case study: Addressing gender stereotypes in advertising through shEqual

The average Australian consumes roughly 5000 ads per day.¹ Accordingly, the representation of women and men in ads contributes to our perception of gender norms. 66% of Australians believe advertising still conforms to gender stereotypes and more than half think it reinforces harmful norms.²

In practice, women portrayed in ads are:

- 2.6x more likely than men to be shown in revealing clothes
- 2x more likely than men to be shown cleaning
- On screen 4x less than men.^{3,4}

Gender inequality in advertising, in particular the objectification and sexualisation of women, contributes to gender attitudes linked to violence against women as well as negative body image. The elimination of stereotyping from advertising flips the script on what is perceived as standard, subverting expectations and promoting equality. It is also more effective: one study found that realistic portrayals of women in ads increased purchase intent by 26% amongst all consumers, and 45% amongst women.⁵

The industry is aware of its impact and has taken steps to address gendered concerns. For example, the Australian Association of National Advertiser's Code of Ethics contains provisions on gender stereotypes and has released standards for body image.^{6,7} However, there is more than can be done.

shEqual, a national initiative delivered by Women's Health Victoria, aims to address the drivers of gendered violence and promote gender equality in advertising. The program recognises the significant influence the advertising industry has over cultural attitudes and behaviours and works to create change at a societal level. This includes developing an evidence base to support reform, offering gender equality training to advertising firms, and developing useful tools and resources to build the industry's capacity to produce gender equal and progressive ads.

One such resource is shEqual's seven identified advertising stereotypes for women in Australia.⁸ Each stereotype reinforces a harmful message about gender norms. The stereotypes, along with their corresponding messages, are summarised in Figure 2.4. Broadly speaking, women portrayed in ads generally lack authority, independence, and intelligence, and may appeal to the 'Male Gaze' through their physical appearance, attire, and/or facial expression. For instance, the 'Pretty Face', where a woman is shown for her appearance, rather than being intelligent or independent. This is typically in contrast to a man who will be depicted as multidimensional: smart, funny, authoritative, or strong.

Figure 2.4: shEqual Seven Gender Stereotypes in Advertising, and reinforced harmful gender norms⁶



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024), using data from shEqual.¹



Challenge 4: Actions do not consider all women

Gender norms manifest distinctly for different groups and outcomes vary significantly for different women

Gender equity policies seldom consider that discriminatory gender norms are diverse and shaped by many, often interplaying, characteristics. Often, these intersecting factors are not included or thought of, which results in worse outcomes for diverse groups of women.

Intersectionality recognises that some people have multiple marginalising identities, for example, race, age, rurality, class, sexual orientation and/or disability. The assumed default is often thought of as a white, cis, heterosexual middle-class man. The lack of inclusion creates negative outcomes for people with intersecting characteristics. Intersectionality means that many women experience compounded discrimination. For example, the pay gap between First Nations women when compared with non-First Nations men is (21%), whereas the gap experienced by non-First Nations women when compared to non-First Nations men is 15%.¹ In addition, the pay gap between culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) women and non-CARM men is 19%.² Women with disabilities also experience a large pay gap when compared to men without disabilities (19%).³

Policies or interventions that aim to close gender gaps, such as increasing women in senior leadership, may often only be effective for white, cis, heterosexual women and can overlook the impact of other forms of marginalisation on access to leadership positions. One survey found that 66% of CARM women felt that they had to “act white” to get ahead.⁴ In addition, there can be ableist expectations of senior roles and repercussions for those that are open about their disability status. Across 19 countries, women with disabilities hold 2.3% of positions as legislators, senior officials and managers; compared to 2.8% of men with disabilities and 3.4% of women without disabilities.⁵

Box 3.1: What is intersectionality?

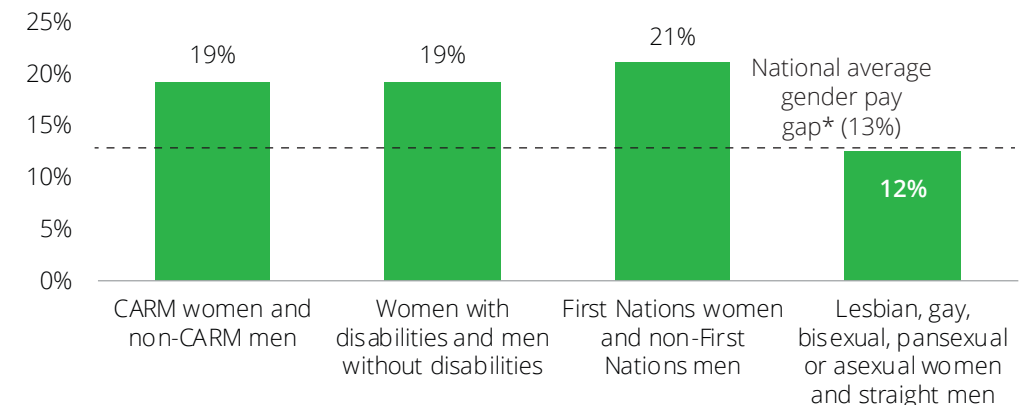
The term intersectionality was first coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and can be described as a lens or prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.⁶ Such intersecting identities can create forms of privilege and oppression depending on a person’s context and the existing power structures.

Despite the importance of applying an intersectional lens, it is rarely implemented in practice. In fact, the Australian Government determined that the 2021 Australian Census would not ask for information about gender identity, variations of sex characteristics or sexual orientation. Additionally, the Deloitte Access Economics employer survey found that only 17% of organisations with a gender equity strategy always closely consider intersectionality as part of the strategy.

Data collection and analysis are important for any measurement of progress and to support effective implementation of policy. Furthermore, it is integral for understanding the discrimination people face and the root causes driving gaps in outcomes. That is, data plays a role in reducing inequality. However, there is a dearth of data disaggregated by several factors and characteristics.

The Victorian Government’s Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector found that there were a limited number of organisations that could provide insight into the intersectionality of their employees. For example, only 28% of entities included under the 2020 Gender Equality Act could provide data related to disability status.⁷

Chart 2.3: Gender pay gap for different groups of women



Source: Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector (2023).
* At time of study.

Contributing to \$128 billion

Tackling the norms that impact and limit intersectional groups would act as an accelerator of change and allow all women to more fully participate in the economy, reduce pay disparities and improve representation.

KEY GENDER GAPS ADDRESSED



Leadership



Pay

Action 4: Embed intersectionality across gender initiatives

Gender norms manifest distinctly for different groups and outcomes vary significantly for different women

Increase representation of diverse groups within organisations

Ensuring that people of diverse backgrounds are represented and heard in management and positions of power is vital for breaking down barriers. Doing so helps recognise the historical biases that determine which characteristics are perceived as 'good' qualities for a leader, which often lend themselves to being traditionally masculine, western or white, heterosexual and ableist. For example, Politics in Colour actively works to advocate for cultural diversity in politics and has supported 27 women of colour in politics.

Increasing representation would be accelerated if businesses set targets to increase representation in leadership and the broader workforce. Businesses should also highlight the achievements of female employees and establish formal mentorship programs exclusive to female-identifying and diverse groups of employees.¹ These actions can ensure staff have the 'role models' required to envision their success within a business.

Celebrate the achievements of diverse groups of women

Content and depictions across society should ensure the inclusion of diverse women's perspectives and unique lived experiences. The promotion of diverse perspectives in content could help to draw attention to different issues and experiences across different backgrounds, reducing the barriers and stigma faced by diverse groups. For example, one survey found that 86% of CARM women said that they had to educate their colleagues about race issues, which was distressing for 72% of them.²

Film studios, publishing companies and media businesses can help promote perspectives by ensuring that they are telling stories of diverse groups of both women and men. Action should not stop at simply promoting perspectives, but also celebrating achievements. Recognising the achievements of leading figures can help role model what achievement looks like for people from a similar background or lived experience. Given the importance of intervening early (see Action 1), school curriculums are one area where the achievements of women should be celebrated. This includes:

- referencing the achievements of women, particularly in subjects viewed as masculine – such as mathematics, economics, science and business
- including texts about and authored by women, particularly those with intersectional identities, at equal rates to male texts
- integrating women's history into current classroom practice.

Applying an intersectional lens to data and decisions

Collecting high-quality intersectional data is an important first step for many organisations to understand and address differences in outcomes across groups. This includes identifying the existing level of representation within organisations, how policies and initiatives impact different groups and whether certain actions are more effective for some groups than they are for others. As well as gender, other characteristics such as race, and disability status should be considered side by side and together.³ Collecting intersectional data can be undertaken by governments, workplaces and philanthropic organisations. For example, collecting detailed data on beneficiaries of philanthropy.

The Victorian state government is making improvements to support the capturing of intersectional data in public workforces. The 2020 Gender Equality Act (the Act) aims to improve gender equality in workplaces in the Victorian public sector, as well as universities and local councils. A key component of this act was acknowledging that gender inequality is impacted by other forms of discrimination. Specifically, the Act requires organisations that fall under the policy to develop strategies and measures that consider intersecting identities, such as race, Aboriginality, religion, disability, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and gender identity. Furthermore, organisations must, where possible, collect data on intersecting forms of disadvantage as well as gender.

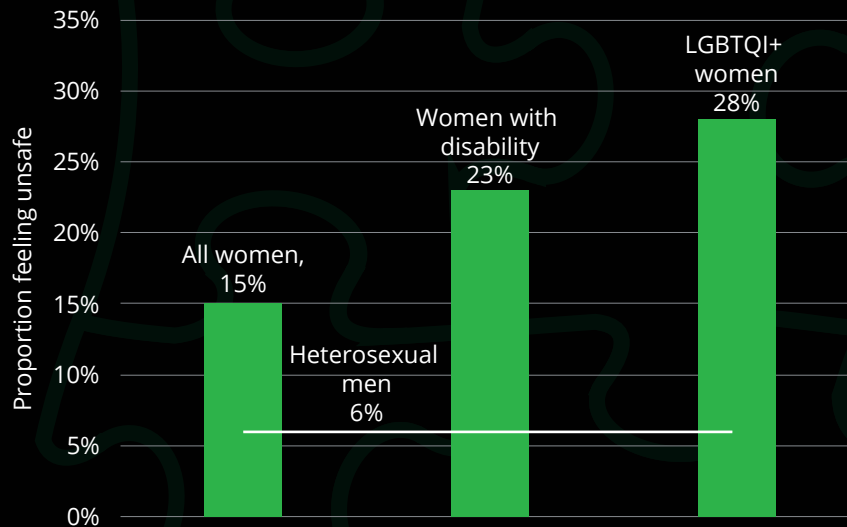
This is the first time under Australian legislature where organisations are encouraged to disaggregate data by a range of attributes. The impacts of the Act are not limited to organisations that fall within its remit; there are ripple effects felt in the private sector when the public sector leads the way.

Alongside analysis of intersectional data, stakeholders should inform the design of policy interventions by engaging with and listening to diverse women's voices. This includes, engaging in meaningful consultation with a range of representatives in the development of policies and including marginalised women in decision-making processes. For the work of marginalised women to be recognised and remunerated accordingly, it is integral to create safe avenues for them to share their perspectives.

Case study: Promoting diverse voices in public space design

Feeling unsafe in public is intersectional

Chart 2.4: Feelings of unsafety walking alone at night in local area



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, using data from ABS.¹

While women as a collective tend to feel more unsafe in public spaces than men, women with intersecting marginalised identities experience feeling unsafe to a greater degree (Chart 2.4). This sentiment is reflected in both perceived and actual unsafety. For example, women with disabilities report significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women without disabilities.²

Public space design can reflect gender and social norms. The infrastructure sector is male-dominated, so design that is assumed to be 'gender-neutral' may not consider the needs of women, in particular diverse groups of women. Without an intersectional lens, public spaces are likely to continue to be unsafe for marginalised groups of women.

Some governments across Australia are starting to embed an intersectional gender lens in their design. For example, Monash University XYX Lab is dedicated to advancing safety and inclusivity for women in public spaces. It has established partnerships with over 25 local councils from Victoria and the NSW, encompassing diverse initiatives including mapping projects and community-focused workshops.³

In Victoria, Women's Health East has applied an intersectional gender lens by consulting diverse people in the conception, design, and review of public spaces in their community. Women's Health East engages groups of diverse women on participatory walks throughout their local community, to better understand how they experience public spaces.⁴ The women are asked to express what they do and do not like about a space, and feedback is used to inform design. The feedback emerging from such walks may not necessarily align with what would otherwise be assumed, as illustrated in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Examples of design considerations that may emerge from participatory walks

	Gender lens assumption	Intersectional gender lens
To ensure all women feel included in public spaces...	...Public art should depict men and women.	...Public art should represent people of all genders and backgrounds e.g. First Nations artists, LGBTQI+ rainbow flag.
	...Baby changing facilities should be available.	...Accessible baby changing facilities should be available to people of all genders, as well as breastfeeding facilities.
	...Hedges and walls can be used to create paths and section off distinct spaces.	... Visibility of spaces should be prioritised from all angles, allowing for passive supervision and surveillance of the area.(a)
	...Bright lighting should be used at night to clearly illuminate the space.	...Considered, layered lighting should be used to avoid sharp drop-off of light beyond the path, and glare from reflective surfaces.(a)
	...Paths should allow two people to pass each other.	...Paths and doorways should be of appropriate condition, width, curvature, and incline to accommodate people, wheelchairs, prams, and carers to walk alongside.

Note: (a) Example considerations discussed by Women's Health East.

Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024), using data from Women's Health East.⁴



Challenge 5: Actions are performative

Organisations should focus on creating a culture that promotes equity rather than superficial achievements

With growing pressure to acknowledge and address gender inequity, many groups are expressing their support for women’s rights. Awareness raising around gender equity is important. However, when it is not followed by accountable and transparent action, businesses risk being performative. Further, they risk contributing to a sense of overconfidence or complacency that change is occurring.

A key example is that while Australian businesses are estimated to spend over \$137 million on IWD celebrations per year, which is more than the Australian Government spends on women’s medical research through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), a significant portion of these businesses lack the systematic processes to measure and close their gender gaps.

- For example, nearly half (45%) of businesses who celebrate IWD do not have a dedicated gender equity budget.
- In turn, half (47%) of businesses who celebrate IWD have a pay gap of more than 5%.

The performative nature of such action was highlighted in 2022 through an X (formally Twitter) account that launched a campaign to reveal the gender pay gaps of UK companies who posted statements supporting gender equality on IWD.¹ The X account, Gender Pay Gap Bot, called for companies to stop posting platitudes and start fixing the problem of gender inequity. In response, many companies tried to evade the bot by deleting their posts or no longer using the hashtag #IWD2022.²

Importantly, public expressions of support for gender equality – including IWD events – can have a positive impact, but only when they are paired with real action. When organisations who have implemented systematic processes to measure and close gender gaps voice their support for gender equality, others are encouraged to follow in their footsteps.

Many existing policies and process across business and government embed the restrictive gender norms and the status quo. Rather than celebrating superficial achievements and progress, remaking the norm requires that institutional structures be rebuilt to foster and reflect a modern culture that promotes shifts in norms. Actions demonstrated to create a culture of change typically embed processes of accountability and transparency. Importantly, this should be done on a business-as-usual basis rather than siloed into human resources functions.

Figure 2.5: Characteristics of businesses celebrating IWD




Source: Deloitte Access Economics year of employer survey (2024). Employers (n=66) were asked ‘Which of the following events did your organisation celebrate in 2023?’ and ‘Does your organisation have a gender and/or diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategy and/or budget?’

Contributing to \$128 billion

Creating accountable and transparent cultures will help address the pay gap and the lack of women in leadership, improving labour force participation and productivity.

KEY GENDER GAPS ADDRESSED

-  Leadership
-  Pay

Action 5: Create accountable and transparent institutions

Organisations should focus on creating a culture that promotes equity rather than superficial achievements

Accountability is key for driving change

Accountability creates change by making organisations and leaders responsible for achieving outcomes. To facilitate accountability stakeholders must ensure that sufficient data is being collected and assessed with a gender lens. This includes outcomes such as representation and pay currently required by WGEA reporting, but should also decisions such as recruitment, promotions, representation and budget allocations. For example, at the end of 2018, the ABC committed to achieving equal representation of men and women interviewees and contributors as part of the 50:50 Equality Project, a global BBC initiative designed to improve representation of women in media.¹ This goal was achieved by March 2021.

Collecting data alone is not enough, accountability requires standardised mechanisms to review and change decisions. Establishing gender equity panels or equity leads are one way to build accountability. However, to work well these bodies need to have meaningful review powers and be sufficiently funded.^{2,3}

Accountability can also improve the functioning of gender equity initiatives. For example, research finds that organisations who implement targets with clear mechanisms for accountability (i.e., consequences for non-achievement) are more likely to result in improvements across a range of gender equity and diversity outcomes.^{4,5} Actions to integrate accountability into targets could include incorporating progress toward equity outcomes as part of managers' reviews, individual performance targets and remuneration.⁶ Through the 2020 Gender Equity Act, the Victorian State Government requires all entities in the public sector with over 50 employees to implement a gender equality action plan and publicly report progress in relation to gender equality.⁷

Transparency is essential for progress

Transparency is another effective avenue of creating accountability and improving outcomes. For example, targets that are publicly shared and reported against are more likely to be met.⁸ Research on pay gap reporting shows that when public reporting was introduced in Denmark, UK and Canada, pay gaps improved by between 13-30%.⁹

While recent changes to WGEA reporting sees organisational level pay gaps reported publicly and requirements placed on businesses to share their industry benchmarking report with their board, previously fewer than half of 100+ employee Australian businesses reported pay equity metrics to the board and a mere 7% voluntarily reported publicly.¹⁰ This lack of business-as-usual transparency suggests a lack of internal focus and accountability for gender equity outcomes within Australian businesses.

Government can play a role in promoting transparency and accountability through legislation. For example, countries with a legislated requirement for targets for women on boards to be met (quotas) tend to have more women on company boards.¹¹ Actions to require businesses to consider, report against and set targets for their gender gaps would likely accelerate the focus businesses place on these outcomes. Some action has already commenced on this front with the Commonwealth Government planning on requiring businesses with more than 500 employees to meet targets in order to participate in some government procurement.

Public reporting also has a role in the community and philanthropic sector. For example, in 2019 the Sydney Film Festival committed to the '5050x2020'. This commitment required the Festival to compile statistics on the gender of the director of submitted films, make public the gender of selection committee members, programmers and the executive board, and commit to a schedule to achieve parity in these bodies.

Public reporting enhances targeting by focusing on critical metrics and goals, promoting accountability and guiding resource allocation. It also enhances transparency by ensuring regulatory compliance and enabling informed decision-making. When sustained over time, public reporting can be highly effective at improving equity outcomes.¹²



Challenge 6: Actions are not targeting the systems that perpetuate gender norms

Process and systems embed historical norms and hinder progress

Gender norms are embedded into everyday decision making across society. They impact outcomes such as who is hired or promoted, where resources are invested, and the policies that government enacts. While these decisions are not inherently about gender, restrictive norms around gender roles and stereotypes contribute to internalised unconscious bias and discrimination, which can result in vastly different outcomes for men and women. For example, consider that:

- Women are 47% more likely to be injured and 17% more likely to die when they get into a car accident because most vehicle crash tests are implemented with crash test dummies that are male-sized with male features.¹
- Fewer than 30% of Australian health and medical research publications stratify their primary outcomes by sex and/or gender.²
- Managers are 50% more likely to ask female workers to undertake non-promotable work than their male colleagues, and when asked, women are 50% more likely to agree to the request.³

This highlights the need for gender equity to be about more than implementing specific gender policies. Instead, stakeholders need to measure and re-evaluate the unintended consequences of all processes and decisions.

Government has begun to adopt a broader approach to gender equity through gender responsive budgeting (GRB), which assesses the impact of government budget and policy decisions on gender equity.⁴ However, despite guidance from both the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments, the application of GRB across the nation is still at an early stage.

Greater consideration of gender in government and business procurement, and contracting processes, is another opportunity for impact. Government has begun to move in this direction with the Western Australian Government currently undertaking a pilot initiative to embed gender equity principles and practices into selected government procurement activities.⁵ However, based on the Deloitte Access Economics employer survey, incorporating a gender lens into procurement processes is currently one of the least utilised initiatives by businesses.

Technological change makes it more important than ever to plan and evaluate gender impacts. For example, with generative artificial intelligence set to become common, there is a risk that these systems reflect, and potentially amplify, restrictive gender norms. The reinforcing nature of gender bias in online content is particularly pronounced for images and video compared to text.⁶ For example, 97% of “CEO” images generated by artificial intelligence (AI) such as OpenAI’s DALL-E 2 (a system that creates images from textual descriptions) depict white men.⁷ Deepfakes, or fake AI-generated images, are also emerging as a medium for perpetuation of harmful gender attitudes, with 90% of deepfakes depicting non-consensual pornographic images of women.⁸ Despite this, the Australian Government’s response to the *Safe and responsible AI in Australia* discussion paper failed to incorporate gender as a consideration.⁹

Gender norms are embedded more broadly than in decision-making. Restrictive norms also shape the structures of many Australian institutions and industries. For example, the structure of work itself reflects traditional norms, with high-paying and prestigious occupations typically rewarding those who are able to invest high amounts of time and are readily available.^{10, 11} These highly inflexible roles (sometimes termed ‘greedy jobs’) are generally incompatible with the domestic and care work that is typically the domain of women.

The value of work in stereotypically feminine industries is also undervalued. For example, 95% of workers in care occupations are earning at rates below the Australian average, with the Fair Work Commission noting that the minimum wage rates for direct care roles in aged care do not properly compensate workers for the value of work performed.¹² However, there has been recent progress with minimum award wages for residential age care workers increasing by 15% in June 2023.¹³

The undervaluing of feminised work is even prevalent among work requiring comparable levels of education. For example, workers in female dominated industries with a bachelor degree or above earn 30% less per hour than workers in male dominated industries with the same level of qualifications.¹⁴ In the veterinary industry, these trends are particularly evident, with female veterinarians instead of vets earning significantly less than their male counterparts (despite outnumbering them two-to-one) and being paid lower than many comparably skilled professions.¹⁵

Contributing to \$128 billion

Structurally addressing the unconscious biases that impact decisions across society will improve the allocation of talent through greater representation of women in leadership and a more even gender balance of industries.

KEY GENDER GAPS ADDRESSED



Leadership



Occupational/industry segregation

Action 6: Create structured processes to reduce embedded bias

Process and systems embed historical norms and hinder progress

Taking a systematic approach to addressing the unconscious biases that are embedded in individual and organisational decision making is essential. This aligns with the *Champions of Change* report, 7 Switches, which calls for the delivery of ‘inclusive gender equality by design.’¹

Apply a gender lens

To change processes across business, government and philanthropists, collecting and applying a gender lens to decisions and outcomes is a foundational step. Not only does this allow the current state of progress to be assessed, but it also enables identifying opportunities for change and proactively addressing gender gaps. This includes assessing organisational gender gaps in pay across all levels (including bonus pay), as well as leadership roles and promotions.

As well as assessing business as usual operations, stakeholders should actively build in processes to ensure that the intended outcomes of policy changes or initiatives are being met. This allows barriers, such as cultural resistance or implementation issues, to be identified and addressed. It can also help establish an evidence base and buy-in for further investment in gender equity initiatives.

Adopting a gender lens improves gender equity, but also has broader benefits. For example, early-stage investors who assess their portfolio companies with a gender lens likely miss out on opportunities to increase returns.² Similarly, philanthropists who take a gender-neutral approach risk not maximising the impact of their funding.³ Given philanthropists’ ability to take a long-term view and invest in projects that may be unsuitable for private investors or less palatable for government, they play a significant role in changing norms over time.

Changing processes to reduce bias

Resetting the default is important for addressing the unconscious biases and gender stereotypes that have a profound impact on gender outcomes across recruitment, promotion and retention. For example, research shows that free-form interviews are more susceptible to bias with differences in scores between candidates being eliminated when structured interviews are used.⁴ Similarly, processes around salary negotiation can exacerbate the gender pay gap over time with research demonstrating that women are less likely to negotiate their salary compared to men, for reasons including being seen as too demanding and facing backlash.⁵ Policies demonstrated to be effective at overcoming bias and driving change are outlined in Table 2.2. These initiatives are demonstrated to contribute to profound change. For example, astronomy company ASTRO 3D increased the share of women in its workforce by 12%, from 38% to 50%, over a five-year period after implementing measuring including targets, diverse selection committees and promoting female role models.⁶

Table 2.2: Business actions with an evidence base of success

Equity area	Initiatives
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove biased language from job ads Offer flexible working arrangements by default in job ads Make job requirements clear, specific, and behaviour-based Use skill-based assessment tasks Use structured interviews Make expectations around salaries and negotiation clear
Promotion and retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase transparency of promotion, pay and reward processes Default employees into applying for promotion or other competitive opportunities Making decisions about applicants in batches rather than individually Offer diversity networking programs Redesign formal grievance procedures
Workplace flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve workplace flexibility for everyone Make workplace or role adjustments available to everyone Encourage men to take parental leave and utilise flexible work arrangements

Source: Behavioural Insights Team (2021).

Restructuring work

While the structure of work itself embeds gender inequity, these structures are not preordained. Change is possible – a trial of a five-day work week in construction found that 78% of workers reported an improvement in work-life balance, with no increase in variable costs.⁷ Similarly, issues surrounding the undervalued ‘feminised’ industries can be directly addressed by increasing the rate of pay in sectors such as healthcare, teaching and aged care.

While a long-term focus on shifting norms and attitudes that prevent men and women entering counter-stereotypical industries and occupation are important, addressing the time constraints that make progression through some careers difficult for parents engaged in care is also essential. To ensure that ensuring the parents feel enabled to divide care in the way that best suits their personal circumstances, giving time back to both birth and non-birth parents through accessible and affordable childcare and early learning is critical.



Case study: Applying a gender lens in philanthropy

The philanthropic sector is worth \$13.4 billion in Australia.¹ This significant funding pool has enormous potential to contribute to the dismantling of harmful gender norms. Compared to businesses which focus on producing good and services for profit and governments which focus on managing public affairs, philanthropists can be better placed to invest in intractable social issues that have a long-term horizon, such as gender norms. This is why philanthropy is often called 'risk capital.'

As well as directly supporting initiatives that challenge gender norms, philanthropy can support gender equity by applying a gender lens to all investment. This means the deliberate consideration of the unique experiences and needs of people of different genders in investment decisions.

However, Australian research shows that philanthropic decision-making does not sufficiently incorporate a gender lens:

- Only 31% of corporate givers and 40% of philanthropic givers consider gender in their philanthropy.² This is despite 100% of corporate and private givers indicating they are aware of concepts and terms such as gender lens and gender-wise giving.
- 91% of Champion of Change Coalition Member organisations have made a leadership commitment to gender equality through a specific strategy and action plan. But only 46% of Member organisations apply a gender lens to corporate giving efforts.³

Applying a gender lens matters because philanthropic investment in causes that are assumed to be gender-neutral, for example 'medical research' or 'the arts', may under-serve and exclude women. This is not an intentional outcome – but failing to consider gender means that investment naturally favours existing structures and systems that tend to better serve men.

Alongside applying a gender lens to all investment, philanthropists can take other action to tackle gender inequity, such as:

- Data collection – collect intersectional gender disaggregated data when assessing the impact of funding
- Targets and executive buy-in – make all executives accountable to setting and achieving targets, including for women-led, owned or founded partners and suppliers, and report progress to the Board
- Implement best practice workforce equity practices within philanthropic organisations – such as those listed in in Table 2.2 on page 38.

Melbourne Theatre Company – Women In Theatre Program

In 2012, the Australian Council for the Arts found that the creative industries in Australia had a significant underrepresentation of women in leadership positions:

- Only 36% of productions by Major Performing Arts theatre companies had a woman in a creative leadership role.
- 21% of productions had a female writer, and 25% had a female director.
- Less than one third of Artistic Directors were women.
- Only one woman chaired a Major Performing Arts theatre company out of a total of 28.⁴

In response, the Melbourne Theatre Company launched the Women Directors Program in December 2013. The program delivered initiatives including: mentorships, professional development masterclasses, networking events, pitch opportunities and placements.

The impact was already evident in 2016, by which point female-identifying directors had made up over 40% of those directing productions and 54% at Melbourne Theatre Company.

The program was renamed Women in Theatre in 2016 and its reach expanded to other female creatives, including producing, management, writing and design. Over 80 women have been supported by Women in Theatre over the last decade.⁵

Building on the success of this program, Melbourne Theatre Company has now adapted the model to further support and champion other currently underrepresented voices in the artistic community.

The Women in Theatre program has been able to deliver this impact through the contributions of philanthropy, illustrating the significant contribution philanthropy can play in shifting gender norms.

Case study: Gender norms in start-ups and venture capital

Tidal Ventures: diversity embedded in culture

An Australia-US venture capital firm headquartered in Sydney, Tidal invests in groundbreaking early-stage technology companies. In addition to financial backing, they offer their founders in-depth advice, business expertise, and operational support.

Over a quarter of start-ups invested in by Tidal have women founders. This is significantly higher than the industry standard.

Grant McCarthy, Founder and Managing Partner labels Tidal's diversity approach as "first principles", which starts with having diversity within their own team. The firm's investment team is 75% women, and as Senior Investment Associate Fee Lal explains: "We believe representation is essential—when women founders see themselves represented in their investment team, that can lead to more women founders coming through."

Grant McCarthy says their entire team "sees the power of diverse perspectives". They encourage healthy debate, valuing different opinions over consensus. Grant indicates that this approach extends to their investment process, where they "dig deep to understand a company's values and potential beyond just numbers or founders".

Fee Lal reiterates the power of diverse perspectives and what that looks like in action: "We pitch internally, someone might say 'this is why we should invest in this company' and then wants everyone to challenge it to reach the best decision based on differing opinions. It's that diverse feedback loop and differing points of data that inform our Investment Committee's final decision. We are united in our diversity".

Gender biases are well established in investment in start-up companies. Research shows that:

- Women founders are more likely to be penalised by investors for a lack of industry fit.¹
- Questions to entrepreneurs following a business pitch can be gendered.²
- Feminine-stereotyped behaviours in founders can be less appealing to investors.³

This translates into a severe underinvestment in women founders...



4% of funding went to women-only founders in Australia in 2023⁴

... which has significant economic consequences:



Global GDP could rise by up to 2% if women and men had equal participation as entrepreneurs.⁵

Investible: reducing bias throughout processes in the investment pipeline

Investible is an early-stage venture capital firm with three funds; Early-Stage Fund 1, Early-Stage Fund 2, and Climate Tech Fund. Investible is committed to diversifying its portfolio and applies bias reducing techniques throughout the investment pipeline. When a pitch deck is submitted, each team member must review it individually, before coming together to decide if a company will progress to the next stage.

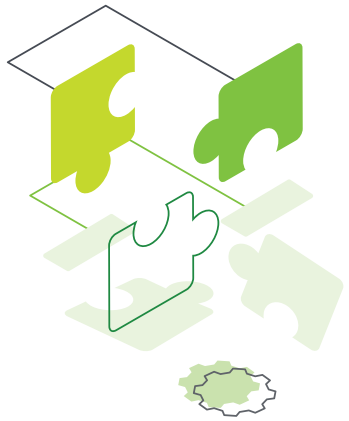
The importance of a horizontal structure was also highlighted by Ben Lindsay, investment manager of the Climate Tech fund, who stated that "irrespective of the level of an employee, if they have conviction to meet the start-up, they can. This reduces bias towards one way of thinking".

In addition, the firm applies an Investibility Index throughout its decision-making process, which includes 16 measures used to assess whether to invest in a company. The index allows for objectivity in the investment process; that is, reducing bias. The index includes both qualitative and quantitative measures to assess whether a start-up is 'thrivable', its ability to grow, and 'survivable', whether it could withstand disruptions.

Investible also prioritises diversity within its investment team, fostering a mix of gender, culture, educational background and professional expertise. With each new addition to the team, Investible ensures that they will not only contribute unique perspectives but also challenge and complement the existing investment team dynamics.

These structures and policies are critical for reducing bias. As Amy Huang, Chief of Staff of Investible, notes, "Building processes to reduce bias is inherently linked to making robust investment decisions. With bias, there are blind spots, and these blind spots result in assumptions which introduce risk. If you aren't constantly checking these biases you end up with an imbalanced portfolio that is less resilient."

The processes to eliminate bias have had profound impacts. In the initial stages of assessment in the Climate Tech fund, where founders have disclosed gender, there are 45% to 50% female- or mixed gender-led founding teams. This balance is maintained throughout the process, with 48% of 23 climate investments having mixed gender founding teams, and 21% solely female founding teams.



3. Action summary sheets by stakeholder





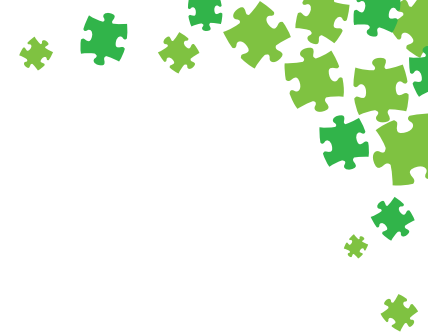
Key actions for government

Core action	Enabling actions	How does this help to remake the norm?
Engage children and young people in discussions about gender norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support teachers, educators and parents to have age-appropriate conversations about respect, consent and safety, through programs like RRE and funding to the eSafety Commissioner. Fund community programs that engage children and young people in discussions on gender norms, including positive masculinities, and upskill community leaders. Build workforce capability in gender norms across sectors that engage with young people, including education, health, child and family services, sport, and justice. When speaking to young boys, use messaging strategies that meet them where they are (i.e., providing rationale, real-life examples and positive messaging). This encourages boys to actively support remaking restrictive gender norms. 	These initiatives are preventative measures designed to challenge restrictive gender norms (e.g., boys are better at math, girls are kinder than boys) at the start, before they are deeply embedded in children's perspectives.
Enable men to play a bigger role at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase government-supported paid parental leave to 52 weeks and raise the rate of pay of parental leave to at least 50% of the average pre-birth wage, with eligibility caps for high-income households. Reserve at least 14 weeks for each parent, with the rest to be shared as the parents choose. Provide high-quality flexible working arrangements to public sector employees, enabling parents employed in the public sector to share unpaid work and role-model less restrictive gender roles at home. Strengthen the rights of employees to flexible work and family-friendly working arrangements, enabling parents to share unpaid work and role-model less restrictive gender roles at home. Encourage men to participate in unpaid work through informational campaigns (e.g., a campaign to encourage dads to take their full allocation of parental leave), changing the norm that women are primarily responsible for care and household duties. 	These initiatives confront the norm that unpaid work is women's work by incentivising fathers to take on greater responsibilities at home. This will have intergenerational effects, as children are raised by parents who role-model sharing domestic duties.
Eliminate stereotypes in language and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use government leadership positions to highlight the achievements of women – stand with women in construction sites, seek out women journalists to work with, demand gender diversity on panels, and seek out statistics and quotes from women experts. Adopt gender neutral language in Parliament, policy and public engagements (e.g., using a singular 'they' instead of a default 'he' or 'he or she' in policy documents), limiting gender bias and reducing the perceived differences between men and women. Challenge gender stereotypes in content (e.g., information booklets, school curriculum and policy), counteracting restrictive norms. Support parents in accessing information about limiting their children's exposure to gender stereotypes (i.e., through an informational campaign, school-run sessions), preventing children from internalising restrictive gender norms (e.g., girls are passive). Apply a gender lens to policies around AI to ensure that past biases are not brought into the future. 	These initiatives reduce the perceived and often exaggerated differences between men and women, which underpin gender norms.
Embed intersectionality across gender initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply an intersectional lens in all government policies, by considering the experiences of diverse women throughout the lifespan of an intervention. Include the achievements, history and texts of a diverse range of women in public materials (e.g., information booklets, school curriculum), remaking gender norms that centre male perspectives and view women as less capable. Support content created by and about a diverse array of women (e.g., movies, television and books), challenging the norm of the default male and encourage more nuanced depictions of womanhood. Embed intersectional data collection in government datasets (e.g., WGEA, the Census) to understand how restrictive gender norms impact woman who aren't white, cis-gender, able-bodied, heterosexual and affluent. Engage in meaningful consultation with a diverse range of women and centre their voices in the design of policies. 	These initiatives account for how norms differ by identity and help to tackle restrictive gender norms faced by marginalised women.
Create accountable and transparent institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislate target setting for businesses in areas, such as the gender pay gap and leadership, counteracting norms that undervalue women. All state governments should incorporate gender consideration into their procurement policies. Use the Women's Budget Statement to show all changes in government funding for measures referenced in previous Women's Budget Statements. 	These initiatives ensure that stakeholders deliver on promises to tackle restrictive gender norms, and that it is prioritised.
Create structured processes to reduce embedded bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt best-practice recruitment processes including skill-based interviews and transparent remuneration. Apply a gender lens to commercial investments. Adopt best-practice gender-responsive budgeting, preventing government investment from strengthening restrictive gender norms. Ensure best-practice systems are embedded in schools to respond to instances of violence, ensuring school responses to violence don't entrench restrictive gender norms, such as victim-blaming. Address labour shortages in the early education and care sector, as well as the broader undervaluation of industries associated with women. Incorporate gender into the design of AI safety frameworks, reducing the reinforcement of gender norms in AI design. Adopt and fund best practice gender responsive budgeting across new and existing policy proposals. 	These initiatives create structural incentives for people and organisations to act in a manner that shifts restrictive gender norms.



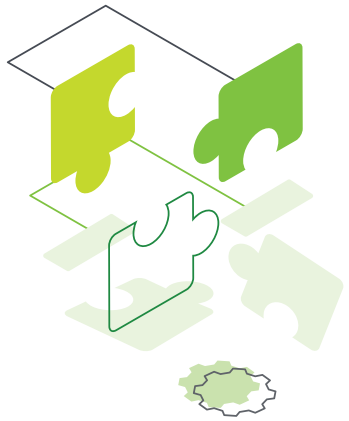
Key actions for businesses

Core action	Enabling actions	How does this help to remake the norm?
Engage children and young people in discussions about gender norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in campaigns and initiatives aimed at changing the public images that are portrayed to young people of professions, careers and leadership. Promote gender atypical professions, industries and leadership opportunities to young people. Partner with universities to build a diverse pipeline of young people into typically gender segregated industries (e.g., women in data science, men in nursing). 	These initiatives are preventative measures designed to challenge restrictive gender norms (e.g., boys are better at math, girls are kinder than boys) at the start, before they are deeply embedded in children's perspectives.
Enable men to play a bigger role at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top-up government parental leave, reducing the financial disincentives that prevent men from taking parental leave (i.e., men are more likely to earn significantly above minimum wage than women) and entrench restrictive norms around unpaid work. Create high-quality flexible working arrangements and develop peer networks to encourage men to use them, helping to tackle the norm that women are primarily responsible for care and household duties. Business leaders should role model change by utilising flexible and family friendly entitlements. 	These initiatives confront the norm that unpaid work is women's work by incentivising fathers to take on greater responsibilities at home. This will have intergenerational effects, as children are raised by parents who role-model sharing domestic duties.
Eliminate stereotypes in language and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilise gender neutral language in internal and external messaging (e.g., eliminate gendered words from job ads), limiting gender bias and reduce the perceived differences between men and women. Challenge gender stereotypes in products and content (e.g., advertisements, products, film and television), counteracting restrictive norms (e.g., men as sexually dominant). For example, television producers could remove objectifying depictions of women and show men in caring roles. Establish formal mentorship programs exclusive to female-identifying employees, counteracting restrictive norms that limit women's professional aspirations, particularly in male-dominated fields like science. 	These initiatives reduce the perceived and often exaggerated differences between men and women, which underpin gender norms.
Embed intersectionality across gender initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture data on the identities of employees (e.g., LGBTQ+ status, CARM status) and include intersectional analysis on pay, promotions and performance into business-as-usual processes, revealing how restrictive gender norms impact women who aren't white, cis-gender, able-bodied, straight and affluent. Produce content created by and about a diverse range of women (e.g., movies, television and books), and ensure women are decision-makers in every stage of production, challenging the norm of the default male and encourage more nuanced depictions of womanhood. Recognise the achievements of a diverse range of women employees (e.g., racially marginalised women are paid equally and represented proportionately on panels), shifting gendered norms around who can achieve professional success. Set clear, achievable, accountable and intersectional gender diversity targets, creating a 'role-model' effect that shifts gendered norms relating to leadership (e.g., women with disability are perceived as equally capable of leadership). 	These initiatives account for how norms differ by identity and help to tackle restrictive gender norms faced by marginalised women.
Create accountable and transparent institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish well-resourced gender leads or panels with the power to review and overrule business decisions on equity grounds. Set targets for gender outcomes with consequences for non-achievement. Incorporate progress toward equity outcomes as part of managers' reviews, individual performance targets and remuneration. Incorporate gendered data collection and analysis on pay, promotions and performance review into business-as-usual processes, ensuring business processes aren't entrenching restrictive gender dynamics. Ensure sexual harassment and domestic violence workplace policies are transparent and victim-survivor centered. 	These initiatives ensure that stakeholders deliver on promises to tackle restrictive gender norms, and that it is prioritised.
Create structured processes to reduce embedded bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply a gender-lens to new initiatives and procurement, preventing these actions from reinforcing restrictive gender norms. Introduce bias mitigation tools and audits, reducing the reinforcement of gender norms in AI design. Adopt best practice initiatives to minimise implicit gender bias in recruitment, promotion and retention decisions (e.g., using skill-based assessment tasks), counteracting norms relating to gender segregation by industry and leadership. End long-hour contracts that encourage restrictive norms around gender-segregation by industry and men's limited involvement in unpaid work. Report equity measures at the board level and publicly, ensuring accountability for action on addressing gender norms. 	These initiatives create structural incentives for people and organisations to act in a manner that shifts restrictive gender norms.



Key actions for philanthropists and community groups

Core action	Enabling actions – philanthropists <i>Fund and support initiatives that address the core action, use a gender lens, demonstrate gender analysis and challenge gender stereotypes to promote gender equality.</i>	Enabling actions – community groups	How does this help to remake the norm?
Engage children and young people in discussions about gender norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund initiatives that engage young people in facilitated conversations at school about gender norms and positive masculinities, challenging norms before they are deeply embedded. • Fund programs that provide engaging environments where young men can build healthy beliefs and behaviours, have safe conversations with responsible adults, and challenge harmful norms they see in places like the internet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empower community leaders to promote positive gender attitudes and inclusive spaces. For example, in sporting clubs, community organisations and public spaces. • Engage young people in facilitated conversations at school about gender norms and positive masculinities, challenging norms before they are deeply embedded. • Upskill community leaders and parents in gender norms, including shifting the attitudes and behaviour of boys, enabling leaders and role models to challenge restrictive norms at the start. • Actively engage boys in conversations about gender norms and teach positive masculinities. 	These initiatives are preventative measures designed to challenge restrictive gender norms (e.g., boys are better at math, girls are kinder than boys) at the start, before they are deeply embedded in children's perspectives.
Enable men to play a bigger role at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund organisations to develop best practices or organisations who advocate for men to play a bigger role at home. • Model best practice gender equality initiatives through organisational practice and governance (e.g., on boards and at events). Build this expectation into communication and funding models where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make public parenting spaces and parenting communities gender neutral to include men. For example, have 'parents play groups' as opposed to 'mothers groups'. 	These initiatives confront the norm that unpaid work is women's work by incentivising fathers to take on greater responsibilities at home. This will have intergenerational effects, as children are raised by parents who role-model sharing domestic duties.
Eliminate stereotypes in language and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund initiatives that support parents in accessing information about limiting their children's exposure to gender stereotypes, preventing children from internalising restrictive gender norms (e.g., girls are passive). • Fund initiatives that engage parents and children in activities that do not reinforce stereotypes. • Fund initiatives that support the gender balance of community leaders (e.g., sporting coaches) to provide all children with strong role models in the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt gender neutral language and remove gender stereotypes from messaging (e.g., promotional materials, instruction manuals and social media context), limiting gender bias and reducing the perceived differences between men and women. • Support parents in accessing information about limiting their children's exposure to gender stereotypes, preventing children from internalising restrictive gender norms (e.g., girls are passive). 	These initiatives reduce the perceived and often exaggerated differences between men and women, which underpin gender norms.
Embed intersectionality across gender initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set clear, achievable, accountable and intersectional gender diversity targets, creating a 'role-model' effect that shifts gender norms relating to leadership (e.g., women with disability are perceived as equally capable of leadership). • Collect and analyse data on the identities of the beneficiaries of all philanthropic giving (e.g., gender, cultural and racial background), revealing how restrictive gender norms impact donations. • Direct philanthropic and charitable giving to the issues faced by diverse women to counteract norms that disregard the unique challenges faced by different groups of women, and ensure it applies a gender lens and undertakes detailed data collection and analysis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use public-facing materials such as school and sport posters and pamphlets to challenge gender stereotypes (e.g. equal representation of boys and girls in photos). • Set clear, achievable, accountable and intersectional gender diversity targets, creating a 'role-model' effect that shifts gender norms relating to leadership (e.g., women with disability are perceived as equally capable of leadership). • Introduce pronouns and D&I statement into communication to normalise gender diversity. • Ensure access to amenities such as change rooms in parks and sport centres enables all genders to participate in safe and respectful way. 	These initiatives account for how norms differ by identity and help to tackle restrictive gender norms faced by marginalised women, men, transgender and non-binary people.
Create accountable and transparent institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to equal representation of men and women in decision making positions within philanthropic organisations. • Implement reporting requirements for philanthropic and charitable giving to ensure transparency of beneficiaries by gender. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to equal representation of men and women in decision making positions within community organisations. 	These initiatives ensure that stakeholders deliver on promises to tackle restrictive gender norms, and that it is prioritised.
Create structured processes to reduce embedded bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a gender lens to proactively address gender gaps in philanthropic giving. • Change underlying processes that may reinforce gender norms, for example gender parity quotas on boards and speaking panels (such as 40:40:20). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a gender lens to proactively address gender gaps in community group settings. • Change underlying processes that may reinforce gender norms, for example gender parity quotas on boards and speaking panels (such as 40:40:20). 	These initiatives create structural incentives for people and organisations to act in a manner that shifts restrictive gender norms.



Appendix





Appendix A: Challenges and actions

The challenges and actions in this report were driven by a detailed literature and rigorous assessment of published reports

The six challenges and actions identified in this report were informed by a broad literature review that was conducted to determine interventions that are effective at deconstructing gender norms. This review involved searches in Google Scholar and was supplemented with ad-hoc searches producing grey literature and data on the current state drawn from the Deloitte Employer Survey and WGEA for businesses and from Women's Budget Statements for government.

Articles and literature were screened for relevancy to gender norms and effective interventions, as well as appropriateness for the Australian gender landscape. A detailed literature review was performed on the selected articles. Findings from the literature review were assessed against the gender transformative framework, and what is currently being done in an Australian context to close gender gaps and address the underlying causes driving disadvantage for women. They were then grouped thematically into six key challenges and actions. The resulting challenges highlighted in this report include the most impactful shortfalls in current gender equity initiatives that further delay progress and meaningful change.

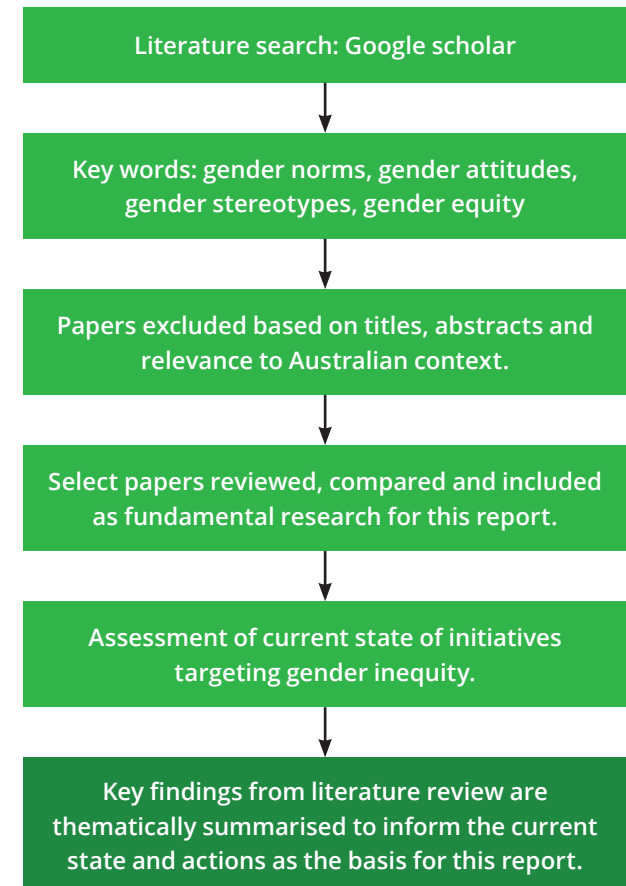
This process is illustrated in Figure A.1 to the right.

A key piece of literature that informed the report was Cookson, Tara Patricia et al., 'Social Norms, Gender, and Development: A Review of Research and Practice' (September 2023). This publication discusses what social norms are, how they change and what interventions are known to be effective or ineffective. The paper provides a global perspective on gender norms and which levels of the socio-ecological framework in particular have a role to play in shifting norms.

Remaking the norm leveraged other key pieces of literature to inform its findings and recommendations. Below are a select few key pieces:

- Steward, Rebecca et al., 'Gendered stereotypes and norms: A systematic review of interventions designed to shift attitudes and behaviour' (2021)
- Flood, Michael, 'Work with men to end violence against women: a critical stocktake', (July 2015)
- UN Women, 'Intersectionality resource guide and toolkit' (2021).

Figure A.1: Process of identifying key challenges and actions



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024).



Appendix B: Deloitte Access Economics employer survey

The Deloitte Access Economics employer survey conducted for this report aimed to understand the actions businesses are taking to address gender equity across a range of different initiatives

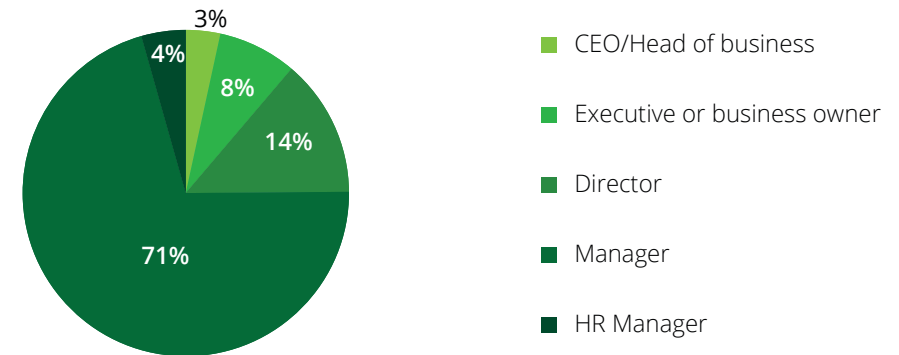
The survey was fielded to:

- 205 respondents
- A mix of sectors and geographies in line with Australian business make-up
- A mix of company sizes, ranging from 0 to over 1,000 employees.

Core topics covered were:

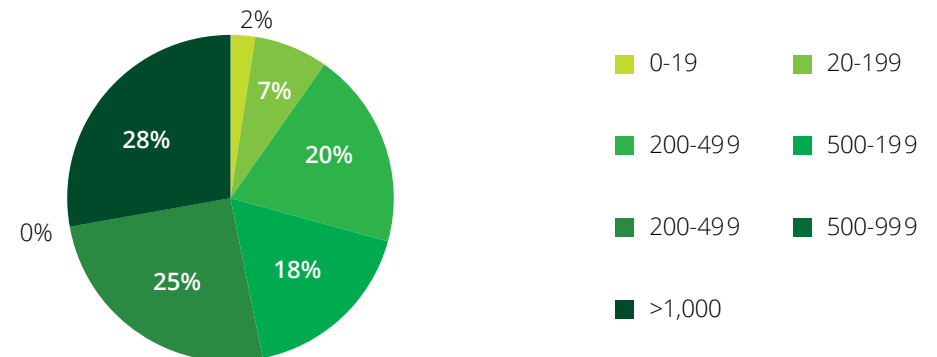
- Perspectives towards gender equity
- Overview of gender within the organisation
- Gender initiatives and policies, including:
 - Leadership and company culture
 - Hiring and recruitment
 - Promotion and retention
 - Development and training
 - Sexual harassment prevention
 - Workplace flexibility.

Chart B.1: Business position of survey respondents



Source: Deloitte Access Economics employer survey. Employers (n=205) were asked 'What is your position in the organisation?'

Chart B.2: Number of employees of survey respondents



Source: Deloitte Access Economics employer survey. Employers (n=205) were asked 'How many employees work in your organisation?'

Appendix C: Expenditure analysis

Estimating national expenditure on IWD using findings from the Deloitte Access Economics employer survey and external data sources

In the Deloitte Access Economics employer survey, employers indicated whether their organisation celebrated IWD, and if so, the proportion of their employees that attended IWD events at their business. From this, the average proportion of employees in all medium and large businesses attending IWD events is estimated at 9% and 13% respectively.

Additionally, employers reported the proportion of those employees that attended the events virtually, in-person or hybrid. Regarding participation at IWD events, 15% of employees attended virtual events while the remaining 85% attended in-person or hybrid events.

Using the count of employees in medium and large businesses from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), an estimate of 704,000 employees attending in-person or hybrid IWD events and 122,000 attending virtual IWD events annually in Australia as produced.

To estimate the cost of hosting IWD events for organisations, wages forgone of attending events was used as a proxy for expense to the firm. The ABS provides data for total salary expenses in medium and large businesses, which was averaged across the count of employees to yield an average wage for this calculation.³

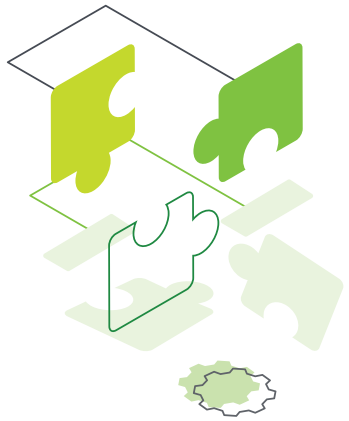
For in-person events, it is assumed there are additional costs associated with hosting. To estimate this, 10 in-person IWD events in Australia were sampled to calculate the average ticket price per employee for such events, assumed to cover the cost of hosting the event for the organisation.

Therefore, the estimated annual IWD event expenditure in Australia was estimated to be \$136.6 million, comprised of the wages forgone for employees attending events and the additional cost of hosting in-person events estimated through ticket pricing.

Table B.1: IWD event expenditure estimates

Estimated annual IWD event expenditure in Australia	\$136,580,288
Average % of employees participating in IWD events across all medium businesses	9.3%
Average % of employees participating in IWD events across all large businesses	13.0%
Proportion of participating employees attending virtual-only IWD events	14.8%
Estimated count of employees attending virtual IWD events nationally	122,436
Estimated count of employees attending in-person or hybrid IWD events nationally	704,007
Average wage in medium and large businesses	\$39.48
Average ticket cost among 10 sampled in-person IWD events	\$147.66

Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2024).



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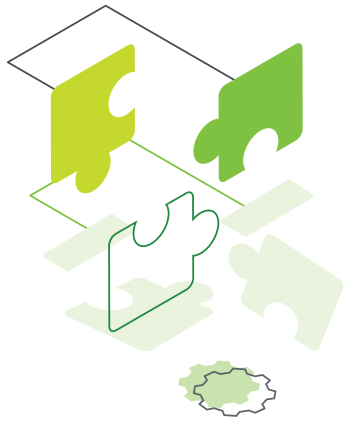
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Contributors

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