



Fair Pay Equity Fact Sheet

In 1972, women's right to be paid equal pay for work of equal value was finally recognised. Yet nearly 40 years later, jobs that are done mainly by women are still underpaid and undervalued.

What is the problem?

- [The gender pay gap](#) in Australia is currently 18%, up from 17.2% in 2009. This is the biggest gap in pay between men and women since 1994

This means that on average, Australian women's full-time weekly earnings are almost one fifth less than men's. Not only that, but:

- The pay gap widens dramatically to [35% for part-time workers](#)
- In the male-dominated finance industry, women currently earn [29.3% less than their male counterparts](#)
- Over a lifetime, this results in women earning [\\$1 million dollars](#) less than men doing the same job.

Key causes: why does it happen?

Many factors contribute to women's pay inequality. One in five women in Australia relies on award rates, which are lower for those industries staffed mainly by women. Areas such as child care, aged care and disability services are some of the lowest paid industries. These Government funded services often don't receive enough money to cover staffing requirements or annual wage increases.

Throughout their working lives women are affected by this disadvantage. According to the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency:

- Female graduates on entering the workforce earn \$3,000 p/a less than male graduates
- Women executive managers in the ASX200 earn an average of 28.3% less than their male peers
- Only 39.6% of the organisations who report to the Agency said they conducted annual gender pay equity analysis.
- The pay gap appears to widen exponentially throughout women's careers.

WorkChoices widened the pay gap because it removed protections in awards and forced many women and young workers onto individual contracts. Many of these contracts combined all entitlements into an overall wage, and women lost out on pay and overtime.

[Women's skills are often undervalued in workplace cultures](#), which prioritise and reward male skills at the expense of female skills which are constructed as 'soft'. This often results in unequal promotional opportunities

Workplace discrimination has also increased, with women experiencing discrimination because of pregnancy and caring responsibilities (see *Workplace Culture* fact sheet).

WEL will be using our Feminist Policy Framework to examine the policies and platforms of all major parties for fairness.

WEL believes that fair policies are those that:

- *Ensure the costs and benefits are fairly distributed between women and men, as well as between different groups of women*
- *Value and reward fairly people's different skills, experiences and contributions*
- *Recognise the value of caring and supporting roles, whether paid or unpaid*
- *Recognise and rectify past and current inequalities and between men and women; and*
- *Enhance opportunities for both women and men to take on equal rights and responsibilities in all aspects of society: politics, community, employment and social life*

What you can do

Ask your local candidates:

- Do they support the establishment of a Pay Equity Unit to advise employers about pay equity issues in the workplace, collect reliable data and report annually on pay equity matters, develop and conduct pay equity audits in the public and private sector, and conduct education campaigns?
- Will they commit to increased funding to cover low paid orders in government funded community services?
- Would they support conducting a pay equity audit in the federal public service?

[Send a Kiss to Julia](#): as part of the Australian Services Union Equal Pay Campaign.

Spread the word: Pass this sheet on to your family, friends and colleagues.

Get together: Have your friends over and discuss equal pay over a few drinks or a cuppa. Visit <http://welnsw.org.au/> for a suggested reading list to kick-start the discussion.

At this election - make your vote count for fairness