



Pay equity and workplace culture survey results

Introduction

This survey was designed to follow up respondents from an earlier survey into pay equity who indicated an interest in finding out more about what women think. Open ended questions about work and pay experiences were asked in this survey, which was intended to provide respondents with more detailed data on other people's experiences, and on the pay differences between men and women.

The survey was also intended to provide data that would be useful to the review of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (EOWW Act) which was being conducted by the Commonwealth Office for Women at the time the survey was conducted.

Questions in the survey provided women with the opportunity to give voice to their views about the main reasons they think women earn less than men in similar jobs in Australia.

Research objectives

To respond to the request from previous survey participants for an opportunity to express more detailed views about pay inequity and workplace culture, and to provide a detailed analysis of these issues to the Review of the EOWW Act.

Research framework and methodology

2020women conducts research projects through polls and surveys to explore, interrogate and make visible the various ways Australians perceive issues relevant to women.

This questionnaire followed on from an earlier poll into equal pay, seeking more detailed and anecdotal information about women's experiences in the workplace in relation to pay inequity. Survey participants for this questionnaire were drawn from participants to the earlier poll who had registered interest with 2020women.

The questionnaire design was based on comments received from participants in the earlier poll, and from issues raised in the EOWW Act review. Eva Cox, an academic with significant experience in market research, generously provided advice on the questions.

The survey was conducted online and was available to respondents for two weeks from 26 September to 10 October, 2009.

The questionnaire was placed on the 2020women website, and an invitation to participate was emailed to approximately 450 women. Recipients of the email who wished to participate in the research poll accessed the link to the questionnaire through the email. Recipients could also forward the email to friends. The majority of respondents were women who had registered their interest in participating in 2020women surveys through the web site, or women who had indicated their interest in further contact leading on from the earlier poll on pay equity.

Analysis of responses to the survey

In 2009, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, full time adult ordinary time earnings for women were 83% of men's earnings. This is back to where we were in 1989. This is reflected in the answers to the first question in this survey:

- 51% of respondents reported being paid less than a male in a similar job in the same organisation.

Women lose out in pay negotiations

In many workplaces, an employee's pay is the result of a negotiation between employee and employer. This survey supports existing evidence that women do poorly in these negotiations. There are two aspects to this failure:

Women don't push for more money

- over 90% agreed that women are less likely to ask for more money
- over 90% agreed that women don't like to be seen as pushy
- over 50% reported being paid less because they didn't ask for more

Women are not valued in the workplace

- over 60% agreed that men were assumed to perform better than women
- 85% agreed that women's skills are not recognised

Family responsibilities impact on women's perceived value at work

Women are still expected to shoulder the majority of domestic duties. This is reflected in the way they are perceived at work. Workplaces are not seen as 'family-friendly'.

- 89% agreed that women with children are disadvantaged at work while men are not
- 72% agreed that time spent at work is seen as more important to senior managers than outcomes achieved
- 60% agreed that women were not seen as job oriented

Respondents' comments

"There is a myth that there is equality and everyone thinks that battle is won so limited resources are placed into this issue."

"There seems to be a view that the problem of undervaluing women's work has been 'fixed' and an assumption that everyone is in a position to choose their own employment outcomes."

"Many women undervalue the work that they do. They don't want to ask for equal wages as they will be seen as a 'ball breaker' or 'butch', which causes a whole set of other problems. Assertive women are still seen as intimidating where their male counterparts are 'focused' or 'professional'."

"Women ask for what they think they are worth."

Men ask for what they think they can get."

"Women's work is undervalued - it makes little sense that child care workers can be paid less than car park attendants."

Women do not value themselves as highly and are more likely to accept pay offered.

Men are perceived as more valuable employees so are more likely to be offered additional pay to retain them.

Flexible working hours

Respondents were asked about their control over working hours and whether they would like to change the total hours worked.

Most respondents had some control over their working times

- 63% could choose start and finish times (within limits)
- 26% had complete freedom on working times
- 11% had no control over when they worked

When it came to balancing time at work against money earned, individual circumstances prompted a range of responses.

- 44% were happy with current hours worked
- 8% would like to work longer hours
- 21% would like to work fewer hours

What is being done in workplaces to address pay equity issues?

Women were asked to indicate whether their workplace had taken steps to improve pay equity. These were their responses, ranked in order of implementation:

- Equal access to training (79%)
- Access to information about pay levels (67%)
- Flexible arrangements for staff with caring responsibilities (52%)
- Transparent and fair grievance procedures (64%)
- Gender balanced interview panels (60%)
- Selection of staff based strictly on merit (51%)
- Equal numbers of men and women in senior roles (21%)

What can we do to improve the situation?

Given a range of possible solutions our respondents nominated the following as the top three:

1. Equal numbers of men and women in senior roles (70%)
2. Access to information about pay levels (57%)
3. Flexible arrangements for staff with caring responsibilities (53%)

The first item on this list: *Equal numbers of men and women in senior roles* only occurs in 21% of workplaces based on the previous list of what women experience in the workplace. Items two and three are reported as being present in 67% and 52% of workplaces respectively.

“Women are discriminated against in their child-bearing years. Employers think they’re not getting value for money as women will leave jobs to raise children.”

“Attempted numerous methods, including reporting stats, women in leadership programs, flexible work arrangements, pretty good parenting leave arrangements, but the work culture still expects very long hours to be taken seriously, pay scales are not transparent, especially at senior levels, and too many individually negotiated packages that rely on confidence and assertion to fight for; outcomes have slipped badly over recent years.”

“I work for a multi national company whose HR policies wrt women in the work place are excellent. In addition to the policies in the questions above, we have a women's network whose membership is automatic for women above a particular job grade. The network provides opportunity for contact with women at different levels within the organisation, training, mentoring, promotion of HR policies 'in action' eg women who have used flexible work practices, especially those in management positions. Also, succession planning for men and women is a routine part of my organisation.”

“I think each seemingly small achievement for women is successful towards changing the way things are or have always been.”



Government's role

On the question of how much should government regulate to achieve equal employment opportunity for women:

- 89% felt the government should do more
- 63% felt the government should do significantly more.

“In name only”

When asked to identify actions taken in their workplace, respondents had the option to record “in name only” to indicate token attempts. These figures were significant for some categories of action.

- 40% of respondents said selection on merit was “in name only”
- 26% said that flexible working arrangements for staff with caring responsibilities were “in name only”

Public sector vs private sector

Around half our respondents (48%) worked in the public service. There is a general perception that pay equity should not be an issue for these employees.

- 40% of public sector respondents reported being paid less than a male in a similar job compared with 61% of private sector respondents.
- 85% of public sector women with a family were at a comparative disadvantage compared with 93% of private sector

Public and private sector employees had similar views on whether workplace discrimination had changed in the past 10 years:

- 40% of public sector employees felt workplaces were now less discriminatory compared with 37% of private sector employees

When asked if they had worked in an organisation that acted to improve equality for women:

- 71% of public sector employees said yes compared with 47% of private sector employees

“They introduced the need to have women and men on selection panels and rules about equity. However this has not fundamentally changed the outcomes.”

“For a while the organization I work for appeared to put an emphasis on female equality in the workplace but the moment the economy began to change the boys banded together and supported each other ensuring that only males were then employed in the most senior positions.”

“Organisations/companies should regularly audit their pay systems and ensure that people doing similar work get paid the same.”

“Teach women to be more assertive, and to value or respect this type of behaviour. Educate men to notice and respect the less assertive women.”

“Need to increase awareness of this issue. Need to promote pay equity as something that is expected. Need to legislate for compulsory reporting of payrates for men/women.”

“- Placing more value on women's roles by paying wages that reflect that worth in society i.e. childcare, aged care.... and where women work within male dominated fields, ensuring equal pay is implemented (more transparency)

- introducing paid maternity leave.”



EOWW Act organisations

37% of respondents worked in organisations covered by the EOWW Act.

- 97% of these respondents felt women's skills were undervalued compared with 79% for non-EOWW Act employees
- 100% felt women didn't like to be perceived as pushy compared with 87% of non-EOWW Act employees

EOWW Act employees felt there had been a reduction in discrimination.

- 59% felt there was now less discrimination than 10 years ago compared with 43% for non-EOWW employees

When asked if they had worked in an organisation that acted to improve equality for women:

- 71% said yes compared with 51% for non-EOWW employees

Age and perceptions of inequality

Respondents to the survey were grouped into three age ranges: 16-39, 40-54 and 55+. While all three groups showed similar figures for their overall agreement to the issues of equity, the strength of feeling varied markedly between the groups.

Pay equity with men

- 33% of 16-39 year-olds have experienced being paid less than a male in a similar job
- 60% of 40-54 year-olds have had this experience
- 56% of over 54 year-olds have had this experience

Women's skills are not recognised or valued

- 37% of 16-39 year-olds strongly agreed with this statement
- 56% of 40-54 year-olds strongly agreed
- 36% of over 54 year-olds strongly agreed

Women don't like to be seen as pushy

- 20% of 16-39 year-olds strongly agreed with this statement
- 45% of 40-54 year-olds strongly agreed
- 40% of over 54 year-olds strongly agreed

"I think there has been a change in thinking but unfortunately it is slow. Work life balance is slowly becoming priority for men as well and that should start to balance the inequality."

"Haven't changed and can't change -

Entrenched patriarchal power - and I think men are fighting back - backlash against women."

"I think the variety and expression of discrimination has changed certainly. The pervasive nature of gender discrimination ten years ago is not initially evident due to concessions in other areas of work equity which have been made.

I dont think this means workplaces are LESS discriminatory though."

"i think there is an assumption that women have equality with men which then tends to mask systemic discriminatory structures, from classification structures in female dominated industry awards to the gender stereotypes about who is a good employee/manager"



Who were our respondents

We received 91 responses to the survey.

Gender

- 97% of respondents were women

Age ranges

- 16-39 29%
- 40-54 40%
- 55+ 31%

Occupations

- Public service 48%
- Private sector (100+ employees) 14%
- Private sector (<100 employees) 10%
- Not for profit organisations 26%
- Self employed/own business 2%
- (EOWW Act organisations 37%)



Survey questions

What are the main reasons that you think women earn less than men in similar jobs?

What do you think would be the best ways of changing this?

Have you personally been affected by:

Being paid less than a man in a similar job in the same organisation?

Yes / No

Being paid less because you didn't ask for more?

Yes / No

Being paid less because you were working in an undervalued care job?

Yes / No

Do you agree the following explain why women earn less than men in equivalent full time jobs?

Women are less likely than men to ask employers for more money

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree no disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Men are assumed to perform better than women in most jobs

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree no disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Women's skills are not recognised or valued

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree no disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Women don't like to be seen as pushy

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree no disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Women are not seen as job oriented

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree no disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Women with children are disadvantaged at work while men are not

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree no disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Time spent at work is seen as more important to senior managers than outcomes achieved

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree no disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Are you currently employed?

Yes, full-time / Yes, part-time / No

If Yes, which of these operate in your workplace?

Gender balanced interview panels

Yes / In name only / No

Selection of staff based strictly on merit

Yes / In name only / No

Equal access to training

Yes / In name only / No

Access to information about pay levels

Yes / In name only / No



Transparent and fair grievance procedures

Yes / In name only / No

Flexible working arrangements for staff with caring responsibilities

Yes / In name only / No

Equal numbers of men and women in senior roles

Yes / In name only / No

Which of these statements best reflects your control over your working hours?

Start and finish times are decided by my employer / I decide when I start and finish work, within limits / I am free to decide when I start and finish work

Which one these choices would you prefer?

Work longer hours and earn more money / Work the same hours and earn the same money / Work fewer hours and earn less money / Can't choose

In comparison to ten years ago, do you think workplaces now are:

Less discriminatory towards women / More discriminatory towards women / Haven't changed and can't change

Why?

Which of these do you think is most likely to make pay more equitable?

Gender balanced interview panels

Selection of staff based strictly on merit

Equal access to training

Access to information about pay levels

Transparent and fair grievance procedures

Flexible arrangements for staff with caring responsibilities

Equal numbers of men and women in senior roles

Have you worked in an organisation that acted to improve equality for women?

Yes / No / Don't know

If yes, briefly describe what they did and how effective they were in your opinion.

How much should government regulate to achieve equal employment opportunity for women?

Significantly more than now / More than now / At the same level as now / Less than now ? Significantly less than now

Have you worked mainly in:

The public service

The private sector in small organisations (under 100 people)

The private sector in large organisations (100 people or more)

Not for profit organisations

Self employed / own business

Unpaid work

Gender

Male / Female

Age

16-24 / 25-39 / 40-54 / 55-69 / 70+