

Gender

Gender equality benefits all of us. And to achieve it, we must involve everyone. Over the last few years, we have made significant progress in improving gender equality in Australia. For example, the implementation of the Positive Duty, new reporting requirements under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth), the extension of paid parental leave to 26 weeks by July 2026 and the payment of superannuation on Commonwealth paid parental leave. Despite this, we still have work to do.

Violence against Women

Safety

Recent human rights advances

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 seeks to end gender-based violence. A specific action plan addressing violence against First Peoples' women has also been established.

The National Plan focuses on prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. Importantly, it also acknowledges children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right. To promote and support the achievement of the National Plan, the Government established the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission. The Commission provides yearly reports to Parliament outlining progress, and highlighting action required in the year ahead to keep building systems that will drive implementation of the Plan.

Gender-based violence remains endemic in Australia

In 2025, 52 women were killed by gendered violence. Gender-based violence in all its forms remains endemic in Australia.

- 2 in 5 women (39%) have experienced violence since the age of 15
- 1 in 5 women (22%) have experienced sexual violence
- 1 in 3 women (31%) have experienced physical violence
- 1 in 4 women (23%) have experienced intimate partner violence.

Women with disability and from LGBTIQ+, First Peoples and culturally and racially marginalised communities experience higher rates of violence and in accessing support.

Funding to frontline services remains inadequate. As a result, services often have to turn people away. In 2024, Australian Government committed \$3.9 billion in frontline legal assistance services through a new National Access to Justice Partnership with states and territories. However more must be done.

Funding and implementation of community-led justice reinvestment programmes is key to change. Justice reinvestment addresses the underlying causes of crime and aims to stop it from occurring in the first place. It represents a crucial shift away from governments telling communities what is best and moves towards what works: local solutions coming from, and being implemented, by communities.

Priority action

The Australian Government should adequately fund evidence-based, community-led efforts to prevent gendered violence for all communities and identify the role of men in prevention. Efforts must promote cultural safety, adopt place-based approaches and respect First Nations women's self-determination.

Sexual harassment

Safety

Recent human rights advances

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 seeks to end gender-based violence. A specific action plan addressing violence against First Peoples' women has also been established.

Australia's *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, marital or relationship status, pregnancy, family responsibilities and breastfeeding. It also makes sexual harassment unlawful.

The positive duty was introduced into the Sex Discrimination Act in December 2022. It imposes a legal obligation on organisations and businesses to take proactive and meaningful action to prevent and respond to sexual harassment, sexist behaviour, sex discrimination and related victimisation from occurring in the workplace or in connection to work.

Regardless of their size or resources, all organisations and businesses in Australia that have obligations under the Sex Discrimination Act must meet the positive duty. This includes sole traders and the self-employed, small, medium and large businesses, and government.

Sexual harassment persists across Australian workplaces

In the last 5 years, 1 in 3 Australian workers (33%) was sexually harassed at work. Particular groups of workers experienced sexual harassment at higher rates:

- 47% of young people aged between 15-17
- 70% of people with variations of sex characteristics or who identified as intersex
- 56% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- 48% of people with a disability
- 77% of LGBTQ young people.

Change is needed to reduce barriers to information, safety, justice and accountability, and victim-survivors must be heard and supported after experiencing harassment. The Australian Human Rights Commission's [Speaking from experience resources](#) help workers recognise workplace sexual harassment and provide a trauma-informed information pathway so they can get the help they need.

Priority action

The Australian Government should implement the recommendations of the Australian Human Rights Commission's [Speaking from Experience](#) report, to make workplaces safer.

Australia needs disaggregated data from workplaces

The experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, young people, culturally and racially marginalised workers, workers with disability and LGBTIQ+ workers is not represented sufficiently in existing research on the nature and extent of sexual harassment. There is a lack of understanding on the role of intersectionality in experiences of sexual harassment, and also in how it can impact a person's ability and willingness to make a complaint.

Yet, we know that they experience higher rates of workplace sexual harassment.

Better data would improve our understanding of how sexual harassment intersects with other types of harassment and discrimination in Australian workplaces. This essential data would be collected if the Australian Human Rights Commission has the opportunity to conduct the sixth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces. Additionally, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) should collect data on the experiences of workers with disability and from LGBTIQ+, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds, to inform workplaces on how to achieve true gender equality.

Priority action

The Australian Government fund intersectional research and through its agencies, collect intersectional data to better understand and address barriers in the workplace including gender inequality for people from marginalised backgrounds and discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and family responsibilities.

The Australian Government to adequately fund the Australian Human Rights Commission to conduct the sixth National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces in 2026, with specific funding for intersectional data collection, reporting and analysis.

Gender Equality

Equality and fairness

Recent human rights advances

The Australian Government has expanded gender equality reporting (through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency) and establishing gender budgeting processes. The gender pay gap is reducing.

In Australia, all large organisations must lodge an annual Gender Equality report to the [Workplace Gender Equality Agency](#). They collect and publish gender pay gaps within individual employers, across industries and occupations, and nationally. Employers with 100 or more employees are required to report annually against 6 gender equality indicators. From 2024, organisations with 500 or more employees are required to have policies or strategies for each of the 6 gender equality indicators. Additionally, in 2025 the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (Cth) was further amended to require organisations with 500 or more employees to select and commit to achieve three targets over a period of three years. At that time, they need to meet or demonstrate improvement against each of the targets selected.

Changes to the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) have widened the scope for employees to request flexible work; extended the right to unpaid parental leave; and added breast feeding, gender identity and intersex status as prohibited grounds of discrimination.

The gender pay gap

Despite this important work and commitments, progress is too slow. For example:

- The gender pay gap is the difference in earnings between women and men. The current private sector gender pay gap in Australia is 21.8%. This gap is even bigger for First Peoples women, who earn 65 cents to every dollar earned by men.
- 1 in 3 Australians hold a negative bias about women's ability to participate fully economically, politically or in education.
- Women continue to do more paid and unpaid care work than men.
- 35.7% of women cite caring for children as the main reason they are unavailable to start work or work more hours, compared to 7.3% of men.

We also know that the intersection of gender with other forms of inequality results in women and gender diverse people with disability, who are LGBTIQ+, First Peoples and from culturally and racially marginalised backgrounds experiencing higher rates of inequality and barriers to support. Additionally, feminised industries, such as care work, continue to be undervalued. In accordance with recent amendments to the *Fair Work Act*, the Fair Work Commission is reviewing modern award classifications and minimum wage rates on work value grounds. In 2026, the Fair Work Commission made changes to the Children's Services Award and is currently reviewing health professionals including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, and disability care workers, to identify potential historical gender undervaluation and determine any resulting wage increases. Despite this positive step, there is limited understanding of the unique experiences of culturally and racially marginalised women workers. Improved data collection relating to their experiences is needed to create greater awareness.

Priority action

The Australian Government through law and policy, should recognise women's unpaid labour, and address the systemic undervaluing of work in feminised industries, such as care, particularly for culturally and racially marginalised women.

Gaps in education continue to undermine gender equality in Australia

Education from a young age is key to promoting gender equality. Education about consent, respectful relationships and reproductive health in schools is lacking, and requires more funding and attention. In Australia, 41% of people believe women often mistake innocent remarks as being sexist, 37% mistrust women's reports of violence, 19% believe women prefer men to be in charge in relationships, and 13% of people believe consent is not always needed in relationships.

Intimate-partner violence in non-“traditional” relationships, including relationships where one or more people are LGBTQIA+, is not well recognised. This is despite evidence of bisexual, cis, and transgender women and gender diverse people being at heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

There is a need for education on how harassment and other discriminatory behaviour can be intersectional, and the impact this can have on the severity of an incident, the harm caused and the actions a person can take to keep themselves safe.

Priority action

The Australian Government should fund intersectional research and through its agencies, collect intersectional data to better understand and address barriers in the workplace including gender inequality for people from marginalised backgrounds and discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and family responsibilities.