

Workplaces **FOR** Women

Work that works for everyone.

“Change it from within!”

Women fighting against
workplace gender inequality,
stereotypes and
non-inclusive facilities

Executive Summary



Full report and
other resources



Australian Government



Executive Summary

More women are needed in male-dominated industries to create fairer workplaces.

Gender segregation in Australian industries is impacting all aspects of workers' experiences – particularly women workers. Supported by the Australian Government, the Workplaces for Women (WFW) Project aims to leverage recent legislative amendments to support the creation of workplaces that are safe, respectful, equal and inclusive for all workers. "Change it from within": Women fighting against workplace gender inequality, stereotypes and non-inclusive facilities is the second in a series of reports that explores the issues faced by women in male-dominated industries (MDIs).

640 workers (508 of whom are women) participated in our survey, of which 422 workers are from historically male-dominated areas, such as manufacturing, warehousing and logistics, and transport. Drawing on data and quotes from workers we collected through the survey, focus groups and interviews, this report highlights the benefits of advancing gender equality in MDIs and takes a closer look at workers' familiarity with their rights and entitlements; gender stereotypes and disproportional role assignments; and facilities and amenities that are not women-friendly.

Workers, regardless of gender, want fairer workplaces. Despite recent legislative efforts to address workplace gender equality, our findings show that unlawful gender discrimination remains prevalent in Australian workplaces. Gendered assumptions and inaction by employers discourage women from entering industry and advancing their careers. Yet, our findings show that MDIs offer stable, secure jobs that women find rewarding. Backed by strong union support and networks, women are standing up and challenging the gendered norms in male-dominated workplaces. Advancing workplace gender equality benefits not just women; it benefits all workers. It can improve workplace productivity and strengthen industry sustainability, positively shaping Australia's stronger future. While taking actions in solidarity with workers, we call on employers to create truly equal workplaces where all workers can reach their full potential.

Our key findings from this report are:

- Over 70% of women and over 40% of men in MDIs want more women in their workplace.
- MDIs offer stable, secure jobs that women enjoy, but opportunities for women to receive education or training to enter these industries remain limited.
- More than 80% of women in MDIs had previously worked in another industry before entering.
- Gender inequality is widespread, yet not all workers are aware of it: over 60% of women are aware of workplace gender inequality compared with just 23% of men.
- 55% of women in MDIs report experiencing gender-based discrimination, and their vulnerability heightened when their personal attributes intersect.
- Women workers in MDIs want to stay in their industry despite the barriers. More than 64% of women workers want to remain, although those who have experienced gender discrimination are more likely to consider leaving.
- Workers who are not familiar with their rights and entitlements feel less safe and more powerless at work.
- Workers' everyday work experiences are shaped by gendered treatment from management, co-workers and the public.
- Women are still disproportionately assigned to part-time or casual roles; women's limited access to full-time work is furthering gender segregation.
- Nearly 15% of women in MDIs are experiencing a lack of access to safe and inclusive facilities and amenities, such as toilets, uniforms and/or PPE.
- Unions are workers' most trusted source of information and play a key role in educating, connecting and empowering workers.

Identified barriers

- 1: The lack of awareness of workers' rights and entitlements in workplaces
- 2: Gender stereotypes and role assignments
- 3: Facilities and amenities that are not women-friendly
- 4: Gender pay gap
- 5: The lack of progression and representation
- 6: Discrimination due to caring responsibilities in workplaces
- 7: Limited availability and access to flexible work arrangements
- 8: Hostile workplace cultures
- 9: The absence of prevention, reporting mechanisms and accountability for sexual harassment and gender-based violence
- 10: The absence of consideration towards intersecting issues in workplaces

Recommendations

- 1: Empower workers every day to know, access and exercise their rights.
- 2: Support workplaces to move beyond 'lip service' to gender equality by promoting worker engagement.
- 3: Improve facilities and amenities for women.
- 4: Establish transparent and fair pathways for skill development and progression.
- 5: Improve uptake of flexible work arrangements and normalise care for workers of all genders.
- 6: Strengthen accountability mechanisms where employers fail to meet their legal obligations.
- 7: Design and deliver better workplace training for workers with diverse backgrounds.

Workplaces for Women - Project Actions

- Action 1:** Develop and deliver an Equal Workplace Advocate program for women and gender diverse workers in target industries to be leaders in their industry, support the introduction of improved gender equality entitlements and practices, and provide confidence to other women workers.
- Action 2:** Encourage and support unions to recruit and train designated Women's Advocates in MDIs.
- Action 3:** Leverage the power of union advocacy to deliver meaningful and enforceable entitlements through consultative mechanisms and enterprise bargaining, and support them with resources and training.
- Action 4:** Collect and promote positive case studies of working women, male workers and unions taking action to improve gender equality in male-dominated workplaces.
- Action 5:** Review enterprise agreements in target male-dominated industries. Identify gaps, best practices and promote opportunities to improve entitlements that encourage and enable gender equality.
- Action 6:** Create a workplace gender equality audit toolkit targeted at workers so they can identify the barriers to gender equality in their own workplace and collectively develop solutions.
- Action 7:** Make information about workplace entitlements clearer and more accessible by creating Equality at Work fact sheets and template enterprise agreement clauses so workers can easily understand, exercise and improve their rights at work.
- Action 8:** Train and support workers to use the workplace gender equality audit toolkit to assess if their workplace has access to safe and clean toilets, appropriate uniforms and PPE, sanitary bins, and drinking water, and to develop collective solutions.
- Action 9:** Consult with workers and make information about workplace rights and entitlements clearer and more accessible by creating Equality at Work fact sheets and template enterprise agreement clauses, so workers can easily understand, exercise and improve their rights at work, including the right to adequate facilities.

Action 10: Train and support workers to use the workplace gender equality audit toolkit to assess the factors contributing to the gender pay gap in their workplace and develop collective solutions.

Action 11: Encourage improved consultation between workers, unions and employers in accordance with legislative requirements about their workplace gender pay gap and gender equality initiatives through enforceable requirements to consult (for example: recommend improvements to existing consultation provisions in enterprise agreements to reflect consultation requirements in WGE Act, FW Act and OHS Act and SD Act requirements).

Action 12: Train and support workers to use the workplace gender equality audit toolkit to assess whether their employer has taken proactive steps to prevent discrimination in their workplace and encourage access to flexibility and gender-neutral parental leave.

Action 13: Make information about workplace entitlements clearer and more accessible so workers can easily understand, exercise and improve their rights at work (including information about discrimination, flexible work arrangements, gender-neutral parental leave and different leave entitlements).

Action 14: Create Equality at Work factsheets and resources about workplace entitlements. Encourage and empower workers to apply new workplace laws and improve enforceable entitlements through enterprise bargaining. Share information about options available to resolve disputes.

Action 15: Encourage and support unions to appoint and train Women's Advocates with the same workplace rights as Workplace Delegates.

Action 16: Identify best practice entitlements that exist in enterprise agreements that are proven to improve gender equality in workplaces and support unions to adopt actions. Continue progressing and improving entitlements in enterprise agreements which focus on gender equality. To support workers and unions in this work:

- Create standardised aspirational bargaining claims that focus on improving gender equality entitlements to be adopted across target industries (including responding to and eliminating SH/GBV).
- Create best practice template clauses that focus on improving gender equality entitlements.
- Provide data and research explaining why these clauses and claims will improve gender equality and train workers, unions and other stakeholders in their use. Provide bargaining arguments to support negotiations with workers and employers.

Action 17: Deliver training tailored to the industrial knowledge of the workforce, recognising that workers in MDIs experience different challenges depending on the density of women working onsite. Information and training should include (among other things):

- Understanding gender equality, workplace entitlements and legislative levers
- How to access and improve entitlements and raise concerns
- Advocacy, building confidence, effective bystander intervention, and managing resistance

"I believe we will achieve progress with more women in the industry prepared to speak up. Strength in numbers."

- Female Construction Worker

