

Gender pay gap data reveals Australia's female CEOs paid \$170,000 less than men on average

Kate Lyons, The Guardian, Tue 19 Nov 2024

But new data shows a three-point rise in men taking primary carer parental leave – the largest annual increase since records began

Female CEOs in Australia are paid an average of \$170,000 less than their male counterparts – a gender pay gap of 25% – according to government figures.

The pay gap among CEOs was published as part of the national pay gap scorecard for the first time this year, after legislative changes introduced last year.

“This is the first time we’ve had this information, and it was a surprising result,” the Workplace Gender Equality Agency CEO, Mary Wooldridge, said. “It’s phenomenal.”

Wooldridge said the agency knew that far more men were employed at CEO level than women (78% of all CEOs in Australia are men) but did not know that “even within those operating at the most senior levels of organisations, there’s this dramatic pay differential ... It just shows we’ve got to work on this at all levels.

“We think that that’s probably driven by – as the broader gender pay gap is – a combination of the industries that women are more likely to be leading ... but also how those CEOs are valued in the role, even in industries where there’s predominantly men.” [...]

The government will announce on Wednesday it will introduce new legislation to parliament this week to require organisations with 500 or more employees to make measurable targets to progress gender equality in their workplaces.

This year’s data also included, for the first time, pay gaps for each state and territory. While all states and territories had a pay gap in favour of men, it was smallest in Tasmania (12.5%) and biggest in Western Australia (29.5%), which was largely due to the large number of highly paid mining jobs in WA, mostly held by men. [...]

In 2023-24, 6% of Australian employers had a gender pay gap in favour of women, 21% had a neutral gender pay gap, and 72% had a gender pay gap in favour of men.

The data also assessed the pay gaps by age group and found that a pay gap in favour of men started young and continued throughout people’s working life. With the exception of the 15- to 19-year-old age group, which had a 0.8% pay gap in favour of women, all age groups had pay gaps favouring men. The gap started at 2.6% for 20- to 24-year-olds and climbed with each age bracket, before peaking among 55- to 59-year-olds, at 32.6%. It then reduced slightly among older adults.

Women were more likely to work part-time and casually, with less than half of women (42.8%) working full-time, compared with 66.9% of men, which was largely due to the caring responsibilities for children and older family members falling on women.

The proportion of employers offering paid parental leave, in addition to government leave, increased from 63% in 2022-23 to 68% in 2023-24 and the number of men taking primary carer parental leave increased 3 percentage points year-on-year to 17%, the largest annual increase since records began.

Last year, legislation came into effect that required the publication of pay gaps at individual companies with more than 100 employees. This data was published for the first time in February 2024, and shone a spotlight on particular employees and industries.

In a sign that the mandatory reporting may be having an impact, 68% of employers analysed their gender pay gaps last year (up from 55%) and 75% of those employers who analysed their gender pay gaps took action after that analysis (up from 60%).

“It does seem that publishing gender pay gaps has had a motivational effect on employers in terms of doing the work they need to do,” Wooldridge said. “All of the steps that we advise employers that they need to be taking, we’ve seen a big increase in them, in anticipation of publishing gender pay gaps.”