



Chief Executive Women

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MEDIA RELEASE

Solve Australia's skill shortage by unlocking women's economic participation: New study

New economic research released today by Chief Executive Women has found that increasing women's participation in the paid workforce would address Australia's current skills shortage and have long-lasting impact on productivity in Australia.

The analysis, conducted by Impact Economics and Policy, shows that unlocking women's workforce participation could fill job vacancies and address critical skills shortages predicted between now and 2026. The report finds:

- Halving the workforce participation gap between men and women would represent an additional 500,000 full-time skilled workers with post school qualifications. Job vacancies hit a record 423,500 in February 2022.
- Engaging women in paid work at the same rate as men could unlock an additional one million full-time skilled workers in Australia. The National Skills Commission estimates the need for 1.2 million additional workers across the economy by 2026.

Chief Executive Women President Sam Mostyn said the report, *Addressing Australia's Critical Skill Shortages: Unlocking Women's Economic Participation*, provides further evidence that it is vital to increase women's workforce participation for Australia's economic prosperity.

"Women are Australia's most untapped resource, and these findings reinforce the need to prioritise reform that supports women to fully participate in our economy.

"We are facing record job vacancies and growing skills shortages, yet we have a ready workforce, which is highly educated and skilled that is sidelined by powerful barriers to their participation.

"Halving the workforce participation gap between men and women would unlock half a million workers. Australia cannot afford to lag behind as a nation on women's workforce participation.

"We must shift from piecemeal policies that deal with individual pressures and change the way we think about our economy and investment in social infrastructure. We must focus on policy that will enable women to participate in decent, paid work and to help solve Australia's skills shortage.

"To help support women's participation in our economy, Chief Executive Women calls for investment in well-paid jobs in care sectors, affordable and accessible early education and care, expansion of Paid Parental Leave for all parents and to make workplaces safe from sexual harassment," Mostyn said.

Dr Angela Jackson Lead Economist at Impact Economics and Policy said: "at a time of critical skill shortages, Australia's failure to keep pace with our international peers in terms of women's economic participation is hurting our economy. Reforms to lift female participation are urgently needed to lift our game to meet current and future skill gaps".



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In addition to workforce participation data, the report outlines the impact of low wages as a significant barrier for women engaging in paid work.

New gender pay gap analysis shows women in female-dominated industries consistently earn less than those working in male-dominated industries:

- Workers with a bachelor degree or above – earn 30% less per hour in female-dominated industries compared to male-dominated industries.
- Workers with a Certificate III/IV – earn 36% less per hour in female-dominated industries compared to male-dominated industries.
- Workers with no post-school qualifications – earn 19% less per hour in female-dominated industries compared to male-dominated industries.

Chief Executive Women President Sam Mostyn said: “women in Australia are the most educated in the world, yet there’s a significant disincentive to participate in paid work and as demonstrated by the data, a pay gap between women-dominated industries and those dominated by men”.

The research supports CEW’s Federal Election policy platform, which calls for policy change that puts care at the centre of the economy and enables women’s workforce participation. Australia has one of the biggest gaps between average male and female participation and hours in paid work in the OECD.

[Read the report](#)

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About Chief Executive Women

cew.org.au

Chief Executive Women’s (CEW) shared mission is ‘women leaders enabling other women leaders. CEW has over 800 members each with leading roles in Australia’s largest private and public organisations. They oversee more than 1.3 million employees and \$749 billion in revenue. Member’s organisations have a combined market capitalisation greater than \$1.144 trillion and contribute in excess of \$249 billion to Australia’s GDP.

Since 1985 CEW has influenced and engaged all levels of Australian business and government to achieve gender balance. Through advocacy, research, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW helps to remove the barriers to women’s progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. CEW’s members work actively to realise our vision of a community where women and men have equal economic and social choices and responsibilities.