



**GENDER EQUITY**

**INSIGHTS 2023**

**ACCELERATING**

**THE PACE**

**OF CHANGE**

## About the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre

The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre is an independent economic and social research organisation located within the Curtin Business School at Curtin University.

The Centre was established in 2012 through the generous support of Bankwest, a division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. The Centre's core mission is to deliver high quality, accessible research that enhances our understanding of key economic and social issues that contribute to the wellbeing of West Australian families, businesses and communities.

The Centre's research and engagement activities are designed to influence economic and social policy debates in state and Federal Parliament, regional and national media, and the wider Australian community.

Through high quality, evidence-based research and analysis, our research outcomes inform policy makers and commentators of the economic challenges to achieving sustainable and equitable growth and prosperity both in Western Australia and nationally.

The Centre capitalises on Curtin University's reputation for excellence in economic modelling, forecasting, public policy research, trade and industrial economics and spatial sciences. Centre researchers have specific expertise in economic forecasting, quantitative modelling and economic and social policy evaluation.

## About the Workplace Gender Equality Agency

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is an Australian Government statutory agency created by the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* (WGE Act). The WGE Act requires private and Commonwealth public sector employers with 100 or more employees (relevant employers) to report to the Agency annually against standardised gender equality indicators and for larger employers (500 or more employees) to meet the Gender Equality Standards.

WGEA is responsible for promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces.

We provide advice and assistance to employers, collect and analyse information provided by employers, assess and measure workplace gender equality performance and undertake research, education and other programs to promote and improve gender equality in the workplace. We are both a regulator and a driver of change and we provide Australia with the most comprehensive gender equality dataset and collection approach in the world.

## About the dataset

The data included in this report is based on employer reports to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. It includes information from 4,795 reporting organisations covering 4,483,123 employees. Of these 51 per cent were women, 48.9 per cent were men and 0.1 per cent non-binary. Since 2020-21, employers can submit voluntary data on non-binary employees, making up less than 0.1 per cent of all employee data collected. Due to the current sample size, non-binary employees cannot be statistically analysed for the purposes of this scorecard.

## FOREWORD WGEA



In March of this year, the Federal Parliament passed a set of legislative reforms that will, among other changes, require the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) to publish employer gender pay gaps for the first time in early 2024.

This is an important milestone in WGEA's work to promote and improve gender equality in Australian workplaces. The initiative is part of a much-needed, targeted strategy to tackle gender inequality through increased transparency and accountability.

International experience has shown that publishing employer gender pay gaps can lead companies to prioritise gender equality and to a lowering of employer gender pay gaps. In the UK, research indicates it motivated employers to narrow the wage gap between men and women.

This strategy will only be successful if employers take action. And to do that, they need the information and resources to drive meaningful change in their workplaces.

This report identifies what policies and strategies leading businesses are using to drive improvements in gender equality. The roadmap it provides can help companies look at their policies and develop actions to better inform their own pathway for improvement.

Employers have an opportunity to use this report to create their own path forward and in doing so, demonstrate to their employees, shareholders and wider stakeholders that they are prioritising workplace gender equality.

This report shows that the pace of change has been slow. Change doesn't take time, it takes action. Now is the time for action.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Wooldridge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underlining the name.

**Mary Wooldridge**  
Director, Workplace Gender Equality Agency



## FOREWORD BCEC

Gender equality - and particularly promoting women's economic opportunities through employment - are being prioritised in policy discussions at both state and federal level, not least through the recommendations coming from the recent review of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, the Women's Economic Equality Taskforce and the Commonwealth Treasury's Employment White Paper.

But while we are seeing some improvements in gender equality outcomes – including the lowest ever gender pay gap – progress is still too slow, particularly in gender divides across sectors and career progression for women.

The eighth report in the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's (WGEA) *Gender Equity Insights* report examines why progress towards narrowing gender pay gaps is slow, and asks what actions and targets are needed to accelerate the pace of change.

For the first time, the *2023 Gender Equity Insights* report breaks down which types of companies are progressing gender equity outcomes most effectively, and which are falling behind.

And we identify what gender equity policies and strategies work, and what distinguishes stagnation from success.

The Report develops a new maturity framework that differentiates organisations based on their approach to driving improved gender equity outcomes.

Using the maturity framework, we identify sets of policies and actions appropriate to the profile and characteristics of the organisation, and to different stages of their organisational journey towards gender equity. Our research also examines the impact that gender differences in accessing higher paid jobs within professions or industries has on gender equity outcomes.

Crucially, the 2023 report offers a practical roadmap to support businesses seeking continuous progress towards gender equity within their workplaces. With WGEA publishing employer gender pay gaps in early 2024, this is a report Australian employers can not afford to miss.



**John Curtin Distinguished Professor Alan Duncan**  
Director, Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Improved gender equity in pay, progression and leadership has emerged as a policy priority for Australian governments and businesses, yet despite focus on, and awareness of this as an issue, progression towards gender equity seems to be stalling.

The eighth report in the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's Gender Equity Insights report examines why progress towards narrowing gender pay gaps looks to be stagnating, and asks what actions and targets are needed to keep Australia's collective foot on the gas.

Crucially the 2023 report provides a roadmap to organisations to support continuous improvement towards gender equity within their workplaces, and in doing so, ensure that apathy and stagnation does not derail the progress of women's economic equality in Australia.

### About the 2023 Report

In this report we look at which types of companies are progressing gender equity outcomes most effectively, and which are falling behind. In this way we identify what policies and strategies work, and what distinguishes stagnation from success.

For this 2023 Gender Equity Insights report we develop a new *maturity framework* that differentiates organisations based on their approach to driving improved gender equality outcomes.

Using the maturity framework, we identify sets of policies and actions appropriate to the profile and characteristics of the organisation, and to different stages of their organisational journey towards gender equity. Our research also examines the impact that gender differences in accessing higher paid jobs within professions or industries has on gender equity outcomes.



KEY INSIGHTS



**Gender pay gap**

The gender pay gap in Australia has fallen consistently over the past eight years to **22.8 per cent** in 2022, but the pace of change has been gradual.



**Women's representation**

The share of company boards chaired by women has increased by 2.3 percentage points to **16.7 per cent** over three years to 2022.



**Pace of change**

The most successful 25 per cent of businesses reduced gender pay gaps within their organisations by **at least 5.3 percentage points** over three years.



**Lack of access to high earnings**

Women are **consistently underrepresented** among the top 20 per cent of earners in most industry sectors.



**Pay gap reporting**

Around **50 per cent** of businesses conducted a pay gap analysis in the past year but **only one-tenth** report pay equity metrics to executives and boards.



**Pay audits**

The median improvement in the gender pay gap **more than doubles** over three years for businesses that undertake a gender pay gap audit.



**Gender equity policies**

**28 per cent** of businesses improved their approach to gender equity over the past three years by raising their maturity by at least one level.



**Gender concentration**

The best quarter of businesses for increasing the percentage of female workers lifted the share of women in their workforces by **2.5 percentage points** in three years.



**Retention**

The share of female manager resignations **rose** by **2.4 percentage points** for businesses at base maturity but reduced by 0.3 percentage points among businesses with highest maturity.



**Women's representation**

The share of female board members increased by **3.3 percentage points** in three years for businesses that improved their gender equity maturity by at least one level.



## A MATURITY FRAMEWORK FOR AUSTRALIAN ORGANISATIONS

### What is a maturity framework?

A *maturity framework* provides businesses with a structured framework to drive improvements in a particular area of activity, organisational discipline or performance metric.

The maturity framework provides a basis to translate the insights derived from evidence-based research into a journey which can help organisations identify, measure, and implement practical policies and actions to drive improved workplace gender equity outcomes.

The gender equity maturity framework developed in this report is constructed with reference to the responses of Australian organisations to WGEA's company reporting data.

Using the framework will enable businesses to position themselves against industry practice on workplace gender equity and to develop a roadmap to drive continuous change.

We should emphasise that the maturity framework developed in this report should not be considered as fixed over time. Rather, the framework and the associated roadmap should evolve to match prevailing expectations and societal norms.

### Maturity levels

**Base** – Limited formal action on workplace gender equality in employment beyond statutory or mandated employment practices.

**Foundation** – Introduced some workplace gender equality policies beyond mandated requirements with the intention to drive improved outcomes for women.

**Growth** – Implemented gender equality policies and practices with more ambitious formal commitment for progress towards workplace gender equality.

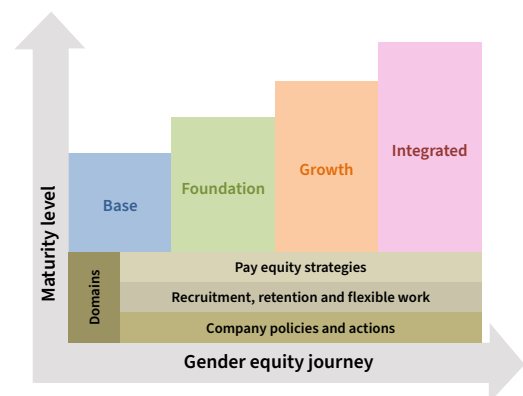
**Integrated** – Embedded comprehensive and connected suite of gender equality practices with senior accountability. Gender equality is integral to the way that organisations do business.

### Maturity domains

**Pay equity** – remuneration policies, pay gap analysis, reporting on pay metrics, training.

**Recruitment, retention and flexible work** – recruitment policies, performance measures, promotions, talent identification, succession, flexible work.

**Company policies and actions** – parental leave, family and caregiving, sexual harassment, domestic violence and discrimination policies, consultation.

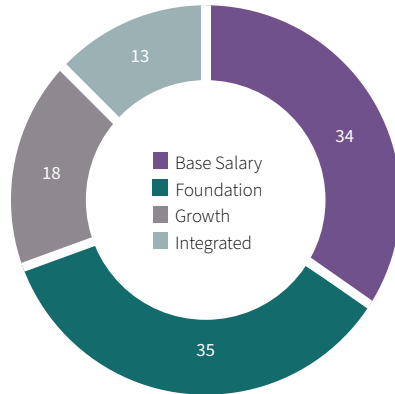




### Linking maturity to gender equity outcomes

Businesses that reach higher maturity levels in their approach to gender equity achieve far stronger gender equity outcomes than organisations at lower levels of maturity.

Businesses are found to outperform their sector on gender equality metrics when they adopt a comprehensive and connected set of gender equity policies with strong accountabilities across all areas of activity.



Gender pay gap	Worker resignations	Share of female managers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>down <b>1.6ppt</b> in three years for businesses at an integrated maturity</li> <li>up <b>0.2ppt</b> in three years for businesses at a base maturity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>down <b>0.3ppt</b> in three years for businesses at an integrated maturity</li> <li>up <b>2.4ppt</b> in three years for businesses at a base maturity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>up <b>3.2ppt</b> in three years for businesses at an integrated maturity</li> <li>up <b>1.1ppt</b> in three years for businesses at a base maturity</li> </ul>

### Accountability matters

Mandatory reporting of pay equity measures to executives and governing boards should accelerate the pace of change.

**15%** of businesses report pay equity metrics to executive leadership

**10%** of businesses report pay equity metrics to their company boards

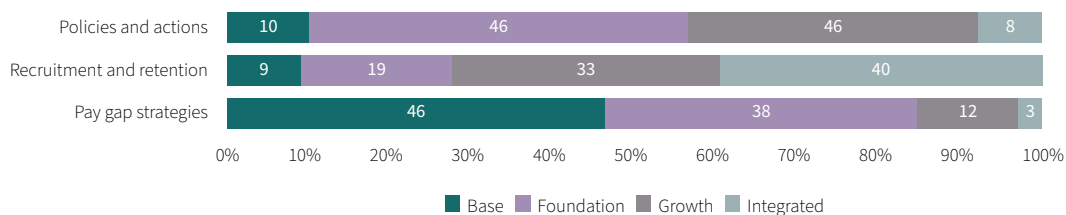
### Accelerating the pace of change

Companies that increase the maturity of their approach to gender equity see enhanced gender equity outcomes.

**55%** of businesses held the same level of maturity between 2019 and 2022

**28%** of businesses improved their level of maturity between 2019 and 2022

### Domains of maturity



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.** Tackle workforce gender balance. A more gender-balanced workforce will go a long way towards narrowing gender pay gaps in many industries, and the greater the rates of progress, the quicker will be the advancement towards women's economic equality. Organisations with a formal strategy for gender balance have outperformed on gender equality outcomes.
- 2.** Implement pay equity action plans, informed by an evaluation of the organisation's remuneration processes for gender bias, including commencement salaries and performance pay. Businesses that do this outperform their industry sector in terms of improved gender equality outcomes.
- 3.** Accelerate progress on gender equality on governing bodies, potentially including targets. Gender diversity in decision-making and on boards is a key driver of organisational change. A lack of action to accelerate change will leave women under-represented in the boardroom for decades to come.
- 4.** Businesses should ensure that women and men have equal access to the most highly paid roles within their industry and profession, for example the top 20 per cent of roles by remuneration and the more highly paid part time manager roles. Businesses can implement targeted strategies to address these leverage points.
- 5.** Extend the focus on gender equality for managers and executives to non-managerial occupations. Equal commitment should be given to supporting gender equality across occupation levels.
- 6.** Commit to sustained focus and action. Maintaining the highest levels of maturity in workplace gender equity requires significant and sustained efforts, not only in the persistent application of comprehensive policies and strategies, but also in the continuity of actions implemented following gender pay audits.
- 7.** Plan for continual improvements, enhanced actions, and higher standards of practice in gender equality policies as internal and external expectations evolve.
- 8.** Consult meaningfully with employees, such as through employee surveys and consultative groups, to enable progress for businesses aspiring to accelerate the rate of improvement in gender equality outcomes.



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## INTRODUCTION

There has been a clear shift in focus recently from government, businesses, and the broader public to prioritise gender equality and women's economic equality.

But while we are seeing some shifts – including the lowest ever gender pay gap – progress is still too slow, particularly in gender divides across sectors and career progression for women.

This eighth report in the Gender Equity Insights report series from the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) examines why progress towards narrowing gender pay gaps is slow, and asks what actions and targets are needed to accelerate the pace of change.

For this year's BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity Insights report we focus on the pace of change in workplace

gender equity among individual Australian businesses, and more especially, the factors that can demonstrably accelerate change.

To do so, we take advantage of one of the most valuable features of WGEA's world leading company reporting data - its longitudinal dimension. This allows us to track the same businesses over time and examine both the rate of change for gender equity measures in pay, progression, and leadership, and the policies and practices that have precipitated the change.

These findings provide us with an evidence base from which to develop a *gender equality roadmap* to enable businesses to continue their progress towards workplace gender equality, regardless of how far they are along the journey.





# THE PACE OF CHANGE





## THE PACE OF CHANGE

While Australia has seen some progress towards improved gender equality in the workplace based on aggregate equity measures, the rate of improvement remains slow across a range of gender equity measures and highly variable between businesses and across industry sectors.

This is the case whether we look at gender pay differences, or women's representation on boards or in leadership positions.

Gender equality and women's economic opportunities through employment are being prioritised in policy discussions at both state and federal level, not least through the recommendations coming from the recently established Women's Economic Equality Taskforce (WEET).

Given that these issues are currently so high on the policy agenda, we must question why progress towards improved economic outcomes for women remains so slow in Australia, and what can be done to accelerate the pace of change.

These are the considerations that provide the organising framework for this year's BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity Insights report, the latest in the series from the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).

The theme of speeding up the process of change is given added currency through the recommendations from the recent review of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* in December 2021, with targeted measures proposed to *accelerate the pace of change in reducing Australia's gender pay gap*.

## MEASURING THE RATE OF IMPROVEMENT IN GENDER EQUITY OUTCOMES: SOME MEASURES

The focus of this Gender Equity Insights report is to explore the practical policies and actions that businesses can implement to improve gender equality within their organisations.

Using detailed information from WGEA's world-leading data collection, our research looks at the factors that improve outcomes for women in the workplace over a range of key gender equity indicators and maintain these improvements regardless of the stage of the company's journey towards workplace gender equality.

One practical outcome from this year's report is the development of a gender equity roadmap of evidence-informed policies and actions that businesses can draw from when planning and implementing change.

The gender equity indicators we examine in this report include the following key measures:

- **Gender pay equity** – reductions in the sizes of managerial and non-managerial pay gaps over time.
- **Gender balance in employment** – improved gender balance among female-dominated and male-dominated businesses.
- **Board and leadership** – improved gender representation on governing boards and in key leadership positions.
- **Workforce retention** – more gender balanced retention outcomes.

## BALANCING THE WORKFORCE

The 2022 *Gender Equity Insights* report made clear the role that gendered workforce concentrations play in driving persistent inequalities in pay and progression.

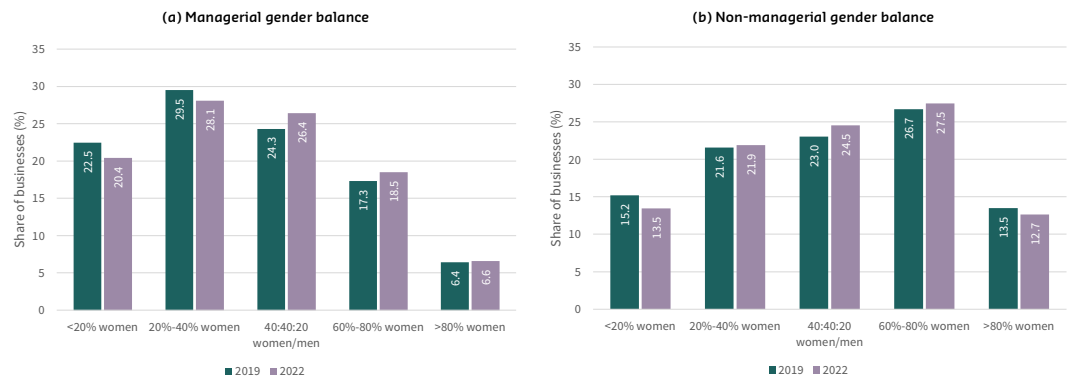
Even in situations where women and men are remunerated equally for the same role within an organisation, an imbalance in gender representation drives significant gender pay gaps and reduces

women's economic opportunities through employment.

Making progress towards a more balanced workforce can go a long way towards narrowing the gender pay gaps that persist in many industries, and the greater the rates of progress, the quicker will be the advance towards women's economic equality.

**FIGURE 1**

Share of businesses by workforce gender concentration: 2019 and 2022



Notes: The charts categorised businesses according to the concentrations of women and men in the managerial and non-managerial workforces in 2019 and 2022. Data are reported for businesses that are present in both survey years.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-22.

Looking across all industry sectors, the overall share of businesses with less than 20 per cent of women among the managerial workforce has reduced by 2 percentage points from 22.5 per cent to 20.4 per cent over the three years from 2019 to 2022 (Figure 1a).

At the same time, the proportion of businesses with managerial gender balance within the 40:40:20 range (of at least 40 per cent of women and 40 per cent men) has risen by 2.1 percentage points to 26.4 per cent in the three years to 2022.

There has been little to no change in the share of businesses with a highly female-dominated managerial workforce, with 6.6 per cent of businesses employing at least 80 per cent of women within their management tiers.

Changes in the gender balance of the non-managerial workforce have been a little slower over the same three-year period, with around 13.5 per cent of businesses employing less than 20 per cent of women among their non-managerial workforce in 2022 (Figure 1b).

**TABLE 1**

Shares of women managers within companies, by industry sector: 2018-19 to 2021-22

Industry of business	Average share of women managers within business			Change in share of women managers 2019-2022 by 2019 gender concentration of business					Change in share of 40:40:20 businesses ppt
	2018-19	2021-22	Change 2019-2022	<20% women	20%-40% women	40%-60% women	60%-80% women	>80% women	
	%	%	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	
Mining	14.9	17.8	+2.9	3.4	1.7				
Construction	15.2	15.4	+0.3	1.9	-2.3				0.8
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	16.5	19.8	+3.3	4.7	0.2				5.7
Manufacturing	21.3	22.9	+1.6	3.2	0.6	0.9	-1.1		3.7
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste	21.4	23.4	+2.0	3.2	0.7				2.8
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	24.6	25.2	+0.6	2.6	0.3		-6.9		3.2
Public Administration and Safety	25.4	31.0	+5.6	2.7	6.4				-6.3
Wholesale Trade	27.1	28.8	+1.7	3.5	1.5	-0.8	1.0		-1.7
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate	31.4	35.6	+4.2	3.4	3.3	6.7			18.0
Professional, Scientific and Technical	35.0	37.4	+2.4	5.4	2.6	2.3	-2.9	-10.1	4.1
IT Media and Telecommunications	36.4	38.6	+2.2	3.1	4.1	2.2	-7.0		6.1
Arts and Recreation Services	37.1	39.8	+2.7	5.3	2.8	2.0	2.1		11.9
Financial and Insurance Services	39.9	41.5	+1.6	13.0	3.2	-1.1	-3.5		2.7
Accommodation and Food Services	41.8	43.5	+1.8	17.0	6.2	-2.0	-4.2		3.2
Retail Trade	46.1	46.7	+0.6	3.3	1.3	0.4	0.1	-3.5	5.7
Other Services	46.7	49.0	+2.3	4.5	5.1	4.5	-0.4	-11.6	-1.9
Administrative and Support Services	48.2	47.7	-0.4	17.5	2.1	0.2	-3.5	-16.9	-6.3
Education and Training	54.4	56.8	+2.5	15.7	8.1	3.5	-1.2	-5.6	2.2
Health Care and Social Assistance	69.9	71.1	+1.1		10.2	8.3	1.3		-0.6
<b>ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>+1.7</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	<b>-6.7</b>	<b>2.1</b>

Notes: Calculations are based on total remuneration for businesses that reported to WGEA in both 2018-19 and 2021-22.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-22.

But as one would expect, there are some significant variations in workforce gender concentrations – and changes to gender concentrations – by industry.

The average share of female managers rose 1.7 percentage points to 42.4 per cent among those businesses present in the WGEA data collection over the two reporting periods 2018-19 and 2021-22 (Table 1).

Women in management is critical to the leadership pipeline and business performance, and while the overall share of women in leadership hasn't shifted much over the past three years, this masks some significant changes across industries, with some sectors having done relatively well over the period.

Businesses in mining and construction, agriculture forestry and fishing, and manufacturing typically employ relatively low proportions of women managers, but in each case the average shares of women employed has risen over the three years to 2021-22.

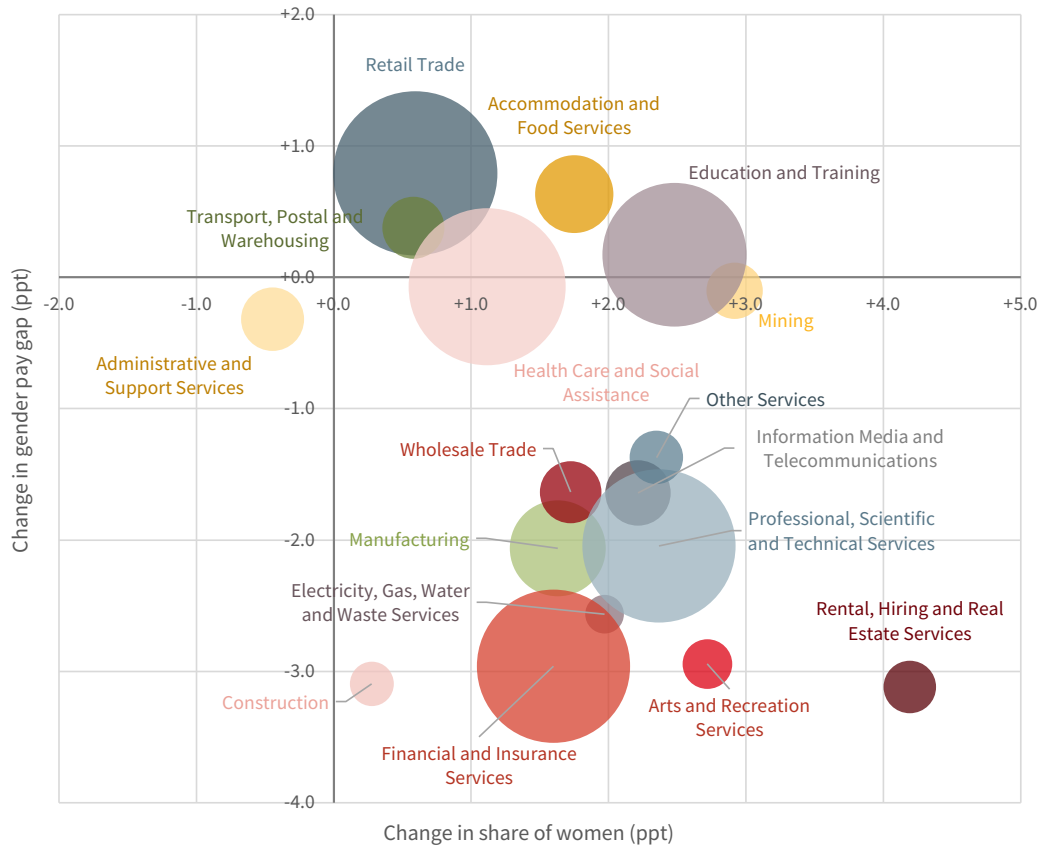
Businesses in public administration and safety delivered the greatest percentage increase in the share of female managers, rising by 5.6 percentage points over three years to 31 per cent in 2021-22.

Table 1 also shows the change in the shares of female managers employed in businesses with different gender concentrations in 2019.

Changes in the gender balance of the managerial workforce have been most pronounced for male-dominated businesses. The overall share of female managers rose by 4.1 percentage points in three years among businesses where less than 20 per cent of managers were women in 2019.

**FIGURE 2**

Changes in gender pay gaps and shares of women managers: by industry, 2019 to 2022



Notes: Calculations are based on total remuneration. The relative sizes of the bubbles are proportional to the aggregate size of the workforces in each industry sector.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-22.

With more female managers now being employed in previously male-dominated companies, we are seeing an improvement in the share of businesses that have reached a 40:40:20 gender balance in their managerial workforce. For example, the share of 40:40:20 businesses in rental, hiring and real estate services rose by 10 percentage points in the three years 2021-22 (Table 1, final column).

And for businesses in most industry sectors, the rising shares of women in the managerial workforce have typically been accompanied by reductions in managerial gender pay gaps, principally for reasons of workforce composition (Figure 2, lower right quadrant). The only exceptions to this rule are for businesses in the retail trades, accommodation and food services, and education and training sectors (Figure 2, upper right quadrant).



**TABLE 2**

Shares of women non-managers within companies, by industry sector: 2019 to 2022

Industry of business	Average shares of women non-managers within business			Change in share of women non-managers 2019-2022 by 2019 gender concentration of business					Change in share of 40:40:20 businesses
	2019	2022	Change 2019-2022	<20% women	20%-40% women	40%-60% women	60%-80% women	>80% women	
	%	%	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt	
Mining	18.7	19.4	+0.7	1.3	-0.4				-1.1
Construction	20.2	21.5	+1.3	1.7	0.3		2.3		1.6
Public Administration and Safety	24.0	24.2	+0.2	3.7					
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste	24.9	25.3	+0.5	0.8	0.0				2.8
Manufacturing	28.1	28.7	+0.7	1.8	0.8	-0.1	-5.1		1.1
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	29.2	30.0	+0.8	3.5	1.5		-1.9 -3.4		5.6
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	34.7	34.8	+0.1		0.8	-1.8			-2.9
Wholesale Trade	40.1	40.8	+0.8	1.8	1.3	-0.0	-0.1	-1.8	4.4
IT Media and Telecommunications	42.9	43.3	+0.5	4.9	1.3	-0.7	-1.1		-2.0
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate	45.3	44.4	-1.0	0.6	4.8	-0.4	-6.1		
Professional, Scientific and Technical	46.0	46.6	+0.5	2.9	1.2	0.4	-0.7	-1.7	0.7
Arts and Recreation Services	47.9	50.1	+2.2		2.9	1.4	-0.2		8.3
Administrative and Support Services	49.5	52.0	+2.5	6.1	8.4	3.3	-2.0	-1.8	3.4
Accommodation and Food Services	55.7	55.2	-0.4		4.5	0.9	-3.3		9.2
Financial and Insurance Services	55.8	56.1	+0.4		2.5	0.9	-1.6	-0.6	2.7
Retail Trade	56.1	55.3	-0.8	1.8	-0.6	0.1	-1.9	-1.8	1.0
Other Services	57.4	57.7	+0.3	3.4	1.5	0.8	-0.2		2.9
Education and Training	68.7	68.9	+0.2	8.7	2.4	1.3	0.0	-1.1	-1.6
Health Care and Social Assistance	78.1	77.5	-0.6			2.2	-0.6	-1.1	-0.4
<b>ALL INDUSTRIES</b>	<b>50.4</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>+0.4</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>

Notes: Calculations are based on total remuneration for businesses that reported to WGEA in both 2018-19 and 2021-22.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2020-21.

Some industry sectors have been especially successful in driving improved workforce gender balance. For example, businesses in the administrative and support services sector with less than 20 per cent of female managers in 2019 saw the share of women increase by an average of 17.5 percentage points by 2022.

Increases of more than 10 percentage points in the share of female managers were also experienced for businesses in the financial and insurance services, accommodation and food, and education and training sectors.

The pace of change in gender workforce concentration among non-managers is generally somewhat slower than for the managerial workforce (Table 2).

Overall employment of non-managers is evenly balanced between women and men, but this conceals some marked differences in the gender balance across different non-managerial occupations.

For example, more than 80 per cent of technicians and trades workers are men, while nearly three

quarters of clerical and administrative services workers are women.

Despite this, we still see that the non-managerial gender balance has improved to a greater extent in male-dominated sectors.

The share of female non-managers rose by an average of 2.5 percentage points over three years among businesses where less than 20 per cent of managers were women in 2019.

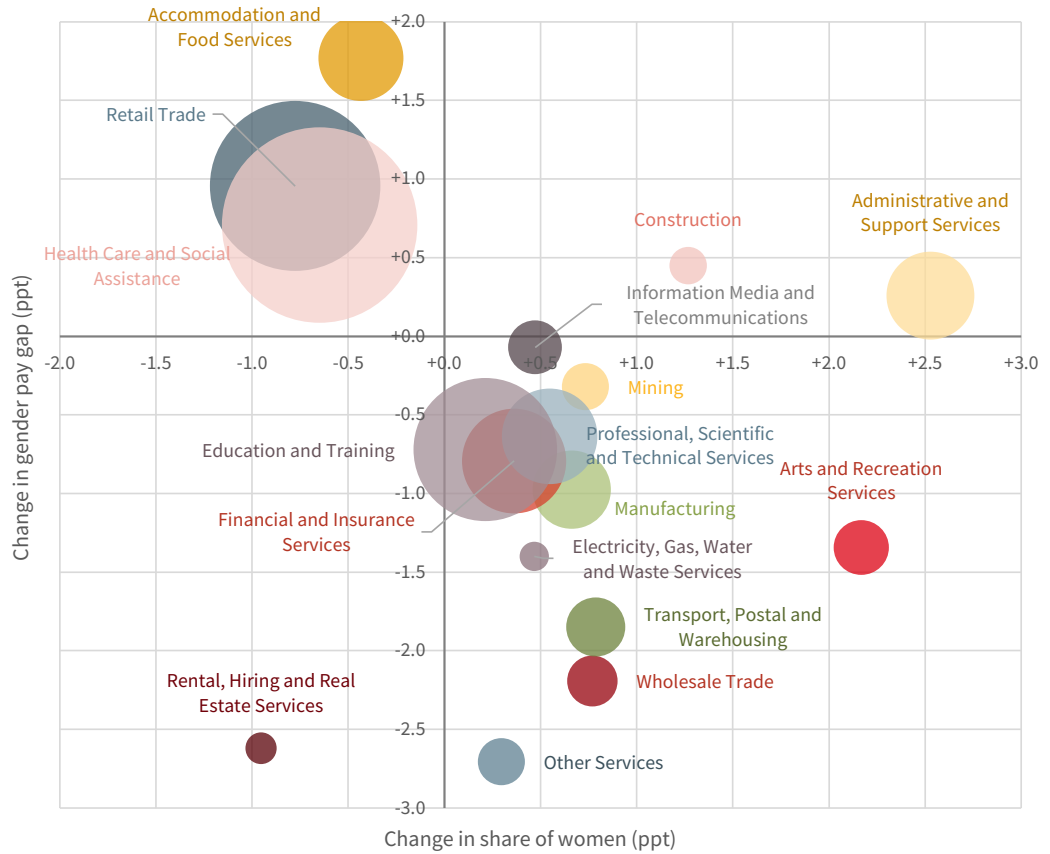
The overall share of businesses that have reached a 40:40:20 gender balance in non-managerial employees has increased by 1.5 per cent over the three years.

Rates of improvement have been especially pronounced for businesses in the arts and recreation services, administrative and support services, and transport, postal and warehousing services sectors.

However, as noted earlier, far more work needs to be done to break down some of the more pronounced gender stereotypes, entry barriers and attitudinal biases associated with specific occupation classes or and industry sectors.

**FIGURE 3**

Changes in gender pay gaps and shares of women non-managers: by industry, 2019 to 2022



Notes: Calculations are based on total remuneration. The relative sizes of the bubbles are proportional to the aggregate size of the workforces in each industry sector.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-22.

**REDUCING PAY GAPS**

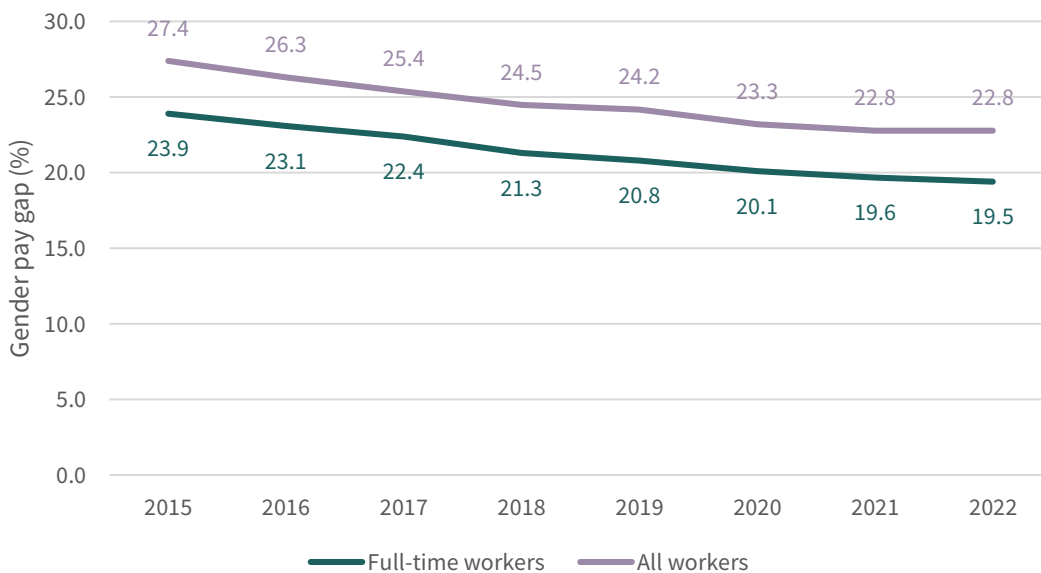
The gender pay gap in Australia has generally fallen over the past eight years, but the pace of change has been gradual.

According to data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), the overall gap in total remuneration between women and men was 22.8 per cent in 2022 (Figure 4).

This was the first year in which the aggregate gender gap in total remuneration remained the same as the previous year, after consistent but progressively more modest reductions in the pay gap from 27.4 per cent in 2015.

For full-time employees the pay gap is a little smaller at 19.5 per cent in 2022.

**FIGURE 4**  
Change in total remuneration gender pay gaps



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Data accessed from WGEA Data Explorer.

But these overall trends conceal some divergent patterns in gender pay gaps for different occupations and across different industry sectors.

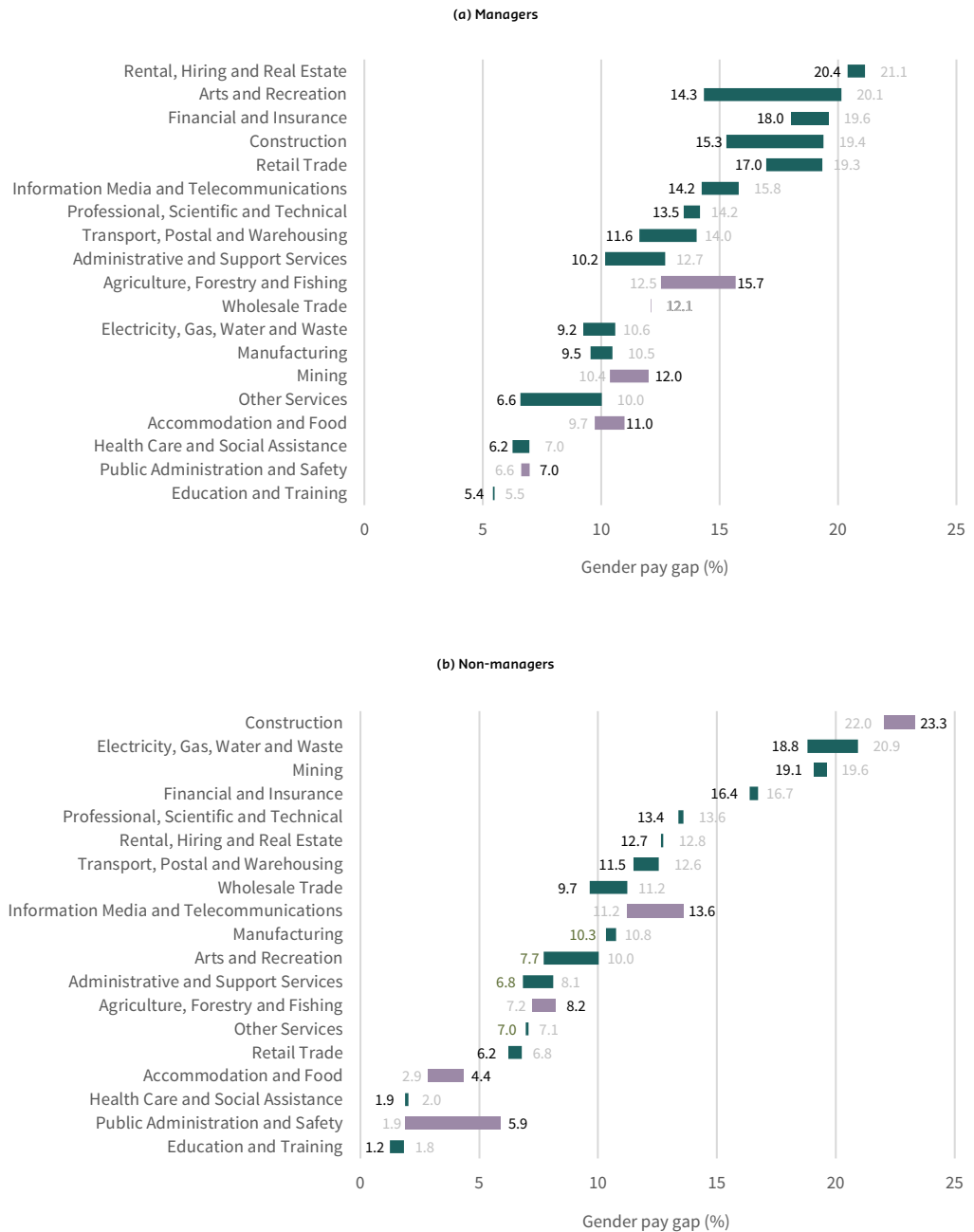
Neither do they communicate the degree to which gender pay gaps - and other gender equity outcomes - may improve more quickly for certain businesses, and the actions that such businesses may have undertaken to accelerate change.

To capture more effectively the pace of change in gender pay gaps that can be achieved for businesses in Australia, we choose to examine the average gender pay gaps for businesses that reported to WGEA in both the 2018-19 and 2021-22 reporting periods.



**FIGURE 5**

Change in the average gender pay gaps of businesses by industry sector: 2019 to 2022



Notes: Calculations are based on the average gender pay gap in total (FTE) remuneration for businesses that reported to WGEA in both 2018-19 and 2021-22. Data are ordered by the average gender pay gaps in 2018-19 across businesses in each industry sector.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-22.

The two charts in Figure 5 show the average change in gender pay gaps between 2019 and 2022 for businesses across Australia's main industry divisions. Data are ordered by the average gender pay gaps for businesses in 2019 in each industry sector for managers (Panel a) and non-managers (Panel b).

The analysis in Panel (a) of Figure 5 reveals that businesses in industry sectors with the highest 2019 gender pay gaps tend to show the greater improvements in the managerial gender pay gap over the three years to 2022.

The greatest declines were among businesses in arts and recreation, where the average gender pay gap for managers fell from 20.1 per cent to 14.3 per cent between 2019 and 2022. The average managerial gender pay gap for businesses in construction fell 4.1 percentage points to 15.3 per cent in the three years to 2022.

Similar trends are shared for businesses in those industry sectors that ranked highest in terms of average gender pay gaps for managers in 2019.

Gender pay gaps did increase on average for businesses in certain industry sectors, specifically in agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining, and accommodation and food services.

But what's especially interesting in this analysis is that the patterns of change in average gender pay gaps for managers are not replicated for the non-manager workforce.

This conclusion is borne out in Figure 5 Panel (b) which shows far slower change in the non-managerial gender pay gaps for businesses across most industry sectors, and for some sectors, a reversal of the trend for managers.

For example, the average gender pay gap for non-managers among construction sector businesses rose 1.3 percentage points to 23.3 per cent over the three years to 2022.

Businesses need to be careful not to focus their attention too much on managers and senior executives at the expense of non-managers.

Business leaders should certainly maintain their commitment to support gender equity for managers and senior executives within their organisations, but this should not diminish the attention given to driving improved gender equity outcomes among non-managerial occupations.

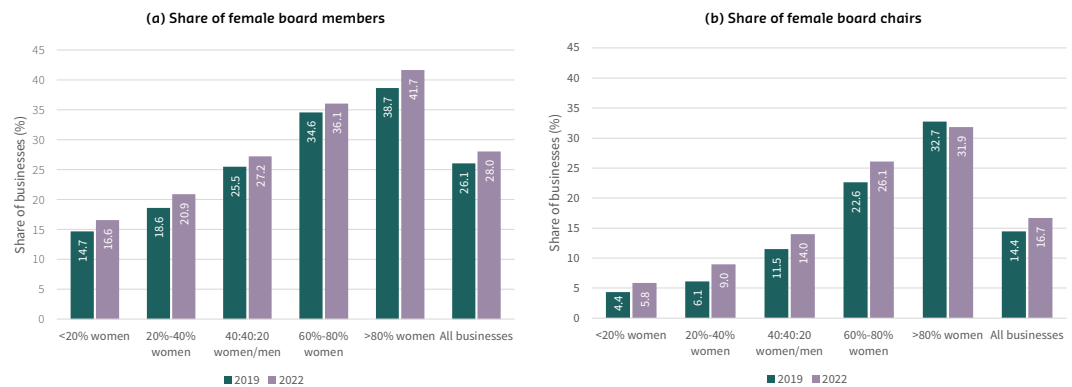
## BALANCING REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP AND ON COMPANY BOARDS

The representation of women on boards has improved according to WGEA's reporting data. Among businesses that reported in both 2018-19 and 2021-22, the share of women on boards rose by 1.9 percentage points to 28 per cent in the three years to 2022 (Figure 6).

The same is true for the proportion of female board chairs, with 16.7 per cent of company boards chaired by women in 2022 – a 2.3 percentage point increase compared to three years earlier.

**FIGURE 6**

Gender representation on boards by workforce gender balance: 2019 and 2022



Notes: Calculations are based on businesses that reported to WGEA in both 2018-19 and 2021-22.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2020-21.

There is a strong positive association between female board representation and the overall gender workforce concentration of the business. The greater the share of female employees within a company, the greater the representation of women on the boards of those organisations.

However, despite the share of women serving on boards either as members or chairs having increased over the three years to 2022, Figure 6 shows that the representation of women on boards still falls short of the overall gender balance in the workforce.

For businesses with a 40:40:20 gender balance of women and men in the general workforce, the share of female board members has reached only 27.2 per cent by 2022.

This has increased by 1.8 percentage points over the three year period, but remains underrepresentative compared to the general workforce concentration.

Gender diversity in decision-making and on boards is a key driver of organisational change and while the past three years has seen some progress, without action to accelerate change, the current rate of progress in Australia will leave women underrepresented in the boardroom for decades to come.



## HOW QUICKLY CAN BUSINESSES CHANGE?

Up to this point in our report, the focus has been on how gender equity outcomes have changed on average for Australian businesses and across industry sectors.

But rates of progress vary markedly across the nearly 4,800 employer reporting groups in the WGEA data collection. Some organisations have been leaders in promoting better workplace outcomes for women.

For others, progress has either been slower, or has regressed.

Given these variations in gender equity outcomes, can we learn anything about what is a feasible or achievable improvement for businesses and over what timeframe?

**TABLE 3**

Distribution of changes in gender equity outcomes: 2019 to 2022

<b>(a) organisational gender pay gap</b>				
Three-year change in organisational gender pay gap (ppt, negative = improvement)				
	All businesses	Businesses that undertook a pay gap audit	Businesses that didn't conduct a pay gap audit	Difference
Level of change	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt
25th percentile	-5.26	-5.38	-4.60	-0.8
40th percentile	-2.09	-2.40	-1.62	-0.8
<b>Median (50th percentile)</b>	<b>-0.37</b>	<b>-0.86</b>	-	<b>-0.9</b>
60th percentile	+1.29	+0.80	+1.88	-1.1
75th percentile	+4.83	+3.96	+5.47	-1.5
<b>Average improvement</b>	<b>-0.40</b>	<b>-0.79</b>	<b>-0.06</b>	<b>-0.7</b>

<b>(b) share of female employees</b>				
Three-year change in share of women employed (ppt, positive = improvement)				
	All businesses	Businesses with formal gender recruitment strategy	Businesses without formal gender recruitment strategy	Difference
Level of change	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt
25th percentile	-1.90	-1.69	-2.05	0.4
40th percentile	-0.46	-0.27	-0.62	0.4
<b>Median (50th percentile)</b>	<b>+0.31</b>	<b>+0.44</b>	<b>+0.21</b>	<b>0.2</b>
60th percentile	+1.07	+1.24	+0.96	0.3
75th percentile	+2.47	+2.60	+2.41	0.2
<b>Average improvement</b>	<b>+0.43</b>	<b>+0.59</b>	<b>+0.31</b>	<b>0.3</b>

<b>(c) share of female managers</b>				
Three-year change in share of female managers employed				
	All businesses	Businesses with formal gender recruitment strategy	Businesses without formal gender recruitment strategy	Difference
Level of change	ppt	ppt	ppt	ppt
25th percentile	-3.09	-2.94	-4.16	1.2
40th percentile	-	-	-0.35	0.4
<b>Median (50th percentile)</b>	<b>+1.56</b>	<b>+1.64</b>	<b>+0.77</b>	<b>0.9</b>
60th percentile	+3.35	+3.42	+2.69	0.7
75th percentile	+6.82	+6.87	+6.35	0.5
<b>Average improvement</b>	<b>+1.72</b>	<b>+1.76</b>	<b>+1.42</b>	<b>0.3</b>

Notes: Calculations are based on businesses that reported to WGEA in both 2018-19 and 2021-22.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-22.

By way of illustration, Table 3 looks at the spread of changes to some key gender equity indicators for businesses that have reported to WGEA between 2019 and 2022.

The table shows the spread of changes between organisations over three years in the overall (total remuneration) gender pay gap (Table 3, panel a), the overall share of women employed (Panel b) and the share of female managers employed (Panel c).

Each set of results also compares gender equity outcomes for organisations that have undertaken specific gender equity actions - either a pay gap audit (when looking at changes to the gender pay gap over time) or the enactment of a specific gender recruitment strategy (when looking at changes to the shares of female employees or managers employed within businesses).

### Gender pay gaps

Looking first at organisational gender pay gaps (Table 3, Panel a), the typical (or median) business reduced the gender pay gap in total remuneration by 0.37 percentage points between 2019 and 2022.

However, the spread of changes to the gender pay gap between organisations is actually quite broad.

The most successful 25 per cent of businesses reduced gender pay gaps by at least 5.26 percentage points over three years, while the worst performing quarter of businesses saw pay gaps rise by at least 4.8 percentage points over the same timeframe.

The median rate of change in the gender pay gap more than doubles to 0.86 percentage points over three years for businesses that undertook a pay gap audit in the past 2 years. This compares to no change in the gender pay gap for businesses that chose not to undertake a pay gap audit over the period.

### Shares of women employed

The typical business increased the share of female employees by 0.31 percentage points (Panel b) but the best quarter of businesses lifted the share of women in their workforces by nearly 2.5 percentage points.

And businesses that have introduced a formal gender recruitment strategy see the share of female employees increasing by 0.44 percentage points over three years – twice the rate of those businesses without a formal strategy.

The same is true when comparing changes between businesses in the shares of female managers over time (Panel c).

The share of women employed as managers increased by an average of 1.56 percentage points between 2019 and 2022 for the median business but by at least 6.8 percentage points for the quarter of organisations that delivered the greatest improvements in the proportion of female managers.

This analysis clearly shows that the pace of change in gender equity outcomes can improve to a far greater extent for some businesses compared to others. It is also clear that these relative improvements look to be associated with the enactment of specific gender equity initiatives that differ by industry sector.





**REACHING THE TOP:  
GENDER  
DIFFERENCES IN  
ACCESSING HIGHER  
REMUNERATION**



## REACHING THE TOP: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ACCESSING HIGHER REMUNERATION

Empirical analysis of gender pay gaps tends to focus on a comparison of median or average salaries between women and men. Gender pay differences are assessed within the same occupational class and industry sector, or further broken down by employment or contract status to determine whether differences in salaries are reflective of gender discrimination in remuneration.

The 'glass ceiling' that prevents women from accessing higher remuneration is usually expressed through biases and barriers in career promotion and progression (Cassells, Duncan, 2019). However, less attention is paid to the relative ease with which women and men can access the highest levels of remuneration within their industry and profession – of 'reaching the top' when it comes to earnings.

And yet this is very much part of the story when it comes to drivers of pay inequality.

An earlier report in the *BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity Insights* series revealed the existence of a 'male bonus premium' whereby women are less able than men to access discretionary pay over and above base salaries (Cassells, Duncan and Ong Viforj, 2016).

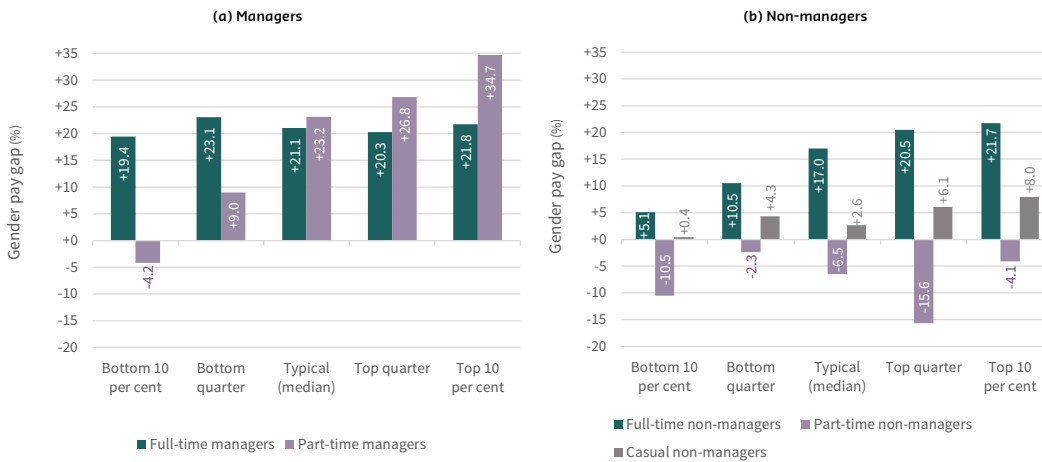
For this report, we take advantage of individual earnings data for nearly 4,500,000 employees in the WGEA data collection to compare the full earnings distributions for women and men at the same age, within the same industry sector and occupational class. We use this information to examine whether percentage gender pay gaps are more extreme for lower or higher levels of earnings, and for certain industries or occupations.

## HOW DO EARNINGS OPPORTUNITIES COMPARE BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN?

We start by comparing total remuneration between women and men at the same sections of their earnings distributions – for example, the highest tenth of female earners against the highest tenth of

male earners; the highest quarter of female earners against the highest quarter of male earners, and so on. These comparisons are shown in Figure 7.

**FIGURE 7**  
Gender pay gaps across the earnings distribution: by employment status, 2020-21



Notes: Gender pay gaps are calculated using total (FTE) remuneration for employment status and broad occupation group, with female and male earners matched according to industry sector and detailed occupation class.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.

The gender pay gaps for full-time managers range from 19.4 per cent for the lowest 10 per cent of female and male earners to 21.8 per cent for the top tenth of earners (Figure 7).

The fact that gender pay gaps for full-time managers are so similar over the entire range of earnings indicates that the earnings distributions for women and men are more or less proportionate with little to suggest any greater gender differences in accessing higher levels of remuneration.

But the same cannot be said for part-time managers – even after controlling for gender differences in occupational classes between women and men.

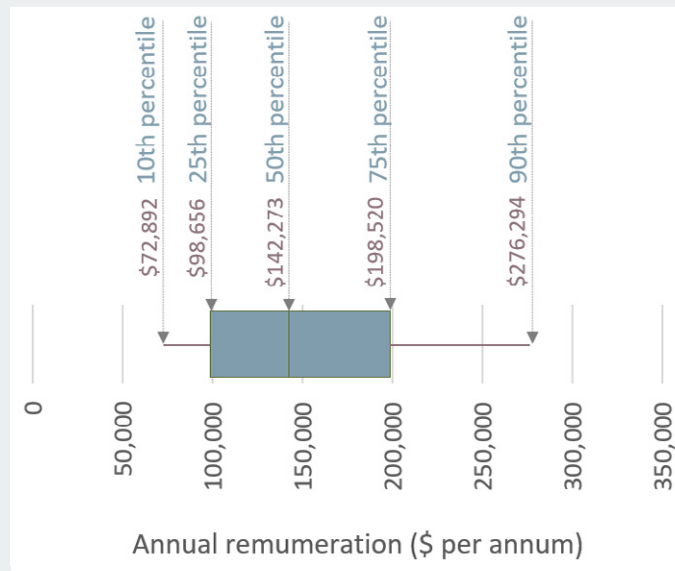
The lowest paid 10 per cent of female managers in part-time roles earn 4.2 per cent more than their male counterparts on comparable full-time equivalent earnings. However, gender pay gaps progressively rise with earnings among part-time managers, reaching 34.7 per cent for the highest paid employees.

### AN EARNINGS DISTRIBUTION BOXPLOT

The **boxplot** (or box-and-whisker plot) is a stylised visual representation of the distribution of earnings. A boxplot provides an intuitive and accessible means of comparing key distributional measures across multiple distributions. For this report we use a version of the boxplot that displays five key summary statistics:

- the **median** (or 50th percentile) which represents the midpoint of earnings above and below which half (50 per cent) of the earnings distribution falls.
- The **lower quartile** (or 25th percentile) of earnings (the left-hand edge of the box) below which a quarter (25 per cent) of the earnings distribution falls.
- The **upper quartile** (or 75th percentile) of earnings (the right-hand edge of the box) above which a quarter (25 per cent) of the earnings distribution falls.
- The width of the box captures the **middle half** of earners.

In this report we add “whiskers” from the left-hand edge of the box to the **10th percentile** of earnings (below which a tenth of the earnings distribution falls) and from the right-hand edge of the box to the **90th percentile** (above which a tenth of the earnings distribution falls).



**Note:** For illustrative purposes, this box-and-whisker plot represents the distribution of **total remuneration among female full-time managers** using WGEA's 'unit-record' data of employee earnings for 2021-22.

The middle (median) earner in the sorted list of full-time female managers receives **\$142,273** per year in total remuneration. The lower quarter (25 per cent) of earners receive **\$98,656** or less and the highest quarter (25 per cent) of earners receive at least **\$198,520** per annum. The lowest 10 per cent of earners receive **\$72,892** or less, and the highest 10 per cent of earners receive at least **\$276,294** per annum.



The two sets of distributions shown in Figure 8 compare the earnings opportunities for women and men in full-time and part-time managerial positions, and by employment status for non-managers.

As noted earlier, the distribution of male and female remuneration for full-time managers are more or less proportionate across the full range of earnings (Figure 8 Panel a).

However, part-time male managers can draw from a much wider spread of earnings opportunities than women with the top 10 per cent earning in excess of \$380,000 in full-time equivalent salaries (Panel b). This compares to earnings of around \$250,000 for the top 10 per cent of part-time female managers.

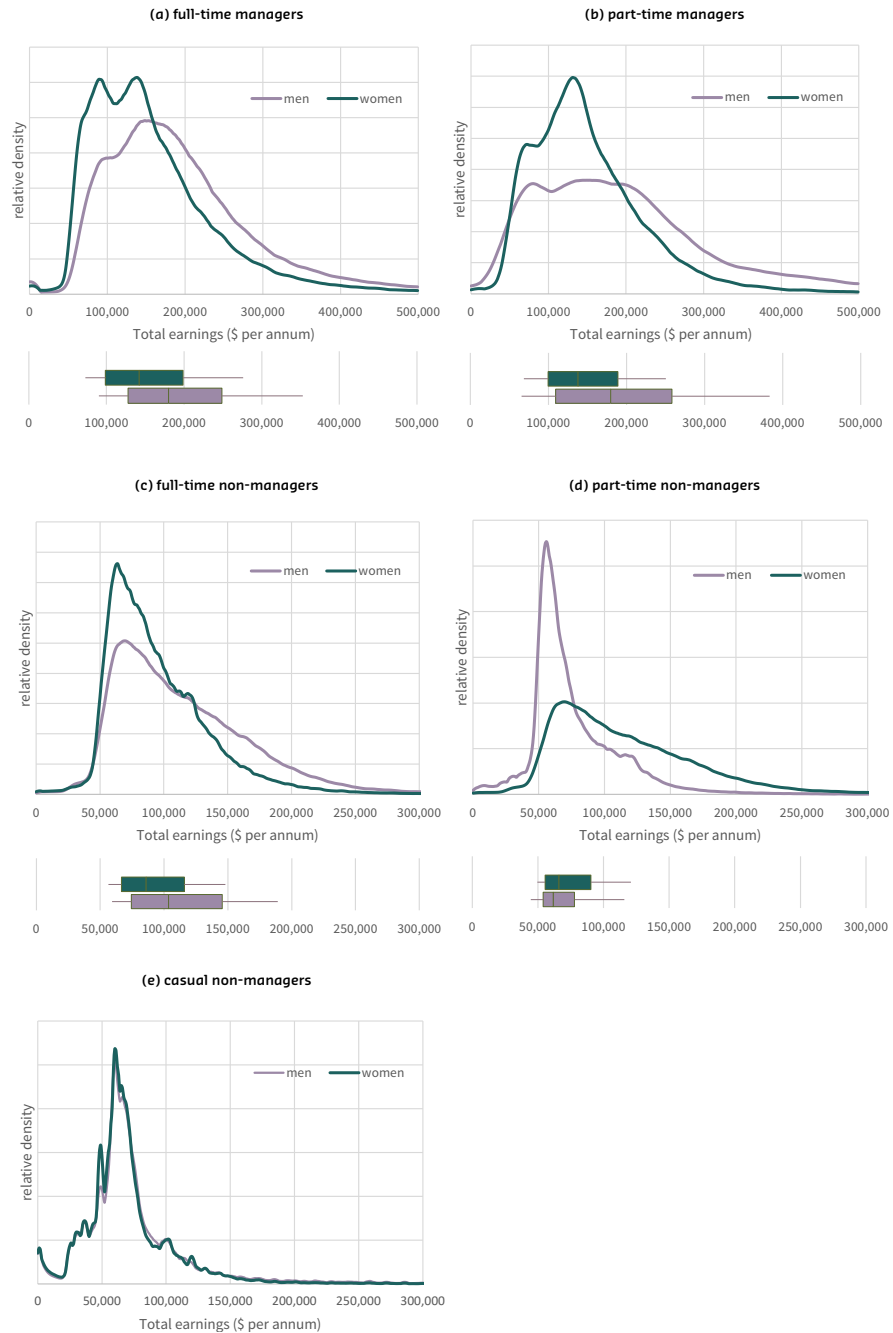
The gender pay gap for full-time non-managers is slightly in favour of women amongst the lowest 10 per cent of earners (Panel c). However, the pay

gap starts to widen in favour of men from around median earnings, with \$103,000 in total remuneration compared to \$86,000 for women – a 17 per cent difference. The top 10 per cent of male part-time non-managers earn more than \$189,000 compared to \$148,000 for the highest earning women.

In contrast to other categories, the distribution of earnings for part-time non-managers is far more compressed for men than women (Panel d). The middle half of male part-time non-managers earn between \$54,000 and \$77,900 – a range of \$23,800. For women, the equivalent range is between \$55,500 and \$90,500 – an interval of \$35,000.

Earnings for casual non-managers are virtually identical between men and women (Panel e), possibly reflecting the high incidence of standardised award wages for many in this employment category.

**FIGURE 8**  
Distributions of total (FTE) remuneration by gender and employment status: 2021-2022



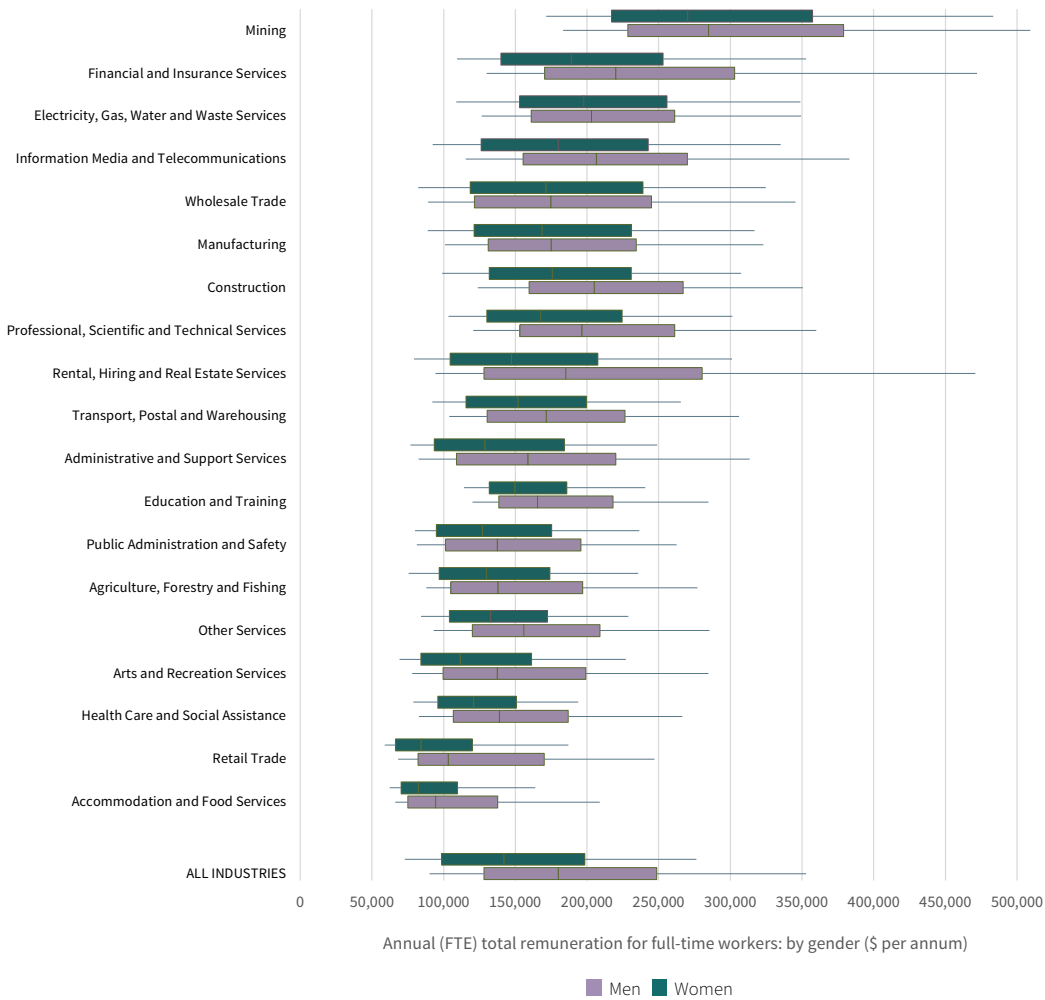
Notes: Earnings distributions are based on total full-time annual remuneration and have been generated using kernel density methods with optimal smoothing (bandwidth selection) for an Epanechnikov kernel function.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.

Of course, the range of earnings opportunities for women and men varies substantially depending on the industries in which they are employed - something that is shown very clearly in the comparison of distributions of total remuneration across industry sector for full-time managers (Figure 9).

The highest earnings opportunities are for people working in the mining sector, and yet the comparative distributions of male and female full-time earnings match each other closely over the full earnings range.

**FIGURE 9**  
Earnings distributions for full-time managers by industry sector and gender: 2021-2022



Notes: Earnings distributions are for total remuneration of full-time managers, expressed as full-time equivalent salaries. Boxplots are shown in descending order of the 90th percentile of earnings for women.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.



Earnings opportunities at the high end for those working in finance and insurance services are far greater for men than women. The gender pay gap for the top 10 per cent of earners in the sector is around 25 per cent.

Gender inequality at the top end of the earnings distribution is even more pronounced for people working in the rental, hiring and real estate services sector with a gender pay gap of 36 per cent between the top 10 per cent of male and female full-time earners - \$470,000 compared to \$301,000.

Comparative earnings opportunities are far more similar between women and men working in the public administration and safety services sector, with greater standardisation of salaries and hence much less variation by gender.

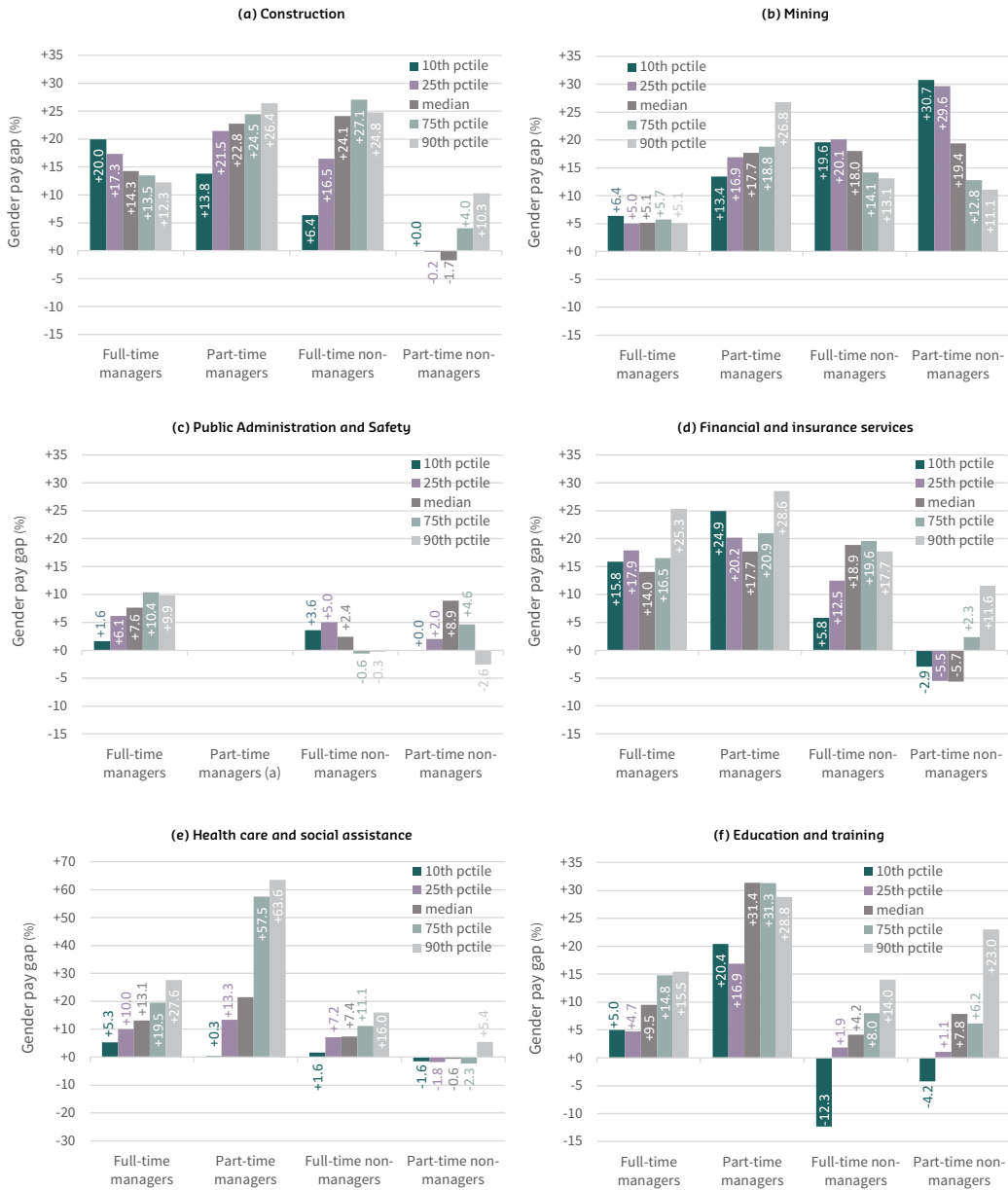
Salary distributions are also more or less coincident for full-time managers working in wholesale trade.

Gender pay gaps across the earnings distribution for other categories of employees are shown for selected industries in Figure 10, and for the full set of industry divisions in the Appendix to this report.

Gender pay gaps at higher earners levels are generally more pronounced among part-time managers. This is certainly true in construction (Figure 10 Panel a) and mining (Panel b), finance and insurance services (Panel d), health care and social assistance (Panel e), and education and training (Panel f).

The relative comparability of salaries between women and men in the public administration and safety services sector (Panel c) extends to all employment categories.

**FIGURE 10**  
Gender pay gaps across the earnings distribution: selected industries, 2021-22



Notes: Earnings distributions are based on total remuneration in full-time equivalent salaries. Categories marked (a) denote insufficient data to ensure statistical precision in estimated gender pay gaps.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.



## THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AMONG HIGHER AND LOWER EARNERS

Another measure of women’s economic opportunity in the workplace explores the extent to which women can access remuneration to the same degree as men across the full distribution of earnings.

This doesn’t necessarily mean that half of an organisation’s highest earning employees should be women, but rather that the overall gender balance of employees should carry through to all parts of the earnings distribution.<sup>1</sup>

Suppose that a third of an organisation’s overall workforce are women. Then gender equality in access to remuneration would suggest that a third of employees on higher earnings should be women, with the same holding true among employees on lower salaries.

So, what do the data show?

**FIGURE 11**  
Representation of women among top/bottom 20 per cent of earners (full-time managers): by industry, 2021-22



Note: The representation of women is assessed by comparing the shares of women in the top and bottom 20 per cent of earners with the overall share of women in the organisation across all earnings levels. A measure of 2 reflects double the representation, a measure of 1 reflects parity and a measure of 0.5 reflects half the representation.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors’ calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.

<sup>1</sup> The effects of promoting a more equal balance of women and men across all parts of an organisation is addressed in the 2022 BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity report.



There is very clearly a real issue of underrepresentation of women amongst the top 20 per cent of earners in most industry sectors.

For example, women are underrepresented by nearly 40 per cent among the top 20 per cent of earners in mining compared to the overall share of women employed in the industry (Figure 11).

Women make up around two thirds of higher earners compared to their overall employment shares in construction, wholesale trade, electricity, gas, water and waste services, and public administration and safety.

Women are underrepresented among higher earners in public administration and safety, despite there being little difference in the salaries of those women that do reach the top of the sector compared to their male counterparts.

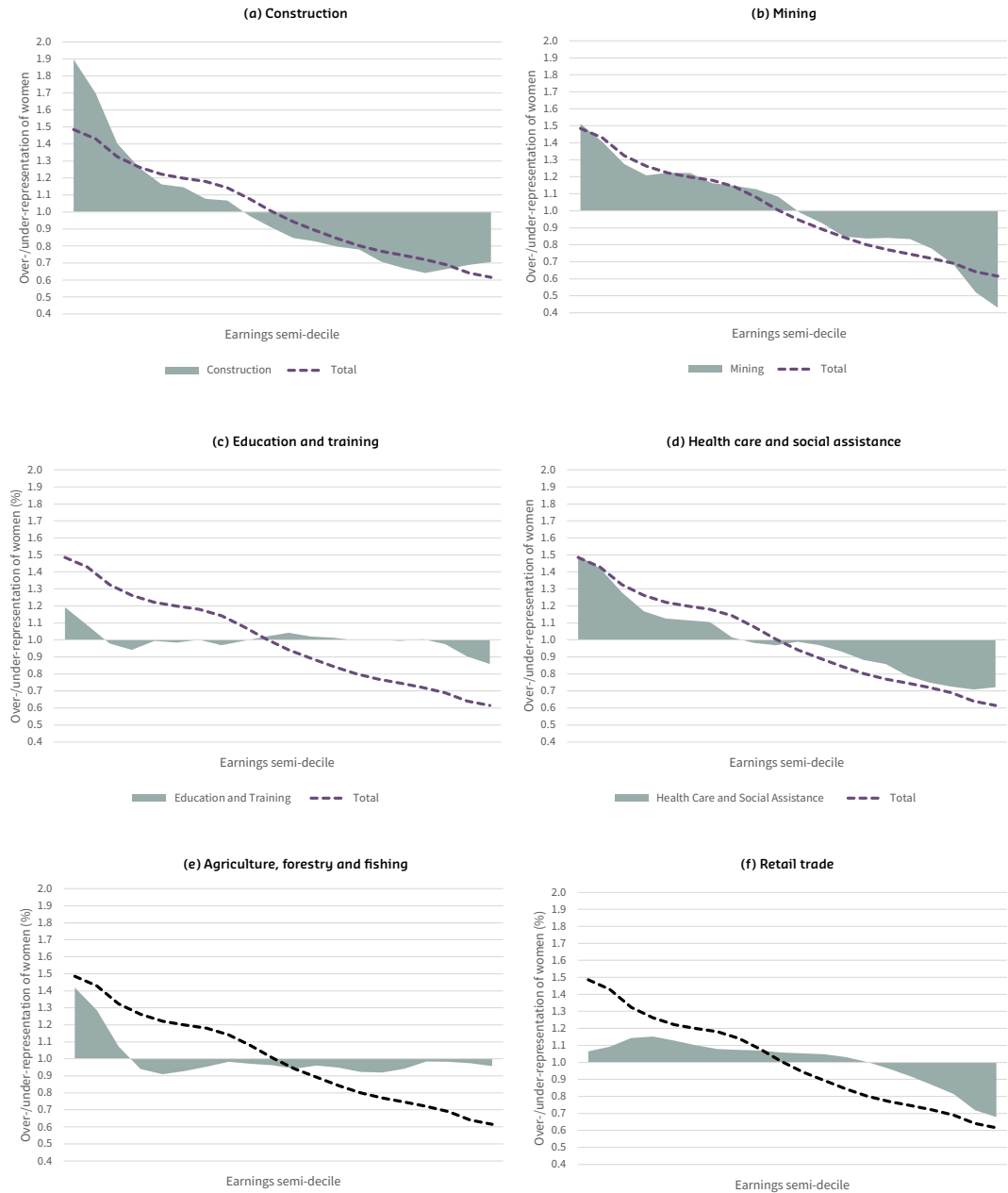
And women are overrepresented among the lower 20 per cent of earners by nearly 60 per cent in construction, and by a third in mining.

The degree of gender earnings inequality in construction is even more pronounced at the lowest earnings levels (Figure 12 Panel a), with nearly double the representation of women among the lowest 5 per cent of earners (the first semi-decile).

However, the education and training industry provides relatively balanced earnings opportunities for women across the full distribution of earnings, compared to their employment share (Figure 12 Panel c).

**FIGURE 12**

Representation of women by earnings semi-decile (full-time managers): by selected industry, 2021-22



Notes: The representation of women is assessed by comparing the shares of women in the top and bottom 20 per cent of earners with the overall share of women in the organisation across all earnings levels. A measure of 2 reflects double the representation, a measure of 1 reflects parity and a measure of 0.5 reflects half the representation. The measures of representation are presented for 20 'semi-deciles' of earnings from the lowest 5 per cent of earners (semi-decile 1) to the highest 5 per cent of earners (semi-decile 20).

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.



# A MATURITY FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUITY

## A MATURITY FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUITY

What more can we learn about the sorts of policies and actions that organisations might consider when seeking to accelerate the pace of change, and to improve women's economic outcomes in the workplace?

For this 2023 Gender Equity Insights report we develop a new gender equity *maturity framework* that differentiates organisations based on their approach to driving improved gender equality outcomes.

The approach seeks to categorise companies in terms of the gender equity policies and strategies captured by employer reporting to WGEA that are being implemented and apply these to a comparison of organisations that are progressing gender equity outcomes most effectively, and those that are falling behind. In this way we identify what policies and strategies work, and what distinguishes stagnation from success.

The maturity framework provides a basis to translate the insights derived from evidence-based analysis into a framework that can help organisations identify, implement and measure practical actions to drive improved workplace gender equity outcomes.

The maturity framework is constructed with reference to the responses of Australian organisations to WGEA's company reporting data, and relates those practices to a range of gender equity outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

And the maturity framework itself should not be considered as fixed over time. The framework should evolve to match prevailing expectations, practices and societal norms and should encourage Australian businesses to strive for continual improvements and higher standards of practice.

The WGEA reporting data is a unique and extensive source of information on the workforce composition, remuneration, company characteristics and gender equity policies and actions for Australian organisations with 100 or more employees.<sup>3</sup>

The WGEA Employer Census includes nearly 380 specific questions on the policies and actions implemented by companies to drive improved gender equity outcomes within their organisations. These cover actions relating to pay setting and reporting, retention, talent identification, governance processes, family policies, as well as policies that provide support for people who have experienced sexual harassment or domestic violence.

Responses were collected from nearly 4,800 reporting groups in the 2021-22 reporting year that collectively employed around 4.5 million employees.

We use the structure of WGEA's census along with our own statistical analysis to allocate each component indicator into one of three broad domains that cover:

- pay equity;
- recruitment, retention and flexible work;
- company policies and actions.

<sup>2</sup> The WGEA data for this report are drawn from private sector companies employing at least 100 employees. This excludes data on Commonwealth public sector organisations. WGEA does not collect data on smaller enterprises with less than 100 employees, but nevertheless represents a powerful source of information on the pay and work environment of more than 4.5 million employees in larger enterprises across the country.

<sup>3</sup> WGEA collects data from the Australian non-public sector and Commonwealth public sector with 100 or more employees. The analysis in this report refers to data from non-public sector employers.



**BENCHMARKING ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

There are numerous factors that can influence gender equity outcomes, and this creates a challenge when seeking to capture authentically the strategies, policies and actions adopted by businesses across industry sectors and with varying workforce sizes.

To resolve this challenge, the first step in constructing the maturity framework involves benchmarking organisational strategies, policies, and practices.

Effective benchmarking is pivotal, as it provides organisational leadership with valuable insights into their current practices.

This in turn creates an evidence-informed foundation for linking organisational strategies and practices to improved gender equity outcomes.

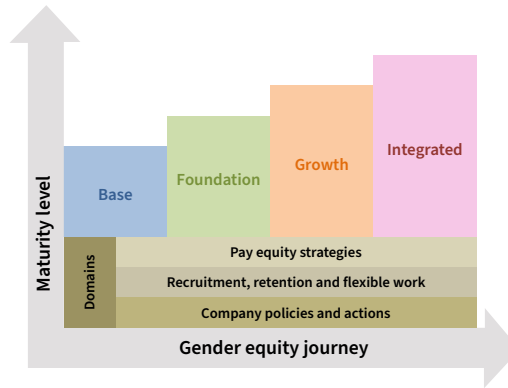
The benchmarks can also be used to formulate an action plan to drive meaningful changes within the organisations - not only in gender pay gaps but in other gender equity outcomes such as female representation in the workforce and leadership positions.

For all domains, each indicator is categorised into one of four maturity levels based on the importance of the respective strategies, policies or practices to gender equity.

The four maturity levels comprise:

- **Base** – Limited formal action on workplace gender equality in employment beyond statutory or mandated employment practices.
- **Foundational** – Introduced some workplace gender equality policies beyond mandated requirements with the intention to drive improved outcomes for women.
- **Growth** – Implemented gender equality policies and practices with more ambitious formal commitment for progress towards workplace gender equality.
- **Integrated** – Embedded comprehensive and connected suite of gender equality practices with senior accountability. Gender equality is integral to the way that organisations do business.

**FIGURE 13**  
Maturity levels and domains



**Gender equality is integral to the way that organisations do business.**

The attribution of specific policies and actions to a level of maturity in the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre's framework is informed by insights from WGEA, from corporate stakeholders and from the Centre's own insights, as well as findings from research and analysis in previous Gender Equity Insights reports in the series.

We then compute scores for each of the three domains at four distinct maturity levels using indicator classifications. These domain-level scores are based on the proportion of strategies, policies, and practices currently being implemented within the organisation at each maturity level. The scores are then compared with thresholds to identify the maturity level of that organisation in each of the three practice domains.

For example, an organisation would reach the integrated level of maturity for pay gap strategies if the majority of their policies and actions are deemed to be at an integrated level of maturity within this domain. Organisations that fail to reach the integrated level of maturity are progressively assessed against benchmarks for lower maturity levels in each domain.



## AN INDEX FOR ORGANISATIONAL MATURITY IN GENDER EQUITY

For this report, the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre has developed a *Gender Equity Maturity (GEM)* Index. The GEM uses statistical methods to create a unique composite measure with the objective of capturing the essential attributes, practices, and initiatives pursued by Australian organisations. To construct the GEM Index, we initially calculate the total level score achieved by each organisation for each maturity level, as a summation of the three domain-level scores at that level.

Scores are then combined into a single overall index using a weighted sum of components through the application of Principal Component Analysis (PCA), a statistical technique.<sup>4</sup>

The PCA method represents a data-driven approach for combining (potentially related) indicators into a single weighted score. PCA weights are constructed in a way that identify patterns – and emphasise differences – among Australian organisations in terms of their strategies, policies and practices relating to gender equity.

From the four level scores, PCA creates uncorrelated components, of which the first and second components explain the largest and second largest possible amount of variation in the original data. The composite GEM is then derived from these first and second components and categorised into four levels: base, foundation, growth, and integrated.

The GEM serves as a comprehensive measure of all strategies, policies, and practices related to gender equity implemented within Australian organisations. The highest GEM scores are reserved for those organisations that have committed to the most comprehensive and holistic suite of practices relating to gender equity.

Organisations achieving a greater GEM score typically implement a more extensive array of strategies, policies, and practices aimed at enhancing gender equity outcomes.

Achieving a high GEM score does not guarantee optimal gender equity outcomes. While some organisations may excel in implementing processes, strategies, and practices, these efforts may not always translate into improved outcomes for women employees.

<sup>4</sup> The PCA has been widely used to transform a set of possibly correlated variables into a smaller set of uncorrelated variables called principal components. The PCA involves breaking down the variance structure of a group of variables. For those variables which are mutually exclusive, we exclude the reference variable.



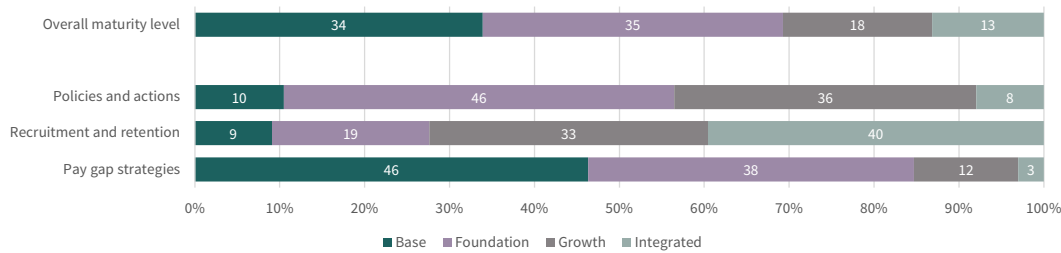
## HOW DO AUSTRALIAN COMPANIES RATE ON THE MATURITY OF THEIR GENDER EQUITY POLICIES?

Overall, the prevailing trend in Australian organisations indicates that a significant proportion are currently adopting practices consistent with a base level of maturity (34 per cent) or a foundational set of gender equity practices (35 per cent).

Around 18 per cent of businesses are implementing growth practices, while 13 per cent have progressed towards the integrated level.



**FIGURE 14**  
Organisational maturity in gender equity policies and practices



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.

A significant proportion of Australian organisations are currently adopting practices consistent with a base level of maturity (34 per cent) or a foundational set of gender equity practices (35 per cent).

When considering the maturity levels within each domain, we observe that the pay gap strategies domain is primarily represented at the base level. Conversely, the domain of recruitment, retention, and flexible work is largely dominated by organisations at the integrated level, making up nearly half of the sample. Furthermore, within the domain of company policies and actions, foundational organisations comprise the majority.

This pattern suggests that Australian organisations are comparatively stronger in recruitment, retention, and flexible work practices. However, they are less advanced in their company policies and actions related to family supports and parental leave provision, and least effective when it comes to pay gap strategies.

These findings align with data on the share of companies that undertake specific policies, strategies, and practices aimed at promoting gender equity. Specifically, the organisations are least active in the implementation of pay gap strategies, remuneration analysis, and reporting practices, a trend that holds across all industry sectors.

For example, around half of the organisations that report to WGEA have conducted a remuneration gap analysis in the past year. However, only 20 per cent of these organisations report pay equity metrics to their executive teams and boards.

In contrast, organisations are performing reasonably well in terms of recruitment, retention, and flexible work practices. Over 80 per cent of the organisations have in place policies and strategies related to recruitment, flexible work arrangements, performance management processes, and training and development. Additionally, around 70 per cent of the organisations are adopting practices related to retention, promotions, talent identification, and succession planning.

Concerning company policies and actions designed to support employees, Australian organisations exhibit better performance compared to pay gap strategies but are slightly less effective in the areas of recruitment, retention, and flexible work.

Distinct patterns emerge when examining maturity levels across industry sectors. For example, the



**Around half of the organisations that report to WGEA have conducted a remuneration gap analysis in the past year. However, only 20 per cent of these organisations report pay equity metrics to their executive teams and boards.**

financial and insurance services sector shows the highest share of businesses classified as integrated – likely a response to the gender equity issues that businesses within the finance sector have faced.

Businesses in the health care and social assistance sector look to be lagging significantly behind other sectors in terms of maturity of approach to gender equity, with only 3 per cent of organisations operating at the integrated level.

When it comes to recruitment, retention, and flexible work practices, the public administration and safety sector is leading the way, with the highest percentage (61 per cent) of organisations reaching the highest level of maturity. In contrast, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector has only one-fifth of its organisations implementing integrated practices.

In terms of company policies and actions, the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector also lags other industries, with the highest percentage (24 per cent) of organisations only meeting basic requirements. Meanwhile, the financial and insurance services sector is performing well, with only 7 per cent of organisations falling into the basic category, but 17 per cent reaching the integrated level.

This finding underscores significant disparities in how organisations in different industry sectors implement gender equity practices. And even then this does not always translate to a gender-inclusive culture. The financial and insurance services sector stands out as relatively strong in comparison to other sectors, while the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector appears to be trailing behind.

HOW DO AUSTRALIAN COMPANIES RATE ON THE MATURITY OF THEIR GENDER EQUITY POLICIES?

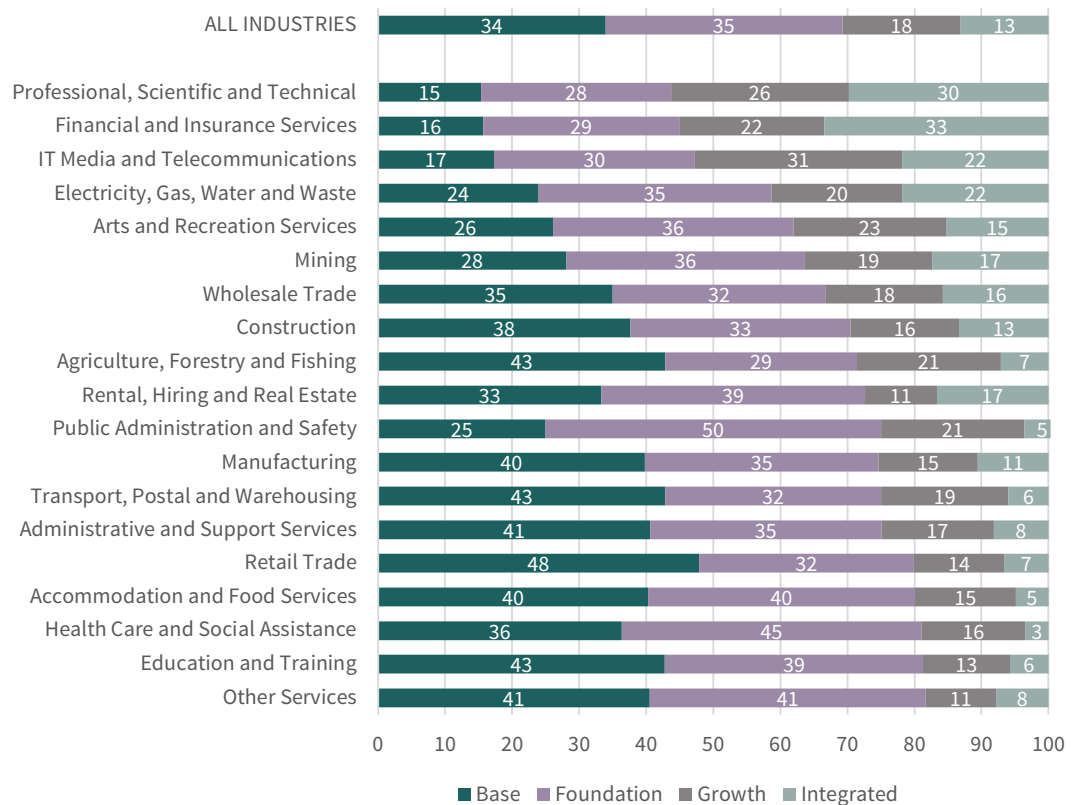
**TABLE 4**  
Policies, strategies and practices implemented within Australian organisations 2021-22

	Pay gap strategies						Recruitment, retention and flexible work								Company policies and actions						
	Remuneration gap analysis	Remuneration gap analysis in last year	Reports pay equity metrics to executive	Reports pay equity metrics to boards	Specific pay equity objectives	Objectives to achieve pay equity	Recruitment	Retention	Gender Equity overall	Performance management processes	Promotions	Talent identification	Succession planning	Training and development	Flexible working arrangements	Additional funded paid parental leave	Domestic violence support measures	KPIs relating to gender equity	Remuneration	Consultation with employees	Sex-based harassment and discrimination
Accommodation and Food Services	42	36	5	1	33	17	88	78	76	85	80	78	80	87	69	33	70	41	60	36	99
Administrative and Support Services	47	39	8	5	38	22	87	71	78	83	70	72	68	84	81	32	72	37	62	40	97
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	53	43	10	5	28	18	70	50	68	78	63	60	60	70	58	50	60	20	65	53	95
Arts and Recreation Services	55	42	13	12	34	18	86	66	77	82	74	70	66	82	88	65	78	37	59	57	100
Construction	57	43	15	11	42	28	87	71	85	88	70	75	69	87	75	42	67	40	65	59	97
Education and Training	33	23	7	6	22	13	82	60	68	80	66	58	59	81	69	72	63	31	45	37	98
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	82	59	45	36	68	45	89	73	91	84	80	82	77	84	82	86	80	43	84	66	100
Financial and Insurance Services	78	66	34	26	61	44	93	80	90	89	83	85	84	88	95	84	84	49	89	69	100
Health Care and Social Assistance	35	28	5	4	28	14	90	67	74	87	67	63	65	87	87	62	80	25	62	35	99
Information Media and Telecommunications	65	50	24	15	54	36	89	78	83	82	79	78	68	87	91	75	73	35	83	62	98
Manufacturing	58	46	12	5	41	26	88	70	79	86	75	80	79	86	78	39	71	41	71	46	99
Mining	71	67	24	21	57	37	95	79	86	94	80	76	79	88	82	69	70	47	81	63	100
Other Services	41	28	10	6	31	15	83	53	64	79	58	49	55	77	86	68	70	23	62	42	98
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	78	66	29	23	57	44	90	77	84	88	85	83	77	90	95	78	81	49	81	67	99
Public Administration and Safety	65	57	4	4	43	30	100	78	91	96	83	78	70	96	74	22	70	52	70	43	100
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	61	52	19	10	47	24	91	78	80	86	78	76	76	85	89	53	76	39	73	57	100
Retail Trade	49	40	8	6	35	20	83	64	72	84	71	72	69	81	73	33	70	34	60	34	98
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	53	45	11	7	42	23	85	65	80	86	68	72	75	82	72	36	67	38	68	40	96
Wholesale Trade	63	49	15	9	45	24	87	69	79	84	74	79	78	85	87	51	70	41	73	51	99
<b>All industry sectors</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>99</b>

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.



**FIGURE 15**  
Maturity levels by industry sector



Note: Industry breakdowns by level of maturity are arranged in descending order of the highest (growth and integrated) levels of maturity.  
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations using WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.

The primary objective of this report is to identify the organisational practices that are most effective in fostering improved gender equity outcomes. By comparing gender equity outcomes across organisations based on their maturity levels, we aim to furnish Australian organisations with valuable insights into what drives meaningful changes.

It is worth emphasising that the gender pay gap, while crucial, is not the sole measure of success for businesses. Other markers of success relate to women's economic participation and equality of access to leadership and decision-making positions, and gender equity in retention.

When taken together, these measures speak more broadly to a positive and inclusive workplace environment that enhances the productivity of the workforce and amplifies business performance.

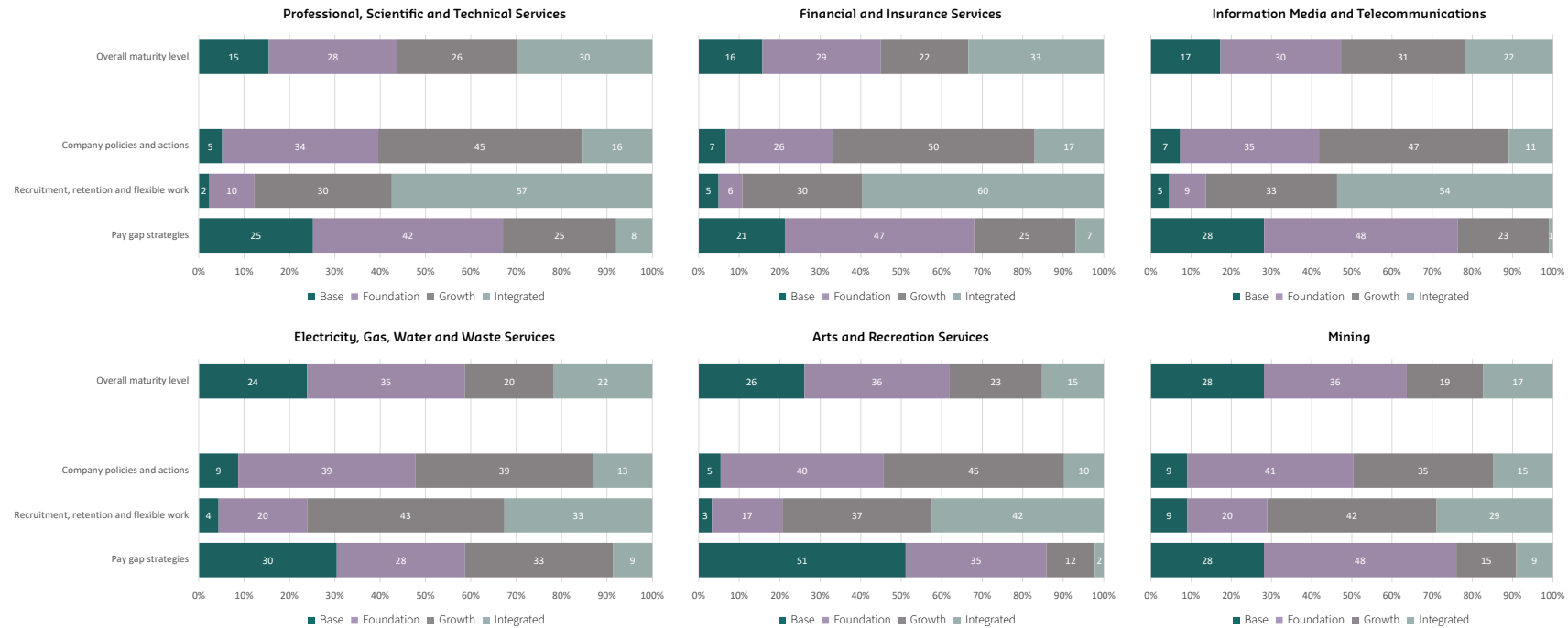
The empirical evidence on what works to accelerate change is further strengthened when we can measure how changes to a company's gender policies and actions are linked to improved gender equity outcomes over time.

The maturity framework for gender equity developed in this report provides exactly such an opportunity.

HOW DO AUSTRALIAN COMPANIES RATE ON THE MATURITY OF THEIR GENDER EQUITY POLICIES?

**FIGURE 16**

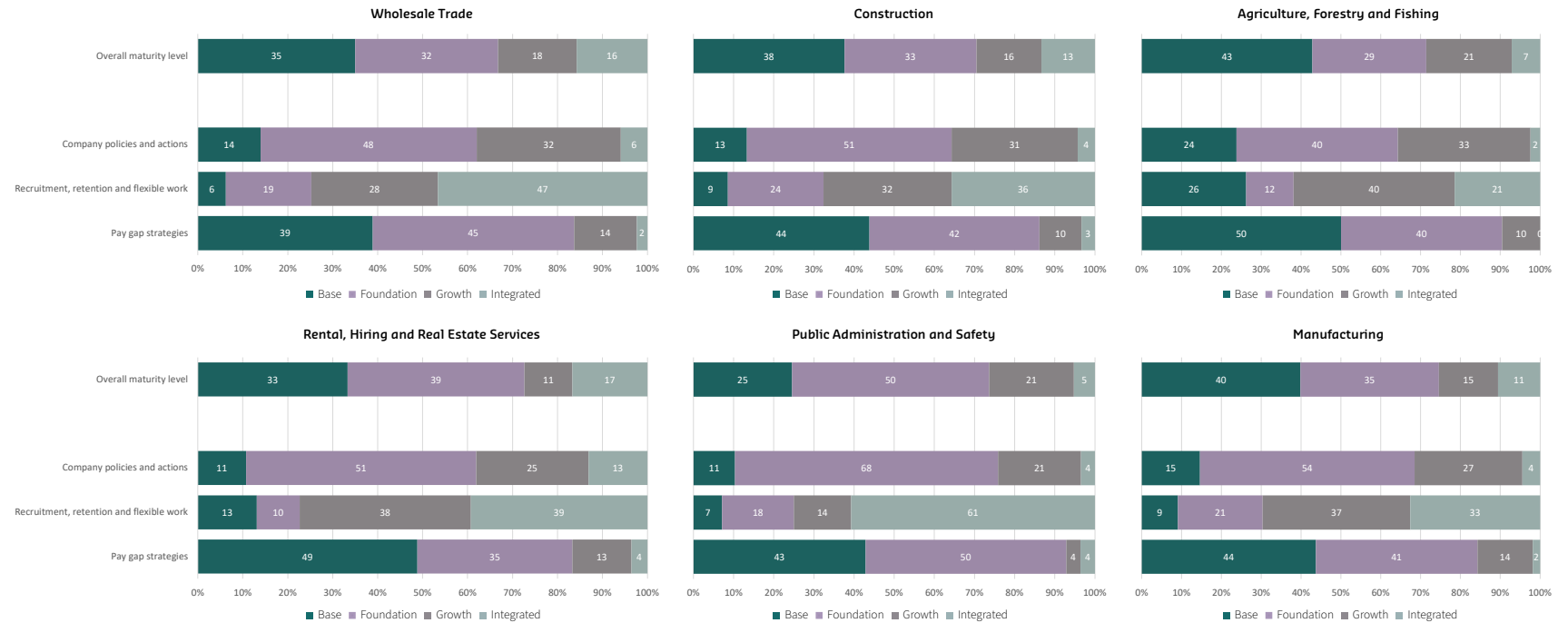
Maturity levels by domain and industry sector



Note: Industries are arranged in descending order of the highest (growth and integrated) levels of overall maturity.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations using WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.

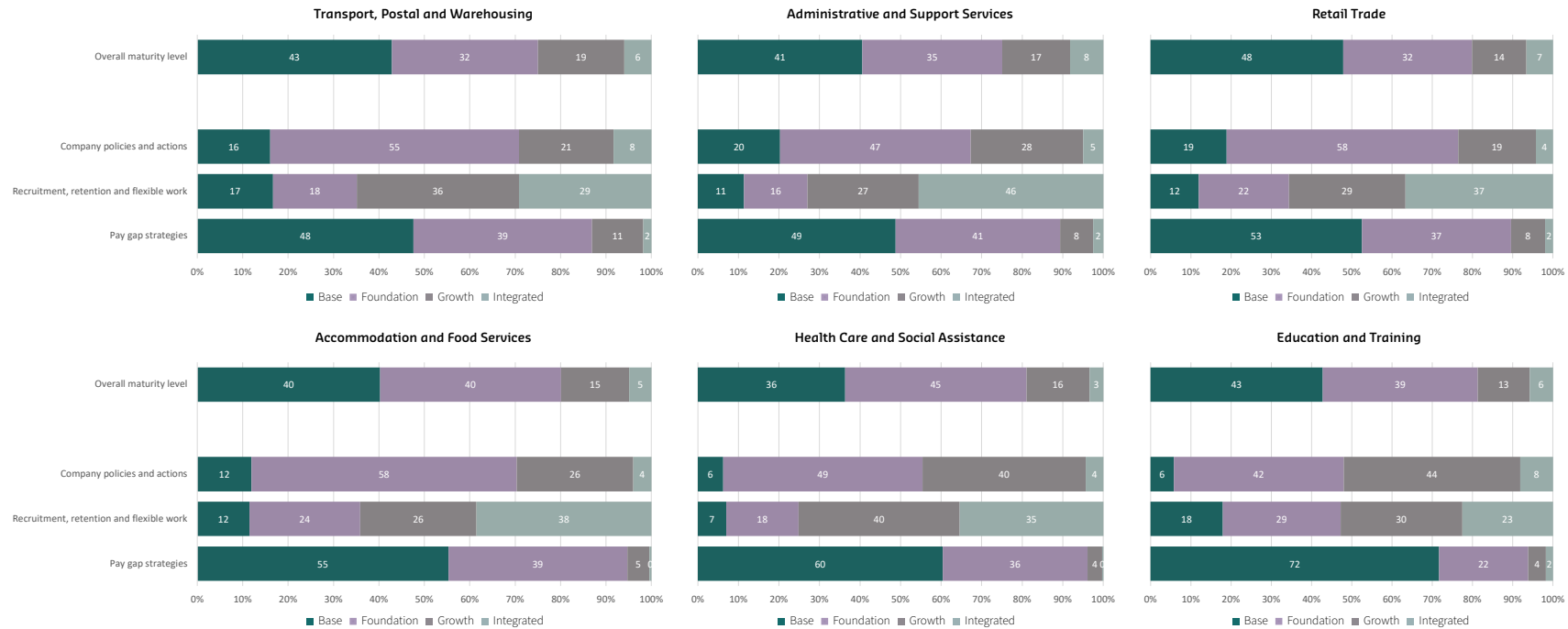
**FIGURE 16** (continued)  
Maturity levels by domain and industry sector



Note: Industries are arranged in descending order of the highest (growth and integrated) levels of overall maturity.  
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations using WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.



**FIGURE 16** (continued)  
Maturity levels by domain and industry sector



Note: Industries are arranged in descending order of the highest (growth and integrated) levels of overall maturity.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations using WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-2022.



**Organisations that attain higher maturity levels in their approach to gender equity achieve significantly stronger gender equity outcomes compared to those at lower levels.**

### LINKING MATURITY LEVELS WITH GENDER EQUITY OUTCOMES

We examine the link between maturity levels and a range of *gender equity indicators*, including:

- Change in the share of female employees from 2019 to 2022
- Change in the share of female full-time managers from 2019 to 2022
- Change in the gender pay gap in total remuneration from 2019 to 2022
- Change in the share of resignations among female full-time managers from 2019 to 2022
- Change in the share of female board members from 2019 to 2022
- Change in the share of female board chairs from 2019 to 2022

**Note:** The choice to measure changes in gender indicators over a three-year interval has been statistically validated to provide sufficient time for the effects of company policies and actions to feed through into gender equity outcomes, while at the same time avoiding the worst impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Longer intervals were found to dilute the effects of company policies on outcomes, while shorter intervals miss capturing the full effects of the implementation of new or changed policies or practices.

Figure 17 illustrates a compelling trend: organisations that attain higher maturity levels in their approach to gender equity achieve significantly stronger gender equity outcomes compared to those at lower levels.

Changes in the shares of female employees from 2019 to 2022 are clearly correlated with maturity levels. Within base organisations, this increase was a modest 0.1 percentage points, whereas integrated organisations experienced a ninefold higher growth at 0.9 percentage points. This same pattern

emerges when assessing the change in the share of female full-time managers over the same period. Specifically, base organisations saw the smallest increase at 1.1 percentage points, while integrated organisations led the way with the highest increase at 3.3 percentage points.

The figure also highlights the relative improvements in the gender pay gap in total remuneration between 2019 and 2022 among organisations at various maturity levels. Base organisations reported a marginal decrease of 0.1 percentage points in the gender pay gap, while those at the growth and integrated maturity levels achieved significantly more substantial reductions of 0.6 and 1.6 percentage points, respectively.

Similar findings arise when analysing the change in the share of female board members and board chairs between 2019 and 2022. Integrated organisations recorded impressive increases of 5.5 and 6.8 percentage points in the share of female board members and board chairs over three years.

Base organisations saw much lower increases of 0.5 and 1.2 percentage points in the share of female board members and in the share of female board chairs, respectively, during this period.

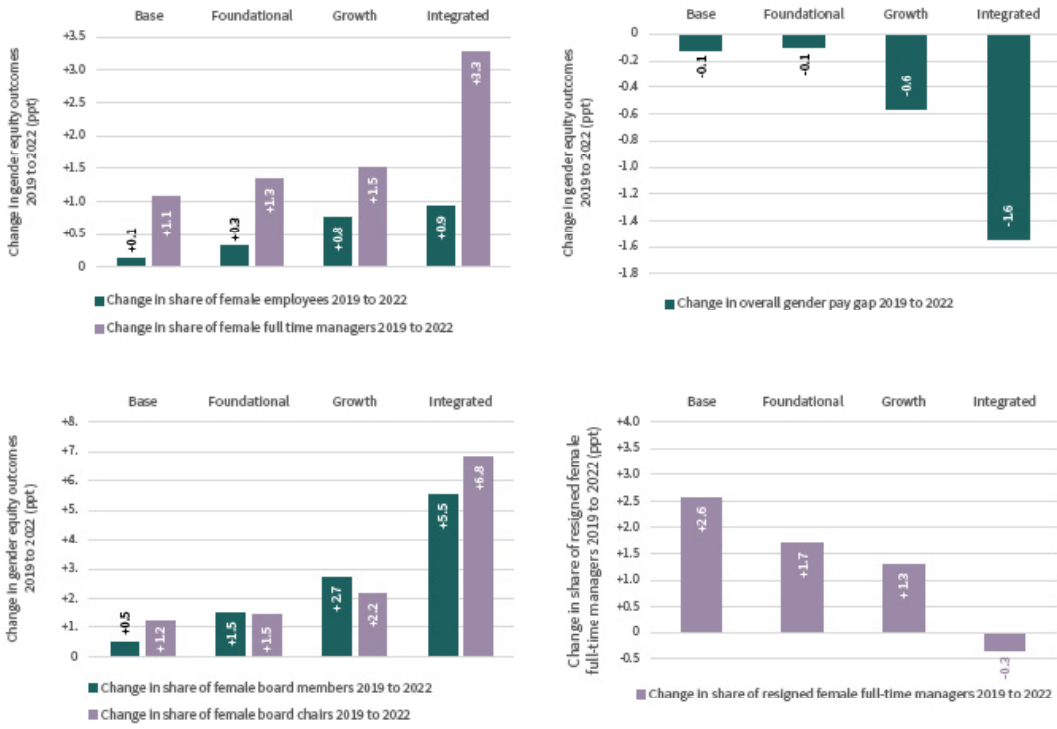
The share of resignations within a business is a useful measure of company morale and acts as an indicator of the effectiveness of gender equity policies, strategies and practices.

The share of resignations among female managers increased by 2.6 percentage points between 2019 to 2022 among businesses at a base level of maturity but reduced by 0.3 percentage points among organisations at the highest level of maturity.

These findings provide substantial evidence that the maturity framework and GEM benchmarking are effective in differentiating organisations based on their implementation of strategies, policies, and practices related to gender equity.

**FIGURE 17**

Gender equity outcomes by maturity level



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-2022.



## HOW DO GENDER EQUITY OUTCOMES IMPROVE ACROSS THE JOURNEY TOWARDS MATURITY?

We applied consistent methods to assess the level of maturity of businesses in the 2018-19 WGEA reporting data. By doing so, we are then able to compare the level of gender equity maturity for the same business at two different points in time and compare a range of gender equity outcomes between those organisations that improved their level of maturity and those that did not.

Of those organisations that were surveyed both in 2018-19 and 2021-22, a significant share was found to be adopting base practices (42 per cent) or foundational practices (31 per cent) in 2018-19.

Around 14 per cent were implementing growth practices in 2018-19, while 13 per cent were attaining the integrated level.

**TABLE 5**  
Share of businesses by maturity level: 2019 to 2022

		2022 maturity level				Total
		Base	Foundational	Growth	Integrated	
2019 maturity level	Base	24.9	12.8	3.2	0.9	41.8
	Foundational	7.1	15.6	6.4	1.8	30.9
	Growth	0.9	5.3	5.3	2.7	14.1
	Integrated	0.1	1.3	2.9	8.9	13.1
	Total	33.0	35.0	17.8	14.3	100

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-2022.

Around 55 per cent of businesses maintained their existing maturity level between 2019 to 2022, while 28 per cent raised their maturity by at least one level (Table 5) – mostly from lower (base and foundational) levels of maturity.

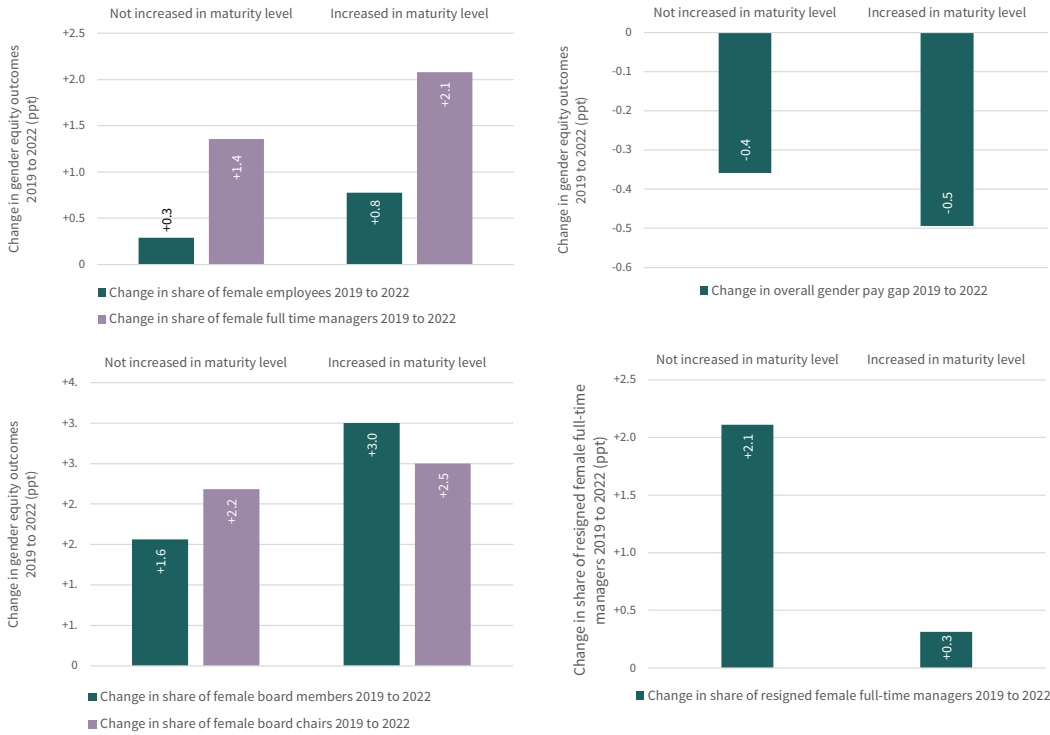
This variation allows us to compare the changes in gender equity outcomes between businesses that advanced their level of maturity and those businesses for which the level of maturity remained the same or worsened over the period.

Figure 18 shows that an increase in maturity levels is positively linked to enhanced gender equity outcomes.

Specifically, the share of female employees rose by 0.9 percentage points among organisations that improved their level of gender equity maturity level. This increase is three times greater than the change in the share of female employees among businesses that did not experience a maturity level increase between 2019 and 2022.

Similarly, the share of female full-time managers increased by 1.9 percentage points among organisations that lifted their level of gender equity maturity between 2019 and 2022, compared to 1.4 percentage points for those that did not raise their maturity level.

**FIGURE 18**  
Gender equity outcomes among businesses with increased maturity



Businesses that enhanced their approach to gender equity between 2018-19 and 2021-22 witnessed a sevenfold reduction in the rate of resignations among female full-time managers.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-2022.

Similar findings emerge when examining the gender pay gap in total remuneration.

Businesses that advanced in maturity levels between 2018-19 and 2021-22 delivered an average reduction of 0.8 percentage points in the gender pay gap over those three years. This compares to a much smaller average decline of only 0.2 percentage points among those organisations that remained at the same or lower level of maturity over the period —four times less significant.

The share of female board members increased by 3.3 percentage points over the period among businesses


that increased maturity in gender equity policies and actions. In contrast, businesses with the same or lower maturity levels saw a far more modest change of 1.4 percentage points over the three years.

We also find that worker retention improves substantially with organisational maturity because of improved policies and actions.

Businesses that enhanced their approach to gender equity between 2018-19 and 2021-22 witnessed a sevenfold reduction in the rate of resignations among female full-time managers.







**A ROADMAP  
TO WORKPLACE  
GENDER EQUITY**



## A ROADMAP TO WORKPLACE GENDER EQUITY

Drawing on the strength of evidence from the maturity framework, this latest *BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity Insights* report offers an evidence-informed roadmap for Australian organisations seeking to accelerate their progress towards improved gender equity outcomes.

The roadmap has been designed to support a strategic, long-term, comprehensive, and systemic approach to gender equity that goes beyond addressing just the gender pay gap.

The gender equity maturity framework that underpins this roadmap draws on the Good Practice Guide developed by Cassells and Duncan (2021) in which a comprehensive and consistent approach to gender-related workplace policies was found to be associated with better gender equity outcomes.

And it is important to treat the roadmap as an evolving resource. Australian businesses should plan for continual improvements, enhanced actions, and higher standards of practice as expectations and norms evolve.

The policy prospectus for businesses is structured around three domains, each of which presents collections of policies and actions at four levels of maturity in approach to gender equity – from base through to foundational, growth and integrated.

These practices empower organisations to evaluate current practices and establish goals, identify customised priorities, and evaluate the impact of their efforts as their maturity and gender equity outcomes improve.

## DOMAIN 1: PAY GAP STRATEGIES

This domain encompasses whether organisations have established formal policies and/or strategies regarding remuneration, set specific pay equity objectives, conducted gender remuneration gap analyses, and taken subsequent actions based on the results of these analyses.

### Base

Within this domain, organisations at the base level can progress to the foundational maturity level by defining explicit objectives designed to achieve gender pay equity. These objectives should be transparent regarding pay scales and salary bands. Additionally, base level organisations may consider conducting annual remuneration gap analyses and reporting pay equity metrics to their executive or governing body.

### Foundational

Organisations at the foundational level can advance to the growth level by incorporating pay equity objectives into their formal remuneration policies and/or strategies. They should ensure there is no gender bias in the remuneration review process and hold managers accountable for pay equity by implementing a transparent performance assessment process. Following the gender remuneration gap analysis, these organisations may take various actions, such as identifying the underlying causes of pay gaps, reviewing remuneration decision-making processes, analysing commencement salaries by gender to eliminate pay disparities, providing training to managers on addressing gender bias, setting targets to reduce any organisation-wide pay gaps, and correcting like-for-like pay disparities.

### Growth

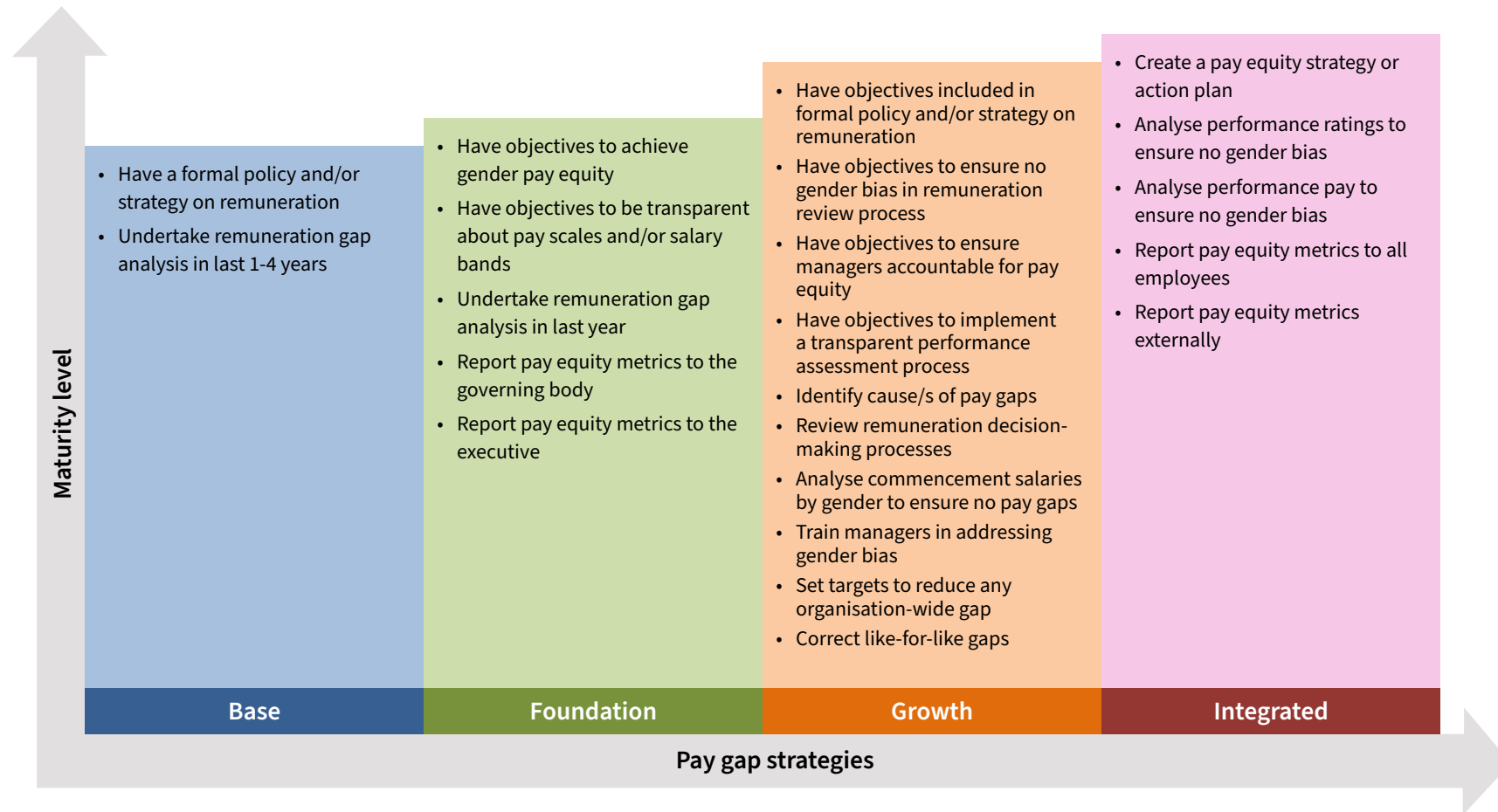
Organisations at the growth level aiming to reach the integrated level, can develop a comprehensive pay equity strategy or action plan. They should scrutinise performance ratings and performance-related pay to eliminate gender bias following a gender remuneration gap analysis. Moreover, these organisations can report pay equity metrics not only to all employees but also externally, and undertake a gender-based job evaluation process.

### Integrated

The relatively few integrated organisations, which constitute only 3 per cent of the Australian organisations in the sample, can commit to an ongoing process of evaluation and improvement. Maintaining their existing level of maturity in addressing pay gaps necessitates significant and sustained long-term efforts. This entails not only the maintained application of policies and strategies but also the continuity of pay equity actions such as correcting like-for-like pay gaps, or eliminating gender bias in performance ratings and pay awards.

**FIGURE 19**

Roadmap for pay gap strategies



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-2022.

## DOMAIN 2: RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND FLEXIBLE WORK

The second domain can gauge the extent to which Australian organisations have established formal policies and/or strategies dedicated to supporting various facets like recruitment, employee retention, performance management, promotions, talent identification, succession planning, training and development, and managerial KPIs in the context of gender equality.

### Base

This domain also encompasses a range of practices related to flexible work arrangements that organisations can implement. These include setting targets, providing employee training, monitoring implementation, analysing outcomes, and reporting results to different levels of management.

### Foundational

Foundational organisations can enhance their existing formal policies or strategies by becoming more specific, particularly in areas such as recruitment and training development, rather than focusing solely on gender equality overall. Regarding flexible work, organisations can establish and endorse a business case for flexibility, encourage leadership as role models of flexible work, promote flexible working practices, and deliver team-based training throughout the organisation.

To progress further, foundational organisations can refine their formal gender equality policies or

strategies into performance management processes, promotions, succession planning, and managerial KPIs. They can also conduct surveys to assess the adequacy of their flexible working arrangements, offer managerial training to support flexible work, evaluate the impact of flexibility, and report the results of flexible work measures to key managers and governing bodies.

### Growth

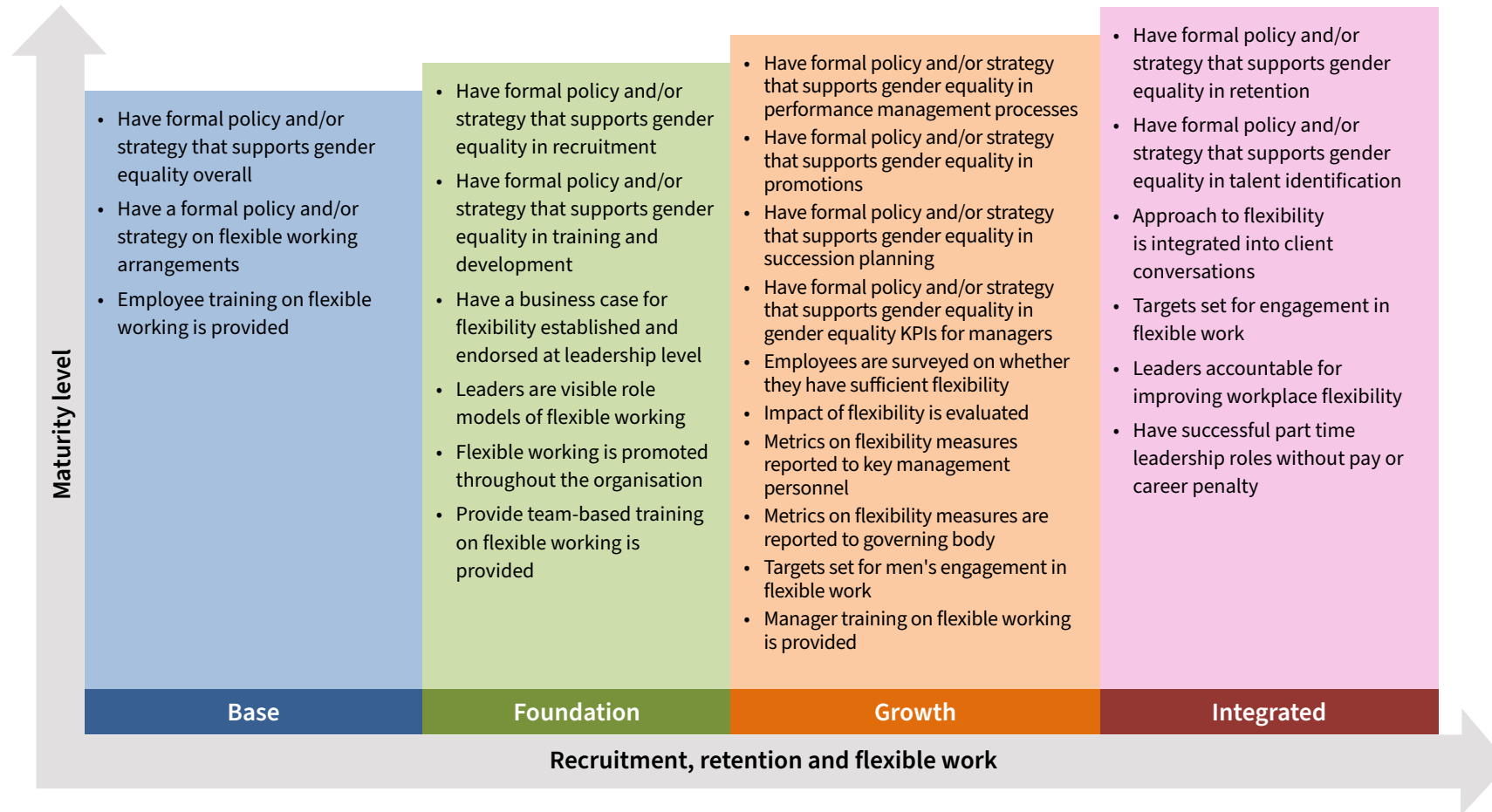
Growth organisations aspiring to attain the highest maturity level, integrated, can focus on policies or strategies targeting employee retention and talent identification. This underscores that recruitment is just the beginning; retaining female employees and ensuring their long-term commitment requires additional efforts. Furthermore, organisations can incorporate flexible work considerations into client conversations, establish targets for engagement, and hold leaders accountable for enhancing workplace flexibility.

### Integrated

Leading organisations that have already achieved integrated status should continue their ongoing efforts to provide both female and male employees with opportunities for flexible and effective work and support their career development.

**FIGURE 20**

Roadmap for recruitment, retention and flexible work strategies



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-2022.

### DOMAIN 3: COMPANY POLICIES AND ACTIONS

The domain encompassing company policies and initiatives comprises a wide array of practices that Australian organisations can put into practice. They include parental leave, assistance for employees with family and caregiving responsibilities and those dealing with family and domestic violence, employee consultations, and practices addressing sexual harassment and discrimination.

#### Base

Base organisations typically offer paid parental leave to women only and don't extend entitlements to include both men and women, nor to encompass situations like adoption, surrogacy, and stillbirth. Some limited support for new parents is offered, but little else in the way of support for childcare costs or the provision of on-site childcare.

Base organisations tend to offer mainly unpaid domestic violence leave and confidentiality protections among people experiencing domestic violence, but support does not yet extend to paid family and domestic violence (FDV) leave.<sup>5</sup>

#### Foundational

Foundational organisations extend entitlements to paid parental leave for primary caregivers to cover adoption, surrogacy, and stillbirth, as well as providing support for returning mothers.

Additionally, foundational organisations have developed a more comprehensive suite of policies to support people experiencing domestic violence to cover targeted communications channels and paid DV leave.

#### Growth

For growth organisations aspiring to reach the integrated level, they can enhance parental leave support by paying the full salary in addition to the government's paid scheme, provide on-site childcare, offer emergency accommodation assistance, and grant access to medical services for employees who are domestic violence victims.

They can also consult with employees on gender equality matters and engage with those who have resigned while on parental leave to address gender equality-related concerns.

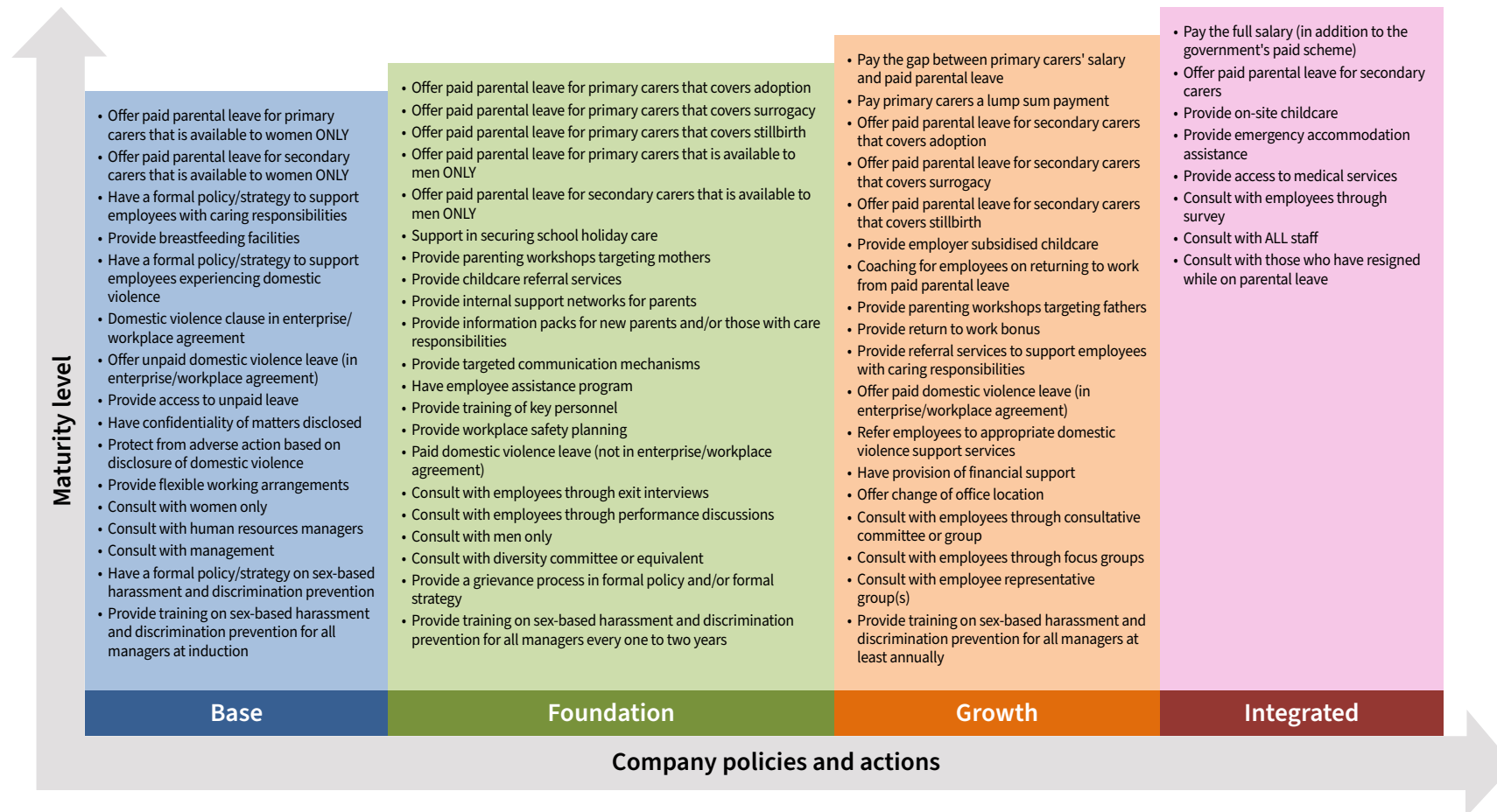
#### Integrated

Finally, for the organisations already at the integrated level for this domain, they should commit to an ongoing process of evaluation and improvement. Sustaining their current level of maturity in supporting employees across various facets would require significant and sustained long-term efforts.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that legislation passed in 2023 following recommendations from the Fair Work Commission (FWC) will mandate the provision of up to 10 days of paid FDV leave as a legal requirement for businesses of all sizes.



**FIGURE 21**  
Roadmap for company policies and actions



Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-2022.

## WHAT GENDER POLICIES ARE IMPLEMENTED BY BUSINESSES THAT OUTPERFORM THEIR SECTOR?

One of the central ambitions in this report is to provide businesses with a policy roadmap that will accelerate the pace of change towards workplace gender equity, founded on a strong evidence base that uses the WGEA data collection to identify links between policies and gender equity outcomes.

One of the findings to emerge most strongly from this analysis is that businesses vary substantially both in the implementation of gender-related policies, and in the pace of change in gender equity outcomes over time.

But what do businesses look like that are outperforming their industry sector? More specifically, how do the policies and actions implemented by businesses at the highest (integrated) level of maturity compare to other organisations at a lower (base or foundational) level of maturity that are earlier on their journey towards gender equity.

And do these differences in policies and practices among top performing businesses vary by industry sector?

### Differences in approach to gender equity

To identify differences in approach towards gender equity, we compare the prevalence of specific policies and actions among businesses that outperform their sector on three metrics:

- (i) the rate of reduction in gender pay gaps over a three-year period;
- (ii) improved workforce gender balance; and
- (iii) growth in the share of women on governing boards.

In Table 6 we present the subsets of policies that are at least three times more prevalent among businesses that perform in the top 20 per cent of organisations in their sector on each of these metrics, for a selection of industry sectors (with the relative prevalence for the best performing businesses in each sector shown in parentheses alongside each policy or action).<sup>6</sup>

### Remuneration analysis

The regular analysis of differences in remuneration by gender is one of the most common differentiators for businesses that outperform their sectors on gender equity outcomes. This is especially true among businesses in the mining, rental hiring and real estate and electricity, gas water and waste sectors (Table 6 panel a).

For example, mining sector businesses that outperform their sector are 4 times as likely to have undertaken a pay gap audit, 4 times as likely to have created a pay equity action plan, and 3 times as likely to have reviewed their remuneration processes for gender bias.

Differences between businesses in the rental, hiring and real estate sector are even more pronounced (Table 6 panel b). Real estate businesses that outperform their sector are 16 times more likely to initiate a pay equity action plan, which reflects the fact that the practice is far less prevalent than for other sectors.

Our analysis finds that pay equity audits – particularly the analysis of performance-related pay and commencement salaries for gender bias – is a common feature of the best performing businesses across the majority of industry sectors.

This is consistent with the results in Table 4 on the shares of organisations that have implemented policies and strategies to reduce gender pay gaps.

<sup>6</sup> The full set of industry sectors are shown in Table 7 of the Data Appendix to this report.

**TABLE 6**  
Summary of policies undertaken by businesses that outperform their sector on improvements in gender equity outcomes: selected industry sectors, 2021-22

(a) Mining	(b) Rental, hiring and real estate	(c) Electricity, gas, water & waste
<p><b>Remuneration analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a pay equity action plan (4)</li> <li>• Remuneration gap analysis in last 1-2 years (4)</li> <li>• Review remuneration decision-making processes (3)</li> <li>• Analyse commencement salaries by gender to ensure no pay gaps (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Training and targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train people-managers in addressing gender bias (3)</li> <li>• Set targets to reduce pay gaps (7)</li> </ul> <p><b>Reporting and accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report pay equity metrics to the governing body (3)</li> <li>• Report pay equity metrics externally (16)</li> </ul> <p><b>Parental leave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay the gap between primary carers' salary and paid parental leave (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Family policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information packs for new parents and/or those with care responsibilities (5)</li> <li>• Provide on-site childcare (4)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Remuneration analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay gap analysis in last 1-2 years (4)</li> <li>• Create a pay equity action plan (16)</li> <li>• Review pay decision-making process (3)</li> <li>• Analyse commencement salaries by gender to ensure no pay gaps (3)</li> <li>• Analyse performance ratings to ensure no gender bias (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Training and targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set targets to reduce pay gaps (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Reporting and accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report pay equity metrics to the governing body (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Flexible work strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets set for engagement in flexible work (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Parental leave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay the gap between primary carers' salary and paid parental leave (5)</li> </ul> <p><b>Family policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide parenting workshops (4)</li> <li>• Provide on-site childcare (8)</li> <li>• Provide return to work bonus (6)</li> </ul> <p><b>Consultation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with employee group(s) (3)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pay strategies and objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives to ensure managers accountable for pay equity (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Remuneration analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a pay equity action plan (3)</li> <li>• Review decision-making processes (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Training and targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set targets to reduce pay gaps (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Flexible work strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metrics on flexibility measures reported to KMPs (3)</li> <li>• Metrics on flexibility measures reported to governing body (4)</li> <li>• Leaders accountable for improving workplace flexibility (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Family policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coaching for employees on returning to work from paid parental leave (5)</li> <li>• Provide parenting workshops (5)</li> <li>• Provide childcare referral services (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Domestic violence support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have training of key personnel (4)</li> <li>• Have access to medical services (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Consultation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with employee group(s) (4)</li> </ul>
(d) Public administration	(e) Accommodation and food	(f) Retail
<p><b>Pay strategies and objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objectives to be transparent about pay scales and/or salary bands (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Reporting and accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report pay equity metrics to the governing body (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Parental leave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay the gap between primary carers' salary and paid parental leave (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Family policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information packs for new parents and/or those with care responsibilities (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Consultation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with employees through consultative committee or group (5)</li> <li>• Consult with employees through focus groups (4)</li> <li>• Consult with human resources managers (7)</li> <li>• Consult with diversity committee or equivalent (4)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Remuneration analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay gap analysis in last 1-2 years (8)</li> <li>• Analyse performance ratings to ensure no gender bias (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Training and targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train people-managers in addressing gender bias (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Flexible work strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metrics on flexibility measures reported to governing body (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Family policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide employer-subsidised childcare (5)</li> <li>• Provide childcare referral services (2)</li> </ul> <p><b>Consultation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with employees through focus groups (3)</li> <li>• Consult with diversity committee or equivalent (4)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Remuneration analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay gap analysis in last 1-2 years (4)</li> <li>• Review remuneration decision-making processes (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Reporting and accountability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a gender-based job evaluation process (4)</li> </ul> <p><b>Training and targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train people-managers in addressing gender bias (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Parental leave</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay primary carers a lump sum payment (3)</li> </ul> <p><b>Family policies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide parenting workshops targeting mothers (3)</li> </ul>

Notes: Relative policy prevalence is shown in parentheses. Listed policies and actions are (x) times more prevalent among businesses performing in the top 20 per cent on gender equity outcomes compared to other organisations in their sector.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations using maturity framework based on WGEA Gender Equality data 2018-19 and 2021-2022.



## Reporting and accountability

Accountability and visibility matter, yet there is still a significant variation in the prevalence of reporting pay metrics to executives and governing bodies, and of external reporting.

The best performing businesses in the mining sector are 3 times as likely to report pay equity metrics to their governing bodies and 16 times as likely to report pay metrics externally.

Reporting pay equity metrics is far less frequent than it should be, and yet the implementation of reporting to executives and governing boards is one of the common threads that run through the best performing businesses in most industry sectors (Table 7 in the Data Appendix). Note that sharing WGEA Gender Equality reports with the CEO and governing body are now legislative requirements of reporting organisations.

## Parental leave

The nature and quality of parental leave provision is one of the policy domains that acts as a differentiator for businesses in specific industry sectors.

Parental leave policies are naturally relatively ubiquitous across businesses in all industry

sectors, but the scope of parental leave provision, the extension of parental leave entitlements to secondary carers, and rates of payment beyond the statutory minimum are less common in certain sectors.

For example, the best performing businesses in the rental, hiring and real estate sector are 5 times as likely to pay the gap between primary carers' salaries and standard paid parental leave entitlements (Table 6 panel b). The practice is also at least 4 times as likely for the best performing businesses in the mining sector and public administration sectors (Table 6 panel a and d).

## Consultation

The best performing businesses typically have a greater propensity for consultation with employee groups and diversity committees. This is especially noticeable for organisations in the public administration sector (Table 6 panel d) where the best performing businesses are 5 times more likely to consult through committees compared to other businesses within their sector. The best performers are also 4 times as likely to engage in consultation through focus groups and diversity committees.

The same patterns are present among businesses in the accommodation and food services sector (Table 6 panel e).





**RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR ACTION:  
WHAT SHOULD  
COMPANIES BE  
DOING?**



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION: WHAT SHOULD COMPANIES BE DOING?

There has been a clear shift in focus recently from government, business and the broader public to prioritise gender equality. But while we are seeing some shifts – including the lowest ever gender pay gap – progress is still too slow, particularly in gender divides across sectors and career progression for women.

This eighth report in the Gender Equity Insights report series from the Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) examines why progress towards narrowing gender pay gaps is slow, and asks what actions and targets are needed to accelerate the pace of change.

For the 2023 *Gender Equity Insights* report we develop a new *maturity framework* that differentiates organisations based on their approach to driving improved gender equality outcomes.

These findings provide us with an evidence base on which to develop a *gender equality* roadmap to enable businesses to maintain progress towards workplace gender equality, regardless of how far they are along the journey.

### The pace of change

The analysis in this report reveals some differences in the pace of change in gender pay gaps across occupational categories. We have generally seen more substantial reductions in gender pay gaps for managers compared with occupations in the non-managerial workforce.

Businesses need to be careful not to focus attention only on gender equity for managers and senior executives at the expense of non-managerial occupations, but instead ensure an equal commitment to driving improved gender equity outcomes across all occupational tiers.

Increasing the share of women in management is critical to the leadership pipeline and business performance (Cassells and Duncan, 2020).

And while the overall share of women in leadership hasn't shifted much over the past three years, some sectors have moved more quickly than others towards at least a 40:40:20 workforce gender balance – particularly for male-dominated businesses.

Gender pay gaps are shown to reduce as the gender balance of the workforce improves, largely for reasons of composition with a greater degree of gender equity in access to higher salaries – a finding that aligns closely with results from last year's *Gender Equity Insights* report (Duncan, Mavisakalyan and Salazar 2022).

The share of women serving on boards has increased over the three years to 2022, but the representation of women on boards still falls short of the overall gender balance in the workforce.

Gender diversity in decision-making is a driver of organisational change and improved business performance, and yet women are still heavily underrepresented on governing boards.

Women's underrepresentation in the boardroom will extend long into the future unless action is taken to accelerate change.

### Reaching the top

The analysis of gender pay gaps typically focuses on a comparison of median or average salaries between women and men.

However, less attention is paid to gender differences in access to the highest levels of remuneration between women and men at the same age within a particular occupation or profession, despite this being an important part of the story when it comes to drivers of pay inequality.

Our research finds that gender pay gaps for full-time managers remain relatively similar over the entire range of earnings, from 19.4 per cent for the lowest 10 per cent of female and male earners to 21.8 per cent for the top tenth of earners.



But the same cannot be said for part-time managers – even after controlling for differences in age and occupational classes between women and men.

The lowest paid 10 per cent of female managers in part-time roles earn 4.2 per cent more than their male counterparts on comparable full-time equivalent earnings. However, gender pay gaps progressively rise with earnings among part-time managers, reaching 34.7 per cent for the highest paid workers.

There is very clearly a real issue of underrepresentation of women amongst the top 20 per cent of earners in most industry sectors, and this should give businesses some cause to reflect on whether remuneration processes – particularly for discretionary pay – retain some gender bias.

### A maturity framework for gender equity

For this 2023 *Gender Equity Insights* report we develop a new gender equity maturity framework that differentiates organisations based on their approach to delivering improved gender equality outcomes within their workforces.

The approach categorises businesses to a level of maturity in terms of the gender equity policies and strategies they implement across three domains: pay equity; recruitment, retention and flexible work; and company policies and actions.

We find business in general to be relatively stronger in the implementation of policies and actions related to recruitment, retention, and flexible work practices, and in company policies and actions related to family supports and parental leave provision.

However, implementation is far more variable and generally less well developed when it comes to pay gap strategies. These findings align with data on the share of companies that undertake specific policies, strategies, and practices aimed at promoting gender equity.

The research in this report provides some compelling evidence on how businesses can accelerate the pace of change when it comes to gender equity outcomes.

Organisations that attain higher levels of maturity in their approach to gender equity also achieve significantly faster improvements in gender equity outcomes.

We should emphasise that the maturity framework developed in this report should not be considered as fixed over time. Rather, the framework and the associated roadmap should evolve to match prevailing expectations and societal norms.

### A gender equity roadmap

So, what policies and actions should Australian businesses consider when seeking to accelerate the pace of change, and to improve women's economic outcomes in the workplace?

This latest *BCEC|WGEA Gender Equity Insights* report offers an evidence-informed roadmap for Australian organisations to progress towards improved gender equity outcomes:

1. Tackle workforce gender balance. A more gender-balanced workforce will go a long way towards narrowing gender pay gaps in many industries, and the greater the rates of progress, the quicker will be the advancement towards women's economic equality. Organisations with a formal strategy for gender balance have outperformed on gender equality outcomes.
2. Implement pay equity action plans, informed by an evaluation of the organisation's remuneration processes for gender bias, including commencement salaries and performance pay. Businesses that do this outperform their industry sector in terms of improved gender equality outcomes.
3. Accelerate progress on gender equality on governing bodies, potentially including targets. Gender diversity in decision-making and on boards is a key driver of organisational change. A lack of action to accelerate change will leave women under-represented in the boardroom for decades to come.

4. Businesses should ensure that women and men have equal access to the most highly paid roles within their industry and profession, for example the top 20 per cent of roles by remuneration and the more highly paid part time manager roles. Businesses can implement targeted strategies to address these leverage points.
5. Extend the focus on gender equality for managers and executives to non-managerial occupations. Equal commitment should be given to supporting gender equality across occupation levels.
6. Commit to sustained focus and action. Maintaining the highest levels of maturity in workplace gender equity requires significant and sustained efforts, not only in the persistent application of comprehensive policies and strategies, but also in the continuity of actions implemented following gender pay audits.
7. Plan for continual improvements, enhanced actions, and higher standards of practice in gender equality policies as internal and external expectations evolve.
8. Consult meaningfully with employees, such as through employee surveys and consultative groups, to enable progress for businesses aspiring to accelerate the rate of improvement in gender equality outcomes.

We hope the findings and recommendations in this report will encourage businesses to plan for continual improvements and higher standards of gender equity practice into the future.

## GLOSSARY AND TECHNICAL NOTES

### About the WGEA Gender Equality Data Collection

This report uses the 2018-19 and 2021-22 WGEA Gender Equality datasets, which are a unique data collection within Australia.

The dataset came to existence through the introduction of the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, which was legislated to promote and improve gender equality in remuneration and employment within Australian workplaces. The Act requires relevant employers to report annually against six Gender Equality Indicators.

The dataset is effectively a Census of private and Commonwealth public sector employers with 100 or

more employees and can be considered population level data. The first reporting year for private sector employers was 2013-14. The first reporting year for Commonwealth public sector employers was 2023.

The WGEA Gender Equality dataset is based on reports from approximately 4,800 employer reporting groups in 2021-22.

The dataset captures approximately 4.5 million employees, which equates to approximately 40 per cent of all employees in Australia. The WGEA Gender Equality data collection does not cover small businesses and a significant proportion of medium-sized businesses that have fewer than 100 employees.

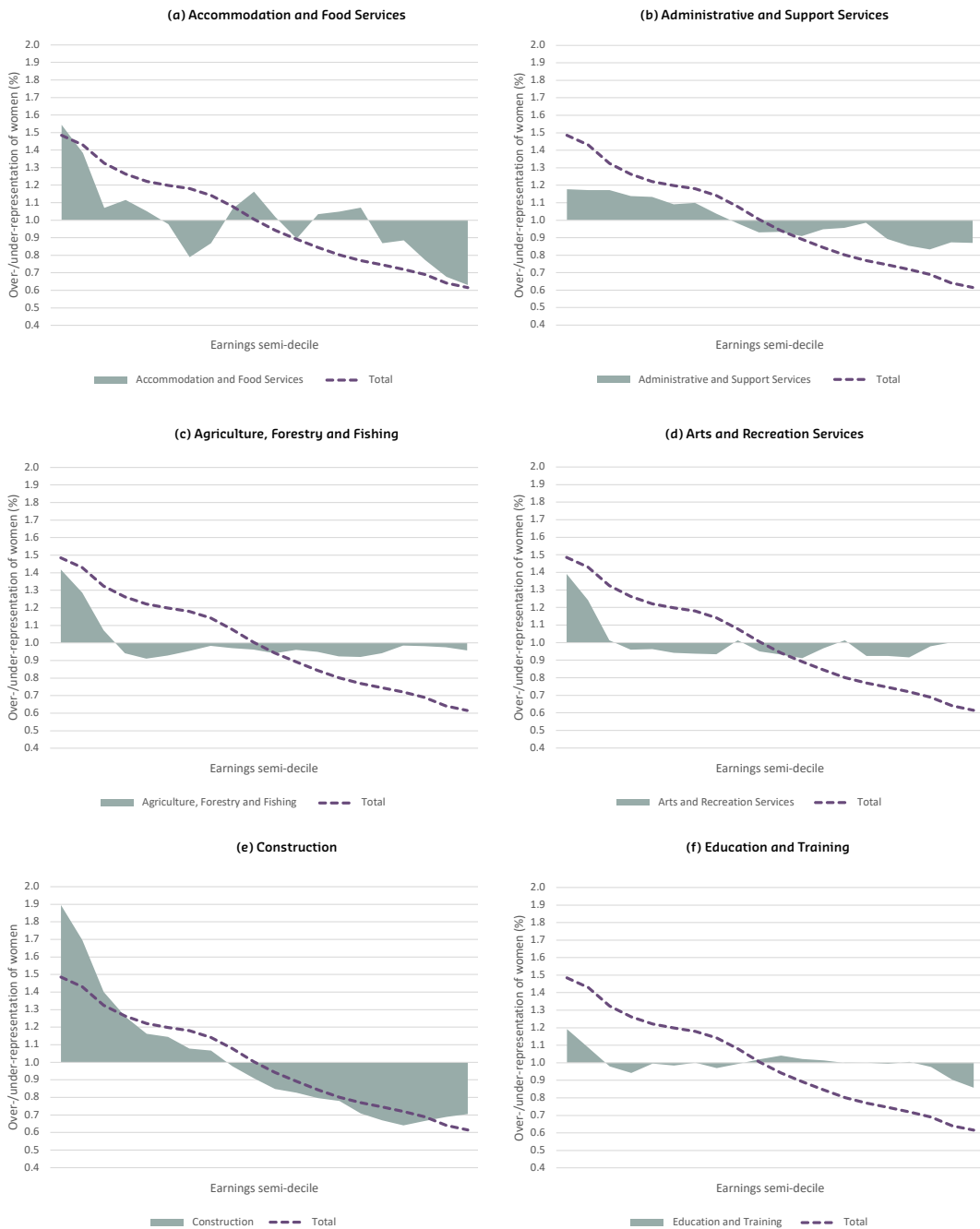
## APPENDIX

This Data Appendix presents industry breakdowns for three collections of gender equity measures:

- Representation of women by earnings semi-decile for full-time managers, by industry sector;
- Gender pay gaps across the earnings distribution by employment status and industry sector;
- Policies and actions undertaken by businesses that outperform their sector, for all industries.

**FIGURE 22**

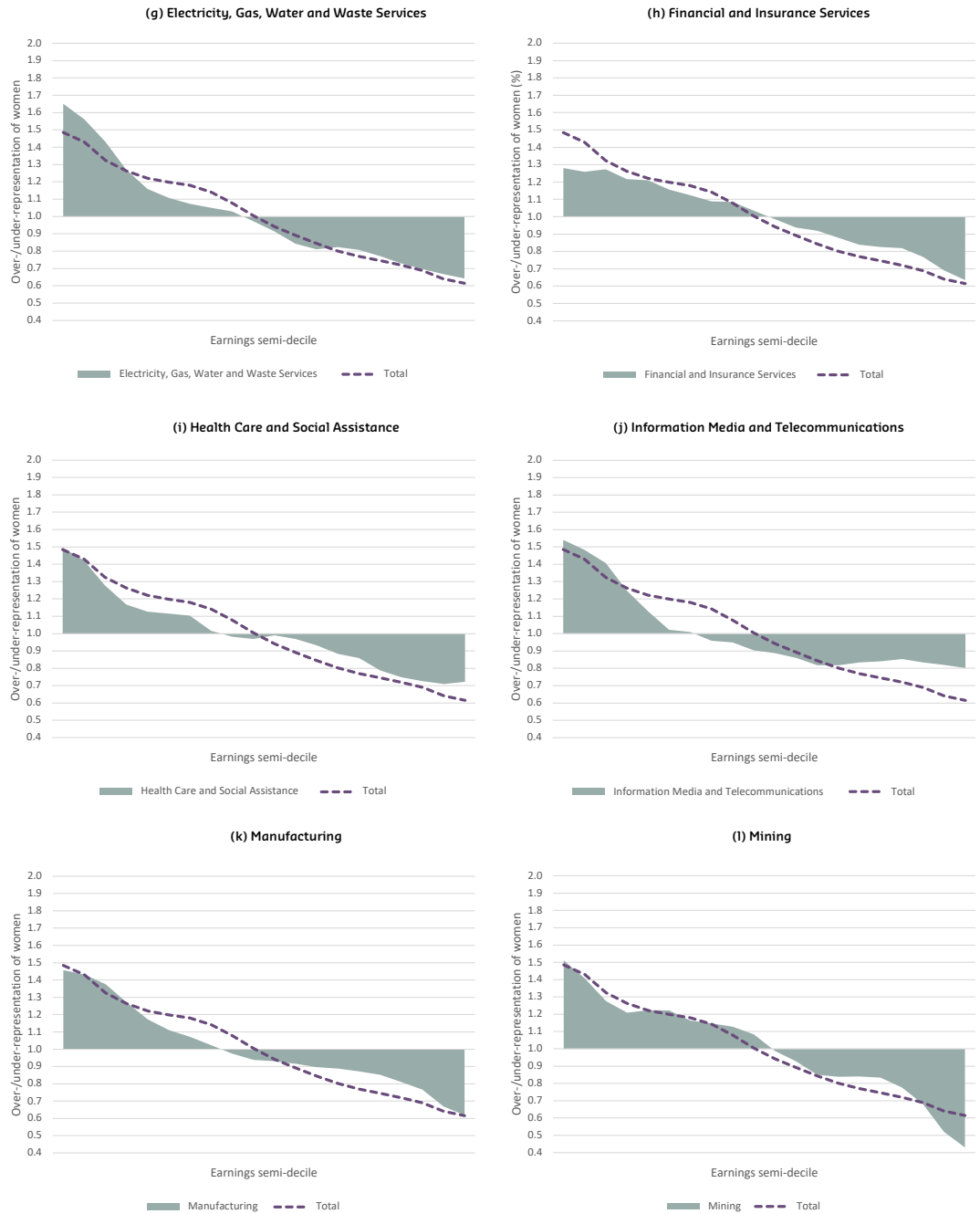
Representation of women by earnings semi-decile (full-time managers): by industry sector, 2021-22



Notes: Values are smoothed using 3 year moving average.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.

**FIGURE 22**  
Representation of women by earnings semi-decile (full-time managers): by industry sector, 2021-22



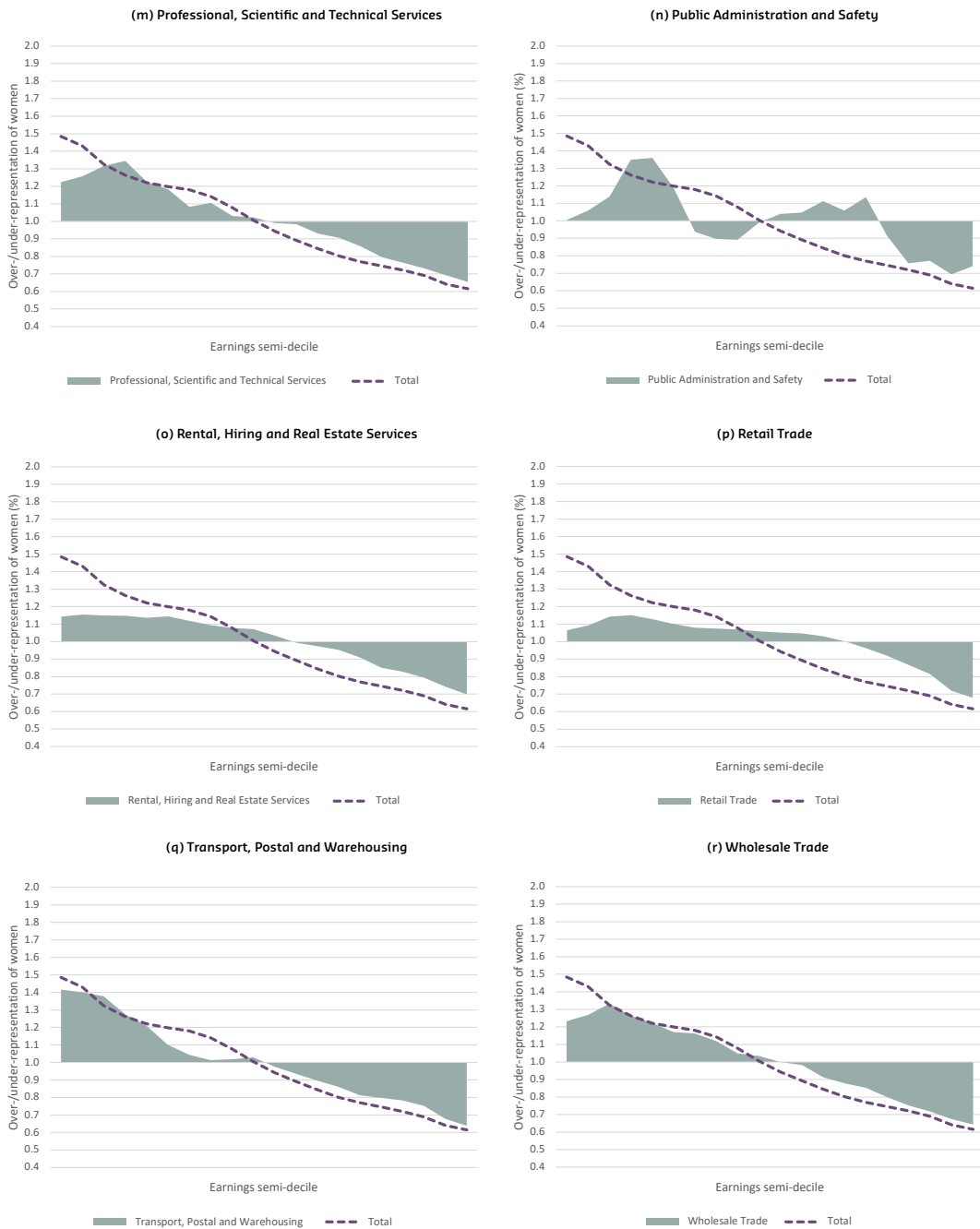
Notes: Values are smoothed using 3 year moving average.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.



**FIGURE 22**

Representation of women by earnings semi-decile (full-time managers): by industry sector, 2021-22



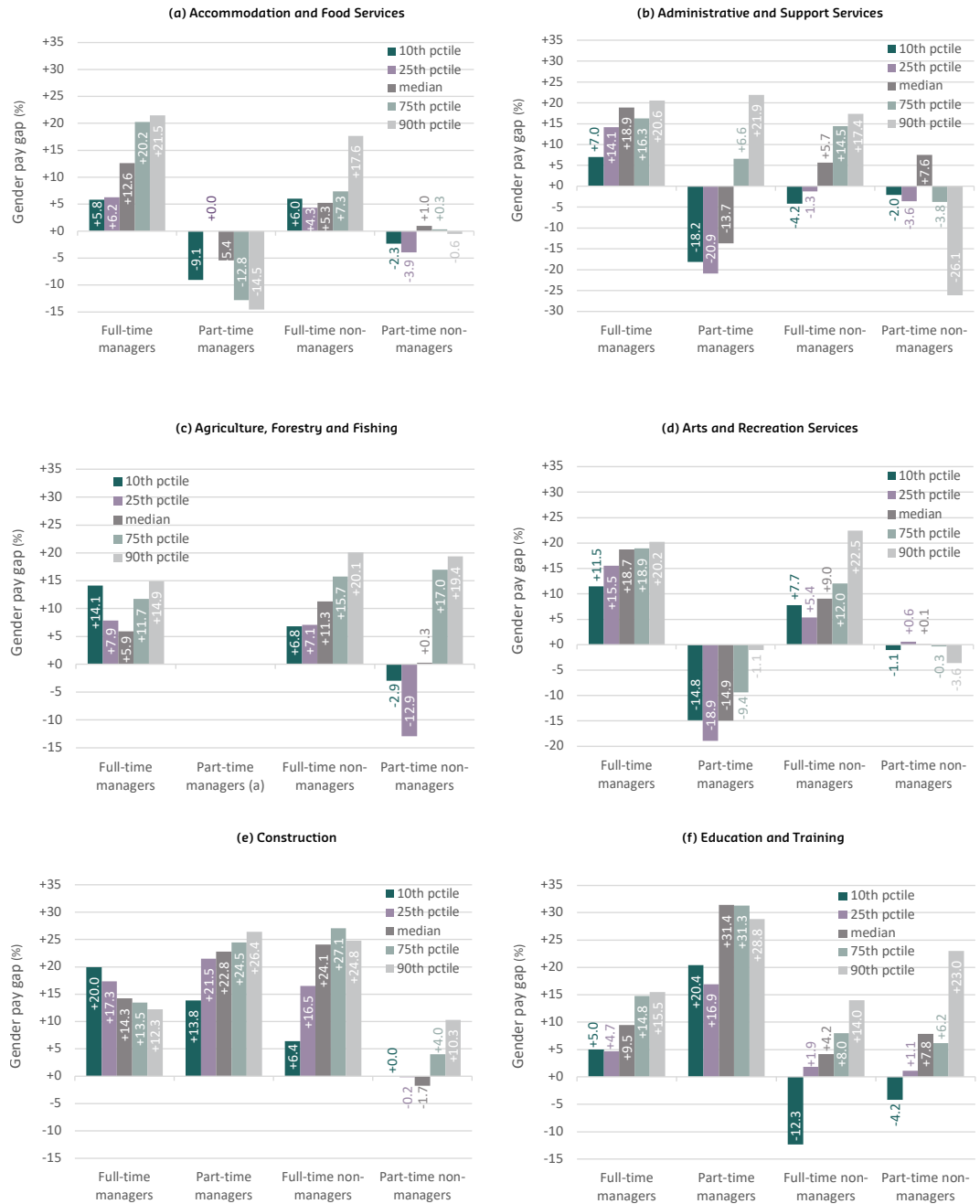
Notes: Values are smoothed using 3 year moving average.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.



**FIGURE 23**

Gender pay gaps across the earnings distribution of managers: by employment status and industry sector: 2021-2022

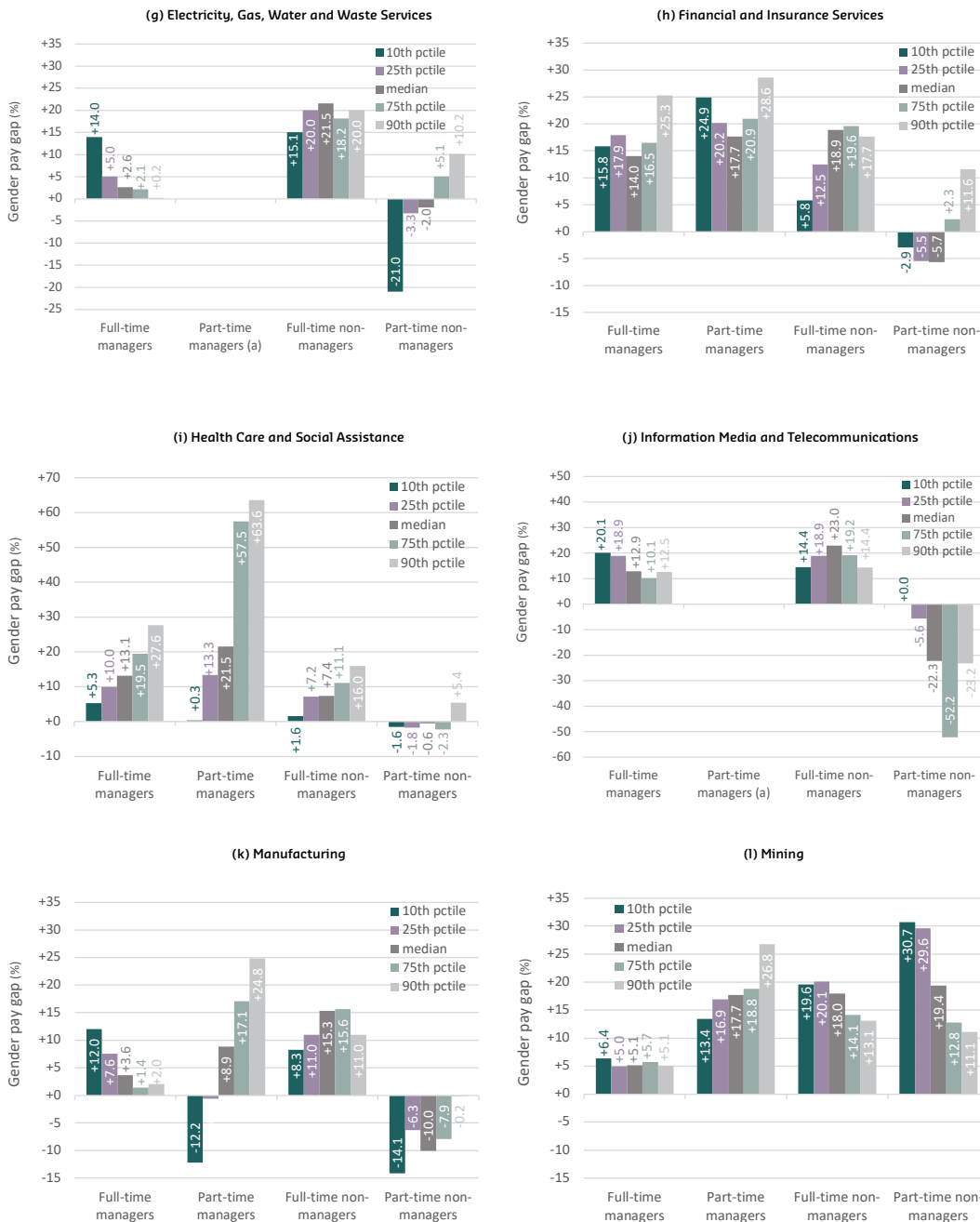


Notes: Earnings distributions are based on total remuneration in full-time equivalent salaries.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.

**FIGURE 23**

Gender pay gaps across the earnings distribution of managers: by employment status and industry sector: 2021-2022

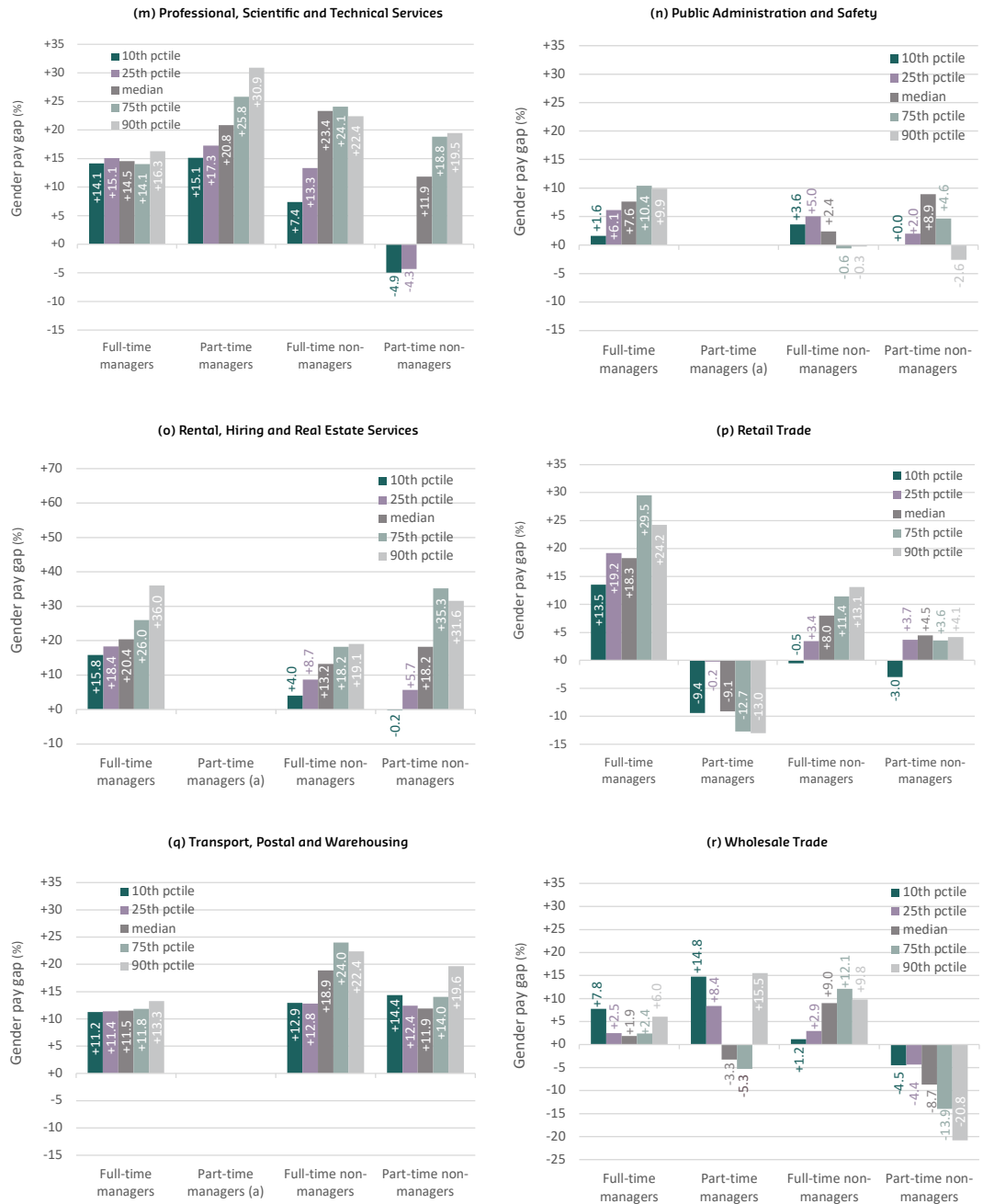


Notes: Earnings distributions are based on total remuneration in full-time equivalent salaries.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.

**FIGURE 23**

Gender pay gaps across the earnings distribution of managers: by employment status and industry sector: 2021-2022



Notes: Earnings distributions are based on total remuneration in full-time equivalent salaries.

Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre | Authors' calculations from WGEA Gender Equality data 2021-22.

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## Authorship

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This paper uses de-identified data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's compliance reporting and benchmarking dataset. The findings and views reported in this paper are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.



**BCEC | WGEA Gender Equity Insights Series**

2016



2017



2018



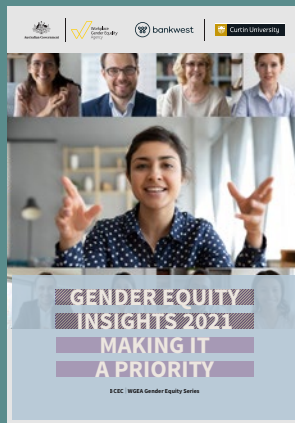
2019



2020



2021



2022



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