Australian Government

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

Workplace Gender Equality Targets



Gender Equality Targets Selection Report

Key insights from 2026 selection

November 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present.



Amy Daniel, *Working Together*

Introduction



In 2026, 1,978 employers with 500 or more employees selected 3 gender equality targets as part of the first year of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) gender equality targets program. These employers represent more than 4 million employees and have committed to taking measurable action to improve gender equality in their workplaces over the next 3 years.

The gender equality targets program is designed to accelerate national progress by supporting large Australian employers to understand and address systemic barriers to gender equality in their organisations. Targets help employers focus action where change is most needed and strengthen transparency and accountability for progress.

The first year of target selection shows employers have committed to taking a range of actions to address gender segregation in occupations, reduce the gender pay gap, and improve the conditions that enable employees to participate and progress in the workplace.

This report represents a baseline to track future progress and outlines major trends and industry insights in employers' target selection.

Selecting a target is only the first step. Achieving meaningful change requires sustained action over time. WGEA is providing guidance and capability-building resources to support organisations to achieve their targets. A selection of currently available resources is provided throughout this report.

About the gender equality targets program

Changes to the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* require employers that directly employ 500 or more employees to select and commit to achieving, or demonstrating improvement against 3 gender equality targets at the end of the 3-year target cycle. Drawing on workforce data already reported to WGEA, employers select targets from the **Gender Equality Targets Menu** and must choose at least one numeric target.

Employers can only select targets where improvement is possible from their baseline position. Numeric targets require an employer to nominate a percentage-point improvement against baseline data reported to WGEA. Action targets require an employer to introduce or strengthen specific workplace practices that were not already in place at baseline, with these requirements determining which targets each employer is eligible to select. This ensures targets represent meaningful progress, and provides an efficient, evidence-based foundation for selecting priorities and measuring improvement over time.

2026 targets data snapshot

1,978

employers selected gender equality targets in 2026



These employers cover more than

4 million

employees

636

employers chose to increase the under-represented gender in non-manager roles, more than any other target.



It was the top pick in

6 of 8

men-dominated industries.





As a result of employers selecting the employee consultation target,

1.26 million

employees will experience improved consultation on gender equality issues

39%

of eligible employers committed to **improving their policies regarding prevention, reporting and responding to sexual harassment**

Top 3

Moving towards equal representation in management positions was among the 3 most selected targets in 13 of the 19 industries



An additional

1.16 million

employees will work in organisations that conduct an annual gender pay gap analysis and report the findings to their governing body

Reducing the organisation-wide gender pay gap was chosen by

464 employers

on average by

2.5pp

over 3 years

1 in 4

eligible employers selected a target to improve supports for employees experiencing family and domestic violence



315

employers selected a target to increase men's uptake of primary parental leave on average by

6.6pp



115

employers selected to introduce employer-funded parental leave, covering an additional

211,000

employees

What targets have employers selected?

The table below presents the number of employers that selected each target alongside the number eligible to select it. Targets are ordered by the number of employers selecting them, from highest to lowest.

Target	Target type	Number of employers who selected	Number of eligible employers	% eligible employers who selected
Representation of non-managers	Numeric	636	1,975	**32%**
Employee consultation on gender equality	Action	634	1,403	**45%**
Representation of managers	Numeric	594	1,923	**31%**
Undertake a gender pay gap analysis	Action	573	1,560	**37%**
Reducing the gender pay gap	Numeric	464	1,974	**24%**
Reporting on sexual harassment to leadership	Action	453	1,212	**37%**
Increase uptake of primary parental leave	Numeric	315	1,884	**17%**
Equal remuneration policies	Action	311	1,367	**23%**
Improve sexual harassment prevention and response policies	Action	275	710	**39%**
Improve employer-funded parental leave	Action	256	1,501	**17%**
Improve FDV supports for employees	Action	238	942	**25%**
Improve flexible work offerings	Action	196	1,614	**12%**
Reduce the GPG for managers or non-managers	Numeric	187	1,975	**9%**
Composition of the governing body	Numeric	176	1,734	**10%**
Increase proportion of part-time managers	Numeric	164	1,927	**9%**
Increase representation in promotions to managers	Numeric	141	1,550	**9%**
Increase representation by pay quartile	Numeric	126	1,978	**6%**
Introduce employer-funded parental leave	Action	115	1,582	**7%**
Improve facilities/support for employees with caring responsibilities	Action	80	1,887	**4%**

The most selected targets and industry trends



Improving the gender-balance of non-manager occupations was selected by the largest number of employers

Increasing representation of the under-represented gender in non-manager occupations was selected by 636 employers. On average, these employers committed to an improvement of 4.2 percentage points over 3 years.

Occupational segregation limits people's employment choices and access to higher-paid roles, career progression and leadership. It also restricts the talent available to employers in industries experiencing skills shortages. Improving gender-balance can help these employers broaden their recruitment pools and strengthen workforce capability.

The popularity of this target is significant given the persistence of gender segregation in Australian workplaces, with only 1 in 3 employees currently working in a gender-balanced organisation. Women and men are also highly concentrated in different occupations with roughly 3 women for every man in clerical, administrative, community, and personal service roles and 4 men for every woman in technicians, trades, machinery operators and drivers.

To achieve change, employers will be required to address the workplace conditions that reinforce gender segregation. These include gendered assumptions about roles, unequal caring responsibilities, limited flexibility, inflexible working hours and unsafe or exclusionary cultures. Employers will need to consider the entire employee experience, from job design and recruitment to retention, development and progression.

Industry trends

The focus on occupational segregation was strongest in men-dominated industries. Increasing the representation of women in non-manager occupations was the most selected target in 6 of the 8 men-dominated industries, with the highest rate of selection occurring in the most heavily men-dominated industries: Mining (65%), Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services (59%), Construction (52%), Transport, Postal and Warehousing (50%), and Manufacturing (45%).

There was also a focus by employers on strengthening pathways for women entering men-dominated occupations, with 16% of eligible employers setting a target to increase the percentage of women in apprenticeships and 10% setting a target to increase the percentage of women in graduate roles.

Focusing on these entry-level roles is particularly important because heavily men-dominated occupations are among those most likely to experience workforce shortages. Increasing women's participation in these occupations can help employers access a broader talent pool and strengthen workforce capacity.

A different pattern emerged for the 2 women-dominated industries. Improving gender-balance in non-manager occupations was selected by just 20% of employers in Health Care and Social Assistance and 17% in Education and Training, suggesting that it was a much lower priority than in the most men-dominated industries.

Nevertheless, the employers that selected this target recognised that achieving gender equality cannot focus on women alone. While occupational segregation is often discussed in the context of increasing women's representation, reducing segregation also requires addressing the barriers to men's participation in women-dominated industries.

As demand for workers in women-dominated occupations grows, attracting a broader talent pool will become increasingly important. Setting targets to increase men's participation in these industries will help employers build workforce capacity and anticipate future skills needs.

WGEA resources

- WGEA Employer Guides and Resources
- WGEA Action Planning Playbook
- WGEA Policy and Strategy Guidance: Gender composition of the workforce



Improving employee consultation on gender equality was selected by the highest percentage of eligible employers

Improving employee consultation on gender equality was the second most selected target overall, chosen by 634 employers. It was selected by 45% of employers eligible to select, the highest proportion for any target in the program.

Approximately 1.26 million employees will experience improved consultation on gender equality issues through the implementation of this target. This is significant because it establishes an expectation that workplaces regularly seek employees' experiences

of how gender is experienced in their organisation. Consultation with employees helps employers understand the experiences and workplace conditions behind the data, and what action employees believe would make a difference.

Employers committed to a broad range of consultation mechanisms: employee experience surveys (529 employers), exit interviews (482 employers), engaging with employee representative groups (329 employers), diversity committees (305 employers) and employee focus groups (257 employers).



Industry trends

Improving employee consultation was a strong priority in gender-balanced industries that have at least 40% women and 40% men. The 5 industries with the highest percentage of eligible employers selecting this target were Information Media and Telecommunications (68%), Accommodation and Food Services (60%), Administrative and Support Services (54%), Arts and Recreation Services (53%), and Retail Trade (49%).

Consulting with employees in these industries is important because a gender-balanced workforce does not necessarily mean that employees have gender-equal experiences. Gender pay gaps remain in favour of men in all gender-balanced industries, as men are concentrated in higher paying roles and women in lower paying roles.

Employee consultation provides a meaningful opportunity for these employers to understand barriers to participation and access in the industry which contributes to the gender pay gap. These factors include employee experiences of safety, decisions to remain or resign and perceptions of opportunities to advance when working part-time and flexibly.

WGEA resources

- WGEA Guide to consulting employees on gender equality
- WGEA Action Planning Playbook
- WGEA Gender Equality Indicators: Policy and Strategy Guides



Employers selected targets to increase gender diversity in leadership and decision-making

The third most selected target was to increase the representation of the under-represented gender in management positions, with 594 employers selecting this target.

Gender diversity in leadership and decision-making is important for addressing drivers of the gender pay gap when men are concentrated in higher paying senior roles and women in lower paying roles. Similarly, the benefits of inclusive workplaces, for culture and business performance, have also been well documented.

Most employers selecting this target focused on increasing women's representation. Almost half of employers (279 employers) selecting this target committed to increasing the representation of women across all manager categories, responding to women remaining underrepresented in management roles, comprising 44% of managers in 2025-26.

A further 141 employers selected a target to increase the representation of the under-represented gender among employees promoted to manager. This matters because promotions to managers can be a crucial first step into leadership and deepen the leadership pipeline to support more balanced representation over time.

Additionally, 164 employers selected a target to increase the percentage of manager roles that are part-time. This is important because currently only 7% of manager roles are part-time and women are more than twice as likely as men to work part-time.

Women's participation in part-time work peaks between the ages of 35 and 39, a period where caring responsibilities coincide with opportunities for progression to management. From this age onwards, women's representation in management declines steadily, even though they continue to comprise around half of employees in non-manager roles. Expanding access to part-time management roles can help address this pattern by reducing the career penalties often associated with caring responsibilities.

Designing management roles with greater flexibility challenges longstanding assumptions that effective leaders must work full-time and enables employers to access a wider pool of talent and improve leadership opportunities for women and men with caring responsibilities.

The focus on improving gender-balance in leadership roles extended to the governing body. 176 employers selected a target to increase the representation of the under-represented gender on their governing body with almost 90% of employers selecting increasing the representation of women. In 2025-26, 62% of governing bodies had fewer than 40% women and almost one-quarter (23%) had no women at all.

Gender-balanced boards can strengthen governance by broadening the range of perspectives, experience and talent available to boards. Research also associates greater board diversity with stronger decision-making, innovation and organisational performance. Governing bodies play an important role in shaping organisational outcomes and are critical in overseeing efforts to create safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces.



Industry trends

Moving towards equal representation in management positions was among the 3 most selected targets in 13 of the 19 industries, demonstrating widespread employer focus on creating more gender-balanced leadership teams.

This focus was particularly strong in some men-dominated industries, with the target selected by 50% of employers in Transport, Postal and Warehousing and 44% in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing. It was also common in gender-balanced industries, where 45% of employers in Arts and Recreation Services and 43% in Financial and Insurance Services selected the target. In these industries, overall workforce composition is relatively balanced, but women remain under-represented in management roles.

Employers in industries with large female workforces placed greater emphasis on making leadership roles more accessible and were among those most likely to select targets to increase the proportion of management roles that are part-time. This target was selected by 17% of employers in Retail Trade, 14% in Health Care and Social Assistance and 10% in Education and Training, compared with 9% overall. Women-dominated industries have high rates of women working part-time, and increasing access to part-time management roles in these industries can support employees to progress into leadership while balancing caring and other responsibilities.

WGEA resources

- WGEA Guidance on flexible work
- WGEA Guidance on mentoring and sponsorship
- WGEA Example of gender bias in recruitment and promotion



Employers focused on addressing the gender pay gap through analysis, action and improved policies

Undertaking a comprehensive gender pay gap analysis was the fourth most selected target overall, chosen by 573 employers. As a result, an additional 1.16 million employees will work in organisations that conduct an annual gender pay gap analysis and report the findings to their governing body.

A comprehensive gender pay gap analysis shows employers where they need to direct their attention and prioritise action to see real change, revealing differences in what women and men are earning, on average, in full-time hours with all discretionary pay considered.

Employers set other numeric targets to reduce the gender pay gap, including reducing the organisation-wide gender pay gap (464 employers), reducing the gender pay gap among managers (143 employers) or non-managers (44 employers) and improving gender-balance within a specific pay quartile (126 employers). By setting a measurable organisation-wide goal, employers create greater accountability for addressing the combined effects of differences in pay, representation, progression and working patterns.

Additionally, 311 employers committed to strengthening their equal remuneration and gender pay equity policies, extending improved processes and accountability measures to workplaces covering 565,000 employees. Strong gender pay equity policies help prevent disparities from arising by making fairness a consistent part of how remuneration decisions are made.

These targets reflect employers' commitment to understand the causes of the gender pay gap, set measurable goals and take effective action by embedding gender pay equality in organisational practices.

Industry trends

Employers in industries with the largest gender pay gaps were among those most likely to commit to reducing them. This was particularly evident in high-paying, gender-balanced industries, with targets to reduce the gender pay gap selected by 42% of employers in Financial and Insurance Services and 36% in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services. In these industries, relatively balanced workforce composition can mask substantial differences in the roles women and men hold and their average earnings.

Employers in industries with large gender pay gaps and heavily men-dominated workforces selected a broader mix of targets, with many prioritising improvements to workforce composition. While only 16% of employers in Construction and 13% in Mining selected a numeric target to reduce their gender pay gap, substantial proportions selected targets to improve their policies and practices. For example, 31% of employers in Construction and 29% in Mining committed to conducting an annual comprehensive gender pay gap analysis.

Gender pay gap analysis was also a strong priority in women-dominated industries. It was the most selected target in both Education and Training, chosen by 36% of employers, and Health Care and Social Assistance, chosen by 35%. Although these industries report comparatively smaller gender pay gaps, they have consistently had the lowest rates of employers conducting a gender pay gap analysis, with 40% of employers in Education and Training and 52% in Health Care and Social Assistance reporting doing so in 2025-26.

The strong uptake of the analysis target is important because smaller gender pay gaps do not necessarily mean women and men have equal access to pay and opportunities. By committing to a comprehensive analysis, employers can uncover disparities in leadership representation, access to highly paid roles and career progression, and identify how workforce composition, recruitment and employee movements contribute to their gender pay gap.

WGEA resources

- WGEA Gender Pay Gap Analysis Guide
- WGEA Action Planning Tool
- WGEA Action Planning Playbook



Preventing and responding to sexual harassment was a strong priority for eligible employers

Many employers already had relevant sexual harassment policies (64%) and leadership reporting mechanisms (39%) in place and were therefore ineligible to select these targets. For eligible employers, addressing sexual harassment remained a strong priority.

Improving reporting on sexual harassment to the CEO, key management personnel and governing body was selected by 453 employers, representing 37% of those eligible and covering approximately 1 million employees.

A further 275 employers, representing 39% of those eligible and covering around 450,000 employees, committed to improving their policies regarding prevention, reporting and responding to sexual harassment.

Employers selecting these targets demonstrated a commitment to improving reporting mechanisms to prevent sexual harassment and create safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces. This is significant because establishing workplace safety is the foundation for achieving all other efforts to progress workplace gender equality, including addressing occupational segregation by attracting and retaining women employees in men-dominated industries.



Industry trends

Employer eligibility varied considerably by industry, reflecting substantial differences in the measures already in place. The proportion of employers with relevant policies ranged from 50% to 81%, while the proportion with leadership reporting mechanisms ranged from 11% to 64%.

Mining stood out both for its strong existing practices and its commitment to further action. It had the highest proportion of employers with relevant policies (81%) and reporting mechanisms (64%) already in place. Among those employers still eligible, 62% selected at least one of the 2 targets, the highest rate of any industry. This continued focus is particularly significant given the workplace safety risks associated with remote and fly-in fly-out workforces and the sustained public scrutiny of workplace conduct in the industry.

Strong uptake was also evident in other men-dominated industries, although many were starting from a lower baseline. At least one target on sexual harassment was selected by 56% of eligible employers in Construction, 55% in Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services and 54% in Manufacturing. This focus suggests that improving workplace safety and leadership accountability is an important part of broader efforts to attract and retain a more gender diverse workforce in these industries.

Addressing sexual harassment was also a priority in the industries employing the largest numbers of women. At least one of these targets was selected by 55% of eligible employers in Education and Training, 53% in Retail Trade and 52% in Health Care and Social Assistance.

The employers selecting these targets cover approximately 330,000 employees in Retail Trade, 294,000 in Health Care and Social Assistance and 142,000 in Education and Training. These industries have large frontline workforces, making effective prevention, reporting and employee support particularly important in creating safe and respectful workplaces.

WGEA resources

- WGEA Using evidence to improve workplace sexual harassment prevention and response
- WGEA Sexual harassment, harassment on the ground of sex or discrimination
- WGEA Gender Equality Indicators: Policy and Strategy Guides



Employers selected targets to improve parental leave and workforce participation

Increasing the uptake of primary parental leave by the under-represented gender was the seventh most selected target, chosen by 315 employers. These employers committed to an average increase of 6.6 percentage points over 3 years. Introducing employer-funded parental leave was selected as a target by 115 employers covering approximately 211,000 employees.

How unpaid care is shared shapes workforce participation, career progression and financial security. More equal access to work and care is therefore critical to reducing gender segregation and the gender pay gap.

Men accounted for 21% of employees who took primary carer's parental leave in 2025-26, an increase of 1 percentage point from the previous year. However, many Australian men have reported they would prefer to take more leave and be more involved in caring for their children.[1]

Supporting men to take more parental leave gives families greater choice in how they share care, supports women's workforce participation and career progression, and can help employers attract and retain talent.

A further 256 employers, covering approximately 410,000 employees, selected a target to improve their existing employer-funded parental leave provisions. These employers could select a range of policy improvements, with the most selected actions being extending the length of employer-funded parental leave, allowing leave to be taken at any time within 24 months and introducing an opt-out approach where taking the full parental leave entitlement becomes the default. These measures can help shift expectations about who provides care, when leave is taken and how long employees spend away from paid work.

Notably, the parental leave improvements selected by the smallest percentage of employers were those requiring greater financial investment, including superannuation payments during parental leave and full salary replacement. These measures can reduce the long-term impact of career breaks on women's retirement savings and the immediate financial barriers that can discourage men from taking longer leave. While employers more often prioritised the design and flexibility of leave, addressing its financial costs will also be important to achieving a more equal sharing of paid work and unpaid care.

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1 Australian Human Rights Commission, Supporting Working Parents: Pregnancy and Return to Work National Review – Report (2014).

Achieving these targets will require employers to address both policy and cultural barriers. This may include removing gendered assumptions from parental leave policies, ensuring employees understand their entitlements, encouraging leaders to model leave-taking, and creating a culture in which men taking extended leave is accepted and supported.

Employers also focused on supporting workforce participation among employees experiencing family or domestic violence. A total of 238 employers, representing 1 in 4 eligible employers, selected a target to strengthen their support by introducing measures such as training key personnel, providing paid leave beyond the National Employment Standards and offering access to emergency accommodation. These supports can help affected employees remain safe, maintain their employment and access assistance when they need it.



Industry trends

Increasing men's uptake of primary parental leave was a particularly strong focus in Higher Education, where 21 of 40 employers selected the target, including many of Australia's major research universities. It was also selected by one in 3 Commonwealth public sector employers. The prominence of this target may reflect the relatively well-established parental leave provisions in these industries. Where access to leave is already available, employers may be better placed to focus on the cultural and workplace barriers that influence whether men use it.

Improving employer-funded parental leave was most commonly selected in higher-paying industries, including Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services, Financial and Insurance Services, Professional, Scientific and Technical Services and Information Media and Telecommunications. This may reflect both a greater capacity to fund enhanced parental leave offerings and a stronger willingness to invest in it as a strategy for attracting and retaining skilled employees.

WGEA resources

- WGEA Parental Leave for Men
- WGEA Advancing Paid Parental Leave and Flexibility in the Workplace
- WGEA Towards gender balanced parental leave



Conclusion

The first year of target selection showed employers have committed to taking measurable action and improving gender equality in their workplaces over the next 3 years.

Overall, employers generally placed greater emphasis on targets that address representation, pay and leadership. Some employers also selected targets on flexible work, parental leave and other leave conditions, but there was less focus on these inclusions.

Addressing workplace conditions which impact employees' participation and progress in the workplace is critical to reducing the gender pay gap and occupational segregation, as it is often these conditions which have the most significant influence on employee attraction, retention and career progression.

Ensuring flexible and supportive conditions are genuinely available to all employees will be essential for many employers to meet their targets, including percentage point improvements to representation and pay.

The first year of target selection provides an ambitious and measurable path for Australia's largest employers to take action to accelerate achieving gender equality in their organisations and unlock the full potential of Australia's workforce.

Next steps

The gender equality targets selected by each employer with 500 or more employees are now available on the WGEA Data Explorer. Publishing these targets strengthens accountability by making employers' commitments visible. It also gives employees greater awareness of where their employer will focus their attention to improve gender equality in their workplace over the next 3 years.

While formal assessment of employer progress against selected targets will occur at the end of the 3-year cycle, WGEA will continue to collect and analyse annual employer data to track changes in workplace gender equality. We will use this data to identify emerging trends, examine differences across industries and employer groups, and build a clearer picture of the actions employers are taking to accelerate change.

Working with employers, industry bodies and research partners, WGEA will translate these insights into practical guidance, targeted research and resources to strengthen employer capability. We will also identify and share promising practices, highlight areas where progress is proving difficult, and support employers to learn from each other. Our focus over the next 3 years will not just be on measuring outcomes, but on building the evidence, insights and capability that will help employers achieve them.

Australian Government

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

Additional information

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