

International Women's Day — how Individuals and the Workplace can Make a Difference

The 8th of March marks International Women's Day (IWD), a day to celebrate women's achievements, raise awareness about discrimination and take action to drive gender parity.

WHY DOES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MATTER?

While huge strides have been made in the pursuit of women's equality and equity since the first International Women's Day in 1911, according to the Australian Government's most recent gender equality workplace statistics show there's still lots of work to be done.

1. The full-time average weekly ordinary earnings for women are 13.8% less than for men. This has decreased by 0.4 percentage points since May 2021.
2. Among non-public sector organisations with 100 or more employees, the base salary gender pay gap for all employees is 18.3%, and 23.8% for total remuneration.
3. The median undergraduate starting salaries for women are 3.9% less than for men. This gap widens to 14.1% for postgraduate (coursework) graduates.
4. Women hold 17.6% of chair positions and 31.2% of directorships, and represent 19.4% of CEOs and 34.5% of key management personnel.
5. 22.3% of boards and governing bodies have no

female directors. By contrast, only 0.6% had no male directors.

6. 34.2% of directors in the ASX 200 are women.

Add these workplace statistics to social issues like the fact that Australian men are still killing women partners or exes at the rate of one a week, then it's clear that more work on women's equality and equity is required.

WHAT CAN THE WORKPLACE DO?

With the changes to the labour market brought on by Covid-19, women leaders are now switching jobs at the highest rates we've ever seen, and ambitious young women are prepared to do the same. To make meaningful and sustainable progress toward gender equality, companies need to go beyond table stakes. According to a yearly report into women in the workplace conducted by management consultancy firm McKinsey, women are:

1. Experiencing headwinds that signal it will be harder to advance — especially at the first step up to management.
2. Are more likely to experience belittling microaggressions, such as having their judgment questioned or being mistaken for someone more junior.
3. Doing more to support employee wellbeing and foster inclusion, but this critical work is spreading them thin and going mostly unrewarded.
4. Increasingly looking for organisations that prioritise flexibility, employee wellbeing, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

FIND OUT MORE

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The quest for flexibility is particularly important in today's labour market. Research has shown that women who can choose their working arrangements are:

- Less burnt out,
- happier in their jobs and
- much less likely to consider leaving their organisation.

This gives further credence to the theory that a "one size fits all" approach to flexible work won't work for all employees.

While there are those who prefer working in an office environment, the option to work remotely is especially important to women. This is no surprise when we learn that over two-thirds of all primary carers in Australia identify as female.

However, these preferences are about more than caregiving and flexibility. When women work remotely - at least some of the time - they experience fewer microaggressions and higher levels of psychological safety.

While organisations should be offering more individualised flexibility, it mustn't be at the detriment of career progression. It's imperative that employees who choose remote or hybrid-work options get the same support and opportunities as on-site employees. Managers play a central role here, and many could benefit from additional training on how to foster remote and hybrid employees' career development and minimise flexibility stigma.

TWO KEY GOALS FOR ORGANISATIONS

To achieve a more equal and equitable working environment, organisations should focus on two overarching goals:

1. Getting more women into leadership.
2. Retaining the women leaders already at the organisation.

Companies achieving these two goals are:

- Pushing beyond common practices.
- Offering more specific and actionable training so that managers are better equipped to support their teams.
- Offering a constellation of benefits to improve women's day-to-day work experiences including, flexibility, emergency childcare benefits, and mental health support.
- Concentrating on identifying where the largest gap in promotions is for women in their pipeline and why it's happening.
- Evaluating the impact of programs to assess whether benefits are equitable and identifying areas where certain groups may need more targeted support.

Ultimately, women are ambitious and hardworking, they're more inclusive and empathetic leaders, and they want to work for companies that are prioritising the cultural changes that are improving work. Companies that rise to these requirements will attract and retain more women leaders, which will lead to a better workplace for everyone.

HOW INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS CAN SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Whether you're an individual, an organisation, in the office, online, or at school – there are many ways to get involved and show your support for women and girls around the world this IWD.



FIND OUT MORE

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1) Attend an event

There are hundreds of virtual and in-person events being run across the world. Click here to see what's happening near you.

2) Conduct your own research

Learn about the feminist movement and the fight for gender equality. Learn more about intersectionality and the challenges faced by women of colour, trans women or women with disabilities.

3) Amplify IWD

Celebrate your favourite women, women leaders, or feminist achievements by shouting them out across social media using #IWD2023.

4) Get the people around you involved

Encourage and rally your friends, family, colleagues, and community to embrace equity.

5) Strike the #EmbraceEquity pose.

Show the world your huge embrace. Strike the IWD #EmbraceEquity pose to show solidarity.

6) Donate to a feminist cause

There are countless groups working for gender equality or women's rights, organisations doing everything from providing access to healthcare, shelter from violence, or lobbying for change.

It's important to remember that IWD is a day for everyone, regardless of gender or gender identity, to celebrate the progress that women have made towards equality and remember how much further there is to go. Ultimately, we can all challenge gender stereotypes, call out discrimination, draw attention to bias, and seek out inclusion.

