

No change to hourly gender pay gap in 10 years

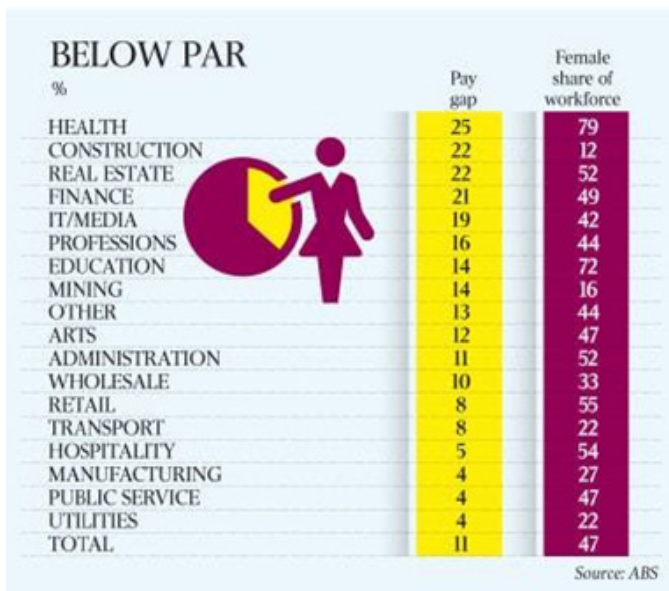


Minister for Women Kelly O'Dwyer. Picture: Tim Carrafa

The pay gap between men and women has not changed in the past 10 years, with women still earning on average 11 per cent less an hour than men. An Australian Bureau of Statistics report on gender difference shows the pay gap is biggest in the health industry, where women make up almost 80 per cent of the workforce but receive on average only 75 per cent of the male wage.

Other industries where the margin is greater than 20 percentage points are finance and real estate, where women represent about half the workforce, and construction, where women are just a fifth of the workforce.

By contrast, the pay gap is less than 5 per cent in manufacturing, hospitality and the public service.



The ABS report, which looks at the hourly earnings of adult non-managerial employees, shows the gap is narrower than the comparison between full-time average weekly earnings, which shows men earning 15 per cent more than women, down from 16 per cent a decade ago.

Minister for Women Kelly O'Dwyer has used the average weekly earnings measure to attack Labor's proposal to write gender pay equity into the Fair Work Act, noting that the gap between men and women had increased to 17 per cent during the last term of a Labor government.

The ABS argues that simply looking at full-time earnings distorts the comparison because of the large number of women who shift to part-time work when they are having children, and says it is better to compare hourly earnings. While the national average has shown no change, there have been significant shifts in some industries. The pay gap in the professional services has contracted from an average of 29 per cent to 16 per cent over the past eight years while there have also been big gains for women in manufacturing and mining.

However, the gap has become bigger in information technology, rising from 16 to 19 per cent, and in construction, where it has risen from 16 per cent to 22 per cent.

The report shows women have made some gains at the senior levels of organisations. Women are now 37.2 per cent of management staff, up from 34.2 per cent a decade ago. Of the 183,000 extra managers employed over the past decade, 108,000 have been women.

The pay gap among women managers has contracted from 19 per cent to 13 per cent over that period.

However, the ABS report shows there has been little change at the top, with only 16.5 per cent of chief executives being women, up by a percentage point since 2013-14. There has been a similarly small change in the number of female company directors, up from 23.7 per cent in 2013-14 to 24.9 per cent.