



Australian Institute of  
**Project Management**

# The Diversity Challenge

AIPM Gender Equity  
Report 2021

# Who is the Australian Institute of Project Management?

The AIPM is the national peak body for project management, supporting approximately 8,000 members through their project management career, to maximise their project knowledge, competency and performance. The AIPM seeks to develop, drive and promote project management professional practice to enable sustainable economic and social outcomes for the national benefit.



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The diversity challenge for the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM) and the project management profession still looms large. In 2020, AIPM identified 8 imperatives to improve gender equity in the Australian workplace, namely:

1. Valuing Women
2. Workforce Participation
3. Affordable Childcare
4. Flexible Work
5. Industry & Occupational Segregation
6. Gender Pay Gap
7. Superannuation Gap
8. Workplace Psychological Safety

In 2021 we have reviewed the changes that are taking place in regards to gender equity in the workplace and provide a spotlight on some of the organisations leading this change.

Following the huge disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past 12 months and the consequent recession and forced rapid changes to business models across Australia and the world, it is important to look at the gains and losses against some of these areas that have occurred.

As shown in the graph below, over the past 6 years there has been a 5% improvement in female membership of AIPM. We will seek to better understand some of the dynamics feeding into the rate of growth of women considering a career in project management.

At the core of this seemingly low percentage of female members is the fact that the Australian workforce is highly gender segregated by industry and occupation - a pattern that has persisted over the last 20 years according to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WEGA). AIPM's membership comes predominantly from project-based organisations in male dominated industry groups, including mining, construction, manufacturing, IT and professional, scientific and technical services. The sectors that employ the highest numbers of women in 2019-20 were health care and social assistance (79%), education and training (71.6%) and retail trade (55%). All are lower paid industries and tend not to be highly project-based organisations.

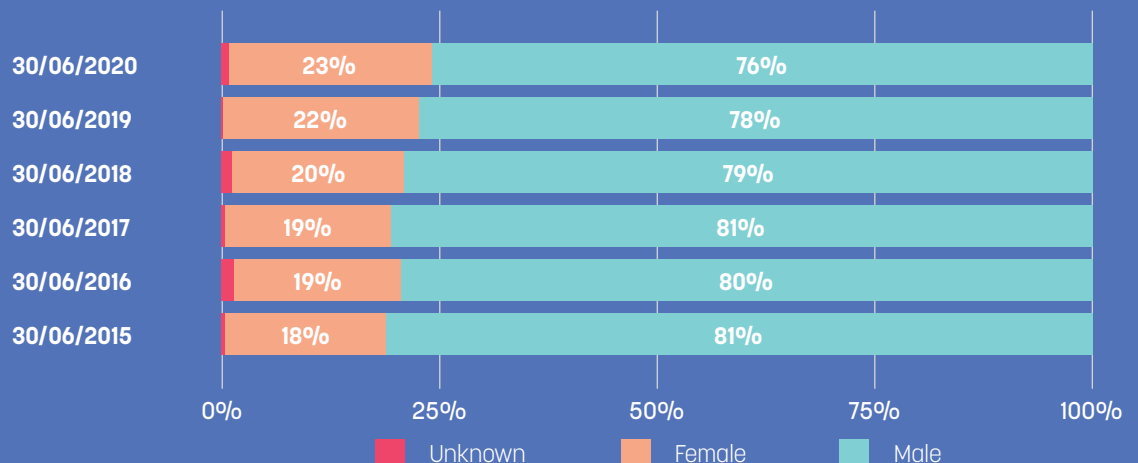
We expect the ratio of males to females in our membership and profession to continue to improve through two avenues. Firstly, as male oriented organisations continue to improve their gender balance, and secondly, as more female dominant industries become more project oriented, there will naturally be more women attracted to project management. AIPM remains committed to growing gender diversity on both fronts and believes that on current trends, AIPM is on track to have females representing 30% of membership by 2027.

Throughout this report we will highlight how organisations, such as Aurecon and NS Group are driving change and improving gender equity in the workplace, through measures such as supporting diversity, providing flexible working conditions, and focusing on a culture of continual transformation.

**ELIZABETH FOLEY**  
Chief Executive Officer

**ELENA ZAGORENKO**  
Chair, AIPM

## AIPM Gender Distribution 2015 - 2020



# Valuing Women in Project Management

Australian women and men have traditionally worked in different industries and different jobs. Six out of ten Australians work in industries dominated by one gender. The COVID-19 pandemic has had very different impacts on a range of industries, some beneficial like home making (think Nick Scali) and supermarkets (Wesfarmers and Woolworths), while others were devastated, like airlines (Virgin) and tourism.

AIPM’s latest membership survey shows that the majority of female project professionals work within the the Government (23%) and Construction (17%) industries.

While the pandemic triggered a \$5 billion reduction in construction and building projects, it is expected these industries will recover to pre-COVID-19 levels by 2023<sup>1</sup>

Despite this reduction, ‘Construction Project Manager’ and ‘Project Builder’ remain on the Australian Skilled Occupation List for 482 Visas for Temporary Skills Shortage<sup>2</sup>.

Of the remaining respondents, Defence and Aerospace (11%), Education and Training

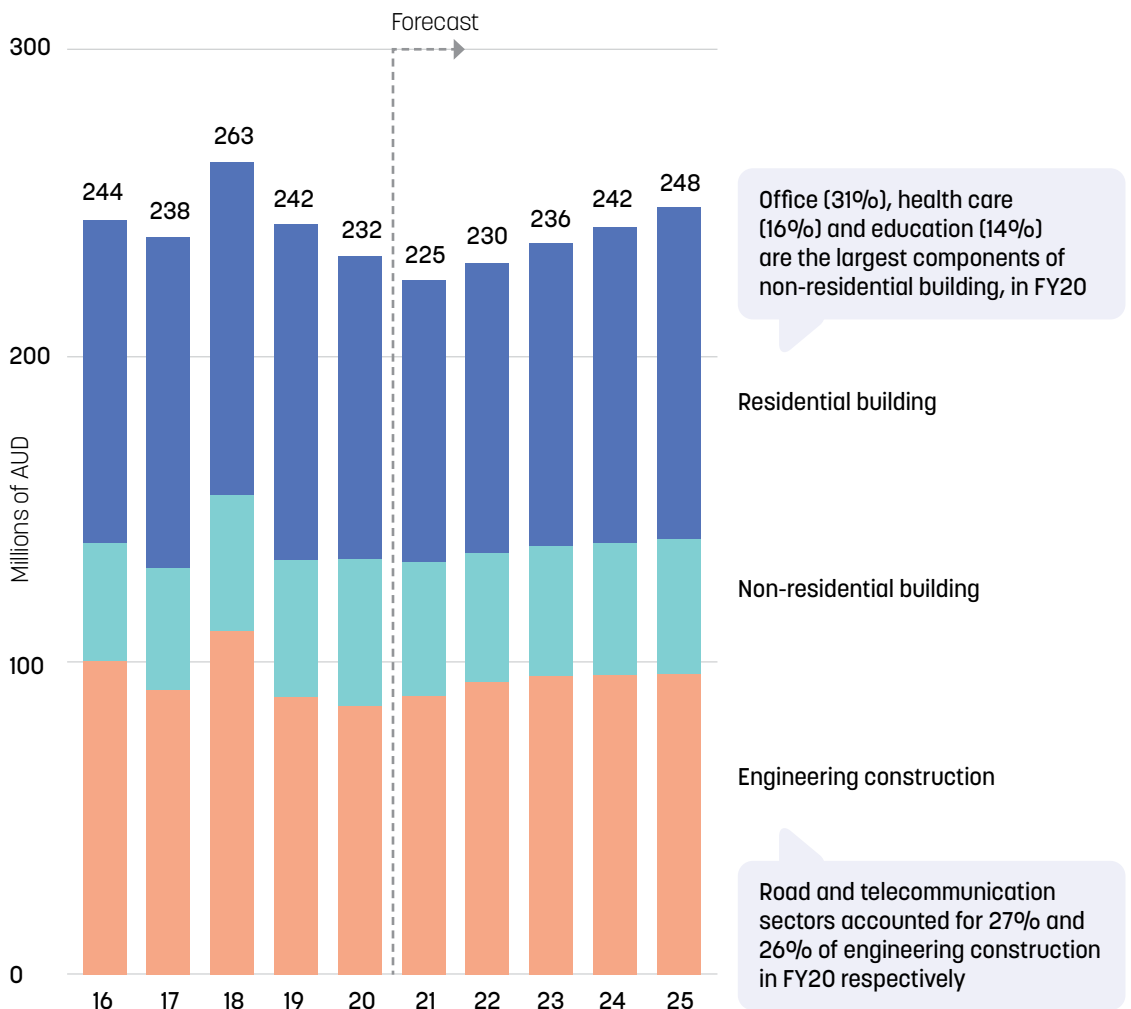
(8%), and Information Technology (8%) were also popular industries for female project professionals.

The project-based Defence sector has benefited from increased Federal Budget spending under the Coalition Government and demand for project management skills has been tipped to increase due to this extra spending.

Large organisations, such as the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (see graph on the next page from LinkedIn), have a higher growth in project management roles than other roles within the organisation.

Source: Australian Construction Industry Forum – Australian Construction Market report, November 2020; AFR

## Value of building and construction work in Australia, by type (FY16-25F)



<sup>1</sup> Infrastructure Australia  
<sup>2</sup> Work Permit Australian Skilled Occupation List (SOL)

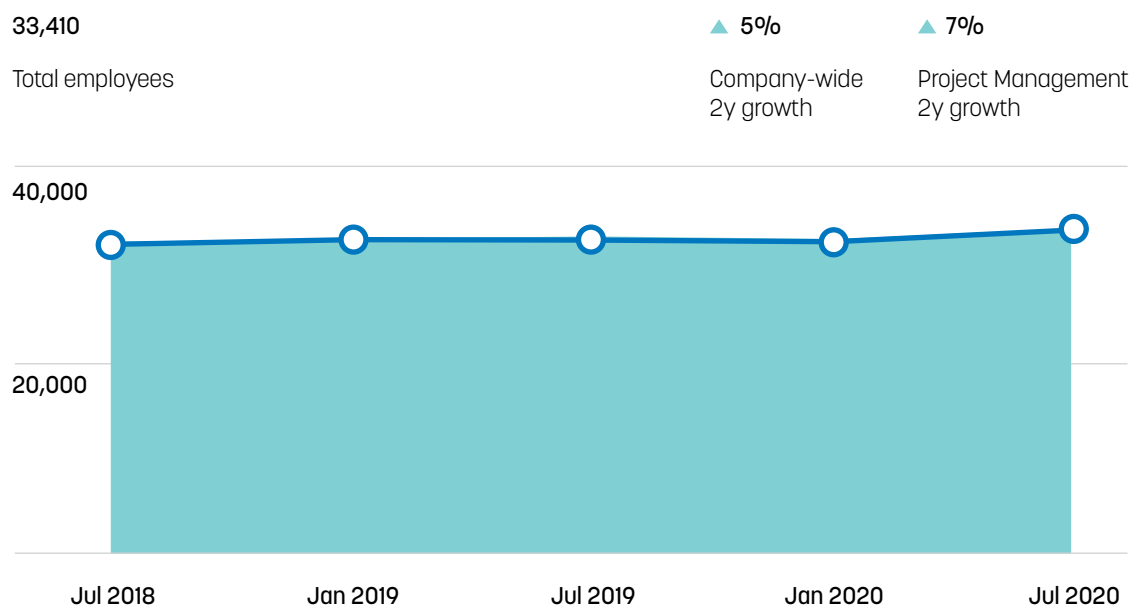
So despite the recession, AIPM believes that project-based organisations will continue to face challenges of increasing skill shortages in the coming years, especially in project management. Leveraging female management talent could meet demand for project managers and improve organisational competitiveness and outcomes.

Research by Queensland University of Technology, published in 2019<sup>3</sup>, found pioneering evidence for positive effects on profit (EBITDA) of more women in management in project-based organisations (PBOs). This supports the argument that PBO's

are better able to capitalise on the benefits of increased representation of women because of the greater value in creativity and innovation achieved through mixed gender teams.

Source: LinkedIn  
September 2020

## CommBank hiring trends over the last 2 years



Median tenure 5.4 years

As we look to projects to support economic recovery and to help project professionals accelerate in their careers as project leaders, in 2020 AIPM launched a new jobs board [PM JOBS @ AIPM](#).

<sup>3</sup> M Baker et al/  
International Journal of  
Project Management 37  
(2019) 872-883

# Workforce Participation

The workforce participation rate went down for both genders in the first half of 2020.

Workforce Participation Rates - source ABS July 2020			
	Feb 2020	July 2020	Change
Women	61.4%	59.9%	-0.5%
Men	70.9%	69.6%	-0.5%

However, these statistics do not reveal the full gendered impact of the pandemic. Women are over-represented in part-time and casual work with 43% of employed women working part-time compared to 16% for men in 2019-20 (ABS), and during the lockdowns, these types of workplace engagement were hard hit.

In addition, the burden of home schooling and primary caring responsibilities have also influenced the paid work capacity and decisions of families/women.

Once restrictions eased and businesses reopened, many of the roles in effected industries held by women bounced back in the September quarter.

## Women over-represented in part-time work



7 in 10 part time workers are women



2 in 5 full time workers are women

Source: ABS July 2020

## Payroll jobs and total wages, indexed to the week ending 14 March 2020 (a)





Affordable, available, quality childcare is fundamental to women with children returning to the workforce on either a full-time or part-time basis. It also continues to be an area of political partisanship.

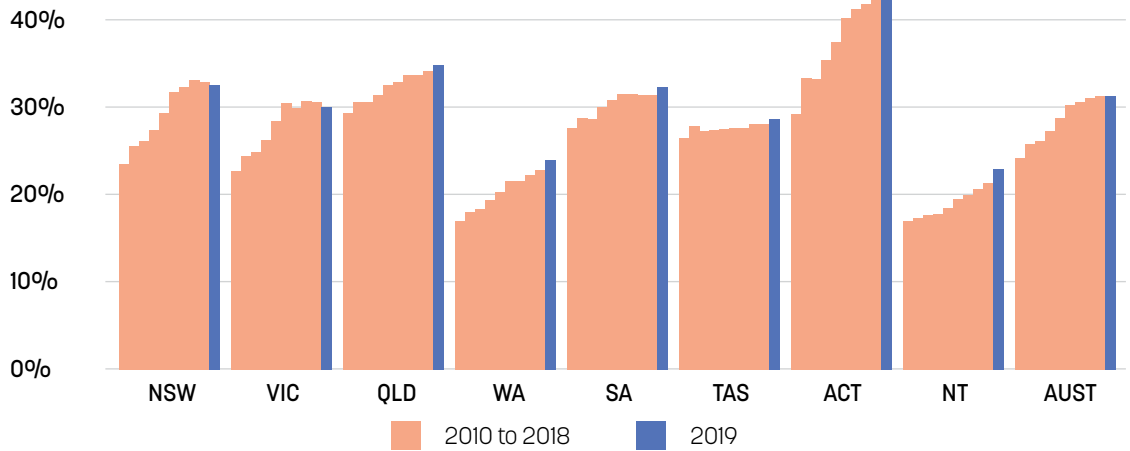
The 2020 Productivity Commission report on childcare services advocates lower costs for parents but points to 'significant variation' in fees associated with accreditation, wages, land values and rental costs. The federal government now wants the Commission to canvass new strategies for improving the system.

Nationally in 2019, 31.5% of children aged 0-12 years attended Australian Government Child Care

Subsidy (CCS) approved child care up from 24.2% in 2010 (see graph below). That translates to about a million children aged between nought and 12 years who are enrolled in some sort of formal care, when Australians are not in lockdown. The majority (64.7 %) of attendees are aged 0-5 years, over half (58.8 %) receive centre based day care and over one-third (36.6%) receive an OSHC (out of school hours care) service.

## Proportion of children aged 0-12 years who are attending Australian Government CCS approved child care services

Data are comparable (subject to caveats) across jurisdictions and over time  
Data are complete (subject to caveats) for the current reporting period



Source: Australian Government Department of Education (unpublished); ABS 2019, Quarterly Population Estimates (ERP), by State/Territory, Sex and Age, ABS.Stat Beta; table 3A. 15.

During the pandemic there was a brief period of free childcare, but it was one of the first relief packages to be wound back. Was this a missed opportunity for the Government to introduce this support on a permanent basis and generate significant long-term increases in female participation and economic growth?

With Australia's population likely to grow more slowly because of limited immigration and a declining birth rate, any proposals to lift productivity during and beyond the 'new COVID-19 normal' should focus on giving parents the childcare flexibility they have been asking for.

Getting parents back into the workforce will be critical to Australia's economic success and to the wellbeing of all Australian citizens.

Freeing parents to contribute to the nation's recovery, and to take care of their families, must involve some serious rethinking of approaches to childcare policy from both sides of politics.

A major disincentive for women returning to the workforce following a career break is the availability of and attitudes towards flexible work and has been an area of seismic shift during 2020. Infrastructure Australia reported that almost a third of Australia’s workforce worked from home during the pandemic, with a third of these hoping to continue post COVID-19.

That’s around 4 million employees who have been working from home since March 2020. Business models have had to change and adapt. In a recent survey<sup>4</sup> the proportion of respondents who wish to work from home once per week or more has grown from 27% prior to COVID-19, to 42% post-COVID-19. Around 15% of respondents would like to increase their level of working from home post COVID-19 compared with pre-COVID-19.

However, while flexible working conditions have improved, women are still shouldering the burden of unpaid work in a relationship, with significant increases in primary care activities and supervisory care for mothers during COVID-19, compared to fathers (see graph below).

The push to a ‘hybrid structure’ that will see a split of working time between the office and home is a hot topic in current business media. AIPM has asked some of our major organisational partners about the shift to working from home during the pandemic, and their views on what the ‘new normal’ will be post pandemic.

**“Working from home is no longer frowned upon but a new normal. Feedback from the team across all age groups is that working from home on a majority basis would not be something they would want to do. What I’ve found is the need for a mixture. It will change from person to person and, in our line of work as project managers, it will change from week to week. Placing boundaries around work time and home life was consistently touted as more difficult during the COVID lockdown. It comes down to working from where you will be most productive to undertake the tasks you are working on that day.”**

**Anna Broughton**  
Director, NS Group

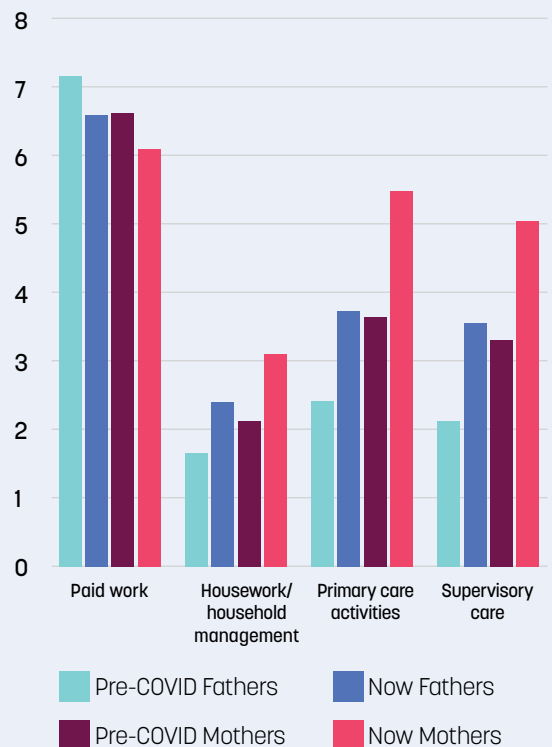
<sup>4</sup> L.E.K. Consumer Survey (November 2020; N=1,531); Property Council of Australia - July 2020 Office Market Report; ABC; ABS; CBRE

**“COVID-19 has shown that people can still connect and be productive remotely. In some ways it has increased collaboration and connection. It has also increased empathy and understanding as we support one another through this crisis. We have gained a greater insight and appreciation of our colleagues and the different situations we all experience. We are careful to promote flexible working as a benefit for everyone, not just for parents or carers. We can all have agency over how we work, our experience of work and our ability to integrate work with other commitments and interests in our lives.”**

**Penny Rush**  
Diversity & Inclusion Manager  
ANZ, Aurecon

## Unpaid work hours by couples in a relationship

University of Melbourne Survey unpaid work by gender before and during COVID-19



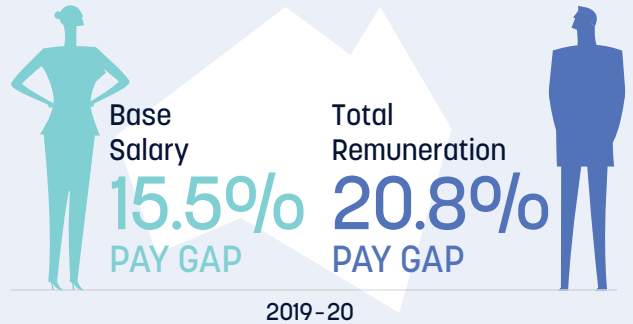


# Gender Pay Gap

**In the overall workforce, women earn significantly less than men.**

The gap widens for total remuneration when superannuation, bonuses and other additional payments are factored in.

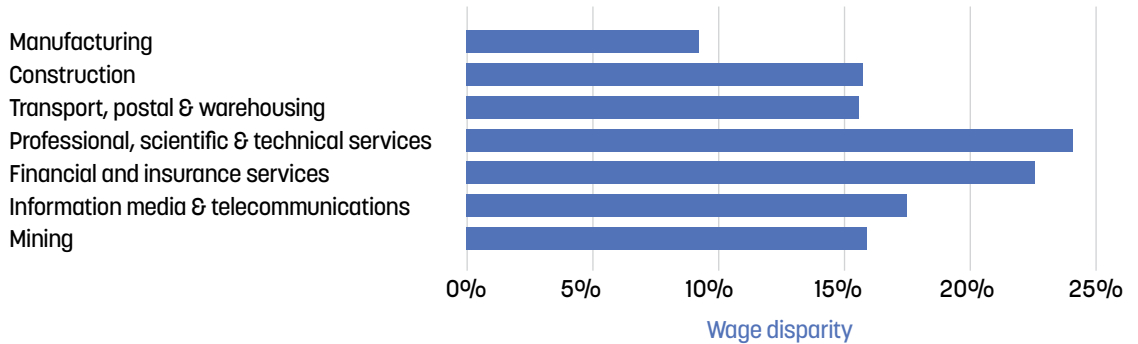
National pay gap for base salary: the difference between women's and men's average weekly full-time base salary, as a percentage of men's salary.



Source: WGEA August 2020. Among non-public sector bodies with 100 or more employees.

But the gap is not the same in every industry. The below chart shows how industries with a significant representation of project-based organisations compares to the measure for all industries.

## Gender pay gap by industry



Source ABS, Financy and Deloitte Access Economics, June 2020

Wage disparity starts at the beginning of professional careers, with the median undergraduate starting salaries for women being 4.9% less than for men. For postgraduate (coursework) the gap is much bigger, with women graduates salaries being 14.4% less than for men [QILT, 2019].

**While the pay gap has been closing, at the current rate, the timeframe to economic equality (i.e. parity) stands at around 32 years.<sup>5</sup>**

**According to AIPM's latest member survey (February 2021), only 33% of female respondents said they earned \$150k or more versus 57% of male respondents.**

## How NS Group addressed the gender pay gap

When Anna Broughton commenced a management position at NS Group, she quickly learned that there were some gender pay gaps.

"I also realised that this was not an intentional position for our company," explains Broughton. "It had simply been a culmination of our female team members not pushing for pay rises in the same way that their male counterparts did."

According to Broughton this was a straightforward

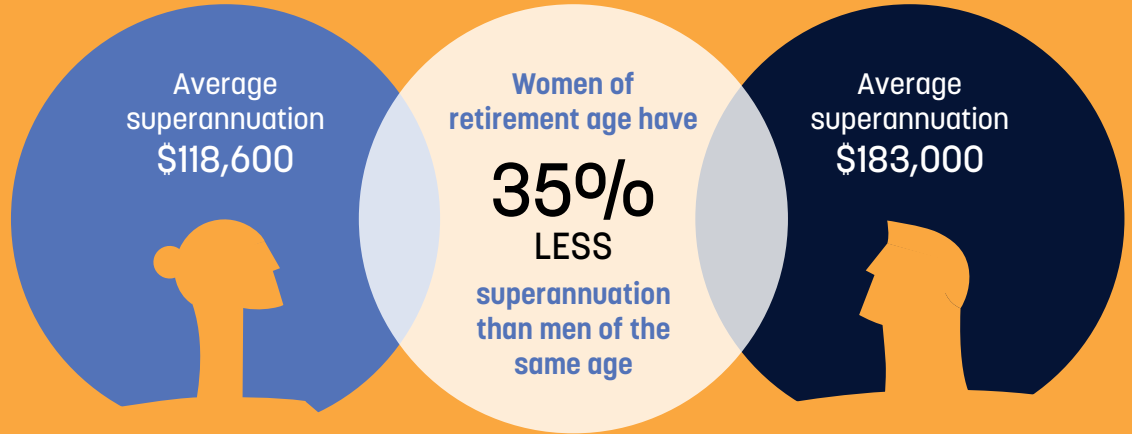
thing to address, but a light needed to be shone on the issue and some changes made. "The task was a simple comparison one, of people in equivalent positions and I would imagine that if other companies undertook the same review, the results would be similar."

"I can very happily say that throughout our entire group, across all levels, there's no gender pay gap from Assistant Project Manager through to Board Director," adds Broughton.

<sup>5</sup> Financy 2020 September Qtr Report

# Superannuation Gap

Superannuation debate is currently on whether to stop the legislated increase in Superannuation Guarantee to 12%. The argument being this disproportionately advantages the wealthy and not those who are in need.



Source ABS Sept 2018.  
Note: Age group: 55-64. Does not include self-managed superannuation which has higher balances, making the gap wider still.

Last financial year, during the early phase of the pandemic, the Federal Government allowed eligible individuals adversely financially affected by COVID-19 to apply for early access to their superannuation of up to \$10,000. ATO figures show that 300,000 more men than women accessed

their superannuation under this scheme, taking out \$3.1 million more funds. One of the reasons given for there being so many more male than female withdrawals is to do with the larger balances of men compared to women. This may in fact narrow the gender gap in superannuation in the future.

## Approved applicants by gender

Applications where gender is not specified <1 or 300. Amounts \$1m

Male applications **56%** or 1.4m

Amounts approved for release

**\$11,625m**



Female applications **44%** or 1.1m

Amounts approved for release

**\$8,510m**

Source ATO.

### AIPM advocates for

- ◆ Legislation that adds a Superannuation Guarantee Contribution to the Government paid parental leave scheme.
- ◆ Legislation that ensures anyone who has been granted early access to their superannuation under the recent Federal Government's scheme is entitled to an enhanced tax concession to make up additional 'catch-up' or 'replacement' contributions to their super.

# Workplace Psychological Safety

The 2020 investigation into former High Court judge Dyson Heydon, put sexual harassment in the workplace back on the front page. It highlighted again the devastating impact of workplace sexual harassment.

The investigation, commissioned by the High Court, found the former judge sexually harassed six young female associates.

This issue has once again been catapulted into the spotlight after recent claims of sexual violence at Parliament House.

According to a 2018 Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) survey, 72% of Australians over 15 have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetimes. In the previous 12 months, 23% of women and 16% of men said they had been harassed at work. Sadly, 79% of sexual harassment incidents involved one or more male perpetrators and 40% of sexual harassment

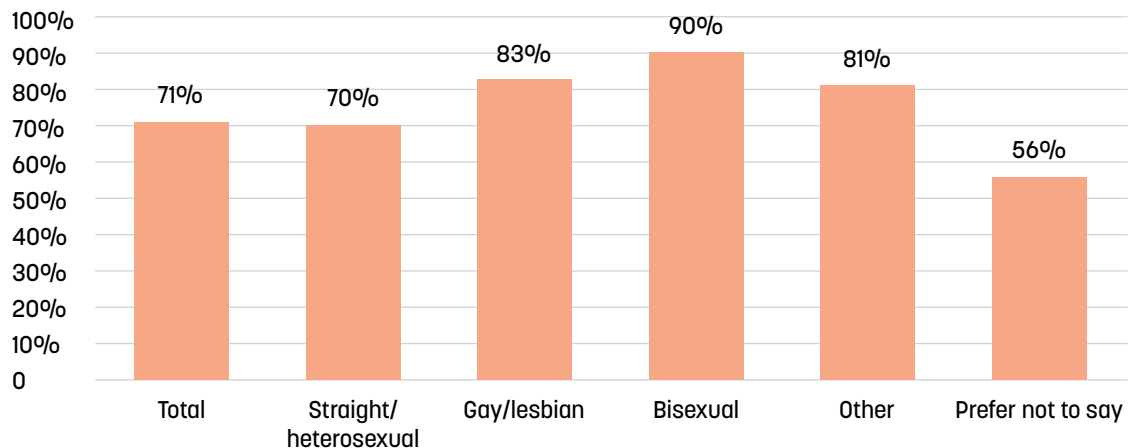
incidents were witnessed by another person, a majority of whom (69%) did not intervene.

Organisations play a vital role in providing a safe working environment through initiatives, such as domestic and family violence policies.

## AIPM advocates for

Organisations to ensure their workplace culture results in a safe environment for all employees.

## Prevalence of lifetime sexual harassment by sexual orientation



Source: Australian Human Rights Commission 2018.

## How Aurecon supports diversity in the workplace

Aurecon is one of only 119 organisations in Australia to be named an Employer of Choice through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and it is also one of only 35 Inclusive Employers, as named by the Diversity Council of Australia.

According to Penny Rush, Diversity & Inclusion Manager at Aurecon, diversity can't be achieved without an inclusive culture. "Some of our leading policies that drive diversity are our inclusive parental leave, flexible working, domestic and family violence policies. We frame our continual cultural transformation towards inclusion through leadership, policies and behaviours."

"We have an annual Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Plan, which highlights objectives and activities for inclusion and for our diversity pillars. D&I is an integral part of our organisational strategy (which we call our Blueprint) and we hold training and awareness events throughout the year," adds Rush.

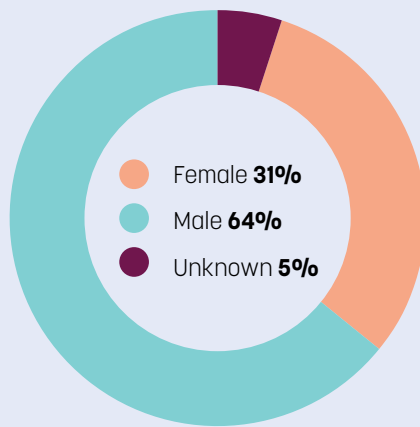
# Project Manager Pipeline

To meet growing demand for project managers, and the increasing professionalisation of the project manager role, we have seen a corresponding growth of project management courses across Higher Education, Vocational Training and the Short Course sectors. AIPM currently endorses over 90 such education programs.

People undertaking these courses represent the pipeline of people moving into the project profession, and it is this pipeline that effects how many women will be entering the profession in the coming years.

AIPM's growing student membership is currently 31% female, compared to the overall membership which is 23% women.

## Gender split of AIPM student members as at 31 Dec 2020



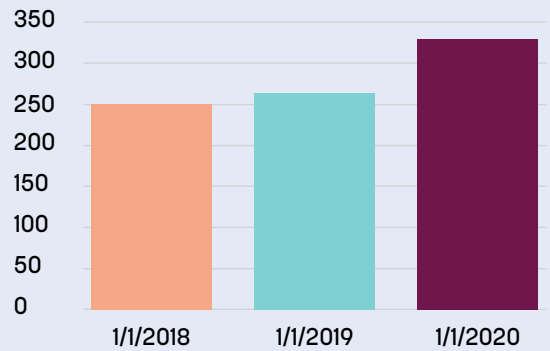
On the basis of the student pipeline gender split, where we have 31% female membership, AIPM should expect to see a continued increase over the next 7 years, in the proportion of its member base being female, reaching 30% by that time.

AIPM recognises:

- 1) the push by governments and other communities to encourage women to study STEM subjects, and careers.
- 2) Australia's strong and persistent bias for both industry and occupational segregation, which will be slow to change.

AIPM concludes that the fastest way to grow the number of women in project management is by bringing the project management discipline to more female dominated industries.

## AIPM student members

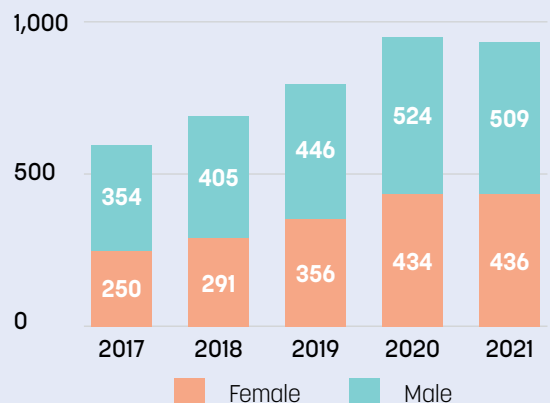


According to Anna Broughton from NS Group the intake of students to the appropriate university degrees could be improved. "Expanding the number of high school-aged children who are aware of project management, what it is and the pathways that lead into it, may help to bring more people into our profession."

Project Management Course providers' student gender profiles range from 20% women at Western Sydney University, where the school is linked to the School of Engineering, Design & Built Environment, to 30% at Edith Cowan University, in the School of Business and Law to 40% at Southern Cross University where project management is in the School of Business and Tourism.

The University of Sydney has recently created Project Management as a separate school, so it will be interesting to monitor if this will increase the number of women. While male students still dominate in undergraduate studies at this university, with 35.5% being female, it is a different story for post graduate courses, where 57.3% of students were female in 2020. Overall the gender profile at Sydney University was 45.3% of project management students being female in 2020.

## The gender profile of Sydney University students



[As at March 2021]

## Organisational Partners



## Organisational Members



## Academic Partners & Members



