WOMEN IN MALE DOMINATED AREAS: CROSS INDUSTRY BARRIERS AND INTERVENTIONS

PROGRAM

Report by: Tradeswomen Australia & Collective Impact Consulting

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to review the cross-industry blockers that are preventing the engagement, recruitment, and retention of women in male-dominated domains to collate best practice models that can be utilised to increase female participation within the civil construction & electrical industries. It will also work to determine interventions that have been successfully implemented to provide long term gender equality within specific industries.

INTRODUCTION

Many male-dominated industries have completed in-depth research papers and studies over the last 10 years focused on looking at key barriers for women to engage in these industries.

By reviewing these studies & reports and compiling key findings along with consulting with associations and committees set up to support women in male-dominated fields it is hoped this data can be used to inform strategies focused on increasing the engagement, recruitment, and retention of women.

Using the learning and insights strategies that are robust and evidence-based can then be developed and implemented across other male-dominated industries to drive gender equality, diversity and increase participation.

Civil construction and electrical industries have seen a stable engagement base of 3% for women within apprenticeship and trade-based roles over the last 10 years with the gender pay gap widening as many of the roles filled by women are entry level and the opportunity for women to progress is limited.

It should be noted that industries such as defence and finance which have been for working on gender equality for longer periods have slightly different barriers due to the age population of their workforce. Where industries begin to bring young women into entry and apprentice level positions it would be expected that they will face the barriers of motherhood, lack of career progression and discrimination due to maternity leave. Learning should be taken from these industries and proactive measures put in place to mitigate them.

OVERALL SOCIETAL CONTEXT

Overall Societal context is seen as a driving factor across a range of industry-specific reports showing consistent themes of discrimination, bias, and barriers.

Societal expectations of roles can also influence participation in careers and careers more generally. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows childcare remains the biggest barrier to women either entering the workforce or working more hours. This also derives from the traditional notion of the male breadwinner which has long underpinned childcare policies.

Although many workplaces are offering equal access to parental leave, rates of usage by fathers/ partners are very low, which reduces the opportunity to break down gender stereotypes.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) found half of all mothers reported experiencing pregnancy or return to work discrimination in the workplace. Over a quarter (27%) of partners experienced discrimination related to parental leave and return to work despite taking only short periods of leave.

The AHRC found this discrimination had a tangible effect on women's workforce participation: 32% of women who experienced discrimination looked for another job or resigned. Additionally, 18% of mothers surveyed reported they were made redundant or their jobs were restructured, were dismissed, or their contract was not renewed during their pregnancy, when they requested or took parental leave, or when they returned to work. Women returning from parental leave also often receive reduced earnings compared to before their leave period. Women face other forms of discrimination, particularly in male-dominated workplaces.

Taking career breaks or working part-time to accommodate caring responsibilities generates stereotypes and myths about women's lack of ability and career aspirations, which are then used to justify the actions of organisations that exclude women from recruitment and development activities. No evidence exists to show women are less committed to their careers, yet women who do choose to take career breaks and work part-time are likely to be disadvantaged by the traditional notion of an uninterrupted career to achieve progression.

In Australia in 2016, one in five university students (21%) were sexually harassed in a university setting. Women were three times as likely as men to have been sexually assaulted, and almost twice as likely as men to have been sexually harassed 48. Earlier research has also shown that most victims of sexual harassment include, but are not exclusively, young women, women on part-time or contract-based work and women in nontraditional jobs.

Women who start their own businesses face difficulties in gaining funding. According to Westpac data, 51.3% of women faced gender bias when starting or running a small business, compared to 18% of men. Women are also more likely (57.3%) to face financial restraints than men (33.3%).

Australia has made some progress towards gender equity, however at the leadership level that progress has stalled or, in some areas, regressed. For progress to be made and momentum regained, everyone needs to be involved.

Implementing programs to create a more inclusive organisation or community can be complex and occasionally meet resistance and backlash. This negative reaction could be caused by a lack of understanding, change fatigue, industry and/or cultural norms, or fear of 'losing' opportunities as a result of the change in diversity. Until gender equity is seen as a benefit for all, progress will remain slow and Australia will not reap the economic and societal benefits.

92% of parents believe that boys and girls should be treated equally. But despite our best intentions, even before a child is born, and then continuing throughout childhood, our world can expect certain things of them, because of their gender.

WOMEN IN STEM (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH)

Gender inequality in STEM is complex and multi-dimensional meaning solutions must necessarily also be complex, multi-faceted and targeted across the policy, structural and workplace levels. Association Groups such as Women in Tech, the National Committee on Women in Engineering & Women in Science Australia all have key strategies and focuses on Female career options (influencers), Gender Advocacy, Recruitment practices, Psychological safety.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Conscious and unconscious bias in decision-making and recruitment
- 59.0 percent agreed or strongly agreed that in their occupation, women have to prove themselves where men are assumed to be capable

Bias in career-building activities
- 16.5 percent of survey respondents said their employer was rarely or never proactive in ensuring that men and women had an equal opportunity to career advancement.

Indirect policy discrimination
- 25.0 percent of respondents said their employer did not have strategies in place to implement policies relating to diversity and discrimination

Career disruption and return to work
- 68.5 percent of survey respondents said taking maternity leave had been detrimental to their career.

Sexual harassment
- 26.8 percent of STEM respondents reported that they had been sexually harassed in the course of their employment

Gender stereotypes that undermine respect and recognition
- 39.6 percent said that in their workplace, advice or information of a technical nature was less likely to be listened to if provided by a woman than a man.

"Organisations with greater diversity have greater retention, higher levels of employee advocacy, overall better performance and faster growth"

INTERVENTIONS

Systemic and individual biases, both conscious and unconscious
 - Education on community gendered stereotypes of careers/roles
 - Encouraged encouragement of the participation high school girls in maths and sciences
 - Increased workplace flexibility (parental leave, flexible work arrangements)
 - Change of imagery used when promoting STEM careers

Lack of female role models
 - Increased representation of women in leadership roles in industry and academia
 - Increased visibility of those that are in leadership
 - Mentoring and support opportunities provided to women

Employer and Leadership intervention required
 - Commitment to make diversity an explicit, strategic priority
 - Implementation of employer of choice initiatives

Government intervention required
 - Raising awareness through educators of the range and nature of careers
 - Supporting development of contemporary STEM curricula
 - Promoting women role models including the selection of women for senior leadership roles on

WOMEN IN BANKING & FINANCE

Many reviews of the global financial crisis led the financial service sector to question whether the industry might have been less prone to disaster if the male-dominated leadership had been more diverse. From this stemmed a series of initiatives that have already had a material impact on the gender makeup of the sectors leadership and mid-management personnel.

Although the banking and financial sectors have a long way to go to achieve parity within roles there has been a range of initiatives that have been implemented to support the recruitment of women. Finding from the research and feedback from both Women in Finance and Women in Banking show that there is still a deeply ingrained cultural issue that impacts the retention of women particularly through motherhood.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Across studies completed across the banking and finance sector, women reported strong levels of self-confidence. More than 80% of the women working in FS are confident about their ability to lead and to fulfill their career aspirations and over 60% say they have negotiated (proactively pursued/ proposed) promotion in the past two years. Although more than half believed their diversity status adversely affected their career progression "54% of women in Financial Service believe that an employee's gender, ethnicity, age can be a barrier to career progression in their organisation"

There are clear concerns for women within both banking and finance around the impact having children will have on their career with 53% reporting that are worried about the impact. After taking parental/maternity leave nearly 60% of new mothers across both banking and finance to feel they've been overlooked for career advancing opportunities (e.g., promotions, special projects, etc.) after returning to work. Most women in financial services report that flexible working is available, many women believe that flexibility still carries a stigma that could harm their careers.

As with all male-dominated industries, there is a high level of women reporting bullying and harassment in the workplace with 43% of women stating they have experienced inappropriate language, insults or bullying, 36% have faced sexual innuendos or sexual harassment and 28% have been the victim of physical harassment.

"Women have to work harder to climb the corporate ladder and to stay at the top. Women will benefit from having career coaches and mentors to help them sort out their priorities."

INTERVENTIONS

Women across the studies all reported 3 key areas of focus for intervention:

Employer education:

Provide skills assessments to help employees understand the strengths and development areas.

Clear and defined career plans

Provide a clear definition of organisational roles, levels and promotion criteria to help employees understand what is expected at the next level for promotion.

Create fair and transparent promotion and appraisal processes.

Culture change and awareness programs:

Invest in training and continuing education programs for employees.

Change workplace culture to support equal opportunity for progression (e.g., track key metrics aligned to diversity objectives).

WOMEN IN IT

While ensuring a strong supply of work-ready IT graduates from universities is critical and many of the interventions and funding initiatives currently in place focus on this end of the pipeline. There is however still a requirement to remove the obstacles, barriers, and biases which create disadvantage and operate as disincentives for women to remain in the IT workforce at the enterprise level as equally important.

Women continue to be seriously underrepresented in the IT workforce. Females account for only 25 percent of those with post-secondary IT qualifications in Australia. Female participation in the IT labour force is also lower than across other occupations with a participation rate of only 28 percent of IT workers compared to 45 percent across all professional industries.

Due to a combination of factors including lack of pay parity, a culture of reward for working long hours, reskilling after a career break, lack of industry commitment to training and retraining, fewer female colleagues, fewer female mentors, persistent stereotypes of IT professionals as male and bias in advancement and development, the ICT workforce loses female employees at much higher rates than it loses their male counterparts.

Women in Tech outline the key priorities for the next three years as part of their strategic plan. These priority areas; understanding of female career options (for influencers), Gender Advocacy, review of recruitment practices and the psychological safety of female workers in IT.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Each of these factors applies to women in the IT workforce. While many of the barriers that face professional women in IT are not unique to IT, they can be exacerbated by:
- The historical stereotyping of IT professionals as predominantly male or masculine;
- Workplace cultures and unconscious bias in IT which directly or indirectly create a disadvantage for women; and
- The rapid pace of deskilling and the subsequent significant impact of taking a career break for child-rearing.

Key Statistics
71.4 % of female respondents to the 2018 IT Professionals Australia Employment and Remuneration Survey Report said they had experienced bias or discrimination based on gender in the previous three years.
16.5 % of survey respondents said their employer was rarely or never proactive in ensuring that men and women had an equal opportunity to career advancement.
56% said a lack of role models was a significant or moderate obstacle to their career advancement
48% said they believed working part-time had negatively impacted their career.
68.5% of survey respondents said taking maternity leave had been detrimental to their career.

INTERVENTIONS

Systemic and individual biases, both conscious and unconscious
 - Increased workplace flexibility.
 - Change of imagery used when promoting STEM careers.

Lack of female role models
 - Increased representation of women in leadership roles in industry and academia.
 - Increased visibility of those that are in leadership.
 - Mentoring and support opportunities provided to women.

Government intervention required
 - Raising awareness through educators of the range and nature of careers.
 - Supporting the development of contemporary STEM curricula.
 - Promoting women role models including the selection of women for senior leadership roles on.

"If you think women in tech is just a pipeline problem, you haven't been paying attention .. Because of the high attrition rate for women working in tech, teaching more girls and women to code is not enough to solve this problem."

WOMEN IN DEFENCE

The defence force has implemented many strategic initiatives to improve gender diversity and inclusion in the Australian Defence Force.

The defence force has made significant increases in the proportion of women in the Australian Defence Force and each Service (Navy, Army and Air Force) since the inaugural Women in the Australian Defence Force Report in 2013. In 2017–18, women made up 17.9 per cent of the Australian Defence Force workforce—an increase of 3.5 percentage points from 2013. Increasing female representation will continue to improve capability and ensure the Australian Defence Force workforce is representative of the Australian community. The Australian Defence Force has especially targeted recruitment into employment roles where women are under-represented, such as the Combat and Security occupational group and the Engineering, Technical and Construction occupational group. Following these recruitment efforts, the proportion of women in every occupational group is slowly increasing.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Women currently make up 17.9% of the Australian Defence Force workforce. Women have served in Australian armed forces since 1899. Women were integrated into the services during the late 1970s and early 1980s, but were not allowed to apply for combat roles until 2013. Women can now serve in all positions in the Australian Defence Force, including the special forces.

The inclusion of women in these roles along with publicly reported targets to engage, recruit and retain women

All of the services (Navy, Army, Air Force) has set female participation targets to be achieved by 2023. These are 25 per cent for the Navy, 15 per cent for the Army and 25 per cent for the Air Force

The Australian Defence Force was not sufficiently prepared for integrating women into all units. Integration was hindered by entrenched discriminatory attitudes, sexual harassment and a perception that less demanding standards were applied to women. This led to several of scandals, including allegations of sexual harassment on board HMAS Swan, and the RAN's mishandling of these complaints. The Defence Equality Organisation was established in 1997 in response to these problems, and it developed frameworks to facilitate the acceptance of women throughout the Australian Defence Force.

"The number one priority... with respect to recruitment is increasing our diversity; with a focus on women and Indigenous Australians... My aim is that women will make up 25% of the Army – based on analysis of best practice across like work environments globally (military and appropriately related industries). I want and need the Army to benefit from the full talent of the other half of our citizens."

INTERVENTIONS

A range of initiatives implemented for both men and women within the Australian Defence Force has supported a strategic growth of women in male-dominated roles along with an overall improvement in workplace culture.

The Australian Defence Force asset ongoing Key Performance Indicators which they report publicly on at the end of each financial year.

FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS: Defence has implemented workforce management initiatives to assist members of both genders to balance work and personal commitments. Women use flexible work arrangements more than men, but men's use of these arrangements is steadily increasing over time. The Total Workforce Model provides a more enduring form of flexible employment, and women and men access these at similar rates.

TARGETED RECRUITMENT: Progression towards reaching critical mass in identified employment categories. Female representation has increased in all occupational groups. Women are still over-represented in health and logistics roles and underrepresented in combat and engineering roles.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT: Efforts to ensure that more women have opportunities to reach leadership positions. Women access development opportunities at the same rate as men. The defence force has implemented many mentoring, networking and sponsorship initiatives and continues to expand the reach of these.

MARKETING AND ROLE MODELS: The Services use female role models in media campaigns to provide potential candidates with an insight into the nontraditional career opportunities available to women. Targeted recruitment models and media campaigns also present the Australian Defence Force as an attractive career option.

"There is an obvious the need to have a 'critical mass' of women in some specialisations within the Australian Defence Force and to provide adequate social and psychological support to women to enable them to reach their potential"

WOMEN IN SPORT

The motivations behind female sporting participation are extensive and varied and what sways and influences one woman at one time does not necessarily affect another.

There are many barriers to female involvement in sport, including time pressures, body image concerns, disapproval among some cultural groups, family responsibilities and financial cost. Programs implemented to mitigate the barriers need to address each of these issues and more, both in sport and its more informal physical counterpart, exercise.
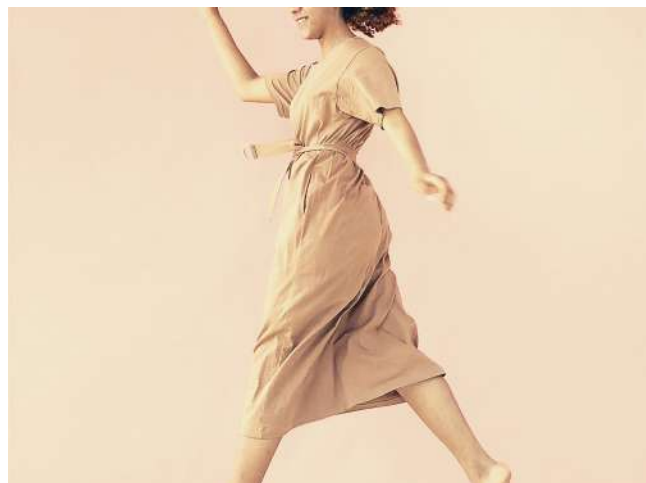
Women in Sport have a strategic focus on the ongoing implementation policy and strategy to continue the development of elite career options and gender advocacy within male-dominated sports.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Across male-dominated sports there have been some consistent barriers

ACCESS TO FACILITIES: Women and girls can't play a sport if they can't get access to facilities at suitable times. Too often, sports halls prioritise male sport so that men get facilities at their preferred times, while women have to make do with less convenient times.

LACK OF TIME & ACCESS TO CHILDCARE: Women tend to have less leisure time than men as they take on the greater burden of responsibility for housework, childcare and care of elderly or infirm relatives. Some women, therefore, tend to be reluctant to sign up for anything over an extended period of time, believing it would be selfish to do so.

PERSONAL SAFETY: Personal safety on the streets, on public transport, and in and around sports and community venues is a particular problem for women. Some groups are particularly vulnerable. People with disabilities are often the targets of bullying and abuse. Travelling to and from venues for sports or physical activity can present particular barriers for these groups.
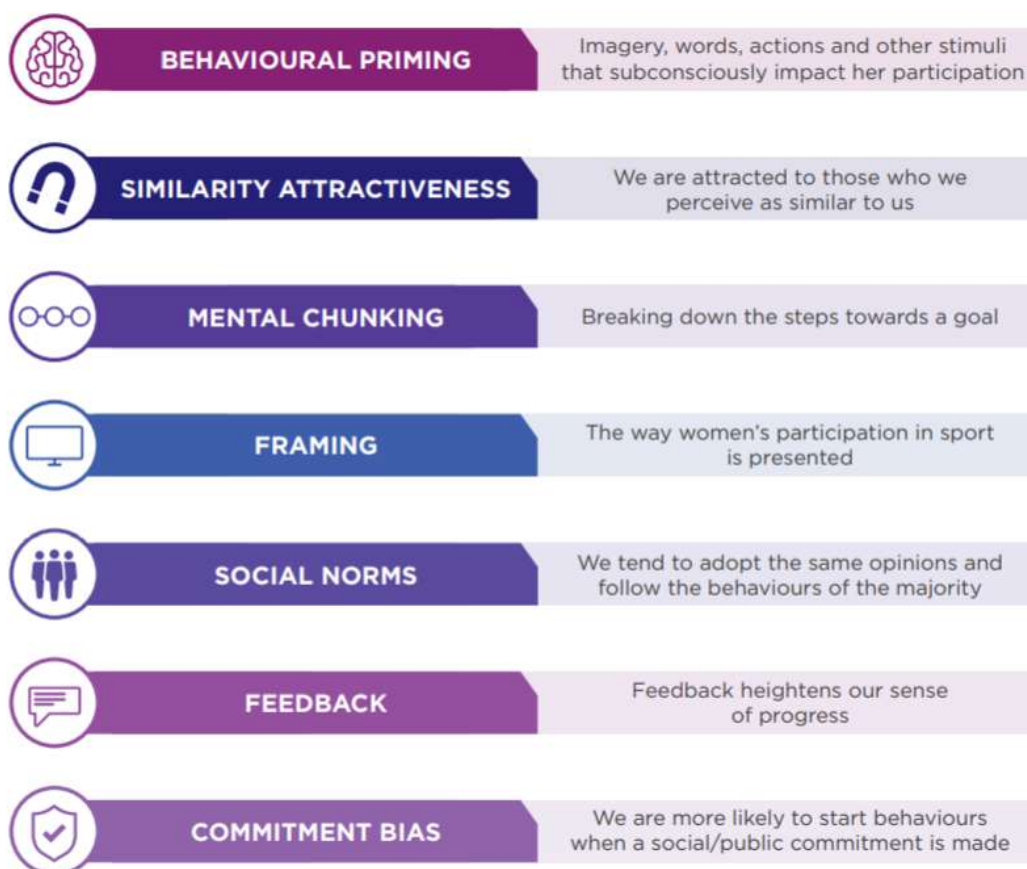
CLOTHING: Clothing and equipment for sports can be expensive. Images of sportspeople can promote the idea that, unless you're dressed in fashionable clothing designed for a particular sport, you'll look out of place. Some sports clothing is also quite revealing, which create problems for women and girls, linked to the issues about body image

PARENTAL & ADULT INFLUENCE: The influence of parents, coaches and other adults affect girls and boys differently. Adolescent females place greater emphasis on self-comparison and comments from adults than do adolescent males, who rely more on competitive outcomes as their basis for personal judgement of physical competence.

"By only focusing on 'role models' rather than 'influencers', there is the potential to obscure a wide range of influencing behaviours that can sway effect decisions and which can be activated to achieve greater impact."

INTERVENTIONS
Understanding the science of behavioural science

BEHAVIOURAL PRIMING	Imagery, words, actions and other stimuli that subconsciously impact her participation	
SIMILARITY ATTRACTIVENESS	We are attracted to those who we perceive as similar to us	
MENTAL CHUNKING	Breaking down the steps towards a goal	
FRAMING	The way women's participation in sport is presented	
SOCIAL NORMS	We tend to adopt the same opinions and follow the behaviours of the majority	
FEEDBACK	Feedback heightens our sense of progress	
COMMITMENT BIAS	We are more likely to start behaviours when a social/public commitment is made	

INFLUENCERS CAN INCLUDE ANYONE AND EVERYONE
The research highlights that it is not just those who are 'sporty' who influence others to participate in sport

INFLUENCERS IMPACT PARTICIPATION BEHAVIOUR
In different ways and in different contexts (e.g. familial/peer, in the local community, in the sports-specific community and in a wider social/cultural way).

THE NEW MODEL OF INFLUENCE, DEVELOPED THROUGH THIS RESEARCH, CAN BE LEVERAGED TO IMPACT ON PARTICIPATION BEHAVIOUR.
The 'sway factors' are complimentary and work best in combination with each other; each factor becomes more transformative at a different point along the behaviour change journey and then continues to impact participation positively

WOMEN'S INFLUENCERS CHANGE OVER TIME AND IN LINE WITH THEIR EVOLVING NEEDS.
Women are diverse and their influencers are strongly affected by the needs associated with particular points along their sports participation behavioural journey and their specific life stage.

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industry and tradespeople
together to create awareness
and support for women working
in the male dominated trade
industry.