

Thursday, 13 August 2026

Gender pay gap at its lowest ever

Australia's gender pay gap is at its lowest on record, according to new ABS data out today.

The data shows the national gender pay gap has fallen from 11.5% to 11.3% over the past six months, driven by wage gains for women in lower paid work, including in the health care sector off the back of key reforms to end the historic practice of undervaluing the work in female dominated occupations.

From early 2026, significant pay increases began being phased in for occupations with majority-women workforce, including dental assistants, pathology collectors and other health professionals.

This follows the significant increases for aged care workers and early childhood education and care workers.

Workplace reforms won by unions, such as paid parental leave and paid family and domestic violence leave, are also boosting women's wages, by supporting women to stay in their jobs and to win higher pay.

Albanese Government reforms banning pay secrecy and expanding access to collective bargaining are among other significant reforms impacting the gender pay gap.

The increase of 4.75% won by unions in this year's Annual Wage Review will also help close the gender pay gap because women make up 60% of Australia's minimum wage and award-reliant workers.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"At this rate of progress, a girl born today could expect the gender pay gap to be eliminated by the time she is 16 years-old and perhaps looking for her first job. But if the previous slow progress under the last Coalition government had continued, a girl born today would need to wait until she was 31 years old to come anywhere near achieving equal pay.

"This is happening because new gender equity laws and record pay rises for workers in undervalued sectors won by unions are having an impact – and not before time.

"Hundreds of thousands of underpaid childhood education and care workers are now being valued properly and getting the first phased historic wage rises as a result.

"Health professionals, like dental assistants and workers in pathology clinics are also beginning to get the wages that they deserve, after a Fair Work Commission ruling late last year, in a landmark case brought by unions.

"Sixty per cent of workers that rely on minimum and award wages are women, and this year's 4.75 per cent increase won by unions started reaching their pay packets from 1 July and will help to close the gender pay gap."

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