

## Provision of Paid Maternity Leave in the Private Sector

Since 2001 EOWA has collected information about the provision of paid maternity leave. The data is collected through a telephone survey between the months of May and September each year. The sample size is statistically significant with on average 2,500 employers surveyed annually.

**Figure 1: Provision of paid maternity leave**

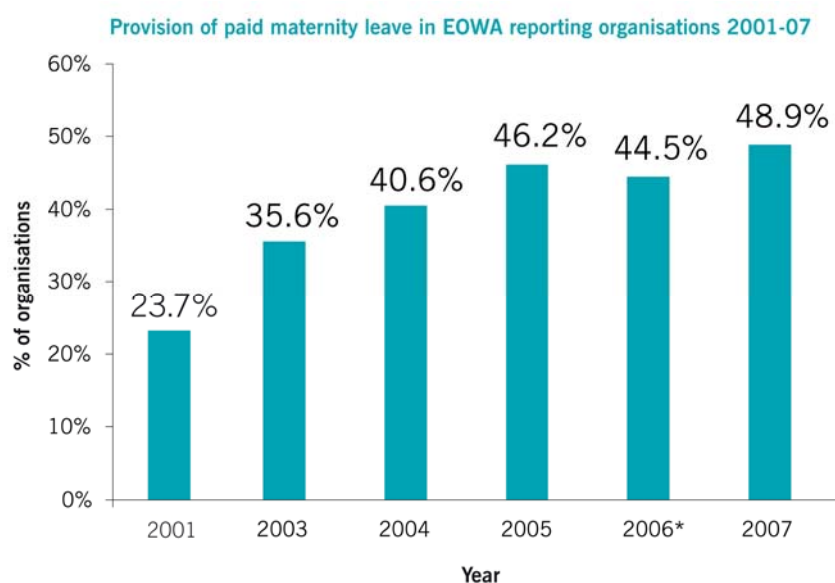


Figure 1 shows the increase in the provision of paid maternity leave by private sector organisations with more than 100 employees. There has been a steady rise in the percentage of organisations reporting to EOWA providing paid maternity leave since the Agency started measuring this in 2001. This is with the exception of a small decrease in 2006 which coincides with the ABS statistics for this period.

Despite this significant growth in the provision as a condition of service for many working women, there are still 51.1% of organisations reporting to EOWA which do not provide paid maternity leave.

Figure 2 <sup>1</sup> shows the accessibility of paid maternity leave by sectors reporting to EOWA. Amongst the 51.1% of organisations currently not providing paid maternity leave, many are in sectors that are high employers of women, particularly the Retail, Accommodation and Food Services sectors. These sectors employ nearly a third of the women covered by the EOWW Act (32.3%).

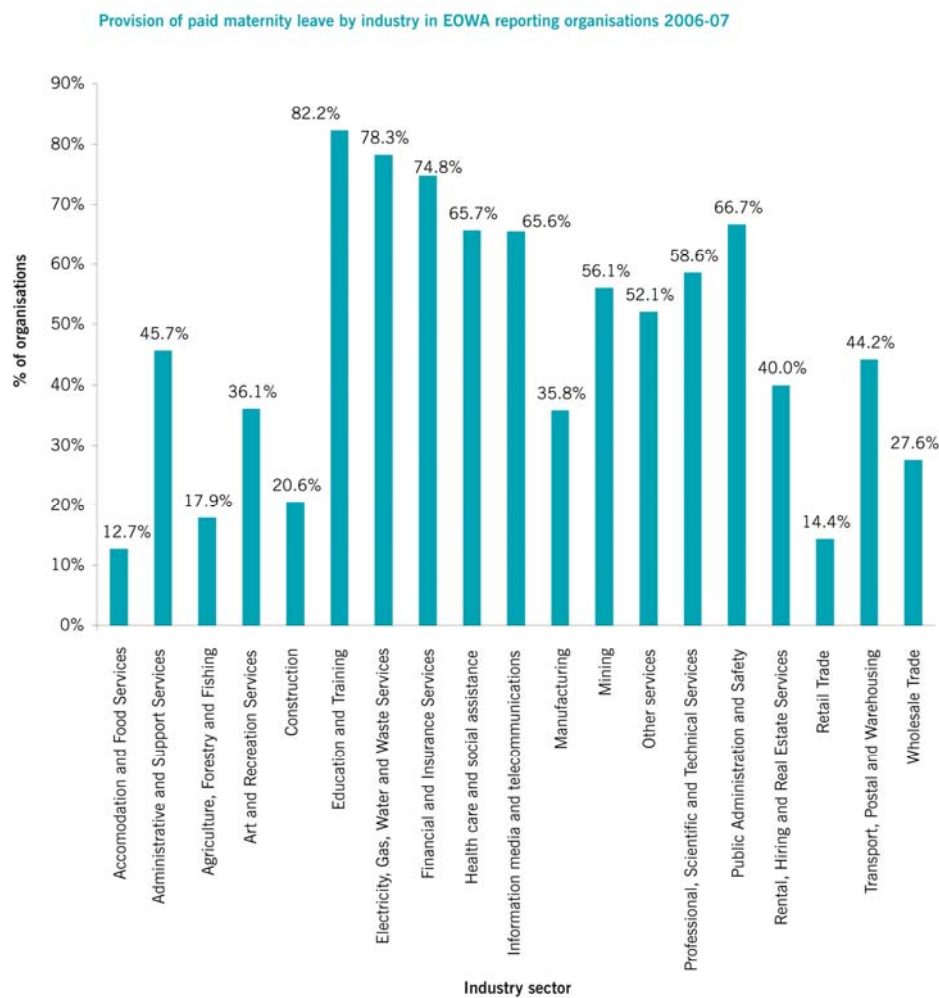
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<sup>1</sup> Figure 2 is skewed by the industries that have very small numbers of organisations in their sector e.g. Electric Gas and Water, Public Admin and Safety, Rental, Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing.

In these highly casualised industries it is most often the case that in organisations that do provide paid maternity leave, many working women would not be able to access the entitlement. For example, Myer’s recent introduction of a paid maternity leave scheme is not accessible by casual or part-time workers, regardless of their length of service with the company.

The concentration of women in sectors not providing paid maternity leave supports the case of a universal scheme.

**Figure 2: Provision of paid maternity leave by Industry**



## **Eligibility of Paid Maternity Leave in the Private Sector**

Eligibility requirements for paid maternity leave vary by organisation and often by employee status.

Not all women employed within an organisation that provides paid maternity leave may have access to the benefit. Casual, part-time and new employees may not be eligible under current policies.

The 2004 EOWA Paid Maternity Leave survey indicated that of the organisations providing paid maternity leave 63% don't make the benefit available to all staff. Of this 63%, 84% confirmed it is not available to casual employees or contractors.

Other disadvantaged groups identified by respondents to the 2004 survey, when asked "which group of employees do not have access to paid maternity leave" were:

- All non-managerial employees – 1%
- Those under a particular award or category – 12%

Given women are located in large numbers in non-managerial positions and are casual or part-time, a universal scheme should not discriminate.

For some employers, like the ANZ bank, there is no minimum requirement of service to access current provisions for paid maternity leave. The known maximum period of service in some other organisations is three years.

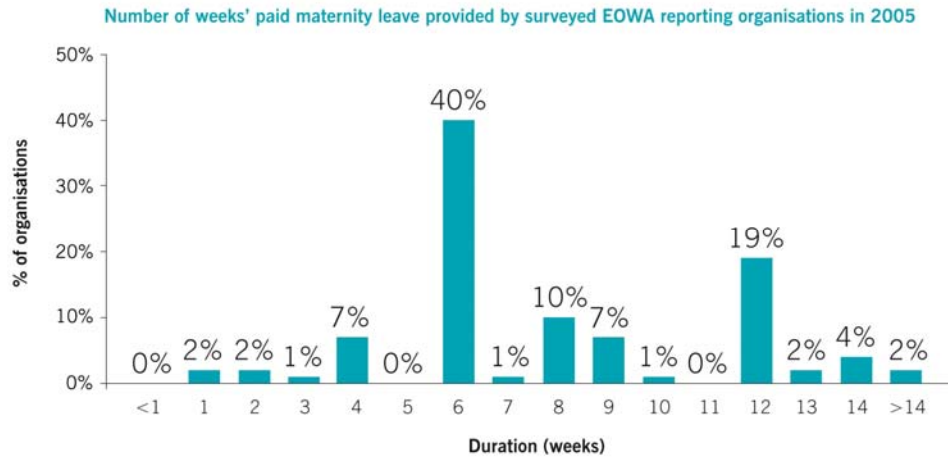
Data collected in 2007 revealed that for small and medium enterprises the percentage of organisations providing paid maternity leave is only 19%.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Better Conditions, Better Business* – A Report on carer and family friendly provisions in Australian small and medium enterprises. Published by The Office for Women, 2007.

## Duration of Benefits in the Private Sector

**Figure 3: Duration of paid maternity leave in 2005**



**Figure 4: Duration of paid maternity leave in 2006 -07**

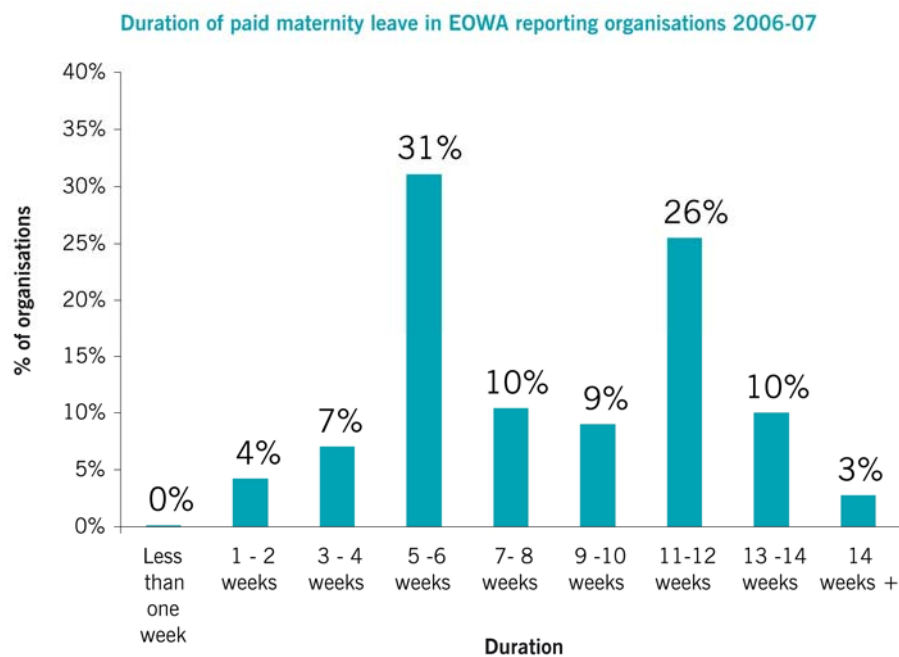


Figure 3 shows the duration of paid maternity leave provided by employers in 2005. Over 85% of employers provided paid leave of six weeks or more.

In 2007, shown in Figure 4, nearly 90% of employers now provide six weeks or more paid maternity leave.

It is interesting to note that organisations providing paid maternity leave have increased the length of this leave over the two year period. Today nearly 40% of organisations provide 12 weeks or more leave, compared to 27% just two years ago.

Significant growth has been in the increase of the percentage of organisations providing 14 weeks, in line with both the International Labour Organisation Convention and the World Health Organisation standard.

In all cases, the rate of benefit is at the individual's salary at time of leave.