



Australian Government

Equal Opportunity for
Women in the Workplace Agency

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GENERATION F: ATTRACT, ENGAGE, RETAIN

Australian workplaces not positioned for productivity: EOWA research

Research released today has uncovered a new generation of workers that will rival Generation Y as the solution to the nation's skills shortage.

The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency's (EOWA) report, *Generation F: Attract, Engage, Retain*, has identified that women aged between 16 and 65 - Generation F - remain significantly overlooked, under utilised and untapped.

Despite record education levels and rising numbers of women entering the labour market, the EOWA research shows that employers are failing to provide workplaces that enable women to fully participate and fuel the growth in the Australian economy.

Two of the five most common reasons for women to leave their previous jobs were a difficulty in progressing (17%) and lack of clear career development (15%), which they rated as extremely important when choosing a workplace. A quarter of women surveyed do not feel that their current employers provide them with a career path and 16% do not believe they are afforded sufficient learning and development opportunities. The research also debunks the myth that women are not as ambitious as men with the majority of both men and women indicating they aspire to a job involving more responsibility.

Despite a shift in focus away from careers and towards families and work life balance by men and women across all income, education and lifestyle groups - workplaces are still not providing the level of flexibility required. 83% of women consider organisational support of work/life balance to be important yet 45% believe their organisations does not genuinely support work/life balance and 42% feel that they do not have access to flexible work conditions. 12% of women were motivated to resign from their previous job in search of greater work/life balance.

Interestingly, while men report being almost as family focussed, this has not translated into an increased demand for family friendly conditions or resulted in men spending additional time on household or caring duties. In fact, more than half of Generation F say their partners do less of the unpaid domestic and caring work than they do and a third state that if they received more help they would be more likely to increase their hours in paid employment.

"Despite both men and women being equally family and work focused, it is clearly still women's career decisions that are impacted by caring responsibilities. Businesses need to make sure that *all* staff – male and female – have a genuine ability to work flexibly, have equal access to training and development and that there is real pay equity before the decisions made in the home about roles and responsibilities can truly be said to be equitable," says EOWA Director. Anna McPhee.

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EOWA's *Generation F* report also showed that men are acutely aware of the barriers that women encounter in the workplace. 25% of women and 21% of men do not believe that women and men are treated equally in their workplace and 43% of women and 46% of men feel that their workplace can be 'bit of a boys club'. Further, over a third of women (36%) and 31% of men recognise that it is difficult for women to balance a career with motherhood. Men are also significantly more likely than women to believe that their workplaces do not appoint women to senior positions, do not provide flexible work conditions and do not have a good record of promoting and supporting women.

7% of women left their last job because of an unfair distribution of pay among employees in the same role and 8% left their job because of bullying and harassment.

"There is a clear discrepancy in what women want and expect from a role and a workplace and what they are experiencing in reality."

"Gender biases and old school attitudes are preventing Generation F's full participation in the workforce. If women's ambition and career plans are recognised and supported they can make a major impact on Australia's productivity at a time when it is widely recognised that we need more hands on deck".

"Addressing the expectations of Generation F and making it possible for all staff to adapt their working lives to their changing life situation is key to overcoming the skills shortage. To start the cultural shift that is required in Australian business, there are some simple inexpensive ways business can attract, engage and retain women."

EOWA's *Generation F* research, sponsored by Hays, involved an extensive qualitative and quantitative study of more than 1600 people (both men and women) across Australia to determine their career aspirations and employer expectations in order to determine the most important issues and understand the experiences of women in the workplace.

[ENDS]

Editor's Note: Generation F publication and background information available for download at:

http://www.eowa.gov.au/information_centres/resource_centre/eowa_publications/Generation_F/Media_Section.asp