mavens

Gender Diversity Study

An independent inquiry into the
state of equality in Australia's advertising
and media industries.

The standard that you walk past

is the standard that you **accept.**

FOREWORD

The world we live in does not champion girls and women, and at the current trajectory it will be 101 years until we have gender equality in Australia (1).

This became glaringly obvious to me during the COVID-19 lock-down of 2020. Part time and casual jobs were the first to go, largely held by women balancing care roles. Women with bachelor degrees were reported to have lost work in greater numbers than men, and lack of childcare and paid parental leave is an ongoing issue. The government has failed to address these inequalities and continues to let women down at federal and state level.

This inequality filters through to the workplace, and the advertising and media industries are no exception.

Women represent 56% of agency employees, yet only 27% of agency leadership – approximately 1 in 4 (2). Which is contributing to a gender pay gap of between 23% for media agencies and 25% for advertising agencies (3).

1. Financy Women's Index
2. Advertising Council Australia Salary Survey (2021)
3. B&T and Honeycomb Strategy (2019)

I believe that the standard that you walk past is the standard you accept. That's why I launched Mavens, an online publication to champion women in advertising and media. Mavens is completely independent, so this study is unbiased and unfiltered. Yes, the content is upsetting – but my hope is that it will galvanise you to become an ally for greater diversity within our industry.

It's time we championed women properly, especially woman from culturally diverse backgrounds. Respect isn't enough. We need to invest in women's professional development, provide mentorship, offer the best opportunities, enter them in awards, increase their visibility, be flexible with their work arrangements and celebrate their wins. And for chrissakes, pay them what they're worth.

Leah Morris,
19 May 2021

SECTION 1:

PARTICIPANTS SNAPSHOT

TOTAL RESPONDENTS: 238

AGE

18-25

26%

26-35

56%

36-45

12%

46-55

5%

65+

-1%

GENDER

MALE

13%

FEMALE

87%

OTHER

-1%

CREATIVE

22%

MARKETING

31%

STUDIO

2%

PRODUCTION

5%

DEPARTMENT

CLIENT SERVICES

13%

OTHER

18%

MANAGEMENT

8%

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

0-12mnths —————○————— **7%**

1-2yrs —————○————— **18%**

3-5yrs —————○————— **31%**

5-8yrs —————○————— **19%**

9-15yrs —————○————— **19%**

16+ —————○————— **6%**
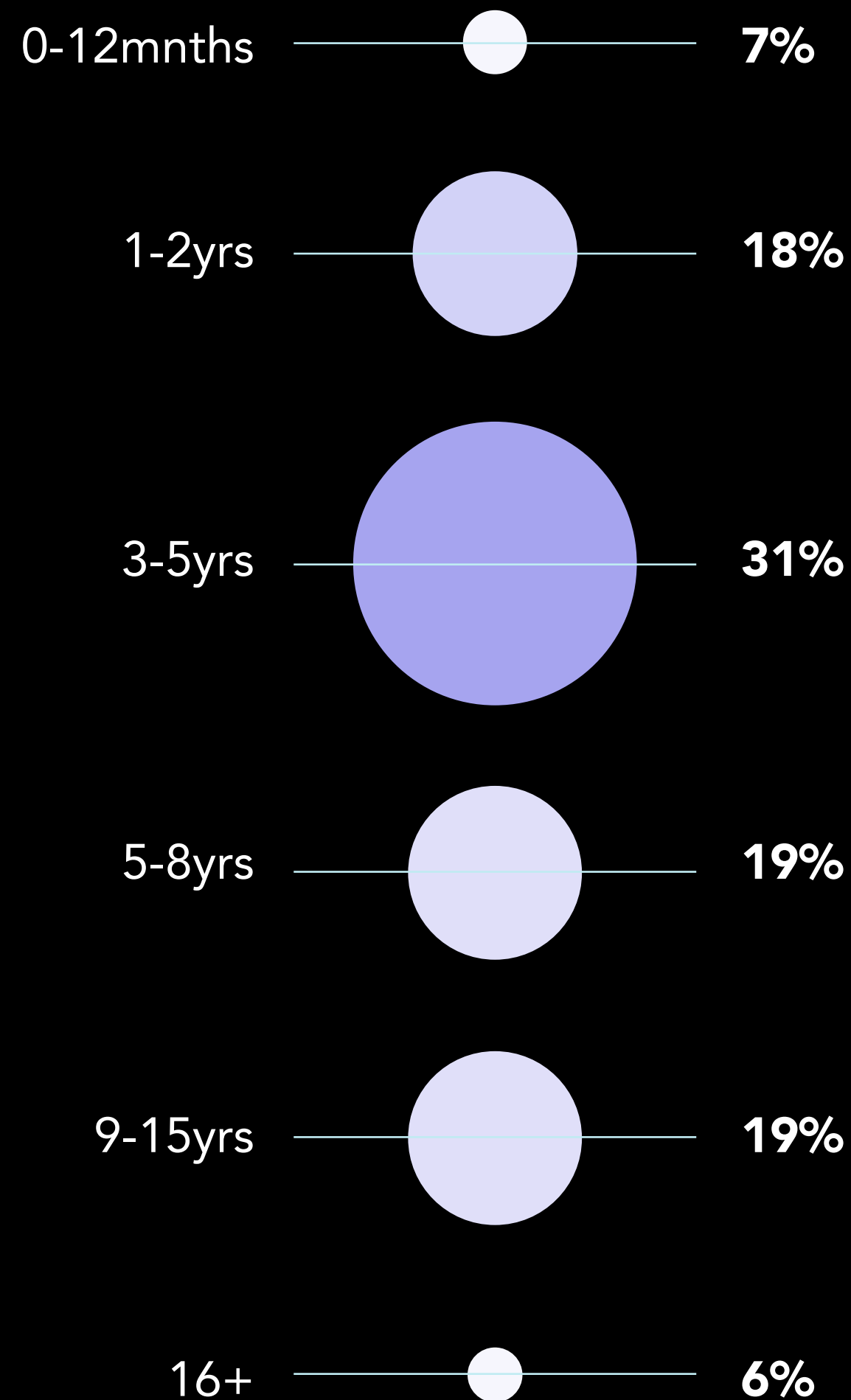
CULTURAL IDENTIFIERS

CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD)

10%

ABORIGINAL OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

0%

LIVING WITH A DISABILITY

5%

LGBTQI+

11%

NONE OF THE ABOVE

74%

WORKPLACE EQUITY

When describing their workplaces, common words and phrases were:

GOSSIPY

TOXIC

DRAMATIC

BACKSTABBING

CULTURE OF OVERTIME

BULLYING

AGEIST

PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE

EMOTIONALLY MANIPULATIVE

SUPERIORITY
COMPLEXES

BOYS' CLUB

GASLIGHTING

CLIQUEY

WHITE

SEXIST

Would you describe your current workplace as inclusive and diverse?

YES

58%

NO

35%

NOT APPLICABLE

6%

Do you consider advertising and media to be equal opportunity industries?

NOT AT ALL	NOT REALLY	KIND OF	YEAH, I GUESS	ABSOLUTELY
8%	**35%**	**32%**	**21%**	**4%**

On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 100 (totally) how respected do you feel at work?

74/100
ON AVERAGE

**Do you have
a mentor
who supports
your career
development?**

YES

48%

NO

52%

Do you think you are fairly remunerated for the work you do?

YES
46%

NO
54%

SECTION 3:

WORKPLACE
SAFETY

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN BULLIED AT WORK?

YES   **NO**

45% 55%

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ABUSED AT WORK (VERBALLY OR PHYSICALLY)?

YES   **NO**

42% 58%

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SEXUALLY HARASSED AT WORK?

YES   **NO**

27% 73%

"My experience with occupational violence wasn't taken seriously by a previous workplace. But when a similar incident happened to a man, they actually cared.

I resigned soon after."

(Anonymous respondent)

TELL US HOW
YOU REALLY FEEL

! Trigger warning: this section contains descriptions of sexual harassment, abuse and bullying.

Are there any problems in your workplace that you wish you could change?

Old white men need to be removed and replaced by women of all ages.

We need to stop forcing women to have Leave Without Pay when they need to stay home for a sick toddler (when they have used up all their sick pay during pregnancy)!

As a junior, I feel my voice is sometimes not heard or taken seriously.

The misogynistic views and the discrimination against people that aren't white, cis-gendered men.

Employees being expected to work overtime for free or do 'favours' without compensation is common practice.

Zero mentoring or room for career progression or pay rises.

Racism and aggressive selling tactics.

Directors above me (who don't know marketing) occasionally go against my decisions and it usually results in lower sales/KPIs for me.

Administration team overworked and underpaid.

Family members (family business) get away with things that no one else would. E.g. being late / leaving early every day, not doing work (and when they do it's not done well), unlimited annual leave, speaking disrespectfully.

A stigma that if you're a man, you can get away with murder. Makes me feel less valued even though I work harder and care more than my make workmates.

'Boys' club' does not respect women as much as they should… slow to listen to our ideas and expertise.

Poor support from management.

Unsustainable work-life balance.

Male dominated industry (sports marketing) and it shows in the work we do and the company we keep.

No diversity and inclusion policy.

White males at the top making all the decisions.

No real promotional pathways for women or POCs.

Entrenched sexism, homophobia and racism.

Not tech-advanced enough.

Ageing out is a real concern.

We lack any diversity in terms of ethnic backgrounds.

Unpaid overtime is an expectation, and I don't think it should be.

Too many straight cis men in leadership rolls, where are the QPOCS?

"The boys' club protects abusers by diminishing and dehumanising women, femmes, enbies and people of colour."

Older staff being resistant to change even if it's to improve processes (nearing 3 months to get a project management tool like Trello).

It would be nice not to get treated like second class citizens when shooting on the back of a TVC. Us photographers are just trying to do our job (in a matter of minutes) and we don't deserve to get randomly abused!

Bullying behaviour.

More about whose-mates-with-who than merit or nurturing the team.

All entry and mid-level roles are 90% female, 10% male. Management is the reverse –10% female (if that!), 90% male.

There should be no meetings with just men in the room.

Not enough cultural diversity in senior management.

There's a glass ceiling and I'm almost there 7 years into my career.

Rich kids who run the industry.

Language surrounding LBGTI and multiculturalism.

I left my old workplace due to workplace bullying, a toxic culture and lots of gaslighting.

Mental health is not valued. I flagged that I wasn't doing okay four weeks ago and all I get is an email in return saying they'll help me out... and yet no help has actually been displayed. It's difficult to write this.

A direct report that gaslights me… 'isn't a business priority right now' so has not been reprimanded.

Worked both in a big ad agency and small studio there's strong divides between departments. Feeling like 'us' and 'them' situations.

Some suggestions that would make workplaces better

More media coverage of advertising work that credits team behind the ideas.

Greater diversity in the workplace.

Mandatory diversity and inclusion policies.

More singled-out acknowledgement for achievements.

I'd like to see more diversity in casting.

Stop micromanagement and give everyone space to do their best work. Have a greater understanding of how long projects can take.

I would like a bit more age diversity.

We need more understanding of the difference between mental health and mental illness. A deeper understanding of mental illnesses and how they affect staff; a deeper understanding of intersectionality and gender bias with regards to other diversity issues.

More diversity, respect and proactivity — less reactive behaviour, panic and stress.

More female leadership that supports other women rather, than pitting them against each other.

We need to produce more work catering to culturally diverse people.

I wish we could be remunerated for all of the overtime we do (even if it's just with days in lieu).

We need a creative department that represents the population we're selling to.

More women needed.

I wish pay and level were more transparent, so you knew what your work was worth.

Having a senior member of the team who's an ally is incredibly beneficial. Also being able to realise whether a situation is toxic and removing yourself from that situation is an act of self care

"More female creatives on the paid creative team!"

"My first boss told me I got my job because I was pretty."

If you would like to share any relevant experiences (good or bad), here is a safe, annonymous place to do so.

I was part of a big advertising agency creative department when I took maternity leave, and aside from being treating appallingly when trying to return to work... I had zero women to look to for an example of how to do this because there were none.

I was incessantly bullied by a manager… the issue was brought to her manager, the GM of the business, the directors of the agency, and the HR team. Absolutely nothing was done... we had 10 of 13 staff all quit within an 8 month period! All citing that manager as their reason for leaving.

Men's behaviour on the surface has improved with me over time. But I've also gotten older during that time. I wonder how women under 30 are treated by men over 50 in today's workplaces.

'Cloak and dagger' style self-protectionism and borderline bullying with some individuals. Many are lovely, but a few can create a toxic culture. Sniping others and plotting to have them managed out, cliquey-ness and having to be friendly with the 'right' people.

My experience with occupational violence wasn't taken seriously by a previous workplace. But when a similar incident happened to a man, they actually cared. *I resigned soon after.*

Very under-resourced for months now. They know that certain people will work overtime to pick up the slack and take advantage of that by overloading them.

We're creating a diversity and inclusion policy (very early days) that our head of is scared to share with our board, due to the CEO's response not likely to be favourable. This is our biggest roadblock.

When I went on maternity leave after 3 years, the company couldn't find anyone to fill my position for the pay I was getting. So my mat leave person was paid $10k more than me. When I came back they gave me a pay rise of $5k... So I still didn't get as much as my cover person.

The 'pink industries' are heavily female in my organisation: HR, comms and admin support.

In light of the Black Lives Matter movement, I approached my organisation with the concern that none of our staff members are indigenous or people of colour. Unfortunately, management did not see the problem. I was told we should 'celebrate how far Australia has come' now that we have Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week. Needless to say, I was furious by their lack of awareness.

My first boss (CEO of small company) told me I got my job because I was pretty.

I have experienced various forms of judgement and discrimination for being a mother, as well as being told that niceness is a weakness.

> "I was stood down from my position during the first wave of COVID19. There were 40 employees… I was the only female BIPOC in the company. When I asked my manager for the reason why, they could not tell me and said it was 'upper management's decision' and they did not have to disclose the reason"

> "I wish there was great representation of CALD and lower socioeconomic demographics in our industry."

If you would like to share any relevant experiences (good or bad), here is a safe, annonymous place to do so.

I have experienced sexual harassment firsthand within this industry at a social event. It is not okay and it happens more often than we realise.

Cis male gets praise for doing shit-all. Spoon feeding him to do the bare minimum.

Sometimes I feel that my word carries less weight because I am a woman.

My first week on the job and I was dubbed 'toots' (referring to my backside) by a male employee and nobody – not even the other females – spoke up for me. I felt that because I was young and in my first job I couldn't speak up, for fear of losing my position. Ultimately, I was made redundant from that position, as they found a male who they thought was better suited to their team. I was also paid at a lower rate to the other male cadet I worked with, which I found out after I left.

HR manager screaming abuse down the phone when that manager had not fulfilled her duties connected with a Workcover case. Bad example set by HR manager.

Everybody is respectful to each other. Even though I am not a native English speaker, I was never bullied for it.

I'm underpaid versus my senior male counterparts.

12 months ago, I was made redundant as one of the partners took a disliking to me. She would pull me into meetings that I had nothing to do with and scream at me in front of a room full of people. She was a partner so there was nothing I could do about it. It was terrible and I developed psychological trauma from it; being diagnosed with PTSD.

Having had many male managers, I've struggled with being respected in my role… when speaking in meetings, I've been cut off, ignored or been told I'm 'moody' or have a 'bad attitude' when I don't agree with their opinion. Thankfully, I now have a bad ass female lead who is strong and assertive, while still being kind and calm.

I have often been disrespected and sexually (and verbally abused) by older, senior males in my workplace. My opinions or professional expertise have been dismissed because I'm female and bossy. I have been sexually objectified and humiliated. A lot of my professional peers are women but as I move up the ladder there are less and less. I have to work harder to be heard amongst my male colleagues.
My client screamed at me on a shoot and called me a 'stupid little girl'. When I tried to leave the room, he grabbed me and wouldn't let me past. I was in South Africa as the only client service representative. When I called my boss to tell him what had happened, he told me to go back in the room, apologise and calm the client down.

> **Gaslighting, sexual harrassment and homophobia are serious workplace issues."**

I've worked for agencies where it is accepted that the boss will scream like a toddler in a tantrum, make suggestive comments to staff (especially women, queer and non-white people) and interrupt workflow at any time.

He surrounds himself with men who don't pull him up on that behaviour. The only person who does is also the only woman in senior management, and she has to be measured in her approach. The 'boys' just laugh it off.

In another workplace, I had a line manager ask me repeatedly about my gender and sexuality, including asking for personal social and sexual experiences. The department head slowly eroded my role, and that of a colleague, ignoring or discounting our huge amount of experience (and qualifications) whenever we tried to raise the issue. When I told him that coming into work made me want to smash my face into an exposed brick wall, he suggested I look for junior design positions. I had over 10 years of experience. When I resigned in front of his supervisor, he asked me why.

"When I resigned in front of his supervisor, he asked me why."

If you would like to share any relevant experiences (good or bad), here is a safe, annonymous place to do so.

When I first started working at my current company, it never hit me that I was the only non-caucasian person in the editorial team and one of the few women. It's usually until I get excited over meeting another Asian gal in the office when I realise, HEY! It's nice to finally meet someone who already 'gets me', even though we haven't spoken a word to each other yet. After growing up with Mulan and Lucy Liu as pretty much the only two Asian women in the media (not complaining, they're badass), it'll be interesting to see how diverse the media/comms industries are and how this affects the actual product of what we see in society now.

I left my old workplace due to workplace bullying, a toxic culture and lots of gaslighting. Where I used to work was very female dominated, but no one had each other's back. Women stepped over and threw other women under the bus. It's not ok and that's not how I want to get ahead, so I left.

I was sexually harassed by a colleague for 1.5 years until it happened on a building site (I was there for marketing photos and to monitor things). The photographer I was working with saw it play out and stood up for me. Until that happened, I never realised it wasn't just gaslighting, it was sexual harassment. My workplace is extremely male-orientated so I had to report the behaviour to males… I'm the only marketing person with a visual designer who is again male. So I felt (up until that point) I always just had to block out stuff and get on with it. Now I know not to do that.

" I wish there was great representation of CALD and lower socioeconomic demographics in our industry. "

I worked in a male dominated industry in my last role and faced regular bullying and harassment. I was called a 'slut' (for establishing healthy friendships with some of my male colleagues), a 'cunt' (for deleting comments from our company FB post by another employee) and I was even threatened by one man who said he knew where I lived when I published his story on page 3 of our internal magazine (instead of page 1). I used to warn women I hired not to be in rooms with certain men as they were known for groping women. Being a woman in media is tough.

And you have to stand up for yourself. Because no one else will.

I was sexually assaulted on a work trip by a client's colleague, and told to drop the complaint as it would reflect badly on the agency and affect the client's likelihood of continuing to work with us.

SECTION 5:

ACTIONABLES

Champion underrepresented talent (including women, LQBTQI+ and POCs/ CALD):

• Mention them in press releases/trade publications

• Enter them into industry awards

• Invest in their professional development and training

• Send them to conferences and networking events

• Give them a good mentor (with paid mentoring time during work hours)

• Make them visible through panels, podcasts and guest appearances

• Create pathways for them within the business

• Create leadership accelerators for them

Write (and honour) the following:

• Diversity and inclusion policy

• Mental health policy

• Overtime renumeration policy

• Gender quotas if needed

Conduct a comprehensive diversity audit:

• Staff (full time, part time, casual
and freelance)

• Suppliers (photographers, directors,
stylists, etc.)

• Casting/talent

**Conduct a gender pay gap audit (implement
pay rises immediately if necessary)**

**Single out and acknowledge
valued employees**

Until equality
is the new **norm.**