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Gender pay gap persists across media and adland

By Adam McCleery | 3 March 2026 0 Comments

Some of Australia's biggest media and advertising companies are paying men more than 20% more than women, according to the latest Workplace Gender Equality Agency data.



Credit: Suad Kamardeen via Unsplash

WGEA has published gender pay gap figures for Australian private sector employers for the third consecutive year.

The agency said employers should aim for a gap of no more than 5% in either direction, the mid-point across all industries sits at 11.2%, down 0.9 percentage points from last year.

Most of the industry remains well outside that range.



TrinityP3 said this year's data shows some notable improvements, including Foxtel, Nine Publishing and Seven West Media, but the pay gap across agencies and media owners persists, and boards need to do more.

Lydia Feely, general manager of TrinityP3, said the annual release has lifted awareness but the industry's focus needs to extend well beyond one day a year.

"After three years of this data, it is clear that the annual pay gap numbers release has definitely elevated this issue," Feely said.

"Our challenge is: how do we get employers to care about the pay gap the other 364 days of the year? While we have definitely seen some improvements among some players, there is still not enough being done."

In the latest numbers, Dentsu is a standout, reporting an average gap of just 1% and a median of -4.9%, women's median pay exceeds men's.

Initiative (0.1% average and 3.9% median) and Publicis Media (9.6% average and 4.8% median) also sit closest to the target.

Ogilvy sits at the other end, with a 21.4% average and 27.6% median. DDB Worldwide reported 21.2% average and 19.1% median. Publicis Communications recorded 22.5% average and 10.7% median.

WPP Media reported 17.2% average and 17.8% median. Its parent WPP entity came in at 6.9% average and 10.5% median.

Howatson+Company recorded 16% average and 7.4% median, IPG Mediabrands 16.5% average and 2.3% median, OMG Media Group 12.6% average and 4.8% median, M&C Saatchi 12.4% average and 10.1% median, and Publicis Sapient 13.5% average and 8.2% median.

Women make up the majority of the workforce at many of these agencies, 68% at Ogilvy, 66% at both IPG Mediabrands and WPP Media, 67% at Initiative Media, 64% at Publicis Communications, making the persistence of pay gaps in female-dominated workplaces particularly stark.

Fairfax Digital Australia & New Zealand recorded the largest average gap in the sector at 27.1%, with a median of 39.2%.



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Val Morgan reported 26.2% average and 16% median, QMS Media 22.6% average, though its median sat at -0.4%, with women's median pay above men's, Spotify 21.6% average and 25.1% median and Ace Radio 23.5% average and 19.1% median.

Are Media, where women make up 81% of the workforce, the highest female representation in the entire dataset, reported an 11.7% average and 8.9% median.

ARN came in at 16.1% average and 8.2% median. Bloomberg reported 14.4% average and 18.3% median.

News Corp Australia appears twice in the data. Nationwide News recorded 17.4% average and 9.6% median, while Nationwide Newspapers reported 16.2% average and 20.7% median, with women making up just 17% of its workforce.

Several broadcasters fared better. Paramount (Network Ten) reported 7.6% average and 4.5% median, among the closest to WGEA's target in the dataset. Fairfax Media (Nine Publishing), a separate entity to Fairfax Digital, recorded 7.5% average and 6.4% median.

Seven West Media recorded 8.5% average and 4.8% median, Southern Cross Austereo 9.8% average and 6% median.

Nine Entertainment reported 15% average and 13% median. Foxtel came in at 15.9% average and 11.5% median. Nova Entertainment recorded 11.1% average and 2.7% median.

In out-of-home, oOh!media reported 17.5% average and 22.5% median, while oOh!media Street Furniture recorded a smaller 2.3% average and 10% median. JCDecaux reported 13.4% average and a median of -4.1%, with women's median pay above men's.

Facebook (Meta) and Stream reported the smallest gaps, Meta at 0.8% average and 1.9% median, Stream at 4.3% average and 0.2% median, both near WGEA's target range.

Google reported 3.8% average but a 16.6% median, suggesting the gap widens further up the pay scale. TikTok came in at 10.2% average and -0.4% median. iSentia recorded 1.1% average, though its 13.6% median points to a notable divergence through the pay distribution.

Domain reported 18.6% average and 19.5% median, REA 14% average and 14.8% median.

Google and TikTok both have heavily male-skewed workforces, women make up 36% and 33% respectively.

Feely also noted fewer companies published their own pay gap reports this year, only News Corp, Nine and REA provided statements and called on the rest of the industry to provide context around their results.

"It really surprises me that, in the third year of this reporting, so many companies are still allowing these complex and important numbers to go out without taking the opportunity WGEA gives you to make an employer statement or report," Feely said.

"Making a statement and providing context demonstrates, to current employees, potential recruits, and to the wider industry, that you are taking this issue seriously."

Feely said companies should benchmark themselves against competitors to avoid moving backwards on the pay gap.

"We know that companies who benchmark and track their performance do better in areas such as the gender pay gap," she said.

"When companies establish where they are, they also need to look at what other like-for-like players are doing and look for the opportunities to improve."

Darren Woolley, CEO of TrinityP3, said the issue is on the radar of major clients, with around half of all agency pitches asking potential partners how they are addressing gender equality and the pay gap.

"Pay equity is an issue that impacts both men and women," Woolley said.

"If our industry is committed to the principles of fairness and inclusiveness, then closing the ongoing gender pay gap must be a high, year-round priority.

"We need to see an ongoing focus on this by everyone from the board, C-suite and shareholders down."

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