



Mining Industry Gender Pay Gap Increases in Downturn Year

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The latest data on gender pay equity in the minerals sector suggests that, despite an overall willingness by companies to change work practices to hold on to staff, females were particularly likely to be undervalued during difficult economic times.

The results of the *2009 AusIMM Remuneration and Employment Survey* – the most comprehensive analysis of remuneration trends, work practices and attitudes of professionals in the minerals sector – show a marked increase in the gender pay gap from previous years.

By responsibility level, where Level 1 represents new entrants to the industry, the pay gap between males and females is 8.7%. There is a reduction of the size of the gap at Level 2 and 3 at 2% and 7.5% respectively, followed by a steady escalation in the gap until it reaches 38.1% at Level 5 (senior management). The pay gap is calculated in reference to respondents pay per hour to rather than annual base salaries, thus removing any distortion that may occur by virtue of more females working part time than men.

The Chair of The AusIMM's Women in Mining Network, Ms Donna Frater, said the results confirmed the industry's continuing propensity to undervalue its female professionals.

"The gender pay gap at most levels of responsibility has increased markedly in comparison to the 2008 survey, with pay per hour gap at entry level trebling from 2.9% to 8.7%," Ms Frater said.

"The clear implication is that whilst equity may be touted as a priority when times are good, some decision makers fall back on old biases about the relative value of male and female employees when the going gets tough."

In general, the survey showed that larger salary increases were granted at the higher levels of responsibility as companies looked to hold on to more experienced staff. Other structural changes to the industry included the move to shorter working hours and reduced fringe benefits in order to weather the economic downturn, with some companies going as far as introducing a four-day working week to cut costs but hold on to key staff.

“In an industry known for rigid working hours and with a reputation for culling staff in the downturn, it was heartening to see creative human resourcing approaches aimed at retaining staff,” said Ms Frater.

“As the industry is now poised for an upturn, it is hoped that some of the creativity previously directed toward strategies for retaining staff during the GFC might be re-directed towards closing the gender pay gap and incorporating more flexible work practices for all employees.”

The AusIMM survey showed that many professionals are not willing to work long and inflexible at the expense of relationships, caring commitments and other interests. For example, just over 30% of respondents indicated that they had caring responsibilities, with 90% of these respondents being carers for children. Interestingly, as a share of their gender, a higher percentage of males (31.4%) indicated that they had some form of caring responsibilities than did females (20.3%). Of those with caring responsibilities, 43% noted that this had necessitated a “Reduction in hours,” followed by “Downshifting or accepting a role with reduced salary or responsibility in a different organisation,” suggesting that flexibility is an increasing priority for this group.

“Last year’s restructuring of work to hold on to staff showed that in an era of high tech communications and remote technologies, step changes in working patterns can be achieved,” Ms Frater said.

“If the same energy were turned to reducing the gender pay gap and to an increased acceptance of diversity in working lifestyles, the industry would be far more equitable for all employees.”

To download the full report, *Gender Pay Equity and Work Practices in the Minerals and Metallurgy Sector*, go to: [insert link]

Contact

Monika Sarder
Manager, Policy & Professional Standards
The AusIMM
(03) 9658 6159 or 0406 061 455
msarder@ausimm.com.au

WIMNet

The AusIMM Women in Mining Network (WIMNet) is a network operating under the auspices of The AusIMM which advocates for and support, the attraction and retention of women in the mineral resources industry.

Our vision is to have a mineral resources industry where all participants are treated fairly and equitably and which is admired for its people and its leadership.

The AusIMM

The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (The AusIMM) is the leading organisation representing 10,000 professionals in the minerals sector in the Asia-Pacific region.

Our role is to maximise opportunities for professionals in the minerals sector through continuing professional development and to promote the value of the minerals industry to the wider community.