



Inquiry into Economic Equity for Victorian Women

Department of Treasury and Finance, Victoria.

Submission from **The Future of Work Lab**
University of Melbourne

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Relevance to Terms of Reference

Key discussions and critical examinations contained within this submission address the following elements of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference with respect to topics of interest:

- Pay equity and relevant workplace barriers, and the value given to work performed in women-dominated industries and other sectors
- Blocks to workforce participation, including unemployment and underemployment
- Skill development and access to promotional opportunities
- The impact of intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination and disadvantage, including women who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+, culturally and linguistically diverse, single mothers, older women, younger women, women with disability, women experiencing family violence, and women from rural and regional areas.

Similarly, **the policy recommendations** provided within this submission specifically address the following elements of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference:

- Measures to support the workforce participation of women with caring responsibilities and to encourage women's domestic partners and men to take on a greater share of these responsibilities
- Retraining and reskilling support for women
- Support for small business and self-employment for women

About the Future of Work Lab

The [Future of Work Lab](#) is a part of the newly established [Melbourne Connect](#) building at the University of Melbourne. We are committed to ensuring the future of work is equitable, especially for women. As leaders in the field, we provide innovative understandings of the intersections of inequality, technology and policy to create more equitable work futures for women.

In truth, the future of work has already arrived. Our integrated approach draws from Sociology, Business and Economics and Computer Information Systems to provide an interdisciplinary understanding of an increasingly changing world of work with the specific aim to ensure women are prepared, workplaces are gender inclusive, and governments are guided by the highest quality evidence. The Future of Work Lab is the premier location for these resources to create gender equity in the future of work.

Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic has changed the lives and livelihoods of Victorians in numerous and consequential ways. From impacts on employment hours, wages earned, and job security spurred on by what has been identified as a “She-cession” to increased childcare, housework and mental loads during mandated lockdowns and home-schooling, Victorian women have endured additional labour, stress and mental anguish during these past 18 months.

All this additional labour has come at a cost and, as we demonstrate in the following submission, without careful decision-making over the coming months and years, Victorian women will continue to bear the brunt of this pandemic long after the last vaccine is administered, and the last mask is removed.

In response to the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, this submission illuminates the depth of work being conducted at the Future of Work Lab around key issues and challenges facing Victorian women in their post-COVID quest for economic equity. In particular, we focus on the following four crucial areas that will have a significant impact on the future of women at work:

1. Women and the Digital Divide
2. Women and the Future of Work
3. Gender Bias in Artificial Intelligence and Automated Recruitment
4. Men’s Utilisation of Flexible/Remote Work for Caregiving

In this submission, we provide an overview of the key issues and current research into each of the above-mentioned priority areas, with a particular focus on the impacts of these issues and challenges on Victorian women. We then provide a series of future policy considerations and recommendations that are informed by the world-leading research conducted at the Future of Work Lab. This includes clear policy solutions that can be implemented to mitigate some of the damage of COVID-19 on and broader challenges to gender equality.

Priority Areas for Consideration

The following section outlines four crucial areas that should serve as key priorities for the Victorian Government to effectively address the challenges associated with economic equity for Victorian women.

1. Women and the Digital Divide

The implementation of strict social distancing measures as a result of the global pandemic has unquestionably accentuated a strong reliance on the Internet. More than ever, the pandemic intensified the importance of online connectivity to ensure access to an array of services from online classes and work-from-home Zoom calls to JobSeeker payments and up-to-date Government COVID-19 information. However, while the majority of Australia's population were able to meet the basic connectivity requirements during the pandemic, some groups have and continue to face significant barriers in their access to and use of the internet. In particular, demographics over-represented within the digital divide (such as women, older adults, migrants with low-English proficiency and those from lower socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds) faced unique struggles during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact of the digital divide on select demographics and communities is often grounded in skill-based problems rather than infrastructure access and can exacerbate difficulties faced by these groups due to social exclusion. Based on the recent Digital Inclusion Index which measures access, affordability, and digital abilities, women score 1.9 points below that of men in Australia (Thomas et al. 2020). Recent ABS data also shows that women are less likely to have access to the internet at home than men (ABS, 2021). This gender digital gap tends to increase with age and is accentuated by other intersectional considerations such as race, ethnicity, class and geographical location. Scholarly research and public policy have highlighted issues faced by the elderly (Niehaves & Plattfaut, 2014; Neves et al., 2013; Van Jaarsveld, 2020), migrant and low-English proficiency communities (Alam & Imran, 2015; Lloyd et al., 2013; Nguyen et al., 2017), and those from lower socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds (Powell et al., 2010; Goedhart et al., 2019), as well as the intersections between these demographics.

For many migrant communities, the digital divide can manifest through a knowledge gap in digital literacy, the language barrier in content produced exclusively in English, and cultural experiences with the Internet (Alam & Imran, 2015; Safarov, 2021). The unique challenges faced by these communities were at the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic, with many lacking the necessary knowledge to access the plethora of digital market solutions and vital services surrounding health and mental wellbeing (Eruchalu et al., 2021; Grey, 2020). In particular, the dissemination of information regarding rapidly changing local exposure sites and lockdown measures were noted difficulties faced by the State and Local Governments in Victoria (Houghton, 2020; Krajl et al., 2020). Scholars have highlighted many additional barriers, including disinterest (Goodall et al., 2010), affordability (O'Mara et al., 2010), and translations from English (Alam & Imram, 2015). The continuing digitization of the public sphere necessitates a realignment of service delivery and information dissemination in the face of increasing social exclusion of migrant communities, particularly women, in English-speaking countries.

While policy measures such as Australia's NBN assist in bridging gaps, access within the digital domain for low-SES and less educated demographics, the adoption of digital solutions for services is still significantly influenced by education levels (Elena-Bucea et al., 2020). Digital literacy represents an increasingly vital element in the future of work and its capacity to enable upward mobility threatens a widening of the divide for many women in already excluded demographics (Chetty et al., 2018; United Nations, 2014). These relationships are also highly gendered as low-SES mothers, who largely shoulder the responsibility of regulating Information and Communication Technology (ITC)-use for their children, may require greater resources and knowledge despite not wielding the necessary skills and time (Goedhart et al., 2019). Particularly with the adoption of virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, digital literacy in order to facilitate school-based care can impact mother's employment (Collins et al., 2021) and children's education outcomes (Black et al., 2021).

Contemporary scholarly work on the digital divide not only examines access to technological infrastructure and high-speed internet, but the barriers for users in possessing the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively engage in an increasingly digitised world (Alam & Imran, 2015; Townsend, 2015). For those demographics with greater usage and adoption of the Internet – such as students, younger adults, and those in higher income brackets (Buchi et al., 2015) – benefit is generated through increased opportunity at the same time as inequalities in economic, social and health outcomes widen (van Deursen & Helper, 2015). The conceptual framework of the digital divide has now expanded to reflect not only physical access to technology, but a sociological problem deeply imbedded in wider socio-economic inequalities (Barzilai-Nahon, 2006; Underwood, 2007). Therefore, bridging gaps in the digital divide beyond access will be critical, and policy makers must ensure solutions are tailored towards structures of wider socio-economic inequality, as highlighted in gender, age, migrant-status, and socio-economic status.

This means now, more than ever, closing the gender gap in digital literacy, skills, and access is critical for women themselves and future generations of Australians.

Our Current Work

The Future of Work Lab is currently engaged in a project (funded by Melbourne Social Equity Institute in partnership with Carlton Local Agencies Network) that is centred on applying spatial data from Victoria to map the digital divide across the state in order to identify gaps in coverage and their distribution across socio-demographic characteristics including gender and its intersections. This data was able to provide a broader scope of digital inequality throughout Australia but with a deeper focus on internet accessibility within Victoria. Based on open data available for the 462 Statistical Areas Level 2 (SA2) in Victoria, we conducted Exploratory Spatial Data

Analysis to visualize the spatial distribution and identify spatial clusters (Anselin et al., 2007).

The resulting [interactive maps](#) (also see images below) show the geographic distribution of the proportion of people who are aged 65 years and older, the proportion of households with internet, the proportion of people born outside Australia, and Median weekly household income by Statistical Area Level 2 (SA2) of residence. These variables may be useful in analysing the digital divide in Victoria at a broader scale. This interactive tool enables users to visualise the mismatch of digital services, providing the community, policy-makers, and service providers with information on digital and technology resource access (Bloemraad and Slootjes, 2020).

When viewed in conjunction with what we already know about the highly gendered challenges that women face when accessing and using technology, these maps and the data contained within them provide a valuable tool for governments and policymakers to understand the intersectionality of equitable access to the many social and economic benefits of our current digital age.

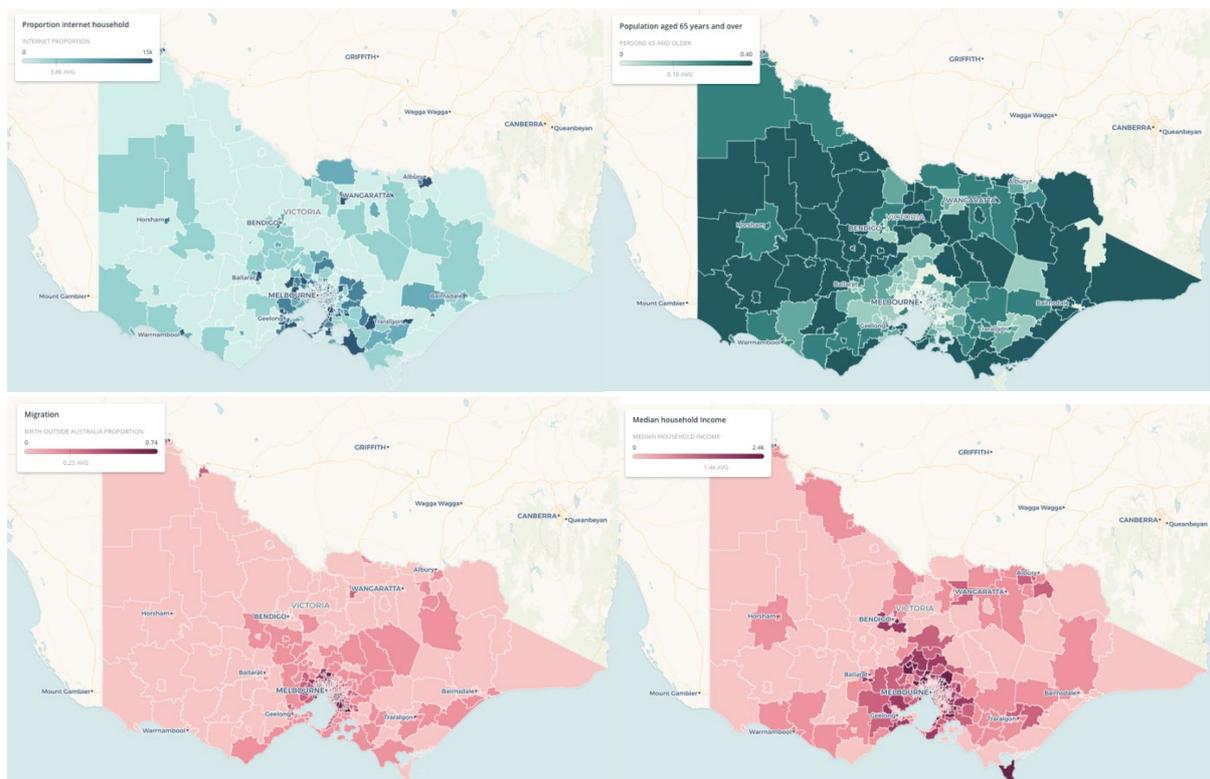


Figure 2: Snapshots of the Interactive Maps from the Digital Divide Mapping Project (Acosta, 2020).

2. Women and the Future of Work

The global pandemic has accelerated the adoption of automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in a number of critical ways. Driven by enduring stay at home orders, social distancing requirements and a shortage of labour, companies and workplaces were compelled to devise new ways to complete their required tasks with less reliance on in-office work and human labour (Autor & Reynolds, 2020).

Consequently, as the adoption and adaption of automation and AI continues at ever increasing rates across daily life, the demand for technology-grounded labour market skills continues to grow alongside it. This means the future of work requires a discrete set of soft and hard skills to be prepared for the future of work.

Acemoglu and Restrepo (2018) maintain that while some work-related tasks will be replaced by AI and automation, other new tasks will be created in which the human workforce has a comparative advantage, and thus need to be appropriately trained and skilled.

In the coming years, the demand for higher cognitive skills, social and emotional skills, and technological skills (both basic and advanced) will increase. Likewise, we will see a reduction in the demand for physical and manual skills, as well as basic cognitive skills (performed by humans) (Bughin et al. 2018). Modelling of Australian occupational skills composition over recent decades shows similar patterns to other OECD countries: a shift away from routine jobs towards non-routine jobs, particularly jobs with cognitive tasks (AlphaBeta 2019). It is expected that the impacts of the future of work will differ across industries and sectors, influenced mainly by initial starting conditions around the distribution of tasks, adoption of technology, skills and adaptability of the workforce. Even jobs that are relatively shielded from the impacts of AI and automation will see transformation as a result of a higher intensity of non-routine tasks. This means no one is immune from the impact of AI and automation on the future of work.

While many women in industrialised countries have basic digital skills, reports show that men often fare slightly better than women with respect to their overall digital ability (HC 2016; Thomas et al. 2019). Critically, this gender gap in digital skills widens as the skills become more complex and advanced (Martínez-Cantos 2017). Similarly, the gender gap in skill attainment also becomes more pronounced with higher level technological skills. A recent report (DISER 2020) found that women in Australia are enrolling in STEM courses at a much lower rate than men, in both VET and university. In 2018, women made up just 21 per cent of total STEM enrolments, compared to 60% of non-STEM enrolments (DISER 2020). Furthermore, women are underrepresented in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industries, in which men are overrepresented in both analytic-technical and professional roles (Munro, Whiton & Maxim 2019a).

In Australia, women account for just 29% of employees in ICT industries (Deloitte Access Economics, 2019) and, according to an analysis of global LinkedIn profiles, only 22% of people working in AI are women (Roberts et al. 2019). Hospitality and the retail sector are also two highly female-dominated industries that are highly susceptible to automation (Bughin et al. 2018) while AI is being implemented widely in the financial industry and is altering clerical and administrative roles typically held by women (Allen et al. 2017; Madgavkar et a. 2019; Chin et al. 2018).

Our Current Work

The Future of Work Lab (in conjunction with the University of Melbourne) has developed a Micro-Certificate on Artificial Intelligence and Women centred around the current technological macro-trends affecting the workforce and more specifically, their impacts on women.

This series examines the policy, digital skills and interpersonal approaches necessary to establish gender equity in our future workplaces and outlines how organisations and women can mitigate against the identified employment risks. The series consists of four Micro-Certifications that can be undertaken separately or together and are recommended for individuals wishing to educate or upskill themselves and/or managers and professionals from organisations that are grappling with these issues.

[Micro-Cert 1: Artificial Intelligence and Women](#)

Automation is rapidly transforming the way we work. Research shows women could be disproportionately impacted by these shifts. This course provides women with a better understanding of technological change and how to future-proof their own careers, as well as accessible insights into concepts such as big data, algorithms, AI and automation, and explores how they are changing work and the consequences for gender equity.

Participants are invited to consider key questions about the future workplace while critically examining how technology is transforming their own industry and how this could impact their current job or career path.

Finally, participants are provided with an opportunity to analyse the connection between professional skills and technologies in the workplace and explore which skills will be sought after in future workplaces before developing future strategies to attain and retain them.

[Micro-Cert 2: Artificial Intelligence Policies](#)

As artificial intelligence and automation become more prevalent across workplaces in all sectors, ensuring policies appropriately account for and factor in the social and ethical implications of these technologies is increasingly important. This course provides participants with an understanding of the key social and ethical implications of AI in the workplace, and the way governments are situating these concerns within policy development.

Participants are taught how to critically assess AI policies, initiatives, and strategies by reviewing leading global frameworks and workplace policies. They are also given the opportunity to learn about some of the leading AI policies at multiple business levels and explore national and international policy frameworks and principles related to AI and its influence in the workplace.

[Micro-Cert 3: Gender Bias and Discrimination in Data](#)

Data is a crucial tool in arguably all modern workplaces – but it is often skewed or misrepresented in ways that reinforce pre-existing gender biases. Drawing on social science perspectives, this course explores the intrinsic gender inequalities that exist within our broader society and invites the participant to consider how these are reflected in AI and other technologies.

Recognising data's value in the workplace and considering how it can be applied to drive effective decision making, the course examines how gender bias and discrimination can be embedded within the data and tech used by organisations and explores the unintended impacts this may have. It also provides an understanding of how gender bias can be reinforced during data collection, analysis and interpretation while introducing the participant to critical frameworks for assessing the quality of data and its sources in order to identify potential bias.

Putting this new knowledge into practice, participants examine how data is used within their own organisations and how to identify the potential bias that exists within it, before considering how to address this issue and make more gender-inclusive data-driven decisions.

[Micro-Cert 4: Adaptability for Artificial Intelligence](#)

In our shifting world of work, the capacity to adapt to technological and social disruption is more important than ever. This course provides participants with an accessible introduction to theories of individual and career adaptability, including the concept of adaptability quotient. Using these theories participants are invited to reflect

upon their own capacity to adapt and consider how these approaches apply to their own career cycles.

The course also examines the impacts of digital disruption and advances in technology such as automation and AI and provides participants with the opportunity to consider the impacts of societal and workplace disruptions, with a particular focus on analysing them through a gendered lens. Furthermore, it offers space within which to explore the benefits of an agile learning mindset and learn how to adopt and maintain this kind of thinking within the context of disruption and transformation.

At the conclusion of the course participants are invited to apply adaptability theories to their own industry and career trajectory and consider how adaptability can be applied to key disruptions and challenges in the future workplace, with a particular focus on strengthening their individual capacity to adapt throughout their career.

3. Gender Bias in Artificial Intelligence and Automated Recruitment

As technologies continue to advance, the adoption of machine learning (ML) in the recruitment sector has soared. Notably, this trend is spurred by its efficiency in quickly assessing massive volumes of data to provide preliminary rankings of job applicants. While many assume that the replacement of human recruiters with algorithms would eradicate human bias, research has found that algorithms are also susceptible to bias (Whittaker *et al.* 2018; Barocas & Selbst 2016). Hiring algorithms may train on flawed data that includes incomplete information, data errors, or representative imbalance (i.e. by race, gender, age, disability, etc.). Furthermore, many algorithms essentially mirror society, meaning that historic patterns of discrimination and exclusion can also be unintentionally incorporated into hiring algorithms. This poses significant risks for Victorian women trying to re-enter the workforce after the employment implications of COVID-19.

The consequences of reliance on flawed algorithms are illustrated through the case study of Amazon. In 2014, Amazon generated hiring algorithms to predict the suitability of applicants for positions using 10 years of data on their own workforce (Costa *et al.* 2020). In 2018, it was found that Amazon's hiring algorithms discriminated against women applicants (Bogen 2019; Dastin 2018; O'Neil 2016). However, this discrimination was *not* intentional; rather, it was a consequence of the algorithm being trained on biased data that captured existing inequality in Amazon's corporate structure specifically, and the tech industry at large. Amazon's employees were mostly white men, meaning their hiring algorithms utilized this pattern – as encapsulated in features of these successful candidates' resumes – as a determining factor of success, and therefore, discriminating against women candidates. As companies increasingly automate their hiring decisions, the scope of bias will be increasingly consequential and thus must be properly understood and mitigated.

In 2020 our research team conducted a pilot study which investigated gender bias in hiring algorithms. This project (Cheong *et al.* 2020) compared the rankings of CVs from human recruiters against algorithms. We observed outputs of three different jobs, ranging from men-dominated, women-dominated and gender-balanced jobs. We used interpretable industry-standard classifiers to train algorithms on a small dataset drawn from real CVs. As shown in Figure 1, our findings show that algorithms favour men over women in the recruitment outputs, especially in men-dominated and gender-balanced jobs. Our human panel exhibited the same biases with preference for men in traditionally men-dominated roles like finance. These results showed women experience the double-whammy of gender bias through the algorithm and stated human preference.

In addition to this study, we also conducted a standard social-science counterfactual study, assessing the outcomes of human-machine partnership in hiring decision-making. We found that men are more preferable than women in the human and machine hiring process — indicated by the number of emails and call-backs we received for men and the tendency for our men’s CVs to be identified as a “good fit” for the position by the hiring algorithm (Njoto 2020). These findings demonstrate the significant new challenges that Victorian (nay all) women are up against with respect to obtaining meaningful and well remunerated employment opportunities in the modern labour market.

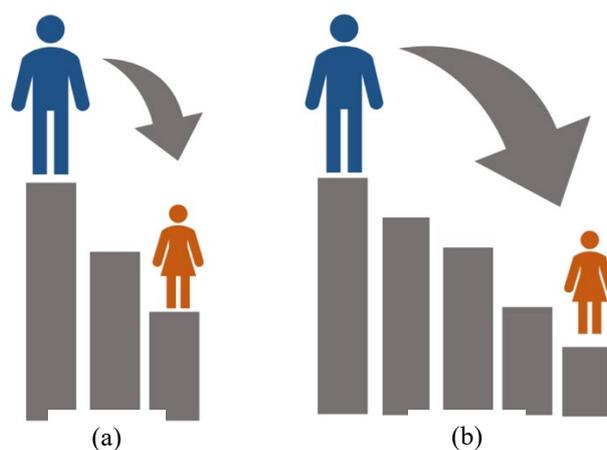


Figure 1(a). An average woman with average experience and education ranked 2.5 places lower than average men in Data Analyst job (men-dominated)

Figure 1(b). An average woman with average experience and education ranked 4 places lower than average men with Finance Officer job (gender-balanced)

Our Current Work

The Future of Work Lab is currently engaged in a multi-year project (with Melbourne Centre for Data Science and the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Ethics) that

will explicitly quantifying recruitment biases against minority groups across different ethnicities, genders and employment histories in the global job market post-pandemic. Drawing upon an interdisciplinary team applying cross-disciplinary methodologies, the project will analyse how gender bias is incorporated into hiring algorithms. This research is significant for three reasons.

First, it will capture both observable and subtle signals associated with ethnicity and gender which can be captured by hiring algorithms. Observable signals include names, job churns and employment history in the informal economy, while subtle signals capture gender- or ethnicity-specific language in CVs. This approach allows us to understand the extent to which different signals embedded in CVs impact higher rankings amongst job applications.

Second, it will identify whether observable and subtle ethnic and gender signals impact algorithmic bias in gender- and White-dominated industries. We know algorithms train on available data meaning women applying to men-dominated jobs (and minorities applying to White-dominated industries) may experience greater discrimination given inherent gender (racial) bias in occupational sorting.

Finally, it will measure how humans view gender and ethnically diverse CVs and the employability of candidates with these traits. Ultimately, humans make final hiring decisions based on algorithmic data meaning understanding how humans reinforce gender- and racial-hierarchies in employment decisions is critical.

This research investigates how and to what extent automated hiring systems discriminate against feminine language and women. Vital to this is identifying what constitutes a 'woman' and 'femininity' in data, looking at both obvious and subtle indicators (or as Goffman 1979 refers to as 'gender signals'). In this research, obvious gender signals include names and the use of keywords in self-descriptions. On the other hand, subtle gender signals refer to the components in CVs that do not directly point towards a certain gender but are often associated with one thereof. These signals include employment history, such as job churns, involvement in the gig economy, previous job roles, and so forth. This research then seeks to theorise to what extent a decision made on the basis of, or related to, gender *should* be considered gender discrimination.

In terms of its usefulness to this Inquiry and to the Victorian Government more broadly, this research will result in three clear and highly beneficial outcomes. First, it will produce a series of academically focused peer-reviewed publications, short reports and public-focused media articles to disseminate our findings. By quantifying sources of human and machine bias in hiring algorithms, it will provide evidence-based insights into the development of new algorithms that are fair and equitable and the role of recruiters in perpetuating unconscious bias and discrimination. Policymakers and

governments may then be able to use these insights to inform future considerations to bias-mitigating interventions, such as systematic policy oversight and compulsory auditing to ensure algorithms have fairer models and Natural Language Pattern powered suggestions to improve keyword assessments for equitable recruitment. Second, it aims to create additional industry-focused training modules, such as micro-certifications that are designed to educate business professionals on the biases in their hiring algorithms. Third, it will broaden our empirical contributions to industry by establishing partnerships with corporations and policymakers in designing policy responses that are grounded in theories and empirical analyses.

4. Men's Utilisation of Flexible/Remote Work for Caregiving

Women have historically undertaken larger shares of domestic tasks and unpaid caregiving that has held them back from meaningful and valued participation in the paid labour force (Criado-Perez, 2019; Dieckhoff et al., 2016; Grimshaw and Rubrey, 2015 and Kleven et al., 2017). This gendered reality was reinforced throughout the recent global pandemic, with countless women being pushed out of the workforce due to increased household and caregiving responsibilities as a result of lockdowns and home-schooling (Collins, et al, 2020; Partington, 2020).

In the past, when men (and women) have attempted to use flexible work arrangements to manage their work and family responsibilities they have been met with a range of barriers and negative consequences, including workplace discrimination, career stagnation, loss of income, reduced employment and social stigmatization (Maume, 2015; Thebaud and Pedulla, 2016). This has resulted in historically low uptake of flexible work arrangements by men in particular.

However, in part due to government mandated working-from-home experiences during the global pandemic, some men are now signalling a shift in values with respect to the importance of family, and many have now indicated that they would be willing to work more flexibility and would like to play a more active role in their children's lives (Australia Institute for Family Studies, 2020; Woodward, 2020; Milkie and Ruppner, forthcoming 2021). Unlike the men of previous generations, these "new dads" are increasingly open to new ways of doing gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987) that facilitate a more egalitarian dual earner/carer approach to home and family life that includes the adoption of new forms of work flexibility.

In line with this change, numerous workplaces have similarly signalled a post-COVID shift in their willingness to engage with both new and old types of flexible and remote work (Kane et al, 2020; Wellinger, 2021; McKinsey Global Institute, 2021) that may ultimately provide the key to allowing both men and women to better manage the conflict between their work and home lives. But this rapid transition to remote work is not without its challenges, and potentially unforeseen gender implications.

The increased adoption of carefully managed remote and flexible work opportunities has the potential to reduce discrimination previously experienced by women (and the few men) who worked flexibility and/or remotely in the past. It is also possible that equalising access to and use of remote and flexible work over other kinds of employment will afford men more time and opportunities to be actively engaged in household chores and caregiving, a critical barrier to women's employment and gender equality more broadly.

It is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic and its recovery will facilitate men's access to flexible work as key to change historically entrenched gender roles. This is an area of critical research and, fortunately, we are investing heavily in developing deep insights.

Our Current Work

The Future of Work Lab is currently conducting a multi-year research project into impacts of post-COVID remote work practices on gender equality both within the home and in the workplace. In particular, the research seeks to examine the level of engagement of men working remotely in active caregiving and household tasks while simultaneously investigating the ability of women working remotely to engage in new or increased levels of paid work and/or access better jobs and pay. At its core, the research seeks to determine the specific impacts of different kinds of remote work on the gendered division of paid and unpaid labour and caregiving in order to contribute to the development of better government and workplace policies and practices that help ease the current burdens on women in particular.

Outcomes from this research project will provide a significant and original contribution to what is historically known about the intersection of remote/flexible work, caregiving and gender equality but with a sharp focus on the future of work in a post-COVID environment. In particular, it seeks to identify ways in which this mode of work can potentially contribute to the greater equalisation of caregiving and paid work opportunities for both men and women, with a focus on caregiving for men and better work outcomes for women.

Conclusion

In response to the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, this submission has provided overviews into four key issues and challenges facing Victorian women in their post-COVID quest for economic equity and highlights the high-quality research conducted through the Future of Work Lab on these topics. In particular, we have focused on providing insights and recommendations for the following four crucial areas of consideration:

1. Women and the Digital Divide
2. Women and the Future of Work
3. Gender Bias in Artificial Intelligence and Automated Recruitment
4. Men's Utilisation of Flexible/Remote Work for Caregiving

Our goal is to provide robust evidence-based policy recommendations to ensure the future of work is fair and equitable for women.

Practical Policy Solutions and Recommendations

We provide four key recommendations to support the future of work for women that provide a foundation for more robust and impactful policy frameworks and interventions in collaboration with the Victorian Government.

1. *Ensure that issues of gender and intersectionality are always considered when developing strategies to address Victoria's digital divide and that policies and projects go beyond mere provision of technological access towards upskilling and educational activities that account for the unique experiences of women across different marginalized groups.*
2. *Develop government or industry funded open-access programs to provide marginalised women (including older women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from CALD and migrant communities and LGBTIQI+ individuals) with access to our micro-certifications in order to prepare and upskill them with knowledge and skills deemed essential for the future of work.*
3. *Ensure that issues of gender bias and discrimination in AI are well understood and considered when government and industry are engaged in the recruitment and/or promotion of new and existing talent. Consider ways in which government may seek to further regulate this sector or work in partnership with the Future of Work Lab and Industry representatives on solutions that can help mitigate these negative consequences.*
4. *Ensure that government and industry alike are supportive of and promoting the equal caregiving responsibilities of both men and women and facilitating the mutual use of flexible and remote work practices by people of all genders. As the research progresses, consider developing (in conjunction with the Future of Work Lab) empirically grounded best practice guidelines and organisational case studies that demonstrate the benefits of shared caregiving for women's attainment of economic equity.*

Contact Details

To find out more about any of the research projects and policy solutions discussed in this submission, or just to have a chat about anything that we have raised, please feel free to contact us via the details below:

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