



**Australian Government**

**Chief Scientist**

17 May 2020

The Hon Karen Andrews MP  
Minister for Industry, Science and Technology  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Please find attached a response to your request for an analysis of the available evidence to respond to your question:

*What impact is the COVID-19 pandemic having on women in the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) workforce?*

This rapid response has been prepared by the Rapid Research Information Forum that I Chair. The report synthesises the evidence base on this matter and has been informed by relevant experts and has been peer reviewed. Details of the authors and peer reviewers can be found in the Appendix.

I hope this document proves useful to you and your colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'Alan Finkel'.

Dr Alan Finkel AO FAA FTSE FAHMS  
**Australia's Chief Scientist**

17 May 2020

**This rapid research information brief responds to the question: What impact is the COVID-19 pandemic having on women in the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) workforce?**

- Women are a minority in STEM professions. Based on disparities in the distribution of domestic workloads and reduced career opportunities compared to men, this pandemic is expected to disproportionately hinder women's STEM careers.
- Early evidence on the impact of the epidemic suggests women face disproportionate increases in caring responsibilities and disruptions to working hours, job security and paid work capacity. This is most acute for those with children under 12.
- Job insecurity is emerging as an even more troubling issue for women in STEM than for men. High proportions of women employed in short-term contract and casual jobs are likely to be threatened by cuts to research and teaching jobs.
- Women from diverse backgrounds face additional barriers to entry, retention and progression in the STEM workforce. Anticipated COVID-related funding cuts to equity programs would set back gains in STEM workforce diversity.
- Evidence demonstrates the benefits of diverse research workforces and the risks of homogenous research workforces, highlighting the need to hold gains made by women in STEM in recent years.
- Hard-won gains by women in STEM are especially at risk. This risk will be even greater if STEM employers do not closely monitor and mitigate the gender impact of their decisions.

Evidence is still being gathered on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the STEM workforce. There are early signs it will result in greater disadvantage for women than men in this sector.

The pandemic has shut down research facilities, laboratories, and other STEM workplaces – profoundly disrupting work patterns for researchers and practitioners in STEM. Further, parents of young children have been juggling STEM jobs from home while supervising education and care. The disruption is likely to be more severe for women than men, given their greater share of caring responsibilities and domestic work. The pandemic appears to be compounding pre-existing gender disparity; women are under-represented across the STEM workforce, and weighted in roles that are

typically less senior and less secure.<sup>1</sup> Job loss at a greater rate than for men is now an immediate threat for many women in Australia's STEM workforce, potentially reversing equity gains of recent years.

## Pre-COVID context

In 2016, women comprised 29% of the labour force that had a university STEM qualification (and 8% of the labour force that had a VET STEM qualification).<sup>1</sup> There were around 7,500 women employed in STEM research fields in Australia in 2017, compared to around 18,400 men.<sup>2</sup> In the university workforce, women hold 47% of the casual jobs, and based on limited available data, a greater proportion of women than men are on fixed term contracts.<sup>3</sup> Only 12% of academics at the professorial level are women, highlighting the promotion barriers and potential bias outlined in the Women in STEM Decadal Plan, with very small increases in biology, medical and environmental science in recent years.<sup>2,4</sup> In the private sector, women represent one in four STEM-qualified professionals (27%).<sup>2</sup>

Pre-COVID, women were also under-represented in career-accelerating **research grants** funded by the Australian Government. In 2019, fewer than one in four applications for Australian Research Council STEM project grants were led by women (24%), while women represented 26% of funded lead investigators.<sup>2</sup> In 2018, fewer than one in three applications for National Health and Medical Research Council grants were led by women (28%), with women comprising one in four funded lead investigators (25%).<sup>2</sup>

## COVID-19 workforce impact

Across the Australian economy, COVID-related **job losses** have been profound – between 650,000 and 700,000 jobs were lost between February and April 2020.<sup>5</sup> Australia's professional, scientific and technical services industry recorded job losses of 5.6% from mid-March to mid-April 2020, with women hardest hit; jobs in this field were down 6.3% for women and 4.8% for men.<sup>6</sup> Research sector STEM jobs are at ongoing risk because of income losses to universities and the flow-on effect to collaborating institutions.<sup>7</sup> With casual and short-term contract jobs likely to be the first to go, women are at particular risk – with women 1.5 times more likely to be in insecure jobs in the overall university workforce.<sup>8,9</sup> **Vulnerability to job losses** will vary from discipline to discipline. In mathematics, 64% of all women in academic positions are in casual jobs.<sup>10</sup> Casual and fixed-term positions are the least secure, yet employ the most women. This precariousness of women's relative position in the STEM labour market is likely to be exacerbated by the pandemic.

Across the whole Australian labour force, paid work has fallen from around 35 to 31 hours per week on average since the hundredth diagnosed case of COVID-19 in Australia.<sup>5</sup> Women’s average paid working hours fell by 4.43 hours a week – while men’s fell by 3.70 hours – and people from non-English speaking backgrounds lost 5.82 hours.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to COVID-19, women in heterosexual relationships shouldered a larger proportion than men of **domestic duties and caring responsibilities** for elders and young children (Table 1).<sup>11,12</sup>

**Table 1: Time spent on domestic activities and childcare by gender: Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>13</sup>**

<b>ABS Time Use Data — 25-34 years</b>		
	Female	Male
Time in paid work	22 hours / week	44 hours / week
Domestic duties and caring activities	21 hours / week	10 hour 30 mins / week
Breakdown of childcare as primary activity		
Age range: 0-4 years	30 hours / week	11 hours / week
Age range: 5-11 years	4 hours 15 mins / week	2 hours 38 mins / week
Age range: 12-14 years	1 hour 15 mins / week	1 hour / week

Research in the United States shows the COVID-19 stay-at-home measures have led to an increase in the hours of unpaid care work done by mothers compared to fathers, even where both parents work full-time.<sup>14</sup>

While COVID-19 work-from-home policies apply to men and women equally, anecdotal reports observe that women – typically those with children – bear the major burden of **home-schooling supervision, meal preparation and more general housework**, while also managing their paid workload.<sup>15</sup>

Research leaders in Australia and New Zealand observed that women led the early adaptation of university teaching to online, compounding pre-existing gender disparities in research and teaching roles.<sup>16-22</sup> Women in the academic STEM workforce have previously faced **a disproportionate increase in workload to develop materials for online teaching** and taken on extra teaching to cover the loss of casual staff.<sup>16</sup>

Women also perform a greater proportion than men of service roles in academic STEM, including pastoral care and mentoring, which could be expected to increase in times of stress.<sup>23-25</sup>

The pandemic has rendered women less likely than men to attend some STEM workplaces (and therefore more likely to be working from home), such as the major university STEM (STEM plus

medicine) faculties represented in Table 2.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, CSIRO found a generally closer proportion of men and women working from home, at the workplace, or at both locations (Table 3).<sup>27</sup>

**Table 2: Female and male staff visiting campus in a two month COVID-19 period by STEMM faculty, n = 674<sup>26</sup>**

16% of female staff visited campus across three STEMM faculties, compared to 28% of males.
In the Faculty of Science, 23% of female staff visited the faculty, compared to 30% of males.
In the Faculty of Medicine, 10% of female staff visited the faculty, compared to 15% of males.
In the Faculty of Engineering, 23% of female staff visited the faculty, compared to 34% of males.

**Table 3: STEMM employees' working locations by gender (20-27 April) – CSIRO, n = 1079<sup>27</sup>**

STEMM employees working locations by gender – national research organisation		
	Female	Male
Normal work site	9%	11%
Part work / part home	30.5%	25%
Fully from home	60.5%	64%

### Academic output

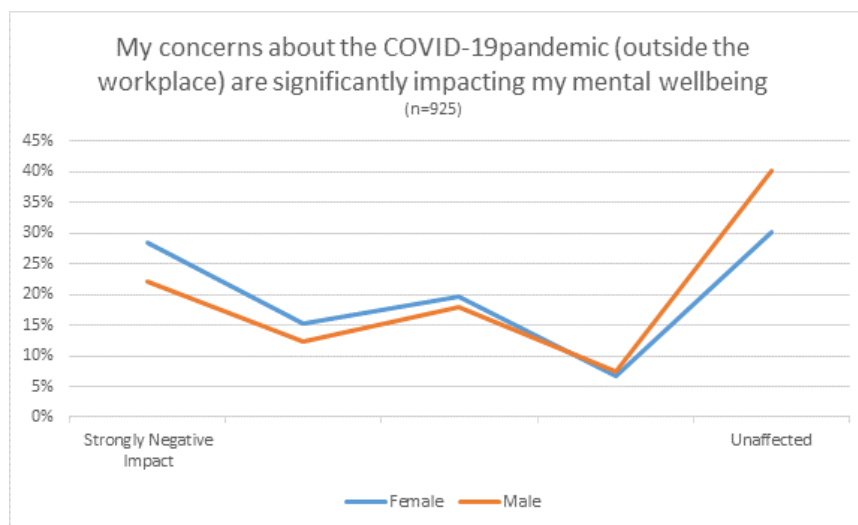
Prior to COVID-19, women and men conducting academic research in STEM produced comparable numbers of research publications per working year (although women published fewer papers over their entire careers due to career disruptions).<sup>28</sup> Early evidence suggests women's **submission rates may have declined** during the pandemic while men's submission rates have increased – reflecting similar trends when men take paid parental leave.<sup>29-31</sup> More data is expected in the near future. As the number and quality of peer-reviewed papers a researcher publishes are factors in awarding research funding and academic promotion, a reduction in the quality or quantity of women's research publications is likely to harm job and funding prospects now and for years to come. Statistics for 2020 grant applications are not yet available in Australia.

In **international trends**, early evidence from New Zealand suggests mothers in STEM have missed funding application deadlines and postponed manuscripts, sabbaticals and fellowships during COVID-19.<sup>17-22</sup>

**Wellbeing** is also being affected. While anxiety across the Australian population has risen, ABS data show a greater rise for women than men.<sup>32</sup>

A staff survey at CSIRO in April 2020 found that among staff aged under 25, one in two women reported some or moderate feelings of being anxious or worried, compared to one in three men.<sup>27</sup> For 25-44 year olds, two in five felt anxious or worried – with broadly similar results for men and women.<sup>27</sup> An ANSTO staff survey found pandemic-related factors outside ‘work arrangements’ had a greater negative impact on women than men.<sup>33</sup> This may be linked to women’s greater carer responsibilities.<sup>13</sup>

**Graph: Staff concerns (outside the workplace) by gender during the pandemic – ANSTO, n = 925<sup>33</sup>**



Women are significantly more likely than men to experience violence in their own home.<sup>34</sup> Early statistics indicate **domestic violence rates** have risen during the COVID-19 shut-down.<sup>35</sup> In the week 27 March to 2 April 2020, crisis services noted client numbers rose significantly, client needs were more complex, and violence more severe.<sup>35</sup> People subjected to domestic violence have poorer mental health and are much less likely to be able to hold down a job or progress in a career.<sup>36</sup>

For **tech entrepreneurs and startups**, 2019 research found no female-founder CEO in the survey had raised more than \$3 million, yet male-founded startups had raised up to \$50 million.<sup>37,38</sup> Women’s extra COVID-related domestic burden is likely to exacerbate the challenges for women seeking to raise capital. The new Australian Government initiative, Boosting Female Founders, may help alleviate some of these challenges.<sup>39</sup>

Currently, there is insufficient research to conclude whether women in STEM from culturally and linguistically **diverse backgrounds**, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, and women who identify as LGBTIQ+ – who faced pre-COVID additional barriers to entry, retention and progression – have experienced further specific challenges as a result of the pandemic.

Indigenous people are less likely to be employed in professional, scientific and technical services than non-Indigenous people (2% compared to 7%), and early analysis suggests the pandemic risks exacerbating longstanding inequities for Indigenous Australians.<sup>40,41</sup>

## Post COVID-19 implications

Given the compounding effect of **career breaks and gender-based discrimination** on career progression, it is reasonable to assume the pandemic is likely to have more long-term negative implications for women in STEM than men. This is also the conclusion of a major US and German study which finds the effects on women are disproportionate to men and are “likely to outlast the actual epidemic”.<sup>42</sup>

Much work has been done in recent years to redress the gender imbalance in STEM, but the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) program reports there is a danger this work may slow down or, according to some institutions, begin to reverse.<sup>43</sup> As SAGE requires participating institutions to collect data on workforce indigeneity and intersectionality more broadly, and to design programs that apply intersectional approaches, any COVID-related cuts to institutional SAGE programs would also set back broader gains in STEM workforce diversity.

The 2019 Women in STEM Decadal Plan outlines a path to achieve gender equity by 2030, including detailed strategic recommendations. While the pandemic may present an additional obstacle, its recommendations remain highly relevant.

Mounting evidence demonstrates the benefits of diverse research workforces and the risks of homogeneous research workforces – including examples of technology and treatments designed for male users or patients that do not work as well for women.<sup>44,45</sup> Long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the Australian research workforce as a whole are serious, as clearly defined in a previous RRIF paper.<sup>7</sup> Current and future **women in STEM are particularly at risk** if important advances of recent years wind back.<sup>46</sup> This potential danger will grow if STEM employers do not closely monitor and mitigate the gender impact of their decisions.

## An important note on available COVID-19 research

The rapidly changing picture and the relatively short timeframe of the outbreak mean conclusions drawn in early research need to be interpreted with caution. Pre-prints are marked with a § in the reference list. This brief is accurate at the time of writing and may become out of date at a later time of reading. Science & Technology Australia and the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering invite readers to seek subsequent updates.

## APPENDIX

### **Contributing authors and peer reviewers of this rapid research report**

#### Lead author

Professor Emma Johnston AO FTSE, UNSW Sydney

#### Contributing authors

Professor Adrian Barnett, Statistical Society of Australia

Professor Madhu Bhaskaran, Node Director and Chief Investigator, ARC Centre of Excellence for Transformative Meta-Optical Systems

Lyndelle Broadfoot CPHR GAICD, Executive Manager Human Resources, Environment, Energy and Resources, CSIRO

Dr Gunilla Burrows FTSE, Gender Matters

Dr Kathryn Evans, Country Manager, Australia & New Zealand, BioMarin Pharmaceutical Australia

Dr Cathy Foley FTSE, Chief Scientist, CSIRO

Associate Professor Nicola Gaston, Department of Physics, University of Auckland; Co-Director, MacDiarmid Institute for Advanced Materials and Nanotechnology

Professor Justin Gooding FAA FTSE, Faculty of Science, UNSW

Kate Hannah, Deputy Director, Equity and Diversity Te Pūnaha Matatini, University of Auckland

Professor Lisa Harvey-Smith, Australian Government Women in STEM Ambassador

Professor Elanor Huntington, Dean, ANU College of Engineering and Computer Science, Australian National University

Isabelle Kingsley, Office of Women in STEM Ambassador

Professor Jane Latimer FAA, Deputy Director, Institute for Musculoskeletal Health Faculty of Medicine and Health, University of Sydney; Director, Strategy and Engagement, Elizabeth Broderick & Co.

Professor Angela Morgan, NHMRC Practitioner Fellow, Speech and Language group leader, Murdoch Children's Research Institute; Professor of Speech Pathology, University of Melbourne

Associate Professor Miranda Mortlock, Queensland University of Technology; President, Statistical Society of Australia (Qld)

Dr Adi Paterson, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation

Professor Jessica S. Purcell, Chair, Women in Mathematics Special Interest Group, Australian Mathematical Society

Lauren Sullivan, Office of Women in STEM Ambassador

Dr Mingzhu Sun, University of Queensland



Dr Peter H Thrall, Deputy Director, Organisational Development, CSIRO Agriculture and Food

Dr Mark Toner AM FTSE FIEAust FAICD, Gender Matters

Peer reviewers

Professor Jodie Bradby, President, Australian Institute of Physics

Dr Anna Calkin, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute

Professor Susan Coppersmith, Head of School of Physics, UNSW

Marina Costelloe, Director Onshore Seismic and MT, Geoscience Australia; Director, Science & Technology Australia

Ms Michelle Durant, Managing Director, Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering

Professor Jock Findlay AO FSRB FSSR (USA) FAHMS

Professor Lisa Kewley FAA, Director, ARC Centre for Excellence in All-Sky Astrophysics in 3D

Professor Peter Koopman FAA, University of Queensland; Founding Chair Australian Academy of Science Equity and Diversity Reference Group

Professor Dr Marcia Langton AM FASSA, Foundation Chair of Indigenous Studies, University of Melbourne

Professor Vaughan G Macefield, Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute

Professor Caroline McMillen FTSE, Chief Scientist, South Australia

Casey Millward, BBus (USQ), MMgt (ANU), MPhil Public Policy (University of Cambridge), Director of Research, Indigenous Culture and Heritage, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

Professor Iona Novak, Head of Research, Cerebral Palsy Alliance, Brain Mind Centre, University of Sydney

Professor Ingrid Scheffer AO FRACP FAA FRS PresAHMS, President, Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences

Dr Georgina Such, Associate Dean Diversity and Inclusion, Faculty of Science, University of Melbourne

Acknowledgements

The production of this rapid research report was supported by Peter Derbyshire and Misha Schubert of Science & Technology Australia, and Alix Ziebell, Elizabeth Geddes and Kylie Walker of the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering. Edited by Dr Elizabeth Finkel AM and Robyn Diamond.

## References

1. Office of the Chief Scientist. *Australia's STEM workforce* (unpublished, 2020).
2. Australian Government. ARC data sourced from the ARC, NHMRC data sourced from the STEM Equity Monitor. *Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources* <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/stem-equity-monitor>.
3. Australian Government. Selected higher education statistics – 2018 staff data. *Department of Education, Skills and Employment* <https://www.education.gov.au/selected-higher-education-statistics-2018-staff-data> (2018).
4. Australian Academy of Science. *Women in STEM Decadal Plan*. [www.science.org.au/womeninSTEMplan](http://www.science.org.au/womeninSTEMplan) (2019).
5. Biddle, N., Edwards, B., Gray, M. & Sollis, K. Hardship, distress, and resilience: The initial impacts of COVID-19 in Australia. *Cent. Soc. Res. Methods* III, IV (2020) doi:10.26193/HLMZNW.
6. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 6160.0.55.001 - Weekly payroll jobs and wages in Australia, week ending 18 April 2020. *ABS* (2020).
7. Larkins, F. *et al.* *What impact is the pandemic having and likely to have on Australia's research workforce and its capability to support our recovery efforts*. <https://www.science.org.au/covid19/research-workforce> (2020).
8. Universities Australia. Investment in university research an investment in COVID-19 recovery. (2020).
9. Scholarship in Teaching. Using workplace gender equality agency statistics for universities. <https://scholarlyteaching.net/wgea-stats-for-universities/>.
10. Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute. *AMSI survey 2015 final results*. <https://amsi.org.au/?publications=amsi-survey-2015-final-results> (2016).
11. Wilkins, R. *The household, income and labour dynamics in Australia survey: Selected findings from Waves 1 to 14*. [https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/2155507/hi-lda-statreport-2016.pdf](https://melbourneinstitute.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/2155507/hi-lda-statreport-2016.pdf) (2016).
12. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 4430.0 - *Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: Summary of findings, 2018*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4153.0> (2019).
13. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 4153.0 - How Australians use their time, 2006. *ABS* (2006).
14. Alon, T., Doepke, M., Olmstead-Ramsey, J. & Tertilt, M. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic on gender equality. *VOX CEPR Policy Portal* <https://voxeu.org/article/impact-coronavirus-pandemic-gender-equality> (Accessed 15 May 2020).

15. O'Connell, C., McKinnon, M. & LaBouff, J. One size does not fit all: Gender implications for the design of outcomes, evaluation and assessment of science communication programs. *J. Sci. Commun.* **19**, (2020).
16. Marchant, T. & Wallace, M. Sixteen years of change for Australian female academics: Progress or segmentation? *Aust. Univ. Rev.* (2013).
17. Gaston, N. *Why science is sexist*. (Bridget Williams Books, 2015). doi:10.7810/9780908321650.
18. Government of New Zealand. Diversity in science. *Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment* <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/science-and-technology/science-and-innovation/agencies-policies-and-budget-initiatives/diversity-in-science/>.
19. Brower, A. & James, A. Research performance and age explain less than half of the gender pay gap in New Zealand universities. *PLoS One* **15**, e0226392 (2020).
20. McAllister, T. G., Kidman, J., Rowley, O. & Theodore, R. F. Why isn't my professor maori? A snapshot of the academic workforce in New Zealand universities. *MAI J.* **8**, 235–249 (2019).
21. Naepi, S. Why isn't my professor pasifika? A snapshot of the academic workforce in New Zealand universities. *MAI J.* **8**, 219–234 (2019).
22. Uhlmann, E. L. & Cohen, G. L. Constructed criteria: Redefining merit to justify discrimination. *Psychol. Sci.* **16**, 474–480 (2005).
23. Ashencaen Crabtree, S. & Shiel, C. "Playing mother": Channeled careers and the construction of gender in academia. *SAGE Open* **9**, (2019).
24. Barrett, L. & Barrett, P. Women and academic workloads: Career slow lane or Cul-de-Sac? *High. Educ.* **61**, 141–155 (2011).
25. Guarino, C. M. & Borden, V. M. H. Faculty service loads and gender: Are women taking care of the academic family? *Res. High. Educ.* **58**, 672–694 (2017).
26. Data provided in confidence by a major Australian university, solely for the purpose of this paper (Accessed 15 May 2020).
27. CSIRO Staff Survey 2020. Ethics approval for the release of this data was obtained for this reporting purpose and not for use more broadly in research (Accessed 15 May 2020)
28. Huang, J., Gates, A. J., Sinatra, R. & Barabási, A. L. Historical comparison of gender inequality in scientific careers across countries and disciplines. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* **117**, 4609–4616 (2020).
29. Kitchener, C. Women academics submitting fewer papers to journals during coronavirus. *The Lily* <https://www.thelily.com/women-academics-seem-to-be-submitting-fewer-papers-during-coronavirus-never-seen-anything-like-it-says-one-editor/> (2020).
30. Flaherty, C. No room of one's own: Early journal submission data suggest COVID-19 is

- tanking women's research productivity. *Inside Higher Ed*  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/21/early-journal-submission-data-suggest-covid-19-tanking-womens-research-productivity> (2020).
31. Antecol, H., Bedard, K. & Stearns, J. *Equal but inequitable: Who benefits from gender-neutral tenure clock stopping policies?*  
<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/aer.20160613> (2016).
  32. Australian Bureau of Statistics. 4940.0 - Household impacts of COVID-19 survey, 1-6 Apr 2020. *ABS*  
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4940.0main+features11-6> Apr 2020 (2020).
  33. ANSTO Staff Survey, Analysis, Bartley, J. (Accessed 15 May 2020)
  34. Australian Government. Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia, 2018. *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*  
<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/domestic-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-in-australia-2018/contents/table-of-contents> (2018).
  35. Women's Safety NSW. New domestic violence survey shows impact of COVID-19 on the rise. *Women's Safety NSW*  
<https://www.womenssafety.nsw.gov.au/impact/article/new-domestic-violence-survey-shows-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-rise/> (2020).
  36. Australian Government. Family violence and employment. *Australian Law Reform Commission* <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/family-violence-and-commonwealth-laws-improving-legal-frameworks-alrc-report-117/15-employment-law-overarching-issues-and-a-national-approach/family-violence-and-employment-3/> (2018).
  37. Sochan, A. Startup salary guide 2018. *Think & Grow*  
<https://www.thinkandgrowinc.com/blog-posts/startup-salary-guide-2018> (2018).
  38. Priestley, A. Male leaders dominate Australian startup scene, as women-led startups receive little funding. *SmartCompany*  
<https://www.smartcompany.com.au/startupsmart/news/australian-startup-sector-dominated-men/> (2020).
  39. Australian Government. Helping female founded startups shine brighter. *Ministers for the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources* (2020).
  40. Expert Working Group on Indigenous Engagement with Science. *Indigenous engagement with science: Towards deeper understandings: Expert working group report*. [https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-10/inspiring\\_australia-indigenous\\_engagement\\_with\\_science-towards\\_deeper\\_understandings\\_2013.pdf](https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-10/inspiring_australia-indigenous_engagement_with_science-towards_deeper_understandings_2013.pdf) (2013).
  41. Markham, F., Smith, D. & Morphy, F. Indigenous Australians and the COVID-19 crisis: Perspectives on public policy. doi:10.25911/5e8702ec1fba2.
  42. Alon, T., Doepke, M., Olmstead-Rumsey, J. & Tertilt, M. The impact of COVID-19 on

gender equality. *University of Bonn and University of Mannheim, CRC TR 224 Discussion Paper, Series crctr224\_2020\_163*  
[https://ideas.repec.org/p/bon/boncrc/crctr224\\_2020\\_163.html](https://ideas.repec.org/p/bon/boncrc/crctr224_2020_163.html) (Accessed 15 May 2020).

43. Science in Australia Gender Equity, personal communication.
44. Holdcroft, A. Gender bias in research: How does it affect evidence based medicine? *J. R. Soc. Med.* **100**, 2–3 (2007).
45. Gibbs, K. Diversity in STEM: What it is and why it matters. *Scientific American Blog Network* <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/diversity-in-stem-what-it-is-and-why-it-matters/> (2014).
46. Women at work: Why mentoring is good but sponsoring is even better. *UNSW Business School. Business Think*  
<https://www.businessthink.unsw.edu.au/articles/Women-at-work-Why-mentoring-is-good-but-sponsoring-is-even-better> (2016).

# RAPID RESEARCH INFORMATION FORUM

---

## The impact of COVID-19 on women in the STEM workforce

The Rapid Research Information Forum (RRIF) is a forum for rapid information sharing and collaboration within the Australian research and innovation sector. It is convened by Australia's Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel AO FTSE FAA FAHMS, and its operations are led by the Australian Academy of Science.

RRIF provides a mechanism to rapidly bring together relevant multidisciplinary research expertise to address pressing questions about Australia's response to COVID-19, as they emerge.

RRIF enables timely responses to be provided to governments based on the best available evidence. RRIF also informs the Chief Scientist's interactions and collaboration with other national chief scientific advisers. It demonstrates the critical value of research and innovation in driving societal as well as economic progress now and into the future.

### **Forum member organisations**

- Australia's Chief Scientist (Chair)
- Australian Academy of Science (AAS)
- Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences (AAHMS)
- Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering (ATSE)
- Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (ASSA)
- Australian Academy of the Humanities (AAH)
- Royal Society Te Apārangi (New Zealand)
- Australian Council of Learned Academies (ACOLA)
- State and Territory Chief Scientists and representatives
- Chief Science Advisor to the Government of New Zealand
- Scientific expert members of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)
- CSIRO
- Universities Australia (UA)
- Science & Technology Australia (STA)