



Social Justice

STOCKTAKE



Gender Inequality and Inequity

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Were you surprised to see gender inequality of less concern than, say, loneliness or racism in the Stocktake?

Initially yes, I was very surprised but, consistently in the responses disadvantage experienced by particular groups were identified less frequently than the more general description of disadvantage. Most of the more commonly identified injustices disproportionately affect women, particularly family violence, so what we are seeing is the consequence of gender inequality being identified rather than gender inequality itself.

There has been a substantial amount of progress on the visibility of gender inequality in recent decades, how does it continue to effect Australian women?

Women continue to be significantly disadvantaged compared to men. Although gender inequality has become more visible, it has not significantly lessened. Women continue to be paid less (13.4 per cent) in the workplace and do more unpaid work in the home than men.

Each of the social injustices in the Stocktake can be viewed through a gendered lens and in many cases women and non-binary people are significantly more vulnerable to social injustice and hardship than men.

How do you see gender inequality manifested in people seeking assistance from The Salvation Army?

We see this in many of our services, but it is most stark in our family violence services. It is important to appreciate that any person can be a victim of family violence and male victims can face undeserved stigma and shame that acts as a barrier to them receiving the support they need. The fact remains however that the victims of family violence are overwhelmingly women and children and the perpetrators are overwhelmingly men. Gender inequality and harmful stereotypes around gender roles are at the heart of both the high incidence of family violence and the barriers to male victims accessing support. Gender inequality harms both men and women.

What can governments do to improve gender inequality?

This is an issue that does not belong to governments alone. All employers can make active strides to ensure pay equity in their workforces. All community groups can ensure that men do not dominate governance and decision-making structures. Families can ensure that household chores are divided evenly, taking into account the project management (often called mental load) of running a household.



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What can individuals do to improve gender inequality in Australia?

Individually we have so much power to address gender inequality and inequity by examining our own behaviour. In our own lives we can all call out sexist jokes and language that perpetuates harmful stereotypes. In our own homes we can insist on household chores being divided equitably. Men in particular can be powerful agents of change by making space for women's experiences, wisdom, and expertise to be considered equally with men.