Australian Government

Jobs and Skills Australia

Gender Framework

14 March 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

Jobs and Skills Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Contents

Gender Framework

What is it?

Rationale, Principles, Priority Projects and Audience

- The Gender Framework is **an agency driven labour market and skills framework** to embed and build capability in gendered and intersectional analysis across Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA).

- The **key rationale** is that analysing labour market and skills systems through gendered and intersectional lenses has now been established at both the macroeconomic and microeconomic level as beneficial for developing effective evidence-based policy and making faster progress towards gender economic equality.

- **The framework is like other Government guides** such as gender responsive budgeting and policy impact assessment guides that mandate a more focused gender analysis and offer best practice advice on how to do it.

- There are **multiple audiences** for the Framework: the public; all levels of Government; tripartite stakeholders across the labour market and skills ecosystem; and analysts within JSA itself.

- The Framework is intended as a **constantly evolving guide** with progressive feedback loops to align with other Government reforms and developments such as Closing the Gap and the National Data Disability Asset.

- The framework has **five principles with priority projects** to ensure practical implementation.

Figure 1 The five principles of the framework

| Interrogate and reform data | Embed intersectionality | Collaborate and co-design with diverse and expert voices | Develop insight and indicators for structural change | Innovate and lead by example |

Purpose

Why?

Gender and intersectional analytical frames are critical for understanding the complexity of recent, current and emerging labour market dynamics. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) notes **intersectional data can help close gender employment and pay gaps.** By closing these gaps and addressing gender inequalities, growth, productivity, competitiveness and the sustainability of economies can improve.

Moving beyond headline measures to explore cohort experiences, pathways and trends within occupations, industries and regions drives better targeted policy levers and more informed government decisions. It also enables more critical insight into both the challenges and opportunities for specific cohorts within the labour market.

The Australian Government's Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality outlines the Government's ambition to drive change and tackle gender inequality in the world of work, education, and training. The strategy also mandates an intersectional approach and sets decade long targets and annual progress reporting. Intersectional data insights are vital and necessary in the identification, funding and evaluation of measures to achieve gender equality.

Likewise, other key Government priorities, such as Australia's transition to clean energy, Closing the Gap reforms, and the Future Made in Australia program all require a deep and nuanced understanding of the labour market and skills system. This includes identifying where inequalities currently exist and how to fix them. To solve the workforce challenges of today, Australia needs insights that uncover and measure how these inequalities intersect and compound.

Why JSA?

The opportunity

JSA plays an important role within the national skills system, providing data and analysis and advice that supports and elicits policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

There are also high public expectations that Government data, analysis and policymaking considers the diversity of the Australian public and incorporates gendered analysis including the impact of any new policy on different cohorts. Indeed, more robust intersectional analysis is now expected from our tripartite stakeholders in industry, academia, and policymaking.

The timing is right for JSA to lead intersectional analysis and explore more diverse labour market methodologies, indicators, and approaches. For example, looking at the gender pay gaps over the life course or strengthening qualitative research into supply-side drivers. JSA's intersectional analysis will strengthen work under way across various portfolios to advance gender equality and in turn make our economy stronger, more inclusive and more sustainable.

Implementation of this framework is vital to the JSA vision of achieving Australia's full skills potential and meeting our legislative remit. Our remit notes that JSA has an important role in supporting an inclusive and productive labour market, which requires tackling disadvantage, exclusion, barriers, and safety issues within the workplace. However, gendered and intersectional frames are not limited to JSA's strategic outcome of developing a more inclusive labour market and skills system, they are also key to solving Australia's biggest

skills challenges. The workstream and action plans in this framework will help JSA do both more systematically.

Analysis that fails to identify the impact of the multiple, compounding and intersecting characteristics of workers, students and employers can lead to ineffective policy responses that do not address the real and structural drivers behind skills gaps, productivity issues and future workforce demand.

For example, the workforces needed to deliver sufficient residential housing, Australia's transition to net zero and Future Made in Australia policy are all gendered, and in many cases culturally diverse or concentrated in specific geographical areas of Australia. So too are the care, crisis and community service workforces that support women's workforce participation through high-quality early childhood education and care; ensure Australia's aging population lives in dignity; and are on the frontlines of the plan to end violence against women. Closing the Gap priority reform four accentuates the importance of First Nations intersectional (regional) data and analysis.

Policy solutions to these complex workforce challenges need to draw on all available data. JSA must advocate for and lead broader gendered intersectional data collection and dissemination as well as drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data and expert research outside of Government.

Implementation and Practice

How will JSA apply it?

JSA has developed five priority projects backed by accountability measures to begin implementing the framework. The five priority projects sit under each principle and are:

1. Data review with recommendations for agency-level change and opportunities

2. Intersectionality definition and analyst toolkit

3. First Nations and Disability Frameworks

4. Occupation Standard Classification for Australian (OSCA) Gender Spotlight

5. A new regular Spotlight Series

Principle 1 - Interrogate and reform data

JSA will actively investigate gendered and intersectional differences, drivers, bias and limitations within the data we use and develop. A data review of selected JSA products and data sources will be conducted to deliver recommendations on how to record, fill and reform gaps; identify where intersectional data disaggregation is possible as well as where it is most needed; and how JSA can leverage existing data automation, quality assurance and data asset register processes to achieve Framework goals.

Priority project | Data review with recomendations for agency level change and opportunities
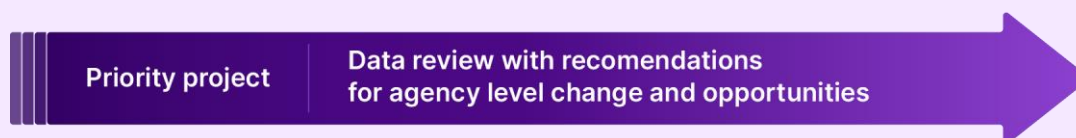
Principle 2 - Embed Intersectionality

JSA will develop and adopt an intersectional definition and develop analyst toolkits to build capability on how to apply best practice gendered and intersectional analysis within JSA and eventually across the labour market and skills ecosystem. The longer-term goal will be to extend this to others undertaking analysis in the labour market and skills space.

Priority project | Intersectionality definition & analyst toolkit
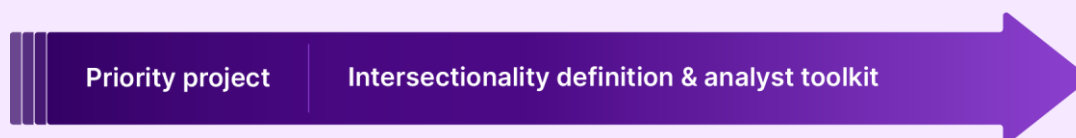
## Principle 3 - Collaborate and co-design with diverse and expert voices

JSA will experiment with new ways of engagement, collaboration and co-designed research to elevate the voices and lived experiences of diverse cohorts, especially socially and economically disadvantaged workers. JSA will also aim to better incorporate academic and other expert research, methodologies and insights into JSA products where appropriate.

A dedicated First Nations Framework to cement Indigenous Data Sovereignty and a cultural lens across JSA's work is the priority project for this action plan. A Disability Framework should follow in conjunction with the finalisation of the National Disability Data Asset.

Priority project | **First nations and disability frameworks**
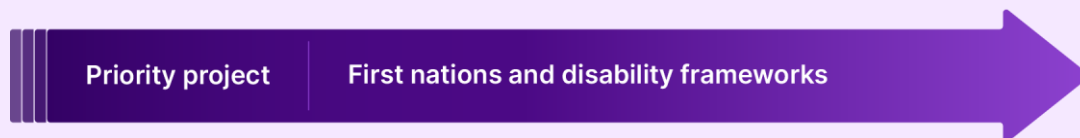
Principle 4 - Develop insights and indicators for structural change

JSA will better identify the social, cultural, regulatory and environmental underpinnings of the traditional labour market and skills ecosystem. This means developing insights on the gendered and racialised nature of some labour market and skills classifications, indicators, standards and methodologies. For example, analysing the implications of how we count and describe jobs; expanding on existing research around how Aboriginal Women's work is hidden or how measuring the gender pay gap over the life course could be a more accurate indicator of the cumulative economic impact of part-time work and caring responsibilities. The current Gender Economic Equality study will analyse the implications of new and expanded occupations in OSCA as an example.

Priority project | **OSCA gender spotlight**
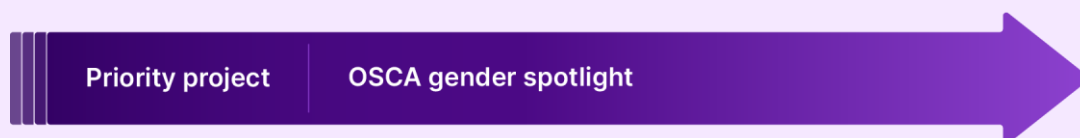
Principle 5 - Innovate and lead by example

JSA will build capability and capacity in gender and intersectional analysis across the agency and support the adoption across the broader labour market and skills ecosystem. JSA will improve visibility of gendered and intersectional insights through a new regular Spotlight Series product. This Spotlight Series could also include insights and resources developed across the five priority projects. A stocktake of the Framework's impact one-year after publication and a three-year review after-2026 census analysis will ensure accountability and drive innovation. JSA can more thoroughly test and apply the framework in the 2026 census and continually refine it based on feedback as it gets adopted and used.

Priority project | **Spotlight series products**
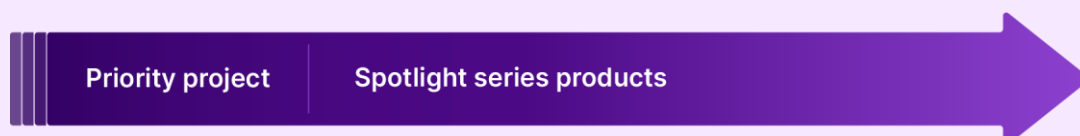
Priority Projects in Detail

1. Data Review

Interrogate and reform data

Prioritise a targeted data review within the JSA work program to highlight where gender differences exist and how intersectional data may enhance insights and/or create new ones. The data review should explore different combinations of gender, social and demographic characteristics in targeted products, and produce an internal facing report (in the first instance) that highlights insights into:

- Where intersectional data disaggregation is possible but missing/or would be of benefit across the workplan

- Examples of data and research (both qualitative and quantitative) that could be collected to fill the more significant gaps

- An internal process to systematically record data gaps, issues and limitations and how to account for them in JSA reporting

- Guidance on how to ensure agency data systems are culturally inclusive, responsive and safe.

Insights from the data review can feed into content for the Spotlight Series as part of JSA's more public facing advocacy for the clear inclusion, collection, expansion and dissemination of intersectional data. Over time, JSA could demonstrate progress in enhanced insights and lead by example in both analysis of and advocacy for intersectional data. This should include advocacy for better incorporating intersectional data into existing and future JSA data assets across Government, and their more common use amongst our tripartite stakeholders and the broader labour market and skills ecosystem. Through this, JSA can maintain better currency with international shifts in intersectional data collection in line with emerging work across the OECD, International Labour Organisation, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) United Nations Women (UN Women), and World Bank.

2. Intersectionality Definition and Analyst Toolkit

Embed Intersectionality

Develop and adopt a JSA intersectionality definition to build capability and understanding both within JSA and across the labour market and skills ecosystem. Putting intersectionality at the forefront is necessary to ensure detailed and accurate analysis of demographic data, so findings obscured in high-level gender analysis can be captured and considered.

The intersectionality definition and analyst toolkit could draw on the ABS framework for social standards and provide best practice guidance on how to apply intersectional lenses in labour market and skills analysis and options on what to do when intersectional data is not available.

Intersectionality Definition

Intersectionality is about capturing and recognising the diverse and multiple identities different people and communities can hold. This means acknowledging the most significant, multiple, intersecting and compounding forms of both marginalisation, disadvantage, discrimination, oppression, privilege, and inequality in our society. However, strengths-based understandings of intersectionality are also important and celebrate the diversity and richness these multiple identities and communities also hold.

Intersectionality assumes that both disadvantage and advantage are closely linked to different aspects of lived experience, identity, status and social characteristics.

These characteristics generally fall under the broad categories of gender, cultural/ethno-racial identity and background, socio-economic status, geographical location and other demographics like disability and age.

A comprehensive list of characteristics that could be used in the JSA intersectionality definition and analyst toolkit are:

- **Gender**: sex, gender identity

- **Cultural, ethno-racial identity and background**: First Nations status, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, culture, migrant, and/or refugee status

- **Socio-economic status & Geography**: socioeconomic and housing status, income, geographic location including remoteness, educational attainment, and level of foundation skills including literacy and numeracy.

- **Other demographics**: age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, caring responsibilities, interactions with the justice system, health status.

The Office for Women defines intersectional analysis in their APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment:

> *Intersectional analysis can provide insights into the causes of inequalities through the identification of compounding and interlocking advantages and disadvantages faced by diverse communities. The term 'intersectionality' was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how race and gender interact to shape black women's employment experiences in the United States. It refers to the interconnected nature of different characteristics and circumstances such as race, income, class, disability, sexuality and gender as they apply to a given individual or group. These characteristics and circumstances overlap and create an interdependent system of discrimination or disadvantage. Intersectionality is sometimes applied to acknowledge both the ways in which intersecting identities can lead to the suffering of oppression and discrimination but that can also enrich individual's lives (UNICEF; scholarship by Crenshaw, OECD Gender budgeting and intersectionality).*

See a video of Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw explaining the concept herself.

3. First Nations Framework

Collaborate and co-design with diverse and expert voices

In alignment with the JSA Engagement Principles, JSA will aim to deepen our engagement, collaboration and research co-design to better capture the lived experience of workers and expert academic research, frameworks and insights into JSA products. This means more:

- Transparent, replicable, and inclusive engagement with intersectional community organisations and groups.

- Proactive consultation and co-design with researchers who have already built insights on the gendered and intersectional dynamics of work, care, education and skills.

- Increasing use of qualitative methodologies drawing on focus groups, surveys and interviews to better incorporate worker and cohort voice across the suite of JSA products or inform other approaches and indicators, for example in economic modelling scenarios. Refocusing analysis on supply-side factors as per the structural insight principle is also key.

- Co-design and collaboration in research with cohorts who have lived experience. This is especially the case when working with First Nations peoples where JSA should also commit to strengths-based and cultural lens approaches.

JSA should also develop a JSA specific First Nations Framework, with principles and action plans like the Gender Framework, to cement co-designed and collaborative research practices as well as a systematic cultural lens across JSA, not just in Firssst Nations focused project areas. The framework could also enhance the DEWR Closing the Gap Strategy and provide JSA-specific advice on how to apply the Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data | NIAA.

Similarly, the development of a Disability Framework would follow. In doing this body of work JSA will need to engage with others in these spaces to draw on their expertise and avoid duplication of effort.

4. OSCA Spotlight

Develop insight and indicators for structural change

JSA will acknowledge the social, cultural, regulatory and environmental underpinnings of the traditional labour market and skills ecosystem and how they shape insights. JSA will also identify and publicly describe the structural and in some cases biased nature of labour market and skills frames, classifications, indicators, methodologies and settings. JSA can produce various spotlight papers in this area to build insights for structural change.

JSA will seek opportunities to influence reviews and updates to classifications and/or structural impacts where problematic and investigate new or expanded indicators to remedy these impacts. For example, the Australian industrial relations system and industry classifications are highly gendered and out of date, and while OSCA has made some progress in addressing this there is still some way to go. These limitations significantly detract from the detail available to understand feminised sectors, their pay, conditions and award dependence. The effects of gender, race and socioeconomic status and social and cultural norms on career choices and qualification outcomes are also known structural impacts. In tandem JSA will also investigate how to broaden its indicator and methodological focus to:

- examine factors like job satisfaction, job quality, career opportunity/choice and turnover in labour market insights and analysis, especially their prominent role in the supply of skills to the labour market; and

- explore the varying impacts of labour market and skills trends, policy levers and entitlements using life course stages, household composition, caring responsibilities and intergenerational factors as analytical frames.

For example, how caring responsibilities over different periods of (largely) women's lives interact with and limit career choices, opportunity, participation, progression, pay and financial security in retirement.

In a First Nations Framework, a cultural lens and implementation of data sovereignty could develop insights and indicators for structural change.

The Gender Economic Equality study will publish some of the implications of OSCA as an example of this type of structural insight. See breakout box below.

OSCA spotlight teaser

OSCA has implications for how we understand gendered labour market trends. The new classification has addressed some of the imbalance ANZSCO had in describing male dominated occupations in more detail, but some bias still remains. For example, selected highly feminised occupations will be 'counted' and described for the first time in OSCA but there is still bias in the ratio to workforce size for several highly gendered occupations.

For example:

- the highly feminised occupation of 'Aged or Disabled Carers' will now be split into five new 6-digit occupations (Aged care team leader, Community aged care support worker, Disability support worker, Disability team leader and Residential aged care worker). The diversity of roles in this large workforce in the economy including leadership level roles that were not previously recognised.

- Another key example is the aggregation of diverse nursing occupations (a very large workforce in the economy), such as paediatric or surgical registered nurses, to a generalised occupation of nursing in acute care. In contrast, surgeon occupations, which are highly masculinised and far smaller remain disaggregated (and this means counted) at the 6-digit occupation level.

- The Gender Economic Equality study will expand this analysis and will be similar to The Fair Work Commission's Gender Prism on awards.

5. Spotlight Series:

Innovate and lead by example

JSA will build internal capability and capacity in gender and intersectional labour market and skills analysis into future JSA products and longer term workplans.

JSA will embed this framework into a new regular Spotlight Series like the International Labour Market Update and Skills Shortage Quarterly. This leading series of labour market and skills statistics will:

- report statistics and insights that highlight where gender and intersectional differences exist and how they impact Australia's key workforce challenges;

- show examples of labour market insights with and without intersectional analytical frameworks to raise internal and public understanding of the value of this approach;

- highlight how the labour market and skills ecosystems structurally benefit and disadvantage different cohorts;

- promulgate industry and occupational case studies beyond cohort analyses or cultural lenses; and

- innovate new gender and intersectional indicators that not only enhance insights but potentially offer new evaluation mechanisms in Working For Women, Closing the Gap and other government strategy targets.

The public facing spotlight series will be a vital accountability measure in this framework's implementation.

Further Resources

To support the implementation of the framework and develop the analyst toolkit JSA has begun developing the following resources to support intersectional and gender analysis.

Key terms and concepts

JSA acknowledges there are debates around terminology and limitations exist when analysing the data we work with every day. For example, a focus on the experience of cisgender people is a limitation of census data and this along with the introduction of sexuality data is slated to change from 2026 onwards.

There are also limitations and debates around the term Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and common ABS data variables like Country of Birth, Language, English proficiency and Ancestry. While CALD has been widely adopted in the literature to capture the experience of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals, there have been recent calls to shift language from CALD to Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM) to account for race.

Links to various key terms, concepts and debates around them are below.

- Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, 2020 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)

> *The terms sex and gender are interrelated and often used interchangeably within the general community. However, they are two distinct concepts: Sex is understood in relation to sex characteristics. Sex recorded at birth refers to what was initially determined by sex characteristics observed at birth or infancy. Gender is about social and cultural identity, expression and experience.*

- The ABS Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity includes a Minimum Core Set of Cultural and Language Indicators that consists of four concepts: Country of Birth of Person, Main Language Other than English Spoke at Home, Proficiency in Spoken English and Indigenous Status.

- Australian Institute of Family Studies – LGBTIQ Communities

- Words at Work: Should we use CALD or CARM? - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)

- A note on language: Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women at work - Diversity Council Australia (dca.org.au)

- PWDA Language Guide: A guide to language about disability

- Glossary | Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment | PM&C (pmc.gov.au)

- Gender equality and intersecting forms of diversity | WGEA

- Intersectionality Explained | Our Work | UN Women Australia

Resources on why intersectional data matters

Intersectional analysis can help researchers and policymakers identify disparities that may be overlooked when looking at the single factor of gender, such as understanding the barriers faced by different groups in accessing employment opportunities and learning outcomes from education. See *Intersectionality at work: Why intersectionality matters to labour market information* and *Intersectionality in Education: Rationale and practices to address the needs of students' intersecting identities*.)

Moreover, intersectional and gender disaggregated analysis is highlighted as a best practice in the OECD Best Practices for Gender Budgeting (OECD, 2023) and the Office for Women's *Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment.* As noted above the Australian Government's Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality and Closing the Gap reforms also mandate intersectional approaches and data development.

- Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Data (data4sdgs.org)

- Recommendations for intersectional data collection, analysis, and interpretation | genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au

- Intersectionality in Education: Rationale and practices to address the needs of students' intersecting identities

- INTERSECTIONALITY RESOURCE GUIDE AND TOOLKIT (unwomen.org)

- Intersectionality at work: Why intersectionality matters to labour market information — LMIC-CIMT

- United Nations Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination & Protection of Minorities.pdf (ohchr.org)

- Gender Awareness Foundations course (intersectional gender lens in policy development)

Examples of gendered and intersectional analysis

- Gari Yala (Speak the truth): Centreing the work experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australians, and Gari_Yala_genderedinsights2021.pdf (wgea.gov.au)

- 2022 research projects | genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au

- Precarious work from a gender and intersectionality perspective, and ways to combat it (europa.eu)

- The impact of personal income taxation on women's labour force participation | OECD and various other examples linked in this document.

- Our very own former National Skills Commission critique of the occupation classification (ANZSCO) in the care economy within the Care Workforce Labour Market Study

Australian frameworks, toolkits and resources

- Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data 2024 NIAA

- Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment | PM&C (pmc.gov.au)

- Gender Responsive Budgeting: Including gender analysis in budget proposals | PM&C (pmc.gov.au)

- Gender Pay Equity Best Practice Guide (fairwork.gov.au)

- Applying intersectionality to workplace gender auditing and analysis | genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au

- National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 (dss.gov.au)

International Frameworks, toolkits and resources

- Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality 2023 | OECD iLibrary (oecd-ilibrary.org)

- Global Gender Gap Report 2023 | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)

- ILC111/III(B) – Achieving gender equality at work (ilo.org)

- Gender-based Analysis Plus resources - Canada.ca

Recent research on occupational gender segregation

Occupational gender segregation is a term that explains how jobs and industries across the economy are divided (segregated) along gender lines. For example, there are far more women in nursing than construction whereas jobs like accountants and retail managers have an approximately even split of men and women. This segregation is an ongoing and stubborn policy challenge in gendered labour market analysis and seminal recent research on this issue includes:

- Gender-based Occupational Segregation: A National Data Profile (fwc.gov.au)

- Gender-based Employment Segregation: Understanding Causes and Policy Interventions

- Workforce Gender Segregation in Australia (nsw.gov.au)

- Background Paper: Analysis of Supply-Side Drivers using HILDA data (nsw.gov.au)