



Australian Government
Australian Research Council

Gender Equality Statement

The ARC, as a key organisation in the Australian research sector, has an important role in driving and advocating for equality, diversity, and inclusion in the research workforce. The ARC is working with Australian research organisations, government departments and agencies, industry, peak bodies, and the broader community to create a dynamic, and constructive environment for all researchers to equitably participate, achieve excellence and contribute to Australia's research and innovation goals.

Gender Equality—Vision: Equal opportunities for all researchers to undertake research for a creative, innovative, and productive Australia.

The ARC's vision for gender equality encompasses all our key business activities and an overarching commitment to advancing women in the researcher sector. Achieving gender equality means equal opportunities, rights, and responsibilities irrespective of gender, for all researchers. The ARC recognises the benefits, both organisationally and in the sector, of achieving gender equality, including economic growth, improved organisational performance, workforce attraction and retention and enhanced reputation¹. The ARC's goals for achieving gender equality focus not only on the immediate impact of ARC activities, but contributing to broader goals for equality, diversity and inclusion across the Australian research sector that will provide inspiration and opportunities for women to commence and continue in research careers. The *Gender Equality Statement* is a component of the ARC's research workforce policy framework, which comprises a range of policies that facilitate equitable access to the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) for eligible researchers, including those in groups often under-represented in the research sector.

Purpose

The ARC's purpose is to grow knowledge and innovation for the benefit of the Australian community through funding the highest quality research, assessing the quality, engagement and impact of research and providing advice on research matters.

To achieve our purpose, the ARC considers support for gender equality, within a diverse research workforce, which is reflective of the diversity of the Australian community, to be essential. The ARC's intention is to ensure that all eligible researchers, irrespective of diversity, have an equal opportunity to participate in NCGP funding schemes.

Principles

Underrepresentation of women in the Australian research sector is an acknowledged issue and supporting and advancing women in the research sector is therefore a priority for the ARC. A range of mechanisms, introduced under the NCGP to support women in research, have contributed to continuous improvement in success rates for women, which in the majority of funding rounds have been equivalent to or higher than men. These mechanisms also address some of the most significant areas of disparity for gender equality in the broader research workforce: equal pay for fellowships and awards, access to leadership roles,

¹ [Workplace gender equality: the business case | WGEA](#)

addressing bias arising from career interruptions, and equal access to funding for all disciplines, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), in which women are commonly underrepresented.

The ARC recognises that addressing both the significant disparity in application rates under the NCGP, as well as a broader underrepresentation of women in the Australian research workforce, is essential. The ARC aims to be an integral part of a responsive and supportive research sector that is committed to gender equality and diversity. To achieve this, the ARC has committed to:

- Supporting women researchers, at all career stages, under the NCGP to facilitate a dynamic, inclusive, and progressive research workforce.
- Promoting outstanding women researchers, to improve the visibility of role models and research leaders, to inspire the next generation of researchers in Australia.
- Leading change by promoting gender equality through program design and implementation, best practice policies and ongoing engagement with the research sector.
- Maintaining a peer review process predicated on research excellence that has fairness, expertise, administrative transparency, impartiality, and integrity as core principles.
- Endorsing mechanisms to improve the participation of women in the research workforce, including improving the gender balance in research teams.
- Promoting excellent research outcomes and impact across all ARC funded disciplines to showcase innovation, ingenuity, and creativity—featuring the work of outstanding women researchers.
- Contributing to productive research environments that are built upon equal opportunities for both women and men.
- Publishing NCGP, and the broader research workforce, gender data and analysis to identify and address trends and inform policy development and implementation.
- Aligning with Australian Government initiatives to achieve focused and effective gender equality outcomes.

Implementation

National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP)

NCGP schemes provide a range of opportunities for researchers from diverse career backgrounds, at all career stages, across disciplines, and from Australia and overseas.

The ARC is committed to contributing to a research workforce, which benefits from fair and equitable access for all eligible researchers to NCGP research funding. The ARC has focused on a conscious and systematic approach to providing women with equal access to the diverse opportunities available, under all NCGP schemes, for researchers at all career stages. As part of this approach all NCGP information complies with Australian Government accessibility requirements and guidelines, including gender neutral language, inclusive content, culturally appropriate and respectful language and non-discriminatory content.

Under the NCGP, early and mid-career researchers, research leaders, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers can apply for fellowships and awards under the Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA), Future Fellowships, Australian Laureate Fellowships and Discovery Indigenous schemes. Early and mid-career researchers and higher degree research students can work directly with research leaders, through the Centres of Excellence; Industrial Transformation Research Program (ITRP); and Australian Laureate Fellowships schemes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander higher degree students, and uniquely under the NCGP honours students, can work with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander researchers, and research leaders under the Discovery Indigenous scheme, which exclusively funds projects and awards led by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander researcher.

University-based researchers can work with industry through the Linkage Projects and ITRP schemes and all researchers can access infrastructure through the Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities scheme.

Within this framework, in support of our commitment to advancing women in research, the ARC has implemented a range of initiatives under NCGP schemes:

Targeted Funding – Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Georgina Sweet Australian Laureate Fellowships

- Women researchers can be supported under all NCGP schemes, and exclusively under the Kathleen Fitzpatrick, humanities, arts, and social sciences disciplines, and Georgina Sweet, science and technology disciplines, (named) Australian Laureate Fellowships.
- The named Australian Laureate Fellowships are awarded annually to women who are successful in the Australian Laureate Fellowships scheme round, and who also applied for one of the named Fellowships.
- The recipients of the named fellowships receive additional funding to undertake an ambassadorial role to promote women in research and mentor early career researchers, particularly women, to encourage them to enter and establish research careers in Australia.

Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Georgina Sweet Australian Laureate Fellows

The named Australian Laureate Fellowships were introduced in 2011 to recognise outstanding women in research. The impact of this initiative has been multi-faceted, highlighting the research careers and outcomes of excellent women researchers, and also establishing a network of highly visible research leaders and champions to inspire young women in research. The additional funding has enabled each named Australian Laureate Fellow to support and mentor early-career researchers, particularly women. Initiatives implemented by named Australian Laureate Fellows under this scheme include: [Science in Australia Gender Equity \(SAGE\)](#), which aims to improve gender equity in the Australian higher education and research sector; initiated and led by Professor Nalini Joshi (2012 Georgina Sweet Australian Laureate Fellow); The [Georgina Sweet Awards for Women in Quantitative Biomedical Science](#), which promote and support female scientists who

demonstrate excellence in the area of quantitative biomedical science established by Professor Leann Tilley (2015 Georgina Sweet Australian Laureate Fellow); [the Kathleen Fitzpatrick Mentoring Fellowship](#), a residential program for Indigenous women early career researchers established by Professor Lynette Russell (2019 Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellow) and [Women in Research](#) an on-line resource to support female researchers and enhance gender diversity in Australian institutions established by Professor Sharon Parker (2016 Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellow).

Eligibility

- Under the *Discovery Early Career Researcher Award* and *Future Fellowships* schemes the eligibility periods for early and mid-career researchers can be extended for specified career interruptions, in recognition of the potentially significant impact of interruptions at these career stages, particularly for women.
- Eligible career interruptions include parental and caring responsibilities, medical conditions, unemployment, and non-research employment. Further information is provided in the [Eligibility and Career Interruptions Statement](#).
- The ARC recognises that COVID-19 has created a new dimension to career interruption, the impacts of which may last long after the actual interruption has ended. Two additional categories of career interruption are now included under the eligibility criterion, applicable for both the DECRA and *Future Fellowships* schemes: disaster management and recovery, and limited or no access to facilities and resources—such as through workplace interruptions.
- Chief Investigators, under all project schemes, must be an employee for at least 20 per cent of full time equivalent at an Eligible Organisation. This criterion ensures that researchers with part-time positions, who are often women, are eligible to apply for NCGP funding.

Assessment

The award of ARC funding is predicated on research excellence determined through a fair, rigorous, and competitive peer review process.

- The Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence (ROPE) assessment criterion is used in most NCGP schemes to recognise research excellence in the context of diverse career and life opportunities and experiences.
- ROPE considers a researcher's capacity, productivity, and contribution, relative to opportunity and experience, recognising the impact of career interruptions for any reason. Further information is provided in the [Research Opportunity and Performance Evidence Statement](#).

- Assessors, including ARC College of Experts members, are provided with guidance and training in the application of the ROPE criterion.
- The gender balance of membership on ARC selection committees, relative to the overall gender balance in particular fields of research, is actively considered and managed to ensure balanced gender representation. Further information on the gender balance of ARC committees, including the College of Experts is provided on the [ARC website](#).
- ARC assessor guidance materials for general and detailed assessors encourages assessor awareness to address unconscious bias; the induction for ARC College of Experts members includes specific unconscious bias training.
- The ARC supports the use of gender-neutral language in applications to further offset the potential risk of unconscious bias during assessment.
- The ARC appeals process is designed to ensure that applicants for funding under all NCGP schemes are treated fairly and consistently in selection processes.

Membership of the ARC College of Experts

The overall gender composition of the ARC College of Experts has continued to improve, increasing from a total of 29 per cent women in 2015, to 48 per cent in 2021. The ARC remains committed to increasing membership in disciplines with traditionally lower participation by women, notably in STEM. Women's membership in STEM disciplines has continued to increase with engineering, information and computing sciences increasing from 14 women and 29 men in 2019, to 20 women and 26 men in 2021. Similarly, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and earth sciences increased from 17 women and 26 men in 2019 to 20 women and 24 men in 2021.

Grant conditions

The NCGP is administered in accordance with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines](#). Grants are awarded in accordance with ARC grant guidelines and policies.

- The ARC supports eligible researchers under all NCGP schemes.
- Fellowship and Award salaries are provided at equal pay rates for both men and women.
- Parental leave is available under all Fellowship and Award schemes.
- Funding for reasonable, essential costs to allow a researcher who is a carer, or who personally requires care or assistance, to undertake travel essential to a project is available under most schemes.

- ARC Centres of Excellence and Industrial Transformation Research Hubs and Training Centres are required to implement a centre/hub-specific gender equality and diversity plan.
- Administering Organisations are required to acknowledge and comply with all relevant laws and regulations, including obligations under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*.
- Administering Organisations are also expected to have implemented gender equality policies, which include provisions to support the progression and retention of women in the research workforce.

ARC funded researchers and research advancing gender equality

The ARC funds research under all disciplines including projects that investigate gender equality, seek to address gender imbalance, and promote equality and diversity. The inclusion of gender dimension and analysis in research projects is encouraged, where relevant.

ARC-funded researchers and centres, have also been showing leadership, and taking action, in advancing gender equality:

- Professor Lisa Kewley's (Director) ARC Centre of Excellence in All Sky Astrophysics in 3D (ASTRO 3D) has committed to equality of opportunity and to a pro-active and inclusive approach to equality, which supports and encourages all under-represented groups, promotes an inclusive culture and values diversity. ASTRO 3D aims to achieve 50:50 diversity at all levels and has developed a comprehensive [equality and diversity plan](#).
- The [Innovative Measurement of Australian Gender \(IN\)Equality \(IMAGINE\)](#) project funded by the ARC and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation aims to develop novel approaches for measuring gender equality in Australia. This will facilitate research into the effects of gender equality on health and socio-economic outcomes.
- [Women in Research](#), an on-line resource, which aims to inspire and support female researchers, enhance the effective mentoring of women, and promote gender diversity in educational and research institutions. Implemented by Professor Sharon Parker, ARC Kathleen Fitzpatrick Australian Laureate Fellow, the resources available include the '[Small Wins' Webinar Series](#) – inspiring change and helping women in research flourish through small wins.
- In 2020 LaTrobe University and Western Sydney University were both named, by *Times Higher Education*, in the top five universities tackling gender inequality. These universities have both been awarded the [Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation](#), and have implemented a range of gender equality initiatives across a broad range of areas.

Engagement

The ARC is committed to engaging on gender equality issues. In doing so the ARC:

- works closely with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in relation to policy and best practice processes in gender equality
- promotes and engages with the sector about gender issues through ARC Executive presentations and participation of staff in relevant forums
- engages with national and international stakeholders to identify the most effective support mechanisms to encourage participation by women in the research workforce, including the Global Research Council and the Research on Research Institute
- participates in relevant national and international forums in relation to women in research
- provides input to Australian Government initiatives
- highlights the topic of gender equality and women in research to the wider community.

Monitoring, data reporting and evaluation

The ARC is committed to making NCGP data available, in accordance with Australian privacy legislation. Within this framework, the ARC:

- publishes gender disaggregated data on the ARC website in scheme selection reports and the [gender data trend visualisation](#) and gender snapshot
- monitors NCGP gender data, including outcomes of grant opportunities to identify any trends or issues overall and by field of research
- reports annually to Administering Organisations on the gender profile of researchers applying from their institution and publishes a [gender data by institution data visualisation](#).
- considers NCGP gender data within the context of research data collected through Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)
- undertakes evaluation activities, as an essential part of program and policy development and management, to inform continuous improvement.

Data reporting and trends

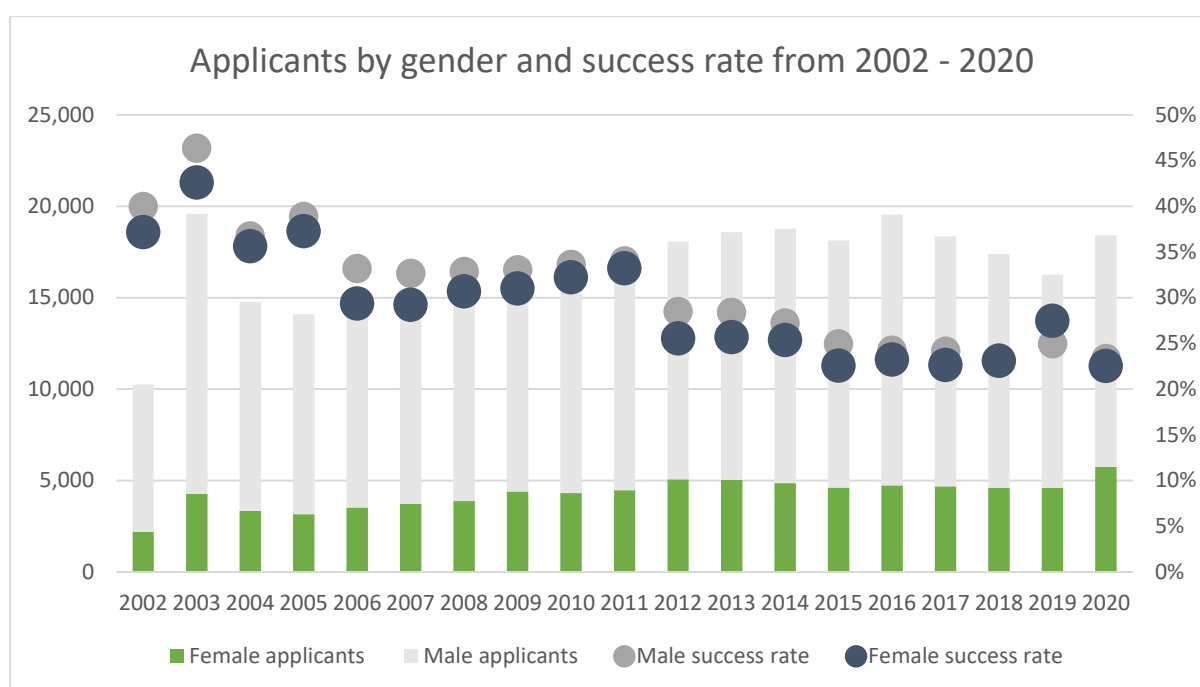
The ARC is committed to making ARC data available to stakeholders, within the operational framework of ARC and Australian Government policy and legislative requirements, including obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988*. The ARC recognises that the range of data created and collected by the ARC can be useful to inform policy analysis, planning and reporting for a range of stakeholders, including individual researchers, and the Australian research sector.

For example NCGP data is included in the [STEM Equity Monitor](#), a national data report on girls and women in STEM produced by the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

For the purposes of ARC data collection, in accordance with the *Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender*, individuals can identify as M (male), F (female) or X (indeterminate/intersex/unspecified). Owing to small numbers reported and privacy obligations, individuals identifying as X may not appear in ARC data reports.

The ARC releases [outcome reports and trend data](#) annually, which track the comparative gender success rates and participation rates across NCGP schemes in a range of categories including, career age and field of research.

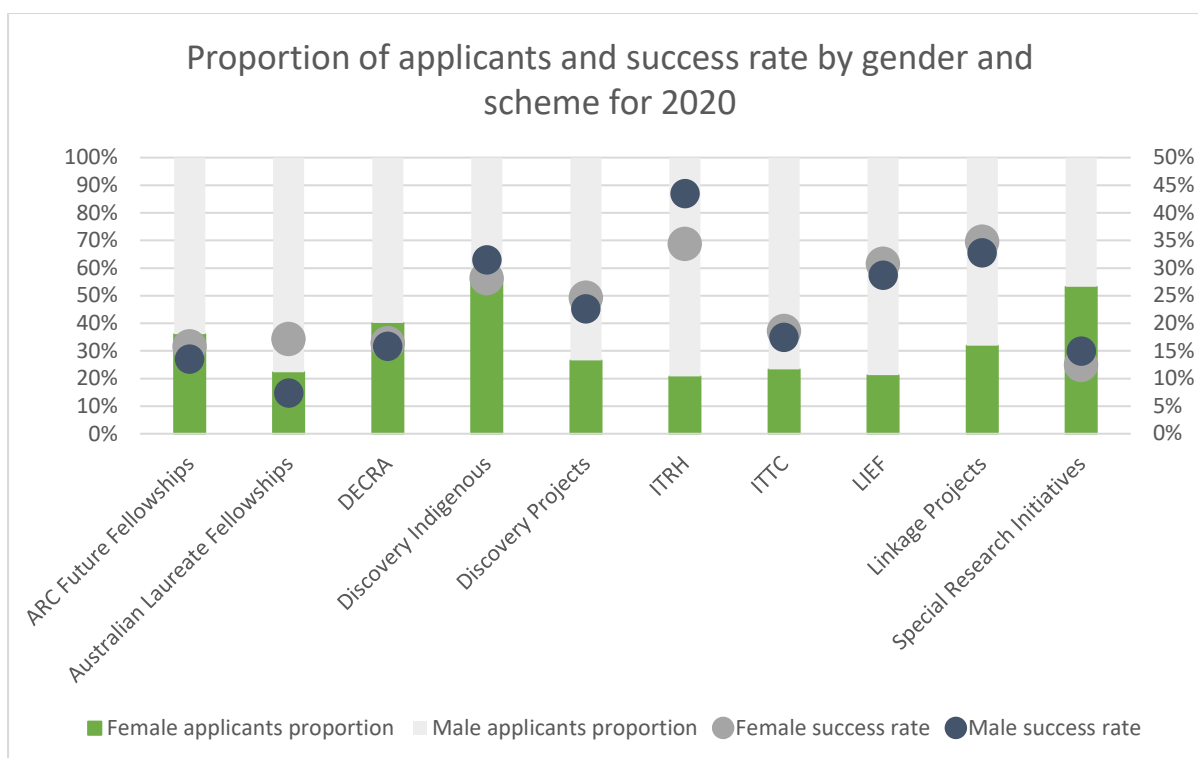
Under NCGP schemes and across years, the success rates for men and women have been consistently comparable, despite the significant disparity in participation rates.



In 2018, for the first time, the success rates for women were equal to or higher than men in all Discovery Program² schemes, and in 2019 the success rates for women were equal to or higher than men in all Linkage Program³ schemes. This trend continues for the majority of Discovery and Linkage Program schemes in 2020, including the ARC Centres of Excellence scheme triennial round.

² Australian Laureate Fellowships, Discovery Early Career Researcher Award, Discovery Indigenous, Discovery Projects, Future Fellowships schemes

³ Industrial Transformation Research Hubs; Industrial Transformation Training Centres; Linkage, Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities; Linkage Projects schemes



DECRA – Discovery Early Career Researcher Award, ITRH – Industrial Transformation Research Hubs, ITTC – Industrial Transformation Training Centres, LIEF- Linkage, Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities.

Comparable, or higher, success rates for women under the NCGP are significant, given the disparity in application rates. In 2020, the lowest participation rate for women in an NCGP scheme was under the *Australian Laureate Fellowships* scheme, where women submitted 22 per cent of applications; however, the success rate for women in this scheme was 17.1 per cent compared to 7.4 per cent for men. Participation rates for early and mid-career women in the DECRA and *Future Fellowships* schemes were higher at 40 per cent and 36 per cent respectively, although these results are still significantly below parity. The success rates for women in both schemes exceeded the success rates for men.

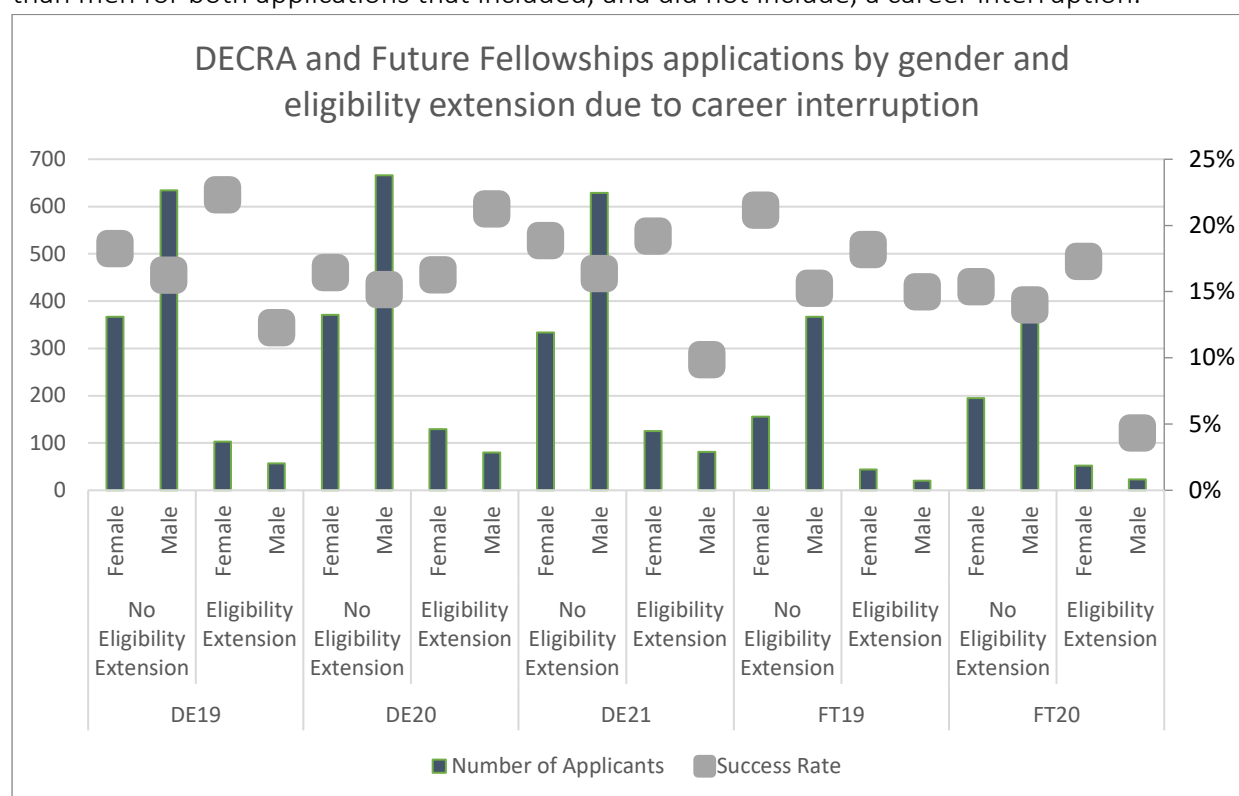
Career Interruptions

NCGP data shows that the mechanisms introduced by the ARC to address disadvantage arising from career interruptions, which can affect more women than men, particularly at early career stages, have been effective.

Under the DECRA and *Future Fellowships* schemes the number of years between the conferral date of a PhD, or equivalent, and the submission closing date for an application, is a key element of eligibility. The ARC allows extension of the eligibility periods for [eligible career interruptions](#).

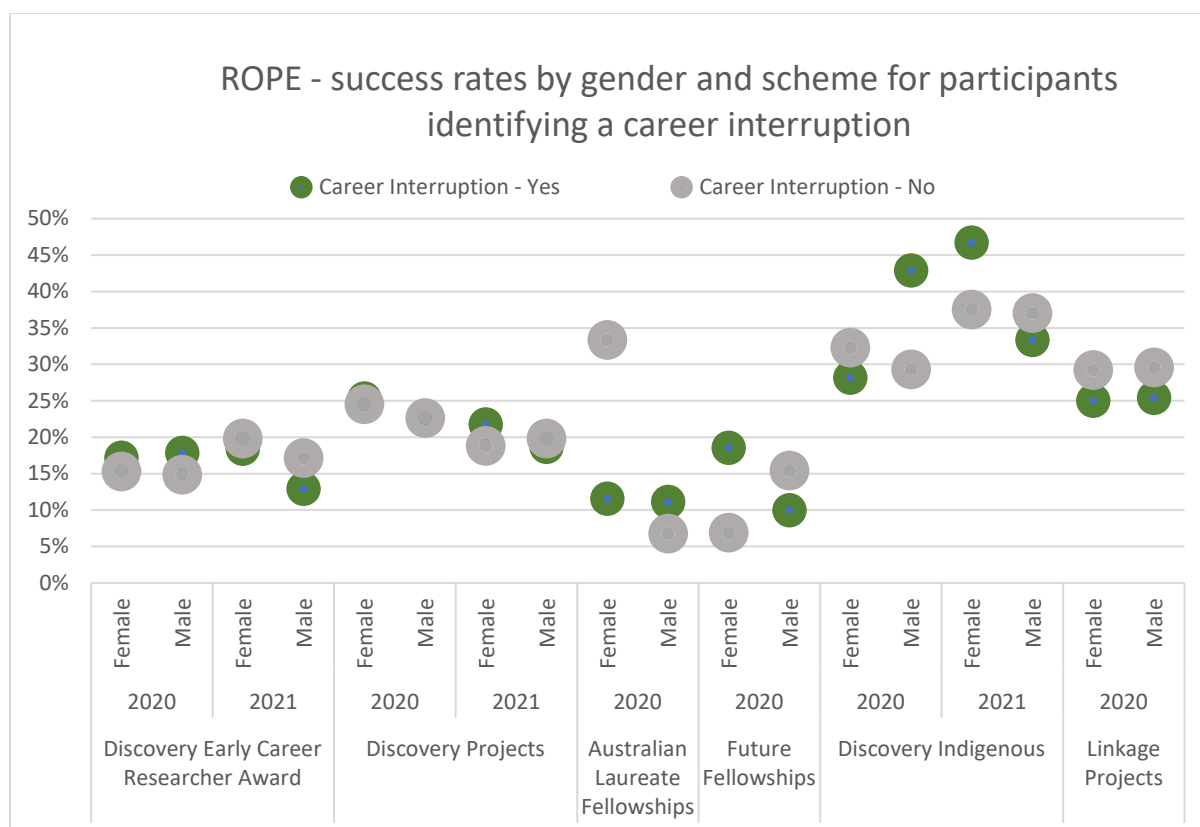
The ARC receives higher numbers of applications, that include a career interruption, from women than men in both schemes. Success rates of applications with and without interruptions have been variable for men and women. Notably the success rates for women

in the latest scheme rounds DECRA (DE21) and Future Fellowships (FT20) have been higher than men for both applications that included, and did not include, a career interruption.



Additional to eligibility extensions for career interruptions, the ROPE assessment criterion, used in most ARC schemes, allows researchers to identify any career interruption that has affected their research opportunity. ROPE has been utilised by researchers at all career stages across all ARC schemes. The ARC recognises that diverse circumstances can affect research opportunity and ROPE enables evaluation of a researcher's capacity, productivity and contribution in the context of opportunity and experience.

The use of the ROPE assessment criterion has ensured that researchers who have experienced a career interruption have not been disadvantaged. ROPE has been particularly effective supporting mid-career women; the most recent *Future Fellowships* scheme showing a 19 per cent success rate for women who identified a career interruption, compared to 7 per cent for women who had not identified a career interruption.



The ARC also provides gender data to each Administering Organisation on the gender profile of their researchers applying for ARC grants. The purpose of the report is to raise awareness of the profile of applicants for ARC funding from each organisation and encourage improvements in participation rates.

Excellence in Research for Australia

In 2019, the ARC released the first *Gender and the Research Workforce report*, using gender data collected from the ERA 2015 and 2018 evaluations of research quality and research activity within Australia's higher education institutions.

The Gender and the Research Workforce report enables analysis of gender trends across fields of research, employment level, employment status (appointment type), and employment function (for example, research only positions).

During the assessment period of ERA 2018, women comprised 44 per cent of the research workforce; there were more women than men in five of the 22 Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification fields of research, with the highest representation in education, 65 per cent, and the lowest in the physical sciences, 19 per cent. The acknowledged disparity at senior levels was significant, with men holding 9,043 Level E appointments (75 per cent) compared to 3,048 held by women. Women held 46 per cent of research only positions during this period, and 43 per cent of teaching and research positions.

Collaboration and consultation – gender equality initiatives

The ARC is committed to working with the research and higher education sectors, government, and industry to improve gender equality in the research workforce. The ARC works directly with other Australian Government agencies and departments, including the NHMRC and Administering Organisations, including all Australian universities, to advance gender equality.

The ARC has contributed to key gender initiatives in the research sector, including:

- [Advancing women in STEM strategy](#) The Australian Government's strategy for women in STEM aims to increase gender equity in STEM education and careers, envisioning a society that provides equal opportunity for people of all genders to learn, work and engage in STEM.
- [Science in Australia Gender Equity](#) (SAGE). Founded by Professor Nalini Joshi, Georgina Sweet, ARC Australian Laureate Fellow, SAGE's vision is to improve gender equity in the Australian higher education and research sector. SAGE is implementing a sustainable and adaptable Athena Swan model for Australia.
- [Women in STEM Decadal Plan](#) An Australian Government initiative to develop a 10-year roadmap for sustained increases in engagement and participation of girls and women in STEM.

The ARC monitors progress against gender equality goals around the world, to stay attuned to best practice and ensure ARC strategies and policies are current, best practice and effective.