

What sets female leaders in manufacturing apart?

The number of women in the Australian manufacturing workforce continues to grow, albeit from a low base. With most organisations on track to meet diversity targets and gender as the top focus, it is clear some steps are being taken to improve female participation.

When it comes to leadership positions, there's even more to be done. Examining the perspectives and strategies of female-led organisations reveals a range of different attitudes and approaches. This adds to the growing body of evidence suggesting diversity can positively affect organisational culture, innovation, and performance.

A snapshot of female participation in manufacturing

Across the industry, one in three employees and just one in five executives are female. This tends to be higher for metropolitan-based manufacturers and those with annual turnover of more than \$20 million. The research suggests that food and beverage and textiles and clothing manufacturers have a higher concentration of women at both levels of the organisation.



33%

the proportion of female employees in the workforce



40%

the proportion of female employees within food and beverage manufacturers*



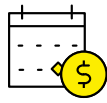
20%

the proportion of executive teams that are female

*Note: low sample size, figure is indicative only

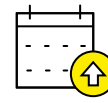
Cautious optimism isn't tempering growth aspirations

Overall, manufacturers have a positive outlook on business conditions in the next 12 months. Almost one in four female-led manufacturers are very confident and two in three are seeking to expand the business in the next year.



23%

of female-led manufacturers are very confident about business conditions in the year ahead, and **61%** are quite confident



65%

of female-led manufacturers are focused on growth in the year ahead and **35%** are intent on maintaining the status quo.

Top business priorities for the year ahead

Female-led manufacturers are focusing on sales and marketing to engage with customers, and investing in social initiatives such as diversity and inclusion and on corporate strategy initiatives. Investment in technology and data management also feature highly on the agenda.



46%

Invest in marketing and sales to improve customer acquisition and retention



42%

Focus on business strategy (e.g. M&A, moving up or down the value chain)

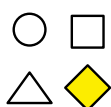


42%

Increase investment in social initiatives (e.g. diversity and inclusion, employee engagement, community impact)

Diversity challenges still to be overcome

Attracting and retaining staff remains a hurdle for many manufacturers, with a range of strategies being implemented across the sector. Embracing diversity and inclusion is accepted by many as a key part of this goal, evidenced by the 78% of manufacturers that already have diversity targets.



66%

of female-led manufacturers have a diversity target, with 35% on track and 31% unlikely to meet the goal



45%

of female-led manufacturers say diversity is a challenge as people from under-represented groups prefer working in other sectors



31%

of female-led manufacturers plan to increase participation of people with a disability in the next two years

Among female-led manufacturers, the top tactics being implemented to attract and retain talent more broadly include:

1

35% are nurturing a friendly and supportive workplace culture

2

35% have a strong focus on continued professional learning and development

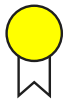
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31% offer flexible working arrangements.

Different drivers of ESG initiatives

Sustainable manufacturing is seen as an important part of business strategy by the vast majority of the industry. This is reflected by the fact that most manufacturers have an emissions target and are on track to meet it.

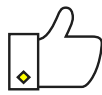
When looking at the motivations behind initiatives to improve environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues, female-led manufacturers are focused on driving brand reputation, enhancing their impact and meeting stakeholder expectations.



Competitive position

54%

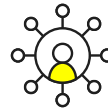
of female-led manufacturers are seeking to achieve stronger brand reputation through sustainability initiatives



Positive impact

50%

of female-led manufacturers are seeking to positively impact the planet and society through sustainability initiatives



Stakeholder management

50%

of female-led manufacturers are seeking to meet stakeholder or shareholder expectations through sustainability initiatives



Financial position

23%

of female-led manufacturers are seeking increased revenue or profit through sustainability initiatives

These findings accompany the CommBank Manufacturing Insights Report, which explores the sector's key challenges and opportunities. Read the full report [here](#) for more information about the operational and financial performance, outlook, and supporting strategies and tactics.

Things you should know:

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