



Bob Bredemeyer

WORK CHOICES & GENDER DIFFERENCES

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Recently, much debate has surfaced about gender differences in the workplace. Most significantly, this debate has related to senior levels of employment, such as board and executive level gender imbalances.

A broader and continuing sore point is general income inequality. For example Australian Government data (March 2016) shows:

- Full-time average weekly earnings of women: \$ 1,325.10
- Full-time average weekly earnings of men: \$1,602.80
- Full-time average earning difference: \$ 277.70 per week
- Full-time gender pay gap: 17.3%

The data is clear, has been for many years, and clearly points to inequity. Part of the explanation for the disparity relates to women and men being concentrated in different occupational areas. For example women are over represented in relatively poorly paid caring and welfare areas, while men are over represented in better

paid engineering and applied technology areas.

That begs the question, why is this so? Why do so few women choose STEM (particularly Maths related) areas of education, training and employment? Where does it all start? And importantly for us, is the problem a poor reflection on career practitioners, career practices and systems?

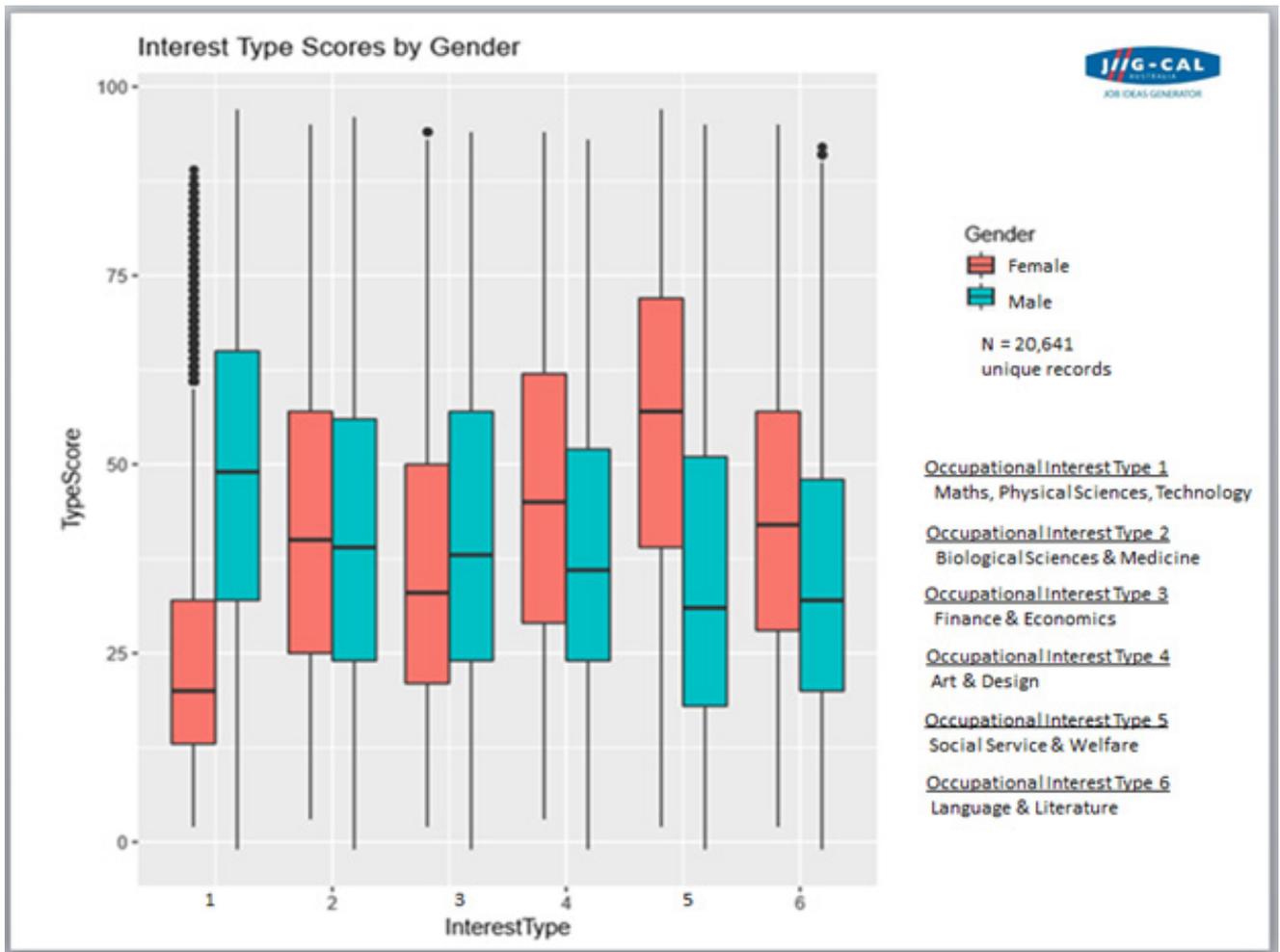
Addressing these questions would seem to provide more fertile ground for progress than trying to establish quotas for recruitment into senior

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positions, as has been attempted many times with little success.

Occupational interest plays a central role in career decision-making. If a person intensely dislikes a particular work related activity s/he will try to avoid it, and if forced into it, stress for all concerned is probable. Quality of work is also likely to suffer. On the other hand, an activity which is strongly liked will generate its own strong motivation, ie separate from material rewards. Consider the master craftsman, totally absorbed in both process and high quality output, often in a voluntary capacity and with little experienced stress of effort.

In trying to contribute to the vexing question of why gender differences occur in career planning, and when they start, the team at JIIG-CAL Australia recently analysed relevant Client data. Results show stark gender differences as shown in the box chart over the page (on page 9).



For further information about box charts & these Occupational Interest Types see: <https://jiig-cal.com.au/blog>

The OIG (Occupational Interest Guide) components of Career Voyage (<https://jiig-cal.com.au/careervoyage>) and Career Compass (<https://jiig-cal.com.au/careercompass>) are arguably the most thoroughly researched, robust and accurate interest guides, based on extensive international university-led research.

The data summarised in the chart is based on an accidental sample of 20,641 Australian Career Voyage users who accessed the online system between April and November 2016. The number of female participants was 11,212 (54%), and male participants 9,429 (46%).

Occupational Interest Type 1 covers most of the STEM subject

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areas and employment. The chart shows the greatest difference between males and females in this Interest Type. The second greatest gender difference is seen in Interest Type 5, ie Social Service

and Welfare, with females having significantly higher levels of interest in this occupational area. These differences are real and significant.

A break-down of the data by gender across different ages and educational levels - from high school Years 9 to 12, plus university, TAFE and beyond - shows very similar patterns as above (with only minor variations).

While analysis of this data doesn't provide answers as to why, and when (origins), it does clearly show that gender differences in occupational Interest Profiles are established before year 9. Additionally, it suggests that origins of the differences are to be found in younger girls and boys, i.e. younger than school Year 9.