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● WORK SEXISM

Women's unequal struggle

Torny Jensen

Australian workplaces are sexist, most women say.

A new survey, released to coincide with International Women's Day today, has found 92 per cent of Aussie women believe they don't have equal rights at work.

The poll, conducted by the United Nations development fund for women, UNIFEM, and cosmetic company the Heat Group, also found 41 per cent of respondents blamed a lack of support at home and demanding domestic responsibilities for not being able to promote themselves at work.

More than half of those surveyed said they felt pressured to take on traditional female roles at home.

This left many women feeling they did not have enough time to invest in the long hours needed to climb the ladder at work.

The results of the survey come as Rice Warner Actuaries and the Australian Council of Trade Unions data show women are still earning 17 per cent less than their male counterparts, resulting in about \$1 million of financial inequality over a woman's lifetime.

The Heat survey found more than two-fifths of women felt they'd been passed over for a promotion because of gender.

Kate O'Reilly from UNIFEM Australia said businesses were putting themselves at a disadvantage by not adequately supporting their female workers.

"It does not make economic sense not to have equality in the workplace," O'Reilly said.

"Companies who support the full participation of women at all levels demonstrate stronger performance."

More than two-thirds of women felt Australia had a long way to go in terms of equality.