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# How empowering women can help close the cybersecurity workforce gap in ASEAN

ASEAN TVET Council Regional Policy Dialogue

**“Reskilling and Upskilling in ASEAN”**

28 – 29 Feb 2024 in Bali, Indonesia and Video conference

Breakout Session 2A

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# A Global Problem



# Where are the women?

Women are underrepresented in the cyber security sector

- Data is lacking and numbers are sketchy
- Designing solutions requires an accurate understanding of the root causes of gender imbalances
- Effective implementation of solutions requires an understanding of resistance to equality initiatives

# Why should the cybersecurity sector care about gender equality?

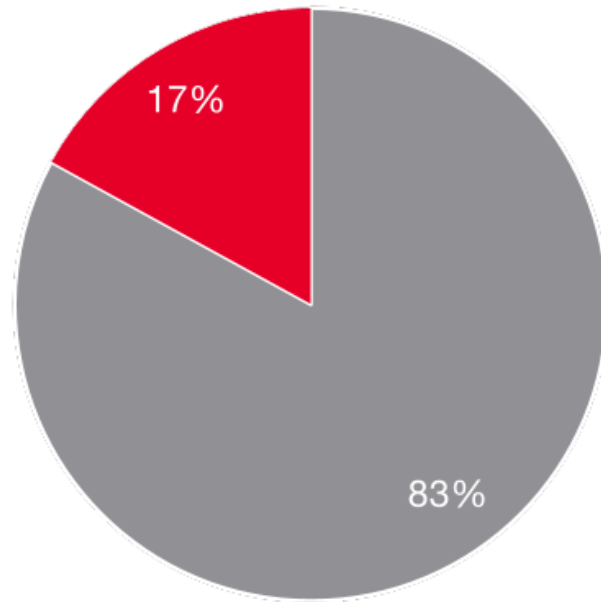
- Rising importance of the cyber security sector
- Workforce shortages
- Gains of diversity are being forgone
  - innovation, creative problem solving, understanding people
- Gender gaps in workforce outcomes are a signal of biases and barriers

# Australian Gender Dimensions Study

- Exploration of diversity challenges by surveying those in the sector in combination with ABS data from the 2006 – 2021 Census data.
- Provide a rich insight into how far the sector has come, and the work still to be done.
- Gain an accurate picture of the security industry workforce in Australia.
- Identify practical ways to expand and diversify the industry's talent pool to best equip it for the growing challenges and demands it faces.



# Percentage of cyber security professionals by gender, Australia 2021



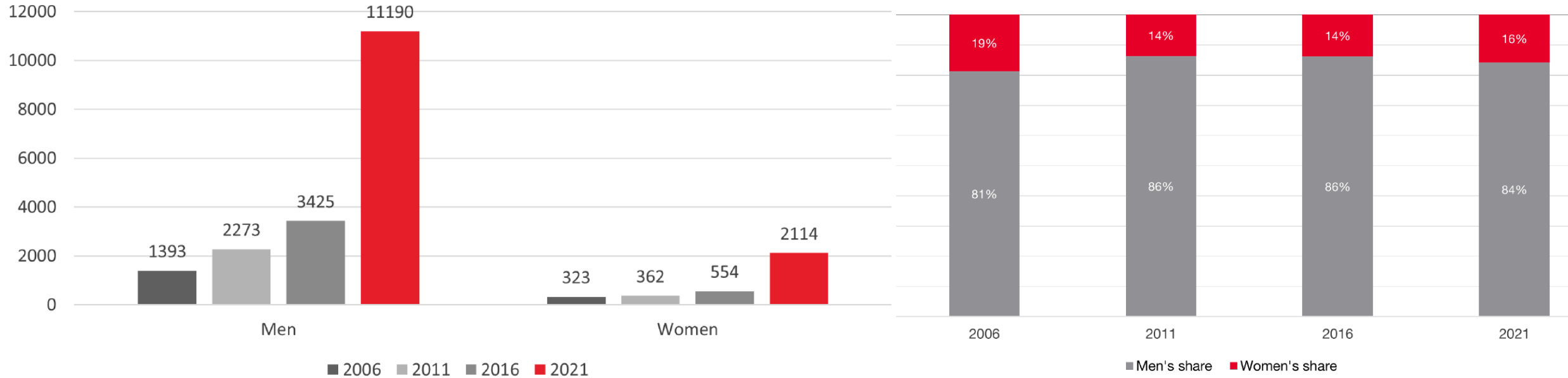
■ Men's share of cyber security occupations

■ Women's share of cyber security occupations



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# The number of ICT Security Specialists has grown over time ... but women's share has not



(Source: ABS, Census of Population and Housing, Table Builder, 2006 to 2021.)

# Key Findings



Under-representation of women in the cyber security workforce



Women bring wider spectrum of educational backgrounds



Differing motivating factors for women and men choosing to join sector



Role models and mentors matter for all, but fewer female role models and mentors available



Impact of family and care responsibilities on women's career continuity



The sector is uniquely poised to be able to make greater progress on gender equity





# Recommended Actions at a glance

For Organisations	Implement gender equity, diversity and inclusion policies and programs that target workforce culture rather than attempting to ‘fix’ women; creating a supportive and inclusive work culture and environment.
For Leaders of Organisations	Role model inclusive, respectful and equitable behaviour; Personally promote cultural change that removes gender bias within existing systems.
For Professional Industry Associations	Invest in initiatives that lift the visibility and voices of women in the sector; Ensure equal gender representation on boards and committees; Ensure gender balance and diversity on speaker panels.
For Governments	Implement policies and initiatives that support diversity and inclusion; provide funding and resources for initiatives that promote gender equity.
For the Wider Community	Call out gender stereotypical images and terminology and replace them with diverse and equitable representations.



# Recommendations for Education Institutions

- Ensure curriculums are gender inclusive and representative.
- Analyse educational content for gender bias and stereotypes.
- Collaborate with industry associations to design and provide initiatives that encourage women to pursue careers in cyber security.
- Promote inclusive attitudes and behaviours – that is, females are equally as capable in STEM subjects as males – among all students at all ages.
- Create networking opportunities to improve awareness and support for students and families
- Ensure female representation and respect at all levels of the institution.
- Ensure gender inclusiveness and diversity of industry guest speakers.
- Recognise and highlight women's research and industry achievements and contributions.



# How has the Australian Women in Security Network Responded

- AWSN Explorers
- Mentoring
- Security Pathways Program
- Women in Security Leadership
- ISC2 Entry Level Certification Program



awsn

Australian Women in Security Network

## How has our Centre responded.....

- Our Industry Advisory Board now has gender parity.
- All research submission have a female investigator
- We aim for gender parity on all panel events
- Our research theme leadership to have gender parity
- Microcred in partnership with the AWSN
- Stage 2 - Attrition

# Thankyou

This research been a collaborative project with:

- Centre for Cyber Security Research and Innovation, RMIT University
- Australian Women in Security Network
- Australian Signals Directorate, Australian Government

[Learn more and download report here](#)

