

Media release

7 June 2012

Two speed economy has gender impact

Today's increase in the unemployment rate to 5.1 per cent in May hides important gender differences in the unemployment experience, according to The Australia Institute.

With the male unemployment rate remaining the same at 4.8 per cent, female unemployment has seen an increase of 0.3 percentage points to 5.5 per cent.

"Today's figures also show a widening in the gender experience of underemployment with 5.5 per cent of males experiencing underemployment compared with 9.6 per cent of females," said David Richardson, Senior Research Fellow at The Australia Institute.

"Australia has a very gender differentiated workforce. While men seem to be enjoying the boom in the male-dominated mining sector, women are more likely to be based in the industries left behind in the mining boom."

According to 2012 Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, women make up only 16 per cent of the mining workforce and 12 per cent of the construction workforce.

"With economic growth concentrated in the areas and industries that depend on the mining boom, our two speed economy is creating further gender disparity in the workforce," said Mr Richardson.

"From the high Australian dollar, to the struggling manufacturing industry, the impact of the two speed economy on the labour market is yet another consequence that deserves to be highlighted, if we are to have a meaningful debate on the impact of the boom," concluded Mr Richardson.