Australian Government

Department of Health and Aged Care

Medical Research Future Fund

Report on gender data for grant opportunities

August 2023

Contents

Introduction

The Australian Government is committed to health and medical research. It invests in Australian research and its translation into practice to ensure that Australia's health system remains prepared for current and future health challenges.

The Australian Government provides direct support for health and medical research through the complementary Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The MRFF funds priority-driven research with a focus on research translation, whereas the NHMRC focuses on investigator-led research.

The MRFF is a $20 billion long-term investment supporting Australian health and medical research. It was established in 2015 and, at present, is forecasted to provide up to $650 million in annual health and medical research funding.

The MRFF aims to support Australian research and innovation to improve health outcomes, build the economy and contribute to health system sustainability.

Reporting of gender data for MRFF grant opportunities

This report is the second to provide an overview of gender data for MRFF grant opportunities. Annual reporting of this type is in line with the MRFF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Strategy 2020–21 to 2023–24.

Data analysis, reporting and decision making that is informed by data are critical for the MRFF to achieve its strategic objectives, as set out in the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy 2021–26. These objectives are:

- equitable health outcomes through research-informed preventive health and health care, from primary to tertiary care
- health and economic benefits from transformative and innovative research through the translation of outcomes into policy and practice, and commercialisation of new diagnostics, therapeutics and preventive health interventions
- a skilled and sustainable health and medical research workforce with expertise in research translation, innovation and commercialisation
- a health and medical research sector and health system that is ready to respond to emerging and future challenges

2022 gender data report

The previous MRFF grant opportunity gender data report, released on 22 March 2022, was the first report from the Australian Government on MRFF gender data. It assessed MRFF grant opportunity data available up to 30 June 2021, covering approximately 76% of the MRFF's completed competitive grant opportunities. The key findings of the 2022 report were as follows:

- Overall, more men applied for MRFF grants — as both leading Chief Investigator and for all Chief Investigators — than women
- More women applied for grants in the broad research areas of 'Health services' and 'Public health' than men
- Funded rates for Chief Investigators of both genders were similar across the range of areas assessed in the report

Current report

The current report, which uses data available up to 30 May 2023, covers the same topics as the previous report, but also introduces several key additions. These are the:

- reporting of annual trends
- introduction of 3 new topics: Chief Investigator team size, lead or administering organisation characteristics, and grant assessor profiles

Additionally, funded rates have been analysed previously in the MRFF report Financial assistance to support the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2020–2022, which focused on grant opportunities that were relevant to the Priorities within the 2020 to 2022 period. The analysis presented in the current report covers all MRFF competitive grant opportunities that had outcomes and gender data available as of 30 May 2023. Funded rates for MRFF grant opportunities that are new to this report can be found in Appendix A (for leading Chief Investigators) and Appendix B (for all Chief Investigators).

Report overview

This report provides an overview of gender data for applicants, grantees and grant assessors for MRFF competitive grant opportunities that opened before 30 June 2022 and had applications and outcomes data available as of 30 May 2023.

The aim of this report is to:

- build on the previous report
- help monitor trends over time for gender equity in MRFF funding
- inform opportunities for improvement or policy changes

This report acknowledges the following principles:

- The terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are interrelated and often used interchangeably; however, they are 2 distinct concepts[1]
  - ‘Sex’ is understood in relation to sex characteristics; sex recorded at birth refers to what was determined by sex characteristics observed at birth or infancy
  - ‘Gender’ is about social and cultural differences in identity, expression and experience
- First Nations Australians are often called Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, but there is significant diversity within these 2 groups

1 Definitions are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, 2020.

Approach

Grant opportunity, application, grant and researcher data were sourced from 2 grant hubs involved in administering MRFF grants, specifically:

- NHMRC — Chief Investigator data were captured through the 'Applicant CV' and 'Profile' sections on the NHMRC grants management platform
- Business Grants Hub (BGH) — Chief Investigator data for grant opportunities that closed after November 2021 were captured through the Excel spreadsheets submitted by applicants; gender data were captured less consistently before November 2021

The gender of Chief Investigators was based on self-identification or cross-identification as either 'men', 'women', 'non-binary' or 'not stated/reported' (see Limitations). Where gaps in gender data were found, data were cross-checked between NHMRC and BGH data sources.

The analysis for the current report was based on the subset of data from competitive grant opportunities that opened before 30 June 2022 and had outcomes data available as of 30 May 2023, and for which Chief Investigator data were available. This consisted of the following:

- **103 competitive grant opportunities** (95 from the NHMRC, 8 from the BGH; equates to 83.7% of all competitive grant opportunities)
- **3945 applications** that were received through all grant opportunities (equates to 77.1% of all applications received for all grant opportunities)
- **31,505 Chief Investigator applicants** (see Limitations regarding distinct applicants) (equates to 93.2% of all Chief Investigator applicants for all grant opportunities)
- **814 awarded grants** (equates to 74.5% of all awarded grants as of 30 May 2023)

The following steps have been taken to preserve anonymity of data:

- All data are de-identified and no names or organisations are published in this report
- Subcategory values with fewer than 10 applicants or applications are generally not reported — this includes cases where low numbers of applicants declared their gender as non-binary (see Limitations), or where gender was not stated by the applicant

Comparisons between men and women funded rates were made using the chi-square test. Only statistically significant comparisons ($P < 0.05$) are reported; otherwise, descriptions refer to numerical comparisons only.

Limitations

While the analysis presented in this report is comprehensive, the following limitations of the analysis should be noted:

- Reportable data are only available from 2017 onwards
- The 2021–22 reporting period for this analysis does not include grant opportunities for which outcomes were not yet available at the time of analysis (30 May 2023)
- All non-competitive grant opportunity types (for example, ad hoc) are excluded from this analysis
- During the analysis period, applications were submitted from 3 non-binary leading Chief Investigators and 19 non-binary Chief Investigators; the low number of applications meant that there were not enough data to allow for meaningful analysis, so these data were excluded from the reporting or analysis of funded rates, but included in total funding amounts
- An individual may be named on more than one application; these instances were treated as distinct applicants for the purpose of this analysis
- Funding data are not presented for all Chief Investigators because this would involve multiple counting
- On 28 October 2022, gender categorisation changed within the NHMRC's grant system from 'male', 'female', 'intersex', 'indeterminate' and 'not stated' to 'men', 'women', 'non-binary' and 'not stated'. Investigators were requested to update their profile accordingly. The updated categories are used in this report to reflect current practice and ensure consistency with future reports
- The 2022 MRFF gender data report included 4 BGH-administered grant opportunities for which gender data were manually included by cross-matching names with NHMRC data and desktop research — these are also included in the analysis for the current report

Funding insights

Note that, in this section, 'overall rates' refers to data that cover grant opportunities opening within the 5 financial years from 2017–18 to 2021–22 and for which outcomes were available up to 30 May 2023.

Summary

General trends

Overall, men leading Chief Investigators submitted more applications than women (1963 applications from men and 1898 from women), and men also received a larger proportion of funding (54.8%, compared with 44.2% for women). However, the overall funded rates for women and men were similar, for both leading Chief Investigators (20.3% for women and 21.5% for men) and all Chief Investigators (25.7% for women and 25.7% for men).

For annual trends, the 2021–22 financial year was the first where more women than men applied for funding, for both leading and all Chief Investigators. Given the very similar funded rates, men and women also received an approximately equal proportion of funding that year. Funded rates have increased progressively over the years for women leading Chief Investigators, but remain consistent for men.

Grant hubs

For NHMRC-administered grant opportunities, funded rates were marginally lower for women leading Chief Investigators than men (20.6% for women and 22.7% for men). However, for BGH-administered grant opportunities, women leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men (15.9% for women compared with 10.4% for men).

Application area of research

Men leading Chief Investigators submitted more applications and had higher funded rates than women for the broad research areas of 'Basic science' and 'Clinical medicine and science'. Conversely, women leading Chief Investigators submitted an equal or higher number of applications, and had higher funded rates, than men for the broad research areas of 'Health services' and 'Public health'.

Application budgets

For both leading and all Chief Investigators, women tended to apply for smaller grants than men, but had a similar or higher funded rate for applications with larger budgets.

Investigator characteristics

Women-led applications tended to have larger, more gender-balanced teams. Additionally, teams that were more gender balanced had higher funded rates than teams that were less balanced — this was consistent with the previous MRFF grant opportunity gender data report.

More women leading Chief Investigators applied for funding at a younger age and at an earlier career stage than men, but funded rates for women tended to be higher at later career stages. However, men received more funding than women, likely due to submitting a higher number of applications; this is consistent with other funders.

Organisation characteristics

Applications submitted from lead or administering organisations in New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia had similar funded rates across genders when considering leading Chief Investigators only. There was better gender balance in general when considering all Chief Investigators on the team. Over the years, funded rates varied between genders across locations, but rates tended to be the highest and most gender balanced in 2021–22.

Grant assessors

Overall, more women than men volunteered to serve on MRFF Grant Assessment Committees (53.9% women compared with 46.2% men).

General trends

Overall rates

Leading Chief Investigator

For 84 applications, the gender of the leading Chief Investigator was classified as either ‘not stated’ (based on self-reported data by the leading Chief Investigator) or ‘not available’ (no data were provided). These applications had an overall funded rate of 7.1% and received 1% ($13.9 million) of the total funding available.

Across all grant opportunities, the overall funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators were similar (20.3% and 21.5%, respectively). Men leading Chief Investigators consistently received a larger proportion of funding than women (54.8% compared with 44.2%), but this was likely due to the higher number of applications received from men (1963, compared with 1898 from women).

All Chief Investigators

There were more men Chief Investigator applicants (14,983) than women (14,512). However, the overall funded rates were the same for both genders (25.7%).

Annual trends

The 2021–22 financial year was the first where more women applied for funding than men, for both leading and all Chief Investigators. Men and women Chief Investigators also received an approximately equal proportion of funding that year (for grant opportunities for which outcomes were known at the time of analysis).

Leading Chief Investigator

The number of applications received from both women and men leading Chief Investigators generally increased each year. The funded rates for women leading Chief Investigators also increased over the years, but these remained quite constant for men (Figure 1). The higher funded rate for women leading Chief Investigators likely increased the proportion of funding they received each year (Figure 2). Funding data are in Table 1.

Figure 1 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by financial year

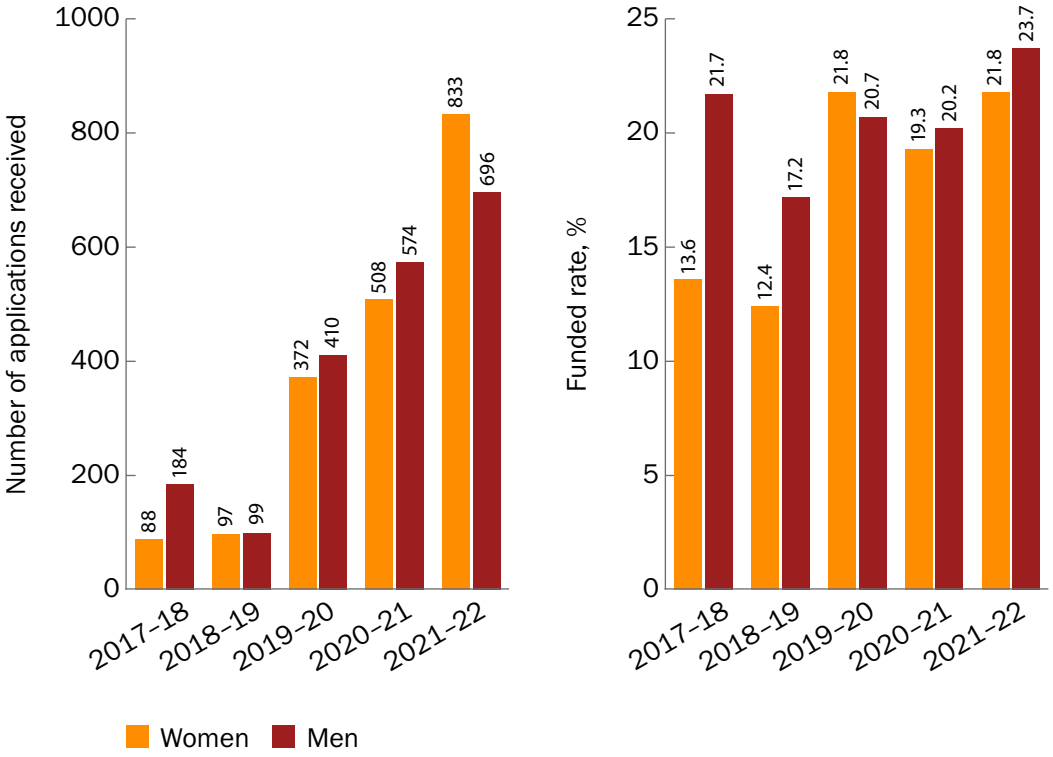
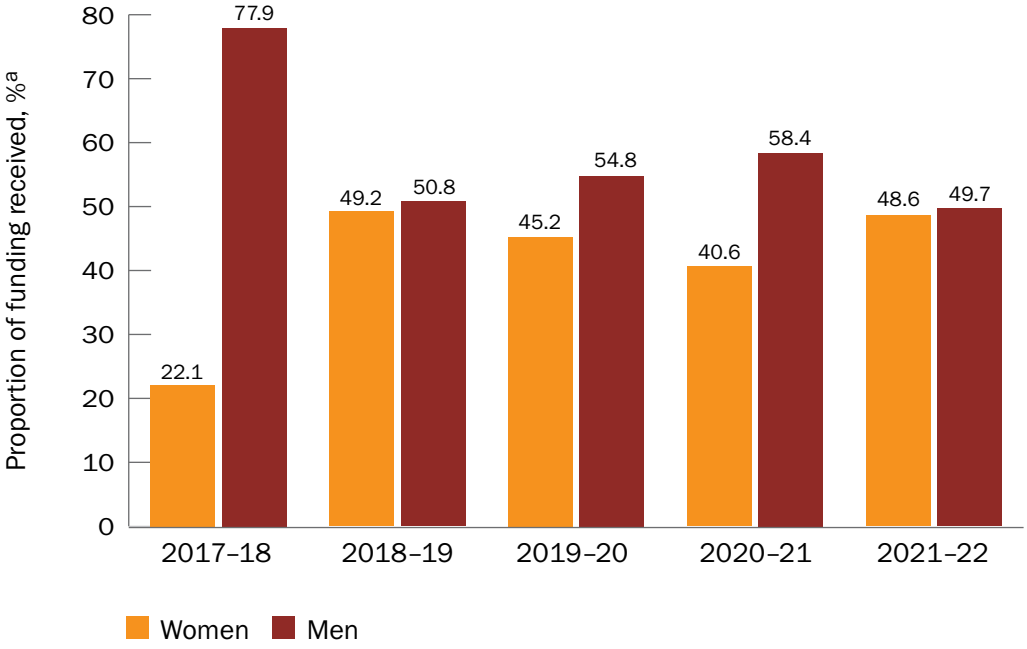


Figure 2 Proportion of funding received each year by women and men leading Chief Investigators



a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount each year for grant opportunities included in this analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1 Annual funding for women and men leading Chief Investigators

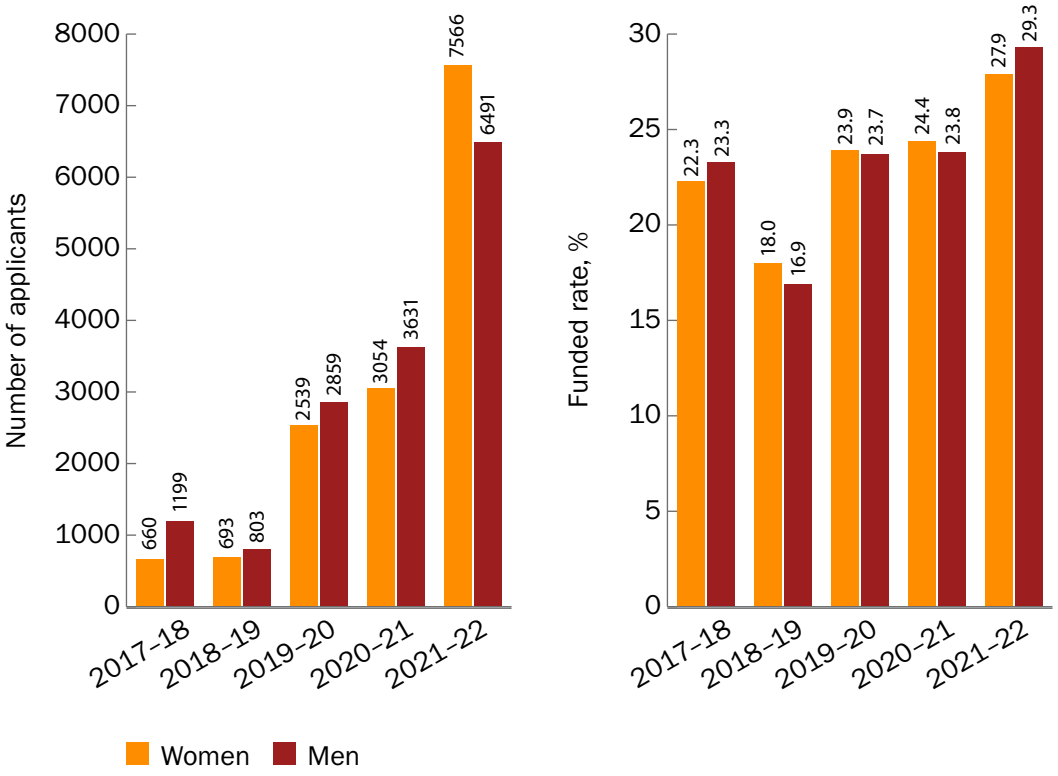
Financial year	Funded amount for women leading Chief Investigators ($)[a]	Funded amount for men leading Chief Investigators ($)[a]	Total funded amount ($)[b]
2017–18	17,824,267.31	62,778,797.06	80,603,064.37
2018–19	28,801,994.85	29,688,109.46	58,490,104.31
2019–20	122,278,534.56	148,257,808.63	270,536,343.19
2020–21	163,578,019.48	234,871,092.00	402,493,996.58
2021–22	296,126,068.93	302,852,202.63	608,837,605.35

a Funded amounts are for grant opportunities included in this report (see Approach) that had data available. For the proportions of funding received by each gender, see Figure 2.
b Includes applications where the gender was not stated or not provided.

All Chief Investigators

The number of men and women Chief Investigator applicants generally increased each year, and the funded rates remained similar between genders (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators, by financial year

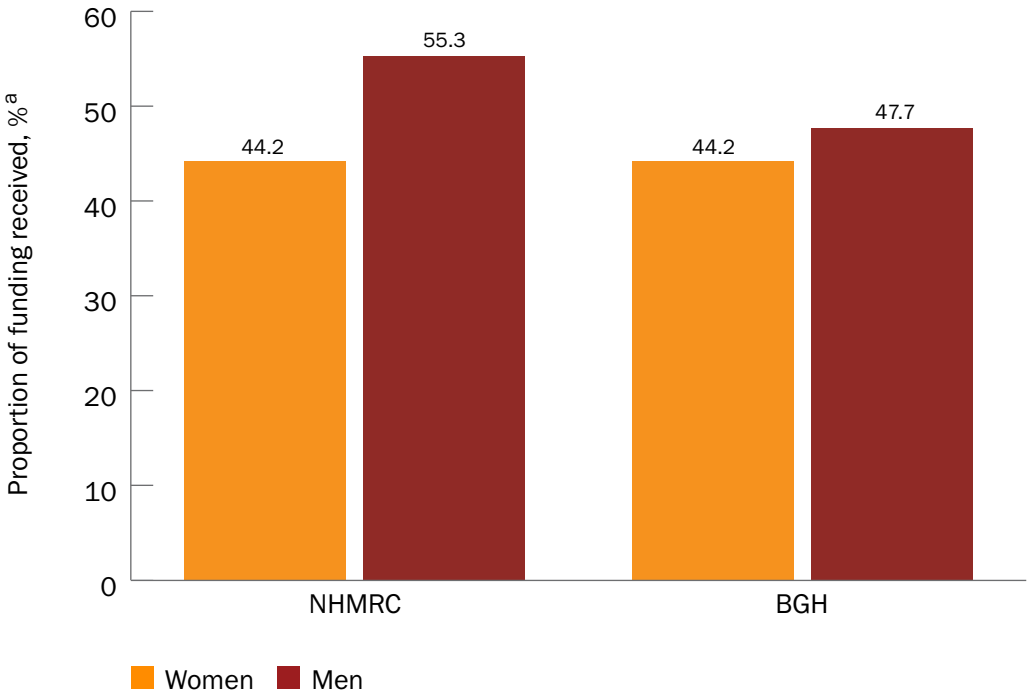


Grant hubs

Overall rates

For both grant hubs, men leading Chief Investigators received a higher proportion of total funding than women, although this was more balanced for BGH-administered grant opportunities (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Proportion of total funding received by women and men leading Chief Investigators, by grant hub



a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount for each grant hub ($1,321,715,394.80 for the NHMRC and $99,245,719.00 for the BGH) for grant opportunities included in this analysis.

NHMRC-administered grant opportunities

The overall funded rate was slightly lower for women leading Chief Investigators (20.6% funded from 1766 applications) than men (22.7% funded from 1780 applications). This was reflected in the proportion of total funding received, with women leading Chief Investigators receiving 41.2% of the total funding (for grant opportunities that had data available, from all grant hubs) and men receiving 51.5%.

Findings were similar for all Chief Investigators, with the overall funded rate for women (25.5% funded from 13,798 applicants) being slightly lower than for men (26.1% funded from 14,189 applicants).

BGH-administered grant opportunities

There were fewer applications from women leading Chief Investigators than men (132 and 183 applications, respectively), but women had a higher overall funded rate than men (15.9% funded compared with 10.4% funded). The proportion of the total funding received (for grant opportunities that had data available, from all grant hubs) was similar between genders (3.1% for women and 3.3% for men).

Results were similar for all Chief Investigators; there were fewer women applicants than men (1162 and 1286 applicants, respectively), but women had a higher overall funded rate than men (25.3% funded compared with 17.7% funded).

Annual trends

NHMRC-administered grant opportunities

The number of applications received each year from women leading Chief Investigators generally increased at a higher rate than for men. This was also seen for the annual funded rate (Figure 5), which may be driving the trends seen overall for the MRFF across both grant hubs. Men leading Chief Investigators generally received a higher proportion of the total funding each year than women, except for the 2021–22 financial year (Figure 6). Funding data are in Table 2.

For all Chief Investigators, there were more men applicants than women each year, except for the 2021–22 financial year. However, in the 3 years from 2018–19 to 2020–21, women Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men (Figure 7).

Figure 5 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators for NHMRC-administered grant opportunities, by financial year

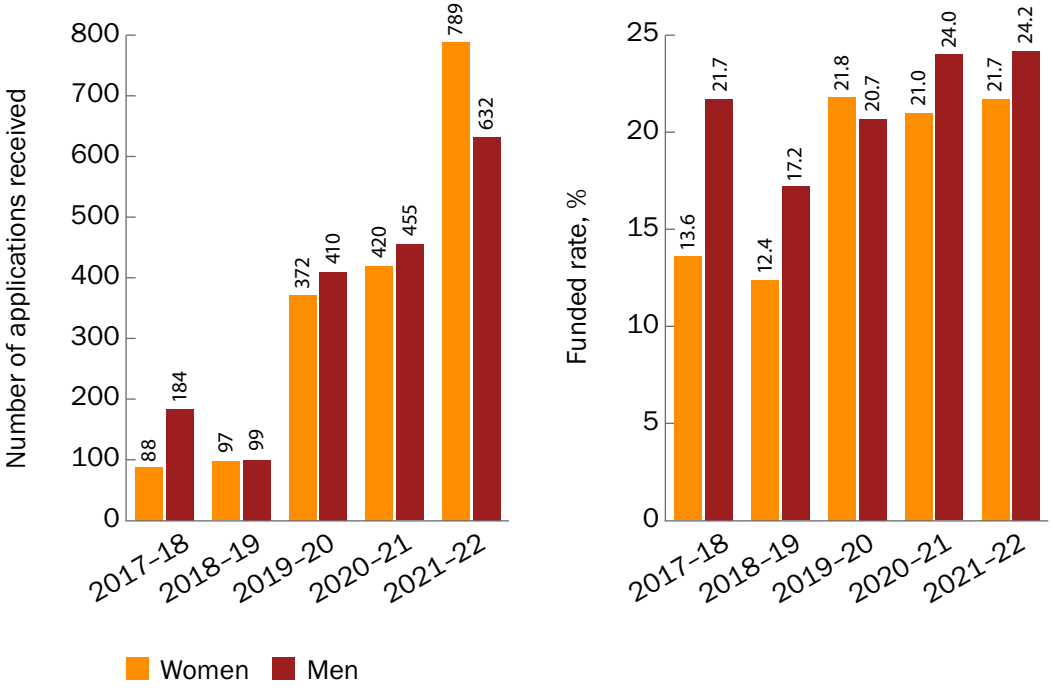
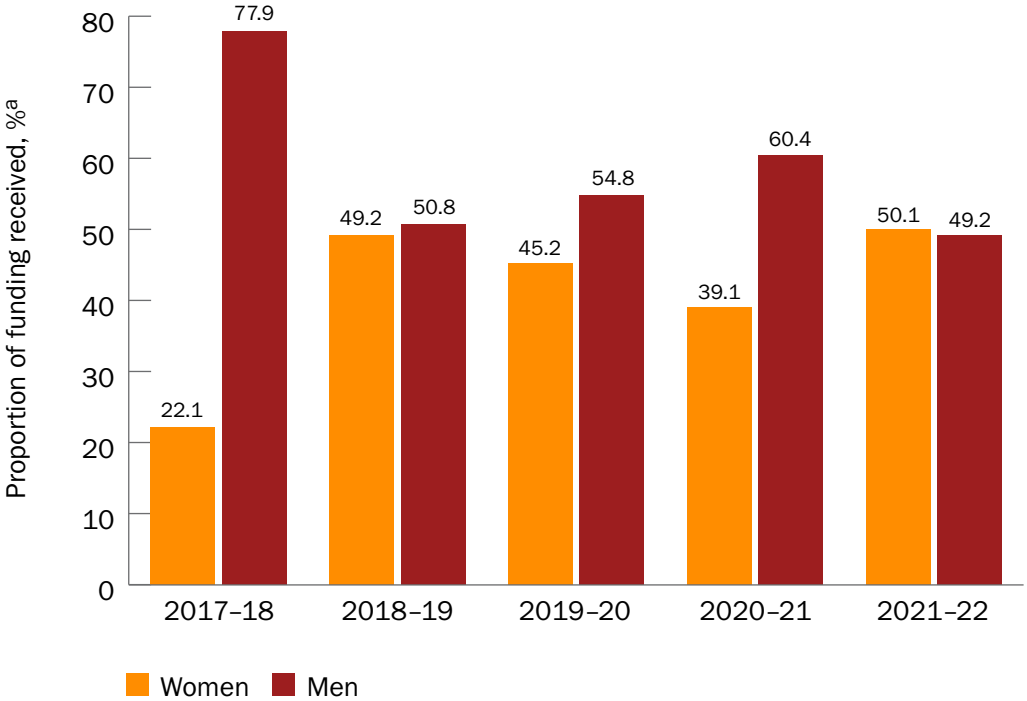


Figure 6 Proportion of funding received each year by women and men leading Chief Investigators for NHMRC-administered grant opportunities



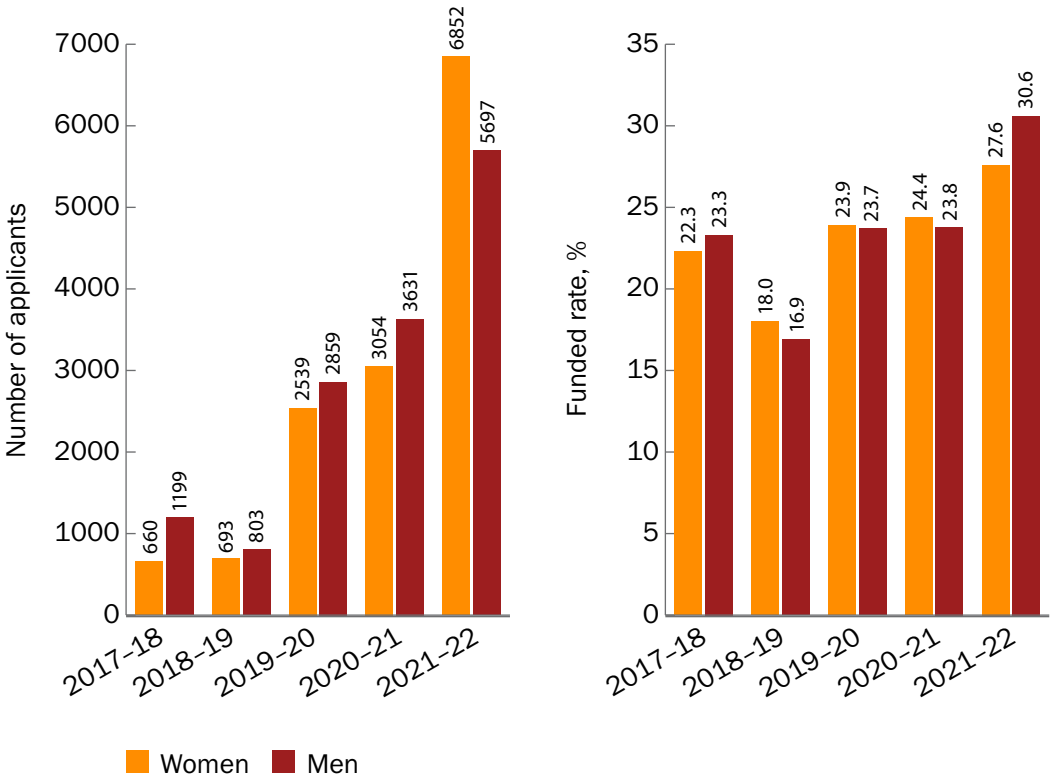
a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount for NHMRC-administered grants each year for grant opportunities included in this analysis (see Table 2).

Table 2 Annual funding for women and men leading Chief Investigators for NHMRC-administered grant opportunities

Financial year	Funded amount for women leading Chief Investigators ($)[a]	Funded amount for men leading Chief Investigators ($)[a]	Total funded amount ($)[b]
2017–18	17,824,267.31	62,778,797.06	80,603,064.37
2018–19	28,801,994.85	29,688,109.46	58,490,104.31
2019–20	122,278,534.56	148,257,808.63	270,536,343.19
2020–21	146,075,906.48	225,754,196.00	373,952,403.58
2021–22	269,843,140.93	264,666,632.63	538,133,479.35

a Funded amounts are for grant opportunities included in this report (see Approach) that had data available. For the proportions of funding received by each gender, see Figure 6.
b Includes applications where the gender was not stated or not provided.

Figure 7 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators for NHMRC-administered grant opportunities, by financial year



BGH-administered grant opportunities

Each year, there were more applications from men leading Chief Investigators than women, but women had higher funded rates than men (Figure 8). Women leading Chief Investigators also received more funding than men in the 2020–21 financial year (Table 3). However, the proportion of funding (for grant opportunities that had data available) received by women leading Chief Investigators decreased from one year to the next (Figure 9).

For all Chief Investigators, there were more men applicants than women each year, but women consistently had a higher funded rate than men (Figure 10).

Figure 8 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators for BGH-administered grant opportunities, by financial year

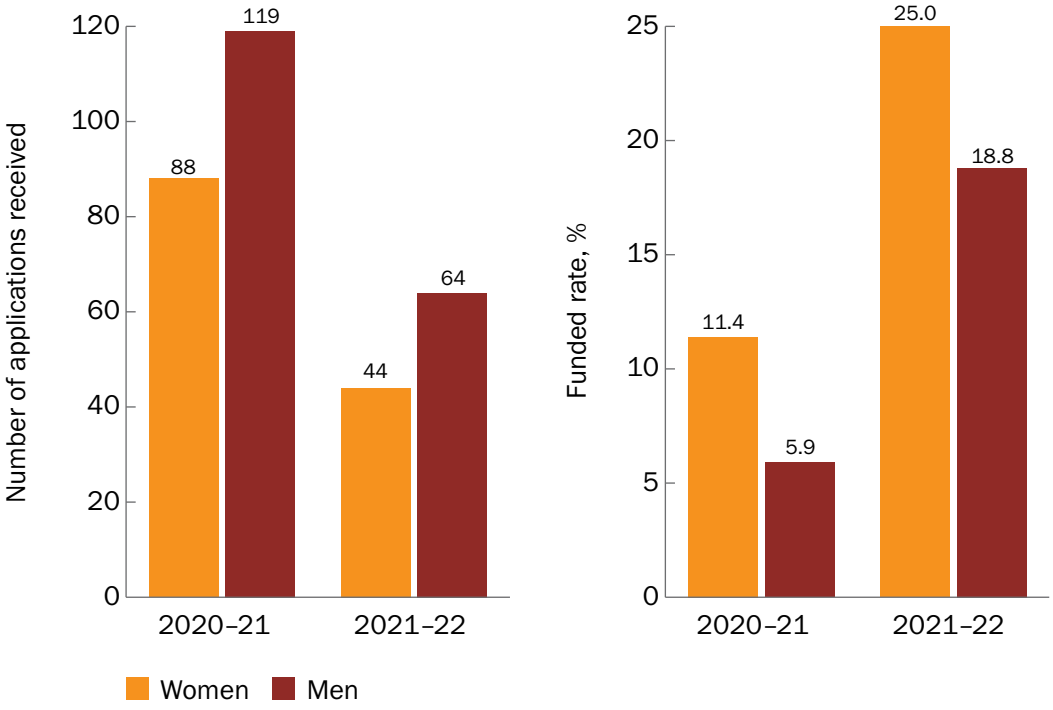
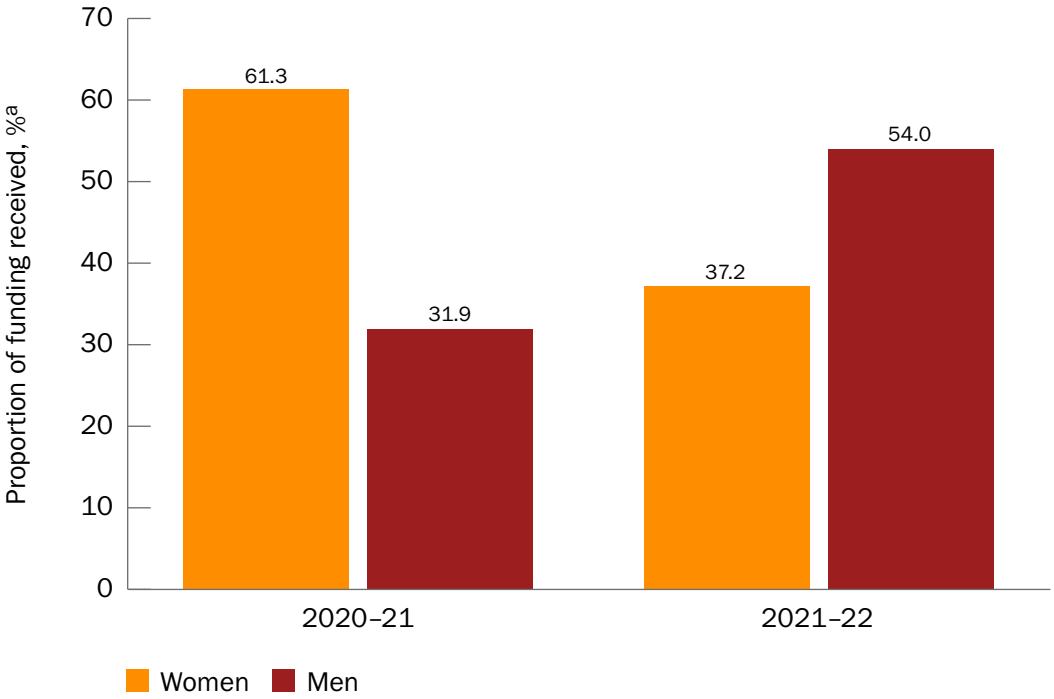


Figure 9 Proportion of funding received each year by women and men leading Chief Investigators for BGH-administered grant opportunities



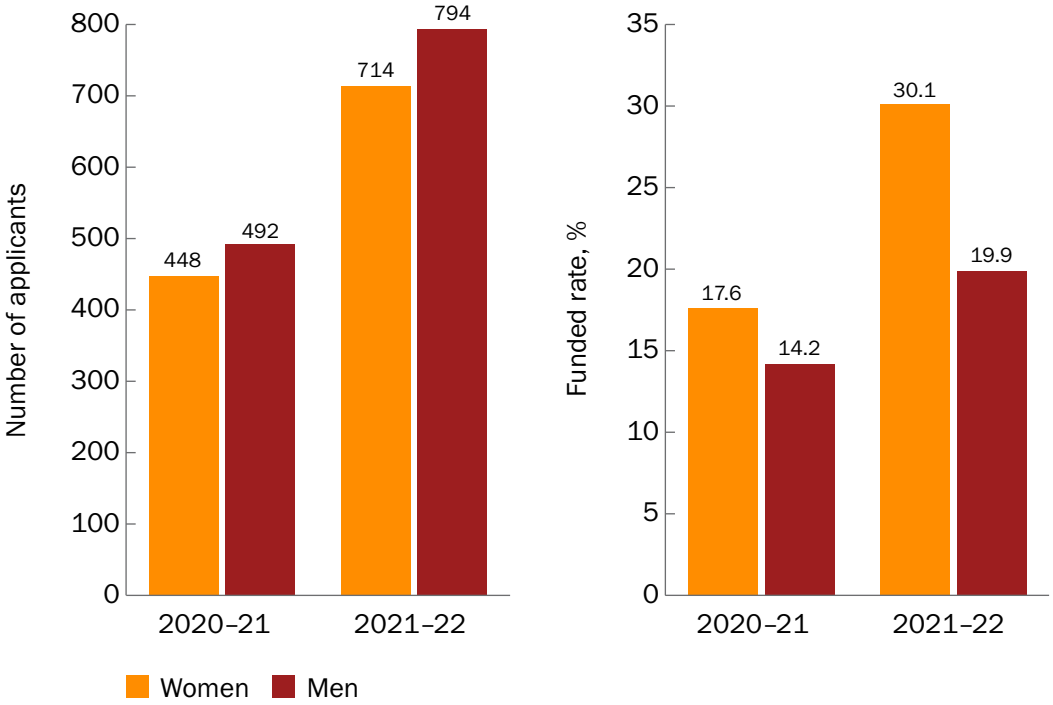
a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount for BGH-administered grants each year for grant opportunities included in this analysis (see Table 3).

Table 3 Annual funding for women and men leading Chief Investigators for BGH-administered grant opportunities

Financial year	Funded amount for women leading Chief Investigators ($)[a]	Funded amount for men leading Chief Investigators ($)[a]	Total funded amount ($)[b]
2020–21	17,502,113.00	9,116,896.00	28,541,593.00
2021–22	26,282,928.00	38,185,570.00	70,704,126.00

a Funded amounts are for grant opportunities included in this report (see Approach) that had data available. For the proportions of funding received by each gender, see Figure 9.
b Includes applications where the gender was not stated or not provided.

Figure 10 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators for BGH-administered grant opportunities, by financial year



Limitations of this analysis

Comparisons of funded rates and amounts between grant hubs should be made with caution because of the small number of BGH-administered grant opportunities — and therefore, applications — included in this analysis.

MRFF themes

Overall rates

Women leading Chief Investigators had more applications than men for the themes 'Research Translation' and 'Researchers'. Women also had a higher funded rate than men for the 'Research Translation' theme (which was statistically significant; *P* = 0.043), as well as the theme 'Research Missions' (Figure 11). Men leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than women for the themes 'Patients' and 'Researchers', with the latter being statistically significant (*P* = 0.041). Men leading Chief Investigators also received a higher proportion of funding than women for all MRFF themes except 'Research Translation' (Figure 12).

For all Chief Investigators, there were more women applicants than men for the MRFF themes 'Research Translation' and 'Researchers', but women Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men for all themes except 'Researchers' (Figure 13).

Figure 11 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by MRFF theme

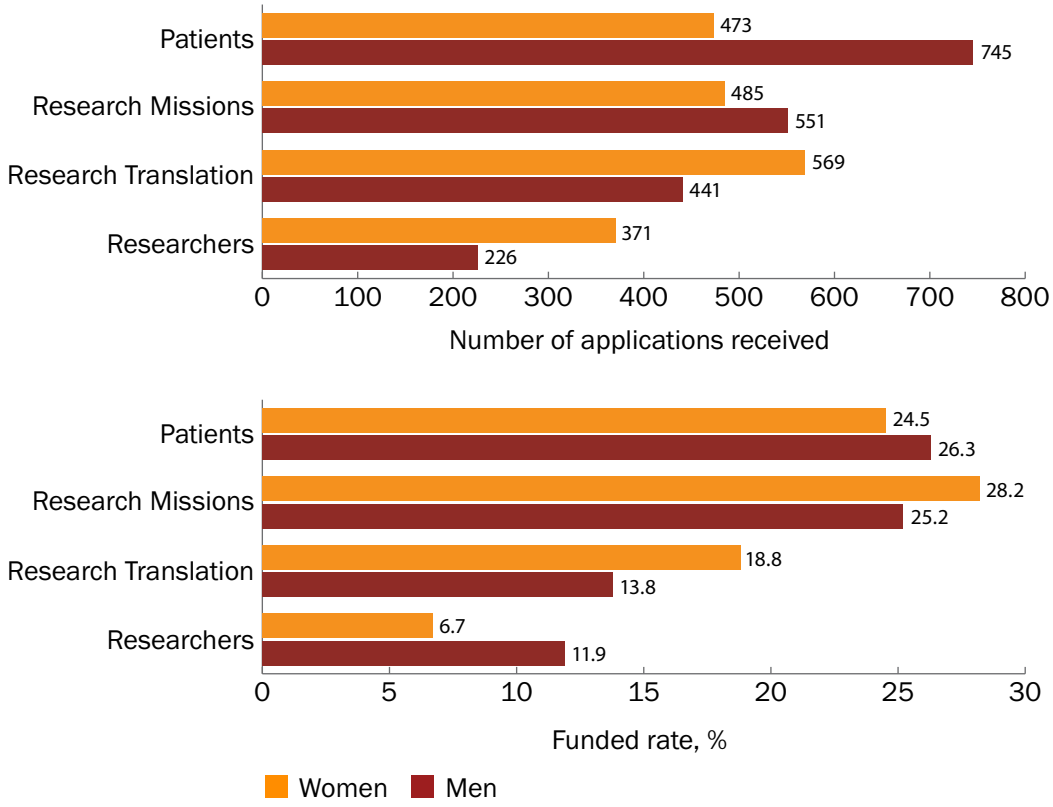
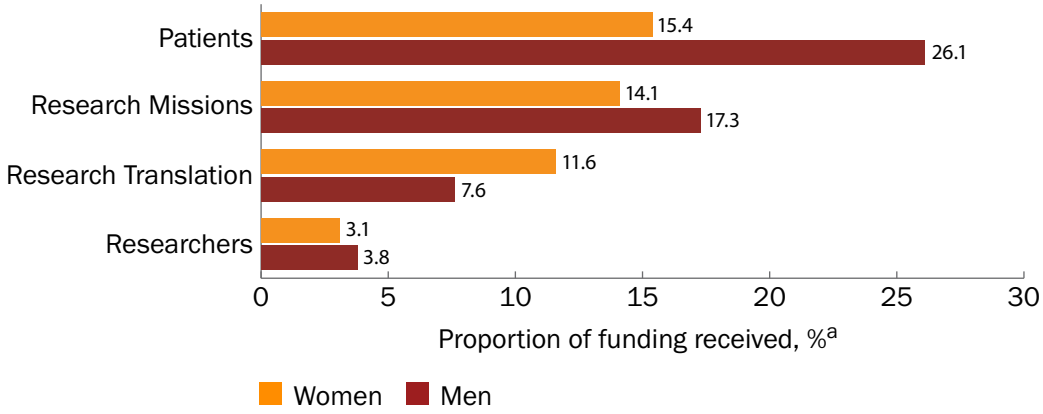
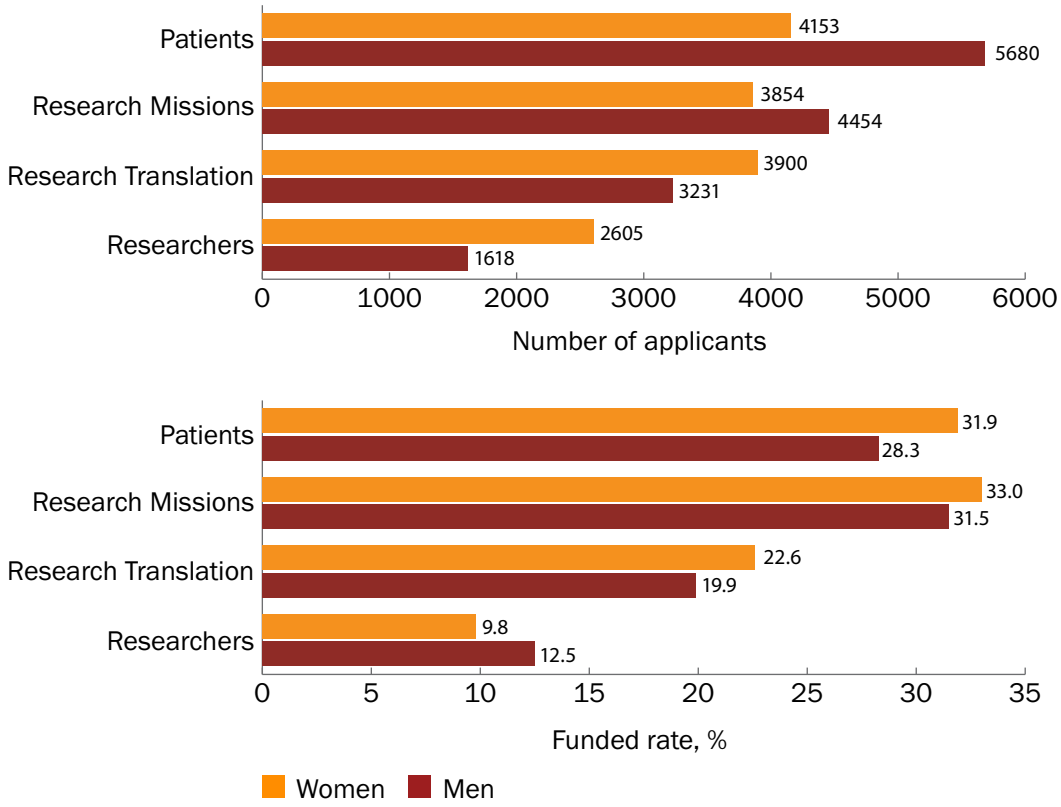


Figure 12 Proportion of funding received by women and men leading Chief Investigators, by MRFF theme



a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount across all MRFF themes ($1,420,961,113.80) for grant opportunities included in this analysis.

Figure 13 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators, by MRFF theme



Annual trends

Except for the 'Research Translation' theme, more men leading Chief Investigators generally applied for funding than women. Funded rates for both men and women leading Chief Investigators generally increased over time for all MRFF themes, and for all themes except 'Researchers', women leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men in the 2021–22 financial year (Table 4).

Table 4 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators each year, by MRFF theme

MRFF theme	Financial year	Number of women leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women leading Chief Investigators	Number of men leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men leading Chief Investigators
Patients	2017–18	88	13.6%	184	21.7%
	2018–19	16	12.5%	39	20.5%
	2019–20	107	23.4%	143	28.7%
	2020–21	133	24.1%	225	26.7%
	2021–22	129	34.9%	154	30.5%
Research Missions	2018–19	34	11.8%	16	18.8%
	2019–20	151	19.2%	195	14.9%
	2020–21	144	26.4%	137	27.7%
	2021–22	156	42.3%	203	34.0%
Research Translation	2018–19	47	12.8%	44	13.6%
	2019–20	103	25.2%	48	14.6%
	2020–21	221	11.8%	197	7.6%
	2021–22	198	24.7%	152	21.7%
Researchers	2019–20	11	9.1%	24	33.3%
	2020–21	10	20.0%	15	20.0%
	2021–22	350	6.3%	187	8.6%

Application results were similar for all Chief Investigators, as there tended to be more men applicants than women except for the 'Research Translation' theme. However, women Chief Investigators had similar or higher funded rates than men, and for all themes except 'Researchers', women had a higher funded rate than men in the 2021–22 financial year (Table 5).

Limitations of this analysis

Trends in the 'Researchers' MRFF theme should be interpreted with caution because of the small number of grant opportunities and applications.

Table 5 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators each year, by MRFF theme

MRFF theme	Financial year	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
Patients	2017–18	660	22.3%	1199	23.3%
	2018–19	137	21.9%	299	21.4%
	2019–20	778	29.9%	941	28.4%
	2020–21	1075	28.4%	1706	26.0%
	2021–22	1503	40.7%	1535	36.2%
Research Missions	2018–19	228	18.0%	196	14.3%
	2019–20	1011	18.7%	1361	20.6%
	2020–21	947	30.2%	1101	29.7%
	2021–22	1668	45.3%	1796	42.8%
Research Translation	2018–19	328	16.5%	308	14.3%
	2019–20	673	24.2%	404	21.0%
	2020–21	932	14.3%	704	10.7%
	2021–22	1967	26.9%	1815	24.2%
Researchers	2019–20	77	28.6%	153	30.7%
	2020–21	100	21.0%	120	16.7%
	2021–22	2428	8.8%	1345	10.0%

MRFF initiatives

Eighteen MRFF initiatives were considered in this analysis. Three MRFF initiatives — 'Research Exchange and Development within Industry', 'Medical Research Commercialisation' and 'Rapid Applied Research Translation' — were excluded because of a lack of Chief Investigator data.

Of the MRFF initiatives considered in this analysis, 8 (44.4%) of them received more applications from women leading Chief Investigators than men. Additionally, women leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men for 10 initiatives (55.5%). Of note were the initiatives 'Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission', 'Indigenous Health Research Fund', 'Traumatic Brain Injury Mission' and 'Research Data Infrastructure', where funded rates for women leading Chief Investigators were almost or over double those for men; the differences were statistically significant for 'Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission' ($P = 0.004$) and 'Research Data Infrastructure' ($P = 0.017$). There were fewer than 10 applications received from women leading Chief Investigators for the initiatives 'Australian Brain Cancer Mission' and 'Global Health', and there were no women leading Chief Investigators funded for the 'National Critical Research Infrastructure' initiative. Women leading Chief Investigators received an equal or higher proportion of funding than men for 10 initiatives (Table 6).

For all Chief Investigators, there were 7 MRFF initiatives (38.9%) that had more women Chief Investigator applicants than men; these same initiatives also had more applications from women leading Chief Investigators. However, there were 12 initiatives (66.7%) where women Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men (Table 7).

Table 6 Number of applications, funded rates and funding received for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by MRFF initiative

MRFF initiative	Gender of leading Chief Investigator	Number of applications submitted	Percentage of applications funded	Amount funded	Proportion of total funded amount[a]
Australian Brain Cancer Mission	Women	4	25.0%	$5,991,219.44	0.4%
	Men	12	25.0%	$5,462,646.70	0.4%
Cardiovascular Health Mission	Women	111	27.9%	$30,655,097.98	2.2%
	Men	175	25.7%	$57,671,817.24	4.1%
Clinical Trials Activity	Women	322	20.2%	$135,414,938.77	9.5%
	Men	537	25.0%	$247,228,365.65	17.4%
Clinician Researchers	Women	95	10.5%	$12,940,837.70	0.9%
	Men	25	20.0%	$7,359,162.30	0.5%
Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission	Women	120	35.0%	$59,575,282.53	4.2%
	Men	105	17.1%	$20,027,171.85	1.4%
Early to Mid-Career Researchers	Women	255	4.7%	$25,470,903.43	1.8%
	Men	162	6.8%	$17,329,096.57	1.2%
Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research	Women	146	33.6%	$81,220,720.79	5.7%
	Men	187	29.9%	$111,007,784.72	7.8%

continues

Table 6 *continued*

MRFF initiative	Gender of leading Chief Investigator	Number of applications submitted	Percentage of applications funded	Amount funded	Proportion of total funded amount[a]
Frontier Health and Medical Research	Women	21	14.3%	$5,529,209.93	0.4%
	Men	39	28.2%	$28,952,877.74	2.0%
Genomics Health Futures Mission	Women	26	38.5%	$26,041,109.52	1.8%
	Men	55	47.3%	$74,990,518.29	5.3%
Global Health	Women	5	40.0%	$1,965,306.90	0.1%
	Men	21	28.6%	$12,299,693.09	0.9%
Indigenous Health Research Fund	Women	38	50.0%	$24,430,175.45	1.7%
	Men	26	26.9%	$8,261,813.92	0.6%
Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission	Women	101	11.9%	$31,850,562.15	2.2%
	Men	54	11.1%	$32,958,897.51	2.3%
National Critical Research Infrastructure	Women	20	0.0%	$0.00	0.0%
	Men	63	11.1%	$26,480,706.00	1.9%
Preventive and Public Health Research	Women	408	20.8%	$124,149,732.18	8.7%
	Men	245	18.0%	$69,128,409.89	4.9%
Primary Health Care Research	Women	104	13.5%	$22,713,650.59	1.6%
	Men	66	10.6%	$8,702,091.70	0.6%

continues

Table 6 *continued*

MRFF initiative	Gender of leading Chief Investigator	Number of applications submitted	Percentage of applications funded	Amount funded	Proportion of total funded amount[a]
Research Data Infrastructure	Women	37	21.6%	$18,496,645.00	1.3%
	Men	67	4.5%	$3,683,102.00	0.3%
Stem Cell Therapies Mission	Women	61	23.0%	$13,583,405.07	1.0%
	Men	107	29.0%	$45,538,676.91	3.2%
Traumatic Brain Injury Mission	Women	24	33.3%	$8,580,087.70	0.6%
	Men	17	17.6%	$1,365,177.70	0.1%

a Expressed as a percentage of the total funded amount across all initiatives ($1,420,961,113.80) for grant opportunities included in this analysis.

Table 7 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators, by MRFF initiative

MRFF initiative	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
Australian Brain Cancer Mission	73	47.9%	119	37.0%
Cardiovascular Health Mission	918	32.1%	1381	30.0%
Clinical Trials Activity	2682	27.2%	4143	25.7%
Clinician Researchers	850	13.4%	351	16.0%
Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care Mission	1033	33.2%	938	28.6%
Early to Mid-Career Researchers	1578	6.3%	994	7.9%
Emerging Priorities and Consumer Driven Research	1389	41.0%	1410	35.9%
Frontier Health and Medical Research	177	24.3%	273	24.5%
Genomics Health Futures Mission	372	54.8%	497	52.1%
Global Health	82	32.9%	127	31.5%
Indigenous Health Research Fund	301	45.5%	202	48.0%
Million Minds Mental Health Research Mission	643	14.0%	512	12.1%
National Critical Research Infrastructure	21	76.2%	39	87.2%
Preventive and Public Health Research	2679	26.1%	1968	24.7%

continues

Table 7 *continued*

MRFF initiative	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
Primary Health Care Research	808	16.0%	635	13.9%
Research Data Infrastructure	392	8.9%	589	5.9%
Stem Cell Therapies Mission	378	32.5%	633	34.0%
Traumatic Brain Injury Mission	136	32.4%	172	25.6%

Broad research area

Overall rates

More women than men leading Chief Investigators applied under the broad research areas ‘Health services’ and ‘Public health’, while more men applied under ‘Basic science’ and ‘Clinical medicine and science’. There was one broad research area, ‘Public health’, where women leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men (Figure 14).

Similar findings were seen for all Chief Investigators. There were more women than men Chief Investigator applicants for the broad research areas ‘Health services’ and ‘Public health’, while women Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men for the broad research area ‘Public health’ (which was statistically significant; $P = 0.043$) . The funded rate was similar between genders for the broad research area ‘Clinical medicine and science’, although it slightly favoured women (Figure 15).

Figure 14 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by broad research area

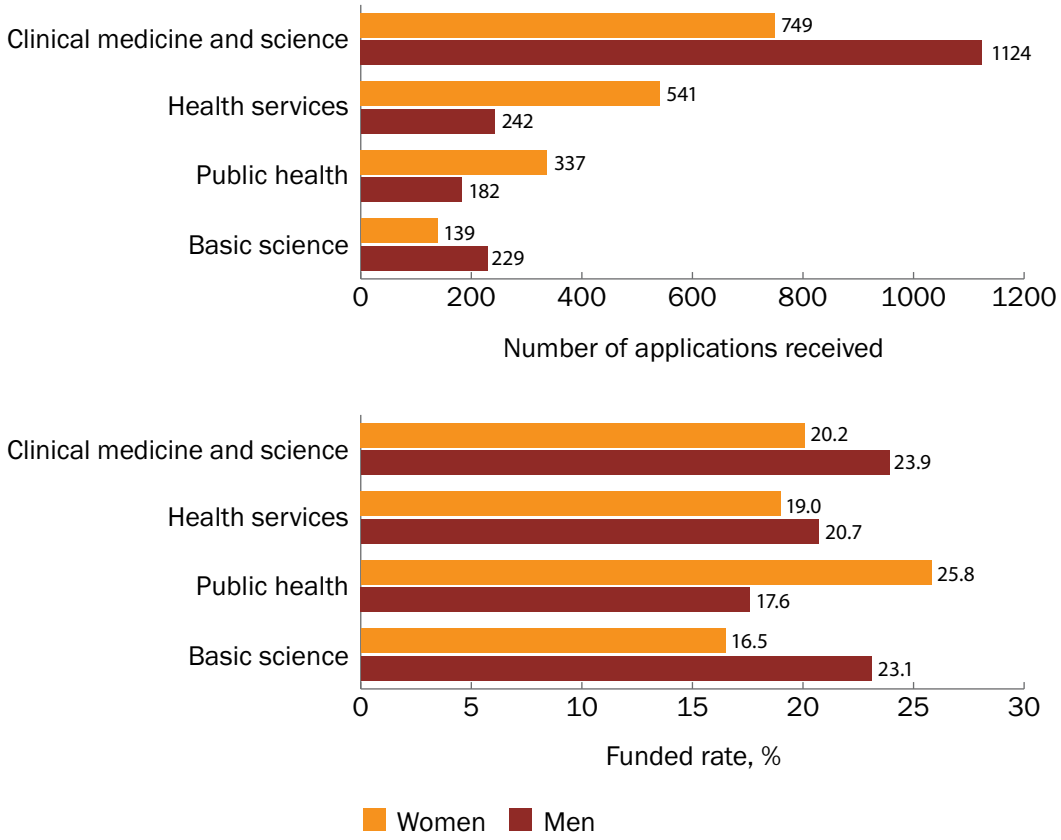
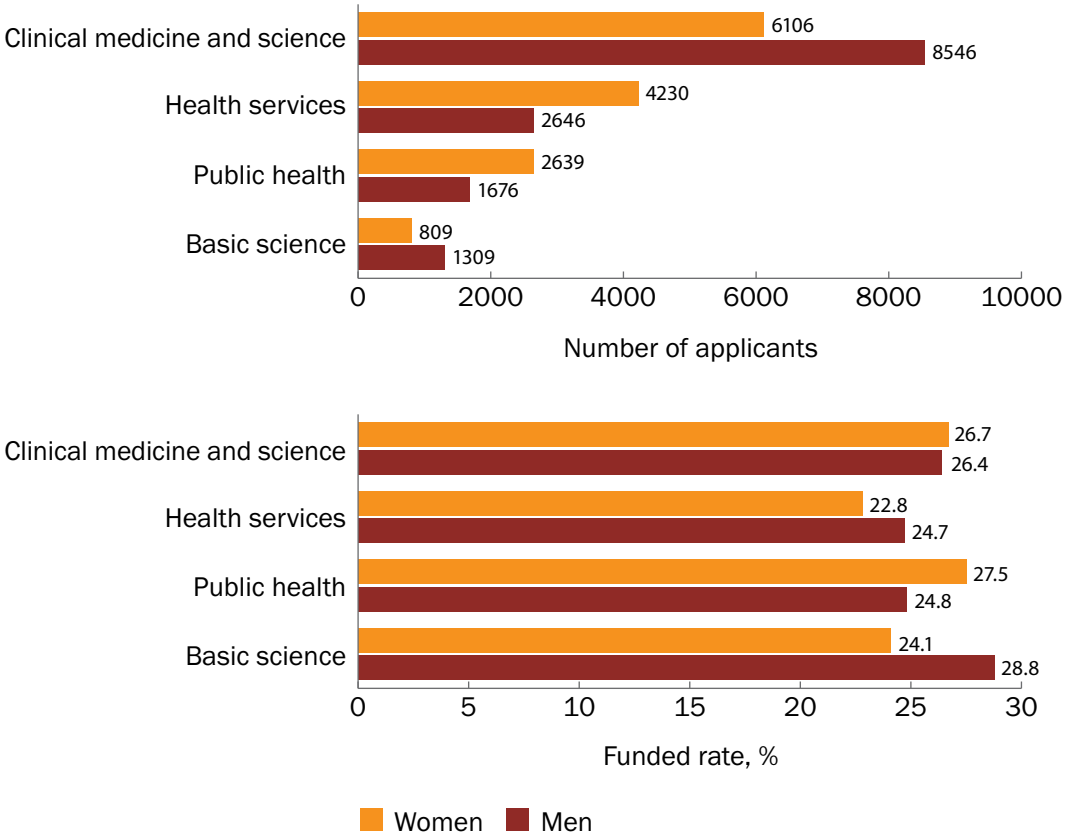


Figure 15 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators, by broad research area



Annual trends

The number of applications from leading Chief Investigators generally increased over time for both genders. There were generally more women than men leading Chief Investigator applicants each year for the broad research areas of 'Health services' and 'Public health'. However, men leading Chief Investigators tended to have a higher funded rate than women each year in all broad research areas except 'Public health' (Table 8).

Findings on the number of applicants were similar for all Chief Investigators. Women Chief Investigators generally had similar or higher funded rates than men each year for 'Public health' and 'Health services', except for the 2021–22 financial year (Table 9).

Table 8 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators each year, by broad research area

Broad research area	Financial year	Number of women leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women leading Chief Investigators	Number of men leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men leading Chief Investigators
Clinical medicine and science	2017–18	70	12.9%	171	22.8%
	2018–19	40	7.5%	61	18.0%
	2019–20	136	22.1%	235	26.4%
	2020–21	211	21.3%	327	23.5%
	2021–22	292	21.9%	330	24.2%
Health services	2017–18	8	0.0%[a]	1	0.0%[a]
	2018–19	37	18.9%	31	19.4%
	2019–20	101	19.8%	55	7.3%
	2020–21	112	19.6%	48	22.9%
	2021–22	283	19.1%	107	27.1%
Public health	2017–18	8	25.0%[a]	10	10.0%[a]
	2018–19	19	10.5%[a]	7	0.0%[a]
	2019–20	103	24.3%	64	17.2%
	2020–21	67	22.4%	24	25.0%
	2021–22	140	30.7%	77	18.2%
Basic science	2017–18	2	50.0%[a]	2	0.0%[a]
	2018–19	1	0.0%[a]	0	0.0%[a]
	2019–20	32	18.8%	55	14.5%
	2020–21	30	20.0%	56	26.8%
	2021–22	74	13.5%	116	25.9%

a Funded rates should be interpreted with caution because of the low number of applicants.

Table 9 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators each year, by broad research area

Broad research area	Financial year	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
Clinical medicine and science	2017–18	553	23.7%	1090	23.8%
	2018–19	290	16.9%	483	17.0%
	2019–20	1049	28.3%	1628	27.0%
	2020–21	1607	25.5%	2534	23.6%
	2021–22	2607	28.6%	2811	31.1%
Health services	2017–18	38	0.0%	29	0.0%
	2018–19	289	22.1%	231	21.6%
	2019–20	666	19.1%	488	15.4%
	2020–21	798	22.3%	516	22.3%
	2021–22	2439	24.5%	1382	30.0%
Public health	2017–18	60	21.7%	68	22.1%
	2018–19	111	10.8%	83	4.8%
	2019–20	673	22.6%	471	22.5%
	2020–21	473	24.5%	272	24.3%
	2021–22	1322	32.7%	782	28.8%
Basic science	2017–18	9	33.3%[a]	12	41.7%[a]
	2018–19	3	0.0%[a]	6	0.0%[a]
	2019–20	145	21.4%	269	21.6%
	2020–21	176	23.3%	309	28.2%
	2021–22	476	25.2%	713	31.8%

a Funded rates should be interpreted with caution because of the low number of applicants.

Limitations of this analysis

Broad research area data were only available for NHMRC-administered grant opportunities.

Several funded rates for the 2017–18 and 2018–19 financial years — especially for the broad research area ‘Basic science’ — should be interpreted with caution because of low numbers of applications.

Fields of research

Of the top 20 fields of research (by number of applications) included in this analysis, there were more applications from women leading Chief Investigators than men for 7 fields of research (35%), while one field of research, ‘Ophthalmology and optometry’, had the same number of applications from each gender. However, there were 5 fields of research (25%) where women leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men. Generally, the proportion of funding received for each gender corresponded to the number of applications submitted (that is, if women leading Chief Investigators submitted a higher number of applications, they tended to receive a higher proportion of funding) (Table 10).

Table 10 Number of applications, funded rates and funding received for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by field of research

Field of research[a]	Gender of leading Chief Investigator	Number of applications submitted	Percentage of applications funded	Amount funded	Proportion of total funded amount[b]
Biochemistry and cell biology	Women	11	18.2%	$1,788,458.30	0.1%
	Men	28	28.6%	$13,349,349.53	0.9%
Biomedical and clinical sciences	Women	57	22.8%	$20,118,962.63	1.4%
	Men	84	31.0%	$49,741,062.06	3.5%
Biomedical engineering	Women	14	14.3%	$1,547,791.50	0.1%
	Men	24	8.3%	$1,734,590.40	0.1%
Cardiorespiratory medicine and haematology	Women	113	23.9%	$38,592,071.29	2.7%
	Men	237	24.9%	$83,341,090.48	5.9%
Clinical sciences	Women	309	21.4%	$124,576,800.36	8.8%
	Men	387	22.7%	$167,556,919.03	11.8%
Genetics	Women	25	24.0%	$14,359,106.51	1.0%
	Men	46	39.1%	$58,669,412.82	4.1%
Health sciences	Women	109	21.1%	$33,666,889.55	2.4%
	Men	60	30.0%	$25,665,297.99	1.8%

continues

Table 10 *continued*

Field of research[a]	Gender of leading Chief Investigator	Number of applications submitted	Percentage of applications funded	Amount funded	Proportion of total funded amount[b]
Immunology	Women	30	13.3%	$8,047,261.80	0.6%
	Men	31	19.4%	$15,396,527.11	1.1%
Medical biotechnology	Women	20	10.0%	$1,455,541.60	0.1%
	Men	44	15.9%	$17,178,437.04	1.2%
Medical microbiology	Women	13	38.5%	$4,496,612.48	0.3%
	Men	33	24.2%	$12,965,225.84	0.9%
Neurosciences	Women	78	12.8%	$18,104,233.78	1.3%
	Men	126	20.6%	$50,394,924.30	3.5%
Nursing	Women	28	10.7%	$4,289,259.61	0.3%
	Men	5	20.0%	$302,942.48	0.0%
Nutrition and dietetics	Women	32	28.1%	$11,982,070.63	0.8%
	Men	7	28.6%	$2,288,021.50	0.2%
Oncology and carcinogenesis	Women	111	19.8%	$38,823,061.07	2.7%
	Men	199	28.6%	$96,571,769.74	6.8%

continues

Table 10 *continued*

Field of research[a]	Gender of leading Chief Investigator	Number of applications submitted	Percentage of applications funded	Amount funded	Proportion of total funded amount[b]
Ophthalmology and optometry	Women	11	27.3%	$3,946,978.32	0.3%
	Men	11	9.1%	$997,796.80	0.1%
Other medical and health sciences	Women	26	19.2%	$8,524,696.68	0.6%
	Men	20	20.0%	$5,722,185.45	0.4%
Paediatrics and reproductive medicine	Women	101	17.8%	$33,017,184.92	2.3%
	Men	48	25.0%	$26,022,084.52	1.8%
Pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences	Women	14	14.3%	$3,358,199.24	0.2%
	Men	18	5.6%	$1,175,522.20	0.1%
Psychology	Women	63	12.7%	$12,850,452.47	0.9%
	Men	34	14.7%	$15,675,048.96	1.1%
Public health and health services	Women	542	22.5%	$182,208,377.55	12.8%
	Men	258	16.3%	$69,548,641.37	4.9%

a Only the top 20 fields of research by number of applications are presented in this table.
b Expressed as a percentage of the total funded amount across all initiatives ($1,420,961,113.80) for grant opportunities included in this analysis.

Findings on the number of applications were similar for all Chief Investigators, with 7 fields of research (35%) having more women Chief Investigator applicants than men. Six fields of research (30%) had more applications from women than men for both leading Chief Investigators and all Chief Investigators; these were 'Health sciences', 'Nursing', 'Nutrition and dietetics', 'Paediatrics and reproductive medicine', 'Psychology' and 'Public health and health services'. However, there were 11 fields of research (55%) where women Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men, and several more where funded rates were similar (Table 11).

Table 11 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators, by field of research

Field of research[a]	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
Biochemistry and cell biology	73	28.8%	137	28.5%
Biomedical and clinical sciences	583	31.7%	707	36.2%
Biomedical engineering	65	12.3%	132	12.1%
Cardiorespiratory medicine and haematology	1027	29.8%	1722	29.2%
Clinical sciences	2392	25.6%	3084	25.7%
Genetics	293	44.0%	355	49.3%
Health sciences	1149	26.7%	636	30.5%
Immunology	169	20.1%	227	20.7%
Medical biotechnology	147	21.1%	255	21.2%
Medical microbiology	115	27.8%	207	35.7%
Neurosciences	592	20.9%	975	23.1%
Nursing	166	13.3%	78	11.5%
Nutrition and dietetics	208	33.7%	94	26.6%
Oncology and carcinogenesis	894	30.6%	1358	27.4%
Ophthalmology and optometry	55	29.1%	78	21.8%

continues

Table 11 *continued*

Field of research[a]	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
Other medical and health sciences	142	20.4%	151	23.2%
Paediatrics and reproductive medicine	770	23.2%	508	21.9%
Pharmacology and pharmaceutical sciences	107	12.1%	105	5.7%
Psychology	433	17.1%	261	14.6%
Public health and health services	4007	23.6%	2609	22.4%

a Only the top 20 fields of research by number of applications are presented in this table.

Limitations of this analysis

Fields of research data were only available for NHMRC-administered grant opportunities and are reported at the 'group' level (that is, the 4-digit field of research code as per the Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification).

Many fields of research categories had very few applications or funded applications, so findings should be interpreted with caution. The low number of applications also precluded analyses of annual trends.

Application budgets

Overall rates

More women leading Chief Investigators applied for grant budgets less than $1 million, while more men applied for grant budgets of $1 million and greater. However, the funded rates were opposite; women leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men for budgets of $1 million and greater, while men leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than women for lower budgets. Generally, funded rates increased as the grant budget increased (Figure 16). Men leading Chief Investigators received a similar or higher proportion of funding than women for most budget bands, except for budgets between $1 million and $2 million (Figure 17).

Similar findings for applications and funded rates were seen for all Chief Investigators (Figure 18).

Figure 16 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by application budget

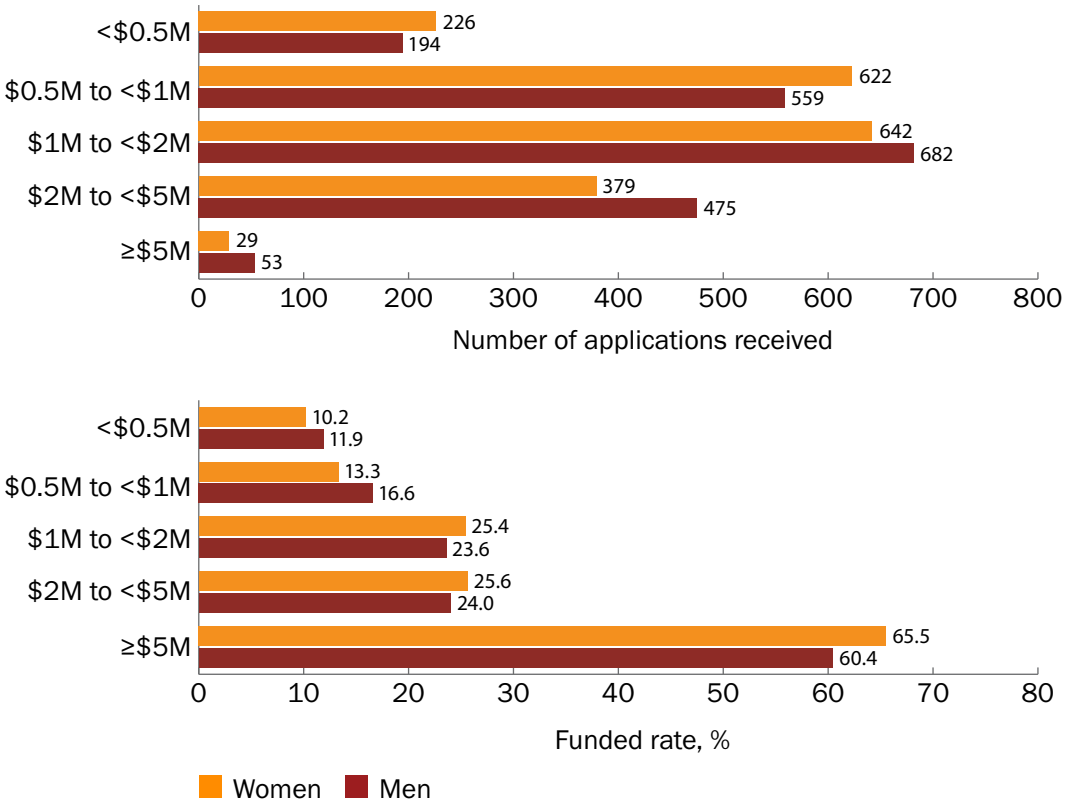
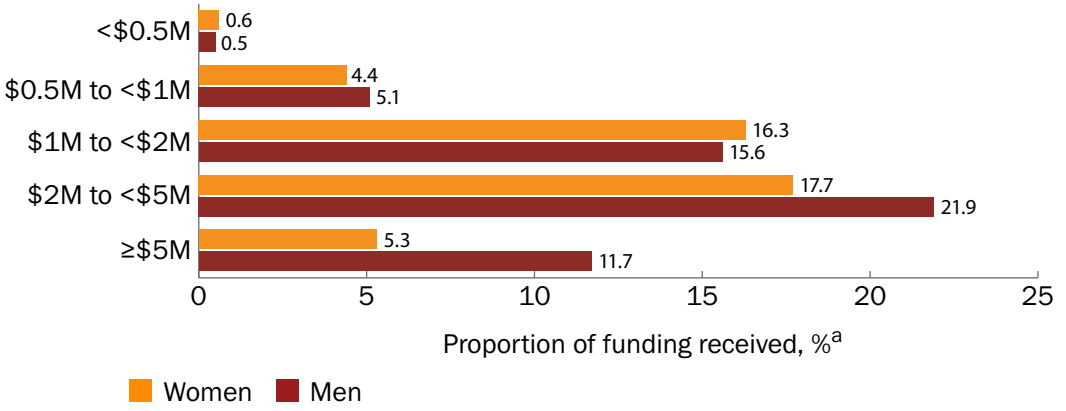
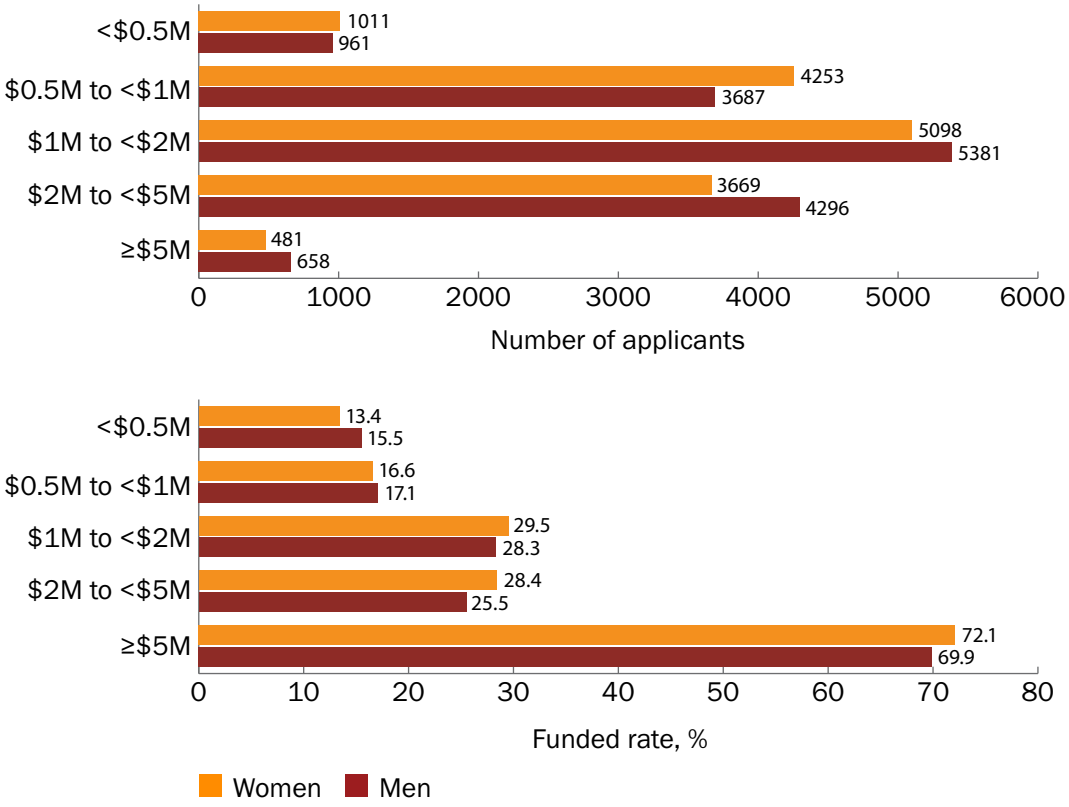


Figure 17 Proportion of funding received by women and men leading Chief Investigators, by application budget



a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount across all application budgets ($1,420,961,113.80) for grant opportunities included in this analysis.

Figure 18 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators, by application budget



Annual trends

The number of applications submitted by both women and men leading Chief Investigators generally increased each year, for all budget bands. The $5 million and greater budget band had the highest funded rates, and the largest increase in funded rates over time, for both genders (Table 12).

Similar findings were seen for all Chief Investigators. Women Chief Investigators tended to have a higher annual funded rate than men for higher budget bands, especially for $2 million and greater (Table 13).

Table 12 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators each year, by application budget

Application budget	Financial year	Number of women leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women leading Chief Investigators	Number of men leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men leading Chief Investigators
<$0.5 million	2017–18	8	0.0%	12	33.3%
	2018–19	7	14.3%	1	0.0%
	2019–20	80	15.0%	78	10.3%
	2020–21	62	12.9%	51	13.7%
	2021–22	69	2.9%	52	7.7%
$0.5 million–<$1 million	2017–18	18	11.1%	33	6.1%
	2018–19	23	4.3%	19	26.3%
	2019–20	120	17.5%	130	16.9%
	2020–21	127	18.9%	127	22.8%
	2021–22	334	10.5%	250	14.0%
$1 million–<$2 million	2017–18	41	17.1%	103	24.3%
	2018–19	34	14.7%	52	11.5%
	2019–20	121	24.0%	111	25.2%
	2020–21	214	17.8%	239	14.6%
	2021–22	232	36.2%	177	37.9%
$2 million–<$5 million	2017–18	19	15.8%	32	28.1%
	2018–19	31	12.9%	27	22.2%
	2019–20	48	35.4%	80	30.0%
	2020–21	101	25.7%	147	27.9%
	2021–22	180	26.1%	189	18.0%
≥$5 million	2017–18	2	0.0%	4	0.0%
	2018–19	2	50.0%	0	0.0%
	2019–20	3	66.7%	11	27.3%
	2020–21	4	50.0%	10	40.0%
	2021–22	18	77.8%	28	89.3%

Table 13 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators each year, by application budget

Application budget	Financial year	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
<$0.5 million	2017–18	33	15.2%	56	30.4%
	2018–19	30	13.3%	16	12.5%
	2019–20	375	13.9%	443	16.0%
	2020–21	203	23.2%	205	20.0%
	2021–22	370	7.3%	241	7.5%
$0.5 million–<$1 million	2017–18	130	10.8%	167	11.4%
	2018–19	133	12.0%	153	23.5%
	2019–20	825	18.9%	792	15.3%
	2020–21	695	25.8%	728	26.9%
	2021–22	2470	13.8%	1847	14.0%
$1 million–<$2 million	2017–18	334	27.5%	680	25.7%
	2018–19	287	18.8%	353	13.6%
	2019–20	815	26.6%	905	27.5%
	2020–21	1400	19.2%	1519	18.4%
	2021–22	2262	38.5%	1924	40.1%
$2 million–<$5 million	2017–18	148	24.3%	266	25.6%
	2018–19	232	19.4%	272	16.9%
	2019–20	446	34.3%	613	31.3%
	2020–21	720	32.5%	1116	29.7%
	2021–22	2123	27.1%	2029	22.7%
≥$5 million	2017–18	15	0.0%	30	0.0%
	2018–19	11	54.5%	9	44.4%
	2019–20	78	37.2%	106	43.4%
	2020–21	36	44.4%	63	27.0%
	2021–22	341	86.8%	450	87.3%

Grant team size

Investigator teams were marginally larger on average when led by women compared with men. Funded applications also tended to have larger team sizes than unfunded applications.

Women-led teams tended to have more women than men team members (approximately 60% women to 37% men), while men-led teams had more men than women team members (approximately 64% men to 33% women). Overall, though, women-led teams tended to be more gender balanced.

Men-led teams submitted more applications than women-led teams (Table 14), despite funded rates being similar regardless of the gender of the leading Chief Investigator (20.3% for women and 21.5% for men).

Limitations of this analysis

These results should be interpreted bearing in mind that grant funding rules and system limitations have changed over time, with several grant opportunities having a cap of 10 or 15 Chief Investigators.

Table 14 Gender proportion and size of teams led by women and men Chief Investigators for funded and unfunded applications

Gender of leading Chief Investigator	Outcome of application	Number of applications	Percentage of women Chief Investigators on team	Percentage of men Chief Investigators on team	Average team size[a]
Women	Funded	385	58.9%	39.1%	10.21
	Unfunded	1513	62.1%	34.8%	7.92
Men	Funded	423	34.8%	62.6%	9.36
	Unfunded	1540	30.9%	66.1%	7.37

a Grant funding rules and system limitations have changed over time and impose restrictions on the number of people who can be entered as a Chief Investigator on grant applications.

Leading Chief Investigator characteristics

Age

More women than men leading Chief Investigators applied for funding in younger age brackets (below 50 years of age), while more men applied in older age brackets

(above 50 years of age). Men leading Chief Investigators aged 50–54 submitted a higher number of applications than men in other age brackets. This was slightly younger for women leading Chief Investigators, at 45–49 years of age.

Overall, women leading Chief Investigators tended to have lower funded rates than men, except for the youngest (25–29 years of age) and 2 oldest (60–64 years and over 65 years) age brackets (Figure 19). Men leading Chief Investigators also tended to receive a higher proportion of funding than women, except for the 45–49-year age bracket (Figure 20). Funded amounts also tended to be higher for men than women, especially in older age brackets — this was likely due to the higher number of applications submitted by men.

Figure 19 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by age

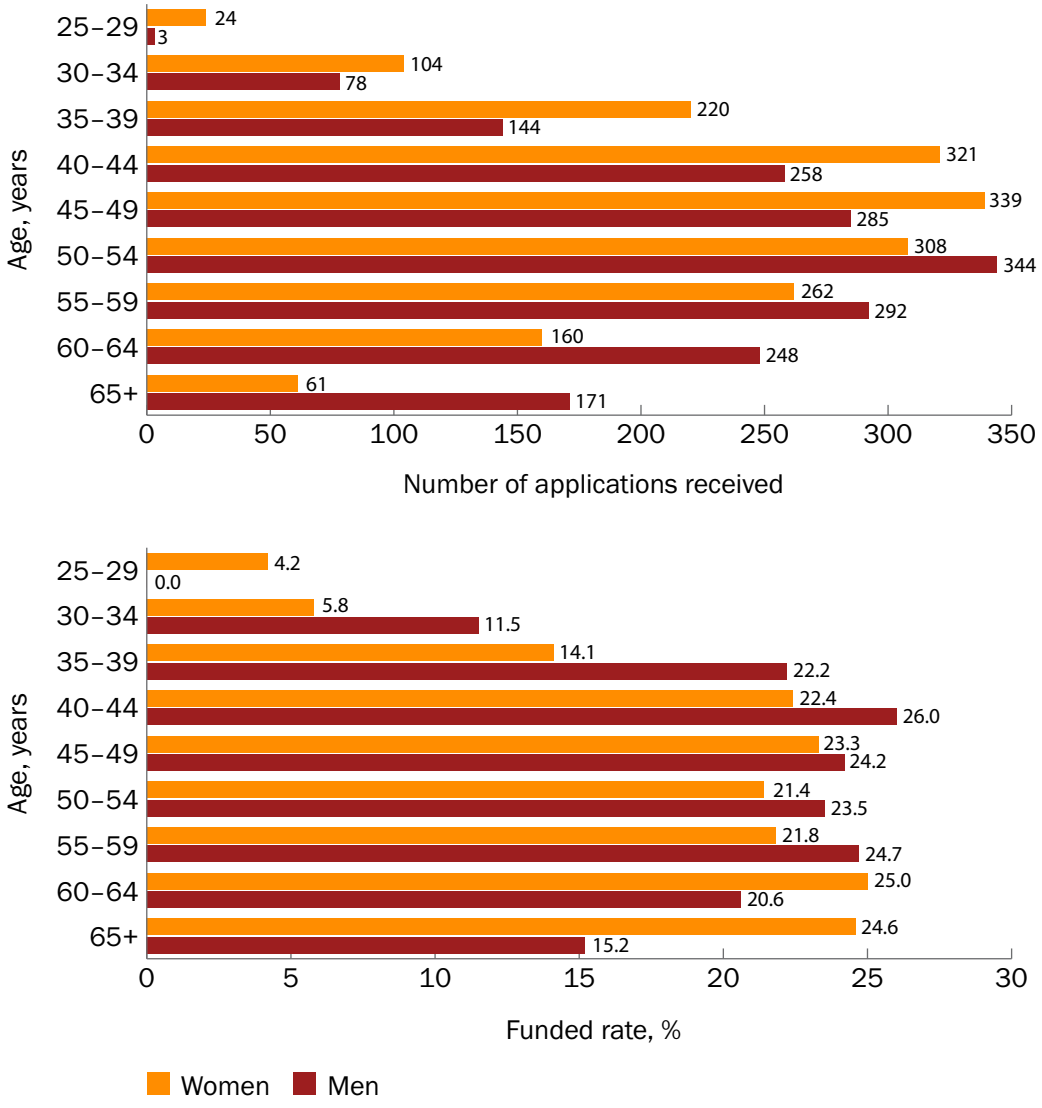
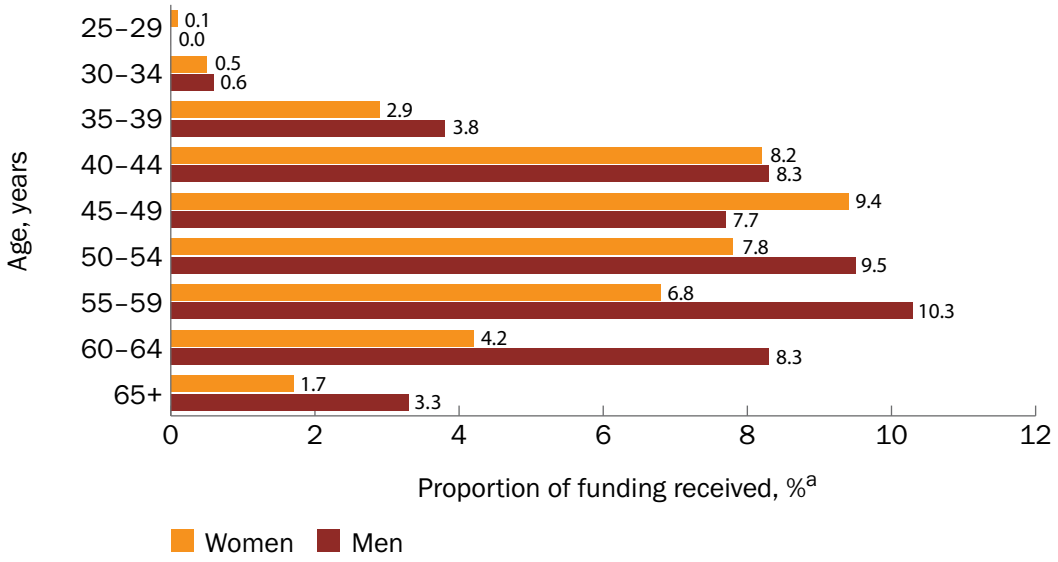


Figure 20 Proportion of funding received by women and men leading Chief Investigators, by age



a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount across all ages ($1,420,961,113.80) for grant opportunities included in this analysis.

Years post-PhD

Women leading Chief Investigators submitted the highest number of applications 6–10 years post-PhD, while men leading Chief Investigators submitted the highest number of applications 21–30 years post-PhD. However, women leading Chief Investigators had the highest funded rate 31–40 years post-PhD, while the highest funded rate for men was 16–20 years post-PhD (Figure 21). Men leading Chief Investigators tended to receive a higher proportion of funding than women, except for the 11–15 years post-PhD band. This band was also when women leading Chief Investigators received the highest proportion of funding overall (for both genders and all post-PhD bands) (Figure 22).

Limitations of this analysis

Years post-PhD were calculated based on the year of application and were not adjusted for career disruptions or relative to opportunity considerations.

Figure 21 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by the number of years post-PhD

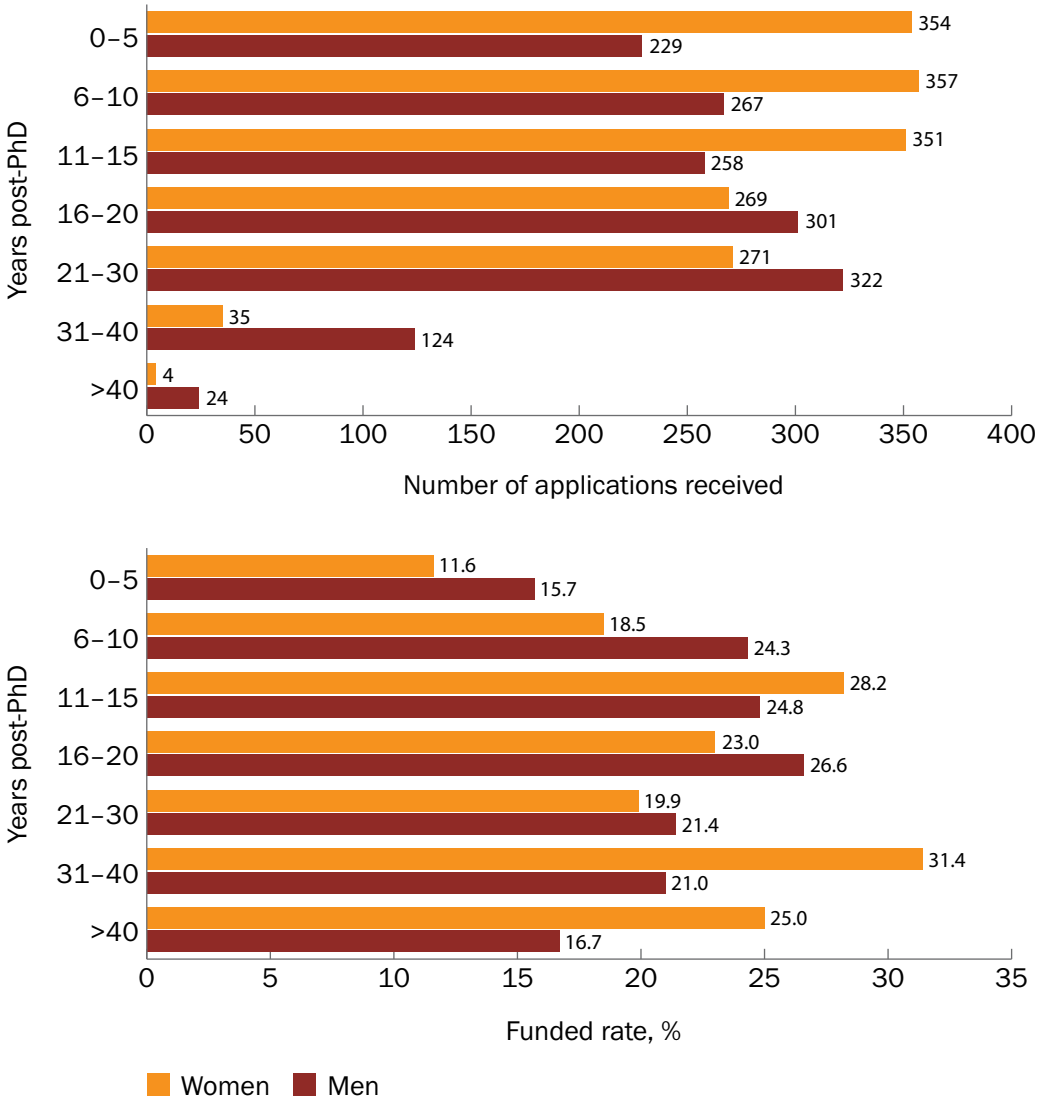
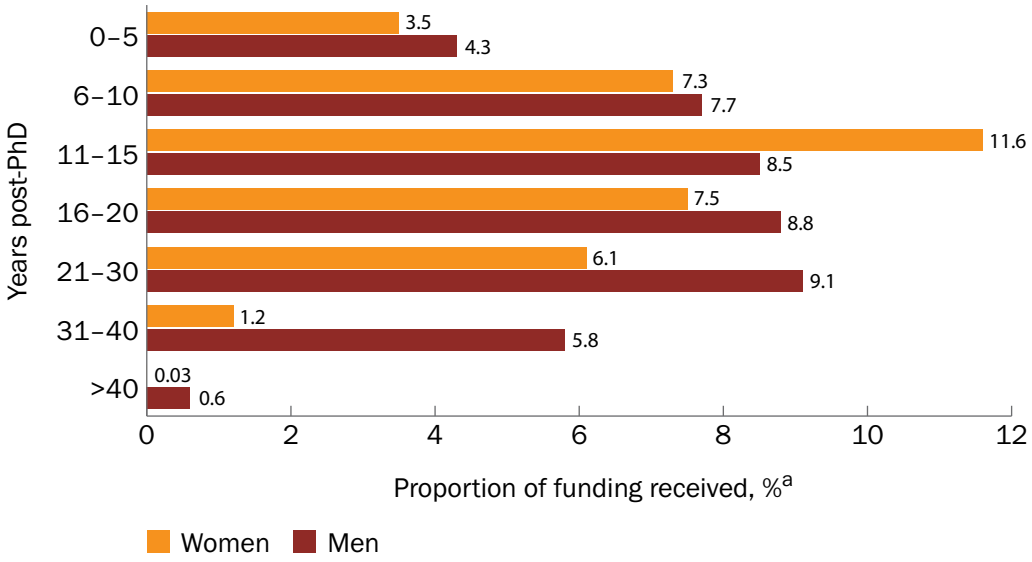


Figure 22 Proportion of funding received by women and men leading Chief Investigators, by the number of years post-PhD



a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount across all years post-PhD ($1,420,961,113.80) for grant opportunities included in this analysis.

Lead or administering organisation characteristics

Overall rates for leading Chief Investigators

Women leading Chief Investigators from administering organisations in New South Wales, Tasmania and the Northern Territory submitted more applications than men, while men leading Chief Investigators submitted more applications than women in all other locations. However, women leading Chief Investigators had a higher funded rate than men for administering organisations in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory (Figure 23). Women leading Chief Investigators received the same or a higher proportion of funding than men for administering organisations in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory (Figure 24).

Figure 23 Number of applications and funded rates for women and men leading Chief Investigators, by location of lead or administering organisation

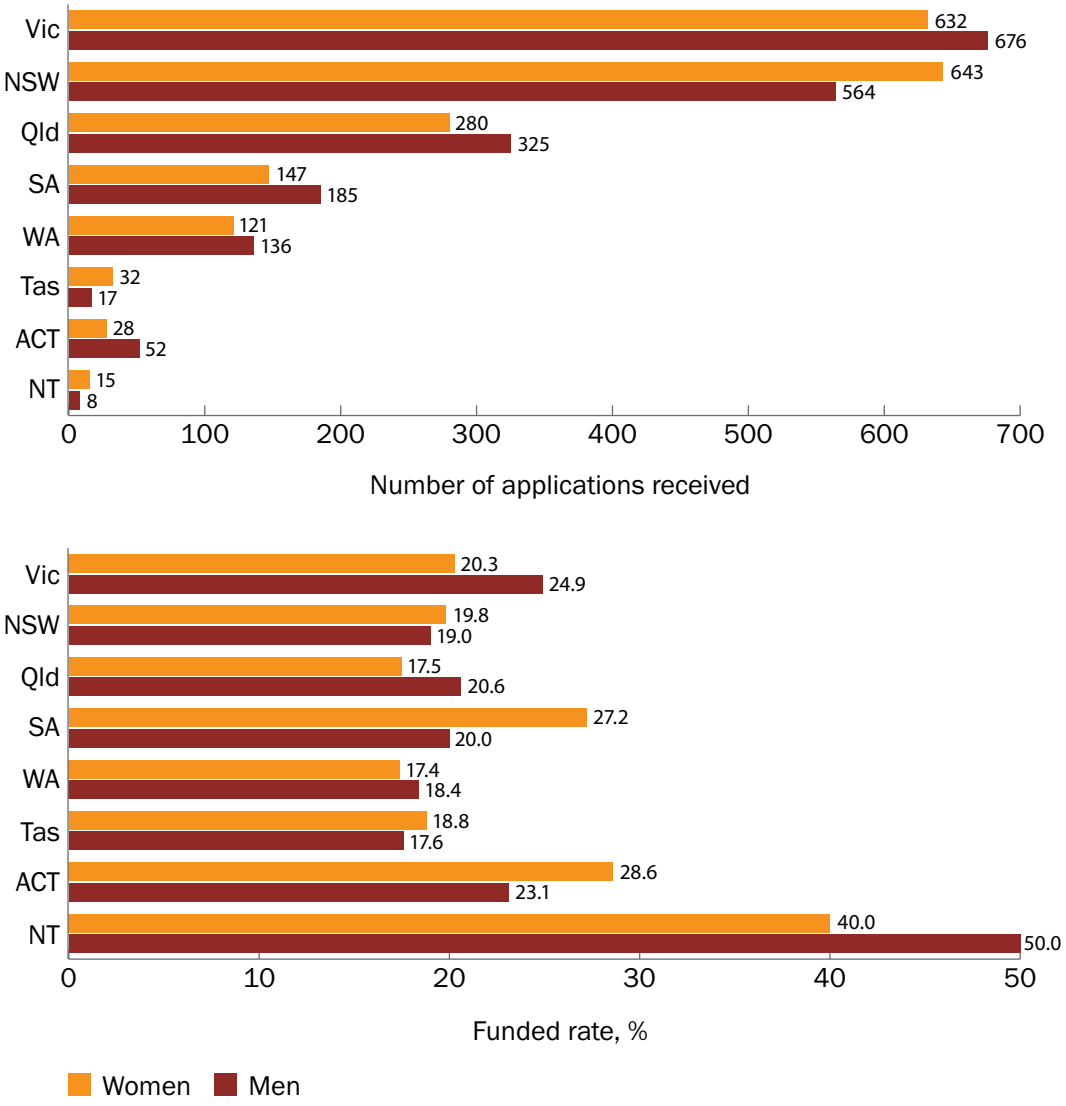
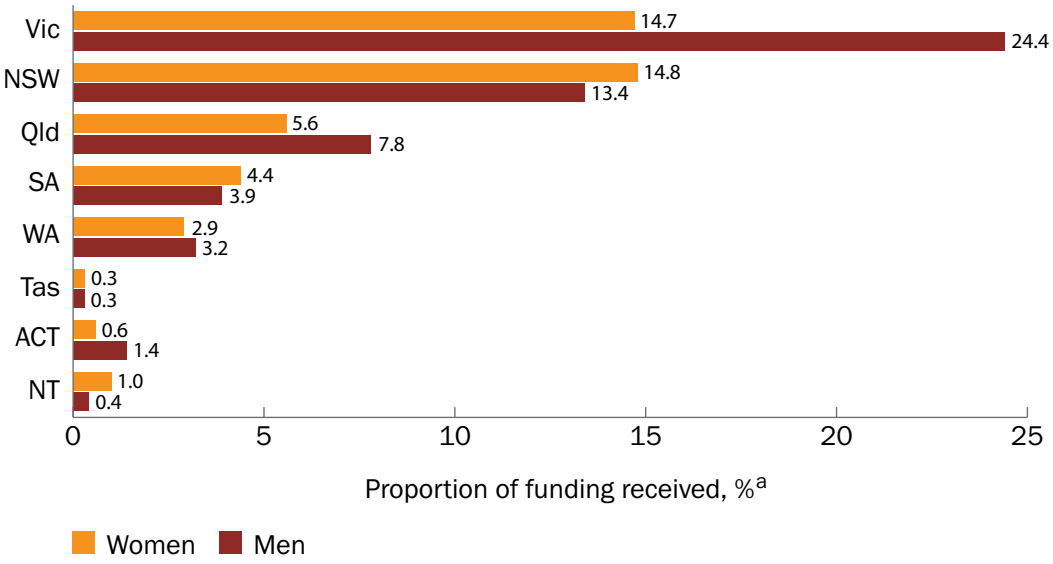


Figure 24 Proportion of funding received by women and men leading Chief Investigators, by location of lead or administering organisation



a The proportion of funding received is a percentage of the total funded amount across all locations ($1,420,961,113.80) for grant opportunities included in this analysis.

Overall rates and annual trends for all Chief Investigators

Overall, there were more women Chief Investigator applicants than men for lead or administering organisations in Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory. Lead or administering organisations in New South Wales had an almost equal number of women and men Chief Investigator applicants. The overall funded rates for all Chief Investigators were balanced between genders across most locations except the Northern Territory, where women Chief Investigators had a much higher funded rate than men (Figure 25).

In terms of annual trends, the number of Chief Investigator applicants increased each year for both genders, and across all locations. Funded rates tended to be the most gender balanced in 2021–22, and this was often when women Chief Investigators had their highest funded rate when compared with other financial years (Table 15).

Figure 25 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators, by location of lead or administering organisation

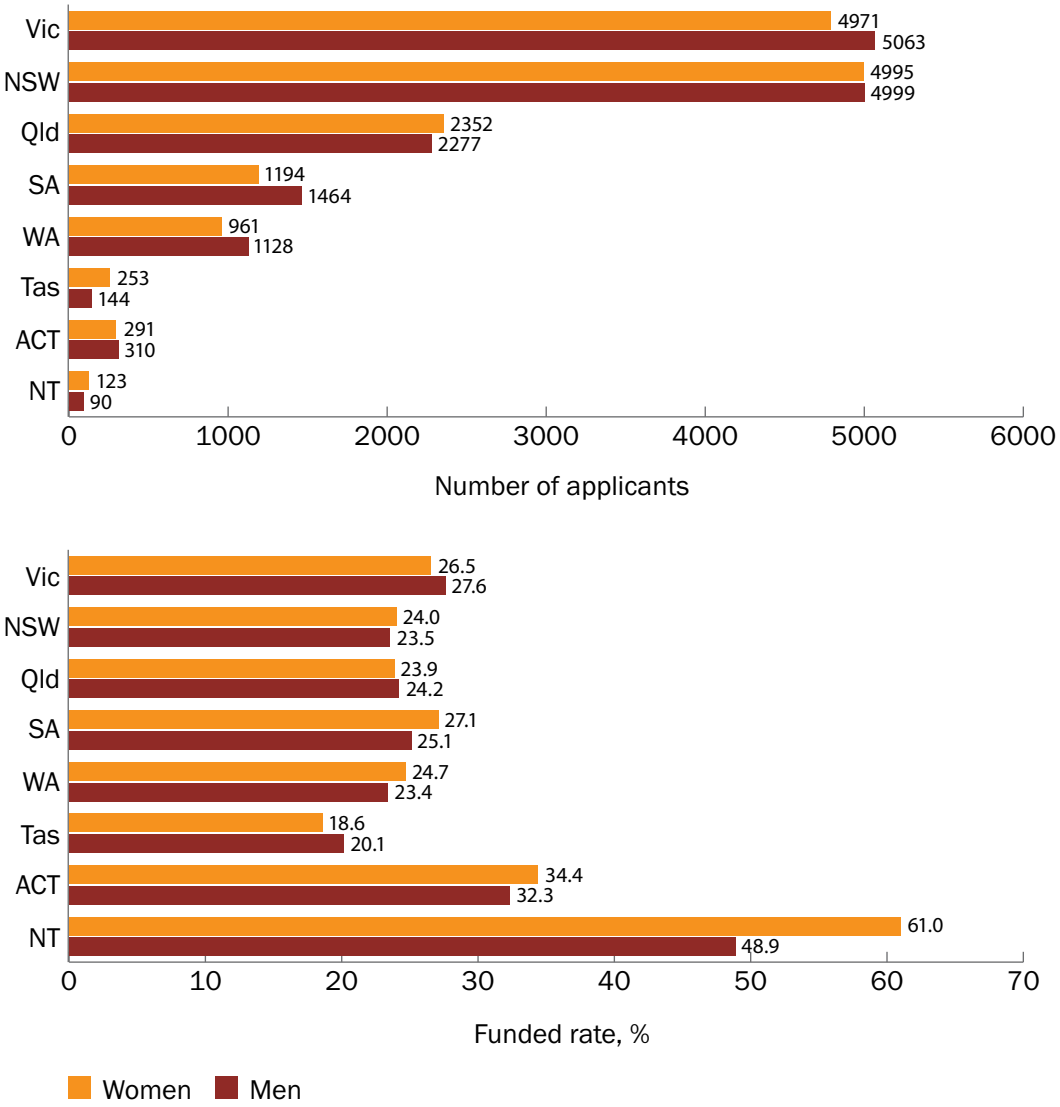


Table 15 Number of applicants and funded rates for women and men Chief Investigators each year, by location of the application's administering organisation[a]

Location of administering organisation	Financial year	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
Vic	2017–18	244	24.2%	451	27.3%
	2018–19	238	24.8%	324	18.8%
	2019–20	865	27.1%	1034	27.9%
	2020–21	1113	25.7%	1254	28.2%
	2021–22	2211	27.7%	1883	29.6%
NSW	2017–18	224	17.9%	403	17.6%
	2018–19	244	13.5%	254	16.9%
	2019–20	810	22.7%	860	20.6%
	2020–21	923	23.3%	1112	22.3%
	2021–22	2633	26.6%	2178	27.8%
Qld	2017–18	95	24.2%	167	25.7%
	2018–19	79	21.5%	81	11.1%
	2019–20	375	21.9%	418	27.3%
	2020–21	517	22.1%	588	18.0%
	2021–22	1230	25.4%	962	28.4%
SA	2017–18	35	31.4%	85	20.0%
	2018–19	51	3.9%	56	3.6%
	2019–20	182	28.6%	243	21.8%
	2020–21	266	29.3%	363	29.5%
	2021–22	612	27.9%	658	27.5%

continues

Table 15 *continued*

Location of administering organisation	Financial year	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
WA	2017–18	20	10.0%	46	17.4%
	2018–19	51	19.6%	66	28.8%
	2019–20	156	9.0%	185	15.7%
	2020–21	159	16.4%	248	14.1%
	2021–22	540	33.1%	552	30.4%
Tas	2019–20	49	8.2%	32	0.0%
	2021–22	137	17.5%	70	28.6%
ACT	2019–20	73	30.1%	80	16.3%
	2020–21	43	25.6%	43	18.6%
	2021–22	124	47.6%	134	50.7%
NT	2021–22	79	65.8%	54	48.1%

a This table excludes data from locations that submitted fewer than 10 applications in a financial year.

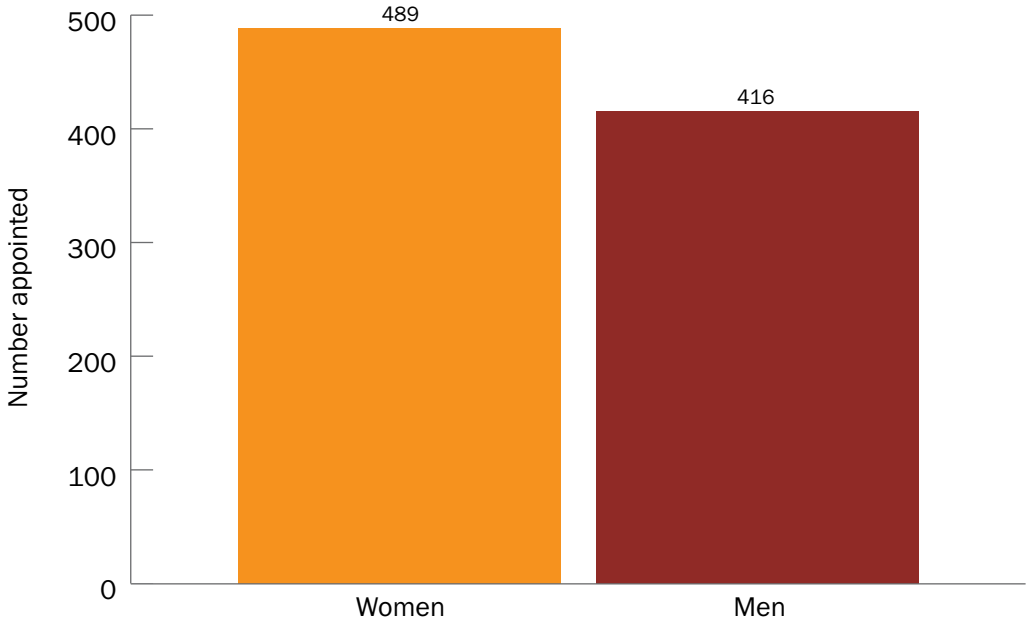
Grant assessors

The gender profiles of Grant Assessment Committee members were not available for all grant opportunities. The grant opportunities with committee gender data that were included in this report (see Appendix C) align with the MRFF's report Financial assistance to support the Australian Medical Research and Innovation Priorities 2020–2022.

Overall, Grant Assessment Committees had a higher proportion of women assessors than men (53.9% compared with 46.2%) (Figure 26). The proportion of assessor genders was the least equal for the following grant opportunities:

- 2021 Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mothers and Babies, where 91.7% of assessors were women
- 2021 Indigenous Health Research, where 88.0% of assessors were women
- 2021 International Clinical Trial Collaborations, where 71.4% of assessors were men
- 2022 International Clinical Trial Collaborations, where 71.0% of assessors were men

Figure 26 Number of women and men appointed to Grant Assessment Committees



Opportunities for learning and future funding

MRFF funded rates were higher for more senior women compared with men. However, there is still a high attrition rate among women researchers at the later stages of their career, which is consistent with findings of other funders. As part of the NHMRC Gender Equity Strategy 2022–2025, the NHMRC will set targets to award equal numbers of investigator grants to women and men leading Chief Investigators, especially through the Leadership Levels (mid- and late-career grants). If successful, the outcomes of this policy change may provide useful lessons for the MRFF.

Men leading Chief Investigators are not as well represented as women on Grant Assessment Committees, despite consistently receiving a higher proportion of funding — this may be consistent with the gender inequity of burden of service seen in academia and other sectors. Broad representation in Grant Assessment Committees, including career stages, disciplines, stakeholder groups and gender, helps ensure that the value and impact of applications are adequately considered during the assessment process. Steps to encourage diversity and gender balance need to be taken, such as the Refresh of the MRFF Assessment Criteria in 2022. The department will continue to monitor data and learn from other funders, the research community and other stakeholders to inform appropriate approaches.

Conclusions

Many of the findings in this report — for funded rates between women and men across a range of areas — are consistent with those outlined in the previous (2022) MRFF gender data report. However, unlike the previous report, this report also analyses annual trends for the first time; these data suggest that funded rates for women researchers have increased steadily since 2017.

The 2021–22 financial year was the first in which women submitted more applications than men, and women and men also received similar amounts of funding that year (for grant opportunities for which outcomes were known at the time of analysis). Future monitoring will help establish whether the equitable participation and funding of women and men is continuing over time. Analysis of these trends will inform policy changes (if necessary) to encourage gender equity.

Opportunities for learning include improving gender balance in Grant Assessment Committees and addressing the attrition rate among women researchers at the later stages of their career. However, it is acknowledged that the latter is a particular issue for the Australian research sector more broadly, and fundamental reform efforts may be needed. The department will continue to monitor data and learn from other funders, the research community and other stakeholders to inform appropriate approaches to address these issues.

Appendices

Appendix A Funded rates for MRFF grant opportunities that are new to this report — for leading Chief Investigators[a]

Grant opportunity	Number of women leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women leading Chief Investigators	Number of men leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men leading Chief Investigators
2020 Stem Cell Therapies Mission	28	21.4%	31	35.5%
2021 Brain Cancer Research	3	0.0%	11	27.3%
2021 Cardiovascular Health	37	43.2%	61	39.3%
2021 Chronic Musculoskeletal Conditions in Children and Adolescents	11	54.6%	17	29.4%
2021 Chronic Neurological Conditions	10	60.0%	5	40.0%
2021 Chronic Respiratory Conditions	16	37.5%	17	23.5%
2021 Clinical Trials Activity	47	36.2%	55	25.5%
2021 Consumer-Led Research	80	13.8%	21	14.3%
2021 COVID-19 Health Impacts and Vaccination Schedules	10	20.0%	15	20.0%

continues

Appendix A *continued*

Grant opportunity	Number of women leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women leading Chief Investigators	Number of men leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men leading Chief Investigators
2021 COVID-19 Treatment Access and Public Health Activities	10	50.0%	19	47.4%
2021 Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care	33	48.5%	18	11.1%
2021 Early to Mid-Career Researchers	255	4.7%	162	6.8%
2021 Genomics Health Futures Mission	11	45.5%	30	50.0%
2021 Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mothers and Babies	12	25.0%	3	33.3%
2021 Indigenous Health Research	13	61.5%	9	33.3%
2021 Innovative Therapies for Mental Illness	4	50.0%	12	41.7%
2021 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 21.1)	7	28.6%	17	11.8%
2021 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 21.2)	14	0.0%	10	30.0%
2021 Maternal Health and Healthy Lifestyles	25	40.0%	4	25.0%
2021 Primary Health Care Digital Innovations	18	22.2%	18	11.1%
2021 Primary Health Care Research	15	20.0%	10	10.0%
2021 Rare Cancers, Rare Diseases and Unmet Need	32	28.1%	63	31.8%

continues

Appendix A *continued*

Grant opportunity	Number of women leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women leading Chief Investigators	Number of men leading Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men leading Chief Investigators
2021 Research Data Infrastructure	24	12.5%	46	2.2%
2021 Traumatic Brain Injury	6	16.7%	5	20.0%
2022 Cardiovascular Health	20	25.0%	31	29.0%
2022 Clinician Researchers: Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health	95	10.5%	25	20.0%
2022 Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care	24	50.0%	12	25.0%
2022 Effective Treatments and Therapies	11	63.6%	21	42.9%
2022 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 22.1)	3	33.3%	17	11.8%
2022 Models of Care to Improve the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Acute Care	10	30.0%	14	42.9%
2022 Multiple Sclerosis Research	Outcomes not available at the time of analysis			
2022 National Critical Research Infrastructure	Outcomes not available at the time of analysis			
2022 Quality, Safety and Effectiveness of Medicine Use and Medicine Intervention by Pharmacists	6	83.3%	10	50.0%
2022 Stem Cell Therapies	14	21.4%	30	33.3%

a Table excludes grant opportunities that received fewer than 10 applications (the sum of men, women and non-binary genders).

Appendix B Funded rates for MRFF grant opportunities that are new to this report — for all Chief Investigators

Grant opportunity	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
2020 Stem Cell Therapies Mission	134	32.1%	204	39.2%
2021 Brain Cancer Research	43	32.6%	80	21.3%
2021 Cardiovascular Health	366	44.5%	500	41.2%
2021 Chronic Musculoskeletal Conditions in Children and Adolescents	116	62.9%	130	41.5%
2021 Chronic Neurological Conditions	87	52.9%	71	45.1%
2021 Chronic Respiratory Conditions	166	38.6%	187	34.2%
2021 Clinical Trials Activity	498	33.9%	572	35.0%
2021 Consumer-Led Research	625	18.1%	322	14.6%
2021 COVID-19 Health Impacts and Vaccination Schedules	100	21.0%	120	16.7%
2021 COVID-19 Treatment Access and Public Health Activities	103	42.7%	141	52.5%
2021 Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care	343	39.1%	203	38.4%
2021 Early to Mid-Career Researchers	1578	6.3%	994	7.9%

continues

Appendix B *continued*

Grant opportunity	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
2021 Genomics Health Futures Mission	246	59.3%	300	61.0%
2021 Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mothers and Babies	189	42.9%	47	38.3%
2021 Indigenous Health Research	113	55.8%	80	50.0%
2021 Innovative Therapies for Mental Illness	39	46.2%	73	42.5%
2021 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 21.1)	70	25.7%	140	15.0%
2021 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 21.2)	96	11.5%	125	13.6%
2021 Maternal Health and Healthy Lifestyles	206	42.2%	94	36.2%
2021 mRNA Clinical Trials Enabling Infrastructure	21	76.2%	39	87.2%
2021 Optimising the Clinical Use of Immunoglobulins	22	100.0%	30	100.0%
2021 Primary Health Care Digital Innovations	179	20.7%	156	17.9%
2021 Primary Health Care Research	141	20.6%	138	16.7%

continues

Appendix B *continued*

Grant opportunity	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
2021 Rare Cancers, Rare Diseases and Unmet Need	300	34.3%	445	33.3%
2021 Research Data Infrastructure	392	8.9%	589	5.9%
2021 Traumatic Brain Injury	63	41.3%	94	37.2%
2022 Australian Brain Cancer Research Infrastructure	30	70.0%	39	69.2%
2022 Cardiovascular Health	162	34.6%	273	35.9%
2022 Clinician Researchers: Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health	850	13.4%	351	16.0%
2022 Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care	266	46.6%	142	39.4%
2022 Effective Treatments and Therapies	156	60.3%	134	47.0%
2022 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 22.1)	87	25.3%	124	14.5%
2022 Mitochondrial Donation Pilot Program	42	35.7%	58	37.9%
2022 Models of Care to Improve the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Acute Care	131	43.5%	138	55.8%
2022 Multiple Sclerosis Research	Outcomes not available at the time of analysis			

continues

Appendix B *continued*

Grant opportunity	Number of women Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for women Chief Investigators	Number of men Chief Investigator applicants	Funded rate for men Chief Investigators
2022 National Critical Research Infrastructure	Outcomes not available at the time of analysis			
2022 Pancreatic Cancer Research	38	44.7%	42	47.6%
2022 Quality, Safety and Effectiveness of Medicine Use and Medicine Intervention by Pharmacists	112	74.1%	119	59.7%
2022 Stem Cell Therapies	99	34.3%	179	35.2%

Appendix C Gender of Grant Assessment Committee members, by grant opportunity

Grant opportunity	Grant hub	Number of men assessors	Number of women assessors	Percentage of men assessors	Percentage of women assessors
2020 Cardiovascular Health	NHMRC	10	8	56.0%	44.0%
2020 Clinician Researchers: Applied Research in Health	BGH	11	31	26.2%	73.8%
2020 Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care	NHMRC	5	8	38.5%	61.5%
2020 Genomics Health Futures Mission	NHMRC	11	15	42.3%	57.7%
2020 Indigenous Health Research	NHMRC	4	8	33.3%	66.7%
2020 Stem Cell Therapies — Stream 1	NHMRC	4	8	33.3%	66.7%
2020 Stem Cell Therapies — Stream 2	NHMRC	14	6	70.0%	30.0%
2020 Traumatic Brain Injury (2)	NHMRC	8	5	61.5%	38.5%
2021 BioMedTech Incubator	BGH	6	4	60.0%	40.0%
2021 Brain Cancer Research	NHMRC	6	6	50.0%	50.0%
2021 Cardiovascular Health	NHMRC	16	18	47.0%	53.0%
2021 Chronic Musculoskeletal Conditions in Children and Adolescents	NHMRC	5	6	45.0%	55.0%
2021 Chronic Neurological Conditions	NHMRC	5	10	33.3%	66.7%

continues

Appendix C *continued*

Grant opportunity	Grant hub	Number of men assessors	Number of women assessors	Percentage of men assessors	Percentage of women assessors
2021 Chronic Respiratory Conditions	NHMRC	9	8	52.9%	47.2%
2021 Clinical Trials Activity	NHMRC	17	22	43.6%	56.4%
2021 Consumer-Led Research	NHMRC	11	21	34.4%	65.6%
2021 Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care	NHMRC	11	16	41.0%	59.0%
2021 Early to Mid-Career Researchers	NHMRC	101	86	54.0%	46.0%
2021 Genomics Health Futures Mission	NHMRC	11	13	54.0%	46.0%
2021 Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mothers and Babies	BGH	1	11	8.3%	91.7%
2021 Indigenous Health Research	NHMRC	2	15	12.0%	88.0%
2021 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 21.1)	NHMRC	10	4	71.4%	28.6%
2021 Maternal Health and Healthy Lifestyles	NHMRC	4	7	36.4%	63.6%
2021 mRNA Clinical Trials Enabling Infrastructure	BGH	5	5	50.0%	50.0%
2021 Optimising the Clinical Use of Immunoglobulins	NHMRC	5	4	55.6%	44.4%
2021 Primary Health Care Digital Innovations	NHMRC	6	12	33.3%	66.7%
2021 Rare Cancers, Rare Diseases and Unmet Need — Stream 2	NHMRC	4	6	40.0%	60.0%

continues

Appendix C *continued*

Grant opportunity	Grant hub	Number of men assessors	Number of women assessors	Percentage of men assessors	Percentage of women assessors
2021 Stem Cell Therapies	NHMRC	8	10	44.0%	56.0%
2021 Traumatic Brain Injury	NHMRC	8	7	53.0%	47.0%
2022 Australian Brain Cancer Research Infrastructure	NHMRC	6	3	66.7%	33.3%
2022 Cardiovascular Health	NHMRC	8	11	42.1%	57.9%
2022 Clinician Researchers: Nurses, Midwives and Allied Health	NHMRC	17	22	43.6%	56.4%
2022 Dementia, Ageing and Aged Care	NHMRC	8	16	33.3%	66.7%
2022 Effective Treatments and Therapies	NHMRC	12	9	57.2%	42.9%
2022 International Clinical Trial Collaborations (Round 22.1)	NHMRC	7	9	71.0%	29.0%
2022 Mitochondrial Donation Pilot Program	NHMRC	5	4	55.6%	44.4%
2022 Models of Care to Improve the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Acute Care	NHMRC	6	9	40.0%	60.0%
2022 Pancreatic Cancer Research — Stream 1	NHMRC	5	6	45.5%	54.6%
2022 Quality, Safety and Effectiveness of Medicine Use and Medicine Intervention by Pharmacists	BGH	10	7	58.8%	41.2%
2022 Stem Cell Therapies	NHMRC	14	13	51.9%	48.2%

Australian Government

Department of Health
and Aged Care