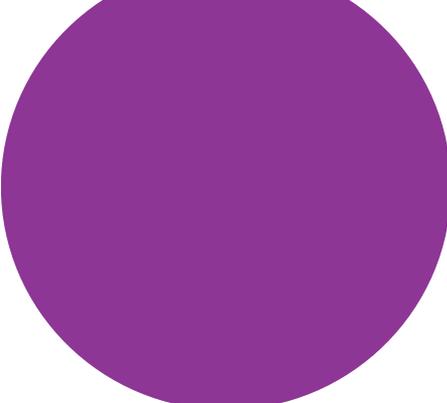


**CEW** Women Leaders  
Empowering  
All Women



Advocacy &  
Resource Pack





# About CEW

Chief Executive Women's (CEW) shared purpose is 'women leaders empowering all women'. CEW's over 1,200 members represent Australia's most senior and distinguished women leaders across business, academia, government, sport, the arts, and not-for-profit sectors. CEW's members have leading roles within Australia's largest private and public organisations. They oversee more than 1.3 million employees and \$749 billion in revenue. Members' organisations have a combined market capitalization greater than \$1.144 trillion and contribute in excess of \$249 billion to Australia's GDP.

Since 1985 CEW has influenced and engaged all levels of Australian business and government to achieve gender balance. Through advocacy, research, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW helps to remove the barriers to women's progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. CEW's members work actively to realise our vision of a community where women and men have equal economic and social choices and responsibilities.



To learn more about CEW, and how our team can support your organisation's journey to gender equality, visit our website [www.ceb.org.au](http://www.ceb.org.au) or contact us at [ceb@ceb.org.au](mailto:ceb@ceb.org.au)

# Advocacy and Resource Pack

The evidence is clear: investing in gender equality leads to outperformance for business, boosts GDP and benefits us all. We know that organisations with gender balanced leadership teams deliver greater profits, attract and retain the best talent and have lower risk profiles. CEW advocates for a world with:

- Diverse women leaders at every decision-making table
- Women's workforce participation enabled across all sectors
- Women's economic security and freedom from violence across their life course
- Workplace flexibility for men and women to work and care

CEW members, as business and community leaders, are committed to working in partnership with corporate Australia and government to bridge the gap from today to where we must be in 10 years. This pack provides practical actions to accelerate progress to reach gender equality by 2033.

- CEW Senior Executive Census 2023
- [Unlocking Leadership: Conversations on Gender and Race in Corporate Australia](#)
- [CEW Respect is Everyone's Business Resource Pack](#)
- Government Advocacy
- Case for Change

If we harness all of our best talent to create diverse, gender balanced leadership and workforces we all benefit.

# CEW Senior Executive Census 2023

**The CEW Senior Executive Census, now in its seventh year, tracks the annual progress of women's representation in the Executive Leadership Teams in Australia's top ASX-listed companies. Seven years of data shows that women are undeniably underrepresented and incremental change is failing to solve the crisis.**

## **Take action**

This year's CEW Senior Executive Census highlights that women remain undeniably underrepresented in senior leadership in corporate Australia. However, it does provide evidence that we are moving in the right direction, albeit much too slowly. By accelerating the pace of this change, we collectively have an opportunity to help solve the economic and social challenges facing Australians today. Accelerating our efforts to progress gender equality benefits everyone.

## **CEW calls on all ASX300 companies to:**

- Set a 40:40:20 by 2030 gender target with real accountability and transparency
- Invest in gender balanced CEO and Executive Leadership Team talent pipelines
- Build inclusive, flexible and respectful workplaces

# Key Findings

..... Crisis ..... Incremental progress

**7 in 10** executive leadership roles are still held by men (71%)

Women's representation **up 2%** from 2022

**Only 23%** of ASX300 companies have gender balanced executive leadership teams

**up 6%** from 2022

**28 ASX300** companies have no women in their executive leadership teams

All ASX100 companies now have at least 1 woman in their ELT

**91%** of CEOs in ASX300 companies are men

**26 women** CEOs up from 18 in 2022

**Only 1 in 4** new CEO appointments were women

**10/42** appointments vs. 4/28 in 2022

**82%** of CEO pipeline roles are held by men (Group Executive, COO & CFO)

Women's representation **up 3%** from 2022

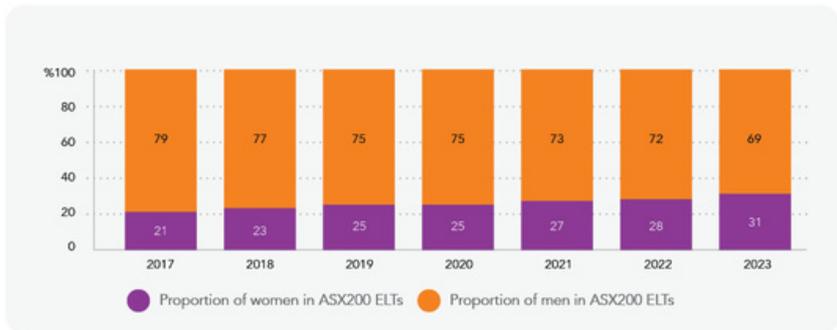
**42%** of the ASX300  
**27%** of the ASX100 have no women in CEO pipeline roles

Companies with 40:40 or better gender targets were **3x more likely** to achieve gender balance than those without targets

**39%** of the ASX300  
**55%** of the ASX100 have set a 40:40 or better gender target

**Crisis**

- At the current rate of change, it could take up to **50 years** to achieve gender parity in CEO roles.
- It will take **over a decade** to reach gender parity in Executive Leadership Teams.



## **Action 1: Set a 40:40:20 by 2030 gender target with real accountability and transparency**

- Report on targets on a recurring and real-time basis both internally and externally. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) metrics should be regularly reviewed in leadership forums and root causes should be tracked where diversity is lacking (such as new hires, promotions, and exits by gender).
- A clear business case is required with internal resources allocated to initiate change. Best-in-class companies extend ownership of gender balanced outcomes to business unit leaders as they make talent acquisition and promotion decisions.
- Make Executives financially accountable for gender targets, but craft these linkages carefully. Over 60% of the gender balanced companies interviewed in CEW's Take It From the Top report (2022) linked DEI metrics to Executive performance and compensation.



## **Action 2:**

### **Invest in gender balanced CEO and Executive Leadership Team talent pipelines**

- Develop proactive succession planning over short, medium, and longer time horizons, with cross-training or up-skilling to remove succession plan gaps. Best in class companies initiate succession processes early, looking beyond the most-likely successors to all levels of the organisation (including leapfrog successors) through systematic criteria. This prompts proactive conversations about their development plans to identify their development needs early, which can then be mitigated through cross-training (for example, rotating general managers across multiple business areas).
- Sponsor diverse emerging women leaders. Women are half as likely to have a sponsor as their male peers, according to Harvard Business Review's "The Real Benefit of Finding a Sponsor"<sup>11</sup>. High-potential women who are sponsored – specifically by senior male leaders – are more likely to receive growth opportunities needed to prepare for executive roles.
- Invest in bias-free recruitment and talent management to remove barriers for diverse talent. Data-driven, skill-based, and competency-based processes provide more transparency around internal career paths. They also help remove biased metrics such as "potential", ensuring standards are equitable for all genders.

## **Action 3:**

### **Build inclusive, flexible and respectful workplaces**

- Embed policies that remove gender norms for men and women
- Normalise flexibility for all roles and genders
- Role-model inclusive, respectful behaviours from top-down - intersectional diversity should be an organisational priority
- Build culturally safe workplaces, examine organisational policies and practices, assess cultural and racial safety, and take action
- Create safe workplaces where everyone is respected and enabled to thrive

# Unlocking Leadership: Conversations on Gender and Race in Corporate Australia

**Racism is still taboo in Australia.** In the past decade, progress towards gender balance in the Executive leadership of ASX300 companies – while slow – is visible. Progress towards cultural and racial diversity representative of the Australian population has not even been measured.

Racially diverse women leaders face a double-glazed ceiling, experiencing barriers because of their gender AND race. It's time for leaders to talk about race in Australian workplaces and take action.



Co-authored by CEW and Intersection, the [Unlocking Leadership](#) report elevates the experiences of culturally and racially diverse women in senior leadership roles across Australia's ASX300 companies. Through in-depth qualitative engagement with 27 culturally diverse women leaders, supported by a review of relevant literature, we found that:

## **1. Leaders need to talk about gender and race in corporate Australia**

Over time, Australian organisations and leaders have become more experienced and comfortable discussing gender equity. In contrast, talking about race remains largely taboo in corporate Australia.

## **2. Culturally and racially diverse women can bring unique and valuable expertise**

Australia is failing to tap into the full talent pool. Organisations with better representation of culturally and racially diverse women are better positioned to thrive in complex, global environments, and have affinity to Australian customer bases.

## **3. International experience can deliver a powerful advantage to Australian workplaces**

Australian organisations are not fully valuing and leveraging leaders' previous international work experience compared to global peers.

## **4. Racial discrimination is still pervasive and is a barrier to authenticity**

Sexism and racism are not historical issues. Most participants reported recent and continuing examples of discrimination and disadvantage, limiting authentic participation in the workforce.

# Take action

There is no shortage of talented, meritorious, and capable women from culturally diverse backgrounds in Australia ready to excel in executive leadership roles. However, there is a lack of attention and leadership in addressing their underrepresentation in corporate Australia.

For Australian workplaces to unlock the potential of culturally diverse women leaders, CEW calls on leaders and corporations to:

## **Lead a conversation about cultural and racial diversity**

Intersectional diversity should be an organisational priority, not confined to a single department or team. Leaders should develop their understanding of intersectionality, and create the space for new conversations about cultural and racial diversity.

## **Role model curiosity and engage in self-reflection**

Leaders and allies can role model curiosity and a learning mindset, in consultation with the workforce, while acknowledging any mistakes and committing to self-improvement. However, we caution leaders against placing the burden of cultural responsibility on culturally and racially diverse people.

## **Gather data, set goals, measure progress, and hold leaders to account**

Data and targets have vastly improved the representation of women in corporate Australia. Now is the time to build on that success, improve data gathering, and work towards setting organisational targets for cultural and racial diversity. Boards and executives should regularly track progress and communicate outcomes.

## **Actively invest in sponsorship**

Sponsorship is highly effective in building the talent pipeline. Leaders should seek opportunities to sponsor culturally and racially diverse women, and lead executive teams to do the same.

## **Build culturally safe workplaces and break down systemic barriers**

Examine organisational policies and practices (particularly in relation to recruitment and progression processes), assess cultural and racial safety, and take action. Reorganise social and networking events to ensure inclusion, and create opportunities for cultural exchanges and celebrations of religious and significant cultural days.

[Read the full report here](#)

# Respect is Everyone's Business

**Making workplaces safe from sexual harassment is a critical element to advancing women's leadership and enabling women's full workforce participation.**

Based on Time for Respect: Fifth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian Workforce, 77% of Australians aged 15 or older have experienced sexual harassment at some point in their lives (89% of women and 64% of men). But fewer than 1 in 5 (18%) made a formal report or complaint about sexual harassment at work.

Young people under 30; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; those living with disability; and people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, or gender expressions, are more likely to experience sexual harassment.

As a leader, you have the power to change these statistics and there is no time to waste.

The introduction of a new positive duty into the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 means all organisations must actively prevent sexual harassment at workplaces. This duty came into effect on 13 December 2022. From 12 December 2023, the Australian Human Rights Commission will also have increased powers to enforce the positive duty and to investigate systemic discrimination.

To help equip leaders like you from all sectors and industries with the tools and confidence to appropriately prevent and respond to sexual harassment in the workplace, CEW has developed resources to initiate critical conversations at work. These tools are designed to navigate potential resistance, model suggested phrasing, and offer examples of reporting frameworks. This is not a turnkey solution but a start for you to build on.

We've offered a range of resources for various stages of the journey – so you can access what you need when it's most relevant to you.

**1.** Getting it on the agenda:  
I want to get sexual harassment on the leadership/board agenda

**2.** Taking action:  
I need tools to turn our intentions into action

**3.** Policy and reporting:  
I need guidance to create the right policies and reporting processes

**4.** Resources:  
I'm looking for a quick list of resources to share with my team

Download the [CEW Respect is Everyone's Business Resource Pack](#)

# Fast Facts

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**89%** of Australian women

and

**64%** of Australian men

have experienced sexual harassment<sup>1</sup>

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Almost **50%** of young people (15 – 29 year olds) have experienced sexual harassment<sup>2</sup>

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**38%**

of sexual harassment occurred at work stations<sup>3</sup>

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▶ **2 in 5** ◀

who made a formal report or complaint said that no changes occurred at their workplace as a result<sup>4</sup>

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Only **1/3**

of Australian workers think their organisation is doing enough to combat sexual harassment<sup>5</sup>

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Sexual harassment cost the Australian economy

**\$3.8 billion**  
in 2018<sup>6</sup>

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1,2,3,4,5 Australian Human Rights Commission's fifth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces, 2022.  
<https://humanrights.gov.au/time-for-respect-2022>

6 Deloitte Access Economics, The economic costs of sexual harassment in the workplace, 2019.  
<https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/economics/articles/economic-costs-sexual-harassment-workplace.html>

# Government Advocacy

## Gender equality boosts productivity

Once a leader on gender equality, in 2022 Australia trails behind many of its peer nations in the Global Gender Gap Index ranking 26th in the world.

As a nation Australia is squandering our investment in human capital – highly educated, skilled women. Current policy settings around work and care constrain women's choices.

We have an opportunity to create the foundation for sustainable change and close the gender equality gap for the good of all. Intentional steps now and over coming years will build towards a gender equal Australia in 2030.

The return on investment in women and social infrastructure will be significant.

- Deloitte's report 'Breaking The Norm' found that more flexible ideas around gender norms could lead to an additional \$128 billion each year for Australia's economy and 461,000 additional full-time employees.



## **CEW's calls on the Government to:**

1. Embed a gender lens and gender responsive budgeting
2. Make quality early childhood education and care universal
3. Strengthen women's economic security throughout their life course by increasing Jobseeker and expanding superannuation for carers
4. Invest in well-paid, secure jobs in care sectors
5. Expand the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave scheme to promote shared care
6. Make workplaces safe from sexual harassment

Read CEW's [Gender Equality Strategy Advocacy Paper](#)



### **Recommendation 1 Embed a gender lens and gender responsive budgeting**

- Strengthen corporate reporting requirements, including prioritising the WGEA reforms to collect desegregated data
- Increase funding for the National Women's Alliances. Review and adapt the Stage Three tax cuts to remove the gender unequal outcomes, as identified by the Parliamentary Budget office distributional analysis
- Set targets for government procurement processes to prioritise organisations with gender balanced leadership

### **Recommendation 2 Make quality early childhood education and care universal**

- Remove the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test
- Build towards universal, free access for all children to quality, flexible ECEC by 2030; at the minimum three days of ECEC from when families need it, until children start school
- Ensure the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy addresses: low wages, working conditions, a sustainable workforce strategy for new educators, and investment in supply of government funded and not-for profit services in identified 'childcare deserts'

### **Recommendation 3 Strengthen women's economic security throughout their life course by increasing Jobseeker and expanding superannuation for carers**

- Extend the superannuation guarantee to the Commonwealth PPL Scheme to help reduce the superannuation gap between men and women in retirement
- Support women out of poverty and into work through increasing JobSeeker payment rates to 90% of the aged pension in line with recommendations of the Economic Inclusion Advisory Committee, which is approximately \$68 a day
- Prioritise women's housing and homelessness, particularly for older women
- Explore extending superannuation guarantee payments to time spent out of the workforce for caring responsibilities, such as a caring credits model as discussed by the Australian Human Rights Commission

#### **Recommendation 4 Invest in well-paid, secure jobs in care sectors**

- To address critical workforce shortages and retention challenges in the ECEC sector in preparation for changes to the Child Care Subsidy, deliver an immediate interim 10% wage supplement for educators for the next 2-3 years until new funding and industrial instruments are in place from the Productivity Commission inquiry and Fair Work Act changes, as recommended by Thrive By Five, Centre for Policy Development.
- Implement the recommendations of the Work and Care Inquiry

#### **Recommendation 5 Enhance the Commonwealth Paid Parental Leave scheme to promote shared care**

- Include a 'use it or lose it' provision in the 26-week Commonwealth PPL scheme to encourage parents to share the leave, and specifically incentivize men to access PPL
- Include a 6 week 'use it or lose it' provision for each parent, plus 12 weeks to share between them as best suits their family
- Offer a bonus two weeks leave (which can be used by either parent) if both parents take at least six weeks leave
- Continue to expand the Commonwealth PPL scheme in line with best practice in other OECD nations

#### **Recommendation 6 Make workplaces safe from sexual harassment**

- Ensure the new National Plan to Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls supports inclusive diverse workplaces grounded in respectful cultures, which prevent and address sexual harassment in workplaces