



# Women's Leadership

Increasing diversity across all levels of leadership helps deliver better decisions and shape systems, structures and policies with perspectives that represent our communities.

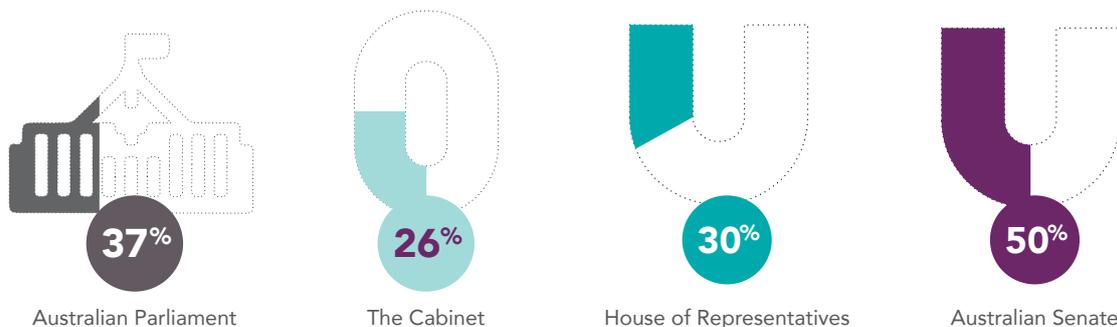
Evidence shows that gender balance in leadership is good for women, good for business and good for the community.

- Numerous studies have found a strong correlation between increasing women in leadership and better business performance. This includes creating a stronger corporate culture, reducing unrest within internal corporate governance, and improving decision-making on boards. <sup>i</sup>
- Greater representation of women on Boards and as key decision makers, leads to a greater likelihood of companies outperforming their sector on key profitability and productivity metrics such as return on equity. <sup>ii</sup> The ground breaking report by Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre/WGEA *Gender Equity Insights 2020: Delivering the Business Outcomes* shows a strong causal relationship between increasing the share of women in leadership and subsequent improvements in company performance.
- Greater gender balance in political leadership encourages inclusiveness in policy making and increases public trust in government. <sup>iii</sup>

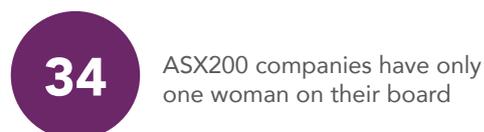
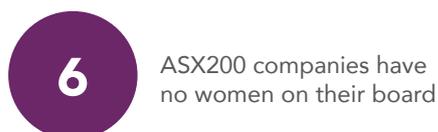
Gender balance in leadership and decision-making is particularly important during times of crisis as women's needs and circumstances are more likely to be considered and a gender analysis undertaken.

However, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions at every level across a range of sectors, including business, government, academia and not-for-profits.

- Women are underrepresented in all levels of government in Australia.
  - At the Commonwealth level, they represent just 37% of the Australian Parliament, 30% of the House of Representatives and 26% of the Cabinet.



- Women's progression to CEO and executive leadership positions remains limited.
  - CEW's annual Census shows just 6% of ASX200 CEOs are women, falling from 14 to 12 in 2019. <sup>iv</sup>



- A significant number of companies are yet to reach the critical mass of women needed to unlock the benefits of boardroom diversity.
  - Six ASX200 companies have no women on their board; and 34 ASX200 companies have only one woman on their board. <sup>v</sup>

The COVID-19 crisis is highlighting the importance of traditionally considered feminine leadership qualities, such as empathy, compassion and truthfulness. vi Despite this, there is a lack of women's representation in decision-making bodies and response teams.

Given emerging evidence demonstrating differential impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls, gender analysis and involving women leaders and diversity experts is important to mitigate adverse impacts and deliver more effective responses.

## Gender Responsive Budgeting and Gender Impact Assessments

By embedding a gender lens in the budgetary process, governments can identify how policies will impact women and girls and direct more coherent and strategic policy approaches to address gender equality. Gender impact assessments ensure governments identify and address gendered impacts of initiatives prior to the enactment of legislation, appropriation of funds, or introduction of policy.

During crises such as COVID-19, gender impact assessments would enable governments to consider the needs and circumstances of women before implementing stimulus packages and responses. For example, the Government's announcement of early access to superannuation intends to relieve financial stress. However, this intervention does not consider the long-term implications for women who have disproportionate retirement savings, with women over the age of 55 the fastest growing population experiencing homelessness.

To ensure the needs of different groups of women are considered, gender impact assessments must include an intersectional lens that recognises and addresses the differential impacts on diverse women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women, women with disability, LGBTI communities, and women living in rural and remote communities.

Also critical to the effectiveness of gender impact assessments is the availability and use of sex-disaggregated data for modelling the cumulative distributional, social and economic impact of policies on women.

### Summary

By increasing women in leadership and building gender experts into government and business response teams and decision-making bodies, governments and businesses are more likely to apply a gender lens to policy making and deliver better outcomes.

i Akhtar, Farida (2020), *Do Women Make Better CEOs Than Men?*, Macquarie University, <https://lighthouse.mq.edu.au/article/january-2020/Do-women-make-better-CEOs-than-men>

ii BCEC/WGEA (2020) *Gender Equity Insights 2020: Delivering the Business Outcomes*, <https://bcec.edu.au/assets/2020/06/BCEC-WGEA-Gender-Equity-Insights-2020-Delivering-the-Business-Outcomes.pdf>

iii OECD (2014), *Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries: Fostering diversity for inclusive growth*, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/women-government-and-policy-making-in-oecd-countries\\_9789264210745-en#page201](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/women-government-and-policy-making-in-oecd-countries_9789264210745-en#page201)

iv Chief Executive Women (2019), *ASX200 Senior Executive Census 2019*, <https://cew.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/190905-Census-FINAL.pdf>

v Australian Institute of Company Directors (2020), *Gender Diversity Progress Report Oct 2019 to Jan 2020*, <https://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/-/media/cd2/resources/advocacy/board-diversity/pdf/final-07649-gender-diversity-report-2020-2020-jan-2020-a4-v5.ashx>

vi Wittenberg-Cox, Avivah (2020), *What Do Countries with the Best Coronavirus Responses Have in Common? Women Leaders*, Forbes, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/avivahwittenbergcox/2020/04/13/what-do-countries-with-the-best-coronavirus-reponses-have-in-common-women-leaders/#408c25033dec>

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