

Alternative paths to politics



Australian
National
University

THE GLOBAL
INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP

How young people engage in politics in Australia

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Global Institute for Women's Leadership acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. This report was written on Ngunnawal and Ngambri land in Canberra, and the research was conducted on Yuggera and Turrbal land in Meanjin.

We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who contributed to this research. GIWL recognises the importance of First Nations voices being present in all places where decisions are being made, and remains committed to uplifting, amplifying and supporting First Nations voices.

Executive summary

Harnessing the power of young people and promoting their participation at every level of decision-making is essential to ensuring that government is representative, and policies are effective, inclusive and address the needs of diverse communities.

Yet, there is a disconnect between young people and the decisions that are made that impact their lives. This is even more evident for young women and those from minoritised groups.

To explore these issues, in October 2023, the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) at the Australian National University hosted our inaugural Youth Summit. The Summit was led by trailblazing sexual consent activist, Chanel Contos, and was attended and facilitated by young gender equality advocates from across Australia, comprising a range of gender and sexuality identities, cultures and ethnicities, experiences of disability, and urban and rural backgrounds.

As these participants were more likely to be a more proactive and politically engaged group than the broader age cohort they represented, we refer to this group as “changemakers” throughout the report.

We asked Summit participants about the barriers and opportunities to political engagement, participation, and representation for young people today. We also asked about their attitudes towards politics and what political representation means to them.

Our findings were generally encouraging – these changemakers want to be involved in politics and are finding new ways to engage in political activism. But there are common factors that can put them off or act as barriers to political engagement. In our study, we found that:

- Young people are engaged and do care passionately about key issues, but they don't feel represented or listened to in politics.
- A lack of trust in political institutions has not led to political apathy, but rather young people finding and creating alternative ways to become politically active (e.g. starting their own initiatives, volunteering, using social media for activism).
- Yet, they aren't confident that the government will take action on their biggest policy concerns, and, even though they are highly motivated changemakers, most don't see politics as a career choice.
- A lack of resources, concern about the safety of political workplaces and not fitting in are key barriers to young people's political participation.

Drawing from these results, we outline approaches and strategies to engaging young people in politics and creating pathways to politics that are diverse and sustainable.

Who took part?

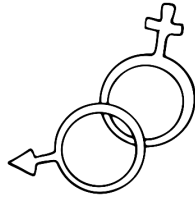
98 young changemakers participated in this research.



21% were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin



60% of participants described their sexual orientation as straight, 19% as bisexual, 10% as queer, 2% as lesbian, gay or homosexual, 2% preferred not to say, 2% didn't know, and 3% used a different term to describe their sexual orientation



92% of participants described their gender as female/woman, 3% as agender, 2% as male/man, 2% as non-binary, and 6% transgender/gender diverse, or someone with a trans history



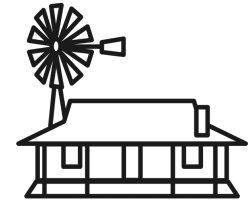
22% of participants reported having a disability



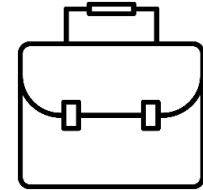
25 years was the mean age



81% of participants just held Australian citizenship while 19% of participants held dual or another citizenship



87% of participants were from inner or outer metropolitan areas
13% of participants lived in rural areas



56% of participants were employed full-time, 15% were students, 12% were employed part-time, and 6% were employed on a casual basis

Context: The unrepresentative face of politics

- There are approximately 4 million young people in Australia. Yet only **7 members** of our federal Parliament are aged 18-34.¹
- The barriers and challenges of running for political office – party affiliation, support for preselection, campaigning and winning an election – are **progressively more difficult for candidates that diverge from archetypical ideas of white, cis-gendered, male heterosexual politicians.**^{2,3,4}
- So young women, those from culturally diverse backgrounds, First Nations persons, members of the LGBTQIA+ community and persons with disabilities **remain under-represented in parliaments across Australia and globally.**^{5,6}
- Data show that women and gender diverse people are **under-represented at all levels of decision-making worldwide** and that achieving gender parity in political life is far off.⁷
- At the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another **130 years**, according to UN Women calculations.⁷
- Just **15 countries** have a female Head of state, and **16 countries** have a female Head of government.⁷
- Recent GIWL research found that women candidates were **running in unwinnable seats** in the 2022 federal election and were being set up to fail in what's known as the “**glass cliff**” phenomenon.⁸
- LGBTQIA+ people remain similarly underrepresented in politics, for example there are currently **29 LGBTQIA+ MPs in Australian parliaments** – just 3.5% of all federal, state and territory parliamentarians.⁹



**Young changemakers
are politically
engaged – but not in
the usual ways.**

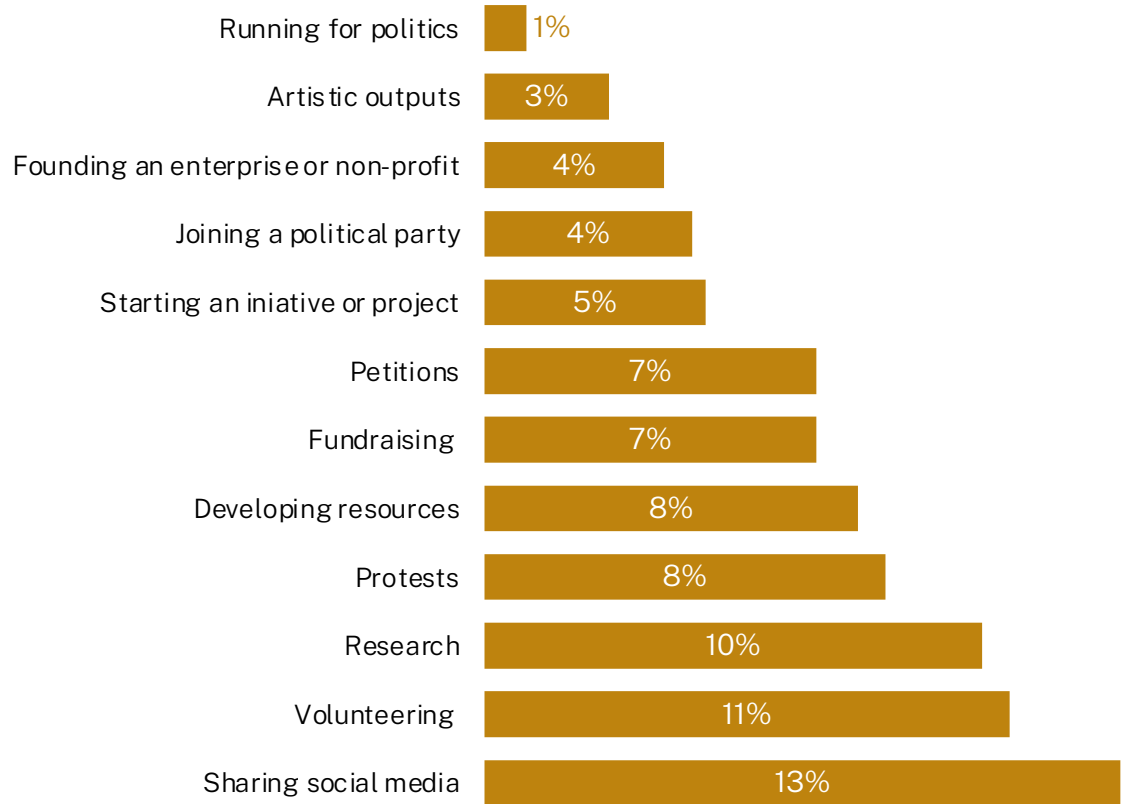
Despite being highly politically engaged, our changemakers are choosing non-traditional routes for participation. Only 1% have run for politics, and 4% have joined a political party.

Young people in our study hold a much more expansive definition of political participation. Their political engagement tends to be:

- more informal
- less secure
- focusing on actions, rather than careers

Asides from (compulsory) voting, the most common forms of political engagement are sharing information on social media (13%), volunteering (11%), and researching a cause (10%).

Types of political engagement



Young people's departure from traditional routes for political participation in favour of a more hands-on, "do-it-yourself" approach demonstrates a high level of *political entrepreneurialism*.



- Sharing social media is the most popular route for political engagement for our young changemakers (13%) highlighting the importance of digital and alternative communication channels in young people's political participation.
- Young people adopt proactive approaches like volunteering (11%), developing their own resources (e.g. anti-racism toolkits) (8%), setting up their own social enterprise or non-profit (4%), or protesting (8%).
- Young people are also committed to making informed decisions and contributing meaningfully to political, social or environmental causes through conducting research (10%).
- Through their preference for hands-on, active methods of political engagement – young changemakers demonstrate **proactivity**, entrepreneurialism, and a 'do-it-yourself' attitude to politics.

"I want to work against the government to **transfer power back to community**. Not join it. The masters' tools will never dismantle the masters' house."

Young people aren't interested in running for politics (yet).

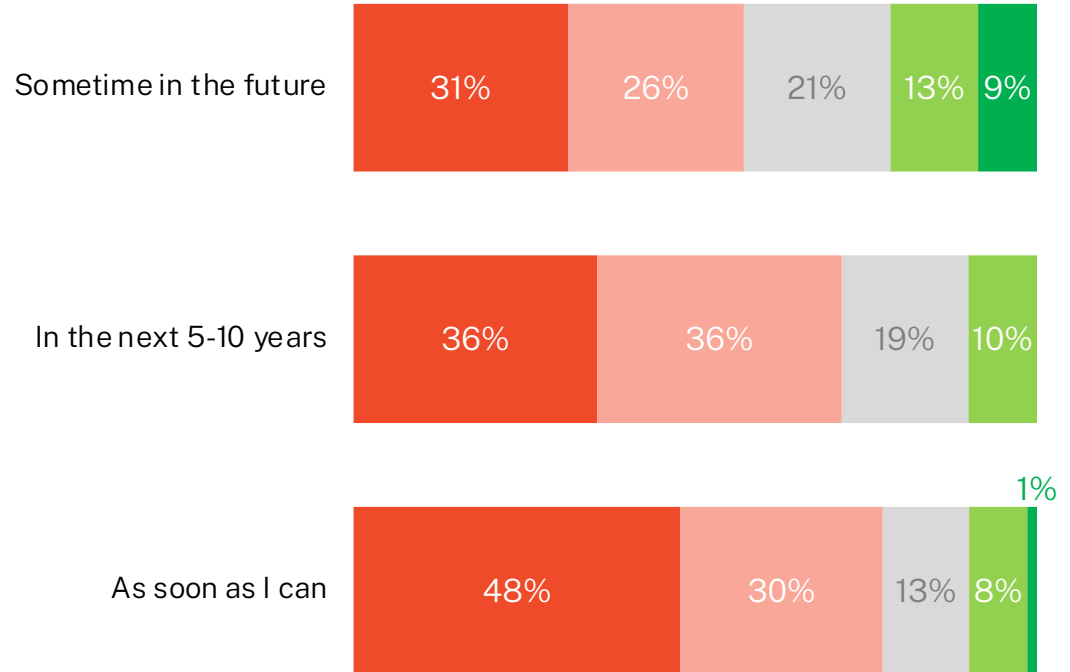
There is a general lack of interest in running for political office, both in the immediate and foreseeable future.

- Nearly 8 in 10 participants (77%) say they will not run right now, and nearly 6 in 10 (57%) say they aren't likely to run any time in the future.
- On the flipside, only one participant says that they are keen to run as soon as they can, and just eight (8%) say they are definitely committed to running in the future.
- This is even lower than PLAN International's findings that only 12% of young women say that they would pursue a career in national politics.

Source: Plan International 2021, "We Can Lead: Young People in Australia Share their Views on Sexism and Misogyny in Politics in 2021 – And what Needs to Change". <https://www.plan.org.au/publications/we-can-lead/>

Do you intend on running for politics?

■ Definitely not ■ Probably not ■ Might or might not ■ Probably yes ■ Definitely yes



**Young changemakers
don't feel represented or
listened to in politics –
and they don't trust
government.**

Young people do not feel represented or listened to when it comes to politics – especially in higher levels of government.

“I see Australia as a lost cause and would never run for politics here. I might consider political engagement when I permanently leave Australia to live elsewhere.”



- Nearly 9 in 10 participants (86%) say that the federal government is **not representative of their perspectives or values**. About 7 in 10 say the same about their state or territory government (72%), and local council (69%).



- 8 in 10 participants (80%) **do not feel listened to by their federal member**. A similar proportion say the same about their state and territory member (76%), and their local council member (74%).



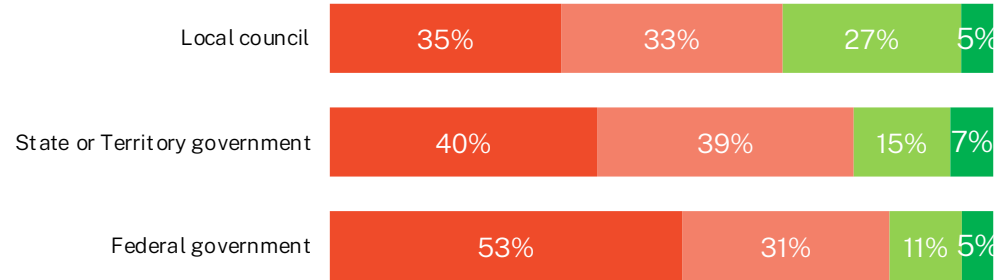
Young people do not see themselves represented in politics – and young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders feel *even less represented than their peers.*

- Participants overwhelmingly feel that Federal government is unrepresentative of people who look like them, with 100% of Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander and 84% of non-Indigenous young people reporting it is definitely not or probably not representative.
- Local council is seen as the most representative area of government, but the majority of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (77%) and non-Indigenous participants (68%) still say it is definitely not or probably not representative.

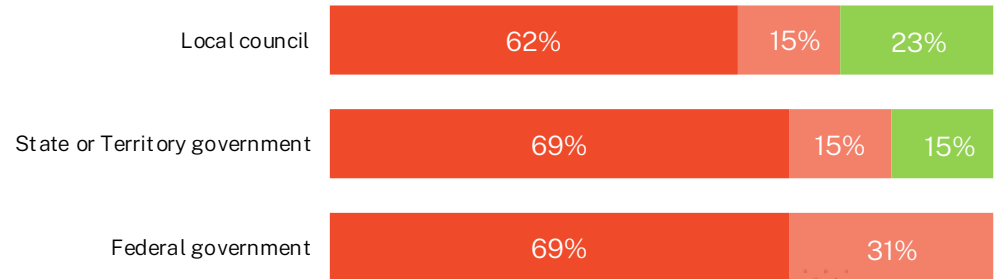
Do you feel the following is **representative of people who look like you?**

■ Definitely not ■ Probably not ■ Probably yes ■ Definitely yes

Non-Indigenous young people



Indigenous young people



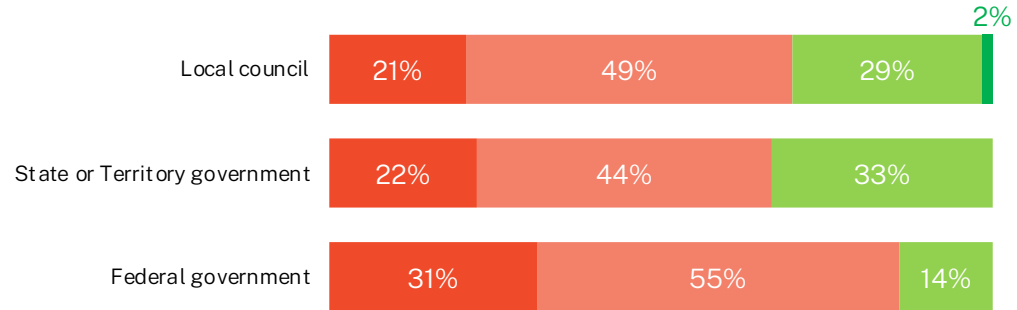
Similarly, young people *do not feel their values are represented at any level of government – and this is particularly true for young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders.*

- Participants feel that the Federal government is least aligned with their values, with 92% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 86% of non-Indigenous young people saying it is definitely not or probably not representative.
- Local council is regarded as the area of government that best reflects the perspectives of young people, but the majority of our participants – both Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (68%) and non-Indigenous (70%) – say it definitely not or probably doesn't represent their values.

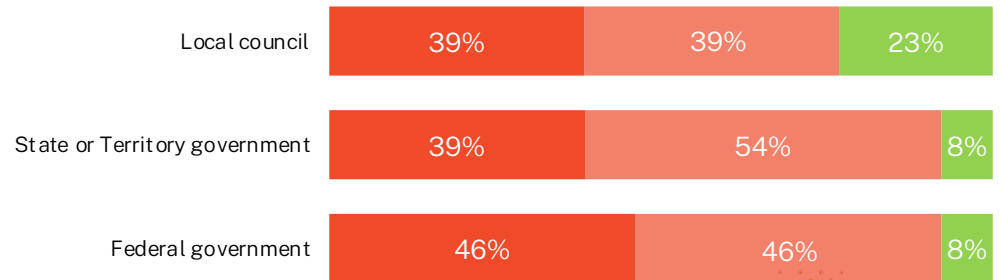
Do you feel the following is **representative of your perspectives or values?**

■ Definitely not ■ Probably not ■ Probably yes ■ Definitely yes

Non-Indigenous young people



Indigenous young people



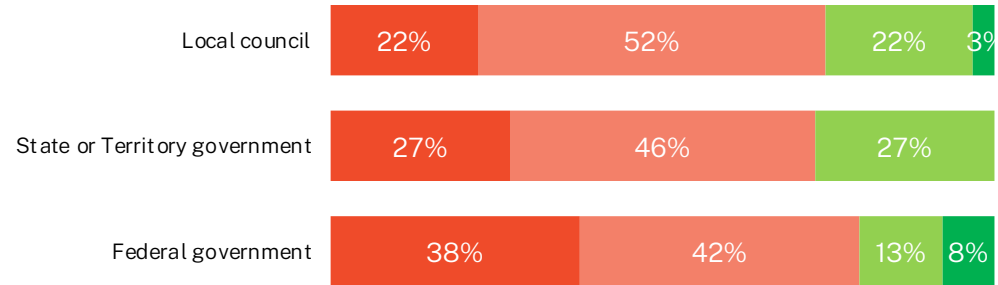
Young people do not feel listened to by any level of government.

- The majority of both young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (**85%**) and non-Indigenous (**80%**) young people say they feel **ignored by Federal government**.
- But while more than a quarter (**27%**) of non-Indigenous young people feel heard by State or Territory government, the overwhelming majority (**92%**) of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers say they definitely or probably don't feel listened to by this area of government.
- And while most young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders said they felt ignored at every level, **local councils are doing a better job of listening to compared to other parts of government**, with almost a quarter (**23%**) of Indigenous young people saying they feel heard by their local council. A similar proportion (**25%**) of non-Indigenous young people said the same.

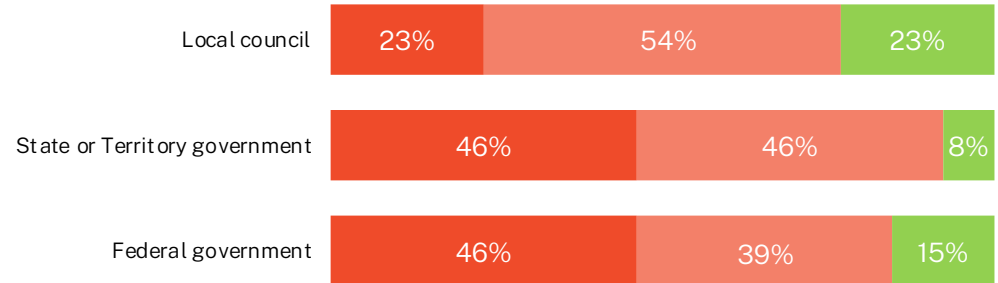
Do you feel listened to by the following?

■ Definitely not ■ Probably not ■ Probably yes ■ Definitely yes

Non-Indigenous young people



Indigenous young people



But despite changemakers feeling most listened to and represented by local councils, they are least interested in running for election at this level.

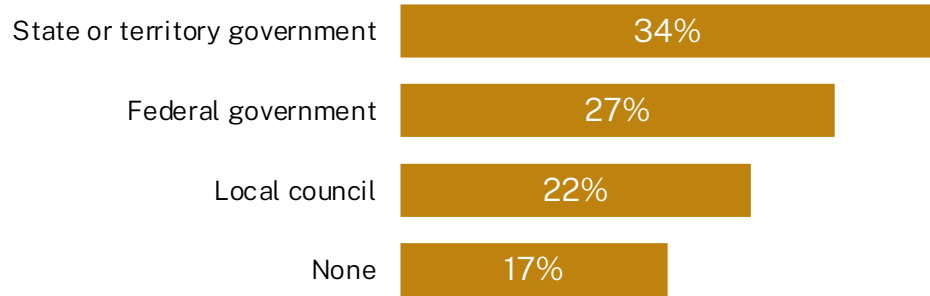
While young changemakers have little interest in running for office, they are most likely to want to run for state or territory government (34%), followed by federal government (27%), and are least interested in running for local council (22%).

This preference is especially surprising given that other studies have found that two-thirds of Australians think local government is best placed to make decisions that impact on people's daily lives relative to other levels of government.

Source: Plan International 2021, "We Can Lead: Young People in Australia Share their Views on Sexism and Misogyny in Politics in 2021 – And What Needs to Change".

<https://www.plan.org.au/publications/we-can-lead/>

If you did run for politics, what level of politics would you be most likely to run for?



Young changemakers don't trust the government.

Young people in our study have **substantially less trust in any level of government** than the general Australian population.

Although not directly comparable, we found lower levels of trust in all levels of government from the young people in our study compared to findings from the 2023 McKinnon Poll on electoral reform in Australia – which looked at trust levels for the whole of Australia.

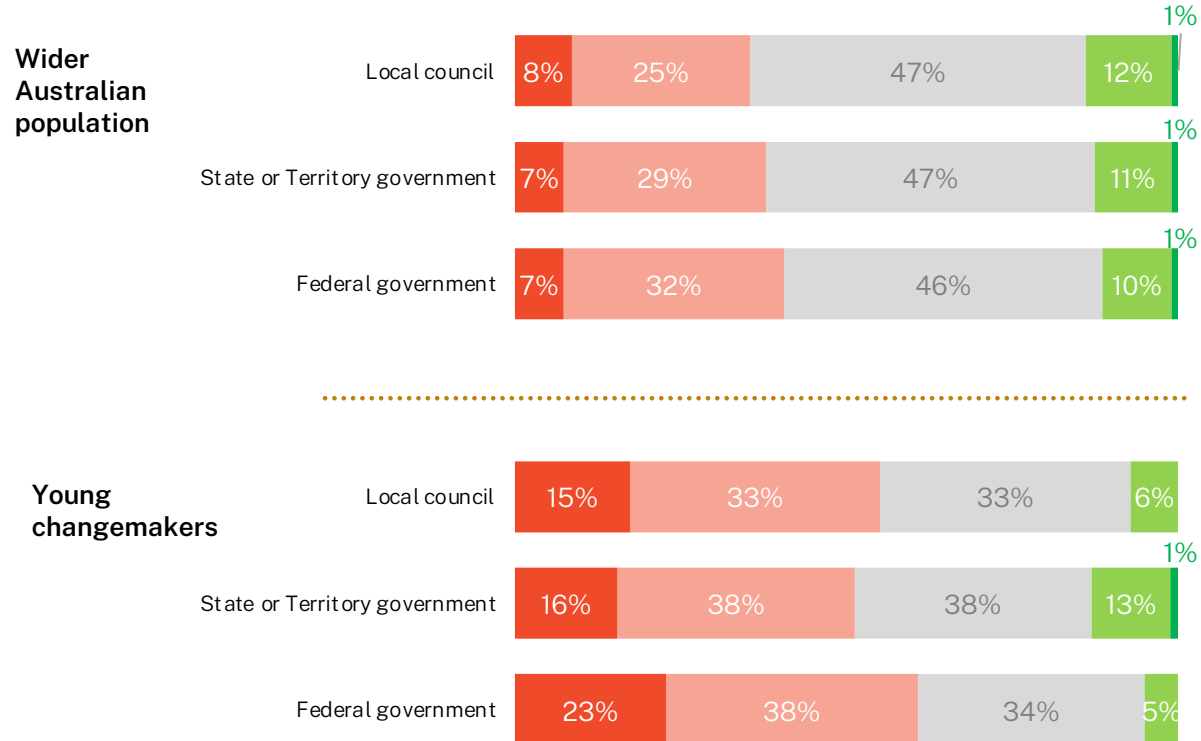
The biggest difference was for Federal government – **61%** of our young changemakers had little or no trust in this area of government, compared to **39%** of the wider Australian population.

We see this pattern at every level of government, with our participants being more distrustful of State or territory government (54% vs 36%) and their local council (48% vs 33%) than the wider Australian population.

This disparity is particularly surprising given the high level of political engagement of the young changemakers in our study.

Do you trust the following?

None/ None at all Low/ A little Moderate/ A moderate amount High/ A lot Complete/ A great deal



Source: The Susan McKinnon Foundation 2023, "McKinnon Poll: Understanding Attitudes Towards Electoral Reform in Australia", <https://www.susanmckinnon.org.au/research-resources/mckinnon-poll-understanding-attitudes-towards-electoral-reform-in-australia/>

Young changemakers are most concerned about climate change, First Nations rights, and addressing gender-based violence – and they don't think government is effectively addressing these issues.

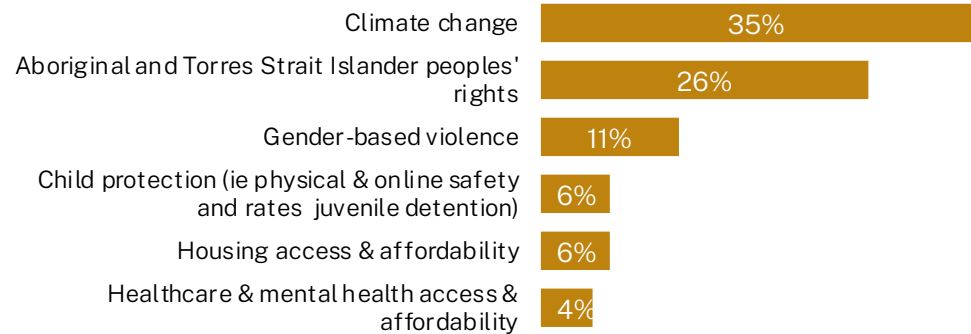
Young people don't feel like government – at any level – is effectively addressing the issues they care about.

Only a tiny minority of participants feel that government is adequately dealing with their leading policy concern. Just 1% of young changemakers say this about federal government, with a similarly small proportion saying the same for their state or territory government (5%) or local council (3%).

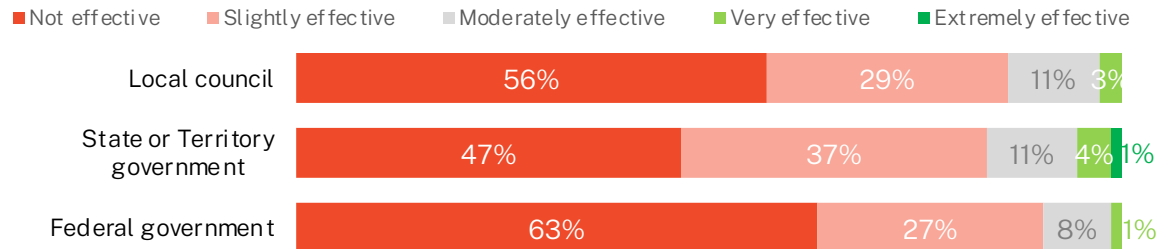
Instead, the overwhelming majority of young people say that government is not at all, or only slightly, effective at addressing the issues they care about.

Federal government is seen as the least effective (90%), followed by local council (85%) and State or territory government (84%).

What is your biggest immediate policy concern?



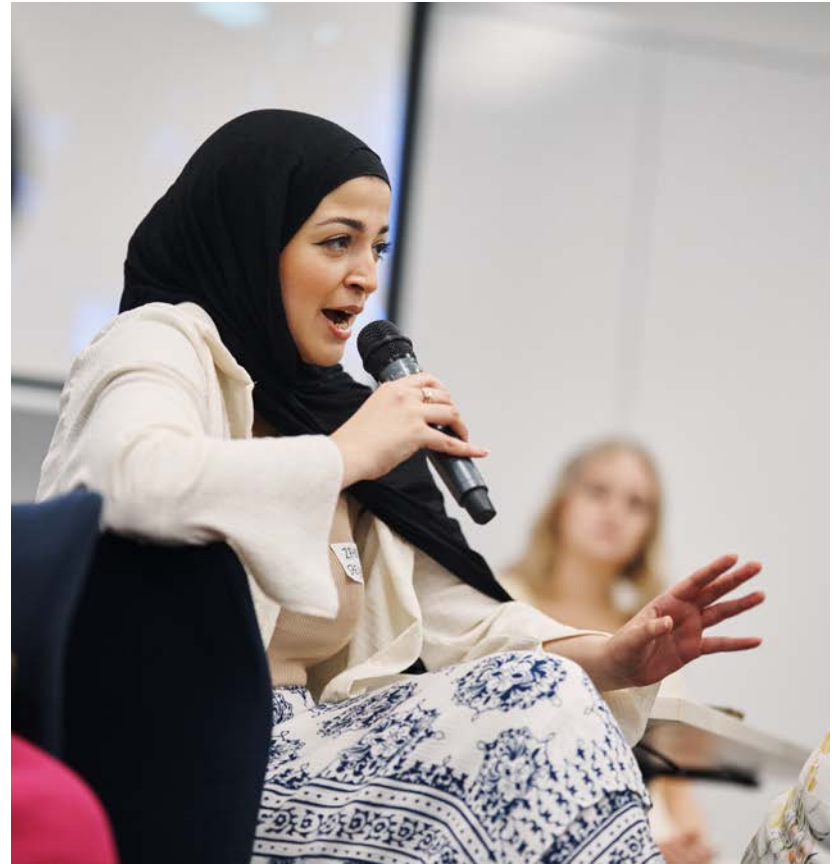
How effective do you think government is at addressing this policy concern?



Young people think traditional politics is ineffective, “over-intellectualised” and “inaccessible”.

More than 6 in 10 young changemakers say that the federal government is “not effective at all” at addressing their leading policy concern.

And they describe traditional political processes like preselection, political campaigns, Question Time, and Senate committees – as “an **over-intellectualised, inaccessible** decision-making process that is ultimately **self-serving for politicians and white Australia**” and “a **battle of egos**”.



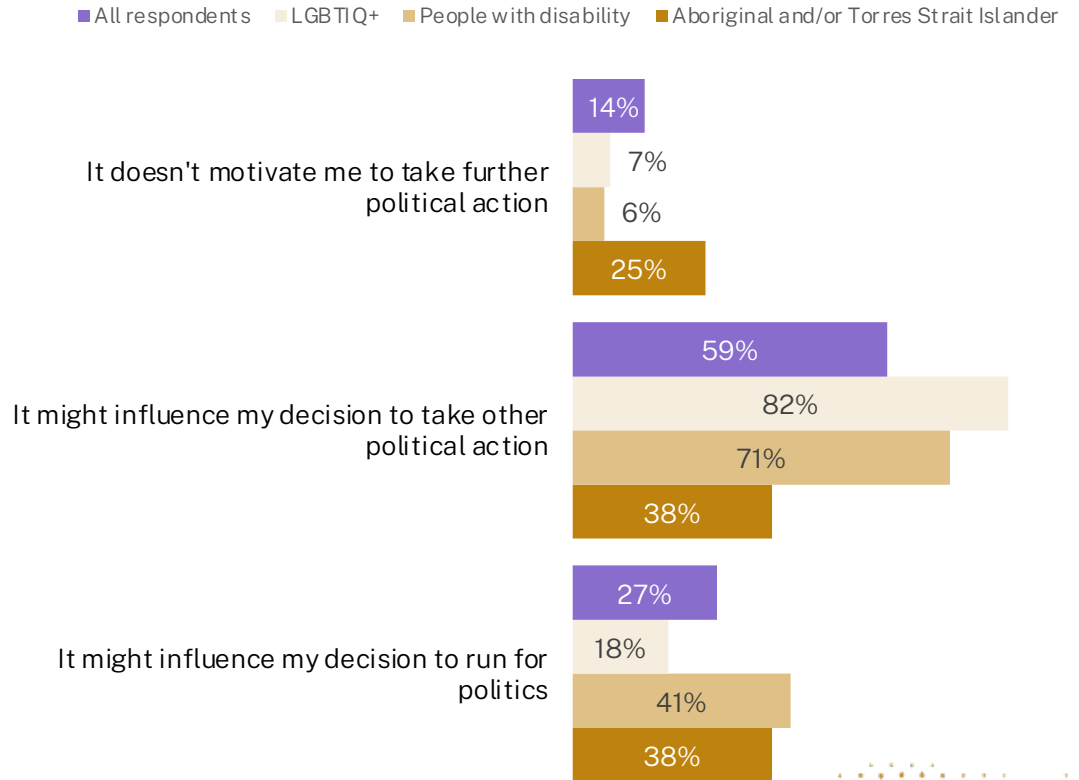
Yet, changemakers are highly motivated to engage in political action responding to the issues they care about most.

Nearly 9 in 10 respondents (86%) say their top policy concern would influence them to take further political action. And once again, our changemakers showed a strong preference for **political engagement beyond traditional methods**, with respondents saying they would be almost twice as likely to take other political action to advance their top policy concern (59%) rather than running for politics (27%). Some of these alternatives included volunteering, grassroots activism, protests and lobbying.

Within this highly engaged group of young changemakers, some participants remain **politically engaged by necessity as policies have a more profound impact on their day-to-day lives**.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (38%) and people with disability (41%) were more likely to run for politics because of the issues they care about. And LGBTIQ+ people (82%) and people with disability (71%) were more likely to seek alternative political action compared to respondents overall.

Does [your selected policy concern] motivate you to take further political action?

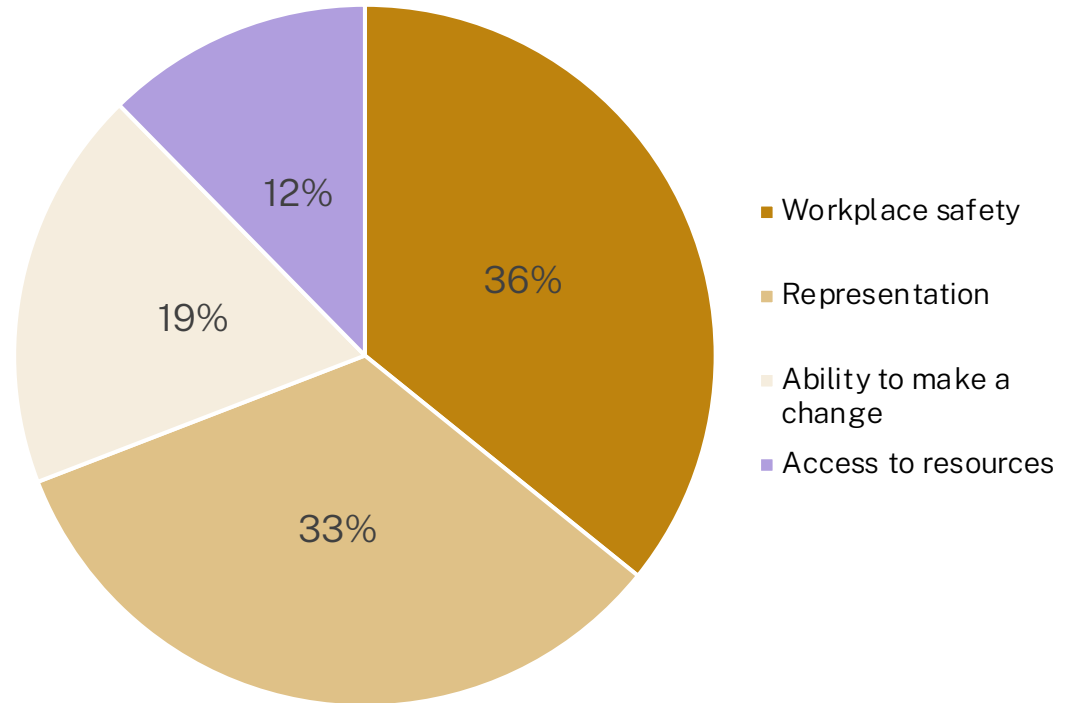


Young changemakers see toxic, unsafe work environments, the sexist treatment of female politicians and the lack of representation as major barriers to running for politics.

When we asked changemakers what they feel is holding young people back from running for politics, they named four key barriers...

1. A **lack of workplace safety** for people in politics, including a high emotional toll, lack of work-life balance, biased and sexist media treatment and lack of support for people in office (particularly for women, gender diverse people and those from culturally diverse backgrounds) (36%)
2. A **lack of representation**, particularly for women, gender diverse people and First Nations communities (33%)
3. A **lack of belief that they could make a positive change** if they were elected (19%)
4. A **lack of access to resources and funding** to support an election campaign (12%)

What are the main barriers stopping young people from running for politics?



Barrier 1: Young people are concerned about workplace safety in politics.

More than a third (36%) of young changemakers say that unsafe working conditions are a key barrier preventing them from getting into politics, and more than a quarter (27%) say they are more likely to participate and continue to participate in politics if it these conditions were safer.

To support them to pursue a career in politics, they sought:

- Kindness
- A lack of misogyny and ableism
- Good work/life balance
- Gender-equal pay
- Psychological support

“I decided not to run previously as in the same month all **three major political parties had sexualised violence cases** in the news that were not handled appropriately”

“I would not run because of the **sexism** faced by women in politics. **I do not believe Australian politics is safe for women, trans or non-binary people.**”

“I look at women in politics and how they get **harassed online** or questioned about competence. **It puts me off completely.**”

“I [would run] if the political climate **was less toxic towards women leaders**, specifically the **sexualised, violent and racist language** you see used against women politicians. **It doesn't feel like a safe option.**”

“[I would run] if women weren't subjected to **sexual and violent threats** online for participating in the political landscape.”

Context: Addressing toxic workplace cultures in parliament

With the barrage of revelations of sexism, misogyny and bullying in parliamentary workspaces in recent years, it's unsurprising that workplace safety is such a major concern for the young changemakers in our survey.

2021 was a turning point for Australia's parliamentary workplaces. Widespread reports of misconduct, including testimonies from parliamentary staffers Brittany Higgins and Grace Tame, led to a reckoning that could not be ignored, with nationwide protests and the ***Set the Standard*** report.

This report received evidence from 1,723 individuals and 33 organisations. While it is easy for the passage of time to dull the shock of its findings, the 51% of people in Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces

who reported suffering sexual harassment or bullying must not be forgotten.

Making Parliament House a safe place for women to work is essential to creating a gender-equal parliament, as well as ensuring our parliament serves as an example of best practice for other Australian workplaces and parliaments around the globe.

But, far from embodying best practice, to date, the Parliament of Australia has actively avoided taking responsibility for the conduct of its Members and Senators. We make the case for a Parliamentary Code of Conduct, sharing international best practice and evidence-based recommendations in our [Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Parliamentary Standards](#).¹¹



Barrier 2: Young people are concerned about a lack of representation – the ethnically homogenous, heterosexist, male face of politics.

Young women, persons from culturally diverse backgrounds, First Nations people, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community remain under-represented in parliaments across Australia and globally.

This lack of representation is a core concern for a third of participants (33%), who see it as the main barrier that prevents young people from running for office.

“I think more people with **diverse backgrounds and experiences** should be in politics, **not someone who went to a private school!**”

“It’s hard to feel **seen, appreciated and empowered** when you **don’t see people like** you in visible positions of power.”

“How can government **make informed decisions** about the wider population if **they do not reflect our diversity?**”



Young changemakers feel passionately about political representation – but the majority see the current system as an “old boys club” that only serves the needs of the privileged few.

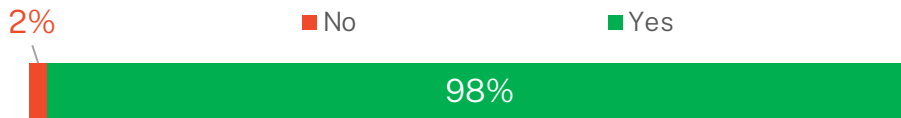
The overwhelming majority of participants (98%) say that representation matters to them, and politics needs a wide variety of viewpoints and cultural backgrounds to address the issues affecting **everyone** in Australia, not just those of a privileged minority that are in power.

While young changemakers gave a variety of reasons on why representation is so important to them – it leads to better policy outcomes (13%), they find it inspiring to see “people like them” elected (10%), and they feel there needs to be a redistribution of power and influence in Australia (5%) – the majority of respondents (71%) just want to feel heard by those in power and see greater diversity in politics as a clear step to achieve this.

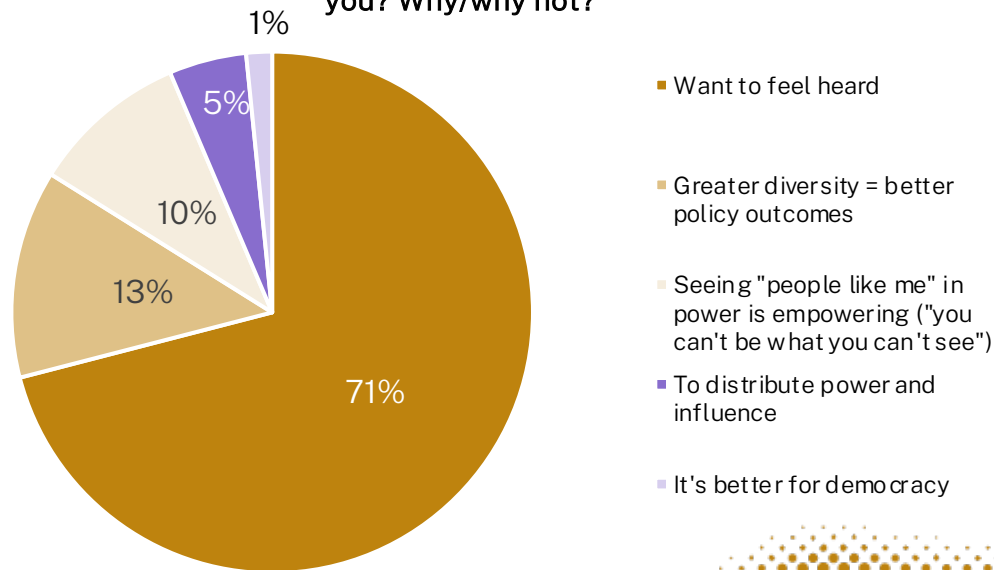
“I don’t want people who **know nothing about my realities** making choices for me or on my behalf”

“[We need] politicians who **reflect the younger generation**, are well versed in modern age technology, popular culture and understanding. Making time to **ACTUALLY** listen and reflect the concerns of younger generations to a changemaking body so that their genuine concerns can be **heard and not assumed.**”

Does political representation matter to you?



Answers from “yes” to does political representation matter to you? Why/why not?



Barrier 3: Young people are highly motivated by a desire to make change but are sceptical of traditional politics as a route to achieve this.

- 19% of young changemakers are sceptical of politicians' ability to make meaningful change and see this as a major barrier stopping young people from running for office. Similarly, 9% say that a general disillusionment with politics is a significant obstacle putting off young people from running.
- BUT 15% say they would personally be influenced to run for politics if they felt they could make a positive change and it made a difference on the issues they care about.

Young changemakers say they would run for politics if...

"[I could] see **tangible and measurable change** within the Indigenous community."

"[I could see] my work **influence people's lives for the better**. But it would still be a bitter pill to swallow if I had to make decisions that didn't align with my values for political strategy and I fear that would be an element to it."

"[I had the] ability to push the envelope and continue to **make real change that actually changes the culture and lived experiences of real people**."



Barrier 4: Young people don't have access to the resources needed to run for politics.

12% of young changemakers point to a lack of resources as a major barrier holding young people back from running for office. When asked what would encourage them to personally participate in politics, 10% say...

- **Access to political resources** (time, money, support, e.g. party alliances)
- **Access to financial resources** (an economic safety net)
- **Access to support resources** (guidance on the process and mentorship/community to support)

“The support base and funding – it’s **incredibly expensive** and usually requires (but decreasingly so) party alliances.”

“Local reach out and accessible resources on **HOW to do it**, and reassurance that my voice matters”



The majority of young changemakers in our survey haven't run for office – and don't currently plan to. But if you want to change their minds, *systemic change* is needed to reform the political workplace.

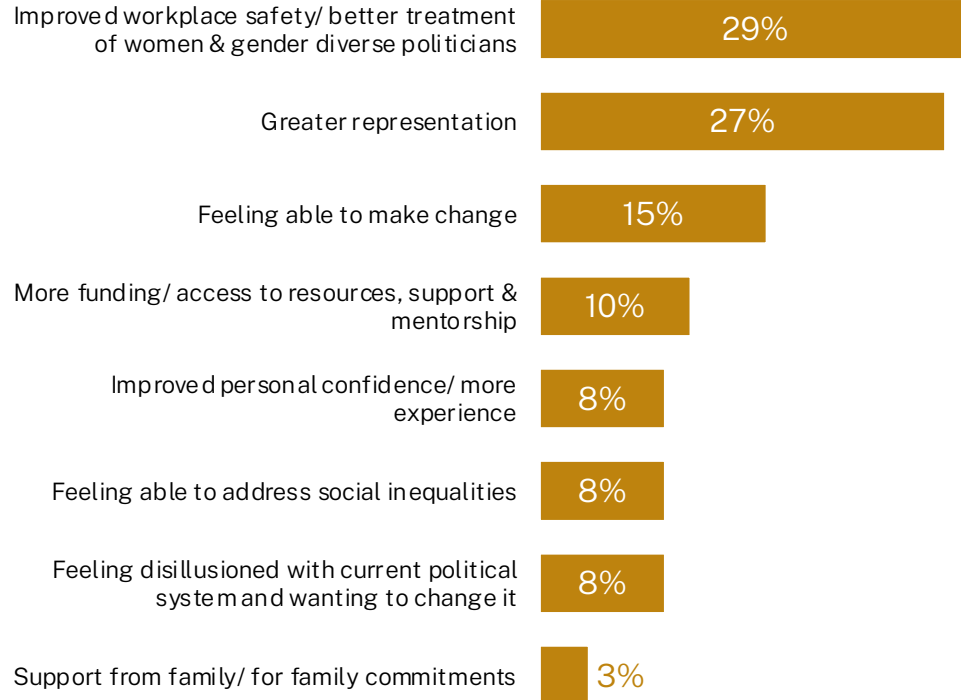
Most young changemakers want to see fundamental, systems-level changes to politics before they would personally consider running.

The two most important factors that young changemakers say would encourage them to run for politics are improved workplace safety (29%) and greater diversity (27%) – both changes that would require reforms to the current political system.

Similarly, many young changemakers feel disillusioned with politics and lack confidence in politicians' ability to make meaningful change. Respondents say that, to consider running for office themselves, they would need to feel confident in their ability to make change (15%) and address social inequalities (8%) if elected. Only 8% would be motivated by a negative – being disillusioned with the current system (and desiring to see it changed).

Overall, most participants say they would be influenced by systemic factors (like improved representation and workplace culture), rather than individual-level measures, with less than one in 10 seeking more confidence or experience, and only one in 10 seeking more mentoring (alongside resources and support).

What would influence your choice to run for politics?



When we ask young changemakers what would influence their choice to run for politics, they say...

- Not being an ‘only’ or **token representative**, but being part of a cohort
- Having a **safe work environment**, for example by introducing a code of conduct
- **Better treatment** of female and minoritised politicians
- Being better equipped with **relevant tools and knowledge** to run
- **Freedom of voice** beyond the party line
- More **achievable role models**
- **Support** from family & community
- Feeling like **change is possible** & having **more belief in government** as a means to achieve this
- Greater **self confidence** that they could win
- Feeling they were an appropriate person to **represent their community**
- Support to **navigate the media and backlash**
- Ability to maintain personal **mental health and quality of life**
- **Cultural safety**
- Support base and **funding**
- More examples of “**people like them**” having good experiences in politics



It's not enough to encourage young changemakers *into* politics, if we want to meaningfully change what Australian politics looks like, we need to support them to *stay in office* once they're elected.

While there is a lot of research activity on how to encourage women or young people *into* politics, far less attention is given to supporting them once there.

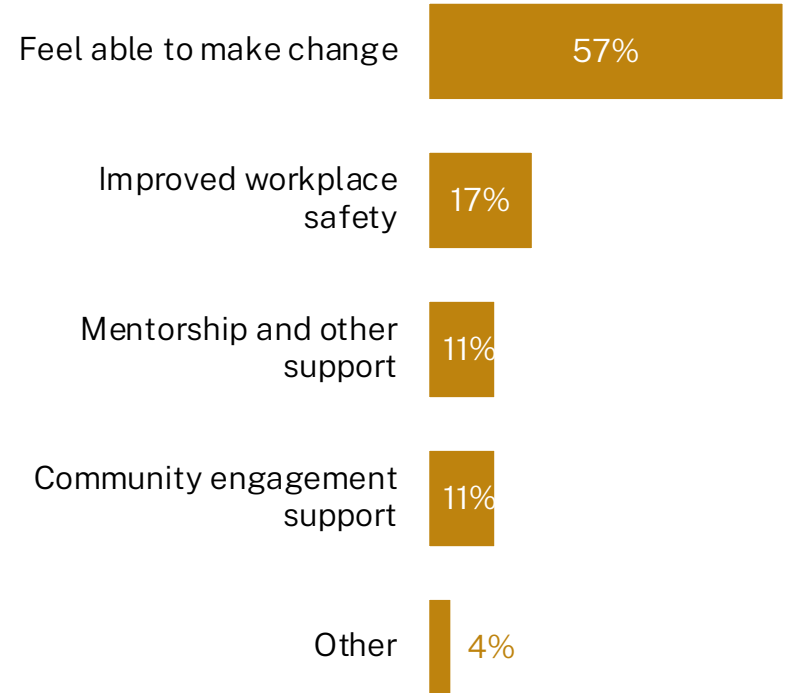
Many young leaders face ageism, biased media treatment and hostile working conditions that all contribute to burnout and mean there is poor retention of young politicians – particularly for women and those from minoritised backgrounds.

We're working on a project with GIWL Kings College London and US partners to find evidence-based solutions to address this issue. So, we wanted to understand the most important factors that would influence young changemakers to stay in politics if they were elected.

More than half of the young changemakers we surveyed (57%) say that feeling able to make meaningful change is the number one thing that would keep them in politics. This highlights young people's commitment to the advance issues they care about, and their scepticism of politics as an effective career to achieve this.

Other significant factors that would influence young people to stay in positions of political leadership once elected are improved workplace safety (17%), mentorship and support measures (11%), and community and engagement support (11%).

What would influence your choice to stay in politics?

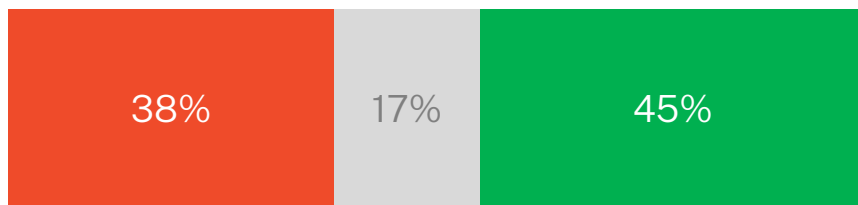


**The Voice Referendum
impacted young
people's views on (and
belief in) politics.**

We conducted our survey one week after the 2023 Voice Referendum, a proposed constitutional change to recognise and enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Australian Parliament. 60.06% of Australians voted No against this change.

Did the outcome of the Voice Referendum change the way you answered this survey?

■ No ■ Maybe ■ Yes



The Voice changed the way almost half of our participants felt about politics. They:

1. Have less trust in government and lost faith in political representatives
2. Feel more pessimistic about the opportunities for government to institute meaningful change
3. Are more aware of **differing views** in Australia
4. Are disillusioned with politicians and the political system
5. Are more **motivated to advocate for change**

Only the last theme could be considered inherently positive and highlights a need for continued engagement of young people post-referendum.

The outcome and process of the Voice Referendum made young people lose some hope, but there were also pockets of optimism.

“I have **less faith** in government but more faith in communities who push for more.”

“I am much **less optimistic**. It is heartbreaking to know that 60% of white Australia actively does not want us to have a voice. I always knew racism in this country was significant, but seeing it illustrated so clearly in statistics is jarring.”

“My **hope is gone** and now I’m just mad.”

“It’s made me realize how **politicians use ambiguity to drive their own agenda**, not what is best for the communities that need the most support, agency and acknowledgement.”

“I am **even more motivated to advocate for change** across Australia – especially outside of urban centres”

“The outcome of the referendum has made it more clear to me; **young people need to go beyond their spheres of influence and reach people with differing views** and different cities. And push towards open, honest and respectful conversations.”

“Having participated majorly in the campaign for YES and having given up time and the emotional strength to listen to and action change for the better and fundamentally seeing that fall through - **it makes you wonder whether politics can be changed from the grassroots and whether politics is for the politicians or for the people**. It influenced how I did the survey because to speak or to participate in politics after a result that we had seen – it makes it seem as though **politics has gone backwards not forwards**.”

**Engaging young
people in discussions
and action around
politics makes a
difference.**

Our political engagement workshop also had a remarkable impact on young changemakers' self-confidence in their ability to run for government.

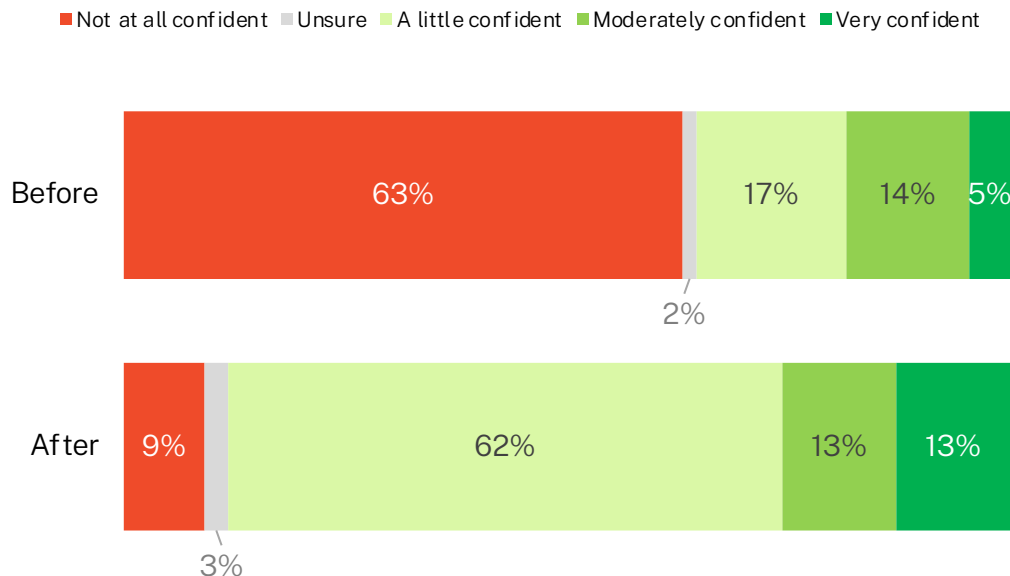
Before the workshop, approximately 6 in 10 young changemakers said they were not at all confident in their ability to run for politics. Yet, when we asked them again after the workshop, this number fell to only 1 in 10 not being confident.

On the flip side, by the end of the workshop participants were **more than twice as likely** to say they would feel very confident running for office (13% vs 5%).

After the workshop, almost 9 in 10 participants (88%) were at least a little confident in their ability to run for politics – while around a third (36%) felt this way beforehand.

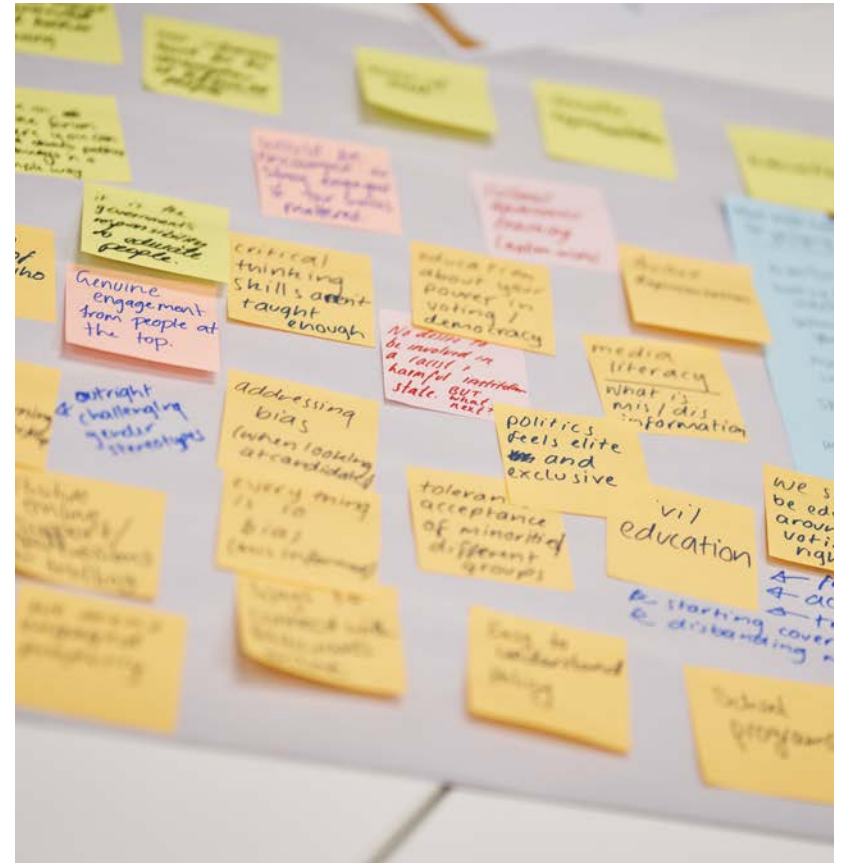
The fact that there was such a tangible change in attitude after just one workshop shows the untapped potential for political youth engagement in Australia and what a powerful tool this could be to boost political participation.

How confident would you feel running for politics?



In fact, our changemakers see *meaningful engagement with young people at a grassroots community level* as the key to boosting youth political participation. They want to see...

- **More local grassroots programs**
- **More visits from councilors and MPs in the local community**
- **Activism clubs in schools supported by adults**
- **Safe spaces for young people to have political conversations**
- **More consultation with young people from elected officials**
- **Better leadership pathways for young people**
- **Increased education in schools on political participation and politics**
- **Social media engagement from elected officials on the issues they care about**



Next steps & further information

About us

This research was led by the Global Institute for Women's Leadership at the Australian National University, and supported by Raise our Voice Australia

THE GLOBAL
INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP

RAISE
OUR
VOICE



Australian
National
University

The Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL)

Founded and Chaired by Julia Gillard, the only woman to have served as Prime Minister of Australia, GIWL is a multi-disciplinary research institute that brings together world-leading expertise on workplace gender equality and leadership.

GIWL (pronounced "jewel") combines research, advocacy and practice to advance gender equality...

- **Research** – Drawing together existing findings and undertaking new solutions-focused studies.
- **Advocacy and engagement** – Bringing together experts, policymakers and activists from across countries and sectors to create a global community of gender equality advocates.
- **Practice** – Translating research into evidence-based, actionable policy, practice, and training.

To learn more, visit <https://giwl.anu.edu.au/>

Raise our Voice Australia (ROVA)

ROVA is a non-partisan, volunteer-run, and woman-led social enterprise dedicated to fostering an inclusive democracy. ROVA actively engages young women and gender-diverse individuals through campaigns, community initiatives, and education, with the goal of reshaping political landscapes and policies.

ROVA's introductory online training offers a dynamic learning experience designed to cultivate expertise in leadership, domestic and foreign policy, and politics. Emphasizing the importance of diversity in decision-making, the training aims to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective civic participation.

ROVA is proud to be one of the largest coordinated efforts to put youth voices in front of politicians and the nation. As part of our Raise Our Voice in Parliament Campaign – ROVIP – we ask federal politicians if they could amplify the voices of young people from their electorates by reading their vision for their future in our Federal Parliament.

Learn more at <https://raiseourvoiceaustralia.com/>

Our commitment to youth engagement

There is so much disconnect between the experiences of young people and the policies that are made that will dictate their lives.

We're on a mission to bridge this gap, which is why we've set up a program of work centred around youth engagement to make sure that our research is addressing the issues that young people care about.

The GIWL Youth Committee is central to this mission. Chaired by trailblazing sexual consent activist Chanel Contos, it brings together passionate young changemakers from across Australia and the Asia Pacific to identify emerging challenges and opportunities for young people – helping GIWL to understand the issues that are most important to young people today and shaping the direction of our research, policy and engagement.

You can learn more about our Youth Committee at:
<https://giwl.anu.edu.au/giwl-global-youth-committee>

The Global Institute for Women's Leadership's

Global Youth Committee



Row 1: Naz Jacobs, Emily Parsons

Row 2: Ananya Kundu, Rachael Pascua

Row 3: Zahra Al Hilaly, Phoebe Britten, Jasmine Davis, Kupukwashe Matangira, Haseeb Riaz

Row 4: Ashna Basu, Georgie Carey, Hannah Diviney, Isabella Negus, Clodia Stanislaus

Row 5: Maggie Blanden, Renee Cremer, Noemie Huttner-Koros

THE GLOBAL INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Global Youth Committee

Australian National University

Notes about the research and future research directions

This study shines a spotlight on how young women and minoritised individuals in particular see politics and political engagement. It provides a critical, much-needed insight into the perspectives of young women and minoritised genders, people of diverse sexuality, of First Nations and culturally and linguistically minoritised backgrounds, and people with disability.

In order to let participants provide the most detailed and authentic answers as per their experience, many responses to this research were collected as free text and then coded into relevant categories.

This approach centres young peoples' experiences.

Yet, more work needs to be done.

As such, this research paves the way for future studies, including around how young people's activism translates to policy or political impact and how gender diverse young people navigate politics and a public profile in Australia.

It also lays the foundation for testing new ways to support young people through longer term initiatives, such as incubator/accelerator programs, political immersion, and mentoring programs.



Get involved: inclusive, youth focused policy & political advocacy groups

- **Raise our Voice Australia** is committed to mobilising young women and gender diverse people through education, campaigns and community to transform policy and politics.
<https://raiseourvoiceaustralia.com/>
- **Women for Election** provides non-partisan training events, workshops and networking opportunities to inspire and equip more women & gender-diverse people to run for public office in Australia.
<https://wfe.org.au/>
- **Foundation for Young Australians** backs young people across the country to beat injustice and create long-lasting change for all by providing expertise, resources, and connections.
<https://www.fya.org.au/>
- **Pathways to Politics for Women** provides comprehensive practical training, workshops, mentoring and career-long support to increase the number of diverse women in Australian politics.
<https://pathwaystopolitics.org.au/>
- **Everygen** is on a mission to amplify the voices of current and future generations and highlight the long-term impacts of today's policy decisions.
<https://www.everygen.online/>
- **Foundations for Tomorrow** is a youth-driven non-profit committed to renewing Australia's leadership, decision-making and governance approaches.
<https://www.foundationsfortomorrow.org/>
- **Young Australians in International Affairs** is a not-for profit organisation committed to engaging the next generation of Australian leaders in international affairs.
<https://www.youngausint.org.au/>
- **Oaktree Australia** is a youth-run international development agency that empowers young people across the Asia-Pacific Region to lead sustainable development in their communities.
<https://www.oaktree.org/home>
- **Tomorrow Movement** organises young people all over the country to fight for a society with good jobs, great public services and a safe climate for all.
<https://tomorrowmovement.com/>
- **The Australian Youth Climate Coalition** is a generation-wide movement of young people leading solutions to the climate crisis.
<https://www.aycc.org.au/>
- **School Strike 4 Climate** brings together school students of all ages, races, genders, backgrounds and sexualities from every part of Australia, united a concern for the future of the planet.
<https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/>
- **Run For It** is a movement of young people working to create a better kind of politics for future generations. <https://run4it.org/>

Further reading: Related research & resources from GIWL

- Parliament as a gendered workplace: Towards a new code of conduct:
<https://giwl.anu.edu.au/research/publications/parliament-gendered-workplace-towards-new-code-conduct>
- Election 2022 - Glass cliff candidates:
<https://giwl.anu.edu.au/research/publications/election-22-glass-cliff-candidates>
- Furthering LGBTIQ+ Inclusion and Rights through Feminist Foreign Policy:
<https://giwl.anu.edu.au/research/publications/furthering-lgbtqi-inclusion-and-rights-through-feminist-foreign-policy>
- Why Do Women Remain Under-Represented in International Affairs? The Case of Australia:
<https://giwl.anu.edu.au/research/publications/why-do-women-remain-under-represented-international-affairs-case-australia>
- Turning ideas for policy change into action toolkit:
<https://giwl.anu.edu.au/files/docs/turning-ideas-policy-change-action>



Research notes

Methodology

Using a mixed-methods approach, we analysed survey responses from 98 participants using the Qualtrics survey software. Some questions were in a multiple-choice format, while others allowed for open-ended responses.

We systematically reviewed the qualitative responses and coded responses based on similar themes and patterns. The frequency of each code was then tallied and converted into percentages.

Demographic data of participants were collected so we could compare responses based on certain demographic variables, such as cultural background and sexual identity.

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8. <https://giwl.anu.edu.au/research/publications/election-22-glass-cliff-candidates>
9. https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp2122/LGBTIQParliamentarians
10. <https://giwl.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/2021/7/Full%20Submission%20to%20Jenkins%20Inquiry.pdf>



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