



Australian  
National  
University

THE GLOBAL  
INSTITUTE  
FOR WOMEN'S  
LEADERSHIP

# The glass cliff & the 2025 election

Pre-election analysis

Natalie Barr, Becca Shepard, Elise  
Stephenson & Michelle Ryan

9 April 2025

[giwl.anu.edu.au](https://giwl.anu.edu.au)  
@giwlanu

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are reading this research. The Global Institute for Women's Leadership 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.

# Research introduction

The Global Institute for Women's Leadership is a research institute based at the Australian National University. We are non-partisan and aim to see effective, evidence-based solutions applied where they will have the greatest impact in advancing gender equality.

With the federal election approaching, we set out to examine who is running, how the major parties stack up on gender representation, and whether a candidate's gender influences their chances of winning.

Our research finds that, not only are there fewer women running in this election, they're also more likely to be contesting 'glass cliff' seats that are hard to win and precarious to hold.



# Definitions & sources\*

Primary candidate profiles	<a href="#">Australian Labor Party (ALP)</a>	<a href="#">The Liberal Party of Australia</a>	<a href="#">The Nationals</a>	<a href="#">Australian Greens</a>	<a href="#">Family First Party</a>	<a href="#">Pauline Hanson's One Nation (PHON)</a>	<a href="#">Climate 200</a>	<a href="#">Trumpet of Patriots</a>
Secondary candidate information	Candidates of the 2025 Australian Federal Election – <a href="#">Wikipedia</a>							
Seat safety status	Australian Electoral Committee – <a href="#">National Seat Status Factsheet: 2025 Federal Election</a>							
Non-classic seat margins and safety status	Antony Green's Election Blog – <a href="#">FED25 Election: New Seat Margins and Electoral Pendulum</a>							
Gender	From candidate profiles, web search where necessary. Parliament of Australia – <a href="#">Gender Composition of Australian Parliaments by Party: A Quick Guide</a>							
Diversity	From candidate profiles, web search where necessary. Parliament of Australia – <a href="#">LGBTIQ+ Parliamentarians in Australian Parliaments: A Quick Guide</a> Parliament of Australia – <a href="#">Cultural Diversity in the 47<sup>th</sup> Parliament: A Quick Guide</a>							

**Glass cliff** – The 'glass cliff' phenomenon was coined by our Director, Professor Michelle Ryan, and her research partner Alex Haslam. They found that women, gender diverse leaders and other minoritised groups are more likely to be appointed to leadership positions that are risky or precarious. We have applied this concept to the election to create the term, 'glass cliff seat', meaning an electorate that is risky, precarious, or downright unwinnable. You can read all of our glass cliff research [at our website](#).

**Safe seat** – The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) classifies seats according to their electoral margin as safe, fairly safe, or marginal. Safe seats have a two-party preferred (TPP) margin over 10%, fairly safe seats are between 6% and 10%, and marginal seats are less than 6%.

There are an increasing number of 'non-classic' seats where the traditional contest is not between the two major parties (those where there are independents or minor parties either elected or receiving the second largest number of votes). The classification for these seats is taken from the two-candidate preferred (TCP) results rather than the TPP results.

\*Figures are correct as of 24 March 2025.



# Executive summary

- **The 2025 federal election sees some progress in gender and diversity representation compared to last election, but the 'glass cliff' effect remains a significant barrier for female candidates.** While the gender gap in seat security has narrowed since the last election, women across both major parties are still disproportionately placed in unwinnable or high-risk seats.
- **Coalition women continue to face the steepest challenge.** They are more likely than their male counterparts to be preselected in electorates that are difficult to win or hold. While the gender gap in winnable seats has halved (from 26% in 2022 to 13% in 2025), the Coalition is still fielding more than twice as many male candidates as female ones, with most women contesting precarious, 'glass cliff' seats.

- **Labor women have made gains this election, but true gender parity is still a work in progress.** The Australian Labor Party (ALP) has increased female representation to a majority of candidates for the first time at 56% (up from 46% in 2022). As the incumbents, the number of both male and female Labor candidates running in risky, 'glass cliff' seats is lower this election. In 2025, 57% of Labor men are running in safe or fairly safe seats, compared to just 50% of women, a slight decrease in the gender gap from 9% in 2022 to 7% in 2025. The playing field is becoming more balanced, but Labor men, despite being outnumbered overall, still have a better shot at winning their seats.
- **Diversity among candidates remains another area of concern.** Of the 591 declared candidates at the point of analysis, 21% self-identified as belonging to diverse or underrepresented groups. However, this figure falls short of the rate of diversity seen in the current Parliament (29%), with the largest drop occurring among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) representation (16% of candidates vs 23% of sitting MPs).

While some progress has been made, the overrepresentation of women in precarious seats and the underrepresentation of diverse candidates highlight persistent structural barriers. Achieving true gender and diversity parity in Parliament requires not just increasing candidate numbers but also ensuring fair and equitable opportunities in winnable seats.



# What is the current state of Parliament?

# What is Parliament's current **gender balance**?

Overall, the House of Representatives has an almost 60/40 gender divide, with 92 male MPs and 59 women.

Of the two major parties, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) is the closest to gender parity with a nearly 50/50 gender split (47% women vs 53% men). By contrast, the Coalition has four times the number of male representatives as female ones (80% men vs 20% women).

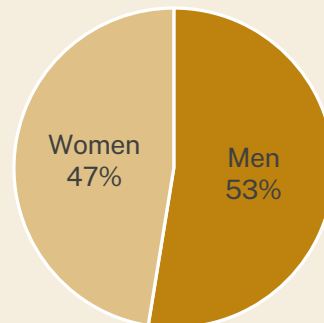
The crossbench has a 70/30 split in favour of women, but with only 14 representatives, the total number of women remains low.

Overall

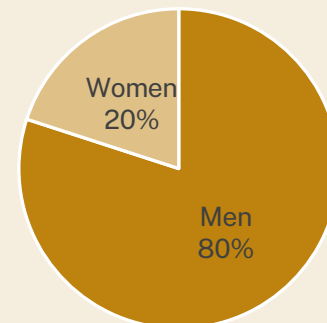
Men  
61%

Women  
39%

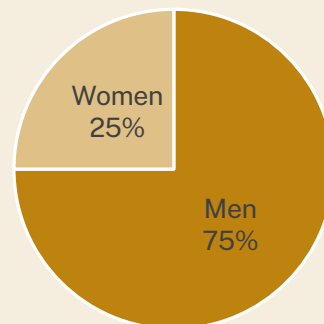
Australian Labor Party



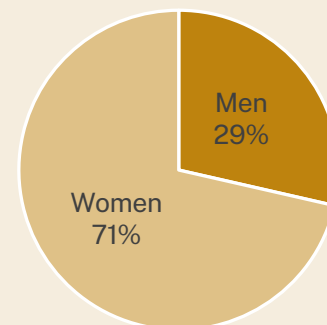
The Coalition



Australian Greens



Crossbench

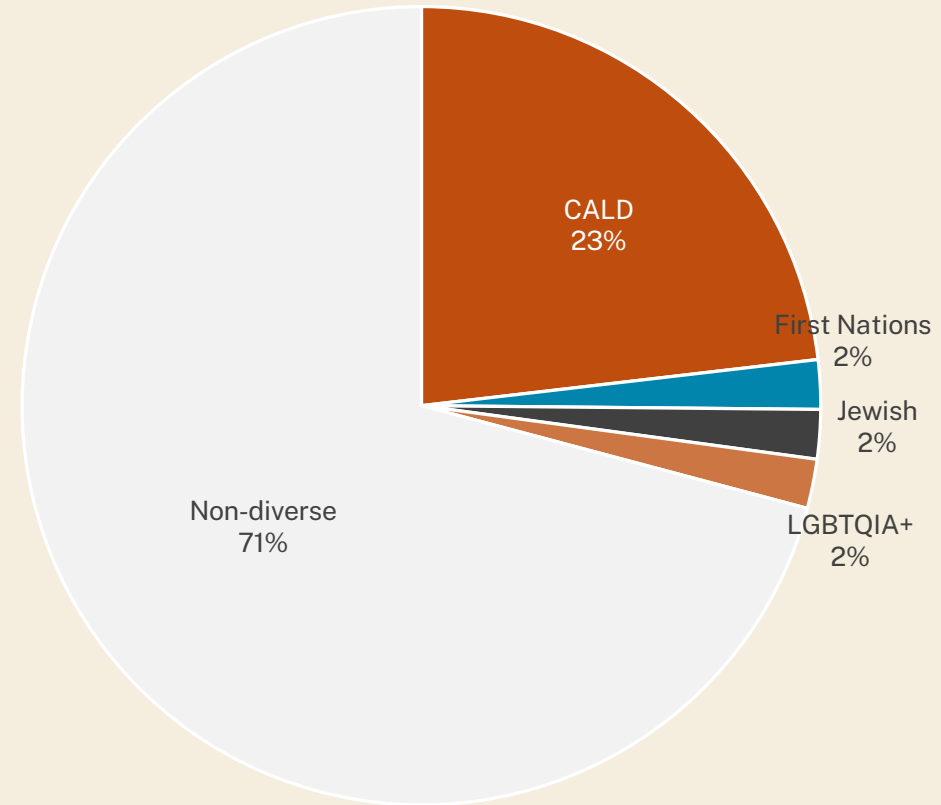


# How diverse is the current Parliament?

**Of the current MPs sitting in the House of Representatives, 44 of 151 (29%) have self-identified as or are publicly reported as belonging to diverse or underrepresented groups.**

This includes three First Nations MPs (2%), 35 from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds (23%), three Jewish MPs (2%), and three from the LGBTIQIA+ community (2%).

Please note, this data does not include senators.

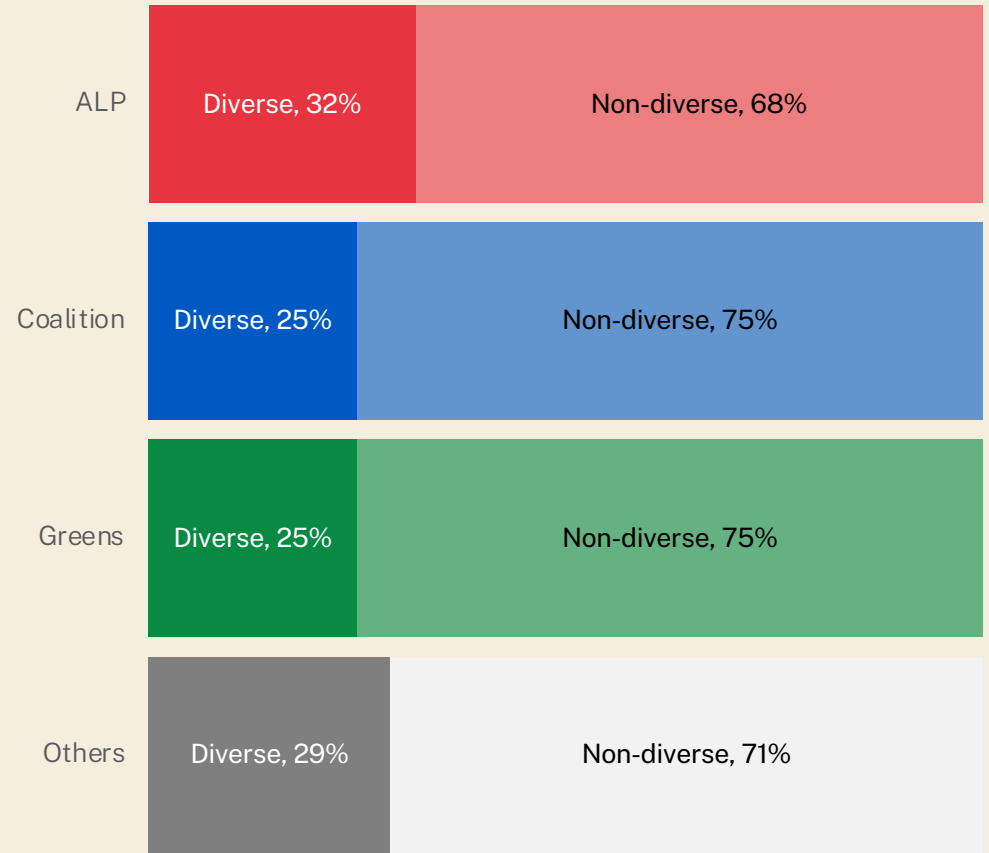


# How diverse is the current parliament?

**At least one in four MPs across all major parties identify as being from a diverse background.**

Looking within each party, Labor has the highest proportion of diverse MPs, with nearly a third (32%) of its members identifying as diverse. Meanwhile, a quarter (25%) of MPs from both the Coalition and the Greens are from diverse backgrounds.

It's important to note that this data is based on self-identification and publicly available information, meaning it may not reflect hidden disabilities or other less visible aspects of diversity. Additionally, identifying as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) doesn't necessarily indicate disadvantage. Lastly, this data does not include Senators.



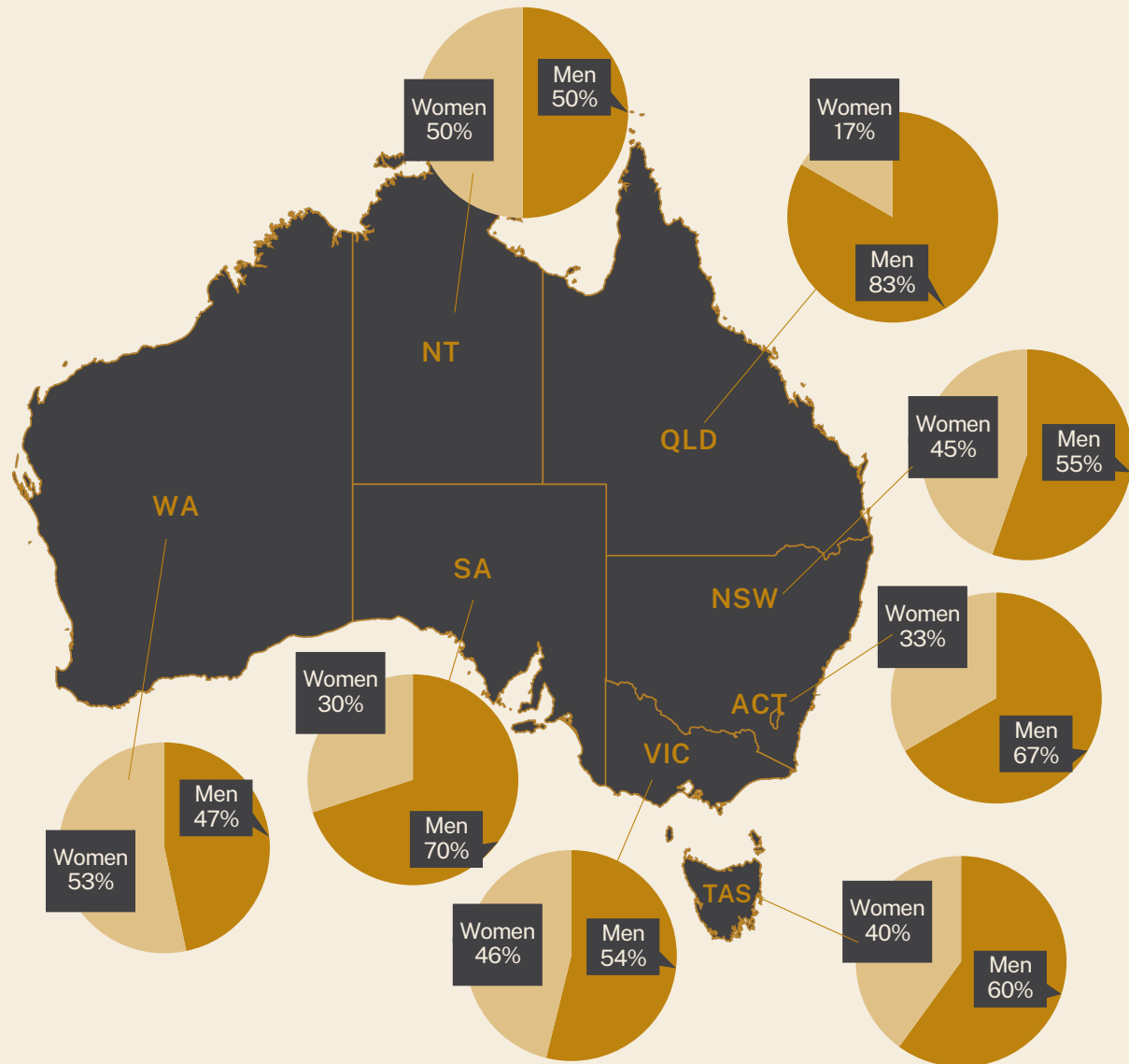
# Current gender balance at the state level

There is a stark difference in gender balance across states and territories, with Queensland and South Australia having significantly lower female representation than other states.

Queensland (QLD) fares the worst in terms of gender equality with nearly five times more male than female MPs (83% men vs 17% women).

This reflects a strong gender imbalance across both major parties in the state, with 80% of ALP and 86% of Coalition MPs being men. It's also a far cry from QLD's previous state government record, where women held the majority of all cabinet positions at a state level in the Palaszczuk government. This pattern is also mirrored in the crossbench and minor parties, where male MPs outnumber their female counterparts three to one.

Western Australia (WA) is the only state with more female than male representatives, while the Northern Territory (NT) is balanced with a 50/50 gender split. While encouraging, it's worth noting that these are two of the jurisdictions with the fewest MPs in the country (15 for WA and just 2 for NT).



Some states have reached gender parity or even a female majority, but there are significant differences between parties.

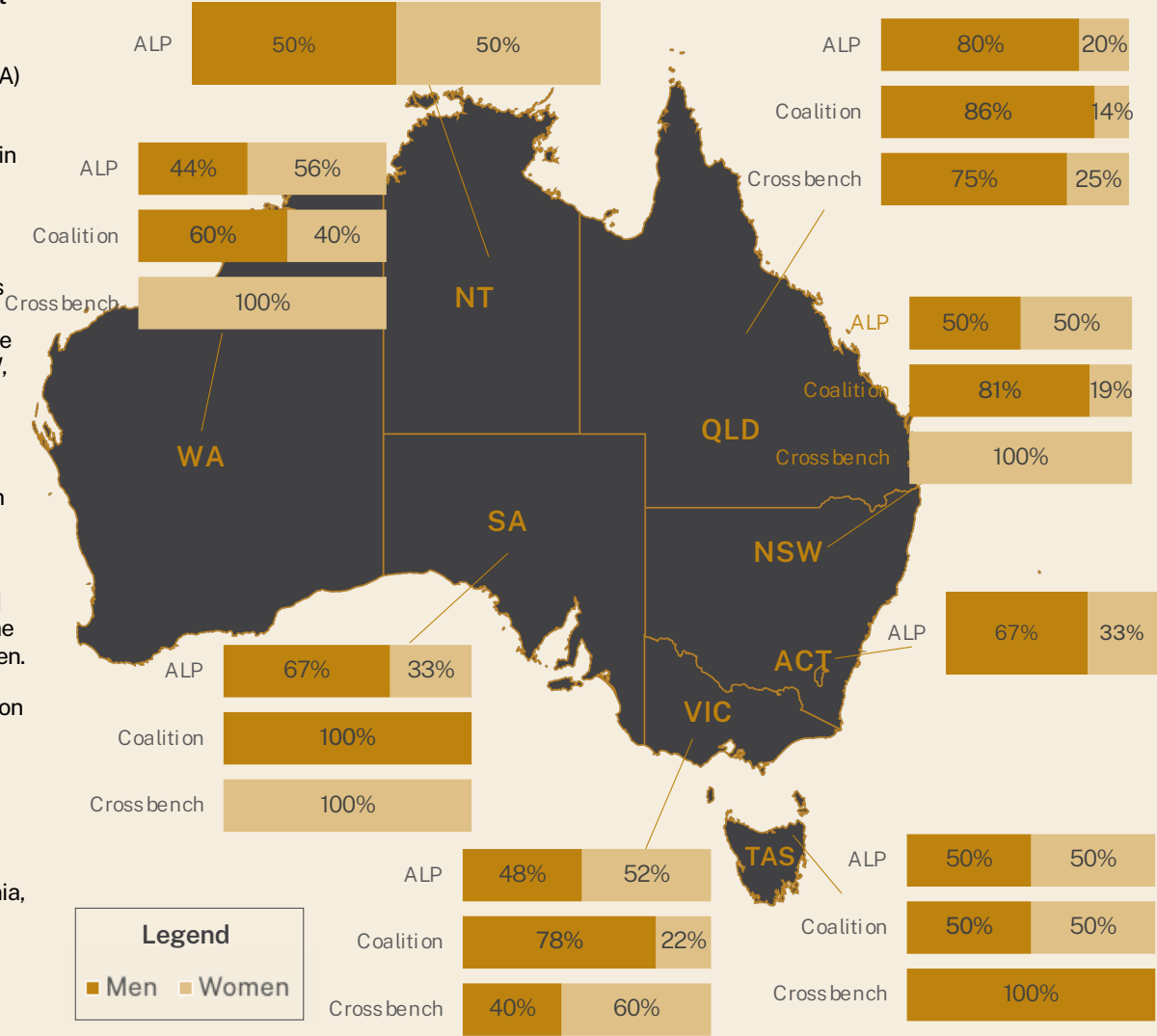
Labor has a majority of female representatives in Western Australia (WA) and Victoria (VIC), while New South Wales (NSW), Tasmania (TAS), and the Northern Territories (NT) have gender-equal representation. By contrast, the Coalition has achieved gender balance or near parity only in TAS (with 1 male and 1 female MP) and WA (with 3 male to 2 female representatives).

South Australia (SA) has no female Coalition representatives, with all three MPs being men. Queensland (QLD) is also heavily skewed towards men, with six times more male MPs than female ones (18 men vs just three women). Similarly, NSW and VIC both have around four times more male representatives than female ones (13 men vs three women in NSW, and seven men vs two women in VIC).

NSW is close to overall gender parity, with 55% men and 45% women, but party differences remain stark. The ALP has an even 50/50 split, whereas 81% of Coalition MPs are men, with only three female Coalition MPs in the state. This imbalance is slightly offset by the fact that all crossbench MPs from NSW are women.

VIC has a more balanced overall gender distribution, with 54% men and 46% women. Within the ALP, 52% of representatives are women, but the Coalition remains male-dominated, with nearly 78% of its MPs being men. Outside of the major parties, 60% of representatives are women, while two of the men include Russell Broadbent, who was elected as a Coalition member in 2022 before leaving the party, and Adam Bandt from the Greens.

Among the entire crossbench (including the Greens), there are more female than male MPs (61% women vs 39% men). This female majority outside of the major parties is reflected in most states and territories, except for QLD where there are three men and one woman, and Tasmania, where Andrew Wilkie is the only independent. The trend is particularly pronounced in NSW, where all five crossbench MPs are women.





# Who is in the safe seats?

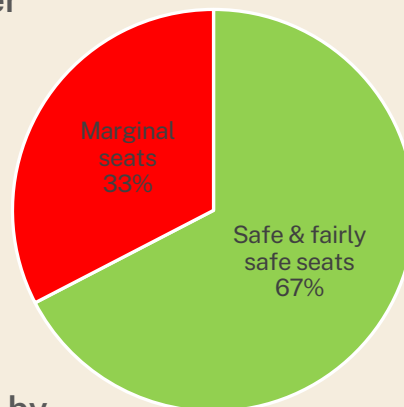
At first glance, men and women seem to hold a similar share of marginal seats (33% of men vs 36% of women). But because men significantly outnumber women in Parliament (61% to 39%), the reality is quite different.

As the election approaches, far more men than women are in safe seats. Of the 151 seats, 100 are considered safe or fairly safe, while 51 are marginal and at risk of changing hands this election. Two marginal seats held by women have been abolished, and one new Labor-leaning marginal seat has been created.

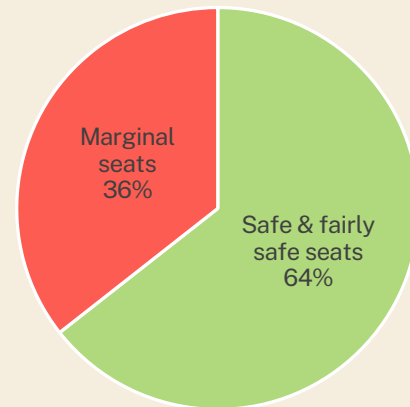
Right now, 41% of all MPs are men in safe or fairly safe seats. By contrast, women in safe or fairly safe seats make up just 25% of all MPs. With far more men in strong positions to retain their seats, they have a clear advantage heading into the election.

Seat safety by gender

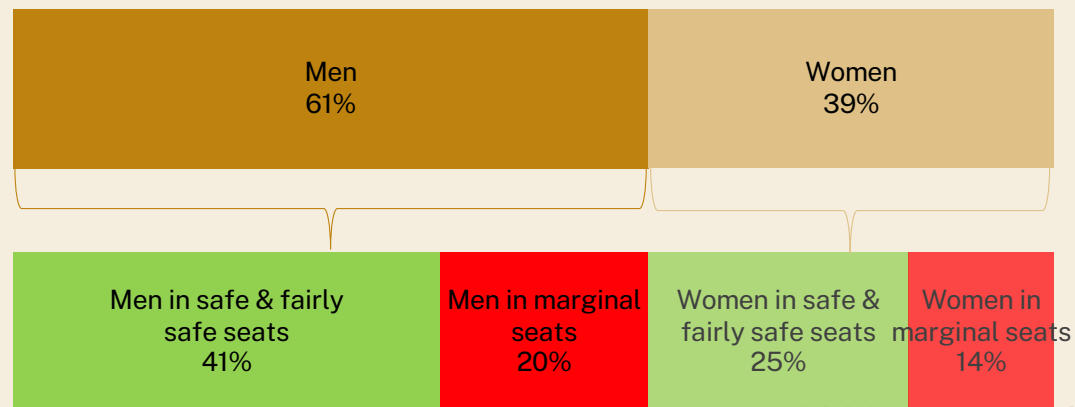
Men



Women



All MPs by gender



# Key insights

## Current Parliament

- Overall, the House of Representatives currently has a near 60/40 gender split, with 92 male representatives and 59 women.
- Of the two major parties, the ALP is the closest to gender parity with a nearly 50/50 gender split. By contrast, the Coalition has four times the number of male representatives as female ones.
- At least one in four representatives across all major parties identify as being from a diverse background.
- Labor has the highest proportion of diverse MPs, making up 32% of their representatives in Parliament.
- There is a stark difference in gender split across states and territories, with Queensland and South Australia having significantly lower female representation than other states.
- Queensland fares the worst in terms of gender equality with nearly five times more male than female MPs (83% men vs 17% women).
- Western Australia is the only state with more female representatives, while the Northern Territory is balanced with a 50/50 gender split.
- Although some states have reached gender parity or even a female majority, there are significant differences between parties.
- Of the 151 seats, 100 are considered safe or fairly safe, while 51 are marginal and at risk of changing hands. For the 2025 election, two marginal seats held by women have been abolished, and a nominally Labor marginal seat has been created, leaving 50 marginal seats to be contested.
- Four in 10 MPs are men in safe seats, compared to just a quarter of women. This gives male MPs a clear advantage heading into the election.



# Who is running in the upcoming election?

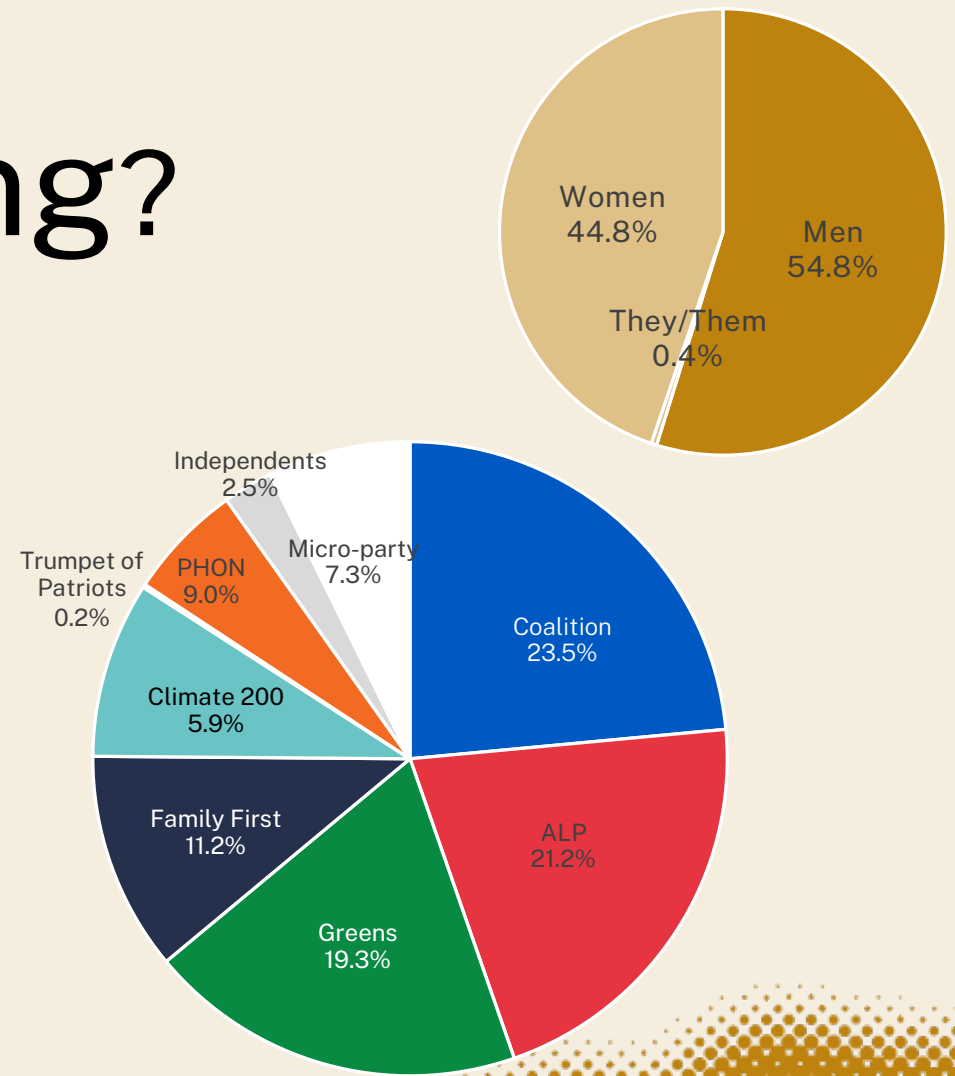
# Who is running?

As of March 24 2025, 591 candidates had declared their intention to run in the Federal election. Of these, 54.8% are men, 44.8% are women, and 0.4% (two candidates) use they/them pronouns. This marks slight progress toward gender diversity, with 5% more women than last election, plus the inclusion of two non-binary candidates.

Among the major parties, the Coalition leads in nominations, with 139 candidates across 136 seats (91% coverage). The ALP has 125 candidates (83% of seats), while the Greens have 114 (76% coverage).

Outside the major parties, Family First, One Nation, and Clive Palmer's rebranded Trumpet of Patriots Party have also announced candidates, with more expected soon.

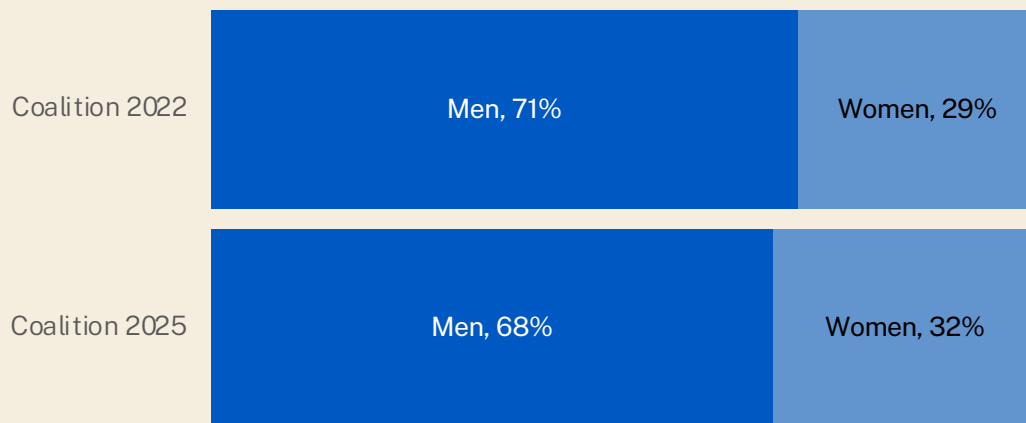
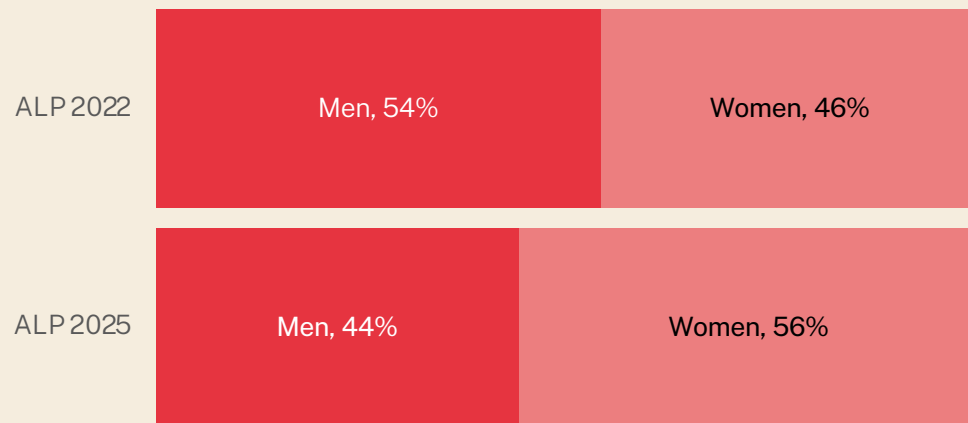
The remaining 93 candidates are a mix of independents and minor parties. Notably, 35 independents are backed by Climate 200, which is supporting candidates in 23% of seats.



# How does this compare to **last election?**

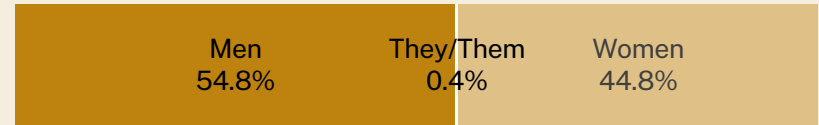
While women make up more than half (56%) of the candidates being put forward by the Australian Labor Party (ALP), less than a third (32%) of the Coalition's candidates are women.

This signifies a 10% increase in female representation for Labor compared to the last election (46% female candidates in 2022 vs 56% in 2025). The Coalition, however, continues to lag behind, with only a marginal improvement on the previous election (32% female candidates this election vs 29% in 2022).



# Gender divide at party level

## Overall candidate gender divide



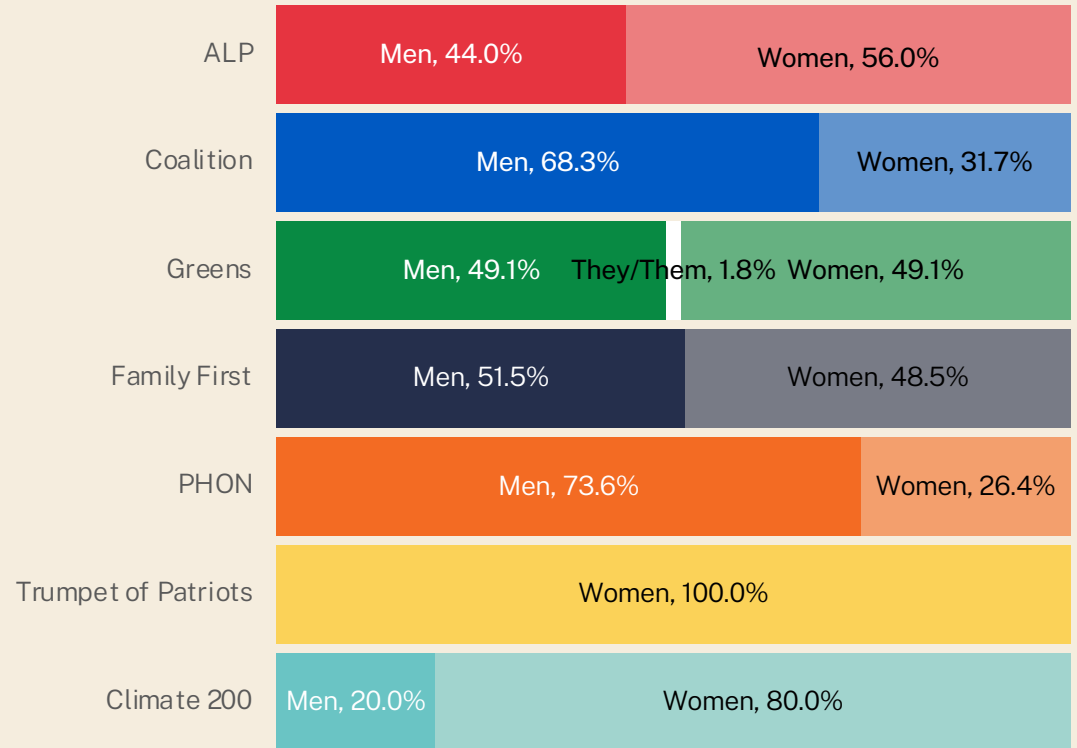
While the overall gender split among nominees is fairly balanced (45% women to 55% men), there are significant differences between parties.

Labor leads the major parties in female representation, with women making up 56% of their candidates this election. By contrast, the Coalition lags behind, with just 32% female candidates – meaning they are running twice as many men as women this election. While this is an improvement from their current MPs (only 20% of whom are women), it's still a far cry from gender balance.

The Greens have achieved gender parity (49% men, 49% women, plus two gender diverse candidates).

Among the smaller groups, Climate 200 heavily favours women with 80% female candidates. However, while a small number of these candidates have European backgrounds, none are people of colour.

Family First is nearly gender-equal, and Trumpet of Patriots had put forward just one candidate at the time of analysis – a woman.

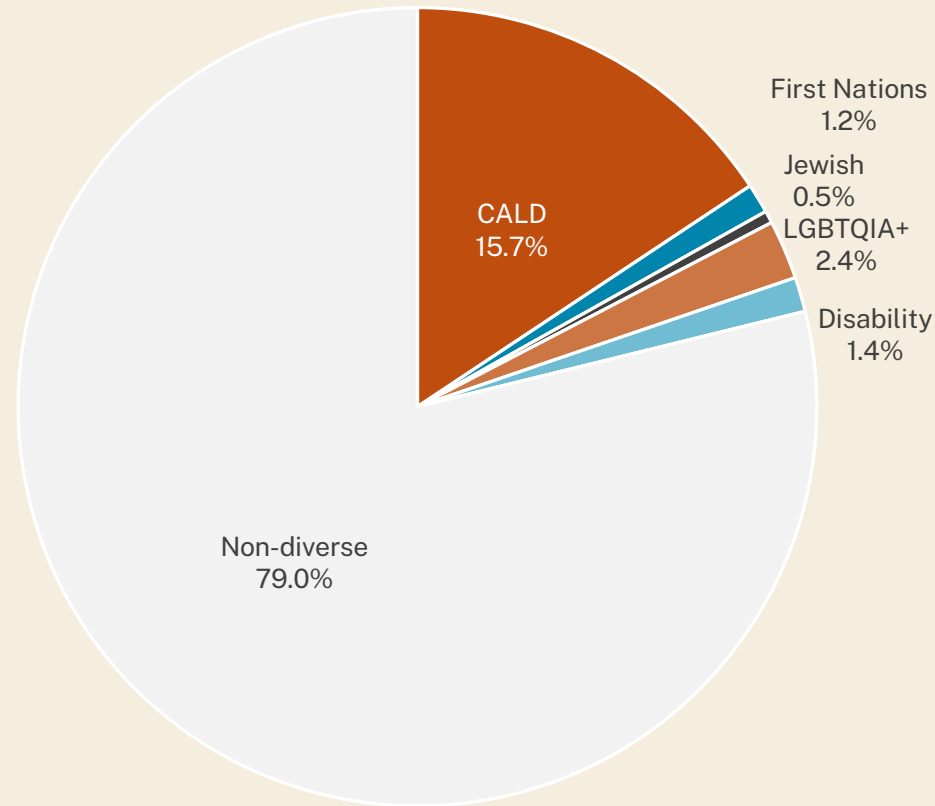


# How diverse are the candidates?

Of the 591 candidates who have announced they are running, just over a fifth (21%) have self-identified as diverse through their statements and public records.

This includes 93 from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (16%); 14 from the LGBTQIA+ community (2%); 8 with disabilities (1%); 7 who are First Nations (1%); and 3 who are Jewish (0.5%).

Overall, this group is less diverse than the current Parliament, where 29% of MPs come from diverse backgrounds. The biggest gap is among CALD representatives, with 16% of candidates identifying as culturally and linguistically diverse, compared to 23% of sitting MPs.



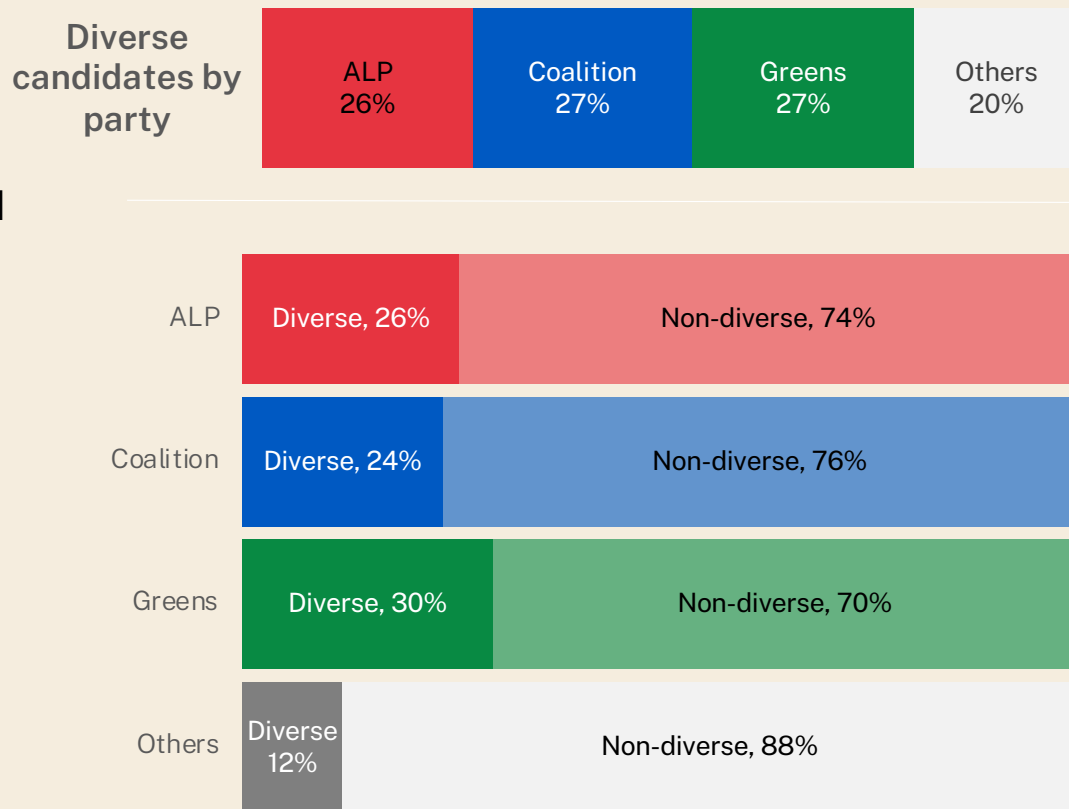


# How diverse are the candidates by party?

As of March 24 2025, 21% of the 591 declared candidates have identified as diverse — this includes CALD or First Nations backgrounds, disabilities, or belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community.

Among them, diversity is fairly evenly spread across the major parties: 26% are from Labor, 27% from the Coalition, and 27% from the Greens.

Looking within each party, the Greens lead with 30% diverse candidates, followed by Labor (26%) and the Coalition (24%).



# How diverse are the candidates by gender?

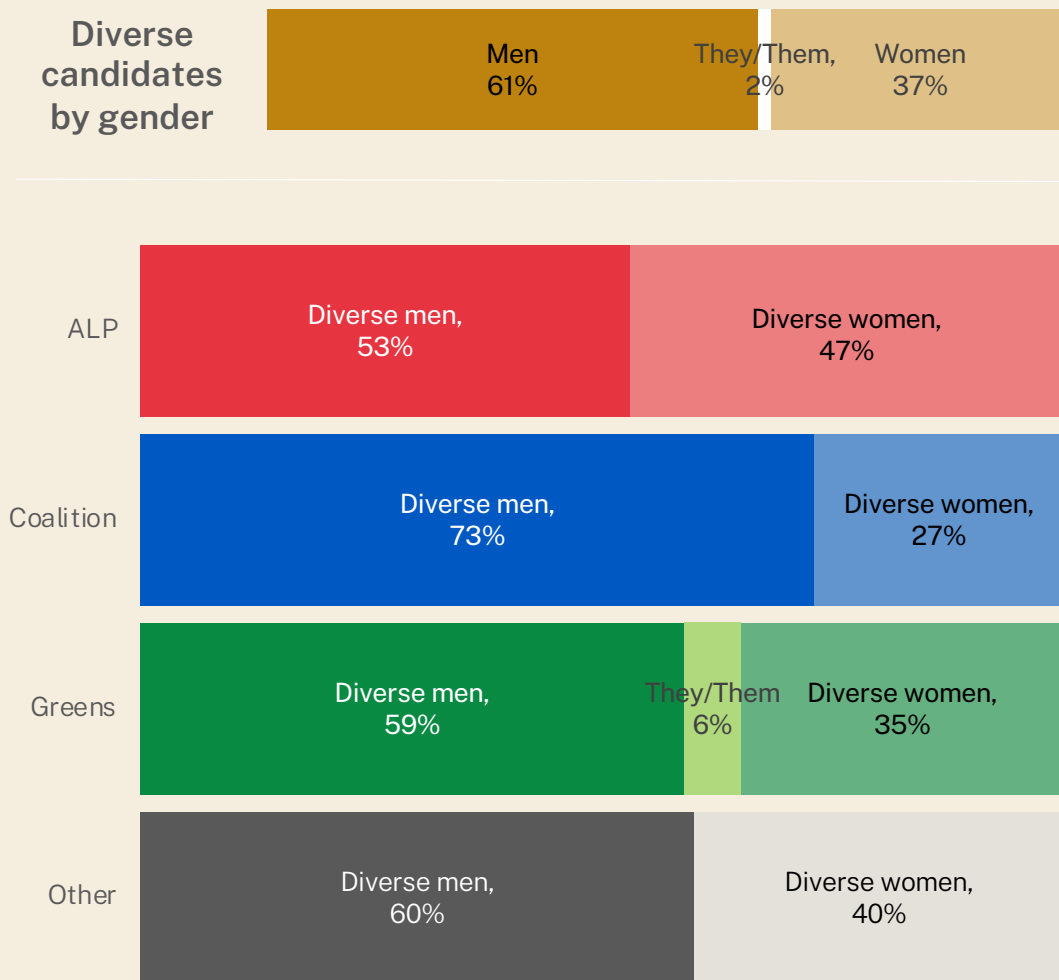
So far, diverse candidates are more likely to be men (61%) than women (37%). But this disparity could reflect the unique barriers faced by diverse women, which can discourage them from seeking public office.

Women running in this election are less likely to be from CALD backgrounds, have a disability, or belong to LGBTQIA+ communities than men, reflecting the added challenges diverse women face — especially those in the public eye. We explore these issues more in [our 2024 report with Women for Election](#).

Among the major parties, Labor has the most balanced gender split of their diverse candidates (53% men vs 47% women), while the Coalition's diverse candidates are overwhelmingly male (73% men vs 27% women) - in part reflecting the higher number of male candidates overall.

The Greens are the only party with non-binary candidates, but overall their diverse nominees skew male (59% men vs 35% women).

Beyond the major parties, the gender divide among diverse candidates is 60% men to 40% women.



# Who is at risk of the glass cliff?

Women remain underrepresented among candidates for the upcoming election – and the women who are running are more likely to be doing so in precarious, unwinnable, ‘glass cliff’ seats than their male counterparts.

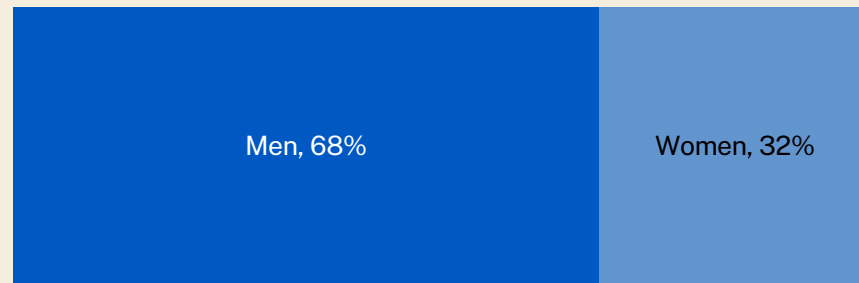
The Coalition is running more than twice as many male candidates as female ones and, of the women who are running, the majority are trying for unwinnable or precarious seats.

Contesting from opposition necessarily means Coalition candidates are coming from a more challenging starting point to win seats. However, just one in six (16%) female Coalition candidates are in safe or fairly safe seats, compared to more than a quarter of men (29%) - a gap of 13%.

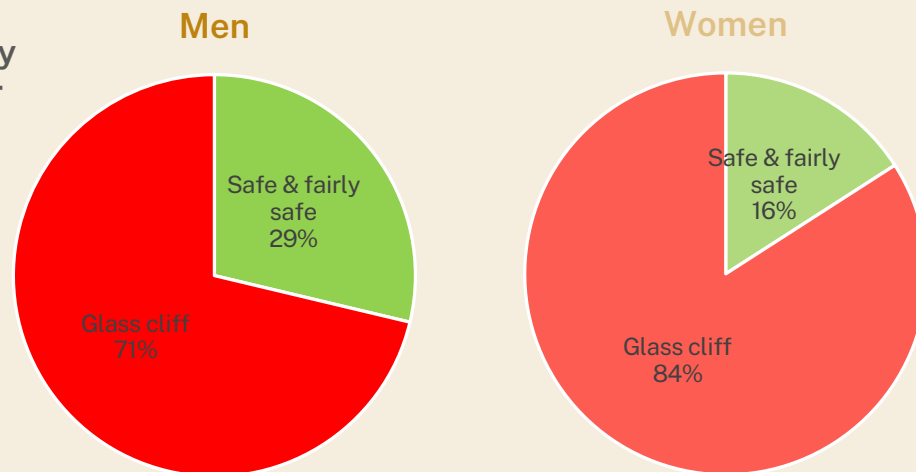
This means that the overwhelming majority of Coalition women (84%) are contesting ‘glass cliff’ seats that will be difficult to win, and precarious to hold – and this is on top of the fact that there were half as many female Coalition candidates as male ones to begin with.

The Coalition

Coalition  
gender  
divide



Seat safety  
by gender



# Who is at risk of the glass cliff?

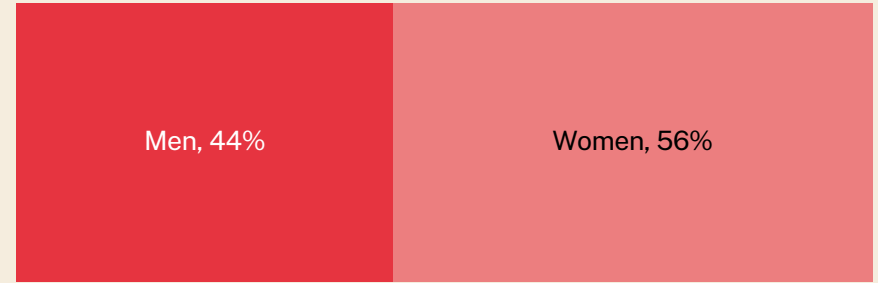
The gender gap in seat safety is smaller in Labor, but men still have an edge when it comes to their chances of being elected.

While 57% of male Labor candidates are running in safe or fairly safe seats, only 50% of women have the same advantage – a 7% gender gap.

Although progress is happening, the continued overrepresentation of women in high-risk seats across both major parties shows that true equality remains a work in progress.

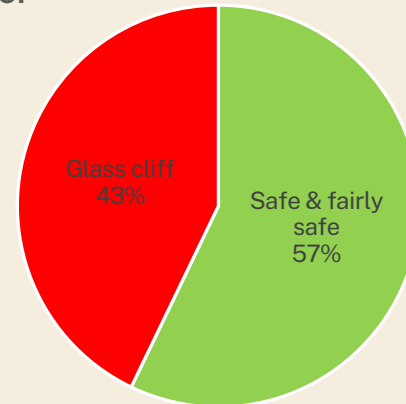
The ALP

Labor  
gender  
divide



Seat safety  
by gender

Men



Women



# What's happening with non-traditional seats?

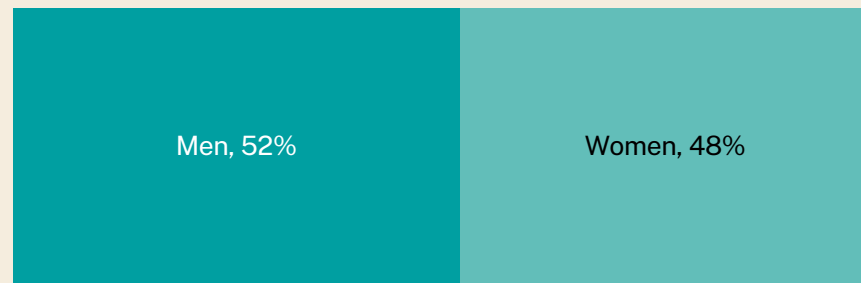
The teal wave in the last election shifted Australia's political landscape, and as we head into the upcoming election, we are seeing a growing number of 'non-classic' seats where the main contest is not between the ALP and the Coalition.

These include seats held or strongly contested by Independent candidates, seats that are very progressive, where the key contest is between ALP and the Greens, and very conservative seats where the main contest is between Liberals and Nationals or other right-wing candidates.

For the Greens, applying traditional 'winnability' measures is more complex, as they tend to get elected in non-classic seats where two-party-preferred analysis and traditional definitions of 'seat safety' are hard to apply. But, using similar metrics, it's clear that both male and female candidates contesting these non-traditional seats face 'glass cliff' elections where success is uncertain.

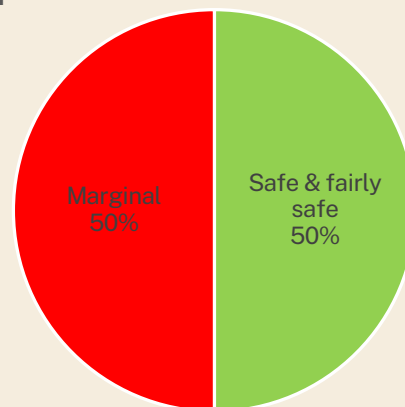
## Non-traditional seats

Non-traditional  
seats gender  
divide

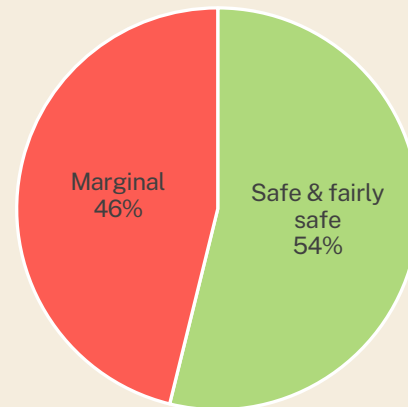


Seat safety  
by gender

Men



Women



# Are Coalition women better off this election?

While some progress has been made, the 'glass cliff' effect seen in the last election persists, with Coalition women still more likely to be placed in difficult electoral battles than their male counterparts.

In the previous election, male Coalition candidates were more than twice as likely as female candidates to contest safe or fairly safe seats. Only 20% of female Coalition candidates ran in these electorates, compared to 46% of men – a 26% disparity.

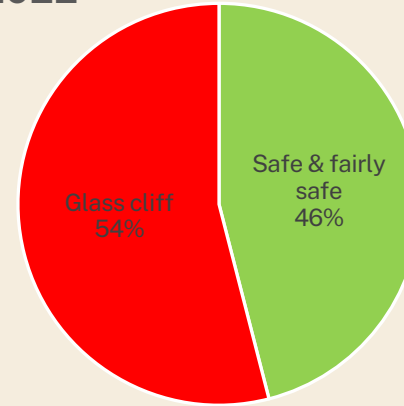
At the same time, Coalition women were disproportionately placed in precarious seats, with 80% running in unwinnable or highly marginal electorates, compared to just 54% of men. This means Coalition women last election were four times more likely to be in risky, 'glass cliff' seats than seats they actually had a reasonable chance of winning.

This trend continues this election, with the Coalition fielding more than twice as many male candidates as female ones, and most women running in unwinnable or high-risk seats.

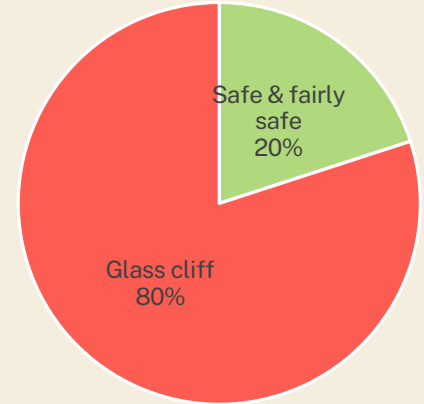
While the 'glass cliff divide' (the proportion of male vs female candidates running for high-risk seats) has halved for Coalition candidates – from 26% last election to 13% this time around – this is due to an increase in the number of men contesting unheld and marginal seats from opposition rather than a decrease in women doing so.

2022

Men

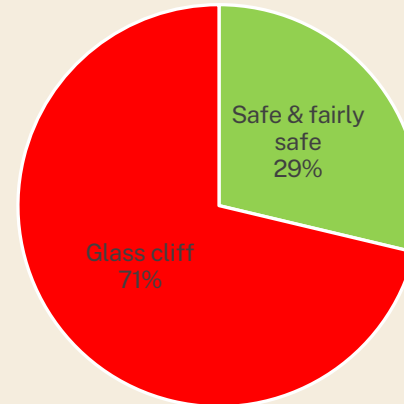


Women

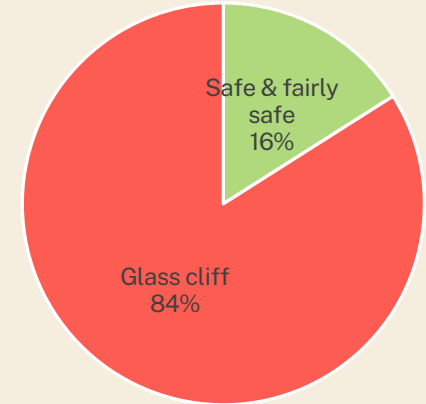


2025

Men



Women



# Are Labor women better off this election?

There are more Labor women running in this election, and they are much more likely to be contesting safe seats this time around. But despite these gains, women continue to be overrepresented in less secure electorates.

This election, Labor have boosted their female representation, going from a nearly even gender split last election to a slight female majority now (46% women in 2022 vs 56% in 2025).

Not only is Labor running more women this election, these women stand a significantly higher chance of actually winning their seats compared to 2022 – Labor women are more than twice as likely to be running in safe or fairly safe seats this election compared to last time (24% in 2022 vs 50% in 2025).

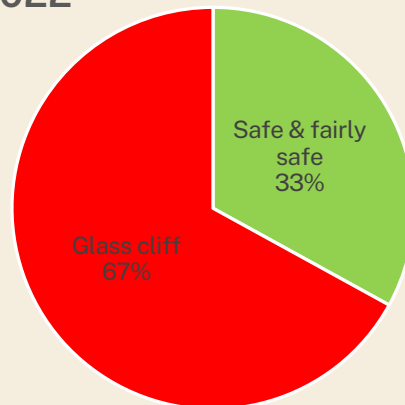
But, we have seen similar gains for male candidates, with only 43% now in ‘glass cliff’ seats, down from 67% last election. So, has Labor truly improved support for its female candidates, or are **all** Labor candidates simply in a stronger position overall compared to last election due to incumbency?

Looking at the ‘glass cliff divide’ – the proportion of male vs female candidates running for high-risk seats – Labor women are now 7% more likely than men to be contesting precarious seats (50% vs 43%). This gap has slightly narrowed compared to last election, when 76% of women were in ‘glass cliff’ seats vs 67% of men (a 9% gap), but there is still progress to be made before male and female candidates have an even playing field.

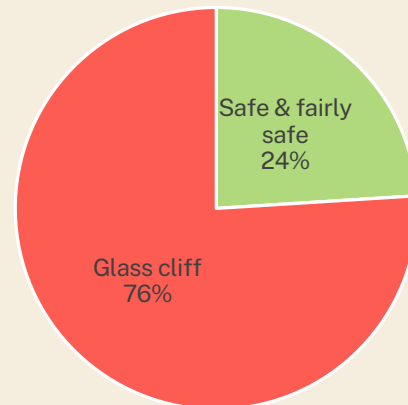
So, while more Labor women are now competing in safe or fairly safe seats, they remain disproportionately placed in high-risk contests, and men still have the advantage heading into the election.

2022

Men

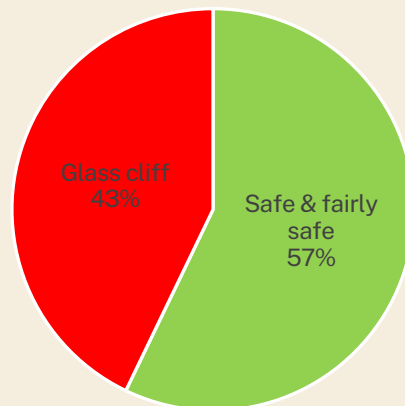


Women

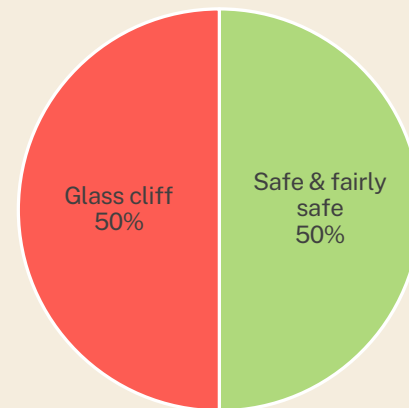


2025

Men



Women





# Key insights

## Who is running?

Women remain underrepresented among candidates for the upcoming election – and the women who are running are more likely to be doing so in precarious, unwinnable, ‘glass cliff’ seats than their male counterparts.

- The Coalition is running more than twice as many male candidates as female ones and, of the women who are running, the majority are trying for unwinnable or precarious seats.
- Progress is being made in Labor with ALP women running in greater numbers and facing fewer ‘glass cliff’ seats than last election. But despite being

outnumbered, men still have a better shot at winning their seats.

- 21% of the 591 declared candidates have identified as diverse (being from CALD or First Nations backgrounds, having a disability, or belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community), and there are two non-binary candidates running this election.
- The majority of these self-identified diverse candidates are men (61% male vs 37% female), which could reflect the unique barriers faced by diverse women, which can discourage them from seeking public office.



# Summary & conclusion

**While this election brings some progress in gender and diversity representation, significant challenges remain.**

The persistent ‘glass cliff’ effect continues to disadvantage female candidates, particularly within the Coalition, where women are still more likely to be placed in unwinnable or high-risk seats. Labor has made strides in narrowing this gap, but male candidates across both major parties still have a higher likelihood of contesting safer electorates than their female counterparts.

Diversity among candidates also falls short of the diversity of the current

Parliament, with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) candidates seeing the largest drop. These findings highlight the need for structural reforms to ensure not only greater inclusion in candidate selection but also equitable opportunities for success.

Achieving true gender and diversity parity in politics requires more than increasing candidate numbers – it demands a fundamental shift in how and where women and diverse candidates are positioned to compete. Without addressing these systemic barriers, representation in Parliament will continue to fall short of reflecting the diversity of the electorate.





# Next steps

The figures quoted in this research are correct as of 24 March 2025, when 591 candidates had declared their intention to run in the Federal election.

We will update this research throughout the election to account for additional nominees, and also conduct post-election analysis to see how our new Parliament stacks up on gender and diversity representation.

Stay up-to-date with our election analysis by following us on social media @GIWLANU, [or joining our mailing list.](#)

You can find all of our election research at our website [giwl.anu.edu.au/2025-election](https://giwl.anu.edu.au/2025-election)





# The Global Institute for Women's Leadership

For more information, and press enquiries, please contact:

Dr Elise Stephenson  
Deputy Director, GIWL

[elise.stephenson@giwl.anu.edu.au](mailto:elise.stephenson@giwl.anu.edu.au)



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