

# Diverse voices and pathways to politics: advancing an inclusive democracy

## Workshop Factsheet | GIWL Youth Summit

### Workshop overview

There is so much disconnect between young people and the decisions that are made that impact their lives. An inclusive democracy means that everyone should feel represented and have a voice in politics, but despite the passion and drive of many young people to make a difference, they are often excluded from the decision-making process and remain one of the most under-represented groups in parliament, particularly young women and those from marginalized groups. This is especially troubling when we consider that some of the toughest challenges today – from rising unemployment to the climate crisis – disproportionately impact younger people.

Harnessing the power of young people and promoting your participation at every level of the decision-making process is essential to ensuring that the policies that are made are effective, inclusive and address the needs of diverse communities. So, what are the barriers for young people – particularly women and gender diverse people – getting into politics, and how can we bridge that gap? In this session, we'll take an intersectional approach to explore the challenges and opportunities around youth political participation, unpacking what political engagement looks like, why representation matters and how we can address systemic barriers to participation.

### Young Australians do not feel confident in Australia's approach to the future

- Overwhelmingly, young people are engaged, but are turning away from traditional institutions for one key reason: **they do not feel represented.**
- Of the generational data available, **Gen Z demonstrate much lower levels of political trust than Millennials and Gen X**, aligning more closely with Baby Boomers.

- When asked about Australia's approach to the future, **24% of young Australians reported their confidence level at or below 4/10**, with an additional 35% indicating their confidence level as 'neutral'.
- Only 4% of Young Australians demonstrated absolute confidence in Australia's current approach. **4.5% demonstrated a complete lack of confidence in the approach.**

### (A lack of) political representation

- There are approximately 4 million young people in Australia. Yet **only 7 members of our federal Parliament are aged 18-34.**
- **96% of respondents said they wanted their voice heard in politics, yet only 1 in three respondents felt represented in parliament**

So we see this disconnect – Young Australians are notably and increasingly concerned about the future of their communities and the world at large, while also feeling disillusioned by and barred from the institutions that make decisions affecting this future.

### The cis, white, male, heterosexual face of politics

- 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, heterosexual politician.**
- So young women, persons from culturally diverse backgrounds, First Nations persons, persons with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA community also remain under-represented in parliaments across Australia and globally.



- 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.
- At the current rate, **gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years.**
- **Just 15 countries have a female Head of State, and 16 countries have a female Head of Government**
- And 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**
- **LGBTIQ+ people remain similarly under-represented in politics, for example there are currently 29 LGBTIQ+ MPs in Australian parliaments** –just 3.5% of all federal, state and territory parliamentarians.

### What issues matter most to young Australians?

- In a recent survey, participants were asked to share the issue they care most about in three words or less. **Overwhelmingly, the issue that concerned young people most was climate.**
- After this, young Australians identify individual wellbeing (mental and physical health) and security (affordable, safe and accessible housing) as the second and third most important challenges facing Australia.



*“Culture, policies and laws that are being made now will be lived out by young people of Australia, so we are integral to how we shape the future of this country”*

– Chanel Contos, Chair of the GIWL Global Youth Committee

### Workshop aims

To create a platform for you to share your ideas and experiences, with the aim of understanding...

- The challenges and barriers that dissuade young people from running in or engaging with politics .
- Why young people might feel unmotivated or disillusioned with our political systems.
- Why political representation matters and whether you feel seen and heard in politics
- The intersectional risks for young people in being “public figures”, for example trolling or harassment.
- What are the opportunities and motivations for young people to get into politics?

### Sources & further reading

[On youth participation in politics: Raise Your Voices Australia 2021 Report, Raise Our Voice Australia \(ROVA\)](#)

[What are young Australians policy priorities? Foundations for Tomorrow Report-Awareness to Action](#)

[How are levels of political trust spread over](#)

[generations? Trust and Democracy in Australia- NSW ICAC](#)

[Should the Australian parliament make room for young people?](#)

[Could young Australians lead the way to a Yes vote in the Voice to Parliament referendum?](#)

[What will young Australians do with their vote?](#)

### Key terms

#### The Glass Cliff

The phenomenon where women (and members of other minority groups) are more likely to be placed in leadership positions that are risky or precarious.

