

THE GLASS CLIFF ELECTION

Research Policy Brief -
Women candidates running in
unwinnable seats in the
2022 federal election



Australian
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University

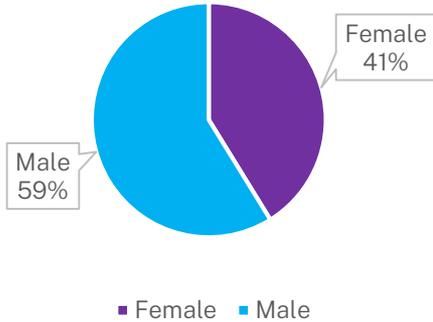
**THE GLOBAL
INSTITUTE
FOR WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP**

Current MPs

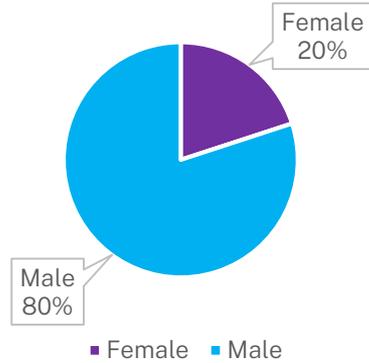
In the current House of Representatives, the major parties have varying proportions of female MPs.

All major parties are led by men.

Sitting ALP MPs



Sitting Coalition MPs

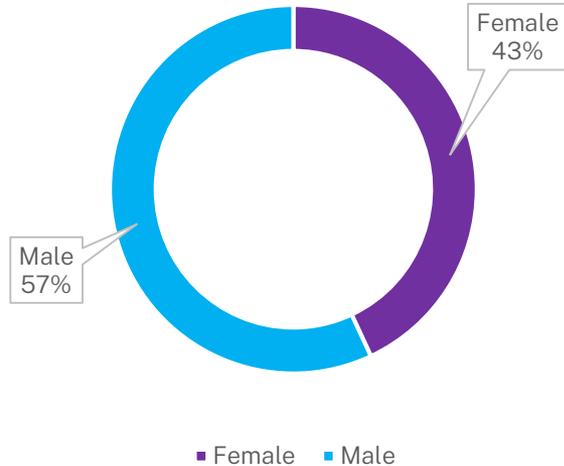


2022 Candidates

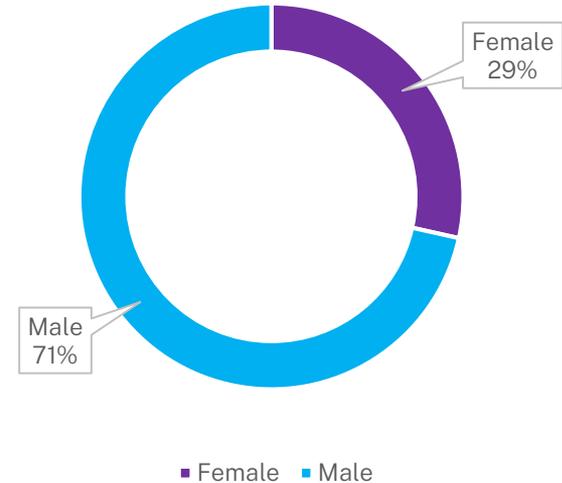
Both the Coalition and Labor are putting forward candidates in all 151 electorates for the House of Representative

- 43% of ALP candidates and 29% of Coalition candidates* are female.

Labor Candidates



Coalition Candidates



*Coalition candidates are defined here using the LNP candidate, or the sitting or more competitive candidate from the Liberal or National parties in states where the parties are separate entities.



But the raw numbers don't tell the full story

Not only are there fewer women contesting than men – they're also less likely to win

The Glass Cliff in politics

As major political parties make up the vast majority of MPs in the House of Representatives, increasing the number of female candidates they put forward at each election is important in ensuring our Parliament represents the diversity of the community.

What is equally important, is making sure that these female candidates are running in seats they can reasonably be expected to win.

The Glass Cliff is a phenomenon whereby women achieve success and attain leadership positions in times of crisis or where their position is precarious – that is, women are allowed to step in when men aren't interested.

While political parties are publicising their efforts to increase the number of women candidates they put forward, we need to look at whether these candidates are simply stepping into seats that males aren't interested in, or if they will genuinely increase the diversity of our Parliament.

What we did

We have examined data from the Australian Electoral Commission, to look at how many women are candidates in safe seats, and how many are 'glass cliff candidates'.

To do this, we have focused on the Liberal/National Coalition and Labor – focusing only on seats where the key contest is between these two parties (137 seats of a total of 151).

We have used the National Seat Status definitions used by the Australian Electoral Commission of marginal, fairly safe and safe.

We have combined the 'safe' and 'fairly safe' classifications to define '**Safe seats**' for each political party – ie. seats that are safe or fairly safe ALP seats are referred to as 'Safe seats' for ALP candidates in the analysis, and seats that are safe or fairly safe Coalition seats are referred to as 'Safe seats' for Coalition candidates in the analysis.

We have used the 'marginal' seat status to define '**Marginal seats**' for both parties, regardless of which political party currently holds the seat.

We have used 'safe' and 'fairly safe' classifications to define '**Unwinnable seats**' where the opposing party holds the seat. That is, seats that are 'safe' or 'fairly safe' Coalition seats are referred to as 'unwinnable' for ALP candidates. Seats that are 'safe' or 'fairly safe' ALP seats are referred to as 'unwinnable' for Coalition candidates. While theoretically all seats are winnable by any candidate, the likelihood is that these seats will not change hands at the election, and this is a major factor for parties in determining who the candidate for the seat should be, and for those seeking preselection.

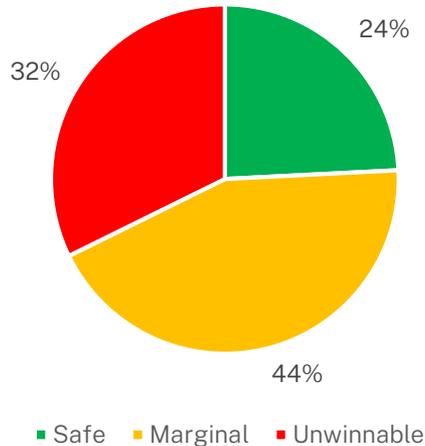
Together, female candidates put forward in marginal and unwinnable seats are referred to as '**Glass Cliff Candidates**' in our analysis. This recognises that while it is possible that some of these candidates will win their seats, their positions in Parliament will remain precarious, with great effort required to hold the seat in future elections.

The results of the analysis are outlined on the following slides.

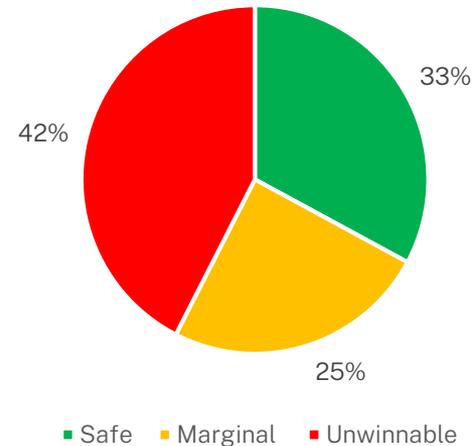


Who gets to run in safe ALP seats?

Where are the ALP female candidates standing?



Where are the ALP male candidates standing?

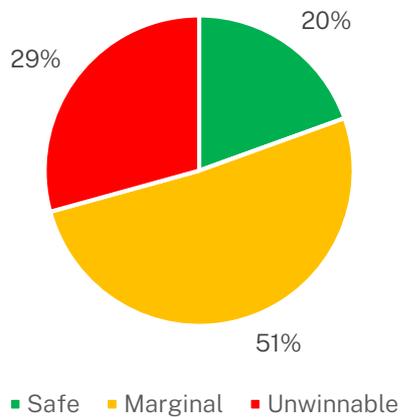


In the ALP, around 24% of female candidates are running in safe seats, compared to 33% of male candidates. **76% of female candidates in the ALP are 'Glass Cliff Candidates'** running in seats they are unlikely to win, or that are precarious to hold. The equivalent proportion of men running in these seats is 67%.

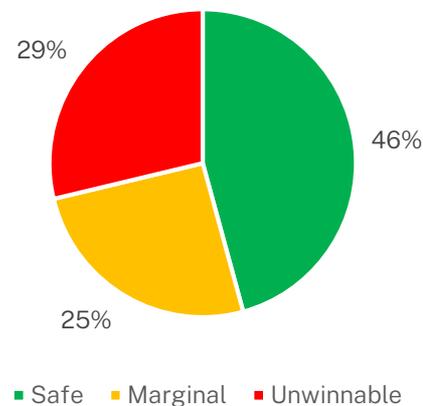


Who gets to run in safe Coalition seats?

Where are the Coalition female candidates standing?



Where are the Coalition male candidates standing?



In the Coalition, around 20% of female candidates are running in safe seats, compared to 46% of male candidates. **80% of female candidates in the Coalition are 'Glass Cliff Candidates'** running in seats they are unlikely to win, or that are precarious to hold. The equivalent proportion of men running in these seats is 54%.



Compare the pair



24% of female candidates are running in safe seats compared to 33% of male candidates



20% of female candidates are running in safe seats compared to 46% of male candidates

While all major political parties need to do better to improve the diversity of our political representatives, the lower disparity between opportunities provided to male and female candidates in the ALP reflects the longstanding policy of quotas within the party, with greater numbers of women overall and greater numbers in winnable seats.



“We know quotas work to get more women into politics – but this analysis shows us why it’s not just about how many women are preselected as candidates, but how many are put into positions where they genuinely can win.”

Michelle Ryan
Director, Global Institute for Women’s Leadership



Diversity is not just about gender...

When we take a closer look at who each political party puts forward as candidates in an election, we need to look at more than gender.

These are some of the Glass Cliff Candidates being put forward by the major parties at the upcoming election in very marginal or unwinnable seats.



And these are some of the women standing in safe seats on both sides of politics...



“We will be keeping a close eye on the election results. Almost two decades of research into the glass cliff tells us that women will not fare as well as their male counterparts at the ballot box. Especially Coalition candidates. This will not be because women can’t do politics, but rather because they are preselected in seats that are more risky and more precarious .”

Michelle Ryan
Director, Global Institute for Women’s Leadership



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Contact Us

Global Institute for Women's Leadership
13 Ellery Crescent, ACTON, ACT 2600
E giwl@anu.edu.au
W giwl.anu.edu.au



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