

AUSTRALIA



Gender equality, or having equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender, is a fundamental human right. It is also the foundation for a healthier, more productive, and more peaceful world.¹ Yet, with just 10 years left to fulfill the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2.8 billion girls and women live in countries failing or barely passing on gender equality-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²

The [Generation Equality Forum](#) presents a key moment to accelerate progress on gender equality before 2030. In the lead up to the Forum, a set of six “Action Coalitions” — multi-stakeholder partnerships — are being developed to deliver tangible results on (1) gender-based violence (GBV), (2) economic justice and rights, (3) bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), (4) feminist action for climate justice, (5) technology and innovation for gender equality, and (6) feminist movements and leadership.

Achieving the objectives of the Forum will not be possible without the right information and data. Evidence drives policy, public opinion, and people to action. Without it, citizens and development actors cannot make informed decisions about policies and programs. To improve data and accountability for girls and women, [Women Deliver](#) partnered with [Focus 2030](#) and the [Development Engagement Lab](#) to survey citizens’ attitudes and expectations on the six Action Coalitions in 17 countries.ⁱ

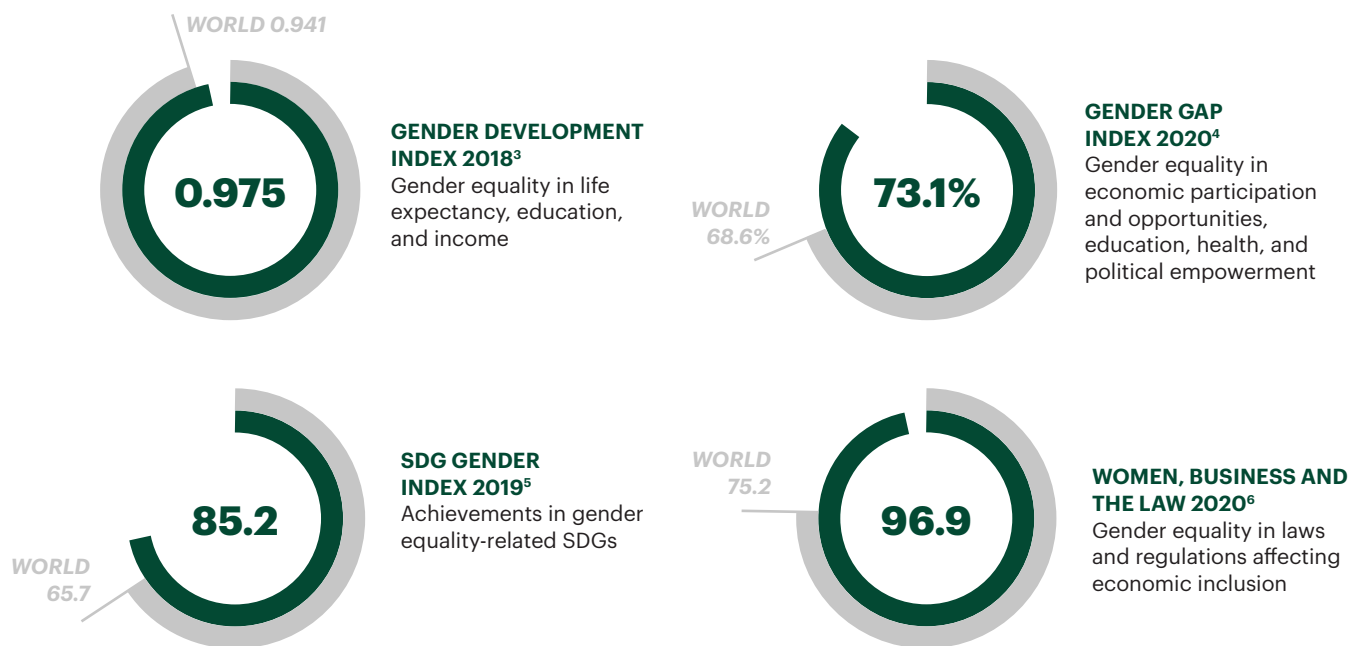
This document presents key results of the survey in Australia. It is intended to inform civil society’s actions and orient decision-makers towards gender equality topics that their citizens would like to see more engagement and investments in by governments.

FIGURE 1 MILESTONES FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA



ⁱ This note captures findings of a public perception survey on gender equality for Australia. This work is co-led by Women Deliver and Focus 2030. The survey was carried out in 17 countries: Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Colombia, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Switzerland, Tunisia, and the United States of America. It focuses on public perceptions on gender equality and the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions. Approximately 1,000 respondents in each country were surveyed in July/August 2020. Demographic data collected included: gender, age, income level, education level, last vote in national elections, and region of residency. In Australia, 1,007 respondents were surveyed, including 517 females and 490 males, and zero respondents who identified “in another way.” Of the 1,007 respondents, 128 were aged 18 to 24, 371 were aged 25 to 44, 246 were aged 45 to 59, and 262 were aged 60 and older. To access additional findings for the 17 surveyed countries, including the full report and survey questionnaire, please visit: <http://womendeliver.org/citizens-call-for-a-gender-equal-world/>.

FIGURE 2 RESULTS IN KEY GENDER INDICES



TOPLINE SURVEY FINDINGS

Gender equality is a prominent topic in Australia: 70 percent of respondents, **76 percent of female respondents and 62 percent of male, say that gender equality is important to them personally.** This sentiment is particularly prevalent among surveyed respondents aged 18 to 24 (80 percent) and becomes slightly less common with age, concerning 61 percent of those aged 60 and older. Further, gender equality appears equally important to respondents living in both rural and in urban areas (70 percent).ⁱⁱ

Over the past few decades, Australia has taken significant steps to promote gender equality (Figure 1) and performs better than the world average in international measures of progress toward gender equality (Figure 2). The survey results confirm that a majority of the sampled population also perceive progress: 59 percent

of respondents consider that gender equality is “better” in the country today than it was 25 years ago. However, a quarter of respondents (26 percent) consider it is “more or less the same,” and 10 percent report it has “worsened.”

The survey also reveals that 53 percent of respondents, **60 percent of female and 45 percent of male, believe their government should do more in promoting gender equality in the country.** Overall, 42 percent of respondents believe “reforming laws to promote equality between women and men and end discrimination against women” should be a primary action, followed by “conducting regular reviews of progress in the pursuit of equality” (31 percent) and “focusing efforts on marginalized girls and women to ensure no one is left behind” (for example, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, refugees and migrants, and women living with disabilities) (29 percent).

ⁱⁱ Acknowledging that girls and women belonging to ethnic minorities are often disproportionately affected by gender inequalities, the survey collected information on respondents’ self-identification to particular ethnic groups (Aboriginal, African, East and Southeast Asian, Latin American, Maori and Pacific Islander, South Asian, West Asian and Arab, White, and Other). However, data are not statistically significant for analysis.

Surveyed respondents consider that **gender inequalities in Australia are primarily linked to economic justice and rights**. When asked about the main reasons why women may not be equal to men in their country, both female and male respondents most commonly cite the unequal division of *“unpaid care, domestic work, and parental responsibilities”* at home (41 percent) and *“different employment opportunities”* (35 percent).

The COVID-19 crisis may affect the progress achieved toward gender equality: 31 percent of female respondents, compared to 24 percent of males, declare their *“time doing housework has*

increased” during the pandemic. In addition, although 68 percent of respondents think the government’s response to support people has met the needs of women and men equally, 23 percent of all respondents fear that gender inequalities will rise as a consequence of the pandemic.

In its [Beijing+25 National Review Report](#), Australia highlights two of the Action Coalition themes as priority areas for 2019 to 2024: eliminating violence against women and girls and promoting women’s digital and financial inclusion.⁷

FINDINGS RELATED TO THE GENERATION EQUALITY ACTION COALITION THEMES

When asked to select the three most important areas, out of a list of pre-identified options, that the government should focus on to improve equality between women and men, **62 percent of respondents identify ending gender-based violence, 59 percent cite economic justice and rights, and 49 percent choose feminist movements and leadership**. Meanwhile, 34 percent of respondents consider investments in technology and innovation for gender equality a priority area, 26 percent mention SRHR, and 17 percent identify the promotion of feminist action for climate justice. Male and female respondents agree on the order of importance of each theme.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Ending GBV is the most often mentioned Action Coalition area to improve gender equality.

Almost two in three respondents (62 percent) believe their government should eliminate GBV to promote equality in the country.

Regardless of gender, age, education level, income, or place of residence, they universally agree on the first action the government should take to fight this issue: **“increase**

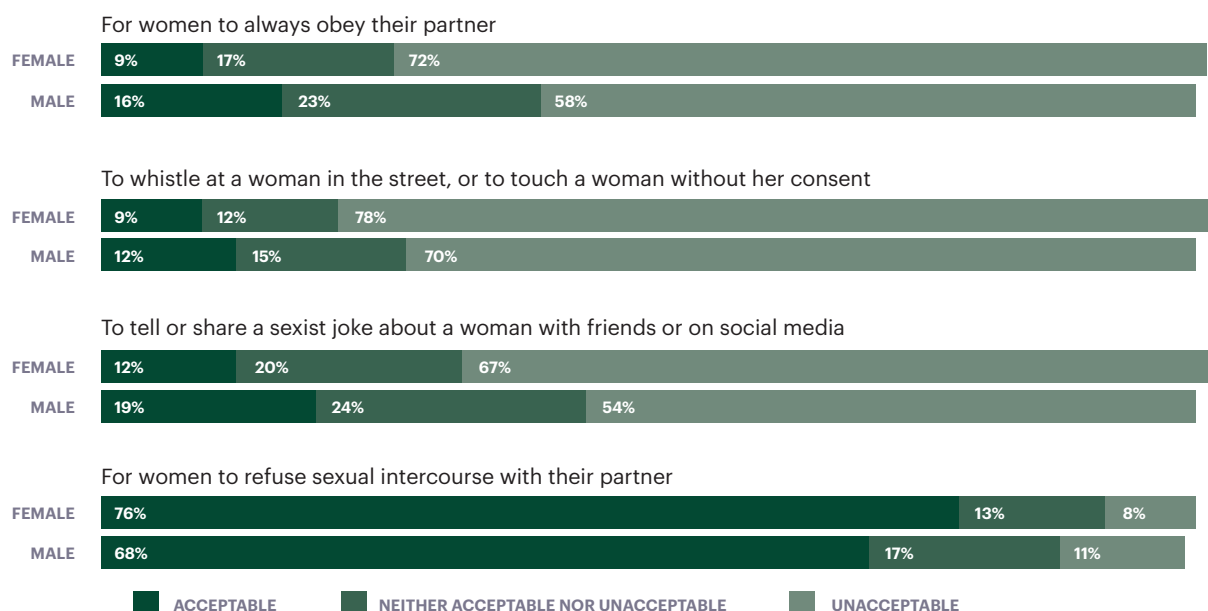
accountability for physical and sexual crimes against women” (58 percent). The second and third most commonly cited solutions across all socioeconomic categories are *“funding programs to support women who have experienced violence”* (42 percent) and *“ending traditional practices that are harmful to girls and women, such as child marriage or female genital mutilation”* (41 percent). For female respondents aged 18 to 44, and those from the highest income quintile of the population, it is more urgent to *“address the unequal balance of power between women and men at home”* than to eliminate traditional practices.

Some respondents, especially male, continue to hold harmful views linked with the persistence of GBV (Figure 3). In Australia, three out of 10 women have suffered physical violence, and 82 percent of women who have experienced violence perpetrated by their current partner have not reported it to the police.⁸ Only between nine and 15 percent of victims of sexual assault report to the police, and, of those, just one in 10 results in a conviction.⁹ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

FIGURE 3 NORMS AROUND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



HOW ACCEPTABLE OR UNACCEPTABLE DO YOU PERSONALLY THINK THE FOLLOWING THINGS ARE:



Deltapoll survey conducted online using the quota method. Results analyzed by Focus 2030. Survey conducted between July 24, 2020 and August 3, 2020 among a representative sample of 1,007 adults in Australia. Weighted data - Margin of error: ± 3%. For more information on the methodology: Focus.org

are 45 times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to experience domestic and family violence.¹⁰ Improving perpetrator accountability is one of the key objectives of the [National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children \(2010–2022\)](#)¹¹ and [National Domestic Violence Order Scheme](#).¹²

ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS

According to 59 percent of respondents, 67 percent of female and 50 percent of male, their government should focus on realizing economic justice and rights to advance equality in the country. In order to improve women’s broader economic opportunities and decision-making powers, 47 percent of respondents think the government should **“achieve equal pay for women and men,”** 40 percent think that it should *“prevent violence and sexual*

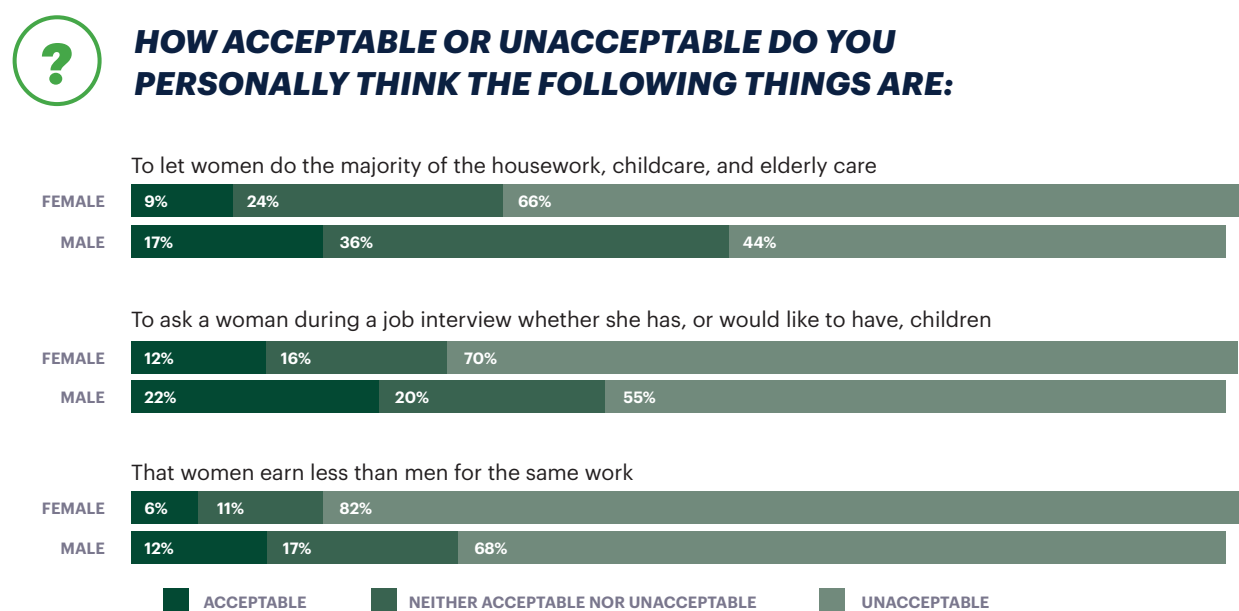
harassment in the workplace,” and 31 percent think that it should *“guarantee social protection and decent working conditions for women in low paying jobs.”* These ranked priorities remain the same for female and male respondents and across education levels. Respondents aged 18 to 24 (41 percent) place a higher importance on *“increasing the number of women in leadership roles”* as a government responsibility than paying special attention to women in low paying jobs. While respondents across all socioeconomic categories think the unequal division of domestic and parental responsibilities is the primary cause of gender disparities in the country, only 19 percent declare the government should *“recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work between women and men”* to improve women’s broader economic opportunities.

The Australian labor market remains horizontally and vertically segregated,¹³ and the average gender pay gap is estimated at 13.9 percent, although it is significantly higher in some sectors.¹⁴ **The survey uncovers discriminatory attitudes, which likely contribute to the persistence of inequalities:** some respondents still think that it is “acceptable” for women to do the majority of care and domestic work (13 percent), to ask a woman during a job interview whether she has, or would like to have, children (17 percent), or that women earn less income than men for the same work (8 percent). **Discriminatory attitudes are more prevalent among male respondents than among female respondents and in rural environments compared to urban areas** (Figure 4). However, age does not influence male or female respondents’ opinions significantly.

FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP

Surveyed respondents would like to see more women in decision-making positions. For 24 percent of respondents, and as many as one in three respondents aged 18 to 24, one of the reasons women are not equal to men in the country is their under-representation in politics. There is no regulated quota or other compulsory measure to promote women’s participation in politics.¹⁵ Just over 37 percent of parliamentarians,¹⁶ and 27 percent of ministers, are women.¹⁷ The survey reveals that **47 percent of respondents “agree” that imposing gender quotas in all political decision-making bodies is a good way to advance equality**, 24 percent “disagree,” and 25 percent “neither agree nor disagree.” Support is higher among women (56 percent “agree”) than men (36 percent) and decreases with age. On average, respondents across all socioeconomic categories support the measure, although men aged 45 and older and those belonging to the

FIGURE 4 OPINIONS ON WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

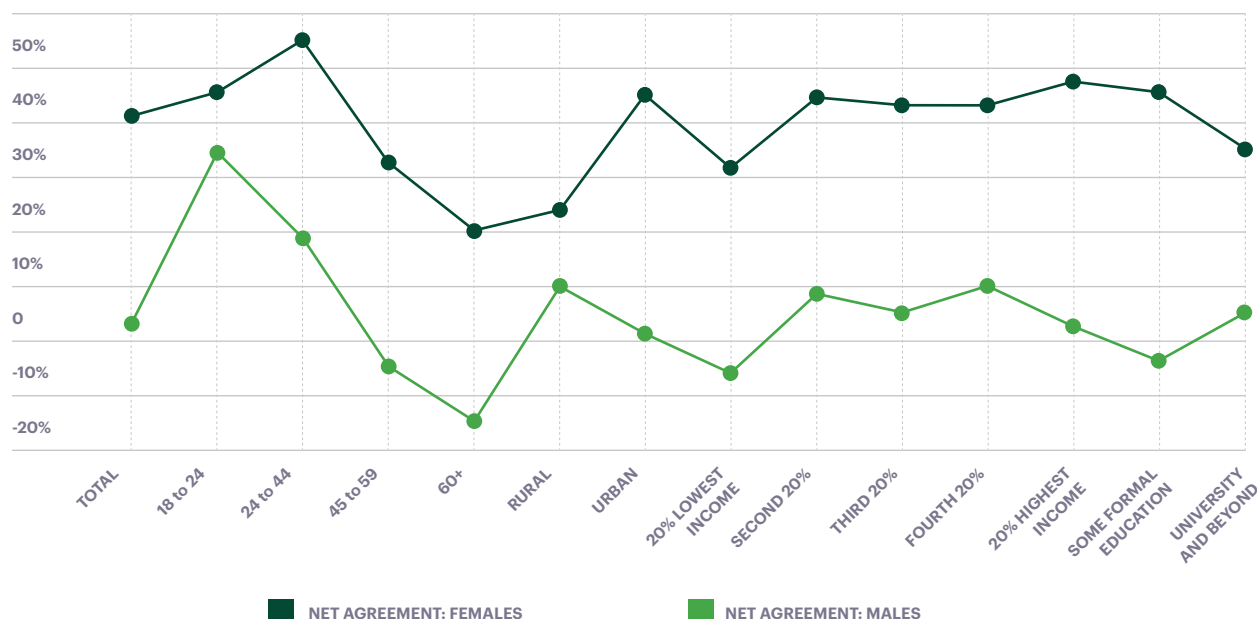


Deltapoll survey conducted online using the quota method. Results analyzed by Focus 2030. Survey conducted between July 24, 2020 and August 3, 2020 among a representative sample of 1,007 adults in Australia. Weighted data - Margin of error: ± 3%. For more information on the methodology: [Focus2030.org](https://focus2030.org).

FIGURE 5 OPINIONS ON GENDER QUOTAS



Imposing gender quotas, that is, having a proportion of seats for women in all political decision-making bodies, is a good way to advance gender equality in Australia



The net agreement rate is obtained by subtracting the proportion of respondents who disagreed from the proportion of respondents who agreed. Deltapoll survey conducted online using the quota method. Results analyzed by Focus2030. Survey conducted between July 24, 2020 and August 3, 2020 among a representative sample of 1,007 adults in Australia. Weighted data - Margin of error: ± 3%. For more information on the methodology: [Focus2030.org](https://focus2030.org).

lowest income quintile have mixed opinions (Figure 5).

For **49 percent of respondents, improving women’s participation and leadership in politics and cultural and social movements** is one of the three most important areas the government should focus on to improve gender equality in the country. In order to achieve this, 41 percent believe the government should “*support women’s political leadership and participation,*” 38 percent would like to see gender-balanced legislative and government bodies, and 32 percent are in favor of an “*equal representation of men and women on boards of companies.*”

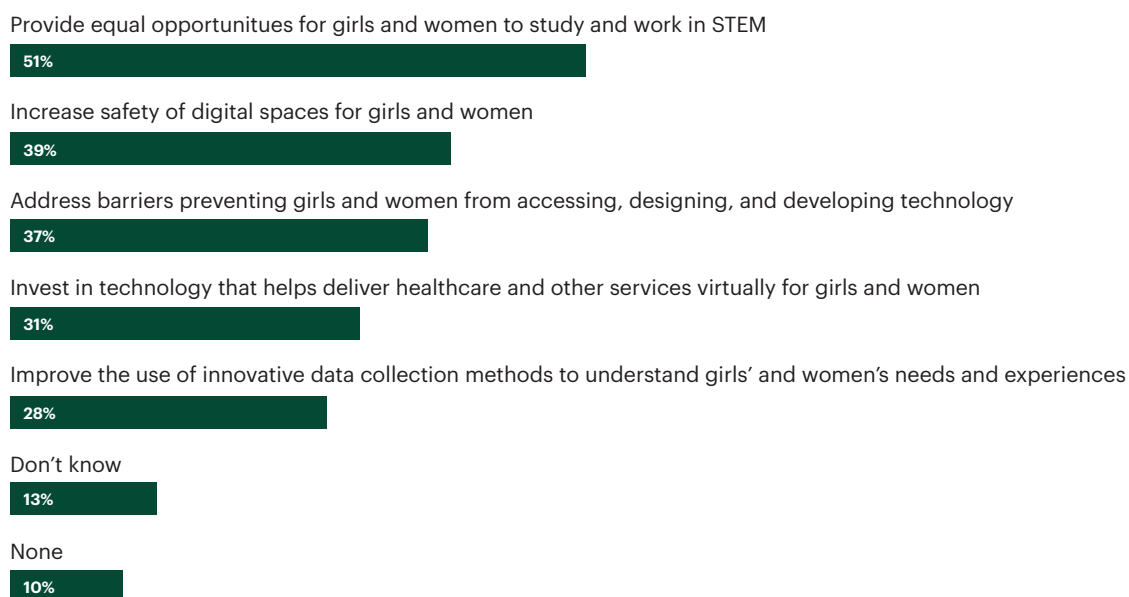
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

One in three respondents (34 percent) believe investing in technology and innovation should be a priority to improve equality between women and men. In order to promote gender-sensitive technology and innovation, **half of respondents (51 percent) cite the provision of “equal opportunities for girls and women to study and work in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)”** (Figure 6). Linking back to the importance of the GBV theme, the second most cited action (39 percent) is “*increasing the safety of digital spaces for girls and women,*” followed by “*addressing barriers preventing girls and women from accessing, designing, and*

FIGURE 6 ACTIONS ON TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY



WHICH ACTIONS, IF ANY, SHOULD YOUR GOVERNMENT TAKE TO PROMOTE THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA?



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developing technology" (37 percent). People from all socioeconomic backgrounds are rather unanimous on these prioritized solutions, although respondents aged 25 to 44 (36 percent) and people from the lowest income quintile of the population (38 percent) also show support for *"investments in technology that helps deliver healthcare and other services virtually for girls and women."* For 39 percent of respondents aged 18 to 24, it would also be important to *"improve the use of innovative data collection methods to understand girls' and women's needs and experiences."*

While Australia has one of the world's highest percentages of women working in tech companies at 28 percent, women and girls continue to be under-represented in the STEM

sector.¹⁸ In 2016, they represented 14 percent of engineering and related technologies undergraduate course completions and 10 percent of vocational education course completions.¹⁹ They represent 14 percent of STEM-qualified occupations and 29 percent of the academic research workforce in STEM fields. In addition, their representation at senior levels in most STEM industries is below 30 percent.²⁰ Government initiatives to address this gender imbalance include the [Women in STEM Decadal Plan \(2019\)](#),²¹ the [Advancing Women in STEM Strategy \(2019\)](#),²² and the [STEM Equity Monitor \(2020\)](#).²³

BODILY AUTONOMY AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

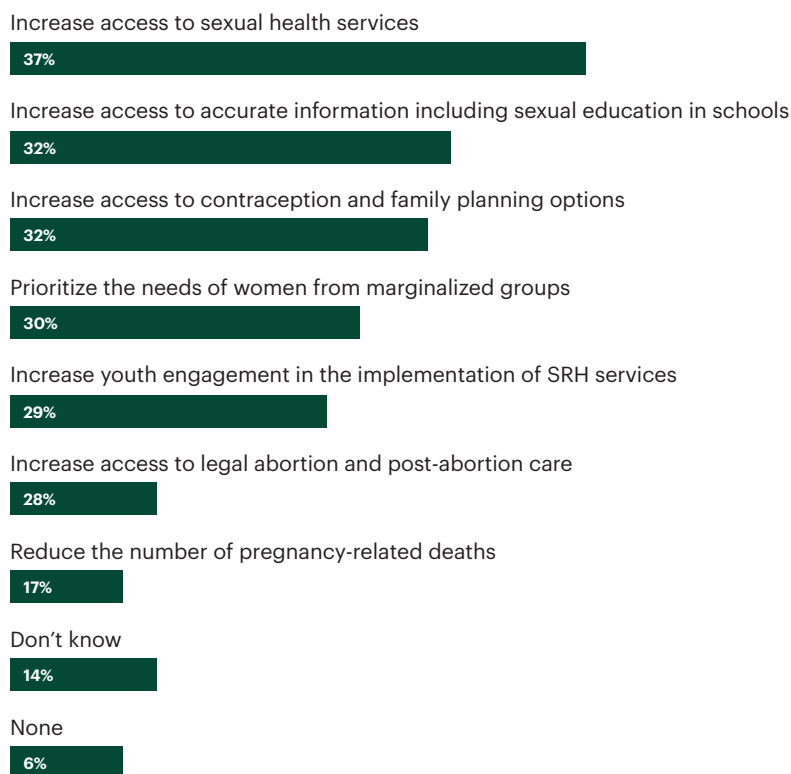
When asked about the main reasons for gender inequalities in Australia from a list of options, 15 percent of respondents selected to the different levels of control women and men have over their bodies. **One in four (25 percent) respondents named “providing access to contraception and family planning, good maternal health, or sex education in schools” as one of the three governmental priorities**

to improve equality between women and men. This level of perceived importance is common among all respondents, regardless of their gender, place of residence, income, or education levels. However, support for SRHR decreases with age, from 37 percent of respondents aged 18 to 24 to 16 percent of those aged 60 and older.

When asked about the actions the government should take to improve women’s SRHR, respondents do not clearly agree on priorities (Figure 7). Across all socioeconomic groups, over a third of respondents (37 percent, and

FIGURE 7 OPINIONS ON SRHR

WHICH ACTIONS, IF ANY, SHOULD YOUR GOVERNMENT TAKE IN ORDER TO IMPROVE WOMEN’S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN AUSTRALIA?



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up to 53 percent of respondents aged 18 to 24) identified **“increasing access to sexual health services** (for example, prevention, testing, and treatment options for sexually transmitted infections)” as a priority. “Increasing access to accurate information, including sexual education in schools” (32 percent) also appears important, especially for the youngest respondents (cited by 44 percent of respondents 18 to 24, compared to 31 percent or less among other age groups). Additionally, 32 percent of respondents stress the importance of “increasing access to contraception and family planning options,” as well as “prioritizing the needs of women from marginalized groups (for example, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ people, refugees, and migrants)” (30 percent).

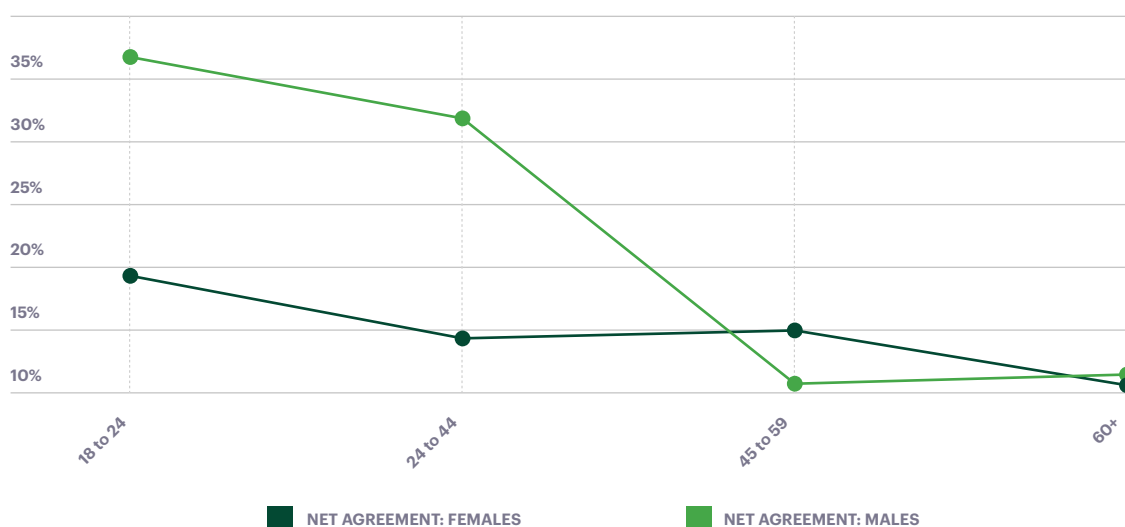
Maternal, sexual, and reproductive health has been a priority under the National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030.²⁴ The adolescent

birth rate, at 10 births per 1,000 adolescents aged 15 to 19, has been steadily decreasing for the past years and is below the world average (41 births per 1,000 adolescents aged 15 to 19); the proportion of married or in-union women who have an unmet need for family planning is in line with the world average of 11 percent.²⁵ However, national averages mask disparities within the country. Women with disabilities, women living in rural areas, single women, migrant and refugee women, among others, face significant barriers to access SRH services and face discrimination in the healthcare system.²⁶ The survey reveals that nine percent of female respondents “have had difficulty accessing their chosen method of contraception,” and six percent “had difficulty accessing abortion and post-abortion care.” Abortion is legal in most states and territories, although it remains restricted in South Australia.²⁷

FIGURE 8 FEMINIST CLIMATE JUSTICE AND AGE



Promote women’s participation in climate change action is one of the top 3 priorities



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FEMINIST ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Being in the Asia Pacific region, which is home to 40 percent of natural disasters and 84 percent of people affected by natural disasters worldwide, Australia faces significant impacts from climate change.²⁸ Survey respondents seem well aware of this situation since 29 percent of them believe climate change and the environment are among the most important issues facing their country at the present time. Yet, only 17 percent of respondents believe their government should promote women's participation in climate change action among the top three priority actions to improve gender equality. This opinion is more frequent among male respondents (21 percent) than female (15 percent), and it becomes less common with age (from 23 percent of respondents aged 18 to 24 to 11 percent of those aged 60 and older) (Figure 8).

In terms of actions the Australian government can take to promote feminist action for climate justice, 44 percent of respondents believe their government should ***“promote the training and hiring of women in jobs related to climate change (for example, clean energy and technology).”*** This action is the most cited across all genders, age groups, income and education levels, except among people living in rural areas, who are more likely to support *“increased funding for women-led organizations that are working to fight climate change.”* Respondents also think their government should promote a greater participation of girls and women in the development of solutions to tackle climate change (36 percent). Overall, however, this is the Action Coalition area in which people seem most uncertain, with 17 percent of respondents selecting the option *“do not know”* how to promote women's participation in climate action.

The Australian Government has committed to taking domestic and international action to respond to climate change.²⁹ Under the [Paris Agreement](#), Australia has committed to reduce

emissions by 26 to 28 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 and advocated for the inclusion of gender in the Agreement. However, there are questions about whether Australia is on track to meet these commitments and how it proposes to meet them, and a considerable body of opinion that the commitments are inadequate.³⁰ During the 25th Convention of Parties in Madrid in 2019, 62 percent of Australian delegates were women.³¹ The participation of Indigenous women in all aspects of climate action should be strengthened, given that Indigenous populations are disproportionately impacted by climate change. Indigenous populations in Australia are leading local actions against climate change through the creation of their own Climate Adaptation Strategies, formation of alliances, sharing traditional knowledge, and driving governmental accountability.³² For example, climate activism in the Torres Strait community resulted in the Australian Government promising AUD \$25 million in climate adaptation spending for their community.³³

FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Even if eliminating gender inequality is perceived as less pressing than funding for gender equality, respondents support increased funding. When asked about the most important issues facing their country at the present time, only five percent of respondents identify *“inequality between men and women,”* after *“the economy”* (62 percent), *“global diseases and pandemics”* (59 percent), *“health”* (44 percent), or *“climate change and the environment”* (29 percent). However, the survey reveals that **55 percent of respondents (59 percent of women and 51 percent of men) believe their government should increase its funding for gender equality in Australia.** This measure is particularly popular among respondents aged 44 and younger (63 percent), compared to respondents aged 45 and older (48 percent). There is no large difference between education and income levels or place of residence.

Australia was the first country to pilot gender-responsive budgeting in 1984, but it has not been applied consistently since then.³⁴ One

in four respondents (26 percent) think the government should “consider the needs and interests of girls and women when developing government spending budgets,” a proportion stable across all socioeconomic categories.

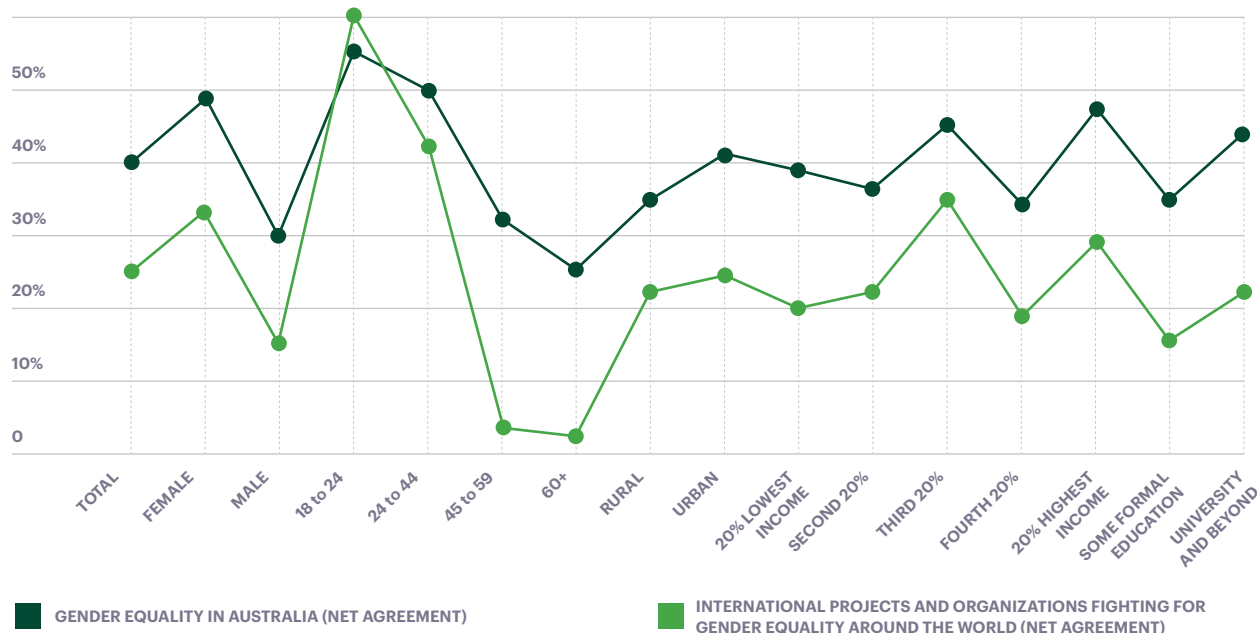
Regarding Official Development Assistance (ODA), **53 percent of respondents “agree” that achieving gender equality is essential to end poverty in all countries, and 46 percent believe the government should increase its funding for international projects and organizations fighting for gender equality around the world** (Figure 9). Younger respondents are more supportive of this

measure (67 percent of respondents aged 18 to 24 and 56 percent of respondents aged 25 to 44) than respondents aged 45 and older (33 percent). Australia’s ODA as a percentage of Gross National Income has been in decline since 2011–12 as a result of significant cuts to the international development budget and currently sits at an historic low of 0.21 percent,³⁵ well short of the global target of 0.7 percent. Despite this, Australia has tended to place a high priority on gender inclusion through its international development program.³⁶ In 2018, the country committed 56 percent of its bilateral allocable aid to gender equality and women’s empowerment, as either a principal or significant objective (up from 50 percent in 2017).³⁷ However less than

FIGURE 9 NET SUPPORT FOR INCREASED GENDER EQUALITY FUNDING



On the occasion of the Gender Equality Forum, my government should increase its funding for...



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one percent of funding was channeled through women's equality organizations,³⁸ despite evidence that demonstrates that

autonomous feminist movements are the most effective mechanism for change towards gender equality outcomes.³⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ➔ **Eliminate gender gaps in the economic sphere, notably through addressing the wage gap by establishing the legal right to disclose salaries to increase pay transparency and ending violence and harassment in workplaces, in line with the [Power to Prevent Statement](#), which highlights procedural, legal, support and reporting strategies to end workplace harassment.**
- ➔ **Implement concrete measures to recognize, reduce, and redistribute, as well as value, unpaid care and domestic work between men and women.**
- ➔ **Provide all women with legal protection from all forms of gender-based violence, enforce measures for safe reporting, hold perpetrators of gender-based violence accountable, and encourage behavior change.** Efforts should pay particular attention to Indigenous girls and women. Improve systems for support, redress, and justice, including providing training to police officers and health and justice professionals and funding to specialist women's services.
- ➔ **Implement gender quotas or reserved seats to ensure women's equal representation in public decision-making bodies.** Create incentives or voluntary quotas to stimulate more women's leadership on boards, in management positions, and as CEOs, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as information and communication technologies.
- ➔ **Support women-led civil society organizations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in their efforts to address climate change, including their participation and leadership in formal climate change decision-making processes.**
- ➔ **Deliver comprehensive SRHR services, including care for survivors of sexual violence, to marginalized populations, in particular for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, girls and women living with disabilities, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, refugees and migrants, and youth.**
- ➔ **Commit to implementing national gender equality policy performance indicators and gender-responsive budgeting, and systematically examine the gender-differentiated effects of national and foreign policies and programs.**
- ➔ **The survey revealed that although most men believe gender equality is important, they remain more likely than women to support harmful gender norms.** The government should not overlook the opportunity to engage all of the population, including boys and men, to accelerate progress toward equality. The government can use tools presented in [Our Watch's Prevention Handbook](#), which engages diverse stakeholders across settings to prevent violence against women by promoting gender equality.
- ➔ **Increase the proportion of Australia's ODA, which is directed to autonomous, constituency-led feminist movements as key drivers of transformative and sustainable change.**

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