

Girls and Young Women in Leadership

GGA Position Statement

Our Vision

Girl Guides around Australia want a world where girls and young women have equitable access to leadership opportunities, without the stigma that often comes along with women in leadership roles.

Statement

Communities thrive when decision-makers reflect the communities they represent. However, it is rare for girls and young women to see people like themselves in leadership positions. Social norms and stereotypes related to both gender and age, often act as barriers to young women assuming leadership positions.

Young women are underrepresented in most decision-making in workplaces, governments, organisations and more.

- In Australia, women make up less than a quarter of CEO positions and less than 20% of board chairs are women.¹
- Globally, women hold less than 30% of position in parliament,² while young people hold less than 3%³. Less than 1% of parliamentarians are young women.⁴
- 76% of young people under the age of 30 don't feel heard by their elected officials.⁵

Girls Say

Girls say that they should have the same opportunities to learn and develop leadership skills without being held back by stigma or stereotypes that often dictate what they can and cannot do. Only 37% of women feel that society supports female leaders⁶. 46% of girls and women feel their gender could disadvantage them when seeking leadership opportunities.⁷ Girls and young women say they should not be held to a higher standard than their male counterparts.

¹ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard*, <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022-23%20WGEA%20Gender%20Equality%20Scorecard.pdf>

² Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024, *Global and Regional Averages of Women in National Parliaments*, <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages>

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024, *Data on Age: Global and Regional Averages*, <https://data.ipu.org/age-brackets-aggregate/>

⁴ Be Seen Be Heard: Understanding Young People's Political Participation, 2023, https://beseenbeheardcampaign.com/static/media/UN_REPORT_TBS_ACCESSIBLE.b891cbcf84c773f78e5.pdf

⁵ Be Seen Be Heard: Understanding Young People's Political Participation, 2023, https://beseenbeheardcampaign.com/static/media/UN_REPORT_TBS_ACCESSIBLE.b891cbcf84c773f78e5.pdf

⁶ University of Exeter, 2018, *Leadership and Opportunity for Young Women: WAGGGS Study internal findings*, as quoted in: *WAGGGS Statement on Girls' Leadership*: <https://www.waggs.org/en/resources/statement-on-girls-leadership/>

⁷ University of Exeter, 2018, *Leadership and Opportunity for Young Women: WAGGGS Study internal findings*, as quoted in: *WAGGGS Statement on Girls' Leadership*:

I would like to use my voice as a young woman to do what I can to try to raise issues about our world and maybe make a difference to someone's life. - Olivia, 14

I would like to see greater female participation in politics. Local communities should establish new committees for young women to express their views openly and create opportunities for women to learn new skills. - Lucy, 16

Just because today's parliament is still considered as a male dominated profession, does not mean tomorrow's parliament has to be. - Rhiannon, 18

Why is GGA commenting?

Empowering girls and young women to discover their potential as leaders of their world is what Girl Guides is all about. We're here to help girls identify and enhance their leadership potential, whether that be at a local, national, or international level.

What Are Girl Guides Doing?

In Australia and around the world, Girl Guides are embracing leadership training and opportunities

In our Girl Guide Units

Through the Australian Guide Program, we create safe spaces and non-formal education opportunities for girls and young women to develop their values and practice leadership. Our Girl-Led program empowers girls to make decisions and allows them to choose a path forward they'd like to see. For many Girl Guides, their first opportunity to see themselves as a leader and demonstrate their capabilities is as a patrol leader of a small group of their peers. We offer various tools and initiatives such as the WAGGGS Leadership Mindsets, leadership training and opportunities to help girls identify and build their leadership potential.

In Our Organisation

At a national level, Girl Guides Australia aims to have at least two young women on every committee and board, giving young people opportunities to put their leadership skills into practice. The GGA Young Women's Forum allows the Girl Guides Australia Board to consult on board matters that may impact Young Women, while providing an ongoing insight into the barrier's girls and young women still face across Australia.

Around the World

Young women in Guiding regularly have opportunities to expand their leadership capacity through participation in global leadership training and advocacy opportunities such as the Juliette Low Seminar, Helen Storrow Seminars, and WAGGGS Advocacy Champions. These transformational leadership development opportunities empower young women as change makers and role models and help them build global peer networks.

Call to Action

Decision-makers should:

- Create and facilitate opportunities for Girls and Young Women to be a meaningful part of the decision-making process.
- Implement measures to address attitudes, behaviour change and fair portrayal of women in leadership positions.

- Should invest in young women's emerging leadership programs, to provide skills, networks and mentorship to girls to become leaders across government, business and civic life.

Girl Guide adult volunteers should:

- Treat girls as the experts in their own lives and provide opportunities for:
 - o Consultation: input and ideas are gathered from youth members to support and inform decisions made by adult members
 - o Collaboration: decisions are made jointly between youth and adult members
 - o Youth-led: initiatives and decisions come from youth members, with the support of adult members

Girl Guides should:

- Play a meaningful role in shaping their learning experience in Girl Guides.
- Practice their leadership in their units, schools, communities and beyond!

Everyone Should:

- Recognise and address prejudices regarding young women's leadership.
- Call out scrutiny that their male counterparts would not receive.
- Help girls and young women identify role models and aspire to leadership.
- Create an environment that enables girls and young women to engage in leadership positions.
- Provide spaces that allow for meaningful participation of young women by ensuring their access to the decision-making processes and leadership positions.

Supporting Research

<https://www.waggs.org/en/resources/statement-on-girls-leadership/>

<https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/australias-gender-equality-scorecard>

Be Seen Be Heard: Understanding Young People's Political Participation, 2023,

https://beseenbeheardcampaign.com/static/media/UN_REPORT_TBS_ACCESSIBLE.b891cbcfa84c773f78e5.pdf