



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

# She Speaks 2014

A SURVEY OF GIRLS AND  
YOUNG WOMEN AGED 15-30  
YEARS

## ISSR RESEARCH REPORT

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# Acronyms

ISSR	Institute for Social Science Research
ReMaSS	Research Methods and Social Statistics
SACHRU	South Australia Community Health and Research Unit
UQ	The University of Queensland
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

## Executive Summary

Women continue to face a number of obstacles and barriers in achieving positions of leadership in Australia. To better understand these issues and devise programs and strategies to inform young women, the YWCA has undertaken She Speaks surveys in 2011 and 2013. These surveys have provided YWCA with a deep understanding of the challenges faced by women in embarking on roles of leadership. It also serves as a springboard for programs, policy and advocacy within and beyond YWCAs in Australia.

In the 2014, the Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR) at the University of Queensland was contracted by YWCA Australia to work in partnership in providing methodological improvements for the survey and ensuring that the survey had ongoing relevance and usefulness to YWCA Australia moving forward.

Like the previous surveys, the 2014 She Speaks survey aimed to capture the voices of girls and young women aged between 15 and 30 years old, and explored a range of social and personal issues and concepts through an online survey. However, whereas the previous surveys were targeted at specific geographical areas in Australia, the 2014 She Speaks survey was expanded to cover every state and territory in Australia. The 2014 She Speaks survey was therefore one of the largest annual surveys collecting information from young women about their attitudes, perceptions and experiences of leadership.

A total of 1643 participants completed the survey. Participants were recruited using the extensive network of YWCA member associations and partner organisations. Further, a categorised list from an online panel provider was used to supplement this sampling strategy, by ensuring that girls and young women who had no existing contact with YWCA were included for participation in the She Speaks survey. The main findings from the survey are that

- a) 58 percent of participants consider themselves to be a leader in their family, school, community and/or workplace.
- b) 71 percent of participating girls and young women would want to be leaders in future.
- c) In their leadership aspirations, the majority of young women stated that the things that would make them become leaders in the future are confidence, completing their education and having a mentor for guidance.

In addition, the participants identified that there were still some lingering gender related issues related to work, equal pay, family, gender stereotypes and body image that they were concerned with. These issues were found to differ according to the age of participants. Girls and younger women identified experiencing sexism and media pressure and social expectations to conform to certain, sometimes unhealthy, body images. On the other hand, the

older age brackets in the survey were concerned with family and work life balance, the cost of childcare and inequality in the workplace. While girls and young women are facing some different issues, it would appear that these issues are all concerned with gender equality. This has obvious implications for YWCA Australia in terms of the type of programs and services that are developed in future.

# 1 Introduction

YWCA Australia is the national association of YWCAs in Australia, formed in 1907, and is part of the World YWCA movement. This women-led association is guided by the aim to achieve positive change for girls and women, and strives for greater awareness of women's equality. It provides advocacy and delivers programs and services for women, families and communities that:

- develop the leadership and collective power of women and girls;
- support individuals, their families and communities at critical times; and
- promote gender equality and community strengthening.

YWCA Australia provides community services through a diverse range of community schemes and programs that target more than a quarter of a million people each year in over 270 sites located throughout rural, urban and regional Australia. Internationally, YCWA Australia are part of the global network of women leading social and economic change in 125 member countries, and have been at the forefront of raising the status of women for almost two centuries.

YWCA Australia commissioned the University of Queensland's Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) to undertake a survey of girls and young women aged 15 to 30 years, the She Speaks survey, to capture the voices of girls and young women across Australia by exploring a range of concepts and issues, both personal and social.

This was the third such survey, with the inaugural She Speaks survey developed in 2011, and released in 2012. This survey focused on the state of South Australia, and was conducted in partnership between YWCA Adelaide and the South Australia Community Health and Research Unit (SACHRU). The 2011 She Speaks survey was designed to capture the voices of girls and young women and was administered online in South Australia. The positive response enabled the SACHRU to expand the next survey (conducted between October 2012 and February 2013) to include the regions of Queensland, Victoria, the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia, in addition to South Australia.

The second She Speaks survey was developed to reflect the interests of the participating local YCWAs (of Adelaide, Queensland, Victoria, and Canberra), as well as those of national YWCA Australia. The results of the second survey, released in 2013 highlighted a number of themes and issues. Therefore, for the third survey in 2014, the intention was for the survey to be conducted in all mainland states and territories to allow for the capturing of voices from a broad range of young women throughout Australia. A call for expressions of interest was sent out seeking university partners for the implementation of the 2014 She Speaks Survey. The main tasks were to:

- a) review the proposed survey methodology;
- b) prepare an online survey for email distribution, and a hard copy format for other forms of distribution;
- c) liaise with YWCA Australia to develop an appropriate state-based sampling strategy, within the budget;
- d) develop a single descriptive report, based on analysis of national data.

ISSR was engaged as the university research partner to conduct a review of the proposed methodology, in consultation with the YWCA Australia, acting as the voice of all local YWCA organisations in the participating states and territories.

The approach to the delivery of the 2014 survey by ISSR was to

- a) have an improved sampling strategy by supplementing the current snowball sampling approach of YCWA member associations with an online panel provider;
- b) ensure appropriate ethics approval was obtained prior to delivery of the survey, in particular regarding to interviewing girls under the age of 18 years;
- c) provide a flexible delivery of the survey with it being compatible on mobile phones, tablets, as well as PCs, so that the survey reached as broad a range of participants as possible.

By so doing, YWCA Australia were able to continue to manage the participant recruitment and data collection. However, the sampling approach proposed by ISSR using the YWCA contacts, in addition to a categorised list from an independent panel provider, ensured it was possible to address the biases in the survey results and achieve improved outcomes. The enhanced sampling approach was known to not result in a truly random sample, but it was noted that by using the panel provider, there was engagement in the She Speaks survey by girls and young women who had no existing connection to YWCA, and different social backgrounds. ISSR made use of the advanced research infrastructure for survey design and administration at its disposal and a number of steps were taken to design the survey to be available for completion via multiple platforms to support a broader reach and uptake.

The 2014 She Speaks Survey was live in time to celebrate the International Women's Day, on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The focus of the survey was on leadership and specifically women's attitudes and perceptions towards leadership. The questionnaire was therefore redesigned with this in mind, and included questions about experiences of leadership. This information is important in identifying the challenges facing girls and young women. Further it will assist YWCA Australia

in their future program planning and service delivery. This is particularly crucial with regards to YWCA Australia's commitment to fostering the next generation of women leaders.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 The She Speaks Survey Questionnaire

The initial She Speaks survey was developed in partnership between YWCA of Adelaide and SACHRU in 2011 and implemented in South Australia in 2012. In 2013, a slightly modified survey tool was used to survey girls and young women in Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland and Victoria, in addition to South Australia. To allow for comparability across the previous waves of the She Speaks survey, the current 2014 survey followed the same general framework with some changes mainly to reduce the scale. The survey questions were also redesigned to allow for people who had no existing association with YWCA to be included. This was accomplished through implementing a two-fold sampling strategy using a main sample of YWCA member associations and affiliate organisations, and an online panel sample from an independent panel provider.

The proposed 2014 survey tool was reviewed by ISSR in consultation with YWCA Australia to design effective survey questions that increase the validity of findings. Furthermore, the intention was to make the survey widely accessible throughout Australia with the view of expanding the geographical reach further from previous waves. For the first time every Australian State and Territory was included in the She Speaks survey. The survey was administered online through capturing information from interested participants. The recruitment of participants was done through active liaison with the local YWCAs who sent out links to the online survey to potential participants. Furthermore, to encourage survey uptake regular emails were sent out to remind people to engage with the survey. News items with links to the survey were placed on all the national and local YWCA websites, as well as those of partner organisations. In addition there was a widespread social media campaign through Facebook and Twitter, to promote the survey.

The final revised questionnaire comprised of 14 demographic questions and 20 questions regarding experiences and opinions of young women in Australia which included seven open-end questions. The survey tool finishes with an open-end feedback question and additional questions in case respondents wish to obtain project results after final results have been published.

Due to tight timeframes for ethics approvals and the target launching date, no survey pilot was able to be conducted. Instead the survey tool was tested in a soft launch on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> March as YWCA Australia had begun circulating the link to selected members and affiliates. The official launch of the survey was on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March, to coincide with International Women's Day. ISSR survey programming staff and YWCA personnel were on standby over the launch weekend to deal with any potential issues, regarding access and provide general user support. Further, preliminary data obtained on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March was checked to ensure faultless

functionality. Importantly, an open-ended question for feedback to obtain respondent feedback on survey usability, clarity and relevance and general content was included at the end of the survey. Since the time frame for the launch and delivery of the She Speaks prevented the optimal survey piloting strategy, this process served as an additional survey testing approach.

## 2.2 The Survey Administration

YWCA Australia distributed the survey link to their members through their member association contacts and social media activity. Members were further invited to distribute the link to peers. Respondents that were recruited through YWCA channels will be referred to as “main” respondents. In collaboration with YWCA Australia, ISSR aimed to enhance this “snowball” sampling approach that had been employed by YWCA Australia in previous years. This sampling strategy was supplemented with a categorised online research panel provided by Empowered Communications. The respondents that were recruited through this online panel provider will be referred to as the “panel”. Empowered Communications was selected from a list of three online providers, as part of the standard tendering process at the University of Queensland, and was chosen because they were able to meet the survey specifications set out in the brief, and deliver the sample in a cost effective manner.

While the survey distribution was managed by YWCA Australia, ISSR provided the survey in a format that was compatible with mobile phones and tablet PCs to ensure relevance to a broader range of respondents. This amendment to the survey distribution strategy was essential to ensure the survey was accessible to a younger audience whilst helping minimise sample bias by increasing reach and encouraging uptake. The questionnaire was programmed using ISSR’s professional in-house data collection tool to prevent errors such as misunderstanding skip logic, out-of-range responses, and multiple responses to single-response items. ISSR also provided email templates for the initial online contact as well as follow-up emails. Further, ISSR advised on an appropriate email distribution strategy, including timings for follow-up, with the aim of increasing response rates. YWCA Australia was responsible for sending out the survey and managing data collection. The aim was to achieve a minimum of 390 respondents in the mainland states and territories (i.e. roughly 2730 participants). Out of these, approximately 1000 respondents were to be sourced through the online panel lists to improve reliability. This online panel was tailored to meet the recruitment criteria of being female and in the specified age group. The panel provider, Empowered Communications, managed the recruitment by sending out invitations to participate in the She Speak survey to panellists who met the criteria. ISSR also liaised with the panel company to ensure that the final sample was broadly representative of the Australian population in the target demographic of the study.

**Table 1 Project timeline with the different processes**

Date	Process step
Monday 10th February	Project start
Thursday 5th March	Ethics application and approval
Friday 6th March	Soft launch of the survey
Sunday 9th March	Official launch of She Speaks survey on International Women's Day
Monday 17th March	Ethics amendment to include 15-17 year olds
Monday 28th April	Launch of survey for online panel respondents
Friday 30th May	Close of online panel survey
Friday 14th June	Close of main survey

## 2.3 Ethics process

The ethical issues in undertaking this research were considerable and ethical approval was required from the researchers' institution, the University of Queensland. As mentioned, the She Speaks survey is in its third iteration (with the first one run in 2011, second in 2012) and has asked questions from young girls and women aged 15-30 years old. To be able to monitor trends and influences of behaviour and attitudes it has been crucial to include young girls aged 15-17 years. This was critical since in addition to working with a vulnerable age group, some of the survey topics were of a sensitive nature with its focus on attitudes and beliefs around violence towards women, sexuality and reproductive health.

To obtain ethics approval for the conduct of the survey, the research had to be submitted for endorsement by a human ethics committee at the university who meet monthly. However, since the research involved conducting interviews with girls under 18 years old, we had to undergo special ethics approval for participants aged 15-17 years old. Because of the tight schedule in order to have the survey ready for launch in time for International Women's Day, it was decided upon discussion with YWCA Australia to first obtain ethical approval for those aged 18 years and above. A subsequent ethics request was submitted for review for the inclusion of those participants aged 15-17 years old, and this amendment was approved at a later date.

This meant that there were technically two questionnaires designed; one for participants under 18 years of age and another for those over 18 years old. ISSR had to have precautionary measures to ensure an age-appropriate survey implementation, because of the ethical implications of asking questions that were deemed to be on sensitive topics to under 18 year olds. Especially, questions on reproductive health and sexual violence were considered to be sensitive.

Therefore, the online survey was programmed in way that questions that are deemed age-inappropriate were not asked to under 18 year old participants. This was facilitated by asking the age of participants at the beginning, and then routing the questionnaire depending on the answer given. Furthermore, those that were under 15 years of age, who happened to access the survey via the website link were not able to complete the questionnaire online and were screened out. A similar routing was done for the online panel, but this time the panel provider sent out age-specific links supplied by ISSR to their members. Members were then redirected to the She Speaks survey website. This ensured that the research team retained the capability to restrict questions asked to different people depending on their age stated at the beginning of the questionnaire, and thereby manage the type of questions asked.

## **2.4 The Data Analysis**

Prior to statistical analysis data cleaning was conducted to ensure reliable results. It is an important step to verify that the data values are correct and conform to the set rules.

The quantitative analysis for the present report is characterised by descriptive statistics. STATA, a general-purpose statistical software package, was used for the fixed choice question data analysis. Section 3 of this report shows percentages and frequencies of the quantitative questions.

The qualitative analysis of open end questions was conducted using the software system 'Leximancer'. Leximancer is an automated system for content analysis of text. Content analysis is a research tool used for determining the presence of words or concepts that are common in a collection of textual materials. This allows a rapid and unbiased analysis of large amounts of text, which consequently leads to more reliable results and improved research quality.

### 3 Survey findings

The following section illustrates sample characteristics of girls and young women who participated in the SHE Speaks survey. Those demographic results are displayed separately for the main survey group, recruited via YWCA channels, and the panel survey group.

Also, descriptive results covering the following themes are presented:

- Gender related issues in Australia
- Leadership qualities and opportunities of women in Australia
- Personal experience of leadership and leadership ambitions
- Gender equality
- Safety and Violence and Reproductive Health and Rights

Statistical tests were conducted to analyse whether the two samples, main and panel, differ significantly. Since this was not the case, descriptive results for the previously listed themes are presented for the combined dataset, which means panel and main dataset findings are not presented separately.

#### 3.1 Demographics

In total 1643 girls and young women completed the She Speaks survey. 1004 participants were part of the panel list that was incorporated to reach a sufficient response rate, and 639 participants were recruited through YWCA Australia's member association contacts and social media activity. The majority of panel respondents were found to reside in New South Wales (33 percent), Victoria (28 percent) and Western Australia (16 percent). For the main survey respondents, the majority of respondents resided in New South Wales (26 percent), Queensland (15 percent) and Victoria (24 percent). Perhaps reflecting the geographical distribution of online panellists and the lack of YWCA member associations in Tasmania and the Northern Territory, there were fewer participants recruited in these states/territories, in both survey groups. A small proportion of respondents did not specify their state or territory. Although there was a concerted effort to achieve the minimum target response rate of 390 participants in each mainland state and territory, it can be seen in the table below that this could only be achieved in the larger states of New South Wales and Victoria.

**Table 2 States and territories of survey respondents by survey groups**

States and territories	Panel f (%)	Main f (%)	Total f (%)
Australian Capital Territory	22 (2)	103 (16)	125 (8)
New South Wales	326 (33)	96 (15)	422 (26)
Northern Territory	6 (1)	17 (3)	23 (1)

States and territories	Panel f (%)	Main f (%)	Total f (%)
Queensland	105 (11)	134 (21)	239 (15)
South Australia	81 (8)	96 (15)	177 (11)
Tasmania	20 (2)	39 (6)	59 (4)
Victoria	276 (28)	114 (18)	390 (24)
Western Australia	157 (16)	32 (5)	189 (12)
Not specified	11 (1)	8 (1)	19 (1)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,004 (100)</b>	<b>639 (100)</b>	<b>1,643 (100)</b>

The majority of survey participants of the panel group were aged 18 to 24 (57 percent were 18 to 20 years of age and 29 percent were 21 to 24 at the time of survey completion). Under one percent of respondent were under 18 years of age and only 14 percent were 25 years of age or older. This age bracket distribution turns out differently for the main survey group. The distribution of the respondents in the main sample was roughly similar for those aged 21 to 24, 25 to 27 and 28 to 30 years old. Between 25 and 26 percent of women were within each of these age categories. The remaining sample of around 23 percent was aged between 15 and 20 years old. Hence, online panel sample participants are younger on average than main sample participants. However, there were more participants in the youngest age bracket (aged under 18 year olds) included in the main survey. There were roughly ten times as many participants aged 15-17 years old in the main survey in comparison with the online panel. This could be seen as a positive reflection of the outreach activities to engage schools by YWCA member organisations.

**Table 3 Age distribution of the survey respondents, by survey group**

Survey group	Age brackets					Total
	15-17	18-20	21-24	25-27	28-30	
<b>Panel f (%)</b>	9 (1)	568 (57)	289 (29)	72 (7)	66 (7)	1,004 (100)
<b>Main f (%)</b>	74 (12)	72 (11)	165 (26)	160 (25)	168 (26)	639 (100)

It was important to also consider the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the participants, and determine if there were any substantive differences between the two samples. To explore this in greater detail, participants were asked if they spoke a language other than English at home. From the responses this question, it can be inferred that participants who did were more likely to be from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. In addition, questions were asked about the Indigenous status.

For Indigenous status, approximately two percent of respondents across both subgroups identify themselves as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up roughly 3% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012b). The majority of survey respondents stated that English was the main language spoken at home (88 percent of the panel sample and 95 percent of the main sample). This suggests that the panel respondent group had more women from a culturally diverse background. 81% of Australia's population speak only English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013a). In both samples, around seven percent of respondents stated that they were living with a disability. However, in the general community, 18.5% of Australians live with a disability (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013b)

**Table 4 Indigenous status, Cultural Diversity and disability status**

	Panel		Main	
	f	%	f	%
<b>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status (ATSI)</b>	22	2	10	2
<b>English spoken at home</b>	879	88	609	95
<b>Living with disability</b>	67	7	46	7

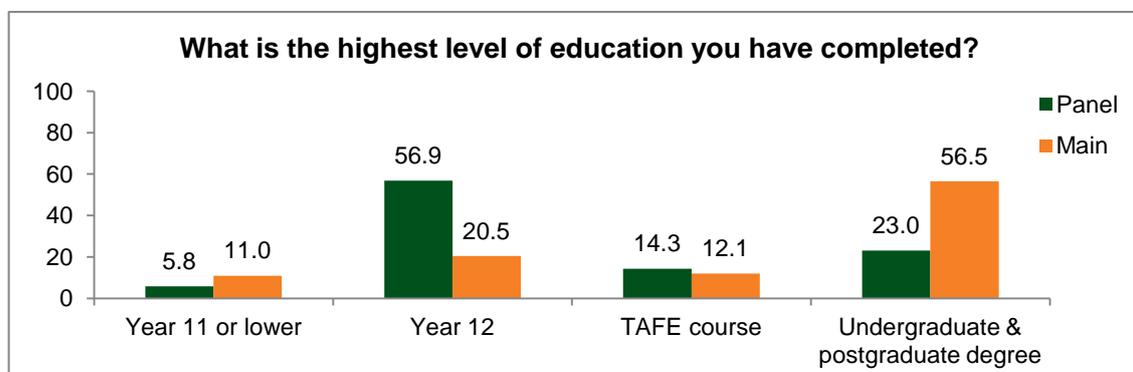
When asked about what describes their current situation best, differences between the two survey groups emerge. The majority of panel respondents study full or part-time at TAFE or university (62 percent and 10 percent respectively), while only 27 and 17 percent of main survey respondents reported studying full or part-time respectively. Approximately 78 percent of main respondents said that 'working' full or part-time describes their current situation best (46 percent full-time and 33 percent part-time), while about 10 percent less panel respondents reported it as describing their current situation best with 52 percent working part-time and only 15 percent working full-time. The suggested reason for this might be due to the age difference in the two samples. As previously mentioned, panel respondents are much younger in age and are therefore likely to be still studying, while main respondents are more likely to have finished their studies and moved on into a working life.

Encouragingly, a significant number of the respondents reported undertaking volunteering activities. 25 percent of panel respondents and 39 percent of main survey respondents reported that they were volunteering part time. In the broader community, 36% of the Australian population participate in voluntary work, with 38% of women participating as volunteers, as compared to 34% of men (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). In comparison to the main panel respondents (12 percent) a higher percentage of panel respondents are unemployed (21 percent). Again, this might be a possible reflection of the age structure of the panel, being younger and in full-time education.

**Table 5 Current situation of survey respondents**

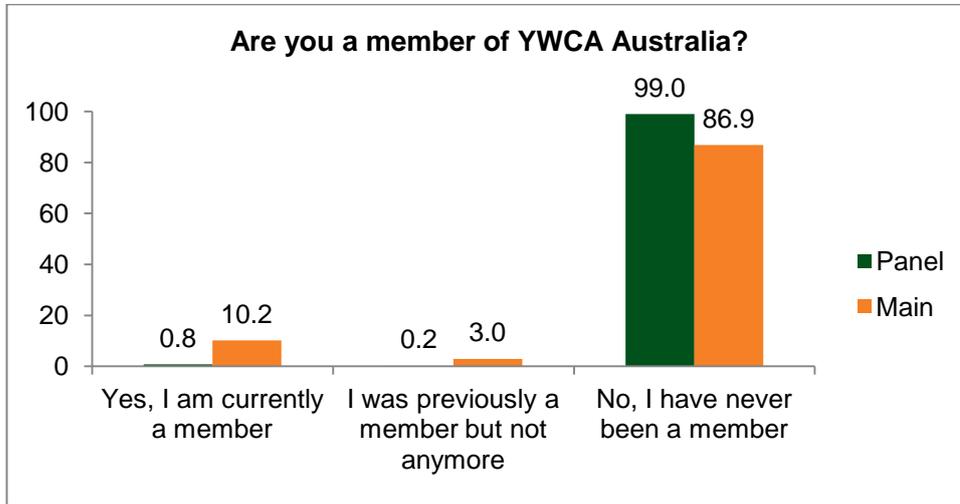
Current situation	Survey group	Full time f (%)	Part time f (%)	Does not apply f (%)	Total
Studying at school	Panel	76 (8)	10 (1)	918 (91)	1004 (100)
	Main	74 (12)	8 (1)	557 (87)	639 (100)
Studying at TAFE or university	Panel	625 (62)	102 (10)	277 (28)	1004 (100)
	Main	174 (27)	108 (17)	357 (56)	639 (100)
Working	Panel	154 (15)	523 (52)	327 (33)	1004 (100)
	Main	292 (46)	208 (33)	139 (22)	639 (100)
Unemployed	Panel	171 (17)	35 (4)	798 (80)	1004 (100)
	Main	59 (9)	16 (3)	564 (88)	639 (100)
Volunteering	Panel	19 (2)	250 (25)	735 (73)	1004 (100)
	Main	10 (2)	252 (39)	377 (59)	639 (100)
Parent	Panel	57 (6)	5 (1)	942 (94)	1004 (100)
	Main	40 (6)	6 (1)	593 (93)	639 (100)
Carer	Panel	19 (2)	40 (4)	945 (94)	1004 (100)
	Main	12 (2)	29 (5)	598 (94)	639 (100)
Other	Panel	10 (1)	14 (1)	980 (98)	1004 (100)
	Main	13 (2)	13 (2)	613 (96)	639 (100)

Further, survey participants were asked to state their highest level of education that they have completed. The majority of survey respondents have finished Year 12 or a higher level. However, more than half of main respondents have completed university, with 57 percent in comparison to 23 percent, while most panel respondents reported having completed year 12 as their highest educational level. This again can be explained by the difference in age distribution of those two samples. However, an equal percentage of main and panel respondents have completed a TAFE course, with 12 percent and 14 percent respectively.



**Figure 1 Educational level**

As expected, almost all panel respondents (99%) have never been a member of YWCA Australia while around 10 percent of main respondents are currently a member and 3 percent reported that they were previously a member.



**Figure 2 YWCA membership status of respondents**

## 3.2 Gender related issues in Australia

The Australian government has identified several areas of concern in relation to issues women are facing in Australia. Reducing violence, economic security and independence, and ensuring women's voices are heard at all levels of decision making, are the Australian Government's three priority areas for issues affecting women (Department of Social Services, 2013). The She Speaks survey aimed to analyse this further and asked participants to identify the three most important issues women are currently facing in contemporary Australia according to their own beliefs and experiences. In depth qualitative content analysis showed that the age bracket of the girls and young women varies significantly with the response pattern. This means that according to their stage of life respondents are concerned about different areas.

### Concept Maps – An introduction

Concept maps are useful in finding meaning from words. In a concept map, we can look for common ideas that connect to each other in a group of text responses that may appear unrelated initially.

Since the girls and young women were asked to express their views and opinions on a number of issues, we can use a concept map to identify any common themes that are being expressed, and any links between these themes.

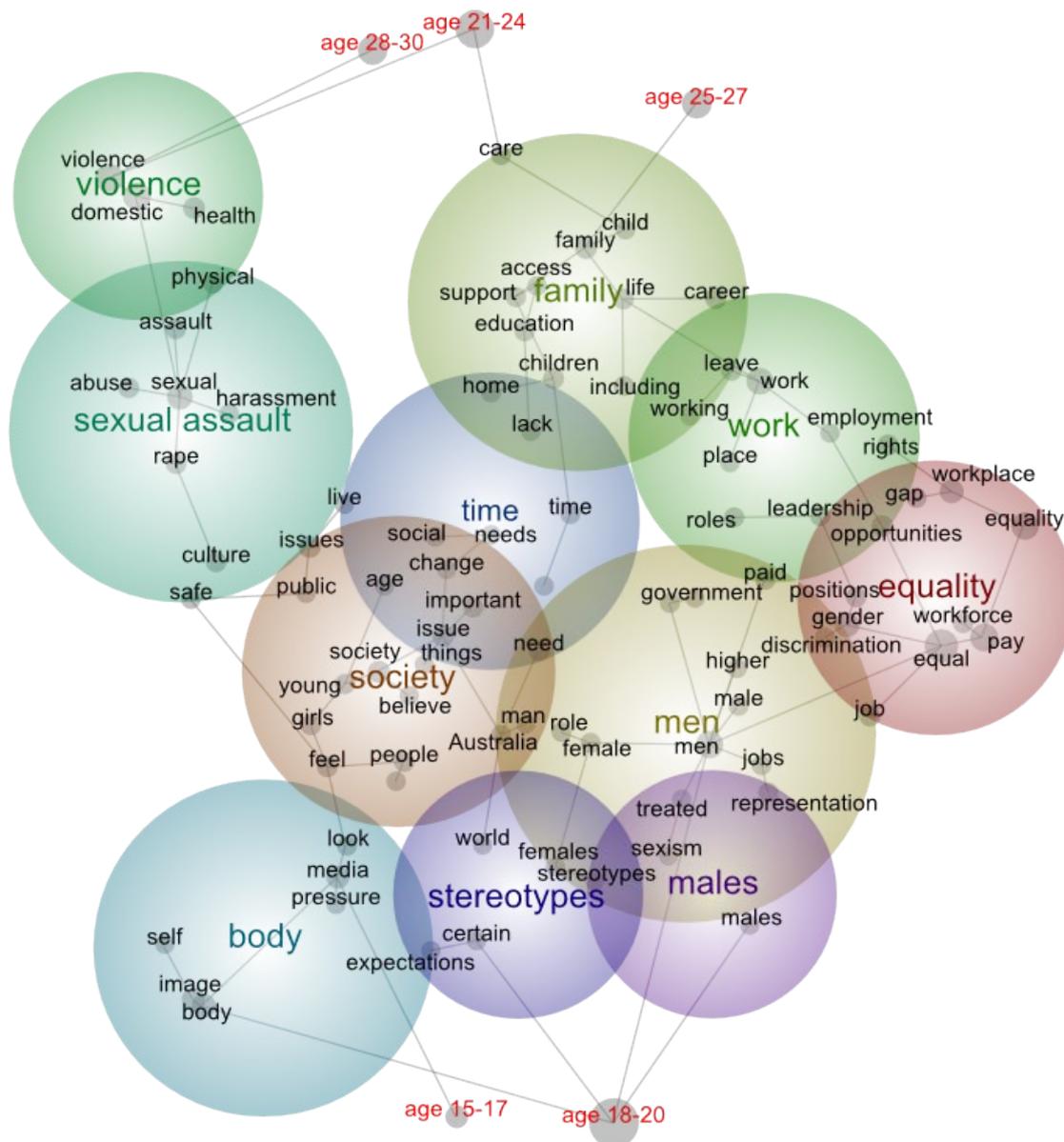
By so doing, a concept map can allow us to come up with associated ideas from the different responses and essentially come up with a story that is common for all survey participants.

There are three parts of a concept map. The building block of a concept map is the **concept**. These are words that generally occur together in text. They are represented by **dots** in the concept map. For example, the concept “university” may contain words such as academic, college, institution, and research.

The next part of the concept map is a **theme**, and these are represented by **circles**. A theme is made up of related concepts. Concepts that are similar will appear together often and therefore will cluster together in the same map space. By grouping the concepts into themes, we can interpret or find meaning in the concepts. Themes can overlap if some concepts are common in different themes. The larger the circle, the more often the theme was raised. When a theme is towards the centre, it was raised by all of the age groups.

The concepts are connected to each other and the main themes through **lines**. These lines are the third part of the concept map and basically inform us about the major **pathways** that interconnect different concepts and themes. These pathways are intended to tell stories that are emerging from the different responses, and by focusing on indirect connections between concepts on the maps, we can reveal how the individual ideas make up the larger collective idea or ideas.

In a nutshell, themes contain stories, and stories are made up of connections between concepts.



**Figure 3 Concept Map reflecting the issues of concern for women living in Australia**

Figure 3 illustrates main themes respondents talked about. Age brackets are shown in red. In brief, when asked about the issues of concern to women in Australia, the participants reported themes around work, family, domestic violence, sexual health, body image, stereotypes, equality and sexism. Although these issues were broad themes reflected throughout the responses of the participants, the themes differed according to the age group. In general, younger participants highlighted issues around body image and stereotypes, whereas the older participants mentioned issues pertaining to family, work and life balance.

Overwhelmingly, younger participants aged 15 to 20 years, were mostly concerned about **women’s portrayal in media and society:**

*How women are represented in the media; on commercial television shows and in "gossip" magazines (15 to 17 years)*

*Portrayal of women in the media (15 to 17 years)*

*The image of women projected in society (18 to 20 years)*

*Often seen as weak or lacking. Men are still seen as dominant in society. (18 to 20 years)*

Especially with regards to their **body image** girls and young women feel **expectations and pressure from society and media** to fit into certain norms:

*Body image and the pressure to be perfect. To compete and conform to society's standards. (15 to 17 years)*

*The expectations of women's beauty and health in place by media (15 to 17 years)*

*Society pressures and expectations to think and dress a certain way (18 to 20 years)*

*An unrealistic idea of beauty portrayed by the media, this beauty is said to be perfection but in an imperfect world such as ours the problem is perfection doesn't exist well at least our idea of perfection. Real perfection is having flaws and being different because that's what makes people interesting and independent (15 to 17 years)*

*Through the media and social expectations of girls there are a lot of women with body image related disorders.*

Apart from concerns about body image, its portrayal in media and society, and the pressure and expectations that are associated with it, **pressure and expectations to fulfil the traditional gender role** is seen as a great burden in all different areas of life.

*The expectations that women should have a career, yet still continue household and parental duties. (18 to 20 years)*

*Less pressure and expectations on being successful in the role of mother, career woman, and wife. (18 to 20 years)*

*Unrealistic expectations holistically placed on all elements on our lives and who we are says that we are inadequate. That we have to do this and be that. So many women become depressed, anxious (a contributing factor to the heightening statistics of*

*mental health problems) and stop striving to achieve what they are under the right circumstances able to achieve. (18 to 20 years)*

*Stereotypes. People saying that women should be in the kitchen and stay in the kitchen as well as other stereotypes. (18 to 20 years)*

*I think it's the issue of perceptions and stereotypes that are the greatest issue for women seeking to advance in any part of life. (18 to 20 years)*

*That a lot of people still believe that women should stay in traditional roles (e.g. women should stay in the kitchen, even if it is just a joke, it can still be a hurtful/degrading comment). (15 to 17 years)*

*Pushing through the degenerative gendered stereotypes women are faced with in a male-orientated society. (15 to 17 years)*

Added to the expectations of society itself, girls and young women (notably those aged 15 to 20) perceive **men's attitudes** as a great issue. They report being **treated with less respect and faced with sexism but also discrimination in general:**

*The derogatory comments given by men (18 to 20 years)*

*Respect from men - e.g. catcalling on the streets, being ogled/ridiculed for the clothes we choose to wear, etc. (18 to 20 years)*

*Women are being discriminated against and have less of a chance getting a highly paid job than males. (18 to 20 years)*

*Sexism - women can do the same jobs as men (18 to 20 years)*

*Sexism in typically 'masculine industries' (18 to 20 years)*

*That even in 2014, women are victims of sexism in many areas of society. (18 to 20 years)*

For 18 to 20 year olds, this seems especially true with regards to the **workplace** where respondents feel that men have an especially **hostile view of professional women:**

*The point of view men have of strong business women (18 to 20 years)*

*That some men aren't aware of how to behave around a woman in a professionally manner. (18 to 20 years)*

**Inequality at the workplace** is of great concern for girls and young women of all age brackets. The **gender pay gap** is hereby perceived as one major concern since it **affects women's economic independence** throughout their whole life and has adverse effects on for instance **superannuation payments**:

*Closing the pay gap, the gap in superannuation levels and the career advancement of women. Improving the numbers of women on company boards, in the management of powerful organisations and in the top tier management. (25 to 27 years)*

*Economic gap between women and men and the broader implications of this for women throughout their lifetime (reliance on partners, less money at retirement, periods of life where women may not be working due to carer duties, etc.). (25 to 27 years)*

*The right to have equal pay and close the 17.5% pay gap (18 to 20 years)*

*Equality in the workplace - This to me includes closing the gender gap in regards to income, superannuation, and career progression (i.e. the number of women in managerial roles). (21 to 24)*

Further, the inequality at the workplace is associated with a **lack of female role models and barriers to achieve leadership roles**:

*Unequal representation in leadership roles in all sectors. (25 to 27 years)*

*Women still face significant barriers in regard to leadership roles - the current government and political landscape is a good indication of this. (28 to 30 years)*

*Low representation of women in the highest roles in politics and business (25 to 27 years)*

Noticeably, women aged 21 to 30 see a **lack and high costs of child care** as problematic. In a similar vein, **balancing work and family** is perceived as especially difficult due to limited child care options. Therefore, young women feel faced with the **dilemma of children vs career**.

*Addressing costs related to child care, and more options for child-raising-friendly workplaces. (25 to 27 years)*

*Work life balance, including maternity leave, as well as the dilemmas surrounding child care costs and options. (25 to 27 years)*

*Sacrificing your career to look after children (21 to 24 years)*

*Finding ways to balance work and life (e.g., maintaining position at work while having children) (21 to 24 years)*

*Childcare payments-too high for mums to pay hence choosing to leave workforce instead (21 to 24 years)*

Even if young women decide to raise a family they are faced with **limited paid maternity and parental leave options** and perceived **low job security** due to their time of work after giving birth:

*Job security in regards to maternity leave. Are you missing out on promotions due to the possibility of you taking maternity leave in the future? (25 to 27 years)*

*Opportunity to return to work (and still make that work for your family) after having children (includes re-entering the workforce, flexible work arrangements, maternity leave etc) (25 to 27 years)*

Also, participants criticise the **sacrifice of superannuation due to maternity leave**:

*Career opportunities that give women equal opportunities. For example, continue to contribute to super whilst they are on maternity leave (21 to 24 years)*

*Ensuring all women are paid superannuation while on parental leave (21 to 24 years)*

Moreover, participants were overwhelmingly concerned about **domestic and sexual violence** towards women and their children in Australia, with some selected women mentioning:

*Domestic and Sexual Violence Against Women and Children (28 to 30 years)*

*Domestic and non-domestic violence and how to prevent it (21 to 24 years)*

*Reducing or eradicating domestic violence for women (and children) of all ages and backgrounds is the most important issue for Australian women today. (25 to 27 years)*

and appeal for a **safer environment for women**:

*Personal safety and the right to feel safe and comfortable in their own community (25 to 27 years)*

*Safety - I do not feel safe walking alone at night. Although I live in a good area, there are too many stories of rapes, murders and assaults to make me feel safe on my own. (21 to 24 years)*

**Health care access and costs** was also perceived as an area of great concern for older age brackets. Young women also talked about their concerns regarding **reproductive health**. This comprises issues such as assistance with family planning and access to abortion:

*Health. To have access to free or inexpensive healthcare (broadly) and feel assured it will continue to be that way into the future.*

*Sexual health access including abortions (18 to 20 years)*

*Safe sexual health including easy access to contraception and pro-choice abortion rights (18 to 20 years)*

*Improved healthcare, including mental health care & free & easy access to sexual health & family planning information and services (25 to 27 years)*

### **3.3 Leadership qualities and opportunities of women in Australia**

As shown in section 3.2, girls and young women perceive a lack of female role models and women in leadership positions as a central issue for women in contemporary Australia. This concern is supported by current statistics and although, women worldwide, and especially in Australia, have more employment and education opportunities than ever before, gender inequality at the workplace is omnipresent. Especially at senior level Australia experiences a consistently high gender gap. This is particularly concerning since 65 percent of Australian women (compared to 80 percent of Australian men) aged 20 to 74 took part in the labour force in 2010/11 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' figures. This was an increase of 5 percentage points in comparison to 2001/02. However, their share of management positions across the work force remains low. In 2011, only 3.5 percent of Australia's top 200 companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX 200) had a female Chief Executive Officer (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012a). This is worrying since research is suggesting that role models and mentors are crucial to individual growth, development and girls' and women's career aspirations (e.g. Almquist & Angrist, 1971; Fried & MacCleave, 2009; Gibson, 2004).

To examine this with regards to leadership qualities She Speaks asked girls and young women to choose five qualities out of a list of 14 that they perceive as most important for a successful leader (the results appear in Table 6). In order to ensure that there was no bias introduced in the survey results due to the ordering in which the qualities appeared, the qualities were randomised. The results are compelling. The majority of 1643 participants who took part in the She Speaks survey rated 'effective communication skills' as the most important skill for a leader (72 percent), followed by 'respectful behaviour' (62 percent) and an 'industrious working style' (53 percent). As the fourth and fifth most important characteristics of a leader, participants voted 'being a team-player' (47 percent) and 'confidence' (38 percent). Of least

importance were 'experience' (12 percent), 'ambition' (15 percent) and 'consultative skills' (16 percent).

**Table 6 Five most important qualities for a leader**

An effective communicator	72%
Respectful	62%
Hard working	53%
A team player	47%
Confident	38%
Knowledgeable	38%
Shows initiative	35%
Emotionally intelligent	34%
Resilient	24%
Visionary	23%
Influential and good networker	21%
Consultative	16%
Ambitious	15%
Experienced	12%

Furthermore, She Speaks participants were asked to indicate where they see effective leadership in Australia. They were able to agree to multiple response options. Participant's ranking of the response options is illustrated in Table 7. Almost 50 percent of participants reported experiencing effective leadership at their educational institution (e.g. school, TAFE or university), followed by within their community (48 percent), at their workplace (45 percent) and in their family or at home (45 percent). Only 23 percent of girls and young women believed they would see effective leadership in public life. Research has shown that it is however exceptionally important to have role models in public life. For example, Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) demonstrated a significant effect of female politician's visibility on adolescent girls' interest in politics and their perception of those women as role models.

**Table 7 Effective leadership in Australia**

At school/TAFE/university	49%
In your community (e.g., community groups and place of worship)	48%
In your work or workplace	45%
In your family or home	45%
Within your friendship circle or other networks	39%
In public life (e.g., prime ministers, premiers, chief ministers and mayors)	23%
None of these	8%

Participants were asked to identify the three most effective strategies to overcome barriers to women moving into leadership roles in Australia. Their top three reflects some of the main

issues identified in the open-end question discussed in section 3.2. Almost 50 percent of respondents believe that changing behaviours and cultures towards employed women and men is the most effective strategy, followed by ‘changing the workplace to accommodate a family friendly policy’ (40 percent) and ‘visible female role models’ (37 percent). Increasing part-time work among men is seen as the least effective strategy to overcome barriers.

**Table 8 Three most effective strategies to overcome barriers to women moving into senior leadership roles in Australian workplaces**

Changing behaviors and cultures towards women and men within workplaces	48%
Changing workplace structures to support men and women with family responsibilities	40%
Visible female role models	37%
Ensuring that career breaks, as a result of caring responsibilities, are seen as a benefit not a disadvantage to a workplace	30%
Training for men and women to change their attitudes and perceptions about what it means to be male or female	28%
Making sure that more people understand that it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender in job ads, interviews and other recruitment and selection processes	23%
Training and encouragement for women to better “market” their individual experiences and skills	18%
Setting and reporting against gender equality targets in workplaces	18%
Increasing part time work and job share roles in senior positions	16%
Setting quotas for women on boards of Australian businesses	13%
Expanding the definition of leadership to include so-called women’s leadership skills	12%
Increasing part time work among men	4%
None	1%

Barriers to women moving into leadership positions are clearly perceived as an issue and participants’ perception of successful strategies to tackle this issue ranges from changing beliefs and attitudes as well as workplace structure to increasing visibility of female role models. To explore barriers and strategies to overcome these barriers further, She Speaks participants were asked: If you had one minute with the Prime Minister, what is one thing you would say about improving leadership opportunities for young women in Australia? Figure 4 depicts a concept map of participants’ responses. The identified key themes comprise topics such as education, women’s opportunities, support of gender equality and leadership.

The analyses showed that participating girls and young women appeal to the Prime Minister to **provide better education and opportunities** for women in Australia:

*Offer better opportunities for all women in terms of education (18 to 20 years)*

*Offer a better promoted variety of leadership courses to women throughout their education. (18 to 20 years)*

But also to **encourage women through education** to become more confident in themselves. This is closely linked to participant's appeal for **more and accessible leadership programs at school, workplaces and the community**:

*I would ask Abbott to encourage and run leadership programs through high schools as well as primary schools as if it wasn't for the camp I attended back in primary school I wouldn't have the confidence I do today. (18 to 20 years)*

*Offer more female leadership programs and make them widely available (especially in the area of people management), encourage more females into parliament and high level roles. (25 to 27 years)*

*Encourage schools to provide programs for young women that enhance their leadership skills and help them apply it through school activities. (18 to 20 years)*

*we need more female leadership programs in schools because we need to start creating leaders from a younger age and encouraging females to become leaders and the benefits and satisfaction you receive from it (18 to 20 years)*

Participants used the word 'need' and 'stop' conspicuously often. This indicates their appeal to the Prime Minister to **stop stereotype-led actions and behaviours in Australia's society** that foster gender inequality and to react to the **need for change**. A participant commented that:

*However I would focus on sexism and that women should be celebrated and encouraged rather than mocked for irrelevant things. I would express my disgust in allowing outdated advertisements to continue and that for women to truly want to lead Australia (A woman would do amazing things) than things really need to change. (18 to 20 years)*

Further, participants report that the current Prime Minister should **support equality**. This might relate to equal opportunities for men and women, equal pay and equal rights, as highlighted in these selected comments:

*Give them equal chances. (21 to 24 years)*

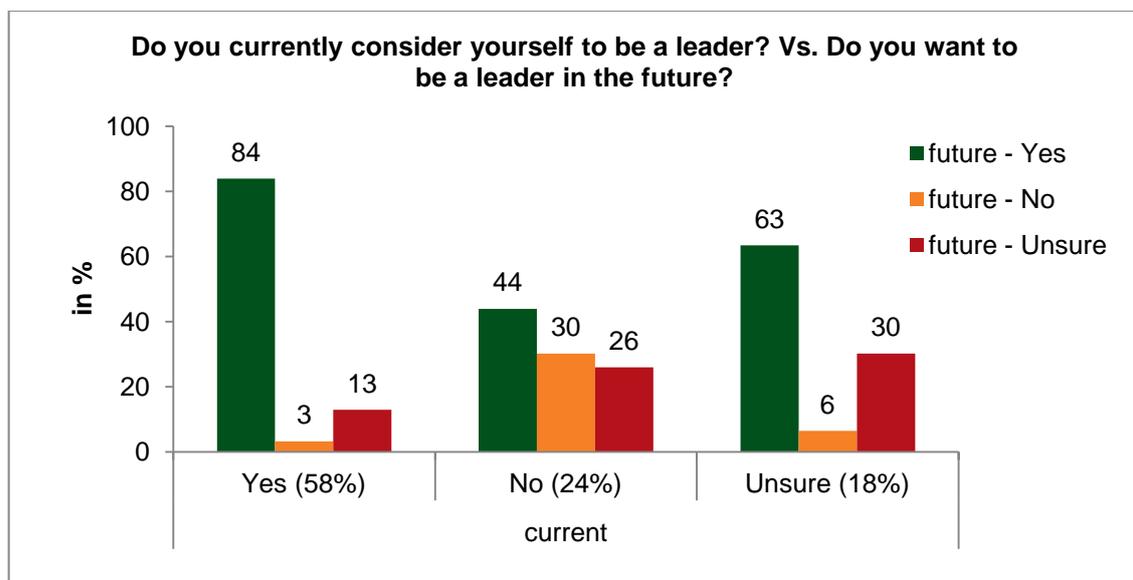
*Support those already in leadership, reduce stigma but no ratios. It shouldn't be about having equal numbers. (18 to 20 years)*



that are associated with leaders, such as being reflective, observant, smart, self-directed, competitive, and moderately to highly confident. But more importantly, they had strong female leaders in their life to guide them.

The YWCA in Australia is constantly striving to build the leadership skills and power of young women and girls. Leadership programs, such as mentoring, one-on-one support and several women's leadership development programs, are an important part of YWCA's work. Further, the YWCA encourages skilled and experienced women to assist and empower other women and girls to develop personally and professionally. She Speaks asked girls and young women about their ambitions around, understandings of, and solutions to support women's leadership.

When asked about their current leadership role and future leadership aspirations, 58 percent of all respondents stated that they consider themselves to be a leader in their family, school community, peer group and/or workplace. The majority of those girls and young women (84 percent) want to keep their leadership role and be a leader in future, whereas 13 percent of those participants are unsure about their future leadership aspirations and 3 percent do not want to stay in their leadership role. Approximately 25 percent of respondents currently did not consider themselves to be leaders, whilst 18 percent were unsure. Of those respondents 44 percent and 63 percent, respectively, aspire to be leaders in some aspects of their lives in future. However, roughly one third (30 percent) of respondents currently do not see themselves as leaders and also do not aspire to be a leader in future. However, 71 percent of participating girls and young women want to be a leader in future, while only 10 percent do not want to be a leader in future.



**Figure 5 Are you currently a leader and do you want to be a leader in future?**

To better understand the responses, She Speaks participants were asked to clarify their answers about their current and potential future leadership role in an open-ended question.

These qualitative results were mapped onto a concept map to look for common themes (Figure 6). The most important personal barrier that prevents participants from perceiving leadership roles was higher **responsibility** that is associated with a leadership role:

*I am working towards goals, but I am not yet ready for that responsibility (21 to 24 years)*

*Leadership means responsibility. Generally, I don't like taking on responsibility. (21 to 24 years)*

*I'm not a very outgoing person and although I have strong opinions I prefer not to share them in fear of starting arguments. I don't like to feel like I'm responsible for others, I believe they need to take responsibility for themselves as well (21 to 24 years)*

For others responsibility seems not to be such a great burden. They rather seem to enjoy this aspect of leadership:

*I feel that this is worth the effort of pushing past my natural avoidance of responsibility. (21 to 24 years)*

*I have had a number of opportunities and feel as though I have a responsibility to use my experiences to improve my community. (25 to 27 years)*

*I like to be in charge and take responsibility (25 to 27 years)*

*I like the responsibility and power (28 to 30 years)*

A similar ambiguous view seems to be present with regard to **confidence**. Some participants report that their lack of confidence is an obstacle while others feel they are confident enough to take up a leadership role.

*I do not have the confidence to tell people what and how they should do things (21 to 24 years)*

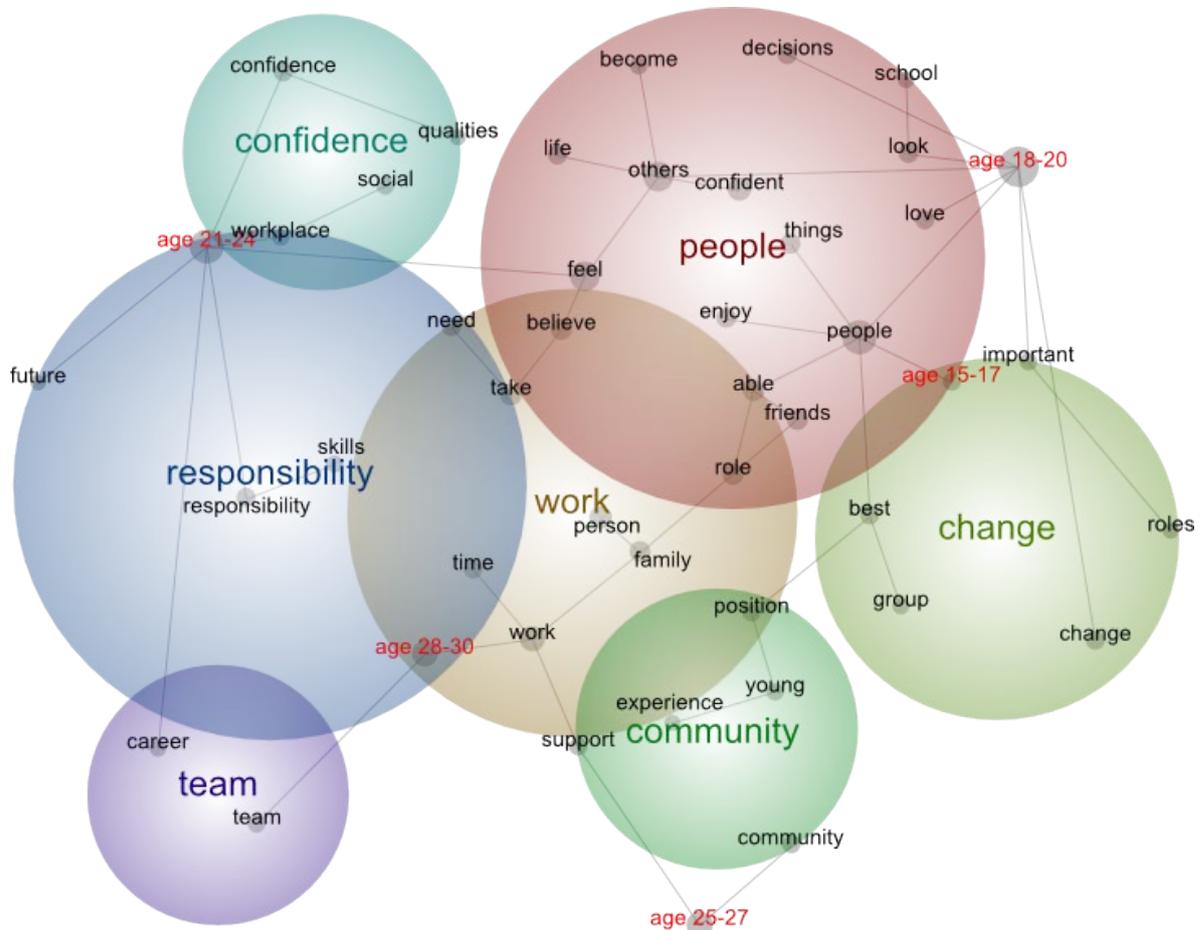
*I have a self confidence that I know some around me lack and so I try to facilitate social settings in which they might feel more comfortable and, hopefully, develop a greater confidence themselves. (21 to 24 years)*

One of the reasons young women want to take on leadership roles is to **create change**.

*I wish to set an example of the values and beliefs, to create a change in the world for a better world for the next generation. (18 to 20 years)*

*I'm not afraid to say my opinion in a respectful matter, speak for what's right and I want to change certain things for the better. (18 to 20 years)*

*Leadership is about positive influence - My aim is to be the change I wish to see in the world. (25 to 27 years)*



**Figure 6 Open end responses with regards to participants' current and future leadership role**

Things that would help participants to be a better leader right now or to be a leader in future are 'confidence', finishing their education or having a mentor (see Table 9). This matches with responses for the open-end question analysed before. According to participants' beliefs, joining a political party was seen as least beneficial to being a leader or becoming a better leader right now or in the foreseeable future.

**Table 9 Ranking of things that would help participants most in becoming a leader/being a better leader**

	right now	in the next 1-2 years	in the next 3-5 years
Confidence	21	14	11
Complete my education	13	16	12
Have a mentor to guide me	14	13	10
Receive on-the-job training	6	8	9
Learn more about my strengths	8	7	6
Get involved with advocacy for social change	6	6	7
Complete a leadership course	4	6	6
Have a role model I can relate to	5	4	4
Learn more about my leadership style	4	4	5
Complete a career action plan	3	5	9
Support from family, partner and friends	3	4	5
Do volunteer work	4	4	3
Get involved with advocacy for gender equality	4	2	3
Join a women's organisation/network	3	3	3
I feel I have no leadership potential	2	2	2
Receive support to return to the workplace	1	1	2
Join a political party	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Furthermore, girls and young women that indicated they are a leader were asked to describe what they perceive as the most rewarding aspects of being in a leadership role (Figure 7). For participants aged 18 to 20 years their leadership role was mainly about **being happy or making others happy**:

*Being able to make people happy and assist them with life problems. (18 to 20 years)*

*Being happy to know you've made others happy and even changing their life's or knowing you're a reliable person that anyone can seek help or advise from. (18 to 20 years)*

However, they also perceive leadership as **satisfying since they are able to help others and achieve goals in a team**:

*The satisfaction of helping others, as well as getting closer to achieving my own personal goals of becoming a teacher in the future. (18 to 20 years)*

*The most rewarding part of being in a leadership role at work are the enjoyment and satisfaction you get when you teach others and they understand you (18 to 20 years)*

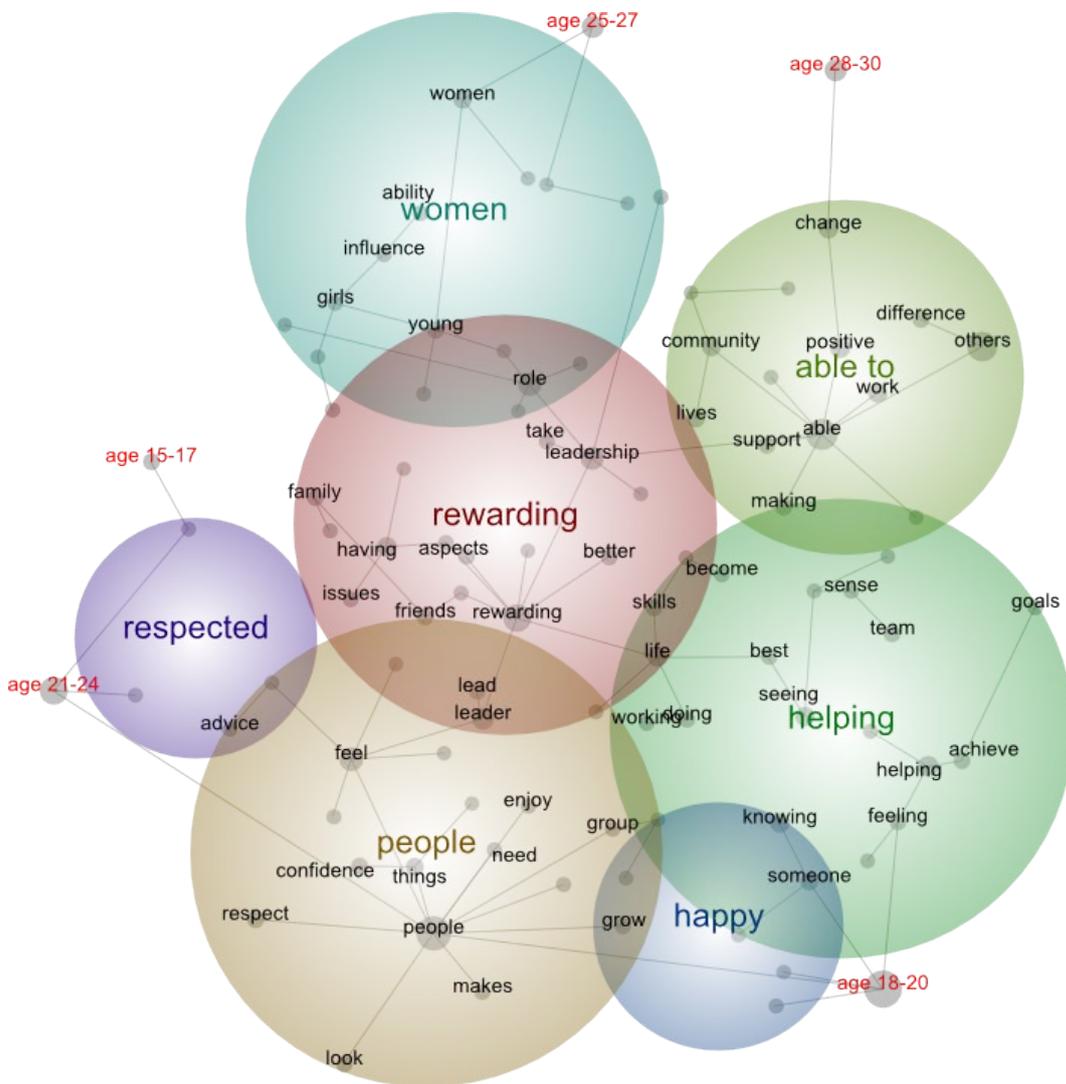
Participants in the younger age groups (i.e. those aged 15 to 17 years, 18-20 years and 21 to 24 years) expressed that they feel more **confident and respected** when they act in a leadership role:

*Feel more confident and respected (21 to 24 years)*

*Being respected; having influence; being able to provide opportunities to other women; having a voice. (21 to 24 years)*

*Being respected, getting work done and being in charge (15 to 17 years)*

*The respect. Confidence and respect from peers and colleges. (18 to 20 years)*



**Figure 7 Most rewarding aspects of being a leader**

Women aged 25 to 30 years of age feel that acting as a **role model for other women** and being able to help others is most rewarding for them:

*Being a role model who encourages other people - be they male or female - to step up and share their concerns, ideas and thoughts. Seeing other people grow and cheering them on. (25 to 27 years)*

*The flow-on-effect on other women around me. (28 to 30 years)*

*being unique and different to most young women my age and showing young girls what you can do and gender shouldn't stop you. (28 to 30 years)*

In general, girls and young women seem to perceive their leadership roles as beneficial due to the fact that they see themselves as **an important part of a team**, as someone people and other team members can **look up to**:

*When people look up to you and enjoy working WITH you not FOR you. (18 to 20 years)*

*Being able to act as a stable, solid ground (albeit not always) that people can rely on at times of distress, or look at for guidance. (18 to 20 years)*

*That people look up to me and I can play the role in getting everyone to complete the task set out. I don't do it for popularity so I guess the benefits are being able to complete the task that we all have in common (15 to 17 years)*

*Knowing that people look up to you, regard you and your skills highly, value you as a person, and that you may have made a real difference to someone. (25 to 27 years)*

Leadership is often associated with helping and supporting others, making others happy and having a better feeling about oneself.

### 3.5 Gender equality

Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women is widely seen as a means to develop and maintain a prosperous society. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women examines the concept of gender equality as follows:

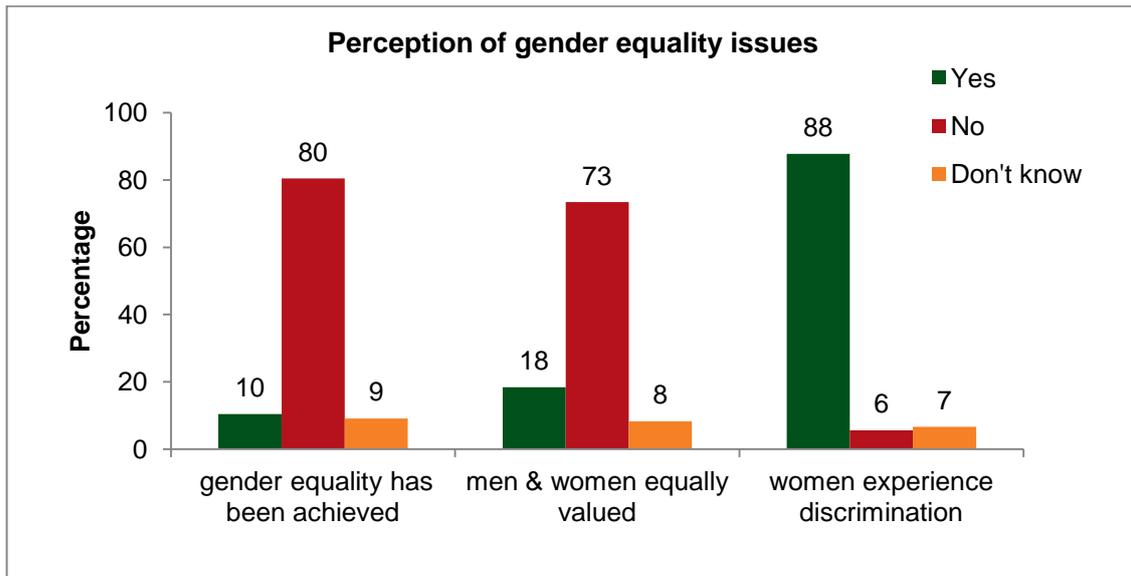
“.. the Convention requires that women be given an equal start and that they be empowered by an enabling environment to achieve equality of results. It is not enough to guarantee women treatment that is identical to that of men. Rather, biological as well as socially and culturally constructed differences between women and men must be taken into account. Under certain circumstances, non-identical treatment of women and men will be required in order to address such differences. Pursuit of the goal of

substantive equality also calls for an effective strategy aimed at overcoming underrepresentation of women and a redistribution of resources and power between men and women.

The position of women will not be improved as long as the underlying causes of discrimination against women, and of their inequality, are not effectively addressed. The lives of women and men must be considered in a contextual way, and measures adopted towards a real transformation of opportunities, institutions and systems so that they are no longer grounded in historically determined male paradigms of power and life patterns.

Women's biologically determined permanent needs and experiences should be distinguished from other needs that may be the result of past and present discrimination against women by individual actors, the dominant gender ideology, or by manifestations of such discrimination in social and cultural structures and institutions. As steps are being taken to eliminate discrimination against women, women's needs may change or disappear, or become the needs of both women and men. Thus, continuous monitoring of laws, programmes and practices directed at the achievement of women's de facto or substantive equality is needed so as to avoid a perpetuation of non-identical treatment that may no longer be warranted." (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2004)

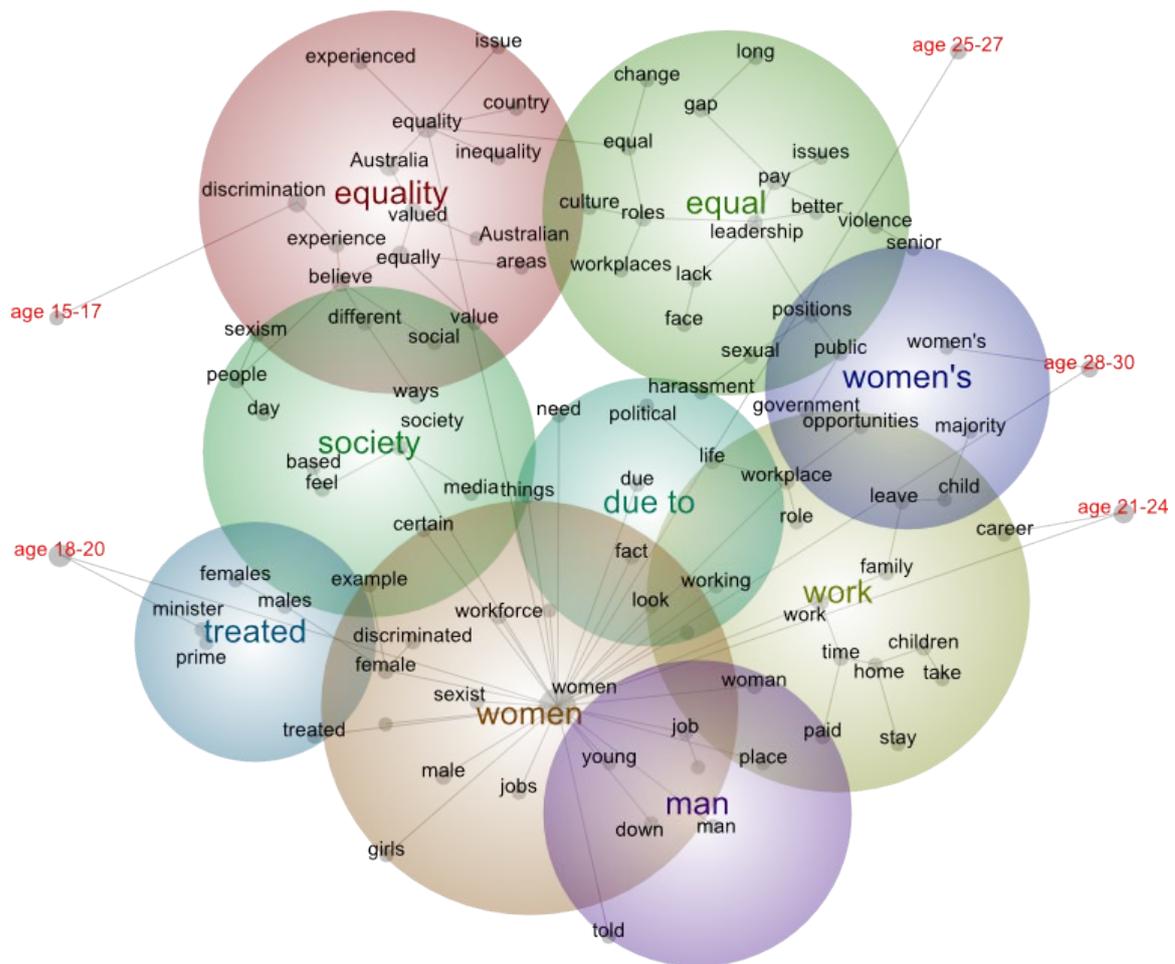
However, gender equality is widely perceived to take different forms, and mean different things to different people. As such, She Speaks asked girls and young women about their perception of gender equality and, relatedly, identify areas where they saw gender inequality in their lives. Although the Australian government has launched initiatives and policies, such as the Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 and the corresponding Workplace Gender Equality Agency, to ensure gender equality, 80 percent of participants do not believe that equality has been achieved yet. Further, 73 percent do not perceive that men and women are valued equally in Australia, while only 18 percent think that this is the case and 8 percent are unsure about it. Additionally, almost 90 percent of She Speaks participants think that women experience discrimination. This clearly shows that government aspirations to promote and improve gender equality have not reached the target group yet and participants perceive that more has to be done.



**Figure 8 Perception of gender equality issues**

Note: Survey questions: “Do you believe that gender equality has been achieved in Australia?”; “Do you believe that women and men are equally valued in Australia?”; and “Do you believe that women experience discrimination in Australia?”

Following these questions asking participants about the perceptions of gender equality, there was the opportunity to elaborate further using an open-ended response. The main themes that arose were around equality of pay, women’s greater opportunities for participating in the workforce, work-life balance and childcare, and societal and media pressure (see Figure 9). When compared to the previous questions issues, it can be seen that there is a widespread similarities in the responses. There are similar themes and concepts that emerged when participants were asked about the gender related issues facing women in Australia (see Figure 3). Taking these two concept maps together, it could be hypothesised that since similar dominant themes appear in both maps the main issues of concern to girls and young women are surrounding gender equality.



**Figure 9 Concept map of open-end responses to participants' perception of gender equality issues**

The majority of participants (77 percent) see themselves as someone who believes women and men should have political, economic and social equality. About 46 percent would describe themselves as a feminist or a feminist in principle. Consequently, only a small number of participants (6 percent) see themselves as someone who believes men and women should play different roles in public, economic and social arenas. Reassuringly, almost none of She Speaks participants agreed to the statement that “I would describe myself as someone who does not believe women and men should have political, economic and social equality”.

**Table 10 I would describe myself as...**

Someone who believes women and men should have political, economic and social equality	77%
A feminist	27%
A feminist in principle but I don't relate or feel connected to the word 'feminist'	19%
Someone who believes men and women should play different roles in public, economic and social arenas	6%
Someone who does not believe women and men should have political, economic and social equality	1%
None of the above	3%

### 3.6 Safety and Violence and Reproductive Health and Rights

Safety issues, sexual and domestic violence, lack of health services and limited access to reproductive health are main problem areas identified by participants at an earlier stage of this report (see section 3.2). In 2010 Australia launched the National plan to reduce violence against women and their children between the period of 2010-2022 (Coalition of Australian Governments, 2010). Underpinning this commitment to address violence against women are a number of international human rights instruments framing violence against women as a significant human rights issue (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1992 and United Nations, 1995). The World Health Organisation has also established violence against women as a major global public health problem (Harvey, Garcia-Moreno, & Butchart, 2007). And within Australia, research has highlighted the enormous economic costs to society of domestic violence (VicHealth, 2004). It is an issue that leads to serious short and long-term consequences for women, children, and society and is a leading trigger of injury, disability, and death for Australian women (Chrisler & Ferguson, 2006).

These themes were explored further in this section to obtain views from participants about safety and violence, sexual health and rights. She Speaks participants overwhelmingly felt that gender-based stereotyping (79 percent) was affecting women in their community to the greatest extent. This was followed by violence (73 percent), the prevalence of sexist attitudes and beliefs (71 percent) and unsteady economic security (65 percent). Almost 50 percent of She Speaks participants felt that a lack of affordable and safe living was an issue to women in their community (see Figure 10).

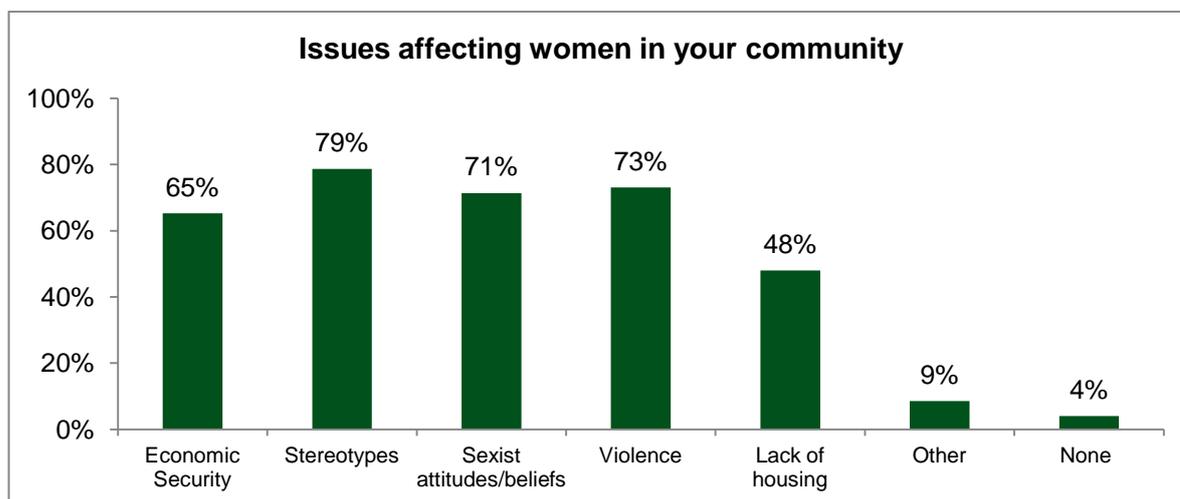


Figure 10 Perceived issue affecting women in participant's community

To examine personal experience related to women's safety, violence and reproductive health further, participants were asked to indicate their feelings associated with different life events and transitions. Table 10 shows percentages for participants that indicated that the specific

event or transitions applied to them. The life phase that was experienced as the most negative stage of life was 'high school' and the 'transition to high school'. 24 and 21 percent respectively associate those life stages with mostly negative feelings. As opposed to this, primary and higher or vocational education life stages were perceived as mostly positive. This was demonstrated by 64 and 62 percent of respondents respectively reporting having positive feelings.

Besides that, participants experienced moving out of home (71 percent) and friendships (73 percent) as especially positive. However, in the main, participants reported that most life events and transitions were experienced as mainly positive, or at least found to be neither positive nor negative.

**Table 11 Feelings associated with different life events and transitions**

	Mostly positive %	Neither positive nor negative %	Mostly negative %
Primary school	65	20	16
Transition to high school	48	30	22
High school	52	24	24
Transition to higher or vocational education	61	27	12
Higher or vocational education	71	21	8
Transition to employment	53	30	17
Your current employment	62	25	14
Transition to a leadership role at work	52	33	15
Living at home	63	23	15
Moving out of home	71	19	10
Buying a home	60	25	15
Becoming a parent	64	24	12
Relationships	64	25	11
Friendships	73	21	5
Coming out (only asked if participant was 18 or over)	46	37	17
Caring for a parent or other family member	47	37	17

Note: Table only illustrate responses from participants that said the event and/or stage applied to them. Moreover, several questions could not be asked for under 18 years old participants due their age-inappropriate theme.

Furthermore, participants were presented with several statements about safety, violence, reproductive health and rights. They were asked to indicate which of these statements represents their experiences and views best. As usual, the statements were randomised to prevent any biases. The results are shown in Table 12.

With regards to violence against women and safety, 70 percent of participants feel that they would seek help and report relationship violence to the police if they were experiencing it. The

same percentage of participants said that they feel able to identify problematic and unsafe behaviours in a relationship. Although this proportion is high, it does highlight that 30 percent of young girls and women felt unable to seek help when experiencing violence in their relationship. Also worryingly, 30 percent of women felt that they were unable to identify problematic behaviours in relationships. In addition, 2 percent of respondents think that they could still respect a man who they know hurts women. In terms of reasons for violence against women, approximately 50 percent believe that binge drinking contributes to this violence. Further, participants strongly believe that age appropriate respectful relationships education in primary school would effectively reduce violence against women and girls (64 percent). However, 34 percent say that they have received uninvited and unwanted indecent and/or sexually explicit texts/phone calls/messages and 27 percent do not know what to do when they get unwanted male attention.

When asked about reproductive health and sexual rights, more than half of She Speaks participants felt that they can negotiate safe sex (56 percent) and are informed about additional contraceptive methods (58 percent). Nevertheless, 23 percent would like to feel more confident to establish boundaries with sexual partners.

**Table 12 Please indicate which of the following statements you feel apply to your experiences and views on safety, violence, reproductive health and rights.**

If I was experiencing relationship violence I would seek help and report it to the police	70%
I feel I am able to identify problematic and unsafe behaviours in a relationship	70%
I think age appropriate respectful relationships education in primary school will effectively reduce violence against women and girls	64%
I know what a female condom is	58%
I feel able to negotiate safer sex	56%
Binge drinking contributes to violence against women	51%
I have received uninvited and unwanted indecent and/or sexually explicit texts/phone calls/messages	34%
I don't know what to do when I get unwanted male attention	27%
I would like to feel more confident to establish boundaries with sexual partners	23%
I can still respect a man who I know hurts women	2%
None of these	2%

## 4 Conclusion

The She Speaks survey has been developed in partnership with YWCA Australia to reflect the interests of the local and national YWCA member associations. Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions, the She Speaks survey obtained information from girls and young women aged between 15 and 30 years of age. The survey explored perceptions of participants across a range of areas pertaining to leadership and gender equality.

The results from the survey are meant to be used by YWCA in the delivery of programs and services to young women and girls, and provision of support for individuals, their families and communities. This information is useful devising strategies to develop the leadership potential of young women and girls. This knowledge underpins the advocacy undertaken by YWCA with the aim of realising the collective power of women and girls, in promoting equality.

Like the previous She Speaks surveys, a significant proportion of respondents consider themselves to be leaders currently, and 71 percent aspire to be leaders in the future. However, participants mentioned that a lack of confidence was a strong barrier preventing them from achieving their leadership aspirations.

The survey has highlighted that girls and young women face barriers in realising their full leadership potential. They identified issues surrounding education, work-and-life balance, and social pressures to conform to unrealistic expectations. These issues differed across the age groups in terms of their relevance, but were dominant themes that emerged.

Another issue highlighted by the girls and young women concerned safety, violence and reproductive health and rights. There was a significant proportion who felt unable to negotiate safe sex (46 percent), felt unable to report sexual violence (30 percent), and felt unable to identify problematic patterns in their relationships that could lead to violence (30 percent). This has implications in terms of the advocacy and education programs that could be targeted at these young women by YWCA Australia, moving forwards.

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