Report Summary

YWCA AUSTRALIA

SHE SPEAKS SURVEY

2014

www.ywca.org.au
Overview

In 2014 the YWCA contracted the Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR) at the University of Queensland to conduct the She Speaks survey.

It aims to highlight the “voices of girls and young women aged between 15 and 30 years old, and explored a range of social and personal issues”.

It was the “largest annual surveys collecting information from young women about their attitudes, perceptions and experiences of leadership”.

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).
She Speaks participants identified the importance of access to free or inexpensive healthcare and sexual healthcare, including contraception and family planning services.

Girls and younger women identified experiencing sexism and media pressure and social expectations to conform to certain, sometimes unhealthy, body images.

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.

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.

Young women are worried about the price they might pay for having children: lost promotions, lack of flexible return to work, and the impact on superannuation and retirement income. And they are worried about the high cost of childcare.

The gender pay gap is hereby perceived as one major concern since it affects women’s economic independence throughout their whole life.

**Key Stats**

- 58 percent of girls and young women consider themselves to be a leader in their family, school, community and/or workplace.
- 71 percent of girls and young women would want to be leaders in the future.
- Only 23 percent of young women believed they would see effective leadership in public life.
- 80 percent of girls and young women do not believe that equality has been achieved yet.
- 73 percent of participants do not perceive that men and women are valued equally in Australia.
- 90 percent of participants think that women experience discrimination.
- 77 percent of participants see themselves as someone who believes women and men should have political, economic and social equality.
- 79 percent of young women felt that gender-based stereotypes affected their day-to-day life.
- 30 percent of young women felt unable to seek help when experiencing violence in their relationship. Also worryingly, 30 percent of participants felt that they were unable to identify problematic behaviours in relationships.
- 34 percent of young women say that they have received uninvited and unwanted indecent and/or sexually explicit texts/phone calls/messages.
- Almost 50 percent of participants 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.
CALL TO ACTION

Key Recommendations

Women’s leadership

- As part of Australian Government investment in measures to achieve the G20 commitment to close the gap between male and female labour-force participation rates by 25 per cent by 2025, restore the $1.6 million over four years cut from the Office for Women’s Women’s Leadership and Development Strategy in the 2014-2015 federal budget.

Women’s workforce participation

- Support flexible work practices that enable parents to combine work and family responsibilities, and work to address the gender-based stereotypes that lead to employer discrimination towards women of childbearing years.
- Ensure that any paid parental leave scheme includes adequate superannuation contributions.
- Ensure that childcare programs are affordable through a single means tested payment to services covering up to 90% of childcare costs, with an additional subsidy for lower income families, ensuring that there are programs in place to support access of children with additional needs to early childhood education and care services.
- Ensure the quality of childcare services through educator qualification requirements for children aged 0-3, current care ratios, and application of the existing family day care framework to oversee the provision of any nanny services.

Violence prevention and respectful relationships

- Ensure that violence prevention and early intervention, including respectful relationships education, remains a key focus of the Australian Government.
- Invest in age-appropriate respectful relationships education in primary school that includes addressing harmful gender-based stereotypes.
- Invest in programs that support girls and young women to negotiate safer sexual relationships and to address unwanted male attention.
- Implement a comprehensive national sexuality education program into the Australian Curriculum, ensuring the program has a central focus on respectful relationships* and uses a gender perspective, including examination of gender roles, perceptions of masculinity and femininity, and consequences of stereotypes and inequalities (see attachment: Hearing Young Women’s Voices: The Equality Rights Alliance Young Women’s Advisory Group (YWAG) Policy Position on Sexuality Education).
- Provide sustainable, long-term and adequate funding for The National Plan to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 generally.

Healthcare, including sexual healthcare

- Ensure that healthcare in Australia, including sexual healthcare, is appropriate, affordable and accessible. In particular, abandon proposals to introduce a Medicare and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) co-payment which may impact on young women’s general and sexual health by limiting access to medical advice and treatment, particularly for young women on low-incomes.


She Speaks participants were particularly concerned about harmful gender stereotypes that affect their lives and limit their opportunities. Participants call on the Prime Minister to lead change on gender stereotypes and to fund programs across their school and university education that would support their leadership development and access to mentors.
YWCA’s leadership programs contribute to support young women in their leadership aspirations. Locally, nationally and globally, YWCA women are leaders for gender equality.

**We help Every Girl find her voice**

YWCA Every Girl provides girls with a unique opportunity to develop their self-esteem, learn about their human rights, and show leadership in their local community. At the conclusion of their Every Girl experience 100% of the participants are able to identify at least one personal strength, 97% were confident to present their personal strengths to their peers, and 90% of the participants were able to identify a personal voice that they found meaningful.

> “If you want to be heard, you have to use your voice!” Every Girl participant

**YWCA inspires women to lead with the SHE Leads Conferences**

While YWCA of Canberra inaugurated their SHE Leads Conference in 2014, YWCA of Adelaide held its second annual SHE Leads Conference in the August of 2013, almost doubling the inaugural attendance with more than 200 women coming together at the venue sponsor, the stunning National Wine Centre.

Leading women delivered powerful plenary sessions addressing global, national and local women’s leadership aspects and break-out sessions focussed on practical development tools such as public speaking and networking.

> “I loved being able to spend a day unapologetically being a woman & a feminist” - conference delegate

**Women hone their leadership style with the She Leads Diploma**

YWCA Canberra launched the She Leads Diploma in June 2013 and successfully completed its first program in March 2014 with 14 graduates.

The Diploma interweaves a gender analysis framework with a traditional Diploma of Management, allowing participants to build their leadership skills while working towards a nationally recognised qualification.

At the end of the course, 100% of participants rated She Leads overall as good or excellent; 100% agreed or strongly agreed they had developed practical management and leadership skills; and 100% agreed or strongly agreed they saw their potential as a leader.

> “She Leads was full of ‘aha’ moments surrounding gender equality, leadership, management and personal values.”