



bsi.

Lifting the Second Glass Ceiling

Australia market
overview



By Royal Charter



In Australia, workforce participation by women is high compared with comparable countries, sitting at 61.1% compared with 70.9% of the male population¹. The section below explores how women in Australia are experiencing the Second Glass Ceiling and looks at which factors are more influential.

As in other markets, menopause is considered a taboo topic in most Australian workplaces, with women concerned they will be considered weak if they speak up, and with research indicating its symptoms have meant long-term absences or forced early retirement². This has led to calls for the federal government to measure and report on the impact of menopause on Australian women's employment, along with a push for policymakers to address this. In addition to this, women in Australia take time out of the workforce and work part-time to meet caring responsibilities at an unequal rate to men, only exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic³.

Evidence suggest this affects their participation and career advancement, adding to the barriers to opportunities within the workforce, including at later stage⁴. The overriding impact of this means that the SGC prevalence in Australia is clear. Alongside the push for policy change coming in Australia, discussion around breaking the stigma surrounding menopause can help accelerate progress.



Key findings

A mixed picture for Australian women in the workplace

Less than six in ten (58%) Australian women surveyed are confident their generation will receive the same levels of flexibility and support to stay in the workforce as long as their male colleagues. This is close to the average of 59% across the five countries polled. Two-fifths of Australian women agree it is uncommon to see women in positions of leadership, again near the average of 42% across the five countries.

Role models are considered important

Three-quarters of Australian women believe the presence of more experienced female colleagues would be beneficial to the development of younger women in the workplace (73% globally).

Women encounter barriers to staying in work

Three in ten Australian women (30%) cited caring responsibilities (for parents or children) as a barrier to remaining in the workplace (in line with the average of 29% across all countries) but higher than in the US and the UK.

Nearly a quarter of Australian women (23%) mentioned health or well-being considerations for menopause as a barrier to continuing work (close to the five-country average of 21%). Australian women are most likely to mention any kind of health consideration as a barrier (47% compared to 41% on average). Only 11% of Australian women believe there are no barriers at all to staying in work (10% globally).

Menopause

Nearly six in ten (58%) Australian women believe it would be difficult to raise this or issues related to menstruation, difficult pregnancies or miscarriage with an employer (matching the five-country average).

There is a marked difference depending on the gender of the manager, with 59% in Australia uncomfortable to raise these issues with a male manager (52% across all countries), and just 14% saying they would be uncomfortable talking to a female manager (18% globally).

Formal policies would help

Over three-quarters of women polled in Australia (76%) believe it is helpful for organizations to have formal policies to address personal health and wellbeing issues such as menopause, health issues related to menstruation, difficult pregnancies or miscarriage, but only 3% say they are aware of such policies in their organization.

[Read the full Lifting the Second Glass Ceiling report and see the recommendations here](#)

¹ [Gender Statistics](#), The World Bank, accessed June 2023

² [Menopause leaves many women suffering in silence at work, but the push for change is on](#), ABC, April 2023

³ [Equitable Flexibility in Australia: Reshaping Our Workforce](#), Bain, June 2021

⁴ [Women's economic equality](#), Office for Women, accessed June 2023

bsi.



Read more about our
services and products
on our website
bsigroup.com