



Women in Public Health

Women in Public Health (WPH) is a network of women from across Australia working to advance gender equity in public health leadership.

WPH advances gender equity by:

- **highlighting inequities** - highlighting the inequities that exist in leadership in public health and the value of diverse women's voices in advancing health
- **elevating voices** - elevating the voices of women in public policy discussions, in the media, in government processes and in other public forums
- **connecting women** - connecting women working to advance public health across research, policy, healthcare and service settings and beyond the health sector.

The WPH network is committed to ensuring diverse representation including among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, Women with Disabilities, LGBTIQ+ women and trans and non-binary people.

The WPH network is committed to ensuring that women are represented from a range of roles and from early in their career and beyond.

Why is WPH needed?

Women are a large part of the public health workforce but are underrepresented in leadership positions.

The Advancing Women in Healthcare Leadership project reports that women make up 75% of the healthcare workforce, but represent 45% of public hospital board chairs, 39% of private hospital CEOs and 38% of state and federal chief medical or health officers.¹

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) 2021-22 Employer Census found that women represent 22% of CEOs and that men are more likely to hold management positions, even in industries such as healthcare which predominantly employ women.²

Women bring different skills, approaches and values to leadership.

Countries led by women leaders have fared significantly better than those led by men on a wide range of dimensions concerning the global COVID-19 health challenge.³ Analysis of available data for 35 countries show that countries governed by women leaders experienced much fewer COVID-19 deaths per capita and were more effective and rapid at flattening the epidemic's curve. Most women-led governments were more prompt at introducing measures in the initial phase of the epidemic, prioritising public health over economic concerns, and more successful at eliciting collaboration from the population. Secondly, most countries led by women are also those with a stronger focus on social equality, human needs and generosity.

Women experience high rates of online abuse in their professional roles. More than a third of women (35%) experience some form of online abuse in a professional context. This is even higher for younger women (43 per cent), women with disability (57 per cent) and those who identified as LGBTIQ+ (51 per cent). A quarter of women indicated that they were reluctant to move into leadership roles, more than one in five (22%) temporarily stopped their online activity and 5% even left their job because of it.⁴

Advancing gender equity in leadership leads to increased and improved economic, social and health outcomes.⁵

¹ [Women in Healthcare Leadership – Advancing Women in Healthcare Leadership \(womeninhealthleadership.org\)](#)

² [Media Release: Stagnant gender pay gap a \\$26,600 wake-up call for employers to pick up the pace | WGEA](#)

³ [Women in power: Female leadership and public health outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

⁴ [Women In The Spotlight: How online abuse impacts women in their working lives | eSafety Commissioner](#)

⁵ [Media Release: Stagnant gender pay gap a \\$26,600 wake-up call for employers to pick up the pace | WGEA](#)

What activities will WPH undertake?

WPH will undertake a range of activities under each of its three priority action areas. Some of these activities are included below.

- **Highlighting inequities**

- » WPH will undertake research and analysis to examine and better understand the issues facing women in public health and make policy recommendations on system changes that can address these inequities.

- **Elevating voices**

- » WPH will profile women working in public health and provide opportunities for women working in public health to connect with decision makers.
- » WPH will produce a podcast that provides a platform for women working in public health to highlight the issues faced in advancing gender equity in health leadership and why it matters.

- **Connecting women**

- » WPH will provide opportunities for women to connect and collaborate through virtual and face-to-face events.