

# Leadership, Representation and Decision-Making

Women with disabilities are underrepresented across political, public service, sport, media and honors leadership roles. Insights from the **2025 WWDA Economic Security Survey** show urgent action is needed, but national data systems are failing to capture the full picture.

## Our Survey Findings

**10%**

of respondents held governance roles, compared to 32% of women nationally (WGEA).<sup>1</sup>

**Less than 5%**

of respondents held management or higher leadership roles, compared to 34% of managers and 33% of board members being women nationally (WGEA).<sup>1</sup>

### What national and global data shows:

- Lack of gender diversity in leadership is as a barrier to workplace safety.<sup>2</sup>
- Only 16% of women with disabilities report feeling represented in leadership roles, compared to 23% of men with disabilities (AIHW).<sup>3</sup>
- 5.1% of all Australian Public Sector employees reported they had a disability.<sup>4</sup>
- In the Asia-Pacific region, 14 of 18 countries had no parliamentarians with disabilities who were women.<sup>5</sup>
- 7 out of 17 countries have no women with disabilities in their national gender equality institutions.<sup>5</sup>

## What We Know, and What We Don't

### What is missing from national data?

- **Representation gaps:** Leadership indicators rarely disaggregate by both sex and disability, leaving women with disabilities invisible.
- **Seniority data gaps:** Disability reporting in the Australian Public Sector does not show seniority levels. Without this, the likely concentration of employees with disability in entry-level positions remains hidden.
- **Barriers to pathways:** Data does not capture inaccessible recruitment processes, lack of mentorship, bias in selection panels, or ableist assumptions about leadership capability and the undervaluation of lived experience.



1. Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA). 'Women in leadership', *Australian Government*.
2. Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) (Jun 2025). Speaking from Experience: What needs to change to address workplace sexual harassment. *AHRC*. p.8.
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (30 Jan 2025) 'Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 Outcomes Framework: 3rd annual report'. *AIHW*.
4. Australian Public Service Commission (APSC). (2023) 'APS employees with disability', *APSC*.
5. UN Women. Leadership and Political Participation of Women with Disabilities, *UN Women*. p.2.