

WWDA Economic Security and Employment Survey 2025

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) undertook this survey to strengthen our advocacy on economic security and employment for women, girls and gender diverse people with disability. WWDA designed the survey to generate policy-relevant evidence in areas where national data collections do not yet fully reflect lived experience at the intersection of gender and disability.

Survey context

Australian research shows that many women experience a reverse wealth trajectory, entering older age with reduced assets, lower superannuation balances and an increased risk of poverty.¹ This trajectory reflects cumulative structural factors, including gender pay inequity, workforce segregation into lower-paid industries, unpaid caring responsibilities, time out of the workforce, and the financial impacts of intimate partner violence. National analysis led by Monash University describes these dynamics as producing a socially and politically structured pathway into poverty for women, including projections that more than one third of single women will live in poverty by age 60 and that women retire with substantially lower superannuation balances than men.²

Women with disability experience these gendered economic pressures alongside disability-related barriers, including discrimination and exclusion in employment, insecure work, and unequal access to career progression and workplace adjustments.³ Current national datasets provide valuable insights into gender inequality and disability-related disadvantage. However, they often examine gender and disability separately, or treat disability as a single aggregated category. This approach can reduce visibility of how gendered economic dynamics and disability interact to shape worse outcomes for women, girls and gender-diverse people with disability.

Survey purpose

Within this context, WWDA designed the Economic Security and Employment Survey to strengthen our advocacy for women, girls and gender-diverse people with disability.

The survey aimed to:

- Generate lived-experience evidence to inform WWDA submissions and policy positions.
- Complement national data by providing insight into how gender and disability interact in relation to work, income, social security and economic safety.
- Identify areas where indicators, definitions and data collection approaches could be strengthened to better support gender-responsive and disability-inclusive policy development.
- Highlight groups and experiences that remain under-researched or under-represented in national datasets.

Survey period and format

WWDA ran an anonymous, online survey between 16 May and 16 June 2025. The survey included multiple choice and open-ended questions to capture both comparable measures and lived experience, including examples and impacts.

Respondent profile

A total of 79 people completed the survey. All respondents identified as women or gender-diverse people with disability.

Key characteristics include:

- Over **10%** (9 respondents) identified as gender-diverse, non-binary or agender.
- Over **10%** (9 respondents) identified as culturally and linguistically diverse.

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- Over **75%** (60 respondents) reported living with one or more chronic health conditions.
- Over **45%** (36 respondents) identified as LGBTQIA+SB.
- Over **45%** (36 respondents) lived in rural or remote areas.
- **Limitation:** Only one respondent identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this survey is the under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with disability. WWDA recognises that this reflects broader structural barriers in research participation, including the impacts of colonisation, systemic racism, distrust of data systems, and the lack of resourcing for culturally safe, community-led research. The economic security and employment experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and gender-diverse people with disability require dedicated, culturally safe research approaches led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This survey cannot speak to those experiences and reinforces the need for future work to prioritise First Nations leadership, partnership and appropriate sampling strategies.

This survey also has limited representation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people with disability. Only 10 per cent of respondents (9 people) identified as culturally and linguistically diverse. WWDA recognises that migrant and refugee women and gender-diverse people with disability face distinct and compounding barriers to economic security and employment, including language barriers, non-recognition of overseas qualifications, insecure migration status, racism, and reduced access to culturally responsive services and supports. The limited representation of CALD respondents means this survey cannot adequately reflect those experiences.

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The survey reflects the overlapping experiences of marginalisation reported by women, girls and gender-diverse people with disability who participated. While these groups all experience gendered discrimination and exclusion, not all identify as women. Nine respondents (10 per cent) identified as gender-diverse, non-binary or agender. The experiences of trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people with disability warrant specific and direct exploration, particularly in relation to employment pathways, workplace discrimination and economic security. While this survey includes gender-diverse respondents, it does not enable analysis that fully captures the distinct ways structural inequality operates for these communities.

Just as WWDA advocates for more intentional sampling strategies and clearer population definitions in national data collection, the design of this survey reflects the limits of what was possible within WWDA's current funding and resourcing. Aggregating findings across gender-marginalised people with disability can obscure important differences in lived experience. Addressing these gaps requires targeted research approaches led in partnership with, and accountable to, the communities most affected.

WWDA aims to work in coalition with, rather than replicate, the core work of organisations led by and representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and LGBTQIA+ people with disability. These limitations do not diminish the value of the survey findings. Rather, they reinforce the central argument of this work: that how we define populations, our sampling strategies and approach to analysis determines whose experiences are visible in evidence and policy, and whose are not.

Sampling strategy

The survey used convenience sampling. WWDA promoted the survey through its social media channels and email members with an invitation

to participate. This means the survey was not representative of all women, girls and gender-diverse people with disability in Australia.

WWDA does not have the resources required to recruit a statistically representative sample across diverse disability experiences, geography, age and other characteristics. For this reason, readers should not generalise the findings to the wider population.

Implications for data and policy

WWDA treats this survey as an exploratory and pilot dataset. The findings provide signals about where existing data architectures could be strengthened, particularly in relation to sampling strategies, disaggregation and indicator design. In other words, how we define the phenomena we measure and the populations we include shapes what the data is able to show.

The findings indicate:

- A need for more intentional sampling strategies, particularly to capture the experiences of women with intellectual disability, including First Nations women with intellectual disability.
- Opportunities to refine commonly used definitions, including measures of economic abuse and employment participation.
- A need for indicators that disaggregate by both gender and disability to show how inequality manifests across policy priority areas, including where women with disability experience persistently worse outcomes than women without disability.

WWDA seeks to work with research partners and data collection agencies to address these gaps and strengthen future data collection, analysis and policy impact.

Use of this data

WWDA used the survey data to inform our advocacy and policy

positions, including our National Women's Alliance 2026–2027 Pre-Budget Submission, and will continue to draw on the findings across future policy and advocacy work.⁴ The survey strengthens the evidence base for gender-responsive and disability-inclusive economic policy. It underscores the importance of improving how governments collect, analyse and apply data so policies respond to the diverse experiences of women, girls and gender-diverse people with disability.

WWDA seeks collaboration with governments, researchers and partners committed to closing these evidence gaps and driving meaningful change.



1. Enticott, J., Callander, E., Garad, R. and Teede, H. (6 Apr 2022) 'Women, work and the poverty trap: Time for a fair go to support health and wellbeing for Australian women', Monash University.
2. Enticott, J., Callander, E., Garad, R. and Teede, H. (6 Apr 2022) 'Women, work and the poverty trap: Time for a fair go to support health and wellbeing for Australian women', *Monash University*.
3. Piantedosi, D. (Nov 2025). Submission: Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Review. *Women With Disabilities Australia*.
4. National Women's Alliances (Nov 2025). 2026-2027 Pre-Budget Submission. *Working with Women Alliance*.