



Scouts
AUSTRALIA

A celebration of 50 years of girls and women in Australian Scouts

February 2024



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This year marks 50 years of girls being included in Scout programs as youth members and provides an opportunity for celebration and reflection. Scouts are always looking for ways to improve and this paper keeps our eye firmly towards the future.

Modern Scouting

Scouting today comprises 57 million young people in more than 200 countries. Scouting's numbers continue to grow.

Over the past 116 years more than two billion young people have enjoyed the benefits of the Scout program, including more than two million in Australia.

Scouting is recognised by UNESCO as the world's largest provider of non-formal education to young people.

Scouting's aim is simple, but uniquely broad.

Scouting is the values-driven youth leadership program for Australia, in the community and the outdoors. Scouting provides leadership opportunities through a program that is adventurous, fun, challenging and inclusive. We run a youth development program from age 5 to 25 years, with a guiding philosophy of "youth leading, adults supporting".

Research from Resilient Youth Australia has shown that Australian Scouts are more resilient, inclusive, and optimistic than their peers. British research has also found that former Scouts have better mental health outcomes including up to 50 years after they were Scouts.

While the values of Scouting have remained constant in more than a century, the program is continually evolving to respond to changing times: societal, cultural, technological, geographic, responding to natural disasters, and more.



A diverse and welcoming global movement

A core value of Scouting is that all are welcome.

Our 1200 Scout Groups across Australia aspire to each represent the characteristics of their local population. Our local community Scout Groups welcome Australians from all backgrounds, most recently this includes young people from Iraq, Syria and South Sudan.

Diversity and Inclusion in Scouting is integral to our mission to be relevant to all young people and support their development.

In 2014 the World headquarters of Scouting moved to Kuala Lumpur, to be closer to the population centre of Scouting's current 57 million youth members. The top five largest Scouting nations are Indonesia, India, Bangladesh and Kenya, and the United States.

The history of girls and women in Australian Scouting

In 1973, Scouts Australia admitted girls and women youth members to the Venturer Scout and Rover Scout Sections (ages 15 to 25), with girls being admitted to the younger sections in the 1980s.

Today Scouts Australia is about 38% female across all sections and ages, including adults.

Scouts has more female youth members than Girl Guides Australia. Scouts Australia is a keen ally of Girl Guides Australia, and we share programs and facilities. We recognise that some girls prefer, and can benefit from, a male-free environment.

Over recent years, Scouts Australia has advanced inclusive gender norms among our members through the #HeForShe Action Kit, uniform pins for members to display their preferred pronouns, and age-appropriate educational outcomes around understanding consent and healthy relationships.

Scouts Australia recognises that our most significant gender gap is not in our youth members, or even in the adult volunteers who run local groups and units around the country, but in our senior organisational leadership. For the first time ever, our National Commissioners team (the C-level executive team) has achieved gender parity - although our broader senior leadership teams are less diverse.

Current status

This is a snapshot of Scouting in Australia at June 30 2023.

Youth members aged 5-25

	Joey Scouts Aged 5-7	Cub Scouts Aged 8-11	Scouts Aged 11-14	Venturer Scouts Aged 15-17	Rover Scouts Aged 18-25	All "Youth" Members	% Percentage
Male	5,494	12,887	10,728	3,904	1,874	34,887	65%
Female	2,743	6,361	6,536	2,503	1,406	18,549	34%
Other	4	14	26	35	25	104	>1%
Total	8,241	19,262	16,290	6,442	3,305	53,540	

Local adult leaders

	Joey Scouts Leaders	Cub Scouts Leaders	Scouts Leaders	Venturer Scouts Leaders	Rover Scouts Leaders	Group Leaders (Adult Support)	Total	%
Male	1,229	1,723	2,019	754	147	1,845	7,717	52%
Female	521	1,509	1,020	420	46	1,229	4,745	38%
Other	1	4	3	2	-	-	10	>1%
Total	1,751	3,236	3,042	1,176	193	3,074	12,472	

National senior leadership

	National non-uniformed executives	%	National uniformed executives	%	National Commissioners	%	Board	%	National Council	%
Male	84	79%	86	60%	3	50%	9	82%	69	70%
Female	23	21%	57	40%	3	50%	2	18%	30	30%
Other	-		-		-		-		-	
Total	107		143		6		11		99	

Planning for improvement

A focus on senior leadership

The contributions of adult volunteers are essential in ensuring that Scouts Australia remains a viable organisation to support the development of young people. While there are many women who volunteer with Scouts Australia, the gender balance in senior leadership roles – particularly the board – is skewed heavily toward men. Diversity in leadership contributes to organisational resilience, and it also ensures that young people are being mentored by a range of leaders who reflect the diversity of the community.

Our actions:

- Scouts Australia has set a target for our senior leadership to reflect our membership: 40% women. This will be reported annually to the board.
- Scouts Australia is reviewing the process and communications we use to encourage nominations for Life Membership and other honours (eg. Order of Australia).
- Scouts Australia's board will consider how it can align with the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality, when published.

Developing leaders

Scouting is, at its core, about developing leadership potential. However, there is more we can do to build the pipeline of women into leadership roles. There are opportunities both in terms of Scouts' own members, as well as seeking opportunities to offer leadership training to other women in the community through the Scouts Australia Institute of Training (which offers certificates and diplomas in outdoor skills, business, leadership, and project management).

Our actions:

- Scouts Australia is seeking funding to bring Scouts' adult leadership and management training (Cert IVs and diplomas) to women re-entering the workforce. This will be reported annually to the board.
- Scouts Australia plans to use its social media channels to highlight female leaders in the organisation.

Improving participation

Research has shown adolescent girls drop out of organised sport and recreation at a rate higher than their male counterparts. With nearly 50% of new participants being girls, Scouts Australia is working hard to show that adventure and leadership is for everyone.

We believe that you can't be what you can't see, and Scouts Australia's material has placed images of girls front and centre – normalising girls' participation in our program. Scouts Australia wants to go further, ensuring that we are a contemporary and relevant organisation for all members of the community.

Our actions:

- Scouts Australia has set monthly targets for marketing and promotional material and social media posts, highlighting the adventures of our female members.
- Scouts Australia is reviewing policies, program materials, and training materials to ensure that language and examples are gender neutral and/or inclusive.

