Acknowledgement of Country

89 Degrees East and Plan International Australia acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and work. We acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded.

We recognise that Australia cannot realise people having the same rights, opportunities and outcomes no matter their gender without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having the same rights, opportunities and outcomes as non - Indigenous people. We recognise the leadership of communities in the fight for equality, human rights and self - determination and are committed to working towards addressing all forms of inequality.

Stage 2: Deep dive and messaging insights

It will take 134 years to close the Global Gender Gap, according to the World Economic Forum.

Plan International Australia set out to develop a unique tool to support gender equality advocates to target specific audiences, shift their attitudes and mobilise them to take action.

Gender Compass Stage 1 (2023) aimed to
- Map where Australians are at on the issue of gender (in)equality
- Segment them based on their attitudes and beliefs
- Profile these segments in terms of broad experiences, behaviours and values.

Gender Compass Stage 2 (2024) aimed to
- Dig deeper to get to the heart of who the segments are
- Understand what shapes their attitudes and beliefs
- Determine the best way to communicate with each segment on this issue.

The 'moveable middle'

Trailblazers (19%)
- Gender equality is vital and urgent
- Acknowledge long way to go
- Very informed and proactive
- Value fairness and equality highly as well as feeling safe.

Hopefuls (24%)
- Believe gender equality is necessary and achievable
- Supportive and optimistic,
- Less vocal or urgent.

Indifferent (6%)
- Not resistant, but not prioritising equality.
- General apathy and disengagement —not specific to this issue.
- Low awareness of drivers or impacts
- Value safety and loyalty but also more inward - looking and express values such as having fun and personal freedom.

Moderates (23%)
- Equality largely achieved = lack of urgency/low engagement.
- Value personal freedom, safety/security/caring for others
- Often attribute differences in outcomes to individual choices, rather than structural inequality. Some see solutions as overblown/potentially discriminating against men.

Rejectors (17%)
- Gender equality has gone too far/ men facing discrimination
- Resistant to suggestion of systemic bias and efforts to address gender equality.
- Value on safety, freedom, loyalty and economic security

Conflicted (12%)
- Strong but often contradictory views
- Values safety and security, personal freedom and caring for others over equality.
- Support gender equality but Conflicted men especially think women are mostly treated fairly these days.
- Concerned about negative impacts on men and boys.

Topline tensions

1 **Most Australians think gender equality is important.**
But… inequality is under - recognised. Many people think we are close to achieving equality in Australia and that women are treated fairly in most areas of life. If Australians don't see the imbalance (inequality), gender equality solutions seem overblown (and potentially unfair).

2 **There is broad recognition that gender equality benefits everyone.**
But… Australians are not on the same page about what gender equality means and looks like.

3 **Most people agree we should treat every person fairly, no matter their gender.**
But… for many people, freedom, safety and caring for others are more resonant values than fairness and equality.

4 **Most are supportive of solutions aimed at addressing gender inequality.**
But…the belief equality is close to being realised in Australia creates ambivalence and contributes to a lack of urgency.

5 **There is broad recognition of a shared problem (rigid gender expectations holding us back).**
But…people of all genders can struggle to recognise the challenges faced by people of a different gender to them. Men especially exhibit a limited understanding of women's experiences of inequality.

6 Many Australians are concerned about the pressures on men and boys.
But…this ranges from the harm caused by rigid ideas about masculinity to broader concerns about men coming under increasing scrutiny, with some feeling there is a 'war on men'.

7 Most support more opportunities and equal outcomes for women and girls.
But... many assume this means less for men and boys (zero sum game thinking). People are also sensitive to anything that feels like pitting men and women against each other   - an adversarial approach does not speak to people's lived experience.

8 There is significant appetite for working together   .
 But… working together requires us to create space for men in the story, presenting their concerns alongside those of women and other groups who are disproportionately impacted by inequality.

9 Most people are open to discussing gender equality at work and in other settings.
But… the type of language typically used by advocates of gender equality can be polarising and risks pushing people further away.

10 There is potential to engage the 'movable middle' to create real change.
But .. it requires us to be creative and adapt our storytelling to meet people where they're at.

Results | Dial testing

Introduction to dial testing

Dial testing is a method that allows researchers to capture moment - by - moment responses to content, such as ads, campaign videos or audio messages.

- Participants were presented with five gender equality audio messages in a randomised order.
- Participants were asked to respond to what they heard in real - time using a 'slider'. The slider is moved up or down depending on how much participants agree/disagree or are engaged/unmoved by different parts of each message.
- This method provides rich data and supports researchers to understand the language, framing and examples that are most effective in building support for gender equality solutions across the different segments.
- It also highlights unhelpful or loaded words and phrases that can turn audiences off.

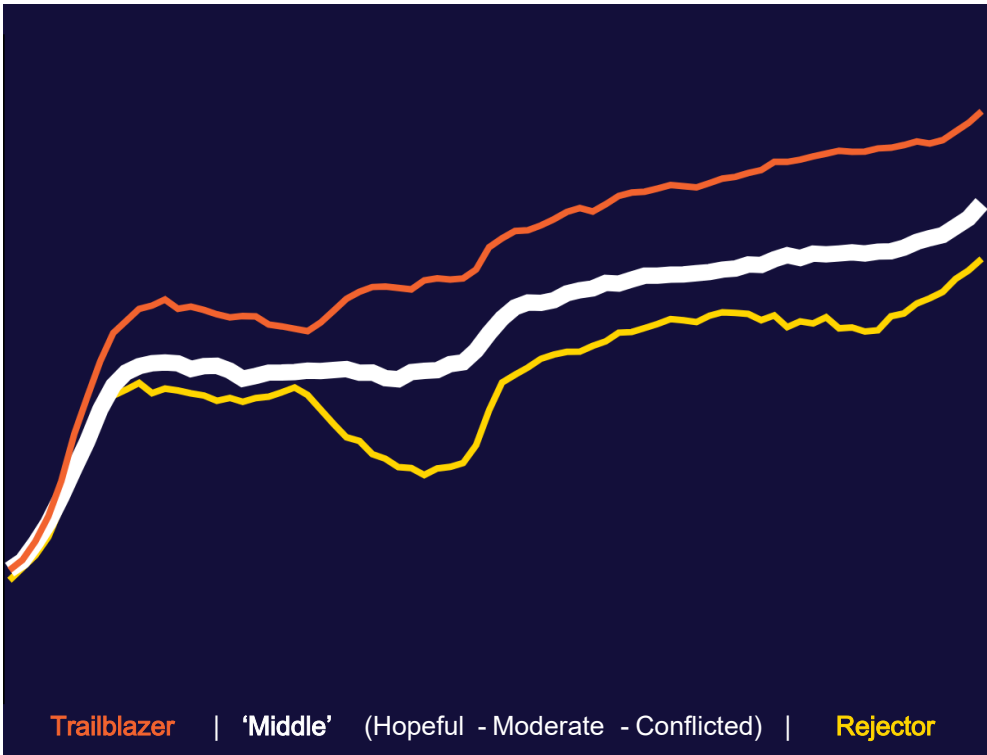The lines on each chart represent the average level of agreement at particular moments in each message.

- The orange line represents the Trailblazers.
- The yellow line represents the Rejectors.
- The thick white line represents the average level of agreement of 'the middle ' - a combination of respondents in the Hopeful, Conflicted and Moderate segments.

1

100
90
80
70
60
50
40

AGREE

NEUTRAL

DISAGREE
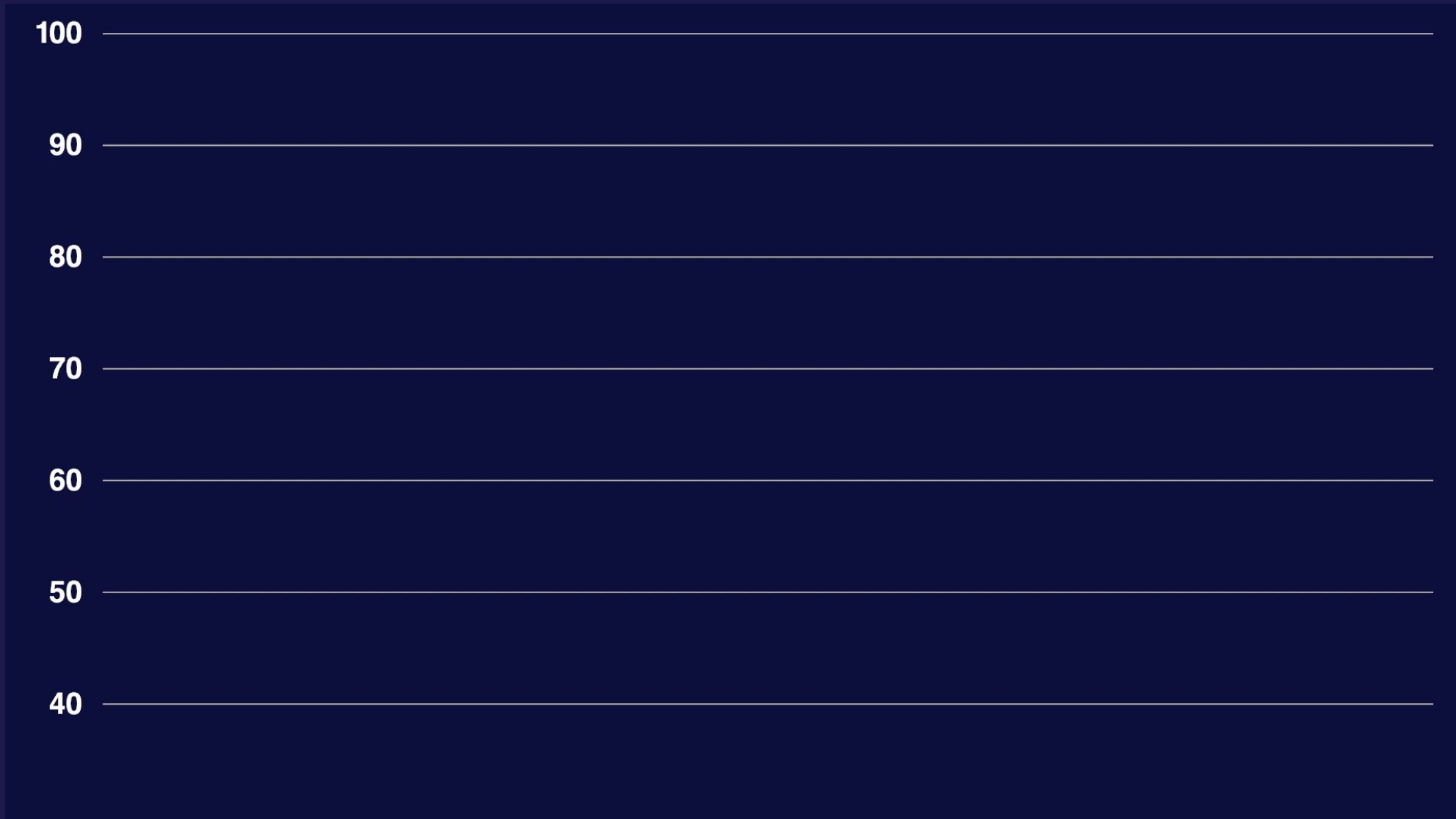
1 Freedom to choose your own path

Trailblazer | **'Middle'** (Hopeful - Moderate - Conflicted) | **Rejector**

Every person should be free to choose their own path in life.

But outdated expectations pressure men to put work first, denying them time with their families, while women are still expected to do the unpaid work of cooking, cleaning and caring — often on top of their paid jobs.

We should all be free to live life on our own terms. Flexible work arrangements can give men more time at home to share the load and enjoy time with their kids, while access to fair pay in rewarding careers recognises women's hard work and lets them choose their own path.
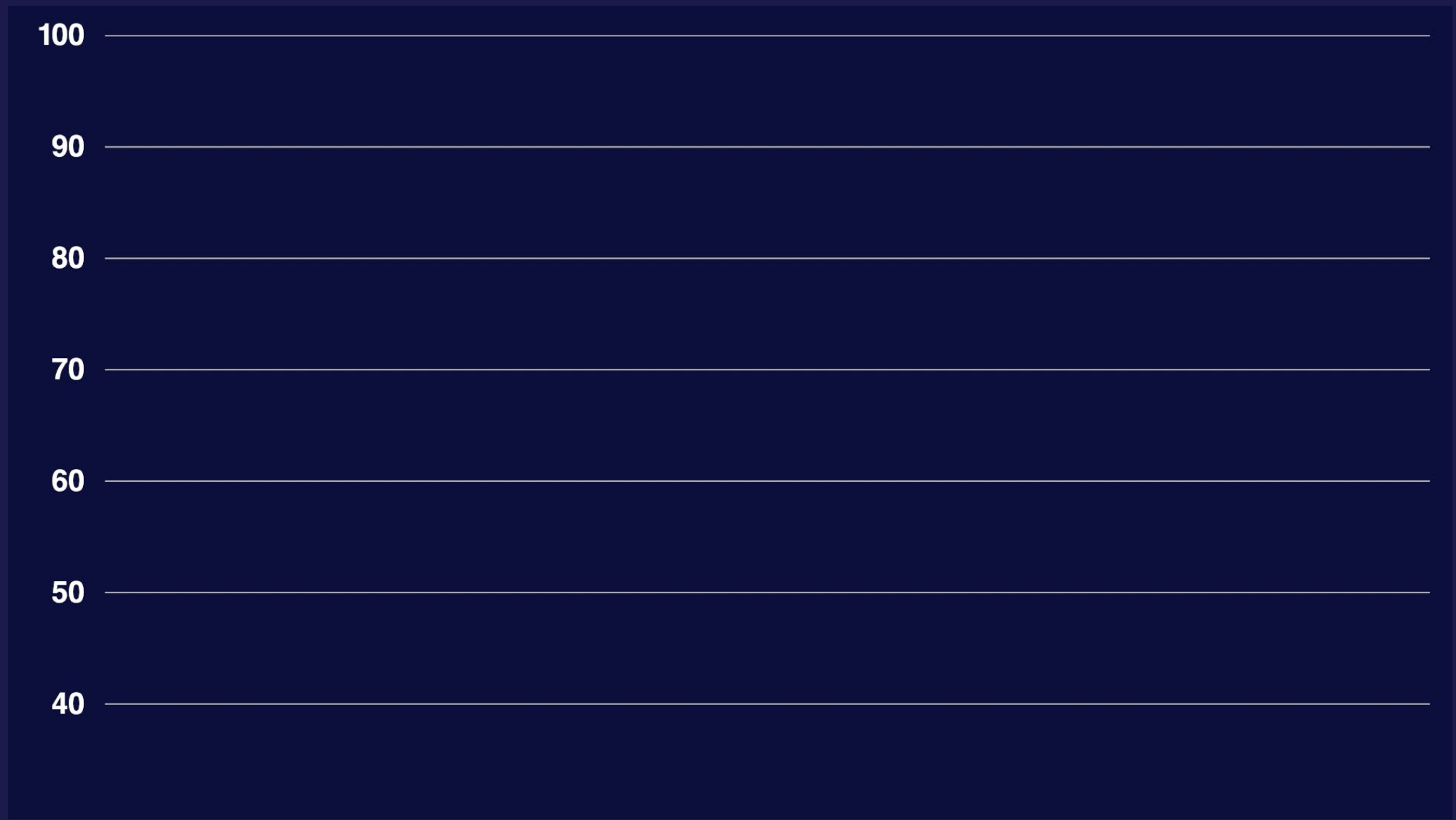
When everyone is free to choose what works for them and their families, we all benefit.

Colour coding:
Effective with 'the middle'
Less effective with 'the middle'

Equal chance to be your best

13

② Equal opportunity to be your best

Trailblazer | **'Middle'** (Hopeful - Moderate - Conflicted) | **Rejector**
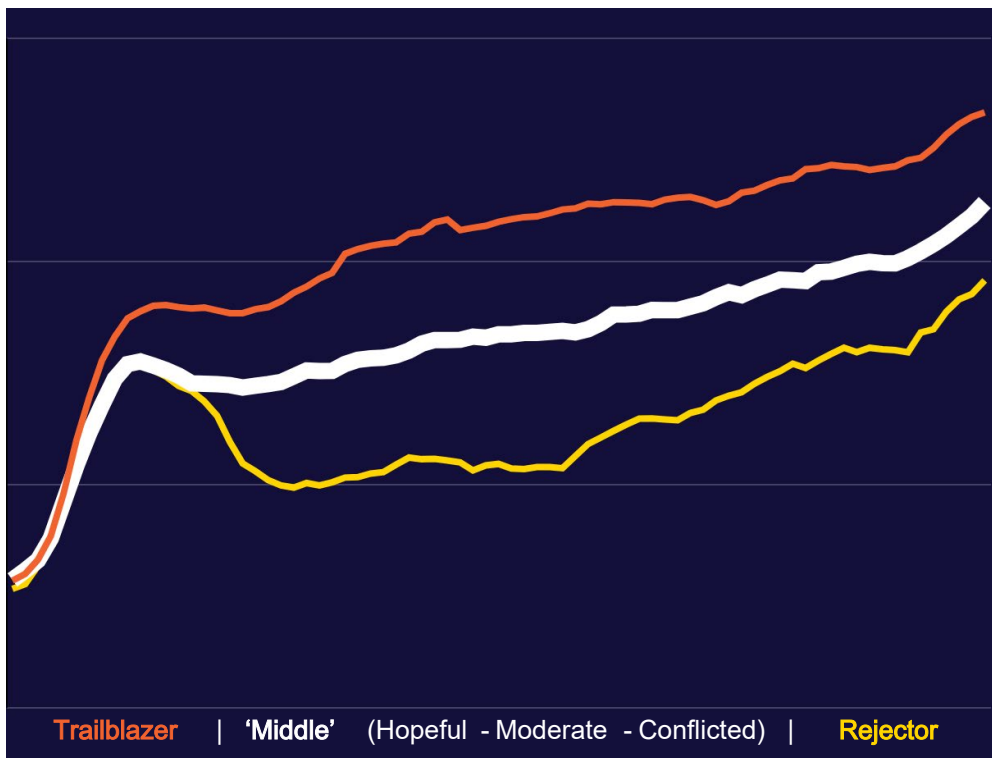
Every person deserves an equal chance to be the best they can be.

But narrow ideas about what men and women are capable of are holding us back.

When we give women in sport the same opportunities as men, they excel. The success of the Matildas and women's AFL, rugby and cricket has given our community more of the sports we love and inspired boys and girls to pursue their goals with confidence. And when men are encouraged as much as women to pursue careers in teaching and nursing, we get more passionate, caring people teaching our kids and looking after us.

When we give every person the chance to be their best, we all win.

Colour coding:
Effective with 'the middle'
Less effective with 'the middle'

3

100 ——————————————————————————— AGREE
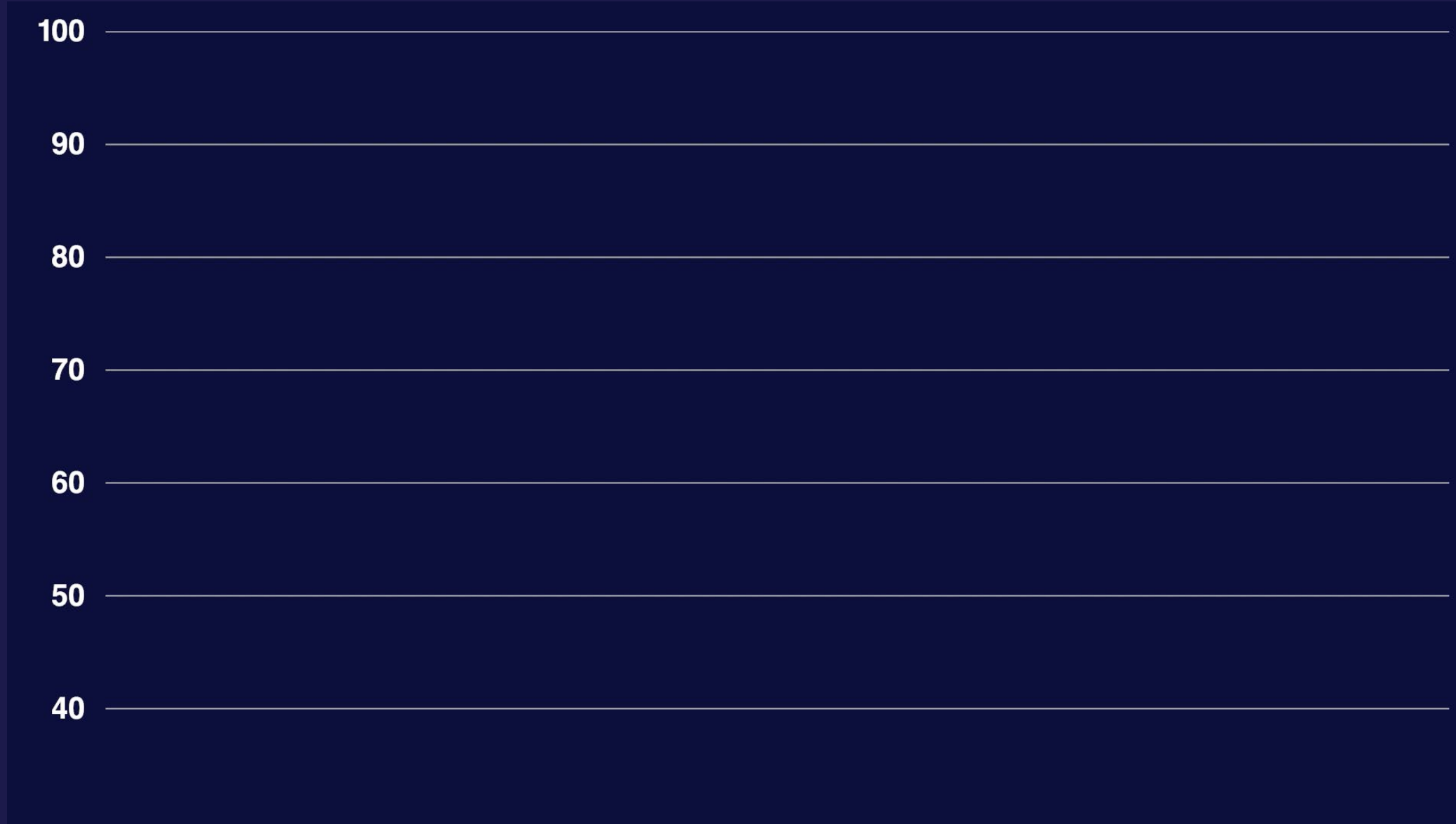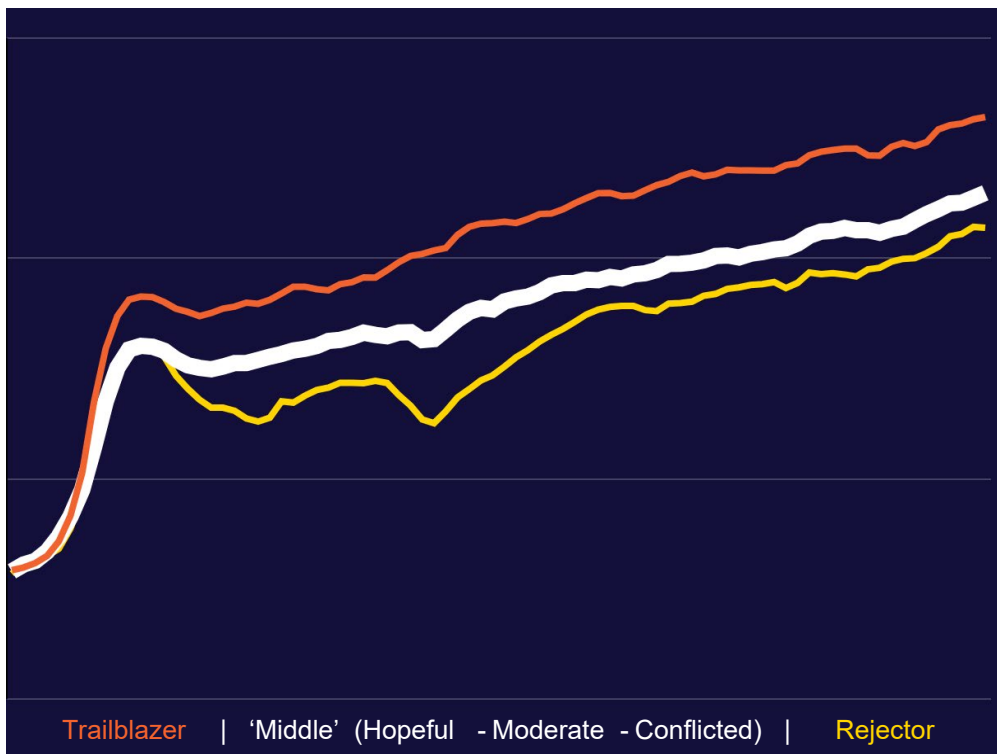
90 ———————————————————————————

80 ———————————————————————————

70 ———————————————————————————

60 ———————————————————————————

50 ——————————————————— NEUTRAL

40 ———————————————————————————

DISAGREE

3 Safety & caring for everyone

Trailblazer | 'Middle' (Hopeful - Moderate - Conflicted) | Rejector

Every person deserves to feel safe and cared for.

But old - fashioned beliefs pressure many men to hide their feelings and act tough, and it's hurting their mental health. This can lead to real danger when some men think it is ok to control and even harm women.

It's time to move forward. Caring for men and boys means encouraging them to express their emotions and ask for help when they need it. Caring for women and girls starts with modelling healthy relationships and teaching consent and respect from a young age so women feel safe at home, at work and in our community.

Together, we can build a world where everyone feels safe and supported.

Colour coding:
Effective with 'the middle'
Less effective with 'the middle'

89 DEGREES EAST | PLAN INTERNATIONAL | Gender Compass.

16

4

100
90
80
70
60
50
40

AGREE

NEUTRAL

DISAGREE

Structural inequality & impact on women   (status quo)
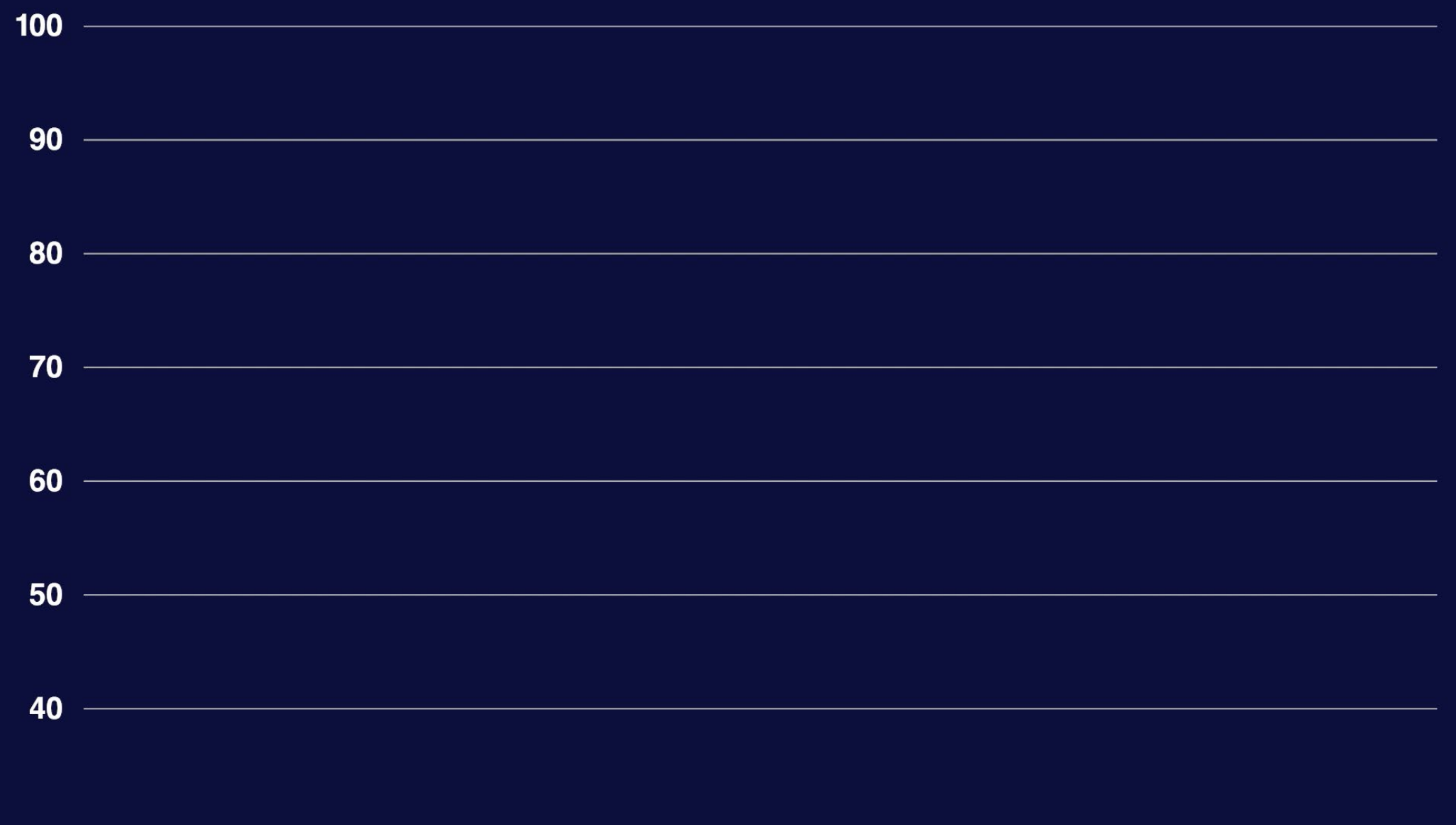
4 Structural inequality & impact on women
'Status quo' message

Trailblazer | 'Middle' (Hopeful - Moderate - Conflicted) | Rejector
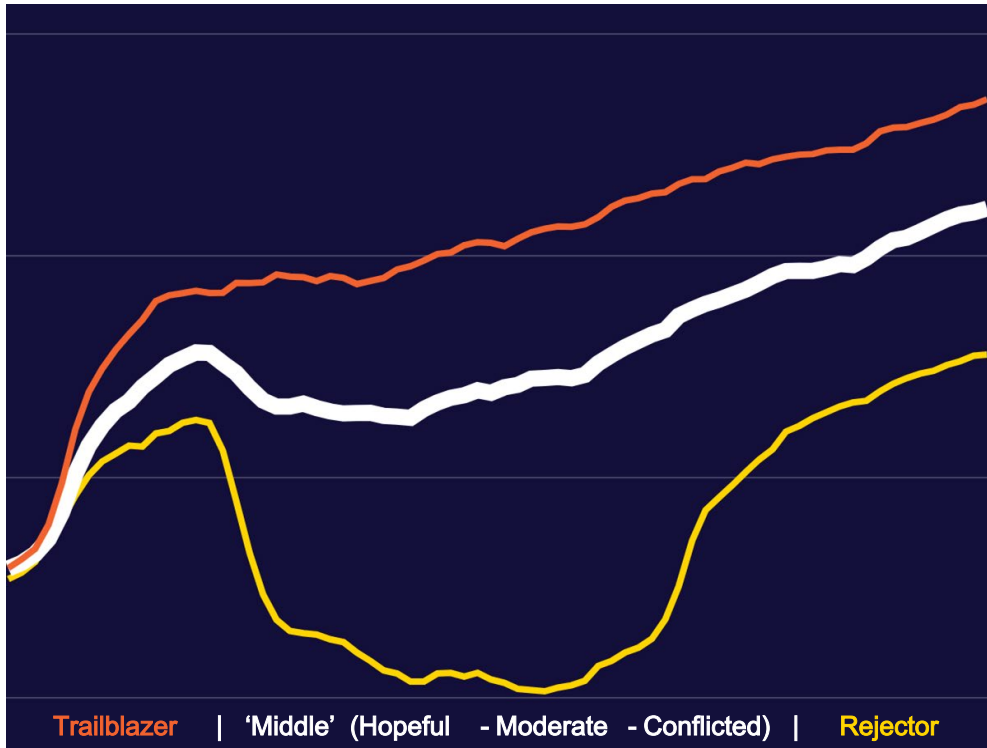
We want an equal future for all women, where it is not a disadvantage to be born a girl.

But women in Australia still don't have the same rights and opportunities as men. Outdated systems designed to privilege men over women put the burden of unpaid domestic work on women and deny them access to equal pay, leadership roles and basic safety.

It's time to move on. Equality starts with treating boys and girls fairly and modelling healthy, respectful relationships at home.

When we value and respect women and girls, we are on our way to building a safer and more equal world.

Colour coding:
Effective with 'the middle'
Less effective with 'the middle'

5

100
90
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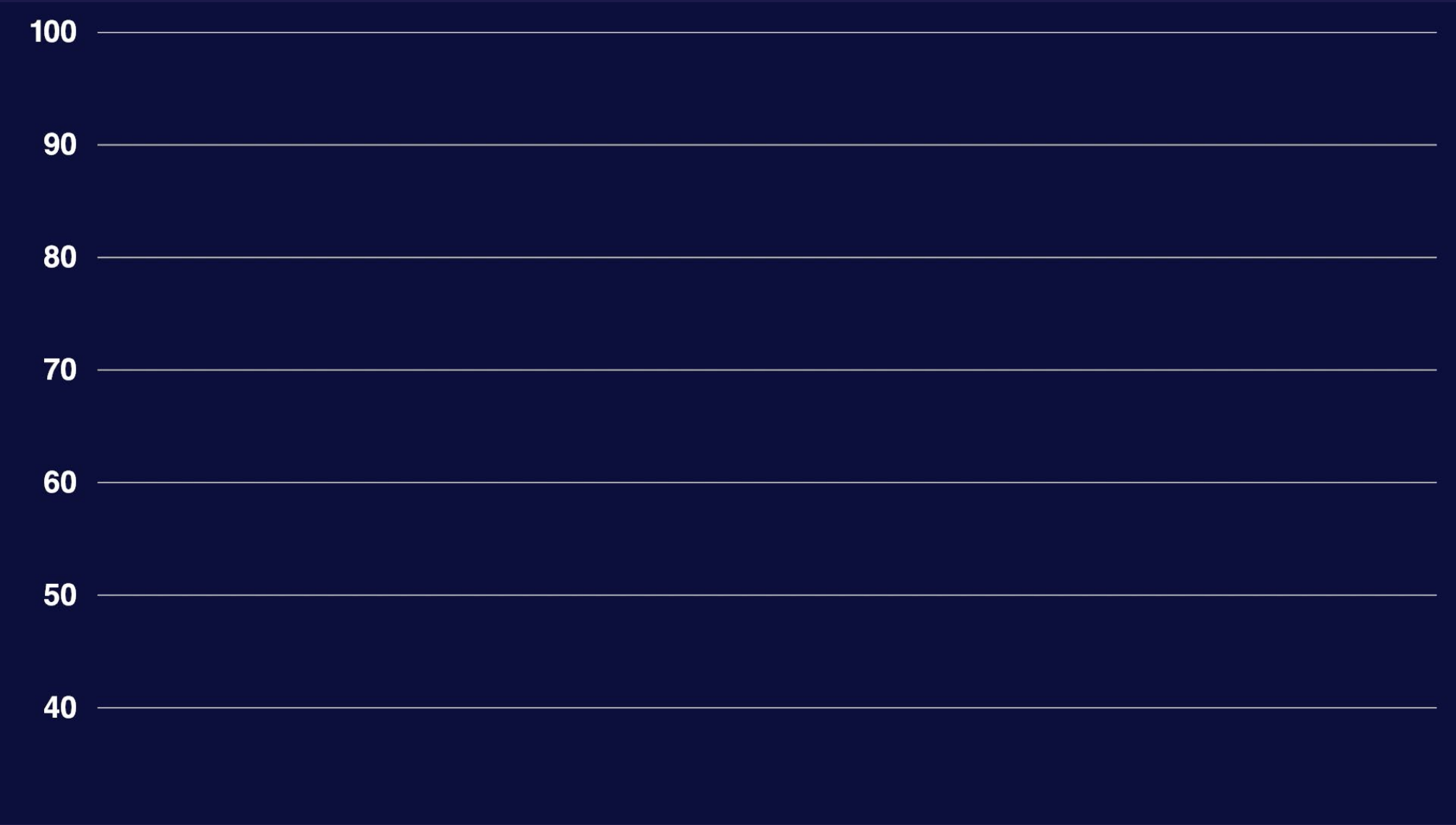AGREE
NEUTRAL
DISAGREE

Freedom/respect for traditional roles   (Opposition message)

19

5 Freedom/respect for traditional roles
Opposition message

Trailblazer | 'Middle' (Hopeful - Moderate - Conflicted) | Rejector
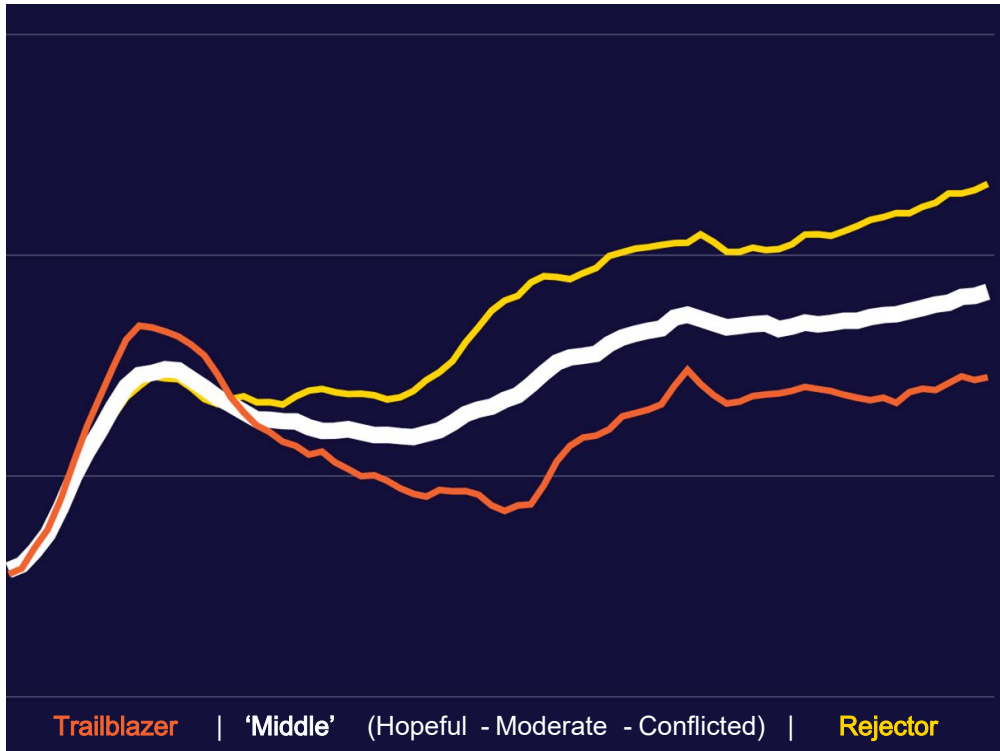
Every person should be free to play to their natural interests and strengths.

But some people want us to ignore the basic biological differences between men and women and treat everyone exactly the same, putting pressure on men and women to be something they're not.

We need to stop blaming men for everything and focus on the positive contributions of good men and women. We should value men for their strength and hard work, and respect women who choose to earn less so they can care for their families.

When men and women are free to play to their natural interests and skills, it's better for individuals, families and communities.

Note: Label reversal!
Colour coding
Effective for opponents
Less effective for opponents

Findings from Stage 2 have informed the development of a Messaging Guide.

Who are we talking to?

Keep energising the base!

As advocates of gender equality, we have been very effective in energising the Trailblazers and encouraging them to take action.

We share their values, understand their motivations and, most importantly, have an established shorthand for communicating that helps us to get them fired up and ready to act.

We are not looking to undermine or minimise the impact of messaging used by advocates of gender equality that embraces different principles to those described in this report.

Energising supporters of gender equality is critical and speaking candidly and emphatically has proven to be very successful with audiences who care about this issue and are actively working to address inequality.

But engaging the 'middle' requires us to adapt

This research confirms that the language that energises Trailblazers is not as effective for engaging other groups, in fact it can push them away.

We need to adapt our messaging to appeal to 'the moveable middle' and keep energising the Trailblazers whilst avoiding pushing Rejectors ever further away. This will support communicators to cast a wider net and bring more people in our community into the conversation about gender equality   .

Less effective with the 'moveable middle'

Talking in the abstract

Abstract arguments and ideas (e.g. *systemic injustice, power imbalances*) often fail to engage people in the 'moveable middle' and in some cases can push away people who find this type of language inaccessible and overwhelming.

While this language still resonates with Trailblazers who are familiar and comfortable with this language, it is critical to translate these concepts into relatable and tangible examples for the 'moveable middle'.

To engage a wider audience, we need to instead use tangible examples that reflect people's day-to-day experiences. When people can see themselves and their loved ones in the story they are more likely to support equality efforts.

Replacing abstract explanations with real world examples boosts accessibility and relatability.

Q: Does "avoiding the abstract" risk making structural drivers of inequality invisible?

A: While we may use simpler language to engage a broader audience, we are still talking about the same thing.

Our research found that although talking about abstract concepts like 'structural inequality' resonate with Trailblazers and some Hopefuls, it often alienates others, rather than inviting them in. By starting with practical, everyday scenarios, we help people connect with the issue, building understanding and trust.

This approach doesn't avoid the deeper, systemic aspects of gender inequality; rather, it opens the door for more nuanced conversations over time. The goal is to make space for broader discussions, without pushing people away at the outset

Less effective with the 'moveable middle'

Ignoring men and boys

A focus on women and girls is very effective with Trailblazers, but demonstrating how gender inequality affects men and boys is essential to making gender equality relevant and urgent for a wider audience.

Including men in the story (without making them the main character) recognises the 'moveable middle's' concerns about pressures on men and mitigates assumptions that more for women = less for men

To counter 'zero - sum game thinking' —where progress for women means a loss for men —we can include men's experiences in the narrative.

Demonstrating how gender inequality impacts women *and* men is crucial to engaging a wide audience.

Q: Doesn't writing men into the story erase women's experiences and ignore the disproportionate struggles women and gender diverse people face?

A: We need to write men into the story, but not as the main character. The aim is not to sideline women's experience, but to invite men to see themselves reflected. This is particularly important for engaging the 'moveable middle' who are less receptive to messaging centred solely on women's experiences. However, as women and gender diverse people are disproportionately impacted by inequality, it is absolutely essential to represent the experience of people of all genders.

We don't want to make this all about men, but by showing that gender inequality harms everyone we open the door to broader support and engagement.

Less effective with the 'moveable middle'

Polarising language

Language that is heavily associated with a Trailblazer worldview can alienate the middle segments and polarise Rejectors, distracting from the core message.

Segments that believe biological differences between genders and/or women making different choices to men explain inequality of outcomes are acutely sensitive to the type of language used by people who see inequality as a systemic issue.

Messages phrased in the language of those they fundamentally disagree with can trigger a defensive, emotional response or prompt people to tune out as messaging   doesn't feel aimed at them.

It's important to communicate the same ideas using accessible, neutral language and relatable examples that can connect with a wider audience.

Q: So, we need to stop using the language we've always used?

A: Not at all. This language still works with Trailblazers and we should absolutely continue to use it to energise our supporter base.

The issue of gender equality is central to everything we do, and the ultimate goal remains unchanged: a world where everyone, regardless of gender, has equal rights, opportunities, and respect.

What we're suggesting is that we need to communicate about gender equality in ways that resonate with different audiences. For some, this might mean starting with broader, more accessible language that focuses on shared values like safety, freedom, and potential. Once we've engaged them, we can begin to introduce more complex and nuanced discussions around structural inequality, making sure we move toward true equality for all.

More effective with the 'moveable middle'

Inclusive language

Inclusive language helps people to see themselves in the story and feel part of the solution.

We can bring people together with what we say and how we say it.

Simple words like *we*, *us* and *everyone* suggest togetherness, while phrases such as *working together* and *all of us* communicate unity. This emphasis is not only engaging and uplifting but crucially mitigates concerns about men and women being pitted against each other.

An adversarial approach does not speak to people's lived experience of loving, living with and working alongside people of all genders. Instead, men and women across the segments respond positively to messages that outline a shared problem and emphasise everyone working together for collective benefit.

Q: If we are making this inclusive, shouldn't we use gender - blind language?

A: Gender-blind language, such as 'every person' or 'people in our community', has an important role to play. It is inclusive regardless of gender identity and helps to communicate universality. However, naming men and women does play a vital role. It makes explicit the ways that men and women are impacted by gender inequality and could benefit from equality solutions. This is critical when many in the 'moveable middle' do not recognise women's experience of persisting inequality and require specific examples of how women are affected. Not mentioning gender in this context risks diluting our communications.

Mentioning men and their specific experiences is also critical to help cisgender men recognise themselves and see this as an issue that is relevant to them personally (and counter assumptions that gender inequality is a 'women's issue'). Using both gendered and gender-blind language is important if we want to make our communications inclusive and engaging.

More effective   with the 'moveable middle'

Make it real and recognisable

To engage the 'moveable middle', we need to meet people where they're at, using resonant shortcuts that connect to people's current values and lived experience.

Relatable examples make inequality harder to ignore whilst making the benefits of equality relevant and achievable. They also help people to recognise themselves and their loved ones in the story.

Making inequality recognisable and equality tangible is crucial to building support for solutions. If our audience does not see the inequality, they may view gender equality initiatives as exaggerated or even unfair.

To engage a wider audience, we need to translate these concepts into specific, tangible examples that reflect people's day - to - day experiences. When people can see themselves and their loved ones in the story, they are more likely to support equality efforts

Q: Does making it real mean providing clear evidence?

A: While facts and evidence have an important role to play, on their own they don't change minds. To make inequality real and recognisable, we need to connect the issue to people's everyday experiences. This means translating abstract concepts, like systemic inequality or power imbalances, into concrete, relatable scenarios that resonate with individuals on a personal level.

Instead of just presenting statistics, we should show how these issues play out in familiar situations   —whether at work, in family life, or in social interactions. By doing so, we help people see themselves and their loved ones in the story, making the issue more tangible and relevant. When people can relate to the experiences being shared, they're more likely to feel motivated to support equality efforts. This approach shifts the conversation from abstract ideas to real - world impacts, which is crucial for engaging a wider audience and building long   - term support for solutions.

More effective   with the 'moveable middle'

Centre the solution

Given the awareness gap (many think we are close to achieving equality), explicitly stating examples of persisting inequality is critical.

However, since guilt and shame aren't conducive to changing minds, and hopelessness undermines motivation to act, it's important to focus on what can be done to change things for the better.

Sticking to a ratio of   1 part BARRER: 2 parts ACTION allows us to set up our issue (inequality) but focus on motivating people with our (equality) solutions. The middle segments, in particular, respond positively to messages focussed on solutions.

Highlighting the reality of gender inequality is crucial, but effectively engaging a broad audience requires a focus on motivating people with relevant and tangible equality solutions that connect to their values.

1 part BARRIER: 2 parts ACTION

While Trailblazers are not put off by a focus on what's wrong, for the 'moveable middle' this feels too much like blaming and can make the problem feel insurmountable. This prompts people to tune out.

Making the problem (BARRIER) real and relevant, then focussing on meaningful solutions (ACTION) is most effective in engaging this group.

E.g.

BARRIER: Women's contributions continue to be devalued with women still being paid less than men for the same work.

ACTION: It's time to value everyone's contributions. We can do this by supporting all businesses to transition to transparent pay policies and providing government   - funded training on fair pay practices to ensure equal pay for equal work.

More effective with the 'moveable middle'

Paint a positive future.

To inspire action across the segments, messages should put forward a hopeful vision for the future.

In all segments, people respond positively to calls to action that invite them to be part of creating a better future.

Phrases such as *it's time to move forward* convey momentum, while expressions such as *together, we can…* are unifying and neutralise concerns about men and women being pitted against each other.

By painting a picture of a better future we can build together, we encourage people to connect with and contribute to change.

When we employ resonant values statements, inclusive language, everyday examples, and emphasise the benefits of equality for men *and* women, we are in the best position to motivate Australians to work together to build a better world.

Settings

for discussing gender equality

Many are open to discussing gender equality in a range of settings.

- Nearly 9 in 10 Australians (86%) believe it's *appropriate* to talk about gender equality topics such as fair treatment and respectful relationships **at home.**

- Nearly 8 in 10 think it's appropriate to discuss this in educational settings such as **school** (78%) and **university/TAFE** (77%), as well as in the **media** e.g on TV or radio (76%) and in the **workplace** (75%).

- Roughly 7 in 10 Australians also say it's appropriate to discuss these topics in **community settings** (73%), on **social media** (69%) and in **faith settings** (65%).

- Very few think it is *inappropriate* to discuss gender equality in any of these contexts - the highest resistance is to discussing them on social media (11% say *inappropriate)* and in faith settings (10%).

Demographic variance:

- Overall, women are more likely to consider these contexts *appropriate* (81% on average) compared to men (72% on average).

- People in the LGBTIQA+ community are more likely to consider certain contexts *appropriate:* social media (81%), community settings (84%) and school (87%).

- Young men, especially 20 - 29 year olds, are more likely to be on the fence about the appropriateness of discussing equality in these settings (25% on average).

Trailblazers are the most supportive of talking about equality in a range of settings: On average, 9 in 10 (90%) say these are *appropriate* .

Rejectors are the most likely segment to believe discussing gender equality in these contexts is *inappropriate:* social media (20%), faith settings (17%), community settings (13%) and in the workplace (13%).

Notably, the majority of this segment think these *are* appropriate contexts for discussing gender equality topics (66% on average).

What can you do with
Gender Compass?

Questions & Discussion

Developed by Plan International Australia

Plan International Australia would like to thank their generous project funding partners and supporters: