



Women in Australian international affairs

Jasmine-Kim Westendorf  and Rebecca Strating 

Department of Politics, Media and Philosophy, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Australia

ABSTRACT

This article reviews the participation of and challenges facing women in international affairs in Australia, with a focus on three sectors: the media, the civil service and the academy. We review the qualitative and quantitative data available, and share the results of a number of surveys and scans we have conducted ourselves: of the gender breakdown of undergraduate enrolments in Australian university courses focusing on international affairs; the gender break down of academic staff employed in politics and international relations programmes at Australian universities; the gender breakdown of authors published in the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* and the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* from 2000 to the present; and trends in the gender breakdown of citations in articles published in the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* between 2000–2001 and 2018–2019. We argue that although women in Australia are interested and engaged in international affairs in almost equal measure to their male counterparts, serious structural challenges continue to undermine their equitable representation in key fora and their career progression. This has clear implications for the future scholarship, practice and analysis of international affairs in Australia and beyond.

KEYWORDS

Australia; international affairs; gender; women; publication rates; citations

In 2017, the Australian publisher Black Inc. launched a new magazine called *Australian Foreign Affairs*, billing it as Australia's 'leading foreign affairs journal' and claiming that it would 'serve as a forum for our most adventurous and deepest strategic thinkers to interrogate foreign policy'. Over the course of the first three issues, it became readily apparent that these 'thinkers' were overwhelmingly men: of the thirteen authors who penned the first twelve headline essays, just two were women. In fact, by the fourth issue, two individual men had contributed a total of four headline essays, which was more than women had collectively contributed to the magazine. A casual reader of *Australian Foreign Affairs* might think that women simply do not work in the area of international affairs to the extent men do. They would be wrong. The reality is that women are actively engaged in international affairs through their work in the academy, civil service and media, but that their exclusion from *Australian Foreign Affairs* is illustrative of broader issues around the visibility of women in international affairs, and the structural challenges to their representation, influence and success.