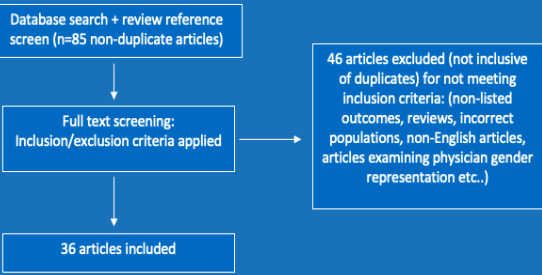


# Gender Diversity within Australian surgery: The challenges and underrepresentation of females within Australian surgical research

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## Background

Gender diversity is a vital component of Australian healthcare. In their Diversity and Inclusion plan The Royal Australian College of Surgeons (RACS) committed to achieving gender equity. Significant progress has been made yet barriers remain. Previous qualitative studies describe the challenges facing women in Australian surgery however few have quantified them. This review quantifies these difficulties and the possible impacts they exert upon female representation within the surgical literature.



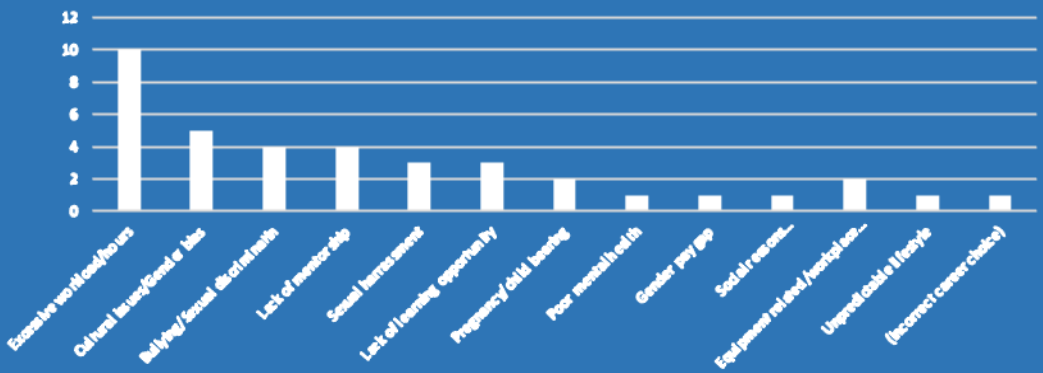
## Methods

This systemic review was performed and reported in accordance with preferred reporting items for systemic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Primary outcomes investigated the challenges RACS accredited female surgeons and trainees face. The secondary outcome explored numerical female representation in the published literature. MEDLINE, PubMed, SOCPUS, Cochrane Reviews, PsycINFO and CINAHL were searched for articles published from 2005 yielding 82 results. Articles were screened by two independent reviewers. 36 articles were included.

## Results

A total of 13 challenges were identified. Most prevalent was an excessive workload (limited training flexibility, long hours) (n=10), gender bias (n=5), bullying and sexual discrimination (n=4) were common. A lack of mentorship (n=4) and sexual harassment (n=3) were documented. Pregnancy was listed twice (n=2). Cumulative demographic data from the search revealed females represented only 15.2% (2,121/16,080) of study participants.

The Challenges Facing Females In Australian Surgery



## Conclusions

Females remain a minority in Australian surgery and surgical research. To achieve gender equity the identified barriers must be fully addressed. Unfortunately these barriers may lead to underrepresentation in the published literature. Additional research is required to investigate the effects such gender biased research has on clinical surgical practice.

## Total Cohort Representation by Gender



■ Female (15.2%) □ Male (84.8%)