

MEMORANDUM

Date: 17 January 2020
To: Hon Julie Anne Genter, Minister for Women
From: Deborah Malcolm, Acting Director Policy
Contact: Deb Potter, Principal Analyst
Subject: World Economic Forum 2020 Global Gender Gap report

Purpose

1. This memorandum provides you with an overview of the 14th edition of the Global Gender Gap report, published in December 2019.

Global Gender Gap report

2. The report, produced by the independent not-for-profit World Economic Forum, benchmarks and tracks national gender gaps in 153 countries across four dimensions:
 - a) economic participation and opportunity – salaries, participation and leadership
 - b) education – access to basic and higher levels of education
 - c) political empowerment – representation in decision-making structures
 - d) health and survival – healthy life expectancy and sex ratio at birth.
3. The report uses the relative difference between females and males to compare complex issues across countries or over time.

Action sought: For information
by: Wednesday 12 February 2020

Noted

Signed:



Hon Julie Anne Genter
Minister for Women

Date: 1 Feb 2020

New Zealand's Scorecard

4. Media interest can focus on New Zealand's comparative ranking. This year New Zealand's ranking rose one place to 6. Table 1 below shows ranking for the last three years and the baseline established when the report began in 2006.

	Educational attainment	Health & survival	Economic participation	Political empowerment	Overall ranking
2019	1	109	27	13	6
2018	1	107	23	9	7
2017	43	115	23	12	9
2006	17	69	14	11	7

5. New Zealand's ranking is only ever a partial indication of national improvement. For instance, international gains in health parity has reduced New Zealand's ranking over time.
6. Ranking is based on a country's proximity to a parity score. A score of 1 means parity is achieved. Table 2 shows New Zealand's positive shift over time for three dimensions, and a small regression for health and survival.

	Educational attainment	Health & survival	Economic participation	Political empowerment	Overall score
2019	1	0.970	0.753	0.474	0.799
2006	0.999	0.973	0.714	0.317	0.751

7. New Zealand has achieved parity in educational attainment (alongside 35 other countries) and has the most distance to achieving parity in the area of political empowerment. The report says political empowerment is globally the most improved area but also the largest area of gender disparity. Increases in the numbers of women in parliament have increased the score globally and in New Zealand. In 85 of the 153 countries considered in the report there has not been a woman head of state in the last 50 years.
8. Our continued high ranking for educational attainment reflects high enrolment rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Global progress is slow

9. The top ten countries of the report are: Iceland, which has closed 87.7 percent of its overall gender gap, followed by Norway, Sweden and Finland. Nicaragua is in 5th position with an 80 percent score, New Zealand is 6th, very closely followed by Ireland and Spain. Rwanda and Germany ranked 9th and 10th. The most-improved countries were Albania, Ethiopia, Mali, Mexico, and Spain.

10. The report finds that, globally, progress towards closing the gender gap has stalled.
11. Progress towards gender parity is proceeding at different speeds in different geographic areas. Western Europe is projected to close the gender gap first, in 54 years. In the East Asia and Pacific region, the gap is projected to close last, in 163 years. This is despite the relatively good ranking of New Zealand and Australia. The East Asia and Pacific grouping is very diverse including Cambodia, China, Japan, Fiji, and Mongolia.

Merits and findings of the report

12. There is no perfect way to compare gender equality within and between diverse countries, and the report works with available data. The strength of the report is that it provides a 'score' which countries can aim to improve on.
13. The high-level nature of the report means that it provides little insight into inequity within countries. The Ministry for Women maintains breakdowns for women's outcomes across similar fields to the report with greater disaggregation.
14. Countries that experience high levels of poverty (e.g. the Philippines) can still have a small gender gap.
15. The report suggests that policies that offer cost- and time-effective solutions to domestic work (i.e. workplace childcare provisions) or change the incentives for men and women to rebalance the burden of household and care duties (i.e. paternity leave), are likely to have a significant impact on women's career opportunities.

Proactive release

16. Within three months of the date of this memorandum, it will be considered for release under the Ministry's proactive release of documents policy.



Deborah Malcolm
Acting Director Policy