

Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister for Women

Release of Cabinet Paper

Building Resilience for Women - COVID-19 and Beyond

Date of issue: 25 May 2021

Cabinet Paper - details

Date: 12 April 2021

Title: Building Resilience for Women - COVID-19 and Beyond

Author: Manatū Wāhine Ministry for Women



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Building Resilience for Women - COVID-19 and Beyond

Portfolio Women

On 12 April 2021, following reference from the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC), Cabinet:

Background

- 1 **noted** that women are experiencing disproportionate economic and social impacts of COVID-19;
- 2 **noted** that, without specific interventions that target women, in particular wāhine Māori and Pacific women, gaps in the immediate COVID-19 response and recovery programme of work risk further entrenching or exacerbating existing inequalities;

Impact on women's employment, education and training

- 3 **agreed** to focus on understanding and increasing women's participation, and in particular wāhine Māori, Pacific and other disadvantaged cohorts of women within the labour market, across existing, and future employment and training initiatives where practicable;
- 4 **noted** that Employment, Education and Training (EET) Ministers have discussed the need to collect better demographic data across employment and training initiatives;
- 5 **directed** officials to provide advice to EET Ministers and the Minister for Women on data about women's participation in existing employment initiatives and opportunities to improve data collection going forward;
- 6 **agreed** that the collection of data on gender will be required for new employment and training initiatives;
- 7 **noted** that the Minister for Women will consider gender data collected in respect of initiatives underway and monitor data from future initiatives to identify whether women's rates of participation in training and employment initiatives are increasing;
- 8 **invited** the Minister for Social Development and Employment and the Minister for Women to report back to SWC by 31 October 2021 on progress towards data collection on gender across employment and training initiatives and the development of an Employment Action Plan for Women;
- 9 **invited** EET Ministers and the Minister for Women to investigate new active employment labour market policies that are primarily targeted towards women;



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- 9 **invited** EET Ministers and the Minister for Women to investigate new active employment labour market policies that are primarily targeted towards women;

Impact on women's social wellbeing

- 10 **invited** the Minister for Women, working with responsible Ministers (Health, Housing and Urban Development, Education, Social Development and Employment, and Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence) to report to SWC by 31 October 2021 on progress towards addressing the social impact of COVID-19 on women, and whether a 'National Action Plan for Women' is required.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister for Women

Chair, Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Building Resilience for Women: COVID-19 and Beyond

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks Cabinet's agreement to:
 - 1.1 a cross-government approach that addresses the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women as part of the Government's wider COVID-19 economic recovery programme;
 - 1.2 a longer-term strategy to improve Aotearoa New Zealand women's resilience in the face of future economic and social shocks;
 - 1.3 identify opportunities within current government frameworks, priorities, and funding that can be better targeted to reduce inequities faced by women, in particular, groups of marginalised women.

Relationship to government priorities

- 2 This paper contributes directly to the Government's overarching objectives to accelerate our economic recovery and lay the foundations for a better future.
- 3 The Government proposes to take the opportunity presented by the scale and pace of the recovery to ensure that the recovery responds to the disproportionate impacts of this significant economic event on women, and Māori and Pacific communities.¹
- 4 The proposed approach is consistent with the Treaty principles of rangatiratanga (self-determination), equity (addressing disparities in outcomes for wāhine Māori), and options (recognising wāhine Māori-specific approaches to issues that directly affect wāhine Māori).
- 5 This paper aligns with the Wai 2700 Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry, which will inquire into claims alleging prejudice to Māori women arising from Crown breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi, with damage to their customary roles and relationships with their whenua, whakapapa, and mātauranga.
- 6 At the heart of all the Treaty claims is the loss of rangatiratanga and the social, economic, environmental, and cultural loss that has occurred from this loss of recognition of wāhine rangatiratanga. The roles and responsibilities of wāhine Māori are crucial to Te Ao Māori, iwi, hapū, marae, and whānau; in particular, in the social sector – education, health, justice, family and sexual violence, housing, and in the economic sector – employment, including the wāhine Māori pay gap and pay equity.
- 7 The Government is committed to reducing inequality and addressing child poverty. Women's economic independence and child poverty are intricately linked, especially in sole parent families. Making women more economically resilient is an important factor in reducing child poverty.

¹ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech-throne-3>; there are other groups of women impacted by COVID-19 – Pacific and ethnic women, women with disabilities, transgender women, sole mothers.

Executive Summary

- 8 Women are experiencing disproportionate economic and social impacts as a result of COVID-19. There are specific population groups that are most affected by barriers to employment in the labour market (wāhine Māori, Pacific women, disabled women, former refugees and ethnic women, sole parents, and older women).
- 9 Over two-thirds of the fall in employment between March and September 2020 was in female employment. For the past three employment quarters, unemployed women have outnumbered unemployed men, by 5000 job seekers.
- 10 Without specific interventions that target women, in particular wāhine Māori and Pacific women, gaps in the immediate response and recovery programme risk further entrenching, or exacerbating, existing inequalities.
- 11 Any interventions will need to take account of the Wai 2700 Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry into claims.
- 12 Sectors that have experienced the most job losses as a result of COVID-19 are in retail, accommodation, hospitality, and recreational services, where nearly one-in-four women work. Many of the current COVID-19 responses have invested in male dominated sectors. We need to diversify employment and training opportunities. This could mean supporting pathways in sectors that are female dominated, as well as ways into traditionally male sectors. There is an opportunity to focus on higher skilled and higher paid employment opportunities for women, particularly for wāhine Māori and Pacific women.
- 13 This paper provides advice on actions we can take to address the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on women's employment, to increase women's participation in training and employment as part of the COVID-19 recovery, with an emphasis on sustainable employment and removing the barriers to women's training and employment opportunities (e.g. childcare support).
- 13.1 In the immediate term, we need to monitor women's participation in training and employment initiatives to understand how women, in particular wāhine Māori and Pacific women, are benefiting and use this to identify where to effectively target support and to invest further.
- 13.2 In the longer-term, structural inequalities that impact on women will be addressed through a Women's Employment Action Plan. The Ministers for Women and Social Development and Employment will report on the development of a Women's Employment Action Plan to the Social Wellbeing Committee by October 2021.
- 14 This paper looks at the impact of COVID-19 on women's social wellbeing, and requests that the portfolios of health (maternal and mental health), housing (homelessness), education (access to technology), social development (childcare), and family violence prevention, report on actions being taken to support women's social wellbeing. I intend to report to the Social Wellbeing Committee by October 2021 on progress towards addressing the social impact of COVID-19 on women. This will also include advice on whether an All-of-Government National Action Plan or Strategy for Women is required.

Background

- 15 As part of the Government's wider COVID-19 economic recovery programme, this paper outlines the economic effects of COVID-19 on women. It proposes some initial options to

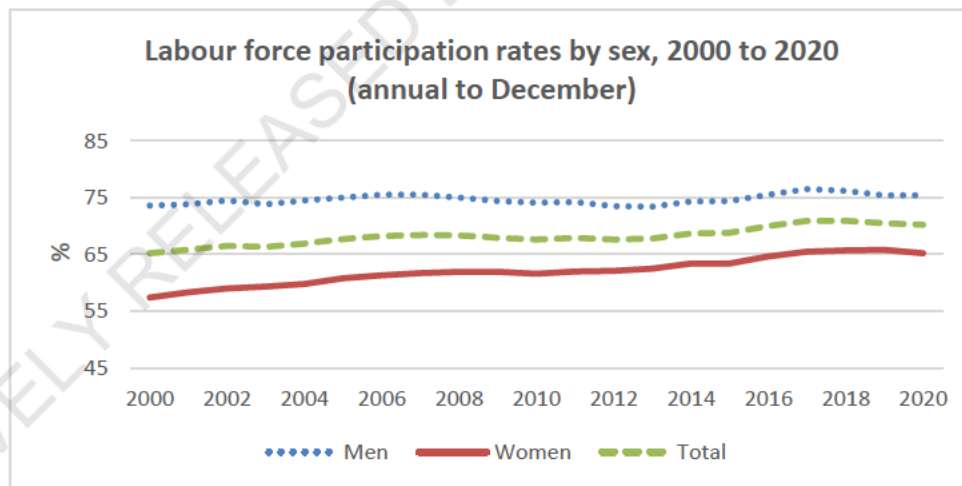
address the issues through existing Government programmes and initiatives, identifies the social impacts COVID-19 has had on women, and signals that further work is needed to better understand how this influences women’s participation in the labour market and their economic outcomes.

16 Women in Aotearoa New Zealand are already at an economic disadvantage, evidenced by the 9.5% gender pay gap². There are a number of other characteristics women have, that often mean they are at a disadvantage to their male counterparts in the labour market. For example, women are more likely to be:

- 16.1 **undertaking a disproportionate share of caring and family responsibilities**, which reduces their capacity to adapt to labour market changes. These factors can constrain their working hours, ability to undertake retraining, and geographic mobility;
- 16.2 **sole parents**. 82% of sole parents are women and sole mothers have greater difficulty finding suitable employment; sole parents make up half of all unemployed mothers, and often have elevated rates of in-work poverty³. Sole mothers made up 40% of all mothers with children still at home⁴;
- 16.3 **in lower skilled, lower paid and/or part-time or casual work, work non-standard hours, and are involved in insecure or limited employment conditions**. Lower skilled and lower paid workers are more vulnerable to job losses.

Trends for women’s employment over time

17 Women’s labour market participation has been steadily climbing over time, although this growth has slowed in recent years. Women’s labour market participation decreased in 2020.



² <https://women.govt.nz/work-skills/income/gender-pay-gap>

³ Plum, A., Pacheco, G., & Hick, R. (2019). *In-Work Poverty in New Zealand*.

⁴ New Zealand Census, 2018

- 18 Historically, women have been concentrated in certain industries, and this trend still remains. Over 50% of all working women are concentrated in three industries: health (20.5% of all working women); retail trade and accommodation (17% of women); and education and training (13.2% of women)⁵.
- 19 While women's representation in some male-dominated industries has increased over time, these gains are small and segregation by industry is entrenched:
- 19.1 in the year to December 2020, women made up 13.4% of the construction industry, compared with 12.8% in 2010;
 - 19.2 in 2020 women made up 30.6% of the manufacturing industry, compared with 29.1% in 2010;
 - 19.3 in 2020 women made up 31.9% of the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, compared with 30.3% in 2010.
- 20 Women's employment outcomes are not reflected in women's educational outcomes. For example, fewer girls than boys leave school without qualifications, and the majority of tertiary graduates are now women⁶. However, this has not translated into more equitable earnings or better labour market outcomes for women. In the years after graduation, the annual earnings of men steadily outpace those for women graduates, including those with the same qualifications.

Women continue to be disproportionately affected in the labour market by the COVID-19 pandemic

- 21 Due to government intervention at a macro-economic level, the economy and the labour market has performed better than expected in response to COVID-19, compared to other countries. In particular, unemployment has been lower than forecast. However, the underlying labour market disadvantages women face have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and women are now faring worse in the labour market than a year previously, in December 2019 (refer Appendix One: Labour market impacts of COVID-19 on women).
- 22 Over two-thirds of the fall in employment between March and September 2020 was in female employment⁷. During this period, we saw a gap emerge between men and women's unemployment rates, which continue to persist. For the past three employment quarters, unemployed women out-number unemployed men, by 5000 job seekers. Job losses have been concentrated in service industries that were reliant on close contact, particularly contact with international visitors. These include retail, accommodation, hospitality, and recreational services, where nearly one-in-four women work.
- 23 Underutilisation rates remain higher for women than men. Underutilisation includes underemployed, unemployed, and job seekers who do not meet the unemployed criteria. In the year to December 2020, the underutilisation rate for women was 14.5% compared to 9.5% for men.

⁵ Source: Stats NZ Household Labour Force Survey year to December 2020.

⁶ In 2019, 64.4% of those who gained tertiary certificates and diplomas, and 64% of those who gained bachelor's degree and above, were women.

⁷ Annex One: Summary of Impact of COVID-19 on the Labour Market (Update of the Narrative), MBIE paper *Improving Labour Market Performance: Strategic Context*, provided to EET Ministers on 11 March 2021.

- 24 The number of underemployed women increased by 11,000 in the year to December 2020, to 79,000. Men’s underemployment grew by 6500, to 38,600. Available potential job seekers (who do not meet full unemployed criteria) increased by less than 1000 men but increased by over 7000 women. Not in Labour Force (NILF) numbers are higher for women than men, which may indicate that there are more women disengaging from the labour market and/or there are barriers that are preventing women entering and remaining in work (e.g. access to childcare).
- 25 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on women who were already vulnerable in the labour market (such as those with caring responsibilities and those in low paid, part time, or casual work). There are specific population groups that are most affected by barriers to employment and disadvantage in the labour market (wāhine Māori, Pacific women, disabled women, former refugees and ethnic women, sole parents, and older women).
- 26 Wāhine Māori, with no or few qualifications are more likely than other women to be unemployed, be in lower paid occupations, and are disproportionately engaged in multiple employment and work part time and in casual work. One-in-five wāhine Māori and Pacific women aged 15 to 24 years are not in employment, education or training (NEET), and both groups experience high levels of unemployment at all age groups (Household Labour Force Survey December 2020). Wāhine Māori and Pacific women are earning 15% less per hour than men (comparing medium hourly earnings). Transactional costs associated with work (e.g. affordable childcare, transport) can mean women remain on a benefit rather than go to work.
- 27 Refer Appendix Two for further information on the economic impacts of COVID-19 on wāhine Māori and Pacific women⁸.
- 28 These negative disproportionate effects women face, and their additional exposure to economic downturns, are not new. Women, especially wāhine Māori and Pacific women, have been more affected by previous economic shocks and for longer (e.g. the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and the Canterbury earthquakes). It can take three to six years longer for Māori and Pacific unemployment to return to ‘baseline’ levels, compared to non-Māori unemployment⁹.

There have also been significant impacts on women’s social wellbeing

- 29 There have been significant social impacts on women (refer Appendix Three: Social impacts of COVID 19 on women).
- 30 Women already perform the vast majority of unpaid work, in particular caring and community roles. During lockdown in 2020, women were more likely to report a significant increase in caring demands in addition to ongoing work demands¹⁰. Carers NZ and the Carers Alliance found that 64% of carers provided more significant care during COVID-19¹¹.

⁸ From December 2019-June 2020, underutilisation rates for women rose by 4.2% (only increasing 2.1% for men). In the June 2020 quarter, women in tourism experienced an 8.4% decrease in employment rates, a 32.7% decrease in total hours worked, and a \$76 decrease in average weekly earnings. Wāhine Māori in the tourism sector were hit particularly hard, with 4,000 fewer wāhine Māori employed in tourism in the June 2020 quarter (a 20.5% drop).

⁹ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/employment-and-skills/labour-market-reports-data-and-analysis/other-labour-market-reports/maori-labour-market-trends/>

¹⁰ https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1865512/WP-20-03-covid-19-life-in-lockdown.pdf

¹¹ <https://carers.net.nz/information/covid-19-survey-report-caring-lockdown/> - no data on number of extra hours

31 Women have also found it difficult to find safe and affordable housing. As at November 2020, 22,409 people were on the Public Housing Register (up from 16,309 in March 2020), of whom 14,010 were women (63%).

32 9(2)(f)(iv)

In July 2020, Cabinet agreed to bring forward the development of the six long-term actions of the Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan, to respond to emerging needs and build on COVID-19 responses, including an action for cohorts at risk of homelessness, including women. The current focus of this work is rangatahi/young people and Pacific peoples. 9(2)(f)(iv)

33 A number of health services were disrupted in the initial lockdown period, including breast and cervical screening, and maternity services. I understand screening services implemented changes to address those disruptions, and that there is increased wrap-around support for those accessing maternity services. I will ask the Associate Minister of Health for information on numbers of women who have accessed this support, and whether any further action needs to be taken to improve women's access to health services, taking into consideration the impacts of, and responses to, COVID-19 in the health system. I propose to include this advice in a report back to the Social Wellbeing Committee in October 2021.

34 There is evidence of increased gender-based violence. Family violence rates have been significantly impacted by COVID-19-related restrictions¹². International evidence shows that major disasters increase the rates of family harm¹³. There was an increase in the reported incidents of family violence, sexual violence, and child abuse following the 2010 and 2011 earthquake events in Canterbury¹⁴. Feedback received by the Human Rights Commission from refuges, sexual violence services, and helplines, reported increases in calls on family violence and sexual violence. In September 2020, victim advocates indicated that there was an increase in domestic violence, and that the brutality of attacks and severity of injuries was significantly worse.

35 I will work closely with the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence on the development of a national strategy and action plan to prevent and reduce family violence and sexual violence, to ensure the experiences and needs of women are included. I have also asked that the Manatū Wāhine Ministry for Women work closely with the Joint Venture Business Unit to address the drivers that cause family violence and sexual violence and tailor responses that address the needs of women victims, whānau, iwi, and hapū.

We have already taken steps to address the employment and social impacts facing women, but we need to do more

36 Government initiatives, such as the wage subsidy, have mitigated the impact of COVID-19. Many women have taken up this support.

¹² <https://nzfvc.org/nz/covid-19/FAQ-part-1>

¹³ For example, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7152912/> and https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/violence_disasters.pdf.

¹⁴ https://www.massey.ac.nz/~trauma/issues/2016-2/AJDTS_20-2_Campbell.pdf, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0004865816679687>

37 Other recent Government initiatives to support women’s employment and social wellbeing include: the Equal Pay legislation, and progressing fair pay agreements; reinstating the Training Incentive Allowance; the current progress on sick leave legislation; the Mahi Aroha – Carers’ Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023; and support for young people through Ka Ora, Ka Ako – the healthy school lunches programme, access to free period products for all state and state-integrated primary, intermediate, and secondary schools and kura.

Mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on women’s education, employment and training

38 My aim is to increase women’s participation in training and employment as part of the COVID-19 recovery, with an emphasis on sustainable employment.

39 This paper provides advice on actions we can take to address the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on women’s employment and wellbeing:

39.1 **immediate-term initiatives:** ensuring that initiatives related to COVID-19 have a specific focus on impacts and outcomes for women, and that specific groups of women do not continue to experience negative labour market outcomes, due to the pandemic¹⁵; and

39.2 **longer-term initiatives:** addressing the systems, structures, and barriers that inhibit women participating to their full potential in the labour market so that they will be less affected by any future shocks to the economy.

Immediate term initiatives

40 I have considered a range of approaches that could be used to increase women’s participation in training and employment (e.g. setting targets, ring-fencing funding, education campaigns to increase work visibility to women and employers).

41 9(2)(g)(i) [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED] Setting gender targets is based on international and domestic evidence on what works to get women into employment, particularly into male dominated industries.

42 However, to better understand which training and employment initiatives to focus on, I propose we first monitor data on women’s participation across current initiatives. This will allow the Government to understand how women, in particular wāhine Māori and Pacific women, are benefiting from initiatives already underway within Employment, Education and Training (EET) portfolios, and where to effectively target support and to invest further.

43 In addition to monitoring uptake of those particular services by gender, building resilience for women involves investing resource into diversifying our job creation and apprenticeship schemes to make them more attractive to women, and provide the opportunity to gain qualifications and work in higher skilled roles that have greater earning potential and career growth.

¹⁵ Annex One: Summary of Impact of COVID-19 on the Labour Market (Update of the Narrative), MBIE paper *Improving Labour Market Performance: Strategic Context*, provided to EET Ministers on 11 March 2021.

44

9(2)(g)(i)

Removing immediate barriers to training and employment opportunities

45 As we respond to the pandemic, we need to remove any immediate barriers that stand in the way of women working, or looking to work.

Access to affordable childcare creates significant challenges for women in the workforce

46 I will seek advice from the Minister for Social Development and Employment on how women are being considered as part of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) review of childcare assistance (part of the long-term welfare overhaul work programme). This is one of the work programmes being tracked by the Child and Youth Wellbeing Ad Hoc Ministerial Group, due to the significant implications it could have for children.

47 In order to develop better information on the costs of childcare, the Manatū Wāhine Ministry for Women is undertaking new research with Motu looking at the employment outcomes of mothers who could not access childcare because of cost. I intend reporting back to EET Ministers on preliminary findings in June 2021.

Investing in sectors where women are well represented

48 My Employment, Education and Training Ministerial colleagues are considering what support is needed for women to transition from sectors of the labour market where there has been significant job losses (e.g. tourism) into sectors where there is stronger job growth. This work is focused on aged care, teaching, and social work. However, women in aged care traditionally experience low pay, casual, and insecure attachment to the workforce.

49 There is however, an opportunity to focus on pathways towards higher skilled and higher paid employment, particularly for wāhine Māori and Pacific women. This could include professional roles in health (including mental health), education, and social service sectors, as well as sectors such as digital technology.


50 Any increased investment will need to be aligned with existing mechanisms such as pay equity and fair pay agreements, addressing the gender pay gap, increased work flexibility, increased paid parental leave and the minimum wage, and access to training and certification/career aspects for these roles. This issue will be included as part of the development of a Women's Employment Action Plan (as part of the All-of-Government Employment Strategy).

Mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on women's social wellbeing

51 It is important to address the impact COVID-19 has had on women's social wellbeing.

52 I will work with my Ministerial colleagues in the portfolios of health (maternal and mental health), housing (homelessness), education (access to technology), social development (childcare), and family violence prevention to identify actions to support women's social wellbeing, and report back to the Social Wellbeing Committee by October 2021 on progress towards addressing the social impact of COVID-19 on women.

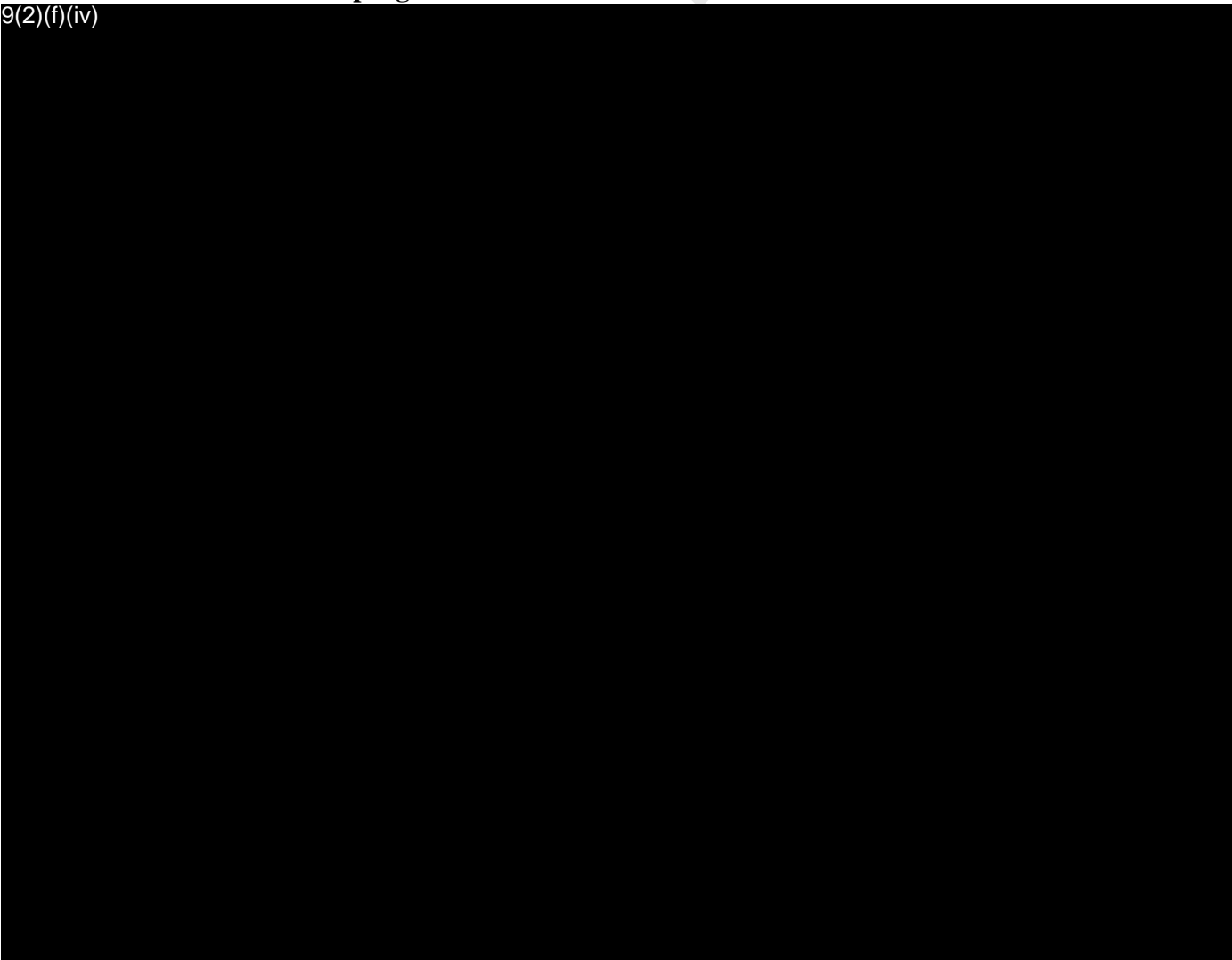
Longer-term initiatives: creating resilience against future shocks for women

- 53 I want to use this recovery as an opportunity to lay down the foundations for a better future and to challenge structural characteristics that create poorer outcomes for women, and by default, child poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. Currently, there is no existing plan across Government that sets our direction for improving women's wellbeing.
- 54 I propose we develop a Women's Employment Action Plan (as part of the All-of-Government Employment Strategy), to address the structural changes needed in the labour market to allow women to achieve their potential and to prevent women's employment being unequally impacted by future shocks.
- 55 We will also ensure there is a gender perspective across the existing Employment Action Plans (young people, disabled people, Māori, Pacific peoples, older workers and job seekers, refugees, recent migrants and ethnic communities).
- 56 I will report back to the Social Wellbeing Committee jointly with my colleague Minister Sepuloni by October 2021, to seek agreement on the final action plan.
- 57 I intend that the Women's Employment Action Plan will:
- 57.1 set out the actions that government agencies can take to improve women's access to training and employment opportunities, which are critical for their lifetime outcomes;
 - 57.2 consider where we could invest in initiatives that are likely to grow and provide sustainable employment options for women and support women to enter, re-enter or remain in the workforce;
 - 57.3 target training and employment needs for specific of cohorts of women who consistently experience poor labour market outcomes;
 - 57.4  9(2)(f)(iv)
 - 57.5 provide a gender perspective into all population-based action plans.
- 58 The issues likely to be addressed in the Women's Employment Action Plan include:
- 58.1 a **fundamental review of childcare** to support women in training and employment, making it more affordable, flexible and available at the times women need so that they can access training and employment opportunities. This will align with the proposed MSD review of Child Care Assistance as well as looking at how women's access to childcare fits with access to early childcare education and other issues such as paid parental leave and work flexibility;
 - 58.2 the relationship between **paid and unpaid work** undertaken by women; quantifying the value of unpaid care work, including the feasibility of a new time use survey to provide insight into individual and household social and economic behaviours, particularly the contribution of unpaid labour;

- 58.3 looking at **women's labour force attachment** issues e.g. parental leave options – extending paid parental leave from the current entitlement of 26 weeks; the payment rate; and extending paid parental leave to include partner leave. Of the 31,000 people who took parental leave in 2017, only 324 were men¹⁶;
- 58.4 addressing **women's low pay** including continuing action to improve women's pay and conditions of work (e.g. the gender pay gap and pay equity, undertaking work to address pay transparency, access to flexible working hours);
- 58.5 investigating what is needed to support **women in business and entrepreneurship**, including access to finance and greater financial literacy and for example, working with organisations such as the Māori Women's Development Inc. that currently provide micro financing to wāhine Māori to start a business; considering the potential strengths and supports offered by iwi/Māori cultural infrastructure and enterprise;
- 58.6 looking at the **future trends** that are likely to change in the New Zealand labour market with increased automation, outsourcing of services, and internationalisation of work. This will impact on the retail trade, customer service, and other low paid sectors, that are often female dominated. I understand work is already underway by the Future of Work Tripartite Forum (Government, Business NZ, and CTU) to look at this issue.

Further investment in new programmes and initiatives

9(2)(f)(iv)



9(2)(f)(iv)

- 60 I believe the Women's Employment Action Plan is the first step towards an All-of-Government women's strategy representing the Government's vision to achieve positive economic and social outcomes for all women in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Work on a wider women's strategy or national action plan

- 61 I want to initiate further work on New Zealand's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). New Zealand ratified CEDAW in 1985, and is required to provide periodic reports to the UN, approximately every four years, to provide an update on our progress against the requirements of CEDAW.
- 62 While we have made good progress in several of the issues in CEDAW, the CEDAW Committee recommended that New Zealand implement a national action plan or strategy for women. While there have previously been national strategies and action plans for women, this has not been the case in recent years. Our next CEDAW examination is likely to be in 2022 or 2023.
- 63 In addition to the implementation of the Women's Employment Action Plan outlined above, I would like to scope work on a wider women's strategy or national action plan that takes into account the social and economic work programme.
- 64 I intend to provide advice on whether a 'National Action Plan for Women' is required as part of my report back to the Social Wellbeing Committee by October 2021 on progress towards addressing the social and employment impact of COVID-19 on women.

Financial Implications

- 65 There are no financial implications associated with setting gender targets within existing employment, education and training initiatives. There may be financial implications associated with funding of any new programmes or initiatives to support women into employment, education and training.

Legislative Implications

- 66 Legislation is not needed to implement the proposals in this paper.

Impact Analysis

- 67 No single action or set of actions will address the impact of COVID-19 on women's employment. Any efforts should be informed by a needs analysis that will monitor how women have accessed and participated in COVID-19 recovery programmes and initiatives.

¹⁸ There were 484 applications, mostly from registered charities, requesting a total of over \$13 million.

Regulatory Impact Statement

68 Regulatory impact analysis requirements do not apply.

Population Implications

69 The gendered perspective of this paper is developed with regard for key populations and intersectoral issues. It includes wāhine Māori, Pacific and ethnic women, women with disabilities, sole parents, working poor families, women experiencing family violence, and LGBTQIA+. These are groups of women who are disproportionately experiencing adverse outcomes, such as significant rates of family and sexual violence and job instability. Information will be gathered at the sub-population level wherever possible.

70 A number of key cross-government strategies have been developed to promote economic success and wellbeing for all New Zealanders, including on child wellbeing, poverty reduction and reducing homelessness. Women are in a unique position to affect the success of these strategies due to their particular social and economic contexts

Human Rights

71 This paper seeks a more inclusive response for COVID-19 economic and social wellbeing recovery efforts for all women and girls, with a focus on wāhine Māori, Pacific and intersectional women, and supports the rights of women and girls in Aotearoa New Zealand. This will help meet our obligations as a party to a number of international agreements that protect and promote the rights of women in New Zealand and around the world. These include the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which sets goals for the global advancement of women.

Consultation

72 The following agencies have been consulted: Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment; Manatū Taonga, the Ministry of Culture and Heritage; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Justice; Te Puni Kōkiri; Ministry for Pacific Peoples; Ministry of Social Development; Te Kawa Mataho Public Service Commission; The Treasury; Department of Conservation; Ministry for the Environment; Inland Revenue; New Zealand Police; Stats NZ; New Zealand Customs; Ministry of Defence; Tertiary Education Commission; and Ministry for Housing and Urban Development.

Communications

73 Subject to Cabinet decisions, I intend to develop a communications plan and stakeholder engagement plan to support action to mitigate the economic and social impacts of COVID-19, including publicly releasing the Women's Employment Action Plan, once completed.

Proactive Release

74 The Minister for Women intends to release this Cabinet paper proactively, within business days of decisions being confirmed by Cabinet.

Recommendations

The Minister for Women recommends that the Committee:

1. **note** that women are experiencing disproportionate economic and social impacts of COVID-19;
2. **note** that, without specific interventions that target women, in particular wāhine Māori and Pacific women, gaps in the immediate COVID-19 response and recovery programme of work risk further entrenching or exacerbating existing inequalities;

Impact on women's employment, education and training

3. **agree** to focus on understanding and increasing women's participation, and in particular wāhine Māori, Pacific and other disadvantaged cohorts of women within the labour market, across existing, and future employment and training initiatives where practicable;
4. **note** that Employment, Education and Training Ministers have discussed the need to collect better demographic data across employment and training initiatives;
5. **direct** officials to provide advice to Education, Employment and Training Ministers and the Minister for Women on data about women's participation in existing employment initiatives and opportunities to improve data collection going forward;
6. **agree** that the collection of data on gender will be required for new employment and training initiatives;
7. **note** that the Minister for Women will consider gender data collected in respect of initiatives underway and monitor data from future initiatives to identify whether women's rates of participation in training and employment initiatives are increasing;
8. **agree** that the Minister for Women and Minister for Social Development and Employment provide a report back to the Social Wellbeing Committee by October 2021 on progress towards data collection on gender across employment and training initiatives and the development of an Employment Action Plan for Women;
9. **agree** that the Minister for Women and Employment, Education and Training Ministers will investigate new active employment labour market policies that are primarily targeted towards women;

Impact on women's social wellbeing

10. **agree** that Ministers in the portfolios of health (maternal and mental health), housing (homelessness), education (access to technology), social development (childcare), and family violence prevention, will report on actions being taken to support women's social wellbeing;
11. **agree** that the Minister for Women will report to the Social Wellbeing Committee on progress towards addressing the social impact of COVID-19 on women, by October 2021;

12. **note** that the Minister for Women will provide advice on whether a 'National Action Plan for Women' is required as part of the report back to the Social Wellbeing Committee by October 2021 on progress towards addressing the social and employment impact of COVID-19 on women.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Jan Tinetti

Minister for Women

PROACTIVELY RELEASED BY THE MINISTER FOR WOMEN

Appendix One: Economic picture for women as at December 2020

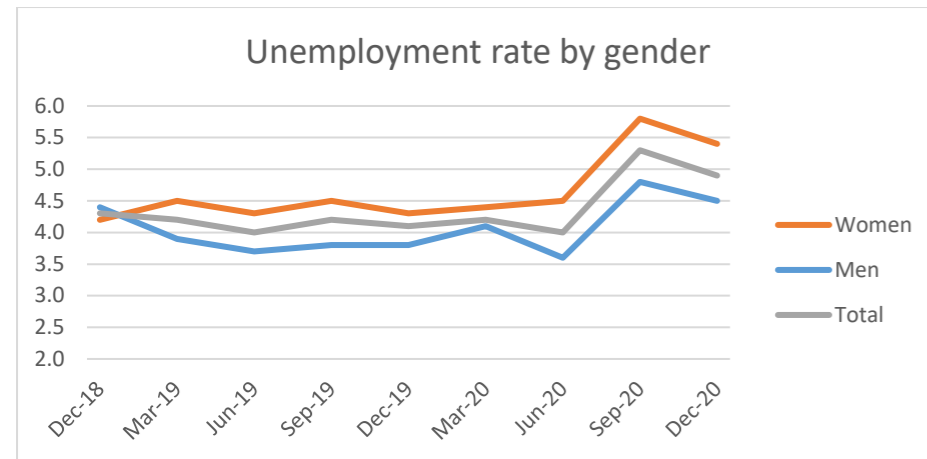
At a macroeconomic level, the economy and the labour market have strengthened against expectations. This improvement has not played out equitably. The picture for women is still concerning, and women are faring worse in the labour market than a year ago. Pre-existing gaps/inequality mean that already vulnerable groups of women have borne the brunt of the impact and will be slower to recover.

Overall unemployment is down but a gender gap has persisted

Before COVID-19, women's and men's unemployment rates were around the same level. The period between March 2020 and June 2020 saw a gap emerge between men and women's unemployment rates, which has remained.

As at December 2020, women's unemployment rate was at 5.4 percent, higher than men's rate of 4.5 percent. Fifteen thousand more women were unemployed in December 2020, compared with the previous year.

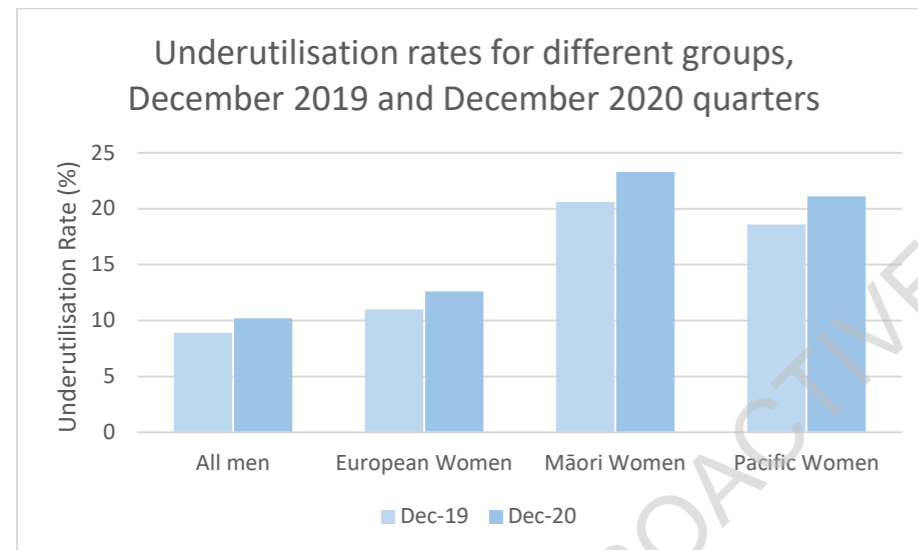
5,000 more women than men were unemployed in the June, September and December quarters



Source: Household Labour Force Survey, Stats NZ

Unemployment rates only tell part of the story

In the year between the December 2019 and December 2020 quarters, underutilisation rose for both sexes, although it is much higher for some groups than others. In December 2020 the underutilisation rate for wāhine Māori was 23.3 percent and for Pacific women it was 21.1 percent, compared with a rate of 12.6 percent for European women and 10.2 percent for all men.



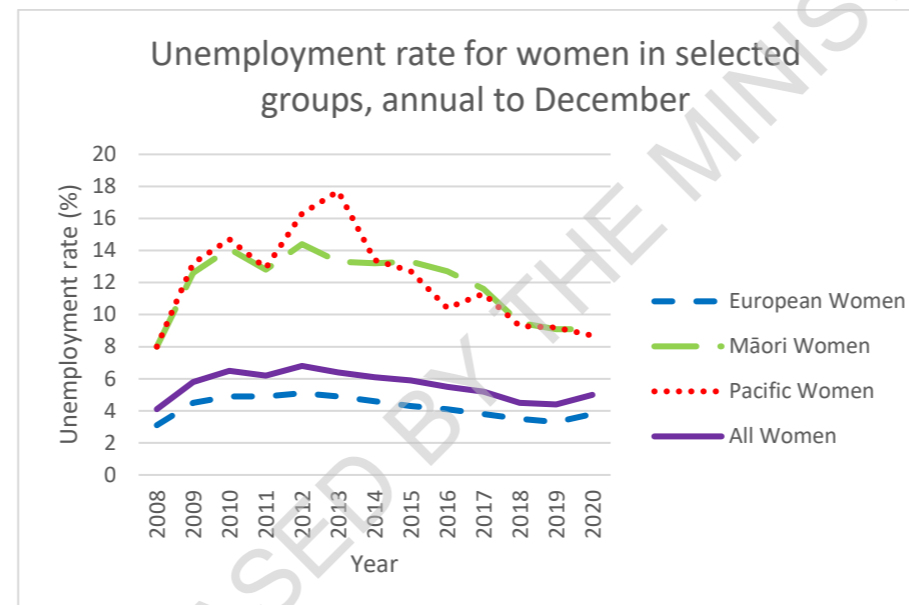
Source: Household Labour Force Survey, Stats NZ

Almost twice as many women (79,500) as men (44,000) were under-employed in the December 2020 quarter; most will be employed part-time and wanting to work more hours.

Vulnerable groups of women may be unable to enter or stay in the labour market

History shows us that already vulnerable women are more exposed during employment shocks, as workers with more labour market capital can more quickly move into alternative employment. Vulnerable women employees are likely to start from lower asset bases, which means less cushioning from negative employment effects and material hardship for themselves and their whānau. Precarious work is concentrated in female dominated industries, and amongst particular groups such as Māori and Pacific peoples.

This effect has been observed following previous employment shocks. The employment of Māori and Pacific women was disproportionately affected by the 2008 global financial crisis, and was slow to correct itself.



Source: Household Labour Force Survey, Stats NZ

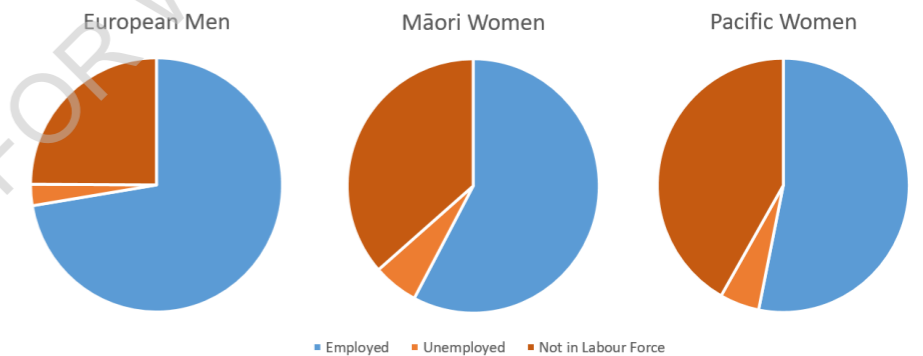
Women, especially mothers, are less able to adapt to job loss and to labour market change. Mobility is particularly relevant for the areas that have been badly affected by the downturn in tourism such as Otago and Northland.

Sole parents stand out as the group with the lowest levels of wellbeing across almost every measure as at September 2020. Nearly 20 percent of sole parents reported not having enough income to meet every-day needs compared to six percent of partnered parents.

The rise in women not in the labour force (NILF) is of concern

The year between December 2019 and December 2020 saw an increase in New Zealanders leaving the labour force. In the year to December 2020 there were 10,000 more men not in the labour force, and 20,000 more women.

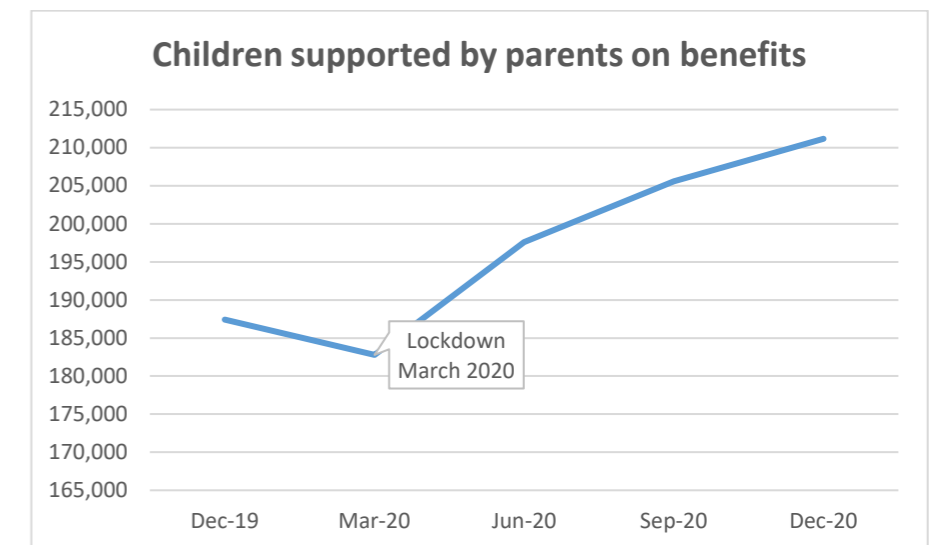
Labour force status of working age population for selected groups, year to December 2020



Occupational segregation. Gender segregation is a marked feature of the labour force. Women are more likely to work in service sectors such as retail and trade (employing 20 percent of all female employees) and tourism, which both suffer in recessions. Other industries where women are a majority of workers (care, health, services such as retail) are significantly exposed to the risk of infection in a pandemic.

Unpaid / paid work is not distributed evenly. Women do significantly more unpaid work. The result is that women are either underutilised if they want to work, or will take on lower skilled, lower paid, part-time or casual work, work non-standard hours, and/or have insecure employment conditions to balance unpaid responsibilities.

Outlook for child poverty. Child poverty decreased across all measures prior to COVID-19; however increases in children supported by benefits over 2020 indicate a reversal of that trend. Women are the majority of sole parents, and MSD reported a rise in sole parent benefits during the December 2020 quarter.



Appendix Two: Wāhine Māori data snapshot

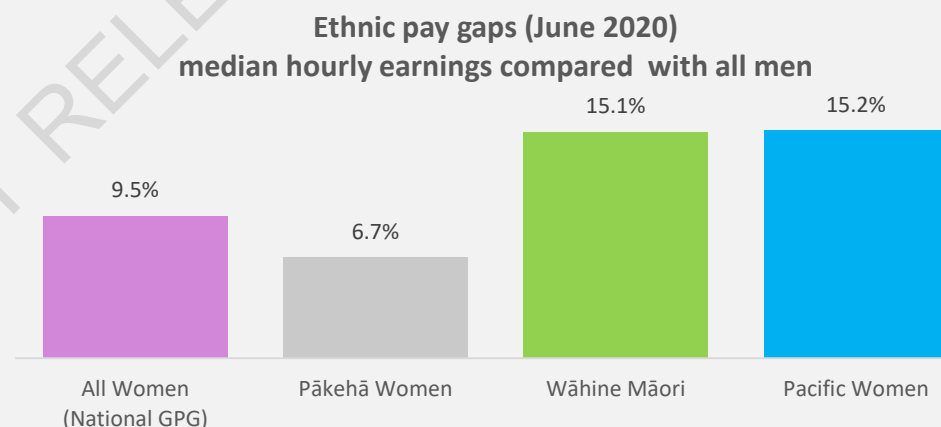
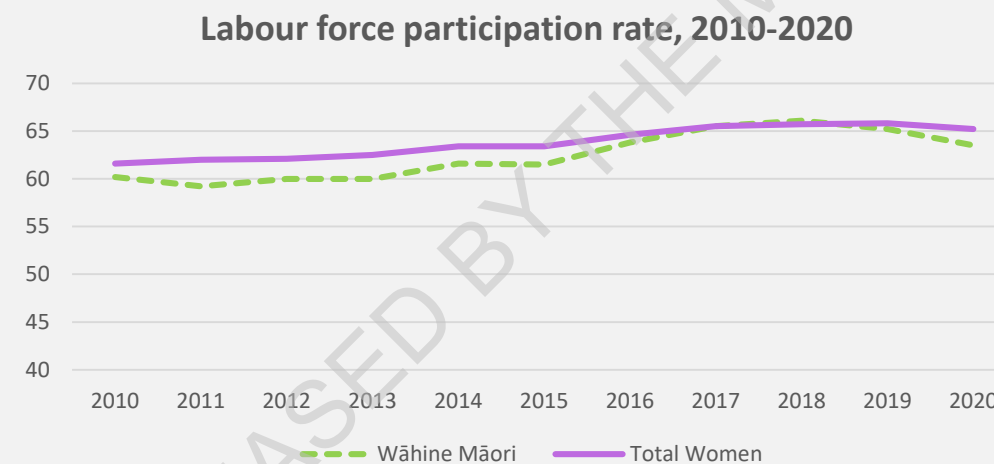
Wāhine Māori (Māori women) are 8% of the working age population.

Career aspirations for wāhine Māori aged 15 years (PISA 2018)

- Teachers
- Lawyers
- Doctors
- Nurses and Midwives
- Police officers
- Veterinarians
- Travel attendants
- Musical performers
- Physiotherapists
- Psychologists

22% Wāhine Māori aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (2021)

Annually, 40 percent of babies born to wāhine Māori are to mothers aged under 25 years. Childcare is key to participation in education and work. The New Zealand Childcare Subsidy was used by 27 percent of Māori preschool children in formal care in 2017. (ethnic fertility rates 2012-14, NZ Childcare Survey 2017)



Wāhine Māori are active business owners and employers throughout New Zealand. The top industries for wāhine Māori in business are are: **agriculture, forestry and fishing; professional, scientific and technical services and construction.**

10% representation of wāhine Māori in 2020 Parliament.

77.1 years Wāhine Māori life expectancy is nearly 6 years less than non-Māori New Zealand women.

Pacific women in data

Pacific women are **7%** of the working age female population.

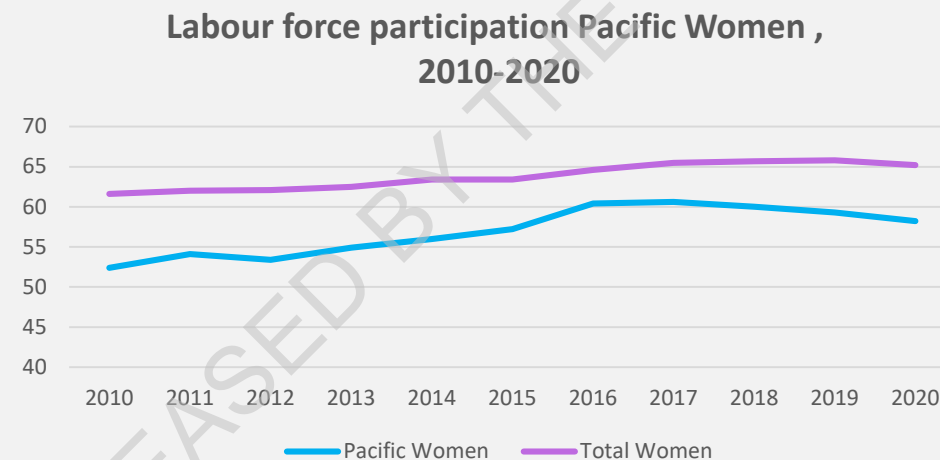
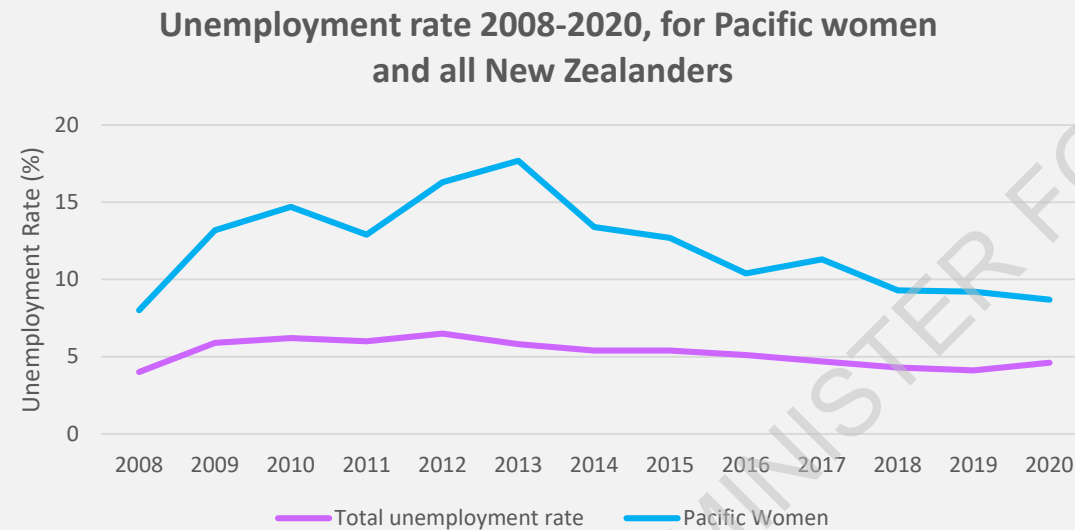
Career aspirations

At 15 years old Pacific women aged 15 years want to be:

- Nurses and Midwives**
- Lawyers**
- Travel attendants**
- Doctors**
- Teachers**
- Police officers**
- Architects**
- Musical performers**
- Designers**
- Actors** (source: PISA 2018)

22% Pacific Women aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (2021)

Annually, 32 percent of babies born to Pacific women are to mothers aged under 25 years. Childcare is key to participation in education and work. The New Zealand Childcare Subsidy was used by 32 percent of Pacific preschool children in formal care in 2017. (ethnic fertility rates 2012-14, NZ Childcare Survey 2017)



Pacific women are a growing part of the business community throughout New Zealand, and particularly Auckland. The top industries for Pacific women in business are: **professional, scientific and technical services, construction, and health care and social assistance.**

5% Representation in Parliament at the 2020 election.

78.7. years Life expectancy for Pacific women continues to improve but is 4.5 years lower than 'all' New Zealand women.

Appendix Three: Social Impacts for women as at December 2020

COVID-19 has exacerbated social impacts for women. During lockdown, the burden of women's unpaid labour increased. There is some evidence of increased gender-based violence, with higher numbers of referrals to service providers in the family violence and sexual violence sectors. More women (and their whānau) need social housing and there have been significant increases in food hardship and hardship grants. Impacts have been worst for sole parents.

Increased risk of family violence

Evidence shows that the risk of gender-based violence rises during national emergencies and disasters. In September 2020, victim advocates indicated an increase in domestic violence, and that the brutality of attacks and severity of injuries was significantly worse.

By December 2020, family violence referrals to Victim Support had increased by 10 per day. Women's Refuge also reports higher numbers of referrals during 2020.

Women's unpaid labour burden increased during lockdown

During lockdown, mothers were much more likely to report needing to juggle work and family demands, with a heavy increase in family time demands without a proportionate decrease in work demands.

In sectoral interviews, Pacific women report that lockdown was stressful for their households, noting loneliness and negative effects on mental health.

While women's unpaid work increased during lockdown, they were also more likely to be working from home, due to higher representation in white collar occupations and service industries.

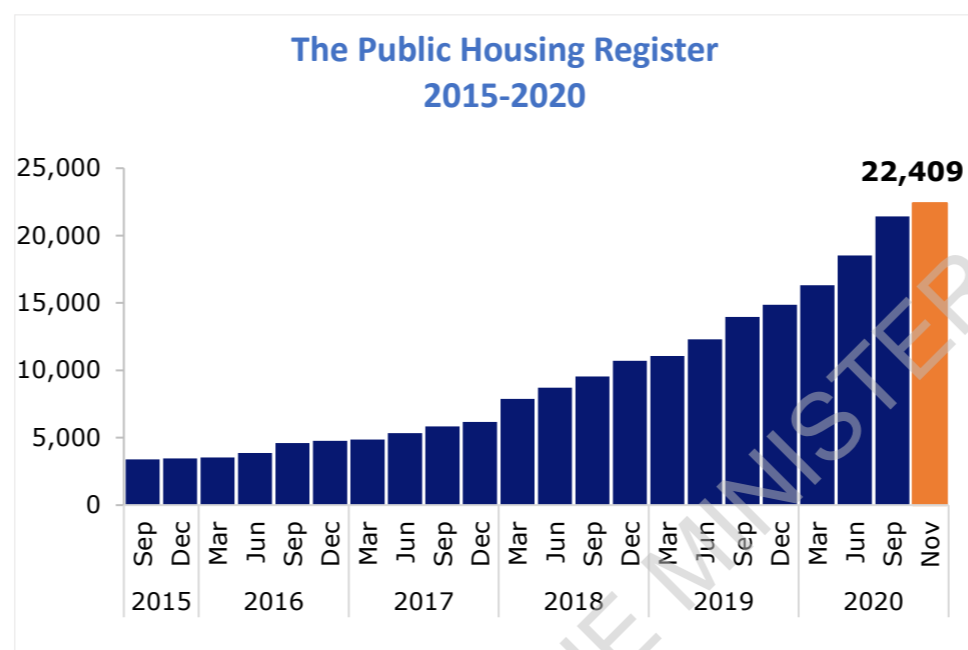
The majority of unpaid carers are women. 64 percent of carers provided more care during COVID-19, and of those providing more care, half did so as a result of social services being reduced or closed. Most carers saw an increase in costs since the COVID-19 outbreak, with 76 percent saying they were spending more money ¹.

More women (and their whānau) need social housing

Women are over represented on the Public Housing Register (those in need of social housing). The register has been steadily increasing since 2015.

As at November 2020 (latest recorded data), 22,409 people were on the Public Housing Register, of which 14,010 were women (63 percent). This is an increase from 16,309 people being on the Public Housing Register in March 2020. Increases in recipients of the sole parent support benefit indicate numbers will continue to grow.

Women were more likely than men to have reported feeling lonely at least some of the time, according to a Household Labour Force Survey supplement from the September 2020 quarter.



Source: <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/housing/index.html>

During 2020, 2.6 million hardship grant payments were made by Work and Income (WINZ), a 35 percent increase on the 1.92 million payments in 2019. The Salvation Army reports that more than 113,000 food parcels - nearly twice the level of 2019 - were distributed across the country by the end of December 2020. In the months of July to December 2020, food parcel distribution continued to be significantly higher than for the same period in 2019. Food hardship grants from WINZ have followed a similar trend.

Flows from benefit to work remain of concern for women

December 2020 benefit data showed that 27,000 beneficiaries receiving main benefits cancelled their benefit due to obtaining work. However, only 43 percent of these 27,000 beneficiaries were women, while women make up 55 percent of people on main benefits ².

There was only limited evidence of impacts on women's mental health

Surveys from 2006 to 2019 have tended to show that women have higher levels of psychological distress than men. Surveys during the COVID-19 response period and since September 2020 indicate that women experience higher psychological distress. Stakeholder engagement with Pacific women reinforced the impact of mental stress they felt from working as well as caring for family members that included children and elderly parents.

Sole parents have been hit the hardest



$\frac{1}{4}$
experience economic loss

The impacts of COVID-19 have been worst for sole parents, who had the lowest levels of wellbeing as at September 2020 and one quarter of whom experienced economic loss. Housing problems were more common for sole parents, and they make up a higher proportion of those in emergency accommodation and sharing accommodation temporarily. Sole parents saw a large increase in the amount of care they were required to perform, and experienced significant difficulties associated with this ³.

The social services sector has been significantly affected

A survey of the community sector on the impacts of COVID-19 found that post-lockdown, the sector was in a fragile, finely balanced position.

There remains a significant gap in funding: a substantial majority (74 percent) experienced or expected reduced funding.

Forty-three percent of respondents were concerned about financial uncertainty and its impact on service delivery and organisations viability. Three key themes were diminished or precarious finances, challenges to service delivery or viability including doing even more with less, and steps to maintain funding or manage the impacts of uncertain funding.

Participation in early childhood education (ECE) has rebounded since lockdown, but there are still effects for vulnerable whānau

Ministry of Education reports that participation in ECE fell during the national lockdowns, but seems to have returned to close to normal levels again under level 1 restrictions for most children (up to 4 October 2020). After the Auckland lockdown ended on 31 August, total enrolments were 192,240, down 2.8 percent from the same period in 2019.

The groups whose participation in ECE are most impacted are Māori and Pacific children, and those ECE centres serving more socio-economically disadvantaged communities. Communities have reported parents moving children to cheaper services, and reducing hours of ECE.

¹ <https://carers.net.nz/information/covid-19-survey-report-caring-lockdown/>

² <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/> (gender breakdown sourced through custom request)

³ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/wellbeing-outcomes-worse-for-sole-parents>