

The Women's Affairs portfolio

This briefing is designed to provide you with an overview of the Women's Affairs portfolio. This briefing is structured into three sections:

- Part 1: Women in New Zealand – how women are doing in New Zealand
- Part 2: Improving Outcomes for Women – what needs to be done to further enhance the contribution of women to New Zealand
- Part 3: Introducing the Ministry of Women's Affairs – how the Ministry of Women's Affairs assists government to further improve outcomes for women.

The following themes flow throughout this document:

- women are diverse and have different needs and aspirations
- some women are doing well, but disparities still exist between men and women and between different groups of women
- gender roles still influence the participation and well-being of some women

Considerable progress has been made in improving outcomes for women but there are still many opportunities to further improve women's well-being and to maximise women's contribution to New Zealand's economic and social development.

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Part 1: Women in New Zealand

Introduction

The first part of this section describes the current and projected demographic composition of New Zealand – particularly as it impacts on women. This section also describes family and household patterns.

The second part of this section outlines the status of women in New Zealand in several key areas of women's lives. The areas chosen provide a picture of women's overall well-being and quality of life. Where information is available and relevant, international data is also included. Summaries of the key points are contained in boxes.

Demography

New Zealand's population is growing, ageing and becoming more ethnically diverse.

Overall, women are having children later, although there are ethnicity differences within this trend. The structure of families is also changing, with sole parent families becoming more common, fewer people choosing marriage, more people choosing de facto relationships and more children being born outside of marriage.

Age and gender structure of the population

There are slightly more females than males in New Zealand, especially in some age groups

New Zealand's population now exceeds 4 million people, of which over half are females. Males outnumber females among children and youth but females predominate among adults, from the late 20s to the late 40s, and from the early 60s onwards.

New Zealand's population is ageing

By 2051, people aged 65 years and over are expected to make up just over 26 percent of the population, compared with just under 12 percent in 2001.

The ageing population will have a significant impact on the female age distribution

The age distribution of the female population is expected to change markedly over the next 50 years. The Statistics New Zealand June 2005 population estimates show that 21 percent of females are under the age of 15 years. By 2051 it is projected that this age group will decrease to 15 percent of the female population.

It is also expected that there will be a decrease in the proportion of females in the 20 to 49 year age group – from 43 percent to 33 percent.

By 2051, it is projected that 46 percent of the female population will be aged 50 years and over, compared with 29 percent in 2004. The greatest change will occur in the oldest age groups. The proportion of the female population that is 65 years and over is expected to more than double from 13 percent in 2004 to 28 percent in 2051.

The female to male ratio is expected to decrease over time

In 2001, there were 103 females to every 100 males. By 2051, the projection is for 102 females to every 100 males. This reflects the underlying assumption that the gap between female and male life expectancy will narrow.

Ethnicity

The population is becoming more ethnically diverse

By 2021 it is projected that those who identify as Māori, Asian or Pacific will make up a greater proportion of the population.¹ Across these ethnic groups, there is a consistent pattern of a slightly higher percentage of females than males. This pattern is projected to remain constant until at least 2021 – except for Pacific peoples, where there will be a reversal in the ratio and males will slightly outnumber females. Overall, these trends will mean that the female population will be more ethnically diverse.

In 2001, 15 percent of the population identified as Māori. This is projected to increase to 17 percent by 2021.

By 2021, the Pacific and Asian shares of the population are projected to increase from 7 to 9 percent and 7 to 15 percent respectively.

The European share of the population is projected to fall from 79 percent in 2001 to 70 percent in 2021.

It is important to note that these ethnic categories are very broad and not homogeneous. The number of people with multiple ethnic identities is also increasing.

¹ People can identify with more than one ethnicity, so the total number of responses is greater than the number of people.

The age distribution of ethnic groups is different

Māori and Pacific females have a similar age profile and have a much higher concentration of females under the age of 15 years than European and Asian females.

Overall, the proportion of females under the age of 15 years is projected to decrease by 2021. However, the proportion of Māori and Pacific females in this age group, at 29 and 32 percent respectively, is expected to stay high compared to European (15 percent) and Asian females (20 percent).

European females have a much longer life expectancy than other ethnic groups. Fifteen percent of the European female population is 65 years and over, compared to 4 percent each of Māori, Pacific and Asian females. By 2021, the proportion of the female population over 65 in all ethnic groups is expected to increase. For European females, those aged 65 years and over are likely to comprise 23 percent of the European female population.

There is a much higher concentration of females (74 percent) in the working age group for Asians compared to other groups because of net migration inflows at younger ages. This proportion is expected to stay relatively high, but decreasing slightly to 72 percent by 2021.

Net migration is important to population growth

Over the last ten years, net migration accounted for around a third of New Zealand's population growth. Migrants in New Zealand come from a wider range of countries and in greater numbers than in previous times.

In 2001, 23 percent of New Zealand females were born overseas, mostly in the United Kingdom and Ireland, Asia and the Pacific Islands.

Disability

About one in five New Zealanders has some form of disability

In 2001, 743,800 New Zealanders reported some level of disability.²

The total number of people with disabilities has increased by 41,800 since 1996/97; however the overall disability rate of one in five has not changed.

Slightly more women are disabled than men and significantly more disabled women have a physical disability than disabled men.

² Disability is now usually defined in terms of functional limitation in activity resulting from a long-term condition or health problem that cannot be readily corrected. Mental illness is increasingly acknowledged as a 'disability' rather than an 'illness', and is often labelled 'psychiatric disability' in recognition of this. The definition of disability includes physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments. Disabilities also range in severity.

Disability rates increase with age so the number of people with disabilities is expected to grow as the population ages.

There are some gender and ethnicity differences among people with a disability

Among people under the age of 15 years, boys are more likely to have a disability than girls (13 percent compared with 9 percent). This gender difference is evident among Māori and Pacific peoples in this age group.

The overall disability rate for Māori is one in five. However, in all age groups under 65 years, rates of disability are consistently higher for Māori than for other ethnic groups. In the 45 to 64 years age group, 39 percent of Māori women reported a disability compared to 29 percent of Māori men.

Geographic Distribution

Most women live in urban areas but there are age and ethnicity differences

Most New Zealanders live in urban areas. Fourteen percent of females live in rural areas. Māori women (16 percent) and European women (15 percent) are more likely to live in rural areas than Pacific women (2 percent) and Asian women (2 percent).

Pacific and Asian females of all ages are highly likely to live in an urban area. By contrast, European females in their 20s and over the age of 60 are more likely to live in an urban area than other European women. Māori women are also more likely to live in an urban area in their 20s.

Access to services is a significant concern for rural women of all ages. Low populations, long distances, transport constraints and unpredictable weather can limit access to health, education and justice services.

Families

The last 50 years have seen major changes in the characteristics of families and the ways in which they are formed.

Women are having fewer children than in the past

Fertility rates have decreased significantly from an average of 4.3 births per woman in 1961 to around 2.0 births over the last quarter of a century.

The current total fertility level is slightly less than 2.0 births per woman, which is below the level required for a population to replace itself without migration (2.1 births per woman). Fertility rates below replacement level are a common feature among developed countries, and New Zealand's fertility rate is relatively high compared with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

Women are having children later in life

The median age of women giving birth is now 30 years, and the median age of women giving birth to their first child is 28 years.

Fertility rates for women 30 years and over have increased over the last decade. Women aged 30 to 34 years now have the highest fertility rate. Fertility rates for women under 30 years have generally decreased over the last few decades, particularly among those aged 20 to 24 years. Māori women, however, are more likely to have children at a younger age.

New Zealand has one of the highest teenage fertility rates among comparable OECD countries, although teenage fertility rates have generally decreased over the last five years.

Fewer women are marrying, and the link between marriage and children is weakening

In 1971, 65 percent of women aged 15 years and over were married. By 2001 this had fallen to 48 percent.

Divorce rates have increased from a rate of 5.1 divorces per 1000 marriages in 1971 to 12.2 in 2001.

De facto relationships have become more common; between 1981 and 2001, the proportion of partnered women aged 15 years and over living in a de facto relationship increased from 6 to 19 percent.

More people are choosing to have children outside of marriage and many of these children are to couples living in de facto relationships. In 2001, 43 percent of births were to women who were not legally married, compared with 14 percent in 1971.

Family forms are also changing

Different family forms and household types are becoming more common. The proportion of families with one parent has risen from 10.4 percent of families with dependent children in 1976 to 29.2 percent in 2001. Sole parents are far more likely to be women. New Zealand has a higher proportion of sole parent families than almost all other OECD countries.

Same sex couples with children, though still a very small proportion of families, have become more common. There were 1,356 same-sex couples with children families in the 2001 Census, up from 684 in 1996. Of these, 960 were female couples, and 396 were male couples.

Women (13 percent) are more likely than men (10 percent) to be living alone.

The ethnicity of women greatly influences their likelihood of living in an extended family. Thirty-five percent of Pacific women live in this type of household, compared with 21 percent of Asian women, 20 percent of Māori women and 5 percent of European women.

Status of women

This section focuses on the status of women in the areas of education and skills, paid work, leadership, managing paid and unpaid work, income, health, housing and safety. These areas represent important components of all individuals' lives and are interconnected – outcomes in one area can influence outcomes in other areas.

Key messages

Women are not a homogeneous group – their experiences, values, lives, needs and priorities are different. They have a diversity of connections to, and relationships with, men, children, other women, families, whānau and communities. Policies to reduce disparities and improve outcomes for all women will only be effective when they reflect and accommodate this diversity.

Disparities exist between men and women and between different groups of women, across a wide range of areas. Factors relevant to the nature and extent of disparities include gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, disability, and geographic location. It is important to understand how the combination of these factors can influence outcomes.

Over time, there has been progress in reducing disparities between men and women and between different groups of women in some areas. Challenges remain and many women still face risks to their independence, security, safety and health.

Societal attitudes and assumptions about gender and gender roles continue to influence New Zealand. This is reflected in fields of study, occupational choice, representation in management positions, and the division of paid and unpaid work. This social construction of gender influences the participation and well-being of women and men in New Zealand.

Women's unpaid work, including their parental and other caring responsibilities, makes an important contribution to New Zealand's social and economic development.

Education and skills

New Zealand women have slightly lower qualification levels than men owing to historical differences in levels of participation in education. Over the last 30 years, however, women's participation in education has risen and women are now gaining qualifications at higher rates than men.

Differences in fields of study remain, and some groups of women continue to have lower rates of achievement. Women continue to be under-represented in industry training and modern apprenticeships.

Young women on average do well at secondary school

Young women are, on average, achieving higher qualification levels in secondary education than young men.

In 2004, 73 percent of female school leavers had qualifications higher than National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) level one, compared with 65 percent of male school leavers. Young Māori women (50 percent) and Pacific women (67 percent) were less likely than European women (78 percent) to leave school with this level of qualification.

Women are participating in tertiary education at a high rate

In 2001, slightly fewer women than men had degrees or post school qualifications, but this gap has closed substantially as women's participation in tertiary education has increased. Women now participate in tertiary education at higher levels than men (13.1 percent compared with 9.9 percent in 2004).

The participation rate of Māori women in tertiary education is particularly high at 22.3 percent. This follows significant increases in enrolments by Māori women in the last seven years, particularly at certificate level in wānanga. There are distinct differences, however, in the fields of study chosen by men and women. Women are more likely than men to study health and education related subjects, while men are more likely to study engineering, agriculture, architecture and building.

Women are under-represented in industry training and modern apprenticeships

Women have much lower levels of participation in industry training and modern apprenticeships than men. In March 2005, 26 percent of industry trainees and 8 percent of modern apprentices were women.

Women's participation in these forms of education is gradually increasing. In 1992, 12 percent of industry trainees were women, and in 2001, 6 percent of modern apprentices were women. Pacific women are more under-represented in industry training than other women generally.

Women repay student loans at similar rates to men

In 2004, 58 percent of those with a student loan were women, mainly due to women's higher tertiary education participation rates.

The median level of student debt was \$10,404 as at June 2005. These figures are not available by gender, but men's median debt in 2001 was 6 percent higher than women's.

Recent research has shown that women tend to repay their loans over a similar period to men. Although women earn less on average, they are more likely to borrow less, work part-time during their studies, complete their studies and achieve higher qualifications than men. Higher qualifications can lead to higher incomes relative to the level of debt. The exception to the trend of women and men repaying their loans over a similar period are women with larger debts (greater than \$25,000) who tend to take longer to repay their loans than men.

New Zealanders have different rates of literacy

The 1996 International Adult Literacy Survey found that almost half of New Zealand adults aged from 16 to 65 years were estimated to have low levels of literacy. This finding is similar to other countries. One in five New Zealanders was found to have very poor literacy skills.

The 2004 follow-up analysis of data collected for this survey found that people who identified as Asian, Pacific or Māori appeared to be more at risk of having low English literacy than those who identify as European.

Paid work

Although women's participation in paid work has risen significantly over the last 30 years, women participate in paid work at lower levels than men. This reflects the higher levels of participation by women in unpaid work, and in particular the care of children. While New Zealand has relatively high levels of participation by women overall, participation rates for mothers of young children and sole parents are below OECD averages.

New Zealand women's employment is concentrated in a small number of female dominated occupations, and women are under-represented in senior positions. A significant proportion of New Zealand women work part-time and a growing proportion are self-employed.

New Zealand parents work relatively long hours on average. This is primarily driven by the long working hours of fathers. There is evidence that availability and accessibility of childcare is a constraint on women's ability to choose the level of participation in paid work that suits them best.

Participation in the paid labour force

Women are less likely to be in the paid workforce than men

In 2004, 59.6 percent of women were participating in the paid workforce, compared with 73.8 percent of men.

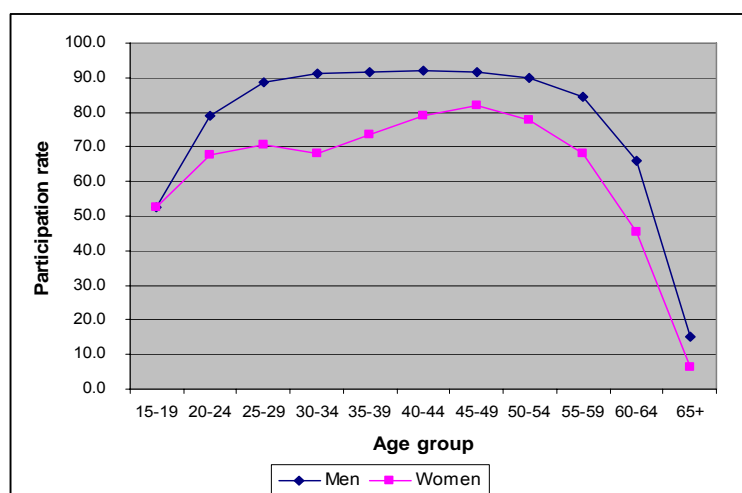
The difference between participation rates of men and women is primarily due to much lower levels of participation in paid work by women in the age groups when child rearing typically takes place (see Figure 1). This indicates that women, by and large, take primary responsibility for the care of children while they are young.

Māori women (57.9 percent) and Pacific women (54.1 percent) have lower rates of participation in paid work than European women (61.4 percent).

Māori women have lower rates of participation during their 20s, in particular, which may reflect younger parenthood.

Disabled women (52 percent) have lower rates of participation in paid work than disabled men (63 percent).

Figure 1: Labour force participation rates by age group and gender, 2004



Some New Zealand women are less likely to be in paid work than women in other countries

New Zealand, compared with other OECD countries has relatively high rates of participation in paid work by women.

The participation rates for women between the ages of 25 and 39 years, and particularly sole parents and those with pre-school children, are lower than OECD averages. The low participation rate of sole parents has particular significance given that New Zealand has the highest proportion of sole parent families in the OECD.

Participation rates for Māori women (57.9 percent) and Pacific women (54.1 percent) are lower than that for European women (61.4 percent).

Unemployment is more common amongst Māori and Pacific women

In 2004, unemployment was slightly higher amongst women (4.9 percent) than men (4.1 percent). Unemployment rates for women have decreased significantly since the 1990s in line with the general trend in unemployment.

Unemployment is much more common, however, amongst Māori and Pacific women, whose unemployment rates (11.1 percent and 8.5 percent respectively) are noticeably higher than those for Māori and Pacific men (8.7 percent and 6.9 percent respectively).

Occupations

Many women continue to work in female-dominated occupations, and this trend is not changing significantly

New Zealand's workforce is characterised by high levels of occupational segregation by gender. In 2001, 25 percent of the female workforce was employed in just six occupations (sales assistants, general clerks, secretaries, registered nurses, primary school teachers and cleaners). Fifty percent of the female workforce was employed in just 22 occupations of a total of 565 occupations.

Furthermore, seven of the ten most common occupations for women were more than 70 percent female. In 2001, nine of the ten most common occupations for women were the same as they had been in 1991.

Many women work in occupations where part-time work is common

Some of the most common occupations for women are dominated by part-time work. In 2001, 75 percent of women cleaners worked fewer than 30 hours a week, as did 57 percent of caregivers and 52 percent of sales assistants. The gender segregation of the New Zealand workforce appears to be changing only very slowly.

Māori and Pacific women are more likely to work in lower skilled jobs

There are some ethnic differences in the occupational distribution of women. European women and Asian women are more likely to work in legislative, administrative, managerial and professional occupations, while Māori and Pacific women are more likely to work in low-skilled manual occupations.

Women are under-represented in management positions

Women are considerably less likely than men to be in management or leadership positions. A 2000 survey of the 500 largest companies in New Zealand found that 27.1 percent of managers were women, and that 9 percent of these women were in senior management positions.

In 2001, women made up 16.2 percent of those who stated that their occupation was a chief executive or managing director of a company.

Structure of work

Many women do not participate in 'standard' work

A growing proportion of New Zealanders are engaged in 'non-standard' work, such as multiple jobs, part-time work and self-employment. Women made up 58 percent of those with more than one paid job in 2003. In 2004, 36 percent of women worked part-time, up from 28 percent in 1986. By comparison, 11 percent of men worked part-time in 2004.

More women are becoming self-employed

In 2001, approximately 14 percent of the full-time female workforce identified themselves as being self-employed, compared with 25 percent of the full-time male workforce.

Women are becoming self-employed at more than twice the rate of men – a trend shared with many similar countries.

Women's businesses tend to start smaller, remain small, and generate lower incomes than those of men. Women's businesses tend to be concentrated in industries with lower rates of growth but higher business turnover such as retail and service industries.

Hours of work

New Zealand fathers work long hours

On average, New Zealanders work more hours on an annual basis than people in most other OECD countries. Couples with children tend to work fewer hours than other couples.

Total hours worked in paid employment by parents in New Zealand is above the OECD average, although total hours of work for couples with very young children is below the OECD average. The relatively high total hours worked by couples with children is driven primarily by New Zealand fathers, who are second only to fathers in the United Kingdom in terms of average hours worked.

Father involvement in caring during a child's early years has a positive impact on their later outcomes.

Parents of young children are working more than in the past

The total hours worked by couples with pre-school children has increased since 1986. This reflects increasing employment rates for mothers, decreasing numbers of mothers working short hours and increasing proportions of fathers working long hours.

Childcare

Childcare influences women's participation in paid work

Women tend to take on primary responsibility for care of children. Availability, accessibility and quality of childcare are therefore key factors influencing their ability to choose the level of participation in paid work that suits them.

Overall, more children are participating in early childhood education

An increasing number of children are enrolled in early childhood education and care services. Between 1990 and 2004, the total number of children enrolled increased by 56 percent.

New Zealand ranks in the top group of OECD countries (where data is available) for the proportion of children under three years who are enrolled in formal childcare.

Women's employment is more likely to be affected by the accessibility of childcare than men's

Early indications from research currently underway are that the cost and availability of childcare continues to have an impact on choices available to parents.

In addition, the *1998 New Zealand Childcare Survey* found that problems accessing early childhood education and care were a barrier to employment for 15 percent of parents. Mothers were more likely than fathers to report this barrier (22 percent compared to 5 percent). The most common reasons given by mothers experiencing difficulty accessing early childhood education and care were:

- cost
- lack of trusted, informal care
- unsuitable or inflexible hours at care services
- lack of local services.

The OECD has noted that the cost of childcare in New Zealand can be high, and has the potential to significantly reduce financial returns a parent receives from work.

Some parents would prefer different childcare arrangements

The *1998 New Zealand Childcare Survey* found that parents of 20 percent of children wanted either more hours of early childhood education and care, care at different times or different types of care. The type of education or care for which there was the highest demand was out-of-school care. Parents of an estimated 31,000 children (6 percent of school-age children) wanted to use this type of care.

Although the number of families receiving the government subsidy for out-of-school care costs has increased recently, it is estimated that just 0.8 percent of children aged 5 to 13 years are receiving this subsidy.

Leadership

The number of women in leadership positions in the non-government sector remains low, while women's membership of government bodies has been steadily increasing.

The number of women in local government leadership positions has remained stable over the last decade.

There has been an increase in the number of women in New Zealand's parliament.

Very few women are in leadership roles outside of government

Internationally, diversity in the backgrounds, skills and experiences of senior managers, executives and directors has been shown to enhance both company and board effectiveness. New Zealand has very few women in leadership positions in the non-government sector.

As at March 2003, women held 5 percent of board directorships of companies listed on the New Zealand stock exchange. This has not changed significantly from 1995, when women held 3.9 percent. By comparison, a 2003 Census in the United States showed that 13.6 percent of board directorships were held by women.

In April 2004, women held just 14.1 percent of legal partnerships and 15.8 percent of senior academic positions in New Zealand's universities.

Women's representation in local government is higher than non-government

In 2001, women's representation in local government was highest in district health boards (44 percent), followed by city councils (39 percent), community boards (31 percent), regional councils (26 percent) and district councils (25 percent).

In 2004, 19 percent of mayors were women. Representation of women in local government has remained stable since 1992.

The proportion of women in parliament has remained stable under MMP

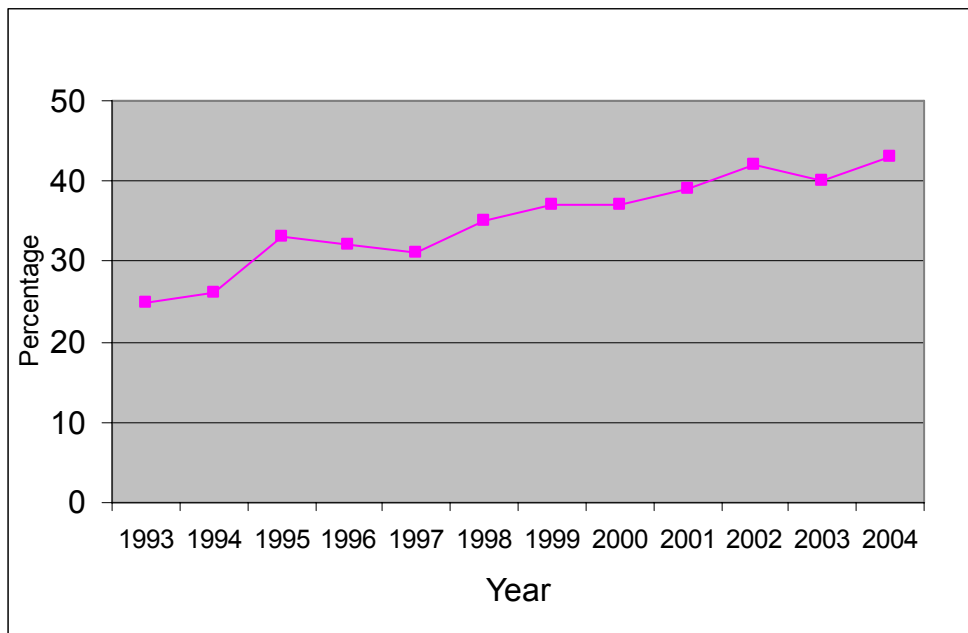
The percentage of women in the New Zealand parliament increased from 13 percent in 1984 to 21 percent in 1993. With the first MMP election in 1996, this rose to 29 percent, 31 percent in 1999, followed by a decline to 28 percent in 2002. Women make up 32 percent of the current parliament.

Women make up an increasing proportion of members of statutory bodies

Provisional figures from the first whole-of-government stock-take of membership of government statutory bodies showed that in December 2004, women made up 41 percent of the total board membership.

There has been a steady increase in the annual intake of women appointed and re-appointed to statutory bodies, from 25 percent in 1993 to 43 percent in 2004 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Percentage of women appointed and re-appointed to Government statutory boards per year 1993-2004



Managing paid and unpaid work

In total, men and women undertake very similar amounts of work, but men spend more time, on paid work and women undertake more unpaid work.

Women's greater responsibility for unpaid work is likely to be a constraint on their ability to participate in paid work.

On average, men do more paid work, and women do more unpaid work

A survey undertaken in 2002 showed that beliefs about the roles of men and women in society are changing. A minority of New Zealanders (18 percent) supported the traditional view that a man's job is to earn money while a woman's is to look after a home and family. More than 50 percent of respondents agreed that men should do a larger share of housework and childcare than they do now.

The distribution of unpaid work between women and men is not equal. The 1999 *Time Use Survey* found that men and women both worked an average of seven hours per day, but women spent two hours more than men on unpaid work, and two hours less on paid work.

Almost 70 percent of women's work is unpaid, compared with 40 percent of men's work time.

Women do more unpaid work than men, even when in full-time paid work

Women spent more time on unpaid work than men regardless of their labour force status.

Women working full-time, however, spent significantly less time on unpaid work than women who worked part-time, or who were not employed. Women who worked part-time spent slightly less time on unpaid work than women who were not employed.

Women's greater responsibility for unpaid work is likely to be a constraint on their ability to participate in paid work.

Income

Women earn less on average than men. This reflects differences in the occupations women work in, lower levels of work experience, differences in education levels, as well as lower levels of participation in paid work.

The gap between the average pay of men and women has narrowed over the last 30 years, but has not changed significantly over the last four years.

Overall, fewer people are now receiving an income tested benefit, but the percentage of female recipients has been increasing slightly. Recipients of the Unemployment Benefit are still more likely to be male, while women are still the vast majority of Domestic Purpose Benefit recipients.

Income from paid work

On average, women earn less than men

For the majority of women, income from paid work is the main factor determining their material standard of living. Women, on average, earn less than men.

Median hourly earnings for those earning income from wage and salary jobs in 2004 was \$14.40 an hour for women, compared with \$16.50 an hour for men. Women's median hourly earnings were, therefore, approximately 87 percent of men's.

Lower hourly earnings combined with lower levels of participation in paid employment and fewer hours of work create a large difference in weekly incomes.

In June 2004, the average weekly income from wages and salaries for women was \$262, compared with \$439 for men.

Some groups of women earn less on average than others

While women earn less than men at all ages, the gap is narrow for the youngest and oldest age groups, and relatively large in age groups where family formation usually takes place.

Median hourly earnings of Māori women and Pacific women, \$13.50 and \$12.30 respectively, are lower than those of European women at \$15.00. Disabled women are more likely to have low incomes than disabled men.

The pay gap is also larger in some sectors. In February 2003, the gap between men's and women's average ordinary time hourly pay across the public service and public health and education sectors was 19.7 percent, compared with 12.6 percent for the whole economy.

The gender pay gap has remained stable in recent years

The gender pay gap, measured by median hourly earnings, decreased between 1997 and 2001, and remained stable between 2001 and 2004. The gap increased slightly between 2004 and 2005.

Average education levels and employment patterns contribute to the pay gap

A range of factors have been identified as contributing to the gender difference in pay. Department of Labour analysis of the pay gap at the end of the 1990s concluded that approximately 0 to 10 percent of the gap could be attributed to differences in levels of educational attainment, 15 to 50 percent to differences in the amount of work experience, and 20 to 40 percent to differences in occupations and industries of employment. Altogether, these factors were estimated to account for between 40 and 80 percent of the gap.

The financial returns for tertiary qualifications are slightly higher for women than for men. Consequently, the percentage pay gap between women and men with tertiary qualifications is slightly smaller than the gap for those without tertiary qualifications. The dollar gap is wider because both men and women with tertiary qualifications earn more.

Income from social assistance

Fewer people are receiving benefits

The total number and proportion of the working age population receiving an income tested benefit has decreased over the last six years. However, the percentage of female recipients has increased from 54.1 percent in 2000 to 61.5 percent in 2005.

Unemployment Benefit recipients are more likely to be male

The proportion of the working age population receiving an Unemployment Benefit has decreased in the last six years from approximately 6.5 percent in 1999 to just under 3 percent in 2004.

Unemployment Benefit recipients are still more likely to be male (65.2 percent) but this trend is changing. Over the five-year period to June 2005, the number of women receiving an Unemployment Benefit has increased from 30.6 percent to 34.8 percent.

Another significant change during this period is the increase in the proportion of Unemployment Benefit recipients aged 55 to 64 years – from 12.7 percent in 2000 to 22.9 percent in 2005.

The number of Domestic Purposes Benefit recipients, most of whom are women, has decreased slightly

The number of people receiving the Domestic Purposes Benefit has decreased slightly. While women still make up the majority of all current recipients, the number of men accessing the Domestic Purposes Benefit has increased.

The proportion of working age people receiving a Domestic Purposes Benefit has decreased over the last seven years. As at June 2005, 24 percent received this benefit continuously for less than one year, 37 percent for between 1 and 4 years, 27 percent for between 4 and 10 years, and 12 percent for 10 years or more. Almost a quarter (23.2 percent) of all Domestic Purposes Benefit recipients declared earnings at June 2005, indicating that many recipients participated in paid work during the last 12 months.

Most women over the age of 65 years are dependent on superannuation

The majority of women aged 65 year and over are dependent on government superannuation for their income.

Although withdrawal from the labour force by both men and women around this age means that there is little variance in income levels, men still receive slightly higher annual median incomes (\$800 more per year).

There are, however, significant differences between women from different ethnic groups. In 2001, the median annual income for Asian women at \$8,200 was considerably lower than European women, Māori or Pacific women at \$12,900 \$11,600 and \$10,000 respectively. This may be explained by the higher take up rates of accessing superannuation by European women.

Standards of living vary across the population

The Economic Living Standard Index (ELSI) is an indicator of how people live, in terms of their possessions and activities and how they get by financially. In 2000, groups with a higher than average prevalence of low living standards included sole parent families, families relying on income-tested benefits, Māori and Pacific peoples and those living in rented dwellings. Fifty-one percent of sole parent families had restricted living standards in 2000. Sole parent families are far more likely to be headed by women than men – 82 percent compared to 18 percent.

Health

Women continue to live longer than men, however there are differences across ethnic groups. Also, there are gender and ethnicity differences in illness and lifestyle factors that affect morbidity and mortality. Diseases, such as cancer and diabetes, continue to impact on women's lives. Māori women have higher rates of, and death from some forms of cancer than non-Māori women.

Health risk factors such as alcohol consumption, obesity and cigarette smoking affect groups of women differently. There is also evidence that sexually transmitted diseases are increasing.

Mental illness affects one in five New Zealanders. Women are more likely to experience depression.

Population life expectancy has increased over time

New Zealand's population life expectancy has increased over time, however, there are still differences by gender and ethnicity. In 2000/2002, male life expectancy at birth was 77.2 years for non-Māori and 69 years for Māori. For women, this was 81.9 years for non-Māori and 73.2 years for Māori. In 2001, the OECD median for females was 80.8 years and for males 75.5 years.

Women have lower rates of death than men across all age groups

Women have lower rates of death than men across all age groups, particularly 15 to 24 years, where the female rate of death is approximately one-third of the male rate. Traffic accidents are the most common cause of death for females and males for this age group.

There is variation in rates of death between groups of women

Māori women have higher rates of death than non-Māori in all age groups. The Māori female age-standardised mortality rate was more than twice the non-Māori female mortality rate.

Cancer is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality

Cancer is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in New Zealand. Women are more likely than men to be diagnosed with cancer at some stage in their lives. Cancer was the leading cause of death amongst women in 2000, accounting for 27 percent of deaths.

Māori women, in particular, have higher rates of, and death from some forms of cancer

There are ethnic differences in cancer rates and death. The following figures are counts of cancer registrations because more than one cancer can be recorded per person. In 2000, Māori women's cancer registration rate was 6 percent higher than the non-Māori women's rate.

In 2000, non-Māori women had an 8 percent higher rate of breast cancer registration than Māori. Māori women, however, were four times more likely to die from breast cancer.

The Māori women's registration rate for cervical cancer was more than 1.5 times the non-Māori women's rate, while the rate of death was more than four times higher.

The Māori women's registration rate for cancer of the trachea, bronchus and lung was four times the non-Māori women's rate, while the rate of death was four and half times the non-Māori women's rate.

The prevalence of diabetes is expected to increase

Current diabetes statistics show that men and women have similar rates of diabetes prevalence. The rate of diabetes in women is expected to increase dramatically in the next five to ten years due to changing demographics and lifestyle factors, particularly obesity and levels of physical activity.

The diabetes mortality rate for Māori women is almost six times the rate for non-Māori women.

Women are more likely to attempt suicide

Women account for the majority of recorded suicide attempts (66 percent), however, men account for more suicide deaths (77 percent). The female suicide rate has been relatively stable since the 1980s, apart from a slight increase between 1996 and 1999 and a fall in 2000.

New Zealand's female suicide rate is particularly high

A comparison of age-standardised suicide rates between 13 OECD countries in the years 1999-2002 showed that New Zealand had the sixth highest rate for both men and women – 16.4 per 100,000 and 5.2 per 100,000.

Comparing youth rates, New Zealand had the worst female youth suicide rates in the 13 OECD countries surveyed.

Young women are at risk of hazardous drinking

According to the 2002/03 New Zealand Health Survey, females are less likely than males to drink and are less likely to have potentially hazardous drinking patterns. For both females and males, potentially hazardous drinking was most common amongst youth.

Studies in 1995 and 2000 by the Alcohol and Public Health Research Unit found an increase over this period in the amount of alcohol consumed and the frequency of drinking by young female drinkers.

Māori females have high rates of smoking

The 2002/03 New Zealand Health Survey indicates that Māori females had the highest prevalence of current smoking, followed by Māori males, Pacific males, and Pacific females.

The 1996/97 New Zealand Health Survey showed that the highest prevalence of Māori females smoking was in the group aged 24 to 44 years (58.2 percent) – twice the rate for Europeans/Others in this age group. Between 1989 and 1993, an estimated 31 percent of Māori deaths each year were due to cigarette smoking.

New Zealanders – especially Pacific women – have high rates of obesity

New Zealand has relatively high prevalence of obesity compared with other OECD countries. In 2003, New Zealand's rate was 21 percent, compared with the OECD median of 13 percent.

Obesity is more prevalent among Pacific peoples and Māori than other ethnic groups. Pacific women in particular have a higher prevalence with 48 percent compared to European women at 20 percent.

Abortion rates are increasing

New Zealand's general abortion rate (number of abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 years) rose from 14.0 in 1991 to 19.1 in 2001.

While the age of women giving birth has steadily increased, the age of those having abortions has remained relatively young. In 2001, women aged between 20 and 24 years were the most likely to have an abortion.

Asian women are more likely to abort a pregnancy

Differentials based on ethnicity are difficult to measure precisely, however, broadly based comparisons indicate that Asian women have a higher abortion ratio (number of abortions per 1,000 known pregnancies) than their European counterparts. In 2001, European women had an abortion ratio of 207, just below the national average of 226, while Asian women had a ratio of 364. Corresponding ratios for Māori and Pacific women were 280 and 255 respectively.

Sexually transmitted infections are increasing

Although data is incomplete, there has been a significant increase in the number of confirmed and probable cases of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) over the last five years.

Māori men and women are more than four times more likely to have an STI than European men and women.

Cases of chlamydia and gonorrhoea are increasing at a high rate

Chlamydia was the most commonly diagnosed STI in New Zealand in 2004. However, in 70 percent of female and 50 percent of male cases there are no recognisable symptoms. Untreated, chlamydia can cause infertility and ectopic pregnancy in females.

Over the past five years, the number of cases of chlamydia has increased in three providers of sexual health services by 28 percent, 209 percent, and 49 percent.

Rates of gonorrhoea are increasing rapidly. There are no recognisable symptoms in up to 50 percent of women and 10 percent of men. Untreated, gonorrhoea can cause a number of reproductive health issues.

Over the past five years, the number of cases of gonorrhoea has increased in three providers of sexual health services by 44 percent, 56 percent, and 171 percent.

One in five New Zealanders experience mental illness or addiction; women are more likely to experience depression

At any one time, 20 percent of the population can be expected to have a diagnosable mental illness (including drug and alcohol disorders). Women are more likely than men to experience depression.

Twelve percent of the population has a mild or moderate illness that requires primary mental health care treatment or assistance. About 3 percent need specialist mental health and alcohol drug services at any one time.

Immigrant and refugee women may have a higher risk of mental illness

Studies undertaken in New Zealand are limited but international literature indicates that many immigrant and refugee women are at high risk of mental illness. Factors that affect the use of effective mental health services include: accessibility, appropriateness, availability of services, existence of alternative services, language barriers and stigma. Immigrant and refugee women also experience an additional cultural stigma attached to mental illness as well as cultural differences in the assessment and treatment of mental illness.

Housing

There has been a reduction in the overall number and proportion of women owning their own home, across all ethnic groups.

Women make up a greater proportion than men of principal tenants of state housing, as well as those on waiting lists. Women also constitute a significantly higher proportion of principal tenants receiving a subsidised rent.

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of low income households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

Fewer women own their own home than in the past

Between 1991 and 2001 there was a reduction in the number of women who owned their own home. Over this period, the proportion of Pacific women who owned their home dropped from 48 to 36 percent. For Māori women, the proportion owning their home also fell from 56 to 45 percent and for European women from 79 to 71 percent.

More low income households are spending a high proportion of income on housing

Since the late 1980s, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of low income households spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing. It is generally accepted that affordable housing exist where no more than 25-30 percent of household income is spent on housing cost. The proportion of households in the lowest 20 percent of the household income distribution that spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing rose from 16 percent in 1988 to a peak of 49 percent in 1994. This proportion then levelled off before falling to 35 percent in 2004.

During this time, women were about as likely to be living in these households as men. However, housing costs exceeding 30 percent of income are much more common for households that include at least one non-European adult.

More women than men access state housing assistance

As at July 2005, 68 percent of Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) principal tenants who received an income-related rent (subsidised rental for low-income earners) were women.

Sixty eight percent of principal applicants on the HNZC waiting list were women and 67 percent of HNZC principal tenants were women.

Safety

Violence against women is a significant issue for women today. It affects their well-being, safety and quality of life. Women are more likely than men to be repeat victims of violent victimisations, and to be repeat victims of threats.

Women's lifetime prevalence of sexual violence and partner violence is higher than men. Each year, women constitute 85 percent of reported family violence case victims. Police estimate that approximately one-third to one-half of murders in New Zealand each year are related to family violence.

Criminal activity is increasing each year among women, but is still low compared to men.

Women's security and safety

Safety and security in the home, at work and in the community are all components of women's wellbeing.

Women have lower rates of workplace injury claims and motor vehicle injuries

Men are more than twice as likely as women to suffer workplace injuries involving a claim to the Accident Compensation Corporation: 186 per 1,000 full-time equivalent employees compared to 91 per 1,000.

Men have higher injury and death rates from motor vehicle crashes. In 2004, the injury rate for men was 390 per 100,000 and 286 per 100,000 for women; the death rate was 14.6 per 100,000 for men and 7.0 per 100,000 for women.

For women, falls are a common cause of hospitalisations for injury

In 2000/01, falls were responsible for 29 percent of females and 21 percent of males hospitalised under the category of injury and poisoning. Females accounted for nearly three-quarters of hospitalisations for falls in the group aged 65 years and over.

Between 1992 and 2001, females accounted for 53 percent of fall-related injury deaths in those under 75 years, and 65 percent of those aged 75 years or over.

Violence against women is under reported

All crime is subject to under reporting, however violence against women, in particular, is one type of victimisation least likely to come to police notice. Crime survey findings represent only a partial picture of violence against women today.

Evidence shows that women are more at risk of repeat violent victimisation

The *New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims 2001* found that, in the year 2000, women were more likely than men to be repeat victims of violent victimisations, and to be repeat victims of threats.

Women are also more likely than men to feel unsafe

Feeling safe is important to women – anxiety and fear can result in restricted freedom and diminished well-being.

In 2001, women were considerably more likely than men to report feeling unsafe about walking alone after dark: 45 percent compared to 11 percent.

Women experience higher lifetime prevalence of partner violence and sexual violence than men

Within each ethnic group, the lifetime prevalence for violence by heterosexual partners was higher for women than for men: 26 percent compared to 18 percent. It was also very much higher for Māori women than for European women: 49 percent compared to 26 percent.

Women's lifetime prevalence of sexual interference or assault was considerably higher than men's: 19 percent compared with 5 percent. It was higher still for young women: 26 percent of those aged between 17 and 24 years; and for Māori women: 23 percent. Sexual victimisation was often experienced more than once.

When asked about their most recent incident of sexual victimisation, almost all victims surveyed in the *New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims 2001* said the offender was male. Most knew their offender(s) before the incident and slightly more than half considered the incident as wrong, but not a crime, or otherwise just something that happened.

More recently, research published in 2004 showed that 33 percent of women in Auckland, and 39 percent of women in the Waikato, had experienced at least one act of physical and/or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime. Experience of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the previous 12 months was reported by approximately 5 percent of respondents.

Family violence is prevalent, is frequently directed against women, and can have fatal consequences

Each year, Police deal with more than 45,000 calls relating to family violence, involving more than 200,000 people.

In 2001, Police noted that 45 percent of all reported violence occurred in private homes and that 85 percent of those cases involved women as victims. Police estimate that approximately one-third to one-half of murders in New Zealand each year are related to family violence.

Perpetrators of the most severe and lethal cases of family violence are predominantly male. One study estimated that between 1978 and 1987, 90 percent of partner murders were committed by men against their female partners or ex-partners.

Elder and child abuse and neglect are also issues

Women made up two-thirds of 1,546 established cases of elder abuse and/or neglect referred to Age Concern services between 1998 and 2001.

Research shows that there is substantial overlap between child abuse and partner abuse. In homes where domestic violence occurs, children are at risk of being physically abused.

Women in the criminal justice system

Criminal activity is increasing each year among women but is still low compared to men

In 2001, women made up just over half of the country's population but only comprised 20 percent of police apprehensions and 17 percent of convictions. The most common categories of offences women were convicted for were traffic and property offences. Violent offences by women make up a small proportion of convictions. However the number of these convictions doubled between 1992 and 1997, and continues to increase steadily.

In the *2003 Census of Prison Inmates*, women comprised 5 percent of the prison population. Women were more likely to be imprisoned for property and drug offences than their male counterparts. Half of the female inmates were Māori.

Women's access to legal services

Women make up a large proportion of family legal aid recipients

There are various legal aid schemes – criminal, family, Waitangi Tribunal and civil general. In 2003/04, over 80 percent of recipients of criminal legal aid were male, while 75 percent of recipients of family legal aid were women.

Most recipients of family legal aid were aged between 30 and 44 years with a significant group of females in the 18 and 29 year age group.

Part 2: Improving outcomes for women

Introduction

Governments seek to ensure that their citizens are safe and secure, are in good health, are educated and skilled, and have the ability to earn incomes sufficient to meet their needs.

To achieve these outcomes, governments must facilitate effective use of a society's collective resources. One of the most valuable resources available to a society is its people. When constraints on people's ability to reach their potential are minimised, society as a whole benefits – both economically and socially. When potential is constrained, there is an opportunity cost for society.

As outlined in Part 1, there is evidence that the full potential of women as a group within New Zealand society is not being realised. This has implications for not only the lives of individuals directly affected, but also for the well-being of all New Zealanders, as the well-being of women affects families, communities and the economy.

Government, therefore, has an interest in improving outcomes for women – to the extent that government action is necessary and is likely to make a difference. While significant progress has been made in improving outcomes for women in many areas, progress is slow in other areas. Part 2 outlines the current framework for government activity to improve outcomes for women, and highlights areas that the Ministry of Women's Affairs (the Ministry) believes are likely to be a high priority in the short to medium term.

The Action Plan for New Zealand Women

No single agency has responsibility for all the issues that impact on the well-being of women. The *Action Plan for New Zealand Women* (Action Plan), launched in 2004, is a whole-of-government plan to improve outcomes for women and capitalise on opportunities for women that can contribute to New Zealand's wider economic and social prospects. The Action Plan provides a basis for co-ordinated government activity.

Three high-level outcomes have been identified within the Action Plan.

- The economic independence of women in New Zealand will be improved.
- Greater work life balance will be achieved in New Zealand.
- The quality of life for all New Zealand women will be improved.

In line with these outcomes, the Action Plan is divided into three workstreams. For each workstream, the Ministry has identified a hierarchy of intermediate outcomes that must be reached for the high-level outcomes to be achieved.

Improving the economic independence of women

- Women have access to the full range of opportunities for paid work and employment.
- Women are equitably rewarded for their work.
- Women have access to an adequate minimum level of income.
- Women have optimal access to, and use of, their financial resources.

Achieving work-life balance

- Women can successfully integrate work into their personal and family lives.
- Women can easily make the contribution they desire to their community.
- Women can access support and services to allow them to meet their responsibilities to others.

Improving well-being

- Women are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy.
- Women are safe at home and in their communities.
- Women can meet their social and cultural needs.

The Action Plan sets out initial tasks and actions across government necessary to achieve the Plan's vision. For example, Action Plan tasks include initiatives led by the Department of Labour to increase women's earnings through pay and employment equity initiatives, as well as initiatives led by the Ministry of Health to reduce Māori women's smoking rates.

The implementation of the Action Plan is overseen by a Chief Executives' Steering Group for the Action Plan. The Steering Group comprises chief executives of Treasury, Te Puni Kōkiri, and Ministries of Social Development, Economic Development, and Pacific Island Affairs. The Chief Executive of the Ministry of Women's Affairs chairs the group.

A monitoring framework has been developed to assess the impact government actions have had on achieving the high-level outcomes, and enable the development of future approaches and initiatives that are most likely to achieve the outcomes of the Action Plan.

The monitoring framework reflects the need to take account of the diversity of women and provide a meaningful picture of the impact of the Action Plan for all kinds of women. The Ministry is working to develop indicators and identify monitoring and evaluation being undertaken by other departments on projects relevant to the Action Plan.

Priorities

The Action Plan provides a framework for progress in a range of areas of relevance to women's lives. There are some areas, however, that are likely to be of particular importance in the short to medium term.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs has used the following criteria to select areas it believes would make the most significant difference to improving outcomes for women:

- research evidence or international comparisons suggest that improvements can be made by government to enhance New Zealand's economic and social development
- a large number of women are affected, or small numbers of women are commonly and severely affected
- achievement of other economic and social outcomes are affected.

On this basis, the Ministry believes that the following areas would make a significant difference:

- improving choices for parents and other carers
- reducing the pay gap between men and women and between different groups of women
- reducing gender segregation in employment
- reducing the incidence and impact of domestic violence.

While these areas are particularly important, they do not represent all that is required to ensure that women fully contribute to New Zealand's economic and social development. Ongoing analysis of impacts on women in a range of policy areas is necessary to achieve this.

Improving choices for parents and other carers

Overall, New Zealand's labour force participation rates are relatively high, and there is a long term trend of increasing labour force participation by women. However, the participation rate for women is still significantly lower than that for men: 59.6 percent compared to 73.8 percent in 2004.

Sixty-two percent of those not participating in the labour force are women. Internationally, it is common for women to have lower rates of participation than men,

but New Zealand has lower than average rates of participation for women in the age groups where family formation typically takes place, and in particular, for sole parents and mothers of children aged under five years.

Many mothers tend to scale back their participation in paid work while children are young. Fathers on average tend to undertake more paid work during this period and work relatively long hours.

It is important to recognise the value of parenting and other caring responsibilities. Many families make conscious choices about the amount of paid work they engage in, in line with their particular circumstances and personal values and preferences about caring for children. Individual families are best placed to make these judgements.

For some parents and carers, however, there are barriers to choosing the arrangement of activities that best suit their needs – whether they relate to caring for children or other dependants. These barriers include: availability of high-quality, affordable childcare; workplace cultures and practices; financial incentives to work; and difficulties in making transitions from one level of paid work to another. Some parents would like to work more, some would like to work less, and some would like to distribute paid and unpaid responsibilities differently.

Ensuring that families are able to reconcile work and family responsibilities will become increasingly important in the future. In New Zealand and internationally, there is evidence that women are making trade-offs between careers and family – fertility rates have dropped below replacement levels in most OECD countries. These trade offs have implications, not only for the future sustainability of the labour force, but also for the ability of people to fulfil their aspirations for different areas of their lives. An ageing population means that, in addition to childcare responsibilities, it is increasingly likely that women will also need to balance responsibility for caring for ageing parents with their aspirations to work.

Both New Zealand and international research indicates that to provide parents with real choices about paid work participation, it is important that they have access to childcare that meets their needs. Parents need to know that their children are well cared for – education and care services for young children must be of a high quality as well as affordable. Research shows that high-quality education and care has significant benefits for children, particularly those from less advantaged backgrounds.

Reducing the pay gap between men and women and between different groups of women

There has been a significant closing of the gap between men and women's pay, but the median hourly pay of women is still about 13 percent less than that of men. This has not changed significantly in the last four years. Some groups of women, such as Māori and Pacific women, also earn significantly less than others.

In part, the pay gap is due to different patterns of participation in paid employment, differences in education levels and the occupations in which women tend to work. However, a portion of the difference between men's and women's average earnings remains unexplained, and may reflect discrimination.

Income is a key determinant of quality of life. If women are restricted in their ability to be economically independent, this can restrict the life choices that are available to them and their families. Lower income levels, for instance, restrict people's ability to repay student loans, buy a house or save for retirement.

Reducing gender segregation in employment

Occupational segregation has been identified as a contributing factor to the gap between the average incomes of men and women. Although women's participation in paid work is now much more common than in the past, women's employment is still concentrated in a small number of occupations. Many of these occupations are female-dominated.

If women's career choices are constrained, this represents an under-utilisation of the full range of women's abilities, and therefore, an opportunity cost for society. Effective use of human capital is an important element of improving economic productivity. Consequently, in the context of seeking to enhance productivity, it is important that women are not constrained in career choice or in developing and using their skills and abilities.

Breaking down gender segregation of work is particularly important in the context of a tight labour market and skill shortage in some industries. The ability of the labour market to respond to the demand for certain skills is restricted when gender segregation exists.

Reducing the incidence and impact of domestic violence

Domestic violence is physical or sexual violence, psychological abuse, or threat of physical or sexual violence that occurs between intimate partners.

Reducing domestic violence is a priority because of the high personal costs it creates for women and children. The impact of domestic violence permeates many spheres of women's lives, including the lives of their children. It affects their mental and physical health, economic status, social participation and general well-being. Being a victim of domestic violence carries immediate impacts but the effects of abuse can persist long after the abuse itself has stopped – such as an increased risk of future ill health. Well-being is essential to active participation in the economy and society, to the benefit of all.

Women's lifetime prevalence of sexual violence and partner violence is higher than men's. Domestic violence is prevalent, is perpetrated by men against women, and does have fatal consequences. Domestic violence creates high personal costs but also has significant direct and indirect social and economic costs for society as a whole. One New Zealand study estimated that family violence – broader than domestic violence – cost the country at least \$1.2 billion per annum.

Domestic violence also impacts on inter-generational outcomes. While most children who witness domestic violence will not perpetrate domestic violence as adults, many adult perpetrators and victims have experienced some form of family violence in the past. Overall, studies indicate that children who have witnessed violence exhibit a host of behavioural and emotional problems, compared to other children. The effects on a child's well-being of witnessing violence may continue into adult life and is associated with depression, trauma-related symptoms and low self-esteem.

Part 3: Introducing the Ministry of Women's Affairs

Introduction

Part 3 provides an overview of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, including its current role, size and structure. This section also outlines the Ministry's current programme of policy work.

Role of the Ministry of Women's Affairs

The Ministry of Women's Affairs is a strategic policy agency with three core functions. The Ministry:

- provides policy advice on issues that impact on social and economic outcomes for women
- assists the government to fulfil its international obligations in relation to the status of women
- nominates appropriately-qualified women for state sector boards.

Strategic policy work

The Ministry is the government's lead policy advisor on outcomes for women. The Ministry's advice seeks to ensure that the distinctive needs of women are met, and that women are fully able to contribute to the economic and social goals for New Zealand. Its roles are detailed below.

Specialist policy advisor

The Ministry leads policy development, alone or within the programmes of other departments; contributes to policy steering groups; and provides analytical support and advice to the government on the potential impact of proposed policies on the relevant range of women. The Ministry uses a range of analytical frameworks including gender analysis.

Knowledge manager

The Ministry provides public sector departments with information and analysis to assist in quality policy advice; connects with networks that have expertise in women's issues; and gathers and generates information that fills critical gaps.

Monitor

The Ministry keeps a watching eye on issues for women; monitors progress on the *Action Plan for New Zealand Women*; supports government agencies to keep policy initiatives on track; and supports capability building in the public sector to ensure consideration of gender issues is embedded.

International work

The Ministry is the lead agency for managing New Zealand's international obligations regarding the status of women. This role has an external and internal focus.

Externally, the Ministry assists in managing the government's international obligations. The Ministry also supports ministerial participation in, and attendance at, international forums such as the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

The Ministry is also responsible, in conjunction with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, for preparing New Zealand's reports to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The sixth report is due for completion by March 2006.

Internally, the Ministry promotes development of domestic policy that is consistent with New Zealand's international obligations in relation to the status of women.

Nominations service

The Ministry is accountable for the provision of suitable women nominees for appointment to statutory bodies.

The Ministry is working towards women representing 50 percent of the members of statutory bodies by the year 2010. Of 683 appointments to statutory bodies made during 2004, 308 were women. This equates to 45 percent.

Relationships

The Ministry uses unique information and high-quality interaction with people to add value to its policy work. The Ministry, therefore, operates a comprehensive programme of relationship management involving relationships with non-government officials as well as public sector colleagues. The Ministry leads in a way that is not always highly visible, through assisting, supporting and enhancing the work of others.

The Ministry accesses information through ongoing relationships with key women's groups including the National Council of Women, Rural Women of New Zealand, New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women Inc., Pacifica, Zonta and the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges. It maintains contacts with organisations with an interest in law, youth, migrants, and people with disabilities. The Ministry also has relationships with trade unions, the Retirement Commission, the Human Rights Commission, and business groups. It also links to a number of universities undertaking research programmes on issues for women.

Sustained relationships with Māori are necessary to produce policy advice that is effective in improving outcomes for Māori women. This is achieved through contact with organisations, specially constituted Māori women's reference groups, and iwi relationships.

The Ministry's collaborative work extends to a range of organisations in civil society. This is particularly a feature of its approach to discharging its international function and the Ministry convenes a caucus on international women's issues. The caucus is a forum for individuals and government agencies to share information and enhance New Zealand's capacity to contribute effectively to international forums.

Size and structure of the Ministry

The Ministry employs 32 staff and has one output class with a baseline appropriation of \$4.115 million in 2005/6 and out years.

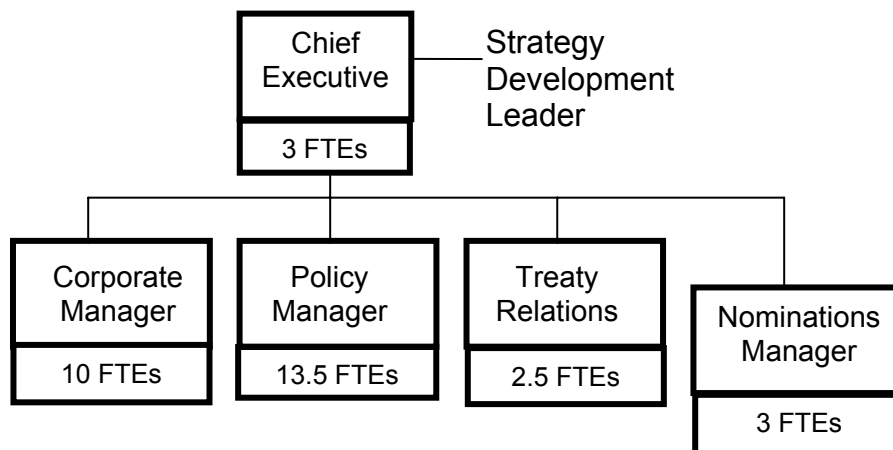
A State Services Commission review in 2005 confirmed that the Ministry is functioning very well.

The Ministry's overall structure and full-time equivalent staff is illustrated in Figure 3. The chief executive, Shenagh Gleisner, has been in the position since February 2004 and has a career in health service delivery, the private sector and central government agencies.

The senior management team consists of the Chief Executive, managers of Policy, Corporate Support and Treaty Relationships units, and the Strategy Development Leader who is on a fixed-term contract. The Nominations Manager reports directly to the Chief Executive, but is not a member of the senior management team.

Corporate Support functions include information services and communications. International work forms part of the Policy team's work programme.

Figure 3: Ministry of Women's Affairs corporate structure



Current policy work programme

The Ministry prioritises policy work based on where it can add the most value. It leads policy projects where evidence shows an area to be critical to achieving outcomes for women, and where that work is not an area of focus for other agencies.

The Ministry also contributes and influences the policy development of other agencies in a range of ways, for example by undertaking focused analysis, engaging other stakeholders, or bringing information to the debate when additional input is needed. The Ministry is agile and effective in applying analytical resources where they are most required.

The Ministry is currently leading several research projects that assist and influence policy development in other agencies.

- Women in Enterprise research, which has been undertaken in conjunction with the Ministry of Economic Development, is due for completion by December 2005. This research will inform policy options to improve business outcomes and create opportunities to increase women's contribution to New Zealand's economic growth.
- Research to improve the economic well-being of Pacific women and their families. This has been funded by the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology and is due for completion by December 2005.
- Research to provide information about how protection orders may better protect women experiencing domestic violence. This research is due for completion in May 2006.

In addition, the Ministry is involved with other major policy projects described below. In some cases, the Ministry leads particular components of work.

- Policy work on how to enhance choices for parents and other carers. This project is being led by the Department of Labour. The main output of this work is to develop advice to enhance the work choices available to parents and other carers and achieve quality outcomes for children, families and other dependents. In particular, the Ministry is involved in workstreams regarding income barriers, early childhood education and care and out-of-school services.
- A cross-sectoral, multi-faceted review of sexuality education is being undertaken to better understand the content and quality of sexuality education in schools. This is part of the Education Review Office's 2006 general review of schools with students between Years 7 and 13.
- Policy advice is being developed to improve the representation of women in Modern Apprenticeships. This work is being developed by the Tertiary Education Commission and will include interviews with Modern Apprenticeship co-ordinators.