New Zealand Government’s Response to the UN Questionnaire


October 2009

1 The information contained in this questionnaire is up-to-date as at October 2009. A minor correction was made to the table on page 3 and to page 7 in March 2010.
Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment

a) Has national policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women been adopted and at what level?

The New Zealand Government’s overall goal is to ‘grow the economy to deliver greater prosperity, security and opportunity for all New Zealanders.’ New Zealand’s goal for women is: Women having real choices and using their strengths to maximise social and economic success.

Priority areas

The government’s goal for women has three priorities that provide a focus for developing outcomes. These are:

• women have the opportunity to develop and use their skills and talents
• women are healthy, empowered, resilient and safe
• society recognises caring as integral to economic and social success.

Monitoring

Indicators for Change: Tracking the progress of New Zealand women is the Ministry of Women’s Affairs’ (MWA) report that uses high-level monitoring indicators to provide an overall picture of how New Zealand women are doing in a range of areas including health, education, labour force participation, and leadership.

National mechanism

All papers to the Cabinet Social Policy Committee (a part of the executive branch of government) are required to include a gender implications statement (GIS). The purpose of a GIS is to signal to Ministers the gender impacts of the particular policy proposal under consideration.

b) What impact does the CEDAW and the concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have on the promotion of gender equality?

Domestically, implementation of CEDAW has been pursued comprehensively since it was ratified in 1985. Progress is incremental and focused on consolidation, given the emphasis in previous reporting periods on developing necessary legislative and policy frameworks to give effect to CEDAW. Also, New Zealand’s CEDAW Report is tabled at the New Zealand Government’s Cabinet Social Policy Committee for agreement before the CEDAW Committee receives the final submission.

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2 http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech+throne+0
c) What are the main legislative and policy-making achievements in the promotion of the gender equality and women’s empowerment over the past decade?

Landmarks achieved for New Zealand women over the past decade include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>The Employment Relations (Breaks, Infant Feeding and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2008 requires rest and meal breaks for all workers and breaks and facilities for infant feeding in the workplace.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>The introduction of a Carers’ Strategy in 2008 was a step towards valuing the contribution of unpaid carers, who are predominantly women.</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>The Human Rights (Women in Armed Forces) Amendment Bill was enacted in May 2007 and repealed section 33 of the Human Rights Act 1993, which had permitted the New Zealand Defence Force to discriminate on the basis of gender in active combat roles.</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>The 20 Hours ECE (Early Childhood Education) policy was introduced in 2007. Childcare costs to parents were reduced through the government fully subsidising up to 20 funded childcare hours.</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>The Taskforce for Action on Sexual Violence was established in 2007 to provide leadership and co-ordination across government and non-government sectors required to address sexual violence.</td>
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<td>The Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act 2007 gives employees with caring responsibilities a statutory right to request flexible work.</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>The establishment of the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families in 2005 set the strategic direction for family violence prevention in New Zealand.</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>The Civil Union Act 2004 provides for different-sex or same-sex couples to enter into a civil union to formally solemnise their relationship in a manner similar to marriage.</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>The Prostitution Reform Act 2003 decriminalises prostitution in New Zealand and introduces provisions to protect the health and safety of sex workers and their clients.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>The Parental Leave and Employment Protection (Paid Parental Leave) Amendment Act was introduced in 2002 and established 12 weeks’ paid parental leave. Paid parental leave was extended to 13 weeks in 2004 and to 14 weeks in 2005.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The Human Rights Amendment Act 2001 identified all legislative provisions and government policies and practices which conflicted with the Human Rights Act 1993, or infringed the spirit and intention of the Act.</td>
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d) What types of significant partnerships have been established with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups?

The New Zealand Government acknowledges and welcomes the important contribution of civil society. National umbrella groups include the National Council of Women of New Zealand, Māori Women’s Welfare League, PACIFICA (Pacific Allied [Women’s] Council Inspires Faith Ideals Concerning All) and the National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges. MWA hosts a Caucus on International Women’s Issues, which is a domestic forum for exchange of information and experience among those working in international forums to address issues relevant to the well-being of women in New Zealand and abroad. The caucus provides representatives of civil society with the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns with government officials, and at times, directly to the Minister of Women’s Affairs.
Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly

Women and the economy

The gender pay gap

In 2004, the Department of Labour established a Pay and Employment Equity Unit to implement the five-year Pay and Employment Equity Plan of Action (Plan of Action). The Plan of Action’s objective was to ensure that remuneration, job choice and job opportunities are not affected by gender. It was based on existing legislation, and on unions and employers working together with a focus on workplace-based partnerships to achieve change. Thirty-eight core public service departments completed pay and employment equity reviews and response plans, as well as schools, kindergartens, 21 district health boards, and the New Zealand Blood Service. Three Crown Research Institutes and two local councils also participated voluntarily.

In 2009, the Pay and Employment Equity Unit was disbanded and MWA received an additional $2 million over four years to do more research and policy work on the gender pay gap. The pay gap between men and women has been at about 12 percent for the past decade and MWA has publicly stated its commitment to addressing this issue and working towards closing the gap.

Labour market indicators

In the June 2009 quarter, New Zealand’s labour force participation rate was 68.4 percent. The labour force participation rate for women was 62.1 percent, compared to 75.2 percent for men. The labour force participation rates of different groups of women vary significantly, and ethnicity is an important factor.

Economic activity was up 0.1 percent in the June 2009 quarter following five quarters of contraction. This is likely to affect the labour market outcomes for women.

The unemployment rate continues to rise following the start of the contraction and was 6.0 percent in the June 2009 quarter. Women’s unemployment rose 1.5 percentage points to 6.3 percent compared to a 0.6 percentage point rise for men at 5.7 percent unemployment.

The number of people unemployed was largely driven by an increase of 15,000 in the number of unemployed females. The number of unemployed males also rose, increasing by 8,000 in the June 2009 quarter.

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4 Statistics New Zealand, Household Labour Force Survey June 2009
Flexible working legislation

The Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act 2007 gives employees with caring responsibilities a statutory right to request flexible work. The Act has changed the way some employees and employers make, and respond to, requests for flexible working arrangements. Women are more likely to be caring for family members and have a lower level of participation in paid employment.

Flexible work opportunities can mean that women participate more in the workforce but there can be pay penalties associated with flexible and part-time work. A review of the Act will be completed in 2010 and will consider whether the statutory right to request flexible work should be extended to all employees.

20 Hours ECE policy

In 2007, costs to parents were reduced through the government fully subsidising up to 20 funded hours of childcare per week. The impact of this policy has increased choice for families, particularly women who are the predominant caregivers, in balancing work and caring responsibilities. 20 Hours ECE was implemented to increase the participation of three- and four-year-old children in high-quality early childhood education services over time.

Carers’ Strategy

In April 2008 the government launched the Carers’ Strategy, in conjunction with the Carers Alliance, a network of 43 NGOs supporting unpaid carers. The Carers’ Strategy outlines the government’s vision for carers in New Zealand: New Zealand Aotearoa is a society that values individuals, families, whanau or aiga who support others who need help with their everyday living. New Zealand data on unpaid caregivers shows:

- 7.8 percent of people care for a member of their own household who is ill or disabled; 61 percent of these are female
- 9.1 percent of people care for someone who is ill or disabled outside of their own household; 66 percent of these are female.

The Carers’ Strategy is supported by a Five-year Action Plan. The proposals in the Five-year Action Plan address the following areas of key priority identified during consultation with carers:

- provide information
- protect the health and well-being of carers
- enable carers to take a break
- provide financial support for carers
- provide training and pathways to employment for carers.

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6 Whanau is the indigenous Māori term for extended family
7 Aiga is the Pacific Island term for extended family
8 New Zealand Census data
9 http://www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/cross-sectoral-work/carers-strategy/
The development of the Carers’ Strategy is a step towards valuing the contribution of carers. Improving support for informal carers is important for developing strong healthy families and meeting future challenges of providing care.

Women and poverty

Paid parental leave increase

Access to paid parental leave has a positive effect on women’s quality of employment. Provision for government-funded paid parental leave under the Parental Leave and Employment Protection (Paid Parental Leave) Amendment Act 2002 took effect from 1 July 2002. Initially the Act provided for up to 12 weeks paid parental leave, if the employee has an intention to return to work, and this was only available if the employee had worked for at least one year for at least ten hours per week for the same employer. Since 2005, all eligible women are able to receive up to 14 weeks paid parental leave. Mothers can also choose to transfer all or part of their leave to their partners.

Since 2006, self-employed women are also eligible to receive paid parental leave through the Parental Leave and Employment Protection (Paid Parental Leave for Self-Employed Persons) Amendment Act 2006. Parental leave payments are adjusted annually in line with changes to the average weekly wage.

Increase in the minimum wage

In 2009 the minimum wage increased\(^{10}\) from $11.50 to $12.50 an hour. This will have a positive impact for female workers. Between 2002 and 2005, 63.1 percent of minimum wage workers were female.\(^{11}\)

Young parent childcare payment

Budget 2009 announced ongoing funding to provide the Young Parent Childcare Payment, for parents under the age of 18 years who are continuing their secondary schooling. The payment is to cover costs of childcare should the parents not qualify for other assistance.\(^{12}\) The payment provides up to $6 per hour for each child, up to a maximum of $180 a week up to 40 weeks per year and is paid to the childcare centre.

SuperGold Card

In 2007, the government launched the SuperGold Card, a free discounts and concessions card for New Zealand residents aged 65 and over. The card allows access to a range of business discounts. It also facilitates access to government entitlements and local authority


services and concessions. This is significant because there are more women in this age group due to women's longer life expectancy.

In 2008, the government extended the card coverage to include free off-peak travel for cardholders on all forms of public transport provided by Territorial Local Authorities. Funding has also been allocated for a significant increase in the subsidy for hearing aids. Both of these government concessions took effect from 1 October 2008.

Social assistance

To ensure all families have enough income to raise their children and have a decent standard of living the government introduced the Working for Families package in 2004. The Working for Families package includes the following initiatives which provide greater assistance for those on low- and middle-incomes to work and raise a family:

- childcare assistance
- accommodation supplements
- in-work tax credits
- other tax credits.

By March 2007 it was estimated 377,800 families were receiving a component of the Working for Families package. Since its launch there has also been a significant fall in the number of families receiving income support through the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB). As most beneficiaries receiving the DPB are women (88.3 percent), Working for Families has created incentives for women to enter the workforce. From 2004 to 2008 Working for Families raised real incomes for households below the median.

KiwiSaver

In 2006, the government introduced KiwiSaver to give New Zealanders more choices for securing their financial futures. KiwiSaver is a voluntary savings scheme for all employees, both full and part-time, aged 18 to 65 years. This will provide women with additional economic security over and above New Zealand's universal superannuation scheme.

Education and training of women

Achievements in education

- In 2008, women accounted for 55 percent (233,000) of domestic students enrolled in tertiary education. Since 2005, enrolments in tertiary education have decreased by 8 percent for women and 7 percent for men.
- Sixty percent of students who completed a tertiary qualification in 2008 were women.
- An estimated 50 percent of female tertiary students complete their qualification within five years, compared with 40 percent of male students.

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14 National Benefit Factsheets, June, 2009, Ministry of Social Development
Youth opportunities package

The Youth Opportunities Package 2009 has a budget of $152 million to create new work, education and training opportunities for unemployed young people. The package is not gender-specific but will assist young unemployed women with low skills and work experience.

Interest-free student loans

The number of women who have outstanding student loans was 286,425 in 2007 compared to 222,066 men. Student loans became interest-free in New Zealand on 1 April 2006. The interest-free policy applies regardless of whether a student is still studying or has had their loan transferred to the Inland Revenue Department (IRD), but students must be living in New Zealand to qualify. Because of the way student loans are administered, students will continue to see interest charges on their loan statements. But as long as the student remains eligible, IRD will write off all interest charged from 1 April 2006, after the end of each tax year.

The provision for interest-free student loans is likely to be particularly beneficial to women as they form the majority of student loan borrowers and will no longer be disadvantaged by increasing student loan debt if they stop paid work to have children.

Women and health

Breastfeeding

The Employment Relations (Breaks, Infant Feeding and Other Matters) Amendment Act 2008 came into effect on 1 April 2009, and requires employers to provide employees with paid rest breaks and unpaid meal breaks. A number of initiatives have been established to promote and support breastfeeding in New Zealand. Current government initiatives include:

- the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative aims to increase new mothers’ awareness of breastfeeding through health workers in hospitals
- the Healthy Eating - Healthy Action Plan includes the promotion of breastfeeding to women and their families
- District Health Boards fund lactation consultants in some regions
- the National Breastfeeding Committee provides technical support and leadership on the issue of lactation support
- the Department of Labour guidelines (2005) Breastfeeding in the Workplace: an employer’s guide to making it work
- the progressive extension of the paid parental leave scheme contributes to supporting the health and well-being of new mothers and babies.

17 Ministry of Education Student Loan Scheme Annual Report to 30 June 2008
Cervical cancer

HPV (human papillomavirus) vaccine

Since 2008, New Zealand girls aged 12 to 18 years have been offered a free HPV vaccine to prevent the most common infections that can lead to cervical cancer. The HPV programme aims to reduce cervical cancer in New Zealand by protecting girls against HPV infection. Currently, around 160 New Zealand women each year are diagnosed with cervical cancer and 60 women die from cervical cancer each year.

National cervical screening campaign

In 2007, a campaign to encourage women to have regular cervical smears as part of the National Cervical Screening Programme was launched. The National Cervical Screening Programme is for women aged 20 to 69 years and has contributed to a 50 percent reduction in cervical cancer incidence and a 65 percent reduction in deaths in New Zealand. The campaign has a universal message for all women – having regular cervical smear tests could save your life.¹⁹

Since the launch of the campaign with increased targeted health promotion activity, there have been statistically significant increases in smear testing for all groups of women, particularly Māori and Pacific women. Māori coverage has increased by 5.2 percent and Pacific by 9.6 percent (absolute increase March 2009).

BreastScreen Aotearoa (BSA)

In 2008, a campaign to encourage women to have regular breast screens was launched. Research showed that 43 percent of Māori and Pacific women surveyed were aware of breast screening and/or mammograms as a method of checking for breast cancer.

The research also showed low awareness of the screening age range, that the service is free and the recommended screening frequency. As at 31 January 2009, BSA coverage for women aged 50 to 69 was: 49.1 percent for Māori women; 52.8 percent for Pacific women; and 66.1 percent for other women.

HIV antenatal screening

In 2006, a universal routine-offer antenatal HIV screening programme was rolled out across New Zealand. By identifying pregnant women with HIV, treatment can be given to reduce the chances of HIV being transmitted to the baby. Knowing that a pregnant woman has HIV reduces the chance of the baby becoming infected from around 31 percent to less than one percent.

Violence against women

Enhancing victims’ rights: a review

The Ministry of Justice is currently undertaking a review of victims’ rights and access to support services. The review will cover the legislative, policy, and operational issues around the implementation of the Victims’ Rights Act 2002.

Domestic violence laws have also been reviewed to strengthen police powers and responses to family violence incidents. As part of this review, Parliament is currently considering legislation proposing a number of substantive and procedural changes to the protection order regime. In particular, police would be able to make orders to address the immediate safety of victims. This will have the potential to make a real difference to the lives of women through the court process.

Trafficking

In 2009, New Zealand published its Plan of Action to Prevent People Trafficking (Plan of Action), which was developed to fulfil obligations under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and related protocols, including the Trafficking Protocol. There is no evidence to suggest that trafficking has occurred in New Zealand. However, people trafficking is an international crime and New Zealand has the potential to be targeted by traffickers in the future. The Plan of Action will collate the existing trafficking provisions, and outline a strategic framework for improving New Zealand’s ability to prevent people trafficking. The Department of Labour is coordinating this work, and leads the Inter-agency Working Group on People Trafficking.

Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families

In June 2005 the Taskforce for Action on Violence within Families (TAVF) was established to advise government on how to make improvements to the way family violence is addressed and to eliminate family violence in New Zealand. The TAVF is a high level inter-sectoral group providing a forum for the government and non-government sectors, the judiciary, the Children’s Commissioner and the Families Commission to set the strategic direction for family violence prevention in New Zealand.

The TAVF's first report was released in July 2006, and outlined four specific areas where the TAVF aims to make progress in family violence prevention. These areas are:

- improving action on leadership
- changing attitudes and behaviours
- ensuring safety and accountability and
- providing effective support services.

The TAVF's work up to 2009 has included: initiation of a Campaign for Action on Family

Violence (see below); local case collaboration to support those affected by family violence; dedicated family violence courts; improving the information base to inform system and service development; engaging with high-needs communities; and a community response fund of $40 million for services that are in crisis as a result of increased demand and the recession.

Campaign for Action on Family Violence

In 2007, the New Zealand Government launched the ‘It’s Not OK’ Campaign for Action on Family Violence, which aims to stimulate change in the way people think and act about domestic violence. This campaign uses various media to promote family safety, and resources are being put in place to support both government and non-government organisations. The government allocated an extra $1 million funding for the campaign in Budget 2009.

Taskforce for Action on Sexual Violence

In July 2007 the government established the Taskforce for Action on Sexual Violence (TASV) to provide the leadership and co-ordination required across government and non-government sectors to address sexual violence. The TASV comprises the Chief Executives of ten government departments, four representatives from the sexual violence non-government sector and a member of the judiciary. A broad range of areas was examined by the TASV – from prevention and education to crisis and longer-term support for victims, offender treatment and management, and the responsiveness of the criminal justice system.

The TASV completed its work with a report to government in July 2009 setting out key actions and recommendations on where government investment should focus to have the biggest impact in preventing and responding to adult sexual violence in New Zealand.

Human rights of women

The Human Rights Commission’s New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights

In 2005 the Human Rights Commission (HRC) presented the New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights (the Plan) to the New Zealand Government. The purpose of the Plan was to encourage a broader and more complex understanding of human rights and support for them, both in public policy-making and in society at large. New Zealand recognises that understanding human rights and effectively promoting them is a constantly evolving process. Given the Plan’s wide range of actions and the scale of factors that need to be considered, in 2007 New Zealand adopted an approach whereby government departments consider the appropriateness of implementing the Plan’s priorities for action as part of their core business.

Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner within the Human Rights Commission

The Human Rights Amendment Act 2001 established the role of a full-time commissioner with responsibility for providing advice and leadership on Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) activities, monitoring and evaluating EEO progress and leading discussions about EEO issues including pay equity. The EEO Commissioner’s key pieces of work have included:

- a biennial Census of Women’s Participation, started in 2004, shows that New Zealand women’s participation in governance and professional life lags behind other comparable countries.
- a 2005 report, The Right to Breastfeed
- the 2004 launch of a National Equal Opportunities Network that promotes leading employment practices to employers, employees, trade unions, human resources personnel, and small business.

Women in power and decision-making

New Zealand is obligated to encourage the participation of women in political and public life on equal terms with men under Article 7 of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Most recent statistics are illustrated below.

- Women’s representation on district health boards has increased slightly. An increase of 1.34 percent puts women’s representation at 43.4 percent in 2007.\(^\text{22}\)
- Less than a quarter (23 percent) of public service chief executives are female despite the high proportion (59 percent) of women employed in the state sector. Women continue to be under-represented at senior levels, with 38 percent of senior managers in the public service being women.\(^\text{23}\)
- Women make up 42.3 percent of ministerial appointees on state sector boards and committees as at December 2008.
- Women leaders remain scarce in the private sector with women making up 8.65 percent of board members of NZSX Top 100 companies in 2007.\(^\text{24}\)

Central government

The year 2009 represents New Zealand’s 116th anniversary as the first country in the world to grant women the vote. The decision to vote is a personal choice. However, it is a legal requirement for New Zealand citizens and permanent residents over the age of 18 years to be enrolled to vote. The proportion of the estimated voting-age population (aged 18 years and over) who cast a vote in the 2008 general election was 76 percent, a slight decline from 77 percent in 2005.

Because of the nature of the secret ballot, information on differences in participation between men and women and different ethnic groups is not directly available. Nevertheless, results

\(^{22}\) New Zealand Census of Women’s Participation, 2008, Human Rights Commission

\(^{23}\) Ibid

\(^{24}\) Ibid
from New Zealand election surveys show that there are few differences in voting turnout rates between men and women. Since the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) representation system was introduced in 1996, the proportion of women in Parliament has remained stable. Following the 2008 general election, women make up 41 out of 122 current Parliamentarians. Six of the 20 current Cabinet Ministers (eight of the 28 Ministers of the Crown) are women, including New Zealand’s first Asian woman Minister. Women have also been appointed to traditionally male ministerial portfolios (e.g. the Minister of Police).

Local government

There are three types of local government in New Zealand: regional, territorial (cities and districts) and unitary (which combines the functions of a regional and territorial council).

Since 1989, the overall number of women local government candidates has increased both numerically and as a proportion of the total number of candidates, against a backdrop of declining candidate numbers. The 2007 local government elections show 29 percent female representation, up from 27 percent in 2004.

New Zealand’s representation in local government translates into 293 women serving as city, regional and district councillors, including mayors and chairs, up from 275 in 2004. This equates to 29 percent female representation. As a proportion of candidates, 51 percent of women who stood in all elections were successful, compared with 46 percent of men.

Women and armed conflict

In May 2007 the last legal discrimination against women in employment was removed. The Human Rights (Women in Armed Forces) Amendment Act 2007 removed the exemption to New Zealand’s human rights laws designed to enable the armed forces to exclude women from combat and other front-line roles. This enabled New Zealand to remove the last remaining reservation to CEDAW.

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25 Ibid

Part Three: National mechanism, structures and measures countries have put into place to support promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment

National Mechanism

Ministry of Women’s Affairs

New Zealand has a central, stand-alone, Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MWA), focused primarily on policy advice to the Minister of Women’s Affairs. In addition, New Zealand has a whole-of-government approach to gender mainstreaming, where all agencies are responsible for conducting gender analysis. This ensures that policies are designed, implemented and evaluated in a way that takes into account the real-life situations of all women, including the rights of girls and women with disabilities and others who are particularly disempowered by social barriers.

Monitoring mechanisms to measure progress to support promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment

Action Plan for New Zealand Women

The Action Plan for New Zealand Women (the Action Plan), launched in 2004, outlined the strategic direction for the government’s goals for women. The Action Plan was a whole-of-government approach to improving outcomes for women in three priority areas: economic sustainability, work-life balance, and well-being. MWA led and co-ordinated work across government on the implementation of the Action Plan; however other government agencies were responsible for implementing the majority of actions. The Action Plan expired in 2009 and a review of its success is currently underway.

Indicators for Change

Indicators for Change: Tracking the progress of New Zealand women is an annual report developed by MWA that uses high-level monitoring indicators to provide an overall picture of how New Zealand women are doing in a range of areas including health, education, labour force participation, and leadership.

The purpose of Indicators for Change is to bring together in one place a range of reliable, easy-to-use data on the status of women for the use of policy-makers, government agencies, non-government organisations, and members of the public. It will be used to set a baseline for future monitoring, and identify areas where more work may be needed.

The Social Report

The Social Report is an annual publication that monitors the well-being of New Zealanders. The report, published by the Ministry of Social Development, uses a set of statistical indicators to monitor trends across ten 'domains', or areas of people's lives. Together these domains provide a picture of well-being and quality of life in New Zealand.

The Social Report has four key aims:

- to provide and monitor measures of well-being and quality of life that complement existing economic and environmental indicators
- to compare New Zealand with other countries on measures of well-being
- to provide greater transparency in government and to contribute to better-informed public debate
- to help identify key issues and areas where we need to take action, which can in turn help with planning and decision making.

The report examines the current level of well-being in New Zealand, how this has changed over time, and how different groups in the population are faring. It helps to identify adverse trends in social outcomes at an early stage. While the report cannot always illuminate what is driving these trends, it can point to the need for further research to understand what is happening and what actions need to be taken to address them. The Social Report complements the MWA report Indicators for Change: Tracking progress of New Zealand women.
Part Four: Remaining challenges and actions for New Zealand to address

Generally, outcomes for women in New Zealand have improved as successive governments have removed the legislative barriers to equality, and society’s attitudes and expectations have changed. Women are doing well in some areas:

- **Health**: Women’s life expectancy continues to increase. Female life expectancy at birth is around 82 years, compared with male life expectancy of 78 years.\(^{28}\)
- **Education**: The number of young women graduating at tertiary level has increased significantly in the last decade. In 2008, 61 percent of students who completed a tertiary qualification were women\(^{29}\) and women accounted for 55 percent (233,000) of domestic students enrolled in tertiary education.\(^{30}\)
- **Labour force participation**: Women’s participation in the labour force reached a record high of 63.0 percent in the December 2008 quarter – an increase of 0.5 percentage points from the previous quarter. This compares with a labour force participation rate for men of 75.6 percent for the same period – an increase of 0.6 percentage points from the previous quarter.\(^{31}\) Since the December 2008 quarter, labour force participation rates have fallen for both females and males (to 62.1 percent for females and 75.2 percent for males in the June 2009 quarter).

However in some areas, not only do women continue to have poorer outcomes in many areas than men, some groups of women continue to have poorer outcomes relative to each other. For example, Māori women have poorer outcomes in many key areas, even after adjusting for socio-economic status; and migrant and refugee women often face cultural and language barriers in addition to those faced by other New Zealand women. Policy approaches will have to increasingly focus on this diversity, as there will be significant changes in the ethnic composition of the New Zealand population over the next two decades. These include substantial increases in the proportion of Asian, Māori and Pacific people in the population.

To fully implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly beyond 2010 the main challenges for women in New Zealand include women in leadership, ending violence against women and the gender pay gap.

\(^{30}\) Ibid.  
Ending violence against women

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states that ‘violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace.’

In New Zealand, sexual violence and domestic violence continue to impact disproportionately on women:

- 29 percent of New Zealand women and 9 percent of men have experienced sexual interference or assault in their lifetime.
- Māori women had a rate of sexual victimisation double the average for women overall.
- 23 percent of New Zealand women have experienced violence by a male partner in their lifetime, compared to 14 percent of men who have experienced violence by a female partner in their lifetime.
- Māori women were at risk of partner violence three times the average for women overall.

The New Zealand Government has expressed a strong commitment to ending violence against women. There have been some important new initiatives in 2009:

- the safety of women will be improved through the Domestic Violence (Enhancing Safety) Bill, which will allow police to issue on-the-spot protection orders
- the government is conducting an important review into legal aid; this has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of women through the court process.

Women in leadership

In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country.

New Zealand aspires to be a highly-skilled economy in the modern global marketplace, which means New Zealand has to maximise the talent pool of men and women, and both should be well represented in public and political life. There are many women with skill and expertise who are being overlooked; for example:

- only 23 percent of public service department chief executives were women in 2007
- women leaders remain scarce in the private sector, with women making up 8.7 percent of board members of NZSX Top 100 companies in 2007.

New Zealand has begun a major push to get more women into the boardrooms of New Zealand businesses. The Prime Minister of New Zealand launched the Women on
Boards initiative in May 2009 and urged business to do more to make better use of the business talents of women. A significant feature of this initiative is that it is a joint effort between the government and the private sector (Business New Zealand, and the Institute of Directors in New Zealand). The business case for more women on boards is strong, but the message is much more powerful when it comes from business itself. This vital push forward will now come from government, private sector companies, company directors and shareholders, and women themselves.

Gender pay gap

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action states ‘discrimination in education and training, hiring and remuneration, promotion and horizontal mobility practices, as well as inflexible working conditions, lack of access to productive resources and inadequate sharing of family responsibilities, combined with a lack of or insufficient services such as childcare, continue to restrict employment, economic, professional and other opportunities and mobility for women and make their involvement stressful.’  

The causes of the gender pay gap are complex.

- While women’s incomes are increasing, the gender pay gap has remained at around 12 percent since 2002.
- In the June 2009 quarter, women’s median hourly earnings were $18.22, compared with $20.53 for men. This equates to a gender pay gap of 11.3 percent.
- Pākehā (i.e. European) women’s median hourly earnings ($18.85) were significantly higher than both Māori and Pacific women’s ($16.43 and $16.00 respectively in the June 2009 quarter).

Budget 2009 demonstrated the New Zealand Government’s determination to make progress on reducing the gender pay gap by allocating an extra $2 million over four years to MWA to do more work on the gender pay gap. The funding will assist MWA to carry out research and provide advice on the pay gap and other employment issues. The work programme is still being developed, but the focus will include a better understanding of the barriers to flexible work and looking at how to avoid occupational segregation (which contributes to the pay gap) in new industry areas.

The work on reducing the pay gap will include:

- working on occupational segregation, including looking at how to avoid it in new industry areas
- working to better understand why female graduates’ pay is less than male graduates’ as soon as one year into their first jobs.

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41 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with the Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document, Department of Public Information, United Nations, p94, 2001
42 New Zealand Income Survey: Statistics New Zealand June 2009 quarter.
43 Ibid.
The ultimate aim is to see the barriers that limit women's employment choices removed, and women's skills fully recognised and used, for the benefit of themselves, their families, and for New Zealand as a whole.