



Women and Work in Asia and the Pacific

Experiences, challenges and ways forward

*Edited by Jane Parker, Marian Baird,
Noelle Donnelly and Rae Cooper*

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DEDICATION

Lina Cabaero was a woman of valour and a woman for all seasons. She was everywhere, with everyone, with full commitment, power and love. Lina had been the chairperson, and later treasurer, of the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association (IWSA) in Australia. She also held positions as the coordinator of the Asian Women at Work (AWatW) and Philippine Australia Community Services Inc. (PACSI).

Even when Lina was terminally ill, she continued to contribute to campaigns for migrants' rights. In these campaigns, she used her skills in cultural work, singing progressive songs while strumming her guitar. Her talent as a true artist was in depicting the socio-economic and political realities of life. Lina was able to visualise her views by working with deprived sectors in society, especially workers. She had intended to co-author the chapter on Philippine women workers in this book, but passed away on 8 August 2021. We dedicate this work to Lina.

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FOREWORD

Women and girls across the globe are disadvantaged by discriminatory regulation, policy, practices, behaviours and attitudes. Although many countries have made progress in some areas for women at work and beyond, gender equality has not been achieved in any nation, with undertakings to eliminate inequalities being only partially pursued.

In 2010, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council established a working group on the issue of discrimination, in law and practice, against women. Renewed in 2019, this mandate was renamed as the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls (UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2022). That year, the Working Group consulted extensively with national experts around the world on key issues and challenges for working women and their communities. In the Asia Pacific region, the Expert Group Meeting, which was held at the University of Sydney, involved representatives from trade unions, civil

society organisations, employer organisations, universities and elsewhere. I would like to thank Marian Baird, Rae Cooper and the team at the Women and Work Research Group for their collaboration in organising this Expert Group Meeting.

This book extends the Working Group's (2020) global thematic report to the UN Human Rights Council, which focused on four themes — demography, globalisation, technological development and sustainability — with deeper analyses of working women in 10 countries in Asia Pacific, as well as a cross-country comparison. It confirms the report's observation that working women's challenges are substantial and require coordinated responses while nuancing our understanding of how the four thematic areas intersect with the lives of working women in different national contexts.

Drawing on a wide range of quantitative and qualitative evidence, *Women and Work in Asia and the Pacific* also provides a much-needed examination of working women's challenges and opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic and with an eye to the future. The intensification of already-diverse work arrangements, labour forces and contextual dynamics in the region underscores the need for such analysis of the challenges and opportunities faced by working women to inform seamless, multilateral, multilevel and context-sensitive initiatives that will significantly ameliorate gender equality and inclusion.

Elizabeth Broderick AO

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1. Working women in Aotearoa New Zealand

Jane Parker and Noelle Donnelly

Aotearoa New Zealand is a small developed economy in the South Pacific. Since its formal founding with Te Titiri o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) between the British Crown and Māori rangatira (New Zealand's indigenous chiefs), the nation has developed into one of the more ethnically and culturally diverse populations and workforces in the world. In this chapter, key dimensions of the New Zealand context are examined, followed by an analysis of four major themes — demographic trends, technological phenomena, globalisation and sustainability — in relation to the situation and experience of working women. This discussion focuses on working women in Aotearoa prior to and during the Covid-19 pandemic, and with an eye to the future. It concludes with an assessment of the implications of current macro-policies and initiatives for women in the workplace and outlines potential multilateral responses to key challenges for working women.

Aotearoa New Zealand has a population of 5 million and a total land mass of 268,021 square kilometres. It was first settled by Polynesians around 800 years ago and a distinctively Māori culture ensued. The signing of Te Titiri o Waitangi in 1840 declared British sovereignty over the islands. New Zealand gained full statutory independence in 1947, with the British monarch remaining as its head of state. The majority of the population are of European descent. Indigenous Māori form the

largest minority, followed by Asians and Pacific Peoples (StatsNZ, 2020b).

Major economic changes occurred from the mid-1980s, transforming the country from a protectionist to a liberalised free-trade economy. Formerly an agrarian economy, New Zealand's service sector subsequently dominated, followed by the industrial sector, agriculture and international tourism, and expanding New Zealand's network of free-trade agreements remains a top foreign policy priority (Central Intelligence Agency, 2021). Neoliberal thinking has informed changes to the country's labour relations from the late 1980s. The passage of the Employment Contracts Act 1991, which made union membership voluntary, allowed anyone to bargain on behalf of workers, and shifted the locus of regulation to the direct relationship between employees and their employers (Deeks et al., 1994; New Zealand Parliament, 1996). This precipitated a rapid fall in union membership. The country's current cornerstone employment law, the Employment Relations Act 2000, subsequently aims to recalibrate employment relations to strengthen workers' positions and ensure a positive employment relationship by incorporating good faith in every aspect of the employment environment.

New Zealand's comparatively high labour force participation (LFP) rate (68.8 per cent) and low unemployment rate (3.4 per cent) by September 2021 (StatsNZ, 2021b) reflect a comparatively robust job market. Women's rising participation in employment has driven New Zealand's recent strong labour force growth (Hyslop et al., 2019). Today, women form half of New Zealand's population (50.4 per cent) and almost half of its labour force (47.2 per cent), representing their highest employment rate since records began over three decades ago (StatsNZ, 2021b) (see Table 1.1).

While women are joining the labour force at a higher rate than men, they are also staying longer in employment. From 2000–20, women's LFP grew by 13.5 per cent to 65.2 per cent, compared with a 2.4 per cent growth in men's participation rate to 70.6 per cent; and the percentage of employed women aged 65 and over rose from 4.5 per cent to 19.6 per cent, while the percentage of employed men aged 65 and over increased from 11.8 to 30.5 per cent (StatsNZ, 2021b).

Table 1.1: Labour force, unemployment and under-utilisation rates by gender in New Zealand, 2021

	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Labour force	47.2	52.8	100
Employment rate	62.8	72.6	67.6
Labour force participation rate	65.6	75.5	70.5
Unemployment rate	4.3	3.8	4.0
Under-utilisation rate	13.0	8.3	10.5
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) rate (15–24 years)	12.7	9.1	10.8

Source: StatsNZ (2021b)

Furthermore, women in Aotearoa New Zealand have long been more likely than men to be employed in part-time work, with a significant proportion seeking longer hours of work. In keeping with international trends, gender gaps, including that for labour utilisation, have been exacerbated under pandemic conditions and have become comparatively worse for women who are already facing inequities (Ministry for Women (MfW), 2021) and less secure work.¹ New Zealand's female under-utilisation rate rose from 13 per cent in the June 2019 quarter to 14.9 per cent a year later (an increase of 29,000), while their unemployment rate rose to 4.4 per cent (an increase of 1000). Corresponding statistics for men showed more modest change (StatsNZ, 2020a).

By September 2020, the overall labour under-utilisation rate was 13.2 per cent, with the rate for women reaching 16.2 per cent. For women, this came almost equally from under-employment and unemployment, while

¹ A significant proportion of part-time workers are parents of dependent children, and some are sole parents; in both cases, most are women. Furthermore, many women were likely to be working part-time for involuntary reasons, with one in six wanting more working hours.

a greater proportion for men came from under-employment. The number of employed men working part-time rose from 10.7 per cent to 11.9 per cent, compared with a smaller increase from an already-high level for women (from 29.1 per cent to 30 per cent) (StatsNZ, 2020a). However, part-time jobs normally cannot provide for a decent living, or for adequate retirement funds, often leading to poverty in old age (e.g. Dale & St John, 2020; also Notz, 1999).

Furthermore, the pandemic has severely impacted on New Zealand's service sectors, with a disproportionate toll on jobs in sectors such as retail, hospitality and tourism, where many women work.² In the first six months of the pandemic, 70 per cent of those who lost their jobs (31,000) were women (StatsNZ, 2020a) and women's greater exposure to job loss during this time has been predicted to exacerbate the gender gap in the future (La Croce, 2020; MfW, 2020). Women were also more likely than men to lose their jobs than have their hours reduced during the outbreak, and experienced significant difficulty in securing new employment. Within New Zealand's tourism industry, for instance, where the number of women outnumber men, women's employment dropped by 8.4 per cent — 20.5 per cent of whom were Māori women (StatsNZ, 2020c).

Post-lockdown, the hospitality sector somewhat bounced back, but 'social distancing early on meant it was costly to maintain a full staff rotation', with some firms making their smaller workforces permanent (Vergara, 2020). Furthermore, the Labour government's pandemic wage subsidy may have helped many businesses to survive and retain their workforces, but for others it may have merely delayed the inevitable, with women and migrants over-represented among those who later lost their jobs.

Women also predominate in the healthcare sector and, while Covid-19 cases were initially relatively small in New Zealand compared with many nations, lockdowns have disproportionately impacted on the employment

2 In the past, women in New Zealand, especially non-Pākehā women, have been more severely affected by crises and labour market shocks than have men (MfW, 2020).

of workers in care sectors. However, at the time of writing, recovery in women's employment had begun, with their unemployment rate dropping to 3.4 per cent by the September 2021 quarter, converging on the marginally lower male unemployment rate of 3.3 per cent (StatsNZ, 2021d).

New Zealand's labour market is highly gender-segregated. Women are clustered in traditionally female-dominated industries, many of which are lower paid and/or have a high incidence of part-time work (MfW, 2019). Industries with high proportions of women employees include healthcare and social assistance (83.1 per cent) and education and training (72.2 per cent), while those with a low proportion are mining (8.7 per cent) and construction (13.5 per cent) (StatsNZ, 2020f). Furthermore, women not only work in a narrower range of occupations than men do, but also at lower organisational and pay levels, while men are more likely to occupy higher-paid managerial and leadership positions (see Table 1.2).

Women's LFP growth has been concentrated in a small number of traditionally female-occupied jobs, part-time jobs and the lowest-paid sectors, including caregiving, hospitality, cleaning, retail and the food-service sectors, as well as in education and training, where there is a high prevalence of fixed-term and casual employment with generally inferior entitlements (e.g. see Council of Trade Unions [(CTU), 2013). Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, there was also a small but notable increase (17,300) in the number of self-employed women in the year to March 2021, including female entrepreneurs, independent contractors and gig workers. The growth in women-led new businesses appears to reflect the feminised nature of pandemic-triggered redundancies (StatsNZ, 2021c).

The employment experiences of women are also far from uniform. For example, Māori and Pacific women, particularly those aged 15–24, are more likely not to be in employment, education or training; have children at a younger age; receive state benefits; and are both under-employed in general but over-employed as multiple job holders (MfW, 2019). While the country's gender pay gap (GPG) was at a historical low of 9.1 per cent in 2021 (StatsNZ, 2021a), the ethnic pay gaps (EPGs) for Māori, Pacific, Asian

Table 1.2: Employment distribution by occupational category and gender in New Zealand, 2020

Occupation	Male (%)	Female (%)
Managers	15.3	12.0
Professionals	17.1	24.0
Technicians and associate professionals	9.9	15.1
Clerical support workers	4.7	17.4
Service and sales workers	11.5	21.9
Craft and related	16.3	0.9
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	12.1	2.1
Elementary occupations*	13.0	6.9

*Elementary occupations are mostly routine tasks, often involving the use of simple hand-held tools and, in some cases, requiring a degree of physical effort (e.g. refuse workers, cleaners, labourers, street and related sales and services workers). Source: ILO (2020)

and new immigrant women were also significantly higher than for Pākehā (New Zealand European), even within female-dominated sectors. Even in New Zealand's feminised and highly unionised public sector, where recent government policy and regulation has encouraged an equity drive, women in ethnic minority groupings still experience greater pay gaps than Pākehā women do (Parker, Donnelly et al., in press). Recent employment growth in industries characterised by high levels of part-time work and low pay levels will do little to improve this situation.

Parenthood also negatively impacts on women's pay in Aotearoa, with research showing that the GPG for parents (at 17 per cent) is significantly higher than for non-parents (5 per cent). This indicates a 'motherhood penalty', and this is higher for part-time workers (MfW, 2016). Contributing to this widening GPG is the division between unpaid care and other

unpaid work and paid work, with women shouldering responsibility for the former, spending on average twice the time on care work than men (MfW, 2019). This situation is more pronounced for Māori women, who report even higher engagement in unpaid care and community work (StatsNZ, 2020d). The pandemic has, however, disproportionately and negatively impacted on employment in the feminised childcare sector, impacting in turn on working mothers of young children. Insufficient childcare has affected their ability to access work and remain employed, their employment status, working hours, wages and productivity, as they have had to assume an even greater share of unpaid care, household and community responsibilities (Grant Thornton, 2018; Parker, Young-Hauser et al., 2022; Weatherall et al., 2017).

EMPLOYMENT REGULATION

Following economic deregulation in the mid-1980s, New Zealand's labour market was liberalised amid a 'fast track' legislative process (Palmer, 1980). The Employment Contracts Act 1991 replaced a centralised system of bargaining, conciliation and arbitration with enterprise-level and individual contract making. As a result, union membership halved, and union density dropped to 17.1 per cent by 1999 (Ryall & Blumenfeld, 2016).

With a change in government, the Employment Relations Act 2000 superseded the 1991 Act. It was designed to recalibrate the balance of power between employers and workers by emphasising both collective and individual 'good faith' bargaining. Analyses concur that this Act has stemmed rather than reversed union decline (e.g. Carroll, 2020a; Harbridge et al., 2003). Today, most workers are not unionised — in 2020, just 16.4 per cent of the employed labour force in Aotearoa were union members (New Zealand Companies Office, 2022). And while union members are more likely to be women (61.5 per cent in 2020) (New Zealand Companies Office, 2022), and density is higher and more feminised in the public sector (Parker & Donnelly, 2020), many women engage in work where unionisation is low.

Since the 1960s, the New Zealand government has enacted statutes and

policies to advance gender equity at work (Parker & Donnelly, 2020). Most recently, the introduction of the Equal Pay Amendment Act 2020 provides a process to address historical and systemic gender pay inequity within a 'good faith' bargaining framework. It also allows bargaining outcomes to be passed on to non-union members, and encompasses roles not previously covered by pay equity claims, thus widening the promise for further gender equality progress. The government introduced equity initiatives to eliminate GPGs in the public sector by addressing equal pay, flexible work by default, non-discriminatory remuneration systems and gender-balanced leadership (Public Service Commission [PSC], 2020). By seeking to remove barriers to gender equality, the government aims to create a catalyst for change across the private sector. The drop in the public-sector GPG to a historical low of 8.6 per cent in 2021 (Thomson, 2021) has been widely attributed to these initiatives, alongside pay equity settlements within female-dominated sectors, campaigning by unions and women's collectives and wider labour market initiatives (Parker & Donnelly, 2020). As noted earlier, however, the EPGs of Māori, Pacific and Asian working women have remained stubbornly higher than for Pākehā women.

More broadly, the government introduced the Public Service Act 2020 to facilitate a cultural shift that builds a unified public service to 'quickly mobilise across the sector to tackle specific issues and deliver better outcomes for New Zealanders' (Public Service Act 2020). This statute has the scope to critique existing (gender) equity notions, initiatives and measurements but research has yet to expose its impact or that of the Covid-19 pandemic on working women in structural terms (Parker, Young-Hauser et al., 2022).

In 2021, the MfW began work to develop a national Women's Employment Action Plan to address structural impediments to gender equality, ensuring that women are protected from labour market shocks such as Covid-19. The first of its kind, this national programme will focus on groups of women who have been further marginalised as a result of the pandemic and will broaden its focus to housing, health, education, social development and violence prevention (MfW, 2021).

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following sections align with the four key themes identified in the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls' (2020) global thematic report (see Introduction).

Globalisation

Much discussion of globalisation in Aotearoa has been linked to economic and labour market policy changes of the last decades of the twentieth century, although 'some forms of global interaction have reached unprecedented heights in recent years' (NZ Institute of Economic Research [NZIER], 2017). As a small economy, New Zealand sought to overcome the limitations of its size by opening up the economy in the 1980s and building international trade connections and relationships. The removal of tariffs, import licences and restrictive quotas in the 1980s signalled its intention to access larger markets, primarily through bilateral and multilateral agreements (Treasury, 2017).

New Zealand was less successful in attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), ranking 71st globally on the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) FDI attractiveness index (UNCTAD, 2012). More recently, New Zealand has focused on strengthening international connections through trade, tourism and education (areas that have recently seen contraction due to border restrictions).

Globalisation has impacted on New Zealand in uneven, historically specific and gendered ways. Deregulation and increased flexibilisation of the labour market, alongside policy and social changes, are marked outcomes of the impact of globalisation, which can be linked to steady growth in women's LFP in recent decades. Labour market flexibility, while encouraging flexible working (e.g. just prior to Covid-19, over 50 per cent of employees had flexible work hours, and one-third worked from home — StatsNZ, 2019b), can also lead to a greater amount of insecure work (non-permanent employment, including casual, fixed-term, seasonal, contract and labour hire work). Women and migrants predominate in

part-time, casual and low-paid work in industries where new firms can easily enter, and in occupations that are low-skilled or use skills that have been historically undervalued.

Furthermore, globalisation has fuelled interest in flexible work. In 2013, women formed almost seven in every 10 people in fixed-term jobs and six in 10 casual workers, while men constituted six of every 10 workers in temp agency and seasonal work (Ongley et al., 2013). By the June 2019 quarter, those with the highest rates of multiple job holding were women (8.4 per cent) and parents and caregivers of dependent children (8.3 per cent). Combining all job incomes, men with multiple jobs earned a median total weekly income of NZ\$1429, while for women, the figure was much lower at NZ\$986 (StatsNZ, 2019a). During the time of Covid-19, part-time and casual workers (i.e. predominantly women) have been identified as those most likely to lose their jobs first, as businesses seek to stay viable in a recessionary climate (Carroll, 2020b).

Globalisation has also specifically and often negatively affected worker groups along ethnic and other dimensions (Harawira, 1999). The expansion of multinational corporations in the services sector has essentially defined female employment in New Zealand, with insecure work affecting Māori and Pacific workers, low-paid women, children, young people, migrants and people living with disability. By 2006, more than four in five New Zealand jobs were located in the services sector, and by 2011, 86.1 per cent of the female labour force worked in service-sector employment (Parker & Arrowsmith, 2012). Furthermore, new forms of insecure work have appeared, including zero-hour contracts, although New Zealand sought to stem their occurrence via legislation in 2016.

Focusing on migrants as a dimension of global labour flows, New Zealand's overseas-born population has continued to increase in recent decades, from 19.5 per cent in 2001 (NZIER, 2017) to 27.4 per cent by 2018 (Manch, 2019). While net migration since March 2020 has been a 'trickle' due to pandemic-related border and travel restrictions (StatsNZ, 2020e), in recent years, migrant women who have been in New Zealand for fewer

than five years, and migrant men who have been here for fewer than 10 years were over-represented among low paid (National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women, 2010) and personal care jobs.³ Research indicates that it takes 15 years for migrants' employment rates to become close to those for comparable New Zealand-born citizens, with the income difference halving for men and disappearing for women (Carey, 2019).

Similar patterns were also found for employed immigrants in terms of occupational rank and wage levels (Stillman & Maré, 2009). However, Stillman (2011) points to immigrant status, rather than ethnicity, as driving lower employment rates of Asian and Pacific immigrants, as a result of weaker job networks or higher reservation wages, possibly due to different family obligations, lack of access to informal childcare, or labour market discrimination. Recent reports suggest increasing exploitation of some temporary migrant workers during Covid-19, resulting in the government investing NZ\$50 million over the next four years to address this challenge (Employment New Zealand, 2020).

Global transformation processes can challenge the rate of progress of equity interventions adopted by government and private companies to increase organisational competitiveness and lower operating costs. Furthermore, with the pandemic, analysts note that Aotearoa faces new challenges in balancing 'health protection and economic openness', cautioning that 'the burden of the Covid-19 disruption, the economic costs of slow growth and the fiscal costs of government response programmes will fall unevenly' across the population (Bollard, 2020, p. 19).

Restructuring and reduced employment opportunities during and the following Covid-19 pandemic may exacerbate an informal sector in New Zealand in which women predominate in vulnerable jobs. And while world trade and capital flows have slowed as a result of the pandemic, flows of cultural texts, ideas and information continue to accelerate (e.g.

3 A proportion of these are qualified nurses or other professionals who are working at a lower level pending their New Zealand registration (Badkar et al., 2008).

NZIER, 2017). For this small, export-dependent nation, the implications of economic and cultural integration remain important, including for underprivileged groups of working women.

Demography

New Zealand's demography reflects its historically high levels of immigration. Following the Second World War, the New Zealand government introduced assisted immigration schemes to encourage the migration of non-British European women and their families, and those displaced by the war. Europe remained the main source of migration until the mid-1960s, when migration from the Pacific began in earnest, with many attracted by employment opportunities. With greater migration in the 1970s and 1980s, the government shifted the focus of immigration policy from race to skills, capital investment and family reunification criteria, resulting in greater diversification of immigration, particularly from China, Hong Kong, India, Japan and Sri Lanka. Immigrants from the Philippines tripled between 1991 and 2006, a high percentage of whom were women marrying New Zealand men (Phillips, 2015).

Migration continues to feed New Zealand's population growth. Prior to pandemic restrictions on border entry, two-thirds of recent population growth — one of the highest in the OECD — came from inward migration. Having such a large migrant population has brought a wide range of ethnicities to Aotearoa. Today, the population is primarily of European descent (70 per cent), with indigenous Māori the largest minority at 16.5 per cent, followed by Asian (15.3 per cent) and Pacific Peoples (9 per cent) (StatsNZ, 2020b). More than a quarter of the New Zealand population was born overseas.

New Zealand is also undergoing an internal 'demographic transformation', involving 'its greatest change since the post-war baby boom' (Spoonley, 2021). Of particular concern are New Zealand's declining birth and death rates. Fertility rates have dropped to 1.6, well below the replacement rate of 2.1 (from a peak of 4.3 in 1961), while life expectancy

rates have risen, especially for women (to 83.5 years and to 80 years for men based on 2017–19 death rates). Furthermore, those aged 65 and over outnumber those aged under 15 years, with some forecasts noting that one in four New Zealanders will soon be aged 65 and over.

How people age in Aotearoa differs across ethnicities. The average life expectancy is lower for Māori and Pasifika (in 2013, it was 77.1 years for Māori women and 78.7 years for Pacific women, as compared with a national average of 81.4 years). Pākehā women marry later in life (29.2 years in 2018), have children at a later stage in life (with the highest birth rates among those aged 30–34 years) and live longer than men. By contrast, Māori women marry relatively young, have higher fertility rates, lower life expectancy and higher rates of premature mortality (StatsNZ, 2019c). In addition, health statistics show that Māori women experience poor health and wellbeing, compared with other ethnicities.

With women in New Zealand living longer on average than men, earning less than their male counterparts and spending more time on caring duties, it is estimated that they will enter their retirement with greater care and financial needs and significant gender pension gaps. With the impact of the pandemic more pronounced for women, it is also feared that lower earning power, employment opportunities and higher end-of-life care costs may result in significant ‘older female poverty’, with calls for greater attention to the gendered perspective of pension policy design (Dale & St John, 2020). Indeed, the Financial Services Council of New Zealand (2018) recently observed that ‘women in Aotearoa are less financially well off in retirement, are paid less overall and aren’t as financially literate as men’; they are also ‘more often the ones juggling money to keep a household running, and shouldering the stress that comes with that’. Furthermore, research indicates that they are more likely to be the victims of financial abuse in relationships (e.g. Scott, 2020).

Aotearoa’s ageing population and falling birth rate will also significantly constrict New Zealand workforces in the future and increase pressure on future migration. As a country that has historically relied on international

migration for its population growth, the recent closure of borders due to Covid-19 has reversed longstanding migration trends. For the first time on record, in January 2021, the annual net migration of citizens was greater than that of non-citizens, raising concerns of future labour shortages (Yadav, 2021). Basic demographic data indicate that the majority of recent migrant-respondents are female on temporary visas, married and living with their families, and a review by Kanengoni et al. (2018) suggests that women migrants' wellbeing is more likely to be at risk, particularly in the context of Covid-19 (Belong Aotearoa, 2020).

Technology

Economic and labour market reforms in New Zealand in the 1980s and 1990s drove rapid shifts away from manufacturing towards service-sector work and higher-paid and -skilled occupations. However, a recent inquiry suggests that technological change, as measured by productivity growth, business dynamism and labour market change, is static or slowing but that '(e)ven if technological unemployment is highly unlikely, technology adoption can still cause frictional unemployment' (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2020, p. 31). Furthermore, most new jobs created in recent decades in information- and skill-intensive sectors (e.g. finance, professional and business services) occurred in Auckland, New Zealand's most populous urban area.

The Chartered Accountants of Australia and New Zealand and NZIER (2015) found that 46 per cent of workers faced a high risk of automation, ranging from 75 per cent of labouring jobs to 12 per cent of professional jobs, in which women and men are differently concentrated. A study by McKinsey (Madgavkar et al., 2019) indicates that the earlier automation technologies are adopted, the more jobs will be lost with higher resulting unemployment, while under their late-adoption scenario, net employment increases by 1 million. Employment growth would be concentrated in managerial, technical and associated professional, service and retail jobs, while there would be an overall reduction in administrative, trade and manual jobs.

It is notable that women are under-represented in growing areas of employment that require STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine) skills and knowledge. Furthermore, the Sustainable Business Council (2019) proffers that, if job losses affect lower-skilled workers, as well as occupations traditionally held by women, such as administration and support services, women could face disproportionately negative consequences. Thus, '(i)n the automation age, women face new challenges overlaid on long-established ones' (Madgavkar et al., 2019, p. vi).

These studies of technological change focus on job gains and losses rather than job modifications, and they predate the pandemic. And while technological job losses have been less widespread than in other sectors, women's under-representation in growing areas of employment involving STEMM re-emphasises why gender equality in this sector is more important than ever.

The impact of technological changes on how women and men work has been thrown into sharper relief during Covid-induced lockdowns and social distancing, which have accelerated a shift towards remote working and virtual businesses. As Aotearoa New Zealand workplaces transition in this way, employers have been forced to re-assess the functionality of their workplace practices and employment relations.

In a recent study of remote work practices during New Zealand's first national lockdown, O'Kane et al. (2020) found that, of the 83 per cent of participants who identified challenges with remote working, 35 per cent reported an inability to switch off from work, 33 per cent found collaboration and communication with co-workers more difficult, 16 per cent encountered distractions and 14 per cent cited challenges with childcare. However, remote working has also protected women's work, with 35 per cent reporting that they maintained their productivity and 38 per cent reporting being more productive while working at home.

Understanding the future nature of work is a long-standing core area of focus for the New Zealand government. In 2019, it commissioned a report to assess the impact of technological disruption on future employment and

established four work streams to approach the issue, including a tripartite forum to examine ‘just transitions’, lifelong learning, technology learning and workplace productivity (Iles, 2019). In response to calls to prioritise the introduction of policies to assist workers to adapt to future technological changes, as noted, the MfW implemented the development of a national Women’s Employment Action Plan in 2022 (MfW, 2021).

Widespread adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and related tech work upskilling and reskilling will take time to fully impact employment and business processes. The AI Forum of New Zealand (2018, p. 53) reports that ‘there is no obvious reason why existing labour market support policies would not be able to cope’, but there is potential for shock and radical change (e.g. Healy et al., 2017). Greater understanding of the likely impacts of technology across different sectors and labour market contexts (Halteh et al., 2018) is thus needed in order to strategically address gender inequalities that arise from structural adjustments.

Sustainability

Concerns with sustainability issues are embedded in New Zealand’s collective psyche. Just over half (51 per cent) of 500 New Zealand business leaders (particularly young leaders) indicate that business should put sustainability ahead of profit (BMW Group Ltd, 2021), while 86 per cent of New Zealanders surveyed in another study agreed that it was important for them to work for a company that is socially and environmentally responsible (Colmar Brunton, 2019).

To address the impacts of global forces, including Covid-19, climate change and the changing nature of work, in 2018 the New Zealand government established a ‘just transitions’ strategy and tripartite working group to move Aotearoa to a low carbon emission future. Alongside the working group, the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019 was introduced to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts. For its part, the CTU (2019, p. 1) observes that New Zealand’s transition to a climate-resilient, sustainable and low-emissions economy needs to

‘ensure that opportunities for decent work in sustainable industries are available for all working people — and that the transition does not repeat existing patterns of inequality’, and needs active involvement by Māori. Furthermore, as a signatory to the UN’s Sustainable Development agenda, New Zealand has agreed ‘to address root causes of inequality in order to make progress toward the eradication of poverty and the sustainable development of a more equitable and just global society’ (UN Women Aotearoa New Zealand, 2021).

While few analyses focus on sustainability in relation to working women, women’s historical dominance in care and support roles in health, education and public services, and their disproportionate share of unpaid work are critical to New Zealand’s wellbeing. While around 60 per cent of men’s work is paid, nearly 70 per cent of women’s work is unpaid (StatsNZ, 2011). Deloitte’s (2021) 2400 survey respondents confirm that women still perform more than their share of unpaid work at home, despite women needing equality in unpaid work in order to achieve equality in paid work (Elson, 2017). Furthermore, young women are playing an increasing role in whānau (family) care, and this can negatively affect their participation in society, mental wellbeing, academic achievement and engagement with paid work. Data also reveal that unpaid care work in Aotearoa (23 per cent of GDP) is comparatively high (OECD, 2019).

The government’s 2021 Wellbeing Budget allocations, together with support for vocational education and benefit increases, aim to enable New Zealand businesses ‘to benefit from new technologies and lift productivity and wages through innovation and support into employment those most affected by Covid-19, including women and young people’ (Thornton, 2021), though the CTU (2019) assesses that more efforts are needed to enable a just transition for all workers.

The eradication of forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and the worst forms of child labour has been a relatively recent concern in New Zealand, influenced by global transformation processes. While

most victims in Aotearoa, based on prosecutions, have been migrant men who were trafficked for labour exploitation, '(t)his is unlikely to reflect everyone who is trafficked or exploited as the hidden nature of these crimes means that vulnerable people are less likely or able to seek help or report their experience' (Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment [MBIE], 2021, p. 8). Indeed, submissions to the consultation process on *New Zealand's Plan of Action Against Forced Labour, People Trafficking and Slavery* emphasised the introduction of modern slavery legislation and strengthened responses to trafficking of women, children, Māori and Pacific Peoples, particularly around domestic trafficking for sexual exploitation (MBIE, 2021).

Limited research on child labour shows that child workers are typically found in family businesses in the primary, retail and hospitality sectors; form a significant part of the informal New Zealand labour market; and, accordingly, are not covered by protective employment legislation (Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand, 2003). A survey of young adults reflecting on their work experiences found that a lack of physical safety was particularly prevalent for females (Anderson & Naidu, 2010). Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand (2020), the Catholic Bishops' agency for justice, peace and development, highlighted the risk of child poverty becoming ingrained in New Zealand, with one in five (one in four Māori and nearly one in three Pacific) children living in households facing material hardship, with implications for the unpaid care roles and paid work opportunities for women and girls in particular.

Aotearoa is relatively advanced in regulation that can be applied to promote and enforce non-discrimination on the basis of sex. Its government has sought to address gender inequalities that exist around pay equity, the GPG, family and sexual violence, and economic outcomes for women, particularly Māori and Pacific (New Zealand Government, 2019), though McGregor et al. (2015, p. 85) noted that New Zealand's 'pronounced self-regard that it is a leader in advancing women's progress pegged to historical firsts . . . is partially responsible for the current complacency' (e.g. see

Parker & Donnelly, 2020). For instance, women of Māori, Pacific and Asian ethnicities remain under-represented in the top management tiers and over-represented in lower-paid occupations in workplaces, particularly in the private sector. Such under-representation and lack of empowerment, in turn, impacts on the rate of progress towards and sustenance of gender equity within the work setting and beyond.

Progress has been slow on recognising and valuing unpaid care and domestic work through the promotion of shared household and family responsibilities, public services provision, infrastructure and social protection policies. However, in the government's 2021 Wellbeing Budget, a proposed social unemployment insurance scheme that provides workers with around 80 per cent of their income for a period if they lose their job 'could have transformational results for both the future of work and . . . efforts on delivering just transitions' (CTU, 2021, p. 31). For working women — the rump of those who have lost jobs or been under-employed during the pandemic — such a scheme will be a vital source of sustainability, although it will take some time to implement (Robson, 2021).

Another concern for sustainable development concerns New Zealand's comparatively high incidence of gender-based violence (including in workplaces), with reports of one in three New Zealand women experiencing physical and/or intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lives, and one in two Māori women experiencing IPV (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011). A focus of government action, the interim UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (2020) report highlights an array of responses, including legislation such as New Zealand's Family Violence Act 2018 and Domestic Violence — Victims' Protection Act 2018, while other responses in relation to the trafficking of women are being formulated. However, while the latter statute has been effective since 1 April 2019 and provides up to 10 days' additional paid leave and short-term flexible work arrangements, just 10 per cent of collective employment agreements concluded by 1 June 2019 included a domestic violence leave clause (Proctor-Thomson et al., 2021).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

At first sight, Aotearoa New Zealand appears to have made significant inroads into addressing gender inequity at work. Recent pay reforms and the introduction of a series of gender equity initiatives have resulted in notable reductions in the GPG and gender leadership gaps (PSC, 2021). However, closer examination reveals that, not only are such benefits largely confined to the public service, but Māori, Pacific, Asian, migrant and disabled women, in particular, continue to experience significant economic disadvantages and structural barriers to equitable and secure employment. As this chapter highlights, women workers in New Zealand are more likely to be under-utilised, shoulder the burden of unpaid care work and earn less than their male counterparts, resulting in lower long-term earnings, pension gaps and potentially higher levels of poverty among older women (e.g. Dale & St John, 2020).

Furthermore, they are more likely than men to be lower skilled, work non-standard hours and be involved in insecure and ‘dead-end’ employment, making them more susceptible to job losses and economic shocks. The global pandemic has also had a gendered effect and exacerbated pre-existing gender inequalities, meaning the New Zealand government, social partners and other stakeholders face significant challenges in ensuring women’s employment recovery across all industries.

Government commitments seek to redress the disproportionate economic and social impacts of the pandemic on women through a national gender-based employment action plan, but it remains to be seen how the specific needs of marginalised women will be addressed. Linked to demographic shifts, greater understanding of the relationship between women’s paid and unpaid work; access to flexible work and funded childcare; providing fair pay and pay transparency; education and training in STEMM; and clearer pathways into and through traditionally male-dominated industries appears to be key, particularly in the mutating context of Covid-19. Current undertakings to counteract the impacts of the pandemic for women provide an important juncture for New Zealand’s

government to shift direction away from low-paid, low-skilled work towards the provision of more secure, skilled and decent work.

This is increasingly important in a context of lower global trade levels, and cautions against ‘low road’ flexibilisation of labour markets amid post-pandemic economic recovery. The introduction of a fair pay agreements (FPA) system to drive productivity via more sector- and occupation-level collective bargaining in New Zealand (FPA Working Group, 2018) may lead to the negotiation of more equitable pay outcomes, while the wider introduction of a living wage could have a positive impact on the working and wider lives of Māori, Pacific, migrant and other women in low-paid work (e.g. Parker, Arrowsmith et al., 2022).

Emphasising sustainability challenges, while recent legislative reforms have also gone some way to supporting women who have been subjected to domestic violence and have increased the level of dialogue around gender-based violence in general, more reforms are urgently required to tackle high levels of physical and emotional violence for women in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly Māori women who experience higher incidence levels. The emulation of successes in New Zealand’s public service in its private sector, a greater level and coalition of multi-party and -level responses involving the state, employers, workers, unions and community groups need to be strategically and practically connected to the linked challenges presented by globalisation, technological advancements, demographic change and sustainability.