

Occupational segregation & non-traditional roles

Employment in non-traditional roles is an issue for both genders, but more specifically for women who are segregated into lower paid jobs. A female-dominated occupational group is one where 70% or more of the staff are female.⁸⁵ Common examples are clerical work, nursing and education support work.

A male-dominated occupational group is one where 60%⁸⁶ or more of staff are male. There are many male-dominated occupational groups, including prison officers, construction workers and police officers. Examples of occupational segregation in New Zealand follows.

New Zealand Men

One area where men have low representation is in early childhood education (ECE). In 2010, there were 19,901 early childhood teachers in New Zealand, only 349 (1.75%) of whom were men.

There has been a big shift in society toward men playing a greater role in the lives of young children as fathers and male caregivers. But men continue to be significantly under-represented in early childhood education.

The near invisibility of men results from systemic occupational segregation and traditional role stereotyping, fears of child abuse claims, the absence of affirmative action to advertise for and recruit men into early childhood education training and pay rates.

Overseas experience shows that men do not apply to become ECE teachers, because they assume the jobs are for women. What is needed to improve men's participation rates is to create male-friendly environments and actively recruit men.

Similar to ECE, nursing is another non traditional role where men are the minority. Only 7.76% of New Zealand nurses are male. Men are deterred from the nursing profession for similar reasons that they are deterred from ECE including; believing others would see them as unmanly, having limited career options and being poorly paid. Concerted effort is required to recruit more men in nursing and to break gendered stereotypes.

New Zealand Women

The Modern Apprenticeship Scheme aims to increase the number of young people in industry training. The traditional under-representation of women in non-traditional work represents a significant opportunity for improved female participation and increased diversity in the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme. However it has failed to deliver gender equality to date.

"Give Girls a Go" published in 2006 raised concerns about women's low participation in modern apprenticeships noting there was considerable occupational segregation.

⁸⁵ <http://www.neon.org.nz/payequitymonitoringtool/>

⁸⁶ Ibid

In 2010, there were 11,926 modern apprentices⁸⁷. Female participants accounted for 12.4% but this is almost entirely due to the inclusion of hairdressing in the modern apprenticeship scheme. Without hairdressing the women's participation rate drops to 8.4%.

The three largest industry sectors (over 1000 apprentices) in better paid occupations, have very low rates of young women. The building and construction industry has 0.3% female apprentices, the engineering sector has 1.2% female apprentices and motor engineering has 2.5% female participation.

A March 2011 report by the Electricity Supply Industry Training Organisation (ESITO) shows "there are significant barriers to recruitment and the ongoing retention of women in trade training in the industry due to strong gender stereotyping of women" the report says.⁸⁸

Some male dominated sectors are making attempts to encourage women's participation. In June 2010, only 3.2% of New Zealand's career firefighter workforce were women. The New Zealand Fire Service set a goal of 5.5% of operational firefighters being female by 2012. In 2010 the service made a concerted effort to attract more female recruits. Its recruitment strategy included targeting all advertising to attracting minority groups including women and contacting existing employees to refer people who represented minority groups.

The establishment of a women's firefighting network in 2001 has been instrumental in helping to attract women to the service. The network provides a means for fire service women to network, discuss and resolve issues faced on the job and also provides an area for any women who are considering employment within the New Zealand Fire Service in both operational and non-operational roles.

The New Zealand Police have also made progress to increase women in its ranks. In 2010 they introduced a positive action programme to improve female representation. A 30% gender equity target was set for training, recruitment and management representation including at executive management level. There are currently 1525 (17.3%) sworn women officers in frontline Police. The Women in Policing Network has helped raise the profile of women in the Police, and has assisted in identifying issues faced by women and in developing and implementing solutions to those issues.

National Conversation about Work

Career choices in New Zealand are still limited by gender stereotyping. However, the Commission met a number of people as part of the National Conversation about Work who challenged cultural norms and made non-traditional choices.

The Commission heard about female air traffic controllers employed by the Airways Corporation, headquartered in Christchurch, and women sea captains at Whalewatch in Kaikoura. In both cases EEO strategies were used to encourage women into these roles. In the case of Airways, targeted advertising was used, and in the case of Whalewatch, educational opportunities were made available.

Equally, the Commission met with men in non-traditional jobs. A group of male kindergarten teachers in Christchurch has set up mutual support structures and actively promote early childhood careers as a job for other men. Male kindergarten teachers challenged the notion of gender roles in relation to young children. "Men need to be invited and made welcome in early childhood centres. They need to know how fantastic the job is", they said.

⁸⁷ <http://www.tec.govt.nz/Tertiary-Sector/Performance-information/Modern-Apprenticeships/Modern-Apprenticeships-2010/>

⁸⁸ *Improving responsiveness to Māori, Pacific People, Migrants and Women*. ESITO. March 2011

The Navy, which has the highest gender ratio of the three armed forces at 23%, tries to reflect society. “You can’t deny 50% of the population.” We heard of greater promotion of women in the Navy, but also the high number of women who become pregnant directly affects deployment into the field.

The highest ranking female officer in an army group spoken to at Waiouru said the career management structure was now identical for men and women. “When I was commissioned, women could only join certain branches. I wanted to be an infantry officer but I couldn’t as combat trades were not open to women then.”⁸⁹

The Commission’s New Zealand Census of Women’s Participation monitors the participation rates of women in a number of non-traditional areas including in agribusiness, accountancy, defence, the judiciary, in law, in the Police and as CEOs or Directors of Boards. The 2010 Census shows New Zealand has a way to go achieve increased numbers of women in non traditional areas of work.

Future action

- The Commission supports strong affirmative action to increase the proportion of women and men in non-traditional roles.



⁸⁹ www.neon.org.nz/newsarchive/afab