



EQUITY GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT SENIOR LEADERS

The Government Women's Network as the representative of women across public sector agencies is concerned about the potentially disproportional impacts of proposed cost savings and efficiencies on women across the public service. During the COVID-19 pandemic, women were disproportionately affected by job losses, particularly women of colour and ethnic minorities. In 2020, women made up 90% of pandemic-related redundancies. In 2021, many more women were working in "precarious" jobs. Wāhine Māori and Pacific women, already facing greater inequalities, have been even harder hit by job losses (Thorpe et al, 2023).

Some unintended impacts include:

- » Women may be disproportionately affected by the job cuts as they make up 62.2% of the public service workforce and are mostly placed in 'back-office' roles. This will likely impact more severely Māori, Pacific, and ethnic women as they are over-represented in lower-paid occupation groups.
- » The substantial progress the public sector has made in reducing the gender and ethnic pay gaps will be compromised as the gaps will widen as a result of job cuts.
- » Women who lose their jobs may be more likely to go into the private sector, where there is a larger gender pay gap (8.6%) and fewer women in leadership roles. According to Ministry for Women's data, in 2022, women held 28.5% of all director positions in the private sector and 26.4% of executive management positions. In comparison, there were 53.1% women in public sector boards and 55.9% in senior management roles. As a result of the pay cuts, women might have to accept lower-paying positions, which will increase the national gender pay gap, and will represent a massive loss of skills and experience to the public sector.
- » International literature shows that it takes more time for women actively seeking employment to find a job than it does for men, which puts greater economic pressure on women and their families (World Economic Forum, 2023).
- » In terms of long-term impacts, the gender gaps in retirement savings may widen even more as women will stop contributing to their retirement fund while they seek employment. Contributions will also be less if women find lower paid jobs. The average KiwiSaver balance as at 31 December 2022 for men was \$31,496, compared to women at \$25,144.

What can Leaders in the Public Service do?

Pre-decision making

- ✓ Check Manatū Wāhine | Ministry for Women's [Bringing Gender In](#) tool. Although the tool focuses on policy, it can be applied to help you run through your 'cost-saving options' to ensure that your decision supports a gender-equitable and inclusive future that considers women in your workforce.
- ✓ Include gender in your impact analysis about any proposed workforce changes. Look at the composition of their workforce data and use the [Bringing Gender In](#) tool to determine the potential gender impact of any decisions on your female workforce.
- ✓ Include your agencies women's networks (or other employee-led networks) as part of your 'in scope' groups for proposal documents, as well as union delegates.
- ✓ Consider solutions that involve working in different ways (e.g. four-day weeks instead of personnel cuts).
- ✓ Apply a Te Tiriti o Waitangi lens to your decision-making to ensure equitable outcomes for Māori public servants.

Post-decision making

- ✓ Measure the impact of your final decision. The [Bringing Gender In](#) tool has a section focused on monitoring and evaluation that can help you identify the impact of the cost saving and efficiencies exercise on your workforce.

