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Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Summary— Women's Health Strategy 2023

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Summary—Women's Health Strategy 2023

Purpose

The Women's Health Strategy sets the direction for improving the health and wellbeing of women over the next 10 years. It sets long-term priorities which will guide health system progress towards equity and healthy futures for women. Strategy development was led by Manatū Hauora (Ministry of Health).

Vision

Our vision is pae ora (healthy futures) for women.

- All women will live more years in good health, and wellbeing and be part of healthy families within healthy communities and environments.
- There will be equitable health outcomes between men and women, and between all groups of women. Equitable health outcomes for Māori women is a commitment under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

The Women's Health Strategy sets out the following goals to guide health entities (organisations) in their work to achieve the vision for women's health and wellbeing:

- The government and health system protect the indigenous rights of Māori women, who are able to

exercise tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake (make their own choices) over their health and wellbeing. Kaupapa Māori (by Māori for Māori) services are accessible to all Māori women who wish to access them.

- Women are leaders within the health system, including Māori women and diverse groups of women.
- The health system recognises and meets the needs and aspirations of all women and their whānau (families) who will experience equitable health outcomes.

What people told us

The Women's Health Strategy is informed by women and evidence.

A common theme we heard in our engagement was that gender bias is affecting women's health and wellbeing and their experiences in the health system. Women, the health sector, and organisations that support women, told us that women are often not heard or understood when they access health care, and there is a lack of knowledge and understanding and support in many areas of women's health.

We also heard that racism is a root cause of health inequity and a routine experience for Māori women. Addressing structural racism and meeting commitments

under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) must happen to improve the health outcomes of Māori women.

Other groups of women experience additional forms of bias. This includes disabled women and rainbow communities.

Priority areas

Four strategic priority areas set clear direction on the changes needed in the next 10 years to move towards ensuring our health system is fairer, stronger, more sustainable, and responsive to women.

Priority 1: A health system that works for women is an overarching priority which sets out our ambitions for system change.

Achieving a health system that works for all women requires us to address gender bias, racism, and other forms of discrimination and bias. This includes the design and operation of the health system and women's experience within it.

Priority 2: Improving health care for issues specific to women.

Women told us that stigma and gaps in service availability and information make it hard to access some forms of health care. This includes sexual and reproductive health care, pelvic and menstrual health, and gynaecological cancer screening and care.

Stigma, in the form of shaming, can be worse for some groups of women due to cultural beliefs or other biases. A survey of disabled women about their experiences of accessing sexual and reproductive health care identified the presence of shaming and a need for further research and practitioner training.

One of the areas for change identified in the Women's Health Strategy is the need for sexual and reproductive health information and services that are accessible and safe for disabled women.

Priority 3: Better outcomes for mothers, their whānau (families) and future generations.

We also heard that pregnant women and people are not always able to access pregnancy care that meets their needs. This includes lack of access to early and ongoing support and a lack of continuity between pregnancy and early years care. Inequities in access and perinatal outcomes have been shown to be worse for some groups of women, including Māori and Pacific women.

One of the areas for change identified in the Women's Health Strategy is that all women and pregnant people will experience high-quality, consistent care from a trusted care provider throughout their pregnancy and birthing and into the early years of their children's lives to support healthy and safe family environments. This includes

disabled women, transgender people and rainbow women, and women of all cultures and ethnicities.

To support this, programmes and services need to engage diverse groups, including Māori women, Pacific women, Asian and other ethnic women, rainbow communities, and disabled women to ensure that they provide culturally safe, accessible and gender affirming care.

Priority 4: Living well and ageing well.

Women also told us that they want to live longer in good health, in environments that support good health, and with better support for conditions and life stages that affect women's health. This requires more focus on prevention and early intervention to better manage conditions and life stages, like menopause. It also requires action on things that affect women's health, including racism, family violence and sexual violence, lack of housing and poverty. These are known as "determinants (factors) of health".

Too many women are living with illness, disability and long-term health conditions that could have been prevented or the impacts minimised.

There also needs to be more support from the health system for women with long-term mental and physical health conditions.

What needs to change includes better support for carers, including improving accessibility of respite care and partnering with other agencies to make it easier for carers to navigate on behalf of those they care for.

The full version of the strategy can be found here:

Women's Health Strategy | Ministry of Health NZ

(www.health.govt.nz/publication/womens-health-strategy)

End of Summary—Women's Health Strategy 2023