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TAURA



**DIVERSITY
WORKS^{NZ}**

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Editor's letter

Kia ora

Gustave Flaubert once famously wrote, "There is no truth. There is only perception." I'm not sure how much the French literary genius knew about creating cultures of inclusion, but it may be worth reflecting on his words when considering if the mahi we do is having an impact on the people we are doing it for.

In this issue of Taura magazine, our Head of Research and Development Pete Mercer looks at some interesting findings from the 2023 New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey that reveal that the perception of those involved in the implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) work is more favourable than those who are not responsible for it.

The best-case scenario, according to Pete, is that even where DEI outcomes are being achieved, there is an overall perception gap between the observations of practitioners and the wider observations of our kaimahi. The worse-case scenario is that we are not actually achieving some of the outcomes we are aiming for.

This article, beginning on page 18, will also update you on a new tool that will help those responsible for delivering DEI strategy and initiatives check if they are wearing rose-tinted glasses when it comes to the efficacy of their efforts.

I'd also like to thank Tania Domett from research company Cogo for sharing insights on how women need the workplace to change to reduce the barriers to their equitable participation and to mitigate the serious gender and ethnic pay gaps in Aotearoa. She tackles the unfair distribution of caregiving responsibilities and discusses how making men the target of equity and flexible working initiatives could be a good place to start if we want to move the dial.

In Whose side are you on? Allyship in the workplace, we explore how, increasingly, people want to use their personal privilege to support colleagues from a marginalised group which they don't belong to themselves. This piece covers how organisations can step into this space to facilitate allyship and the pitfalls we need to be aware of.

We also take a look at the work Belong Aotearoa is doing to help migrants and former refugees find meaningful employment. Hopefully after reading about it, you will feel inspired to get your organisation involved.

Enjoy the magazine and if you have an issue or viewpoint you would like to raise in the next issue, please get in touch with me at sblythen@diversityworks.nz

Ngā mihi



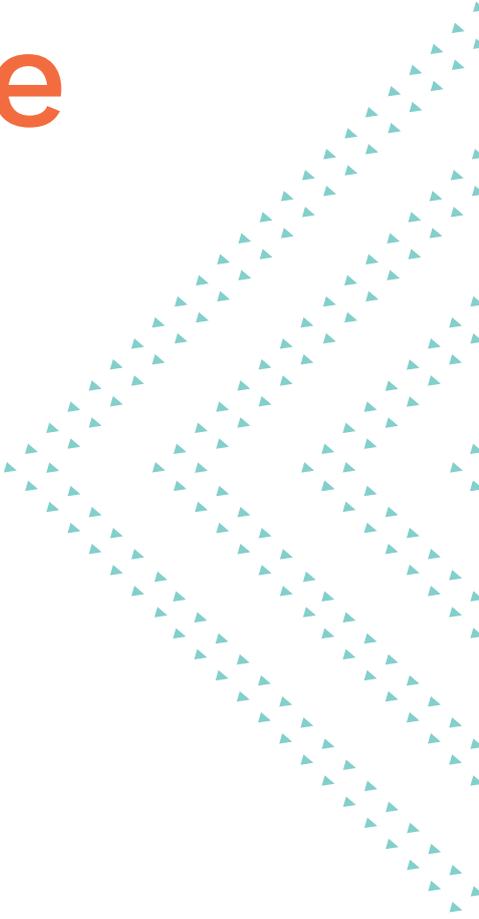
Sheryl Blythen
Head of Marketing and Communications





Whose side are you on? Allyship in the workplace

Increasingly, people are looking at how they can use their personal privilege to support colleagues from a marginalised group which they don't belong to themselves. We look at how organisations are stepping into this space to facilitate allyship and the pitfalls we need to be aware of.





As the global profile of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) practice has grown in recent years – including here in Aotearoa – so has understanding of allyship and how it can be used to foster inclusivity in the workplace, says Diversity Works New Zealand Head of Research Pete Mercer.

In the 2023 New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey, 71 per cent of respondents indicated that their organisation promotes or talks about allyship.

“For the first time this year, we introduced it as a topic of focus in the survey because we had anecdotally observed it as a term that was starting to be used widely by DEI practitioners. The results showed that it is a widespread topic of conversation across a whole range of industries and employers.”

However, while the term allyship might be bouncing off the walls of boardrooms and offices around New Zealand, it has not necessarily been established as a priority tool for driving inclusion.

When people were asked to rank DEI-related priorities in terms of importance in their organisations, allyship was at the bottom of the list, and those who have begun focusing on this space are taking a variety of approaches to delivering allyship practices.

Of the 963 survey respondents who answered the question about allyship activities undertaken,

40 per cent selected ‘mechanisms for different groups/networks to connect and support each other’, making it the most common practice. This was followed by ‘allyship talks and training sessions’ (39 per cent) and ‘bystander campaigns and initiatives’ (36 per cent).

Meanwhile, symbolic gestures, such as ‘having an ally email signature available to use’ (18 per cent) and ‘visible signals such as badges and lanyards provided’ (11 per cent) were at the bottom of the table, along with ‘formal ally programmes’ (18 per cent).

“The survey results indicate that allyship activities are more likely to revolve around those actions that increase the knowledge, awareness and capabilities of kaimahi rather than focusing on branding or communicating allyship programmes,” says Mercer.

These findings are encouraging, he says, because there is always a risk that allyship can be merely for show, rather than manifesting in behaviours that are going to meaningfully improve the experiences of those from non-dominant groups.

That said, formal programmes, branding and communication have an important place in doing this work effectively. “Without this, there is a danger that that any initiatives designed to promote allyship are not dispersed throughout the organisation, lack sustained support and may ultimately fizzle out.” →

Allyship at ASB

An allyship programme at ASB Bank is giving its people the tools to create safe spaces for their Rainbow colleagues and customers.

ASB prides itself on being an inclusive organisation. Its Unity network group, formed in 2014, works in support of the LGBTQQIPA+ community and has led initiatives within ASB to promote diversity, inclusion and belonging and celebrate the country's Rainbow community.

With a low number of staff identifying as being part of the Rainbow community, Unity has focused its efforts in the past year on promoting allyship within the bank. Allies can support and drive Rainbow inclusion and equality by increasing knowledge and creating understanding.

One of the gaps identified, says Unity Co-Chair and Personal Banker Alex Silvester, was that not many people knew what it meant to be an ally.

To combat this, the group launched a handbook, *Your Guide to Allyship*, during Pride month last year.

“This guide covers what it means to be an ally, why we care at ASB, conversation starters and more. It was distributed to staff and was also

converted into a learning module for ease of access,” says Alex.

Unity also created a Proud Ally Badge which staff can display on their intranet profile, providing a way to publicise who the allies are and encourage more allies within the organisation.

Another part of the initiative was to begin listing ASB branches as safe spaces with the Safe Spaces alliance. For a branch to be listed as a safe space, all people working at that branch must complete two Rainbow Tick modules.

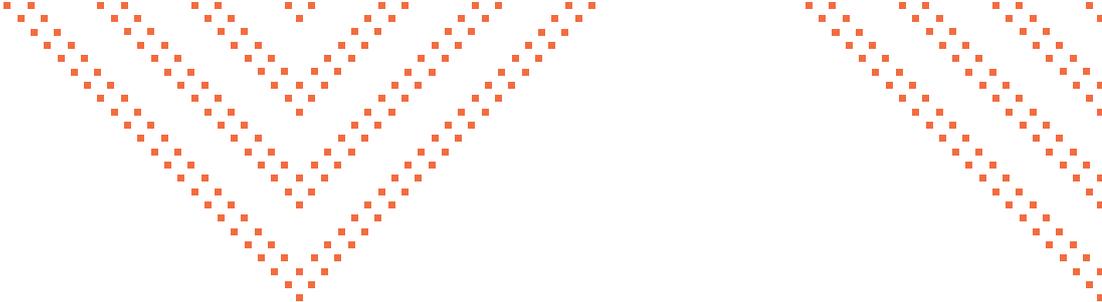
“We want our Rainbow customers to feel like they can approach any of our branch staff. Moreover, we wanted to ensure our branch staff understand the Rainbow community.”

Staff throughout the organisation can also get their own Rainbow lanyard by completing the Rainbow Tick modules and the internal learning modules about allyship.

ASB's employee satisfaction surveys track the number of staff who identify as allies – this figure increased by 14 per cent between November 2021 and March 2022, indicating efforts to build a culture of allyship are working, says Alex.



ASB was a finalist in the Inclusive Workplace category at the 2022 Diversity Awards NZ™



“Ultimately, if you observe problematic behaviour and don’t do anything about it, then you are permitting that behaviour.”

→ **What is the best approach to allyship?**

While the prevalence of conversations relating to allyship is now more apparent, what is less clear is what allyship should look like in practice. Indeed, says Mercer, DEI scholars and practitioners alike tend to agree that there is no singular way of being an effective ally.

“You can choose to see allyship as something that can be achieved in accordance with the skills, personal styles and professional positions of people.”

“For example, someone with highly adept listening abilities could be well suited to being a confidant who creates safe spaces for those from marginalised groups to share their experiences, while someone in a more senior position would be well placed to advocate for the inclusion, support and advancement of individuals from an under-represented group.”

Regardless of the form of allyship that your actions take, there are common behavioural themes to note in terms of what it means to be an ally, Mercer says. Therefore, one of the main roles for organisations should be to support their people to think about what principles are important to be an effective and authentic ally.

“For instance, can someone proclaim to be an ally for a particular group if they don’t translate their commitment into action or only practice allyship momentarily and abandon responsibility when the going gets tough?”

If the answer is no, then perhaps being action-oriented and behaving with some degree of moral consistency are important allyship principles

an organisation would promote as part of any programme or initiative created.

While there are many ways to “show up” as an ally, part of being an ally does mean being willing to disrupt actions, behaviours and practices that cause harm.

“Ultimately, if you observe problematic behaviour and don’t do anything about it, then you are permitting that behaviour – which in turn normalises it and sends the signal that it’s ok.”

At the same time, says Mercer, it’s important to recognise power and privilege as being factors that shape what someone can and cannot do.

“We don’t always have the skills, confidence or the positional power to intervene in the moment. But there is always something you can do, whether that’s checking in with the targeted individual or reporting an incident (formally or informally) to someone who is in a position to tackle unacceptable behaviours.”

The bottom line is that nobody should be negatively targeted at work for simply being who they are, and everyone has the right to work in an environment that preserves their dignity and uplifts their mana, Mercer says.

“By being mindful and empathetic allies, we all collectively have a role to play in ensuring that those who are marginalised or at greater risk of experiencing workplace harm enjoy that same right.” ■

Check out our new resources [Understanding Allyship and Allyship in Action](#) in the [Resources section](#) of the Diversity Works New Zealand website

It's not all about you

Diversity Works New Zealand Chief Executive Maretha Smit explores how allyship can go wrong despite best intentions.

When we set out to be an ally, it's important to remember that not all allyship gestures are received in the way they are intended. People from marginalised groups have often spent a lifetime dealing with discrimination and may be suspicious of people with privilege who show up as an ally.

This is a natural response but there is a risk it will result in those potential allies, who have less experience of receiving criticism or rejection and less practice in how to deal with it, becoming defensive, which is counter productive to doing this mahi effectively.

When we offer allyship, we need to recognise that this work is about amplifying the voices of marginalised communities, not centring ourselves.

Show up in a way that is valued by those in need of your support. If your style of allyship isn't appreciated in a particular instance, rather than becoming defensive or despondent in your efforts to be any ally, simply step out of the situation. Don't force yourself as an ally on anyone. Take the feedback or experience on board, and rather than feeling hard done by, reflect on how the situation could have been handled differently.

It's not about you, it's about the community you are trying to champion.

Other pitfalls to avoid

- Don't do this mahi unless you genuinely want to support marginalised communities. If you are doing this work to feel good or because it's the trendy thing to do, it will be obvious to those you are purporting to help that your actions are not authentic.
- Do your homework. If you don't understand the nuances and complexity of the lived experiences of the particular community you want to support, you are at risk of stereotyping members of that group, which will ultimately do more harm than good.
- Remember allyship is not just about words, it's about action – and those actions must be done consistently, not just when they are easy to do. While it is important to initiate conversations that draw attention to marginalised groups in the workforce, the only way to drive actual change for those communities is to do the hard mahi that is at the core of good diversity, equity and inclusion practice – that is changing the structures, policies and procedures that perpetuate inequity.





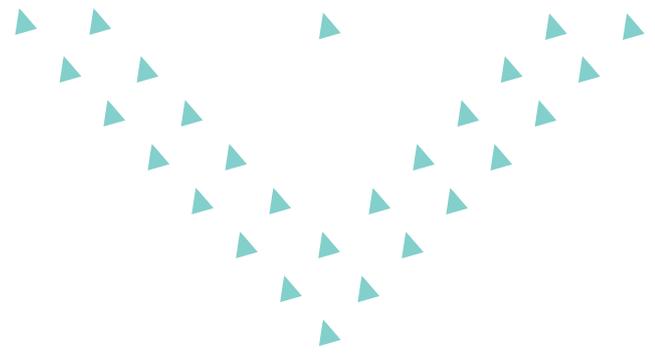
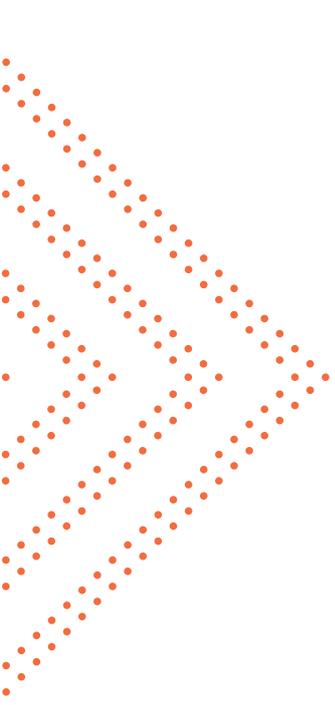
How women need the workplace to change

Tania Domett looks at the barriers to women's participation in the workforce and how transformative remedies that change the underlying framework causing inequities are key to better outcomes. Spoiler alert – men are a big part of the solution.



ARUP

ARUP



Cogo and Project Gender have delivered a number of research projects over the past couple of years that have – in one way or another - gathered data on what women need to be able to access paid work, and experience pay and employment equity.

These projects have included insights on how to get more women into the building, construction and infrastructure industries; what employers can do to improve mental health and wellbeing and reduce corporate burnout; DEI in large corporates, measuring demographic diversity and levels of inclusion across the workplace; and how single parents need the system to change to better support them and their children.

“Flexible working, school-hour shifts, and part-time work absolutely give some women better access to paid work, but they will not shift the dial on gender equity.”

We have heard from literally thousands of women, wāhine, trans, intersex and non-binary people across diverse communities, industries, work settings and income levels. We’ve heard from women who want to be in paid work, who want to access more hours of paid work, who want to get ahead at work and get promoted, and from women who want to experience more fairness and better wellbeing at work.

Those women reporting the most significant barriers to accessing paid work and getting promoted are, without exception, mothers and caregivers, and our research found that the following are the main barriers across the board.

When it comes to women wanting to be able to do any paid work at all or wanting to do more hours of paid work than they are currently doing, being able to access childcare that’s affordable, located nearby, and has session-times that line up with hours of work is critical.

Tying in with this, being able to work set scheduled hours or flexible hours that fit around children and caregiving is also important.

When it comes to women being able to advance their careers, again it is how work is scheduled and being able to access childcare that are key factors, but this time let’s add when meetings are scheduled.

For example, a woman in a senior corporate role talked about the challenges of making early morning meetings: “What I have to get through in the morning to get my kids off to school... I’ve been up for hours and driven across half the city and then am expected to get into work for an 8:30am meeting and walk through those doors, gliding in like a swan.”

Employers also need to think about part-time workers and the impact of organising last-minute meetings out of their scheduled work hours. They also need to think about making sure that meetings end when they are scheduled to, so as not to jeopardise school pick-up time.

Employers need to think about when social out-of-work events occur that “aren’t-work-but-really-are”. These social events are where the crucial team bonding happens, but some of your staff may not be able to afford \$100 on a babysitter, and others may not work on Thursdays when everyone goes to the pub at 5pm. →



“Gendered social norms, with workplaces as key institutions reinforcing those norms, mean that being a working dad tends not to be the same as being a working mum.”

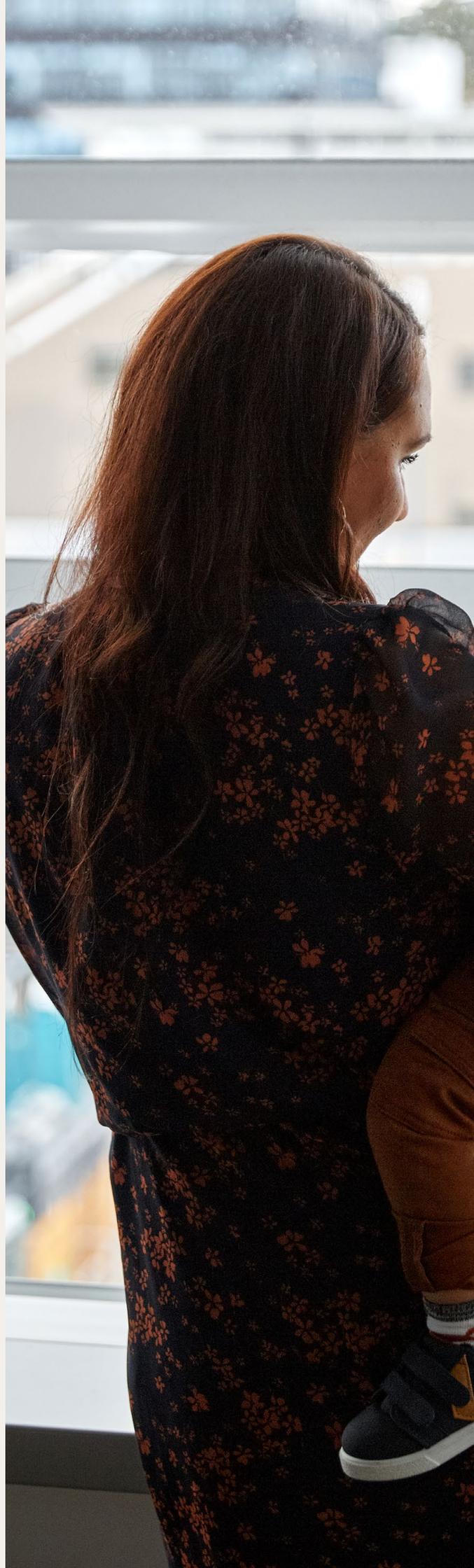
→ Part-time and flexible workers – who are mostly women – often experience exclusion. When everyone on the team is supposed to pull together and do their part at “crunch time” on a needlessly-tight deadline, the “real heroes” pull the extra hours. But your part-time workers may have already stretched their hours for that week. “Crunch time” could, in fact, be seen as a sign of systems failing, rather than a way of identifying who can show a commitment to the cause and who deserves promoting. Employers need to think about how they structure work and set deadlines as well.

There is a vast population of women in Aotearoa who want to be in work but currently are not. And there is a vast population of women who want to be promoted into leadership roles and advance their career but are hampered by the refusal of many – actually most – employers to see that leadership roles can be structured so that they can be done part-time.

What is the key factor across all these themes? It is caregiving. Women do the lion’s share of it, and it is this normative responsibility for caregiving that is most impacting women’s equitable access to and participation in paid work and all the benefits that flow on from that.

Women incur a serious financial hit over the course of their lifetime, earning on average \$880,000 less than men. And that figure is greater for wāhine Māori, Pasifika women and disabled women who can add racism and ableism to the structural discrimination that they face.

Gendered social norms, with workplaces as key institutions reinforcing those norms, mean that being a working dad tends not to be the same as being a working mum. Our research shows that men in the workplace report having dependants as often as women – if not more often. →



Case study

Aurecon

Disrupting gender stereotypes around parents' working and caring roles has long been a focus for design, engineering and advisory firm Aurecon.

The company's current parental leave provisions were market leading when launched in 2017, encouraging secondary carers to play a more active part in caring for children as part an over-arching policy to provide employees with genuine choice about how they balance work and caring responsibilities.

Aurecon was the winner of the Work Life Balance category of the 2020 Diversity Awards NZ™ based on this mahi.

Under the policy, employees were paid 150 per cent of their salary for up to 14 weeks when returning from parental leave if their partner was taking leave to care for their child to enable this return to work and didn't have access to paid parental leave from their own employer.

Aurecon's new policy, launching on 1 July this year, will offer all parents (through birth, surrogate, foster, whānau care) 22 weeks of paid parental leave without any primary care requirement.

The leave can be taken in up to four blocks, with four weeks 'use it or lose it' in the first three months.

If both partners work for Aurecon, both are entitled to paid parental leave.

Aurecon's Managing Director New Zealand, Tracey Ryan, says the parental leave provisions make it easier for parents to return to and stay in the workforce, improving career prospects and reducing the career and financial penalties that can come with extended leave.

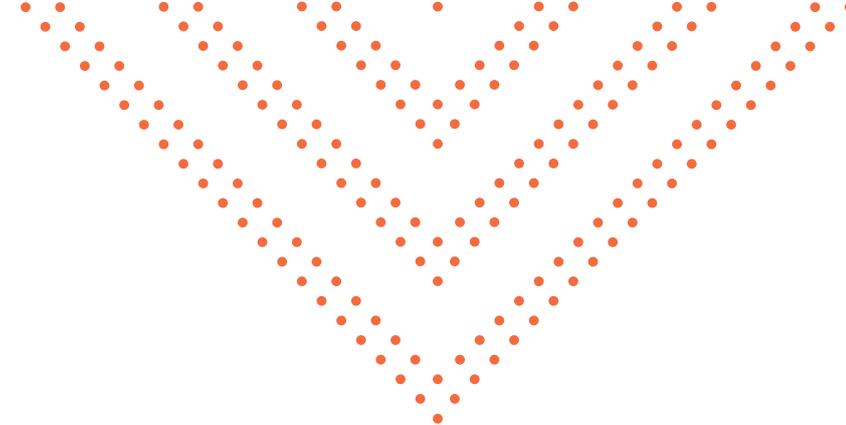
It also challenges typical arrangements (in heterosexual couples) of women undertaking most of the unpaid work, including childcare, while men assume the breadwinner role.

"This policy disrupts these stereotypes and encourages new and more equitable arrangements for all parents," says Tracey.

"Since the introduction of our parental leave policy in 2017, the percentage of parental leave taken by men has significantly increased, which demonstrates the desire of many men to play a more active parenting role. In the past, lack of policy provisions, stigma and societal norms have been a barrier."

Looking at data from the past three years, the proportion of parental leave taken by men has increased from 27 per cent in 2021 to 33 per cent in 2022 to 40 per cent this financial year.

"Importantly, our policies have normalised balancing work and care," says Tracey. "Seeing colleagues take parental leave while still building successful careers demonstrates to others in the business that both working and caring is possible."



“Flexible working, school-hour shifts, and part-time work absolutely give some women better access to paid work, but they will not shift the dial on gender equity.”

→ However, when it comes to the impact of having dependants on career progress, remuneration, and how they operate in the world of work, it is not the same for men who are fathers as it is for women who are mothers.

In research carried out by Cogo, men were far less likely than women to say that they have to hide the fact that they have dependants in order to be accepted at work. Men are far less likely to take part-time roles. Men are far more likely to be in leadership roles. Men are far more likely to be paid more.

There was a campaign quite a few years ago now, with the key message “Flexible Working is not the F Word” which did a great job at helping to normalise flexible working practices for parents. But who accesses flexible working the most in the workplace? It is mothers.

Flexible working, school-hour shifts, and part-time work absolutely give some women better access to paid work, but they will not shift the dial on gender equity. These workplace policies are generally promoted as gender-neutral and available to everybody. But in practice, not unlike subsidised childcare, they are seen as something that will help women work because of their caregiving responsibilities. And the trade-off is often less remuneration and fewer promotion opportunities.

These workplace policies are the perfect example of what feminist economist Nancy Fraser calls affirmative remedies, which are those that correct inequitable social outcomes without addressing their underlying causes. They are Band-Aid remedies. They stand in contrast, she argues, to transformative remedies, which correct inequitable outcomes by restructuring the underlying generative framework that causes them.

We have serious gender and ethnic pay gaps in Aotearoa. We also have a serious gender caregiving gap, with career breaks, reduced hours, and part-time work being a feature mostly of women’s employment. The caregiving gap contributes to the gender pay gap, which in turn reinforces the caregiving gap by making it economically rational for the mother to be the parent who stays at home or works reduced hours. And on it goes.

Only by addressing the fundamental issue of the gender caregiving gap head-on have we got any hope of achieving pay and employment equity. This is the underlying generative framework that needs to be restructured.

What can employers do – what are the transformative remedies? We suggest that you focus your attention on your male employees and make them the target of your workplace equity initiatives. Start by devising ways to support more fathers to take up parental leave and flexible working. Monitor how many men are accessing parental leave and flexible working in your workplace - track your progress over time. This is how women need the workplace to change. ■



Tania Domett is the Founder and Director at research company Cogo, and Co-founder and Director at Project Gender. She is an experienced research leader skilled in designing, driving and executing complex research projects.



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Diversity data: Navigating the employee perception gap

Organisations are pouring significant time and money into diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategies and initiatives. But are the intentions and outcomes of that mahi properly understood by the workforce they are aimed at supporting? Pete Mercer shares some interesting research and a new tool that will help DEI practitioners discover if they are gaining traction.



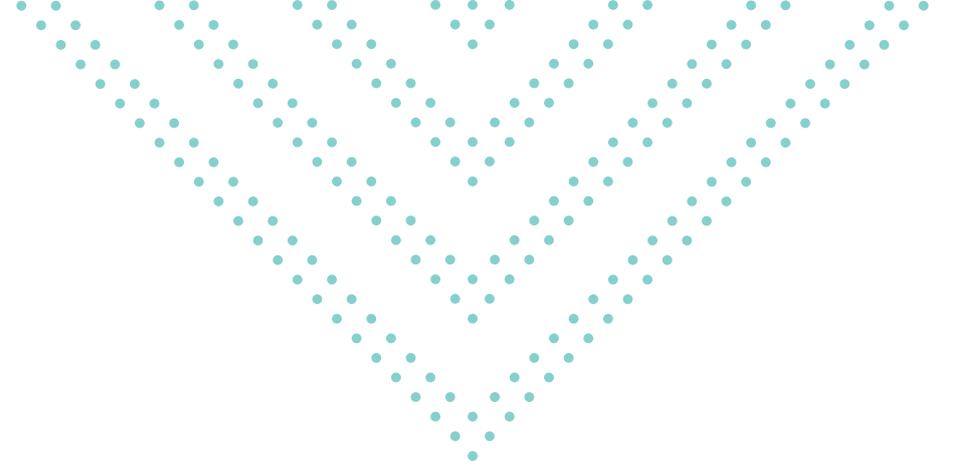
We all have things that sometimes keep us up at night. One of the things that keeps my mind racing when struggling to get shut-eye is this question: are we – as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) practitioners – completely and utterly delusional about our mahi and the impact it has?

This year, for the first time, the New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey asked respondents to indicate whether they have responsibility for DEI work within their organisation or not. While the primary rationale was to be able to target those with DEI responsibility as a research sample, this meant we were able to compare this sample against those who said they don't have responsibility for DEI.

For almost every question of the survey, our findings revealed that the perception of those involved in the implementation of DEI work is more favourable than those who are not responsible for it – sometimes drastically so, and particularly for questions relating to the impact the work is having (as opposed to the prevalence of work being undertaken).

Are we delusional, then? Do we have rose-tinted glasses when it comes to the efficacy of our collective work?

The best-case scenario would be to say that even where DEI outcomes are being achieved, there is an overall perception gap between the observations of DEI practitioners and the wider observations of our kaimahi. A worse-case scenario is to say that we are not actually achieving some of the outcomes we are aiming for. →



“How do you become aware of how unaware you are if you’re not aware that you are unaware in the first place?”

→ This is a problem. If the goal of this kaupapa is to improve the lives of our people – to earnestly hear and understand their experiences and concerns, to identify the ways in which they are systemically disadvantaged and to work with them to tear that disadvantage down while uplifting their mana, self-determination and agency – then this gap in perception should be a warning signal that we are, frankly, missing the mark. Simply put, we are out of touch.

And therein lies the self-awareness paradox. How do you become aware of how unaware you are if you’re not aware that you are unaware in the first place? If you are sailing a vessel with no means of navigation – without stars or compass to guide your path – not only are you likely to go in the wrong direction but you also won’t know that you’re sailing off-course. The same can be said of DEI work: a lack of information is both the cause and the result of our delusion.

If this sounds like a scathing take-down of today’s cohort of workplace DEI advocates and professionals, I promise you it’s not. It must be acknowledged that, right across the motu, there are so many incredibly talented DEI professionals who have an exceptionally valuable blend of skills, working tirelessly to move the dial and create meaningful change, often in challenging circumstances and in a role that we know can be painfully lonely and misunderstood.

But we have to be honest about the status quo and speak truthfully to each other – and ourselves. And the truth is that so many organisations are still navigating their DEI priorities without the information they need to properly do so.

Data is vital to implementing effective systemic change. Using a systems-change approach, as DEI practitioners we need pertinent information to identify root causes, unearth any hidden assumptions, consider holistic perspectives

and adopt an outcomes-framed plan to create sustainable and enduring change. And we need to do so through continual collaboration and engagement with our people.

Only in more recent years have data-driven approaches to DEI started coming to the fore. The use of analytics to sharpen organisations’ understandings of the employee experience in broader terms is certainly on the rise. I believe this is trickling down to DEI too – and not a moment too soon.

This year’s New Zealand Workplace Diversity Survey saw a sharp rise, compared with previous years, in the proportion of respondents who said that their organisation measures and evaluates the effectiveness of their DEI initiatives. This is a great indication that a collective shift in approach might be taking place. That said, far fewer individuals reported that their organisation is collecting the range of data needed to do this with precision or depth of understanding, so clearly data acquisition is still not where it needs to be. This begs the question: what information is being used by organisations to measure and evaluate efficacy? And what metrics and measures of success are being chosen?

Data gathering must extend much further than a simple stocktake of your organisation’s inputs and outputs. Organisations also need to gain an accurate picture of what their workforce demographics looks like, of where certain groups are under-represented and what disparities are occurring throughout the employee lifecycle. But they also need to understand, in statistical and quantifiable terms, how different groups feel and how they experience the workplace – in essence, a 360-degree interrogation of the DEI work itself, how this is being received and what impact it is having.

Diversity Works New Zealand’s recently launched Employee Perception Survey is a tool designed to do just that.

Designed to be completed by all your New Zealand-based teams, it captures demographic data across a wide range of diversity dimensions, enabling organisations to understand more about their workforce and the extent to which certain groups are represented in it. The survey also captures the perspectives of employees in relation to DEI (how they feel and the extent to which they are supportive) and how well they think their employer is performing across the various strategic components.

Finally, it reveals insights on their lived experience by asking how they personally experience the organisation in the day-to-day – the data from which can be analysed to understand which groups are most likely to respond positively and negatively.

The Employee Perception Survey is the third tool in the AIM Insights suite – the AIM Insights Self-Assessment and Qualified Assessment give organisations a better understanding of their organisation’s maturity in relation to the strategic components of DEI (as defined in AIM: the Aotearoa Inclusivity Matrix). These tools are designed to determine maturity from the executive viewpoint (whether that’s a designated DEI lead or a senior leader responsible for DEI), reporting on what activities and initiatives are already taking place. An assessment of this nature tells a story of “what is being done” in an organisation; but it only tells a half of the story.

Rolling out the Employee Perception Survey will give you a clear insight into how the work you are doing is perceived by the people you are doing it for, ensuring your DEI programme is not at risk of getting lost at sea. ■

To find out more information about the AIM Insights Employee Perception Survey, visit our [website](#) or contact a member of the team on: membership@diversityworks.nz

FOCUS ON **Belong** **Aotearoa**

Across Aotearoa, there are many advocacy groups and not-for-profit organisations that play an important role in advancing cultures of inclusion in our workplaces. We've put the spotlight on **Belong Aotearoa** and the work it does to support refugees and migrants to find meaningful employment.



What's Belong Aotearoa's purpose?

Belong Aotearoa (formerly known as Auckland Regional Migrant Services Charitable Trust) was formed in 2003 and is a non-profit innovation and social change hub, working to address systemic barriers to the settlement of migrants and refugees in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Over the last 18-years it has supported more than 75,000 migrants and refugees who have settled in Aotearoa.

Why is it so hard for migrants and refugees to find work in New Zealand?

When it comes to securing employment, some of the challenges people from the migrant and former refugee communities face include a job market that stresses the importance of New Zealand work experience and overlooks and undervalues the experience many have gained overseas. There are often cultural differences in the recruitment process, and perceptions of those that have English as a second language.

Many refugees and migrants have extensive qualifications, skills and experience, but despite this they have to accept employment that is below their expertise or outside of their chosen sector.

This lack of equitable employment pathways means the migrant and refugee communities do not have equitable access to income and other opportunities to support their wellbeing and integration into their new country.





“ Having attended and tried other programmes and services that support migrants through employment, I can say this one is the only one that is really doing something meaningful for us, knocking on the door of employers, preparing them, and finding opportunities. ”

What programmes or initiatives has Belong Aotearoa implemented to help people overcome those challenges?

Belong Aotearoa carried out a pilot internship programme to help bridge the gap between employee and employers. It was a paid internship that provided support for the intern through the recruitment process and induction to their placement, as well as supporting the businesses where they were placed. With careful selection of interns and clear understanding of their skills, experiences and challenges, we were able to provide bespoke support to enable the interns to perform in their placements to their full potential.

We also run WISE Catering, where we support women from refugee and migrant backgrounds to utilise their existing cooking and baking skills to enter employment. Many women we work with have little to no education or employment experience. This social enterprise is about more than just upskilling women; it also builds their confidence and capability, reduces their isolation, connects them with a community and helps improve their English language skills. Many women who come through WISE Catering learn key skills and gain the confidence to seek other employment, with some even starting their own business outside of catering.

By connecting the baking and cooking skills of women from refugee and migrant

backgrounds to opportunities that help them enter employment and enterprise, we can provide opportunities for financial independence and wellbeing.

What shifts or outcomes have you seen as a result of this work?

The internship programme had more than 200 applications and selected seven highly skilled migrants to match to employers for three months. Across all the placements, the employers expressed how the interns brought a wealth of skills, fresh ideas, and perspectives, and were productive and positive right from the beginning.

The learnings from these placements highlighted that alongside supporting migrants to enter employment, the intern programme also supported employers to recruit a more diverse workforce. From the programme, several interns had their contracts extended or found employment after gaining New Zealand work experience in their chosen industry.

The programme also had a positive impact on the interns' mental health. Several interns had reported negative experiences job hunting or working in New Zealand that hindered their performance in interviews. We found our support not only helped build their confidence, but also supported employers to understand the challenges migrants face and work towards a more inclusive interview and recruitment process.

WISE Catering, and the workshops and training we've provided alongside it to improve participants' English language skills, marketing skills and other transferable skills, has supported hundreds of women. Some have continued with us whilst others have found other employment, enrolled in a course to further their education, volunteered in their local communities or participated in other community events and programmes.

Through our work, we contribute to employment action plans as well as advise and influence around the employment challenges of migrant and former refugee communities and the opportunities there are to address them. It's also enabled us to further develop our own initiatives.

Organisations interested in supporting migrants and former refugees enter employment, can connect with Belong Aotearoa and learn more about the opportunities to be involved in this work at belong.org.nz



In brief

A quick look at workplace inclusion news and updates making headlines here and around the world.

IS SEXISM INFLUENCING TEACHERS' PAY?

The Ministry of Education has begun investigating whether sexism has suppressed teachers' pay. The pay equity investigation covers about 90,000 school and early childhood teachers and principals and follows claims lodged by the Educational Institute and the Post Primary Teachers Association in 2020. The unions said teaching had been undervalued right across the education sector because the education and care of children was historically viewed as women's work. The investigation should be completed by the end of the year.

SPAIN OFFERS MENSTRUAL LEAVE

Women in Spain now have the right to three days of paid menstrual leave a month — with the option of extending it to five days — if they experience painful periods, after a series of laws covering sexual and reproductive rights were passed by the country's parliament earlier this year. Spain is the first European country to mandate menstrual leave and Equality Minister Irene Montero, an outspoken feminist in the left wing government, hailed the passing of the bill as “a historic day of progress for feminist rights”. The government will pay the costs of the leave provision. Other countries that offer menstrual leave include Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Indonesia and Zambia.

AGEISM IN THE WORKPLACE GETTING WORSE

Older workers across New Zealand believe ageism has grown more prevalent in workplaces in the past five years, according to findings released by an insurance company specialising in cover for people over 50. Sixty per cent of those surveyed who have or are considering re-entering the workforce, going full time, or changing their career paths said they are expecting to face some barriers to employment. These included age discrimination, a perception they were overqualified or too expensive for the role and a perception their technical skills were lacking or falling behind. The research by New Zealand Seniors also found that 73 per cent of the workers in the 50-plus age bracket felt undervalued at work.

NO MORE DISCRIMINATORY PAY FOR DISABLED WORKERS

Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities Priyanca Radhakrishnan has said the government will put a stop to the “discriminatory” system that enables employers to pay disabled workers less than the minimum wage. Using Minimum Wage Exemption permits, employers can under “certain circumstances” pay employees who have a disability with wages below the minimum rate. Minister Radhakrishnan has said this will end by mid-2025 and the minimum wage exemption permits will be replaced with a government wage supplement to ensure disabled people all receive minimum wage.

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