

Health equity in Aotearoa has been left unaddressed for far too long. The longer we ignore it, the more urgent the issues will become and the greater the resources which are lost in terms of human potential and lives. The RACP is committed to making health the norm for all, now.

Our members look beyond a three-year election cycle for the resources to make and sustain the changes urgently needed to realise the promises of Te Tiriti o Waitangi – equity, active protection, and tino rangatiratanga for all people of Aotearoa. We recognise that good health is supported by much more than infrastructure or staff: we need to look at the factors that promote healthiness, and work outside our traditional borders to advocate, collaborate and create.

The RACP's vision for health equity in Aotearoa NZ is enduring. We want to see a more fair and just society for the year when Aotearoa commemorates the bicentennial of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 2040.

Our vision for Aotearoa in 2040: Unpaid work is valued as a social good

- Unpaid work is valued as productive and a net benefit to societal wellbeing

RACP recommendations to make Good Work the norm

- Policies and programmes actively support the importance of unpaid work, which is valued as a productive and net benefit to societal wellbeing

This is Maria, she's 21 years old and lives in the outer suburbs of a big city. Maria lost her minimum wage job as a cleaner as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has taken up a bigger role around the house. Maria does much of the cooking and cleaning for her whānau, including her uncle who suffers from chronic illness.

Maria is pregnant and worries that since she lost her job she will become more of a burden, especially once baby arrives. Other whānau members have lost jobs due to the pandemic, and everyone is anxious at their job prospects as the pandemic continues.



“I just feel like I'm not contributing enough money. I really appreciate everything my aunt and uncle are doing for me letting me stay here. I help take care of my uncle, I know that helps out my family a lot”

MARIA ON UNPAID WORK

What Is Good Work?

Roles that meet the values of Good Work will

- Foster wellbeing, personal growth, fulfilment, autonomy and meaning
- Recognise that all forms of work (including unpaid work) should be valued as parts of our lives
- Move beyond 'health and safety' to positively contribute to the worker's sense of self-determination

Valuing unpaid labour and the care economy in Aotearoa NZ

Unpaid work is a central yet unrecognised contributor to our economy and society. Household chores, caring (for children, people with illnesses or disabilities), and volunteer work are all examples of unpaid work. This work keeps our whānau, our communities and our society going.

We need principles of Good Work in Aotearoa NZ to apply to unpaid work: our working lives are much more than time in formal employment.



The counting and distribution of unpaid work shows how it is undervalued by governments and civil society. Unpaid labour is assigned a dollar value, which informs its worth in relation to other economic measures, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Unpaid work is disproportionately done by women and girls. This has direct impacts on both female participation in the labour force, and the gender pay gap.

Peter is 72 and lives alone in a rural area. Peter's wife died a few years ago, and his nephew recently moved to a major city, meaning he can't visit as often. Peter struggles with his mobility due to arthritis, and he suffers some memory loss caused by a brain injury which forced him into early retirement.

One of the most important parts of his life is the time he spends at the local MenzShed volunteering. It gives him back some of the routine he lost when he retired, and helps him stay in contact with other people. He also really gets something out of contributing, and it makes him feel like he is involved in something meaningful.



“The Covid lockdown meant that the MenzShed wasn't open. Old fullas like me, we like to meet up and work on our projects. Have a chat. April and May were pretty lonely for me”

PETER ON THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

Government and society must celebrate unpaid work – it's an asset

Government policy in Aotearoa New Zealand contributes to a climate where unpaid work is undervalued. Treasury launched a new framework for measuring economic wellbeing in 2018, applying the Four Capitals (Human, Social, Physical and Environmental). Although this framework recognises many things that contribute to economic growth, it fails to acknowledge the different roles unpaid work plays in our society.

One way to measure unpaid work is through time-use surveys, which gain insights into paid and unpaid work, education and leisure. It has been over a decade since Stats NZ has undertaken a time-use survey. There have been big changes in how people spend and utilise time, including more organisations offering flexible working arrangements, and limited (although growing) recognition of the importance of female-dominated care work, both paid and unpaid, including Paid Parental Leave and Pay Equity legislation.

The RACP strongly supports a societal conversation about the value of unpaid work, and how it is recognised and supported. This conversation should be inclusive, acknowledging that for many women who do unpaid work, it has strong socioeconomic, ethnicity and cultural dimensions. Intersectionality is critical. The experiences of groups including wāhine Māori, Pasifika women, sole parents and women with disabilities have been neglected and erased from dominant narratives. This has stunted policy design and implementation.

Future governments must respond to increasing gender inequity in paid and unpaid work resulting from the pandemic.

COVID-19 has revealed important gendered consequences in national lockdowns: as schools shut and whānau spend more time at home, demands on unpaid labour increase; while simultaneously many women are working on the front lines in health care, aged care and other essential workforces. Of the people who lost their jobs in the April 2020 lockdown, a staggering 90 per cent (10,000) were women, who dominate workforces in the hospitality, retail and tourism sectors. Many others had hours cut or pay withheld as their jobs were on a 'casual, as needed' basis.