



**The Royal New Zealand
College of General Practitioners**
Te Whare Tohu Rata o Aotearoa

RNZCGP Position Statement – Gender Pay Equity

13 June 2022

Summary of position

The gender pay gap measures the difference between the median hourly pay of female and male incomes as a percentage of the median hourly pay of men. It is fifty years since New Zealand's Equal Pay Act¹ was passed into law, making it illegal to pay employees and contractors differently according to gender. However, in 2022 the gender pay gap within the general practice workforce, estimated at 14.6 percent², is wider than the overall New Zealand figure of 9.5 percent.³

As a leader in quality and standards setting, the College does not differentiate between gender in the payment of employees or contractors considers it is unacceptable for female GPs to be paid less than male GPs for identical work requiring the same level of skill and time:

1. We do not support gender pay differentials for GPs doing the same work.
2. The principle of pay equity is applied within our education, training, and quality programmes.
3. The gender pay gap in general practice is measured in the College's workforce survey to gain insight into its causes and raise awareness of areas for improvement.

Preamble

The Gender Pay Gap (GPG) is a high-level indicator of the difference between female and male incomes.⁴ New Zealand began measuring GPG in 1998 with the gap sitting at 16.2 percent. In 2020 the gap in the general practice workforce was 14.6 percent.⁵ When compared against the 2021 measurement of the New Zealand workforce at 9.5 percent for the last five years⁶, the GPG for female GPs, now exceeds that of the New Zealand workforce.

Inequity in remuneration for work undertaken impacts disproportionately on female GPs. As an employer of first year General Practice Education Programme (GPEP) registrars, the College ensures there is no gender bias in pay from commencement of training. Findings from the College's 2020 Workforce Survey identified the (GPG) as an equity concern and area for improvement in general practice⁷.

Gender income inequity amongst doctors

Internationally, it is not uncommon for female doctors to be disadvantaged by the GPG. The 2020 Independent Review into Gender Pay Gaps in Medicine⁸, reported that the full time equivalent (FTE)

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when corrected for the mean GPG, the annual pay amongst GPs in England was 15.3 percent less for female GPs. The Australian Medical Association found when taking hours worked into consideration, the annual gross personal earnings for female specialists was, on average, 16.6 percent less than their male counterparts, and in general practice, female GPs earned, on average 25 percent less than male GPs.⁹

The GP income landscape

In New Zealand there are multiple factors influencing GP pay. There are a variety of employment arrangements with long term employee, or contractor being the most common arrangement (52%), followed by practice owner or partner (34%).¹⁰ Pay is calculated on either, hours available to see patients, hours worked, the number of patients treated, or a percentage based on the number of patients seen. General practice owners and partners may receive a proportion of income made by the practice.

GPs who are not practice owners usually negotiate an individual employment agreement or contract for services with their employer. Some GPs may be employed under a collective agreement although the Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS) has negotiated collective agreements for GPs working in a small number of practices.¹¹

Women in the NZ general practice

The College’s 2020 Membership Survey¹² found the gender pay gap was highest for females aged 25 – 29 years, who are Fellows of the College. Female GPs are twice as likely as their male counterparts to work part time and receive 14.6 percent less per hour than male GPs.

The approximate GPG between females and males working in general practice is \$25,000, after controlling for, employment, status, weekly working hours, Fellowship status, and years since gaining MCNZ registration. Ethnicity was not a significant contributor to gender income differences.

Table 1. RNZCGP 2020 Workforce Survey

Comparison of demographic and employment characteristics of female and male respondents	Female	Male
Average age	48	54
GPEP1 registrars	61%	39%
GPEP 2/3 registrars	65%	35%
Practice owners or partners	26%	44 %
Employees and contractors	59%	42%
Work part time	66%	36%
Mean hours worked per week	31.5	38.5
Weekly or fortnightly after-hours commitments	16%	26%

Causes of general pay gaps

The experience and causes of GPGs are complex and often invisible with factors such as those listed below likely to be at play in the GP workforce:

- Unconscious bias — stereotypical views about gender can negatively influence decisions about recruitment and career progression.
- Occupational segregation — female-dominated occupations tend to be paid less than male-dominated occupations.

- Vertical segregation — males are more likely to hold senior and be in better-paid positions than females, including female-dominated industries.
- Patterns of participation — females spend a greater proportion of their time on unpaid and caring work than men. They are also more likely to work part-time, often due to family commitments.
- Part-time work tends to pay less per hour than full-time work.¹³

Differences in the type of consultations most frequently undertaken by female and male GPs may also be a factor contributing to the GPG. Anecdotally female GPs are more likely to provide services needing longer consultations such as, patients with mental health concerns, female patients, and managing psychological or social problems which are factors identified as being associated with longer consultations and/or increased administration or clinical work outside a consultation.¹⁴

In general, roles undertaken by female GPs in general practice tend to be paid less and male GPs are more likely to hold senior positions and be paid at a higher rate. The relative contributions of these factors to the inequity in the GP workforce is unknown.¹⁵ Research on gender inequity also shows female GPs are less likely to be successful in negotiating pay increases or do not ask. It is also possible that there are differences between genders in the value placed on income relative to other components of agreements, or trade-offs such as flexibility.¹⁶

Recommendations for improving gender pay equity.

As an employer, the College encourages general practice employers and GP employees to take responsibility for ensuring remuneration levels are appropriate.

The following actions are intended to promote gender pay equity:

1. Use publicly available collective employment agreements for GPs, as benchmarks, e.g., collective agreements negotiated for GPs by the Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS).¹⁷
2. College quality programmes require general practices to undertake a regular audit of gender pay equity.
3. Assess current practices, resources and training to support new employees and for employment agreements.
4. Employment contracts for procedures most likely to be undertaken by female GPs are remunerated to align with and integrate pay parity practices.

References

¹ New Zealand Government. The Equal Pay Act 1972. Public Act 1972 No.118.

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1972/0118/latest/DLM407770.html>

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³ Stats NZ. Gender pay gap unchanged.18.8.21. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/gender-pay-gap-unchanged> Accessed 21/12/21

⁴ Employment New Zealand. <https://www.employment.govt.nz/hours-and-wages/pay/pay-equity/gender-pay-gap/>

⁵ RNZCGP. RNZCGP Workforce Summary Report.2020. <https://rnzcgp.org.nz/gpdocs/New-website/Publications/GP-Workforce/RNZCGP-2020-Workforce-Survey-Results-1-summary.pdf>

⁶ Stats NZ. Gender pay gap unchanged. 18.8.2021. <https://www.stats.govt.nz/news/gender-pay-gap-unchanged>

⁷ RNZCGP. Equity Report. 2020 General Practice Workforce Survey. 2020. <https://rnzcgp.org.nz/gpdocs/New-website/Publications/GP-Workforce/RNZCGP-2020-Workforce-Survey-Results-4-equity.pdf>

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- ¹⁰ RNZCGP. 2020 General Practice Workforce Survey. Overview Report. 2020. <https://rnzcgp.org.nz/gpdocs/New-website/Publications/GP-Workforce/RNZCGP-2020-Workforce-Survey-Results-2-overview.pdf> Accessed 21/12/21
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- ¹² RNZCGP. 2020 General Practice Workforce Survey. Equity report. 2020. <https://rnzcgp.org.nz/gpdocs/New-website/Publications/GP-Workforce/RNZCGP-2020-Workforce-Survey-Results-4-equity.pdf> Accessed 21/12/21
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- ¹⁷ Association of Salaried Medical Specialists, ASMS Collective Contract and employment advice. <https://www.asms.org.nz/employment-advice/advice/>