

Long-term Insights Briefing 2025

Consultation Document

Consultation document - Long-term Insights Briefing

Manatū Wāhine Ministry for Women is seeking your input on the proposed topic for our 2025 Long-term Insights Briefing, which is focused on the impact of online harm on women and girls in leadership.

The Ministry is proposing this topic because research has shown the increasing prevalence of online harm poses a significant deterrent and barrier to women and girls' participation in public life, including in leadership roles.

There has been a steady increase in women's representation in leadership roles in New Zealand over the past decade. This is across a range of leadership areas including women MPs, councillors and public sector board members where women's representation now sits at over 50%. The last local body elections in 2022 culminated in the most women ever elected to local councils – 45.5%. And women MPs currently make up 46% of Parliament.

Alongside this increase in representation, we have started to see a disturbing trend of online violence against women in politics and other leadership positions.

Public service agencies are required to develop a Long-term Insights Briefing at least once every three years. They are intended to be 'think pieces' that provide information and analysis about medium and long-term trends, risks, and opportunities that affect Aotearoa New Zealand.

Long-term Insights Briefings are not government policy and are independent of ministers.

Our proposed topic is: 'Free to lead: tackling the effects of online harm on the pipeline of future women leaders'

The Ministry for Women is proposing to look at the effects of online harm on the pipeline of women and girls who may become future leaders. We will consider what outcomes may look like for women and girls in leadership positions or aspiring to leadership and public-facing roles across a 15-year timespan.

Why is this topic important?

The impacts of online abuse and harassment are increasingly evident across measures of gender equality such as in leadership, participation, and safety. Advances in the field of Artificial Intelligence, seen in widely available tools such as ChatGPT, bring the potential for additional risk, including entrenching built-in gender bias and the amplification of existing gender-based violence.

Online harm is particularly compounded for groups of women and gender-diverse people who experience discrimination, including those who are Māori, disabled, culturally or linguistically diverse, and rainbow communities. This is an emerging area of work for the Ministry as we consider how these developments will impact women and girls. We have started to develop a work programme focusing on addressing the impact of online harm on women's public participation in New Zealand. Outcomes of this work programme will include an online toolkit of practical resources and interactive modules for both employers and women, developed with Netsafe, a Non-Government Agency. The toolkit will be designed to empower women to remain active online and continue participating confidently in public life.

Elected representatives have always faced criticism and public scrutiny, but the social media era has normalised gendered harassment, online insults, intimidation, cyberbullying and trolling. The independent review into bullying and harassment in Parliament released in 2019 found online harassment and abuse of MPs by members of the public, including sexist and violent threats, was increasingly common.

Online harm takes many forms, including sextortion (blackmail by threatening to publish sexual information, photos or videos); image-based abuse (sharing intimate photos without consent); doxxing (publishing private personal information); cyberbullying; online sexual harassment; cyberstalking; online grooming, hacking, hate speech and online impersonation.

When faced with online harm (either direct or observed), women and girls can often change how they engage with technology, or even opt out entirely, due to negative experiences and perceived risk to safety and reputation. The impact of this is that feelings such as shame or fear of harm can silence women and girls, shrinking their presence and participation online. All this has the very real potential to impact the participation and engagement of women in public and political life.

Online harm has the potential to reverse the hard-won progress for women and girls. Supporting women and girls requires an equal seat at the leadership and decision-making table, and we need to make sure we don't risk the gains that have been made in women's representation.

Proposed scope

The Ministry is proposing to focus on the drivers behind the growth in online harm towards women and girls in Aotearoa New Zealand. By understanding those drivers, we will be better placed to propose policy initiatives and other measures that may help address the impacts of online harm on the pipeline of women and girls who may become future leaders. We are proposing that this Long-term Insights Briefing covers a 15-year time period.

We intend to focus on the effects of online harm on the pipeline of women and girls who may become future leaders. While this focus is narrow, the Ministry recognises that violence against women is widespread in New Zealand and its impacts are serious, long-lasting, can be intergenerational, and are often fatal. The Ministry continues to contribute to work to address violence against women more broadly, both online and offline.

- For further reading about the issues leading to our topic choice, [click here](#).
- There is more information about [Long Term Insights Briefings](#) here.
- Find out more about Manatū Wāhine [Ministry for Women](#), including our role and priorities.

We are seeking your feedback on our proposed 2025 Long-term Insights Briefing topic ‘Free to lead: tackling the effects of online harm on the pipeline of future women leaders’, particularly your views on the following:

- how strongly do you agree that online harm will have a negative effect on the pipeline of future women leaders
- is this a useful topic for the Ministry to develop as our next LTIB
- the proposed scope of the topic, including:
 - whether the proposed 15-year horizon is the best timeframe for this topic
- any thoughts you may have on the following relevant topics:
 - the possible impacts of online harm on the pipeline of women and girls into future leadership roles
 - what can help mitigate and respond to/address the impacts of online harm on the pipeline of women and girls into future leadership roles
 - possible technological changes or social trends/narratives that may exacerbate online harm, or potentially address online harm e.g. developments in AI or algorithms
- your suggestions of other organisations or communities that may be interested in being involved/supporting/contributing to the development of this work
- any other feedback you want to provide.

How to provide feedback

You can provide feedback by completing a short survey here: <https://forms.office.com/r/N0emsh8i7e>

This survey has multi-choice and pre-determined questions, and the option to add other feedback. The survey will take 10 to 20 minutes to complete, depending on how much information you choose to share.

We appreciate you taking the time to participate. Your feedback is crucial for shaping and refining this topic.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, others from your organisation can also respond as individuals if they choose to do so.

If you're unable to complete the online survey, please email us at korerero@women.govt.nz for a Word doc version.

The consultation period will run from **Wednesday 27 November to Friday 20 December 2024**. We will be engaging directly with stakeholders working in this space.

The Ministry intends to share a draft of the LTIB for public consultation, before publishing the final LTIB, in mid-2025.