



Media release

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New research into NZ workforce finds Gen Z the most ambitious generation, stigma around age greater than ethnicity or gender

ANZ Bank New Zealand (ANZ) research shows Gen Z as the most ambitious generation in the workforce and that age is a greater barrier to career advancement than ethnicity or gender.

The research report, titled *Watch Wāhine Win*, was commissioned to highlight issues around gender equity with a specific focus this year on Māori, Pasifika and Asian women. It is the second report in a series of research being undertaken by ANZ to better understand the factors that help Kiwi women succeed.

More than 2000¹ New Zealanders participated in the latest iteration of the Talbot Mills research, which was launched today at an event at McAuley High School attended by ANZ CEO Antonia Watson, several Silver Ferns players, and MP Jenny Salesa.

The research shows women expressed significant anxiety about the future with 44% of female respondents expressing concern that New Zealand is headed “on the wrong track”. Over half of the respondents also said they expect the economy to get worse in the year ahead, and a third expect their personal finances to get worse.

But it also shows there is a strong push for Kiwis to advance in the workplace, particularly Pasifika (65%) and Māori (57%) workers. Gen Z (55%) and Millennial (54%) workers were more ambitious than Gen X (38%) and Baby Boomers (27%)².

The research shows there are several barriers Kiwis face. Most cited “business structure” as a key barrier, followed by “not worth the hassle”, “being focused on other things”, “confidence” and “lack of management support”. One younger Māori woman commented during the research: “I’m quietly studying but not with my boss, because I know that he is not the type of person that will help me to achieve this. So, I will quietly study on the side without his knowledge.”

Ms Watson says organisations need to be more supportive to help employees achieve career success because it benefits both the employer and the employee.

“Our respondents noted that more advancement opportunities and more education and training are what employers could do most to help women succeed,” Ms Watson says.

“Another important factor of women’s success at work is having a role model they can aspire to. In our research report, 15% of men and women told us they can’t see themselves in a senior position. It highlights the importance of us showcasing the incredible achievements being made every day by

¹ Of the 2,171 people surveyed by Talbot Mills, 1,484 identified as female and 682 as male. The ethnic breakdown includes 688 people who identify as Māori, 420 Pasifika, 669 as Asian, and 489 as other. Further to this, the report included significant quantitative research into the opinions from our female participants.

² Based on Gen Z as those born between 1997 – 2012; Millennial’s as those born between 1981 - 1996, Gen X as those born between 1965-1980 and Baby Boomers as those born between 1955 - 1964.

women and girls across New Zealand. That's why I am a big believer in the phrase 'if you can see it, you can be it'."

Other key insights from the ANZ *Watch Wāhine Win* research include:

- There's been notable progress in the way women perceive their own cultural diversity and the richness it brings to a work environment. Overall, women identified cultural diversity as a strength at work (27%) [in comparison to men at 23%], none more so than Māori (50%) and Pasifika (47%) wāhine who were double the national average. Asian respondents were more likely to see their culture as a weakness at work.
- 36% of women said their jobs satisfied their financial needs, 11% lower than men at 47%. Yet women remain 2% more likely to stay in their current job over the next two years versus men (48%).
- Women were more likely than men to say that "people" are the best thing about their jobs.
- Respondents in smaller companies were more satisfied in their jobs, and professional and administrative workers more than manual or technical collar workers.
- Despite talk of "the great resignation", just under half (49%) of respondents are generally satisfied and expecting to stay in their job for the next two years.
- Over half of respondents appreciated efforts by employers to recognise and support cultural diversity in the workplace. However, when asked if they felt the efforts towards cultural recognition were genuine, 23% of women said they felt it was tokenistic.
- Almost a fifth of respondents also believe there is more their employer could do to promote cultural diversity, with Pasifika and Asian respondents more likely to hold this view.
- Despite this, a significant number of women reported they couldn't be themselves at work (13%). Māori women were the most likely to say they can't bring their authentic selves to work.
- Some women felt the biggest barrier was attitude, as their upbringing had not set them up to aim high – or have a clear direction for their future.
- While 45% of the general public and 49% of NZ European did not consider ethnicity a significant barrier to advancement, that view was less strong among Māori at 39%, Pasifika at 33% and Asians at 31%.
- An alarming statistic was more than one in ten Kiwis (16%) reported experiencing cultural discrimination or racism in their current workplace, with Māori (24%), Pasifika (28%), and Asian (22%) respondents being more likely to have experienced it.
- The research is challenging in parts, but reassuring. Respondents identified workable solutions such as role models closer to home in the form of team leaders, mentors or managers, support for training and financial literacy.

The report findings serve as a reminder that not all women (or men) prioritise advancing in their careers. Māori and Pasifika respondents were more likely to rate "being focused on other things (e.g. family)" higher than other barriers to career advancement.

One older Māori woman told the survey: "They live to work and I'm the opposite. I actually work to live, and I work for my kids. I've got kids, and they're my life, and need every spare minute of my time. I don't want to sit there, sort of hanging out with them [work colleagues]. I can't be at this meeting at 12 o' clock because I have to go pick up my kids from kindy. And I can't come to your team drinks after work, and that kind of thing. And I don't know. I feel like they judge."

Ms Watson says it's important to recognise that success looks different for every woman and it's important to support ambition in all areas of life.

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Notes to the editor:

- A total of 2171 New Zealand adults took part in the Talbot Mills Research online survey from February 8 to 27 2023. The sample was also weighted to represent the general public in terms of region, age, gender and ethnicity, so total figures can be treated as a nationally representative sample.
- Talbot Mills also conducted qualitative research with four focus groups of working women; Māori aged 25-35 years, Māori aged 36-55 years, Asian women in a mix of ages, Pasifika women in a mix of ages.
- The Watch Wāhine Win report is the second produced by ANZ which looks to identify ways to enable New Zealand women to fulfil their professional or personal aspirations.