

Women, Gender Equality, and Economic Security

Our Vision

The Alliance believes that women's equality is fundamental to a democratic, fair, and socially just society.

Women cannot achieve genuine equality simply through formal legal rights. Equality requires action to remove the economic, social, and institutional structures that continue to disadvantage women. This means addressing discrimination in employment, unequal pay, poverty, unpaid caring work, violence, inadequate access to healthcare and reproductive rights, and the barriers that prevent women from participating fully in public and economic life.

We reject the idea that these inequalities can be left to the market to resolve. The state has a responsibility to ensure that women have the economic security, freedom, safety, and opportunities necessary to exercise their rights and participate equally in society.

The Alliance will pursue a comprehensive programme for substantive gender equality, recognising inequality is experienced differently according to income, class, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, family circumstances, and other factors.

1. Equality and Systemic Change

The Alliance will place gender equality at the centre of government policy and decision-making.

We will:

- require the Government to assess the gender impact of legislation, government programmes, public expenditure, and major investments before decisions are made;
- establish a **Gender Audit** framework to identify and address the effects of government policies;
- ensure that gender equality is incorporated into economic, employment, housing, health, education, and social policy;
- address the concentration of women in low-paid, insecure, and undervalued occupations;
- remove institutional and structural discrimination against women;

- ensure that public services are accessible and responsive to the different needs of women;
- give particular attention to women who experience multiple or compounded forms of disadvantage.

The Alliance recognises the particular rights and circumstances of **wāhine Māori**, and will advance gender equality consistently with Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the obligations of the Crown.

We will also address the specific barriers faced by Pasifika women, women with disabilities, lesbian women, older women, trans women, migrant women, and women experiencing poverty or insecure housing.

2. Bodily Autonomy and Reproductive Rights

Every woman has the right to control her own body and make her own decisions about reproduction.

Reproductive healthcare is a fundamental health right and must not be treated as a criminal matter.

The Alliance will:

- ensure free, safe, and accessible abortion services throughout Aotearoa;
- remove unnecessary legal, financial, and geographic barriers to abortion;
- ensure access to high-quality, confidential, and non-coercive reproductive healthcare and counselling;
- provide universal access to contraception through the public health system;
- ensure access to appropriate reproductive and sexual health services regardless of income, age, disability, or location;
- provide comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education in schools, including education about consent, relationships, health, and bodily autonomy;
- ensure women have access to the information and healthcare necessary to make informed reproductive choices.
- support an informed consent model of gender-affirming care.

No woman's economic circumstances, geographical location, or relationship status should determine whether she can exercise control over her own reproductive life.

3. Recognising Unpaid Work and the Caring Economy

The Alliance recognises that unpaid caring, domestic, and community work makes an essential contribution to the wellbeing and wealth of Aotearoa.

Women continue to carry a disproportionate share of this work. This contributes directly to women's lower incomes, reduced retirement savings, interrupted careers, and economic insecurity.

The Alliance will recognise caring as economically and socially valuable work.

We will:

- establish a **Universal Child Benefit** for every child, paid directly to the principal caregiver and indexed to movements in average weekly earnings;
- ensure that support for children is universal rather than dependent upon narrow means-testing;
- recognise the economic contribution of unpaid caring and domestic work in national economic and social measures;
- develop measures of national wellbeing that recognise unpaid social and community contributions alongside conventional economic indicators;
- ensure that carers are not forced into poverty because they undertake essential unpaid work;
- strengthen public services that support families and carers.

The Universal Child Benefit will recognise that raising children is both a private responsibility and a contribution to the future of society.

4. Equal Pay and Economic Equality

Women must receive equal pay for work of equal value.

The Alliance rejects the assumption that existing market wages are necessarily fair or neutral. Historical patterns of discrimination have contributed to the systematic undervaluing of occupations in which women are concentrated.

We will establish a comprehensive programme of employment and pay equity.

This will include:

- strengthened **Employment Equity legislation**;
- mechanisms for workers to pursue collective and class-based claims where discrimination is systemic;

- a **Pay Equity Bureau** with responsibility for monitoring and enforcing pay equity;
- comparisons between female-dominated and male-dominated occupations to determine equal value;
- powers to require employers to provide appropriate pay and employment information;
- measures to improve wage transparency;
- effective enforcement mechanisms where employers fail to meet pay equity obligations;
- equal access to education, training, and career progression;
- measures to prevent discrimination in recruitment, promotion, and employment.

The Alliance will also support policies that increase wages and improve conditions in traditionally female-dominated occupations, recognising that improving women's economic position requires action on both discrimination and low pay.

5. Work, Family, and Caring Responsibilities

Having children or caring for family members should never result in economic disadvantage.

The Alliance will make work and family life compatible by ensuring that responsibility for caring is shared between individuals, employers, and the state.

Paid Parental Leave

We will provide **at least 52 weeks of paid parental leave**, available to all eligible workers, including casual, seasonal and part-time workers.

Parental leave arrangements will recognise that caring responsibilities are not limited to mothers and will support parents and caregivers to share caring responsibilities.

Employment Protections

We will strengthen the Employment Relations Act to require employers to act in good faith in accommodating legitimate family and caring responsibilities.

Workers should be able to seek flexible working arrangements without being disadvantaged because they have children or other caring responsibilities.

Childcare

The Alliance will establish a comprehensive, accessible, and affordable system of high-quality childcare.

This will include support for non-profit and publicly supported childcare services, including services capable of meeting the needs of people working outside conventional hours.

We recognise that many workers are employed in shifts, evenings, nights, and weekends. Childcare provision must reflect the reality of working life rather than assume that every family operates from 9 am to 5 pm.

Older Persons' Care

With an ageing population, unpaid care work includes more and more support for older family members and friends, including peer support.

The Alliance Party will improve retirement provisions, increase funding for aged care and support, and establish and fund **independent advocacy services for older people**.

We believe the whole of society benefits when older people are able to live with as much dignity and security as anyone else, meaning that the support they need to thrive should be undertaken by society as a whole.

A Shorter Working Week

The Alliance supports a progressive reduction in standard working hours, including the movement towards a **35-hour working week**, without loss of income.

A shorter working week would help redistribute unpaid domestic labour, improve work-life balance and allow women and men to participate more equally in paid employment, family life, and community life.

6. Ending Violence Against Women

Every woman has the right to live free from violence, intimidation, and abuse.

Violence against women is not simply an individual problem. It is a major social and public health issue requiring sustained government action.

The Alliance will:

- invest in comprehensive prevention programmes addressing the underlying causes of violence;
- provide education about healthy relationships, consent, equality, and non-violence;
- ensure adequate long-term public funding for women's refuges and specialist support services;

- end competitive short-term funding arrangements that undermine the stability of essential services;
- provide secure, non-contestable funding for organisations providing essential protection and support;
- ensure women fleeing violence have access to safe and affordable housing;
- strengthen the enforcement of protection orders;
- ensure police, courts, and other agencies have the resources necessary to respond effectively to family and sexual violence;
- ensure children are properly protected from violence and abuse;
- support and provide funding for kaupapa Māori informed models for addressing harm;
- provide appropriate support for survivors and their children.

Protection orders and other legal protections must be backed by the resources necessary to make them effective. A legal right is of little value if the state cannot provide the practical protection required to enforce it.

7. Women, Poverty, and Economic Security

Women are disproportionately affected by poverty, low wages, insecure employment, and inadequate retirement income.

The Alliance will address the economic causes of women's disadvantage through a combination of decent wages, secure employment, adequate income support, affordable housing, universal public services, and recognition of unpaid caring work.

We will:

- support full employment and secure, properly paid work;
- ensure social security provides an adequate standard of living;
- improve support for sole parents and families;
- ensure that women are not forced into poverty because of caring responsibilities;
- strengthen women's access to affordable housing;
- protect and improve public health, education, childcare, and social services;
- address the long-term retirement income consequences of unpaid caring and interrupted employment.

Women's economic independence is essential to their ability to exercise genuine freedom and equality.

8. Women's Participation and Representation

Women must have an equal voice in the institutions that govern and shape society.

The Alliance will promote women's participation and leadership across government, Parliament, public services, workplaces, and community organisations.

We will:

- remove barriers to women's participation in public and political life;
- promote equal representation in decision-making;
- support women's leadership and participation in traditionally male-dominated sectors;
- address discrimination and harassment that prevent women from participating fully;
- ensure government decision-making reflects the diversity of women in Aotearoa.

9. A Commitment to Substantive Equality

The Alliance believes that equality means more than treating everyone identically.

A genuinely equal society must address the different circumstances and barriers experienced by different groups of women.

Our policies will therefore recognise the particular experiences of:

- wāhine Māori;
- Pasifika women;
- women with disabilities;
- lesbian women;
- trans women;
- older women;
- women experiencing poverty;
- women in insecure or low-paid work;
- sole parents;
- migrant and refugee women;

- women experiencing violence and homelessness.

We will ensure that gender policy is developed in partnership with the women and communities directly affected.

Conclusion

Women's equality is not an optional addition to social policy. It is fundamental to the kind of society the Alliance Party seeks to build.

The Alliance will pursue a society in which women have genuine economic independence, control over their own bodies, equal pay, secure employment, access to affordable childcare, adequate income, freedom from violence, and an equal voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

We will recognise the value of paid and unpaid work, strengthen the public services on which families depend, and challenge the structural inequalities that have historically limited women's freedom and economic security.

The Alliance is committed to a society in which all women are free, secure, economically independent and equal participants in the life of Aotearoa New Zealand.