

NZMS Council Statement on Women in Mathematics

The New Zealand Mathematical Society is concerned about under-representation of women in the mathematics community, from participation in mathematics classes in high school through to the higher levels of research and teaching. This situation results in missed opportunities for the advancement of mathematics.



Under-representation occurs for a variety of reasons, including:

- There is unconscious bias in the assessment of the talents and inclinations of girls, often resulting in them being directed toward “people-based” subject choices and careers and away from the mathematical sciences;
- There is unconscious bias in the tasks that women mathematicians are asked to undertake, often resulting in them being directed toward “people-based” activities rather than “research-based” activities, sometimes to the detriment of their own professional development.
- Women are more likely to have had disrupted career patterns or to have worked part-time on account of child-rearing and family responsibilities;
- Women are often overlooked when names are sought for speakers or for prizes;
- Those few women who reach the higher levels are disproportionately called on to sit on committees etc., which leaves less time for developing their own research and teaching.

The Society recognises the need to give active consideration to ensuring that all people are treated equally in their prospects, recognition and progression. Such disadvantages as do occur are often the unintentional outcome of the formulation of regulations and procedures which do not give adequate attention to the needs of people in such positions.

Accordingly, the Society will:

- ensure an appropriate gender balance on its committees and working groups, keeping in mind that diversity in decision-making bodies must be balanced against the risk of overburden to those in minority groups;
- keep under review the regulations governing its membership, prizes, awards and grants to ensure that they do not inadvertently deter or fail to recognize people with non-standard career patterns;
- actively encourage and facilitate the nomination of women for its prizes and awards, and ensure that it considers women when it is proposing nominees for external prizes and positions;
- ensure appropriate numbers of women speakers in its meetings and workshops;
- require that the organisers of conferences and activities who are given grants by the Society: invite both male and female speakers, or explain why this is not appropriate or possible; and give consideration to the provision of mechanisms to enable participation by people with children or family responsibilities;
- develop material and activities to promote equitable participation of women and girls as learners, teachers, researchers, and users of mathematics, at all levels;
- collect data and thereby monitor trends in the above.

The NZMS acknowledges the London Mathematical Society Council Statement on Women in Mathematics; we are grateful to the LMS for leading the way and for allowing us to adapt their statement.

Approved by NZMS Council: December 3, 2018.