

The Social Report 2002

te purongo oranga tangata 2002

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Summary

This report has described a range of desirable social outcomes and proposed a range of indicators to measure these outcomes. The indicators provide a snapshot of the current social health of the nation, and for some an indication of whether this aspect of the social health of the nation has improved or deteriorated; an indication of how New Zealand compares internationally; and an indication of how different groups in the population fare.

These findings are summarised below.

THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF NEW ZEALANDERS

The health indicators included in this report show some improvement in the health aspects of well-being of New Zealanders. Life expectancy is increasing steadily for all groups. With more people living well into old age, rates of disability are significant, although most New Zealanders can expect to live the great majority of their lives independently. Among younger people the birth rate has declined, and the youth suicide rate, which climbed steadily to 1995, dropped somewhat in 1996 and has been fairly stable since then, improving slightly in 1999. Fewer people smoke now than in the past, although smoking among Maori or Pacific peoples has remained relatively unchanged. These health indicators give cause for concern for the health status of Maori, and to a lesser extent for that of Pacific peoples. A comparison of this country's performance with that of other OECD countries suggests that while the health status of New Zealanders has been improving, improvements in comparable countries have been greater.

Educationally New Zealanders make a good start in life with very high levels of participation in early childhood education. Participation rates have been steadily improving particularly for Maori and Pacific children. The proportion of school leavers with higher school qualifications improved in the late 1980s, but has since been stable. The level of educational attainment of adults in the population improved throughout the 1990s. However, in 1997 almost half the adult population had literacy levels below those required to meet the demands of everyday life (as measured by the Adult International Literacy Survey). Participation rates in early childhood education compare very favourably with other OECD countries. The proportion of the population with an upper secondary school or a tertiary qualification is about average for OECD countries, and what evidence there is suggests that the rates of adult literacy in English in this country are also about average. New Zealand has high rates of participation in tertiary education internationally with nearly a quarter of 16-24 year-olds enrolled in a tertiary institution.

New Zealand is not always a safe place for its people, especially if they are young. About 10 children each year are killed by those caring for them, and the rate of substantiated reports of abuse and neglect of children has been fairly constant for a number of years. It is, however, difficult to interpret these figures as they reflect only the abuse that is reported. It is unclear how the rate of abuse compares with that of other countries, or whether New Zealanders are prepared to report child abuse more or less readily than do people in other countries. Many New Zealanders have been the victims of violent offending or property offending, and a small proportion of people have been repeatedly victimised. The rate of people killed or injured in motor vehicle crashes has been falling steadily since 1986, but is still higher than that in many comparable OECD countries.

Rates of employment and unemployment have fluctuated with the state of the economy. In the mid to late 1980s unemployment was low, but climbed rapidly to a peak in 1991 and has since fallen somewhat, although it has not returned to the 1986 level. Younger people, Maori and Pacific peoples are all amongst those more

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likely to be out of work. New Zealand's position relative to other OECD countries has also fluctuated from having one of the lowest unemployment rates 15 years ago, to having a rate well above average by 1992, and around or just below average over the past five years. Safety in the workplace is one measure of the quality of work. Certain groups are more likely to have accidents at work than others, notably men and Maori.

Included in this report as a measure of civic participation, voter turnout has gradually declined since 1986, although New Zealand's voter turnout is high when compared with many other western democracies. Complaints to the Human Rights Commission have increased steadily since 1986, and complaints to the Race Relations Conciliator have risen very sharply particularly in recent years. Complaints relate mostly to discrimination in employment on the grounds of disability and race, access to goods and services and sexual harassment. These trends can be difficult to interpret given legislative changes, expanding the grounds for complaints, and issues of under-reporting.

New Zealanders report a high level of participation in broadly defined arts and cultural activities. Local content on New Zealand television has increased since 1988 until in 1999 when it made up over a third of all programming. News and current affairs, information programmes and sports coverage account for nearly two-thirds of local content. Local content on New Zealand television accounts for a much smaller proportion of total transmission time than in Australia, Canada, Ireland or Norway. A quarter of Maori have conversational fluency in te reo Maori, although the number of fluent Maori speakers is much smaller, and many are older people. Participation in Maori medium education, however, is particularly strong at the early childhood level and significant at the primary school level.

After a brief downturn in the economy in the early 1990s, market income per person has grown since 1992. However, per capita growth since then has been slower than in many comparable countries. Despite this growth, income inequality is higher now than it was in the 1980s due largely to the rise in the incomes of higher earners, and an increase in the proportion of the population with low after-housing cost incomes. The economic indicators suggest that Maori and Pacific families, sole parent families and families with several children are more likely to be on a low income and to experience hardship, such as crowding or food insecurity, than other families.

In terms of social connection with others, almost all of the adult population has access to a telephone, and almost half has access to the Internet in their own home. Over half the population over 12 are involved in unpaid work outside the home, and high proportions of the population report that they participate in family activities and share meals with family or friends. The indicators suggest that social connectedness is less strong for older people than for others, but stronger for Maori and Pacific peoples than others.

The quality of the physical environment influences quality of life in a number of ways. The air quality in New Zealand's urban areas is generally good and is comparable with or better than a number of OECD countries. High levels of air pollution do sometimes occur, particularly in congested traffic corridors. A high proportion of the population has access to good quality drinking water, and that proportion is gradually increasing.

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Summary of indicators

Indicators	Current overall level of indicator (most recent year)	Variation within the population	Is this aspect of the quality of life improving overall?	How does this aspect of the quality of life compare with OECD countries?
Health				
Life expectancy at birth	75.2 years for males and 80.8 years for females (1998-00)	Lower for males, Maori and Pacific peoples. Variation between regions	Steadily improving	Average
Dependent disability	11% of the population with a disability requiring assistance (1996-97)	Higher rates amongst people aged 65 years and above and Maori	No trend available	No reliable comparison available
Independent life expectancy	64.6 years for males and 67.9 years for females (1996)	Lower for males and Maori	No trend available	No comparison available
Youth suicide	22.6 suicides per 100,000 young people aged 15-24 (1999)	Much higher rates for young men and for Maori but more attempted suicides by young women	Worsening to 1996 then stable, improving in 1999	Very poor
Births to young adolescents	8.6 births per 1,000 females aged 13-17 (2001)	Rates higher for Maori but declining faster. Variation between regions	Improving since mid-90s	Poor
Prevalence of cigarette smoking	25% of population aged 15 and over smoke cigarettes (2001)	Higher rates among young people, Maori, Pacific peoples and those living in deprived areas	Improving to 1991, steady since	Good for males, average for females
Knowledge and skills				
Participation in early childhood education	"Apparent" participation rate of 91% for 3 year olds and 99% for 4 year olds (2001)	Maori rates lower than non-Maori	Improving	Good
School leavers with higher school qualifications	64% of school leavers with at least Sixth Form Certificate (2000)	Proportions lower for males, Maori and Pacific young people	Improving to 1991, steady since	No comparison available
Educational attainment of the adult population	72.7% of the population aged 25-64 years with at least an upper secondary qualification (2001)	Proportions lower for older people, women as well as Maori and Pacific peoples	Improving	Average

Adult literacy skills in English	54% of population aged 16-65 have a level of literacy in English needed to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work. 51% meet the same standard for document literacy and 50% for quantitative (1996)	Literacy levels lower amongst older people, Maori and Pacific peoples and Other ethnic groups	No trend available	Average on document and quantitative. Good on prose
Participation in tertiary education	9.7% of population aged 16 and over enrolled in tertiary education institutions (2001)	Lower rates for males, students from poorer socio-economic communities, and those aged above 25	Improving slowly	Good
Safety and security				
Child abuse and neglect	5.5 substantiated notifications per 1,000 children aged 0-16 (2001)	Female and Maori children more likely to be assessed as abused or neglected	Trend cannot be reliably interpreted	No reliable comparison available
Criminal victimisation	8.2% of population aged over 15 years were a victim of violent criminal offending (1995)	Younger people, Maori, Pacific peoples and people of other ethnic groups more likely to have been a victim of violent offending	No trend available	No reliable comparison available
Road casualties	12.1 deaths per 100,000 of population (2000)	High rates amongst men, young people and those aged 65 and over. Also higher for Maori and Pacific per kilometres driven	Improving since 1986	Poor
Paid work				
Unemployment	5.3% of the labour force (2001)	Higher rates amongst young people, Maori, Pacific and Other ethnic groups. Variation between regions	Worsening to 1991 then improving but not to mid-80s levels	Average

Employment	71.8% of the population aged 15-64 years (2001)	Lower rates for young people, women, Maori, Pacific peoples and Other ethnic groups. Variation between regions	Worsening to 1992 then improving	Above average
Workplace injury claims	143 claims per 1,000 full time equivalent employees (2001)	Higher rates for men and Maori	No trend available	No comparison available
Civil, political and human rights				
Voter turnout	72.4% of the population eligible to vote (2002)	Non-voters more likely to be on lower incomes, younger people and Maori or Pacific people	Worsening	Good
Complaints to the Human Rights Commission and Race Relations Office	337 complaints to Human Rights Commission and 1,031 to Race Relations Office (2000)	Most complaints for sexual harassment, racial harassment, racial disharmony and discrimination in employment because of disability	Cannot be reliably interpreted	No comparison available
Culture and identity				
Participation in cultural and arts activities	93% of adult population took part in arts and cultural activities (1998)	Higher participation rates amongst young people and women	No trend available	No comparison available
Maori language speakers	25% of Maori report conversational fluency in Maori (2001)	Fluent speakers more likely to be older	No trend available	Not relevant
Maori and Pacific children receiving Maori medium and Pacific medium education	31% of Maori children in early childhood education are in ko-hanga reo (2001) 42% of Pacific children in early childhood education are in Pacific Islands language nests (2001) 17% of Maori school students involved in Maori medium education (2001)	Particularly high at pre-school level. Increasing proportion of Maori children have at least some preschool and school Maori medium education	Improved to early 90s then recent worsening for ko-hanga reo. Improvement for school students until mid 90s then steady	Not relevant

Local content programming on New Zealand television	37.2% of the prime time schedule (2001)	Not relevant	Improved to mid-90s then variable	Below average
Economic standard of living				
Market income per person	RGNDI of \$23,086 per capita (in constant 91/92 dollars) (2000)	Not measured	Improving	Below average and falling behind on GDP per capita
Income inequality	The household in the 80th percentile has an income 2.7 times the household in the bottom 20th percentile (2001)	Not relevant	Worsening	No comparison available
Population with low incomes	24% of population lives in economic family units with incomes below 60% of median (2001)	Higher rates among large families, sole parents, Maori or Pacific families, families from Other ethnic groups, families reliant on income tested benefits and families in rented dwellings	Worsening to 1994 then improving slowly to 1998 before worsening slightly	Average
Housing affordability	24% of households spend more than 30% of income on housing (2001).	More likely amongst Maori, Pacific peoples or Other ethnic groups	Worsening to 1998 then stable	No comparison available
Household crowding	3.4% of individuals living in households requiring two or more additional bedrooms (1996)	More common amongst families with young children, for people in rental housing and in South Auckland and Maori and Pacific peoples	No trend available	No comparison available
Food insecurity	13% of people reported that their household could afford to eat properly only sometimes (1997)	Higher rates for Maori and Pacific peoples	No trend available	No comparison available

Self-reported standard of living	8% of the population rate their own standard of living as low or fairly low (2000)	More likely to be reported among sole parent families and families with Maori, Pacific or non - European adults	No trend available	No comparison available
Social connectedness				
Unpaid work outside the home	59% of the population aged 12 and over spent some time during the last four weeks doing unpaid work outside the home (1999)	Women and Maori are more likely to undertake unpaid work outside the home	No trend available	No comparison available
Telephone and Internet access in the home	97% of adult population have access to telephone and 41% to Internet in their homes (2000)	Access less likely amongst Maori and Pacific families, families with unemployed adults and sole parent families	No trend available	Above average for Internet
Participation in family/wha-nau activities and regular contact with family/friends	71% of adults had family or friends over for dinner at least once a month in the previous year and 87% engage in family/wha-nau activities (2000)	Older people and Europeans/Pakeha less likely to be involved in family activities	No trend available	No comparison available
Membership of and involvement in groups	70% of adults belonged to community organisations or groups (1999)	Non-Maori less likely to belong to sports clubs and cultural organisations. Women more likely to belong to church groups, hobby groups and community service organisations. Men more likely to belong to sports clubs and unions.	No trend available	No comparison available
The environment				
Air quality	Carbon monoxide levels exceeded "action" threshold 1% of the time in Auckland and Christchurch (1999) and not at all in Waikato (1998)	Poorer in some urban areas, particularly in congested traffic corridors	Steady	Good

Drinking water quality	In 1999, 75% of the population had a water supply that conforms with the 1995 Drinking Water Standards	Not reported	Improving	Good
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