2004

the social report

report

te pūrongo oranga tangata

2004

indicators of social wellbeing in
New Zealand

contents

Ministerial Foreword

The Government is delighted to welcome the release of *The Social Report 2004*. The social report is an annual report that monitors progress in improving the wellbeing of New Zealanders across a wide range of outcomes.

Social reporting enables us to compare wellbeing in New Zealand with wellbeing in other countries and helps to identify key issues and areas where government action may be needed. The report provides greater transparency in government and stimulates public debate on the key issues facing New Zealand society.

This year's report is based on an expanded set of indicators which allow us to examine areas of wellbeing that were not within the scope of previous reports. This includes new indicators of leisure and recreation, work/life balance, trust between New Zealanders, and contact between young people and their parents.

The Social Report 2004 shows a steady improvement in the outcomes of New Zealanders across a wide range of areas. It is my view that recent Government policies have made an important contribution to these improvements. Moreover, announcements in the latest Budget in the areas of 'Working for Families', early childhood education, and housing, will further improve the lives of ordinary New Zealanders.

The Government is committed to investing in New Zealanders, and creating a prosperous and inclusive society in which social outcomes continue to improve. The social report is central to monitoring progress towards this commitment.

Steve Maharey
Minister for Social Development and Employment

Chief Executive's Preface

The Social Report 2004 describes the social health and wellbeing of New Zealand society. To plan where we are going in the future, we need to know where we are now, what has happened historically, and how outcomes are distributed across different communities.

Social problems have complex and interrelated causes that cut across the traditional boundaries of government agencies. By bringing together information from across these boundaries, the social report can assist government in developing integrated social policies to improve our quality of life.

The social report is a critical document to support social wellbeing. Not only does it set out a framework of outcomes across the broader social sector, it provides a measure of these outcomes to assess how well we are doing as a nation to address key social problems.

The Ministry of Social Policy produced the first social report in 2001. When *The Social Report 2003* was published, the Government agreed that the social report would become an annual publication.

The Social Report 2004 builds on previous reports and includes an additional leisure and recreation outcome domain and a number of new indicators. The changes are the outcome of consultation with the public and other government agencies, and the availability of new social wellbeing data.

I would like to acknowledge the work undertaken by both staff from within the Ministry of Social Development and others from across government departments who have given their time and expertise to produce this report. I would also like to thank those in the wider community without whose input the social report would not have been possible.

I hope that *The Social Report 2004* is of value to a wide audience and that future reports continue to bring together an array of information to provide a wide-ranging view of New Zealand and its people.

Peter Hughes
Chief Executive, Ministry of Social Development

HEALTH

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Introduction

The Social Report 2004

The social report is an annual publication that monitors the wellbeing of New Zealanders

The Social Report 2004 uses a set of statistical indicators to monitor trends across 10 discrete outcome domains. These 10 domains together provide a picture of overall wellbeing and quality of life in New Zealand.

The Social Report 2004 is the third in what has now become an annual series of reports on wellbeing in New Zealand and builds on the social monitoring framework first established by *The Social Report 2001.* We have added one new outcome domain to this year's report, and a number of new indicators that are based on information about how people see their own lives.

Purpose of the social report

The social report has four key aims:

- to provide and monitor over time measures of wellbeing and quality of life that complement existing economic and environmental indicators
- to allow us to assess how New Zealand compares with other countries on measures of wellbeing
- to provide greater transparency in government and to contribute to better informed public debate
- to help identify key issues and areas where we need to take action, which can in turn help with planning and decision-making.

The report enables us to examine the current level of wellbeing in New Zealand, how this has changed over time, and how different groups in the population are faring. The social report helps us to identify adverse trends in social outcomes at an early stage. The report itself cannot illuminate what is driving these trends but can point to the need for further research and action to address them.

Government policy, as well as families, communities, businesses and international factors, influence the outcomes we report on. The cross-cutting nature of many social issues means that the social report is not a tool for evaluating the effectiveness of any one particular government policy.

Social wellbeing

Social wellbeing comprises those aspects of life that we care about as a society

Wellbeing comes about as a result of those aspects of life that we as a society agree contribute to our individual happiness, quality of life, and welfare. To get a sense of the level of wellbeing in New Zealand and how it has changed over time, we need to identify what those aspects of life are.

Many of the constituent components of wellbeing will be common to all New Zealanders. For example, Professor Mason Durie has noted important outcomes for Māori are likely to include outcomes relevant to the rest of society such as good health and a high standard of living.[1] However, the needs and aspirations of different people and communities will also vary in important ways. For example, for people who get comfort and strength from their religion, an important outcome could be spiritual wellbeing, and this might mean for example, having access to a place of worship. Reflecting this diversity within the social report outcomes framework is not any easy thing to do.

The New Zealand Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988) is a useful source of research on what New Zealanders agree to constitute wellbeing and a decent quality of life. The Commission concluded that:

> *[New Zealanders] have said that they need a sound base of material support including housing, health, education and worthwhile work. A good society is one which allows people to be heard, to have a say in their future, and choices in life… [they] value an atmosphere of community responsibility and an environment of security. For them, social wellbeing includes that sense of belonging that affirms their dignity and identity and allows them to function in their everyday roles.[2]*

The Social Report 2004 identifies 10 components of wellbeing

This report breaks wellbeing down into 10 discrete components. We refer to these components as 'desired social outcomes'. The table below summarises these outcomes.

Table IN1

The 2004 Social Report outcome domains and statements of desired outcomes

OUTCOME DOMAIN	STATEMENT OF DESIRED OUTCOMES
Health	All people have the opportunity to enjoy long and healthy lives. Avoidable deaths, disease, and injuries are prevented. All people have the ability to function, participate, and live independently or appropriately supported in society.
Knowledge and Skills	All people have the knowledge and skills they need to participate fully in society. Lifelong learning and education are valued and supported. All people have the necessary skills to participate in a knowledge society.
Paid Work	All people have access to meaningful, rewarding and safe employment. An appropriate balance is maintained between paid work and other aspects of life.
Economic Standard of Living	New Zealand is a prosperous society, reflecting the value of both paid and unpaid work. All people have access to adequate incomes and decent, affordable housing that meets their needs. With an adequate standard of living, people are well placed to participate fully in society and to exercise choice about how to live their lives.
Civil and Political Rights	All people enjoy civil and political rights. Mechanisms to regulate and arbitrate people's rights in respect of each other are trustworthy.
Cultural Identity	New Zealanders share a strong national identity, have a sense of belonging, and value cultural diversity. All people are able to pass different cultural traditions on to future generations. Māori culture is valued and protected.
Leisure and Recreation	All people are satisfied with their participation in leisure and recreation activities. All people have adequate time in which they can do what they want to do, and can access an adequate range of different opportunities for leisure and recreation.
Physical Environment	The natural and built environment in which people live is clean, healthy, and beautiful. All people are able to access natural areas and public spaces.
Safety	All people enjoy physical safety and feel secure. People are free from victimisation, abuse, violence and avoidable injury.
Social Connectedness	People enjoy constructive relationships with others in their families, whānau, communities, iwi and workplaces. Families support and nurture those in need of care. New Zealand is an inclusive society where people are able to access information and support.

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Nine of these domains were selected for use in *The Social Report 2001*. Stakeholder consultation after the publication of *The Social Report 2001* revealed general public support for the chosen domains, but also backing for a number of changes. The majority of these changes were incorporated into *The Social Report 2003* and are summarised in Appendix One. However, the most significant recommendation, the addition of a new leisure and recreation domain, could not be implemented until this year because of a lack of suitable data from which to derive indicators in this domain. We will continue to review the choice of outcome domains and indicators as part of the annual process of producing the social report each year.

The outcome domains are interconnected. Doing well or poorly in one domain is often likely to impact upon performance in another outcome domain. For example, participation in leisure and recreation is a good thing in itself, but it may also lead to improved physical and mental health, and better social networks.

Social indicators

Progress towards the desired outcomes within each domain is measured using a set of social indicators

Social indicators are signposts that help us to measure progress towards a desired outcome. Indicators are selected because they either directly measure the outcome of interest (for example the employment rate in the Paid Work domain), or because they are known to be a good predictor of, or are associated with, that outcome (for example, the prevalence of smoking in the Health domain).

The use of social indicators means that we can measure trends over time by reducing the sizeable body of statistical information within an outcome domain to a few key measures. For example, we use five indicators to represent the desired outcomes in the Knowledge and Skills domain. Though the indicators do not in detail describe the state of knowledge and skill acquisition in New Zealand, they identify key trends in this area.

One of the key features of a social indicator is that any change in an indicator can be interpreted as either progress towards, or a movement away from, the desired outcome. This distinguishes social indicators from some social statistics, which do not lend themselves easily to such an interpretation. For example, a change in the average age at which New Zealand women give birth to their first child, while an important social statistic, can not be said to be necessarily 'good' or 'bad' for social wellbeing.

Indicators have been selected against the following criteria. These criteria were first established in *The 2001 Social Report.*

- *relevant to the social outcome of interest* - the indicator should be the most accurate statistic for measuring both the level and extent of change in the social outcome of interest, and it should adequately reflect what it is intended to measure

- *based on broad support* - ideally there should be wide support for the indicators chosen so they won't be regularly changed

- *grounded in research* - there should be sound evidence on key influences and factors affecting outcomes

- *able to be disaggregated* - the data needs to be broken down by age, sex, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and region so we can compare outcomes for different groups
- *consistent over time* - the usefulness of indicators is related directly to the ability to track trends over time, so indicators should be temporally consistent
- *statistically sound* - the measurement of indicators needs to be methodologically rigorous
- *timely* - data needs to be collected and reported regularly and frequently to ensure that indicators are reporting up-to-date information
- *allows international comparisons* - indicators need to reflect the social goals of New Zealanders but also need to be consistent with those used in international indicator programmes so we can make comparisons.

Inevitably some indicators perform well on some criteria, and poorly against others. Trade-offs are necessary as a consequence. For example, we base most of the economic standard of living indicators on Household Economic Survey data, rather than data from the Income Survey, because it provides a more accurate measure of annual income and is hence a more relevant indicator to the outcome of interest. As a consequence however, we are only able to update these indicators on a three-yearly rather than an annual basis.

In some outcome domains, and in particular Social Connectedness and Cultural Identity, there is relatively poor quality data, and we have had to include lower quality indicators as a consequence. In other outcome domains, such as in health, where there is an abundance of good data, we have had to exclude some good indicators to ensure consistently sized sets of indicators across the domains.

Data limitations mean that the indicators cannot be broken down by key population sub-groups

Ideally, each indicator used in the report would be able to be broken down by sub-populations of interest, such as age, sex, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability status, and region. In the cases of age, sex and ethnicity (subject to the caveat below), most indicators can be disaggregated. The majority of the indicators rely on data sources that do not allow us to disaggregate by socio-economic status, disability status, and region, because either they do not collect this type of information, or because they are based on sample sizes too small to permit disaggregation. More detailed information on the geographical distribution of wellbeing can be found in *The Quality of Life in Big Cities of New Zealand* report which uses alternative data sources and indicators to look at quality of life at a regional level.[3] The same issue also arises when it comes to breaking down data by small ethnic sub-populations.

Analysis by group highlights differences between group averages. In most cases, however, the differences between members of any one group will be much greater than differences between group averages.

It is worth noting that disaggregation by ethnicity is problematic. Definitions of ethnicity are inconsistent across data sources and change over time. In most instances, the way in which we present the data is constrained by the way in which it has been collected.

There are 43 indicators in this year's report, including new indicators that are based on information about how people view their own lives

This year's report is an expanded version of the 2003 edition (a full summary of the changes that have been made to this year's report is provided in Appendix One). A number of new subjective indicators have been included that allow us to get a better sense of the more intangible, non-economic dimensions of wellbeing which can be difficult to discern using traditional social statistics.

Of the 43 indicators included in the report, 17 can not be updated this year because they are either based on surveys that are not repeated annually, or because new data was not available in time for inclusion in this report. However, there are additional disaggregations in this year's report for some of the indicators that haven't been updated.

The indicators for *The Social Report 2004* are set out below. New indicators are marked by a triangle (▲) and those that have not been updated are marked with an asterisk (*). Technical details about how the indicators are constructed can be found in Appendix Two.

Table IN2   **The 2004 Social Report indicators**

Health	1. Health expectancy
	2. Life expectancy
	3. Disability requiring assistance*
	4. Suicide
	5. Prevalence of cigarette smoking
	6. Obesity* (new information on child obesity is provided)
Knowledge and Skills	7. Participation in early childhood education
	8. School leavers with higher qualifications
	9. Educational attainment of the adult population
	10. Adult literacy skills in English*
	11. Participation in tertiary education
Paid Work	12. Unemployment
	13. Employment
	14. Average hourly earnings▲
	15. Workplace injury claims*
	16. Satisfaction with work/life balance
Economic Standard of Living	17. Market income per person
	18. Income inequality*
	19. Population with low incomes*
	20. Population with low living standards*
	21. Housing affordability*
	22. Household crowding*
Civil and Political Rights	23. Voter turnout*
	24. Representation of women in government*
	25. Perceived discrimination
	26. Absence of corruption▲
Cultural Identity	27. Local content on New Zealand television
	28. Māori language speakers*
	29. Language retention▲
Leisure and Recreation	30. Satisfaction with leisure▲
	31. Participation in sport and active leisure▲
	32. Experience of cultural activities*
Physical Environment	33. Air quality
	34. Drinking water quality
Safety	35. Child abuse and neglect
	36. Criminal victimisation*
	37. Perceptions of safety*
	38. Road casualties
Social Connectedness	39. Telephone and internet access in the home*
	40. Regular contact with family/friends*
	41. Trust in others▲
	42. Proportion of the population experiencing loneliness▲
	43. Contact between young people and their parents▲

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Structure of the report

The remainder of this report is divided into three sections. The first, the People section, provides background and contextual information on the size and composition of the New Zealand population.

The second section is the core of the report and is organised around the 10 outcome domains listed earlier. Within each outcome domain, there is a two-page summary for each indicator.

The final section, the Conclusion, looks across the report to provide an overview of social wellbeing in New Zealand. It summarises the current level of social wellbeing, and how this has changed over time. It compares New Zealand's performance with other OECD countries to identify areas where we perform well or where there is scope for improvement.

The future

A comprehensive social survey programme will enable us to develop new indicators and to update more of the current set of indicators annually

Statistics New Zealand has undertaken a major review of its social statistics programme which should in the long term lead to the more regular collection of a wider set of social statistics. The Ministry of Social Development is also undertaking a joint quality of life survey with local government which should support the alignment of outcomes and indicators between local government reporting and the social report.

We welcome your feedback and comment

As previously noted, we now produce the social report on an annual basis. Work will continue to refine the desired social outcomes and indicators, and we welcome your feedback and suggestions as to how you think this might be done. Comments can be made to:

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