

DESIRED OUTCOMES

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.

Social Connectedness

INTRODUCTION

Social connectedness refers to the relationships people have with others.

People are defined by their social roles, whether as partners, parents, children, friends, caregivers, teammates, staff or employers, or a myriad of other roles. Relationships give people support, happiness, contentment and a sense they belong and have a role to play in society.¹⁰⁷ They also mean people have support networks in place they can call on for help during hard times.

Social connectedness also refers to people joining together to achieve shared goals that benefit each other and society as a whole – this may range from working together as part of a business to contributing to their communities through voluntary groups.

One of the most important aspects of social connectedness is the relationship people have with a spouse or a partner. Studies have consistently found having a partner contributes to a person's reported level of wellbeing.¹⁰⁸

Several studies have demonstrated links between social connectedness and the performance of the economy and positive outcomes for individual health and wellbeing.¹⁰⁹

Social connectedness is fostered when family relationships are positive, and when people have the skills and opportunities to make friends and to interact constructively with others. Good health, employment, and feeling safe and secure all increase people's chances of developing positive relationships.

INDICATORS

Five indicators are used to measure New Zealand’s levels of social connectedness. These are: telephone and internet access in the home, regular contact with family/friends, trust in others, the proportion of the population experiencing loneliness and contact between young people and their parents.

Together, the five indicators measure the opportunities for and the actual levels of connection between people, both within their immediate social groups and within the wider community. Access to the internet is significant. It improves people’s ability to access information and, as a consequence, it provides more opportunities for people to participate in society. Both the telephone and the internet enable people to keep in touch without seeing each other face to face. This means social connectedness can be maintained when people are in different cities or even in different countries. It also means new social networks can be opened up across geographical boundaries between people who may never have met.

For most people, social networks centre on family and friends. The second indicator measures the proportion of people who keep in touch with family and friends by having them over for a meal at least once a month.

Trust in others, the third indicator, measures the extent to which people expect others to act fairly and honestly towards them. High levels of trust enhance wellbeing by facilitating co-operative behaviour among people who otherwise do not know each other. Trust also enhances people’s ability to develop positive relationships with others.

The fourth indicator measures levels of loneliness. Feelings of isolation and loneliness undermine overall wellbeing and can be detrimental to people’s physical and emotional health, resulting in stress, anxiety or depression.

The final indicator, the proportion of young people who report getting enough time each week with their parents, is a measure of the extent to which people in need of care and nurturing receive that support.

HEALTH

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

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ECONOMIC STANDARD OF LIVING

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

CULTURAL IDENTITY

LEISURE AND RECREATION

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SAFETY

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Telephone and internet access in the home

DEFINITION

The proportion of the population with telephone access (either landline or cellphone) and internet access in the home.

RELEVANCE

Access to a telephone and access to communication via the internet helps to maintain social connectedness. It enables social contact with friends and family in the absence of frequent face-to-face contact. The telephone also ensures an adequate line of communication in times of need and emergency.

The internet is an important means of accessing a wide range of information and services. People who are unable to access information technologies or who are without the skills to use them run the risk of being excluded from possible social, educational, cultural and economic benefits. This may have adverse effects on their educational outcomes and employment prospects.

CURRENT LEVEL AND TRENDS

In 2006, 98 per cent of New Zealand residents lived in households with telephones, an increase from 96 per cent in 2001. The 2006 Census, for the first time, collected information separately on cellphones and landline telephones. It showed that 79 per cent of people lived in households with cellphones available in the dwelling all or most of the time, while 92 per cent lived in households with landline telephones.

At the 2006 Census, 66 per cent of people lived in households with access to the internet, a considerable increase from 43 per cent in 2001.

AGE AND SEX DIFFERENCES

There are only minor differences in telephone access by age and sex. Access increases slightly with age, with those aged 45 years and over being the most likely to have telephones in the household (99 per cent). However, the gaps between younger and older people narrowed between 2001 and 2006.

Similarly, there are only minor age differences in the level of internet access up to the age of 65 years but the level falls considerably for people aged over 65 years. In 2006, between 68 per cent and 71 per cent of age groups below 65 years lived in households with internet access, compared with just 39 per cent of those aged 65 years and over. However, between 2001 and 2006 those aged 65 years and over experienced a proportionately greater increase in internet access than younger people.

There is very little difference in telephone or internet access between the sexes, although women are slightly more likely than men to have telephone access and slight less likely to have internet access. These differences are more pronounced at older ages, particularly in the case of the internet. In 2006, 45 per cent of males and 35 per cent of females aged 65 years and over had internet access.

Table SC1.1 **Proportion (%) of the population with telephone and internet access in the home, by population characteristics, 2001 and 2006**

	Telephone access		Internet access	
	2001	2006	2001	2006
Age				
0–14 years	94.6	97.6	45.6	69.1
15–24 years	95.3	97.6	47.5	68.0
25–44 years	96.1	98.0	47.0	70.8
45–64 years	97.7	98.6	45.6	70.9
65 years and over	98.4	98.9	16.4	39.2
Total	96.3	98.1	42.9	66.4
Sex				
Male	96.0	97.9	44.1	67.2
Female	96.5	98.3	41.8	65.5
Ethnicity				
European	98.1	98.9	45.5	70.4
Māori	88.3	94.4	25.3	46.7
Pacific peoples	87.0	95.1	20.4	37.7
Asian	97.8	98.7	61.5	77.4
Other	97.3	98.5	55.6	72.9
Family type				
One parent with dependent children	87.3	95.1	27.9	50.3
Two parents with dependent children	96.5	99.1	54.9	79.3
All families with dependent children	93.8	98.0	47.0	71.2

Source: Statistics New Zealand, Census of Population and Dwellings, 2001 and 2006

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

Māori and Pacific peoples have the lowest levels of household access to telephones and the internet. However, they experienced by far the greatest increases in both these areas between 2001 and 2006.

Access to telephones increased from 88 per cent to 94 per cent among Māori and from 87 per cent to 95 per cent among Pacific peoples between 2001 and 2006. Telephone access for European, Asian and other ethnic groups increased slightly over this period, reaching 99 per cent in 2006. In 2006, the difference in telephone access between Māori and Pacific peoples and the total population was larger for landline telephones than for cellphones.

Between 2001 and 2006 access to the internet increased from 25 per cent to 47 per cent among Māori and from 20 per cent to 38 per cent among Pacific peoples. These levels were still well below those of Asians (77 per cent), the Other ethnic group (73 per cent) and Europeans (70 per cent) in 2006.

DIFFERENCES BY FAMILY TYPE

Among families with dependent children, 98 per cent had telephone access and 71 per cent had internet access in their homes in 2006. One-parent families were less likely than two-parent families to have access to either telephones or the internet, but they experienced proportionately greater increases in access between 2001 and 2006. In 2006, 95 per cent of one-parent families and 99 per cent of two-parent families had access to telephones while 50 per cent of one-parent families and 79 per cent of two-parent families had access to the internet.

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

International comparisons show the proportion of households with internet access, rather than the proportion of people living in households with internet access. By this measure, New Zealand compares relatively favourably with other countries, ranking 13th out of 30 OECD countries surveyed between 2005 and 2007. With 65 per cent of households having internet access in 2006, New Zealand's figure is higher than the OECD median of 62 per cent. New Zealand's figure is similar to that of Australia (64 per cent in 2006), lower than those of the United Kingdom (67 per cent in 2007) and Canada (68 per cent in 2006), but higher than that of the United States (62 per cent in 2007).¹¹⁰

Regular contact with family/friends

DEFINITION

The proportion of the population who had family or friends over for a meal at least once a month, as measured by the New Zealand Living Standards Surveys.

RELEVANCE The extent to which people are in regular contact with family and friends is an important reflection of social connectedness.

CURRENT LEVEL AND TRENDS Seventy per cent of adults aged 18 years and over had friends or family over for a meal at least once a month in 2004. This was about the same level as in 2000 when 69 per cent had family or friends over for a meal.

Table SC2.1 **Proportion (%) of the population having family/friends over for a meal, by population characteristics, 2000 and 2004**

	Have family/friends over for a meal	
	2000	2004
Population estimates		
Total population aged 18 years and over	68.6	70.0
Age groupings		
Adults aged 18–64 years	70.0	71.1
Adults 65 years and over	60.2	63.7
Economic family ethnicity		
Māori economic family	70.2	73.3
Pacific economic family	79.5	69.9
European economic family	65.8	65.8
Other ethnic group economic family	68.2	78.0
Families with dependent children		
One-parent with dependent children	64.8	64.8
Two-parent with dependent children	70.8	73.4
All families with dependent children	69.1	70.8
Family employment/income status		
18–64 year olds, main income earner in full-time employment	69.4	72.4
18–64 year olds, main income earner not in full-time employment	67.7	62.9
65 year olds and over, with employment or other income (above New Zealand Superannuation)	75.3	79.7
65 year olds and over, with little or no other income (above New Zealand Superannuation)	56.5	61.8

Sources: Ministry of Social Development (2003a); Ministry of Social Development (2006)

AGE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES

People aged 65 years and over who had employment income or other income in addition to New Zealand Superannuation were the group most likely to have friends or family over for a meal (80 per cent). In contrast, those in the same age group with little income above New Zealand Superannuation were the least likely to have people over for a meal (62 per cent). Similarly, among adults aged under 65 years, families where the main earner in the family was not in full-time employment were less likely than those with the main earner in full-time employment to have people over for dinner (63 per cent compared with 72 per cent).

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

According to the 2004 New Zealand Living Standards Survey, people living in Other ethnic group economic families were the most likely to have friends or family over for a meal at least once a month (78 per cent). Māori were also slightly more likely than average to do this (73 per cent). Those living in European families had below-average levels of having people over for a meal (66 per cent), while Pacific families had average levels (70 per cent). Between 2000 and 2004, the biggest increase in the proportion of families having friends or family over for a meal was among Other ethnic group families (up 10 percentage points) and the biggest decrease was among Pacific families (down 10 percentage points).

DIFFERENCES BY FAMILY TYPE

Sole-parent families were less likely than two-parent families to have friends or family over for a meal (65 per cent compared to 73 per cent). Two-parent families were slightly more likely to have friends or family over for a meal in 2004 than in 2000, but there was no change for sole-parent families.

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Trust in others

DEFINITION

The proportion of the population aged 15 years and over reporting that people can “almost always” or “usually” be trusted, in the Quality of Life Survey.

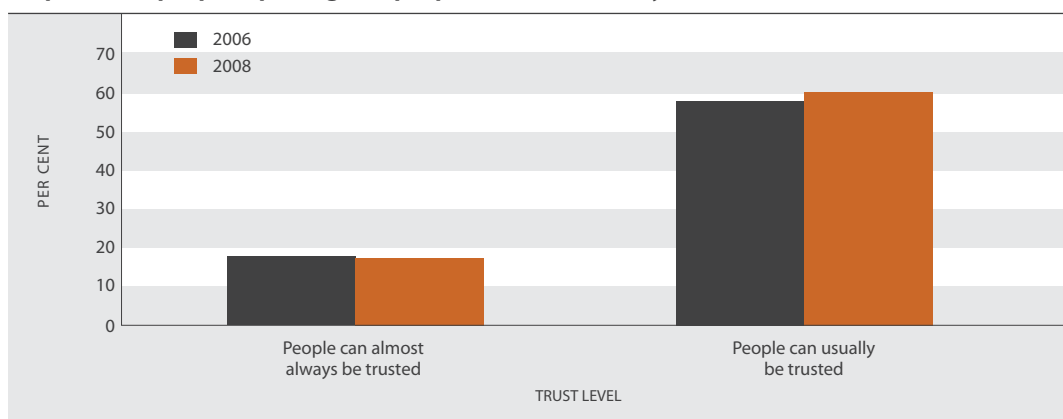
RELEVANCE

Trust in others is an important indicator of how people feel about members of their community. High levels of trust facilitate co-operative behaviour among people and contribute to people’s ability to develop positive relationships with others.

CURRENT LEVEL AND TRENDS

In 2008, 78 per cent of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over said that people can be trusted, a similar proportion to that recorded 2006 (76 per cent). Those who said that people can usually be trusted made up the largest group (60 per cent), while those who said that people can almost always be trusted made up 17 per cent. The corresponding figures for 2006 were 58 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively.

Figure SC3.1 **Proportion of people reporting that people can be trusted, by level of trust, 2006 and 2008**



Source: Quality of Life Survey 2006; Quality of Life Survey 2008

AGE AND SEX DIFFERENCES

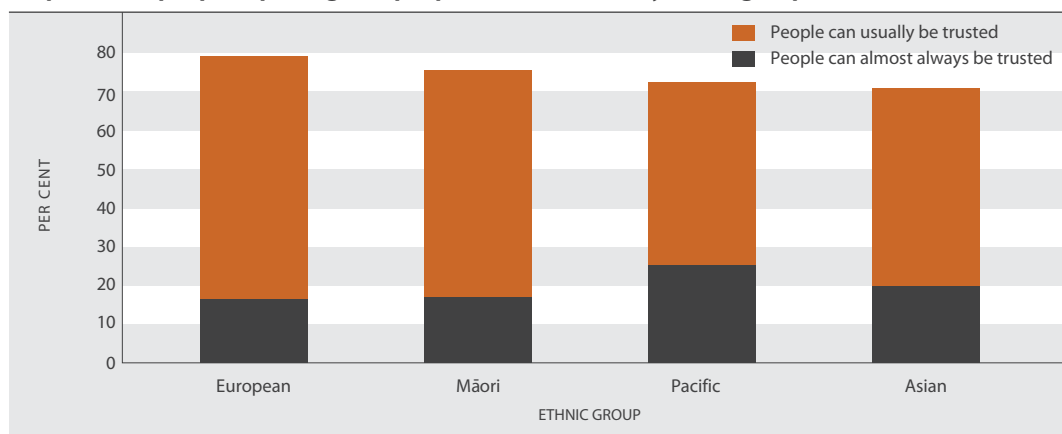
The proportion of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over reporting that people can be trusted was similar for males (78 per cent) and females (77 per cent). Eighteen per cent of males and 17 per cent of females agreed that people can almost always be trusted, while 60 per cent of both males and females responded that people can usually be trusted.

Young adults aged 15–24 years (74 per cent) were slightly less likely than people aged 25 years and over (78 per cent) to report that people can be trusted.

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

People of European ethnicity reported a slightly higher level of trust in people (79 per cent) than Māori (75 per cent). Pacific peoples (72 per cent) and those of Asian ethnicity (71 per cent) had the lowest proportions who said that people could be trusted.

Figure SC3.2 **Proportion of people reporting that people can be trusted, by ethnic group and level of trust, 2008**

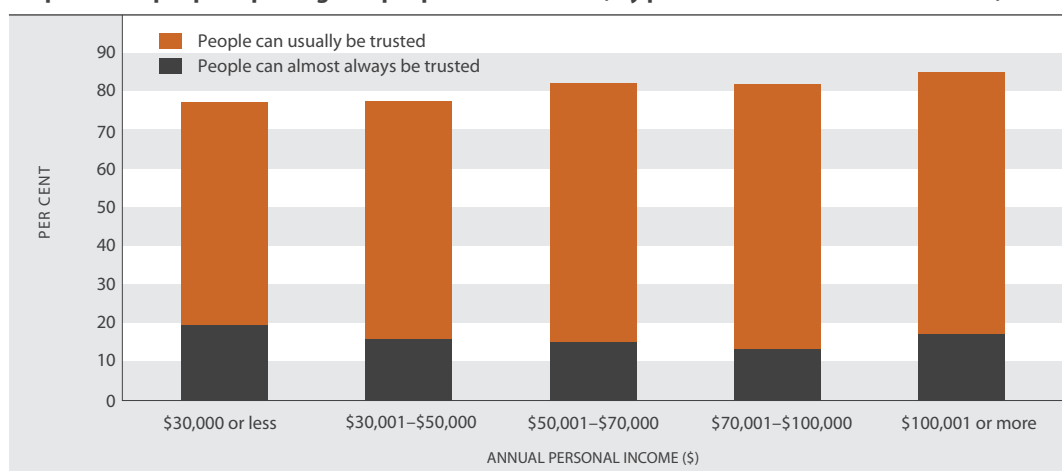


Source: Quality of Life Survey 2008

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES

Across all income levels, a large majority of New Zealanders indicated that people can be trusted. Overall levels of reported trust increased with personal income levels. People with incomes over \$100,000 reported the highest overall level of trust (84 per cent), while people with incomes of \$30,000 or less reported the lowest level (76 per cent).

Figure SC3.3 **Proportion of people reporting that people can be trusted, by personal income and level of trust, 2008**



Source: Quality of Life Survey 2008

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Across all New Zealand’s big cities, a large majority of New Zealanders indicated that people can be trusted. Reported levels of trust were highest in Wellington (87 per cent) and lowest in Manukau (68 per cent).

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

New Zealanders’ level of trust in other people in 2006 compared well with those of people in European Union countries in 2005, and to that of people in Canada in 2003. Out of 25 OECD countries for which there was data, New Zealand had the sixth highest reported level of trust in other people¹¹¹

New Zealand’s reported level of trust in other people (76 per cent in 2006) was above the median of 56 per cent for these 25 OECD countries. Norway had the highest reported level of trust in people (87 per cent) followed by Denmark and Sweden (both 84 per cent). Canada (53 per cent) and the United Kingdom (55 per cent) reported lower levels of trust in other people than New Zealand.

Loneliness

DEFINITION

The proportion of people aged 15 years and over who reported feeling isolated or lonely “sometimes”, “most of the time” or “always” during the previous 12 months, in the Quality of Life Survey.

RELEVANCE

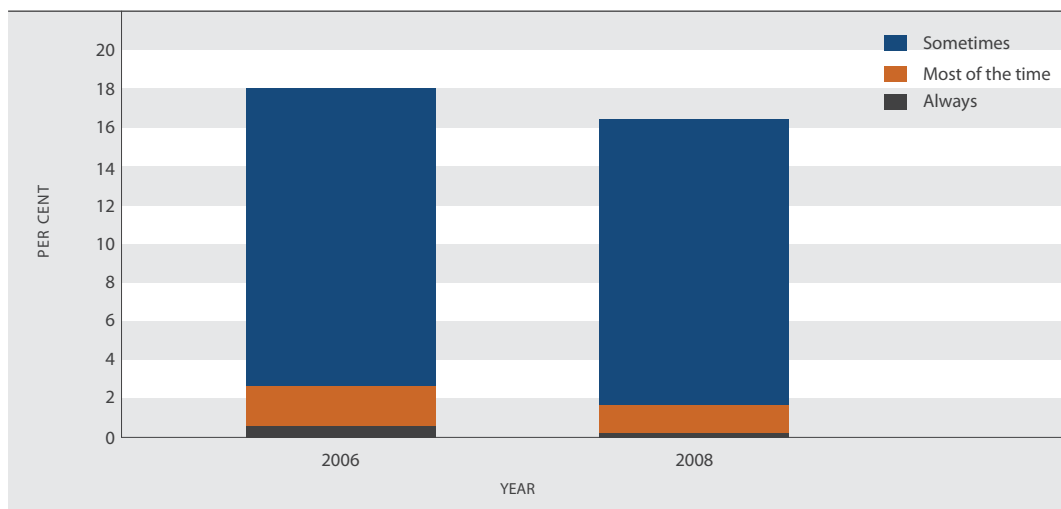
Social contact is fundamentally important to people: humans are social creatures. Self-assessed loneliness is a proxy indicator of whether people are happy with the amount and quality of social contact they have. As well as being an undesirable state in itself, loneliness may also contribute to poor outcomes in other areas, including adverse health problems such as stress, anxiety or depression.

CURRENT LEVEL AND TRENDS

In 2008, 16 per cent of New Zealanders reported feeling lonely during the last 12 months. Fifteen per cent said they felt lonely sometimes, while fewer than 2 per cent said they were lonely most of the time or that they always felt lonely. In 2006, 18 per cent of New Zealanders reported feeling lonely, similar to the level in 2008.

Feelings of isolation or loneliness are strongly associated with self-rated health and overall life satisfaction. Those who rated their health as “excellent” or “very good” were far less likely to have felt lonely in the past 12 months (10 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively), than those who rated their health as “poor” (43 per cent) or who were dissatisfied with their life (61 per cent).

Figure SC4.1 **Proportion of people experiencing loneliness, 2006 and 2008**

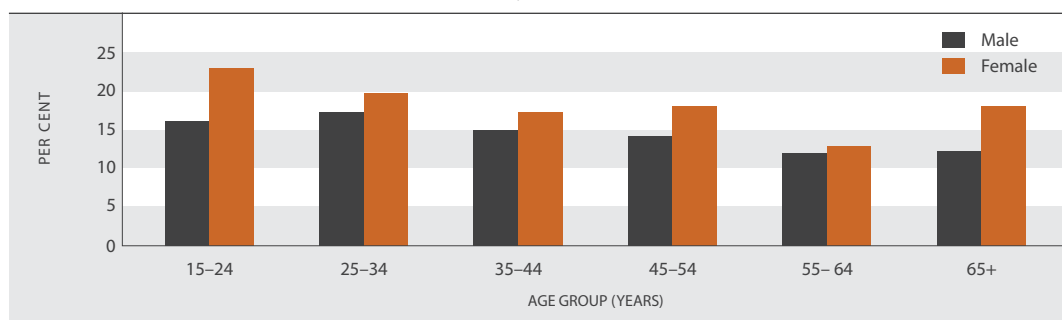


Source: Quality of Life Survey 2006; Quality of Life Survey 2008

AGE AND SEX DIFFERENCES

In 2008, females (18 per cent) were more likely than males (14 per cent) to have reported feeling lonely sometimes, most of the time, or always, during the last 12 months. This was the case across all age groups, particularly among those aged 15–24 years and 65 years and over.

Loneliness is most prevalent among females aged 15–24 years (23 per cent), followed by females aged 25–34 years (20 per cent). Levels of loneliness were lowest among males aged 55–64 years, males aged 65 years and over (both 12 per cent) and females aged 55–64 years (13 per cent).

Figure SC4.2 **Proportion of people experiencing loneliness, by age and sex, 2008**

Source: Quality of Life Survey 2008

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

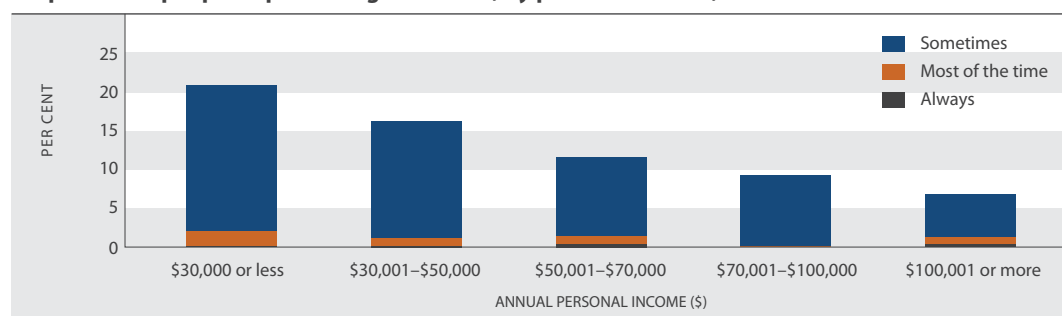
Europeans reported the lowest rate of loneliness with 15 per cent reporting they had felt isolated or lonely in the last 12 months. In comparison, 18 per cent of Māori, 23 per cent of Pacific peoples and 24 per cent of Asian peoples reported having felt isolated or lonely in the past year.

HOUSEHOLD TYPE DIFFERENCES

People who live in one-person households and one-parent-with-children (aged under 18 years) households reported higher levels of loneliness (both 30 per cent) than other household types. People in couple-only households had the lowest level of loneliness among household types (9 per cent).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES

Reported loneliness declines as personal income rises. People with personal incomes of \$30,000 or less reported higher rates of loneliness than those with higher incomes. Twenty-one per cent of people with incomes of \$30,000 or less reported having felt isolated or lonely in the past 12 months, compared with 9 per cent of those with personal incomes between \$70,000 and \$100,000, and 7 per cent of those with personal incomes over \$100,000.

Figure SC4.3 **Proportion of people experiencing loneliness, by personal income, 2008**

Source: Quality of Life Survey 2008

REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

People living in Rodney had the lowest reported level of loneliness (12 per cent). The cities of Manukau, Hamilton, Tauranga, Auckland and Waitakere had the highest levels of loneliness, with between 19 per cent and 20 per cent of people reporting they felt lonely sometimes, most of the time or always.

Contact between young people and their parents

DEFINITION

The proportion of secondary school students aged 12–18 years who said they get enough time with Mum and/or Dad (or someone who acts as Mum and/or Dad), most of the time, as reported in the Youth2000 and Youth'07 Surveys.

RELEVANCE

Healthy relationships are built through both the quantity and quality of time spent together. Having a close and caring relationship with a parent is one of the most important predictors of good health and wellbeing for young people.¹¹²

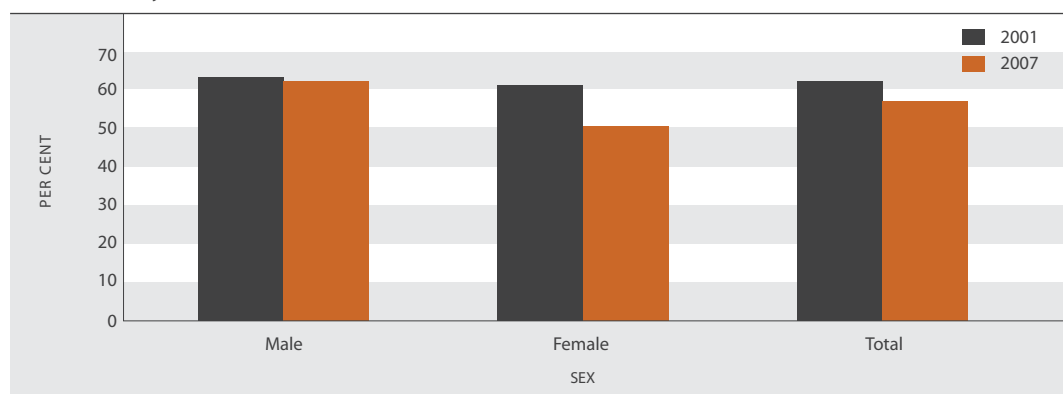
CURRENT LEVEL AND TRENDS

In 2007, 57 per cent of secondary school students reported that they get enough time with at least one parent most of the time. This was a smaller proportion than in 2001 (62 per cent).¹¹³

About half of the students (46 per cent) felt they get enough time with their mothers most of the time, while fewer students (39 per cent) felt they get enough time with their fathers.

Of those students who did not get enough time with their parents, the most common reason reported was that the parent was at work. Seventy-two per cent of students who lacked time with their fathers gave this reason, as did 62 per cent of those who lacked time with their mothers. Other common reasons were that the parent was busy with housework, other children or family members (particularly mothers), and that the parent was out or not living with them (particularly fathers).

Figure SC5.1 **Proportion of secondary school students who said they get enough time with their parent(s) most of the time, by sex, 2001 and 2007**



Source: Adolescent Health Research Group (2003, 2008b)

AGE DIFFERENCES Younger students were more likely than older students to report that most of the time they get enough time with their Mum and most of the time they get enough time with their Dad. These differences remain after adjusting for sex, ethnicity and socio-economic differences. Across all age groups, students were more likely to report that they get enough time with Mum than with Dad.

Table SC5.1 **Proportion (%) of secondary school students who get enough time with their mother or father most of the time, by age, 2007 (with 95% confidence intervals below)**

Parent	Age of student					Total 12–18 years
	12–13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17–18 years	
Mother	48.7	47.3	47.1	42.7	44.4	46.2
	46.3–51.0	44.8–49.8	44.7–49.4	39.8–45.6	42.0–46.8	44.8–47.6
Father	43.5	40.7	38.4	35.6	36.0	39.0
	41.4–45.5	38.2–43.2	36.0–40.9	32.9–38.3	32.9–39.0	37.6–40.4

Source: Adolescent Health Group (2008b) pp 43, 45

Note: If the respective confidence intervals (in brackets) do not overlap, the difference between rates is likely to be statistically significant

SEX DIFFERENCES In 2007, more male students (62 per cent) than female students (50 per cent) reported that most of the time they get enough time with at least one parent. This difference remains after adjusting for age, ethnicity and socio-economic differences. In 2001, there was no significant difference by sex.

The proportion of female students reporting they get enough time with their parents fell between 2001 and 2007 (from 61 per cent to 50 per cent), but there was very little change for male students over this period.

Both males and females were more likely to state they get enough time with Mum than with Dad.

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES Sixty-one per cent of New Zealand European students reported that most of the time they get enough time with Mum and/or Dad. Fewer Māori students (51 per cent), Pacific students (49 per cent) and Asian students (51 per cent) reported that most of the time they get enough time with Mum and/or Dad. These differences remain after adjusting for age, sex and socio-economic differences.