

DESIRED OUTCOMES

People enjoy constructive relationships with others in their families, whanau, communities, iwi and workplaces. They are able to participate in society through sports, arts, and other recreational activities. Contributions to social connectedness through unpaid work and caring are valued.

Social Connectedness

INTRODUCTION

Social connectedness refers to the relationships people have with others and the benefits these bring to individuals and society.

The desired outcomes refer to three key aspects of social connectedness. The first is the quality of relationships, the second is the ability to participate in a wide variety of social roles, and the third is the value society places on caring and nurturing roles that might have no measured economic benefit but play a vital part in promoting wellbeing and strengthening communities.

Social connectedness is integral to wellbeing. People are defined by their social roles, whether as partners, parents, children, friends, caregivers, team-mates, staff or employers, or myriad other roles. Relationships give people support, happiness, contentment and a sense they belong and have a role to play in society.⁶⁸ They mean people can call on help during hard times.

Social connectedness also refers to people joining to achieve shared goals which benefit each other and society as a whole - ranging from working together as part of business and paid employment 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 partner. Studies have consistently found that having a partner contributes to a person's reported level of wellbeing.⁶⁹

Several studies have demonstrated links between social connectedness and the performance of the economy as well as positive outcomes for individual health and wellbeing.⁷⁰

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. There can be many barriers to social connectedness. The tendency to make connections outside the family varies between cultures and communities, and factors such as language differences, high levels of inequality, and tensions between ethnic groups can create barriers between people.

INDICATORS

Four indicators are used to measure New Zealand's levels of social connectedness. These indicators do not directly measure the *quality* of contact between people. We currently do not have information on the quality of the relationship people have with friends, partners, children, family, or co-workers.

Together, the four indicators used here measure opportunities for and actual levels of connection between people, both within people's immediate social groups and with the wider community. The indicators are: access to the internet; unpaid work outside the home; participation in family/whānau activities and regular contact with family/friends; and membership and involvement in groups.

Access to the internet is significant because it allows people to keep in touch without seeing each other face to face. This means social connectedness can be maintained even when people are in different cities or even countries. It also means new social networks can be opened up between people who may never have met, crossing geographical boundaries.

Time spent on unpaid work outside the home is an indicator of people's willingness and ability to act for others and to enhance the common good. Unpaid work directly maintains wellbeing through the services provided, whether that be care of an elderly relative or working on a community project. It also has indirect benefits by building the social networks and 'social capital' which is important for wellbeing. People doing unpaid work benefit by widening their social network.

For the vast majority of people, social networks centre on family and friends. The third indicator measures the proportion of people who take part in family activities and have family or friends over for a meal at least once a month.

Participation and involvement in groups and clubs measures people's willingness to take part in activities outside the family for their own benefit and the benefit of others. People who participate in clubs and groups widen their social circle beyond their immediate friends and family, and contribute to the building of the social networks necessary for a well-functioning society.

Telephone and internet access in the home

DEFINITION

The proportion of the population with telephone and internet access in the home, as measured by the 2000 Living Standards Surveys.

RELEVANCE

Being able to communicate and interact easily in the absence of frequent face-to-face contact helps maintain social connectedness. Access to telephones and access to communication via the internet, especially e-mails, are particularly relevant as social indicators because access to mail services is almost universal and fax use is principally by businesses. The internet also makes it easier to access a significant and growing repository of information and knowledge.

CURRENT LEVEL

Access to a telephone is almost universal in New Zealand at 97 percent overall. Internet access is also relatively high at 41 percent, considering the relatively recent introduction of this communication technology.

Table SC1.1 **Proportion of population with telephone and internet access by population characteristics, 2000**

	Telephone %	Internet access %
Population estimates		
Total population	97.3	40.6
Dependent children	96.4	44.3
Age groupings		
Adults aged under 65	97.3	44.2
Adults aged over 65	99.2	11.8
Family ethnicity		
Māori economic family	92.3	28.3
Pacific economic family	88.1	16.4
European economic family	99.2	44.3
Other economic family	96.9	50.7
Families with dependent children		
One parent with dependent children	88.9	25.3
Two parents with dependent children	98.3	49.6
All families with dependent children	96.8	45.6
Family employment/income status		
People under 65, main income earner in full-time employment	98.8	49.0
People under 65, main income earner not in full-time employment	91.6	29.2
Adults over 65, with employment or other income (above New Zealand Superannuation)	99.5	18.2
Adults over 65, with little or no other income (above New Zealand Superannuation)	98.8	5.4

Source: Ministry of Social Development

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

People living in Pacific economic families (those with any Pacific member) have the lowest telephone and internet access in the home (88 percent and 16 percent, respectively), followed by people living in Māori economic families (92 percent and 28 percent). The highest level of internet access in the home was among people living in other non-European economic families (51 percent).

AGE GROUP AND EMPLOYMENT OR INCOME DIFFERENCES

Adults over 65 years are more likely than average to have a telephone, but much less likely to have internet access in their home (12 percent compared to 44 percent among adults under 65). Older people with no income other than New Zealand Superannuation have the lowest level of internet access in the home (five percent).

Among adults under 65, telephone and internet access in the home is lower than average where the main earner in the family is not in full-time employment, the difference being more striking in the case of internet access (29 percent compared to 49 percent).

DIFFERENCES BY FAMILY TYPE

Overall, families with dependent children are more likely than average to have internet access in the home. However, sole parent families are about half as likely as two parent families to have internet access (25 percent compared to 50 percent) and considerably less likely than two parent families to have a telephone (89 percent compared to 98 percent).

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

New Zealand compares relatively favourably with other countries in relation to access to the internet. Based on the number of internet subscribers as a proportion of the total population, New Zealand ranks ninth out of 26 OECD countries.⁷¹

Unpaid work outside the home

DEFINITION

The proportion of the population aged 12 and over who did unpaid work for people or organisations outside their own household, and the average time spent on unpaid work outside the home, as measured by the 1999 Time Use Survey.

RELEVANCE

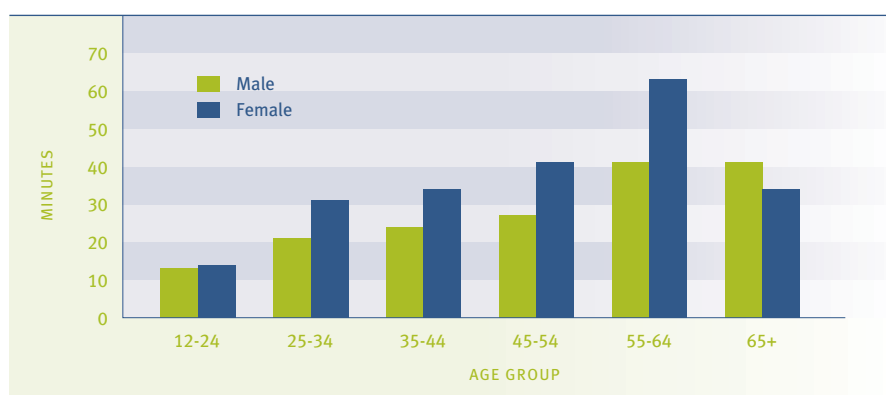
Spending time on providing services and support to others without financial reward is one of the ways in which people build and maintain social networks that help society to function effectively.⁷²

CURRENT LEVEL

The survey found that 59 percent of New Zealanders aged 12 and over spent some time during the previous four weeks doing unpaid work for people or organisations outside their own home. Overall, people spent an average of 48 minutes doing unpaid work outside the home each day, including 29 minutes in which it was their main activity.

An average of 14 minutes per person aged 12 and over was spent on unpaid work for community organisations. Slightly more time was spent on informal unpaid work, such as caring for and helping people from other households.

Figure SC2.1 **Average minutes per day spent on unpaid work outside the home by age & sex, 1998-99**



Source: Statistics New Zealand 2001b
Note: Includes only unpaid work as a primary activity

AGE DIFFERENCES

Women are more likely than men to do unpaid work outside the home (63 percent compared to 55 percent). They also spend more time on this work than men. In part, this reflects their lower rates of paid employment.

Women on average spend more time than men caring for people outside their household and providing services such as meals on wheels and parent help at school, but the same amount of time on unpaid administration for organisations.

Sex differences are greatest at ages 55-64, with women spending 1.5 times as long as men working for others. In the 65 and over age group, the reverse is true, with men spending more time than women on unpaid work outside the home. Men and women who are employed full-time spend the least time in unpaid work for

others. Women, part-time workers and men who are unemployed spend the most time in unpaid work. People who receive income-tested benefits spend more time on unpaid work than other people.

Rural women and men also spend longer on unpaid work outside the home than non-rural people, reflecting the importance of social networks and voluntary work in the functioning of the rural sector.

Table SC2.1 **Average minutes per day spent on unpaid work outside the home (primary activity), by age, sex and ethnicity, 1998-99**

	12-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Females	14	31	34	41	63	34
Males	13	21	24	27	41	41
Māori	19	37	38	55	61	48
Non-Māori	12	24	27	32	51	37

Source: Statistics New Zealand 2001b, Figure 3.1.10

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

Māori are more likely than non-Māori to undertake unpaid work outside their own home, and on average spend more time doing so. The difference is evident across all age groups, peaking among those aged 55-64 years.

In particular, Māori spend more time providing assistance and care for non-household members, perhaps reflecting the traditional role of the whānau in caring for extended family members.

Table SC2.2 **Average minutes per day spent on unpaid work outside the home (primary activity), by type of work, sex and ethnicity (adjusted for age), 1998-99**

	Males	Females	Māori	Non-Māori
Formal unpaid work				
Administration	5	5	7	5
Service provision	3	5	5	4
Travel associated with formal unpaid work	2	2	2	2
Other formal unpaid work	2	2	3	2
Informal unpaid work				
Caring for non-household members	3	6	9	4
Helping non-household members	6	7	8	6
Travel associated with informal unpaid work	3	4	4	3
Other informal unpaid work	1	1	1	1

Source: Statistics New Zealand 2001b

Participation in family/whānau activities and regular contact with family/friends

DEFINITION

The proportion of the population who participated in family/whānau activities and the proportion of the population who had family or friends over for a meal at least once a month, as measured by the 2000 Living Standards Surveys. 'Family/whānau activities' were not specified in the surveys; respondents interpreted them in their own ways.

RELEVANCE

An important reflection of social connectedness is found in the extent to which people are in regular contact with family and friends, and the extent to which they participate in family (whānau) activities.

CURRENT LEVEL

A high proportion of the population say they take part in family/whānau activities (86.8 percent) and more than two-thirds (70.5 percent) report having had family or friends over for a meal at least once a month.

Table SC3.1 **Proportion of population doing family activities and having family/friends over for a meal, by population characteristics**

	Participate in family activities %	Have family/friends over for a meal %
Population estimates		
Total population	86.8	70.5
Age groupings		
Adults aged under 65	86.5	72.0
Adults aged 65 and over	80.4	60.5
Family ethnicity		
Māori economic family	90.9	68.9
Pacific economic family	86.1	79.6
European economic family	87.6	70.0
Other economic family	71.8	70.3
Families with dependent children		
One parent with dependent children	87.4	65.4
Two parents with dependent children	90.0	72.6
All families with dependent children	89.6	71.4
Family employment/income status		
People under 65, main income earner in full-time employment	89.0	73.4
People under 65, main income earner not in full-time employment	83.4	66.9
Adults 65 and over, with employment or other income (above New Zealand Superannuation)	85.5	69.3
Adults 65 and over, with little or no other income (above New Zealand Superannuation)	75.4	51.8

Source: Ministry of Social Development

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

According to the surveys, people living in Māori economic families are the most likely to take part in family or whānau activities (91 percent), while Pacific and European people have average levels of participation (86 and 88 percent, respectively). Those living in other non-European economic families are much less likely than average to take part in such activities (72 percent), perhaps reflecting the fact this group may include many new migrants whose families live overseas. Sharing meals in the home is more common among Pacific peoples (80 percent) than among people of other ethnic groups (70 percent).

AGE GROUP AND EMPLOYMENT OR INCOME DIFFERENCES

Adults over 65 years are less likely than average to engage in family activities (80 percent) and considerably less likely to have people over for a meal (61 percent), particularly those with no income other than New Zealand Superannuation (52 percent).

Among adults under 65, participation in family activities and sharing meals is somewhat lower than average where the main earner in the family is not in full-time employment (83 percent and 67 percent).

DIFFERENCES BY FAMILY TYPE

Not surprisingly, families with dependent children are more likely than average to participate in family or whānau activities, and there is little difference between sole parent and two parent families on this measure of social connectedness. However, sole parent families are less likely than two parent families to have friends or family over for a meal (65 percent compared to 73 percent).

Membership of and involvement in groups

DEFINITION

The proportion of the adult population (18 years and over) who are members of different types of community organisations and were 'actively' or 'passively' involved, as measured by the 1999 New Zealand Election Study. 'Active' membership is defined here as having attended at least one meeting in the previous year; 'passive' membership as having attended no meetings.

RELEVANCE

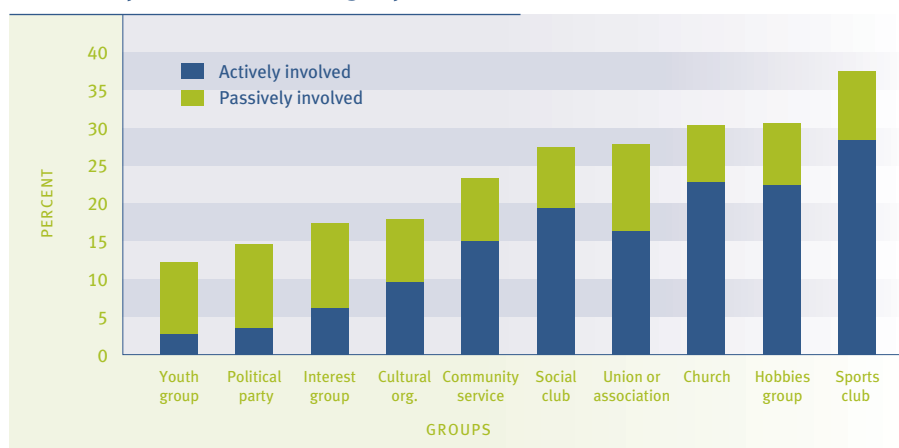
Participation in organisations and clubs is a measure of people's willingness to take part in activities outside the family, for their own enjoyment and for the benefit of others. Active participation provides opportunities for social interaction and support. It is widely regarded as a major source of social capital and a necessary component of a well-functioning, democratic society.

CURRENT LEVEL

In the 1999 New Zealand Election Study, more than two-thirds (70 percent) of respondents said they belonged to an organisation, group or club. Sports clubs were the most often mentioned, with more than a third of respondents (38 percent) reporting they belonged to such groups. Other groups with high levels of membership were hobbies groups (31 percent), church groups (30 percent), unions or associations (28 percent), social groups (28 percent) and community services organisations (23 percent).

For most types of groups, members were more likely to be active than passive. Sports clubs, hobbies groups and churches had the highest proportions who had attended at least one meeting during the previous year. Members of youth groups, political parties and interest groups were least likely to have attended meetings during the year.

Figure SC4.1 **Membership and involvement in groups, 1999**



Source: New Zealand Election Study, 1999

Note: "Actively involved" = attended at least one meeting during the previous year

SEX DIFFERENCES

The survey found substantial sex differences in group membership. Women were more likely than men to belong to church groups, hobbies groups and community services organisations, while men had higher membership of sports clubs and unions. A similar pattern held for active membership.

Table SC4.1 **Proportion of the population aged 18 and over who were members of organisations, groups or clubs, by sex, 1999**

	Membership		Actively involved	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Church	33.2	27.5	26.4	19.1
Community service	25.6	20.7	18.0	11.7
Cultural organisation	19.1	16.9	11.4	7.7
Hobbies group	34.2	26.8	27.3	17.3
Interest group	17.3	17.7	6.2	6.4
Political party	14.0	15.1	3.3	3.9
Social club	26.6	28.8	19.1	20.1
Sports club	32.6	43.4	23.6	34.0
Union or association	25.5	30.8	14.0	19.4
Youth group	12.1	12.7	3.1	2.6

Source: New Zealand Election Study 1999

ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

According to the survey, Māori were much more likely than non-Māori to belong to sports clubs and cultural organisations, and slightly more likely to belong to social clubs. While non-Māori had higher levels of membership in community service organisations, political and interest groups, there was little difference between Māori and non-Māori in terms of active membership. Māori had higher active membership than non-Māori in church groups, cultural organisations, social clubs, sports clubs and youth groups. Nearly one in four Māori said they belonged to Māori organisations and almost all had attended at least one meeting during the previous year.

Table SC4.2 **Proportion of Māori and non-Māori aged 18 and over who were members of organisations, groups or clubs, 1999**

	Membership		Actively involved	
	Māori	Non-Māori	Māori	Non-Māori
Church	29.0	29.6	26.8	22.5
Community service	15.7	22.3	14.6	14.5
Cultural organisation	26.5	16.3	25.3	8.2
Hobbies group	18.3	30.2	17.4	22.8
Interest group	7.5	16.6	6.3	6.1
Political party	5.4	13.6	3.6	3.1
Social club	29.7	26.7	27.6	19.0
Sports club	44.3	36.9	40.2	28.0
Union or association	23.8	27.3	18.2	15.9
Youth group	8.0	11.2	7.9	2.3
Māori organisation	24.9		23.8	

Source: New Zealand Election Study 1999