

2003 the social report

te pūrongo oranga tangata

2003

indicators of social wellbeing in
new zealand

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ministerial foreword

The Government welcomes the latest edition of the Social Report. The Social Report provides a comprehensive set of indicators designed to measure our progress as a nation in achieving its social vision. The Social Report 2003 marks the third year of this regular reporting programme. It measures the social wellbeing of New Zealanders and charts our progress as a country in achieving our collective goals.



This Government's vision is for an inclusive, prosperous and environmentally sustainable New Zealand. People in New Zealand want this nation to be a place where all individuals are able to achieve their full potential, where all have the opportunity to participate in a vibrant and growing economy, and where our environment is enjoyed by both current and future generations.

Regular social reporting is important: it tells us how we are doing, how we compare with other countries, and what areas the Government needs to address. Social reporting also plays a role in promoting an open and transparent government, and better public debate. In this sense, the Social Report is of value to ordinary New Zealanders as well as policy makers and Government.

As the second full Social Report commissioned by this Government, the Social Report 2003 provides us with an opportunity to take stock of progress over the last few years. We can look at how far New Zealand has come towards the desired social outcomes established in the Social Report 2001.

The Social Report 2003 reveals substantial progress towards achieving these goals in a wide range of areas.

Since the first report there have been substantial improvements in the important areas of life expectancy, average incomes, employment and educational attainment. There has also been a reduction in many areas of disadvantage and exclusion in our society such as unemployment. For example, in 2002 an average of 5.2 percent of the labour force were unemployed compared to 7.7 percent in 1998.

Although there is much more to achieve, there have been important gains for Māori and Pacific people in education and paid work. There have been considerable reductions in the unemployment rate for Māori and Pacific people. Māori unemployment declined from a rate of 18.3 percent in 1998 to 11.3 percent in 2002. Over the same period, the unemployment rate for Pacific people declined from 15.3 percent in 1998 to 9.2 percent in 2002.

Overall, the broad picture described by the Social Report is of a nation that has become more self-confident and comfortable with itself.

The progress revealed in the Social Report is the result of a wide range of influences. Nevertheless this Government believes that its approach to social, economic and environmental development has been important.

An essential element of this Government's approach to improve social outcomes is to understand that Government has a key role, but that it must also work in partnership with others. Families, communities and business are all key to improving wellbeing of New Zealanders.

As can be seen from this year's Budget, the Government has a number of practical priorities in social policy. These include:

- improving skills and education
- widening access to high quality healthcare especially for individuals in low income communities
- reducing crime
- reforming social assistance to better support families and children and improve opportunities to move into paid employment
- improving the availability of safe and affordable housing
- supporting families and communities.

Improving skills and education

Our Government's key priorities for education over the next three years are to build an education system that equips New Zealanders with 21st century skills and to reduce systematic underachievement in education. This will involve building on the foundations laid in previous years. Already the median performance of our children in maths, science and reading ranks in the top handful of developed countries. However, compared to other countries New Zealand has a higher proportion of children at the tail end who are performing poorly and this is of considerable concern.

Good education in the early years is important in laying the foundations for future learning. This Government has invested in increasing participation in early childhood education and improving the quality of early childhood education through child-teacher ratios and teacher qualifications.

We have introduced the National Certificate of Educational Achievement and have invested in a number of initiatives to increase the number of children who leave school with a formal qualification. These initiatives include improving the development of student literacy skills, increasing the number of primary and secondary school teachers, and supporting the development of best teaching practices for students from diverse backgrounds, particularly Māori and Pacific students.

We have developed a Tertiary Education Strategy for the next five years that is aimed at connecting the tertiary education system with national goals for economic and social development. Our tertiary education system will be driven by a focus on excellence, relevance and accessibility. The use of charters and profiles for all publicly funded providers and a new funding system that rewards performance will help to achieve this. We are committed to removing barriers to participation and have developed a system of maximum fees that should provide long term fee predictability. Scholarships and bonding arrangements will be considered to address recruitment and retention issues.

Industry training provides a means by which people can develop skills in a work setting and contributes to the development of a knowledge economy. This Government has invested \$84 million in Budget 2003 to increase the number of people in industry training to 150,000 in 2005.

We are expanding the Modern Apprenticeships Scheme and have a goal of reaching a target of 7,500 Modern Apprentices by June 2006. This scheme helps improve the skills and increase the number of qualified people in participating industries, along with increasing the capability of those industries for innovation and growth in the future. We will invest a further \$14.6 million in this scheme over the next four years.

Access to high quality healthcare

Health presents particular challenges because demand can easily outstrip capacity to pay. Nevertheless, the Government increased health spending by \$711 million in the latest Budget. Our Primary Healthcare Strategy recognises that early health interventions can prevent more serious and costly health problems later in life. Under Primary Health Organisations, health professionals are encouraged to work together to meet the needs of their particular populations. We are helping reduce the cost of primary healthcare for those aged under 18.

We are continuing to invest in our mental health services. Strategies to prevent the incidence of youth suicide have been supported and youth suicides have dropped by more than a third since 1995. This Government has funded a drug strategy aimed at educating and protecting young people against the dangers of drug use, including establishing a youth rehabilitation centre.

Reducing crime

In the important area of reducing crime we are investing in early intervention and prevention. Better support for young offenders (and their families) through a youth development approach will assist them to be productive members of society and to move away from a life of crime. Under the Youth Offending Strategy we have established Youth Offending Teams throughout the country that take an integrated approach and include representatives from Police, Child Youth and Family Services and health and education agencies. A Youth Drug Court has been established along with a drug treatment programme for youth.

Te Rito, the Government's family violence prevention strategy has been implemented to help prevent, reduce and address violence within families/whānau. Additional funding has been provided to the Police to increase Police numbers in high risk areas and to fund specialist teams to deal with methamphetamine laboratories, organised crime and terrorism.

Reforming social assistance

Social assistance reforms are underway that will focus on better supporting families and children, simplifying the system, and improving opportunities to move into employment. This Government has recently committed significant funding to increase childcare assistance for those families in work or training. Other employment initiatives include working closely with local employers and industries to determine current and future workforce needs and focusing on helping recent migrants and refugees obtain work.

The income thresholds for family support and the child tax credit have been increased in recognition of the additional costs faced by families with children, and further work is being undertaken to review family income assistance.

A review will be undertaken of the assistance provided to people with disabilities to determine how best we can reduce barriers and support their participation in society.

Safe and affordable housing

The introduction of income related rents for state houses has helped to ensure that housing is more affordable for those on low incomes. Initiatives in this area have included building more state houses and upgrading the existing stock of houses. The Government is also making an investment in third sector and local government housing provision.

Supporting families and communities

Another important focus has been the recognition of the important role of families and communities in contributing to good outcomes. The Families' Commission is about to be established to contribute to policy development and to act as an advocate for the interests of families. The Commission will have considerable resources to spend on research into ways to better support New Zealand families.

This Government has worked to strengthen the relationship between Government and the community sector. The Community and Voluntary Sector Office will be established this year and will provide policy advice on community and voluntary sector issues. We have introduced the Social Entrepreneur scheme that offers funding to support community leadership and innovation for initiatives aimed at increasing social wealth at a community level.

Cross-cutting issues

There are a number of cross-cutting issues across the areas of education, health, justice and social assistance that we are addressing.

First of all, we recognise that economic development is the key to improving a wide range of economic, social and environmental outcomes. Economic development aims to create real opportunities for all in society, as well as enabling the country to afford better social services.

This is why we have stressed the critical importance of our drive to support regional economic development, encourage economic innovation and invest in the skills and talent of New Zealanders. In tertiary education in particular we have stressed the need to ensure that our graduates have the skills to engage in the knowledge economy.

Secondly, we are improving the effectiveness of government by adopting a social investment focus. The traditional social safety net remains central to providing security for New Zealanders in need. However, a passive social safety net is no longer enough, and we are pro-actively investing so as to protect individuals against the risk of needing support in the first instance. This Government aims to achieve opportunity as well as security.

The Social Report 2003 identifies children and young people as a priority for social investment. We need to ensure that our young people have the best opportunities in life. Initiatives to address this priority have been set out in the Sustainable Development for New Zealand programme of action. The programme involves coordinated action aimed at supportive families, adequate material living standards, good health, success at all stages of education and transition into employment and lives free from violence and crime. The Care and Protection Blueprint provides a strategy for enhancing the services provided to children and young people at risk of, or who have suffered, abuse or neglect. The New Zealand Agenda for Children identifies and supports the rights of children.

The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa provides a platform for action to enable positive youth development throughout New Zealand. Although the strategy will be used by public sector agencies, it is also for individuals, groups and organisations that work at all levels with young people and on youth issues. This complements work in other areas to reduce rates of youth suicide and youth offending. In addition, work is currently underway to ensure that youth move from the education system into paid employment without long periods of non-activity.

A third cross-cutting issue is the need to address continuing inequalities and high levels of disadvantage in Māori and Pacific communities. Both the Māori and Pacific populations are relatively youthful, and by investing in them we also are investing in the youth of New Zealand. We are strengthening the capacity of Māori and Pacific communities to develop their own solutions as well as improving the responsiveness of wider public services by building competencies in relation to these ethnic groups.

The fourth cross-cutting issue is that, in the general area of social policy we have embarked upon a programme of modernising government. Encouraging greater coordination and collaboration, investing in new infrastructure, and making the public service more open to the public are all important contributors to ensuring we have high quality public services suitable for the 21st century.

This Government is starting to see positive outcomes from our efforts in a number of key areas. We need to continue the momentum and build on the gains we have made to ensure the social wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Maharey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steve Maharey
Minister for Social Development and Employment

Chief Executive's Preface



The Social Report 2003 provides a picture of New Zealand society - how well we are doing, where we have come from, and how different groups are faring.

Social problems have complex and inter-related causes that cut across the traditional boundaries of government agencies. It is increasingly important that policy decisions can be directly linked to the social outcomes of concern.

The Social Report is a tool that supports this. By bringing together information on a wide range of different social outcomes the Social Report can assist people in deciding how well we are doing as a society in addressing key social problems and improving our quality of life.

The first Social Report was produced in 2001 by the Ministry of Social Policy and marked the first step towards a comprehensive programme of social outcomes monitoring.

The next step was taken early in 2002 when the Ministry of Social Development undertook a full review of the Social Report. This involved talking to people from around the country about the role of the Social Report and identifying the things that were important to them.

The Social Report 2003 builds on the Social Report 2001, and includes a number of changes to reflect feedback that the Ministry received during the Review of the Social Report. We have also revised some of the indicators where new, better information has become available.

I would like to acknowledge the work done within the Ministry to produce the Social Report 2003, and also the contribution from other government agencies and people in the wider community.

It is my hope that people find the Social Report of continued value and relevance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'P' followed by a series of loops and a final flourish.

Peter Hughes
Chief Executive, Ministry of Social Development

Introduction

The Social Report 2003

The social report monitors the social wellbeing of New Zealanders.

The Social Report 2003 provides a report card on how we are doing in nine different social outcomes that contribute to wellbeing and quality of life. We use a range of statistical indicators to measure progress towards these outcomes.

These nine desired social outcomes cover trends in people's health, knowledge and skills, experiences in paid work, and economic standard of living, as well as their enjoyment of civil and political rights, of cultural identity, the physical environment in which they live, the level of safety they enjoy, and the degree of social connectedness they have.

We use social indicators to describe the current wellbeing of New Zealanders across these nine areas and to identify whether things are getting better or worse. The social report tells us how levels of wellbeing vary between individuals, families, different groups in the population, and between New Zealand and other countries.

The Social Report 2003 is the second full social report produced. It extends and updates the social monitoring framework first established by The Social Report 2001 and reflects the results of extensive consultation with members of the public and experts in social monitoring. Future social reports will continue to build on these changes and will incorporate better indicators as more information becomes available.

Purpose of the social report

The first social report was produced in 2001 because there was no overall assessment of the social wellbeing of New Zealanders. In particular, the purpose of the social report is:

- to provide and monitor over time measures of wellbeing and quality of life that complement existing economic indicators
- to allow us to assess how New Zealand compares with other countries on various 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 social report provides a high-level picture of social wellbeing that cuts across different sectors. This is an important addition to existing economic reporting since it focuses on a wider set of outcomes rather than just prosperity or the distribution of income. It 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.

An important reason for monitoring social outcomes is to identify issues early. The social report cannot tell us the cause of a problem, nor can it evaluate the impact of particular government policies. However, it can alert us to the existence of problems and identify areas for further investigation and research.

The actions of government are only one factor among many that affect social outcomes. The social report is not intended to monitor the performance of any one government agency, nor can it hope to identify the impact of specific policies. This is the role of research and evaluation. What the social report can do, however, is to help identify issues and areas for further investigation.

Because of its focus on outcomes for New Zealand as a whole, the social report cannot include detailed regional information. The Quality of Life in Big Cities of New Zealand report presents a picture of wellbeing similar in many ways to that of the social report, but focused at a regional level.¹ This information on the quality of life by locality complements the high level national overview presented in the social report.

Outcomes framework

Social wellbeing comprises those things we care about as a society.

We have to understand what social wellbeing is before we can monitor it. In the social report, social wellbeing is not taken to mean 'social' in the narrow sense of social welfare policy, nor in the slightly broader sense of the health, education, and welfare sectors. Rather, social wellbeing is taken to be those things we care about as a society. It can be thought of as comprising individual happiness, quality of life, and those aspects of community, environmental, and economic functioning that are important to a person's welfare.

Social wellbeing in this sense has no single measure on which it can be assessed in the way that Gross Domestic Product measures the size of the formal market economy. There is no 'one number' that can tell us whether social wellbeing has improved or got worse. To monitor changes in wellbeing, we need to measure a range of different elements of wellbeing. This involves making some explicit value judgements about what quality of life means, and what characteristics of society are considered desirable. We refer to these characteristics in this report as 'desired social outcomes' or 'outcome domains'.

Defining the desired social outcomes to be measured is not easy. New Zealand society consists of many diverse communities and, while certain core outcomes are common to all, we have got to incorporate the needs and aspirations of all those different communities into the outcomes framework adopted by the social report. For example, Professor Mason Durie has noted important outcomes for Māori are likely to include outcomes relevant to the rest of society like good health and a high standard of living.² However, he also suggests a further outcome for Māori might be to be able to live as Māori. This could mean having access to language, culture, marae, and resources such as land or tikanga.

The Social Report 2001 identified nine desired social outcomes against which to measure the social health and wellbeing of New Zealanders.

The nine domains were selected after consultation with a range of government and non-government social policy experts, and drew heavily on the work of the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988). The Royal 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... (t)hey 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.³

After the publication of The Social Report 2001, the Ministry of Social Development undertook a review of the social report involving widespread public consultation. The review indicated generally broad public support for the nine desired social outcomes used in 2001, but also identified a number of proposed changes to the outcomes framework. These changes are discussed in detail in Appendix 1.

Social Indicators

Social indicators are statistics used to measure various aspects of social wellbeing.

The social report uses indicators to measure the extent to which we achieve the nine desirable social outcomes. Social indicators don't necessarily present a comprehensive description of society. Their purpose is to reduce a large and complex pool of information about the state of society to a few key measures people can understand and use to monitor trends over time. For this reason, we do not want indicators of everything, and particularly not of things that tend to change in line with each other.

For example, a key social outcome is 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.

The social report uses six indicators to represent these outcomes. While these six indicators cannot comprehensively describe the health status of New Zealanders, they can identify key trends in desired social outcomes for health.

By their very nature, it is important that any movement in a social indicator can be interpreted as 'good' or 'bad' - ie as an improvement or deterioration in social wellbeing. This distinguishes social indicators from other social statistics.

The age structure of the population, for example, is an important social statistic but it is not a social indicator. While an ageing population will have a major impact on New Zealand society, we cannot sensibly say an older population is 'good' or 'bad' for social wellbeing.

The criteria we used to select the social indicators for The Social Report 2001 are a relatively robust set of factors to take into account when considering indicators. We have used them again to guide the choice of indicators for The Social Report 2003. The criteria are:

- **relevance 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
- **being based on broad support** - ideally there should be wide support for the indicators chosen so they won't be regularly changed
- **being grounded in research** - there should be sound evidence on key influences and factors affecting outcomes
- **ability to be disaggregated** - the data needs to be broken down by age, sex, ethnicity and region so we can compare outcomes for different groups
- **consistency over time** - the usefulness of indicators is related directly to the ability to track trends over time, so indicators should be as consistent as possible
- **being statistically sound** - the measurement of indicators needs to be methodologically rigorous
- **timeliness** - data needs to be collected and reported regularly and frequently to ensure that indicators are reporting contemporary rather than historical information

- *allowing international comparison* - 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.

Trade-offs between these criteria are sometimes required. For example, it may be necessary to choose an indicator where data is produced at long intervals to ensure a consistent time series is available. Similarly, the desire to present a balanced picture across all nine outcome domains has meant including some indicators of a lower quality for domains where we lack good data, while excluding some very good indicators for domains such as health where there is a relative abundance of high quality information.

The desired social outcomes are interconnected with each other and many indicators relate to more than one outcome. Being employed, for example, contributes to one's economic standard of living through the income it generates, but it is also a major source of people's social interaction. Similarly, poor health may limit a person's ability to work or impose costs of treatment that affect the economic standard of living a person is able to achieve. Despite this, we report indicators only in the single outcome domain to which they are most closely linked.

The desired social outcomes and indicators for The Social Report 2003 are set out below.

DESIRED SOCIAL OUTCOME	INDICATORS
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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Independent life expectancy 2. Life expectancy at birth 3. Dependent disability 4. Suicide 5. Prevalence of cigarette smoking 6. Obesity
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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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	
All people have access to meaningful, rewarding and safe employment. An appropriate balance is maintained between paid work and other aspects of life.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Unemployment 13. Employment 14. Proportion of employed persons working long hours 15. Workplace injury claims
Economic Standard of Living	
New Zealand is a prosperous society where all people have access to adequate incomes and enjoy standards of living that mean they can fully participate in society and have choice about how to live their lives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Market income per person 17. Income inequality 18. Population with low incomes 19. Population with low living standards 20. Housing affordability 21. Household crowding

Civil and Political Rights

All people enjoy civil and political rights. The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi are recognised and incorporated into government decision-making.

- 22. Voter turnout
- 23. Representation of women in government
- 24. Perceived discrimination

Cultural Identity

New Zealanders share a strong national identity, have a sense of belonging, and value cultural diversity. Māori, European/Pakēha, Pacific people, and other groups and communities are able to pass different cultural traditions on to future generations. Māori culture is valued and protected.

- 25. Participation in cultural and arts activities
- 26. Māori language speakers
- 27. Māori and Pacific children receiving Māori medium and Pacific medium education
- 28. Local content programming on New Zealand television

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.

- 29. Air quality
- 30. Drinking water quality

Safety

All people enjoy personal safety and security and are free from victimisation, abuse, violence and avoidable injury.

- 31. Child abuse and neglect
- 32. Criminal victimisation
- 33. Perceptions of safety
- 34. Road casualties

Social Connectedness

People enjoy constructive relationships with others in their families, whānau, 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.

- 35. Telephone and internet access in the home
 - 36. Unpaid work outside the home
 - 37. Participation in family/whānau activities and regular contact with family/friends
 - 38. Membership of and involvement in groups
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Data Issues

The range of indicators used in The Social Report 2003 has been limited by the available data.

Wherever possible, data is presented tracking changes from 1986 to the present, and each indicator is looked at by age, sex, ethnicity, and region. We have also tried to include breakdowns by socio-economic status for some indicators. Breakdowns of this sort highlight average differences between groups. In most cases, however, the differences between members of any one group will be much greater than average differences between groups. Ethnicity is particularly problematic in this respect. Definitions of ethnicity are also inconsistent between data sources and change over time.

There is little information that links people's experiences across a range of indicators. Thus, the social report has no indicators that show multiple disadvantage across a range of outcomes. There is also relatively little information on the persistence of outcomes. We can measure whether people currently experience low incomes or have a job, but not how long this has been the case for.

Information on how people view their own lives is scarce. We can, for example, report how many people take part in cultural activities, but not how people feel about their cultural identity. Ideally, we would like to have at least one subjective indicator for every desired social outcome to supplement the largely objective indicators currently used.

A number of indicators from The Social Report 2001 have not been updated for 2003 because they are derived from one-off surveys or surveys that are not repeated on an annual basis. In a report that aims to monitor changes over time, this is a major drawback. However, in areas where there is no good alternative information available, we have had no choice other than to report indicators used in The Social Report 2001 and to work towards identifying data sources that will enable us to update them in future social reports.

There is clearly scope for future social reports to improve measurement in many areas. This depends, however, on better data becoming available and on conceptual work to develop better measurement frameworks.

Structure of the Report

There are 12 sections in The Social Report 2003. The first of these is this introduction, which outlines the background and purpose of the social report, and describes the framework it uses.

The second section, People, provides background and contextual information on the New Zealand population. This section contains no information on social outcomes, but gives a general overview of the size and composition of the New Zealand population.

Most of the social report is devoted to the nine desired social outcomes. There is an introductory section for each outcome domain that has a description of the desired social outcomes relating to that particular outcome domain, and how they relate to other social outcomes and social wellbeing more generally. Each introductory section is followed by a two-page presentation for each social indicator

relating to that domain. This covers the definition of the indicator, its relevance, the current level and trends over time, and how the indicator varies by age, sex, ethnicity, and region. We provide an international comparison where possible.

The summary draws together information from the rest of the report as an overview of social wellbeing in New Zealand. It looks at what the social report can tell us about the current level of social wellbeing in New Zealand, and how this has changed over time.

The Future

In future, we will produce the social report annually, with the next one due to be released mid-2004. Future editions will continue to refine and improve the desired social outcomes and indicators. We welcome feedback, comments, and suggestions as to how you think the social report could be improved or amended. Comments can be made to:

The Social Report Project Manager
Ministry of Social Development
P.O. Box 12 136
Wellington
New Zealand

e-mail: socialreport@msd.govt.nz

website: <http://socialreport.msd.govt.nz>