

## 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.

Social connectedness is integral to wellbeing. 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.<sup>100</sup> 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.<sup>101</sup>

Several studies have demonstrated links between social connectedness and the performance of the economy and positive outcomes for individual health and wellbeing.<sup>102</sup>

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. Factors such as language differences, high levels of inequality and tensions between members of different ethnic groups can create barriers between people.

## 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.

# 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.

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## 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, employment prospects and other aspects of wellbeing.

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## CURRENT LEVEL AND TRENDS

In 2006, 98 percent of New Zealand residents lived in households with telephones, an increase from 96 percent in 2001.

The 2006 Census, for the first time, collected information separately on cellphones and landline telephones. It showed that 79 percent of people lived in households with cellphones available in the dwelling all or most of the time, while 92 percent lived in households with landline telephones.

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

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## 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 percent). 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 percent and 71 percent of age groups below 65 years lived in households with internet access, compared with just 39 percent 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 slightly less likely to have internet access. These differences are more pronounced at older ages, particularly in the case of the internet. In 2006, 45 percent of males and 35 percent 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
<b>Age</b>				
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>96.3</b>	<b>98.1</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>66.4</b>
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	96.0	97.9	44.1	67.2
Female	96.5	98.3	41.8	65.5
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
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
<b>Family type</b>				
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 percent to 94 percent among Māori and from 87 percent to 95 percent among Pacific peoples between 2001 and 2006. Telephone access for European, Asian and Other ethnic groups increased slightly over this period, reaching 99 percent 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 percent to 47 percent among Māori and from 20 percent to 38 percent among Pacific peoples. These levels were still well below those of Asians (77 percent), the Other ethnic group (73 percent) and Europeans (70 percent) in 2006.

## DIFFERENCES BY FAMILY TYPE

Among families with dependent children, 98 percent had telephone access and 71 percent 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 percent of one-parent families and 99 percent of two-parent families had access to telephones while 50 percent of one-parent families and 79 percent 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 11th out of 30 OECD countries surveyed between 2003 and 2006. With 65 percent of households having internet access in 2006, New Zealand's figure is higher than the OECD median of 57 percent. New Zealand's figure is similar to those of Canada (64 percent in 2005) and the United Kingdom (63 percent in 2006) and higher than those of Australia (60 percent in 2005) and the United States (55 percent in 2003).<sup>103</sup>

# 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 percent 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 percent 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
<b>Population estimates</b>		
Total population aged 18 and over	68.6	70.0
<b>Age groupings</b>		
Adults aged 18–64 years	70.0	71.1
Adults 65 years and over	60.2	63.7
<b>Economic family ethnicity</b>		
Māori economic family	70.2	73.3
Pacific economic family	79.5	69.9
European economic family	65.8	65.8
Other economic family	68.2	78.0
<b>Families with dependent children</b>		
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
<b>Family employment/income status</b>		
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)

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## 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 percent). 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 percent). Similarly, among adults 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 percent compared with 72 percent).

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## ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

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

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## DIFFERENCES BY FAMILY TYPE

Sole-parent families were less likely than two-parent families to have friends or family over for a meal (65 percent compared to 73 percent). 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.

# Trust in others

## DEFINITION

The proportion of the population aged 15 years and over reporting people can “almost always” or “usually” be trusted, as reported in the Quality of Life Survey 2006.

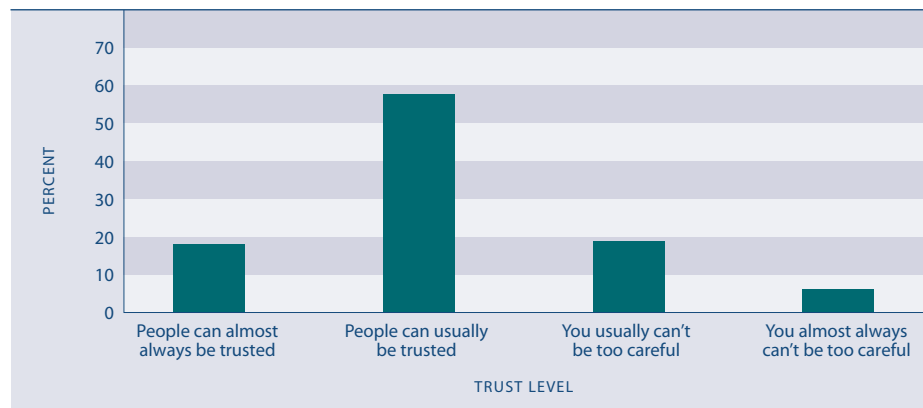
## RELEVANCE

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

In 2006, 76 percent of New Zealanders said they believed people can be trusted, with 18 percent reporting people can almost always be trusted and 58 percent reporting people can usually be trusted.

Figure SC3.1 **Levels of trust in other people, 2006**



Source: Quality of Life Survey 2006

## AGE AND SEX DIFFERENCES

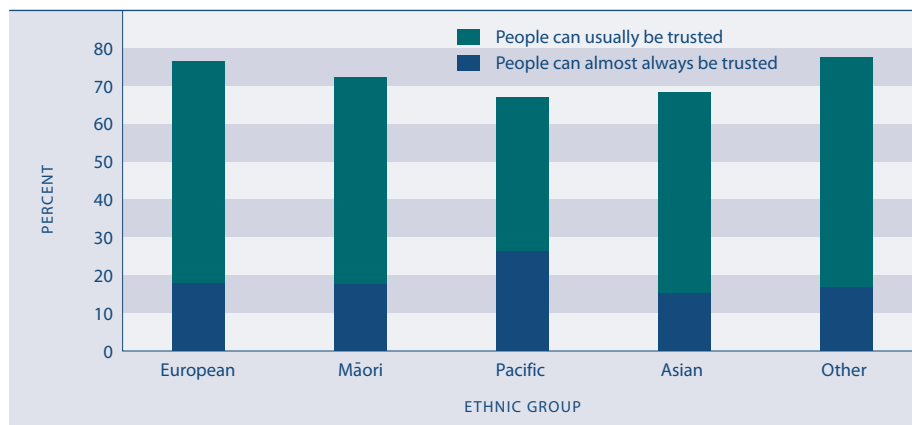
The proportion of those reporting people can be trusted was similar for males (75 percent) and females (76 percent). Nineteen percent of males and 17 percent of females agreed people can almost always be trusted and 56 percent of males and 59 percent of females responded people can usually be trusted.

Those reporting that people can almost always or usually be trusted ranged from 72 percent at ages 15–24 years to 78 percent for 50–64 year olds.

## ETHNIC DIFFERENCES

People in the European and Other (excluding Asian) ethnic groups reported a slightly higher level of trust in people (each 77 percent) than Māori (72 percent). Asian and Pacific peoples had the lowest proportions who felt people could be trusted (68 percent and 67 percent, respectively).

Figure SC3.2 **Proportion of people reporting that people can almost always or usually be trusted, by ethnic group, 2006**

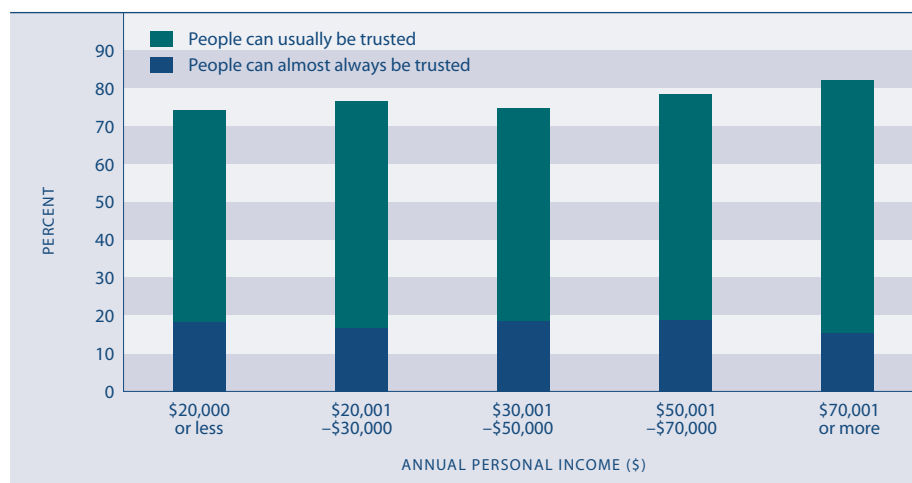


Source: Quality of Life Survey 2006

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES

Across all income levels, a majority of New Zealanders indicated people could almost always or usually be trusted. Reported trust increased with personal income level. People with incomes over \$70,000 reported the highest overall level of trust (82 percent), while people with incomes of \$20,000 or less reported the lowest level (74 percent).

Figure SC3.3 **Proportion of people reporting that people can almost always or usually be trusted, by personal income, 2006**



Source: Quality of Life Survey 2006

**REGIONAL DIFFERENCES** Across all New Zealand's largest cities, a majority of New Zealanders indicated people could almost always or usually be trusted. Reported levels of trust were highest in Wellington and Dunedin (both 84 percent) and lowest in Waitakere (66 percent) and Manukau (68 percent).

## INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

New Zealanders' level of trust in other people in 2004 compares well with those of people in European Union countries in 2005, and to that of people in Canada in 2003. New Zealand had the seventh highest reported level of trust in other people (almost always trust or usually trust) out of 25 OECD countries.<sup>104</sup>

New Zealand's reported level of trust in other people (69 percent) is above the OECD median of 56 percent. Norway had the highest reported level of trust in people (87 percent) followed by Denmark and Sweden (both 84 percent). Canada (53 percent) and the United Kingdom (55 percent) 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 2006.

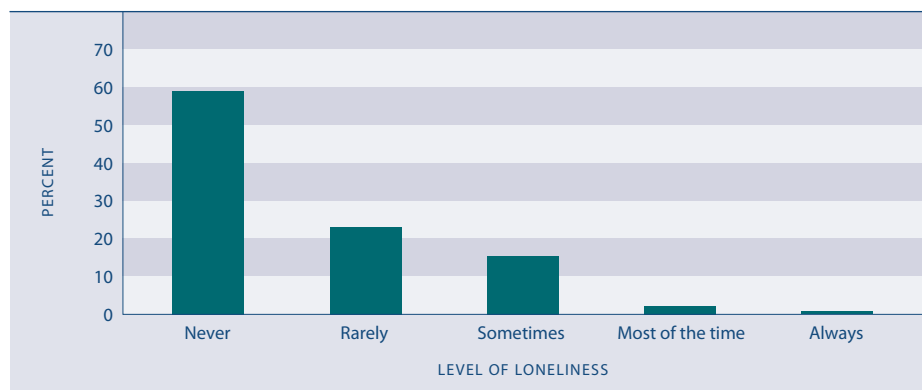
## RELEVANCE

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

In 2006, 18 percent of New Zealanders reported feeling lonely during the last 12 months. Fifteen percent said they felt lonely sometimes, 2 percent said they were lonely most of the time and fewer than 1 percent said they always felt lonely. Feelings of isolation or loneliness are strongly associated with self-rated quality of life. Those who rated their quality of life as “extremely good” or “good” were far less likely to have felt isolated in the past 12 months (8 percent and 19 percent, respectively) than those who rated their quality of life as “poor” (60 percent).<sup>105</sup>

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

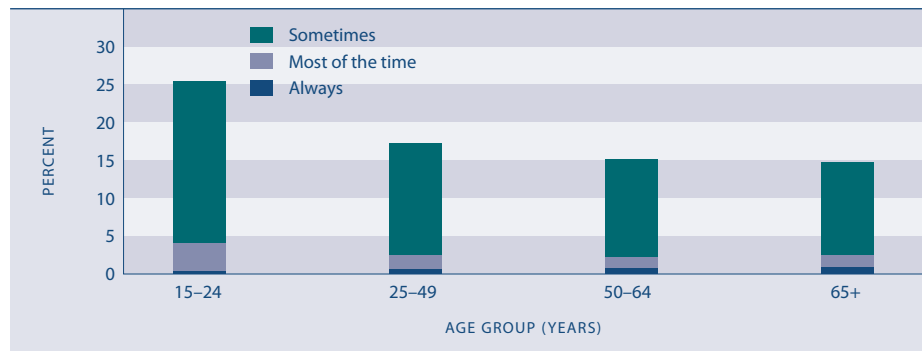


Source: Quality of Life Survey 2006

## AGE DIFFERENCES

Loneliness is most prevalent among people aged 15–24 years, followed by those aged 25–49 years. Twenty-five percent of 15–24 year olds and 17 percent of those aged 25–49 years reported feeling lonely sometimes, most of the time, or always. Levels of loneliness were lower among those aged 50–64 years and 65 years and over (both 15 percent).

Figure SC4.2 **Proportion of people experiencing loneliness, by age, 2006**



Source: Quality of Life Survey 2006

**SEX DIFFERENCES**

Females (20 percent) were more likely than males (16 percent) to have reported feeling lonely during the last 12 months. Seventeen percent of females said they were lonely sometimes compared to 14 percent of males.

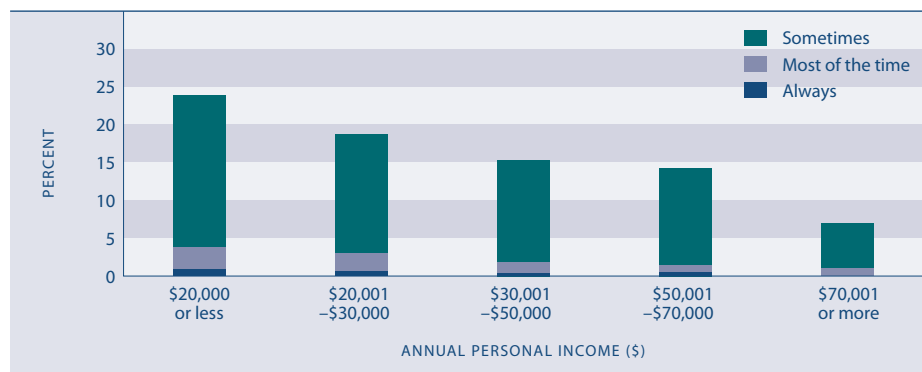
**ETHNIC DIFFERENCES**

Europeans reported the lowest rate of loneliness with 16 percent reporting they were lonely sometimes, most of the time or always. Eighteen percent of Māori, 22 percent of people in the Other (excluding Asian) ethnic group and 23 percent of Pacific peoples reported they were sometimes, most of the time or always lonely. Asian peoples (27 percent) reported the highest rates of loneliness.

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIFFERENCES**

Experiencing loneliness declines as personal income rises. People with personal incomes of \$20,000 or less reported higher rates of loneliness than people with higher incomes: 24 percent said they felt lonely sometimes, most of the time or always in the past 12 months. This compares with a loneliness rate of 7 percent for those with a personal income over \$70,000.

Figure SC4.3 **Proportion of people experiencing loneliness, by personal income, 2006**



Source: Quality of Life Survey 2006

**REGIONAL DIFFERENCES**

People living in Manukau City had the highest reported incidence of loneliness with 21 percent reporting they felt lonely sometimes, most of the time or always. Those living in Dunedin had the lowest reported incidence of loneliness (12 percent).

HEALTH  
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS  
PAID WORK  
ECONOMIC STANDARD OF LIVING  
CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS  
CULTURAL IDENTITY  
LEISURE AND RECREATION  
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT  
SAFETY  
SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

# Contact between young people and their parents

## DEFINITION

The proportion of secondary school students aged 12–18 years who were able to spend enough time with Mum and/or Dad (or someone who acts as Mum and/or Dad) most weeks, as reported in Youth2000 – New Zealand Youth: A Profile of their Health and Wellbeing.

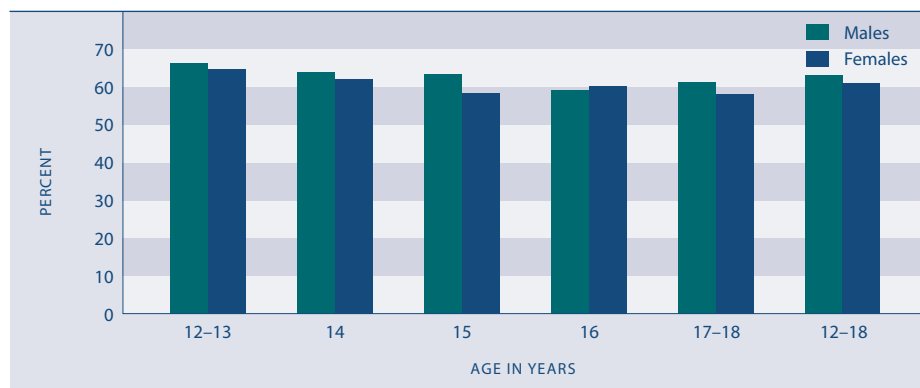
## RELEVANCE

Healthy relationships are built through both the quantity and quality of time spent together. Young people having enough time with their parents is a proxy indicator of the extent to which those in need of care and nurturing receive appropriate support.

## CURRENT LEVEL

In 2001, 63 percent of male secondary school students and 61 percent of female secondary school students reported that most weeks they were able to spend enough time with at least one parent.

Figure SC5.1 **Students reporting they spent enough time with their parent(s), by age and sex, 2001**



Source: Adolescent Health Research Group (2003a)

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**AGE DIFFERENCES**

Girls at 15 years of age were less likely to report that most weeks they were able to spend enough time with Mum and/or Dad than younger boys and girls (12–13 years).

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**SEX DIFFERENCES**

There were no significant differences by sex in the proportion of students reporting they spent enough time with at least one parent.

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**ETHNIC DIFFERENCES**

Fifty-five percent of Māori students and 65 percent of European students reported that most weeks they were able to spend enough time with Mum and/or Dad. The difference was statistically significant after adjusting for age, sex and socio-economic differences between the two ethnic groups. Pacific students (60 percent), Asian students (65 percent) and students of the Other ethnic group (60 percent) showed no statistically significant difference from European students after adjusting for age, sex and socio-economic differences.