

Desired outcomes

People enjoy constructive relationships with others in their families, whānau, communities, iwi and workplaces. Families and communities 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 and the benefits these relationships can bring to the individual as well as to society.

It includes relationships with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours, as well as connections people make through paid work, sport and other leisure activities, or through voluntary work or community service.

These relationships and connections can be a source of enjoyment and support. They help people to feel they belong and have a part to play in society.¹⁰² People who feel socially connected also contribute towards building communities and society. They help to create what is sometimes called “social capital”, the networks that help society to function effectively.

Several studies have demonstrated links between social connectedness and the performance of the economy and positive outcomes for individual health and wellbeing.¹⁰³ A recent large study confirmed that people with more friends and connections are generally happier, healthier and better off, and that happiness spreads through social networks. However, the study also found that social networks can influence health behaviours both negatively and positively; for example, starting and stopping smoking.¹⁰⁴

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 social networks that help improve their lives.

Indicators

Six indicators are used to measure social connectedness in New Zealand. These are: telephone and internet access in the home, contact with family and friends, contact between young people and their parents, trust in others, loneliness, and voluntary work.

Both the telephone and the internet increase people's ability to keep in touch with family and friends, and to work or conduct their business from home. The internet in particular is becoming an increasingly important means of accessing information and applying for services, as well as a popular choice for making bookings for entertainment and travel. Through social media on the internet, people can considerably expand their social networks. However, new communications technology can also be used for antisocial purposes.

For most people, social networks centre on family and friends. The second indicator is the proportion of people aged 15 years and over who feel the amount of contact they have with friends and family who don't live with them is "about right". This new indicator uses data from the 2008 New Zealand General Social Survey. It replaces the previous indicator on regular contact with family and friends, which was based on the 2004 New Zealand Living Standards Survey.

The third indicator is also about contact with family: the proportion of young people of secondary school age who report getting enough time each week with their parents.

Trust in others, the fourth 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.

The fifth 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 is about voluntary work done for organisations or groups. Volunteering can help to build networks of trust and mutual support that sustain people through difficult times and reinforce social cohesion.

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, employment prospects and other aspects of wellbeing.

Current level and trends

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

The Household Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Survey provides more recent information on access to the internet, although it is at the household level rather than at the individual level. In the December 2009 quarter, 75 percent of households had internet access in the home, an increase from 65 percent in the December 2006 quarter.

At the 2006 Census, 98 percent of people lived in households with telephones, an increase from 96 percent in 2001. The 2006 Census collected information on cellphones and landline telephones separately for the first time. 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. The Household Use of ICT Survey showed that, in the December 2009 quarter, 85 percent of the population aged 15 years and over had the personal use of a mobile phone in the previous 12 months, up from 80 percent three years earlier.

Age and sex differences

There are only minor differences by age group in the proportions of the population aged under 65 years living in households with internet access, but the rates decrease markedly at older ages. In 2006, between 68 percent and 71 percent of age groups under 65 years lived in households with internet access, compared with 50 percent of those aged 65–74 years and 26 percent of those aged 75 years and over. However, between 2001 and 2006 those aged 65 years and over experienced a greater increase in internet access than younger people. While the proportion of the population with internet access in the home increased by one and a half times for people aged under 65 years between 2001 and 2006, it more than doubled for people aged 65 years and over.

Both the 2001 and 2006 censuses showed that people aged 45 years and over were slightly more likely than younger people to have telephone access in the household. However, the difference narrowed over the five-year period.

There is little difference between the sexes in telephone or internet access in the home, although at older ages men are more likely than women to have internet access. In 2006, 45 percent of males and 35 percent of females aged 65 years and over had access to the internet at home.

Table SC1.1

Proportion (%) of the population with telephone and internet access in the home, 2001 and 2006

	Telephone access		Internet access	
	2001	2006	2001	2006
Age group (years)				
0–14	94.6	97.6	45.6	69.1
15–24	95.3	97.6	47.5	68.0
25–44	96.1	98.0	47.0	70.8
45–64	97.7	98.6	45.6	70.9
65–74	98.3	98.9	21.1	49.7
75 and over	98.6	99.0	10.0	25.8
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

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 the 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 with dependent children were less likely than two-parent families with dependent children to have access to either telephones or the internet, but they experienced 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.

Regional differences

The Auckland and Wellington regions had the highest proportion of households with internet access in the December 2009 quarter (both 80 percent), followed by Canterbury (78 percent). Northland (65 percent), Gisborne/Hawke's Bay and Manawatu-Wanganui (both 66 percent) had the lowest proportions of households with internet access.

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 eighth out of 30 OECD countries surveyed between 2005 and 2009. With 75 percent of households having internet access in 2009, New Zealand's figure is higher than the OECD median of 66 percent. New Zealand is ranked above Australia (72 percent in 2008/2009), the United Kingdom (71 percent in 2008) and Canada (73 percent in 2007), and considerably above Ireland (63 percent in 2008) and the United States (62 percent in 2007).¹⁰⁵

Contact with family and friends

Definition

The proportion of people aged 15 years and over who said the amount of contact they have with family and friends who don't live with them is "about right", as measured by the New Zealand General Social Survey.

Contact includes face-to-face meetings as well as telephone calls, letters, emails, texting, and other forms of electronic communication.

Relevance Families and friends are key sources of social support and give people a sense of belonging. Staying in touch with family and friends who live elsewhere helps maintain social connectedness between households and across geographical boundaries.

Current level and trends In the New Zealand General Social Survey 2008, more than 80 percent of people aged 15 years and over had some sort of contact with family who don't live with them, and more than 90 percent had contact with non-resident friends, at least once in the past four weeks. Of those who had contact, one-quarter felt they had not had enough contact with their non-resident family and one-fifth reported not having enough contact with non-resident friends. A very small proportion (2 percent) felt they had too much contact with family or friends who don't live with them. This indicator refers to people who said the amount of contact they have is about right for both family and friends (ie the two groups combined).

In 2008, 60 percent of people aged 15 years and over said the amount of contact they have with family and friends who don't live with them is about right.

Age and sex differences People aged 65 years and over were the most likely (76 percent) to say the amount of contact they have with family and friends who don't live with them is about right. People in the 25–44 years age group were the least likely (54 percent) to feel the amount of contact was about right.

There were no statistically significant differences by sex, either for all people aged 15 years and over or within age groups.

Ethnic differences Māori were the least likely (52 percent) to say the amount of contact they have with family and friends who don't live with them is about right. Asians were the most likely (63 percent) to report their contact was about right. The difference between Māori and Asian peoples was the only statistically significant ethnic difference.

Table SC2.1

Proportion (%) of people aged 15 years and over whose contact with non-resident family and friends is “about right”, by population characteristics, 2008

Characteristics	Total	Males	Females
Population aged 15+	60.1	60.8	59.4
Age group			
15–24 years	57.3	58.6	56.0
25–44 years	53.7	54.5	53.0
45–64 years	60.9	62.4	59.6
65+ years	76.1	75.1	76.9
Ethnic group			
European/MELAA/Other	60.6	61.5	59.6
Māori	52.3	52.3	52.3
Pacific peoples	55.4	55.1	55.7
Asian	63.1	63.7	62.5
Labour force status			
Employed	57.3	58.9	55.4
Unemployed	51.0	46.6	54.7
Not in the labour force	67.9	68.7	67.3
Personal income (annual)			
\$30,000 and under	62.3	63.2	61.8
\$30,001–\$70,000	57.7	59.4	55.7
\$70,001 and over	57.5	58.7	54.2
Family type			
Couple without children	66.8		
Couple with dependent children	55.6		
One parent with dependent children	54.6		
Not in a family nucleus	61.8		
Region			
Auckland	64.6		
Wellington	55.9		
Northland/Bay of Plenty/Gisborne	54.0		
Rest of North Island	59.7		
Canterbury	58.2		
Rest of South Island	59.7		

Source: Statistics New Zealand, New Zealand General Social Survey

Notes: (1) MELAA stands for Middle Eastern, Latin American, African. (2) Other includes the category “New Zealander”.

Socio-economic and family type differences

Around half (51 percent) of unemployed people felt their amount of contact with non-resident family and friends was about right, compared to around two-thirds (68 percent) of those not in the labour force. Just over half (55 percent) of people living in one-parent families felt their contact was about right, compared to 67 percent of couples without children. There were no statistically significant differences by personal income; average proportions of people in each income band felt their amount of contact with family and friends who don’t live with them was about right.

Regional differences

The Auckland region had the highest proportion of people (65 percent) who felt their amount of contact with family and friends who don’t live with them was about right. The Wellington region (56 percent) and the combined Northland/Bay of Plenty/Gisborne region (54 percent) had lower than average proportions of people who felt this way.

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.¹⁰⁶

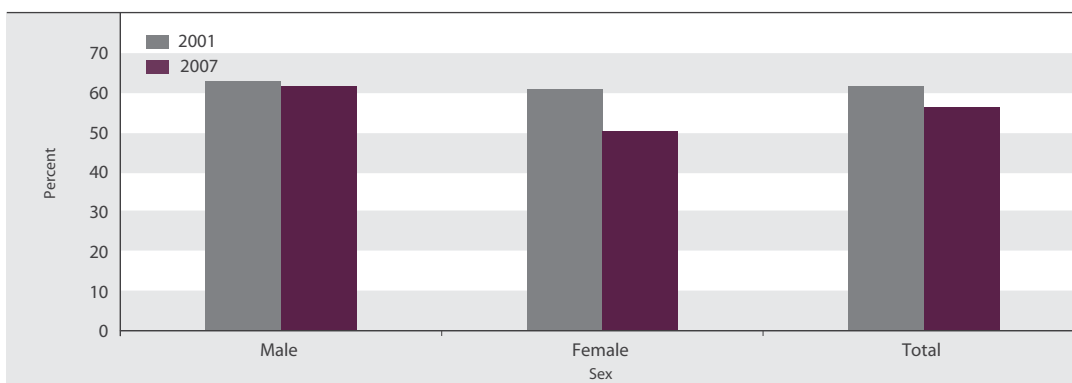
Current level and trends

In 2007, 57 percent 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 percent).¹⁰⁷

About half of the students (46 percent) felt they get enough time with their mothers most of the time, while fewer students (39 percent) 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 percent of students who lacked time with their fathers gave this reason, as did 62 percent of students 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 SC3.1 **Proportion of secondary school students who said they get enough time with their parent(s) most of the time, by sex, 2001 and 2007**



Sources: 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 their Mum than with their Dad.

Table SC3.1 **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 46.3–51.0	47.3 44.8–49.8	47.1 44.7–49.4	42.7 39.8–45.6	44.4 42.0–46.8	46.2 44.8–47.6
Father	43.5 41.4–45.5	40.7 38.2–43.2	38.4 36.0–40.9	35.6 32.9–38.3	36.0 32.9–39.0	39.0 37.6–40.4

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

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

Sex differences

In 2007, more male students (62 percent) than female students (50 percent) 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 percent to 50 percent), but there was very little change for male students over this period.

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

Ethnic differences

Sixty-one percent of New Zealand European students reported that most of the time they get enough time with Mum and/or Dad. Fewer Māori students (51 percent), Pacific students (49 percent) and Asian students (51 percent) 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.

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.

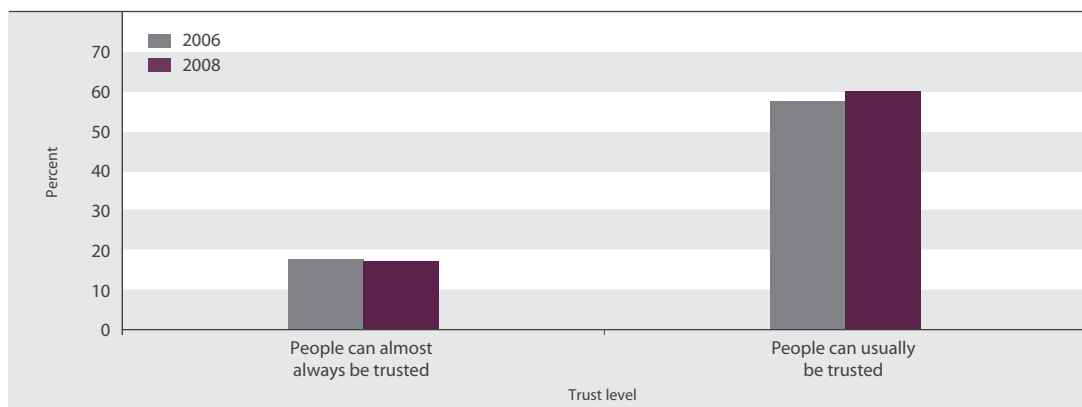
Relevance

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 percent of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over said that people can be trusted, a similar proportion to that recorded in 2006 (76 percent). The largest group (60 percent), said that people can usually be trusted, while 17 percent said that people can almost always be trusted. The corresponding figures for 2006 were 58 percent and 18 percent, respectively.

Figure SC4.1 **Proportion of people reporting that people can be trusted, by level of trust, 2006 and 2008**



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

Age and sex differences

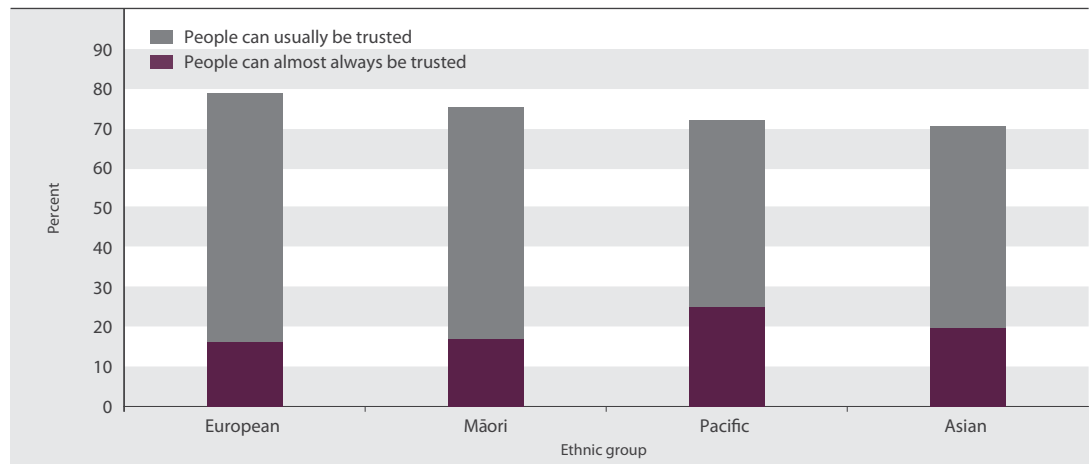
The proportion of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over reporting that people can be trusted was similar for males (78 percent) and females (77 percent). Eighteen percent of males and 17 percent of females agreed that people can almost always be trusted, while 60 percent of both males and females said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

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

Ethnic differences

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

Figure SC4.2 **Proportion of people reporting that people can be trusted, by ethnic group and level of trust, 2008**

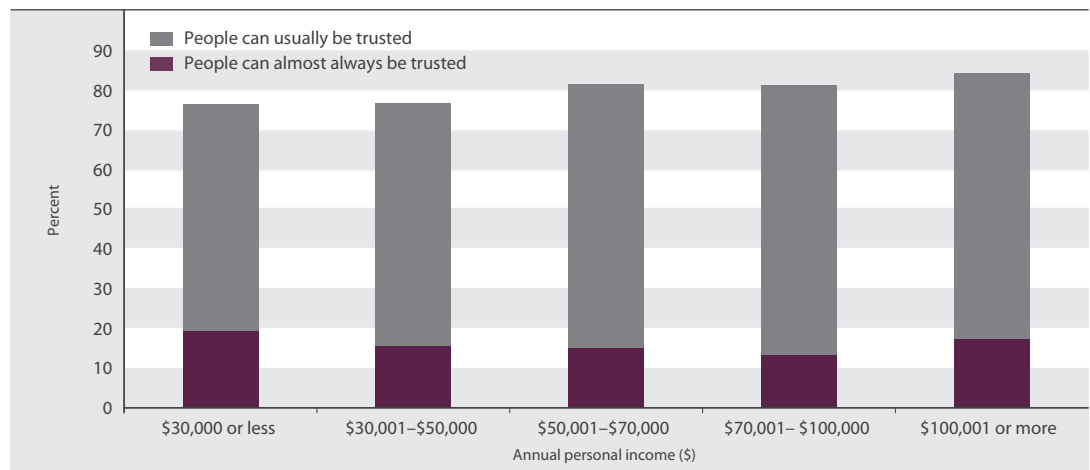


Source: Quality of Life Survey 2008

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 percent), while people with incomes of \$30,000 or less reported the lowest level (76 percent).

Figure SC4.3 **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 percent) and lowest in Manukau (68 percent).

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 people.¹⁰⁸

New Zealand's reported level of trust in other people (76 percent in 2006) was above the median of 56 percent for these 25 OECD countries. 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.

Relevance

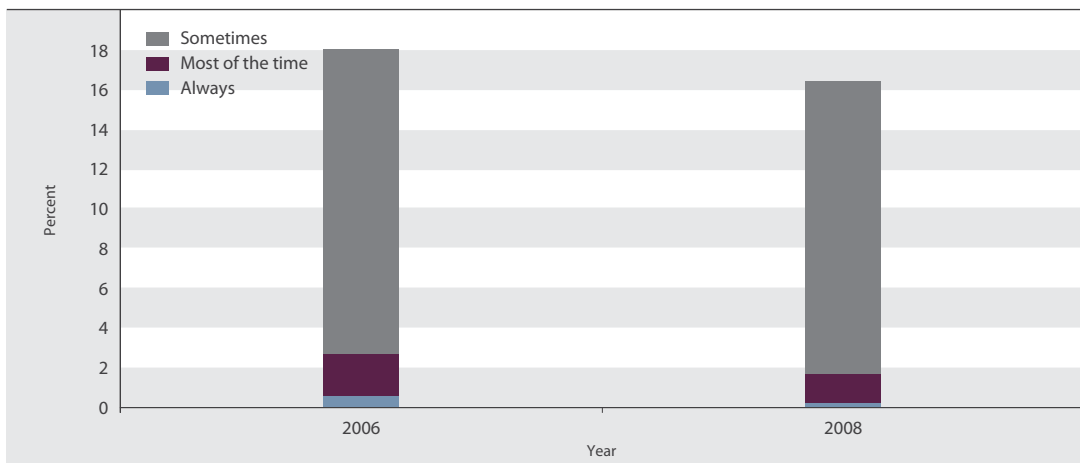
Social contact is fundamentally important to people: humans are social creatures. Self-assessed loneliness is a proxy indicator of whether people are happy with the amount and quality of social contact they have. As well as being an undesirable state in itself, loneliness may also contribute to poor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

Current level and trends

In 2008, 16 percent of New Zealanders reported feeling lonely during the last 12 months. Fifteen percent said they felt lonely sometimes, while fewer than 2 percent said they were lonely most of the time or that they always felt lonely. In 2006, 18 percent 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 percent and 14 percent, respectively), than those who rated their health as “poor” (43 percent) or who were dissatisfied with their life (61 percent).

Figure SC5.1 **Proportion of people experiencing loneliness, 2006 and 2008**



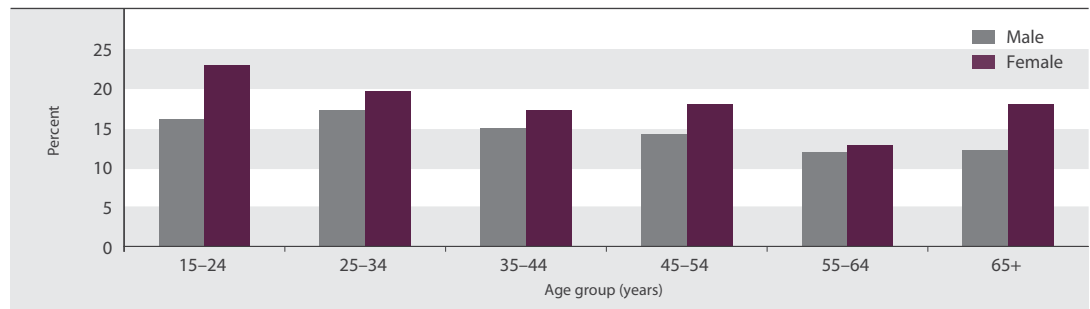
Sources: Quality of Life Survey 2006; Quality of Life Survey 2008

Age and sex differences

In 2008, females (18 percent) were more likely than males (14 percent) 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 people aged 15–24 years and those aged 65 years and over.

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

Figure SC5.2 **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 percent reporting they had felt isolated or lonely in the last 12 months. In comparison, 18 percent of Māori, 23 percent of Pacific peoples and 24 percent of Asian peoples reported having felt isolated or lonely in the past year.

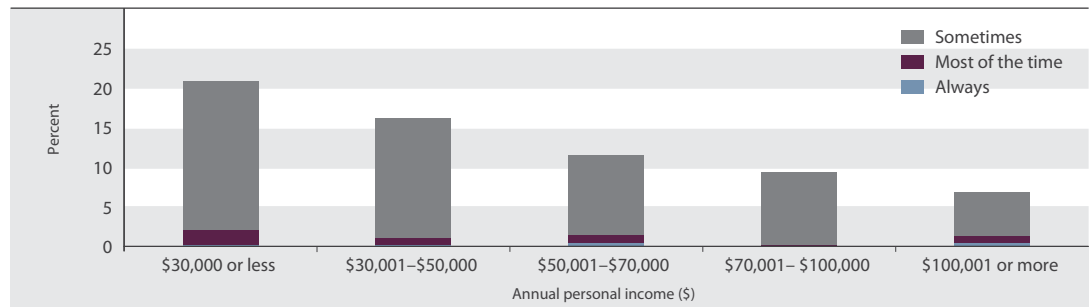
Household type differences

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

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 percent of people with incomes of \$30,000 or less reported having felt isolated or lonely in the past 12 months, compared with 9 percent of those with personal incomes between \$70,000 and \$100,000, and 7 percent of those with personal incomes over \$100,000.

Figure SC5.3 **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 percent). The cities of Manukau, Hamilton, Tauranga, Auckland and Waitakere had the highest levels of loneliness, with between 19 percent and 20 percent of people reporting they felt lonely sometimes, most of the time or always.

Voluntary work

Definition

The proportion of the population aged 15 years and over who reported having done voluntary work for a group or organisation in the last four weeks, in the New Zealand General Social Survey 2008.

Relevance

Voluntary work underpins a wide range of groups and organisations whose activities contribute to social wellbeing. In the fields of health, education, sports and recreation, social services, arts and culture, human rights, emergency services, the environment and conservation, animal welfare and community support and development, volunteers provide their time and skills to help others and to make a contribution. People also volunteer to meet others, to develop their skills and broaden their experience, to make contacts that may lead to employment, and to fulfil parental, social, cultural and religious obligations.

Current level

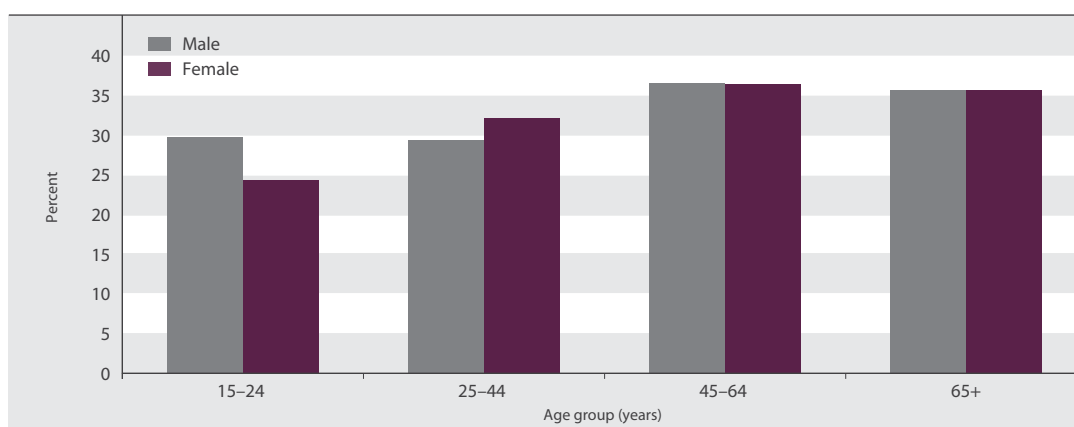
In 2008, one in three New Zealanders aged 15 years and over (33 percent) had done voluntary work for a group or organisation in the last four weeks.

Age and sex differences

Males and females were equally likely to report having done voluntary work for a group or organisation in the last four weeks.

Voluntary work was slightly more prevalent among older people, particularly for females. In 2008, females in age groups 45–64 years and 65 years and over (both 36 percent) were significantly more likely than females aged 15–24 years (24 percent) to have done voluntary work in the last four weeks. The rate for females aged 25–44 years was 32 percent. For males, the difference between younger and older age groups was less marked. Thirty percent of 15–24 year olds reported doing voluntary work in the last four weeks, as did 29 percent of 25–44 year olds, 37 percent of 45–64 year olds and 36 percent of people aged 65 years and over.

Figure SC6.1 **Proportion of people aged 15 years and over who had done voluntary work in the last four weeks, by age group and sex, 2008**



Source: Statistics New Zealand, New Zealand General Social Survey

Ethnic differences

Pacific peoples (42 percent) were significantly more likely than Asian people (28 percent) and people in the mainly European group (32 percent) to report doing voluntary work in the past four weeks. The rate for Māori was 34 percent. The difference between the rates for Māori and Pacific peoples was not statistically significant.

Socio-economic and family type differences

People with personal incomes of \$70,000 or more (39 percent) were significantly more likely to report having done voluntary work than those with incomes of \$30,000 or less (32 percent). There was little difference in volunteering by labour force status or family type.

Volunteering increased with educational level. Twenty-six percent of those with no qualifications did voluntary work in the last four weeks compared to 30 percent of those with a Level 1–4 certificate, 38 percent of people with a Level 5–6 diploma and 42 percent of those with a bachelor's degree or higher qualification.

Regional differences

Across regions, the proportions of people who had done voluntary work ranged from 31 percent in Auckland and Canterbury to 39 percent in the rest of the South Island (outside Canterbury).

International comparison

A 2006 survey of voluntary work in Australia found that 34 percent of the population aged 18 years and over had participated in voluntary work through an organisation or group in the last 12 months. While New Zealand had a similar proportion of adults aged 15 years and over volunteering in 2008 (33 percent), the period of recall was shorter (four weeks), so the two surveys are not directly comparable.¹⁰⁹