Te Korowai Whetū
Social Cohesion

Baseline Report Summary

Social Cohesion in
Aotearoa New Zealand 2022

Measuring social cohesion

This summary report describes social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand using indicators from the Social Cohesion Measurement Framework and drawing on insights from the social cohesion engagement process.

A summary of findings from the engagement process are provided in Annex B – Cabinet paper Appendix one – "What we've heard".[1]

In Aotearoa New Zealand a socially cohesive society is one where people:

- **connect and feel a sense of belonging**
- **are able to participate**
- **are recognised for who they are and respect others**
- **are equitably included and trust in others and in institutions.**

To enable this, the places people live, work, play, and learn must be safe, inclusive, and supportive, and the systems and services that shape society must be fair, responsive, and accountable.

Given there isn't one single measure of social cohesion we need to use a range of indicators to understand how socially cohesive we are in Aotearoa New Zealand.

These key outcomes are shaped by a recognition of the many distinctive communities that make up our society and our shared aspiration for all people and the nation as a whole to thrive.

Key findings

The level of diversity present within Aotearoa New Zealand is a source of strength and richness and provides a strong foundation that can be built on to ensure that everyone equally enjoys the benefits of social cohesion. In general, the data available also suggests that Aotearoa New Zealand has high levels of connectedness and belonging, trust, participation, and wellbeing.

However, these outcomes are not equally shared across all groups.

While many people already feel they are able to enjoy the benefits of full participation in society, as a country we know we still have a long way to go to ensure this is fully realised for everyone.

The indicators also show there are real opportunities to improve inclusion, accessibility, and representation.

This was also echoed in the feedback throughout the social cohesion engagement process. For example, people talked about the various forms of discrimination experienced at all levels including discrimination related to ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic position, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Improving social cohesion for all requires a recognition that everyone has different experiences based on identity, life opportunities, circumstances, and the influence of historical context.

Data sources and limitations

These indicators come from a range of data sources and surveys, collected between 2016 and 2021 with illustrative examples highlighted in the summary.

Note: Current available indicators do not fully capture the experience of many people who encounter systemic forms of disadvantage. Nor do they capture how intersecting identities may interact to provide a source of strength. The complete list of indicators and information on limitations will be described in Social Cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand: Baseline report of indicators.

The indicators tell us that many New Zealanders are connected to social networks and have a strong sense of belonging

Many people reported being connected to social networks and having weekly contact with friends and family, though this has been decreasing since 2016.[2]

Many people also reported having a strong sense of belonging to their families and Aotearoa New Zealand as a whole.

Māori reported particularly high levels of connection and belonging to whānau and their marae.[3]

Māori reported high levels of recent contact with their whānau, both face-to-face and non-direct contact.

Most Māori adults considered their marae tipuna (ancestral marae) as their tūrangawaewae, and of those many felt very strongly or strongly connected to their tūrangawaewae.

Sense of belonging

No sense of belonging ←——————————→ Strong sense of belonging

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○

9.1/10 to their families

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ◐ ○ ○

8.6/10 to New Zealand[4]

Overall, reported levels of trust in other people, institutions, and government is high

According to OECD measures of trust in central government, New Zealand is well above the OECD average.

The indicators available show people reported high levels of trust in other people and institutions including the health system and Police.[5]
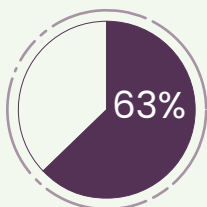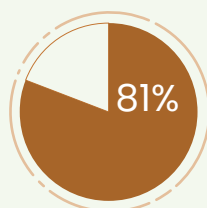
63% New Zealanders
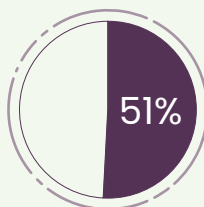
51% OECD Citizens

## There are high levels of participation in social, community, and civic activities

Lots of New Zealanders volunteer in different ways.[7] Over half of New Zealanders reported belonging to at least one group, club, or organisation, and just over 94 percent of New Zealanders reported their participation in at least one cultural or recreational activity.[8] The majority of enrolled electors voted in the New Zealand general election. Participation in employment, education and training is also high.[9]

81% of enrolled electors voted in the New Zealand General Election[10]

Many New Zealanders experience high levels of wellbeing

Most New Zealanders reported high levels of life satisfaction and positive family.
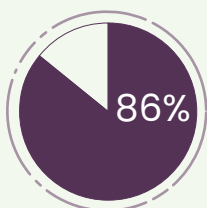
86% of New Zealanders report high levels of life satisfaction [11]

However, these outcomes are not equally shared across all groups[12]

Trust

Māori were less likely to report high levels of trust in other people, and in some specific institutions such as the health system and police.

Wellbeing

Mental health service users, disabled people, and rainbow communities reported low levels of positive mental wellbeing.

Loneliness

Recent migrants, people aged 18–24, and Asian people were more likely to report feeling lonely. Overall levels of loneliness in the general population have also been increasing since 2014, particularly in rural areas.

Voting

Voter turnout in general elections is lower among young people and Māori.[13]

Participation

Māori[14] and Pacific[15] youth have lower rates of participation in education, employment and training.

Discrimination is a key barrier to social cohesion that warrants further attention

Overall, people report high acceptance of diversity, and many people find it easy to be themselves in Aotearoa New Zealand. However, only 54.8 percent of people felt comfortable having a neighbour who has a mental illness.[16]

New Zealanders are also less accepting of refugees and migrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands.[17] Some groups also experience higher levels of discrimination, including sole parents, Māori, those who are unemployed, and Asian people.

Those who identify with multiple marginalised groups often experience even higher rates of discrimination. For example, among trans and non-binary people, Asian and disabled trans and non-binary people are more likely to experience discrimination.[18]

**Percentage of people reporting experiencing discrimination:** [19]

32%	**29%**	**18%**
Sole parents	Māori	Total population
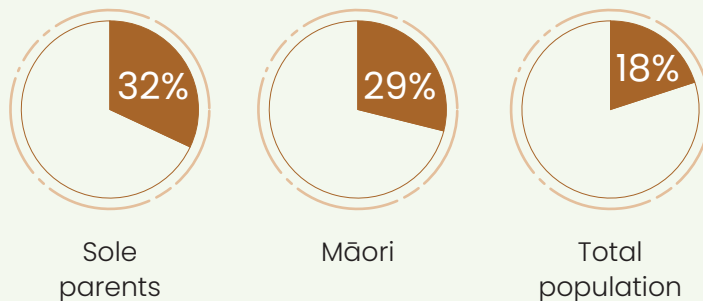
The accessibility, safety, and inclusiveness of the places people live, work, play and learn could be improved

While many people agree that their city or local area is a great place to live[20] and find it easy to access key public facilities, women, disabled people, and members of the rainbow community reported feeling less safe in schools or at night in their neighbourhoods. Some people, including disabled people and people from rainbow communities, also feel less able to be themselves at work.[21]

Disabled people have long-standing barriers to inclusion. Some disabled people find it more difficult to access key public facilities, including their nearest doctor, supermarket, and green space. New Zealanders are also increasingly concerned about online safety.[22]

Percentage of people who find it easy or very easy to access their nearest doctor: [23]

78.7%	**88%**
Disabled	Non-disabled
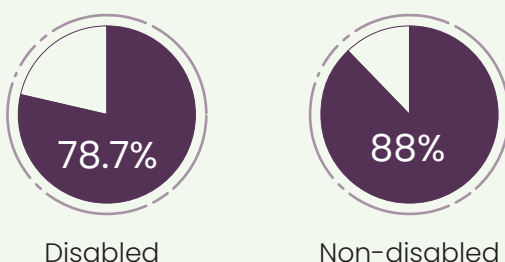
Our public service and local councils are increasingly diverse, but representation in leadership roles could be improved

The Public Service is becoming more ethnically diverse – across our workforce, in management and in senior leadership roles. However, there is more to do to increase ethnic diversity in senior roles to reflect the makeup of society. Māori representation in senior leadership is similar to levels within the public service more generally, while Pacific and Asian leaders continue to increase slowly but remain under-represented. Representation of women in local council elections is also improving.

Representation in the public service workforce:

16.4%	10.2%	12.5%
Māori	Pacific Peoples	Asian

Representation in the public service senior leadership: [24]

16.2%	2.7%	2.7%
Māori	Pacific Peoples	Asian

Social cohesion and wellbeing has been affected by COVID-19

COVID-19 and the subsequent response have had an impact on social cohesion. For example, people are likely to have had less face-toface contact with family and friends. New Zealanders have also reported lower levels of physical and mental health during the pandemic period. However, the pandemic response has also fostered a greater sense of community, solidarity, and reciprocity. The full impact of the pandemic on social cohesion is yet to become clear through available indicators but will require careful monitoring.

1   Appendix One: What we've heard (Cabinet paper submission)

2   www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/wellbeing-statistics-2018

3   www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/te-kupenga-2018-final-english

4   www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/well-being-statistics-2016

5   www.stats.govt.nz/reports/wellbeing-statistics-a-year-in-review-june-2020-to-march-2021-quarter

6   www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/trust-and-confidence-in-the-public-service

7   www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/research/volunteering-statistics-nz

8   www.stats.govt.nz/reports/kiwis-participation-in-cultural-and-recreational-activities

9   www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/20211-labour-market-statistics-snapshot-march-2022

10 https://elections.nz/democracy-in-nz/historical-events/2020-general-election-and-referendums/
    voter-turnout-statistics-for-the-2020-general-election

11 www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/ wellbeing-statistics-march-2021-quarter

12 www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/ wellbeing-statistics-march-2021-quarter

13 https://elections.nz/democracy-in-nz/historical-events/2020-general-election-and-referendums/
    voter-turnout-statistics-for-the-2020-general-election/

14 www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/20217-maori-labour-market-statistics-snapshot-march-2022

15 www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/20214-pacific-peoples-labour-market-statistics-snapshot-
    march-2022

16 www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/well-being-statistics-2016

17 www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/18768- community-perceptions-of-migrants-and-immigration

18 https://static1.squarespace.com/ static/5bdbb75ccef37259122e59aa/t/60d
    d227e2226ae499706dd69/1625105031254/Youth19+Intersectionality+Report_FINAL_2021_ print.pdf

19 www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/ wellbeing-statistics-march-2021-quarter

20 www.qualityoflifeproject.govt.nz/pdfs/QoL-8- City-Topline-FINAL-Interactive-PDF-2020.pdf

21 www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/workforce-data/diversity-and-inclusion/inclusion

22 https://internetnz.nz/assets/Uploads/ perceptions-of-the-internet.pdf

23 www.stats.govt.nz/reports/measuring-inequality-for-disabled-new-zealanders-2018

24 www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/workforce-data/diversity-and-inclusion/ethnicity-in-the-
    public-service

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