

Late 2022 Wellbeing studies in Aotearoa New Zealand - a descriptive review

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Abstract

In November 2022 Treasury released its Te Tai Waiora report on well-being, together with a considerable suite of supporting papers. These include a conceptual framework and measuring system concerning 'Living Standards framework' (LSF) which has been under development for several years with the measurement system now populated with the most recently available statistics (mainly up to 2021). The main report reviews NZ's wellbeing in terms of the array of trends and social distributions of many of the indicators organised in terms of the LSF, with the series of supporting papers fleshing out more details for much of the coverage. Included amongst these papers is a thorough description of the wellbeing of NZ society and its major subpopulations, with particular attention devoted to the recent impacts of the Covid pandemic. Of recent months Treasury's work has been accompanied with the release of MSD's social cohesion baseline report and the MSD survey of young New Zealanders, and comments on these are added to the commentary provided.

Keywords: Wellbeing, New Zealand, Treasury, Social Cohesion, Social Capital, Inequality, Te Tai Waiora, Ministry Social Development, Stats NZ, Survey

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1 Introduction

Across this Millennium there has been a gathering momentum that progress towards achieving human goals should not be exhausted by economic material matters but must involve social well-being, with a steady extension of the social into cultural and even spiritual issues. As part of this broad movement the Labour government has instituted a Well-being budget, although the extent to which this has been successfully achieved seems little commented on academically. And supporting this is a Living Standards framework. This note updates an earlier article on wellbeing indicators in NZ (Crothers, 2021; see also Hughes, 2022) by focusing on the transformation of the conceptual framework into a set of populated indicators with commentaries.

Towards the end of November 2022 Te Tai Ōhanga | Treasury released Te Tai Waiora¹ (TWW) the first of its legislatively required 4 yearly reports on the state of wellbeing which is required of the Public Finance (Wellbeing) Amendment Act 2020. It is hoped Te Tai Waiora will stimulate robust public debates, although at the time of writing media attention has been negligible. . It fits within a suite of ‘stewardship’ reporting documents, required by either the Public Finance Act (1989) or the Public Service Act (2020), which also includes:

- Investment Statements
- Long-term Fiscal Position
- Long-term Insights Briefings
- Economic and Fiscal Updates.

A suite of background papers support Te Tai Waiora (all published in 2022 except for the last 2):

- *Trends in Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2000-2020* (+charts, April Treasury)
- *Our wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic* (+charts) (November, treasury)
- *Wellbeing during the first year of COVID-19: An analysis of the wellbeing supplement to the New Zealand Household labour force survey* (November, SWBA) 2022
<https://swa.govt.nz/assets/SWA-Wellbeing-during-the-first-year-of-COVID-19-v2.pdf>
- *Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand: A population segmentation analysis* (October, Treasury)
- *The distribution of advantage in Aotearoa New Zealand* (+charts; December 2022)
- *Social Cohesion in New Zealand: Background paper to Te Tai Waiora: Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022* (November, Treasury)
- *New Zealand’s wellbeing: Is it sustainable and what are the risks?* (November, Treasury)
- *Wellbeing and natural capital: Understanding the sustainability and risks* (+charts November, NZIER)
- *Estimating the Value of New Zealand’s Human Capability 1986 – 2018* (Forthcoming 2023)
- *Trends in Māori wellbeing* (December, Treasury 2022)

¹ <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/wellbeing-report/te-tai-waiora-2022>

- *Pacific Peoples' wellbeing* (Forthcoming 2023).
- *Equality, equity and distributive justice* (December, Treasury)

The Treasury has engaged in preparing TTW with a number of agencies, organisations, and experts – particularly their Expert Advisory Panellists and joint Treasury-Victoria University of Wellington academic roundtable participants. A reviewer on several reports has been Prof. Tracey McIntosh (Chief Science Advisor at Ministry of Social Development). However, much effort was in-house.

This review merely provides a description of the content of the Wellbeing report – and it's supporting papers – together with a few comments. Much is lightly edited extracts from the relevant reports, apart from the more evaluative comments towards the end. Some indication of results is provided but my main interest is in describing what is broadly available.

The main report provides an array of information about each of a considerable set of indicators, with indicators then being analysed further in one or other supporting paper.

2 Conceptual Architecture:

The TTW is conceptually based in large part of the LSF which Treasury has been developing over much of a decade and which is supported by a suite of reports. One of the sources for this framework was the earlier MSD *Social Reports*.

This LSF Dashboard refresh focused on the new and changed elements of the LSF. We restructured the LSF Dashboard so that each section corresponds to each level of the LSF, adding a new Our Institutions and Governance section and incorporating the Our people section into the Our Individual and Collective Wellbeing section. We added and moved several indicators to better align with the redefined domains and to incorporate more child-relevant indicators. We largely retained all existing LSF Dashboard indicators except where a better indicator had become available since the 2018 release or we needed to adapt to changes in the collection or analysis of data sources.

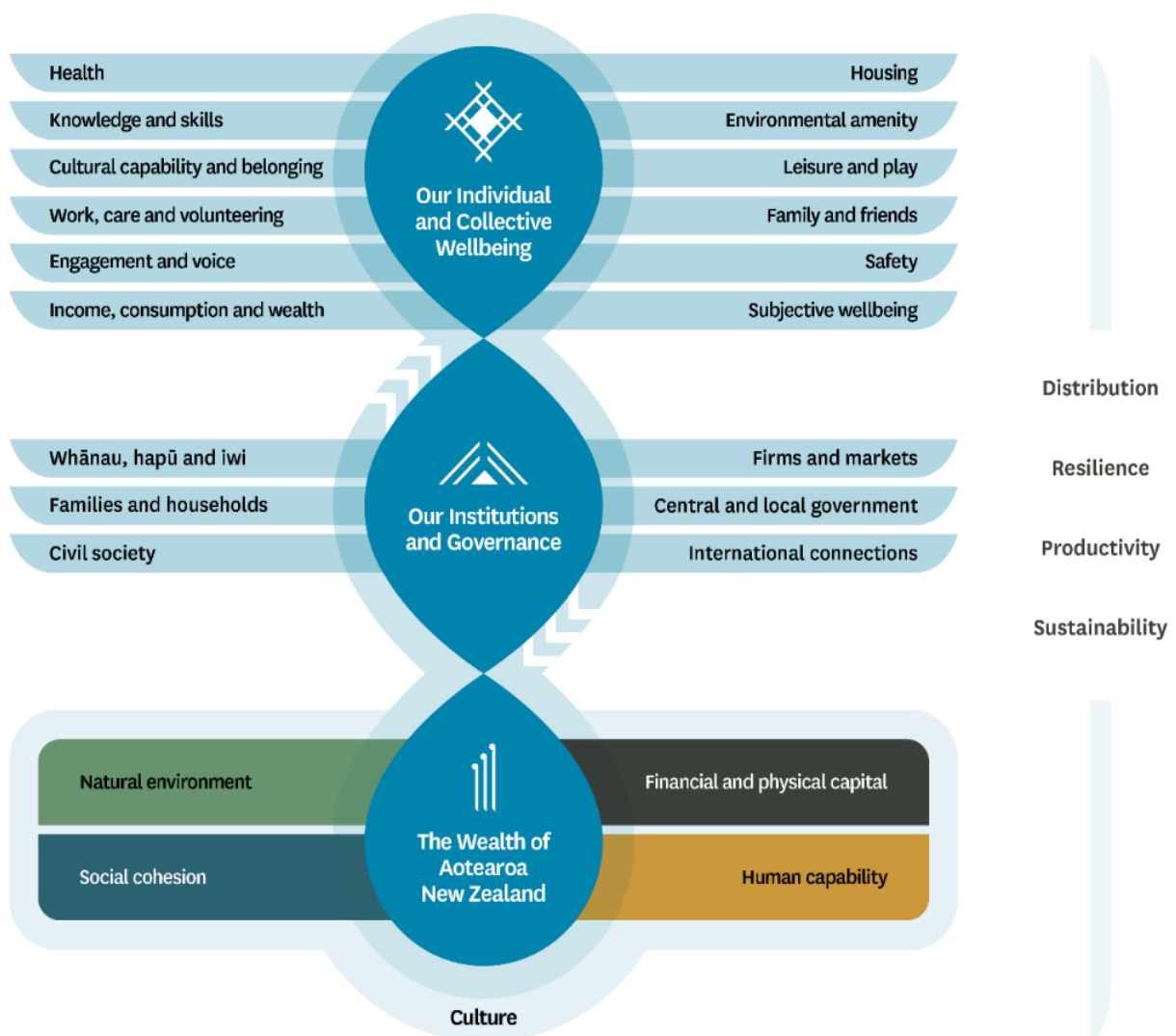
The LSF includes three levels:

- **Our Individual and Collective Wellbeing (12):** This level captures the resources and aspects of our lives that have been identified by research or public engagement as important for our wellbeing as individuals, families, whānau and communities.
- **Our Institutions and Governance:** This level captures the role our institutions and organisations play in facilitating the wellbeing of individuals and collectives, as well as safeguarding and building our national wealth.
- **The Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand:** This captures how wealthy we are overall, including aspects of wealth not fully captured in the system of national accounts such as human capability and the natural environment.

The framework also includes analytical prompts that are the key lenses used to analyse wellbeing across the three levels of the framework. The analytical prompts are: distribution, resilience, productivity and sustainability. More detail is provided on the chart below, although readers are cautioned that reading of the commentary is needed to better understand the whole framework.

Where possible data is provided on

- Change over time
- Differences between major subpopulations and
- International comparisons (usually to other OECD countries).



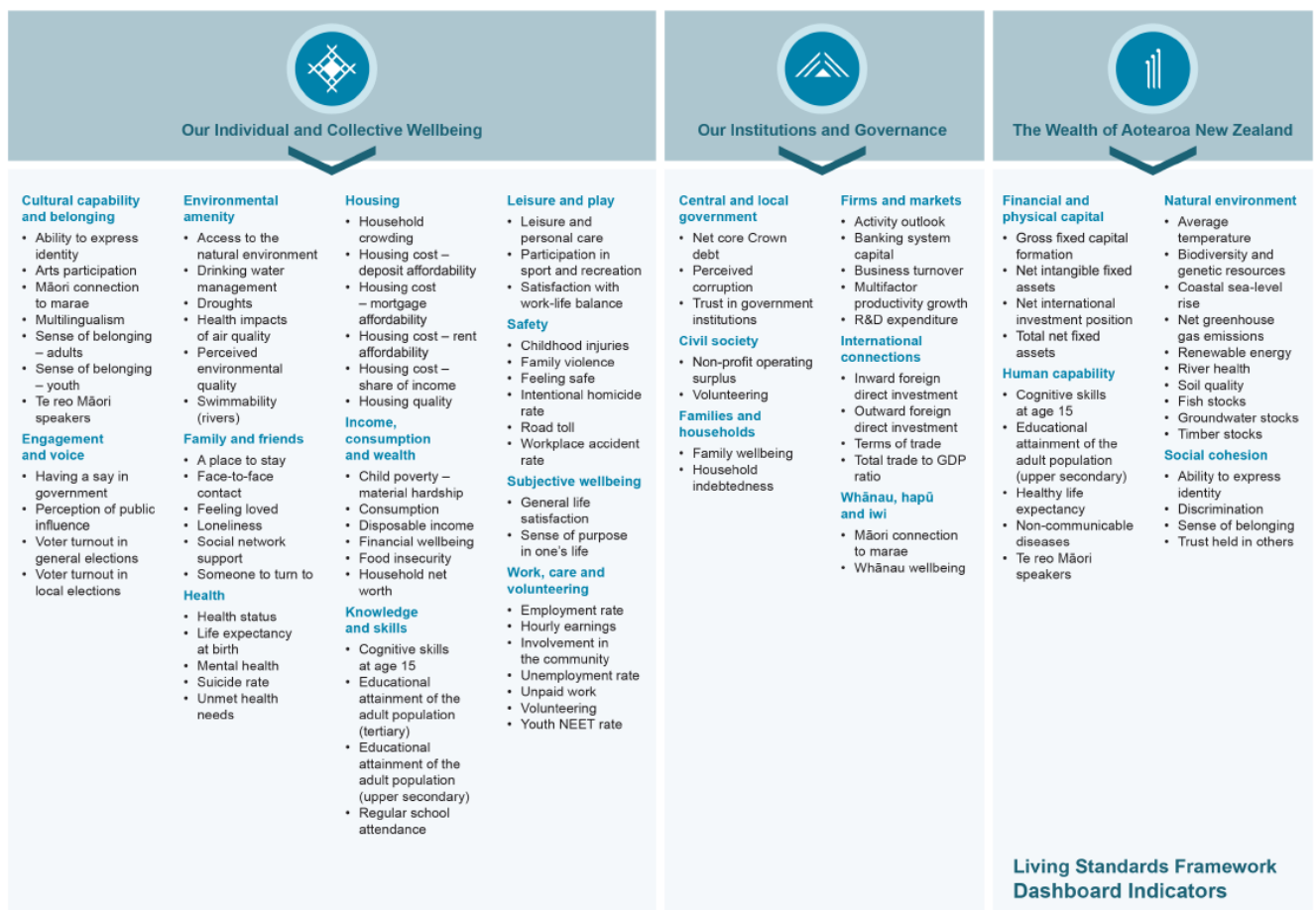
<https://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/tp/living-standards-framework-dashboard-april-2022>

3 The Statistics Infrastructure

Late 2022 was a good time for pausing to present data as many relevant data-sources have recently reported. There are several somewhat linked databases underpinning the reports. (For a more general treatment see Crothers, 2020). The main source is the Treasury LSF dashboard now updated with some 2021 or even 2022 information: see treasury diagram below. This in turn provides its data through three downloadable datasets pertaining to each of the three levels of the LSF. In addition, several of the supporting papers have their own downloadable sets of charts and data – much sourced from the LSF dashboard. (It is particularly useful for readers that results are provided as well as more illustrative charts). As well as providing conceptualisation, measurement methodologies and empirical results normative issues concerning Equality, equity and distributive justice are also considered.

Further back-up is provided by SNZ Social wellbeing Dashboard: see key results of 2021 GSS in appendix.

The main sources of survey data drawn on include the GSS, the NZ Health Survey and to lesser extent on a wider range of sources. Given that work on social indicators really only began about the turn of the Millenium, many series stretch back only that far although there is some information stretching further back into the 1980s and 1990s. There are other data sources that can be used to examine the short-term changes in wellbeing.



New questions on happiness and anxiety, along with questions about sense of control and expected life satisfaction in the future were added to the GSS in 2021 (see SNZ, 2022a). These questions enable better measurement of three different aspects of subjective wellbeing – evaluative (how satisfied you are with your life), eudemonic (to what extent you have meaning and purpose in your life), and affective experience (how you are feeling right now). Asking people to rate how satisfied they expect to feel with their life in five years’ time offers an insight into how optimistic they are about their future.

Recently there was a release of results from the MSD (2022b) *What About Me?* This surveyed 7,209 year 9 to 13 young people in school settings between June and November 2021. An additional 502 young people completed surveys in community settings, including alternative education providers and community organisations that support young people. (The community data is not yet reported on. Unfortunately, the survey took place at a time when many young people’s lives were disrupted by COVID-19.) The survey aimed to profile young people, their wellbeing, resilience and strengths and their hopes for the future, and to inform support services by identifying areas of difficulty in young people’s lives. Available are:

- Technical report providing more detail on the survey method including sampling, weighting and analysis
- Tables with all results included in this report and later a wider set of tables including results for other survey questions
- More information about accessing the dataset with data dictionary and supporting documentation held by Stats NZ..

Key themes included:

- A strong identity
- Strong relationships and connections
- A stable home base
- Achieving and contributing
- Feeling good physically and mentally
- Safety
- Experience of harm.

MSD released towards the end of 2022 its version (Perry, 2022) of *The Child Poverty in New Zealand report*.

4 Results: main report

Improvements in wellbeing over time: Life in Aotearoa New Zealand has improved in many ways over the past twenty years. Infrastructure, institutions, the economy, so NZers are now healthier and live longer, are safer on our roads and workplaces, and have far higher incomes. Compared to other OECD countries, NZers enjoy very clean air, strong relationships, high life satisfaction and have a relatively high level of social cohesion and trust in one another. Those of working age have very high levels of skills, partly reflecting the fact that many highly-qualified people born in other countries have joined. Those over 65 have high levels of social support, experience more positive emotions and are less likely

to be in poverty. Rates of home ownership are highest among the oldest age groups, most of whom have benefited from substantial growth in house prices over time.

However, Aotearoa New Zealand performs less well on wellbeing for children and young people. Child poverty rates are declining but there are still many children and young people who have experienced poverty for much of their lives, including many disabled children and children in sole parent families. Our schools do less well to counteract disadvantage than schools in other countries. Children in our schools are bullied more often than children in other countries. An increasing number of children are not attending school, and each year growing numbers of children are reaching age 15 without even basic levels of literacy and numeracy. Teenagers and young adults have rapidly increasing levels of psychological distress and our teen suicide rate continues to be among the worst in the OECD. Changes in housing markets have made it more difficult for young people to progress into home ownership. Renting is becoming increasingly common well into people's 30s and 40s, and our rental housing is among the least affordable in the OECD, particularly for people with the lowest incomes. Housing in Aotearoa New Zealand is often of low quality, and this applies particularly to rental accommodation, which is more likely to be crowded or mouldy.

Many young people (and adults) experience one type of low wellbeing, such as poor mental health, or low skills, or unaffordable housing, while this is often balanced by high wellbeing in other areas of life. But those least satisfied with their lives tend to face low wellbeing in multiple areas at once, with some 5%-10% of the population experiencing low wellbeing in at least four areas. Disabled people, sole parents, Māori and Pacific Peoples are over-represented in groups of people that experience low wellbeing in multiple areas.

Some experiences of low wellbeing are short-lived, but others are persistent or recurrent. Much income poverty and material hardship is recurrent, particularly for people without qualifications and people on benefits. Many of those with low wellbeing are parents. Children raised by parents with low wellbeing do less well at school and tertiary levels than children of more advantaged parents. Patterns of educational success help explain why children of rich parents are more likely to become rich themselves and the children of poor parents are more likely to become poor. NZ's levels of income mobility between generations appear to be higher than in countries like the USA, but lower than in countries like Denmark.

Māori experience high levels of cultural belonging, collective identity, and communal sharing and giving, with Māori wellbeing improving in many ways. However, Māori experience lower wellbeing on average than other groups of people across income, material hardship, health, housing, and other areas with. Most of these gaps between Māori and non-Māori are closing slowly at best. Māori have had especially rapid increase in rates of psychological distress, high levels of discrimination, and low trust in government institutions.

Pacific peoples have strong social connections and a strong sense of belonging to New Zealand. However, Pacific peoples' wellbeing is lower than the national average across many other areas, with poor housing and low incomes.

The future of wellbeing: There is a growing intergenerational gap in wellbeing with children and young people facing major challenges to achieving the same high levels of wellbeing that older adults enjoy today. The falling educational achievement and worsening psychological distress among young people today pose risks to their wellbeing as adults. There are also external challenges to future wellbeing, especially climate change.

NZ's physical capital and human capability are high and have been increasing over time, something that future New Zealanders will benefit from. Future New Zealanders will also benefit from the high social cohesion we have built, although there are threats to maintaining this such as the rise of misinformation. However, while New Zealand has high natural capital, aspects of the natural environment are deteriorating, and this poses risks to future wellbeing. As our economy has developed over time, we have accepted some deterioration of our natural environment in exchange for the benefits of increasing wealth of other forms. But biodiversity loss and other types of environmental deterioration cannot continue indefinitely without posing major risks to future wellbeing.

Perhaps the most significant risk to the sustainability of our wellbeing is climate change. Severe weather events are becoming more frequent as mean temperatures rise, and the sea level is rising. Scientists predict this will continue. Aotearoa New Zealand is part of global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, efforts which will require an economic transformation. Sustaining wellbeing will depend upon our society's ability to adapt to a lower-carbon economy and a warmer global climate. Through a combination of productivity growth, technological change and societal choices, the material foundation of our wellbeing needs to change if it is to be sustainable in the future.

Aotearoa New Zealand is also exposed to many high-impact, inevitable, but rare risks like earthquakes and tsunami that significantly harm wellbeing when they occur. Managing risks, particularly the potential for many major, unexpected ones, requires a focus on building adaptability and resilience across society. This means investing in the quality and flexibility of our institutions, which determine our response to risks, and managing our wealth to provide buffers to absorb shocks.

Important areas for further research include:

- the natural environment.
- the causes of the identified concerning trends
- what policy interventions could help alleviate low wellbeing.

5 Trends studies

3 trends studies expand on the trends described in the main document. The main trends report provides more detailed treatment of that provided in the main overall report (see summary under 4 above).

The SWA Covid report tracks changes to the way New Zealanders lived their lives in terms of 13 well-being outcomes using survey data from General Social Survey and the Household Labour Force Survey over the first year of COVID-19, up until June 2020 and then until

March 2021. 16 key groups who might have been particularly impacted by COVID-19 were also tracked:

- parents, especially sole parents;
- disabled people;
- younger (18-39) and older (65+) people;
- Māori; Pacific people; and
- people living in Auckland.

in general, reported wellbeing outcomes tended to be more positive or about the same level in June 2020 as they were for the same group in 2018: there were statistically significant increases across most of the groups with life satisfaction, having enough income, mental wellbeing, feelings of safety, trust in other people, Parliament, the police, media, and the health system. In contrast over the first year of COVID-19, the populations of Australia and UK were instead reporting a decline in life satisfaction. The only statistically significant worsening outcome from 2018 to June 2020 was loneliness, particularly among Pacific people, men, people aged 65+, and people aged 18-39 in Auckland -However, for all of these groups other than 18–39-year-olds, rates of loneliness during COVID-19 were still better than other groups, despite worsening compared to 2018.

In the following 12 months, these initial benefits faded out for many outcomes. Self-reported health and most measures of trust fell so that by the end of our sample period, outcomes were at about the same level as in 2018. Immediate impacts of lockdown were examined by observing reported outcomes for people who were interviewed immediately before the end of the Alert Level 3 lockdowns that occurred in May and August 2020 compared to those interviewed immediately before and after this lockdown. Life satisfaction was lower while people were in lockdown, and some evidence that loneliness also increased (potentially with delayed effects), especially among Pacific people and sole mothers.

Drivers could be estimated from the multiple observations from each of several rounds of interviewing. Life satisfaction over the first year of COVID-19 was heavily affected by health and loneliness while various economic aspects, including having enough income and not being unemployed, were also moderately important. When looking at family wellbeing, loneliness and material hardship were about as important for life satisfaction, but health, income and unemployment were less important. Winter Energy Payment improved people's income adequacy and family wellbeing.

This Treasury Covid paper uses the 2021 Living Standards Framework to provide a high-level review of evidence about changes in New Zealanders' wellbeing from the arrival of COVID-19 in early 2020 through to the first quarter of 2022. Many wellbeing metrics have been more robust than might have been expected, and wellbeing has generally held up better than in many other countries. The economy regained pre-COVID activity levels rapidly and unemployment reached historical lows in late 2021, including for young New Zealanders who were most at risk from a weaker labour market. Measures of subjective wellbeing also held up (despite declining slightly as the pandemic prolonged), and there were fewer road

deaths and fewer workplace injuries in 2020.

There had been disruption to NZ's health system, including to hospital services and access to general practitioners (GPs) and screening services, and the education system. House price growth accelerated during a period of low interest rates and higher-than-expected employment. Significant inflation pressure has also emerged. The economic and social consequences of COVID-19 have fallen particularly hard on young people, who, for example, were more likely to experience psychological distress than other age groups. Māori and Pacific peoples, two population groups with younger age profiles, have also experienced some particularly negative impacts including worsening rates of childhood immunisation, and cervical and breast cancer screening coverage. More positively, employment and income levels have held up for all groups, and we have seen overall declining levels of child poverty (material hardship) in recent years.

There is also evidence of potential impacts on other aspects of the wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand. Trust, as a metric for social cohesion, increased during the first part of 2020 but those gains eroded as the pandemic continued. In terms of financial and physical capital, a strong balance sheet prior to the pandemic provided the Government with options to support firms and households. Although the impact was less than initially forecast, the pandemic did affect the government's finances. Business balance sheets remained resilient, reflecting in part, the rapid overall economic recovery.

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6 Specialist studies

6.1 Clustering study

However, both variables and cases cluster together. The Treasury paper examines the factors which are related to differences in subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction) using (GSS and also linked administrative data) data and regression tree analysis. A key finding from this analysis is that mental health, having enough income to meet everyday needs, and trust in institutions or trust in other people, are the characteristics most strongly related to different levels of subjective wellbeing above. Other factors are partnership status, trust in institutions, problems with neighbourhood crime, loneliness, and material wellbeing. The report also profiles an array of clusters in terms of groups' best combining linked characteristics.

6.2 Maori, Pacific etc

The Maori report applies He Ara Waiora framework and is organised around two principles of Māori wellbeing

* Te Taiao – the natural world

* Te Ira Tangata – the human realm.

A set of relevant quantitative indicators from the LSF dashboard are displayed and commented on. This is complemented with qualitative insights in the form of interview excerpts from Māori across academia, government, iwi and business

A Pacific paper (forthcoming) will complement this report.

7 Institutions/Governance Level

The Treasury report does not develop indicators for the newly developed level of institutions and governance. However, a SNZ report from the GSS 2021 (SNZ 2022b) includes information in relation to families/whanau. Questions concerning belongingness to various groups were updated from 2016.

The 2021 General Social Survey included new questions on family functioning a fuller picture of how families interact and support each other. ‘Family’ means different things to different people and is self-defined by respondents.

A family functioning satisfaction score was elicited. Six Questions (summable into a general functioning score) were added about agreements with statements about how their family functions (e.g. “In times of crisis we can turn to each other for support”); Another half a dozen questions asked about who (e.g. family lived with) respondents would ask for support (e.g. “If you had the flu for a few days and had to stay in bed”, and finding it easy to ask for help was also asked about.

8 NZ’s Wealth:

8.1 Social Cohesion/Capital

Social cohesion is conceptualised as one of the four aspects of wealth, with sustaining social cohesion into the future seen as necessary to safeguard the wellbeing of future generations. Treasury’s explorative background report introduces the relevant concepts and reviews data from some cohesion indicators.

Social cohesion is defined as the willingness of diverse individuals and groups to trust and cooperate with each other in the interests of all, supported by shared intercultural norms, understanding and values. It exists when people feel like they are part of a society that accepts differences in a way that allows conflict to be resolved peacefully and amicably. It has broad economic and social benefits for society and contributes to sustained long-term prosperity by allowing a focusing on this. The World Bank used cross-country studies to estimate that a significant amount of wealth within nations may be intangible and a large

share of this may be attributable to social capital². Researchers focus on survey measures of social trust in other people as the best summary indicator. Social trust is described as the “glue” that holds society together. It enables social interaction, supports community engagement, and may reduce the cost of commerce.

Most metrics and indicators (particularly the GSS) suggest that New Zealand is relatively cohesive and that it enjoys strong social capital compared to many similar countries. The majority of the community are socially connected, politically engaged, and report high levels of social trust. Similarly, most report comfort with diversity and openness to inclusion within their communities. However, generalised and more specific institutional Trust scores for deprived groups are lower and reported discrimination, crime victimisation & also suicide rates are also higher wealth and connection may be most acute for youth or minorities. Youth are more likely to report lower trust and are more likely to engage in and be victims of crime.

MSD has also (apparently quite separately since there are no mutual cross-references with the Treasury report) developed, after an extensive engagement process, its own social cohesion report – issuing a methodology report and a baseline compilation (MSD 2022). The components of social cohesion (for People, families, whānau and communities) are:

- connected and feel like they belong,
- willing and able to participate,
- economically and socially included through equitable access to the determinants of wellbeing (including housing, education, employment, health),
- recognised for who they are and respect others
- and trust each other and institutions.

To support these outcomes, the places people live, work, and play need to be safe, inclusive, and supportive and institutions and sectors must be fair, responsive, and accountable.

MSD results indicate that many New Zealanders are connected to their social networks and feel a strong sense of belonging. However levels of loneliness appear to be increasing, and is more common among some groups People’s social networks provide an important source of connectedness

Social connectedness is an important component of social cohesion and a lack of connectedness can indicate feelings of exclusion and disengagement from society. It has three important components:

1. Socialising: Frequent and quality contact with others
2. Social support: Ease of access to instrumental and emotional support
3. Sense of belonging: Perception of being part of a social group

² Social capital is a distinct, but very closely related term used to describe social cohesion with social capital specifically including the stock of norms and values that may give rise to social cohesion over time.

A sense of belonging is also considered to be an important aspect of social cohesion, with belonging to as variety of groupings possible. solidarity or reciprocity among and between social groups and individuals can exist at local levels (neighbourhoods or community groups) as well as larger scale (nationally) and can be indicated by individuals willingness to help others, sacrifice or generally contribute towards a collective good - concern for others and willingness to help others. Membership of clubs and groups provides opportunities for people to have their voice heard, allows for diverse groups to interact positively building trust, wider cooperation, solidarity and access to resources and mutual benefits.

8.2 Wealth

The wealth report *more work at this level is forthcoming) looks into the pressures that our activities today may be placing on various aspects of national wealth and therefore its ability to support wellbeing into the medium-long term future focusing on:

- Is New Zealand's overall wealth is increasing, declining or staying the same?
- What major risks does New Zealand face that could undermine future wellbeing?
- Given the character of these risks, what is the best way in which to build resilience to limit the impact of the risks on the sustainability of future wellbeing?

Despite lack of robust measurement of trends of capitals Treasury have tentatively concluded that the measured value of NZ's human and physical wealth has been increasing since 1995, and social cohesion is high by international standards. There are various threats to the sustainability of the natural environment, including the likely impact of climate change. So sustaining wellbeing will depend on whether technological innovation, productivity growth and societal choices will allow adaption. NZ's location on the Ring of Fire means we also have a very high proportion of high-impact, inevitable but rare events (HIREs), while At the same time, New Zealand faces many slow-onset risks where the impacts accumulate over time, notably declining youth educational performance, which could undermine the growth of our human capital, and some signs of declining trust undermining our social cohesion.

The Treasury commissioned NZIER to investigate the existing empirical evidence on the sustainability of the contribution of New Zealand's natural environment to the wellbeing of its people. The objective of this 'synthesis' report is to review and summarise measures of natural capital and ecosystem services for New Zealand and what they say about our natural environment in relation to the sustainability of and any risk to the state of wellbeing in the country. This report is a background paper to Te Tai Waiora: Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022.

8.3 Culture, Wellbeing and the Living Standards Framework: A Perspective (June 2019)

This Discussion Paper provides a perspective on how to better reflect culture in the Living Standards Framework (LSF). It was jointly commissioned by the Treasury and Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage; and written by Lincoln University economists Professor Caroline Saunders and Professor Paul Dalziel (2019). It forms part of a series of papers published by the Treasury to generate discussion on key issues in developing the LSF and the LSF Dashboard.

Generally, the concept is viewed in a broad sense to include elements of the way that people affirm their identity as individuals and in groups through the sharing of common objects, rituals, behaviours, and knowledge. Although the report advocated treatment of culture as a separate component of 'wealth' this has not been followed.

9 Normative

A crucial area of writing, given the host is the Treasury and the authors economists is the connection with economic and political theory especially in their normative aspects. Drawing on such frameworks can be helpful in trying to pin down the finer detail of goals which might be aimed at. For example, a broad goal is to achieve better equality but there is a considerable literature on what this might involve: for example Atkinson's models. Another author of wide importance in relation to SWB is Sen.

A clearly written Treasury paper (2022) provides a review of normative theories relevant to inequality. Some of these theories share the assumption that the pattern of distribution is relevant for the equity of distribution so that a distribution is equitable if:

1. Maximin: it maximises the situation of the person who is worst off.
2. Utilitarianism: it maximises the total (it is efficient).
6. Prioritarianism: it gives weighted priority to the worse off.
7. Sufficientarianism: everybody is above some minimum sufficient threshold.

The remaining three normative theories discussed in the paper do not share the assumption that the pattern of distribution is relevant for the equity of distribution with each arguing for a different factor as being relevant for equity:

3. Libertarianism: rights and entitlement: distributions are equitable if they result from processes that respect property rights.
4. Luck Egalitarianism: desert and opportunity: distributions are equitable if they result from choices people have made.
5. Relational Egalitarianism: moral equality: distributions are equitable if they uphold the fundamental social equality of people

The paper stresses that decisions concerning values are the province of elected officials (and specifically Ministers) but that analysts can provide useful advice. But, the issue of normative argument can also be tackled sociologically: e.g. what people prefer what model of inequality reduction? Again, there is a literature across this question both internationally but also with local applications. Earlier work in this WB workstream at Treasury did begin to explore this line of inquiry so it is disappointing that it seems to have been abandoned.

10 Other Frameworks:

Besides the LS framework there are also:

- He Ara Waiora for a mātauranga Māori perspective on wellbeing
- Fonofale for a Pacific perspective on wellbeing, and

- The Children’s Commissioner’s Wellbeing Wheel for a perspective on children’s wellbeing.
- MSD’s Social Cohesion framework

HAW has been developed but does not currently have a set of agreed indicators to underpin it. In He Ara Waiora some LS indicators can be used together with drawing on a series of interviews and these are used in the Treasury Maori report.

11 Commentary

It has been said semi-seriously that Treasury houses the largest of NZ’s ‘academic’ economic departments, but it now also emerges as a competitor amongst university academic sociology departments too. And few other government agencies seem to have much public-facing analytical capability left, after a flurry of interest a few years aback around indicator frameworks. The set of Treasury papers provides a substantial working through of available conceptualisations of social policy frameworks and of social data and is carried out competently. There are some flashes of Research Design sophistication such as the tracking of the impacts of lockdowns using data collected immediately before and after lockdowns. There is not surpassingly a twist towards economics that emerges from time to time that I find slightly jarring but this merely reminds me of the provenance of the material.

The highly ambitious Treasury offering is rife with complexities, trying to deal with conceptual, normative, methodological and empirical material and in particular trying to shoe-horn a maze of empirical data into a coherent framework. The attempt is admirable. The language used is straightforward but includes technical terms, although glossaries help with these. There are some stretches where the publishing treatments might have been more standardised, although much secured in a recipe format that helps.

There are a few glitches. In particular deployment of data from QOL surveys is problematic in that only main cities are covered (and that coverage changes from time to time). Some datasets could be pushed out further or updated (e.g. NZES 2020). Clearly, as always further analysis is required, and much data has been made available to facilitate this. It is important for reader to get their heads around the conceptual architecture of the whole, and however the writers have endeavoured to be, this is not easy.

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Appendix SNZ GSS 2021 results:

- Most people in New Zealand still satisfied with their lives
- Most people optimistic for the future
- Life worthwhile unchanged from 2018
- Most families doing well
- Low-income households feel less in control of their lives
- Most people report a net positive affect
- Satisfaction with work-life balance increases with age
- More people say they have enough money to meet their needs
- People still rate their general health well
- Renters rate housing affordability lower than homeowners
- Mental wellbeing has declined
- Majority of people feel safe at night home alone
- Increases in loneliness and contact with family
- Decrease in peoples' high trust of others
- Te reo Māori proficiency increases across the board
- People becoming more accepting of mental illness
- Four aspects of life have a strong relationship with wellbeing.