

Subjective whānau wellbeing in Te Kupenga

RESEARCH SUMMARY

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There is a growing interest in whānau wellbeing as a field of scholarly inquiry and as a focus for public policy.

Subjective whānau wellbeing in Te Kupenga addresses a substantial gap in the quantitative evidence base about whānau wellbeing¹. It is also the first detailed analysis of self-assessed whānau wellbeing in Te Kupenga. It focuses on two key questions:

1. How well do Māori think their whānau are doing?
2. What are the critical factors associated with whānau doing well?

BACKGROUND

Whānau wellbeing as a concept is complex. Diverse approaches have been developed for defining and measuring whānau wellbeing.

Although definitions vary, 'whānau' is often described as whakapapa-based relationships of mutual obligation. 'Whānau' include intergenerational relationships, may extend beyond one household, and may sometimes include 'friends and others'.

Definitions of what constitutes 'whānau wellbeing' also vary. However, research in this area often describes whānau wellbeing (or whānau ora) as a collective state of wellbeing that is enmeshed with wellbeing at the individual level. Research in this field also emphasises the collective strength of whānau and the potential for whānau to provide their own solutions to challenges they face.

Previous research has attempted to quantify whānau wellbeing by aggregating individual-level data at the household-level. However, this approach fails to reflect whānau structures that often do not conform neatly to household boundaries.

The individual-level variables used in existing analyses are often indicators of social deprivation, offering a very limited, externally imposed picture of wellbeing. This report addresses these issues by studying individuals' subjective assessments of the wellbeing of their whānau.

Although there is a dearth of statistical evidence on whānau wellbeing, previous qualitative research has identified that potential predictors of whānau wellbeing are strong reciprocal relationships between whānau members and traditional lands and waters, as well as the knowledge and practices that underpin those relationships.

¹ This project is part of a larger research programme on family and whānau wellbeing. For the latest research report see superu.govt.nz/publication/families_whanau_report_2016

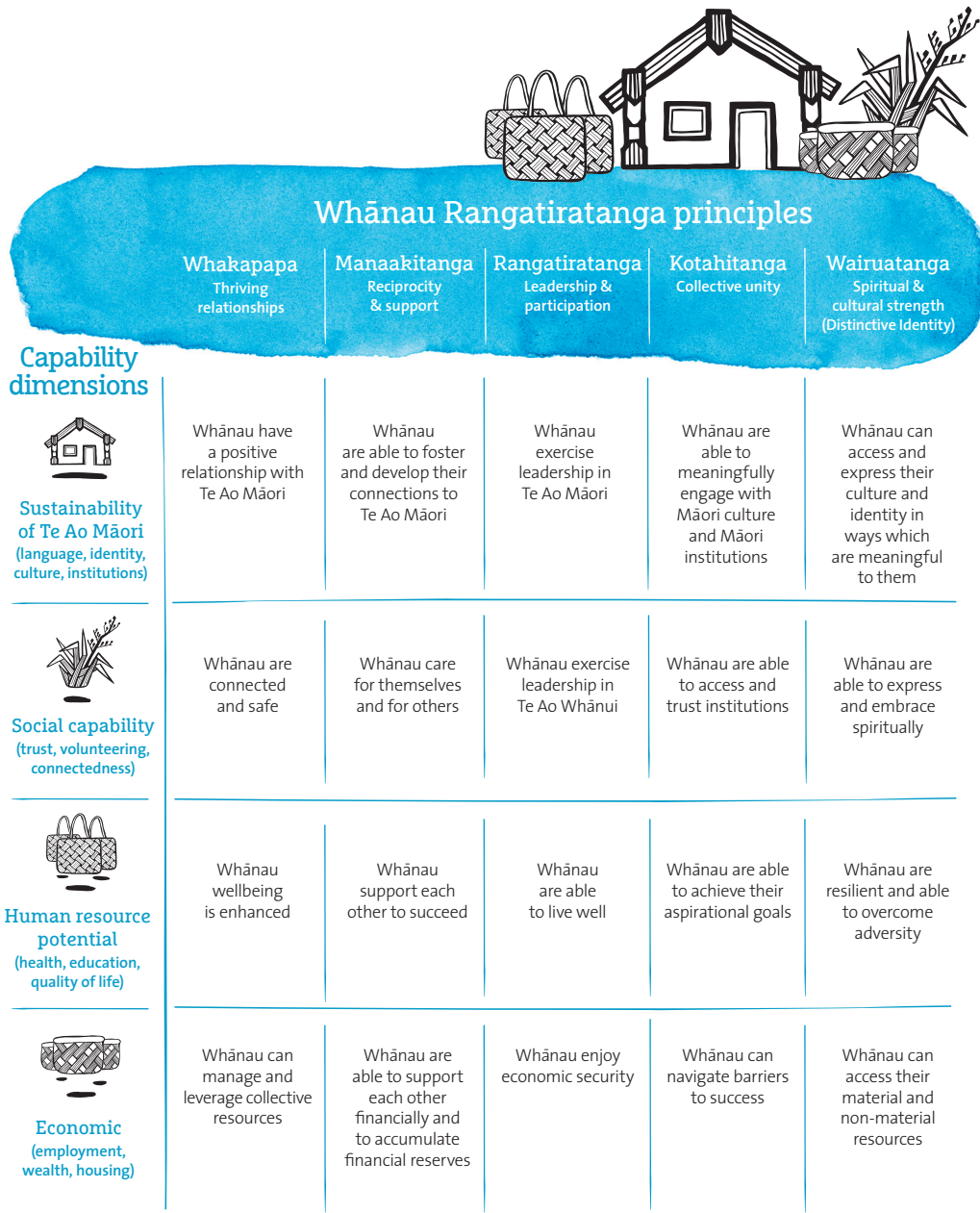
Approach

This report uses data from Te Kupenga, the first nationally representative survey of Māori wellbeing, undertaken by Statistics New Zealand following the 2013 Census. Participants were a sample of the usually resident Māori population, aged 15 years or older (n=5,549 weighted to 529,750).

Participants rated how well their whānau was doing on a scale from 0 (extremely badly) to 10 (extremely well).

Superu’s Whānau Rangatiratanga Measurement Framework (see below) was used to help guide the selection of factors used in this analysis.

Figure 1_Whānau Rangatiratanga Measurement Framework



Based on a review of the literature, three principles were identified from the framework that were most likely to influence how Māori subjectively assess the wellbeing of their whānau:

- whakapapa / thriving relationships
- manaakitanga / reciprocity and support
- rangatiratanga / leadership and participation.

The capability dimensions, outcomes and indicators related to these principles are represented in Table 1.

Table 1 Factors from the Whānau Rangatiratanga Framework likely to influence self-assessment of whānau wellbeing

Capability dimension	Principle	Outcome	Indicator
Social	Whakapapa	Whānau feel connected and safe	Has been the victim of crime in last 12 months
	Manaakitanga	Whānau care for themselves and for others	Has provided unpaid help to others
Human resource potential	Manaakitanga	Whānau support each other to succeed	How well whānau get along Access to general support
	Rangatiratanga	Whānau are able to live well	Level of life satisfaction Self-rated health
Economic	Rangatiratanga	Whānau enjoy economic security	Home ownership

Results

The mean whānau wellbeing rating was high, with only 6.3 percent of respondents reporting a wellbeing score below the scale midpoint (5). About one-fifth reported a moderate whānau wellbeing score (5–6), and about three-quarters of respondents reported that their whānau were doing well (7–8) or very well (9–10).

Whānau wellbeing is related to household-based family structure and location...

How each factor on its own relates to whānau wellbeing (bivariate analysis)

- Age is an important influencer of how Māori assess their whānau wellbeing, and assessments appear to be more positive at younger and older ages. Gender also influences self-reported whānau wellbeing, with women being more likely to report high levels of whānau wellbeing than men.
- Whānau wellbeing is related to household-based family structure and location, with respondents in single-parent families and in areas of economic deprivation more likely to report lower levels of whānau wellbeing.
- Material factors such as income adequacy and housing are correlated with wellbeing, but their impact appears to be most influential at the lower end of the wellbeing scale. Economic security may provide some protection against very poor whānau wellbeing, but may be less important for very high wellbeing.
- The factors that stand out as most significant for whānau wellbeing are the various measures of quality of interpersonal relationships (measured by individuals’ perceptions of how well their whānau get along and the level of whānau support), along with individual life satisfaction and feelings of loneliness.

How different factors relate to whānau wellbeing when examined together (multivariate analysis)

- In this more complex multiple regression analysis, we identify which factors are **most** important for a subjective sense of whānau wellbeing, while controlling for the associations between whānau wellbeing and all other variables. We included a range of variables that we identified as being associated with whānau wellbeing in the bivariate analysis.
- **The two factors that have the strongest associations with self-assessed whānau wellbeing, taking account of age, are the quality of whānau relationships and individual life satisfaction.** How Māori assess the wellbeing of their whānau is tightly connected to

their perception of how well their whānau get along, regardless of age. And Māori who are very satisfied with their own life are also much more likely to assess their whānau wellbeing in very positive terms, regardless of age. In addition, for Māori in most age groups, self-rated health has a relatively strong association with perceived whānau wellbeing, with the exception of those aged 55 years or older.

The findings align with the work by Durie and others (Durie 1985², 1997³, 2006⁴; Panelli & Tipa 2007⁵) that emphasises the holistic nature of wellbeing and the interconnections between the wellbeing of the individual and of the whānau.

CONCLUSION

Te Kupenga offers an important opportunity to better understand whānau in a way that reflects Māori values. It enables Māori to evaluate how well their whānau are doing, rather than relying on the judgements of external observers, or narrowly constraining wellbeing to objective measures such as income and employment.

The findings suggest that supporting and strengthening whānau wellbeing requires a multifaceted approach that includes social and human resource potential factors, as well as economic factors.

Extending our understanding of whānau wellbeing will require some assessment of causality. For quantitative research, this will require longitudinal data. Currently there is no national level longitudinal data that includes variables on whānau wellbeing.

2 Durie, M. (1985). 'A Māori perspective of health'. *Social Science & Medicine*, 20(3): 483-86.

3 Durie, M. (1997). 'Whānau, whanaungatanga and healthy Māori development'. In P. Te Whaiti, M. McCarthy, & A. Durie (Eds.). *Mai i Rangiatea: Māori Well-being and Development* (pp. 9-12). Auckland University Press, Auckland.

4 Durie, M. (2006). Measuring Māori wellbeing. *New Zealand Treasury Guest Lecture Series*, 1.

5 Panelli, R., & Tipa, G. (2007). 'Placing well-being: A Māori case study of cultural and environmental specificity'. *EcoHealth*, 4(4): 445-60.



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