

International Social Survey Programme

The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) involves leading academic institutions in 38 countries in an annual survey of economic and social policy issues. New Zealand is represented in the ISSP by Massey University. Each year the ISSP member countries carry out a 30-minute survey using the same questionnaire. The data from these surveys are deposited in a central archive in Cologne, where they are freely available to all members. This collection of data enables researchers to examine similarities and differences between countries, and to monitor changes over time.

The ISSP addresses a different topic each year in a roughly seven-year cycle. Previous topics have included national identity, social networks, social equality, work orientation, the role of government, the environment, and religion. In 2002, the eleventh year New Zealand has been involved in the ISSP, the topic was the roles of men and women in society, a replication of a similar survey conducted in 1994.

Survey Details

Between August and November 2002, a nationwide mail survey was conducted of 2075 people aged 18 and over, randomly selected from the New Zealand Electoral Roll. After three reminders, the survey produced 1025 valid responses, an effective response rate of 60%. A sample of this size has a maximum error margin at the 95% confidence level of approximately plus or minus 3%.

Though the achieved sample was representative of a wide spectrum of New Zealand society, young people were underrepresented and women were overrepresented. To correct these biases the sample was weighted so that its age-sex distribution matched that of the New Zealand population over 18.

The Roles of Men and Women

Only a minority of New Zealanders (18%) support the traditional view that a man's job is to earn money, while a woman's is to look after a home and family. However, 40% of those aged over 60 believe it is a man's job to earn money and a woman's to look after

a home and family, whereas only 12% of those aged 50 and under thought this.

More than 50% of respondents agreed that men should do a larger share of housework and childcare than they do now, and more than 40% believe that both men and women should contribute to the income of a household. This pattern is relatively consistent regardless of age or gender, except for the question of whether men should do a larger share of housework. Perhaps surprisingly, strongest agreement with this proposition is among older men.

Though there are some non-traditional couples in New Zealand, in most households the man earns the greater share of the household income, and the woman does the greater share of the housework. Women earn more than their male partners in only 11% of households; while in a further 22% both partners earn around the same amount. This means that for two-thirds of couples the man earns more than the woman, and this situation has not changed over the last eight years. However, most couples (77%) manage all or some of their money together.

The responsibility for doing household chores also tends to follow traditional patterns, with women mainly responsible for doing the laundry, preparing the meals, doing the cleaning, caring for sick family members, and shopping for groceries, and men mainly responsible for maintaining the car, making small repairs around the house and putting out the rubbish (see Figure 1). However, in more than a third of households couples are likely to share responsibility for looking after elderly parents or sick family members, doing the gardening, and shopping for groceries.

Women estimated that they spend around ten hours a week on housework; by contrast, men put this figure slightly higher, at around 12 hours a week. Men estimated that they spend around five hours a week doing housework; women estimated the time at four hours a week. This disproportionate responsibility for housework is reflected in differences in the attitudes of men and women towards the equity of the situation.

Nearly 70% of women believe they do more than their fair share of household work, while only 10%

of men feel their contribution is too high. By contrast, 43% of men and only 3% of women believe they do less than their fair share of housework. Despite this, disagreements about the sharing of household work are relatively rare; in 75% of households such disagreements rarely or ever occur.

Task usually done by....	Women %	Men %	Shared %	Someone Else %
Does the laundry	75	5	20	0
Takes time off work when the children are sick	67	5	26	2
Prepares the meals	65	8	27	0
Does the household cleaning	64	3	27	6
Cares for sick family members	57	3	40	0
Shops for groceries	55	8	37	0
Looks after elderly parents	45	2	47	6
Goes to school camps with children	35	23	34	8
Does the gardening	31	20	46	3
Puts out the rubbish	16	50	32	2
Maintains the car	3	68	18	11
Makes small repairs around the house	5	77	15	4

Figure 1. Who does what around the home

Most New Zealanders (76%) believe opportunities for university education are no different for men and women. However, while women may have equal access to education, the perception among respondents of job opportunities and promotion prospects for women is less optimistic. Forty percent of respondents believe job opportunities for women are worse than for men with similar education and experience, and 45% believe women have worse promotion opportunities. Most of those surveyed (58%) believe that, compared with men who have similar education and jobs, women are not paid as well as men. These perceptions were more strongly held by women than by men, and younger respondents were more pessimistic about job opportunities for women than were older respondents.

Ironically, there are now relatively few jobs that New Zealanders believe are particularly suitable for men only or women only. Most New Zealanders think a job as a member of parliament, a city councillor,

family doctor, social worker, bank manager, director of a large company, nurse, pilot or police officer is equally suitable for both men and women. Only in jobs such as a car mechanic (seen as particularly suitable for men) and a secretary (seen as particularly suitable for women) do traditional gender stereotypes persist, and even in these cases nearly half of respondents considered the job equally suitable for men and women.

Women and Paid Work

Attitudes towards women and paid work depend critically on whether the woman has children and, if she does, how old they are. Around 40% of New Zealanders believe a pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works, and that family life suffers when a woman has a full-time job (see Figure 2).

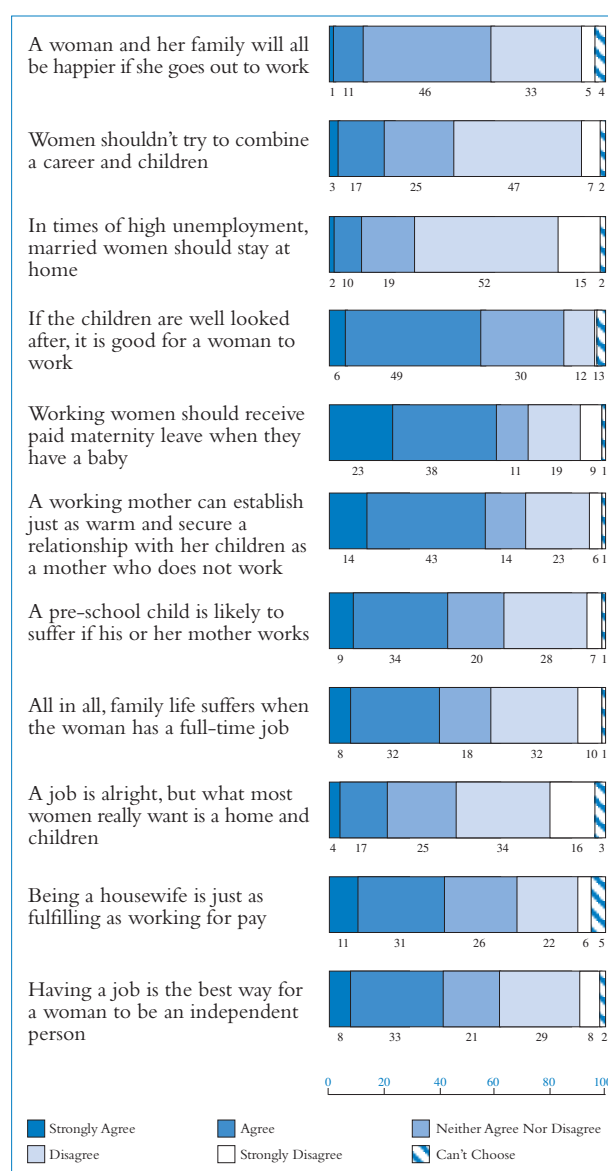


Figure 2. Women and paid work

Thus, while 23% of respondents approve of married women working full-time before they have children,

only 2% approve of women with children under school age working full-time. Approval is higher for mothers of young children working part-time (31%), and, for women working full-time, increases to 12% after the youngest child starts school and to 64% after the children leave home.

Despite this general attitude to working mothers with young children, most New Zealanders (55%) believe a working woman can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work. Furthermore, 40% of respondents agreed that having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person.

Around 14% of mothers surveyed said they had worked full-time with a child under school age. In a small proportion of these cases, the woman's partner stayed at home and looked after the children, but generally this was not the case. However, it seems likely that economic necessity rather than personal choice often determines whether or not a woman with pre-school children works full-time.

Sixty percent of those surveyed agreed that working women should receive paid maternity leave when they have a baby. This is an increase of 10% in support for paid maternity leave since 1994, reflecting the fact that what was simply a proposal then is now law. Just under 40% of respondents believe families should receive child care support when both parents work, while the equivalent figure in 1994 was only 25%. This finding represents a significant increase in support for subsidised child care for working families.

Role of Fathers

Virtually all New Zealanders (96%) believe both parents are equally important to children. However, a large majority (80%) also believe men should be more involved in their children's lives (see Figure 3). Around 20% of respondents agreed that fathers are more important to boys, and just over 10% agreed that fathers are more important to teenagers and are better than mothers at disciplining children. Older respondents were more likely to agree that fathers are more important to boys and to teenagers, but generally these are minority views.

Some fathers have argued that their attempts to be more involved in their children's lives have been frustrated by the Family Court. Forty five percent of those surveyed agreed that the Family Court discriminates against men in child custody cases. Perhaps predictably this view is more strongly held by men (57%) than by women (34%). However, the view that men in New Zealand are treated as second class citizens is not widely held.

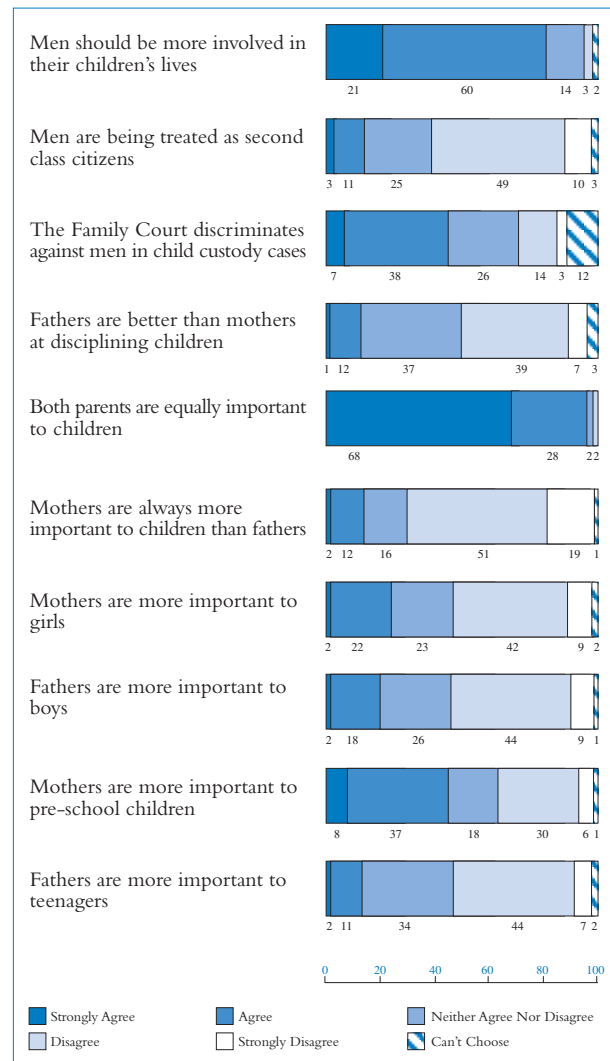


Figure 3. The role of fathers

Morals, Marriage and Abortion

Most New Zealanders (66%) believe it is all right for a couple to live together without intending to get married; in fact, 57% consider it a good idea for a couple who intend to get married to live together first. About half of respondents agreed that people who want children ought to get married. However, this opinion appears to be based more on consideration for the welfare of the children than on the moral undesirability of having children out of wedlock.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that most of those surveyed (53%) disagreed that one parent can bring up a child as well as two parents together. Furthermore, when asked their opinion about an unmarried couple who decided to have a child but do not marry, 60% of respondents said the decision would have nothing to do with morals (though 30% said it would sometimes or always be morally wrong). However, when asked about a 30-year old single woman who does not have a permanent relationship and decides to have a child, 45% of respondents said the decision has nothing to do with morals, while

48% said it would sometimes or always be morally wrong.

Very few respondents believe that a bad marriage is better than no marriage at all (3%). This is reflected in the fact that just under half of those surveyed (48%) agreed that divorce is usually the best solution when couples can't seem to work out their marriage problems. Around 20% of respondents believe that married people are generally happier than unmarried people, 35% believe the opposite. Among those surveyed, unmarried men reported the highest level of happiness with their lives, followed by unmarried women; least happy were married men and women. But these differences were not large and most respondents (88%) reported themselves happy with their lives in general.

Most New Zealanders believe the law should allow abortion under a range of circumstances (see Figure 4). Support for legal abortion is very high when the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy (88%), when the woman became pregnant as a result of rape (87%), or when there is a strong chance of a defect in the baby (76%). Support is weaker, however, where a couple simply agree they do not wish to have the child (60%), or cannot afford any more children (56%), and only half of respondents thought abortion should be allowed by law where a woman decides on her own she does not wish to have the child, or does not wish to marry the father.

Should abortion be allowed by law when ...	Yes %	No %	Don't Know %
The woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy	88	5	7
The woman became pregnant as a result of rape	87	6	7
There is a strong chance of a defect in the baby	76	13	11
The couple agree they do not wish to have the child	60	29	11
The couple cannot afford any more children	56	30	14
The woman decides on her own that she does not wish to have the child	49	36	15
The woman is not married and does not wish to marry the man	49	36	15

Figure 4. Attitudes to abortion

Men and women have similar views on the legality of abortion under different circumstances, but those under 50 tend to be more liberal than those over 50.

However, this age effect is weaker than might be expected; older respondents were just as likely to support abortion if the woman's health is in danger or she became pregnant as a result of rape, and those over 65 were actually more in favour of abortion if there is a strong chance of a defect in the baby than those under 35.

Conclusion

The changing roles of men and women in our society are reflected in New Zealanders' attitudes towards these roles. It is no longer assumed that a woman's role is to stay at home and look after a family, while a man's role is to have a job and earn money. However, while women are achieving some equality in the workplace, traditional roles are changing more slowly in the home. In most households men still earn more of the income and women still do most of the housework. Furthermore, there is a widely-held perception that, despite equal access to education, women's job opportunities, promotion prospects and pay are less than for men with similar education and experience.

Predictably, New Zealanders' attitudes to the roles of men and women in marriage, at home and at work, and towards issues such as abortion, are strongly related to age. Older people have more conservative, traditional views, younger people more liberal, modern views. It appears that younger people are retaining these more liberal views as they get older, thus New Zealand society as a whole is becoming more liberal in its attitudes to the roles of men and women, marriage, divorce and abortion.

Regardless of age or sex, New Zealanders' concern for the welfare of children is widespread, and expressed in terms of reservations about the desirability of mothers with young children working full time, and support for more involvement by fathers in their children's lives.

About the Authors

Members of the Massey University Department of Marketing involved in this survey were: Professor P Gendall (Professor of Marketing), S Stadler and K Gendall (Research Assistants).

For further information on any aspect of this survey, please contact the Department of Marketing, Massey University, Private Bag 11-222, Palmerston North. Telephone (06) 350 5582, fax (06) 350 2260, email P.Gendall@massey.ac.nz.

Access to data from previous ISSP surveys conducted in New Zealand: Religion, 1991 and 1998; Social Inequality, 1992 and 1999; The Environment, 1993 and 2000; The Roles of Men and Women in Society, 1994; National Identity, 1995; The Role of Government and Work Orientation, 1997; Social Networks, 2001; is available through the Department of Marketing, Massey University.