Objectives of the 2014 New Zealand General Social Survey’s social networks and support rotating module
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Contact
Statistics New Zealand Information Centre: info@stats.govt.nz
Phone toll-free 0508 525 525
Phone international +64 4 931 4610
www.stats.govt.nz
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1 Introduction

Purpose

Objectives of the 2014 New Zealand General Social Survey’s social networks and support rotating module discusses the aims of the social networks and support module in the 2014 New Zealand General Social Survey (NZGSS). This module is the first cycle of supplementary content which will rotate in and out of the survey over time.

This paper also explains the need for this module, and provides survey developers with information to develop the tools that will meet the module’s objectives.

Structure of this paper

This paper is organised into chapters which discuss the following topics:

- overview of the NZGSS
- brief description of social networks
- the need to collect this information
- the three objectives of the rotating module
- a conceptual framework for social networks and support
- current knowledge on social networks and support
- overview of the topics to be included in the rotating module.

The New Zealand General Social Survey

The NZGSS provides information on the well-being of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. It covers a wide range of social and economic outcomes and shows how people are faring. In particular, the survey provides a view of how well-being outcomes are distributed across different groups within the New Zealand population. First conducted in 2008, the survey runs every two years and interviews over 8,000 people in each collection.

From 2014, the NZGSS will become one of three integrated household surveys, along with the Household Economic Survey and the Household Labour Force Survey. Each survey has the following structure:

- a set of standard socio-demographic questions (core)
- primary survey content that repeats at each collection
- rotating module

Figure 1 shows the different components of the NZGSS and the expected interview times for each component.
Figure 1

Components of the NZGSS and expected interview duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core HQ</th>
<th>Core PQ</th>
<th>NZGSS primary content</th>
<th>Rotating module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 min</td>
<td>4 min</td>
<td>13 minutes</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total NZGSS interview time = 45 minutes

**Note**: HQ = household questionnaire, PQ = personal questionnaire

Description of social networks

Social networks are formed as individuals interact with one another. Social networks are patterns of relationships, and also patterns of the resources brought to the relationship by participants (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Most New Zealanders have at least one or two people they are close to and many have a wider network of friends, neighbours, co-workers, and other connections from daily activities. These social networks have value because they provide support to help us achieve what we could not achieve on our own. People with extensive social networks may call on these for assistance in times of need. Conversely, those with limited networks may experience isolation and loneliness, which can be harmful to their well-being.

Social networks are an integral part of social capital. It is important to consider the wider concept of social capital because much of the knowledge on social networks comes from social capital literature. Social capital refers to resources, such as trust, mutual encouragement, and shared understandings, which form when individuals and groups interact in society. Social capital theory argues that positive social norms, such as trust, are generated through social networks (Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1994).
2 Need for this information

The NZGSS is the primary source of New Zealand official statistics on social networks and support.

The consultation process for the social networks and support module so far has included discussions with several central government agencies (see ‘Consultation’ section for further information). Through the consultation process, Statistics NZ has begun to gather information on areas of interest around this topic.

Stakeholder interest

The ability to identify the sources of social support gives policymakers valuable clues on how to understand the nature and effect of social networks in people’s lives, identify target areas, and assess whether new policies can leverage off existing social networks.

- Social networks play an important role in policies that aim to increase individuals’ resilience and self-reliance. The question of how support and care responsibilities can be most effectively shared between government and support networks is important because New Zealand society is ageing and the demand for support and care is increasing. The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy (Ministry of Social Policy, 2001) considers social networks are a key part of enabling older people to live in the community for longer. Information on how older persons receive support for activities they are unable to do for themselves is crucial given New Zealand’s ageing population.

- The global financial crisis has further increased the pressure on government spending on public services. However, economic factors alone do not determine living standards – there are other social and environmental factors at play (Treasury, 2012). The Treasury’s Living Standards framework indicates this, acknowledging growing social capital is integral to current and future living standards of New Zealanders.

- The Department of Labour is interested in how well migrants integrate or settle in New Zealand (Allen, 2010). Social integration is a key part of how well migrants settle. Some migrants have limited interactions with non-migrants. It is important to understand the role that social networks and support play in helping the social integration of migrants.

- The Whanau Ora programme and Child, Youth and Family’s family group conferences are examples of recent programmes that address an individual’s issues through their social networks. The social networks and support module will help to inform programmes such as these.

- Information on the social networks of people can play a role in understanding vulnerable children. The Green Paper for Vulnerable Children (Ministry of Social Development, 2011) emphasises the importance of families in raising children. Social networks and support – in particular family relationships – play a key role in the functioning of families and their ability to raise healthy children. Information on family relationships will be useful, not just for understanding negative outcomes such as social exclusion, social isolation, and deprivation, but also for suggesting effective solutions.

- New Zealand has a high youth suicide rate when compared with similar countries. The Ministry of Health promotes services such as the Lowdown website for this reason. However, informal social networks – such as family and friends – are just

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as important in providing support. Research has found that protective factors for suicide include (Fortune, Watson, Robinson, Fleming, Merry, & Denny, 2010):

- good social skills
- positive engagement with school
- family cohesiveness.

- Family resilience – most individuals and families manage well for themselves without needing support from others (Ministry of Social Development, 2004). However, a family will often need support through shocks, such as a sudden drop in income, a natural disaster, or the death of a member (Families Commission, 2008). Identifying where and what type of support families might access in times of need is important for understanding resilient families.

In addition to informing central government, the social networks and support module will help to inform areas of interest at the local government level. Community development and resilience is a focus area both for central and local government. Encouraging networks within communities can produce gains for communities. The Christchurch earthquakes showed how communities can use social networks in times of need and how these contribute to resilience. Information from the NZGSS could play a role in further understanding the contribution social networks might make to the Christchurch recovery.

Research interest

More research is being conducted on how social networks may contribute to positive outcomes for individuals in areas such as health and employment; and for communities, in terms of broader opportunities for participation and safer environments (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

Consultation

Consultation with a wide range of government stakeholders confirmed there is great interest in collecting data on social networks and support. Agencies we have consulted to date include:

- Treasury
- Department of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry of Health
- Department of Labour
- Families Commission
- Te Puni Kokiri
- Housing New Zealand
- Electoral Commission.

The range of topics they were interested in included:

- family functioning as it relates to vulnerability
- social cohesion/integration
- social integration of migrants
- capacity to pass on knowledge and skills within networks
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- emotional, instrumental and informative support within and outside the household
- relationship of social support to well-being
- who people turn to in times of need
- neighbourhood networks and access to support
- the diversity of people’s networks
- Internet-based social networks
- social networks and health
- the characteristics of those with limited social networks.

We are now interested to hear more from policy makers, community groups, researchers, local government organisations and others who are interested in data around social networks and support.
3 Module objectives

This chapter discusses the objectives of the social networks and support rotating module. These objectives provide clear, high-level statements of the information needed from the rotating module.

The objectives of the social networks and support rotating module are to:

- provide a picture of New Zealanders’ social networks and the support these networks provide, including over time
- understand how social networks and the support received differs across population groups of interest
- understand the relationship between different aspects of social networks and support, and the well-being and resilience of individuals.

Provide a picture of New Zealanders’ social networks and the support these networks provide, including over time

The rotating module’s overall goal is to increase the depth of information that can be collected on a specific topic. The NZGSS’ primary content includes a module on social connectedness that collects information on an individual’s social networks, including:

- frequency of contact with family and friends
- face-to-face and non-face-to-face contact
- satisfaction with frequency of contact with family and friends.

The rotating module for the 2014 NZGSS will provide a greater depth of information in this topic area. It will increase the information on the size, composition, diversity, and contact with social networks. It will also include information on the forms of support provided by social networks and the quality of in-household family relationships.

Together, this information will present a comprehensive picture of the social networks and support New Zealanders have. Over time, changes in this information can be compared with wider societal changes to better understand their interrelationships.

Understand how social networks and the support received differs across population groups of interest

While national estimates of social networks and support show average levels in society, they give no clear indication of the potential diversity that lies beneath. Levels of social networks and support at the overall level could be unequally shared across groups, leaving some groups relatively worse off than others. Distributional information is important to enable policy programmes to be targeted to those who are most in need.

As part of the primary content development, work is being undertaken to prioritise these groups of interest and to optimise the ability of the NZGSS to meet their information needs.

Understand the relationship between different aspects of social networks and support, and the well-being and resilience of individuals

An aim of the social networks and support module is to make clear the interrelationships between individuals’ social networks, their general well-being outcomes, and their
subjective well-being (for example, to what extent material support received from social networks is associated with material standard of living). The NZGSS contributes to a better understanding of these interrelationships by covering many different life experiences.

Strong social networks can be an important means by which individuals and families cope with adversity. The literature defines resilience as a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity.

An aim of the social network module will be to collect information on adverse events in peoples’ lives, the social network support that was used during the adverse event and the impact that support had.
This chapter presents a framework of social networks and support and discusses each framework element in detail.

The social networks and support framework shows how social networks operate. It guides us on how to measure its various elements. The NZGSS rotating module will not necessarily collect information on every aspect of this framework.

Figure 2 presents the key elements of social networks and support.

**Composition**

The composition of networks is located at the top of the framework because this describes the units that individuals have social networks with. These units include family, both within and outside the household; friends; neighbours; colleagues; and organisations/groups. Organisations and groups can include government, business, sports, or religious groups, civic or community groups, or school-related groups.
Characteristics

The characteristics of an individual’s social networks will influence the range and quality of support available to that individual. The framework includes a number of characteristics of social networks that have been suggested in the literature (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004; Policy Research Initiative, 2005).

**Network size and diversity** refers to the number and variety of relationships individuals have. The size of a network often reflects the amount of investment made in relationships and how much support can be given. Size increases the capacity of an individual to draw on these resources.

**Contact frequency** is how often people have contact with others in their various networks. The frequency of contact an individual has with their networks relates to their access to resources and provision of support. The frequency that people interact with their networks can depend on how close they live to their family and friends. However, **geographic proximity** to social networks may be less important than in the past with the increasing use of electronic communication technologies.

**Communication mode** is the method or range of methods that individuals use in keeping in touch with others in their networks. Modes of communication include the telephone, face-to-face communication, mail, and electronic forms of communication such as email, social networks, or Skype.

**Network density** refers to the structure and strength of links between people and groups in a given network. A highly open network may refer to a set of links in which few members are linked to others, and may result in many members existing in isolation. A closed network generally refers to a tightly bonded group, in which each member tends to know the others.

Types

Social capital theory typically breaks social networks into three types: bonding, bridging, and linking networks. Each type indicates the diversity of an individual’s social network.

**Bonding networks** are those between similar people, including families that provide emotional and material support and usually increase the well-being of individuals.

**Bridging networks** link heterogeneous individuals, generating broader identities, trust, and reciprocity. Given the multicultural nature of New Zealand society, bridging networks can be particularly important. At an individual level, people need a balance between bonding and bridging networks.

**Linking networks** are those with well-connected or powerful people and can provide significant private benefits, for example, when finding a job. Those without linking networks are likely to be disadvantaged as they cannot capture the benefits available from these. In some societies, linking networks will significantly benefit the well-connected, concentrating power within small groups of the population.

Benefits

The key benefit social networks give is social support. The type of support varies. For example, social networks can supply an individual with emotional, instrumental, or informative support.

**Emotional support** is the offering of empathy, concern, affection, love, trust, acceptance, intimacy, encouragement, or caring. Providing emotional support can let the individual know they are valued. **Instrumental support** is the provision of financial assistance, material goods, or services. This form of social support encompasses the concrete, direct
ways people assist others. **Informative support** is advice, guidance, suggestions, or useful information given to someone. This type of information can help people solve problems.

**Social support benefits individuals and society**

Having other people available for support and help can increase an individuals’ resilience and reduce stress. Social support has also been shown to be significantly correlated with a wide range of well-being outcomes, including:

- subjective well-being
- mental and physical health
- knowledge and innovation
- material standard of living
- acceptance of diversity
- identity/sense of belonging
- civic participation
- social participation.

These individual benefits have positive spill-over effects on the community and society as a whole. The Productivity Commission (2003) noted that well-networked people, being less likely to experience illness, depression, or unemployment, are less likely to draw on the (publicly funded) health and welfare system. They argue that social networks create benefits for society in four main ways:

- reduce transaction costs
- disseminate knowledge and innovation
- create cooperative and/or socially-minded behaviour
- provide individual benefits and associated spin-offs.

**Negative effects**

While strong social networks will benefit an individual, this does not always translate into benefits for the broader community or society as a whole. For example, while they create strong bonding networks, gangs can have a negative effect on communities. Groups with strong bonds can also actively exclude or oppress others that do not conform to their social norms.

Links to people in positions of influence, possibly family members, can lead to or be thought to lead to nepotism or corruption if not balanced by honesty and more diverse social networks (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).
In this chapter we show the information we currently have on social networks and support, which is sourced from the NZGSS. We also present information from general social surveys in Australia and Canada.

Although the NZGSS queries people about their contact with family and friends and their feelings of social isolation, there is little knowledge on social networks and support in New Zealand. Australia and Canada have long-running general social survey programmes that have contributed to the knowledge of social networks and support in these countries.

**Majority of people have contact with family or friends**

The NZGSS found that the majority of people have regular contact with either family or friends (figure 3). The 2010 Australian General Social Survey (AGSS) found similar results.

**Figure 3**

![Contact with family and friends in the last four weeks](chart)

Figure 3 shows that in New Zealand, people are more likely to have non-face-to-face contact with family than face-to-face contact. People are more likely to have face-to-face contact with friends than with family. The NZGSS also showed younger people are more likely than older people to have contact with their friends while older people are more likely to have contact with their family.

**Increasing use of the Internet for networking**

The 2010 Australian GSS found the proportion of people using fixed phones and postal mail to contact family and friends is falling. In contrast, the proportion of people using mobile phone/texting and Internet services is increasing.

The most common methods used to contact family and friends varied depending with age. Mobile phone and the Internet are most common for younger age groups, while fixed phone was mainly used by people older than 45 years.
Majority of people have similar friends

The 2010 AGSS measured the diversity of people’s social networks, by similarity of friends in age, educational background, and ethnicity (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). It found that of people aged 18 years and over:

- 65 percent reported their friends were of a similar age
- 57 percent reported their friends had a similar educational background
- 73 percent reported that their friends were of similar ethnic background.

Younger people reported having less diverse friends – in terms of age and educational background – than older people.

Almost everyone has the capacity to access support

Less than 5 percent of New Zealanders reported not being able to access support in a time of crisis or ask anyone to do small favours (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). There is little difference by age, gender, ethnicity, or labour force status.

Family is the most important resource for dealing with change

For Canadians, family was the most commonly accessed and most helpful social network in dealing with change in their lives (Statistics Canada, 2009). Close friends, professionals, and the Internet were also commonly accessed resources. However, these were not as helpful in dealing with change as family.

Two-fifths of adult Canadians had used the Internet to help deal with change. However, it declined steeply as a social resource in older age groups. Regardless of age, the Internet was seldom reported as the most helpful social network resource. While the Internet may be a valuable tool in Canadians’ lives, it shows no signs of replacing people.

In this chapter we discussed the limited New Zealand information on social networks and support. We also presented an example of international information to show what added information we could collect. We used this knowledge to guide the inclusion of topics in the rotating module as outlined in the next chapter.
6 Overview of topics to be included in the rotating module

This chapter describes each potential topic area and lists the key outputs that can be obtained from them.

Guided by the survey objectives outlined in chapter 3, we defined the following criteria to decide which topics and indicators would fit with the NZGSS rotating module:

- not available elsewhere, or enables analysis of the interrelationships between indicators in the NZGSS
- compatible with the survey methodology of the NZGSS
- measurable in a meaningful way
- relevant to customers or stakeholders.

Based on these criteria, the suggested topics to be included in the social networks and support module are:

- network size and composition
- contact with family and friends
- diversity of social networks
- social support
- family relationships
- support during a time of change.

There may not be enough time for all these topics within the 20-minute timeframe of the rotating module. If they are too long we will prioritise them when we develop the questionnaire.

Network size and composition

Social networks can range in size, from very small to large. Social support is more likely to be available and accessible from larger social networks. Inversely, the smaller the social network and the more isolated individuals are, the less access they have to resources to overcome difficulties (Policy Research Initiative, 2005). Available support in a time of crisis may also be influenced by the size of a person’s network.

An individual’s social network may be affected by many factors, including their socioeconomic status and stage of life. Having close family and friends living near their homes will also affect an individual’s network size. Regularly moving to different places may also affect the time people have to set up social networks. Evidence suggests the longer an individual lives in a community, the stronger their ties to that community.

An individual may have access to a greater variety of resources or support when their network contains different people and groups. Bridging and linking relationships will often be made by interacting with neighbours, colleagues, and groups.

Key outputs that can be obtained from network size and composition topic:

- number of close family and friends
- composition of people’s social networks
- proportion of people who have close family or friends living nearby
proportion of people who know all or most of their neighbours
proportion of people who have kept in touch with at least one previous work colleague
proportion of people who are members of a club, organisation, or association
number of clubs, organisations, and associations active in.

Contact with family and friends

Contact with family and friends is important in providing individuals with social support. More contact shows a stronger social network, which in turn provides greater social support. While people have different inclinations to sociability, research has found that frequent contact with other individuals or groups usually leads to better emotional well-being (Baron & Byrne, 1997).

Information on frequency of contact will allow us to analyse its relationship with different well-being outcomes. It is widely suggested that contact with others is important in providing individuals with identity, social roles, and social support.

A person’s level and type of contact with other people are influenced by their need for interaction, the method of communication, and the proximity of networks (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

Face-to-face contact is perhaps the most satisfying form of social contact because people need real, human, personal interactions for social capital to develop. Geographic separation often means face-to-face contact with family and friends cannot occur regularly. Telephone contact is useful for exchanging information, maintaining individual relationships at a distance, and passing information around a network.

In the last decade, the Internet and email have become common methods of keeping in touch with family and friends. They allow people to keep in touch with established contacts and spread information simultaneously to whole networks. In the short term, these communication methods may affect cross-generational communication as younger generations favour and adapt to new technologies faster than older generations (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004).

Information on the desire for more contact with family and friends will tell us whether people in New Zealand are getting sufficient contact with family and friends.

Key outputs that can be obtained from contact with family and friends topic:

- proportion of people who had contact with family they do not live with, by mode of communication and contact frequency
- proportion of people who had contact with friends they do not live with, by mode of communication and contact frequency
- proportion of people who would like more contact with family and friends
- proportion of people who have felt lonely.

Diversity of social networks

While contact with family and friends is important to an individual’s well-being, close ties and strong group identities can develop at the expense of broader links and identities. Connecting with diverse individuals and groups can benefit both the individual (through wider social support) and society (through shared norms and values). Relating this to the framework, it is the extent to which people have bridging social networks.
People tend to relate most closely with those who are similar to them – common background, age, level of education, social status, or shared attitudes and interests. Measuring the range of an individual’s friends by, for example age, ethnic group, and level of education, indicates the diversity of peoples’ social networks.

In addition, people may be able to form bridging networks by interacting with diverse groups, such as neighbours, colleagues, groups, and organisations. These interactions – particularly with groups and organisations – may also provide people with linking networks. Measuring the interaction individuals have with neighbours, colleagues, groups, and institutions will show the level of bridging and linking networks they have access to.

Key outputs that can be obtained from the diversity of social networks topic:

- proportion of people who have friends with different/same characteristics, by characteristic
- proportion of people who are members of a club, organisation, or association
- number of clubs, organisations and associations active in.

**Social support**

People depend on the support of their social networks at some stage of their lives. As the framework shows (see figure 1), the support may be emotional, instrumental, or informative. Indicators of social support will be structured to reflect these three types of support. Social support may be used in times of need or as part of daily life.

There are three ways of measuring social support:

- receipt of support
- provision of support
- capacity to access support.

Receipt of support measures the actual support people receive from their social networks. Provision of support measures the actual support people provide to people or groups in their social networks. These indicators would normally be asked within a timeframe, such as the last month or year. Most often there is a sense of reciprocity where support is concerned, with many people being both providers and recipients. Asking about the receipt and provision of support gives some sense of the level of this reciprocity.

Capacity to access support measures an individual’s opinion of whether they would be able to access support from their social networks. This indicator complements the receipt and provision of support indicators by collecting information from all survey respondents.

The current NZGSS indicator – support in a time of crisis – is a high-level generic measurement that hides more detailed content. All these measures of social support can be asked of a range of specific situations. Asking for the source of that support would provide richer information. Situations where support from social networks is important include:

- child care
- help around home
- transport
- borrow a sum of money
- emotional support
- getting advice.
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Key outputs that can be obtained from the social support topic:

- proportion of people who are able to access support in a time of crisis
- proportion of people who would be able to get support, by various situations and type of provider
- proportion of people who have been helped by others, by type of provider and type of support
- proportion of people who have provided support to others, by type of recipient and type of support.

Family relationships

An important role of the family is to maintain and improve the well-being of its members by providing them with emotional support. Relationships within the family are a critical part of its psychological capital and have been shown empirically to be associated with the members’ well-being, particularly children (Zubrick, Williams, Silburn, & Vimpani, 2000). All families experience some level of conflict, and if managed well, it can have positive effects on families. However, conflict is stressful for families and when it occurs, it is a time when they need support. At its extreme, conflict can lead to separation or abuse (Ingoldsby, Smith, & Miller, 2004).

Information on relationships within families is important because it lets us know when they are in trouble and may need to rely on support from their social networks. It can also point to families that have vulnerable members, including children.

The NZGSS currently collects social networks and support information on family outside the household. This topic fills an information gap on information about family relationships within the household.

There are two areas of family relationships that we could look at. The first is the quality of, or satisfaction with, relationships people have with others inside the household. This includes relationships with partners, children, parents, and other family living inside the household. The second area is a person’s satisfaction with different aspects of family life, including how they:

- provide emotional support
- spend time together
- resolve conflict
- share childcare
- practice parenting
- share household duties.

Key outputs that can be obtained from the family relationships topic:

- proportion of people who are satisfied with their relationship with their spouse/partner
- proportion of people who are satisfied with other in-household relationships
- proportion of people who are satisfied with aspects of family life.
Support during a time of change

People may not draw on their social networks for support until a significant event occurs in their lives. It is at this time that social networks are most helpful in helping them deal with change. The World Happiness Report found that having social support in times of trouble was the single variable with the most effect on a person’s sense of well-being (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2012). Areas that people may experience change include:

- finances or income
- employment
- health
- parenting or childcare
- death of a loved one
- family relationships.

The goal of this topic would be to collect information on the major changes that occurred in people’s lives and the support they used and needed during these times. This approach can link information on the receipt of social support to an actual event in people’s lives. This means that any unmet needs and the outcomes of the change can also be looked at.

Statistics Canada used this approach in their 2008 General Social Survey. While this gives us a good model, they found that 40 percent of respondents experienced a change in their life over the last 12 months. This approach could limit the number of respondents who answer these questions in the NZGSS to around 3,000.

Key outputs that can be obtained from the support during a time of change topic:

- proportion of people who experienced change in their life over the last 12 months, by type of change
- resources used for support during a time of change
- types of support received during a time of change
- outcomes of the change.
References


Appendix – What has been done so far?

This section outlines what has been done so far internationally on general social surveys. It also identifies sections of these surveys that relate closely to the NZGSS social networks and support module.

Canadian General Social Survey 2008 – social networks

In 2008, cycle 22 of the Canadian GSS collected information on social networks, and social and civic participation. Information was also collected on major changes in respondents’ lives and the resources they used and needed during these transitions.

The survey included three sections closely related to the NZGSS social networks module:

1. Social networks
   - social contacts with relatives
   - social contacts with friends
   - social contact – general
   - social contact – new people
   - Internet use of respondent
   - position generator of respondent.

2. Changes experienced by the respondent (during the past 12 months)
   - changes experienced by the respondent
   - resources used and available for the change: greatest impact
   - information on resources used for the change: greatest impact
   - unmet needs of respondent for the change: greatest impact
   - outcomes of the change: greatest impact.

3. Randomly selected change other than the one with the greatest impact (during the past 12 months)
   - randomly selected change other than the one with the greatest impact
   - resources used and available for the randomly selected change
   - information on resources used for the randomly selected change
   - unmet needs of respondent for the randomly selected change
   - outcomes of the randomly selected change.

Australian General Social Survey 2011

This survey collects data across a range of areas of social concern, to allow information to be connected in ways not generally available. The information is used to develop broad-based social policy. It allows the analysis of disadvantage across various aspects of people’s lives.
The survey collected information on four areas closely related to the NZGSS social networks module:

4. difficulty accessing services
5. support for others
6. stressors
7. contact with family or friends
8. trust.

Living Standards Survey 2004

The Living Standards research is an ongoing research programme that aims to develop a comprehensive description of the living standards of New Zealanders using non-income measures of material well-being and hardship. The 2004 survey included a range of questions on factors that could explain variation in living standards within the population. Topics covered by these questions included incidents that constitute ‘life shocks’ (e.g., being a victim of crime or suffering a health shock), restrictions on social and economic participation (e.g., inability to work) that are a direct result of poor health, and financial difficulties caused by making various types of payments (e.g., debt repayments or housing costs).

Various New Zealand surveys

The Growing Up in New Zealand, the Christchurch Health and Development Study, the Youth 2000 project, and the Youth Connectedness Survey have all used questions to find out information about the quality of relationships with families.