

# **New Zealand Attitudes to Social Citizenship in the Context of Neoliberalism**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report is a summary of a Royal Society Marsden Fund project which attempts to grapple with the question: *Have neoliberal policy reforms implemented since the 1980s radically changed public beliefs about the idea of social citizenship in New Zealand?* 'Social citizenship' refers to the idea that all citizens should be guaranteed a basic level of social and economic security through rights to health, education, work and welfare. It has been argued that social rights are necessary in order for citizens to be able to activate the civil and political rights traditionally associated with citizenship.

The study's key question emerges out of several theoretical assumptions about the likely impact of neoliberal policies on social citizenship which have never before been tested in New Zealand. In trying to answer this question, interviews and focus groups were undertaken with 87 New Zealand adults from a wide range of backgrounds in 2007-2008. The major focus of the study reported here is on the qualitative analysis of contemporary public opinion rather than the tracking of specific changes in attitudes over time. The latter has been published elsewhere using New Zealand Election Study data (see Humpage, 2008).

Overall, the study found that support for social rights of citizenship is *not* dead in New Zealand, nor have New Zealand attitudes to social citizenship been totally immune to the rhetoric and reality of neoliberal reforms. Indeed, by considering the broader issues of citizenship, identity and belonging in New Zealand, this report highlights how the impact of New Zealand's neoliberal reforms have been far wider than a narrow focus on *social* citizenship would indicate. Social, cultural and economic differences and inequalities that are associated with such reforms clearly shape not only what people *think* but also how they *feel* about living in New Zealand *and* how others feel about them. As such, the report indicates key policy implications emerging from the study's findings.

### ***Assumption 1: User-pays will reduce support for social citizenship***

It has been assumed that user-pays and the privatisation of social services reduce support for health, education, welfare and work as social rights of citizenship because fewer people have contact with state-funded and state-provided arms of the welfare state. This argument is based on the principle that public attitudes always reflect 'self-interest' i.e. that people will support or oppose a particular policy depending on the extent to which they personally (or people 'like' them) benefit or lose out. However, international empirical research has found that not only can altruistic ideas influence public opinion, but growing dissatisfaction with the quality and availability of social services may also increase support for government spending in these areas. In addition, it is believed likely that benefit recipients will offer less support for social citizenship over time because they are more heavily subject than other citizens to a neoliberal focus on 'individual responsibility'. This is due to the way in which conditions on their receipt of benefit are framed.

### **Finding 1: Participants strongly supported social citizenship rights**

1.1 Four-fifths of participants agreed with the statement: *'Government should take responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for'* (referred to here as the 'government responsibility' statement). Less than one-fifth thought that government should *not* be responsible for ensuring everyone is provided for at all. However, over two-fifths of the former group qualified their agreement with the government responsibility statement, saying that government should be responsible only for *some* groups of people *or some* activities. Importantly, participants expressing high levels of distrust in government were usually *more* likely to support the government responsibility statement. This suggests that disenchantment

with government services as a result of cutbacks, privatisation and user-pays may have actually increased, rather than diminished, the expectations New Zealanders have of government agencies and political representatives.

1.2 The activities participants most frequently named as a government responsibility are all clearly associated with 'social citizenship'. At least two-thirds thought 'help the needy' and 'health' should be government responsibilities, while half said the same for 'education'. Approximately one-third named 'ensure basics affordable', 'housing' and 'decent work/wages' as areas where government should take responsibility. In contrast, few named 'redistribution' or 'supporting business/industry' and other activities were mentioned even less often. Alongside data from the New Zealand Election Study, these findings suggest that participants still strongly believe government has significant responsibilities in social policy, even if neoliberal ideas appear to have gained greater support, or at least acceptance, in economic policy areas (significant minority support for issues relating to work and wages being the notable exception).

1.3 When asked what *rights* they associated with citizenship, it is notable that the political or civil rights traditionally associated with this status were hardly mentioned by participants. Again, *social* rights were those most frequently mentioned:

a) *Health and education:* Two-thirds of participants strongly believed they have a right as New Zealand citizens to 'health' and over half thought the same of 'education'. Although fewer saw *free* access to health or education as either possible or advisable, over half the participants supported these ideas. When asked about activities they thought should be an individual responsibility, only a quarter mentioned 'look after &/or pay for own health' and fewer than one-tenth named 'educate yourself &/or pay for it'.

b) *Welfare:* A third of participants thought they had the right to have their 'basic needs met'. This referred to comments about income supplements such as In-Work Tax Credit and income support payments, both of which aim to ensure a basic standard of living for all New Zealanders. Indeed, a third of participants explicitly indicated that 'welfare entitlement' should be regarded a right of citizenship. When asked what people need to feel 'first class' in New Zealand, it is notable that almost a quarter of participants also said 'basic needs met' or 'money', indicating they believed that a certain level of economic security is critical to feeling valued and equal in society.

Four-fifths of all participants also thought that such social rights should be considered *human rights*, indicating they saw them as critical to a well-functioning society. These findings suggest there is still a strong sense of entitlement regarding social rights, despite three decades of neoliberal reforms.

**Policy implications:** New Zealanders are likely to be resistant to significant cutbacks in key social policy areas, such as health and education, and any diminishing of the 'welfare safety net' principle.

## **Finding 2: Participants thought that individuals should take responsibility for some aspects of their lives, notably families and children**

2.1 When participants were asked to respond to a further, 'individual responsibility' statement – *People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves* – almost nine-tenths of them agreed in some way and just over a tenth completely rejected the statement. However, two-fifths of those who offered affirmative responses were ambivalent, with many saying *some* people should take more responsibility to provide for themselves or that *both* individuals and government should share responsibility for provision.

2.2 Strong support for individual responsibility seems to contradict responses to the earlier statement about government responsibility. The qualitative data suggests that the 'commonsense' nature of both statements makes them difficult to disagree with completely; participants also responded differently to the abstract statements than more specific questions. Indeed, when participants were asked about the *types* of activities which should be individual responsibilities, they mostly offered very different responses than when naming government responsibilities. The most frequently named individual responsibilities were:

a) *Children and family*: Just over a third of participants named 'discipline/teach own children' and/or 'care for family'. This finding was influenced by the repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961, which was being debated at the time the focus groups and interviews were conducted. However, it is notable that when participants were asked to consider where they found their greatest sense of belonging, 'family' was the most common response with around one-fifth of participants giving this answer. Gendered norms, which tend to situate family and caring roles with femininity and discipline and authority with masculinity, shaped participant responses: females were more likely to name 'care for family', while males more often named 'discipline/teach own children'. But it is clear that family is important to most New Zealanders and they feel very protective of their responsibilities in this area.

b) *Work and tax*: The activities named third and fifth most frequently as individual responsibilities were 'work' and 'pay tax', with just over a quarter naming the former and just over a fifth indicating the latter. This is an important finding because it suggests that a notable minority of participants agree with government rhetoric which frames paid work as the most important way of demonstrating individual responsibility. However, when asked how one might characterise a 'good citizen', only a fifth of participants responded 'pay tax' or 'work' and only about a tenth thought 'not work and can' was the characteristic of a 'bad citizen'. Although paid work was considered very important by many participants, there was thus no overwhelming belief that it constitutes a crucial aspect of *citizenship*.

2.3 Indeed, when asked about an individual's responsibilities, participants named a total of 23 activities, indicating a far broader understanding than is evident in government welfare-to-work policies. These activities included 'participate in democracy', 'contribute to community' and 'care for others', although less than one-fifth of participants mentioned them. Similarly, when asked how they would characterise a 'good citizen', most equated this with being a good person: almost half said 'help others' or 'participate in community' and a quarter said 'good morals/norms'. 'Law-abiding' was named by almost two-fifths of participants, while 'participate in democracy' was mentioned by a quarter, both well above 'pay tax' or 'work'.

**Policy implications:** The strong belief that children and family are individual responsibilities helps explain public reaction to the repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act 1961. However, earlier evidence suggests that participants look to government to help *support* families take care of their own, through health, education, welfare and – to a lesser but still significant degree – employment policies. While New Zealanders clearly conceive paid work to be an important way of demonstrating individual responsibility, other aspects of life (such as family and community) were mentioned as important. This challenges the government's rather one-dimensional focus on paid work.

**Finding 3: Participants supported work-related conditions being placed upon main benefit recipients in some way, but most considered 'education' to be the best way to encourage greater individual responsibility**

3.1 When asked specifically about 'work-for-dole', 'work-tests' or 'other conditions', around a third of participants fully agreed that main benefit recipients should be expected to meet each of these obligations in return for financial assistance from the state. When 'yes' and

'sometimes/maybe' responses are combined, between seven- and almost nine-tenths of participants supported the three types of conditions in some way.

3.2 The above findings suggest that New Zealanders believe main benefit recipients should be expected, encouraged and possibly even coerced into employment, which challenges the idea that work is a right rather than an individual responsibility. This seems to indicate that participants believed work-related obligations placed upon benefit recipients are an appropriate way to get this group to be more independent and self-reliant. Yet, when asked how we might encourage people to take greater individual responsibility, just under one-fifth of participants supported 'sanctions', such as the conditions noted above. The activity most frequently mentioned was 'education', which almost half named. A third of participants also named 'incentives', while a fifth indicated 'role-model values' as a way of encouraging individual responsibility. These results suggest that there is no majority support for coercive or punitive means for encouraging 'responsible' behaviour when participants were asked about this in a way that does not specify work-related obligations. This is especially the case for the 'sick/disabled' and 'Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB) recipients', who the qualitative data indicates participants considered to be the most 'deserving' groups in society.

a) A noteworthy exception are middle income participants with no tertiary qualification whose beliefs regarding individual responsibility were more consistent with government rhetoric. They were most likely to support both 'work-for-dole' and 'work-tests', to name 'sanctions' as a way of encouraging responsibility and to consider it appropriate that benefit recipients are made to feel 'second class'. They were also most likely to name 'work' and 'tax' as individual responsibilities. The qualitative data suggests that this group felt particularly vulnerable in the labour market yet were unable to access subsidies available to lower income New Zealanders to mediate the cost of user-pays charges and rising living expenses. This made them feel disgruntled and thus tougher on the unemployed.

b) A less significant exception, but one no less important given gender had little impact on shaping responses to most questions, was that males were more likely to support 'sanctions' and 'role-model values' as ways of encouraging individual responsibility, to associate 'responsibilities' with citizenship and to believe we have more responsibilities today than in the past. Likely influenced by traditional gender norms, this finding further reflects the way neoliberal deregulation of the labour market has disproportionately affected some groups of males. This vulnerability was expressed in harder attitudes towards the unemployed.

**Policy implications:** Although there is strong support for placing some kinds of work-related conditions on main benefit recipients generally, participants preferred positive means of encouraging individual responsibility (such as 'education' and 'incentives') rather than more punitive sanctions. There is no clear indication that the New Zealand public overall supports a tightening of work-related conditions, especially those targeting the sick/disabled and DPB recipients.

***Assumption 2: Income support recipients will experience a 'second class' form of citizenship, reducing both their support for social citizenship and social cohesion more generally***

The international literature theorises that income support recipients who are subject to work-related obligations may experience a 'second class' form of citizenship. This is because some of their rights are conditional on adopting the attitudes or behaviours promoted by such obligations. While income support recipients are usually thought to support social citizenship rights more than wage/salary earners because of their 'self-interest' (i.e. they directly benefit from the welfare state), there has been concern that support for social citizenship would diminish over time amongst benefit recipients who are subject to such conditions because they



come to believe the overriding rhetoric of 'individual responsibility' that frames them. In the long-term, it has also been thought likely that experiences of 'second class' citizenship would affect individual and societal belonging and thus reduce social cohesion.

**Finding 4: Main benefit recipients strongly supported social citizenship rights – often more than New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients and wage/salary earners**

4.1 Almost a third of both main benefit and New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients fully agreed that '*government should take responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for*', compared to only one-tenth of wage/salary earners. This would appear to confirm the 'self-interest' argument and challenges the assumption that support for social citizenship would have diminished amongst main benefit recipients. In addition, some wage/salary earners did not support the government responsibility statement because they perceived little benefit for themselves from government services. Distrust of government is particularly strong amongst main benefit recipients, more than nine-tenths of whom indicated considerable distrust compared to only two-fifths of wage/salary earners and a third of New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients. There were also qualitative differences in the causes of such distrust: amongst main benefit recipients this emerged from their frequent interaction with government services and dissatisfaction with assistance offered to New Zealanders in need, while wage/salary earners were more concerned with the perceived burden of regulations and intervention in an individual's life.

4.2 Main benefit recipients were also most likely to name all of the government responsibilities associated with social citizenship, with a majority naming 'health', 'education' and 'housing' and a prominent minority mentioning 'decent work/wages', 'ensure basics affordable' and 'childcare/children'. New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients were second most likely to name these activities, with the exception of 'health', 'education' and 'ensure basics affordable' which wage/salary earners named most often. Those receiving main benefits were also most likely to name 'basic needs met' and 'welfare entitlement' as rights of citizenship. In many cases, these results appear to be independent of income level, with low income participants generally only most likely to name 'housing' as a government responsibility, while low income earners with no tertiary qualification (along with middle income earners of the same educational status) were most likely to also mention 'decent work/wages'.

4.3 Given the findings above, it is surprising that main benefit recipients were least likely to support 'free health' or 'free education' and least likely to name 'health' and 'education' as rights of citizenship. This may be because main benefit recipients have been sheltered from user-pay charges more than other groups, with their benefit status and low incomes offering them access to more subsidies than wage/salary earners (particularly middle income earners). Many of the latter expressed considerable frustration with user-pays and expectations that they were able to fully support themselves. Both low and middle income earners without tertiary qualifications were particularly vulnerable and were most likely to indicate that it was a right of citizenship to have their 'basic needs met'.

4.4 In addition, participants receiving a main benefit were slightly *more* likely than other groups to agree with the individual responsibility statement. Given other findings, the difference was not great enough to be able to argue in support of the theoretical assumption that benefit recipients subject to work-related obligations have 'bought into' the individual responsibility rhetoric of welfare policy. Indeed, although 'pay tax' was the only activity named as an individual responsibility more often by main benefit recipients than by other groups, they were also least likely to name 'work'. It is possible that past and present debate about using income support payments as a way of influencing the behaviour of parents may also explain why income support recipients (but especially those on a main benefit) were far more likely to name

'discipline/teach own children' as an individual responsibility than wage/salary earners. Furthermore, when asked what they associated with the term 'citizenship', main benefit recipients were most likely to name 'responsibilities' *and* 'rights', suggesting their experience of being on a benefit may have enhanced their awareness of both. Main benefit recipients were also most likely to believe we have more rights, and least likely to think we have more responsibilities, today than in the past.

4.5 Main benefit recipients also did not seem to accept conditions being placed on benefit recipients more than other New Zealanders. Most did not *disagree* with such conditions outright and they were slightly more likely to support 'work-tests' than other main income source groups, but main benefit recipients were ambivalent about most forms of work-related conditions or other means to encourage individual responsibility. This was often because they agreed in principle (wanting to deter people who 'abuse' the system) but knew from their own experiences the difficulties of applying a general rule to people with different needs and capabilities. In contrast, the New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance group was most likely to offer 'yes' responses to the two other types of conditions discussed ('work-for-dole' and 'other conditions'); however, there are strong indications this was linked to the older age of most participants in this group, rather than their main income source status. When participants were asked to think of ways in which we might encourage individual responsibility, New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients were also most likely to name the top response, 'education', while wage/salary earners were more likely to say 'sanctions'. Both groups named 'incentives' and 'role-model values' far more than main benefit recipients.

**Policy implications:** There is no overwhelming evidence that main benefit recipients' attitudes towards government responsibilities and social rights of citizenship have been diminished by the rhetoric of individual responsibility that frames the welfare policies to which they are subject. But that this group was generally ambivalent about, rather than completely against, placing conditions on benefit receipt suggests that current policy conditions and obligations may be having some impact on their opinions. It is difficult to separate this effect from other variables such as ethnicity, gender and education but, in tandem with the findings below, it suggests a review of welfare policy is needed.

### **Finding 5: Main benefit recipients are often treated as if they are 'second class' - but resisted this positioning**

5.1 To assess whether benefit recipients experienced citizenship differently from other New Zealanders, participants were asked to respond to the statement: *'People receiving social security benefits are made to feel like second class citizens'*. Seven-tenths of participants agreed this 'second class' statement was true, with a further fifth answering 'sometimes/maybe'. Only just over a tenth of participants disagreed with the statement.

5.2 Not surprisingly, over two-thirds of main benefit recipients compared to just over two-fifths of wage/salary earners and a third of New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance fully agreed with the statement. The difference between these two groups indicates the differential treatment that New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients experience because they are widely considered to be more 'deserving' than main benefit recipients.

5.3 When asked *why* benefit recipients might feel 'second class', the most common response related to the treatment of benefit recipients by 'Work & Income/Accident Compensation Corporation (WINZ/ACC) officials and policies'. Almost half the participants named this but both main benefit and New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients were far more likely to do so than wage/salary earners. A third of the total sample also felt that 'stigma' was an important factor in benefit recipients feeling 'second class'. This referred to a broader societal perception of benefit recipients as 'lazy' and 'undeserving', rather than the specific

actions of WINZ/ACC officials (although the two are clearly related). Not surprisingly, main benefit recipients were most likely to name 'stigma' and were far less likely than other groups to individualise the problem by naming 'low self-esteem' as a reason benefit recipients might feel 'second class'. New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients' responses were the reverse (least likely to say 'stigma' and most likely to say 'low self-esteem'), stressing again that the two groups have very different experiences of benefit receipt. Wage/salary earners were least likely to name 'WINZ/ACC officials and policies', possibly because most had had little to do with these government agencies.

5.4 There is some evidence that the stigma and unequal treatment main benefit recipients experience may have a longer-term effect on belonging and, potentially, social cohesion. It is important to note that only about half the total number of participants said 'yes' when asked if citizenship was an important identity for them and that almost as many (two-fifths of participants) said 'no'. But main benefit recipients were a little less likely to give an affirmative answer (with almost a quarter doing so) than the other main income source groups.

5.5 Responses as to *why* citizenship is important to participants help us to understand the above finding. Almost three-fifths of New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients said they feel 'pride' (making them more than twice as likely to say this than wage/salary earners and main benefit recipients). The New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance group was also most likely to say New Zealand gave 'respect overseas', while wage/salary earners were slightly more likely to believe citizenship important for 'practical' reasons. Qualitative evidence from this study and from overseas research suggests that citizenship and national identity often become more important when citizens travel overseas. It is possible that because most main benefit recipients cannot afford such a luxury, a citizenship identity is less important to them. That main benefit recipients were most likely to mention 'passport/travel/migration' (with almost half naming this) when asked what they associated with citizenship seems to contradict this argument, but they spoke about such things in regards to immigrants to New Zealand, rather than themselves. More troublingly, main benefit recipients were less likely to associate citizenship with positive, collective concepts such as 'belonging' and 'national identity' than wage/salary earners and New Zealand Superannuation/Student Allowance recipients. In general, main benefit recipients were not likely to name any responses given compared to other groups.

**Policy implications:** There is a strong perception and plenty of anecdotal evidence that government agencies, such as Work & Income, contribute to a wider stigmatisation of main benefit recipients. This is likely to be detrimental to their sense of belonging as citizens and as New Zealanders. Current policies regarding the treatment of main benefit recipients should be reviewed.

## **Finding 6: Surprisingly few participants felt themselves to be 'first class' (valued and equal) citizens in New Zealand**

6.1 Having discussed the 'second class' treatment of benefit recipients, participants were asked if *they* felt like a 'first class' (i.e. a valued and equal) citizen in New Zealand. Many found it difficult to answer and some resisted labelling themselves this way. However, about a third of participants gave each of the three responses: 'yes', 'sometimes/maybe' or 'no'. A small minority said 'don't know'. A very surprising result is that those on main benefits were *more* likely to answer 'yes' and 'sometimes/maybe' than wage/salary earners and other benefit recipients (super annuitants and students) who are considered more 'deserving'. Discussion highlighted that this was because main benefit recipients used a human rights discourse to challenge any suggestion they were not equal citizens. The other groups were more likely to associate the word 'class' with income-based divisions and either resisted the idea that 'class' existed in New Zealand or did not feel 'first class' in the economic sense. The middle income/no tertiary qualification group was the major exception: they were most likely to say they felt 'first class',

apparently because they wished to dispute any perception they were any less a citizen than their wealthier, more educated counterparts and – given their economic vulnerability – in some cases to assert their superiority over those who were worse off than them.

6.2 To understand why so few participants felt ‘first class’ in contemporary New Zealand society, they were asked what people *need* to feel ‘first class’. Almost a third considered ‘respect/kindness’ as essential and another fifth identified ‘feeling valued’. Not surprisingly, given their frequent engagement with WINZ and ACC officials where a lack of respect and recognition was often apparent, main benefit recipients were most likely to name both of these preconditions. But so were low income, Māori and female participants, suggesting that those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged in society are more likely to consider these recognitive factors as a precondition to feeling ‘first class’. Almost a quarter of participants said that people need to have their ‘basic needs met’ or ‘money’ to feel ‘first’ class; interestingly, these responses were more likely to be named by more advantaged groups in society (wage/salary earners, middle income earners, European/Pākehā – with the exception of ‘money’ which was most often named by Māori). Only a small minority of participants indicated that individuals need ‘to work’ and have ‘self-esteem’, ‘education’ or ‘belonging’ to feel ‘first class’.

**Policy implications:** Many people feel under-valued in New Zealand society, with participants often implicating current policy mechanisms, including a relatively low-wage economy, relatively poor practical and financial support for families with children, growing credentialism and a lack of discussion about multiculturalism, as contributors to this phenomenon. Participants’ comments indicate that both recognising devalued groups *and* improving socio-economic conditions is necessary to make all New Zealanders feel ‘first class’.

### ***Assumption 3: Younger citizens are less likely to support social citizenship***

It has also been assumed that support for social citizenship would have diminished since the implementation of neoliberal reforms because most New Zealanders under the age of 30 will have grown up in the neoliberal era and, having known nothing else, will more likely accept neoliberal policy and rhetoric. In contrast, older New Zealanders (particularly those over 60) are likely to remember a time when education and health were largely free of charge, make-work schemes aimed to support full employment policies and income support recipients were not subject to work-related obligations; as such, they are more likely to support social citizenship rights. However, education mediates people’s attitudes to social citizenship and because younger New Zealanders are more likely to have a tertiary qualification than their older counterparts, this may in fact make them more supportive of social citizenship.

### **Finding 7: In general, younger participants were less likely to support social citizenship rights than older participants**

7.1 Although the difference is small, those over 45 years old *were* more likely to say ‘yes’ to the government responsibility statement. When ‘yes’ and ‘sometimes/maybe’ responses are combined, this lead became more substantial: around half of the over 45s offered some agreement in comparison to around a third of the under 46s. But the younger participants were also much less likely to answer ‘no’ to the statement, while both the under 31s and the over 60s tend to distrust government far less than the 31-60 age group. The sample was not large enough to disaggregate the variables of age and education, but in that participants with tertiary qualifications were generally more likely to name support for the government responsibility statement and the under 46s were less likely to do this suggests that education does not always lessen the effect of age. Indeed, it is notable that the effect of tertiary education upon participants’ responses overall was rather mixed, being strongly mediated by income level and income source.

7.2 When naming the activities they considered to be government responsibilities, participants from the under 31s group did not offer the highest level of support for any activity, but the over 60s were most likely to name two: 'education' and 'infrastructure'. The 46-60s age group was most likely to name the greatest number of activities ('elderly', 'superannuation', 'childcare/children', 'housing', 'decent work', 'health', 'help the needy' and 'ensure basics affordable' (tied with the 31-45s). Overall, it appears participants in the middle age groups named the greatest number of activities as government responsibilities because they are raising families, saving for retirement, paying for health insurance *and* funding their children's education all at the same time, while their younger and older counterparts do not face these cumulative responsibilities and life risks in the same way. Interestingly, younger participants were not even more likely to favour 'free education' or name 'education' as a government responsibility. This is the case even though participants with tertiary qualifications were generally more supportive of this and even though education is the arm of the welfare state younger people will most likely to have personally experienced. However, the under 31s group was within six percentage points of the mean for all activities named as government responsibilities and their attitudes were not *substantially* more negative than the older participants, as the international literature would lead us to expect.

7.3 The over 60s were most likely to name activities associated with social rights of citizenship except 'welfare entitlement' which was most frequently mentioned by the 46-60 group. Indeed, when comparing the youngest and older generations, the under 31s were about one-third less likely to name 'welfare entitlement' and half as likely to name 'basic needs met' than the over 60s. This is the case even though both named 'help the needy' as a government responsibility and 'basic needs met' as a right more often than those with a tertiary qualification (although this was mediated by income level). The rights named most often by the under 31s were 'education' and 'health' (with around half of this group doing so) but this was only about two-thirds of the support offered by the over 60s. This does suggest a considerable weakening of a social rights discourse amongst the younger generation, although it – once again – may also reflect their lack of engagement with many of the life risk's older participants have experienced across the life course.

**Policy implications:** While there is some evidence that support for social citizenship may diminish over time because younger New Zealanders have been influenced by the neoliberal policy reality in which they have grown up, attitudes towards social citizenship may equally be influenced by life-stage rather than a simple generational effect. This means that younger people, who at the current time do not consider social policy issues to be particularly important, may well change their minds once they have children, want to buy a house or take on other major life responsibilities. Thus political representatives should not anticipate that social policy will become less important to voters over time.

**Finding 8: Older participants were more concerned individual responsibility and were often tougher on main benefit recipients than younger participants yet were more open to non-punitive ways of encouraging responsibility**

8.1 Although the 31-45s group was most likely to offer 'yes' responses to the individual responsibility statement, when 'yes' and 'sometimes/maybe' were combined participants 61 years and over were much more likely to agree in some way: over four-fifths did so, compared to just over half the 31-45s and seven out of ten of the under 31s. The over 60s were also the only group to give no negative answers. That younger participants offered more clear-cut responses provides some support for the assumption that the younger generation are more likely to endorse neoliberal ideas about individual responsibility. However, that the over 60s offered more, if ambivalent, support for the individual responsibility statement overall suggests that attitudes may reflect life experience rather than a simple generational effect.

8.2 Differences between age groups were minimal when it comes to the types of activities named as individual responsibilities. The over 60s were twice as likely as the under 46 age group to name 'discipline/teach own children' and/or 'care for family' as individual responsibilities, with responses suggesting some nostalgia for more traditional family forms and morals. The under 31s were a little more likely to say 'look after &/or pay for own health' than the over 60s but the over 45s were far more accepting of user-pays in health and education than the under 46s age group (although the over 45s were also most likely to say 'no'). The under 31s were more likely to say 'work' was an individual responsibility but differences were very small, as they were regarding 'pay tax'. These mixed findings offer no clear evidence that younger participants have been more heavily influenced by individual responsibility rhetoric in the social policy arena.

8.3 The over 60s were the strongest supporters of 'work-for-dole' and 'other conditions' and were a close second runner-up on 'work-tests', which was named most frequently by the under 31s (although responses overall were small). When considering how we might encourage greater individual responsibility, the under 46s were slightly more likely to say 'sanctions' than the over 45s, a little less likely to name 'incentives' and far less likely to mention 'role-model values' or 'education'. These mixed results do not offer enough evidence to say that younger people have harder attitudes towards main benefit recipients than their older counterparts, but the latter do appear to be more open to more varied means of encouraging individual responsibility. This is the case even though participants with tertiary qualifications were generally more likely than those without to mention all five most commonly named ways of encouraging individual responsibility; thus suggesting education did not mitigate the responses of the younger participants, as one might expect.

8.4 The 46-60 years age group was most likely to agree that social security recipients are made to feel that are 'second class' and the over 60s were *less* likely to agree with this statement than the under 46s. This might be because New Zealand super annuitants are generally framed as far more 'deserving' than main benefit recipients and their personal experience thus did not support this statement. The over 60s also named 'low self-esteem' as a reason why main benefit recipients might feel 'second class' more frequently than other age groups, suggesting an individualisation of this problem. But the over 45s were most likely to name 'WINZ/ACC officials and policies' and 'stigma' as contributors to this phenomenon and to consider it *inappropriate* to treat main benefit recipients as 'second class'. Thus, although older participants were more ambivalent about whether such a 'second class' status existed, they disagreed with and were able to offer more reasons for it than younger participants who grew up during the 1980s and 1990s.

**Policy implications:** There is no clear evidence that New Zealand public opinion about the treatment of main benefit recipients will harden as the population ages. Government agencies and elected officials thus must make no assumption that punitive policies will be easier to implement in the future.

### **Finding 9: Financial factors were more important in making younger participants feel 'first class' than they were for their older counterparts**

9.1 Age was not an important factor influencing whether participants felt 'first class' or not. But there *was* a clear difference as to whether cognitive or financial factors were necessary preconditions for this. The 46-60s were most likely to say 'respect/kindness' and 'self-esteem', while the over 45s also said 'feel valued' more often. But the 31-45s named 'basic needs met' (although differences were small) and 'money' more frequently than the older age groups. Notably, no one 61 years and over said the latter and this group was least likely to name the former. The under 31s also did not name 'basic needs met' and 'money' nearly as often as the 31-45s. The differing responses from within the under 46s age group suggests that these findings do not reflect a more 'selfish', consumer-oriented generation but rather the varied

economic circumstances and responsibilities of participants. Interview and focus group data suggests that the middle age participants were more interested in financial issues because they faced greater economic vulnerability and a greater burden of responsibility than their older (and more financially secure) or younger (and more financially dependent) counterparts.

9.2 Finally, it is notable that participants aged over 45 years were most likely to say citizenship was an important identity to them. This was especially the case for the over 60s, who were almost twice as likely as the under 46s to say this was so. It is difficult to know if this finding reflects a general weakening of citizenship as an identity in recent years or whether citizenship becomes a more important identity as an individual grows older. There is some evidence that the latter may be true, with many of the younger participants being rather narrowly focused in terms of identity and belonging. For instance, 'family' was the most common site of belonging for the under 31s, especially when compared to the over 60s (none of whom named this), and references to 'national community' and 'local community' were also far lower amongst this group. Similarly, when asked what they associated with the term 'citizenship', younger participants were focused largely on travel-related issues ('passport/travel/migration' and 'gives respect overseas') while the over 60s were more than twice as likely to name 'belonging' than the under 31s. The over 45s also mentioned 'national identity' a little more frequently than those aged under 46. When asked why citizenship was an important identity, the over 60s were most likely to say 'pride', with about half saying so compared to around a third of the under 31s and 46-60s, while only a tenth of the 31-45s did so. Once again, it is difficult to know if the attitudes of younger participants will change over time, as they travel, raise families and develop a greater awareness of their citizenship role (possibly through tertiary education) or whether their current attitudes reflect a significant shift in the importance of nation-based citizenship identities more generally.

**Policy implications:** In that financial insecurity and economic vulnerability can shape citizens' sense of belonging and identity in New Zealand, it is important to ensure income adequacy so that the basic needs of *all* New Zealanders are met. In addition, although there is some indication that citizenship knowledge and belonging may increase with age, it is possible that improving citizenship education amongst young New Zealanders could be beneficial for social cohesion and democratic participation.

#### ***Assumption 4: Growing cultural diversity may reduce support for social citizenship rights***

There have also been theoretical assumptions that increasing cultural diversity will diminish support for the welfare state and social citizenship. This is partly because placing a policy emphasis on forms of cultural recognition (such as 'biculturalism') is thought to come at the cost of the traditional focus of the social rights of citizenship, which is on the material disadvantages (such as income inequality and income inadequacy) that affect *all* ethnic groups and which have worsened since neoliberal reforms were implemented. In addition, there is some concern that the welfare state may become negatively associated with new migrants and ethnic minorities, who are perceived as relying heavily on its assistance. The attitudes of citizens born overseas may also be more influenced by the policy settings of their country of origin than any past focus on social rights that may have existed in their new place of residence.

#### **Finding 10: New Zealand's colonial history shaped the strong support for both government and individual responsibility found amongst Māori**

10.1 About a quarter of both European/Pākehā and Māori fully agreed with the statement but when the 'sometimes/maybe' answers are added almost half of Māori agreed compared to only two-fifths of European/Pākehā. Despite the similarity in results for these two groups, qualitative analysis shows that there were quite different reasons for their responses: while

European/Pākehā were concerned with the democratic process and the idea that government represents all New Zealanders effectively, Māori articulated a need for government to address New Zealand's colonial history with improved recognition of their indigenous and Treaty rights. Indeed, over three-quarters of Māori participants expressed considerable distrust of government, compared to only half of European/Pākehā, largely due to this history of colonialism and its ongoing effects.

10.2 Māori were by far the most likely ethnic group to name 'help the needy', 'housing', 'decent work/wages' and 'ensure basics affordable' and were second most likely to name 'health' and 'education' as government responsibilities. Māori participants offered little or no support for the idea of 'free health' or 'free education' yet, when asked specifically about support for user-pays in social policy areas, they offered only 'no' responses. Despite this discrepancy, overall Māori support for government to take responsibility in social policy areas was very strong.

10.3 Although Māori most commonly indicated social policy issues were a government responsibility, European/Pākehā were most likely to name 'health', 'education' and 'basic needs met' as *rights of New Zealand citizenship*, while the 'Other' ethnic group was most likely to name 'welfare entitlement' as such. A small number of Māori participants referred to 'Treaty/indigenous rights' when asked about the rights of citizenship and it is likely this incorporated some focus on issues associated with social citizenship. It is also possible that Māori participants supported government taking responsibility for a range of social policy areas but did not consider these *rights* given the unequal treatment Māori have often historically received from government agencies.

10.4 Despite strong support for government responsibility, almost two-thirds of Māori participants agreed with the individual responsibility statement, meaning they were substantially more likely to provide an affirmative response than any other ethnic group. They were also least likely to disagree. While this finding counters popular myths about 'welfare dependent' attitudes amongst this group, it is important to note that Māori participants did not strongly associate the idea of 'individual responsibility' with paid work or work-related conditions being placed on benefit recipients. When asked about these specific conditions, Māori were most likely to name 'work-tests', but less than a quarter said 'yes' and they were most likely to say 'no' to 'work-for-dole', while support for 'other conditions' was very ambivalent. The qualitative evidence suggests many Māori associated the individual responsibility statement with a Māori self-determination discourse focused on regaining Māori control over decisions pertaining to their own lives. While there is some overlap between neoliberal ideas of individual responsibility and Māori self-determination, it is important to stress that they have quite different cultural drivers.

10.5 Māori comments about citizenship generally reflect this group's troubled relationship with government and the concept of the New Zealand nation-state, as well as the group's disproportional socio-economic disadvantage. Māori participants were least likely to say citizenship was an important identity for them, with less than one-tenth giving this response. In addition, none associated it with 'national identity' or 'belonging', given they tended to have a very negative viewpoint on citizenship due to its association with breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi or with immigrants coming to New Zealand and receiving resources ahead of Māori. Few Māori participants also offered any of the main responses mentioned by other groups as to why citizenship was important to them; notably less than a tenth said this was because of 'pride'. Not surprisingly, 'local community' and 'ethnic group' were considered more important sites of belonging than citizenship.

**Policy implications:** Given Māori are a significant and growing proportion of the New Zealand population, their strong support for government responsibility in a range of social policy areas



should not be ignored by political representatives. Nor should the apparent support for individual responsibility be mistaken for a widespread endorsement of punitive work-related obligations for main benefit recipients, which are likely to disproportionately affect Māori as a group. The negative views that many Māori have of citizenship (and of government) are troubling, given they do not offer much hope for developing greater belonging and social cohesion. Both institutional acts of recognition, as well as improvements in the socio-economic status of Māori as a group, are likely needed to address these issues.

**Finding 11: Ethnic minority groups were more ambivalent about social citizenship but were not tougher on main benefit recipients than Māori and European/Pākehā**

11.1 As noted, European/Pākehā and Māori participants were most likely to fully agree with the government responsibility statement. Pasifika and 'Other' participants did not offer 'yes' or 'no' responses but over half the former and over a fifth of the latter group gave 'sometimes/maybe' responses. This suggests substantive (if more ambivalent) support overall. The qualitative evidence indicates that a strong work ethic and community focus may have made Pasifika participants hesitant to *completely* agree with the statement but considerable distrust of government and concern about the disproportionately poor socio-economic status of Pasifika peoples meant they still supported a strong role for government in social policy matters. It is less clear why participants from the 'Other' ethnic group offered strong but mostly ambivalent support for the government responsibility statement, especially since only a third of them were distrustful of government. Asian participants were even less distrustful (only a tenth expressed such a feeling) but they offered no direct responses to the government responsibility statement at all. It is possible 'Other' and Asian participants were less likely to distrust government because they either did not have enough experience of New Zealand to have formed an opinion (although only the Asian ethnic group included participants who were new migrants) or they rated the New Zealand government favourably against those overseas. Either way, ethnic minority groups were overall more ambivalent about the government responsibility statement than European/Pākehā or Māori participants.

11.2 Nonetheless, differing ethnic minority groups strongly supported government responsibility in specific areas. Of the ethnic minority groups, 'Other' participants offered the highest levels of support across most areas, probably because they shared many characteristics with the European/Pākehā ethnic group who were also very supportive. Four-fifths of the 'Other' ethnic group also named 'health' and 'education', making them most likely to do so by far, while over half said 'help the needy'. Pasifika participants were most likely to name 'childcare/children' as a government responsibility (with a third doing so), while half supported 'health' and 'education' and a third 'help the needy' and 'decent work/wages'. The qualitative data suggests this is likely for similar reasons as above. The Asian group named the fewest number of government responsibilities, probably because all but one of its members were recent migrants and thus were still heavily influenced by their experiences living in China or Taiwan. Just over half of Asian participants thought government should 'help the needy' but they were far less likely than other groups to name 'health', 'education' and 'childcare/children' (only just over a tenth gave these responses). None of the Asian group named 'housing' or 'decent work/wages' at all.

11.3 In general, minority ethnic groups were less likely to use the language of rights to discuss social policy issues. With the exception of 'welfare entitlement' - where the 'Other' ethnic group was ahead - European/Pākehā were more likely than other groups to name all the rights associated with social citizenship. However, this appears to be part of a broader problem of knowledge about citizenship, with ethnic minority groups also less likely to name civil and political rights. While this might be partly associated with the fact that many of these participants had not grown up in New Zealand, the qualitative evidence also suggests a relationship between relative disadvantage in New Zealand and poor knowledge of citizenship and its rights.

11.4 Two-fifths of Asian and 'Other' participants offered 'yes' answers to the individual responsibility statement, making them most likely to do so after Māori, while none disagreed with it. These viewpoints were likely shaped by experiences in their home country. For instance, discussion suggested that a strong cultural emphasis on family responsibility in many Asian countries meant the government takes less responsibility for the kinds of social services offered in New Zealand. Pasifika participants were the least likely to offer a clear-cut response but more than two-fifths said 'sometimes/maybe'.

11.5 These findings would suggest there may be some basis for the theoretical assumption that cultural diversity may harden attitudes towards benefit recipients. However, 'work' and 'pay tax' were mentioned infrequently as individual responsibilities by the ethnic minority groups, suggesting no overwhelming support for paid work to be considered a notably individual responsibility. Ethnic minority groups were also less likely to mention specific activities as individual responsibilities overall. The 'Other' group mentioned 'care for family' and 'contribute to community' more frequently than other groups, and were not far behind European/Pākehā regarding 'discipline/teach own children'. Pasifika and Asian were not more likely to name any activity as an individual responsibility, although over two-fifths of the former named 'care for family'. However, almost a third of both the 'Other' and Asian groups gave responses coded as 'look after &/or pay for own health', suggesting some support for user-pays in this area.

11.6 In addition, there is no clear trend towards ethnic minority groups being more supportive of conditions being placed on main benefit recipients than other New Zealanders. Pasifika participants supported 'work-for-dole' more than other groups, but only just over one-tenth did so. This group did not offer 'yes' responses to any other type of conditions that could be placed on main benefit recipients, although a third said 'sometimes/maybe' to 'other conditions' and a tenth said the same to 'work-tests'. The 'Other' ethnic group was most likely to say 'yes' to 'other conditions', with over two-fifths giving this response, while less than a quarter said 'yes' to 'work-tests' and less than one-tenth did the same for 'work-for-dole'. Asian participants made no direct responses to these questions.

11.7 When asked how we might encourage greater individual responsibility, Asian participants were on par with European/Pākehā regarding 'education' with almost three-fifths of each group naming this. Almost a third of Asian participants also named 'incentives' or 'get alongside/support people' but they did not name 'role-model values' or 'sanctions'. All four activities were named by almost a third of the 'Other' ethnic group, which was most likely group to mention the latter two activities. Pasifika participants made few responses to this question, with just over a fifth naming 'education' and a tenth indicating 'incentives' and 'role-model values'; none named 'sanctions'. These findings suggest that minority ethnic groups are open to a range of means for encouraging individual responsibility and, given only the 'Other' group named 'sanctions' at all, there is no preference for punitive obligations to achieve this goal.

**Policy implications:** Policy-makers and elected representatives should not assume that as the proportion of overseas-born citizens living in New Zealand increases, support for social citizenship will diminish. While there is some evidence that ethnic minority groups offer less support at the moment, it is notable that the 'Other' and Pasifika participants, who had lived in New Zealand longer, were more likely to distrust government and support social citizenship more than the Asian migrants who had arrived more recently. There is also no clear evidence that ethnic minority groups are tougher on main benefit recipients than other New Zealanders and thus will support a tightening of their conditions.

## **Finding 12: Ethnic minority groups associated being ‘second class’ with ethnicity, rather than benefit receipt**

12.1 European/Pākehā were most likely to fully agree that benefit recipients are treated as ‘second class’ citizens, with almost three-fifths doing so, compared to almost half of Māori and two-fifths of ‘Other’ participants. It is perhaps surprising that Māori were not the front-runners here given Māori constitute a disproportionate number of benefit recipients, while Māori participants had the highest levels of distrust of government and placed a strong emphasis on government responsibility. This finding appears to be linked to Māori, along with Pasifika participants, tending to frame any disadvantage in terms of ethnicity rather than benefit receipt. To a certain degree this was true of other participants, in that when they were asked what other groups might feel ‘second class’ in New Zealand society, two-fifths of participants thought ‘Māori’, a tenth said ‘immigrants’ and just under a tenth said ‘Pacific peoples’. Participants thus saw ethnicity as a major source of disadvantage in New Zealand.

12.2 However, while over half the European/Pākehā and ‘Other’ participants said benefit recipients might feel ‘second class’ due to the treatment they received from ‘WINZ/ACC officials and policies’, just over two-fifths of Māori and Pasifika did so – even though members of these ethnic groups are more likely to receive a benefit in New Zealand. European/Pākehā were also far more likely to say ‘stigma’, with half saying so, compared to just over a tenth of Māori and ‘Other’. When it comes to ‘low self-esteem’, no Māori named this, few Pasifika did but ‘Other’ participants were ahead, with almost a third naming this. These findings again suggest that ethnic minority groups (including Māori) did not consider benefit receipt the most important source of feeling under-valued and unequal in New Zealand society.

12.3 Support for this argument is found in the fact that although a similar number (about a third) of Māori, Asian and European/Pākehā participants said ‘yes’ they felt ‘first class’ in New Zealand society, this response was far less common amongst ‘Other’ and Pasifika participants. The ‘Other’ and Asian groups were also by far the most likely to say ‘no’ they did not feel ‘first class’, with European/Pākehā least likely to offer this response. These results indicate that being European/Pākehā is associated with feeling ‘first class’ and generally ethnic minority groups are more mixed in their views (and experiences) about feeling valued and equal in New Zealand society. But Māori were second most likely to say ‘yes’ and second least likely to say ‘no’, with discussion suggesting that many Māori participants felt that although they were treated as ‘second class’ in society, they could draw upon an indigenous/Treaty rights discourse to claim a ‘first class’ status. Some participants also noted the importance of whakapapa as a source of feeling ‘first class’.

12.4 Given the above findings, it comes as no surprise that ethnic minority groups (along with other disadvantaged groups) were more likely to mention recognitive, rather than redistributive, factors as preconditions of feeling ‘first class’. However, the ‘Other’ group was most likely to name ‘basic needs met’ and Māori said ‘money’ most frequently (with over two-fifths doing so in both cases). This suggests material conditions were still important to these groups. Importantly, European/Pākehā were most likely to name ‘feel valued’, with the qualitative evidence suggesting that a strong focus on ‘ethnic’ issues, along with neoliberal policies which have increased income inequality and kept wages relatively low, meant that some ethnic majority members felt marginalised in New Zealand.

12.5 Despite this finding, the European/Pākehā and ‘Other’ ethnic groups were also most likely to say citizenship was important to them, with around two-fifths doing so in each case. Only a quarter of Pasifika peoples did the same, while no Asian participant did; indeed, they only offered ‘no’ responses. New Zealand’s high levels of immigration and the common experience of travelling overseas seem to have influenced understandings of citizenship. Many participants considered ‘citizenship’ to be simply a practical device for gaining access to rights and services within a country and did not necessarily associate it with ‘belonging’ or a New

Zealand 'national identity'. This was particularly notable amongst Asian and, to a lesser extent, Pasifika participants. Importantly, European/Pākehā participants were also more likely to give 'pride' as a reason for why citizenship was an important identity to them. When asked to consider where they found their greatest sense of belonging, 'family' was most important for Pasifika participants, while for Asian participants it was 'national community' (usually China rather than New Zealand). These findings highlight that citizenship was a rather latent identity for most participants and many did not see it as relevant to their daily lives. This is not *necessarily* a problem. But given democratic participation is critical to the functioning of society and citizenship is often theorised as having the potential to offer a shared identity to a diverse population, it is concerning that *no* Pasifika and Asian participants named 'participate in democracy' as an individual responsibility and few indicated that citizenship was important to them because they had 'pride' in New Zealand.

**Policy implications:** While specific citizenship education may be useful to encourage a better and shared knowledge of citizenship rights and responsibilities amongst New Zealanders, it is not clear that it will be able to overcome the differences in levels of citizenship identity and belonging found amongst different ethnic groups. There is a need to recognise Māori rights while also accommodating the diverse needs of New Zealand's multicultural population. But in that the differences in knowledge, identity and belonging appear to be linked to existing socio-economic inequalities, social cohesion may not be radically improved until these material inequalities are reduced.

## **Conclusion**

The changes in social and economic policy that neoliberal reforms brought to New Zealand *have* shaped attitudes towards government and individual responsibility and to particular aspects of social policy, if not in as negative or as clear-cut way as the theoretical literature would suggest. Indeed, frustration with such reforms has often enhanced support for social citizenship, rather than diminished it. However, predictions that neoliberal policies would impact negatively on broader understandings of citizenship and belonging have stronger ground. This study has found that both are heavily influenced by forms of inequality and disadvantage (based on ethnicity, main income source, age and – to a lesser extent – socio-economic status and gender) that have grown since neoliberal reforms were implemented in New Zealand from the 1980s. There is some evidence that citizens *do* need a basic level of social and economic security to activate their civil and political rights and, until these broader inequalities are addressed, many New Zealanders will continue feeling under-valued and social cohesion at the society level will remain vulnerable.