Family Wellbeing in an era of reform – monitoring changes in family wellbeing in New Zealand between 1981 and 2001

Andrew Sporle, Gerry Cotterell
Social Statistics Research Group
Department of Sociology
The University of Auckland

Australian Conference, July 2007
Outline

- Project description
- Definitions of families + ethnicity
- Wellbeing indicators
- Results
- So what?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Family and Whānau Wellbeing Project (FWWP)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Five year, FoRST funded programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Aims to examine and monitor social and economic determinants of family and whanau wellbeing 1981–2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uses Census of Population and Dwellings to construct indicators of wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- An indicator is a summary measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Primary units of interest are the family and the household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Focus on outcome for different ethnic groups and family types.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Data**

- Access to census records was obtained through SNZ DATA LABORATORY
- Allowed use of confidentialised unit record data
- Required working on-site (SNZ Auckland)
- Required application of confidentiality rules to all output taken from the Data Lab, as well as SNZ review of all published and presented outputs (Statistics Act, 1975)
- Detailed data assessment undertaken prior to analysis
  - Variable assessment (data dictionaries)
  - Comparability measures
Access to the data used in this study was provided by Statistics New Zealand in a secure environment designed to give effect to the confidentiality provisions of the Statistics Act 1975.
Modelling Wellbeing using Census data

| Family and whanau wellbeing model  
| (as operationalised for constructing indicators Census data) |

Family and whanau wellbeing  
Material, physical, social and emotional wellbeing of the family unit

Access to resources and living conditions

- Income
- Education
- Work
- Housing
- Health

Access to assets that may facilitate social connectedness

Milligan et al. (2006, p.29)
Census Families

Defining indicators at the family level is limited by census definition:

**can** identify families in the same household
Census Families

Defining indicators at the family level is limited by census definition:

**can** identify families in the multi-family households
Defining indicators at the family level is limited by census definition:

**cannot** identify families which cross household boundaries
In particular, we cannot easily identify:

- Families where parents have dual custody
- Blended families
- Extended families
- ‘Operational’ families
Family Classification

- Families in the census classified by SNZ according to:
  - number of adults
  - number and dependency status of children

- Family types in the analysis:
  - Couples with children
  - Couples without children
  - Single Parents with Children
Time Series

Households or Family Type

- Type A
  - A1 → A2 → A3 → A4 → A5

- Type B
  - B1 → B2 → B3 → B4 → B5

- Type C
  - C1 → C2 → C3 → C4 → C5

- Type D
  - D1 → D2 → D3 → D4 → D5

- Type E
  - E1 → E2 → E3 → E4 → E5

Changing distributions of outcomes for household or family type
Family Ethnicity?

Ethnicity is an individual attribute

Chosen approach – where one of more of the parents is Maori

Strengths
- Looks at child’s environment
- Parents complete the census form
- Children’s ethnicity is variable

Limitations
- Theoretically shonky
- Not an indigenous definition (Maori ancestry)
Family Wellbeing Indicators

Domains and indicators
- **Income**
  - Median equivalised gross family income
  - Income source
  - Income inequality
- **Education**
  - Educational attainment
  - Post-secondary educational attainment
- **Work**
  - Workless families / households
  - Hours worked
- **Housing**
  - Tenure
  - Rental Affordability
  - Crowding
- **Health**
  - Health related benefits
Median equivalised income - One parent with children

Median equivalised income, 1981–2001, by family type

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
Median equivalised income
- Couple without children

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
Median equivalised income - Couple with Children

Median equivalised income, 1981–2001, by family type

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
Median equivalised income - ALL

Median equivalised income, 1981–2001, by family type

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
Low income families

Percentage of families whose equivalised gross income is more than 60 percent below the median gross equivalised family income level, 1981–2001, by family type

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
Workless families

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
Hours worked

Percentage of families with at least one adult working more than 48 hours per week, 1981–2001, by family type

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
Crowding

Percentage of families whose dwellings need at least one additional room in order to meet their sleeping requirements, 1981–2001, by family type

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
Health-related benefits

Percentage of families with at least one adult receiving a health-related benefit, 1981–2001, by family type

The results presented in this study are the work of the author, not Statistics New Zealand.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Persistent differences between Maori and non-Maori families over 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sole parent families do consistently worse than other family types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improvements in some key determinants for wellbeing and decreases in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Marked differences in outcomes by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Family type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ethnic group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What’s next?

- Add 2006 Census data
- More ethnic groups
- Intra-ethnic analysis
- Indigenous focus
- Analyse associations with positive outcomes
- Data platform and modelling

| Maori | European | Pacific | Asian | MELAA | Other |
Cohort Study

Households with Children in age range

- < 5 yrs
- 5-9 yrs
- 10-14 yrs
- 15-19 yrs
- 20-24 yrs

Years:
- 1981
- 1986
- 1991
- 1996
- 2001
## Concluding Comments

- **Census data can be used to create time-series**
  - Some limitations
    - Comparability imposes certain restrictions
    - Families restricted to the same household

- **Highly detailed policy monitoring tool**
  - The data is there, so use it

- **Highlights gaps in knowledge**
Further Information

For further information about FWWP and other projects of the Social Statistics Research Group, please visit:

http://www.nzssn.org.nz