

3. Vibrant, growing communities

Social Wellbeing

Why is this important?

Social wellbeing encompasses health, education, community safety, housing and many other issues. Indicators for this section were identified through discussions and workshops during 2005 and 2006.



How are we doing?

Relative to the national average, South Waikato fares poorly on many social indicators but is steadily improving.

Community spirit and support

A 2003 South Waikato Telephone Survey asked: "Thinking about the community spirit ... how would you rate community spirit in the District using a scale of 0 being very poor to 10 being very good?" Over two thirds of the respondents (70.8%) rated the District as having good or excellent levels of community spirit including 9.4% who rated this with a score of 10. Only 0.5% of respondents rated the District poorly.

A 2005 Household Survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area across a range of items, including the strength of community pride/cohesion. The results show that 53% of South Waikato residents rated community pride/cohesion as good or excellent. A further 28% scored community pride/cohesion as average, while 10% scored it weak or poor. The Survey also asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of service clubs/churches, to which 54% responded that South Waikato service clubs/churches are good or excellent. A further 28% scored service clubs/churches as average, while 9% scored them weak or poor.

Air quality

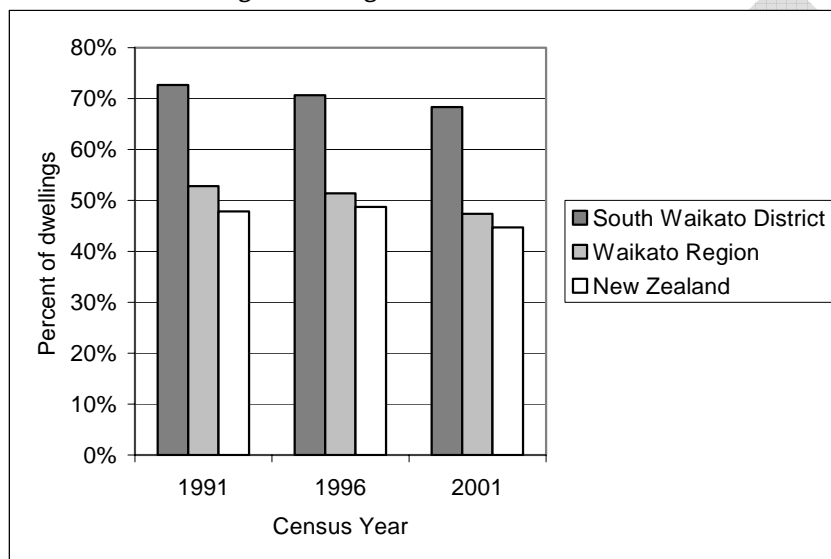
Central Government has introduced a National Environmental Standard for Air Quality to reduce air pollution. Research shows that poor air quality has been the cause of ill health in some communities. Fine particles in the air (PM_{10S}), predominantly from home wood burning fireplaces and heating appliances, collect in the lungs causing respiratory illnesses, including asthma. Tokoroa is one of a number of towns in New Zealand where tests have shown that the air quality is below the standard.

The proportion of unacceptable air quality samples in Tokoroa was 25% in 2001, 14% in 2002, 35% in 2004 and 22% in 2005. The problem is primarily due to home heating (open fires and pre-1995 wood burners). A 2005 telephone survey by Environment Waikato found that the contribution to daily PM₁₀ emissions from domestic heating ranged from 28% during the summer months to 89% during the winter. Other significant contributors during the summer months were outdoor burning and motor vehicles.

Census data from 2001 show that 68.3% of South Waikato dwellings used wood for home heating compared to the national average of 44.7%. This is only a slight improvement from 1991. Data from Environment Waikato's 2005 Tokoroa

Home Heating Survey confirmed that wood burners were the main heating method in Tokoroa with 58% of households using this method, almost half of which were pre-1995 wood burners. A Tokoroa Warm Homes Clean Air Project was initiated in 2005 as a response to Tokoroa's poor air quality. The Warm Homes Project is a joint initiative of South Waikato District Council, Ministry for the Environment, Environment Waikato, Waikato District Health Board and Raukawa Trust Board. It is intended to fully inform the community of the poor air quality situation in Tokoroa, what is causing it, the effect on health and what we can do about it. In the following years, the Advisory Group will be putting in place options and measures that individual households can take to improve the standard of their home heating and insulation. Council is also supporting a related joint initiative to retrofit insulation in up to 200 older homes in the District as part of the South Waikato Healthy Homes Project.

Percent of dwellings burning wood as a heat source



Source: Statistics NZ Census

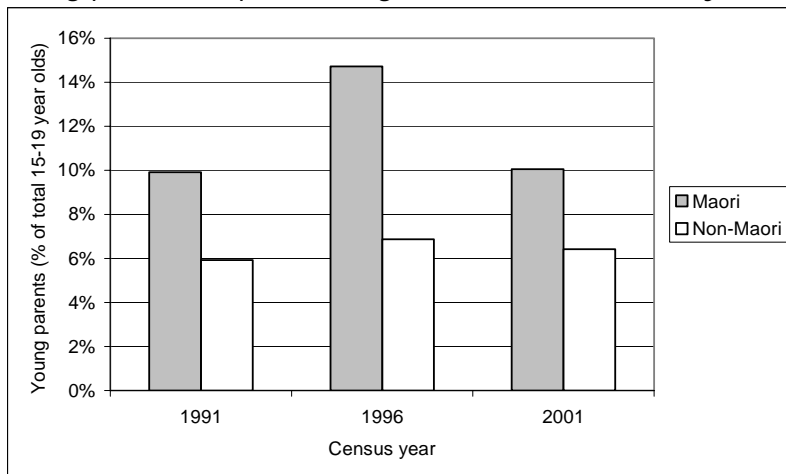
Youth activities

Retaining and attracting families and young people is crucial to the ongoing viability of the District. According to a 2005 South Waikato Youth Survey, some of the things that young people feel are not cool about the District include "nothing to do", gangs/fights, not enough shops, tagging and other crime. Suggestions by young people that would make their town more exciting to spend time in included timezone/games arcade, malls, more and better shops, a club/youth centre and variety of other suggestions. Types of activities that respondents said they felt the District could run for young people included a youth centre, sports days, games place, cinema and other suggestions. The South Waikato Safer Community Council is in the process of developing a Youth Services Directory and other youth-focused information. A stock-take of youth services and programmes is also being compiled as part of the preparation of the South Waikato Youth Strategy.

Census results show that the proportion of South Waikato 15 to 19 years who stated a parent or partner role increased between 1991 and 1996 but has subsequently fallen. In 2001 there were 117 (7.9%) young parents and partners aged 15-19 compared with 174 (10.0%) in 1996. However, this is still above the national average. In addition, Māori young people have almost twice the rate of teen parenthood compared to non-Māori young people.

The 2005 Community Outcomes Household Survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of activities for youth. The results show that only 12% of South Waikato residents rated activities for youth as good or excellent. A further 29% scored activities for youth as average, while 38% scored it weak or poor, and 21% did not give a response to this item.

Young parents or partners aged 15-19 (% all 15-19 year olds), South Waikato



Source: Statistics NZ Census

Employment and unpaid work

Paid work has an important role in social and economic wellbeing by providing people with incomes to meet their basic needs and give them options for how they live their lives. Both paid and unpaid work are important for the social contact and self-esteem they can give to people.

South Waikato has had an above average unemployment rate for several decades. The gap widened in the period 1991 to 1996, with South Waikato unemployment increasing despite a national downward trend, but the gap subsequently reduced over the period 1996 to 2001. As at Census night 2001 the unemployment rate for the South Waikato District was 10.3% compared to 7.5% for New Zealand overall. Unemployment rates as at 2001 were highest in the central suburbs of Tokoroa (approximately 16-19%), and lowest in rural parts of the District.

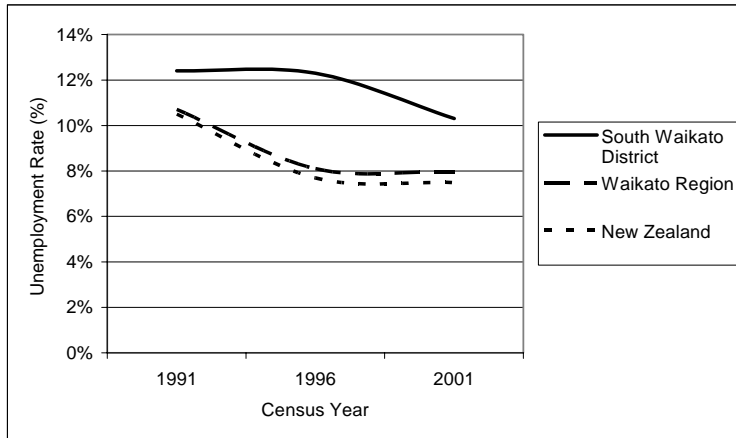
The number of people registered for the Unemployment Benefit (UB) at the Tokoroa Service Centre was 397 as at March 2006, the lowest level on record for many years. However the decline in numbers of people registered for the UB has been partly offset by increased numbers of people registered on the Invalids Benefit (IB) and Sickness Benefit (SB).

Data from the 2001 Census shows that South Waikato residents were more likely than the national average to be undertaking unpaid work, including looking after a child, looking after household members who are ill or have a disability, and voluntary work in the community. South Waikato residents were less likely than the national average to be studying.

The 2005 Community Outcomes Household Survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of job opportunities. The results show that only 13% of South Waikato residents rated job opportunities as good or excellent. A further 35% scored job opportunities as average, while 41% scored

it weak or poor. Respondents from Tokoroa, and to a lesser extent Putaruru, were most likely to rate the strength of job opportunities as weak or very poor.

Census unemployment rate 1991-2001



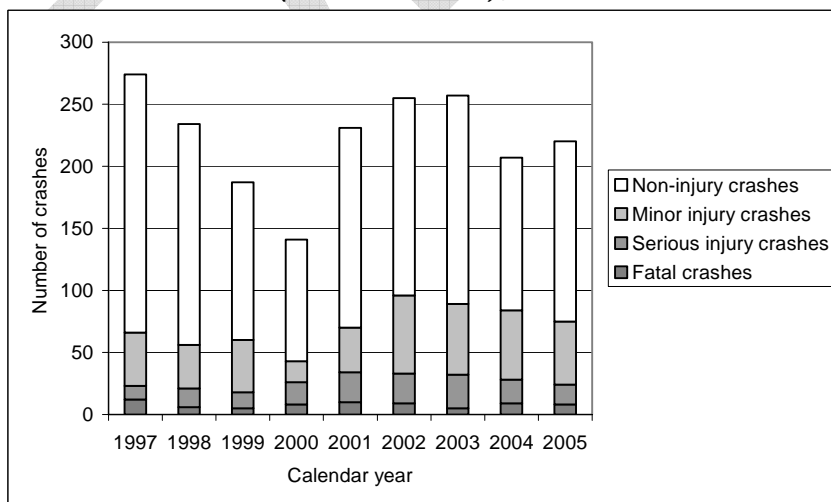
Source: Statistics NZ Census

Transport services

The South Waikato District is a major transport corridor for people traveling north or south on State Highway 1, or traveling to or from Waitomo, Rotorua, Tauranga or other centres.

During 2005 there were 220 reported road crashes in the South Waikato District, including 8 fatal crashes. The number of crashes per year is currently above the levels seen in 1999 and 2000. The major road safety issues in the South Waikato area are poor observation, speed, drink-driving, and poor use of restraints and helmets. The estimated social cost of road crashes in the South Waikato District during 2005 was \$48.1 million, of which 82.4% was due to injuries, deaths and damage on state highways. Council monitoring of traffic counts shows that heavy vehicles make up around 10-15% of traffic on rural roads. Council is implementing a programme of rural road widening to improve traffic safety.

Road traffic crashes (crash incidents), South Waikato District



Source: Land Transport New Zealand

Health and education services

Health care and education are fundamental to human capital and social wellbeing. Equity of access to health care and education are important for reducing social and economic disparities.

Tokoroa Hospital was recently upgraded. It has an in-patient capacity of 17 general medical beds, four maternity beds, a day stay service for minor surgery and a 24-hour accident and emergency department. Outpatient clinics cover virtually all medical specialties and laboratory, radiology and pharmacy services are provided. In addition to Tokoroa Hospital there is a range of medical and emergency services available to the residents of the South Waikato District. The smaller towns of Tirau and Arapuni do not have resident doctors or pharmacies in town, but can access facilities at nearby Putaruru.

A 2005 South Waikato Household Survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of services that care for people in need. The results show that 33% of South Waikato residents rated services that care for people in need as good or excellent. A further 25% scored services that care for people in need as average, while 25% scored it weak or poor. The Survey also asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of access to health facilities. The results show that 32% of South Waikato residents rated access to health facilities as good or excellent. A further 24% scored access to health facilities as average, while 35% scored it weak or poor.

In addition the 2005 Household Survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of education, resulting in 54% of South Waikato residents rating education as good or excellent, 26% as average and 7% weak or poor.

The South Waikato has 12 ECE childcare centres including punanga reo, 7 kindergartens, 4 accredited ECE playcentres, 7 kohanga reo and at least 4 other early childcare centres. Overall attendance at South Waikato's early childhood education centres is estimated at more than 1000 children. For school age young people, the District provides access to 19 primary and intermediate schools and 3 high schools. Schools in the District range from decile 1 to decile 9, with an average decile rating of 3 for Ministry of Education funding purposes. The overall school roll as at July 2005 was approximately 3,400 for South Waikato primary and intermediate schools, and 1,700 for high schools.

Facilities and events

Involvement in leisure and events gives greater meaning to individual and community life and contributes to people's overall quality of life. Recreation can encourage personal growth, self-expression and increased learning opportunities.

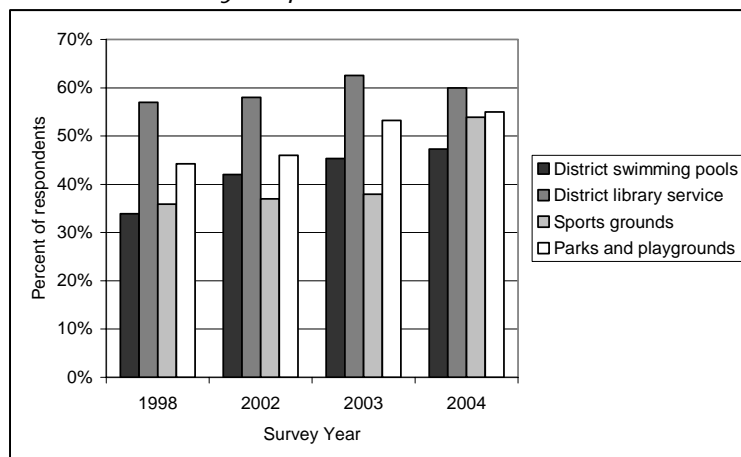
Information on the cost of key events in the District is scheduled to be compiled over the coming years. Council is also developing a future programme of monitoring participation and satisfaction of key events in the District. An Events Calendar is currently being developed to pull together information and assist future decision making.

According to results from Council's Resident Satisfaction Survey, usage of Council recreational facilities has generally risen over the past several years, including the percentage of respondents who had used District swimming pools, public libraries, sports grounds, parks and playgrounds. Satisfaction with Council recreational facilities has also been maintained, and has been improving in the

case of the District Library services. Council has set itself stretch targets for the 2006/07 Survey in relation to use and satisfaction of all its recreational facilities and is undertaking asset management improvements and a Recreational Services Review to achieve this.

The 2005 Community Outcomes Household Survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of activities for families. The results show that 25% of South Waikato residents rated activities for families as good or excellent. A further 27% scored activities for families as average, while 31% scored it weak or poor.

Percent of survey respondents who used facilities "in the past year"



Source: SWDC Resident Satisfaction Survey

Community safety

In the year ended June 2006 there were 2,117 offences recorded at the Tokoroa and Putaruru Police stations combined. This was a fall of 9% compared to the previous year. In terms of selected offence categories, disorder offences were down 28% and violence offences (excluding family violence) were down 21%, however there was an increase in the number of recorded unlawful takings of motor vehicles (up 18%). Over the four year period 2001/02 to 2005/06 the number of annual recorded offences fell by 18% in the South Waikato area compared to a fall of 2% at the overall national level over the same period. The resolution rate for total recorded crime in the South Waikato area in 2005/06 was 60% compared to 44% at the national level.

South Waikato recorded offences (Putaruru and Tokoroa stations combined) – Selected offence categories

	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Burglary				311	314
Dwelling burglaries				201	182
Theft ex-car				98	93
Unlawful takings of motor vehicles				62	73
Family violence				206	211
Sex offences (less Family Violence)				10	17
Violence (less Family Violence)				225	177
Violent attacks				156	147
Disorder				196	141
Total recorded offences	2584	2215	2401	2328	2117

Source: NZ Police

Note: Columns do not add to "total recorded offences" because only a selection of offence categories is shown

Council's Three-Yearly Residents Survey asks respondents "thinking now about personal safety, and using a scale where 0 = very unsafe and 10 = very safe, overall how safe do you feel when in the neighbourhood you live in?" In the 2004 Residents Survey, over four fifths of respondents (86%) felt safe in their neighbourhood including 21% who rated this with a score of 10. A further 17% rated this at 9 and 36% rated this at 8. A tenth of respondents, 11% rated this as neutral with scores that ranged from 4 to 6 while 3% felt unsafe in their own neighbourhood (score 0 – 3). Reasons for not feeling safe included concerns about crime, concerns about young people "roaming the streets", and concerns with neighbours.

The 2005 Community Outcomes Household Survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of safety/policing. The results show that 34% of South Waikato residents rated safety/policing as good or excellent. A further 29% scored safety/policing as average, while 24% scored it weak or poor. Respondents from Tokoroa were most likely to rate the strength of safety/policing as good or excellent.

Community health and active lifestyles

People with poor health are less able to participate in their communities and have lower levels of life satisfaction. A range of factors affects health outcomes, including the physical and social environment, and personal behaviours including levels of physical activity.

At the Waikato regional level, around 73% of young people aged 5-17 years engage in sport and active leisure, falling to 66% for the 18+ age group. This is slightly below the national average. The South Waikato Leisure Strategy 1999 noted that active recreation tends to be informal and focused on individual needs, and that enjoyment is the biggest motivator. A District stock-take of sports, arts and recreation clubs is currently being updated by Council.

The District provides a high amount of public open space per capita. An average 8.9 hectares of public open space per 1,000 people is provided in urban areas compared to the national average of approximately 5-6 hectares per 1,000 people. The extent of public open space per capita is highest in Arapuni and lowest in Putaruru.

The infant mortality rate in New Zealand has declined markedly over the past century, indicating a general improvement in health and health care. There were 29 infant deaths in the Waikato DHB area in 2002, giving a death rate of 6.3 per 1,000 live births. The infant death rate for Māori remains higher than average, at 9.8 per 1,000 live births in the Waikato DHB area in 2002.

Across all age groups combined, avoidable mortality rates in New Zealand decreased by approximately 40% between 1980 and 2000. People living with high levels of relative social deprivation tend to have the highest rates of avoidable mortality. Māori and Pacific Island ethnic groups have a considerably higher avoidable mortality rate than other ethnic groups. Avoidable mortality counts in the South Waikato fluctuated at around 50 to 90 deaths per year in the period 1988 to 2001. Almost 80% of all avoidable deaths in the Waikato DHB region occur in people aged 45-74 years, dominated by chronic diseases such as ischaemic heart disease, diabetes and smoking-related cancers.

Avoidable hospital admissions for diabetes in the South Waikato fluctuated at around 25 to 50 per year in the period 1997 to 2003. The Waikato DHB region's overall avoidable hospitalisation rate for diabetes is significantly higher than the

national rate and rising. New cases of diabetes can be reduced by addressing overweight and obesity issues through uptake of improved nutrition and physical activity rates.

As at 1996, 48.7% of Māori in the South Waikato District were current cigarette smokers compared with 25.6% of non-Māori. Smoking rates for both Māori and non-Māori in the District were about 5 percentage points higher than the national average. Forthcoming Census data will help identify more recent trends in smoking rates at the District level.

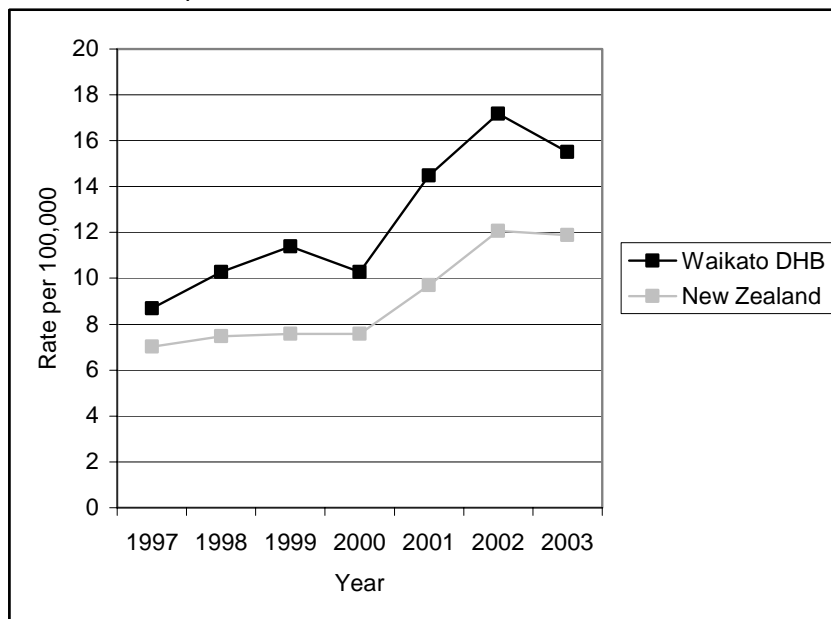
New Zealand has a relatively high level of obesity compared with many other OECD countries, with a rate of 21% in 2003 compared to the OECD median of 13%. Obesity is more prevalent among Pacific peoples and Māori than other ethnic groups. Between 1989 and 2003 male obesity doubled from 10 to 20 percent, and female obesity increased from 13 to 22 percent. The major drivers of the increase have been changing dietary and physical activity patterns.

Based on the mortality experiences of New Zealanders in the period 2003-2005, life expectancy at birth was 77.5 years for males and 81.7 years for females. These figures are similar to the OECD average. Between 1985-1987 and 2003-2005, life expectancy at birth increased by 6.4 years for males and 4.6 years for females. The gains in life expectancy since the mid-1980s can be attributed mainly to reduced mortality in the middle-aged and older age groups (45-84 years). Reduced mortality rates are due to better living standards and improved public and personal health care.

In recent years gambling-related harm has emerged worldwide as a significant social and health issue, due to the introduction of increased opportunities for frequent and prolonged gambling. The number of problem gamblers in the South Waikato District is estimated to be in the approximate range 150 to 600, depending how problem gambling is defined. A significant minority of problem gamblers are associated with domestic violence, alcohol abuse, theft, bankruptcy, poor employment performance and poor mental health. The Ministry of Health has begun implementing a strategy to try and reduce the harm caused by problem gambling.

The 2005 Community Outcomes Household Survey asked respondents to rate the strength of their town or area in terms of sports clubs/recreational facilities. The results show that 42% of South Waikato residents rated sports clubs/recreational facilities as good or excellent. A further 30% scored sports clubs/recreational facilities as average, while 18% scored them weak or poor. Respondents from Tokoroa and Putaruru were most likely to rate the strength of sports clubs/recreational facilities as good or excellent.

Avoidable hospitalisation rate for diabetes, Waikato DHB and New Zealand



Source: *Waikato DHB Health Needs Assessment 2005*

Education and learning

Knowledge and skills enhance people’s ability to meet their basic needs, widen the range of options and employment available to them, and enable greater control over the direction of their lives. Skills and knowledge can also enhance people’s sense of self-esteem, security and belonging.

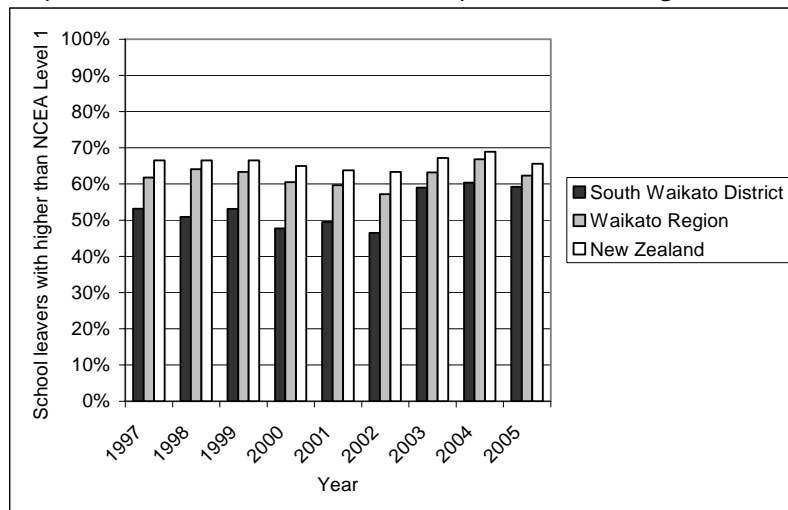
As at 1 July 2005 the apparent early childhood education (ECE) participation rate for 4 year-olds was 100%, which represents a considerable improvement from 82% in 2001. Taking out double-counting of children that attended more than one ECE centre, 87.5% of South Waikato of newly enrolled primary students in 2005 had attended ECE compared to the national average of 94.3%. Participation is highest for European ethnic groups.

The proportion of school leavers in the South Waikato with little or no formal qualifications is above the national average (18.8% compared to 12.9%) but has fallen markedly over the past decade. At the other end of the achievement spectrum, 59.2% of South Waikato school leavers in 2005 achieved qualifications higher than NCEA Level 1. This was slightly lower than the Waikato regional average of 62.3% and the national average of 65.6%. South Waikato has achieved relative improvements in higher achievement rates over the past several years, although comparisons over time are difficult due to changes in New Zealand’s qualification framework. The proportion of adults in the South Waikato District with an educational attainment of at least upper secondary school level rose almost 10 percentage points over the period 1996 to 2001, from 51.0% to 60.4%. However improvements at the local level have lagged well behind improvements at the regional and national levels. There is also considerable ethnic disparity, with only 43.9% of Māori and 46.2% of Pacific Island adults in the South Waikato District having an educational attainment of at least upper secondary school level as at 2001.

The total number of public library visits per year in the South Waikato peaked at 165,037 in 2003/04 and has subsequently fallen slightly. An estimated average of 7.1 visits per person were made to District Libraries in 2005/06, up from 6.3 visits per person in 2000/01. In 2005/06 an estimated 39.2% of District

residents were active library borrowers, which was similar to the 2004/05 level. From 2006/07 Council will be benchmarking the use of libraries and other recreational facilities with other Peer Group councils and the National Average through the NRB Communitrak Survey.

Proportion of school leavers with qualifications higher than NCEA Level 1



Source: Ministry of Education/MSD Social Report

Note: Before 2004, higher qualifications included Sixth Form Certificate, Higher School Certificate, Entrance Qualification and University Bursary. From 2004 the equivalent qualifications are: 30 or more credits at NCEA Level 2, NCEA Level 2, 30 or more credits at NCEA Level 3, and NCEA Level 3 or higher.

Quality, affordable housing

For lower-income households especially, high housing costs relative to income are often associated with severe financial difficulty. Issues relating to housing crisis, such as affordability problems, poor housing quality and household crowding, have flow-on effects in areas such as health, education, community participation, community cohesion and safety.

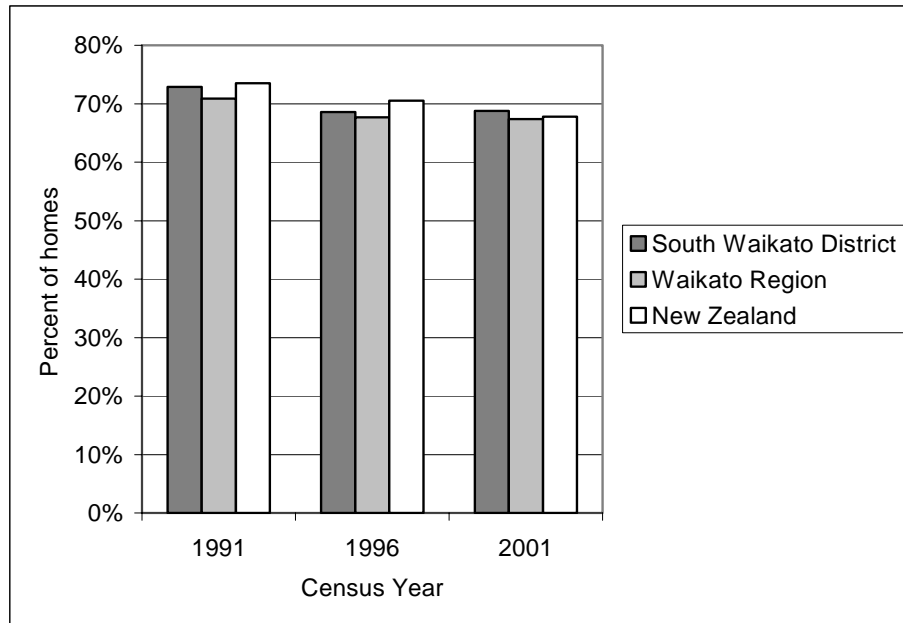
The percentage of South Waikato’s population living in crowded households decreased from 15.9% in 1986 to 12.4% in 2001 but remains above the Waikato regional rate of 9.1%. There is considerable difference between ethnic groups, with 29.4% of Pacific Island people and 22.7% of Māori in the South Waikato District living in “crowded” housing (as defined by the Canadian Crowding Index) compared to 6.7% of people who identify with European ethnic groups.

Information from the 2001 New Zealand Household Expenditure Survey shows that the total average annual spending for households in South Waikato District was \$38,635 compared with \$43,682 for New Zealand overall. Housing continues to be the most significant item of household expenditure, although it represents a lower proportion of total household expenditure in the South Waikato (20.6%) compared to the national average (23.3%).

As at the 2001 Census, 68.8% of dwellings in the South Waikato District were owned with or without a mortgage, compared to 67.8% for all of New Zealand. South Waikato’s home ownership rate fell by around 5 percentage points over the period 1991 to 1996, reflecting a national trend towards lower levels of home ownership, but remained steady over the period 1996 to 2001 despite a continued decline at the national level.

At both the regional and national levels, housing is much less affordable than it was in 1998 when monitoring began. In addition to mortgage affordability, data from Statistics NZ on the rent to income ratio shows that renting in the South Waikato District is more affordable than the regional and national averages, but rental costs are a greater proportion of total household income compared to 10 years previously.

Percent of homes that are owner occupied



Source: Statistics NZ/MARCO Benchmark Report

What is being done?

Key initiatives to improve social wellbeing in the District include:

- Building and Environmental Health Regulations
- Emergency response plans
- Festivals and community events (eg, Spring Clean South Waikato, Involve '06)
- Industry-led air quality initiatives
- Local Area Concept Plans
- NZ Urban Design Protocol
- Paratransit mobility support service
- Potential development of reserve and beautification committees
- Provision of Libraries, Swimming Pools, Parks and reserves
- Public bus service between Tokoroa and Mangakino
- Safer Community initiatives, including reduction of CBD crime and tagging
- South Waikato Arts and Culture Strategy (forthcoming)
- South Waikato Employment Skills Strategy
- South Waikato Graffiti Strategy
- South Waikato Healthy Homes Project
- South Waikato Land Transport Programme
- South Waikato Physical Activity (Leisure) Strategy (forthcoming)
- South Waikato State of the Environment Report
- South Waikato Youth Strategy (forthcoming)
- Strategic Youth Co-ordinator
- SWDC Bylaws
- SWDC Grants and Loans Allocation Policy

- SWDC Reserve Management Plans, Playgrounds Policy, and Recreation Services Review, etc
- SWDC Road Safety Co-ordinator
- Tokoroa Warm Homes Clean Air Project
- Volunteer recognition programmes
- Waikato Regional Land Transport Strategy

Lead Partners

- Arapuni Residents' Association
- Carter Holt Harvey (CHH) Ltd
- Churches
- Council contractors
- Early Childhood Education centres
- Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA)
- Environment Waikato
- Fast Forward Tokoroa contractor (TANGS)
- Housing New Zealand Corporation
- Land Transport NZ
- Mayors' Taskforce for Jobs
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry for the Environment
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry of Youth Development
- Overdale Community Centre/ Putaruru Council of Social Services (PCOSS)
- Pacific Island and other ethnic community groups
- Police
- Putaruru Residents' and Ratepayers' Association
- Raukawa Trust Board
- Schools
- South Waikato Achievement Centre
- South Waikato Education Centre Trust
- South Waikato Residents' and Ratepayers' Association
- Sport and recreation clubs and organisations
- Sport and Recreation NZ (SPARC)
- Sport Waikato
- South Waikato District Council (SWDC)
- South Waikato Economic Development Trust (SWEDT)
- South Waikato Safer Community Council (SWSCC)
- South Waikato Sports and Leisure Board (SWSLB)
- South Waikato Te Rito Coalition on Family Violence
- South Waikato Youth Forum (forthcoming)
- Tirau Business Association
- Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
- Tertiary Education Commission
- Tirau Community Board
- Tokoroa Council of Social Services (TCOSS)
- Transit NZ
- Tranz Rail
- Vibrant Putaruru Contractor (PIP)
- Waiariki Institute of Technology
- Waikato Civil Defence Emergency Management Group
- Waikato District Health Board
- Waikato Engineering Lifelines Group
- Waikato Primary Health Organisation
- Work and Income