



Relationships and emotional support in advanced age: *Findings from LiLACS NZ*

Te Puāwaitanga O Ngā Tapuwae Kia Ora Tonu

This report presents key findings about the relationships that people in advanced age have with their family and friends and whether they feel that emotional support is available to them.

The findings are from a population-based sample of Māori (aged 80 to 90 years) and non-Māori (aged 85 years), living in the Bay of Plenty, who are taking part in a longitudinal study of advanced ageing, called Life and Living in Advanced Age: a Cohort Study in New Zealand - Te Puāwaitanga O Ngā Tapuwae Kia Ora Tonu (LiLACS NZ).

For data tables about relationships in advanced age and the LiLACS NZ sample, see the Appendix. For details on methodology, recruitment, and data presented in this report that do not feature in the appendix, see www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/lilacs.html and published articles.^{1, 2}

Key findings

Most people in advanced age were satisfied with the relationships they had with family and friends. Over 80% of people in advanced age reported having someone to provide them with emotional support.

The person most helpful in giving emotional support was for men, their spouse and for women, their daughter.

Fewer people who lived alone (78%) reported having someone to give them emotional support, than those who lived with their spouse (84%) or with others (84%).

More Māori, particularly those in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation, reported an unmet need for emotional support than non-Māori.

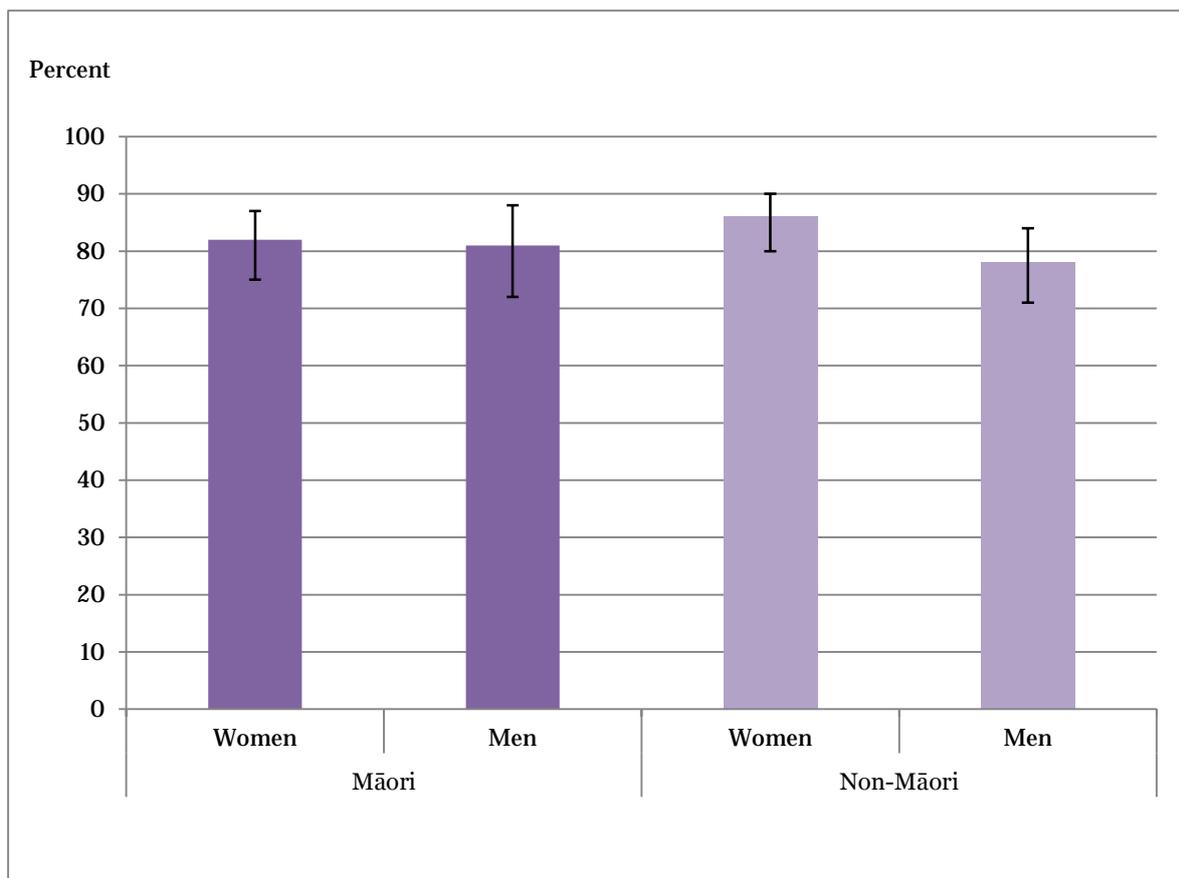
This report describes the prevalence of receiving emotional support, who gives that support and the satisfaction that people in advanced age feel about their relationships with family and friends, by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic deprivation and living arrangement. This report includes people living in the community and those in residential care.

Findings

The majority of people had someone to give them emotional support

Most people (82%) said 'Yes' when asked if they had anyone they could count on to give them emotional support. Seventy nine percent of men and 84% women reported having someone available to give them emotional support (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Having someone to give emotional support in advanced age, by sex and ethnic group



Source: LiLACS NZ

The prevalence of having someone to give emotional support did not vary by the deprivation of the area in which people lived (Appendix Table A-5).

Significantly¹ more men (17%) than women (10%) reported that they did not need emotional support (Appendix Tables A-2 and A-3).

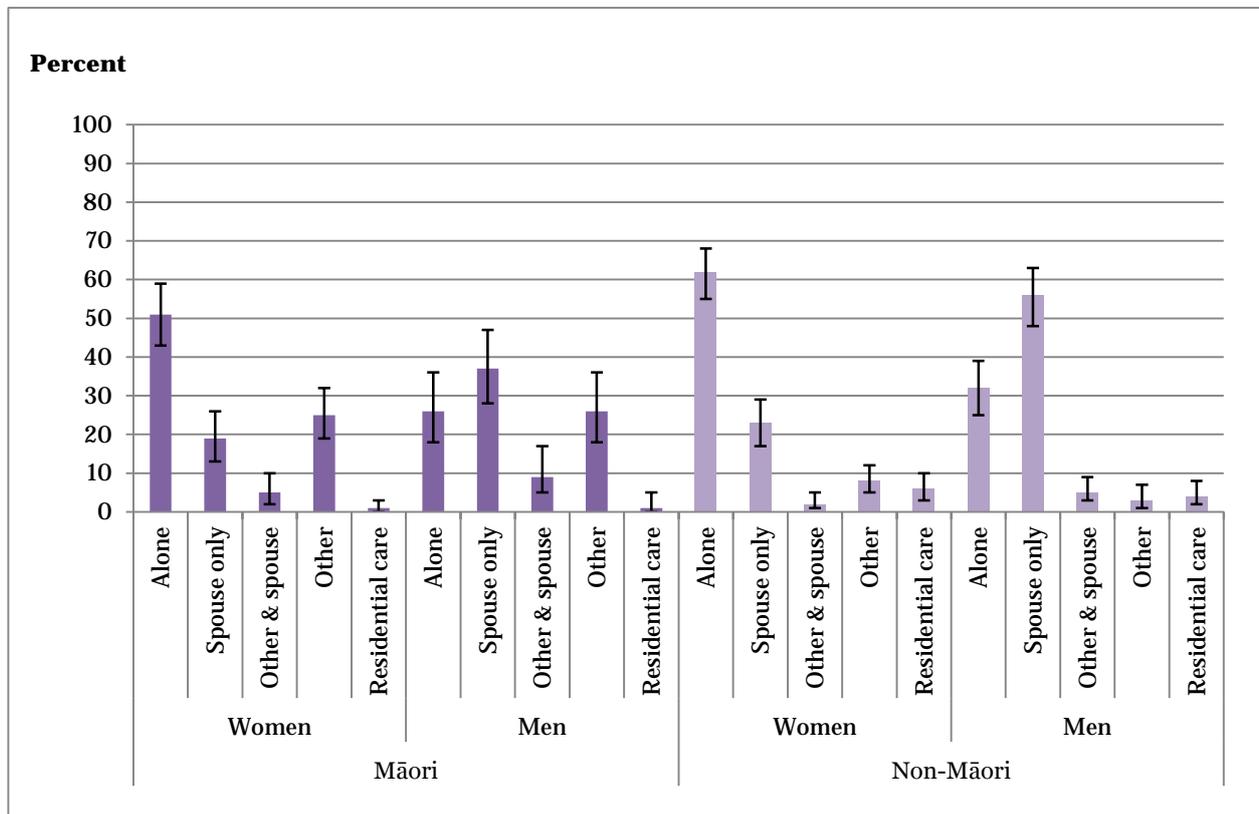
¹ The difference between two groups is statistically significant if their confidence intervals do not overlap. Sometimes, even when two confidence intervals overlap, the difference between these groups can be statistically significant. In these cases, if the text reports a difference, a statistical test (a 'Chi Square test, or regression') has been carried out to confirm that the finding is statistically significant.

The person most helpful in giving emotional support was their spouse for men, and their daughter for women.

The person most helpful in giving emotional support was their spouse for all men; 41% of Māori men and 56% of non-Māori men.

Daughters were most helpful in giving emotional support for 42% of all Māori women and 40% of all non-Māori women.

Figure 2: Living arrangement in advanced age, by sex and ethnic group



Source: LiLACS NZ

Emotional support varied by living arrangement

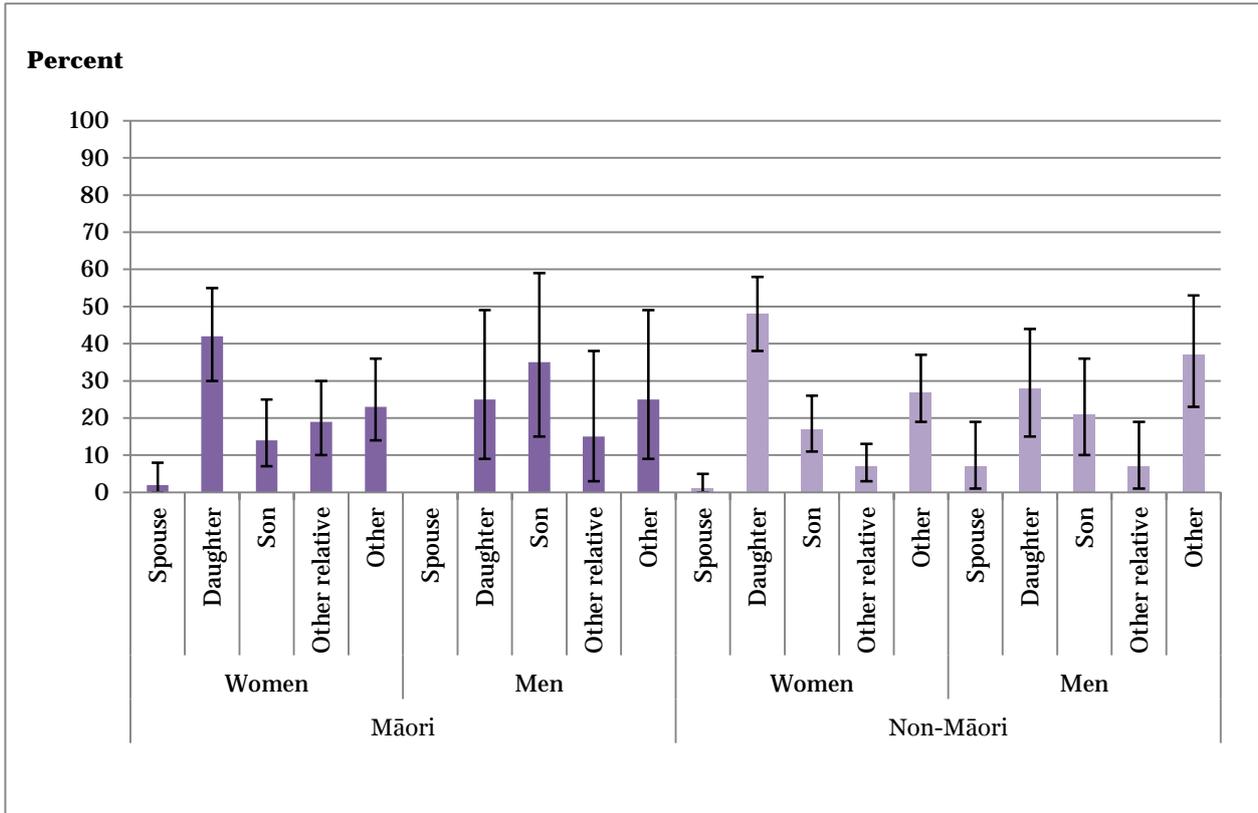
Forty-five percent of people lived alone and 33% lived with only their spouse or partner.

Significantly more women (57%) lived alone than men (30%) and significantly more Māori lived with others (33%) than non-Māori (15%) (Figure 2).

Significantly fewer people who lived alone (78%) reported having someone to give them emotional support, than those who lived with their spouse (84%) or with others (84%). This was particularly so for women when adjusted for age and ethnic group.

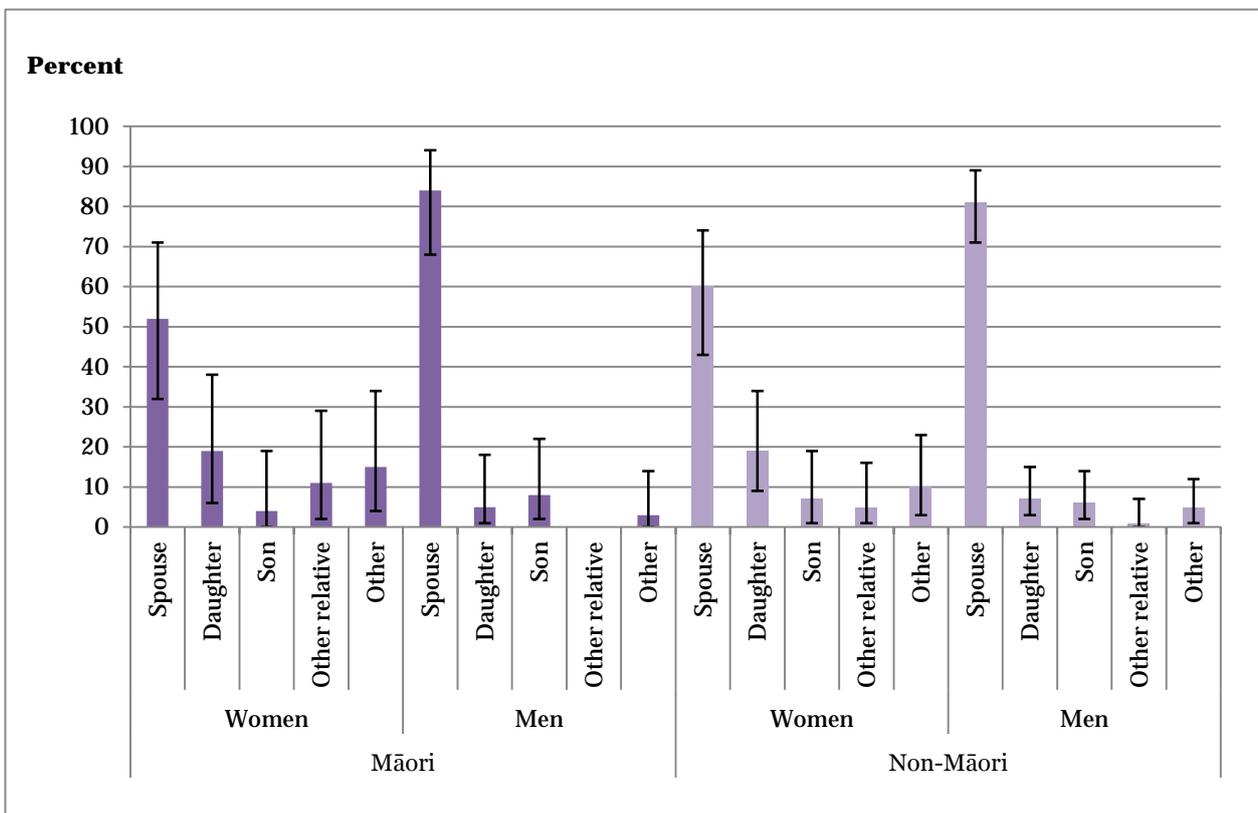
The source of emotional support varied by living arrangement, with the son or daughter being most helpful in giving emotional support for those either living alone (Figure 3) or with others (Figure 5) and the spouse being the most helpful in giving emotional support for those living only with their spouse (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Source of emotional support for those living alone in advanced age, by sex and ethnic group



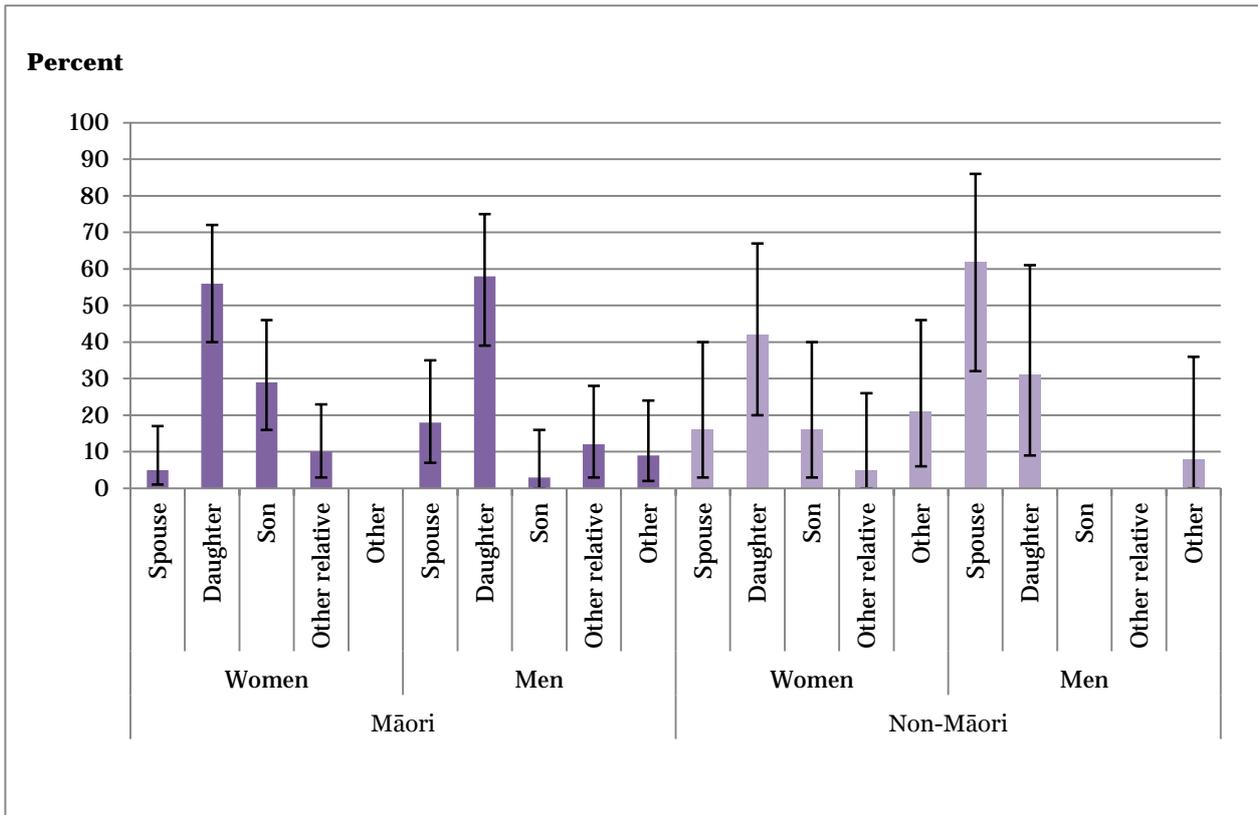
Source: LiLACS NZ

Figure 4: Source of emotional support for those living with only their spouse in advanced age, by sex and ethnic group



Source: LiLACS NZ

Figure 5: Source of emotional support for those living with others in advanced age, by sex and ethnic group



Source: LiLACS NZ

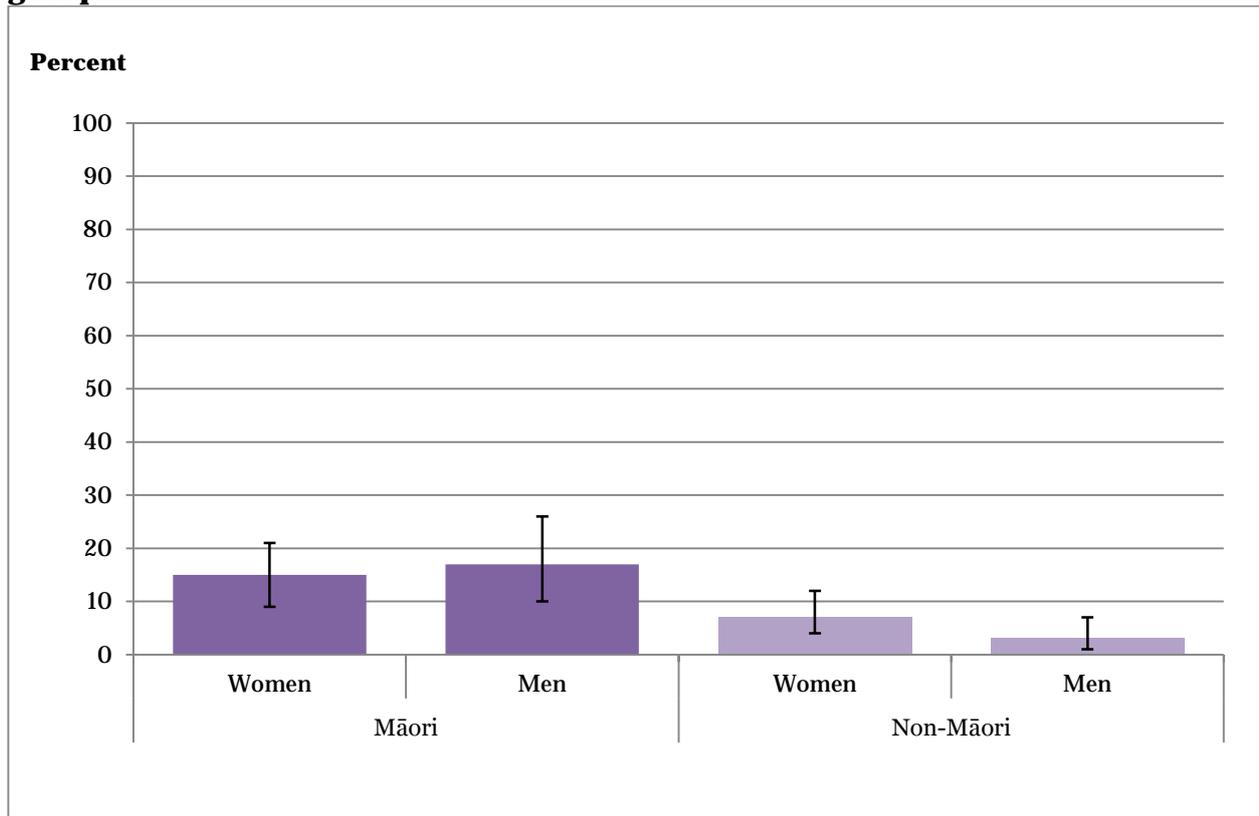
Unmet need for emotional support was greater among Māori

We asked people whether they “could have used more emotional support than they received”. Overall, 10% said that they could have used more; that is, they had an unmet need for emotional support.

Significantly more Māori (16%) than non-Māori (5%) reported an unmet need for emotional help (Figure 6).

Significantly more Māori women (15%) than non-Māori women (7%) reported an unmet need for emotional help. The difference for men is not statistically significant (Appendix Table A-4), possibly due to the smaller number of men in the sample.

Figure 6: Unmet need for emotional support in advanced age, by sex and ethnic group



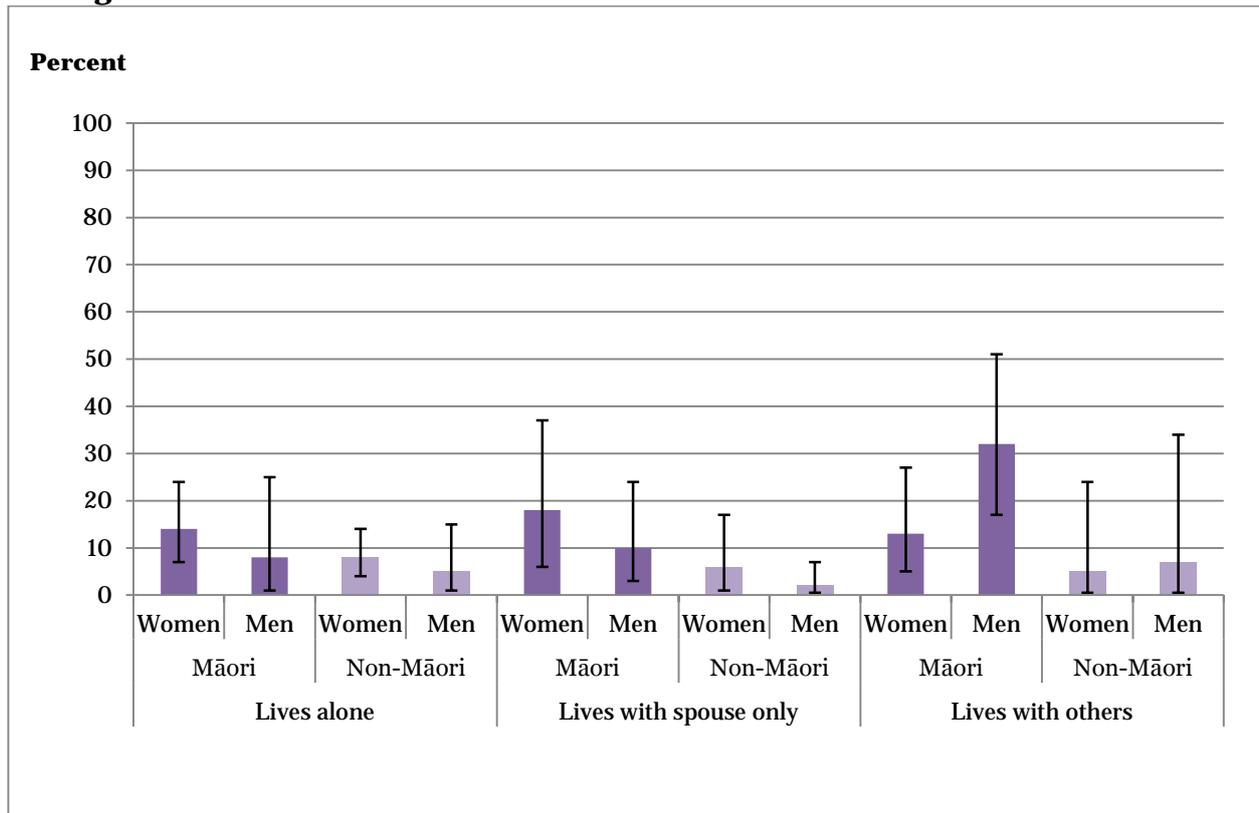
Source: LiLACS NZ

Unmet need for emotional support varied by living arrangement

Seventeen percent of people living with others reported unmet need for emotional support. Of those who lived with others as well as their spouse, 19% reported unmet need for emotional support; among those who lived with others but not their spouse 17% reported unmet need. In contrast, of those living only with their spouse, 6% had an unmet need for emotion support while for those living alone, 9% reported unmet need for emotional support (Figure 7).

Significantly more Māori living in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation had an unmet need for emotional support than non-Māori living in areas of high socioeconomic deprivation (see Appendix Table A-4).

Figure 7: Unmet need for emotional support in advanced age, by living arrangement



Source: LiLACS NZ

Most people in advanced age were satisfied in their relationships with family and friends

Over 90% of people were satisfied most or all of the time in their relationships with family and friends.

Forty-one percent of Māori reported being satisfied all of the time with the kinds of relationships they had with their family and a further 55% were satisfied most of the time (Appendix Tables A-1 and A-2).

Almost two-thirds (63%) of non-Māori were satisfied with family relationships all of the time and a further 33% were satisfied most of the time.

When asked how satisfied they were with the kinds of relationships they had with friends specifically, 30% of Māori were satisfied all of the time and a further 69% were satisfied most of the time. Sixty-two percent of non-Māori were satisfied with relationships with friends all of the time and a further 37% were satisfied most of the time.

Satisfaction with relationships did not vary by the socio-economic deprivation of the area in which the participant lived (Table A-5).

What is the source of the data?

The source of these data is Life and Living in Advanced Age: a Cohort Study in New Zealand - Te Puāwaitanga O Ngā Tapuwae Kia Ora Tonu (LiLACS NZ). Data were gathered in face-to-face, standardised interviews with Māori aged 80-90 and non-Māori aged 85 at home, plus nursing assessments of physical function and health.

The LiLACS NZ sample lives within the boundaries of the Bay of Plenty and Lakes District Health Boards, excluding the Taupo region of Lakes DHB. The participants were first interviewed and assessed in 2010 (the 'first wave' of data collection). This is a longitudinal study with annual data collection, subject to mortality and participant retention.

What were the survey questions?

People were asked whether they could count on anyone to provide them with emotional support, and who had been the most helpful in the past 12 months with providing emotional support. They were also asked whether they could have used more emotional support than they received, and 'Yes' was counted as having an 'unmet need' for emotional support.

Satisfaction in relationships with family and friends, in terms of whether it seemed that 'family and friends' understood them (from none of the time or hardly ever, to all of the time) was asked. Participants were asked how satisfied they felt with the kinds of relationships they had with family (from dissatisfied to satisfied all of the time) and how satisfied they were with their relationships with their friends.

In the core questionnaire people were asked about their living arrangements (Appendix Table A-2 and Table A-3) as these are relevant to many areas of living in advanced age, including support. They were asked whether they lived alone, with a spouse/partner, or with children, other relatives, or with other people (categorised as 'other' and including those in residential care for older people).

Further information

You can find more information about the LiLACS NZ study on the website (<https://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/lilacs.html>) and see also Hayman et al (2012)¹ for the study protocol and Dyall et al (2013)² for the recruitment detail.

References

1. Hayman K, Kerse N, Dyall L, et al. 2012. Life and living in advanced age: A cohort study in New Zealand, *Te Puāwaitanga O Ngā Tapuwae Kia Ora Tonu – LILACS NZ: Study protocol*. *BMC Geriatrics* 12(June). DOI: 10.1186/1471-2318-12-33 (accessed 18 March 2014).
2. Dyall L, Kepa M, Hayman K, et al. 2013. Engagement and recruitment of Māori and non-Māori people of advanced age to LiLACS NZ. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 37(2): 124-31.

LiLACS NZ – at a glance

Sample: 932 people of advanced age; Māori aged 80–90 years and non-Māori aged 85 years living in the Bay of Plenty and Lakes District Health Boards region. Non-Māori are 90% NZ European, 9% other European and 1% other. Participant numbers vary slightly according to topic being discussed.



Mode: Standardised home-based interview and standardised nursing assessment, repeated annually. Hospitalisation and mortality outcomes data were obtained, with permission, by matching the NHI with nationally held hospitalisation data from the Ministry of Health.

Timing: Results refer to the population sample recruited in the first wave of data gathering in 2010.

Funding: LiLACS NZ was originally funded by a programme grant from the Health Research Council of New Zealand. Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, Heart Foundation NZ, Oakley Mental Health Foundation, Auckland Medical Research Foundation, the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences also provided project support. The University of Auckland, the Rotorua Energy Trust and the Ministry of Health have funded LiLACS NZ from 2013.

Representation: The study is strengthened by the extensive breath of domains investigated and is designed to engage with a full cohort of Māori allowing equal explanatory power for separate analyses. The findings for Māori and non-Māori may not be generalizable beyond the Bay of Plenty region. However, the overall response rate in the first wave is consistent with other longitudinal studies of ageing; 56% of all Māori and 59% of all non-Māori who were invited participated. In gender and age the sample engaged was similar in proportion to the population of the area and the population of New Zealand. Although all age-eligible older adults were sought and invited, lower enrolments than expected from residential care facilities limits separate analyses of frailer participants.

For more information, see the LiLACS NZ webpage:

<https://www.fmhs.auckland.ac.nz/en/faculty/lilacs.html> and other Ministry of Health short reports.

Appendix: Detailed data tables

The following tables provide detailed data for the key indicators presented in this report. The tables present the prevalence and number of people by sex and ethnic group and 95 percent confidence intervals for all estimates. Generalised linear models were used for analysis of potentially significant predictors of outcomes and controlled for age, sex and ethnic group.

Table A-1: Number of participants who answered the questions

	Māori		Non-Māori	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Can you count on anyone to provide you with emotional support? (talking over problems or helping you make a difficult decision)	100	153	179	199
In the last year who has been most helpful in providing you with emotional support?	90	132	139	165
Could you have used more emotional support than you received? (unmet need)	99	149	176	195
Does it seem that your family and friends (i.e. people who are important to you) understand you?	99	152	179	197
How satisfied are you with the kinds of relationships you have with your family?	98	152	180	198
How satisfied are you with the kinds of relationships you have with your friends?	98	152	179	197

Table A-2: Emotional support and satisfaction with support for men

	Men					
	Māori			Non-Māori		
	n	(%)	(95% CI)	n	(%)	(95% CI)
Living arrangement						
Alone	28	(26)	(18 - 36)	60	(33)	(26 - 40)
Lives with spouse only	40	(38)	(29 - 48)	106	(58)	(51 - 65)
Other	38	(36)	(27 - 46)	16	(9)	(5 - 14)
Other, including spouse	10	(9)	(5 - 17)	10	(5)	(3 - 9)
Other, without spouse	28	(26)	(18 - 36)	6	(3)	(1 - 7)
Other, residential care	1	(1)	(0 - 5)	8	(4)	(2 - 8)
Someone to provide emotional support						
No	5	(5)	(2 - 11)	6	(3)	(1 - 7)
Yes	81	(81)	(72 - 88)	140	(78)	(71 - 84)
I don't need help	14	(14)	(8 - 22)	33	(18)	(13 - 25)
Provided the most help in the past 12 months						
Spouse	37	(41)	(31 - 52)	78	(56)	(47 - 65)
Daughter	26	(29)	(20 - 39)	22	(16)	(10 - 23)
Son	11	(12)	(6 - 21)	14	(10)	(6 - 16)
Other relative	7	(8)	(3 - 15)	4	(3)	(1 - 7)
Other	9	(10)	(5 - 18)	21	(15)	(10 - 22)
Unmet need	17	(17)	(10 - 26)	6	(3)	(1 - 7)

Understanding from family and friends						
None/hardly ever	3	(3)	(1 - 9)	3	(2)	(0 - 5)
Some of time	7	(7)	(3 - 14)	13	(7)	(4 - 12)
Most of the time	60	(61)	(50 - 70)	82	(46)	(38 - 53)
All of time	29	(29)	(21 - 39)	81	(45)	(38 - 53)
Satisfaction with the kinds of relationships with family						
Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied	4	(4)	(1 - 10)	7	(4)	(2 - 8)
Satisfied most of the time	56	(57)	(47 - 67)	57	(32)	(25 - 39)
Satisfied all of the time	38	(39)	(29 - 49)	116	(64)	(57 - 71)
Satisfaction with the kinds of relationships with family						
Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied	1	(1)	(0 - 6)	2	(1)	(0 - 4)
Satisfied most of the time	69	(70)	(60 - 79)	67	(37)	(30 - 45)
Satisfied all of the time	28	(29)	(20 - 39)	110	(61)	(54 - 69)

Table A-3: Emotional support and satisfaction with support for women

	Women					
	Māori			Non-Māori		
	n	(%)	(95% CI)	n	(%)	(95% CI)
Living arrangement						
Alone	81	(51)	(43 - 59)	131	(65)	(58 - 72)
Lives with spouse only	30	(19)	(13 - 26)	48	(24)	(18 - 30)
Other	48	(30)	(23 - 38)	22	(11)	(7 - 16)
Other, including spouse	8	(5)	(2 - 10)	5	(2)	(1 - 5)
Other, without spouse	40	(25)	(19 - 32)	17	(8)	(5 - 12)
Other, residential care	1	(1)	(0 - 3)	12	(6)	(3 - 10)
Someone to provide emotional support						
No	9	(6)	(3 - 11)	13	(7)	(4 - 11)
Yes	125	(82)	(75 - 87)	171	(86)	(80 - 90)
I don't need help	19	(12)	(8 - 19)	15	(8)	(4 - 12)
Provided the most help in the past 12 months						
Spouse	17	(13)	(8 - 20)	29	(18)	(12 - 24)
Daughter	55	(42)	(33 - 51)	66	(40)	(32 - 48)
Son	22	(17)	(11 - 24)	24	(15)	(10 - 21)
Other relative	19	(14)	(9 - 22)	10	(6)	(3 - 11)
Other	19	(14)	(9 - 22)	36	(22)	(16 - 29)
Unmet need	22	(15)	(9 - 21)	14	(7)	(4 - 12)
Understanding from family and friends						
None/hardly ever	3	(2)	(0 - 6)	1	(1)	(0 - 3)
Some of time	14	(9)	(5 - 15)	18	(9)	(6 - 14)
Most of the time	83	(55)	(46 - 63)	109	(55)	(48 - 62)
All of time	52	(34)	(27 - 42)	69	(35)	(28 - 42)

Satisfaction with the kinds of relationships with family						
Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied	4	(3)	(1 - 7)	10	(5)	(2 - 9)
Satisfied most of the time	82	(54)	(46 - 62)	67	(34)	(27 - 41)
Satisfied all of the time	66	(43)	(35 - 52)	121	(61)	(54 - 68)
Satisfaction with the kinds of relationships with friends						
Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied	3	(2)	(0 - 6)	1	(1)	(0 - 3)
Satisfied most of the time	103	(68)	(60 - 75)	73	(37)	(30 - 44)
Satisfied all of the time	46	(30)	(23 - 38)	123	(62)	(55 - 69)

Table A-4: Living arrangement : Alone

Group of interest	Reference group	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)	Significant (*)	Adjustment variables
Men	Women	0.30 (0.21, 0.41)	*	Age
Māori	Non-Māori	0.80 (0.54, 1.19)	ns	Age, sex
Māori men	Non-Māori men	1.25 (0.65, 2.41)	ns	Age
Māori women	Non-Māori women	0.63 (0.38, 1.03)	ns	Age
Most deprived areas	Least deprived areas	1.33 (0.85, 2.08)	ns	Age, sex, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - men	Least deprived areas - men	1.24 (0.62, 2.48)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - women	Least deprived areas - women	1.41 (0.79, 2.50)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - Māori	Most deprived areas - non-Māori	0.88 (0.49, 1.60)	ns	Age, sex

*Significant odds ratio for comparison of group of interest to the reference group. ns = no significant difference

Table A-5: Has someone to provide emotional support

Group of interest	Reference group	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)	Significant (*)	Adjustment variables
Men	Women	0.72 (0.48 - 1.08)	ns	Age
Māori	Non-Māori	1.03 (0.61 - 1.73)	ns	Age, sex
Māori men	Non-Māori men	1.13 (0.52 - 2.47)	ns	Age
Māori women	Non-Māori women	0.92 (0.45 - 1.86)	ns	Age
Most deprived areas	Least deprived areas	0.99 (0.57 - 1.74)	ns	Age, sex, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - men	Least deprived areas - men	1.41 (0.66 - 3.02)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - women	Least deprived areas - women	0.64 (0.27 - 1.52)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - Māori	Most deprived areas - non-Māori	0.67 (0.32 - 1.41)	ns	Age, sex
Lives alone	Does not live alone	0.54 (0.35 - 0.84)	*	Age, sex, ethnic group
Lives alone - men	Does not live alone - men	0.66 (0.35 - 1.22)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Lives alone - women	Does not live alone - women	0.44 (0.23 - 0.84)	*	Age, ethnic group

*Significant odds ratio for comparison of group of interest to the reference group. ns = no significant difference

Table A-6: Has an unmet need for emotional support

Group of interest	Reference group	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI)	Significant (*)	Adjustment variables
Men	Women	0.78 (0.45 - 1.35)	ns	Age
Māori	Non-Māori	2.74 (1.4 - 5.36)	*	Age, sex
Māori men	Non-Māori men	2.38 (0.57 - 9.96)	ns	Age
Māori women	Non-Māori women	2.42 (1.12 - 5.26)	*	Age
Most deprived areas	Least deprived areas	1.32 (0.63 - 2.76)	ns	Age, sex, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - men	Least deprived areas - men	2.57 (0.53 - 12.42)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - women	Least deprived areas - women	0.99 (0.42 - 2.35)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - Māori	Most deprived areas - non-Māori	2.72 (1.02 - 7.26)	*	Age, sex
Lives alone	Does not live alone	0.99 (0.56 - 1.77)	ns	Age, sex, ethnic group
Lives alone - men	Does not live alone - men	0.90 (0.30 - 2.66)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Lives alone - women	Does not live alone - women	1.10 (0.54 - 2.24)	ns	Age, ethnic group

*Significant odds ratio for comparison of group of interest to the reference group. ns = no significant difference

Table A-7 Satisfied with relationship with family all or most of the time

Group of interest	Reference group	Adjusted Odds Ratio (95% CI) †	Significant (*)	Adjustment variables
Men	Women	1.01 (0.45 - 2.26)	ns	Age
Māori	Non-Māori	1.17 (0.45 - 3.03)	ns	Age, sex
Māori men	Non-Māori men	0.76 (0.18 - 3.26)	ns	Age
Māori women	Non-Māori women	1.60 (0.45 - 5.65)	ns	Age
Most deprived areas	Least deprived areas	0.62 (0.21 - 1.80)	ns	Age, sex, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - men	Least deprived areas - men	---†	**	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - women	Least deprived areas - women	1.27 (0.38 - 4.3)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Most deprived areas - Māori	Most deprived areas - non-Māori	0.68 (0.20 - 2.36)	ns	Age, sex
Lives alone	Does not live alone	1.19 (0.51 - 2.78)	ns	Age, sex, ethnic group
Lives alone - men	Does not live alone - men	2.18 (0.44 - 10.67)	ns	Age, ethnic group
Lives alone - women	Does not live alone - women	0.88 (0.28 - 2.72)	ns	Age, ethnic group

Note: †Satisfied all of the time/most of the time vs. somewhat dissatisfied / very dissatisfied / extremely dissatisfied

†Inestimable as no men in deciles 1-4 reported they were dissatisfied with their relationship with their family

*Significant odds ratio for comparison of group of interest to the reference group. ns = no significant difference

**No Men in deciles 1-4 were dissatisfied

LiLACS NZ background and sample

LiLACS NZ is a programme of research that is based on a longitudinal cohort study of New Zealanders in advanced age. In 2010, LiLACS NZ invited all Māori aged 80-90 years and all non-Māori aged 85 years within the Bay of Plenty and Lakes District Health Board regions (excluding Taupo area) to undertake a detailed health interview and physical assessment, and to give a blood sample. Those who agreed were interviewed between March 2010 and April 2011, defined as the *2010 first wave*. These participants were then followed up annually at the same time of year, which produced the 2011 second wave and in 2012 the third wave. Table A-8 shows the age, sex, ethnic group, living arrangements and socioeconomic deprivation area of the LiLACS NZ participants in the first wave.

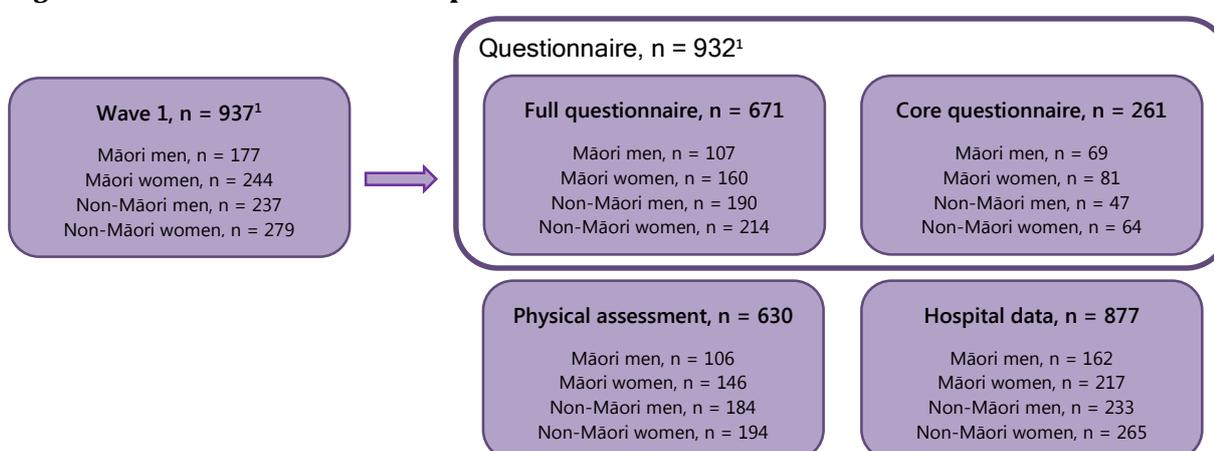
Table A-8: Demographic summary of LiLACS NZ participants

	Māori						Non-Māori					
	Men		Women		Total		Men		Women		Total	
Age - Mean (SD)	82.5	(2.8)	82.8	(2.7)	82.7	(2.8)	84.6	(0.5)	84.6	(0.5)	84.6	(0.5)
Living - n (%)												
Alone	29	(27%)	81	(51%)	110	(41%)	61	(32%)	134	(63%)	195	(48%)
Spouse only	40	(37%)	30	(19%)	70	(26%)	106	(56%)	48	(22%)	154	(38%)
Other	38	(36%)	49	(31%)	87	(33%)	23	(12%)	32	(15%)	55	(14%)
Deprivation - n (%)												
Decile 1-4 (Low)	19	(11%)	41	(17%)	60	(14%)	60	(25%)	69	(25%)	129	(25%)
Decile 5-7 (Med)	53	(30%)	56	(23%)	109	(26%)	91	(38%)	117	(42%)	208	(40%)
Decile 8-10 (High)	104	(59%)	147	(60%)	251	(60%)	86	(36%)	93	(33%)	179	(35%)

Source: LiLACS NZ demographic data

During their interview, all participants completed a *core* questionnaire of three pages about health and function. The majority of participants also completed the full questionnaire during their interview where, in addition to the core questions, they were asked more detailed questions about social, environmental, cultural, and health status. The social relationships and emotional support questions were part of the full questionnaire.

Figure A-1: LiLACS NZ recruitment process



Note 1: n = 4 recruits withdrew before first interview; n = 1 questionnaire lost, no data