

Community resilience

Withstanding adversity and growing in response

COVID-19 has emphasised the crucial role that local communities, iwi, hapū and non-government service providers play in supporting people during periods of significant adversity. The Ministry of Social Development wanted to know what could work to support and strengthen community resilience in Aotearoa New Zealand in the next three to five years. Our literature review focuses on **what matters** for community resilience, and **what works**. It gives us important evidence highlighting that communities who are adaptable, flexible, strong and well-resourced are resilient communities.



Why did we do that?

We commissioned the literature review to inform COVID-19 response decision makers and government leaders throughout Aotearoa New Zealand – locally, in regions and in Wellington – during a time of significant and rapid challenge and change.

How did we do it?

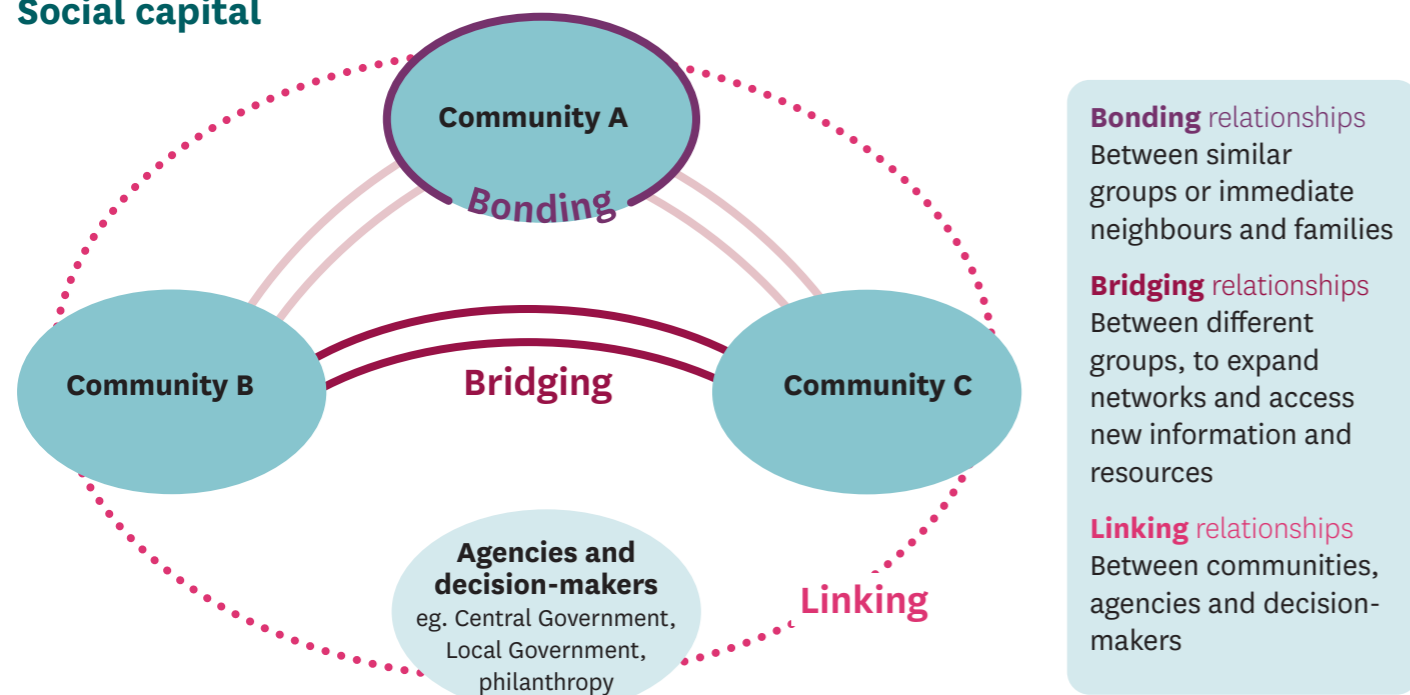
The scope of the review was workshopped with Chief Science Advisors. It was time-limited, drawing on mostly disaster-focused literature from Aotearoa and around the world, particularly peer-reviewed, Indigenous, Māori and under-served communities' experiences.

What matters for community resilience?

The main focus should be building a foundation of social capital between individuals and groups, by nurturing relationships, connections and local participation.

The most resilient communities have a foundation mix of three forms of **social capital** and are used to working together in these ways.

Social capital



What works for community resilience?

Many initiatives have been used to build community resilience however, in general, few currently offer strong evidence of results. The literature and research show what counts is the strength of social and cultural connections and how these are formed. Successful initiatives that increase social connection tend to adopt three principles:

1. Community connections and engagement

Give people opportunities to connect and be active, supporting them to understand their challenges and work out how to meet them.

2. Knowing what works and how to do it







Engaged communities that trust their own abilities to make a difference are more able and likely to drive change. They also tend to trust others, like government, to play their role.

3. Enabling and empowering support

Communities, especially if they've experienced inequities and discrimination, need resources and support that's tailored for them specifically and led out locally.

How can Government better support communities?

Responses to COVID-19 showed a good starting point is understanding the cultural context of different communities and engaging with them. A generic approach risks missing groups of people or reinforcing existing inequities or discrimination.

-  Understand community culture and dynamics
-  Enable equity in community resilience efforts
-  Support community-led approaches
-  Support the connections that communities have with government
-  Consider the psychosocial context of recovery
-  Support monitoring and evaluation

What can local and central government do to increase social capital?

- Provide the conditions for community resilience to thrive
- Engage locally and encourage **bonding, bridging, linking**
- Recognise and give practical effect to **Te Tiriti o Waitangi** principles (partnership, participation, active protection and redress)