

8 Social Studies Survey

Students' attitudes, interests and liking for a subject have a strong bearing on their achievement. The Social Studies Survey sought information from students about their curriculum preferences and perceptions of emphases in their school social studies programmes. The questions were the same for year 4 and year 8 students. The survey was administered to the students in an independent session (four students working individually on tasks, supported by a teacher). The questions usually were read to year 4 students, and also to individual year 8 students who requested this help. Writing help was available if requested.

The survey included 21 items which asked students to record a rating response by circling their choice, and two items which invited students to write comments. The results of the latter two items are not reported here.

The students were first asked to select their three favourite school subjects from a list of 14 subjects. The results are shown below, together with the results from the surveys in 2001 and 1997.

Dance and drama were introduced into the survey from 2003, with art relabelled visual art. This affected the apparent popularity of (visual) art. Social Studies was the twelfth most popular option for year 4 students and eleventh equal for year 8 students. Its popularity declined markedly at year 8 level between 1997 and 2005, but this may in part be due to the addition of dance and drama as new options in the survey. Another consideration is that social studies is often embedded in theme work and not easily identified as "social studies", but this factor probably cannot account for the decline across time at year 8 level.

Responses to the 21 rating items are presented on pages 49–50, in separate tables for year 4 and year 8 students. The first five items in each table have comparative results from both 2001 and 1997, while the remaining 16 items have comparative results only from 2001.

On question 2 (How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?), 19 percent fewer year 4 students chose the most positive rating in 2005 than in 1997. This decline apparently occurred earlier, between 1997 and 2001. The results for question 4 indicate that less than 50 percent of year 4 students thought that their class did really good things in social studies "heaps" or "quite a lot". Almost three quarters of year 4 students were very keen to learn

PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS RATING SUBJECTS AMONG THEIR THREE FAVOURITES

Subject:	year 4		year 8	
	2005 ('01) ['97]		2005 ('01) ['97]	
physical education/sport	53 (49) [47]		68 (62) [57]	
mathematics	48 (42) [42]		28 (26) [35]	
visual art	31 (64) [68]		23 (52) [43]	
reading	28 (33) [30]		18 (18) [16]	
writing	26 (31) [19]		16 (13) [13]	
music	24 (27) [27]		25 (22) [25]	
science	20 (20) [22]		19 (25) [23]	
drama	14		21	
dance	13		13	
technology	11 (9) [10]		44 (46) [30]	
Māori	11 (8) [9]		7 (6) [11]	
social studies	5 (4) [5]		7 (13) [16]	
speaking	4 (3) [4]		4 (8) [9]	
health	3 (1) [3]		3 (4) [3]	

about living in the future (question 13), but 29 percent said that they "never" learned about this in social studies at school (question 21). Nevertheless, 80 percent of year 4 students were positive about doing social studies at school (question 1) and about learning or doing more social studies as they got older (question 5).

The results for year 8 students are somewhat more concerning. The percentage of year 8 students who are highly positive about doing social studies at school (question 1) has

dropped from 19 percent in 1997 to 11 percent in 2005, although the percentage that is at least mildly positive has stayed almost constant at 71 to 72 percent. On question 2, *How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?*, 17 percent fewer year 8 students chose the most positive rating in 2005 than in 1997. Like their year 4 counterparts, two thirds of year 8 students were very keen to learn about living in the future (question 13), but 39 percent said that they "never" learned about this in social studies at school.



YEAR 4 : SOCIAL STUDIES SURVEY 2005 (2001) [1997]



1. How much do you like doing social studies at school?

40 (36) [41]

40 (42) [38]

12 (15) [12]

8 (7) [9]

heaps

quite a lot

some

very little

2. How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?

31 (30) [50]

38 (38) [35]

25 (28) [12]

6 (4) [3]

more

about the same

less

3. Would you like to do more, the same or less social studies at school?

36 (34) [36]

45 (48) [46]

19 (18) [18]

heaps

quite a lot

sometimes

never

4. How often does your class do really good things in social studies?

17 (15) [18]

30 (27) [30]

47 (53) [48]

6 (5) [4]



5. How do you feel about learning or doing more social studies as you get older?

53 (46) [51]

27 (31) [27]

11 (15) [12]

9 (8) [10]

How much do you like learning about these things in social studies?



6. The way people work together and do things in groups.

56 (51)

31 (34)

10 (11)

3 (4)

7. Other places in the world, and how people live there.

48 (44)

37 (40)

10 (11)

5 (5)

8. Other places in New Zealand, and how people live there.

61 (56)

27 (31)

9 (11)

3 (2)

9. The work people do and how they make a living.

46 (47)

35 (33)

13 (14)

6 (6)

10. Why people have different ideas.

51 (51)

33 (30)

11 (13)

5 (6)

11. What is happening now – in New Zealand and other countries.

49 (43)

30 (27)

13 (16)

8 (14)

12. How people lived in the olden days.

51 (43)

24 (26)

13 (17)

12 (14)

13. Living in the future.

74 (73)

13 (15)

8 (7)

5 (5)

How often do you learn about these things in social studies at school?

heaps

quite a lot

sometimes

never

14. The way people work together and do things in groups.

24 (25)

36 (28)

36 (42)

4 (5)

15. Other places in the world, and how people live there.

24 (22)

33 (32)

37 (39)

6 (7)

16. Other places in New Zealand, and how people live there.

28 (25)

28 (28)

37 (39)

7 (8)

17. The work people do and how they make a living.

25 (22)

28 (29)

36 (38)

11 (11)

18. Why people have different ideas.

29 (24)

30 (34)

29 (29)

12 (13)

19. What is happening now – in New Zealand and other countries.

32 (31)

30 (30)

30 (31)

8 (8)

20. How people lived in the olden days.

25 (21)

24 (29)

36 (34)

15 (16)

21. Living in the future.

31 (31)

15 (15)

25 (30)

29 (24)

YEAR 8 : SOCIAL STUDIES SURVEY 2005 (2001) [1997]



1. How much do you like doing social studies at school?

11 (14) [19]

61 (54) [52]

21 (25) [23]

7 (7) [6]

heaps

quite a lot

some

very little

2. How much do you think you learn in social studies at school?

12 (16) [29]

49 (53) [54]

35 (28) [14]

4 (3) [3]

more

about the same

less

3. Would you like to do more, the same or less in social studies at school?

12 (14) [16]

68 (63) [67]

20 (23) [17]

heaps

quite a lot

sometimes

never

4. How often does your class do really good things in social studies?

4 (7) [5]

29 (30) [30]

61 (54) [59]

6 (9) [6]



5. How do you feel about learning or doing more social studies as you get older?

19 (22) [26]

55 (47) [50]

20 (23) [19]

6 (8) [5]

How much do you like learning about these things in social studies?



6. The way people work together and do things in groups.

25 (29)

58 (49)

15 (17)

2 (5)

7. Other places in the world, and how people live there.

41 (36)

45 (45)

11 (16)

3 (3)

8. Other places in New Zealand, and how people live there.

29 (34)

47 (43)

21 (19)

3 (4)

9. The work people do and how they make a living.

20 (23)

53 (43)

23 (27)

4 (7)

10. Why people have different ideas.

25 (26)

44 (39)

24 (28)

7 (7)

11. What is happening now – in New Zealand and other countries.

41 (43)

41 (35)

14 (15)

4 (7)

12. How people lived in the olden days.

41 (35)

30 (33)

18 (21)

11 (11)

13. Living in the future.

66 (67)

23 (23)

8 (6)

3 (4)

How often do you learn about these things in social studies at school?

heaps

quite a lot

sometimes

never

14. The way people work together and do things in groups.

9 (10)

30 (34)

55 (47)

6 (9)

15. Other places in the world, and how people live there.

12 (15)

46 (41)

39 (40)

3 (4)

16. Other places in New Zealand, and how people live there.

13 (14)

36 (33)

44 (45)

7 (8)

17. The work people do and how they make a living.

8 (8)

26 (26)

53 (53)

13 (13)

18. Why people have different ideas.

8 (10)

25 (25)

48 (45)

19 (20)

19. What is happening now – in New Zealand and other countries.

20 (23)

39 (42)

37 (31)

4 (4)

20. How people lived in the olden days.

11 (10)

28 (27)

44 (48)

17 (15)

21. Living in the future.

10 (12)

13 (14)

38 (41)

39 (33)