Profiling Societal Disengagement in the New Zealand Population

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Despite growing concerns about declining social cohesion, no systematic analyses have assessed how societal disengagement manifests in New Zealand. The present study addresses this oversight by examining societal disengagement in a large, nationwide random sample of New Zealand adults collected in 2021/2022 (N = 34,131). Using latent profile analysis, we identified seven profiles in the population that differed on seven indicators of disengagement: feeling wronged, powerless, meaningless, disconnected from community, financially deprived and pessimistic, and wary of authority. Two enfranchised profiles captured most of the sample (68.9%), suggesting most people are generally connected to society. However, we identified a small Anomic profile (6.4%) in which members experienced alienation and disengagement across indicators. We also identified four additional profiles reflecting combinations of enfranchisement and disengagement. The seven profiles differed across demographic characteristics and reflect qualitative distinctions between the socially enfranchised and disengaged in New Zealand.

Keywords: *Latent profile analysis, New Zealand, Societal Disengagement, Social cohesion*

INTRODUCTION

> *Man cannot become attached to higher aims and submit to a rule if he sees nothing above him to which he belongs. To free him from all social pressure is to abandon him to himself and demoralize him.*
>
> – Emile Durkheim (1897/1987, p. 389)

Globally, there is concern about increasing societal disengagement—a sense of detachment and disillusionment among segments of society (Putnam, 2000; Zhao & Cao, 2010). For example, social connectedness has declined in both Western (Borkowska & Laurence, 2021; Kannan & Veazie, 2023; O'Donnell, 2023) and non-Western countries (Dragolov et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2024), with a recent poll suggesting that nearly one in four people worldwide feel very or fairly lonely (Gallup Organisation, 2023). Similar trends have emerged for trust in the government (United Nations, 2021; World Health Organisation, 2023) and media (Newman et al., 2023), suggesting disillusionment with public institutions. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated these effects; an analysis of 26 countries suggests that nearly twice as many citizens were "weak" (versus "solid") in their sense of social cohesion during the pandemic (IPSOS, 2020). More broadly, the global rise in economic inequality (Atkinson et al., 2011), populism, and political instability (Middleton, 2023) have contributed to declines in social cohesion.

These declines in social cohesion are broadly described by Durkheim's (1893, 1897/1987) theory of anomie, which argues that societal disengagement arises from the breakdown of individuals' or groups' connection to societal norms and values. Specifically, the disintegration of particular social systems—whether a product of rapid social change or long-lasting sociopolitical crises—fosters the perception that society is failing and that its leaders cannot be trusted (see Teymoori et al., 2017). As noted in the epigraph, the resulting absence of social pressure and norms individualizes and *demoralizes* the populace. This, in turn, leads individuals to disengage from society and focus on their personal (rather than collective) interests. In sum, societal crises foster individualism, distrust, and social disengagement among the general population.

In New Zealand, several socioeconomic and political crises have renewed interest in social cohesion and societal disengagement, including the March 15th 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch (see Ministry of Social Development, 2022) and the COVID-19 pandemic (Gluckman & Bardsley, 2020; Sibley et al., 2020). More broadly, concerns about dissatisfaction with the media (Peacock, 2021), government (Elliott, 2022), rising crime rates (Ministry of Justice, 2023; World Bank, 2023), and polarisation (Gluckman et al., 2023) highlight the need to understand social cohesion (or lack thereof) in New Zealand. There are, however, several challenges to defining and measuring social cohesion, given the need to survey the broader population on a range of socioeconomic, political, and well-being indicators (see Ministry of Social Development, 2022; Scanlon Foundation, 2024). Accordingly, few studies systematically analyse social cohesion and societal disengagement, and little is known of *who* feels disengaged from New Zealand society. Even less is known about the potential empirical profiles that may reflect different types, or patterns, of societal disengagement. This is concerning because interventions to *reduce* societal disengagement in the population may differ between subgroups of the population that feel disengaged in distinct ways.

The present study explores the prevalence of societal disengagement in New Zealand using data from the New Zealand Values and Attitudes Study (NZAVS), a large ongoing panel study of New Zealand adults. Critically, we

use Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) to identify whether different subgroups of the population differ in their scores on different societal disengagement indicators. In doing so, we provide base-rate information on societal disengagement in the population. After identifying these distinct profiles, we explore the demographic correlates of profile membership, allowing us to determine for *whom* indicators of societal disengagement are most prevalent. First, we provide a brief overview of prior work measuring social cohesion and disengagement, as well as our focal constructs for studying societal disengagement in New Zealand. We then provide a brief overview of the benefits of LPA before outlining our hypotheses.

Measuring Social Cohesion and Disengagement in New Zealand

Initial measurements of social cohesion in New Zealand emerged in response to the ongoing challenges of rising immigration for both migrants and host communities (see Peace et al., 2005). In this context, social cohesion is broadly defined by a "climate of collaboration" whereby migrants and their families feel a sense of belonging, inclusion, and social participation but feel recognised and legitimised for their cultural diversity by institutions and society (Peace et al., 2005, pg 14). These indicators of social cohesion were later developed for host communities *alongside* migrants (Spoonley & Peace, 2007). Despite these advances, formal, clearly operationalized and reliable measures of people's experiences of social cohesion are lacking. This is in part because of the complexity of measuring social cohesion and critiques of the focus on creating a "one New Zealand" identity (for discussion, see Peace & Spoonley, 2019).

Although there are challenges to its measurement, the March 15, 2019 terrorist attack in Christchurch re-ignited the need to understand and strengthen social cohesion in New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2022). To this end, the Ministry of Social Development developed a social cohesion measurement framework to define and measure social cohesion in New Zealand. Building on prior definitions of social cohesion, the framework defines social cohesion by whether people and communities feel: (a) a sense of belonging and connection with society, (b) able and willing to participate, (c) economically and socially included, (d) recognised for who they are and respect others, and (e) trusting of others and institutions. These indicators allow for social cohesion measurement across the broader New Zealand population and, accordingly, can identify segments of society who are disenfranchised or disengaged.

While these indicators are situated within the New Zealand context, it is important to consider how these measures align with international social cohesion frameworks. Table 1 provides an overview of recent definitions and indicators of social cohesion. Although there are some regional and contextual differences across social cohesion frameworks, these differences reflect distinctions in the emphasis on (rather than inclusion of) a given indicator. For example, all frameworks argue for the need for positive social relations, but some emphasise helpfulness, respect and interpersonal processes (e.g., Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018; OECD, 2011), while others focus on intergroup attitudes (e.g., SeeD, 2015; UNDP, 2020). Nonetheless, almost all frameworks incorporate individuals' sense of belonging, community and social connectedness, trust in people and institutions, and ability to meaningfully participate in society. Most frameworks also emphasise the role of equality, financial well-being and security, and social mobility, highlighting the need to consider how people perceive their societal position when measuring social cohesion. Taken together, these measures largely mirror those used in New Zealand and help identify important markers of social cohesion (or lack thereof) at the individual-level of analysis.

In the current study, we use New Zealand's social cohesion measurement framework (Ministry of Social Development, 2022) and the commonalities across international measures to guide our measurement of societal *disengagement*. Indeed, while social cohesion broadly reflects the extent to which individuals feel a sense of belonging, connection, trust, and civic participation (see Table 1), societal disengagement refers to the extent to which people feel *dis*connected, marginalised, and *dis*trusting or wary of institutions and authority (Bornand & Klein, 2022; Ionescu et al., 2023; Teymoori et al., 2016). Accordingly, indicators of societal disengagement reflect the *inverse* of social cohesion measures. Consistent with this definition, we use seven purposeful indicators of societal disengagement that assess whether people feel (a) wronged, (b) powerless, (c) meaningless, (d) disconnected from society, (e) deprived, (f) financially pessimistic, and (g) wary of authorities. Below, we provide an overview of each indicator and its relation to societal disengagement and social cohesion.

Feeling Wronged

Individuals feel wronged when they perceive *unjust* treatment that compromises their rights or well-being. This perception can lead to *vengeful* rumination—repetitive negative thoughts characterised by resentment and a desire for retribution (rather than forgiveness; Berry et al., 2005). The consistent revisiting of past "wrongs" individuals have suffered correlates positively with depression and anxiety (Barcaccia et al., 2022; Ysseldyk et al., 2007) and intensifies negative thoughts and feelings of helplessness (Whisman et al., 2020). Accordingly, vengeful rumination is closely tied to societal disengagement, particularly among young people who are more susceptible to rumination (Sloan et al., 2021; Sütterlin et al., 2012). Notably, our vengeful rumination indicator measures the perception of *mistreatment*, a pivotal contributor to dissatisfaction with societal norms and helplessness (Borders, 2020) and, thus, societal disengagement (Singh et al., 2022).

Powerlessness

Powerlessness, our second indicator, signifies the belief that others hold excessive power over one's life. This lack of control is strongly tied to disengagement, hindering individuals from finding their societal roles and eroding their sense of belonging, fulfilment, and self-efficacy (Brown et al., 2022; Funk & Wise, 1989; Thomas et al., 2016). Indeed, societal crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, increase feelings of powerlessness and lack of control, which, in turn, correlate with reduced trust in institutions and greater conspiracy beliefs (Šrol et al., 2021). However, perceived *control* protects against psychological distress and disengagement in the face of adversity, emphasising its role in resilience (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2021; Zhao & Cao, 2010; Zheng et al., 2020)

Table 1. Example definitions and indicators of social cohesion.

Source	Context	Definition	Example indicator(s)	
Jenson (1998); Bernard (1999)	Canada	Social cohesion is characterised by a sense of commitment, and desire of capacity to live in some harmony.	• Belonging • Inclusion • Civic participation	• Recognition • Legitimacy • Equality
Cantle (2001, 2005)	United Kingdom	Social cohesion is characterised by mutual trust, social inclusion, and the absence of divisions based on social class or economic factors.	• Belonging • Social capital • Civic participation	• Migrant and host community resources • Equality
Peace et al. (2005); Spoonley and Peace (2007)	New Zealand	Social cohesion is defined by a climate of collaboration whereby migrants and host communities feel a sense of belonging, inclusion, and social participation.	• Belonging • Inclusion • Civic participation • Recognition	• Migrant and host community resources • Equality • Trust in people and institutions
OECD (2011)	Global	Social cohesion is a broad concept covering domains of trust, belonging, activate participation, trust, inequality, exclusion and social mobility. Social cohesion can be broadly captured through three core lenses, using both objective and subjective measures: 1. Social inclusion 2. Social capital 3. Social mobility	• Equality • Social capital • Civic participation	• Well-being • Life satisfaction • Trust in others
Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (2015)	Global	Social cohesion is defined as harmonious coexistence between individuals within and across groups (horizontal cohesion) and coexistence with institutions (vertical cohesion).	• Civic participation • Sense of security • Socioeconomic security	• Forgiveness • Stereotyping and warmth towards outgroups • Trust in others and institutions
Langer et al. (2017)	Africa	Social cohesion is a matter of how individuals *perceive* others and institutions and is defined by perceptions of three components: 1. Inequality 2. Trust 3. Identities	• Horizonal (group) inequalities • Vertical (individual) inequalities	• National and ethnic identity • Trust in others and institutions

Table 1 (Cont'd). Example definitions and indicators of social cohesion.

Source	Context	Definition	Example indicator(s)	
Bertelsmann Stiftung (2018)	Europe, Asia, and Pacific	Socially cohesive societies are characterised by three core components: 4. Resilient social relationships 5. Societal connectedness 6. The focus on the common good	• National identity • Social networks • Perceptions of societal fairness • Civic participation	• Acceptance of diversity • Respect for social rules • Solidarity and helpfulness • Trust in others and institutions
United Nations Development Programme (2020)	Global	Social cohesion is defined as the extent of trust in government and within society and the willingness to participate collectively toward a shared vision of sustainable peace and common development goals	• Belonging • Socioeconomic and political inclusion • Trust in people and institutions • Sense of security	• Stereotyping and warmth towards outgroups • Social distance and threat • Forgiveness • Intergroup contact
Leininger et al. (2021)	Africa	Social cohesion refers to the vertical and horizontal relations between members of society and the state, characterised by three core components: 4. Trust 5. Cooperation for the common good 6. Inclusive identity	• Belonging • Civic participation • Ethnic identity	• National identity • Trust in people and institutions
Ministry of Social Development (2022)	New Zealand	Social cohesion is defined by whether people and communities feel a sense of belonging and connection, an ability and willingness to participate, economically and socially included, recognised for who they are and respect others, and trusting of people and institutions.	• Belonging • Social networks • Civic participation • Well-being	• Equality • Trust in others and institutions • Sense of purpose • Financial well-being
Markus and Dharmalingam (2007); O'Donnell (2023)	Australia	Socially cohesive societies are characterised by five core components: 6. Identity and belonging 7. Social justice and equity 8. Civic participation 9. Acceptance and legitimacy 10. Worth	• Well-being • National identity • Perceptions of societal fairness • Civic participation	• Attitudes towards minorities and migrants • Life satisfaction • Future expectations • Trust in others and institutions

and social cohesion (SeeD, 2015). Thus, people's perceptions of power and control are essential for understanding societal disengagement.

Meaninglessness

Meaninglessness reflects a belief that one's life lacks a clear and significant purpose, often resulting in feelings of emptiness and disconnection (Franke & Elliott, 2021). This, in turn, contributes to disengagement (Levina et al., 2018), as individuals who lack meaning feel disconnected from others, society, and themselves (see Seeman, 1991). This disconnection from meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging can exacerbate disillusionment with societal norms and institutions. Conversely, establishing meaningful connections with society and social groups fosters a sense of purpose and belonging, reducing vulnerability to anomie (O'Donnell et al., 2014). Engaging in activities that benefit others and facilitate relationships promotes purpose and cooperation, decreasing the risk of social disconnection or dissatisfaction (Datta et al., 2015; Healy, 2019) and mitigating the risk of adverse mental health (Ruiz et al., 2019). Thus, evaluating individuals' perceived meaninglessness offers valuable insights into their susceptibility to societal disengagement.

Disconnection from Community

Disconnection from community stems from a lack of meaningful relationships and a profound detachment from the community (Iwegbu & Okoli, 2023). Building connections with family, friends, and the community fosters belonging, support, and shared identity (Allan, 2021; Allen et al., 2021), protecting against psychological distress and disengagement. However, the absence of social integration leads to disconnection from others and social groups, weakening social cohesion (Allan, 2021). This disconnection has significant implications for individual and collective well-being, as it increases the risk of societal disengagement by fostering loneliness, isolation, and a perceived lack of external support (Klussman et al., 2020; Rahmani et al., 2022). This may be especially pressing in New Zealand; the percentage of adults with high levels of psychological distress increased from 4.6% in 2011 to 11.2% in 2022, with especially high rates of psychological distress among young people, Māori and Pacific adults, and adults living in socioeconomically deprived areas (Ministry of Health, 2023). Loneliness rates also rose by nearly 3% between 2014 and 2018 (Loneliness New Zealand, 2018), with recent research suggesting a high prevalence of loneliness among the general population (Hawkins-Elder et al., 2018). These adverse mental health trends may be indicative of disconnection and disengagement among vulnerable populations.

Deprivation

Growing concerns about financial security and living costs in New Zealand may also indicate societal disengagement. For example, the cost of living in New Zealand increased by 7.7 per cent from March 2022 to March 2023 (Statistics New Zealand, 2023), with many New Zealanders struggling to pay for essential housing and necessities (Rangahau Aotearoa, 2023). One way to measure perceptions of these economic conditions is by examining feelings of relative deprivation—the belief that one is personally economically disadvantaged compared to similar individuals in their environment (Smith et al., 2012; Walker & Smith, 2002). Perceptions of relative deprivation lead to feelings of frustration, dissatisfaction, and resentment (Osborne et al., 2012; Smith & Huo, 2014), which has adverse effects on one's health and well-being, as well as social cohesion and democracy (Jay et al., 2019; Osborne et al., 2022). Notably, while most of the population report generally *low* levels of relative deprivation (Lilly et al., 2023), recent research suggests that economic crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can exacerbate financial insecurity (Fletcher et al., 2022) and ensuing feelings of deprivation (Lilly et al., 2024). Accordingly, understanding *who* feels deprived, and how this manifests in the general population, may be important to understanding societal disengagement in New Zealand "post"-pandemic.

Financial Pessimism

Financial pessimism signifies a negative outlook on current and future economic circumstances. This pessimism disrupts individuals' perceptions of social order, leading to feelings of alienation, disconnection, and marginalisation, especially among those who perceive themselves as disadvantaged and struggle to improve their financial situation (Casara et al., 2022; Hastings, 2019). Coupled with the associations income inequality has with reduced trust (De Courson & Nettle, 2021), financial pessimism may contribute to societal disengagement in the general populace. Conversely, financial optimism *protects* against disengagement by fostering positive well-being and life satisfaction (Kaur et al., 2021; Ngamaba et al., 2020). Thus, financial optimism and pessimism are crucial for profiling different levels and types of societal disengagement.

Wariness of Authorities

Finally, we measure wariness of authorities by assessing trust in politicians and whether participants believe that world authorities hide the truth about significant world events. Trust towards politicians and authorities reflects people's confidence in the government's ability to address societal challenges. If people do not perceive established authorities as trustworthy and competent, feelings of normlessness and, thus, societal disengagement may arise (McCarthy et al., 2022; Teymoori et al., 2017). For example, voter turnout and participation in electoral roll surveys has declined over the past 30 years in New Zealand (Greaves et al., 2020), suggesting potential declines in social capital and institutional trust (see Brick & Williams, 2013). This may also be a downstream consequence of reductions in trust in science, particularly in the wake of COVID-19 (Nivette et al., 2021). The COVID-19 lockdown protests both overseas and in New Zealand (see Carothers & Press, 2020; Molyneux & Satherley, 2020) also support this possibility and suggest a decline in trust for institutions among subsets of the New Zealand population. Thus, understanding the prevalence of (dis)trust may help identify those socially disengaged in the population.

Measuring Societal Disengagement through Latent Profile Analysis

Prior work predominantly examines general mean-level trends in indicators of social cohesion (Ministry of Social Development, 2022). Unfortunately, these variable-centred analyses tell us little of how unique *combinations* of these indicators may emerge among different subgroups of the population. For example, subgroups of

the population may feel financially secure and trust institutions but nevertheless experience a lack of meaning and purpose. In contrast, people may feel economically deprived and powerless, but may also be generally forgiving and connected to society (see White, 2002). Although these two subgroups may report similar mean levels of disengagement, they require distinct interventions that target social inclusion and economic conditions, respectively. Accordingly, understanding these different "types" of disengagement is necessary to properly model how societal disengagement manifests in New Zealand. Indeed, there may be different types, with different causes and different outcomes.

One way to examine these possibilities is through latent profile analysis (LPA), a type of mixture-modelling that identifies common response patterns to continuous variables. LPA takes a person-centred approach that distinguishes between distinct subgroups within the population that score similarly on particular sets of variables (Osborne & Sibley, 2017). LPA can identify the *prevalence* of different types of societal disengagement in the population and for *whom* societal disengagement is most salient. Despite the potential utility of this analytic approach, to our knowledge, no studies to date have used LPA to examine types of societal disengagement in the general population.

Overview of the Current Study

The current study uses LPA to examine societal disengagement in the New Zealand population. While our study is the first to profile types of societal (dis)engagement in New Zealand and is largely exploratory, we draw on prior work on social cohesion and New Zealand's socioeconomic context to guide our core hypotheses (e.g., see Ministry of Social Development, 2022; Peace et al., 2005). First, we expect to identify an *anomic* profile characterised by purposelessness, loss, disconnection, deprivation, and wariness of authorities (i.e., a profile scoring high across our seven focal indicators). An anomic profile may be particularly likely to emerge given recent social crises, such as the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, foster societal discontent and reduce trust in social institutions and democracy (Iwegbu & Okoli, 2023; Teymoori et al., 2017). Conversely, we expect a generally enfranchised profile characterised by feelings of empowerment, control and experience of financial, social and emotional stability. We expect a substantial proportion of the population to fit this profile, given New Zealand's (a) relatively egalitarian context, (b) generally high confidence levels in the central government (OECD, 2023), and (c) generally high levels of social *cohesion* (Ministry of Social Development, 2022).

Subgroups of the population may also feel financially secure and wary of authority but simultaneously experience a personal lack of meaning and purpose. Although financial and emotional well-being are highly related (Ngamaba et al., 2020), those who are generally financially well-off can lack meaning and report lower levels of well-being than their disadvantaged counterparts (Jebb et al., 2018; Oishi & Diener, 2014). In contrast, economically disadvantaged people may be generally forgiving and high in emotional well-being; disadvantaged people and communities can have high levels of social capital and, thus, higher feelings of purpose, meaning, and belonging (White, 2002). Therefore, we may identify profiles with mixed feelings of anomie and content.

After identifying the distinct profiles, we examine differences in the demographic composition of the different profiles. Specifically, we examine how discrete profiles differed in gender, age, ethnicity, education, deprivation, employment, religion, whether participants had partners or children, lived in urban areas or rurally, whether they were born in New Zealand, their hours spent volunteering, and whether they intended to vote in the 2023 general election. We expect that profiles of anomie (versus enfranchisement) are more objectively economically disadvantaged (i.e., high in deprivation and low in education and employment), may be less inclined to volunteer and vote, and contain a greater proportion of marginalised group members (i.e., ethnic minorities) but make no specific predictions with regards to other demographic characteristics of different profiles.

METHOD

Sampling Procedure

We use data from Time 13 (2021) of the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (NZAVS), an ongoing nationwide longitudinal panel study of New Zealand adults. The NZAVS initially randomly sampled participants from the New Zealand electoral roll (Time 1 [2009] n = 6,518, response rate: 16.6%). Time 13 (2021) contained responses from 34,131 participants, 28,640 of whom were retained from the previous wave (Time 12; retention rate: 74.29%) and 2,185 retained from Time 1 (retention rate: 33.52%). Sibley (2023) provides further information about the sampling procedures, retention rates, and ethics approvals for the NZAVS.

Participants

Of the 34,131 participants who completed Time 13 (2021), 63.9% were women, 35.5% were men, and 0.6% were gender diverse, with a mean age of 54.89 years (SD = 13.66). Concerning ethnicity, 92.4% identified as European, 8.9% identified as Māori, 1.7% as Pasifika, and 3.6% identified as an Asian ethnic group. Note that people could identify with multiple ethnic groups (and, hence, be counted multiple times). Additionally, 32.1% were religious, 74.7% were parents, 74.8% had a romantic partner, 74.6% were employed, and 78.7% were born in New Zealand.

Education (M = 5.94, SD = 2.57) was coded using the New Zealand Qualifications Authority scheme, which ranged from 0 (none) to 10 (doctoral degree or equivalent). Area deprivation (M = 4.69, SD = 2.73) was coded using the New Zealand Deprivation index for the meshblock level (approx. 100 person-sized geographic units), with a decile rank from 1 (low) to 10 (high; Atkinson et al., 2014). We also assessed whether participants intended to vote in the 2023 New Zealand election (0 = no, 1 = yes; M = 0.97, SD = 0.17), and their hours spent volunteering in the last week (M = 1.46, SD = 4.37).

Measures

Unless otherwise specified, items were rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Wronged. We measured how "wronged" participants

Table 2. Model fit for solutions ranging from two to eight profiles.

Profile Solution	AIC	BIC	aBIC	ΔAIC	ΔBIC	ΔaBIC	Entropy
Two Profiles	791928.60	792114.24	792044.32	—	—	—	0.756
Three Profiles	785731.45	785984.58	785889.24	6197.15	6129.66	6155.08	0.718
Four Profiles	781677.98	781998.61	781877.85	4053.47	3985.97	4011.39	0.720
Five Profiles	779578.80	779966.94	779820.75	2099.18	2031.67	2057.10	0.728
Six Profiles	777507.35	777962.99	777791.38	2071.45	2003.95	2029.37	0.714
Seven Profiles	**776120.17**	**776643.32**	**776446.28**	**1387.18**	**1319.67**	**1345.10**	**0.748**
Eight Profiles	774468.59	775059.24	774836.78	1651.58	1584.08	1609.50	0.710

Note. AIC = Akaike Information Criterion; BIC = Bayesian Information Criterion. Selected model highlighted in bold.

feel using the mean of three items: (a) "Sometimes I can't sleep because of thinking about past wrongs I have suffered"; (b) "I can usually forgive and forget when someone does me wrong" (reverse-scored; adapted from Berry et al., 2005); and (c) "I find myself regularly thinking about past times I have been wronged" (developed for the NZAVS; ω = .72).

Powerlessness. We measured powerlessness using the mean of two items developed for the NZAVS: (a) "I do not have enough power or control over essential parts of my life", and (b) "Other people have too much power or control over important parts of my life" (α = .68).

Meaninglessness. We measured meaninglessness using the mean of two items: (a) "My life has a clear sense of purpose" (reverse-scored), and (b) "I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful" (reverse-scored; adapted from Steger et al., 2006; α = .75).

Disconnection. We measured how connected participants feel with those around them using a single item: "I feel a sense of community with others in my local neighbourhood" (reverse-scored; see Sengupta et al., 2013).

Deprivation. We measured deprivation using the mean of two items: (a) "I'm frustrated by what I earn relative to other people in NZ", and (b) "I generally earn less than other people in NZ" (adapted from Abrams & Grant, 2012; α = .59)

Financial Pessimism. We assessed financial pessimism using a single item, where participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with their "future security" on a 0 (*completely dissatisfied*) to 10 (*completely satisfied*) scale.

Wariness of Authorities. We assessed wariness of authorities using the mean of two items: (a) "Politicians in New Zealand can generally be trusted" (reverse-scored), and (b) "I think that the official version of major world events given by authorities often hides the truth" (Lantian et al., 2016; α = .56).

RESULTS

We conducted LPA using M*plus* v.8.10 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2023) to identify distinct profiles of societal disengagement within the New Zealand population. We examined solutions ranging from two to eight profiles to determine the model that best fit our data while also considering model parsimony. To assess model fit, we evaluated the Akaike information criterion (AIC), Bayesian information criterion (BIC), and sample-size adjusted BIC (aBIC), with lower scores indicating relatively better model fit. We also assessed the entropy of each solution, with values closer to 1.0 indicating a clearer separation of the data into distinct profiles. Table 2 displays the fit statistics for each model. As shown in Table 2, AIC, BIC, and aBIC values plateaued after estimating a model with six profiles. Entropy was highest in the seven-profile solution, suggesting a more precise separation of our data than in the six-profile solution. We thus settled on a seven-profile solution. Figure 1 displays the means across our seven indicators for each profile.

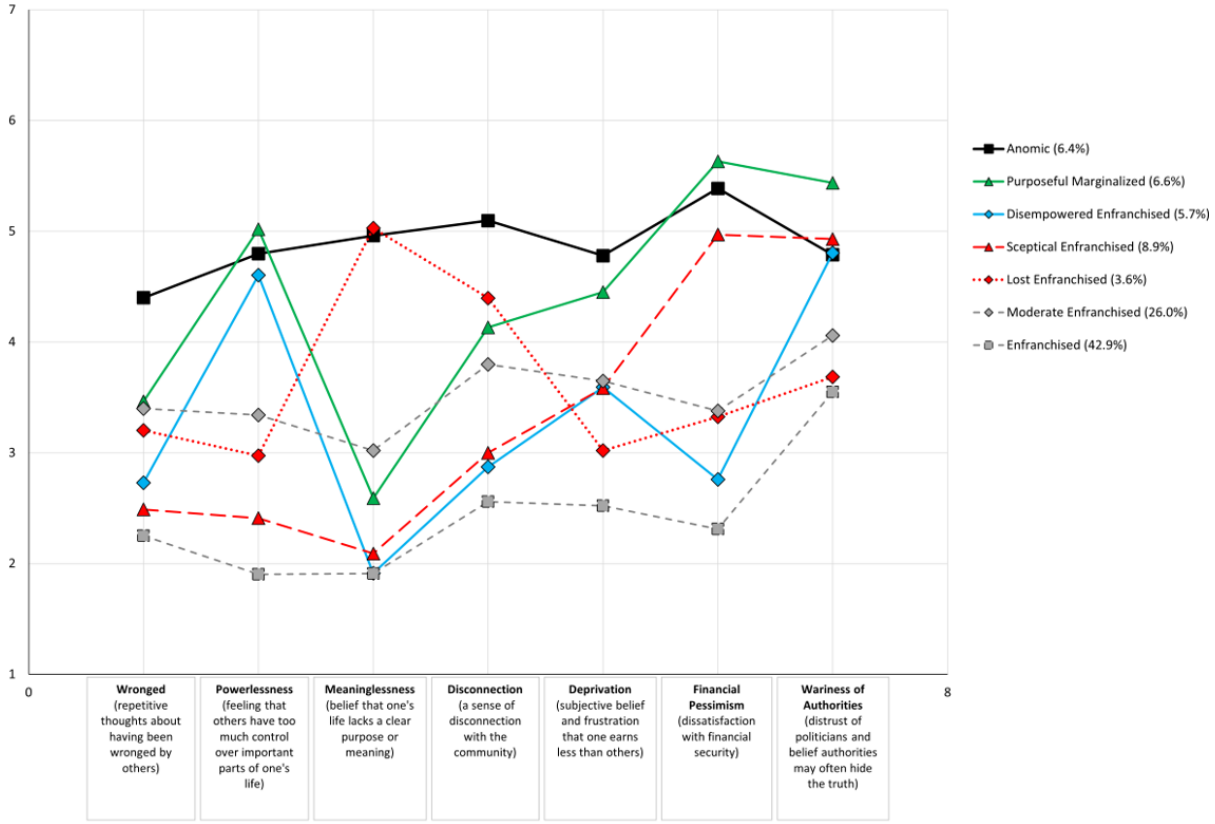
Profiles of Enfranchisement and Societal Disengagement

Enfranchised. As shown in Figure 1, 42.9% of the sample scored low across all seven disengagement indicators, signifying enfranchisement. We define this class as the Enfranchised profile because of their sense of positive engagement, both in social and economic domains. Specifically, the Enfranchised profile reported low feelings of being wronged by others (M = 2.25, SE = 0.02), powerlessness (M = 1.90, SE = 0.01), meaninglessness (M = 1.91, SE = 0.01), and disconnection (M = 2.56, SE = 0.02). Likewise, they reported low financial pessimism (M = 2.31, SE = 0.02), relative deprivation (M = 2.52, SE = 0.02), and low-to-moderate levels of distrust in authorities (M = 3.55, SE = 0.01).

Moderately Enfranchised. A further 26.0% of the sample were comparable to the Enfranchised class but experienced moderate (rather than high) levels of inclusion across indicators. Specifically, this profile reported low-to-moderate levels of feeling wronged (M = 3.40, SE = 0.04), powerlessness (M = 3.34, SE = 0.05), meaninglessness (M = 3.02, SE = 0.04), disconnection (M = 3.80, SE = 0.03), relative deprivation (M = 3.65, SE = 0.04), financial pessimism (M = 3.38, SE = 0.04), and distrust in authorities (M = 4.06, SE = 0.02). We thus termed this profile the Moderately Enfranchised.

Anomic. Conversely, we identified a small Anomic profile (6.4% of the sample) that reported general levels of alienation and disengagement across all indicators. That is, they reported high levels of feeling wronged by others (M = 4.40, SE = 0.06), powerlessness (M = 4.80, SE = 0.05), meaninglessness (M = 4.96, SE = 0.06), and disconnection from society (M = 5.10, SE = 0.04). Additionally, they reported negative economic perceptions, including relative deprivation (M = 4.78, SE

Figure 1. Latent Profiles of Societal Disengagement in the New Zealand Population



= 0.05), financial pessimism (*M* = 5.39, *SE* = 0.06), and general distrust of authority (*M* = 4.79, *SE* = 0.04).

Purposeful Marginalised. The remainder of the population (24.8%) sat within profiles combining disengagement and enfranchisement. First, we identified a small profile (6.6%) comprised of people financially marginalised and distrustful of authority but who generally felt purposeful and socially connected. We thus termed this profile the Purposeful Marginalised. Indeed, the Purposeful Marginalised profile reported low feelings of being wronged by others (*M* = 3.46, *SE* = 0.047) and meaninglessness (*M* = 2.59, *SE* = 0.07), and only moderate disconnection from the community (*M* = 4.13, *SE* = 0.05). However, they reported high levels of powerlessness (*M* = 5.02, *SE* = 0.07), financial pessimism (*M* = 5.63, *SE* = 0.05), and wariness of those in power (*M* = 5.44, *SE* = 0.06), as well as moderate levels of relative deprivation (*M* = 4.45, *SE* = 0.05).

Disempowered Enfranchised. We also identified a small profile (5.7%) generally low across indicators of societal disengagement (and thus, enfranchised). These individuals reported a low sense of feeling wronged (*M* = 2.73, *SE* = 0.07), meaninglessness (*M* = 1.91, *SE* = 0.04), disconnection (*M* = 2.87, *SE* = 0.06), relative deprivation (*M* = 3.59, *SE* = 0.07), and financial pessimism (*M* = 2.76, *SE* = 0.05). However, this profile experienced a moderate sense of powerlessness (*M* = 4.60, *SE* = 0.07) and a wariness of authority (*M* = 4.81, *SE* = 0.08). We thus termed this profile the Disempowered Enfranchised.

Sceptical Enfranchised. Additionally, we identified a profile (8.9% of the sample) of people who were generally positively engaged with society except for their scepticism towards authority (*M* = 4.93, *SE* = 0.06) and financial pessimism (*M* = 4.97, *SE* = 0.05). Accordingly, we refer to this profile as the Sceptical Enfranchised profile. Participants in this profile reported low feelings of being wronged (*M* = 2.49, *SE* = 0.04) and low relative deprivation (*M* = 3.58, *SE* = 0.05), as well as low powerlessness (*M* = 2.41, *SE* = 0.04), disconnection (*M* = 3.00, *SE* = 0.05), and meaninglessness (*M* = 2.09, *SE* = 0.04).

Lost Enfranchised. Finally, the remainder of the sample (3.6%) showed a generally positive engagement but reported high levels of meaninglessness (*M* = 5.03, *SE* = 0.08) and disconnection from society (*M* = 4.40, *SE* = 0.07). Across all other measures, they were generally similar to the enfranchised profiles. Specifically, they reported low relative deprivation (*M* = 3.02, *SE* = 0.11), financial pessimism (*M* = 3.32, *SE* = 0.12), and distrust of authorities (*M* = 3.69, *SE* = 0.07). Likewise, members of this profile were low on feeling wronged (*M* = 3.20, *SE* = 0.09) and powerlessness (*M* = 2.97, *SE* = 0.15). We thus termed this profile the Lost Enfranchised profile.

Demographic characteristics

After identifying the seven-profile solution, we examined how these profiles differed across demographics. To do so, we used a distal approach where profile membership was used to predict demographic factors to evaluate the proportion of a particular demographic that fell within each profile (see Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014). We then used equality tests of the means and probabilities (for continuous and categorical variables, respectively) to evaluate whether profiles differed across demographics. Table 3 provides the means and probabilities across the seven profiles.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics by Profile Membership

	Anomic		Purposeful Marginalised		Disempowered Enfranchised		Sceptical Enfranchised		Lost Enfranchised		Moderate Enfranchised		Enfranchised	
Demographic variable	Est.	*SE*	Est.	*SE*	Est.	*SE*	Est.	*SE*	Est.	*SE*	Est.	*SE*	Est.	*SE*
Gender														
Women	0.63	(0.013)	0.61	(0.014)	0.53	(0.019)	0.78	(0.011)	0.57	(0.023)	0.62	(0.009)	0.65	(0.005)
Men	0.38	(0.013)	0.39	(0.014)	0.47	(0.019)	0.22	(0.011)	0.43	(0.023)	0.38	(0.009)	0.35	(0.005)
Age (*Mean*)	46.79	(0.307)	53.41	(0.272)	62.53	(0.217)	55.81	(0.237)	47.96	(0.395)	50.85	(0.150)	57.76	(0.104)
Employed (yes)	0.69	(0.013)	0.73	(0.012)	0.60	(0.018)	0.77	(0.011)	0.80	(0.017)	0.79	(0.007)	0.74	(0.004)
Partner (yes)	0.49	(0.014)	0.67	(0.015)	0.81	(0.015)	0.73	(0.013)	0.63	(0.021)	0.71	(0.008)	0.83	(0.004)
Religious (yes)	0.24	(0.011)	0.40	(0.014)	0.51	(0.019)	0.42	(0.014)	0.16	(0.015)	0.25	(0.008)	0.33	(0.005)
Parent (yes)	0.51	(0.014)	0.75	(0.015)	0.87	(0.012)	0.82	(0.011)	0.45	(0.020)	0.68	(0.010)	0.82	(0.004)
Born in NZ (yes)	0.83	(0.009)	0.79	(0.011)	0.76	(0.015)	0.80	(0.010)	0.73	(0.017)	0.79	(0.006)	0.78	(0.004)
Urban (yes)	0.82	(0.022)	0.73	(0.025)	0.71	(0.032)	0.74	(0.024)	0.86	(0.034)	0.83	(0.014)	0.81	(0.014)
Deprivation (*Mean*)	5.64	(0.060)	5.39	(0.059)	4.82	(0.063)	4.95	(0.051)	4.58	(0.076)	4.93	(0.030)	4.23	(0.022)
Education (*Mean*)	5.14	(0.058)	5.42	(0.056)	5.21	(0.063)	5.25	(0.049)	6.55	(0.067)	5.91	(0.027)	6.35	(0.020)
Ethnicity														
European	0.91	(0.007)	0.88	(0.009)	0.89	(0.012)	0.91	(0.008)	0.95	(0.009)	0.92	(0.004)	0.94	(0.002)
Māori	0.12	(0.008)	0.15	(0.010)	0.11	(0.011)	0.12	(0.008)	0.07	(0.011)	0.09	(0.004)	0.07	(0.002)
Pacific	0.02	(0.004)	0.03	(0.004)	0.03	(0.005)	0.03	(0.004)	0.01	(0.003)	0.02	(0.002)	0.01	(0.001)
Asian	0.06	(0.006)	0.04	(0.005)	0.03	(0.006)	0.03	(0.004)	0.04	(0.007)	0.05	(0.003)	0.03	(0.002)
Hours volunteering (*Mean*)	0.55	(0.036)	1.75	(0.103)	2.45	(0.165)	1.57	(0.081)	0.77	(0.061)	0.95	(0.028)	1.75	(0.042)
Voting intent (yes)	0.93	(0.007)	0.92	(0.008)	0.95	(0.007)	0.95	(0.006)	0.97	(0.006)	0.98	(0.002)	0.99	(0.001)

Gender. Regarding gender, the overall test of the equality of probabilities indicated gender differences across profile membership ($\chi^2(6) = 231.85$, $p < .001$). As shown in Table 3, the Disempowered Enfranchised profile was comprised of the largest proportion of men (47.0%) versus women (53.0%) but was similar to the Lost Enfranchised profile (43.4% versus 56.6%; $\chi^2(1) = 1.66$, $p = .198$). Conversely, the Sceptical Enfranchised profile was predominantly comprised of women (77.6%) over men (22.4%). The remaining gender differences were minimal, with the Purposeful Marginalized profile displaying a similar gender distribution to the Lost Enfranchised ($\chi^2(1) = 2.43$, $p = .119$), Moderately Enfranchised ($\chi^2(1) = 0.92$, $p = .338$), and Anomic profiles ($\chi^2(1) = 0.76$, $p = .385$).

Age. For age, the overall test of equality for the mean age of participants across profiles was significant ($\chi^2_{(6)} = 3704.80$, $p < .001$). Inspection of the equality tests revealed that all profiles significantly differed in age ($ps \leq .020$). As shown in Table 3, the Disempowered Enfranchised profile had the highest mean age ($M = 62.53$), followed by the Enfranchised ($M = 57.76$), Sceptical Enfranchised ($M = 55.81$), Purposeful Marginalized ($M = 53.41$), Moderately Enfranchised ($M = 50.85$), Lost Enfranchised ($M = 47.96$), and finally the Anomic profile ($M = 46.79$).

Employment. Regarding employment, the overall test of equality of probabilities was significant ($\chi^2(6) = 131.75$, $p < .001$). The Lost Enfranchised, Sceptical Enfranchised, and Moderately Enfranchised were largely similar in their employment probabilities (76.6–80%; $ps \geq .124$). Likewise, the Enfranchised (74.3%) and Purposeful Marginalised (73.0%) profiles were similarly employed ($\chi^2(1) = 0.92$, $p = .337$). However, the Anomic and Disempowered Enfranchised profiles had significantly lower probabilities of employment (68.7% and 60.2%, respectively) compared to the remaining profiles ($ps < .001$).

Partners. The overall equality test of probabilities for those who reported having partners was significant ($\chi^2(6) = 971.74$, $p < .001$). As shown in Table 3, the Enfranchised (82.9%) and Disempowered Enfranchised (80.8%) had the highest probabilities of having a partner ($\chi^2(1) = 1.87$, $p = .170$), followed by the Sceptical Enfranchised (72.6%) and Moderately Enfranchised (71.1%) profiles ($\chi^2(1) = 0.92$, $p = .337$), and the Purposeful Marginalized (66.5%) and Lost Enfranchised (62.8%) profiles ($\chi^2(1) = 2.22$, $p = .136$). The Anomic profile had a considerably lower probability of having a partner (48.6%).

Religion. Regarding religiosity, the overall equality test of probabilities was significant ($\chi^2(6) = 530.70$, $p < .001$). As shown in Table 3, the Lost Enfranchised profile had the lowest religiosity rate (15.9%), while the Disempowered Enfranchised profile had the highest percentage of participants who identified as religious (50.8%; $\chi^2_{(1)} = 222.42$, $p < .001$). The Purposeful Marginalized (39.5%) and Sceptical Enfranchised profiles were similarly religious (42.1%; $\chi^2(1) = 1.51$, $p = .219$), as were the Moderate Enfranchised (24.7%) and Anomic profiles. (24.1%; $\chi^2(1) = 0.24$, $p = .622$).

Parents. Regarding those who are parents, the overall test of equality of probabilities indicated significant differences across profile membership ($\chi^2(6) = 1126.80$, $p < .001$). All profiles differed in their probabilities of being parents, except for the Sceptical Enfranchised (82.1%) and Enfranchised (81.6%; $\chi^2(1) = 0.18$, $p = .669$). As shown in Table 3, the Disempowered Enfranchised profile had the highest percentage of parents (87.4%), while the Lost Enfranchised profile had the lowest (44.6%; $\chi^2(1) = 348.88$, $p < .001$).

New Zealand Born. The overall test of equality of probabilities indicated significant differences across profile membership ($\chi^2(6) = 34.43$, $p < .001$). However, five of the seven profiles were generally similar in their probabilities of being born in New Zealand (76-80%; $ps \geq .072$). The Anomic profile had the highest percentage of those born in New Zealand (82.8%), while the Lost Enfranchised had the lowest (73.4%; $\chi^2(1) = 21.22$, $p < .001$).

Urban (vs, rural) living. For urban living, the overall test of equality of probabilities indicated significant differences across profile membership ($\chi^2(24) = 257.53$, $p < .001$). The Disempowered Enfranchised (70.6%), Purposeful Marginalised (73.0%), and Sceptical Enfranchised (73.6%) were similar in their probabilities of urban living ($ps \geq .122$) but lower in their probabilities compared to the other four profiles ($ps < .001$). The Lost Enfranchised (85.5%) had the highest probability of living in an urban setting.

Deprivation. For deprivation, the overall test of the equality of probabilities revealed significant differences ($\chi^2_{(6)}$ = 929.36, p < .001). The Anomic profile had the highest mean levels of deprivation (M = 5.64), while the Enfranchised profile reported the lowest mean levels of deprivation (M = 4.23; $\chi^2(1)$ = 487.79, p < .001). The Disempowered Enfranchised (M = 4.82), Sceptical Enfranchised (M = 4.95) and Moderately Enfranchised (M = 4.93) profiles were similarly deprived (ps ≥ .097).

Education. Regarding education, the overall test of equality of probabilities indicated significant differences ($\chi^2(6)$ = 1106.84, p < .001). The Anomic profile demonstrated the lowest mean levels of education (M = 5.14) but was similar to the Disempowered Enfranchised (M = 5.21) and Sceptical Enfranchised (M = 5.25) profiles (ps ≥ .151). The Lost Enfranchised profile reported the highest levels of education (M = 6.55).

Ethnicity. For European ethnicity, only small differences were observed across profiles. The Purposeful Marginalised (88.0%) and Disempowered Enfranchised (88.6%) had the lowest (and similar) probabilities of being European ($\chi^2(1)$ = 0.16, p = .686). The Lost Enfranchised (94.9%) and Enfranchised (94.3%) were most likely to be European ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 0.50, p = .481).

For Māori ethnicity, the overall test of equality of probabilities was significant ($\chi^2(6)$ = 162.54, p < .001). The highest percentage of Māori was in the Purposeful Marginalised profile (15.0%), whilst the Lost Enfranchised (6.5%) and Enfranchised (6.8%) had the lowest probability of being Māori (χ^2 (1) = 0.08, p = .783). The Anomic (11.6%), Disempowered Enfranchised (10.9%), and Sceptical Enfranchised (11.7%) profiles contained similar proportions of Māori (ps ≥ .165).

Significant differences across profiles were also observed for Pacific ethnicity ($\chi^2(6)$ = 42.33, p < .001). However, five of the seven profiles showed similar probabilities of being Pasifika (1.8–2.7%; ps ≥ .073). The Enfranchised (1.3%) and Lost Enfranchised (0.8%) had similarly low probabilities of being Pasifika ($\chi^2(1)$ = 1.65, p = .199).

Finally, for Asian ethnicity, significant differences across profile membership were observed ($\chi^2(6)$ = 44.13, p < .001). As shown in Table 3, the profile with the highest percentage of Asian participants was the Anomic profile (5.5%), although this profile was similar to the Moderate Enfranchised (4.5%), Purposeful Marginalised (4.2%) and Lost Enfranchised (3.8%) profiles (p ≥ .077). The lowest percentage was within the Sceptical Enfranchised profile (2.7%) and Enfranchised (2.9%) profiles ($\chi^2(1)$ = 0.14, p = .706).

Hours spent volunteering. Regarding volunteering, the overall test of equality of probabilities indicated significant differences across profiles ($\chi^2(6)$ = 667.26, p < .001). The Anomic profile reported the lowest hours spent volunteering (M = 0.55), while the Disempowered Enfranchised reported the highest hours spent volunteering (M = 2.45). The Purposeful Marginalized (M = 1.75) reported similar hours spent volunteering to the Enfranchised (M = 1.75; $\chi^2(1)$ = 0.00, p = .995) and Sceptical Enfranchised (M = 1.57; $\chi^2(1)$ = 2.08, p = .149) profiles.

Voting intentions. The overall test of equality of probabilities for voting intentions indicated significant differences ($\chi^2(6)$ = 218.74, p < .001). The Purposeful Marginalized (92%) and Anomic (93%) profiles reported the lowest probabilities of voting ($\chi^2(1)$ = 0.89, p = .346). The Sceptical Enfranchised (95%) and Disempowered Enfranchised (95%) demonstrated similar probabilities of voting ($\chi^2(1)$ = 0.00, p = .947). Likewise, participants in the Lost Enfranchised (97%) were similarly likely to vote compared to the Moderately Enfranchised (98%; $\chi^2(1)$ = 0.30, p = .581), and Enfranchised (99%; $\chi^2(1)$ = 3.13, p = .077) profiles.

DISCUSSION

Globally, nations are growing apprehensive about increasing societal disengagement, including New Zealand (Ministry of Social Development, 2022). However, societal disengagement is difficult to measure, and, accordingly, few studies have systematically analysed the prevalence of societal disengagement in the New Zealand population. The present study addressed this oversight by identifying distinct profiles of societal disengagement in a nationwide random sample of New Zealand adults. Our application of LPA allowed us to identify (a) the prevalence and 'types' of disengagement and enfranchisement in the general population and (b) demographic differences between identified profiles, which is essential for understanding *who* is disengaged in New Zealand. Overall, we aimed to (a) provide valuable insights into New Zealanders' social, economic, and psychological well-being and (b) identify for whom interventions designed to safeguard against societal disengagement may be most effective.

Results revealed seven profiles encapsulating an array of response patterns within the population (see Table 4 for a summary of findings). Notably, 68.9% of the sample comprised two clearly engaged profiles—the Enfranchised (42.9%) and the Moderately Enfranchised (26.0%). These profiles demonstrate moderate (Moderate Enfranchised) to high (Enfranchised) levels of inclusion and engagement across all measures. Members of these two profiles were generally older, more likely to be European, have children and a partner, and were higher in socioeconomic status. Although generally similar, the Moderate Enfranchised profile was younger and less objectively advantaged (i.e., lower in education and higher in deprivation) than the Enfranchised profile. Thus, differences emerged even among those generally enfranchised and engaged in society. That these two enfranchised profiles comprised most of the sample signals generally strong levels of social cohesion in New Zealand (see also Ministry of Social Development, 2022), alleviating concerns of societal disintegration in the general population.

Societal Disengagement in New Zealand

Despite these generally optimistic results, our analysis also identified five distinct profiles marked—entirely or partially—by societal disengagement. Notably, a sizable minority of participants comprised an Anomic profile (6.4% of the total sample) that demonstrated low engagement across our economic and social indicators. Their perceived disconnect from society supports Durkheim's (1893) theory of anomie and the global discourse on societal breakdown and declining trust in authority (Brown et al., 2022; Gluckman et al., 2023; Iwegbu & Okoli, 2023; Spoonley & Peace, 2007). Our

Table 4. Summary of Profiles and Key Demographics.

Profile (%)	Definition	**Key demographics** (vis-à-vis the Enfranchised profile)
Enfranchised (42.9%)	…this profile is enfranchised or experiences high inclusionary status both socially and economically. On the social side, this includes forgiveness of others and the view that others are not exploitative, a sense that one has control over one's life, a sense of meaning, and connection to others. On the economic side, this includes the view that one is financially secure and relatively affluent and feels at least moderate levels of trust in authorities.	
Moderately Enfranchised (26.0%)	…comparable in all regards to the enfranchised profile but experiences moderate (rather than extremely high) levels of inclusion across indicators.	• Younger, more deprived, less educated, less religious. • Higher probability of being men, being employed, or living urbanely. • Lower probability of being European, having a partner, having children, volunteering, or voting.
Anomic (6.4%)	…experiences general alienation and disengagement across both social and economic indicators. They feel powerlessness, wronged by others, a lack of goals or purpose in life and a general disconnection from society. Likewise, they have a sense of relative deprivation and frustration about income, insecurity about future finances and general wariness or distrust of government and authority.	• Younger, more deprived, less educated, less religious. • Higher probability of being born in New Zealand, being men, being Māori, Pasifika, or Asian, or living in urban areas. • Lower probability of being employed, having a partner, having children, voting, or volunteering.
Purposeful Marginalized (6.6%)	…experiences alienation from some aspects of society (primarily via a sense of powerlessness and only a weak-to-moderate sense of community) but has a clear sense of meaning and forgiveness of others. Aspects of alienation relate primarily to economic perceptions, including relative deprivation, insecurity about future financial security and wariness of those in power.	• Younger, more deprived, less educated, more religious. • Higher probability of being women, or being Māori, Pasifika, or Asian. • Lower probability of having a partner, having children, urban living, or voting.
Disempowered Enfranchised (5.7%)	…positively engaged with society, except that this profile experiences a sense of powerlessness over essential aspects of their life and a wariness of those who have power over others (authorities).	• Older, less deprived, less educated, more religious. • Higher probability of being men, being Māori or Pasifika, having children, or volunteering. • Lower probability of being employed, living urbanely, or voting.
Sceptical Enfranchised (8.9%)	…positively engaged with society, except this profile appears sceptical or pessimistic regarding authority and future financial security.	• Younger, more deprived, less educated, more religious. • Higher probability of being women, being Māori or Pasifika, or being employed. • Lower probability of having a partner, living urbanely, volunteering, or voting.
Lost Enfranchised (3.6%)	…positively engaged with society and generally similar to the moderate and enfranchised profiles, with the exception that this profile experiences a lack of purpose and feels disconnected from society.	• Younger, more deprived, more educated, less religious. • Higher probability of being men, being employed, or living urbanely. • Lower probability of being born in New Zealand, being Pasifika, having a partner, having children, or volunteering.

results suggest that anomic individuals in New Zealand face significant challenges related to isolation, companionship, and reliable social support systems, as well as in their financial well-being and trust in authority.

That we identified this profile highlights the need to consider societal disengagement in the New Zealand context and establish interventions to redress this disengagement among vulnerable populations (see also Gluckman et al., 2023). Indeed, participants in the Anomic profile were younger, lower in socioeconomic status, less educated, lived in more deprived areas, and were less likely to be employed or have a partner compared to the more Enfranchised profiles. These findings highlight how lower social capital and mobility contribute to societal disengagement (e.g., Bornand & Klein, 2022), and the need to reduce socioeconomic disparities that undermine social cohesion (Ministry of Social Development, 2022).

Notably, Asian peoples were disproportionally represented in the Anomic profile. This is perhaps unsurprising given rising rates of discrimination (particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic; Jaung et al., 2022; Neilson, 2021), as well as the unique experiences of migration and isolation for Asian people (Ho, 2004; Ward, 2010). Nonetheless, this result signals the need to further examine discrimination and isolation among Asian people in New Zealand and how these experiences may undermine social cohesion (see Gluckman et al., 2023; Peace et al., 2005). More broadly, instigating stronger relationships between anomic individuals and government systems may reduce distrust in authorities among these groups and foster social cohesion. While examining the efficacy of these interventions is beyond the scope of our study, we encourage future research to test these possibilities.

In addition to revealing profiles at either extreme of disengagement, we identified four profiles characterised by unique combinations of enfranchisement and disengagement across our social and economic measures. First, the Purposeful Marginalised profile (6.6% of the sample) supports our hypothesis of a group sceptical of the government. This profile is characterised by financial pessimism, deprivation, wariness of authority, and powerlessness but reported high levels of forgiveness and a clear sense of purpose in life. While the demographics within the Purposeful Marginalised profile are relatively moderate compared to the other profiles, this profile was generally lower in socioeconomic standing and had the highest proportion of Māori and rural dwellers. Coupled with the tendency for forgiveness and sense of meaning in life, as well as the generally high prevalence of religious identification, this profile may reflect a subgroup of *marginalised* but culturally and socially *connected* individuals in New Zealand.

Conversely, we identified a Lost Enfranchised profile (3.6%) consisting of those who feel that their income is adequate and have confidence in the government but feel disconnected from society. Specifically, while members of this profile do not feel wronged by others or that they lack power, they struggle with a lack of purpose in life and a sense of disconnection and loneliness. Lost Enfranchised profile members were more likely to be younger, male, nonreligious, born outside of New Zealand, and less likely to have children or a partner. In combination, these demographic factors suggest a susceptibility to loneliness and social disconnection unique to this profile. However, these members seem relatively well-off across economic-based demographics, as they were more likely to be (a) of a privileged ethnicity (European), (b) employed, (c) living in an urban area, (d) educated, and (e) living in less deprived neighbourhoods. The demographic characteristics associated with profile membership highlight the critical intersection of socioeconomic status and societal disconnection, as those who are objectively advantaged may still feel disconnected from society.

Finally, we identified Sceptical Enfranchised (8.9%) and Disempowered Enfranchised (5.7%) profiles. The Sceptical Enfranchised profile consists of individuals actively engaged with society with positive social connections, trust in others, a sense of meaning, and low levels of relative deprivation. However, scepticism and pessimism characterise their views on authority and future security. Similarly, the Disempowered Enfranchised profile exhibits high trust in others, social connection, and meaning. However, this group is financially *optimistic* but experiences a sense of powerlessness and wariness toward authority. Therefore, both profiles share commonalities in terms of trust in others, a sense of meaning, connection, and economic well-being but differ in their feelings of powerlessness and scepticism toward authority.

These differences are apparent in the demographic factors associated with profile membership. The Sceptical Enfranchised members were primarily women, were less educated, and were more likely to live rurally, suggesting less access to resources (and thus, had low levels of trust and belief in authorities to support them). Conversely, the Disempowered Enfranchised members were older and religious, lower in education, and less likely to be employed and live in urban settings. However, they were more likely to have partners and children. Thus, this profile reflects characteristics akin to New Zealand's older, retired population. For example, these demographics could represent retirees settling in quieter areas post-career, with limited educational opportunities in their generation. While these two profiles are similar in many aspects, they qualitatively differ in their demographic compositions, highlighting the utility of the seven profiles identified in our analyses.

Strengths, Caveats, and Future Research

One of the most notable strengths of the current study is our use of LPA, a person-centred approach that allows us to assess a multidimensional model of societal disengagement in New Zealand. Indeed, while many nations are concerned about decreasing social cohesion, no research to date has examined types of societal disengagement, nor their prevalence, in the general population. Using LPA and a large nationwide sample of adults allowed us to address this oversight and identify subgroups in the population that differ in their levels of societal disengagement. That the seven profiles identified here differed across indicators and demographic factors highlights the strengths of LPA for identifying unique response patterns and validates our seven profiles as distinct forms of disengagement in New Zealand.

Importantly, the demographic differences that emerged between these profiles can help inform policy and interventions. Indeed, understanding the predictors of

societal disengagement enables tailored approaches to meet distinct group needs. For instance, Anomic individuals might benefit from mental health support and community engagement programs. At the same time, Purposeful Marginalised members could require initiatives focused on financial security, community empowerment, and co-governance between institutions and communities. Recognising these variations helps formulate a mix of interventions to address the needs of different groups in New Zealand.

Despite these strengths, there are limitations worthy of consideration. We were fortunate to leverage a large national probability sample collected in 2021/2022, allowing us to develop our model estimating societal disengagement in the contemporary New Zealand population. Without this large sample and the wide range of indicators assessed related to societal disengagement, we would struggle to triangulate different profiles or identify the population rates in general. However, we were constrained by the measures included in the NZAVS, and it is worth carefully considering if there are attitudinal indicators of societal disengagement that may be missing from our model. For example, societal disengagement typically emerges during sociopolitical and economic disruption or change. Assessing concerns about crime and social inequality may provide more nuanced insights into societal disengagement in New Zealand. Moreover, examining digital forms of connectivity (e.g., social media platforms) may offer more contemporary insights into social cohesion and disengagement, particularly among young people (Marlowe et al., 2017). Nonetheless, our indicators of these seven profiles measure dysregulation (e.g., social disconnection), disintegration (e.g., wariness of authority), and perceived marginalization (e.g., financial deprivation and pessimism), which, in tandem, assess the perceived breakdown of leadership and social fabric central to social disengagement (Teymoori et al., 2017). Likewise, our indicators broadly map onto prior indices of social cohesion (Ministry of Social Development, 2022; Peace & Spoonley, 2019; Spoonley & Peace, 2007). We thus have confidence in our measurement of societal disengagement, although we encourage future research to fine tune an appropriate set of indicators.

While our study draws from a nationwide random sample of adults closely mirroring the New Zealand population, our sample over-represents Europeans and women. Given that the more enfranchised profiles contained more European (versus ethnic minority) group members, our results may *underestimate* societal disengagement within the population. Similarly, the overrepresentation of women might impact our understanding of societal disengagement among men, particularly in profiles such as the Lost Enfranchised that contain significantly more men than other profiles. Future investigations could examine these possibilities by focusing on these groups in studies of societal disengagement in New Zealand.

Finally, our analyses are cross-sectional, and the stability of profile membership across time remains unexplored. Profile membership may not remain stable over extended periods, and specific subgroups within the population could be more susceptible to change than others. Thus, future research should consider how levels of societal disengagement in the population may change over time, and for whom this change may be most salient. Relatedly, the relationship between social change (such as sociopolitical crises) and societal disengagement highlights a need for longitudinal research across changing sociopolitical environments. Our results lay the invaluable groundwork for future investigations assessing the stability and change in these profiles over time and how societal disengagement may manifest in different contexts. These longitudinal investigations are crucial, especially given the current global trends of *increasing* disengagement.

Conclusion

Despite growing concerns globally, analysis of societal disengagement in New Zealand remains scarce. We addressed this oversight by using LPA to identify seven profiles that differed in their levels of disengagement, enfranchisement, and demographic factors. Our results illustrate how subgroups of the population feel disconnected and distrusting of society, thereby providing the necessary groundwork for understanding anomie in the public. These results should be useful for future research tracking change in different profiles of anomie in the population over time, and for modelling how these different rates of change relate to broader transformations in the economy and New Zealand society in general.

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