

Perceptions of Feeling Safe

What this is about...

Perceptions of safety impact on the health and wellbeing of the individual, family and wider community. If people feel unsafe they are less likely to talk to their neighbours, use public transport, go out in the evening, use public amenities and generally participate in their neighbourhood.

Respondents to citizens' surveys undertaken in the six largest cities were asked to rate their feelings of safety in their home, in their neighbourhood and in the town centre, at both day and night.¹⁵² Respondents were asked to rate their perception of safety on a scale of very safe, safe, unsafe and very unsafe.¹⁵³

What did we find ?

- Residents tended to indicate that they felt safe in their **home**, both during the day and after dark. However, females felt slightly less safe at home after dark than males.
- Proportions of respondents who felt very safe or safe in their **neighbourhood** after dark were considerably smaller than proportions of those who felt safe in their neighbourhood during the day, especially among females and residents of Manukau City. Citizens in Manukau City rated the lowest levels of feeling safe in their neighbourhood and those in Wellington City rated highest levels of feeling safe after dark.
- Similarly, whereas respondents tended to feel very safe or safe in their **local town centres** during the day, proportions dropped after dark, especially among Christchurch citizens.
- A relatively small proportion of respondents to the Christchurch survey indicated they felt safe in town after dark - a smaller proportion than in any other survey.
- Manukau respondents tended to indicate lower levels overall of feeling very safe or safe than any other city.

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO FELT 'VERY SAFE' OR 'SAFE', OVERALL (2000)

	At home		In neighbourhood		In town	
	Day (%)	Dark (%)	Day (%)	Dark (%)	Day (%)	Dark (%)
Auckland	93	85	95	69	85	69
Manukau	86	71	85	53	89	47
North Shore	95	88	97	74	96	59
Waitakere	86	78	91	65	n/a	n/a
Wellington	95	95	95	84	n/a	n/a
Christchurch	96	90	96	72	87	29

Data Source: Citizens' surveys

Perception of safety is linked to environmental factors such as the look and feel of the city, level of graffiti and perceived safety of public transport. The media and reporting on crime rates and events also has a significant influence on perception of safety. There are some possible links between perception of safety and actual crime levels as reported in other indicators. For example, the high level of juvenile offending in Canterbury may have resulted in the finding that only 29% of Christchurch respondents feel safe in town at night.

Manukau respondents had the lowest perception of safety compared to other cities. Manukau/Counties has the second highest rate of burglary compared to other Police Districts and a high number of juvenile offences which may influence perception of safety. In addition, as shown in other indicators in this report, Manukau has a higher level of social deprivation compared to other cities, which may influence perception of personal and family safety, directly or indirectly through crime levels.

152 No data was available for any indicator that involved perceptions or attitudes of citizens in the six largest cities. As a result, each participating local authority conducted a survey that explored perceptions and attitudes towards issues such as feelings of safety from crime, perceptions of public transport, sense of community spirit etc.

153 There were several differences in wording of questions between surveys: For example, Manukau City's survey provided the option of "neither safe nor unsafe", which was not offered by any other survey and Waitakere City's survey did not ask respondents about their feelings of safety in the town centre during any particular time period (ie: by day or at night). Manukau City survey asked respondents to identify their local town centre and then asked them to rate how safe they felt at that place, while other surveys did not ask respondents to consider a particular local town centre. In addition, both Wellington and Christchurch residents were asked to rate how safe they felt in the main City Centre, with no specific time limits.