

MARKET RESEARCH REPORT

*Prepared by Gravitas Research and Strategy Limited*

# QUALITY OF LIFE IN NEW ZEALAND'S LARGEST CITIES

***- RESULTS FOR HAMILTON CITY -***

*Prepared For Hamilton City Council*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. Introduction And Methodology

#### Introduction

Ensuring quality of life among its residents is a critical part of all Councils' role. In response to growing pressures on urban communities, and concern about the impacts of urbanisation and the effects of this on the wellbeing of citizens, in 1999 a National Indicators project was initiated. The aim of this project was to measure the quality of life and change in social conditions in large urban areas in New Zealand through the development and use of a series of key indicators.

Residents' perceptions of their quality of life have been assessed through a series of survey questions, conducted via telephone, with a random sample of those living in New Zealand's twelve largest urban areas.

The results for all Twelve Cities and the "rest of New Zealand" have been presented in a separate document ("Quality Of Life In New Zealand's Largest Cities: Residents' Survey" – Gravitas Research and Strategy 2005). This report presents the results from Hamilton city residents.

#### Methodology

All interviewing for Hamilton city was conducted by Consumer Link, using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Live interviewing began on August 9 and was completed on December 13, with interviewing postponed for a month in November due to school and tertiary exams. The average interview length was 19 minutes. The final response rate was 22%.

Five hundred interviews were conducted in each of the twelve cities/districts (the maximum margin of error on a sample size of 500 is  $\pm 4.4\%$  at the 95% confidence interval). The margin of error on the sample size of  $n=500$  is  $\pm 4.4\%$  at the 95% confidence interval.

In order to ensure an exact match with the population distribution, the data set was weighted once interviewing was complete. Hamilton city's data set has been weighted so that the distribution of the sample by gender, age, ethnicity and ward exactly matches that of the city's population aged 15 years or over.

## 2. Quality Of Life

Most Hamilton residents felt that they had a positive overall quality of life, with 89% describing their quality of life as either *good* (67%) or *extremely good* (22%). Only 2% thought they had a *poor* quality of life.

## 3. Health

### Overall Health

Most Hamilton residents (88%) rated their overall health positively (*good, very good or excellent*). Twelve percent of residents described their overall health as *poor* (10%) or *very poor* (2%).

### Experience Of Barriers To Usage Of General Practitioners

One quarter of all Hamilton residents (25%) reported that, in the preceding 12 months, there had been at least one instance when they had wanted to visit a doctor but had not done so. *Cost* was the most dominant reason identified by Hamilton residents who had not visited their general practitioner when they wanted to, this barrier being cited by three-quarters (74%) of this group. Just over one in ten residents (13%) who experienced barriers stated that they had been *too busy to go to the doctor/couldn't take time off work*, while a further 7% noted that *the doctor was too busy/couldn't fit me in/waiting times too long*.

## 4. Free Time

### Activities Undertaken In Free Time

When asked what three main things they did in their free time, just over a third of residents reported spending free time *taking part in sports or other physical activity* (not specified with whom) or *socialising with friends in cafes and bars, visiting friends and/or eating out* (each with 35%). Other commonly mentioned past-times included:

- reading (25%);
- taking part in sports or other physical activity, either on their own or with friends (22%);
- watching TV/videos/DVDs (20%); and/or
- family or child-focused activities (20%).

### Satisfaction With Free Time

Four in five Hamilton residents (79%) were either *satisfied* (54%) or *very satisfied* (25%) with their free time. Only 8% were either *dissatisfied* (7%) or *very dissatisfied* (1%).

### Experience Of Barriers To Leisure Activity

Over half of Hamilton residents (55%) did not experience any barriers that made it difficult to take part in free time activities that were important to them.

The most frequently mentioned barrier was being too *busy, having family commitments and/or not having time* (53%). Twenty percent stated that the *activity cost too much and/or they couldn't afford to participate*, while 13% mentioned *poor health and/or physically cannot participate/sports injury and/or old age*.

### Frequency Of Doing Physical Activity

The greatest single share of Hamilton residents (52%) stated that they participated in physical activity *once or twice a week*, while 36% stated they did some form of physical activity *daily*. An additional 6% stated they participated *at least monthly*. Four percent stated that they *did not ever* do any form of exercise or physical activity.

## 5. Wellbeing

### Emotional Wellbeing

Most Hamilton residents rated their emotional wellbeing positively, with 87% providing a *happy* (56%) or *very happy* (31%) rating. Only 2% provided a negative rating (*unhappy/very unhappy*).

### Satisfaction With Life In General

The greatest share of Hamilton residents were found to be satisfied to some extent (*satisfied* or *very satisfied*) with life in general (87%).

### Stress

Nine in ten Hamilton residents (91%) stated that they had experienced stress which had had a negative effect, one in six (16%) stating that they experienced negative stress at least *most of the time*, 2% experiencing negative stress *always*. Nine percent of Hamilton residents responded that they had *never* experienced stress that had had a negative effect.

### Availability Of Support

Most residents (89%) have someone that they can turn to for help or rely on for support (*some of the time, most of the time or always*), with only 4% of respondents stating that they *never* have anyone that they can turn to.

## 6. Public Transport

### Frequency Of Use Of Public Transport

The greatest single proportion of Hamilton residents (57%) stated that they *had not used public transport* in the last 12 months. An additional 22% stated that they used public transport *less than once a month*. Only 3% of Hamilton residents reported using public transport *daily*.

## Perceptions Of Affordability, Safety And Convenience Of Public Transport

Of the three aspects of public transport measured, Hamilton residents were most likely to *agree/strongly agree* that public transport was **safe**, followed by **affordable** and **convenient**.

Four in five (79%) Hamilton residents *agreed* (67%) or *strongly agreed* (12%) that public transport was **safe**. Only 2% *disagreed* with this statement. By comparison, three in five Hamilton residents (63%) either *agreed* (52%) or *strongly agreed* (11%) that public transport was **affordable**, while just less than three in five (58%) Hamilton residents *agreed* (49%) or *strongly agreed* (9%) that public transport was **convenient**.

## 7. Democracy

### Perception Of Understanding Of Council Decision-Making Process

Just less than a half of all Hamilton residents (46%) agreed to some extent (*agreed or strongly agreed*) that they understood how Hamilton City Council made decisions.

### Desire To Have More Of A Say In What Council Does

Just over half of all Hamilton residents expressed a desire to have more of a say in what Hamilton City Council does (56% *agree/strongly agree*). Thirteen percent of residents stated that they would not like to have more of a say in what Council does.

### Confidence In Council Decision-Making

Two in five Hamilton residents (41%) agreed to some extent that they had confidence that their Council made decisions that were in the best interest of the city. Thirty-three percent disagreed with this statement to some extent.

### Perception Of Public's Influence On Council And Central Government Decision-Making

A comparison of results reveals that there were no significant differences in the perceptions of ability to influence Council and central government decision making, with 88% of Hamilton residents perceiving that they had at least a *small influence* on Council decision making while 85% perceived they had an influence on decisions made by central government. Similarly, 45% of residents perceived that they had at least *some influence* on both Council and central government decision making.

### Perceptions Of Corporate Ethics And Responsibility

Two in five Hamilton residents (41%) *agreed* (37%) or *strongly agreed* (4%) that the private business sector makes decisions in an ethical and responsible manner. Sixteen percent *disagreed* with this statement to some extent.

## 8. Work-Related Issues

### Using Work Skills, Training and Experience in Current Job

More than four in five Hamilton residents currently in paid employment (84%) either *agreed* (34%) or *strongly agreed* (50%) that they were using their work skills, training and experience in their current jobs. Twelve percent either *disagreed* (6%) or *strongly disagreed* (6%).

### Balance Between Work and Other Aspects of Life

Three in five Hamilton residents (63%) were either *satisfied* (44%) or *very satisfied* (19%) with the balance they had between work and other aspects of their life. Twenty percent were either *dissatisfied* (18%) or *very dissatisfied* (2%).

## 9. Crime/Safety

### Sense Of Freedom From Crime

Hamilton residents reported high levels of perceived safety in their own homes after dark, but were less positive about safety in their local neighbourhood and particularly the city centre.

Most Hamilton residents reported feeling a sense of freedom from crime **in their home after dark**, with 87% stating they felt either *safe* (54%) or *very safe* (33%). Six percent felt *unsafe* (4%) or *very unsafe* (2%). Sixty-four percent of Hamilton residents reported feeling a sense of freedom from crime **in their local neighbourhood after dark**, with 49% stating that they felt *safe* and 15% *very safe*. In contrast, less than two in five Hamilton residents reported a sense of freedom from crime **in the city centre after dark**, with 37% stating they felt either *safe* (34%) or *very safe* (3%). Thirty-four percent reported feeling *unsafe* (26%) or *very unsafe* (8%).

### Perceptions Of Crime/Safety Problems In Local Area

Of the five issues assessed, Hamilton residents were most likely to identify dangerous driving as having been a problem in their local area in the last 12 months (64%). In contrast, residents were least likely to perceive a problem with vandalism (25%).

**Summary Table 1: Perceptions Of Crime And Safety Issues (%)**

	Share Perceiving Issue To Be A Problem (n=500)
Dangerous driving	64
Graffiti	45
Theft and damage to cars	32
Feeling unsafe around some people	29
Vandalism	25

Base: All respondents

## 10. Community

### Felt Sense Of Community

Just over half of Hamilton residents felt a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood, with 56% either *agreeing* (47%) or *strongly agreeing* (9%) with this statement. Twenty-two percent of residents either *disagreed* (20%) or *strongly disagreed* (2%) that they felt a sense of community with others.

### Importance Of Sense Of Community

Three quarters of Hamilton residents felt that a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood was important, with 74% either *agreeing* (54%) or *strongly agreeing* (20%) with this statement. Nine percent *disagreed* with the importance of a sense of community.

When asked why they did not think it was important to have a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood, the most frequently mentioned reasons were that residents *liked to keep to themselves and/or were not interested in community activities* (35%) or that they were *too busy and/or that their focus was on their family and/or and job* (21%). An additional 19% stated that they *didn't know their neighbours*.

### Ability To Have Personal Impact On Making Community A Better Place To Live

Just over three-quarters of Hamilton residents (77%) either *agreed* (58%) or *strongly agreed* (19%) that people like themselves can have an impact on making their community a better place to live. Eight percent of residents *disagreed* with this statement.

### Social Networks

Three in five Hamilton residents (60%) stated that the group or social network that matters to them the most is *mostly made up of people who have the same interests, culture or beliefs as you, but who do not necessarily live in their area*. Fourteen percent stated that their social networks were *mostly made up of people who live in the same area as them* (that is, their local neighbourhood), while 22% stated that *there were no particular groups or networks that they feel part of*.

### Neighbourhood Contact

Most Hamilton residents (91%) stated that, in the last 12 months, they had had **no negative contact where there is outright tension or disagreements** with people in their neighbourhood. Only 9% stated that they had experienced negative contact with outright tension. Most Hamilton residents (86%) also stated that, in the last 12 months, they *had not* experienced **some negative contact** with people in their neighbourhood (for example not getting on with them). Fourteen percent stated that they had experienced negative contact of this nature.

In contrast, almost all Hamilton residents (95%) stated that, in the last 12 months, they had had **some positive contact** - such as a nod or saying hello - with people in their neighbourhood. Five percent of residents stated that they had not experienced any positive contact. Most Hamilton residents (82%) also stated that, in the last 12 months, they had experienced **positive contact** - such as a visit, a chat, asking each other for small favors, telling them if you are going away etc. - with people in their neighbourhood. Eighteen percent stated that they had not.

### Isolation

Four in five Hamilton residents (82%) reported that, in the last 12 months, they had either *never* (57%) or *rarely* (25%) felt lonely or isolated. Sixteen percent stated they *sometimes* felt isolated, while 2% *always* felt this way.

### Trust

Just over three in five Hamilton residents (64%) stated that people can *usually* (59%) or *almost always* (5%) be trusted. Just over a quarter (27%) stated that *you usually can't be too careful*, while 8% stated you *almost always can't be too careful*.

## 11. Built Environment

### Pollution Problems In Local Area

Of the four environmental issues measured, Hamilton residents were most likely to report a problem with rubbish or litter lying about on the streets, 41% of residents noting that this had been an issue in their local area in the last 12 months. In contrast, residents were least likely to report a problem with air pollution (17%).

**Summary Table 2: Perceptions Of Environmental Issues (%)**

	Share Perceiving Issue To Be A Problem (n=500)
Rubbish and litter lying about on the streets	41
Noise pollution	35
Water pollution	25
Air pollution	17

Base: All respondents

### Culturally Rich And Diverse Arts Scene

Just over half of Hamilton residents (56%) either *agreed* (43%) or *strongly agreed* (13%) that their city had a culturally rich and diverse arts scene. Twelve percent *disagreed* (10%) or *strongly disagreed* (2%).

### Pride In City's Look And Feel

Seventy percent of Hamilton residents either *agreed* (58%) or *strongly agreed* (12%) that they felt a sense of pride in the way their city looked and felt. Eight percent *disagreed* with this statement, while 2% *strongly disagreed*.

The most commonly mentioned reasons for pride in the way Hamilton looked and felt related to the physical attractiveness of the city as well as the attitudes of its people. Twenty-four percent stated that they felt a sense of pride because of the *greenness of the city with its beautiful parks and gardens*, while 15% stated that their sense of pride was derived from the fact that their *city was clean and tidy and/or had no litter*. Eight percent stated that they felt a sense of pride due to the *helpful, friendly and welcoming people* who lived there.

Among those who stated that they had a lack of pride in the way Hamilton looked and felt, the most frequently mentioned reason related to the unattractiveness of the look of the city, with 20% stating that they did not feel a sense of pride because their city looked *drab or dowdy and that it needs sprucing up and/or better maintenance*. Eleven percent stated that it was because there was *poor planning or lack of forward planning*, while 6% mentioned either that there was *no sense of community* or that they had *safety concerns, or crime/violence* issues.

### Perception Of Impact On City Of Greater Cultural Diversity

Just less than half of Hamilton residents (46%) felt that greater cultural diversity made Hamilton either *a better* (36%) or *a much better* (10%) place to live. Just over a third (39%) felt that greater cultural diversity *made no difference*, while 12% felt that it made a place a *worse* (10%) or *much worse* (2%) place to live.

Residents who stated that, overall, greater cultural diversity made Hamilton a *worse* or *much worse* place to live were asked what the one main reason for saying this was. The most frequently mentioned reasons were that *migrants lacked integration into New Zealand society and/or they didn't mix with others outside their ethnic groups* (16%), that they were *arrogant, disrespectful or ill-mannered people* (16%), and that they had *poor driving skills* (14%).

Of those who stated that, overall, greater cultural diversity made their city or town a *better* or *much better* place to live, 58% mentioned that *diversity was good as it gave a broader perspective and outlook and/or brought new ideas*. Forty-two percent stated that it helped them *learn about other cultures, stop racism and/or taught tolerance*. Other frequently mentioned reasons included a perception that cultural diversity made Hamilton a *more vibrant and interesting place* (16%) and that it meant *more interesting food, more choice and/or better restaurants* (14%).

### Ease Of Access

Most Hamilton residents rated access to each of the services or facilities as at least *easy*. Shopping malls and/or centres and supermarkets, local parks and green spaces had the highest ratings for ease of access (95% *easy* or *very easy*), while residents were most likely to report difficulties accessing public transport facilities.

**Summary Table 3: Ease Of Access To Services And Facilities (%)**

	Share Rating Access As Easy Or Very Easy (n=500)
Shopping malls/centres and supermarkets	95
Local parks and green spaces	95
Banks or cash machines	91
Education provider	86
Public transport facilities	82

*Base: All respondents*

Residents who stated that access to any of the services and facilities above was *difficult* or *very difficult* were asked why access was so poor. In response, a quarter (25%) stated that the services and facilities were *not easily accessible by public transport or that public transport was not available*, while 24% noted that it would be a *very long walk to access the service or facility*. A further 22% stated that the facility or service was *not available or that there were only a few located in their area*.