

MARKET RESEARCH REPORT

Prepared by Gravitas Research and Strategy Limited

**QUALITY OF LIFE IN
NEW ZEALAND'S LARGEST CITIES**

- RESULTS FOR RODNEY DISTRICT -

Prepared For Rodney District 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 Rodney district residents.

Methodology

All interviewing for Rodney district was conducted by Gravitas Research and Strategy, 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. Rodney district'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 Rodney residents felt that they had a positive overall quality of life, with 91% giving a rating of either *good* (58%) or *extremely good* (33%). Two percent thought they had a *poor* or *extremely poor* quality of life.

3. Health

Overall Health

Most Rodney residents rated their overall health positively, 90% giving a rating of *good*, *very good* or *excellent*. Ten percent of residents described their overall health as *poor* or *very poor*.

Experience Of Barriers To Usage Of General Practitioners

Over a fifth of all Rodney residents (22%) 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 Rodney residents who had not visited their GP when they wanted to, this barrier being cited by three in five (59%) of this group. More than one in six residents (17%) who experienced barriers stated that they had been too busy to go to the doctor/couldn't take time off work, while a further 14% noted that the doctor was too far away, difficult to get to and/or that they didn't have transport.

4. Free Time

Activities Undertaken In Free Time

When asked what three main things they did in their free time, a third (34%) stated that they took part in sports or other physical activity (but did not specify whether they did this activity by themselves, with friends or with a club). Other commonly mentioned past-times included:

- gardening and lawn mowing (26%);
- taking part in sports or other physical activity, on their own or with friends (26%);
- reading (21%); and/or
- socialising with friends in cafes and bars, visiting friends and/or eat out (21%).

Satisfaction With Free Time

Four in five Rodney residents (80%) were either *satisfied* (47%) or *very satisfied* (33%) with their free time. Nine percent were *dissatisfied* (7%) or *very dissatisfied* (2%).

Experience Of Barriers To Leisure Activity

Over half of Rodney residents (55%) did not experience any barriers that made it difficult to take part in free time activities that were important to them. Forty-four percent stated that they had experienced barriers.

The most commonly mentioned barrier was being too busy, having family commitments and/or not having time (41%). Nineteen percent stated that the activity was too far away and that they don't have transport, while 14% stated that they had poor health, physically could not participate, had a sports injury and/or could not participate because of old age. A further 13% stated that the activity cost too much and/or they couldn't afford to participate/participate more often.

Frequency Of Doing Physical Activity

The greatest single share of Rodney residents (48%) stated that they participated in physical activity *about once a week*, while 41% stated they did some form of physical activity *daily*. A further 4% stated they participated in physical activity *once a month*. Three percent stated that they *did not ever* do any form of exercise or physical activity.

5. Wellbeing

Emotional Wellbeing

Most Rodney residents rated their emotional wellbeing positively (91% *happy or unhappy*). Two percent gave a negative rating (*unhappy/very unhappy*).

Satisfaction With Life In General

The greatest share of Rodney residents were found to be satisfied to some extent (*satisfied or very satisfied*) with life in general (90%).

Stress

Thirteen percent of Rodney residents responded that they had *never* experienced stress that had had a negative effect. Almost nine out of ten respondents (87%) stated that they had experienced stress which had had a negative effect, 13% stating that they experienced this negative stress at least *most of the time*, 3% experiencing negative stress *always*.

Availability Of Support

Most residents (94%) have someone that they can turn to for help or rely on for support (*rarely, some of the time, most of the time or always*), while 5% of respondents state that they *never* have anyone that they can turn to. Just over half (55%) reported *always* having someone they can turn to.

6. Public Transport

Frequency Of Use Of Public Transport

The greatest single proportion of Rodney residents (66%) stated that they *had not used public transport* in the last 12 months. An additional 16% stated that they used public transport *less than once a month* in the past 12 months, while 6% noted that public transport was not available where they live. Four percent reported using public transport *every day* or *nearly every day*.

Perceptions Of Affordability, Safety And Convenience Of Public Transport

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

Seven in ten Rodney residents (69%) *agreed* (57%) or *strongly agreed* (12%) that public transport was **safe**. Three percent *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with this statement. Just over two in five Rodney residents (41%) either *agreed* (36%) or *strongly agreed* (5%) that public transport was **affordable**, while 30% of Rodney residents *agreed* (25%) or *strongly agreed* (5%) that public transport was **convenient**.

7. Democracy

Perception Of Understanding Of Council Decision-Making Process

Just less than half of all Rodney residents (47%) agreed to some extent (*agreed or strongly agreed*) that they understood how Rodney District Council makes decisions.

Desire To Have More Of A Say In What Council Does

Three in five Rodney residents expressed a desire to have more of a say in what Rodney District Council does (61% *agree/strongly agree*). Around one in seven residents (14%) stated that they would not like to have more of a say.

Confidence In Council Decision-Making

Just over a third of all residents throughout Rodney (36%) agreed that they had confidence that their Council made decisions that were in the best interest of the city. Just over a third (37%) disagreed with the statement to some extent.

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

A comparison of results for perceptions of ability to influence Council and central government decision making reveals that residents were significantly more likely to perceive that they had at least a *small influence* on Council decision making (85%) than on the decisions made by central government (80%).

Similarly, just over two in five (43%) of all residents perceived that they had at least *some influence* on Council decision making while 33% felt that they had the same level of influence on central government-made decisions.

Perceptions Of Corporate Ethics And Responsibility

Two out of five Rodney residents (40%) *agreed* (35%) or *strongly agreed* (5%) that the private business sector makes decisions in an ethical and responsible manner. Seventeen percent disagreed with this statement.

8. Work-Related Issues

Using Work Skills, Training and Experience in Current Job

More than four in five Rodney residents currently in paid employment (85%) either *agreed* (33%) or *strongly agreed* (52%) that they were using their work skills, training and experience in their current jobs. Ten percent either *disagreed* (6%) or *strongly disagreed* (4%).

Balance Between Work and Other Aspects of Life

Two thirds of Rodney residents currently in paid employment (65%) were either *satisfied* (45%) or *very satisfied* (20%) with the balance they had between work and other aspects of their life. Twenty one percent were *dissatisfied* (17%) or *very dissatisfied* (4%).

9. Crime/Safety

Sense Of Freedom From Crime

Rodney 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 Rodney residents reported feeling a sense of freedom from crime **in their home after dark**, with 90% stating they felt either *safe* (46%) or *very safe* (44%). Four in five Rodney residents reported feeling a sense of freedom from crime **in their local neighbourhood after dark**, with 79% stating they feeling either *safe* (50%) or *very safe* (29%). Seven percent felt *unsafe* (5%) or *very unsafe* (2%). In contrast, three in five Rodney residents reported a sense of freedom from crime **in the district's centre after dark**, with 62% stating they felt either *safe* (47%) or *very safe* (15%). Thirteen percent reported feeling *unsafe* (12%) or *very unsafe* (1%).

Perceptions Of Crime/Safety Problems In Local Area

Of the five issues assessed, Rodney residents were most likely to identify dangerous driving as having been a problem in their local area in the last 12 months (66%). In contrast, residents were least likely to perceive a problem with feeling unsafe around some people (24%) (Summary Table 1).

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

	Share Perceiving Issue To Be A Problem (n=500)
Dangerous driving	66
Graffiti	48
Vandalism	32
Theft and damage to cars	29
Feeling unsafe around some people	24

Base: All respondents

10. Community

Felt Sense Of Community

Three quarters of Rodney residents felt a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood, with 75% either *agreeing* (55%) or *strongly agreeing* (20%) with this statement. Ten percent *disagreed* (8%) or *strongly disagreed* (2%) that they felt a sense of community with others.

Importance Of Sense Of Community

More than four in five Rodney residents felt that a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood was important, with 83% either *agreeing* (54%) or *strongly agreeing* (29%) with this statement. Five percent *disagreed/strongly 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 commonly mentioned reason was that residents liked to keep to themselves and/or were not interested in community activities (50%). Eighteen percent stated that their neighbours were not their type of people and/or that they had different interests and lifestyles and/or that they had nothing in common, while 14% stated that they did not know their neighbours or that they were too busy and/or that their focus was on their family and/or job.

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

Over three-quarters of Rodney residents (79%) either *agreed* (57%) or *strongly agreed* (22%) that people like themselves can have an impact on making their community a better place to live. Seven percent of residents *disagreed* (6%) or *strongly disagreed* (1%).

Social Networks

The largest share of Rodney residents (45%) stated that the group or social network that matters to them the most was *mostly made up of people who have the same interests, culture or beliefs as you, but who do not necessarily live in their area*. A third (33%) 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 18% stated that *there are no particular groups or networks that they feel part of*.

Neighbourhood Contact

Most Rodney residents (89%) 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. Ten percent stated that they had experienced negative contact with outright tension. Most Rodney residents (82%) 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). Seventeen percent stated that they had experienced negative contact of this nature.

In contrast, almost all Rodney residents (98%) 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. Two percent of residents stated that they had not experienced any positive contact. Almost all Rodney residents (92%) 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. Eight percent stated that they had not.

Isolation

More than four in five Rodney residents (86%) reported that, in the last 12 months, they had either *never* (69%) or *rarely* (17%) felt lonely or isolated. Twelve percent stated they *sometimes* felt isolated, while 2% felt this way *most of the time*.

Trust

More than seven out of ten Rodney residents (72%) stated that people can *usually* (63%) or *almost always* (9%) be trusted. Just less than a quarter (23%) stated that *you usually can't be too careful*, while 4% stated you *almost always can't be too careful*.

11. Built Environment

Pollution Problems In Local Area

Of the four environmental issues measured, Rodney residents were most likely to report a problem with rubbish or litter lying about on the streets, 36% 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 (10%) (Summary Table 2).

Summary Table 2: Perceptions Of Environmental Issues (%)

	Share Perceiving Issue To Be A Problem (n=500)
Rubbish and litter lying about on the streets	36
Water pollution	29
Noise pollution	22
Air pollution	10

Base: All respondents

Culturally Rich And Diverse Arts Scene

Just less than half of Rodney residents (45%) either *agreed* (37%) or *strongly agreed* (8%) that their district had a culturally rich and diverse arts scene. Twenty percent *disagreed* (16%) or *strongly disagreed* (4%).

Pride In City's Look And Feel

Two thirds of Rodney residents (66%) either *agreed* (53%) or *strongly agreed* (13%) that they felt a sense of pride in the way their city or town looked and felt. Ten percent *disagreed/strongly disagreed* with this statement.

The most commonly mentioned reasons for pride in the way Rodney looked and felt related to the physical attractiveness of the district. Nineteen percent stated that they felt a sense of pride because the beaches and harbours were beautiful with good access. Eighteen percent stated that their sense of pride was derived from the greenness of the city with its beautiful parks and gardens, while an additional 17% said they felt a sense of pride due to the fact that their city was clean and tidy and/or had no litter.

Among those who stated that they had a lack of pride in the way Rodney looked and felt, the most frequently mentioned reason related to the planning of the district, with 16% stating that they did not feel a sense of pride because their district had poor planning and/or lacked forward planning. An additional 13% stated that it was because city looked dirty and/or there is rubbish everywhere, while 11% said it was because of road works, traffic problems and congestion.

Perception Of Impact On City Of Greater Cultural Diversity

Two in five Rodney residents (44%) felt that greater cultural diversity made Rodney either *a better* (32%) or *a much better* (12%) place to live. Just less than half (46%) felt that greater cultural diversity *made no difference*. Seven percent felt that it made a place a *worse* (5%) or *much worse* (2%) place to live.

Residents who stated that, overall, greater cultural diversity made Rodney a *worse* or *much worse* place to live were asked what the one main reason for saying this was. The three most frequently mentioned reasons were that it causes racial disharmony and tension, that migrants lacked integration into New Zealand society or they didn't mix with others outside their ethnic groups, and/or that that migrants are taking us and our shops over (each mentioned by 17%).

Of those who stated that, overall, greater cultural diversity made their city or town a *better* or *much better* place to live, 64% mentioned that diversity was good as it gave a broader perspective and outlook and/or brought new ideas. Thirty-eight 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 meant more interesting food, more choice and/or better restaurants (12%), and that it made the Rodney district a more vibrant and interesting place (11%).

Ease Of Access

Most Rodney residents rated access to each of the services or facilities as at least *easy* – with the exception of public transport facilities. Local parks and green spaces had the highest ratings for ease of access (93%), while residents were most likely to report difficulties accessing public transport facilities (39% reporting access as at least *difficult*) (Summary Table 3).

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

	Share Rating Access As Easy Or Very Easy (n=500)
Local parks and green spaces	93
Banks or cash machines	85
Shopping malls/centers and supermarkets	81
Education provider	67
Public transport facilities	45

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, over half (55%) stated that the reason access was difficult was that the services and facilities were not easily accessible by public transport or that public transport was not available. Other commonly mentioned reasons included that the facility or service was not available or that there were only a few located in their area (16%), that it would be a very long walk to access the service or facility (15%) and that they would have to travel a long distance to reach the service or facility (14%).