

RESEARCH REPORT

*Prepared by Gravitas Research and Strategy Limited*

# QUALITY OF LIFE IN NEW ZEALAND'S LARGEST CITIES

***- RESULTS FOR WELLINGTON CITY -***

*Prepared For Wellington City Council*

*Revised Report Delivered 27 June 2005*

## 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 has 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 National Indicators closely align with those used by the Ministry of Social Development in their annual Social Report. As both projects rely on similar data to monitor trends in wellbeing, for 2004, the Ministry became partners on the Quality Of Life survey, and an additional sample of 1500 residents living outside the twelve urban areas was included in the research.

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 Wellington city residents.

#### Methodology

All interviewing for Wellington City 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. Wellington 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 Wellington residents felt that they had a positive overall quality of life, with 88% giving a rating of either *good* (56%) or *extremely good* (32%). Only 3% thought they had a *poor* or *very poor* quality of life.

## 3. Health

### Overall Health

Most Wellington residents rated their overall health positively (*good, very good or excellent*) (89%).

Eleven percent of residents described their overall health as *fair* or *poor*.

### Experience Of Barriers To Usage Of General Practitioners

Over a fifth of all Wellington residents (23%) 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 Wellington residents who had not visited their GP when they wanted to, this barrier being cited by over three in five (63%) 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 9% noted that *the condition got better on its own*.

## 4. Free Time

### Activities Undertaken In Free Time

When asked what three main things they did in their free time, a third (32%) stated that they spent their free time socialising with friends in cafes and bars, visiting friends and/or eating out. Other commonly mentioned past-times included:

- reading (32%);
- taking part in sports or other physical activity (*unspecified with whom*) (29%); and/or
- taking part in sports or other physical activity, either on their own or with friends (28%).

### Satisfaction With Free Time

Four in five Wellington residents (81%) were either *satisfied* (50%) or *very satisfied* (31%) with their free time. Only 7% were either *dissatisfied* (6%) or *very dissatisfied* (1%).

### Experience Of Barriers To Leisure Activity

Over half of Wellington residents (52%) did not experience any barriers that made it difficult to take part in free time activities that were important to them. Forty-seven percent reported experiencing barriers.

The most commonly mentioned barrier was being too busy, having family commitments and/or not having time (51% of those experiencing a barrier). Eighteen percent stated that the activity cost too much and/or they couldn't afford to participate/participate more often, while 12% mentioned weather and/or daylight hours.

### Frequency Of Doing Physical Activity

The greatest single share of Wellington residents (50%) stated that they participated in physical activity *about once a week*, while 37% stated they did some form of physical activity *daily*. An additional 5% stated they participated *once a month*. Five percent stated that they *did not ever* do any form of exercise or physical activity.

## 5. Wellbeing

### Emotional Wellbeing

Most Wellington residents described their emotional wellbeing positively (88% *happy* or *very happy*). Only 2% gave a negative rating (*unhappy/very unhappy*).

### Satisfaction With Life In General

More than four in five Wellington residents were found to be satisfied to some extent (*satisfied* or *very satisfied*) with life in general (84%).

### Stress

Almost all Wellington respondents (91%) stated that they had experienced stress which had had a negative effect, 15% stating that they experienced this negative stress *most of the time* or *always*. Eight percent of Wellington residents responded that they had *never* experienced negative stress.

### Availability Of Support

Most residents (95%) 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*). Only 4% of respondents state that they *never* have anyone that they can turn to. Half (50%) *always* have someone they can turn to for support.

## 6. Public Transport

### Frequency Of Use Of Public Transport

The greatest single proportion of Wellington residents (25%) stated that they used public transport *every day* or *nearly every day*. An additional 21% stated that they used public transport *at least once a week*, while 17% stated they used it *at least once a month*. In contrast, 13% stated they *had not use public transport* in the previous 12 months.

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

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

Almost nine in ten (87%) Wellington residents *agreed* (63%) or *strongly agreed* (24%) that public transport was **safe**. Only 4% *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with this statement. More than three quarters (77%) of Wellington residents *agreed* (54%) or *strongly agreed* (23%) that public transport was **convenient**, while three quarters of Wellington residents (75%) either *agreed* (57%) or *strongly agreed* (18%) that public transport was **affordable**.

## 7. Democracy

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

Just less than half of all Wellington residents (49%) agreed to some extent (*agreed or strongly agreed*) that they understood how Wellington City Council made decisions.

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

Just less than half of all Wellington residents expressed a desire to have more of a say in what Wellington City Council does (49% *agree/strongly agree*). Around one in seven residents (16%) stated that they would not like to have more of a say in what Council does.

### Confidence In Council Decision-Making

Over half of all residents throughout Wellington (52%) agreed to some extent that they had confidence that their Council made decisions that were in the best interest of the city. Just over one in five (21%) 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 slightly more likely to perceive that they had at least a *small influence* on Council decision making (87%) than on the decisions made by central government (85%). Similarly, over half (56%) of all residents perceived that they had at least *some influence* on Council decision making, while only 48% felt that they had the same level of influence on central government-made decisions.

### Perceptions Of Corporate Ethics And Responsibility

Almost one in three Wellington residents (29%) *agreed* (26%) or *strongly agreed* (3%) that the private business sector makes decisions in an ethical and responsible manner. Over a quarter (27%) 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 Wellington residents currently in paid employment (86%) either *agreed* (28%) or *strongly agreed* (58%) that they were using their work skills, training and experience in their current jobs. Eight percent either *disagreed* (5%) or *strongly disagreed* (3%).

### Balance Between Work and Other Aspects of Life

Seven in ten Wellington residents (70%) were either *satisfied* (49%) or *very satisfied* (21%) with the balance they had between work and other aspects of their life. Fourteen percent were either *dissatisfied* (11%) or *very dissatisfied* (3%).

## 9. Crime/Safety

### Sense Of Freedom From Crime

Wellington 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 Wellington residents reported feeling a sense of freedom from crime **in their home after dark**, with 94% stating they felt either *safe* (43%) or *very safe* (51%). Only 3% felt *unsafe* in their homes after dark. More than three quarters of Wellington residents reported feeling a sense of freedom from crime **in their local neighbourhood after dark**, with 78% stating they felt either *safe* (53%) or *very safe* (25%). In contrast, just over half of Wellington residents reported a sense of freedom from crime **in the city centre after dark**, with 55% stating they felt either *safe* (45%) or *very safe* (10%).

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

Of the five issues assessed, Wellington residents were most likely to identify dangerous driving as having been a problem in their local area in the last 12 months (50%). In contrast, residents were least likely to perceive a problem with feeling unsafe around some people (24%).

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

	Share Perceiving Issue To Be A Problem (n=500)
Dangerous driving	50
Graffiti	42
Theft and damage to cars	38
Vandalism	25
Feeling unsafe around some people	24

Base: All respondents

## 10. Community

### Felt Sense Of Community

Three in five Wellington residents felt a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood, with 61% either *agreeing* (47%) or *strongly agreeing* (14%) with this statement. Sixteen percent *disagreed* (14%) or *strongly disagreed* (2%) that they felt a sense of community with others.

### Importance Of Sense Of Community

Three quarters of Wellington residents felt that a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood was important, with 74% either *agreeing* (51%) or *strongly agreeing* (23%) with this statement. Seven 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 reasons were that they were too busy and/or that their focus was on their family and/or and job (26%), and that residents liked to keep to themselves and/or were not interested in community activities (24%). An additional 15% 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.

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

Just over three-quarters of Wellington residents (77%) either *agreed* (56%) or *strongly agreed* (21%) that people like themselves can have an impact on making their community a better place to live. Eight percent of residents *disagreed* (7%) or *strongly disagreed* (1%).

### Social Networks

Over three in five Wellington residents (64%) 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*. Nineteen 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 14% stated that *there are no particular groups or networks that they feel part of*.

### Neighbourhood Contact

Most Wellington residents (90%) 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 Wellington residents (87%) 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). Twelve percent stated that they *had* experienced negative contact of this nature.

In contrast, almost all Wellington residents (96%) 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. Four percent of residents stated that they *had not* experienced any positive contact. Most Wellington residents (85%) also stated that, in the last 12 months, they *had* experienced **positive contact** - such as a visit, a chat, asking each other for small favours, telling them if you are going away etc. - with people in their neighbourhood. Fifteen percent stated that they *had not*.

### Isolation

Four in five Wellington residents (82%) reported that, in the last 12 months, they had either *never* (55%) or *rarely* (27%) felt lonely or isolated. Fifteen percent stated they *sometimes* felt isolated, while 3% felt this way *most of the time*.

### Trust

Almost four out of five Wellington residents (77%) stated that people can *usually* (68%) or *almost always* (9%) be trusted. Just less than one in five (17%) stated that *you usually can't be too careful*, while 5% stated *you almost always can't be too careful*.

## 11. Built Environment

### Pollution Problems In Local Area

Of the four environmental issues measured, Wellington residents were most likely to report a problem with rubbish or litter lying about on the streets, 46% 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 (11%).

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

	Share Perceiving Issue To Be A Problem (n=500)
Rubbish and litter lying about on the streets	46
Noise pollution	22
Water pollution	15
Air pollution	11

Base: All respondents

### Culturally Rich And Diverse Arts Scene

Almost nine in ten Wellington residents (88%) either *agreed* (37%) or *strongly agreed* (51%) that their city had a culturally rich and diverse arts scene. Only two percent *disagreed*.

### Pride In City's Look And Feel

More than four out of five Wellington residents (84%) either *agreed* (47%) or *strongly agreed* (37%) that they felt a sense of pride in the way their city or town looked and felt. Only 3% *disagreed/strongly agreed* with this statement.

The most commonly mentioned reasons for pride in the way Wellington looked and felt related to the physical attractiveness of the city as well as the things the city has to offer. Thirteen percent stated that they felt a sense of pride because of the greenness of the city with its beautiful parks and gardens. Twelve percent stated that their sense of pride was derived from the fact that their city had many attractions, activities, events and/or things to do, while 11% said they felt a sense of pride due to the city's good facilities and services.

Among those who stated that they had a lack of pride in the way Wellington looked and felt, the most frequently mentioned reason related to the unattractiveness of the look of the city, with 31% stating that they did not feel a sense of pride because their city looked dirty and/or there is rubbish everywhere. An additional 17% said it was because their city was drab or dowdy and that it needs sprucing up and/or better maintenance, while 14% said they either lacked pride because older buildings had been pulled down, there was infill housing and/or new buildings were unattractive or because of graffiti and vandalism.

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

Just less than three quarters of Wellington residents (74%) felt that greater cultural diversity made Wellington either *a better* (50%) or *a much better* (24%) place to live. One in five (21%) felt that greater cultural diversity *made no difference*, while only four percent felt that it made a place a *worse* place to live.

Residents who stated that, overall, greater cultural diversity made Wellington 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 it leads to increases in crime and/or gangs (28%), and that migrants lacked integration into New Zealand society and/or they didn't mix with others outside their ethnic groups (26%).

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, while 40% 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 Wellington a more vibrant and interesting place (19%), and that it meant more interesting food, more choice and/or better restaurants (15%).

### Ease Of Access

Most Wellington residents rated access to each of the services or facilities as at least *easy*. Local parks and other green open spaces and public transport facilities had the highest ratings for ease of access (93% *easy/very easy*), while residents were most likely to report difficulties accessing education providers (83% *easy/very easy*).

**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
Public transport facilities	93
Shopping malls/centres and supermarkets	92
Banks or cash machines	91
Education provider	83

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 facility or service was not available or that there were only a few located in their area, while 21% 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. An additional 20% noted that it would be a very long walk to access the service or facility.