

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **New Zealanders have great quality of life Quality of Life Survey Results**

*Dunedin (22 February 2007)* – Most New Zealanders believe they have a very high quality of life, according to the results of a national survey released today. The biennial Quality of Life survey measures the perceptions of over 7,500 residents living in the country's largest cities and districts. Conducted by research company TNS, the survey is jointly funded by the twelve participating Councils and the Ministry of Social Development.\* The survey sample comprised 500 telephone interviews in each of the 12 largest cities and districts and 1,500 residents from the rest of New Zealand.

Ninety percent of residents living in the 12 cities rated their overall quality of life positively, compared with 91 percent of respondents living outside of these main areas. Similarly, 90 percent of 12 cities residents viewed their overall health as favourable. Those who rated their health the best live in Tauranga and 'the rest of New Zealand', while those who rated it less favourably live in Auckland and Waitakere. Standards of living within our major cities and districts were also reportedly positive, with the majority of people interviewed (88% 12 cities, 87% 'rest of New Zealand') saying they had enough money to cover the cost of their everyday lives.

Jim Harland, Quality of Life Project Sponsor, said the survey results are heartening and "show that people's experiences of life in New Zealand's major cities and districts are very optimistic and that they have continued to rise compared to the 2004 survey. However, the results still highlight areas to which both local and central government policy makers need to devote greater attention".

The majority (90%) of 12 cities residents viewed their health positively, responding with a rating of either excellent (22%), very good (40%), or good (27%). Twenty percent of 12 cities respondents and nineteen percent of those from the 'rest of New Zealand' experienced some type of barrier when going to visit their general practitioner. Among those who had experienced such barriers, the most frequently mentioned was the expense (53% 12 cities, 41% 'rest of New Zealand) or that they were too busy or could not take time off work (23% 12 cities, 18% 'rest of New Zealand').

Reflecting results from those in the 'rest of New Zealand', the majority of the 12 cities' respondents felt safe in their homes during the day (96%) and 91 percent felt safe after dark. Dunedin, Wellington and Christchurch are where most people feel safe in their homes after dark, while Manukau and Auckland are where they feel less safe. Feelings of overall safety in central city areas after dark was considerably lower with only 50 percent stating that they felt very safe (12%) or fairly safe (38%). The most frequently mentioned reason for feeling unsafe was the perception of dangerous people, high profile media coverage of crime, alcohol and drug problems and poor lighting in these areas.

Males were significantly more likely to indicate that they felt safe in their city centre (58%) compared to females (42%). Those who indicated they were more likely to have encountered 'unsafe people' (due to behaviour, attitude or

appearance) live in Manukau, Auckland, Waitakere and Christchurch. Conversely, those from Rodney, Dunedin or 'the rest of NZ' were less likely to have had a problem.

Social connectedness within our communities could be improved with only 56 percent of those surveyed in the 12 cities feeling like there was a sense of community in their local neighbourhood, compared with 65 percent in the 'rest of New Zealand'. The 'busy lives of fellow residents' and 'unfriendly neighbours' were the main reasons behind this perceived lack of community. Those from Rodney or 'the rest of NZ' have a higher expectation of a 'sense of community' whereas those from Hamilton, Tauranga or Christchurch have less of an expectation. Maori and Pacific Islanders felt more of a 'sense of community' than other ethnic groups.

A lack of awareness amongst urban dwellers about Council decision-making processes emerged as an issue, with only 35 percent of 12 cities' respondents stating that they had an understanding of Council decision-making. This compares with 44 percent of those from the 'rest of New Zealand'. Over half of the 12 cities' respondents (53%) desired a greater say in Council operations and only 42 percent felt that they had confidence that their Council makes decisions in the best interests of the area.

Fifty-eight percent of 12 cities' residents felt a sense of pride in their area. This was much less than those living in the 'rest of New Zealand' (65%). Those who were significantly more likely to have felt a sense of pride in their area (either strongly agree or agree) were living in Wellington (82%), Dunedin (73%), Hamilton (69%) and Christchurch (68%). While those who were significantly less likely to have felt a sense of pride in their city lived in Manukau (39%), Auckland (43%), Waitakere (50%) and Rodney (53%). Key issues affecting sense of pride included the presence of rubbish and graffiti or vandalism and the need for better city maintenance.

Only 21 percent of 12 cities respondents' were regular users of public transport (2 or more times per week), compared to 6 percent in the 'rest of New Zealand'. The availability of public transport options did not appear to be a significant issue as 67% of people believed they were able to access a public transport facility. Jim Harland said, "The lack of uptake of public transport is an increasingly important issue as we grapple with the impacts of climate change and rising fuel costs. Each city needs to do more to persuade its residents to leave their cars at home".

Kiwi's living within the 12 cities seem to be embracing physical activity, with 56 percent of those surveyed participating in some type of activity five or more days per week. However, those living in the 'rest of New Zealand' participated even more (61%). Only seven percent of respondents from the 12 cities indicated that they did not currently undertake any form of physical activity.

Jim Harland said, "the Quality of Life project provides important information about our residents. The fact that we are working on this with the Ministry of Social Development only strengthens our ability to identify any significant issues and address them at both the national and local level".

## **About the Quality of Life 2006 Survey \***

The Quality of Life 2006 Survey is the second national survey in a partnership between 12 Quality of Life Project Cities and the Ministry of Social Development. The 12 cities are: North Shore, Waitakere, Auckland, Manukau, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Porirua, Hutt, Christchurch, Dunedin and Rodney District.

The 2006 survey is part of an ongoing series of surveys and research exploring quality of life and well-being issues. Topics covered include:

- Quality of Life
- Health and Well-being
- Crime and safety
- Community, Culture and Social Networks
- Council Processes
- Built Environment
- Public Transport
- Lifestyle – Work and Study

Information obtained from the survey will be used to help inform central and local government policy makers. The information will be particularly useful for cities undertaking monitoring of progress toward achieving community outcomes under their Local Government Act requirements.

Survey interviews were conducted over the telephone with 7,720 people, with a margin of error of +/- 1.2% on the 6,300 interviews conducted in the 12 cities and +/- 1.1% on the total New Zealand sample of 7,720.

Local level information on the Quality of Life survey will be available to the media from each of the 12 participating Councils.

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