

Commentary on Highlights from Survey of Residents– February 2007

Wellington City Council

March 2007

Introduction This summary is intended to highlight the main findings of the Resident Satisfaction Survey carried out in February 2007.

It supplements the graphical report that illustrates the results for February 2007 and compares in some cases these results to those of earlier surveys.

Throughout this summary, we have commented on some differences in the results when comparing across demographic groups. The comparisons we have included have been limited to those we consider potentially useful and meaningful, rather than pointing out all differences simply because they are statistically significant. If there is a particular area that the reader would like to investigate further, we suggest you look at the detailed tables included in the graphical report.

This report has been structured according to the seven strategy areas and according to outcome areas within each strategy area.

We have also included commentary at times to encourage the reader to consider what might have influenced the results, particularly those that have changed significantly since February 2006, or where trend changes in perceptions are evident.

Images and Perceptions of Council

Overall Council Performance

Seven out of ten (68%) people rate the overall performance of Wellington City Council over the last twelve months as good or very good. Whilst this is a positive result, it is a significant decrease compared with the same time last year when three quarters (75%) perceived Council performance overall as good or very good. However, there has not been an increase in the proportion of residents rating overall performance as poor or very poor rather. This result represents a softening in opinion of some from positive to middling (24% neither good nor poor).

Residents were asked to explain their reasons for giving the rating they did. The main reasons for giving positive ratings (factors which are likely to have a stronger influence on overall perceptions) are:

- A lack of perceived problems with the job Council is doing (23% of those who rated performance overall as good or very good)
- Providing good facilities or services e.g. swimming pools, libraries and so on (19%)
- Prompt or good service experiences with Council (18%)
- Providing good events (13%).

The main sources of dissatisfaction with Council overall relate to:

- Perceptions that Council is slow to respond or act on things (25% of those who rated performance overall as poor or very poor)
- Difficulties with dealing with Council and that the customer service is not good (21%)
- Dissatisfaction with how Council spends money, and that it's not listening to residents (19%)
- Dissatisfaction with Council performance sorting out roading issues and traffic congestion (15%).

Reviewing the changes in attitudes of performance detailed elsewhere in this report there are a number of areas where a decline in perceptions are evident. We undertook correlation and regression analysis to investigate if any particular areas (e.g. transport) were affecting any other areas throughout the questionnaire (e.g. safety). There was no level of correlation found. Therefore, negative results in one area did not affect results in other areas.

Environment **Natural Environment**

This is the first year where residents were asked about their perceptions of management and protection of Wellington’s natural environment. Eight out of ten (79%) agree or strongly agree that Wellington’s natural environment is appropriately managed and protected.

Open Spaces

Facilities associated with Wellington’s harbour and coastlines such as beaches, wharves, jetties and boat ramps, are used by a larger proportion of residents than other spaces (86% in the last 12 months). Three in ten residents use these facilities at least once a week and the majority of users do so at least monthly. While only slightly fewer use local and neighbourhood parks (76%), these facilities also tend to be used often (three in ten residents using them at last weekly). Outdoor sports fields (44% of residents indicated they used these in the last 12 months) and the town belt (57%) are the least popular of the places and facilities asked about.

Council has set targets for use of parks, coastlines, town belt or outer green belt and the Botanic Gardens. While the proportion of people using the facilities associated with Wellington’s harbour and coastlines is higher than target and use of the town belt and green belt is on target, use of the Botanic Gardens and local and neighbourhood parks are below target.

Residents from Lambton Ward are more likely to use the Botanic Gardens most days (6% compared with 2% on average). Households with their youngest child under five are more likely than others to use local or neighbourhood parks (46% compared with 25% on average).

Ratings of the quality and maintenance of the Botanic Gardens, track and trail networks and outdoor sports fields are strongly positive, with the proportion of residents rating good or very good above annual plan targets for the Botanic Gardens (87% compared with 80% target) and the track and trail network (86% compared with 80% target).

The cleanliness and maintenance of the coastlines and the town belt are also on target, receiving predominantly positive ratings.

Waste reduction

As with last year, all residents claim to be carrying out activities to reduce the amount of waste from their homes. Activities most commonly identified in this context are: reusing plastic containers and buying refills (89%), using the kerbside recycling service (88%), and donations to second hand shops (85% of residents).

The trend in avoidance of using plastic bottles or bags continues (from 26% indicating they avoid these items in February 2003 to 43% now). There has also been an increase in the number of residents reusing plastic containers (89% compared with 85% in February 2006).

These changes may in part be attributable to ongoing media attention aimed at increasing awareness of environmental issues.

Among the nine out of ten (88%) Wellington residents who put the green kerbside recycling bins out for collection, 86% put them out weekly, this is the same amount as last year (87%) and is in line with the annual plan target which is set at 85%. Single person households continue to put out recycling less often.

Of those who use the Wellington City Council's kerbside recycling service, nine out of ten rate it positively; well above the target of 75%.

While only a small proportion rated kerbside recycling as poor or very poor, reasons for less positive ratings are:

- Need better bins/bigger/better shape
- Contractors should take more care and not leave mess
- Wind.

Sustainable Disposal

Nearly all residents claim to be actively doing something to reduce the amount of pollution entering the storm water system. Putting litter in a rubbish bin (97%) disposing of sweepings with household rubbish (71%) and pouring all household liquid wastes down an inside sink, toilet or gully tap (70%) are the most common methods used.

There has been a significant increase in the number of people indicating they put litter in rubbish bins (97% compared with 94% in Feb 06).

Compared with last year, there has been a significant decrease in the proportion of residents indicating they wash their cars at a carwash or on the lawn (last year 51% of residents indicated they do this compared with only 42% this year).

**Economic
Development**

Free Weekend Parking

Half (53%) the residents of Wellington indicated free weekend parking entices them into the central city for reasons other than work, a similar result to last year (56%). While this year's result is five percentage points below target (58%), this difference is just within the margin of error for this sample size.

Urban Development

Pride in Wellington

The majority (86%) of residents agree they feel a sense of pride in the way Wellington looks and feels with a quarter (24%) of these strongly agreeing.

Liveable City

Although almost all residents agree that generally speaking, Wellington is a great place to live, compared with February 2006 significantly fewer indicated they strongly agree or agree (93% compared with 96% last February).

Similarly, nine out of ten residents strongly agree (29%) or agree (61%) that the different suburbs and communities in Wellington mean there is a good variety of places to live; this is significantly lower than the 95% who agreed last year. Residents from Lambton ward are more likely to strongly agree that Wellington offers a good variety of places to live in (40% compared with 29% on average).

Eight out of ten residents (79%) feel that there are a variety of opportunities and places to work in Wellington given their occupation or level of experience and qualifications. This is a similar result to last year.

The proportion of residents who agree there is a good variety of leisure activities and opportunities to socialise in Wellington remains at the same level as last year (93% and 94% in Feb 06). There has been a significant decrease in the proportion who strongly agree (four in ten (39%) strongly agree that there is a variety of opportunities and places to work this year compared with half (50%) last year.

Character of the City

This year is the third year that the contribution of heritage buildings, areas, trees and objects to the **city's** and **local community's** unique character has been measured. While most still agree these aspects contribute to Wellington's unique character, steadily fewer appear to recognise the contribution these features make, particularly to local communities. This year, 86% residents feel these things contribute to the **city's** unique character (compared with 93% in Feb 05) and 72% feel that the heritage buildings, areas, trees and objects contribute to their **local community's** unique character (compared with 86% in Feb 05). Residents from Lambton ward and those with household incomes of \$20,000 to \$30,000 are more likely than average to recognise the contribution these features make to their local community (83% and 89% respectively compared with 72% on average). The redevelopment work conducted in the Lambton Quay, Aro Valley and Cuba Street areas over the last 12 months may have contributed to this result.

Seven out of ten residents (70%) feel the city is developing in a way that takes into account Wellington's unique urban character and natural environment. This is a new measure this year and this result is below the annual plan target of 85%.

Compact City

Just less than nine in ten Wellingtonians (85%) agree that the city centre is lively and attractive. This is below the annual target, which is set at 91%.

Similar to last February, local suburban centres are less likely than the city centre to be perceived as being lively and attractive. This year, just over half (55%) indicate their local suburban centre is lively and attractive; significantly fewer people than last year (64%) and below the annual plan target of 62%.

Three quarters (75%) of New Zealanders feel that Wellington is an attractive place to visit. This is significantly fewer than last year when 81% felt this way. This change is not accompanied by an increase in disagreement with the proposition, it reflects an increase in those who lack definite opinions one way or the other. Hence, it represents a slight weakening in enthusiasm for Wellington as an attractive place to visit.

Safety

A new question was asked this year to identify how the approach to urban design could be modified to improve feelings of safety in the city. A list of nine situations and potential issues was read out to participants and they were asked to identify which of these nine were of most concern to them at the present time.

Four of the nine ranked equally as of most concern (about six out of ten Wellingtonians indicating these aspects were of most concern to them). These are:

- Alcohol and drug related problems
- Car theft
- Dangerous driving
- Graffiti.

A further 4 areas are of concern to slightly fewer (about half of residents). These are:

- Threatening people or people behaving dangerously
- Poorly lit public areas

- Vandalism
- Traffic.

Finally, poorly maintained or dangerous public areas is the aspect of concern to the least number of people, however, it is still an aspect that concerns many (40%).

Some residents are more likely than average to be concerned about these topics and they are detailed below:

Alcohol and drug problems (Average = 61%)

- Households with a gross income less than \$20,000 (79%)
- Those 60 years and over (71%)

Car theft (Average = 59%)

- Those 60 years and over (72%)

Graffiti (Average = 59%)

- Those 60 years and over (81%)
- Households with a gross income between \$20,000 and \$30,000 (76%)
- Households with older couples with no children or no children living at home (75%)

Poorly lit or dark public areas (Average = 51%)

- Female residents (61%)

Vandalism (Average = 47%)

- Eastern ward residents (63%)
- Those 60 years and over (60%)

Poorly maintained or dangerous public areas (Average = 40%)

- Households with a gross income less than \$20,000 (65%).

**Governance
and Citizen
Information**

City Governance and Decision-Making

Nearly six in ten (58%) feel Council consults them sufficiently. This is in line with last year's result and is on target (55%).

The majority (89%) feel that the public influence decisions being made by Wellington City Council to some degree. Similar to last year, only four in ten (36%) are satisfied with the way Council involves people in decision-making (the target for this measure is 40%).

Just over half (54%) of Wellington residents have confidence Council makes decisions that are in the best interests of their city. Southern Ward residents are more likely to disagree that decisions are in the city's best interests with 36% disagreeing compared with 25% on average

Most people (70%) say that they do find it easy to obtain information about the decisions Council is making. However, only four in ten (43%) indicated they actually understand Council's decision-making process.

Transport

Perceptions of ease of moving about the city

Perceptions of how easy or difficult it is to move about in Wellington, be it by walking, driving or using public transport; are less positive than last year. This is reflected by a significant decrease in the proportion of people indicating they find it easy to get around the city as a whole from 73% last year to 64% this year. This year, one in five (20%) indicated they find it difficult to get around the city compared with only 13% last year. This is a significant increase.

There have been a number of issues in Wellington over the last few months that are likely to have contributed to these less positive results:

1. Disruption to normal traffic flow and delays during construction of the Inner City Bypass.
2. Negative media comment and unexpected disruption to traffic flows immediately following the opening of the first phase of the Inner City Bypass.
3. Public transport issues arising from poorly implemented changes to bus timetables in February.
4. The failure of the gas network in Wellington's CBD at the end of last year which led to holes being dug in roads and footpaths.

As with last February, most people (92%) think it is easy to walk around the city however; this year only 38% say it's very easy compared with 61% last year. Most people (83%) are satisfied with the workings of traffic signals to allow them to cross the road.

Less than six in ten (57%) are satisfied with the way the street systems work to help them drive around the city. This is significantly fewer than last year or the annual plan target (71% and 85% respectively). All four points above are likely to have contributed to this result.

Public Transport

Given the timing of this survey (during the furore surrounding implementation of the new bus timetable), it is not surprising that reliability and frequency of Wellington City's public transport system is viewed significantly less positively compared with last year. Satisfaction with reliability has decreased from 75% to 55% and satisfaction with frequency has decreased from 78% to 67%. Southern ward residents are most dissatisfied with the reliability of the public transport system (44% dissatisfied compared with 25% on average).

The convenience and affordability of Wellington's public transport were viewed more favourably (78% having favourable impressions of both).

We interpret these results to mean that recent experiences have a substantial impact on perceptions of frequency and reliability. Perceptions of convenience (and affordability) seem less strongly influenced in this way and are perhaps more heavily influenced by longer term factors such as the cost and availability of parking, proximity to bus routes and so on.

Travelling in to central Wellington

Six in ten residents (63%) travel into central Wellington most weekdays, and two-thirds (64%) are travelling by car, motorbike, bus or taxi during peak traffic times. Driving is still the most common form of transport to town on weekdays; this year 45% of commuters indicated they drive in to central Wellington, similar result to last year.

Of those who would rather travel in by a different method, catching a bus is the most popular alternative (38%), and the trend increase in preference for travelling by bus evident over the last few years continues this year. The proportion preferring to travel by car (21%) continues its downward trend. Other forms of transport, such as trains (15%), continue to appeal only to a minority.

The main barriers to people using their preferred mode of transport are:

- Buses – Frequency of service and over-crowding (i.e. to increase usage increase frequency of service to reduce waiting times and over-crowding)
- Trains - Train service not available (i.e. to extend the train network)
- Cars – Parking and cost (i.e. improving access to parking and/or reducing costs of parking and petrol are likely to lead to increased use of cars)
- Walking/scooters/skateboards – Speed and weather.

Cycleways and Streets

One in five (22%) residents have used Wellington's on-road cycleways in the last twelve months. This is a similar proportion to both 2005 and 2006.

Only one in four (39%) of those who have used the cycleways in the past twelve months are satisfied with the safety and only half (53%) are satisfied with the maintenance. Both of these results are significantly less favourable compared with February 2006 (57% satisfied with safety and 66% satisfied with maintenance in 2006).

The untimely death of two cyclists in separate incidents and another couple hospitalised which received large national news coverage as it coincided with the end of National Bike Week (24th February – 4th March) and is likely to have contributed to less positive perceptions of safety.

Eight in ten residents (82%) rate the street cleaning in Central Wellington positively. However, rating of how well Council maintains the streets overall is lower, with seven in ten (68%) providing a positive rating. While this latter result is below the 80% target, both these results are similar to previous years. Maintenance of roadside vegetation again receives mainly positive ratings (84%) and this is in line with the annual plan target.

Just over eight in ten residents (84%) indicated they are satisfied with street lighting in the central city, fewer (75%) are satisfied with street lighting in their suburban area, both similar results to last year.

Social and Recreation

Supportive Population

Almost all residents perceive their overall quality of life to be extremely good (37%) or good (56%). It is encouraging that this result has not significantly changed over the four years it has been monitored.

There continues to be a positive relationship between perceptions of quality of life and household income, with low income households (less than \$20,000 per annum, 84% and those earning \$20,000-\$30,000, 79%) being less likely than average to indicate their quality of life is good or extremely good rising to all (99%) of those in high income households (more than \$100,000 per annum).

Compared with last year, significantly fewer people indicated they have had positive contact with others in their neighbourhood in the last twelve months. (72% compared with 79% who had some or lots of positive contact last year). Lambton ward residents (32%) and those whose gross household income is between \$70,000 and \$100,000 (34%) are more likely to have had limited positive contact (average =23%).

The lower levels of positive contact and interaction may have contributed to a significant decline in the proportion of residents who feel that the community works together and people support each other. This year 65% feel their community does work together compared with 71% in February 2006. One-person households are less likely to feel a sense of community (47%).

Just less than six in ten (57%) residents feel satisfied the services and resources Council provides are appropriate to ensure strong and thriving communities. Few (9%) indicated dissatisfaction with this area, and one in three (34%) indicated they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Cultural Diversity

Three quarters (76%) of residents indicated the increasing number of people with different lifestyles and cultures and from different countries makes Wellington a much better (36%) or a better (39%) place to live while only 4% believe cultural diversity makes Wellington a worse place to live. These attitudes have not changed since February 2002.

Feelings of Safety

The pattern of previous years continues where most Wellingtonians attest to feeling very safe during the day in both the city centre and neighbourhoods of our city. Feelings of safety diminish during the night time, especially in the central city where over a quarter (26%) indicate they

generally feel unsafe at night. This year, for the first time since measuring perceptions of safety, there has been a significant decrease in the number of residents feeling safe in their neighbourhood after dark (85% compared with 92% in 2006).

One possible explanation for this drop in feelings of safety in people's local neighbourhoods could be the extensive media coverage of the Graeme Burton incident in late January.

Safeguarding Communities

Compared with February 2005, there has been a decrease in the proportion of residents who indicated they have an emergency kit where they live, with only half (52%) indicating they have a kit (compared with 56% two years ago). There were no substantial or noteworthy natural disasters or serious earthquakes in the year preceding this year's survey and this may have influenced residents' behaviour.

Amongst those who have an emergency kit, canned food (92%), emergency lighting (91%), a first aid kit (86%) and a can opener (83%) are most likely to be included. Compared with last year, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of residents who indicate the content of their emergency kits includes: a first aid kit (86% compared with 80% in Feb 2006), ten litres of bottled water per person (71% compared with 63% in Feb 2006) or spare batteries (66% compared with 57% in Feb 2006).

Only one third (33%) of residents indicated they have an emergency plan for their family or household in the case of a significant emergency. The most common things done to prepare for a significant emergency are: completing a first aid course (50%), knowing where the nearest Civil Defence Centre is (41%) and discussing ways to get in touch with other family members (36%).

However, compared with last year, significantly fewer residents have completed a first aid course (50% compared with 59% in Feb 2006), discussed ways to get in touch with other family members (36% compared with 48% in Feb 2006) or arranged for authorised people to collect children from school (of those who have school-aged children, 22% compared with 44% in Feb 2006). Interestingly, some residents who indicated they don't have an emergency plan had completed a first aid course, know where their nearest Civil Defence Centre is or have discussed ways to get in touch with other family members. The figures quoted in the preceding paragraph include these people.

Public Toilets

Last year residents' perceptions of the availability and standard of public toilets appeared to be stabilising after a period of declining satisfaction. This year there has been a further significant decrease in satisfaction with

only 49% satisfied with the availability. Secondly, there has been a change in the wording in this survey from the previous “standard of public toilets” to “cleanliness of public toilets”.

Residents from the Onslow-Western ward are more likely to be satisfied with the availability of public toilets with 59% satisfied compared with 49% satisfied on average.

Recreation Opportunities

Overall, comparing the results from the 2007 survey with those of 2006, the proportion of residents using Council swimming pools, recreation centres, skating areas and the Karori Mountain Bike Park remains stable.

This year residents were asked to rate the quality of the recreation facilities they use and all the facilities receive extremely positive results (about nine out of ten users indicating they were satisfied with each).

Wellington residents (94%) continue to agree that in general, Wellington offers a wide range of recreational activities.

Council swimming pools (55%) continue to be the most commonly used recreational facility. Households with the youngest child under 5 or with children aged between 5 and 13 are more likely to be using the swimming pools (78% and 85% respectively).

Nearly all residents (93%) who use Council swimming pools rate them as good or very good.

It is also these households who are more likely to be using Council recreation centres (38% and 37% respectively compared with 22% on average) and Council skating areas (23% and 26% respectively compared with 12% on average).

Of those who use them, the majority (91%) rate the quality of Wellington recreation centres positively.

One in ten (11%) residents indicated they have used the Mountain Bike Park at Karori over the last twelve months and, not surprisingly, residents of the Onslow-Western ward are more likely to be using the Park (26%).

Among those with children 13 years or under in their households, nine out of ten (90%) indicate that their children have used a Council playground in the last twelve months. The majority (90%) of these people rate the quality as good, with half (51%) rating the quality as very good.

Community Facilities

The proportion of residents utilising Wellington City Council community facilities has decreased compared with last year and almost one in five (18%) indicating they have not used any of the facilities over the last twelve months.

Most people (79%) have used a Council public library over the last twelve months; however, this proportion represents a significant decrease compared with last year when 85% indicated they had used a public library in the last 12 months. The quality of library services receives positive ratings with nearly everyone (95%)¹ who has used them rating them as good (37%) or very good (59%).

Women are more likely than men to be using the libraries (84% compared with 74%) as are those 60 years and over (88%).

The Central Library continues to be the most commonly used library (78%).

Only one in five (19%) indicated they have used a Community Centre in the last 12 months, fewer when compared with February last year (24%). Households with children between 5 and 13 years of age and residents of Northern ward are more likely to be using Council Community Centres (30% for both).

There has also been a small decrease in the proportion using Community Halls (18% compared with 22% in Feb 2006).

Participation and Health

Even though the proportion of residents using recreation facilities remains stable, this year 85% of residents claim to be undertaking more than 2.5 hours of physical activity per week which is an increase compared with last year when eight in ten (79%) indicated they were physically active for more than 2.5 hours per week. This year SPARC and Wellington City Council have continued running a significant public awareness campaign called 'Push Play' and the success of this programme is likely to have contributed to this more positive result.

Residents from Southern ward are more likely to be physically active more than 2.5 hours per week (96% compared with 85% on average).

Three in ten residents (30%) perceive barriers to taking part in their preferred activities during their free time. There is an indication that barriers may be reducing since 38% indicated they faced barriers in

¹ Total rating libraries good or very good does not equal arithmetic sum of those rating good plus those rating very good due to rounding.

February 2005. Southern ward residents are more likely to indicate they face barriers to participating in recreational activities (47%).

This year residents cite lack of parking, public transport or transport (28%), being too busy (15%), poor health (14%) and lack of facilities (11%) as the main barriers to participation in recreational activities.

The predominant activity where residents perceive barriers to participation is sports and physical activities (72%).

Southern ward residents were slightly more likely to consider lack of parking, public transport or transport a barrier to participation, though this is not significant.

Households with the youngest child under 5 are more likely to consider themselves too busy for free time activities (36% compared with 15% on average).

Residents over 60 years old are far more likely to cite poor health as a barrier (58% compared with 14% on average) to participation.

Of the 11% who indicated that a lack of facilities restrained them from participating, no particular demographic group or area stands out.

Cultural Wellbeing

Arts, Events and Culture in Wellington

The majority of Wellingtonians (90%) and New Zealanders as a whole (81%) agree that Wellington has a culturally rich and diverse arts scene. These results are consistent with previous year's results.

Not surprisingly, the association of Wellington being the arts capital of New Zealand is more prominent among Wellington residents than New Zealanders as a whole. Three quarters (76%) of Wellington residents agree with the statement 'Wellington is the arts capital of New Zealand' whereas nationally only 61% agree. The trend in the proportion of New Zealanders agreeing coincides with the biennial International Arts Festival that is held in Wellington. This year is not an International Arts Festival year and this would explain the significant decrease in New Zealanders agreeing with the statement (61% compared with 69% in Feb 06). However, the general slow but sure upward trend in non-Wellingtonians perceiving Wellington as the Arts Capital continues.

The level of participation for all kinds of artistic activities over the last twelve months remains the same as last year, with the exception of those participating in language activities such as poetry readings and debating where there has been a significant increase with almost one in five (18%) taking part this year compared with 12% last year.

The most popular activity continues to be going to see a movie (81%) (Lambton residents are more likely than average (93%) to do this) followed by music (58%), visual arts (52%) and drama (45%).

The events and festivals such as community festivals, sports events and arts and cultural events that the Council is involved with are well received with 84% of residents satisfied and virtually no one (2%) dissatisfied.

Almost two thirds (63%) of Wellington residents agree that Wellington is the events capital of New Zealand. On the other hand, only 38% of New Zealanders as a whole agree with the statement.

Wellington's Local Identity

This year, residents were asked to consider Wellington's local identity, its capital city status, distinctive land form and land marks, defining features, history and heritage; and to what extent they agreed that its sense of place is appropriately valued and protected. It is a positive result that eight in ten strongly agree (15%) or agree (64%).