

## Aucklanders' Attitudes

*By Charles Crothers*

While it is possible to obtain and analyse much 'objective' information on Auckland and Aucklanders, it is also important to obtain information about how Aucklanders feel about issues facing them, in particular how they feel about Auckland and their future in the city. This 'subjective' information was most readily obtained from surveys.

The survey data has been used in three main ways. First, the surveys have given us detailed information for each of the substantive sections of this report that relate to a particular social issue. Second, the surveys indicate which areas of their lives most concern Aucklanders and with which they are satisfied. And third, the data from the surveys gives insights into the extent to which the available objective measures capture the range of concerns that Aucklanders have expressed.

### ***Ranking of Issues and Domains***

The General Social Survey (GSS) gives a broad view on how its respondents rank their subjective satisfactions in relation to the various issues covered by this report. The New Zealand Election Survey (NZES) includes some fairly broad categories of concerns of Aucklanders, both in relation to them personally and to NZ as a whole; and these can be used to check whether the GSS items cover what people express as their concerns. Finally, recent survey data gives information for a possible agenda for Auckland Council.

Highest satisfactions tend to relate to more personal circumstances, with parts of people's lives less intimately associated with them being less highly valued. The domain relating to social and the community received good ratings, with very few reporting frequent isolation and almost all reporting good access to those who can offer support. There was also a fairly high standard of satisfaction with the extent to which people see their family and their friends.

Safety received mixed ratings depending on whether it is day or night-time, at work or home, or in the community. There are both very high or very low ratings; for example: Aucklanders feel unsafe at night in the city and in the suburbs, but safe during the day especially while at work.

Levels of satisfaction with economic conditions and with work situations also had a range of answers. For example, respondents had high levels of overall satisfaction with life and with their current standard of living, but gave much lower ratings for adequacy of standard of living and income. Many would prefer to work different hours (mainly more work in return for more pay).

Very high ratings were given for overall satisfaction with life, ability to express cultural identity, and satisfaction with own education. Satisfaction with personal health was rated only moderately high.

Satisfaction with various aspects of neighbourhood was generally high – except for public transport. However, this is a domain where further attention seems most needed.

**MacroAuckland – An initiative by Auckland Communities Foundation**

Proudly supported by SKYCITY Auckland Community Trust and Westpac, with additional support from Vodafone New Zealand Foundation



Personal satisfactions were moderately high, and satisfactions with the natural and built environments and associated facilities and services slightly less than moderately high.

It is difficult to draw an overall conclusion but there clearly are some high points – the social and cultural domains – but also some areas of higher concern, such as safety at night, public transport and economic well-being.

Aucklanders' satisfactions and rankings are very similar to those of other New Zealanders.

The 2008 NZES survey produced responses that were broadly similar to those of the GSS. At least half of those surveyed expressed concerns about the economy, together with related issues such as unemployment and tax. Law and order (i.e. 'safety' in MacroAuckland terms) came next, with about one-third mentioning concerns in this area. Political issues concerned approximately a fifth of the respondents. Other concerns related to health, education, welfare, the environment, social discontents and immigration, and a number of less frequently mentioned issues.

Just after the 2010 Auckland Council elections, a survey asked about several named concerns that had emerged during the election. Crime and transport were at the top, ranking very heavily. Rates and, to a lesser extent, housing were seen as important, with social issues together with a rather more diverse of detailed matters still receiving considerable support. Very few of those answering these questions rated them as unimportant. Moreover, although the set of five issues seemed to catch voters' concerns fairly well, almost every respondent had something further to add – while tending to rate this addition as being less important than the five specified ones. Views on issues facing Auckland tended to fall into one of only two broad categories: concerns about transport, housing and social issues, or concerns about crime, rates and other issues.

In an earlier survey, the dissatisfactions with Auckland tended to particularly focus around several issues that are clearly size- or growth-related, i.e. traffic congestion, lack of public transport, cost of living, overcrowding and crime. Aucklanders gave the region good marks for overall quality of life, natural environment and facilities in general, including educational facilities. However, they expressed concern with the built environment, health facilities and social conditions generally. Auckland's 'clean green' image takes a battering in the face of widespread condemnation of various forms of pollution, although those surveyed were less concerned about the long-term degradation of the environment through continuing urban sprawl.

When asked some general attitude questions, respondents focused on growth- and size-related issues, in particular public transport and (presumably its flip-side in the eyes of many) traffic congestion. Respondents indicated moderately high levels of concern about the regional economy and about preserving farmland, before indicating any concern with Auckland's size – although 40% believed that Auckland had too many people. Only one-quarter believed that local government were doing an effective job managing growth and development in Auckland; 40% were unhappy and the remaining one-third neutral. Local councillors received very similar ratings. These ratings of satisfaction with local government are consistent with results from several other surveys over time.



## **Community perceptions, resilience and volunteering**

Aucklanders share their neighbourhood living areas with other residents, and contribute to community social capital and resilience through a myriad of voluntary association memberships, assistance and generosity.

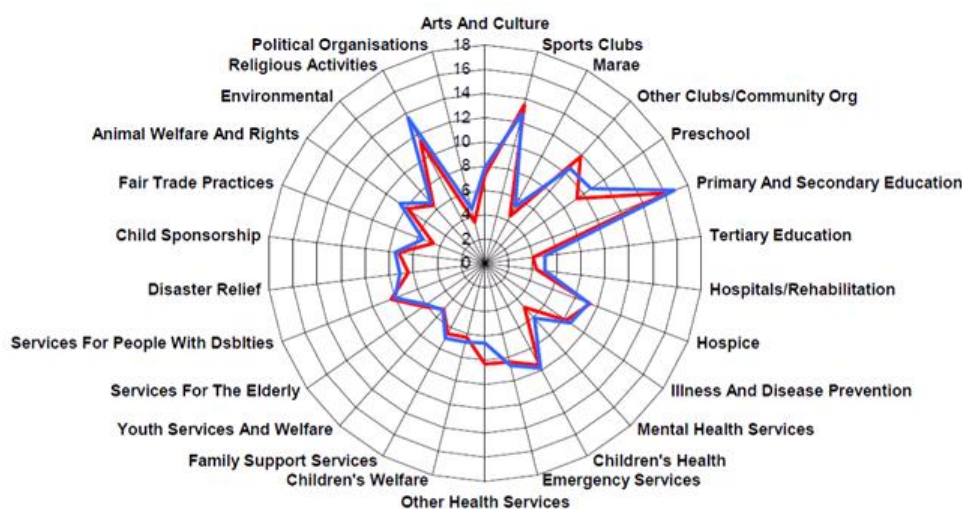
The majority of respondents (94%) to the Quality of Life survey had experienced some form of positive contact with their neighbours in the last twelve months: e.g. a nod or saying hello. However, over one in ten respondents (13%) had experienced negative contact such as outright tension or disagreements. Those more likely to have experienced some negative contact in the last 12 months included those aged 15 to 24 years, Maori, males and those living in Waitakere city. Only a very small proportion reported often feeling isolated and lonely.

Just over half (56%) said they felt a sense of community in their neighbourhood. Those more likely to 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the statement were aged 65 years and over, and living in Rodney, Franklin and Papakura districts. A high proportion (69%) that it is important to them to feel a sense of community. Extending from this most respondents had a general sense of trust in people.

Two-thirds have a sense of pride in the way the city looks and feels and similar proportions see Auckland as having a vibrant arts scene. Reasons for positive views stress the clean, green environment, good facilities and friendly people, while others complain of areas where the city fabric is run down.

There is some sense of alienation from local authorities with small majorities feeling confident they were aware of, understood, were sufficiently involved in their local authority and felt that their viewpoints were listened to.

There is widespread involvement in clubs and societies and a wide range of volunteering. In 2008 a third of Aucklanders volunteered their time: a very slight increase from the year before (OCVS, 2009).



## **Percentage Volunteering by Sector Auckland Region**

MacroAuckland – An initiative by Auckland Communities Foundation

Proudly supported by SKYCITY Auckland Community Trust and Westpac, with additional support from Vodafone New Zealand Foundation