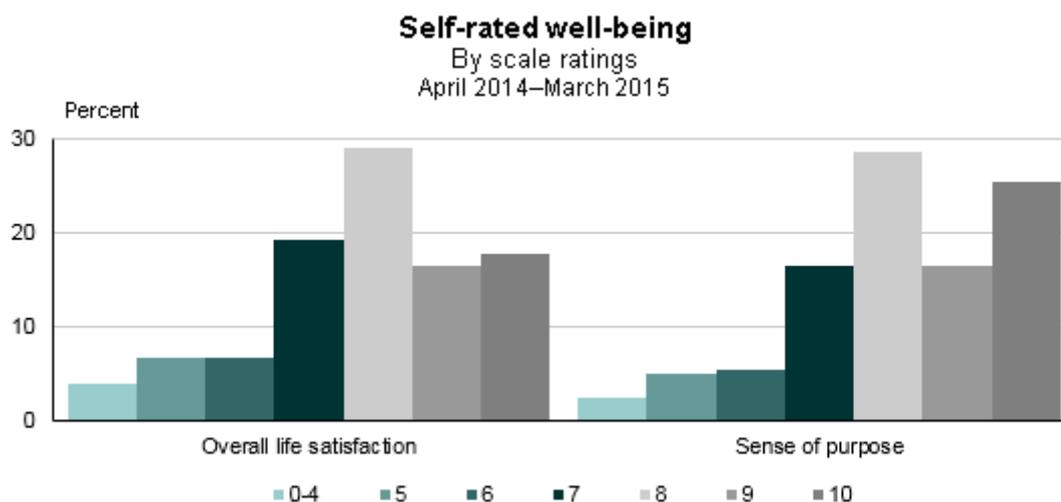


New Zealand General Social Survey: 2014

Embargoed until 10:45am – 26 May 2015

Key facts

- The majority of New Zealanders rated their overall life satisfaction and sense of purpose highly in 2014.
- Just over 8 in 10 people reported high levels of overall life satisfaction and almost 9 in 10 felt a sense of purpose in the things they did.
- Some population groups had lower levels of both overall life satisfaction and sense of purpose: sole parents, unemployed people, and people with no qualifications.
- Other population groups had notably lower levels of overall life satisfaction but their sense of purpose ratings were still similar to other groups' – people who didn't live in families, had incomes of \$30,000 and under, needed an extra bedroom in their home, or identified as Māori or Pacific peoples.
- Age differences had a strong effect on the different well-being rates reported by different population groups.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Liz MacPherson, Government Statistician
ISSN 1179-5050
26 May 2015

Commentary

- [Majority of New Zealanders rate their well-being highly](#)
- [Overall life satisfaction and sense of purpose increase with age](#)
- [Sole parents have lower sense of purpose and overall life satisfaction](#)
- [People with spare bedrooms more likely to rate their well-being highly](#)
- [Māori and Pacific people less likely to rate their well-being highly](#)
- [People with no qualifications have lower self-rated well-being](#)
- [Unemployed less likely to have high self-rated well-being](#)
- [Self-rated well-being levels off with higher income](#)

This first release of information from the 2014 New Zealand General Social Survey (NZGSS) provides insights into two aspects of personal well-being – overall life satisfaction and sense of purpose.

We focus on people who rated their overall life satisfaction or sense of purpose as 7 or above on the 0–10 scales as indicators of higher levels of self-rated well-being.

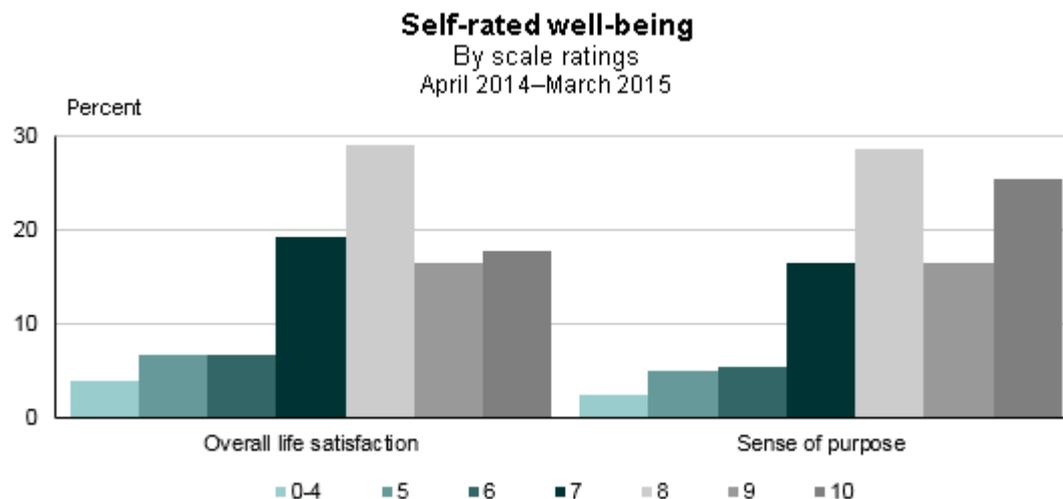
See [definitions](#) and [data quality](#) for background about the NZGSS and our well-being measures.

See [related links](#) for information about other data and reports from the 2014 NZGSS that we will publish in 2015.

Majority of New Zealanders rate their well-being highly

Over 8 in 10 New Zealanders aged 15 years and over rated their overall life satisfaction at 7 or above on a zero to 10 scale (82.6 percent).

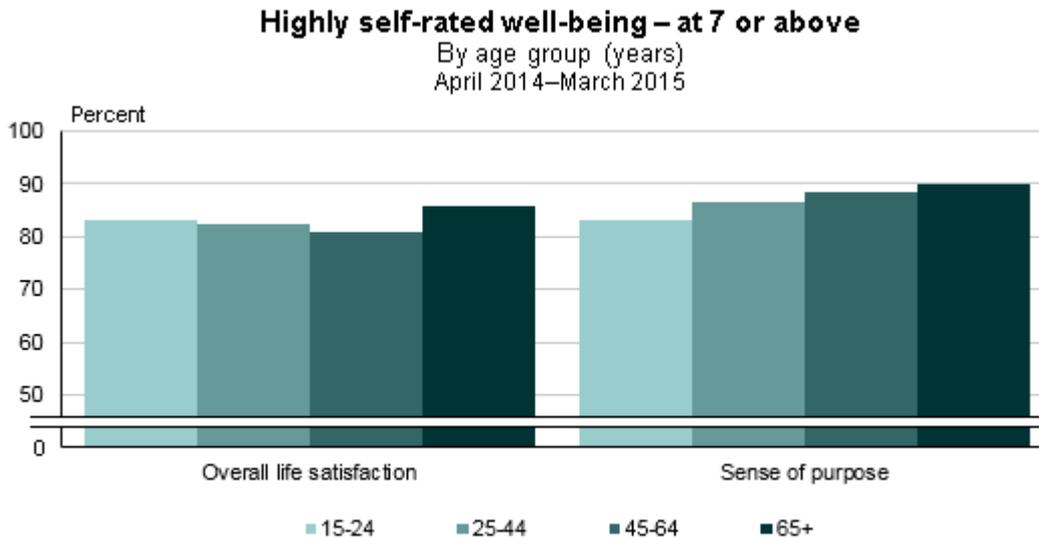
Slightly more people (87.1 percent) rated their sense of purpose in the things they did at 7 or above.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Overall life satisfaction and sense of purpose increase with age

Now we'll take a closer look at New Zealanders who chose 7 or above on the two 0–10 well-being scales, to identify any differences between different population groups.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Older people (aged 65 and over) were more likely to be satisfied with their lives than younger age groups. People were also more likely to rate their sense of purpose highly as age increases.

Older people may be more satisfied with their lives (85.9 percent) and have a greater sense of purpose (89.8 percent) for a number of reasons.

They are generally more financially secure, have raised their children, have become grandparents, or have a better balance between paid work and their recreational time.

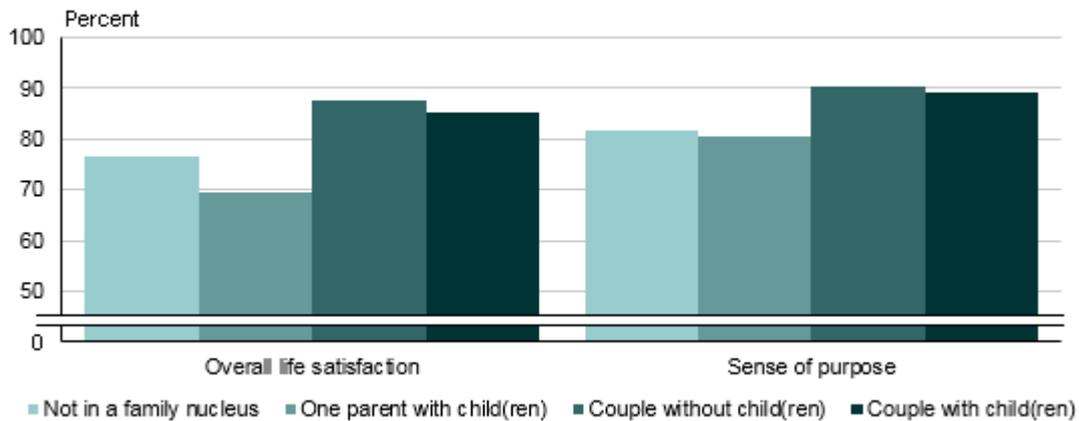
In contrast, middle-age people were less likely to rate their overall life satisfaction highly. Many people manage a challenging mix of family, work, and financial commitments in their middle-age, which may be reflected in this group's lower levels of satisfaction with their lives. However, middle-age people were almost as likely as older people to feel their lives were worthwhile (88.3 percent).

Sole parents have lower sense of purpose and overall life satisfaction

People living in sole-parent families and people not in a family nucleus had lower rates of both aspects of well-being than other family types.

Highly self-rated well-being – at 7 or above

By family type
April 2014–March 2015



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Just over two-thirds of those in sole-parent families (69.6 percent) and three-quarters of those who didn't live in a family nucleus (76.7 percent) rated their overall life satisfaction at 7 or above.

People in these two family types were more likely to feel a greater sense of purpose in the things they did (80.4 percent and 81.7 percent, respectively) than to feel satisfied with their lives overall.

Self-rated well-being was notably higher for people living in couple families.

People who lived in couple family types, with or without children, had the highest self-rated well-being of all family types. Between 85.2 and 90.2 percent of people in these two groups reported overall life satisfaction and sense of purpose at 7 or above.

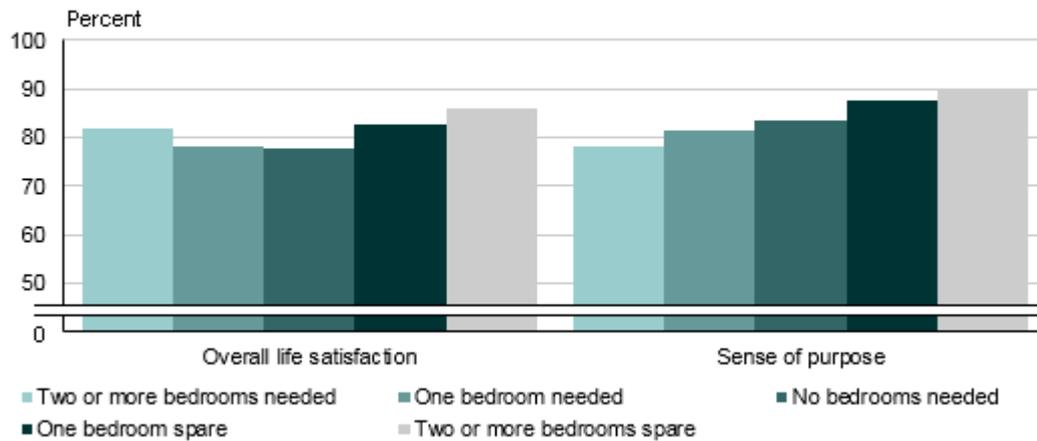
Their greater satisfaction and sense of purpose may be due to better access to social, economic, and emotional resources, and support from family members.

People with spare bedrooms more likely to rate their well-being highly

We can find out more about the effect of living with others on people's self-rated well-being by looking at crowding in people's homes. This measure tells us if people had enough bedrooms for the number of people they lived with.

Highly self-rated well-being – at 7 or above

By crowding
April 2014–March 2015



Source: Statistics New Zealand

People who needed two or more bedrooms were less likely to rate their sense of purpose highly (78.3 percent) than those who had two or more spare bedrooms (90.1 percent).

Those with two or more spare bedrooms (86.1 percent) were also more likely to rate their overall life satisfaction highly than those who needed no more bedrooms (77.9 percent).

The positive relationship between sense of purpose and the number of bedrooms people had in their homes is strongly related to age-group patterns. People in older age groups were more likely to have homes with extra space, from owning larger homes while bringing up their children.

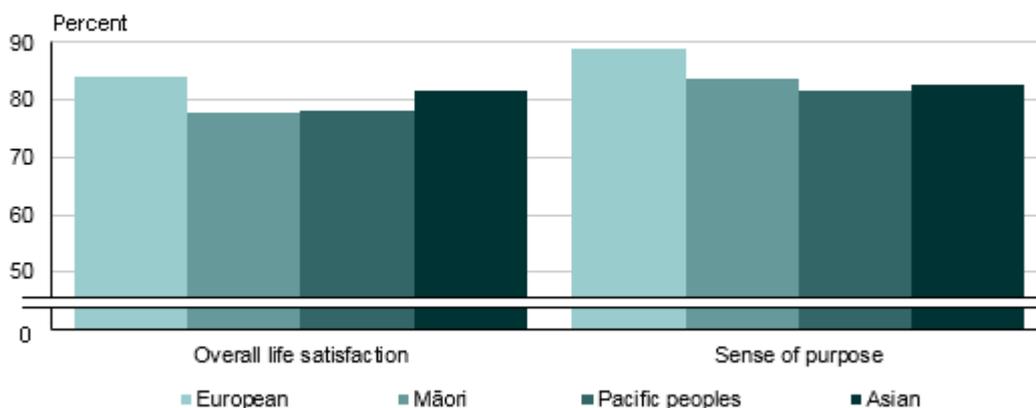
This suggests that people may still find satisfaction from the presence of other people in their homes, despite a shortage of space

Māori and Pacific people less likely to rate their well-being highly

Māori and Pacific people were less likely to rate their well-being at 7 or above than Europeans were.

Highly self-rated well-being – at 7 or above

By selected ethnic group
April 2014–March 2015



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Just over three-quarters of Māori (77.8 percent) and Pacific peoples (78.1 percent) rated their overall life satisfaction highly. This rose slightly to 83.6 percent and 81.7 percent (respectively) for their sense of purpose ratings.

Europeans had the highest rated well-being rates of all the major ethnic groups – 84 percent rated their overall life satisfaction highly and almost 9 in 10 rated their sense of purpose highly (88.8 percent).

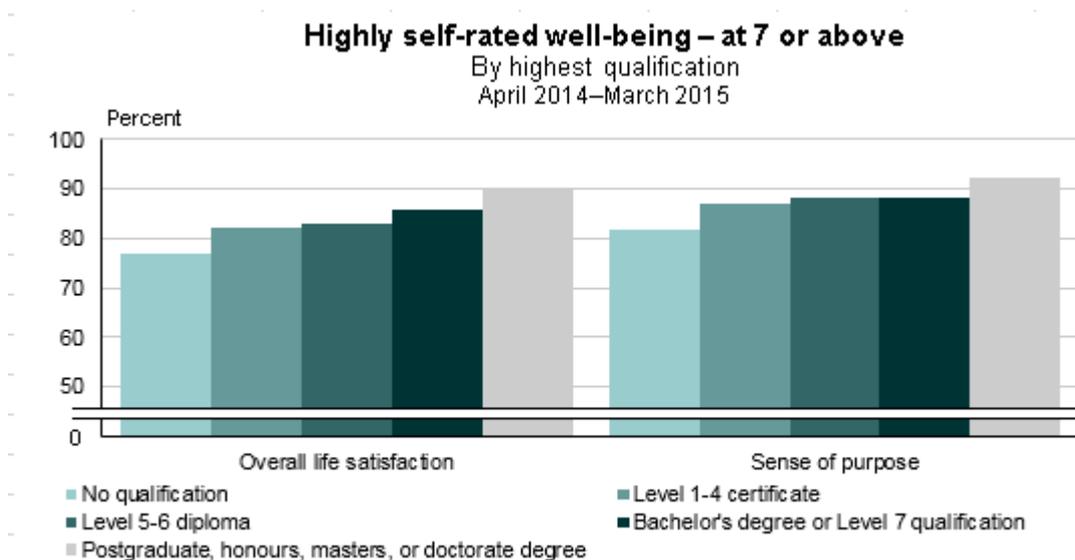
The differences in self-rated well-being across ethnic groups could be related to many factors, which might include the differences in each group’s age structure.

The 2013 Census shows that the Pacific peoples and Māori populations are significantly younger than the European population.

Given that we know self-rated well-being increases with age, age differences may explain the lower sense of purpose rates of the younger Pacific peoples and Māori populations, and the higher ratings of the older European population.

People with no qualifications have lower self-rated well-being

Work and income are two critical components of most people’s lives. They are key determinants of material well-being and are closely linked with other aspects of overall well-being.



The higher qualified a person is, the more likely they were to rate their overall life satisfaction at 7 or above and, to a lesser extent, their sense of purpose.

Just over three-quarters of people with no qualification (76.8 percent) had high levels of self-rated overall life satisfaction. This rate rose with qualification level, so that 9 in 10 people (90.3 percent) with postgraduate qualifications rated their overall life satisfaction highly.

But qualification level didn’t affect people’s sense of purpose to the same extent.

Around 88 percent of people with level 1–7 qualifications or a bachelor’s degree rated their sense of purpose highly.

In contrast, people with no qualification (81.8 percent) were least likely to rate their sense of purpose at 7 or above.

Qualification level is a key determinant of the level of personal income. The more qualified a person is, the more likely they are to earn a higher income. This could explain the relationship between higher qualification and overall life satisfaction.

Unemployed less likely to have high self-rated well-being

Unemployed people were much less likely than other people to rate either aspect of their well-being at 7 or above.



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Just over 7 in 10 unemployed people (70.5 percent) rated their overall life satisfaction highly and 73.1 percent rated their sense of purpose highly.

This compares with over 8 in 10 employed people (84.4 percent) being highly satisfied with their lives overall and nearly 9 in 10 (89.0 percent) rating their sense of purpose at 7 or above.

Those not in the labour force had higher levels of self-rated well-being than unemployed people. Exactly 80.0 percent of people not in the labour force rated their overall life satisfaction highly and 84.7 percent reported higher levels of sense of purpose.

These differences in self-rated well-being across the labour force groups were strongly affected by age structure.

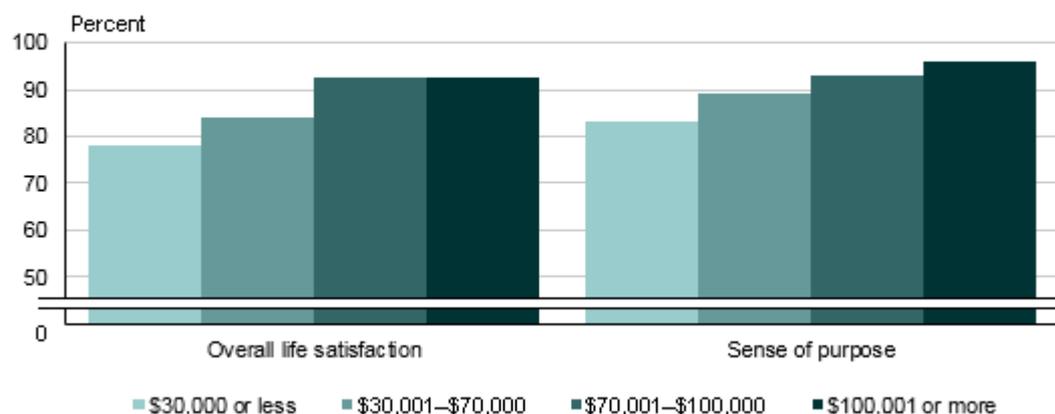
A high proportion of older people aren't in the labour force, and it's this age group that has the highest levels of self-rated well-being.

Self-rated well-being levels off with higher income

Both aspects of self-rated well-being rose with income, but they levelled off from around \$70,000.

Highly self-rated well-being – at 7 or above

By grouped personal income
April 2014–March 2015



Source: Statistics New Zealand

Just under 8 in 10 people (78.3 percent) receiving \$30,000 or less rated their satisfaction with their lives overall at 7 or above. This compares with over 9 in 10 people (92.5 percent) with a personal income of \$100,001 or more.

Similarly, just over 8 in 10 people (83.1 percent) with an income of \$30,000 or less rated their sense of purpose at 7 or above, compared with 9 in 10 (96.1 percent) of those earning \$100,001 or more.

Notably, the rise in overall life satisfaction began to level off from the \$70,001 mark. This pattern is found in much of the literature that looks at the relationship between personal income and self-rated well-being.

People with lower incomes had relatively wide gaps between their two well-being rates, suggesting that low income has a greater influence on life satisfaction rather than on sense of purpose.

For more detailed data, see the Excel tables in the 'Downloads' box.

Definitions

About the New Zealand General Social Survey

The 2014 New Zealand General Social Survey (NZGSS) is the fourth survey of the series which provides information about multiple aspects of the well-being of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over.

This information release looks at people who chose 7 or above on two 0–10 well-being scales, to focus analysis on those with high levels of self-rated well-being.

More definitions

Crowding: calculates the proportion of the population living in crowded housing or who require one or more additional bedrooms, as defined by the Canadian National Occupancy Standard.

We calculate crowding using the following criteria:

- There should be no more than two people per bedroom; parents or couples share a bedroom.
- Children aged under five years, either of same or opposite sex, may reasonably share a bedroom.
- Children aged under 18 years of the same sex may reasonably share a bedroom.
- A child aged five to 17 years should not share a bedroom with one aged under five of the opposite sex; single adults aged 18 years and over and any unpaired children require a separate bedroom.

Ethnicity: the ethnic group(s) that people identify with or feel they belong to. It is a measure of cultural affiliation rather than race, ancestry, nationality, or citizenship.

See [New Zealand Standard Classification of Ethnicity 2005](#) for more information.

This release uses level 1 of the 'total response' classification. Respondents determined their own ethnic groups and could identify with more than one.

Total response counts the number of responses for each ethnic group, not the number of people. This means that people who told us they belonged to more than one ethnic group would be counted in each of those ethnic groups.

For confidentiality and analytical reasons, we've used the four major ethnic groups: European, Māori, Pacific peoples, and Asian.

Family type: family composition within households (using level 1 of the New Zealand Classification of Family Types 2008). This release uses the three categories in the classification and a fourth category for people who are not in a family nucleus:

- couple without children – couples who don't have children and couples whose children have left home
- couple with child(ren) – couples and their child(ren) who live with them
- one-parent with child(ren) – one adult with child(ren) who live with them
- not in a family nucleus – someone living by themselves or someone who is flatting.

Highest qualification: measures a person's highest level of formal education. It uses the 13 categories provided by the New Zealand Register of Quality Assured Qualifications (2003). We've combined the 13 categories into five groups. They are:

- no qualification – no formal qualifications
- level 1–4 certificate – all secondary school qualifications including school certificate, sixth form certificate, university entrance, NCEA or national certificate 1, 2, 3, or 4, trade certificate, and people with an overseas secondary school qualification
- level 5–6 diploma – vocational qualifications including nursing or teaching diplomas, and advanced trade certificates or diplomas
- bachelor's degree or level 7 qualification
- postgraduate, honours, masters, or doctorate degree.

Labour force status: a respondent's position in the labour force in one of three groups: employed, unemployed, or not in the labour force. This measure is based on the New Zealand Standard Classification of Labour Force Status 1999 and refers to the respondent's circumstances in a defined time period

Life-stages: age groupings that reflect the different experiences people have at different times in their lives (eg like being in education, working, forming families, and retirement). These stages are:

- young people (15–24 years)
- prime working age (25–44 years)
- middle-age (45–64 years)
- older people (65 years and over).

Overall life satisfaction: a self-reported measure that makes up one aspect of people's self-rated well-being. It has changed for the 2014 NZGSS. In 2014, we asked respondents how they felt about their lives overall on a response scale of 0–10 (completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied).

Personal income: the respondent's before-tax income in the previous 12 months. We collect it as an income range rather than an actual dollar amount. We combined the 16 categories into four groups for this release.

Self-rated well-being: describes the two measures of well-being used in the NZGSS. Overall life satisfaction and sense of purpose are only two aspects of subjective or perceived well-being, but they are described as 'self-rated well-being' in this release for clarity and brevity.

Sense of purpose: a self-reported measure we use to look at people's self-rated well-being. It tells us whether people felt they had a sense of purpose or meaning in life.

We asked respondents if they felt that the things they did in life were worthwhile, using a 0–10 scale. People who reported 0 felt their lives were not at all worthwhile; those who reported 10 felt their lives were completely worthwhile.

Related links

Next releases

We will publish several releases from the 2014 NZGSS in 2015. They include new information about personal well-being, and social networks and support.

The characteristics of social networks (short report)

We'll look at what New Zealanders' social networks look like, and what the networks tell us about family functioning, connection to communities, and associations outside family and friends.

How New Zealanders use their social networks (report)

This report will focus on how we use our social networks and how they help us deal with change. We'll also explore where people go when they first need help and the kinds of help people ask for.

The strength of social networks (report)

We'll examine the kinds of support people can access, what issues might affect people's likelihood to use their social networks, and their access to support across different support need types.

[See Rotating Survey Supplement](#) for more information.

The *New Zealand General Social Survey: 2016* will be released in 2017.

[Subscribe to information releases](#), including this one, by completing the online subscription form.

[The release calendar](#) lists all information releases by date of release.

Past releases

[See New Zealand General Social Survey](#) for links to past releases.

Related information

[See General Social Survey: Summary results](#) for results from Australia's latest GSS.

[See The General Social Survey: An overview](#) for an overview from Canada's GSS.

[See well-being](#) for reports and articles that use previous NZGSS information.

Data quality

Period-specific information

This section contains information that has changed since the last release in 2012.

- [Reference period](#)
- [Response rate and sample size](#)
- [Changes to survey since 2012](#)
- [Rotating survey supplement](#)

General information

This section contains information about the data that does not change between releases.

- [Survey population](#)
- [Survey content](#)
- [Reliability of survey estimates](#)
- [Confidentiality and suppression](#)
- [Rounding and percentages](#)
- [Accuracy of the data](#)
- [More information](#)

Period specific information

Reference period

The data collection for the New Zealand General Social Survey (NZGSS) 2014 took place over the 12 months from April 2014 to March 2015.

Response rate and sample size

The target response rate for the survey was 80 percent. The achieved response rate for 2014 was 80.3 percent. We calculated the response rate by dividing the weighted percentage of eligible individuals who responded by the estimated number of eligible individuals.

The NZGSS 2014 personal questionnaire was answered by 8,795 individuals. Households were selected at random using a multistage sample design.

Changes to survey since 2012

Overall life satisfaction measure redeveloped

Overall life satisfaction is a self-reported measure that is one aspect of people's self-rated well-being. We used it for the 2008, 2010, and 2012 New Zealand General Social Surveys (NZGSS), but changed it for the 2014 NZGSS.

In 2012, we asked people how they felt about life as a whole at the time they were interviewed. Respondents chose from five options on a Likert response scale:

- very satisfied
- satisfied

- neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- dissatisfied
- very dissatisfied.

In 2014, we changed this and asked respondents how they felt about their lives overall on a scale of 0–10 (completely dissatisfied to completely satisfied).

We are starting a new time series with 2014 data, which means that 2014 data can't be used for NZGSS time series that use earlier data.

New 'sense of purpose' measure

Sense of purpose is the second self-reported measure we used to look at people's self-rated well-being. It tells us whether people felt they had a sense of purpose or meaning in life.

We asked respondents if they felt that the things they did in life were worthwhile, using a 0–10 scale, as we used for the overall life satisfaction measure.

For sense of purpose, people who reported 0 felt their lives were not at all worthwhile and those who reported 10 felt their lives were completely worthwhile.

Changes to survey domains

Safety and security

In 2014, we deleted this content from the safety and security domain:

- How safe do you feel at work?
- How safe do you feel walking alone during the day in your neighbourhood?
- How safe do you feel waiting for or using public transport such as buses and trains during the day?
- crime questions (except for crimes committed against the respondent, which was kept)
- safety-at-work questions
- road-user safety questions.

We introduced this content into the domain:

- How safe do you feel at home by yourself at night?
- How safe do you feel using the Internet for online transactions?
- anti-social behaviour in neighbourhood questions (also includes questions about 'major problems with house').

Material standard of living

We deleted the economic living standard index content from the material standard of living domain.

We introduced the material wellbeing index into this domain.

Paid work

We deleted this content from the paid work domain:

- hours / pay balance question
- hours balance question.

Housing

We deleted this content from the housing domain:

- overall satisfaction with housing
- major problems with house
- major problems with street / neighbourhood (we incorporated some of this content into a new question, 'anti-social behaviour in neighbourhood').

We introduced this content into the housing domain:

- condition of house
- whether mould is a problem
- whether coldness is a problem.

Knowledge and skills: We've deleted this domain entirely but we still ask people about their highest qualification in the demographic section of the survey.

Leisure and recreation: We've deleted this domain.

Physical environment: We've deleted this domain but still ask three questions about emergency preparedness.

Emergency preparedness: We've reduced this module from 13 to three questions.

Sense of belonging to New Zealand: We've deleted this domain.

Social connectedness: We extended this domain and used it as the content for the 2014 rotating survey supplement, outlined below.

Rotating survey supplement

In 2014, the NZGSS collected information from a supplement that will change with each subsequent survey.

We choose the supplement's topic from the survey's main content, and expanded it to give more detail about the topic. That topic is returned to the main content for the next survey, and we expand a different topic for the supplement.

In 2014, the rotating survey supplement was about social networks and support.

Social networks and support

Social networks are important parts of people's lives. They provide support and help in times of need; they help us achieve things we might not be able to do on our own; and they improve our well-being by reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness.

We collected information about three aspects of social networks and support:

- characteristics of social networks – tell us about the make-up of people's familial and wider social networks
- strength of social networks – tells us if people think they would be able to access support, if they needed it, across different scenarios
- effectiveness of social networks – tells us if people could get support from their networks when they experienced an actual time of need.

General information

Survey population

The survey population for the NZGSS is the usually resident New Zealand population aged 15 years and over, in private dwellings in the North Island, South Island, or Waiheke Island.

The survey population includes:

- New Zealand usual residents temporarily overseas
- New Zealand usual residents temporarily staying elsewhere in New Zealand (including other permanent and temporary private dwellings, institutions, and non-private dwellings; and people who have no fixed abode, but are found in private dwellings on the household enumeration date)
- people in the New Zealand armed forces if they reside in a private dwelling
- young adults at boarding schools.

The survey population excludes:

- overseas visitors and international students who expect to be resident in New Zealand for less than 12 months
- people living in non-private dwellings such as hotels, motels, boarding houses, hostels, and homes for the elderly
- patients in hospitals, or residents of psychiatric and penal institutions
- people living on offshore islands (excluding Waiheke Island)
- members of the non-New Zealand armed forces and their dependants
- non-New Zealand diplomats or diplomatic staff members and their dependants
- New Zealand usual residents temporarily overseas who do not return within the survey period
- New Zealand usual residents temporarily staying elsewhere in New Zealand (including other permanent and temporary private dwellings, institutions, and non-private dwellings; and people who have no fixed abode, but stay at private dwellings) who don't return within the survey period
- New Zealand usual residents who live in remote areas that are costly or difficult to access.

Survey content

We use household and personal questionnaires to collect the data. One individual in the household completes the household questionnaire, which collects information about all the usually resident people in that household (eg family relationships and household income). We randomly select one individual in the household aged 15 years or over to answer the personal questionnaire.

We use computer-assisted personal interviews, which last an average of 45 minutes.

Reliability of survey estimates

Two types of error are possible in estimates based on a sample survey: sampling error and non-sampling error. Sampling error can be measured and quantifies the variability that occurs by chance because a sample rather than an entire population is surveyed. Non-sampling errors are all errors that are not sampling errors. These errors are not quantifiable and include unintentional mistakes by respondents, variation in the respondent's and interviewer's interpretation of the questions asked, and errors in recording and coding data. We endeavour to minimise the impact of these errors by applying best survey practices and monitoring known indicators (ie non-response).

We estimate sampling errors using a jack-knife method, which is based on the variation between estimates and on taking 100 mutually exclusive subsamples from the whole sample. Sampling errors are quoted at the 95 percent confidence level. For example, if the estimated total number of people is 1,575,200, and the estimate is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 35,500, or 2.3 percent (measured at the 95 percent confidence level), that shows there is a 95 percent chance the true total number of people lies between 1,539,700 and 1,610,700.

Smaller estimates, such as the total number of Pacific people (191,000), are subject to larger sampling errors than larger estimates. This estimate has a sampling error of plus or minus 21,300, or 11.2 percent (measured at the 95 percent confidence level).

High-level checks of the ethnic groups indicate the samples are broadly representative of the population. However, conclusions about groups with small population size, such as Pacific people, can be vulnerable to unmeasured differences between the survey participants and the population.

Our customers should view an output with a relative sampling error of 30 percent to 49.9 percent with caution (flagged in tables by an asterisk*). An error of 50 percent or more should be considered unreliable (flagged by **).

Confidentiality and suppression

Tables with very few contributors are suppressed ('S'). These cells have an estimated population of less than 1,000 and we deem them to be unreliable and a risk to respondents' confidentiality.

Rounding and percentages

We calculate all percentages used in the text from weighted data, which is rounded to two significant figures. The percentages in the tables are rounded to one decimal place. To improve the readability of the data, our calculation of percentages excludes residual categories (eg 'don't know' and 'refused') in the population base from which we calculate percentages.

Accuracy of the data

Sample design information

The NZGSS uses a three-stage sample selection method, similar to our other household surveys.

For the first stage, we select a total of 1,200 primary sampling units (PSUs) from the Household Survey Frame (HSF). The HSF is the standard sampling frame we use to select samples and to manage overlap control for all our household surveys. The HSF lists PSUs with attributes determined by data from the census. We then assign PSUs to standard strata based on these attributes.

The second stage of sample selection consists of selecting eligible dwellings within the selected PSUs. In the third stage, we select one eligible individual within each selected dwelling. The eligible individual is chosen at random from all eligible individuals in the dwelling.

The NZGSS is designed to provide estimates at a national level.

Weights

The survey has two sets of weights attached, one for the household and one for the person. We use the household weight to describe the attributes of a household; for example, how many households have dependent children who live outside that household. We use the person weight to describe the attributes of a person; for example, how many people are 'very satisfied' with their life overall.

More information

See [New Zealand General Social Survey](#) for more information.

Statistics in this release have been produced in accordance with the [Official Statistics System principles and protocols for producers of Tier 1 statistics](#) for quality. They conform to the Statistics NZ Methodological Standard for Reporting of Data Quality.

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Tables

The following tables are available in Excel format from the 'Downloads' box. If you have problems viewing the files, see [opening files and PDFs](#).

1. Selected NZGSS measures for the total population
2. Selected NZGSS measures by life stage
3. Selected NZGSS measures by age (10-year groupings)
4. Selected NZGSS measures by sex
5. Selected NZGSS measures by labour force status
6. Selected NZGSS measures by highest qualification
7. Selected NZGSS measures by household income
8. Selected NZGSS measures by personal income
9. Selected NZGSS measures by housing tenure
10. Selected NZGSS measures by family type
11. Selected NZGSS measures by migrant status
12. Selected NZGSS measures by ethnicity
13. Selected NZGSS measures by region

Access more data

[NZ.Stat](#) allows you to organize data in the way that best suits your needs. You can view your results onscreen or download and print them.

[Self-rated well-being across regions](#) has regional information about people's overall life satisfaction and sense of purpose.

Customised data requests

Phone our Information Centre on 0508 525 525 toll-free, or email info@stats.govt.nz, to discuss options for getting customised data that suits your particular needs. Note: there may be a charge for a customised request.

Next releases

We will be publishing other information from the NZGSS 2014 during 2015 and 2016.

The *New Zealand General Social Survey: 2016* will be released in 2017.