

# General Social Survey 2018: Final content





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# General Social Survey 2018: Final content

## Purpose

*General Social Survey 2018: Final content* outlines the confirmed topics in the 2018 survey. It also includes details of the main changes we have made since the 2016 survey.

## About the General Social Survey

Every two years, the General Social Survey (GSS) takes a snapshot of the well-being of people in New Zealand. The survey first ran in 2008. The target population is the usually resident New Zealand population aged 15 years and over, in private dwellings in the North and South islands and Waiheke Island.

The survey interviews over 8,000 respondents on their experiences and circumstances across a wide range of life domains, including health, material living standards, paid work, social connectedness, housing and physical environment, safety and security, civic and human rights, culture and identity, and overall subjective well-being.

The objectives of the GSS are to:

- provide a picture of (changes in) well-being for New Zealanders
- understand and monitor the distribution of well-being across population groups of interest
- contribute to understanding the interrelationships between different aspects of well-being.

The GSS interview takes approximately 45 minutes, around 25 minutes of which is allocated to the survey's primary content. This is content that we repeat at each collection.

Since 2014, the survey has included a rotating supplementary module taking approximately 20 minutes. The supplements allow the survey to focus on a theme of high public interest and for that theme to be explored within the wide range of well-being outcomes in the GSS.

In 2018, the supplement will cover housing and the physical environment. In 2014, the supplement covered social networks and support; the second supplement, in 2016, covered civic and cultural participation.

## Consultation process

A comprehensive consultation process in 2014 identified housing and the physical environment as the most suitable topic for the 2018 GSS supplement. The process also formed the starting point for identifying information needs in this area.

The 2014 consultation included 35 nationwide workshops attended by over 1,000 people. We had face-to-face meetings with central and local government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs), and held a formal submissions process that attracted 85 written submissions.

[Housing and physical environment will be NZ General Social Survey 2018 supplement](#) has more information about the consultation process.

The housing and physical environment theme fits well with the GSS objective to monitor well-being in New Zealand. Outcomes in this area are strongly related to people's overall well-being and their well-being in other life domains, such as health, material living standards, social connectedness, and work and educational outcomes.

## GSS 2018 content

This section outlines the topics included in GSS 2018.

The survey is split into two main parts: primary content (including core demographic questions) and supplementary content.

### Primary content

In 2018, the GSS primary content includes 18 sections:

- a short summary questionnaire about who is in the household
- demography
- overall life satisfaction
- a question on how worthwhile the respondent thinks their life is
- health
- smoking
- disability
- language
- culture and identity
- generalised trust
- institutional trust (eg in government)
- voting
- material standard of living
- safety and security
- acceptance of diversity
- discrimination
- family well-being
- social connectedness.

[Appendix 1](#) has a more-detailed description of what each section contains.

### Changes to 2018 primary content

The majority of the 2018 content will be the same as in 2016. However, based on feedback and consultation with stakeholders, we've made some changes to better meet stakeholder information needs, and to reduce the burden on respondents.

The main changes are outlined in more detail below.

#### *Demography*

In previous years, the questionnaire started with the demography section. For GSS 2018, we've moved it to the end of the survey. A new question on [sexual orientation](#) is added to this section.

*Accommodation supplement*

In 2018, 'accommodation supplement' is added as an option in the question on sources of personal income.

*Health*

In 2016 the health section included a question about overall health and sets of questions about physical and mental health. For GSS 2018, we've retained the overall health question. A new set of questions about emotional well-being (the WHO-5) replaces the physical and mental health questions.

[WHO – Five well-being index](#) has more information about the WHO-5.

*Voting*

The voting section for GSS 2018 is significantly shorter than in 2016. In 2016, we included questions on voting in local elections and in the general election. The 2018 survey only has questions on voting in the general election. The questions on voting in local elections will be rotated into the survey after the next local elections.

*Safety and security*

Stakeholders expressed a need for more data on people's perceptions of feeling safe and secure, how these perceptions affect different types of people, and which groups are most affected.

In 2018, we've added extra questions on changes in neighbourhood crime levels and fear of crime to the safety and security section.

[New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey \(NZCASS\)](#) provides the basis for the new questions.

**Supplementary content**

[New Zealand General Social Survey 2018: Objectives of the housing and physical environment supplement](#) (published October 2016) outlined the objectives and priority topics for this supplementary module and gathered feedback on priorities.

This section lists the topics included in the final version of the 2018 questionnaire, broken down into five broad streams.

- Housing quality and suitability
- Housing tenure security and housing mobility
- Housing costs and affordability
- Quality of neighbourhood
- Sustainable living and the natural environment.

[Appendix 2](#) has a detailed description of what each stream contains, but we provide a short description of each below.

## Housing quality and suitability

### Definitions

**Housing quality/habitability** is defined as the physical condition of the dwelling (eg the dwelling's structural soundness and need for repair), the existence of basic household amenities and services (power, water and sewerage, and refuse collection), and the state of the environment surrounding the home (safety, noise, and pollution).

**Housing suitability** is the extent to which dwellings meet the housing needs of households. This includes the ability of households to access housing, public services and amenities, and local opportunities such as employment or schooling that are appropriate to their needs; cultural expectations; and their aspirations and preferences. People with different lifestyles and those at certain stages of their life require different types of housing. A commonly used concept of suitability relates to space, particularly for identifying homes that are crowded or where space is underutilised.

### *Why the information is important*

Housing is essential to the well-being of New Zealanders, to meet the fundamental human needs for shelter, security, and privacy. Over the past decade, issues relating to housing quality have been of increasing concern for public policy in New Zealand. For example, the physical condition of New Zealand houses received a lot of attention as a result of the 'leaky homes' remediation (the New Zealand Productivity Commission (2011) noted the leaky homes crisis was estimated to cost \$11.3 billion) and the growth in evidence showing a strong relationship between sub-standard homes and health problems.

[He Kainga Oranga, The Housing and Health Research Programme, \(University of Otago, Wellington\)](#) examines and clarifies the links between housing and health.

Housing quality has been identified as a major information gap in the official statistics system, first in the 2009 Review of Housing Statistics (Statistics NZ, 2009) and then in the revised list of Tier 1 statistics in 2012 (Statistics NZ, 2012). Data from the GSS, and adding questions on housing quality in the [2018 Census of Population and Dwellings](#), will help fill some of these information gaps.

In addition to housing quality, questions on housing suitability will enable us to better understand how many people live in housing that is unsuitable for their needs.

### *Topics covered*

- Overall self-assessed condition of the home
- Perceived dampness and mould
- Healthy housing behaviours, including ventilation and use of heating
- Additional health indicators related to poor housing quality (including smoking inside the home)
- Whether the respondent's home and the area they live in meet their needs
- Whether home maintenance has been deferred and the main reason for doing so.

## Housing tenure security and housing mobility

### Definition

**Housing tenure security** refers to how often people move house (**housing mobility**) and other dimensions of security, such as the amount of control a household has over its housing and the degree of certainty about future housing circumstances.

*Why the information is important*

At its best, tenure security can provide long-term renters or home-owners with independence, stability, and a sense of control over their lives, and provide a basis for community participation. Tenure insecurity may lead households to live in homes that have low levels of habitability or that do not meet their needs and in extreme situations. Tenure insecurity can result in homelessness, frequent changes of rental accommodation, or using improvised, makeshift, or mobile dwellings such as caravans. It can reinforce social exclusion and poverty (Statistics New Zealand, 2009).

*Topics covered*

- Number of times moved in the past five years, and length of stay at current residence
- Main reason for moving
- Type of tenancy and length of lease
- Whether respondent owns home
- Category of landlord (eg private person, local authority).

**Housing costs and affordability****Definition**

**Housing affordability** – housing costs in relation to a household’s ability to meet those costs.

*Why the information is important*

Housing costs are a large part of the household budget for many households. Particularly for low income households, housing costs may constrain how much is left for other essential expenditure, such as food and health care. High housing costs also make it harder for households to access appropriately sized houses, leading to overcrowding. It affects a wide range of well-being outcomes, including health, education, and paid work.

*Topics covered*

- High-level housing costs, including rent and mortgage costs and self-assessed housing affordability.

**Neighbourhood quality****Definition**

**Neighbourhood quality** includes the physical quality of the area around a dwelling, but extends to the social and economic characteristics of neighbourhoods and the quality of services.

*Why the information is important*

The neighbourhood in which people live can affect their well-being, and their tenure stability. When looking for affordable housing, people often need to make trade-offs between housing affordability and quality of neighbourhood. Opportunities for recreation and socialising, and having access to local facilities and services, transport, and natural surroundings can all contribute to well-being in other areas, such as social connectedness, safety and security, mental and physical health, and work and education outcomes.

*Topics covered*

- Perceived access to key public facilities
- Perceived quality of neighbourhood.

## Sustainable living and the natural environment

### Definition

**Sustainable living** is defined as any lifestyle based on energy-saving and environmentally responsible behaviours. Examples are: composting, recycling and reducing or eliminating waste, energy efficiency, and using low-carbon means of transport. These activities are considered sustainable living behaviours regardless of whether environmental concerns are the motivator.

### *Why the information is important*

In and around the house is where most individuals are able to make the biggest contribution towards more sustainable living. Data on occupant behaviour around sustainable living will help to inform planning, monitoring, and reporting work on sustainability and sustainable housing. There is also a need for better data on how people understand the main human-caused pressures on New Zealand's natural environment.

### *Topics covered*

- Sustainable living behaviours
- Understanding of environmental issues.

## Objective housing quality data

To better understand housing quality in New Zealand, the GSS will include some physical measures related to housing as well as the subjective questions detailed above.

### Temperature reading

This will be an-on-the-spot measurement of the temperature in the house of each respondent who gives permission. It will provide the first national-scale measurement of indoor temperature since 2006.

### *Why this is this important*

Indoor temperature has been shown to mediate between house structure and disease. Indoor temperature is an objective validation of the question 'Does your home feel cold?'. We ask this question, with variations, in many of our social surveys. However, we currently have no external validation of self-reported temperature, such as an objective measurement.

### Physical housing inspection

As part of the housing section in the GSS, we will ask for permission to inspect the actual house. This inspection will be done by the [Building and Research Association of New Zealand](#) (BRANZ), who have carried out five-yearly housing inspections since the 1990s.

While we'll ask for consent from all respondents, only a small sample will be selected for inspection. The inspection will cover key aspects of housing quality, including: whether the house is insulated, the types of heating, and whether it is weathertight, safe, and secure.

The inspection will be non-invasive and take approximately one hour. BRANZ will also ask permission to leave sensors in the home, which will record temperature and humidity over a year. The housing inspection will be optional and all respondents can choose to opt out even after initially giving permission.

*Why this is important*

In [Measuring housing quality: Potential ways to improve data collection on housing quality in New Zealand](#), Stats NZ recommended that a physical housing inspection was vital to get good quality data on housing quality in New Zealand. We know it is important to have a physical inspection by a trained inspector. Previous evidence from self-reported housing quality shows that both tenants and home owners tend to underestimate housing problems.

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## Appendix 1

### Topics included in primary content of GSS 2018

<b>Section</b>	<b>Topics included</b>
Household questionnaire	Age, sex, ethnicity, paid work, jobs, hours of work, income, housing tenure
Introduction	Age, sex
Overall life satisfaction	Satisfaction with life
Life worthwhile	Perception of how worthwhile life is
Health	Personal health – overall and mental
Disability	Activity limitations
Language	Language first learned, language spoken in the household, ability to speak Māori, Māori language
Culture and identity	Ability to express identity
Generalised trust	Trust in others
Institutional trust	Trust in public institutions
Voting	Voting in last general election, reasons for not voting in last general election
Material standard of living	Whether people have enough money to meet their basic needs
Safety and security	Experiences of crime, perceptions of safety
Acceptance of diversity	Levels of acceptance of ethnic, religious, and other cultural differences
Discrimination	Experiences of discrimination
Family well-being	How well family is doing, number of people in family, groups included in family (eg parents, grandparents)
Social connectedness	Contact with family and friends, loneliness, access to social support
Demography	DOB, ethnicity, sexual orientation, birth country, year and month arrived in New Zealand, birth place of parents, Māori descent, qualifications, paid work, jobs, hours of work, income

## Appendix 2

### Topics included in supplementary content of GSS 2018

<b>Stream</b>	<b>Topics included</b>
Housing quality and suitability	Permission to take a temperature reading inside the house Recording temperature reading Smoking, smoking inside the home Days off due to illness, instances of common cold, flu, and other respiratory and cardiovascular illness, medication Number of bedrooms, outdoor area, suitability of house or flat Cold, damp, mould Condition of house or flat, repairs/maintenance required, reasons repairs/maintenance not done Ventilation and heating behaviours, type of heating used
Housing tenure security and housing mobility	Length of stay at current address, number of times moved in the last 5 years, main reason for moving, children changing schools due to move Type of tenancy and length of lease Whether respondent owns home Category of landlord (eg private person, local authority)
Housing costs and affordability	Housing costs and perceived housing affordability
Neighbourhood quality	Difficulty getting to nearest supermarket or dairy, doctor or medical centre, public park or green space, using public transport, reasons access is difficult Sense of connection to neighbourhood, level of attractiveness of neighbourhood
Physical environment	Sustainable living behaviours in the household – composting, recycling, taking reusable bags to go shopping Perceived environmental issues in New Zealand, reasons for environmental issues, participation in environmental project in last 12 months