BNZ’s inaugural NZ Wellbeing Index confirms what New Zealanders already knew – this is a great place to live. But, it also shows that wellbeing is much higher for some. The index is derived from questions relating to how people think and feel about their life satisfaction, life worth, happiness and anxiety. Over 1,000 New Zealanders across all ages and walks of life contributed to this important survey. Wellbeing measures complement more traditional measures of progress such as economic growth. BNZ will monitor New Zealand’s wellbeing each quarter.

Overall, New Zealanders enjoy relatively high levels of personal wellbeing and higher than in Australia. The BNZ New Zealand Wellbeing Index measured 68.4 points out of a possible 100 in Q4 2018 (Australia measured 64.6 in Q3 2018). Life worth contributed most in New Zealand, followed by life satisfaction and happiness. But, anxiety levels are high – 1 in 5 New Zealanders said they were experiencing “high” levels of anxiety.

Wellbeing was highest in Canterbury and lowest in Northland. New Zealanders living in Auckland lead the way for life satisfaction, Canterbury for life worth and Gisborne/Hawke’s Bay for happiness. People living in Waikato were the least anxious and those living in Northland were most anxious.

There is a strong relationship between wellbeing and household income levels. Wellbeing was highest for people with household incomes exceeding $100,000 p.a. and much lower for those with incomes of less than $35,000 p.a. (this group also rated their wellbeing lowest for all survey questions).

Age also plays a significant role in improving wellbeing with the over 50s reporting much higher levels than 30-49 year olds and 18-29 year olds (who have the lowest wellbeing). While over 50s scored wellbeing higher for all questions, the gap was most apparent when it came to anxiety. Owning and living in your own house significantly lifts your wellbeing. House owners reported much higher levels of wellbeing and in particular much lower levels of anxiety than renters.

What are the key drivers of wellbeing for New Zealanders?

Topping the list of positive wellbeing factors are: the homes we live in; our personal safety; our family & personal relationships; our standard of living; and feeling part of the local community. The key detractors of wellbeing are negative events such as abuse and victimisation, lack of time and substance use and abuse.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **New Zealanders enjoy relatively high levels of wellbeing.** The BNZ New Zealand Wellbeing Index measured 68.4 points out of a possible 100 points in Q4 2018, and was higher than in Australia where NAB’s latest Wellbeing Index measured 64.6 points in Q3 2018.
- **What’s driving wellbeing in New Zealand?** Life worth contributed most to overall wellbeing (72.3), ahead of life satisfaction (70.0) and happiness (69.6). Anxiety added the least with New Zealanders scoring ‘not anxious yesterday’ 61.5 points. All components of the wellbeing index in New Zealand were rated higher than in Australia (NAB Wellbeing Index).
- **Who has the highest wellbeing?** Wellbeing was rated highest by men (75.5) and women (72.6) over the age of 50, New Zealanders who live in and own their house (72.0), are married (71.7), live in a 2 person household (71.7), have a household income of over $100,000 p.a. (71.6) and work in professional occupations (71.3).
- **Who has the lowest wellbeing?** Wellbeing was lowest for labourers (60.1), young people aged 18-29 (62.3), particularly young women (61.7), single people (62.5), have a household income of less than $35,000 p.a. (62.8), young men (63.2) and live in a rented apartment (63.6).
- **What does wellbeing look like by region?** Wellbeing was highest in Canterbury (70.1) and lowest in Northland (64.2). New Zealanders living in Auckland led the way for life satisfaction (71.3), Canterbury for life worth (74.4) and Gisborne/Hawke’s Bay for happiness (71.5). New Zealanders living in Waikato (67.6) were the least anxious and those in Northland (53.2) the most anxious.
- **Does wellbeing improve with income?** Wellbeing was highest for New Zealanders with household incomes over $100,000 p.a. (71.6) and stepped down to just 62.8 points for those with incomes below $35,000 p.a.
- **What about age?** Age plays a significant role in improving wellbeing, with over 50s reporting much higher levels of wellbeing (74.2), than 30-49 year olds (67.6) and 18-29 year olds (62.3).
- **What are the key issues that define wellbeing?** The homes in which people live, personal safety, family & personal relationships, standard of living and feeling part of the local community contributed positively to the wellbeing of most New Zealanders in Q4 2018.
- **What are the key detractors from wellbeing?** Not surprisingly, events like abuse and victimisation, lack of time and substance use and abuse detracted the most from wellbeing in Q4 2018.
DETAILED REPORT: WELLBEING IN NEW ZEALAND

Subjective wellbeing measures can play an important role in supplementing traditional economic measures of national wellbeing.

BNZ’s methodology is based on a similar survey conducted by the UK government statistician (ONS) that looks at survey participants’ responses to four questions related to how people “think and feel about their own lives”:

- Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, to what extent do you feel the things that you do in your life are worthwhile?
- Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?
- Overall, how anxious did you fell yesterday?

The BNZ Wellbeing Index is a subjective assessment of over 1,000 New Zealanders own perceptions of their wellbeing using this same methodology.

National Australia Bank (NAB) has been conducting this Survey in Australia since Q1 2013.

New Zealanders enjoyed relatively high levels of personal wellbeing in Q4 2018.

The BNZ New Zealand Wellbeing Index measured 68.4 points out of a possible 100 points in Q4 2018.

Overall wellbeing in New Zealand was also higher than in Australia, where NAB’s latest Wellbeing Index measured 64.6 points in Q3 2018 - a gap of 3.8 points.

Life worth contributed the most to overall wellbeing in New Zealand. Overall, it scored 72.3 points. Just over 7 in 10 New Zealanders (71%) scored their life worth 70 points or higher.

Life satisfaction in New Zealand was measured at 70.0 points, with 69% of people also rating this aspect of their wellbeing 70 points or higher.

Happiness was measured at 69.6 points, with 66% of New Zealanders rating it 70 points or higher.

Anxiety added the least to wellbeing in New Zealand - and by a significant margin. Overall, New Zealanders scored ‘not anxious yesterday’ just 61.5 points*. It is also of some concern that 1 in 5 New Zealanders said they experienced “high” levels of anxiety.

On a positive note, New Zealanders rated all aspects of their wellbeing higher than did Australians - satisfied life 4.6 points higher, worthwhile life 3.9 points higher, not anxious yesterday 3.7 points higher and happy yesterday 3.0 points higher.

*NOTE: While the survey asks people to rate their level of anxiety, the results are inverted (i.e. ‘not anxious yesterday’) in order to maintain a consistent scale with the other survey questions. As a result, a higher score implies lower anxiety and a lower score higher anxiety.
Wellbeing also varied widely across demographic groups.

Among key survey findings, wellbeing was rated highest by New Zealanders over the age of 50 (74.2 points) - both men (75.5) and women (72.6) - people who live in and own their house (72.0), were married (71.7), lived in a 2 person household (71.7), had a household income of over $100,000 p.a. (71.6) and professional workers (71.3).

Wellbeing was rated lowest by labourers (60.1), young people aged 18-29 (62.3), particularly young women (61.7), single people (62.5), people whose household income was less than $35,000 p.a. (62.8), young men (63.2 points) and people living in a rented apartment (63.6).

Among other survey highlights:

- By region, wellbeing was highest in Canterbury (70.1), and lowest in Northland (64.2). New Zealanders living in Auckland led the way for life satisfaction (71.3), Canterbury for life worth (74.4) and Gisborne/Hawke’s Bay for happiness (71.5). People living in Waikato (67.6) were the least anxious and those living in Northland (53.2) were the most anxious.

- There was a strong relationship between wellbeing and household income levels. Wellbeing was rated highest by people with household incomes exceeding $100,000 p.a. (71.6) and stepped down to just 62.8 points for people with household incomes of less than $35,000 p.a. (62.8). People in the lowest income group also rated their wellbeing lowest for all survey questions.

- Age plays a significant role in improving wellbeing, with over 50s reporting much higher levels of wellbeing (74.2), than 30-49 year olds (67.6) and 18-29 year olds (62.3). While over 50s scored their wellbeing higher for all survey questions, the gap was most apparent when it came to anxiety, where it ranged from 70.9 points for over 50s to just 49.4 points for 18-29 year olds.

- Having a job is not a significant differentiator for wellbeing. In fact, people not employed (69.4) had slightly higher levels of wellbeing than part time (68.8) and full time workers (68.0).

- Owning and living in your own house or apartment does however impact wellbeing. House owners (72.0) and apartment owners (65.7) reported higher levels of wellbeing than house (64.3) and apartment renters (63.6). House owners in particular also reported much lower levels of anxiety (67.0) than all other people in this group, including apartment owners (53.3).
In order to better understand why New Zealanders feel the way they do, we asked them about a range of key issues that define personal wellbeing. Specifically, we asked them if these issues had a positive or negative impact on their ratings of personal wellbeing.

The net results (i.e. the number of people who said the issue impacted their wellbeing positively minus those who said it impacted their wellbeing negatively) are summarised in the chart on the left.

Clearly, the homes in which people live (+61%), personal safety (+58%), family & personal relationships (+58%), standard of living (+57%) and feeling part of the local community (+46%) contributed positively to the wellbeing of most New Zealanders in Q4 2018.

Not surprisingly, the key detractors from their wellbeing were events like abuse and victimisation (-19%), lack of time (-18%) and substance use and abuse (-8%).

One of the biggest wellbeing gaps was noted between 18-29 year olds (62.3) and over 50s (74.2) - and the chart on the left helps explain why. It’s very clear more over 50s derived positive benefits from most drivers of wellbeing than did 18-29 year olds, except for their physical health and social media (equal).

Among the issues which contributed positively to the wellbeing of significantly more over 50s than 18-29 year olds included their mental wellbeing (49% vs. 19%), physical appearance (24% vs. -3%) and the home they live in (72% vs. 51%). Far fewer over 50s (-2%) also said a lack of time impacted their wellbeing negatively than did 18-29 year olds (-30%).

Interestingly however there were 2 issues that detracted from the wellbeing of more over 50s than 18-29 year olds. These were events such as abuse and victimisation (-22% vs. -14%) and substance use/abuse -14% vs. -3%.

There was also a very significant wellbeing gap between New Zealanders with household incomes above $100,000 p.a. (71.6) and those with a household income of less than $35,000 p.a. (62.8).

A lot more New Zealanders in the highest household income group enjoyed positive wellbeing benefits (or were less negatively affected) across almost all wellbeing drivers than the lowest income group.

This was most evident when it came to the positive impact on their wellbeing from standard of living (73% vs. 23%), ability to fund retirement (32% vs. -13%), work and job issues (33% vs. -7%), the future (44% vs. 6%) and mental wellbeing (44% vs. 9%).

Lack of time was the exception. It had a far bigger negative impact on the wellbeing of New Zealanders in the highest household income group (-23%) than it did for those in the lowest income group (-12%).
The table below focuses on how these issues impact personal wellbeing of New Zealanders according to the region where they live. Clearly, there are some very big differences in how they help define wellbeing across the country.

For example, the homes in which they live had a net positive impact on the wellbeing of 74% of New Zealanders living in Other South Island, but for only 41% of people living in Otago/Southland. Personal safety impacted people in Gisborne/Hawke’s Bay (72%) most positively, compared to just 47% in Otago/Southland. Family & personal relationships had a positive wellbeing impact for the most number of people living in Gisborne/Hawke’s Bay (77%) and the least impact on people in Northland (35%). In contrast, standard of living contributed most positively in Waikato (66%) and least positively in Taranaki/Manawatu-Wanganui (47%).

Among other key differences, mental wellbeing contributed much more positively in Other South Island (66%) than in Wellington (18%), while the environment was most important in Auckland (41%) and least important in Gisborne/Hawke’s Bay (16%). More New Zealanders living in Canterbury (39%) were impacted positively by the future, while those in Otago/Southland (11%) were the least positively impacted.

Ability to fund retirement had a positive impact on the wellbeing of 30% of people living in Otago/Southland but had a net negative impact on people in Northland (35%). In contrast, standard of living contributed most positively in Waikato (66%) and least positively in Wellington (18%).

Events such as abuse and victimisation had a net negative impact on the wellbeing of -19% of all New Zealanders. It also impacted negatively in all regions, but the impact ranged from -8% in Bay of Plenty to -31% in Gisborne/Hawke’s Bay and -30% in Other South Island. Lack of time also impacted negatively in all regions, but ranged from -4% in Bay of Plenty and Waikato to -39% in Northland. Substance use or abuse detracted from the wellbeing of the most number of people in Bay of Plenty (-17%) and detracted from the wellbeing of the least number in Wellington (-3%).
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