

Living Streets Aotearoa



Feedback from LIVING STREETS AOTEAROA on the questions proposed to be included in the 2018 Census

Due: 30th June 2015

Send to: census.external.relations@stats.govt.nz

1. Living Streets Aotearoa welcomes the opportunity to comment on the questions proposed to be included in the 2018 Census.
2. Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national pedestrian¹ advocacy organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking-friendly planning and development around the country. Our vision is "More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places".
3. The objectives of Living Streets Aotearoa are:
 - to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
 - to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
 - to work for improved access and conditions for pedestrians including walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety
 - to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.
4. We confine our comments to the questions about Transport and Disability which were discussed in the StatsNZ Preliminary View of the 2018 Census Content document at <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2018-census/prelim-content.aspx>
5. We recognise the value of the transport question response data to local government and transport planners but note that it is also relevant to organisations promoting active and public transport such as Regional Sports Trusts, Public Health agencies and groups such as Living Streets

Aotearoa. It enables us to gauge whether we are making progress and to identify geographic areas or population groups where we might focus our efforts.

Main Means of Travel to Work

6. Living Streets Aotearoa believes this question is important but that it is insufficient to gain an adequate understanding of the population's regular transport activities.

'Main Means'

7. The question asks specifically about the 'main means' of travel. This limits the information gained about the different travel modes that may be essential to accomplish the full journey. These modes, such as walking or cycling to the bus stop or train station, walking from where a driver of a car dropped a person off, or walking from the carpark at the edge of the CBD where a driver parked his/her car, are all equally as important as the bus, train or car component of the journey. If any one trip leg is not able to be completed then the overall journey is not possible and the person won't get to his or her destination.
8. Asking about other modes is also useful for assessing the amount of exercise the population is undertaking, given that people may not think of this incidental or utility walking as exercise in the same way that they think of going for a power walk specifically for exercise. This may be particularly valuable to the health sector given the increasing prevalence of obesity in our society.
9. Including all modes of travel in the transport questions of the Census is an important improvement that we would like to see.

'Travel to Work'

10. Only about half the NZ population is involved in paid work and increasingly people are working hours outside the traditional 8-to-5 day. Thus, the current question may overestimate the peak demand created for transport infrastructure and services (as it is increasingly being spread across more hours).
11. As importantly, the question on travel to work provides no information about the half of the population not working on Census day. We believe this is another major defect of the current question that should be rectified.

'Travel to Education'

12. Somewhere around 1 million NZ residents are involved in education each day (including early childhood education through to tertiary level). These people also contribute to the demand for transport facilities and services but their collective demands are likely to be somewhat different from the working population.
13. We recommend that any question about travel to education is not confined to 'main' means of travel for the same reasons mentioned above in connection with travel to work. Furthermore, as most respondents will be children, the level of physical activity they have is particularly important and so knowing about the walking and cycling components of their travel is essential. Additionally, members of this group often use different modes for the journeys to and from school (e.g. being dropped off at school but walking home).
14. We strongly support the inclusion of a well-crafted question concerning people going to or from education establishments.

'Travel to Other Places'

15. In addition, there is another group of people who probably make up a fifth of the population - those people who neither leave home each day to undertake paid work nor attend an educational establishment. These people also have transport needs. They visit friends and relatives, they undertake voluntary activities, they go shopping and to medical appointments, they undertake leisure activities etc. Although they may have greater freedom to choose when they travel, in many instances they may do so at the same times as others in society. Even outside those times, it would be useful to gather information about their desired travel patterns as this can help public transport planners and health promotion agencies.
16. So we recommend a question which elicits information from this group also.

A Question that Elicits Travel Information from All Groups

17. In light of our comments above, the following approach may be useful for eliciting information from people on their modes of travel for their regular journey:
 - a. Ask people if they left their home on Census day .

- b. Then ask those people who left their home, whether it was to go to paid work, to an educational place or for some other purpose (they could be asked to specify the latter). (Because some people may go to work and education and/or other places, answers could be constrained by stipulating that people should state the destination that they spent the most time at).
- c. Then, ask what modes of transport they used to get to their destination as well as how long they spent and/or how far they went using each mode. A pre-formatted table could be supplied to make it easy for respondents to provide the information, e.g. 'In the column that shows your main activity away from home (paid work, education, other), indicate which methods of transport you used and the approximate time (and/or distance) travelled using each of these methods'. Note that people may have a better sense of the time they spend using any given mode than the distance travelled using it.

Method of Travel (tick all methods used where the distance travelled was more than 50m)	Time spent using this method (minutes)	Distance travelled using this method (metres or kilometres)
Walk		
Cycle		
Bus		
Train		
Ferry		
Motorcycle as Passenger		
Motorcycle as Driver		
Private Car as Passenger		
Private Car as Driver		
Company Vehicle as Driver		
Company Vehicle as Passenger		
Plane		
Other (please specify)		

18. Living Streets Aotearoa believe it is more important to get relevant and comprehensive information than simply to have fewer questions. With the Census increasingly being completed electronically the number of questions is not such an issue, especially if any additional questions are alternatives rather than all having to be answered.

Number of Cars Per Household

19. LSA agrees that the means of travel is more important than the number of vehicles available for private use from the perspective of planning for the needs of the users of those private motor vehicles. It may also be helpful in planning for public transport services.
20. However, it provides no information useful from a sociological perspective, especially about social isolation. This is because access to vehicles within the household may be very non-uniform. One member of the household may have almost exclusive use of the vehicle, limiting its use by others.
21. This question may be better asked on an individual basis. Rather than asking how many motor vehicles are available to a household at a specific address, it may be better to ask each individual whether they have ready access to the use of a vehicle when they need it as well as the total number of vehicles at the address. Often, we travel as individuals not as households.

Address of Residence and Place Travelled to Each Day

22. The information about usual place of residence and the place the person goes each day (currently specified as the workplace) is extremely valuable to gather since it enables mapping of flows of people across different parts of the country down to a very small spatial scale. This is highly useful for both transport facility and service planning.
23. In light of the comments above, it would be useful if the address of the educational establishment or the other destination to which a person goes is asked for. This will expand the dataset available to map traffic flows.

Usual versus Census Day Travel

24. Living Streets Aotearoa believes comparability across time is important and would like to see this retained as much as possible. However, usual mode of travel data is probably more useful than the snapshot 'on census day' data because transport is moderately strongly affected by day to day variation in work, study, weather and other factors.
25. If both Census day and 'usual' travel data were collected over several censuses, multivariate correlations might be discernible that would enable cross-census comparability to be maintained while only collecting 'usual mode' data from then on.

Disability

26. Living Streets believe that information on disability levels down to mesh block scale is important for transport planning. This is the group which is most often neglected in its transport needs and yet it is the most susceptible to being isolated at home. More information on disability correlated with travel behaviour would be very valuable.
27. We support retaining and improving the disability questions.

Summary

28. In summary, Living Streets Aotearoa believes it is important to gather data on the travel behaviour of a greater proportion of the population and about all the modes of transport used by people to make their full journeys.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in gathering New Zealand's most important information base. We have particularly appreciated the many ways of joining in this discussion.

Andy Smith
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Notes:

¹ Pedestrians is used here to include walkers and runners, mobility device uses, and people using their own physical power to move on small-wheeled devices such as skateboards and skates.