

# Quality of Life Survey Data Access Policy



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## Introduction

This document outlines the policy for providing access to Quality of Life (QoL) survey data and describes the way in which the policy will be implemented.

The data from 2022 and earlier surveys may be of interest to non-council researchers, and the project management team would like to make the data available to support additional research that will add value to the broader project. The data are available to researchers working within academic institutions, government agencies, or independently, subject to certain conditions.

Applications to access the data will be reviewed and assessed by the project management team. In assessing applications, the project management team will balance the benefits of data access with its obligations to act as guardians of the information supplied by individuals. A key element of this is considering the impacts of research on the communities these data come from and how the research outputs might be shared with these communities.

Individual participating councils may provide access to their single-city dataset to external researchers, at their discretion. However, individual participating councils may not provide access to the 8-city dataset or the datasets of other participating cities. This data policy covers access to QoL 8-city datasets and datasets for more than one participating council.

## Background to the survey

The Quality of Life survey is an important source of information for urban councils in Aotearoa New Zealand. It collects information on residents' perceptions of their overall quality of life, housing, transport, the built and natural environment, health and wellbeing, crime and safety, local issues, community and social networks, culture and identity, climate change, economic wellbeing, and council processes. In more recent survey waves, information has also been collected on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The survey is undertaken every two years and comparable data is available from 2014.

A small project management team manages the survey on behalf of the nine participating councils. This team consists of researchers from Auckland Council, Wellington City Council, Christchurch City Council and Dunedin City Council.

Note: The '8-city data' is referred to throughout this policy. This refers to the results for eight of the participating councils that are predominantly urban areas: Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Hutt, Porirua, Wellington City, Christchurch, and Dunedin. It does not include results for Wellington Regional Council.

## **Principles**

### **Ownership**

Quality of Life survey data (QoL data) remains the property of individual participating councils. No ownership of any QoL dataset will be conferred on external researchers.

### **Guardianship**

The QoL project management team will act as guardians of the data collected from individual survey participants. This involves ensuring the data are held and used in line with ethical standards of participant consent and to protect participant anonymity. Guardianship also involves requiring data to be analysed, interpreted, reported, and published in culturally appropriate ways.

### **Privacy**

QoL data is for the purposes of approved research only. No identifying information will be available in any dataset. The anonymity and privacy of study participants must be preserved at all times and researchers must take all care to prevent any participant from being identified. Researchers must adhere to best practice regarding security of datasets and must take all reasonable steps to prevent unauthorised (either deliberate or unintentional) access to the datasets.

### **Public good**

Given the value of the QoL study for investigating questions of public policy and the significant investment of public funds involved, QoL data are considered to be a public good. Research using the QoL datasets must be for public good purposes only, with clear value and benefits for Aotearoa New Zealand. Access to data is not permitted where people or organisations stand to gain commercially or financially.

### **Protection of value**

Any use of QoL data and any published output from the study must protect the value of the QoL study, relationships with study participants and the wider community, and must not jeopardise the future integrity of the study.

## Terms and conditions of access

The QoL project management team has an obligation to participants to protect their information. All researchers must agree to accept these obligations by adhering to terms and conditions of access.

1. The lead researcher and each member of the research team will be asked to sign an External Researcher Agreement to be granted status as authorised researchers. The lead researcher must send a copy of this to the QoL project management team, or its representative, and retain the originals on file. The lead researcher must advise the QoL project management team, or its representative, when a new researcher joins the research project.
2. The research team will be responsible for all research undertaken. No support will be provided by members of the QoL project management team unless they are formal collaborators on the project.
3. The QoL data may only be used for the research project described in the External Researcher Agreement.
4. No attempts are to be made to data-match or identify individuals in the data.
5. Security of QoL datasets used off-site:
  - The QoL datasets may only be accessed by those who signed the External Researcher Agreement.
  - Limited copying of the data may be made where reasonably required to permit the research.
  - All researchers must ensure the safe storage of QoL data, meaning it should be protected from accidental or deliberate access by unauthorised people, either physically or electronically. QoL datasets must not be stored on shared servers, unless access to QoL datasets on those shared servers is restricted only to the approved researchers.
  - At the conclusion of the research, electronic copies of any part of the datasets must be destroyed. The lead researcher must verify this in writing in their final update.
  - The lead researcher is responsible for immediately advising the QoL project management team about any breach of confidentiality or security.
  - Breaches that are deliberate or a result of a lack of care may result in the termination of access and affect future access requests.
6. Researchers are responsible for the quality of all analytical outputs.
7. The lead researcher is required to provide regular progress updates to the QoL project management team detailing progress to date – what has been achieved, what results have been published, what is planned, as well as a current list of the research team. The frequency of these updates will be agreed on a project-by-project basis.

8. Results of the research:

- The research team will be asked to agree to a reasonable timeframe for completing the research and publishing the results.
- All results must include an appropriate reference to the QoL survey.
- All results must include a disclaimer indicating that the researchers take full responsibility for the outputs. For example: The results presented in this paper are the work of the authors and may not reflect the view of the QoL project management team.

9. Dissemination and publication of research results:

- The research team must take a 'no surprises' approach regarding any media release or other publication of the results. The lead researcher must send copies of results, publications, and presentations to the QoL project management team prior to dissemination, so that the QoL project management team is informed before any public interest is generated. Failure to do so may affect access to QoL data.
- In line with the principle of Guardianship, the QoL project management team has the right to review and request changes to how results are presented, in order to protect participant anonymity and ensure that data are interpreted and published in culturally appropriate ways.
- The QoL project management team may publish links to published work on the QoL website.

10. At completion of the research, the lead researcher must return the data, confirm in writing that all confidential material and copies of the data have been destroyed, and provide details of all published or forthcoming results (even where already advised).

## **Researcher criteria**

Researchers proposing research consistent with the principles of the protocol are eligible to apply for access to QoL data, subject to the following criteria:

- As appropriate, the research team includes a researcher (statistician/analyst) with recognised skills in analysing survey datasets.
- As appropriate, the research team includes a Māori researcher or can demonstrate they are consulting with Māori research and data experts.
- With the exception of doctoral students, students may not be the lead researcher. Doctoral students are eligible to apply for access, provided they are supervised by a researcher connected to a recognised organisation.

Researchers may be independent or connected to a recognised organisation, provided their application provides clear and detailed information about the purpose, benefits and methodology of the proposed research.

## **How to apply for access**

External researchers are required to apply for access to data using the Application form.

Access to QoL data is subject to the QoL project management team approving the application and the research team signing the External Researcher Agreement.

Prior to submitting the application form, it is the lead researcher's responsibility to ensure that the process described below is followed:

- Check the availability and content of the dataset/s of interest. This involves:
  - Consulting the QoL project management team to determine whether a dataset is available.
  - Checking any information provided about the dataset (e.g. the questionnaire and/or any methodology reporting) to ensure that the data are available to support the proposed research.
  - Check the fit between the proposed research and the principles outlined in this data access policy.
- Check that the criteria for research access are met.

Once this has been done, please complete an application form with supporting material attached and send to the QoL project management team.

Please contact Dr Ashleigh Prakash, Social Researcher at Auckland Council with any queries at any stage. Email: [ashleigh.prakash@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz](mailto:ashleigh.prakash@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

## The decision-making process

Upon receiving the application form and supporting material from the external researcher/s, the QoL project management team will undertake the following steps.

1. Acknowledge receipt of the application within a week and advise the applicant approximately how long the decision process is likely to take.
2. The QoL project management team will consider the application and make a decision. They will consider whether the application is consistent with the principles in the QoL data access policy.
3. The QoL project management team will then advise the lead researcher of the outcome.
  - a. If the application is successful, all members of the research team must sign the External Researcher Agreement.
  - b. If the application is unsuccessful, the lead researcher may resubmit an amended application or send a submission to the QoL project management team for further consideration and review.

## Application assessment criteria

Applications must meet the principles for access to the Quality of Life dataset(s), as outlined in this Data Access Policy.

Principle	Considerations during assessment
Guardianship	Does the application adequately consider, where applicable, Te Tiriti ō Waitangi and responsiveness to Māori communities? Does the research team have sufficient experience and/or expertise working with or researching the communities they are proposing to research? Does the proposed research benefit the communities being studied?
Privacy	Does the application identify how participant anonymity and privacy will be protected? Does the application have adequate processes for data security and storage? Does the application outline what steps will be taken to prevent deliberate or unintentional access to the datasets?
Public good	Does the research team have a proven history of public good research? Does any member of the research team, or affiliated organisation, stand to gain financially or commercially from the proposed research?
Protection of value	Does the proposed research protect the value of the Quality of Life study? Does the application adequately outline proposed mitigations to any identified potential risks?