



Are our Buildings Safe to Occupy?

The earthquakes in Christchurch in December 2010 and February 2011 have led to questions being asked about whether the building consent and inspection processes are sufficiently rigorous to ensure that buildings meet earthquake standards. In Christchurch, for example, the CTV Building, where the greatest number of casualties occurred, has been found not to have met the standard. In Wellington a number of older buildings do not meet current standards, and owners have been served with notices that they must strengthen their buildings.

This leads to the question of whether New Zealanders generally trust their councils to ensure that buildings they approve meet the building code and are safe to occupy. In a recent poll, Research New Zealand asked New Zealanders whether they were confident that this was the case for (a) commercial buildings and (2) residential buildings in their area.

The majority of New Zealanders (65 percent) are confident that commercial buildings meet the building code and are safe to occupy. Twenty-eight percent are not confident that this is so. Confidence is highest in the Upper North Island (71 percent), falling to 61 percent in the Lower/Central North Island, and to a low of 56 percent in the South Island.

When it comes to residential buildings, 71 percent are confident that residential buildings meet the building code and are safe to occupy. Some 25 percent are not confident. When it comes to location, 71 percent of those in the Upper North Island are confident, 79 percent of those in the Lower/Central North Island, and 65 percent of those in the South Island are confident that residential buildings meet the building code.

When considering only Auckland, Wellington/Wairarapa and Canterbury, the pattern is much clearer as shown in the table below:

Percentage that are confident or very confident that commercial/residential buildings approved by councils meet the building code and are safe to occupy.

	Total	Auckland	Wellington/Wairarapa	Canterbury
Base** =	490	125	51	75
	%	%	%	%
Commercial buildings	65	74	67	44
Residential buildings	71	64	82	57

*Unweighted base.

In the case of commercial buildings, it is not surprising that the level of confidence generally mirrors experienced or perceived earthquake risk; being 74 percent in Auckland, 67 percent in Wellington and 44 percent in the case of Canterbury.



In the case of residential buildings, the relatively low level of confidence in Auckland, at 64 percent probably reflects the experience of water-tightness problems, which is not perceived to have been such an issue in Wellington, where confidence is highest at 82 percent. "It is perhaps not surprising that it is rather lower in Canterbury at 57 percent, given the devastation caused by the December 2010 and February 2011 earthquakes," said Research New Zealand Director, Emanuel Kalafatelis.

The Research New Zealand poll of 490 people aged 18 and over was conducted by telephone on 15-23rd February 2012. The maximum margin of error for the sample as a whole is +/- 4.7% (at the 95% confidence level). The data has been weighted to ensure it is an accurate representation of New Zealand's general population. The poll was not taken on behalf of any organization, but as part of Research New Zealand's monthly survey of attitudes and opinions.

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Table 1:

Q18. The next few questions are on a different range of topical issues, the first concerning building standards and your local council. How confident are you that commercial buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

	Base* =	Total 490 %	Male 247 %	Female 243 %
Very confident		16	18	14
Confident		49	46	51
Not confident		21	21	21
Not at all confident		7	7	7
Don't know		7	8	6
Refused		1	0	1
Total		100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.

Table 2:

Q18. The next few questions are on a different range of topical issues, the first concerning building standards and your local council. How confident are you that commercial buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

	Base* =	Total 490 %	18-34 years 83 %	35 to 54 years 178 %	55 years and over 229 %
Very confident		16	16	19	12
Confident		49	58	47	43
Not confident		21	18	19	26
Not at all confident		7	2	7	11
Don't know		7	5	8	7
Refused		1	1	1	0
Total		100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.



Table 3:

Q18. The next few questions are on a different range of topical issues, the first concerning building standards and your local council. How confident are you that commercial buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

Base* =	Total 490 %	NZ		
		European/Pakeha 349 %	Maori/Pacific 59 %	Other 82 %
Very confident	16	15	17	17
Confident	49	51	43	47
Not confident	21	20	26	21
Not at all confident	7	7	6	8
Don't know	7	7	7	8
Refused	1	1	2	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.

Table 4:

Q18. The next few questions are on a different range of topical issues, the first concerning building standards and your local council. How confident are you that commercial buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

Base* =	Total 490 %	Upper North Island	Lower/Central North Island	South Island
		215 %	108 %	167 %
Very confident	16	14	20	15
Confident	49	57	41	41
Not confident	21	17	22	25
Not at all confident	7	5	6	12
Don't know	7	6	11	6
Refused	1	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.



Table 5:

Q18. The next few questions are on a different range of topical issues, the first concerning building standards and your local council. How confident are you that commercial buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

	Total	Under \$40,000	At least \$40,000 but less than \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	Don't know/refused
Base* =	490	164	130	159	37
	%	%	%	%	%
Very confident	16	12	21	18	5
Confident	49	46	47	55	44
Not confident	21	25	18	17	30
Not at all confident	7	10	8	4	9
Don't know	7	8	6	6	7
Refused	1	0	0	1	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.

Table 6:

Q19. And when it comes to residential housing? IF NECESSARY: How confident are you that residential buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

	Total	Male	Female
Base* =	490	247	243
	%	%	%
Very confident	18	18	18
Confident	53	54	52
Not confident	20	18	22
Not at all confident	5	6	4
Don't know	4	3	4
Refused	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.



Table 7:

Q19. And when it comes to residential housing? IF NECESSARY: How confident are you that residential buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

	Total	18-34 years	35 to 54 years	55 years and over
Base* =	490	83	178	229
	%	%	%	%
Very confident	18	16	20	16
Confident	53	58	51	51
Not confident	20	22	19	21
Not at all confident	5	3	3	8
Don't know	4	0	6	3
Refused	1	1	1	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.

Table 8:

Q19. And when it comes to residential housing? IF NECESSARY: How confident are you that residential buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

	Total	NZ European/Pakeha	Maori/Pacific	Other
Base* =	490	349	59	82
	%	%	%	%
Very confident	18	17	22	17
Confident	53	54	44	57
Not confident	20	21	22	18
Not at all confident	5	5	5	4
Don't know	4	3	4	4
Refused	1	1	2	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.

Table 9:

Q19. And when it comes to residential housing? IF NECESSARY: How confident are you that residential buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

	Total	Upper North Island	Lower/Central North Island	South Island
Base* =	490	215	108	167
	%	%	%	%
Very confident	18	16	21	18
Confident	53	55	58	47
Not confident	20	21	14	23
Not at all confident	5	4	5	7
Don't know	4	4	2	4
Refused	1	1	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.



Table 10:

Q19. And when it comes to residential housing? IF NECESSARY: How confident are you that residential buildings approved by your local council meet the building code and are safe to occupy?

	Total	Under \$40,000	At least \$40,000 but less than \$80,000	\$80,000 or more	Don't know/refused
Base* =	490	164	130	159	37
	%	%	%	%	%
Very confident	18	16	17	20	20
Confident	53	52	56	54	40
Not confident	20	24	19	17	20
Not at all confident	5	7	5	2	10
Don't know	4	2	3	5	5
Refused	1	0	0	1	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

*Unweighted base.

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