

# TopSpots: Healthiest Places

By Stephen Hart



This is the first of a series of TopSpots reports commissioned exclusively for [iwantahome.co.nz](http://iwantahome.co.nz), which aims to shed new light on the lifestyle attributes and social makeup of New Zealand's towns and cities so that homebuyers can find out which places may be best for them.

For this first report, 17 of New Zealand's largest cities, districts and District Health Boards were analysed in depth, against a variety of diverse criteria, to establish which places have the rudest health and the ruddiest complexions.

The complete list of places we analysed:

Places	Population
Auckland City	404,658
Christchurch City	348,435
Manuaku City	328,968
North Shore City	205,605
Waitakere City	186,447
Wellington City	179,466
Hamilton City	129,249
Dunedin City	118,683
Tauranga District	103,632
Lower Hutt City	97,701
Rodney District	89,562
Palmerston North City	75,543
Napier City	55,359
Invercargil City	50,325
Porirua City	48,546
Nelson City	42,888
Upper Hutt City	38,415

And the winner is.....

## Rodney District

Stretching from Kumeu in the south to Wellsford in the north - Rodney District has been identified as New Zealand's healthiest place to live. Here is the top 10 places in descending order:

### Top 10 Healthiest Places in New Zealand

1. Rodney District
2. Wellington City
3. North Shore City
4. Christchurch City
5. Dunedin City
6. Nelson City
7. Porirua City
8. Auckland City
9. Lower Hutt City
10. Upper Hutt City

The researchers awarded or deducted points based on 12 factors:

- Life expectancy
- Smoking
- GPs per capita
- Unemployment levels
- Air pollution perception
- Physical activity
- Sedentary behaviour
- Fruit and vegetable intake
- Alcohol consumption
- Negative stress levels
- Own health rating
- Body size

Rodney and second placed Wellington were clear leaders throughout the study but Rodney was in a league of its own in the final points analysis.

### Rodney District - How did it Score?

(Including Helensville, Kumeu/Huapai, Whangaparaoa, Matakana, Orewa, Warkworth and Wellsford).

Rodney's results were strong against most of the health criteria we measured.

It came second in the overall **life expectancy** stakes with an average age of 80.5 years for men and women.

**Smokers** account for only 16% (the third lowest) of the adult population compared to the national average of 19%.

91% of residents **rated their own health** as good, very good or excellent, which was the third highest.

Rodney came out first in terms of residents' frequency of doing **physical activity**, with 62% saying they participated on at least five days a week, just ahead of Invercargill, Dunedin and Nelson on 61%.

All of that physical activity must be starting to pay dividends because another high scoring area was **healthy body weight**. Along with Waitemata District Health Board neighbours Auckland, North Shore and Waitakere, Rodney District had the best BMI (Body Mass Index) scores.

Another area where Rodney was top of the table was its residents' exposure to negative stress. 49% said that they rarely or never experienced **negative stress** which was the highest number recorded.

Rodney isn't perfect however. It had the highest **unemployment** rate of all of the places we analysed. It also came last for the number of **General Practitioners** available - only 48.2 per 100,000 people, compared to the national average of 71.3. Maybe the doctors have realised that this healthiest of places is unlikely to be good for business.

#### Highlights from the Others:

**North Shore City** is the place to live if you want to live longest (an average of 81.4 years). Perhaps not surprisingly it also has the lowest percentage of regular smokers at just 14% compared with worst performer Invercargill's 22.6%.

**North Shore** may have the longest lives but it's apparently not because of their fitness regimes or lack of worries. It rates a clear last in terms of residents' lowest physical activity and highest negative stress levels. Go figure.

**Wellington** is another place where residents can expect to make it into their 80's and has a correspondingly low number of smokers. Wellingtonians also feel good, with 92% of them saying they were in good, very good or excellent health.

The only place with a more positive score than **Wellington** for self-health assessment, was neighbouring **Porirua**, which also recorded the second lowest stress levels. Unfortunately the life expectancy of **Porirua** (76.5 years) doesn't bear out such optimism, only **Invercargill** is lower.

**Christchurch** is another high health scorer. And, if you're going to get sick, this is the best city to do it; the place is practically crawling with doctors (95 per 100,000 population). Unfortunately, two thirds of its residents think air pollution is a real problem - in fact no other city in New Zealand comes close.

#### Box Snapshots:

	Best	Worst
Life expectancy	North Shore City	Invercargill City
Smoking	North Shore City	Invercargill City
GPs per capita	Christchurch City	Rodney District
Unemployment levels	North Shore City	Rodney District
Air pollution perception	Porirua City	Christchurch City
Physical activity	Rodney District	North Shore City
Sedentary behaviour	Napier City	Auckland City
Fruit & vegetable intake	Dunedin City	Manukau City
	Invercargill City	
	Nelson City	
Alcohol consumption	Manukau City	Napier City
Negative stress levels	Rodney District	North Shore City
Own health rating	Porirua City	Waitakere City
Body size	Rodney District	Manukau City
	North Shore City	
	Waitakere City	

## All About Rodney



Rodney is the northernmost district in the Auckland region and covers an area of 2,475 square kilometres; it has over 1,400 kilometres of coastline.

It's population is just under 90,000, making it bigger than Palmerston North, but smaller than Lower Hutt. Between the 2001 and 2006 Census the population grew by almost 18%, which was faster than anywhere else in New Zealand, other than Queenstown and Selwyn District in the South Island.

Its popularity as a place to live can be put down to a number of things.

With the growth and expansion of the Auckland region there has been a subsequent growth in the Rodney District as people choose to move away from the hustle and bustle of the city. However, the closeness to Auckland makes it attractive to many for the easy commuting distance to major employers. It's also very popular as a place to retire and live a healthy, long life.

The population is slightly older than New Zealand in general, with a higher percentage being 40+ and a lower representation in the 15-34 age band. It also has a comparatively higher proportion of married couples.


At \$521,323, the average price of a home in Rodney is 33% higher than the national average of \$391,487, but 9% less than its near neighbour North Shore which has an average price of \$573,430. Rodney's house prices have increased by 82% over the last five years and show a price decrease of almost 1% during the last year.

The completion of the [Northern Motorway Project](#) in 2009, is likely to add further to the area's popularity for Auckland commuters and impact positively upon house prices.

People	Rodney	New Zealand
Population	89,559	4,027,947
Population density	36.9	14.9
Population change	17.6%	7.8%
Median age	39	35
Households	32,908	1,454,175
Household size	2.65	2.68
Male population	49.0%	48.8%
Female population	51.0%	51.2%
Married population	56.5%	48.6%
Single population	26.0%	34.1%

Estimated Total Population By Age	Rodney	New Zealand
Age 0 to 4	6.3%	6.9%
Age 5 to 9	7.3%	6.9%
Age 10 to 14	7.7%	7.2%
Age 15 to 19	6.9%	7.6%
Age 20 to 24	4.0%	6.9%
Age 25 to 29	3.7%	6.3%
Age 30 to 34	5.3%	6.6%
Age 35 to 39	7.8%	7.4%
Age 40 to 44	8.4%	7.5%
Age 45 to 49	8.0%	7.4%
Age 50 to 54	6.9%	6.4%
Age 55 to 59	6.3%	5.7%
Age 60 to 64	5.7%	4.7%
Age 65 to 69	4.9%	3.9%
Age 70 to 74	3.7%	2.9%
Age 75 to 79	3.1%	2.5%
Age 80 to 84	2.2%	1.8%
Age 85+	1.7%	1.4%

Family	Rodney	New Zealand
Percentage of couples with children	42.8%	42.0%
Percentage of couples without children	43.7%	39.9%
Single, with children	13.5%	18.1%
Divorced	8.2%	7.6%
Separated	3.4%	3.7%
Widowed	5.9%	6.0%
Now married	56.5%	48.6%
Never married	26.0%	34.1%

Housing	Rodney	New Zealand
		
Median home cost	\$521,323	\$391,487
Home appreciation		
(1 year)	-0.9%	-4.5%
(5 years)	82.3%	80.5%
Homes owned	69.5%	62.7%
Homes rented	24.9%	31.1%

All about Rodney: Useful Links:

[Rodney on Wikipedia](#)

[Rodney District Council](#)

[Homes for Sale in Rodney](#)

Sources:

- Statistics New Zealand
  - Census data 2001 and 2006
  - Life Expectancy at birth 2000-2002
  - Estimated Subnational Population by age 2007
- Quality of Life Report 2006 Point Research
- A Portrait of Health - New Zealand Health Survey 2006/2007, Ministry of Health
- Medical Council of New Zealand, NZHIS 2001-2005
- QV data August 2008

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