

Background information

What does this report cover?

The report contains 85 indicators to assess progress under the following 15 topics: population; economic resilience; biodiversity; air and atmosphere; water; land use; energy; transport; waste; innovation; work, knowledge and skills; living conditions; health; social connection and governance; and culture and identity.

A summary brochure, *Key Findings on New Zealand's Progress Using a Sustainable Development Approach: 2008*, highlights the indicative move either towards or away from sustainable development for 16 key indicators.

What is sustainable development?

An internationally recognised definition has been used. This is that “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

How does the report come up with its findings around whether progress has been towards or away from sustainable development?

By comparing changes in the data between 1988 and 2008 (or over the time period available) we have identified a trend for each indicator. From these trends the desired direction of change according to principles of sustainable development has been indicated.

Progress is assessed in relation to the four questions rather than counting the numbers of indicators getting better and subtracting those getting worse. Some aspects of sustainable development (eg national income) are more easily summarised than others (eg social and environmental aspects).

Is this the first time Statistics New Zealand has produced sustainable development statistics?

Internationally, sustainable development is an established, but still developing, area of official statistics. In 2002, Statistics NZ produced an experimental set of sustainable development indicators in a report called *Monitoring Progress towards a Sustainable New Zealand* in 2002. In 2006, Statistics New Zealand was invited to take part in an international working group convened by the OECD, and some other United Nations and international statistical bodies. The aim of this working group is to ensure greater consistency in measurement and international comparability of sustainable development statistics.

Who has been involved in the process?

Statistics New Zealand has worked collaboratively across a wide range of government and non-government agencies. The advisory group to the report included: Anew NZ, Department of Conservation, Landcare Research, Local Government New Zealand, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Transport, NZ Society of Local Government Managers, Sustainable Future, Sustainable Business Network, Te Puni Kokiri, and the Treasury.