

# ARE NEW HOMEOWNERS GETTING SATISFACTION?

**A BRANZ survey offers builders valuable insight into how homeowners select their builder and how happy they are with the end result. It's found a few areas that could be improved.**

By **Matt Curtis**, BRANZ Economist

**T**he building of a new home is perhaps the largest investment an individual or family can make, and the process of finding the right builder for the job is an important step.

BRANZ recently carried out a survey of owners of homes built in 2011. This gauged levels of satisfaction with the way the builder was selected and asked what improvements, if any, homeowners would like to make. Over 500 responses were received.

## Builders often chosen from quotes

Different firms rely on different methods to obtain clients. Smaller firms often rely largely on recommendations from clients, whereas larger firms can either offer a cheaper price or are more visible through advertising.

Consumers looking for a builder often have limited knowledge of the building industry. They may rely on comparing several quotes or the most common method – recommendations from friends, family and designers (see Figure 1).

The best consumer satisfaction levels came when the builder had been recommended (see Table 1). Conversely when the best quote – the lowest price – was chosen, the satisfaction rating was likely to be worse than if other selection criteria were used.

## Room for improvement

The survey also asked an open question about what features could be improved (see Table 2). Some respondents were very happy with their home and thought no improvements were necessary.

Some wanted features that increase cost, such as larger room sizes and landscaping or outdoor improvements, but others listed things that are often overlooked during the planning stage, such as additional storage space, improved window size and placement, and improvements to the materials used. The general house layout was also a concern for many owners.

The most common wish was for defects to be repaired, with 36.8% of respondents listing this.

## More survey results are available

The builder's name and house location was recorded in the survey. While we cannot release individual responses, builders may be interested in receiving aggregated responses for their houses covered in the survey and comparing their firm with industry averages.

*For the survey form and more results, download BRANZ Study Report 267 Building industry performance measures at [www.branz.co.nz](http://www.branz.co.nz), then BRANZ Shop.*

## WANT INFORMATION?

If you would like more information about the survey, or want to request results relating to your firm, email [economics@branz.co.nz](mailto:economics@branz.co.nz).

**Table 1: Average satisfaction rating by how the builder was chosen.**

	Service provided by builder during buying process	Condition of home on day moved in	Service provided by builder after moving in	Overall quality of home	Home completed in time	Standard of house finish	Fixing defects after occupancy
<b>Industry average</b>	<b>1.57</b>	<b>1.66</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>1.77</b>	<b>1.52</b>	<b>2.01</b>
Recommended by friends	1.38	1.48	1.68	1.22	1.56	1.32	1.69
Recommended by designer	1.31	1.38	1.55	1.41	1.79	1.48	1.52
From adverts	1.62	1.75	1.99	1.52	2.04	1.58	2.09
Used previously	1.46	1.45	1.52	1.33	1.68	1.31	1.67
Best quote	1.87	1.77	2.37	1.52	1.92	1.64	2.42

1 = Very satisfied/good. 2 = Fairly satisfied/good. 3 = Neither. 4 = Fairly dissatisfied/poor. 5 = Very dissatisfied/poor.

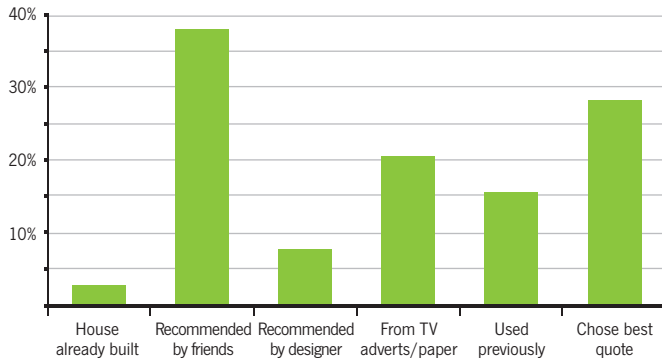


Figure 1: How the builder was selected.

**Table 2: Features that could be improved.**

	Percent (%)
Defects repaired	36.8
General design and planning	30.1
Larger room size	24.9
Materials, fixings, fittings etc. used	18.2
Landscaping and outdoor improvements	11.0
Window size and placement	5.7
Additional storage space	5.3

Note: Percentages don't add to 100% as the question allowed multiple responses.

# OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

**By 2030, a quarter of New Zealand's population will be over 65 and placing increasing accessibility demands on their living environments.**

As most New Zealand houses are not designed for this shift in demographics, it provides the building industry with a largely untapped opportunity to respond and find new ways of building adaptable and accessible homes.

One solution is to design and build with the Lifemark™ Design Standards, catering for lifetime needs. A recent survey of 2,000 industry professionals found that 70% of respondents were designing housing projects for the 50+ age group and that 85% of those businesses are including specific design features that accommodate clients as they age because those clients are asking for them.

*For more information, go to [www.lifemark.co.nz](http://www.lifemark.co.nz).*