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The Industrial Revolution has enabled humans to create an ever-increasing number of products in ever-larger quantities. When we consume those products and they wear out or become out of date we tend to buy a new one. This has implications for sustainability.

In today's consumer society, when we buy a product and it wears out or becomes out of date, we often buy a new one. This has an impact on sustainability.

What do 'Needs' and 'Wants' have to do with Rubbish?

Our needs include:

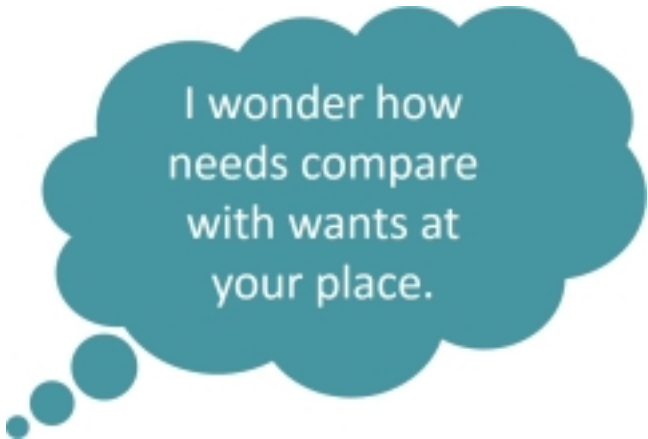
- food
- clothing
- shelter.

Wants are everything else like:

- cars
- TVs
- fancy foods
- wine
- phones
- art
- pets
- fashion clothing
- haircuts
- makeup
- jewellery.

Like all other westernised, industrialised countries, in New Zealand we live in a "[Consumer](#) [3] Society" where we spend part of our income on goods and services that are not seen as essential to our survival.

A related term is "The Throw-Away Society" whereby people do not repair or upgrade products but rather throw them away and buy a new one. The idea also implies a wish to always have "The Latest" version of a product and a reluctance to recycle or re-use products.



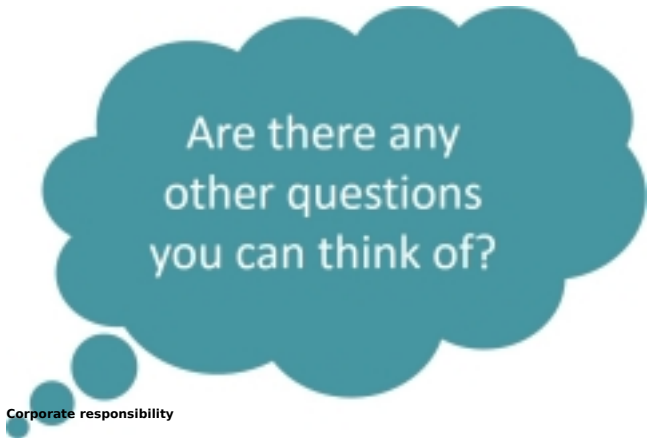
I wonder how needs compare with wants at your place.

Our responsibilities as consumers

There are no laws in New Zealand that require individuals to behave in ethical ways as consumers. It is up to each citizen to make up their own mind.

Before purchasing a [product](#) [3] or service, a person who wants to behave responsibly as a citizen in a Consumer Society could consider questions like:

- How long will this product last?
- Does this product contain any [toxic](#) [3] materials?
- How much energy does this product use?
- How often will I use this product?
- Where was this product made?
- Is there an alternative?



Are there any other questions you can think of?

Corporate responsibility

Over the last 20 years or so, more pressure has been put on businesses and corporations to reduce wastage and the production of harmful products as they carry out their activities. An example could be a simple action like reducing packaging or using packaging that is easily recycled by consumers.

Are there any
other examples
you can think of?

- [Ready for a quiz?](#) [4]



[4]

What do 'Needs' and 'Wants' have to do with Rubbish?

Our needs include:

- food
- clothing
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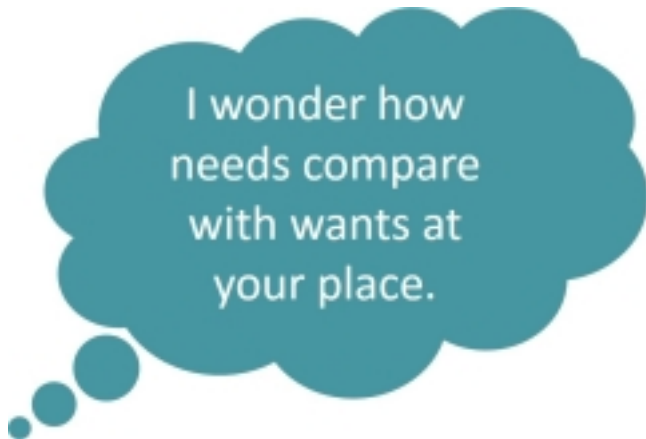
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- jewellery.

In New Zealand we live in a "[Consumer](#) [3] Society". We spend part of our income on goods and services that are not seen as needed for our survival.

Another word is "The Throw-Away Society". This is where people do not repair or re-cycle products but throw them away and buy a new one instead.

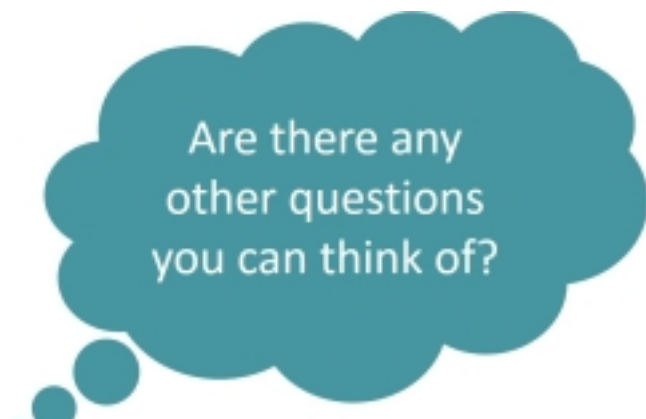


Our responsibilities as consumers

There are no laws in New Zealand about how to behave in ethical ways as consumers. It is up to each person to make up their own mind.

Before purchasing a [product](#) [3] or service, a person who wants to behave responsibly in a Consumer Society could ask questions like:

- How long will this product last?
- Does this product contain any [toxic](#) [3] materials?
- How much energy does this product use?
- How often will I use this product?
- Where was this product made?
- Is there an alternative?



Corporate responsibility

Today there is pressure on businesses to reduce wastage and the production of

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harmful products. An example could be a simple action like reducing packaging or using packaging that is easily recycled by consumers.

Are there any
other examples



• [4]

Māori keywords:

Audio Māori keywords:

- [kaihoko - consumer](#) [5]
- [hapori - society](#) [6]
- [kai - food](#) [7]
- [kākahu - clothing](#) [8]
- [maru - shelter](#) [9]
- [hāneanea - luxuries](#) [10]
- [taonga - product](#) [11]

Challenges: Find the nearest industrial site to your school or home. Find out more about "The Demographic Transition". Find out more about "The Consumer Society".

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[12]

Everyone needs food to survive. Would the food on this picture be a need or a want? Image: LEARNZ.



[13]

Computers are an important part of our lives these days. Are they a need or a want? Image: LEARNZ.



[14]

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As a responsible consumer we have important questions to ask before buying goods. A responsible corporation making the goods can think of actions such as reducing packaging. Image: Public Domain.

Source URL: <http://www.learnz.org.nz/node/2204>

Links

- [1] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/bg-std-our-consumer-society.mp3?uuid=5c706b349fc86>
- [2] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/bg-easy-our-consumer-society.mp3?uuid=5c706b349f6c6>
- [3] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/redvale181/glossary>
- [4] <http://activities.learnz.org.nz/rv181/rv181-a01-our-consumer-society/quiz.html>
- [5] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/kaihoko.mp3?uuid=5c706b349fdcb>
- [6] http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/hapori_7.mp3?uuid=5c706b349fecb
- [7] http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/kai_2.mp3?uuid=5c706b349ffc4
- [8] http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/kakahu_0.mp3?uuid=5c706b34a00b9
- [9] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/maru.mp3?uuid=5c706b34a01ad>
- [10] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/haneanea.mp3?uuid=5c706b34a029f>
- [11] http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/taonga_2.mp3?uuid=5c706b34a0391
- [12] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/b-our-consumer-society-01.jpg>
- [13] <http://www.learnz.org.nz/sites/learnz.org.nz/files/b-our-consumer-society-02.jpg>
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