Canterbury Wellbeing Index

Social connectedness

2016

The Canterbury Wellbeing Index tracks the progress of social recovery in greater Christchurch following the earthquakes using indicators to identify emerging social trends and issues.

Why is social connectedness important?

Social connectedness refers to the relationships people have with others and the benefits these relationships can bring to the individual as well as to society. High levels of social connectedness are thought to promote better health and psychological wellbeing. People who feel socially connected also contribute towards building communities and society. They help to create ‘social capital’ – the networks that help society to function effectively. Social connectedness is particularly important in building communities that can withstand adversity, whether caused by economic, social, or environmental shocks.

Social connectedness includes relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours, as well as connections people make through paid work, sport and other leisure activities, voluntary work or community service. Disasters are more likely to adversely affect social connectedness in groups that were vulnerable and had lower social connectedness before a disaster, such as people with ill health or disabilities. Providing adequate access to the built environment allows disabled people to be included in the economic and social life of the community, to make social connections and to contribute to society.

Volunteering

One strong indicator of high social connectedness is the degree to which community members volunteer. Over a million New Zealanders are involved in voluntary work. As volunteers they make a huge contribution to sports, recreation, arts, culture and heritage, emergency and social services, health, education, conservation and the environment.

Volunteering creates stronger communities by building social connections and networks of reciprocity and trust. Volunteers foster and maintain cultural identity through events and activities. They also maintain and improve our natural environment and provide services to families and those most vulnerable in communities.

Volunteering has a positive impact on the economy. Through their work, volunteers learn new skills that they can use in paid employment.

There are over 97,000 non-profit organisations in New Zealand. Ninety per cent of these rely entirely on voluntary labour.

Graffiti and noise complaints

If communities become less socially connected, signs of urban decay can grow. Post-disaster evidence of urban decay can include increased levels of graffiti or increasing social disruption. Monitoring and managing these incidents can help to rebuild social connectedness within the community.
How was social connectedness impacted by the earthquakes?

The community immediately responded to the earthquakes with spontaneous volunteering. People ‘pitched in’ and did whatever was necessary and possible to assist each other.

Noteworthy acts of altruism occurred in the hours after the earthquakes. Passers-by pulled people from rubble and saved animals from damaged buildings. Teachers and bus drivers looked after groups of school children for hours before their parents were able to reach them.

In the days and weeks afterwards people shared meals with neighbours, created community food kitchens, supplied water to elderly residents, towed strangers’ cars from holes in the roads, and teamed up to deconstruct damaged chimneys.

Response agencies such as the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and churches immediately started organising volunteers to knock on doors to assess the wellbeing of residents and to ensure their immediate needs were met. New volunteering groups formed organically, such as the Student Volunteer Army and Farmy Army who mobilised university students and the rural community respectively to clear liquefaction and provide many other services.

Networks of professionals such as lawyers, accountants, and health professionals offered their time and expertise for free to assist affected people. Residents’ groups such as Canterbury Communities’ Earthquake Recovery Network (CanCERN) and Addington Action formed to support their communities.

In other parts of the country, individuals, groups, churches, and businesses also mobilised and established supply chains of items such as warm clothing, heaters and household items to distribute to affected people. Iwi representatives from around New Zealand arrived to volunteer their skills and provide support to Ngāi Tahu and other Māori communities.

People remaining in damaged areas developed new bonds with neighbours in similar predicaments. However, social connectedness was also weakened as people left their communities due to damage or concerns about aftershocks. In the 2012 CERA Wellbeing Survey, 26 per cent of respondents reported having to move house permanently or temporarily ‘because of the earthquakes’.¹

Whole communities were uprooted and some people felt their social networks had developed ‘holes’ due to people leaving.² Children’s social networks were disturbed with some travelling to schools in other parts of town. Some people, particularly in the hard-hit eastern suburbs, had their lives and social connections severely disrupted.³

Many facilities where people used to meet and connect were damaged or closed down. In the 2012 CERA Wellbeing Survey, 69 per cent of respondents reported the loss of recreational, cultural and leisure time facilities (cafes, restaurants, libraries, marae, arts and cultural centres) having a negative impact on their everyday lives.

What is happening now?

There are a range of informal and formal initiatives supporting volunteering in greater Christchurch. The Department of Internal Affairs, which oversees the distribution of lottery funds, the Community Organisation Grants Scheme and other funding programmes, continues to support volunteering through its funding and advisory role. This includes contributing funding to Volunteering Canterbury.

In addition, the Christchurch City Council through its various funding pools supports over 1.5 million volunteer hours across the city.

The Christchurch City Council also supports volunteering through its Graffiti Team, which coordinates over 1,000 community volunteers and contributed to a reduction in graffiti vandalism throughout the city over 2015. This collective community effort aims to help the community feel safe and enhances neighbourhood pride. The Graffiti Team works with many organisations and schools promoting, educating and encouraging the community to become more involved, which in turn helps promote social connectedness. The Red Cross continues to engage in community outreach to support social connection. The Community Transport initiative connects people with health and recreation support and continues to run at capacity. This service is being transitioned from a recovery service to one of the usual services provided by the Red Cross. Red Cross volunteers and other local volunteers also check on affected residents in the most vulnerable areas of greater Christchurch. In May 2016 alone, 19 volunteers spent 114 hours knocking on over 1,800 doors to find out more about issues people may be facing and connecting them with support where possible.
Another door-knocking initiative is the Christchurch Community Response (CCR) Team, a church-based partnership between organisations including the Ministry of Social Development, Christchurch City Council and St Christopher’s Trust. CCR volunteers have visited over 70,000 homes across the city to help connect isolated individuals with appropriate support services. CCR continues to work its way across the city, gathering volunteers from each suburb it visits.

As our communities change and grow, local responses have worked to support social connectedness. Selwyn District Council signed its Newcomers and Migrants Strategy in December 2015 and is developing a resource to familiarise new residents with the area and connect people with local activities. In line with its Community Strategy, Waimakariri District Council has adopted a range of strategies to facilitate connectedness across its rapidly growing communities, including support for the establishment of a Welcome Ambassador initiative, welcome bags for new residents, and a range of social networks to help people start connecting in their area. The ‘You Me We Us Kaiapoi’ programme, initiated shortly after the earthquakes, continues to organise events and projects to help create a thriving and unique community.

The Christchurch City Council also supports communities at a neighbourhood level, working closely with Neighbourhood Support to run its successful Neighbourhood Week. Neighbourhood Week encourages social connections by supporting neighbours to organise and get together. A total of 141 events were held in Neighbourhood Week 2014.

Creative groups such as Gap Filler, Greening the Rubble, Te Putahi (Christchurch Centre for Architecture and Citymaking) and Life in Vacant Spaces have created temporary creative projects in vacant spaces which enhance the physical environment by creating areas where people can reconnect.

Another activity increasing connectedness is the Phillipstown Hub, which opened in 2015 on the Phillipstown School site following the school’s closure after the earthquakes. The aim of the Hub is to provide a place for the community to engage in activities that strengthen relationships, enhance skills, and encourage potential. The hub encourages community led projects that support positive outcomes for Phillipstown and hosts groups who work across a range of areas including health, safety, art, services for children, services for young people and their families.

CERA and the Council played a role in facilitating a range of initiatives that encouraged existing connections and enabled creation of new connections across the community. These included:

Partnering with the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust (CEAT) and the Methodist and Anglican churches to deliver the family-targeted Summer of Fun free event series in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Another initiative, ‘Piece of Cake,’ joined the Summer of Fun series in 2016. ‘Piece of Cake’ had previously encouraged neighbours to get to know each other by sharing cake and conversation over the weekend of 29-30 March 2014 and again on 28-29 March 2015.

Supporting Rotary to develop the Rotary Neighbourhood Project Fund, which provides small grants to assist community groups to host small neighbourhood and larger community events.

Working to improve accessibility through the rebuild by implementing Barrier Free Audits and accessibility checks in construction of the major projects in the city rebuild and ensuring all anchor projects are accessible.

‘Let’s Find & Fix’ was a community-led initiative launched in April 2014 which aimed to identify earthquake-damaged homes that needed temporary repairs to keep them safe, secure and weather-tight. This campaign was initiated by Canterbury Communities’ Earthquake Recovery Network (CanCERN) and supported by CERA, Red Cross, Community Energy Action, EQC and Insurance Council of New Zealand members. The Programme was later supported by CEAT and resulted in temporary repairs for nearly 700 homes.
What are the indicators telling us?

People and Places

In the April 2016 Canterbury Wellbeing Survey, six per cent of respondents reported that the loss of community meeting places is still having a strong ('moderate' or 'major') negative impact on their wellbeing. However these impacts are diminishing as the repair and rebuild of facilities continues. By April 2016 the loss of indoor sport and active recreation facilities had a strong negative impact on only 10 per cent compared with 24 per cent in September 2012. The loss of outdoor sport and active recreation facilities strongly negatively impacted only 8 per cent compared with 20 per cent in 2012. The proportion of people indicating that the loss of other recreational, cultural and leisure time facilities continued to have a strong negative impact reduced to 10 per cent in April 2016 compared with 34 per cent in September 2012.

Sense of community

In this report, sense of community is measured in the following ways:

- Sense of community with others in neighbourhood
- Levels of connectedness (having anyone you could turn to for help during a difficult time, such as during a serious illness, after an injury, or when needing emotional support).

Sense of community with others in neighbourhood

Prior to the earthquakes, Christchurch city residents reported lower levels of a sense of community (57 per cent) than the national average (60 per cent). The 2012 CERA Wellbeing Survey showed that in the year following the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes, over half of residents in greater Christchurch (55 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood. This may have been because the earthquakes had engendered a greater spirit of social connectedness during a time of uncertainty and upheaval for many.

However, Figure 1 shows that since September 2012, the proportion feeling a sense of community (agree or strongly agree) has trended downwards to below 50 per cent (greater Christchurch, 49 per cent as at April 2016, Canterbury Wellbeing Survey). The downward trend in the proportion of residents who feel a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood from September 2012 to April 2016 is statistically significant.

Figure 1: Percentage of residents who felt a sense of community

![Percentage of residents who felt a sense of community](image-url)
Map 1 shows the proportion within each geographic area reporting that they felt (agree or strongly agree) a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood in the April 2016 Canterbury Wellbeing Survey. Only 32 per cent of those living in the East reported a sense of community, compared with 58 per cent in the South (down from 39 per cent and 64 per cent respectively in September 2015). Residents of Selwyn and Waimakariri districts continue to feel a stronger sense of community than people living in Christchurch city.

Map 1: Proportion of people who agree that they feel a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood, zoned by residential address, Canterbury Wellbeing Survey April 2016 (see technical notes regarding geographic boundaries)
In April 2016, the group most likely to agree they feel a sense of community with others in their
eighbourhood were those aged 35-49 years (54 per cent), aged 75 years or over (62 per cent),
those whose total dwelling claim was up to $15,000 (62 per cent), and those who have either not
needed to make an insurance claim on their dwelling (56 per cent) or who have accepted an offer
from their insurer (56 per cent).

Those less likely to report a sense of community were people living in rental accommodation
(27 per cent) and young adults aged 18–24 years (31 per cent) or 25-34 years (23 per cent).

In the 2013 CERA Youth Wellbeing Survey of 12–24 year olds, 57 per cent of respondents agreed
that they felt a sense of community with others in their neighbourhood. Those most likely to feel this
way were those aged 12–15 years (64 per cent) and those at school (62 per cent). In contrast,
the unemployed (38 per cent), young people living with a long-term health condition or disability and
young people aged 19–24 years were less likely to feel a sense of community.

Levels of connectedness

Despite significant population movement as a result of the earthquakes, people in greater
Christchurch appear to have maintained high levels of connectedness. Figure 2 shows the
percentage of residents who agreed that they had someone to turn to for help during a difficult time.
The figure shows two comparisons, because the survey methods employed changed between
the period 2008 to 2010 (using computer assisted telephone interviewing) and the period 2012 to
2014 (using internet and hard copy questionnaires). Figure 2 shows that there were essentially no
differences in the proportions of respondents reporting they had someone they could turn to for help:
both between Christchurch city and non-Christchurch city residents and across the two time points.
Levels of connectedness, as captured by this measure, remain high. In April 2016, 97 per cent of
respondents to the Canterbury Wellbeing Survey indicated that they have someone to turn to. Family
(91%) and friends (66%) continue to be the most common forms of support that residents use in times
of need.

Figure 2: Proportion of residents reporting they had someone they could turn to for help during a
difficult time

CATI = computer assisted telephone interviewing
SMM = Sequential Mixed Methodology

aData not available for 2016 (one-time survey, unknown if survey will be repeated in future).

bImportant points about the methods used in the New Zealand Quality of Life Survey up until 2010 are that it used computer assisted telephone
interviewing (CATI); it relied upon telematching from the electoral role, which excluded 60% of the population; it included ages 15-17 in the survey, by
using an in-house database of named individuals who had indicated they were willing to participate in surveys in the future; and it included the following
city councils: Auckland, Manukau, North Shore, Waitakere, Wellington, Christchurch, and the following territorial
authorities: Rodney, Hamilton, Tauranga, Hutt, Porirua, and Dunedin. From 2012 onwards, the New Zealand Quality of Life Survey used Sequential
Mixed Methodology (SMM), which uses internet and hard copy questionnaires and does not exclude 60% of the population; it only included 18 years and
older, and it included the newly amalgamated Auckland City, Hutt City, Porirua, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Hamilton and Tauranga withdrew.

Data since the April 2014 CERA Wellbeing Survey has been excluded from this analysis due to a change of question format.
Personal commitment to Greater Christchurch

In the 2012 CERA Wellbeing Survey 24 per cent of residents reported benefits from feeling a stronger personal commitment to Christchurch city or to Selwyn or Waimakariri districts as a result of the earthquakes. This positive impact has diminished over time with 18 per cent of respondents in April 2016 still reporting that it was having a strong (moderate or major) positive impact on their everyday life as a result of the earthquakes.

Other community indicators

Other indicators which indicate changes in levels of community connectedness include:

- volunteering rate
- graffiti complaints
- noise complaints

Volunteering

Data in Figure 3 shows rates of formal volunteering. This indicator is based on survey questions from the Nielsen CMI Survey, which only collects data on formal volunteering (i.e., that done for/through an organisation by persons 10 years and older). When comparing the rates between Canterbury and New Zealand, it must be remembered that a lot of informal volunteering in Canterbury since the earthquakes is not captured by this measure. Note that this survey is no longer conducted, hence data cannot be provided beyond this time point.

The volunteering rate in Canterbury increased in the period immediately following the February 2011 earthquake to 35 per cent in March 2011, from 28 per cent in March 2010. The rate has since fluctuated and despite increasing again to 34 per cent in June 2012, it has generally remained below the New Zealand rate. Since December 2009, 30 per cent of the population (on average) have spent time volunteering in New Zealand compared to 29 per cent in Canterbury. By late 2014 the Canterbury rate was similar to that before the earthquakes.

After the February 2011 earthquake people in Canterbury also volunteered more hours on average than before. However, time spent volunteering has generally remained below the New Zealand average since June 2011. However, Figure 3 shows that volunteering rates tend to fluctuate across time and for all of New Zealand.

Another source of information on volunteerism is the New Zealand Census (albeit using different criteria and methodology). Data for 2013 show that the proportion of greater Christchurch people 15 years and over who spent time helping or in other voluntary work through any organisation, group or marae (13 per cent) is very similar to that across New Zealand (14 per cent). This proportion has remained stable between the 2006 Census and the 2013 Census.13

Figure 3: Volunteering rate, Nielsen CMI Survey
Graffiti complaints

While the number of recorded complaints has increased in recent times, the number of physical tags (items of graffiti) has decreased substantially in Christchurch between 2011 and 2015, based on the Christchurch City Council’s Graffiti Scan of physical ‘tag’ counts across 21 sampling grids. The Graffiti Scan programme recorded over 11 thousand tags (11,601) in 2011 but this number has declined dramatically to just over three thousand (3,061) in 2015 (Figure 4). In addition, the Council’s introduction of the ‘Snap Send Solve’ mobile phone app provides residents with a quick and easy way of notifying incidents within Christchurch. The app generated photo and GPS data helps the relevant Council department to isolate and investigate issues.

In 2015, 5,726 volunteer hours were applied to graffiti removal in Christchurch. In addition, 5,614 tags were removed through contractors’ proactive runs (graffiti removed without first being reported).

![Figure 4: Tags counted during Graffiti Scans, 2011 to 2015, Christchurch City](image)

Taken together, the data points to the effectiveness of the Christchurch City Council’s Graffiti Programme. In particular, the programme appears to be making a real contribution to reducing the incidents of graffiti vandalism. It is possible that this is contributing to a reduction in the incidence of other crime and may be improving perceptions of community safety.

*The Graffiti Scan is done every year in the last week of February. It is a physical count on any tagging sighted from the road. This year was the first year that a volunteer group Community Patrol undertook the count. The group drove down each street within the designated suburbs (21 sample areas in total) and physically counted the tagging on both sides of the road.*
Noise complaints

Total noise complaints reported to Christchurch City Council peaked at 14,152 complaints in 2010 and subsequently declined to 12,422 complaints in 2014 and 12,800 in 2015.

Typically, noise from radios, stereos, and televisions are the major source of complaints. However, Figure 5 shows that construction noise complaints have increased considerably as the rebuild has picked up pace and these are now the third most common type of complaint. The number of construction noise complaints has more than quadrupled between 2010 and 2015. Several factors (including temporary residential/industry displacements, and residential and commercial construction) may be driving the changes in the numbers and types of noise complaints.

Figure 5: Noise complaints due to construction

Find out more

Find out more about the Canterbury Wellbeing Index: www.cph.co.nz/your-health/canterbury-wellbeing-index/

Find out more about volunteering across New Zealand: www.volunteeringnz.org.nz/

Find out more about the Strengthening Communities Fund: www.ccc.govt.nz/culture-and-community/community-funding/strengthening-communities-fund/

Find out more about Volunteering Canterbury: www.facebook.com/pages/Volunteering-Canterbury/76308735321

Find out more about the Community Organisation Grants Scheme: www.communitymatters.govt.nz/Funding-and-grants---Crown-Funds---Community-Organisation-Grants-Scheme

Find out more about Red Cross assistance programmes and volunteering for the Red Cross: www.redcross.org.nz/what-we-do/in-new-zealand/disaster-management/canterbury-recovery-programme/

Find out more about Salvation Army assistance programmes and services and volunteering for the Salvation Army: www.salvationarmy.org.nz/need-assistance/welfare
Technical notes

Canterbury Wellbeing Survey (formerly the CERA Wellbeing Survey)

Data source: Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, Canterbury District Health Board

Data frequency: Six-monthly September 2012, April 2013, September 2013, April 2014, September 2014, April 2015, September 2015 (all CERA) and April 2016 (CDHB)

Data complete until: April 2016

Notes: The April 2016 Canterbury Wellbeing Survey (formerly the CERA Wellbeing Survey) is the eighth survey in the series providing information about the residents of greater Christchurch. Respondents were randomly selected from the electoral roll. The survey was delivered online and by hard copy from 30 March to 18 May 2016. The response rate was 41 per cent. Weighting was used to correct imbalances in sample representation. The survey was originally developed in partnership with Christchurch City Council, Waimakariri District Council, Selwyn District Council, the Canterbury District Health Board, Ngāi Tahu and the Natural Hazards Research Platform. For results from the surveys, see: www.cph.co.nz/your-health/wellbeing-survey/

CERA Youth Wellbeing Survey

Data source: Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority

Data frequency: One-time survey (unknown if survey will be repeated in future)

Data complete until: 2013

Notes: The aim of the CERA Youth Wellbeing Survey 2013 is to measure the progress of earthquake recovery by collecting data on the self-reported wellbeing of those aged 12–24 years. CERA worked with the Ministry of Education, Canterbury District Health Board, the Ministry of Youth Development, Christchurch City Council, Waimakariri District Council, Selwyn District Council, Ngāi Tahu, the Natural Hazards Research Platform and The Collaborative for Research and Training in Youth Health and Development to develop and implement the Youth Wellbeing Survey. Survey questions were adapted from the CERA Wellbeing Survey and were tested with panels of young people to ensure that the wording and content were relevant.

The Youth Wellbeing Survey was open between 23 September and 13 December 2013 for responses from young people aged 12–24 years, living in greater Christchurch.

Methodology

This was an online survey aiming to generate a sample of young people in greater Christchurch that, while self-selected and therefore not representative, was as large and diverse as possible. The survey was undertaken between September and December 2013. Advertising through greater Christchurch youth networks and targeted promotional activities were the main recruitment strategies. Some hard copy responses from targeted groups of young people were also received.

The survey period included high school and university exams, which meant that efforts to attract responses from different age groups needed to take the timing of study leave and exams into account. Recruitment during this period may also have had some impact on the responses given by students who may have been experiencing greater stress than usual due to exam pressure.
Sense of community


Data complete until: October 2012 and 2014 (Quality of Life) and April 2016 (Canterbury Wellbeing Survey)

Notes: The Quality of Life Survey is a national survey run every two years. Computer assisted telephone interviews were conducted with New Zealand residents aged 15 years and older. Respondents were selected randomly from the Electoral Roll. The Christchurch sample size is 488 for 2014. For 2010, fieldwork was conducted between 19 November 2010 and 2 March 2011. All interviewing in Christchurch was undertaken before the 22 February 2011 earthquake (and after the first large quake in September 2010).

The questions were asked in the same fashion in the Quality of Life surveys and the Canterbury Wellbeing Survey. The question, "If you were faced with a serious illness or injury, or needed emotional support during a difficult time, is there anyone you could turn to for help?" was not asked in 2006.

The results of the Quality of Life Survey include residents of Christchurch city only, while the Canterbury Wellbeing Survey also includes residents of Waimakariri and Selwyn districts.

The ‘national’ total in 2012 and 2014 is the combined results of the six Quality of Life Project cities of Auckland, Porirua, Hutt, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

The ‘national’ total in 2010 is the combined results of the eight Quality of Life Project cities of Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Porirua, Hutt, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin.

Prior to 2010, a further two cities were involved and the ‘national’ average included a number of people resident outside the main Quality of Life Project cities.

Volunteering

Data source: Nielsen CMI Survey via Department of Internal Affairs

Data frequency: Quarterly

Data complete until: September 2014

Notes: This indicator is based on survey questions from the Nielsen CMI Survey. This survey only collects data on formal volunteering (i.e., that done for/through an organisation). A negligible amount of informal volunteering (helping neighbours etc.) is also captured. Results are provided for the population aged 10 years and older, which is the standard measure used by the Department of Internal Affairs for volunteering data.

The rate of volunteering used is the number of people aged 10 years and older who have formally volunteered for a group or organisation in the last three months, as a proportion of all people aged 10 years or older.

The 22 February 2011 earthquake fell in the middle of the March 2011 quarter survey period. The March 2011 quarter results should be considered indicative only due to data quality issues, especially in the Canterbury region.

Note September 2014 data is the last data recorded in this data series.

Graffiti complaints

Data source: Christchurch City Council

Data frequency: Data collected monthly and aggregated annually in this report

Data complete until: February 2015
Noise complaints

Data source: Christchurch City Council

Data frequency: Data collected monthly and aggregated annually in this report

Data complete until: Jan 2015
References

1. Information retrieved from: socialreport.msd.govt.nz/social-connectedness.html


9. For information on the Canterbury Wellbeing Survey, refer to the technical notes.


