

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS, SOCIAL AND SPORT CLUBS

What is this?

Within communities there are various sub-groups and organisations that people can belong to. Some are based on shared religion/beliefs, while others are based on a shared interest or hobby such as reading, knitting or gardening. Sports clubs cater for a wide range of sporting interests including cricket, netball, bowling, fencing, badminton, tramping and skiing to name a few.



Why is it important?

Religious organisations, social groups and sports clubs play an important role in communities by providing avenues for people to meet others and share common interests. Membership of such groups enables people to enrich their social connection with other community members through participation in social, educational, cultural and recreational activities. These groups also provide opportunities for people to be actively involved in and support their communities' activities (such as fund raising and field trips). In addition, religious organisations, social groups and sports clubs can act as a source of information as some people will feel more comfortable seeking information from these organisations rather than official service providers.

Religious organisations often have a particular permanent place to hold services (e.g. churches and temples). Many of those with smaller congregations also use community halls to hold their services and meetings. Religious organisations also provide other support to their members in the form of social activities (e.g. youth groups) and access to educational and family support programmes.

Data

Christchurch has a large number of religious organisations and other social networks. The Community Information Christchurch (CINCH) website lists over 6000 organisations and courses for cultural, arts, educational and sports groups and activities.¹

There are over 200 churches and church related groups in Christchurch as well as several different temples and other places of worship. Of those that chose to answer the question in 2006 census, about 54% of New Zealanders affiliate themselves with Christianity (56% in Canterbury); about 5% across New Zealand affiliate themselves with non-Christian religions (3% in Christchurch). There are also around a third of the population who consider themselves to have no religion (36% for NZ and 34% in Christchurch).²

The quality of life survey provides a look at community members' involvement in social networks, which includes interest groups, churches, sports clubs etc.³

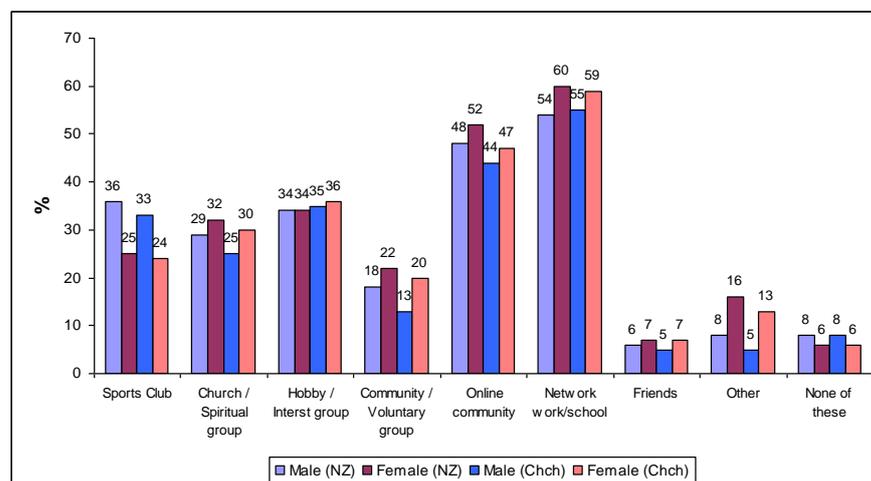
¹ <http://www.cinch.org.nz>

² Data calculated using the table builder on Statistics New Zealand website using religious affiliation category http://www.stats.govt.nz/tools_and_services/tools/TableBuilder/2006-census-pop-dwellings-tables/culture-and-identity/religious-affiliation.aspx

³ Quality of Life Survey, 2010, AC Nielsen. Christchurch and National survey reports available from www.bigcities.govt.nz

Figure 1 below identifies a number of small differences between males and females across these social networks. The most popular social networks both nationally and in Christchurch are work and school networks and online networks. Within the context of this measure sporting groups, religious groups and hobby and interest groups are the next three most common social networks.

Figure 1 Social networks and groups people belong to in New Zealand and Christchurch by gender, 2010⁴



On the whole males are more likely than females to be involved in a sports club with the reverse true for community and voluntary groups. While other differences exist they are less marked. It is interesting to note that there are still 6% of people in Christchurch not involved in any of these groups.

Nationally Maori are more likely to belong to sports clubs than other ethnic groups and Pacific and Asian more likely to belong to church or spiritual groups. While the Christchurch data mirrors this the differences are not significant due to small numbers.

Differences within age groups are quite marked for some networks. For instance in Christchurch 15-24 year olds are much more likely to belong to online communities (83%) than the average of 46% for all ages. Those aged 65 and older are more likely to belong to a network around a hobby or interest (51%) compared to all ages (36%).⁵

Impact on inequalities

Religious, social and sports groups form part of many people's social networks and while there are some differences by gender and ethnic group these are generally not large. Difference with ages do occur meaning the way in which groups choose to connect may change significantly over time and one method will not suit all.

Continuing to ensure there is choice available for people to remain connected within their community and that it is accessible to them through things like transport, communication and technology will be key to having an impact on reducing inequalities.

Solutions

Christchurch has a good variety of religious organizations and social groups. Information on these groups is available on line such as through the CINCH website. This is only one way to access information about services and some community members will not be aware of this.

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

Promotion of groups and events through a variety of medium is essential though online tools are becoming much more popular, especially for the younger generation.

To ensure a variety of community members are able to access these groups it is important to ensure there are places for these groups to meet and hold social events such as local community halls. It is also important that groups are able to access venues that are affordable to rent and that information on how to rent them is easily available through a number of media.

Data limitations

While information is available on the range of religious, social and sports groups in Christchurch, not all groups are listed on the CINCH website. Data is not available on membership numbers, the nature of the population they serve or the health outcomes.

Connections with other issues

Social Connectedness, Community Initiatives, Satisfaction with Leisure Time, Telephone and Internet Access.

Impact of the earthquakes

As time passes and these papers are updated the initial sections on the impact of the earthquake are going to be kept as an archive. Updates are provided where possible.

As at November 2011

Damage to buildings and other places where these groups meet may make it difficult for some groups to continue with their events and activities. While a number of groups have relocated or are sharing premises, other groups may be unable to find an appropriate venue due to limited space available and/or the high cost of buildings. Other new groups have grown out of the earthquake experience.

Online technology has been widely used to connect people and ensure they know about service changes etc., this has proved popular for many it is not necessarily available to all.

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