

Canterbury Rainbow Communities
Vision Workshop,
7th November 2013

Results of the consultation

Report prepared for The Uprising Trust

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Introduction

The UpRising Trust was established in 2011 after the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011. The Trust was formed to advance the wellbeing, education, leadership and social cohesion of rainbow people and rainbow communities, and to provide a hub of information relevant to rainbow communities. The Trust organises events for rainbow communities within Christchurch and the greater area. The Trust is run by volunteer trustees with the help of other volunteers in the community.

The Uprising Trust, in conjunction with the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, hosted a 'Share a Queer Idea' consultation on 7th November 2013. The process for the consultation included completion of individuals questionnaires, of which 50 partially or fully completed copies were returned. Results of seven group conversations, including a 'dot' prioritisation exercise, were also recorded. The attached report is an analysis of these individual and group responses.

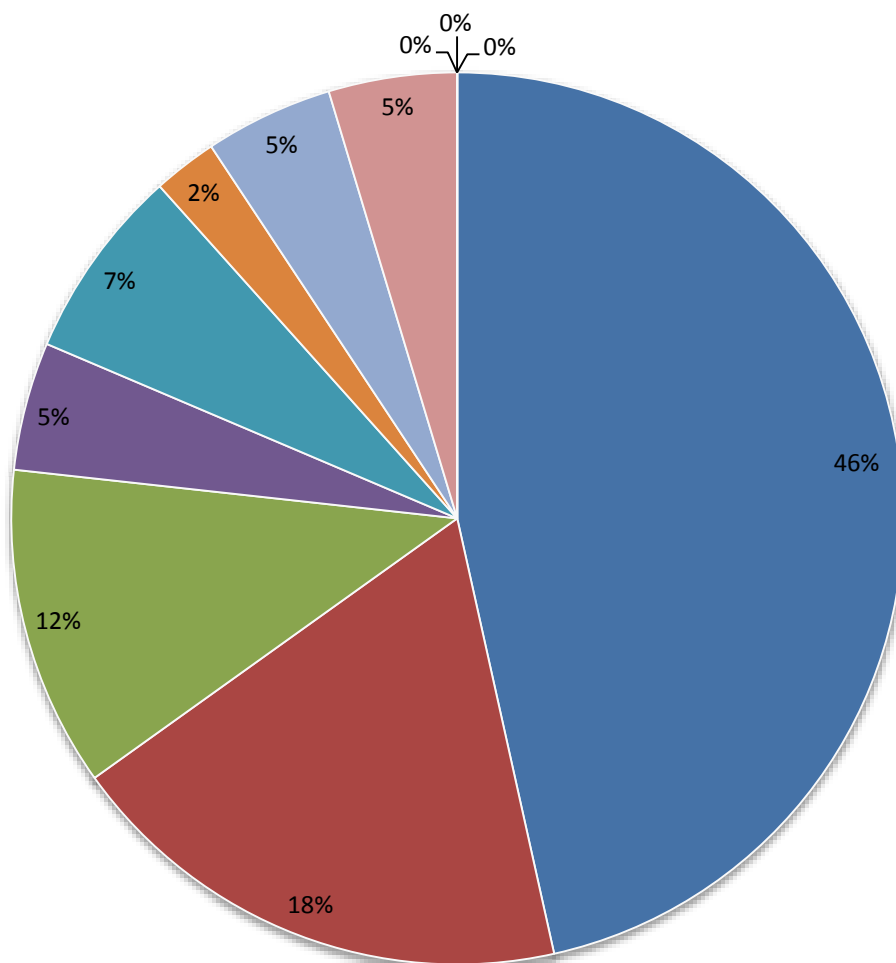
The consultation identified three clear priorities for the Rainbow communities of Greater Christchurch

- Provision of more gay-friendly venues and events
- Proactive promotion of gay-affirming messages by civic authorities
- More prominent and vocal community leadership

It is envisaged that a further community consultation will be convened in order to identify some community-owned actions in response to these priorities.

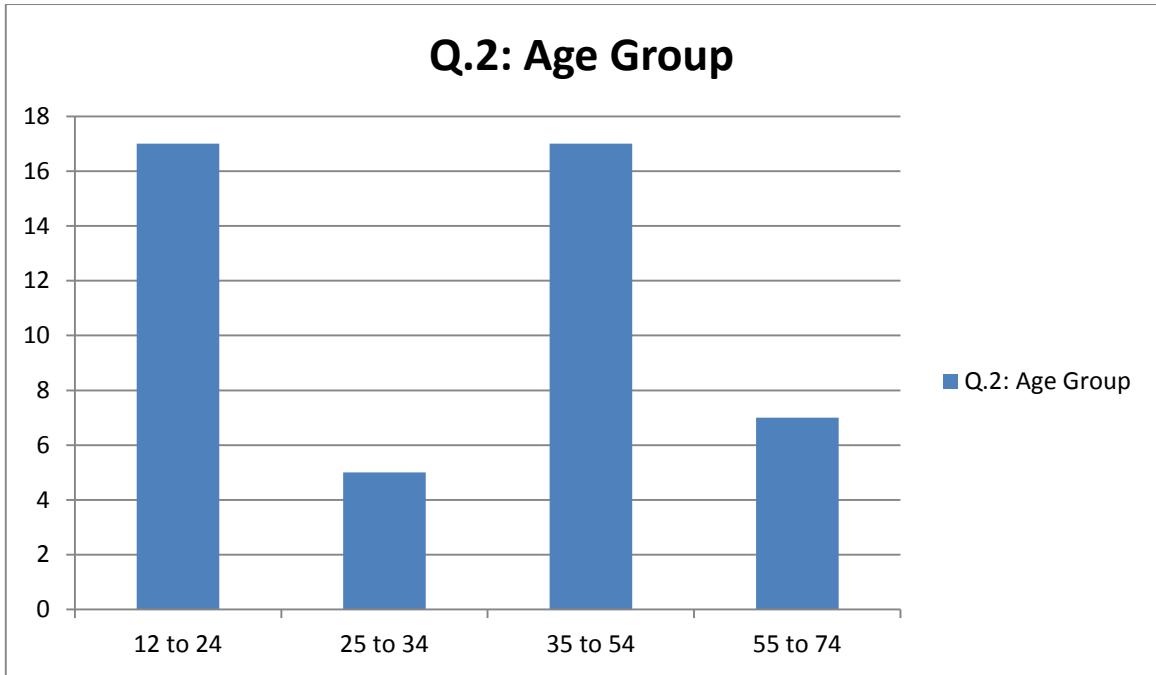
Q1:How do you identify?

- Gay
- bisexual
- queer
- trans
- lesbian gender queer 1
- Other/undeclared 2
- lesbian
- pansexual
- lesbian trans
- Gay lesbian
- Trans queer intersex non labelled 1

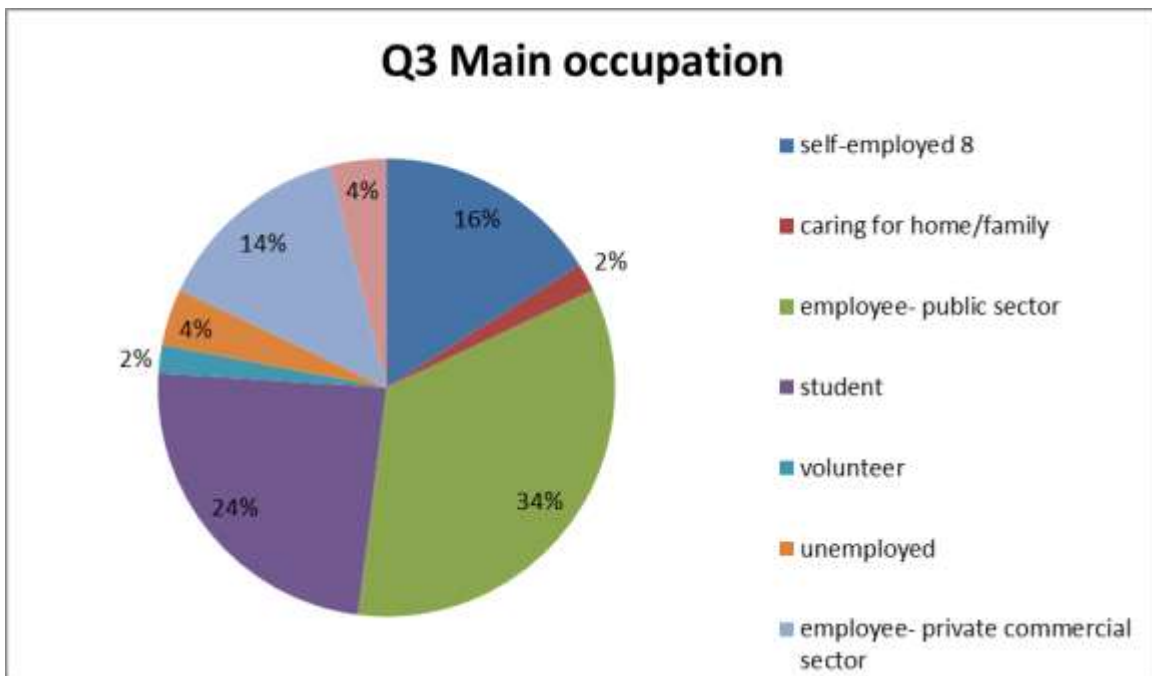


Comment: It is interesting to note the diversity of identifications, which makes coining a blanket description for this varied community problematic. Acronyms like LGBTI are themselves exclusive according to these results. It is unclear how widespread acceptance of umbrella labels like 'queer' or 'rainbow' might be. Nobody at this consultation identified as Takatapui or Fa'afafine.

Further exploration of an acceptable umbrella term may be valuable.



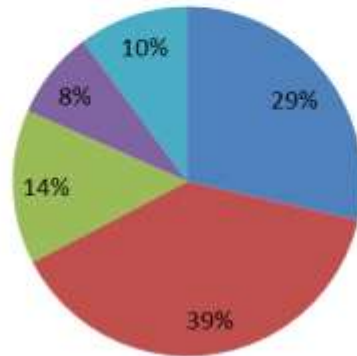
Comment: This community reflects the ageing trends of wider Canterbury. While the issue of elder care was mentioned in the consultation, it was not a main theme. Gay-friendly services for older people is likely to become a theme for the community over the next 20 years.



Comment: While these results have not been tested against the pattern for the general population, they reflect general trends. The unemployment rate matches the national rate.

How many people do you know in the room tonight?

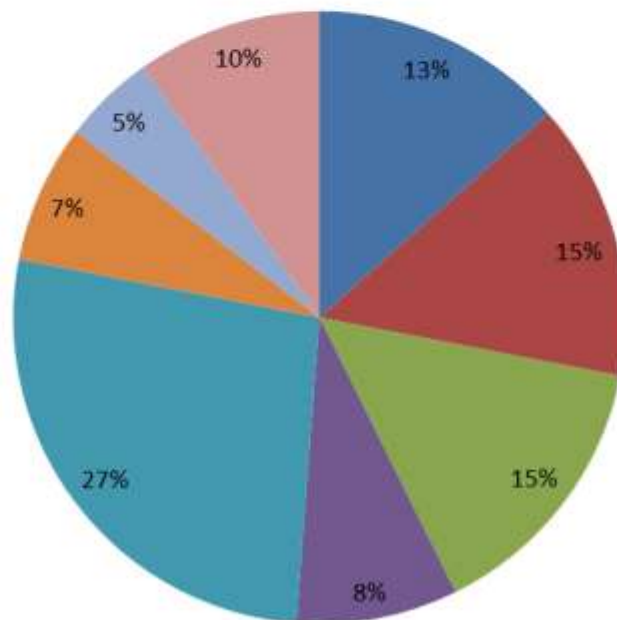
■ 0-5 ■ 6 to 15 ■ 16 to 25 ■ 25 to 50 ■ did not answer



Comment: The intention of this question is unclear. The data implies a relatively close-knit community – this would be expected given the ways in which the consultation was advertised would mainly attract those actively involved in existing networks. Public consultations would be unlikely to attract socially isolated or closeted people which means their voices are less reflected in these findings. This question indicates that the other results of the survey will be relatively accurate reflection of the views of the more active members of the Rainbow communities in the city.

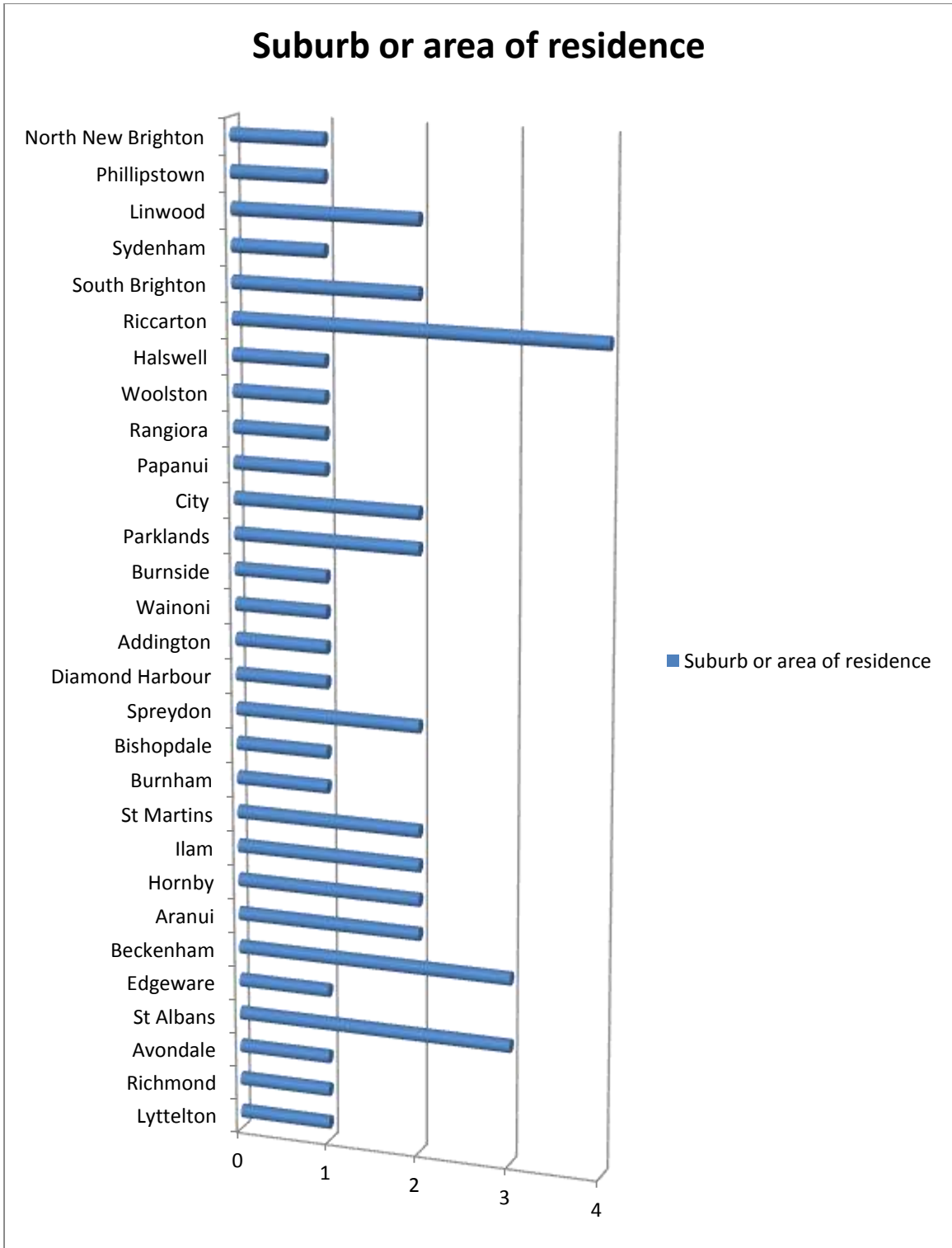
Issues or new considerations you face post-earthquakes

- Housing - costs, availability, quality and moving
- Friendships and social support
- Transport issues - roadworks, increased commute times, public transport
- Employment opportunities and unemployment
- Community venues and events
- Recovery issues - dealing with EQC, trust in management of recovery
- Visibility issues
- Stress, mental health and lack of support for young people



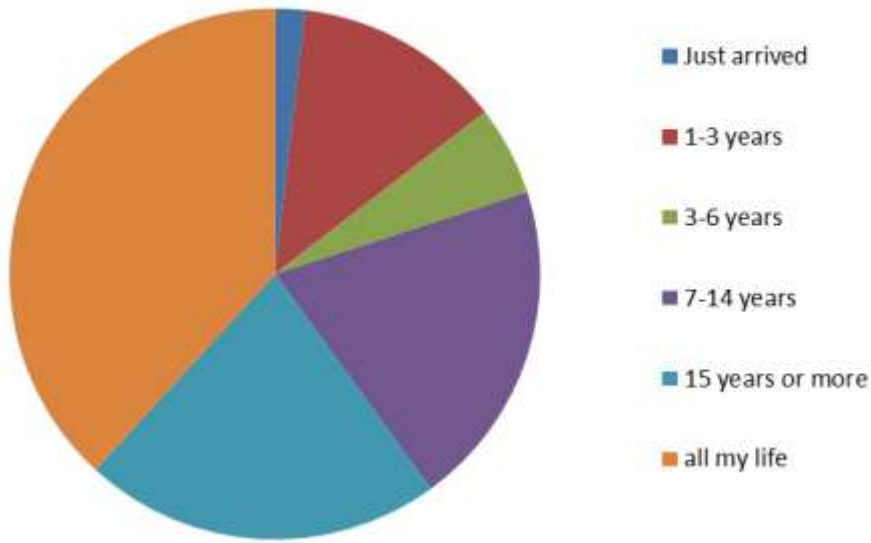
Comment: The need for community venues and events was the main issue identified and this will have some overlap with friendship and social support, which would mean that 42% of respondents identified these issues as a priority.

The rest of the issues parallel those of the wider community as outlined in the Community Wellbeing Survey. Housing is a major priority, along with transport, EQC/insurance and mental health issues. It is impossible to clarify from the data whether the stress and mental health issues are related to post-EQ stressors or the stressors of social isolation and stigma which are well documented to affect the Rainbow community.



Comment: This is a significant response since it indicates that there are no discernable ‘rainbow’ suburbs, such as you might find in major cities internationally. This may be due to wider housing issues since people may have fewer options when finding accommodation but may equally indicate that people choose accommodation according to other criteria than the proximity to other ‘rainbow’ households. This lack of a clear ‘rainbow’ centre affects choosing locations for community hubs/venues/events.

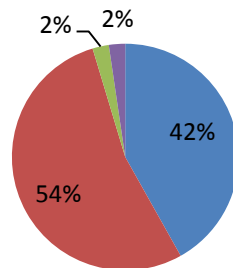
Q.8:How long have you lived in Canterbury?



Comment: The most striking aspect of this data is the high percentage of people who were born locally or have been here longer than 7 years. There are a number of potential interpretations of this – the area is sufficiently gay-friendly to support an established community; those attending the consultation are well networked but these are not easy networks for newcomers to access; or simply that Canterbury has a relatively stable population.

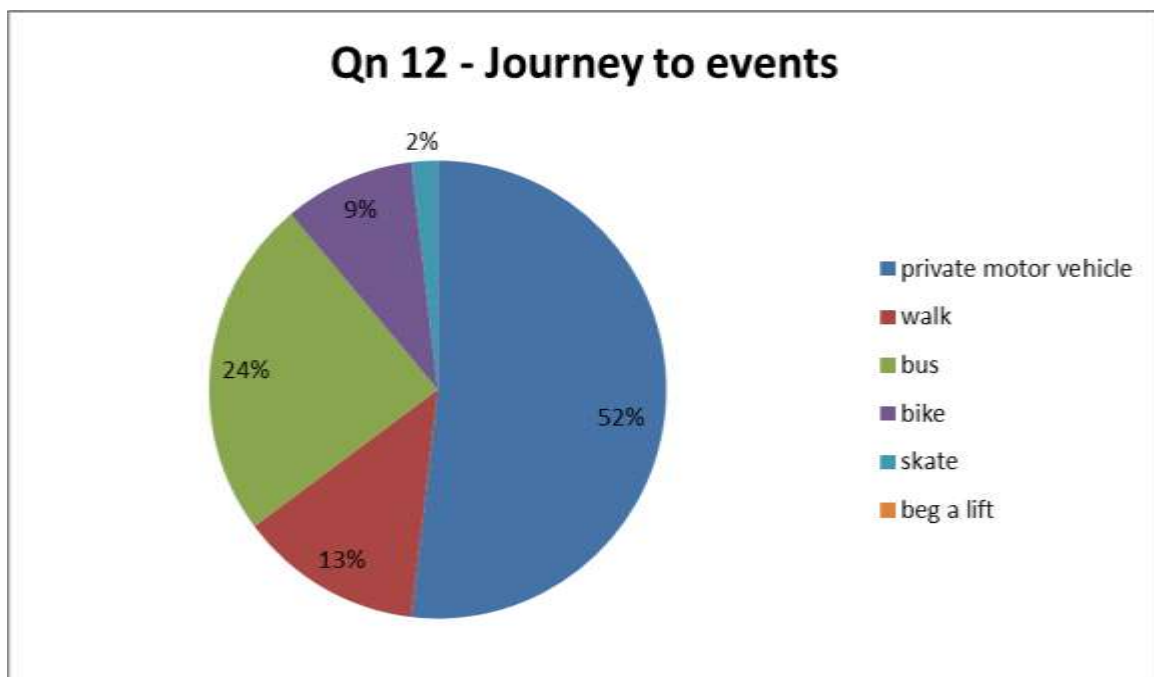
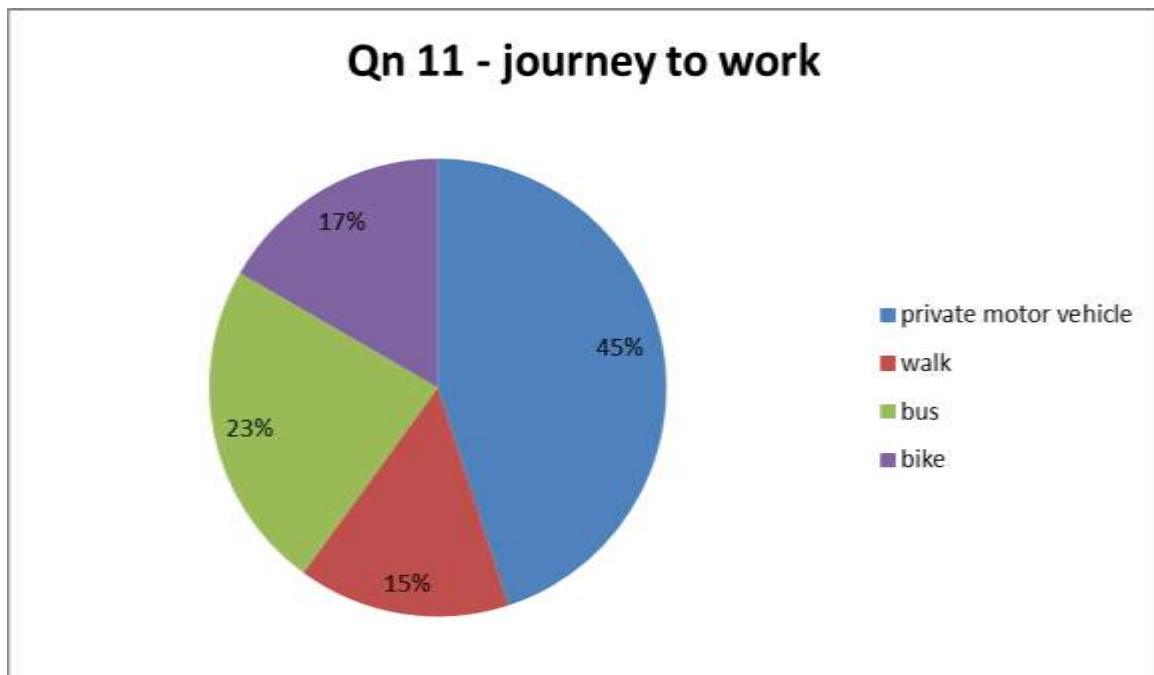
Have you permanently shifted place of residence because of the EQs?

- Have permanently shifted place of residence because of the EQs
- Have not permanently shifted place of residence because of the EQs
- Have shifted temporarily
- Haven't shifted yet



Comment: This indicates a high degree of movement but it is difficult to interpret further. This correlates with the high number of respondents who noted housing as an issue post-EQs but there is no indication that this is not in line with the experience of the wider population.

NB: Only 43 respondents answered this question and the question did not ask about temporary moves.



Comment: These questions indicate a preference for private motor vehicles but also reveal the community uses a relatively high level of active transport. This data is also relevant for the

identification of community venues/hubs/events but does not indicate that planning these locations need to consider anything that would not be relevant in a more mainstream planning exercise.

Table Discussions

It is difficult to interpret these accurately from brief notes but some clear themes emerge, especially from the dot democracy exercises.

How does the Community look to you now?

Repeated themes from several groups included lack of awareness/education/visibility both within the community and within the mainstream. Lack of gay friendly venues and events was also a recurring theme, with some tables noting that what events there were tended to be organised by a few people and that this leadership pool was probably overstretched. Resistance to change was noted as an issue for the community as was lack of finance. It was noted by one table that these issues predated the earthquakes but were now exacerbated by the recovery environment.

What sometimes gets in the way?

Lack of awareness, visibility and advertising received the most 'dots' overall. Stigma and violence or the threat of violence were repeated themes, as was the issue of 'feeling welcome/empowered within the community'.

If there were no barriers, how would you like the Community in Greater Christchurch to be like?

There were a wide variety of responses to this question. The idea of a 'Welcome to Christchurch – we are a gay-friendly city' received the most dots at one table but this theme was echoed in other tables' suggestions for a gay hub/bookshop, a rainbow information centre, a gay precinct and a desire for a safer, more supportive and encouraging environment. The value of having a gay mayor was also mentioned a number of times. Collectively, these ideas would account for most of the 'dots'.

The concepts of 'mind markets' for learning and sharing, guerrilla activities, events, and festivals received repeated mentions.

There was again recognition that leadership of the community falls on only a few shoulders and one table highlighted the need (for Council and govt.) to resource leadership, including an acknowledgment of the need for leaders to feel safe.

Reducing discrimination, especially by Police, and improved sense of safety were also key themes. One group highlighted the importance of gay friendly rest homes.

Conclusion and recommendations

The data collected at the consultation paints a picture of a diverse community, well established in the area, well connected to the existing networks but identifying a need for more community venues and events.

The respondents reflect many of the concerns of the wider population around housing and transport issues, concerns about EQC, insurance and the management of the recovery and stress and social isolation. From this data, there is no indication that this population is finding it more difficult than any other to access the support services currently available. There is some recognition that the challenges which always faced this community have been exacerbated by the earthquakes and subsequent recovery.

Unsurprisingly, the issues of visibility, stigma, social isolation and social prejudice were mentioned throughout the surveys, with particular concern for young people's needs. Discrimination by Police and the fear of discrimination by elder care services were specifically mentioned. This is in keeping with mental and public health research about the impact of discrimination on rainbow communities.

The major solutions proposed by the consultation were for

- the provision of more gay-friendly public spaces, venues and events,
- proactive promotion of gay-affirming messages by civic authorities,
- and more prominent and vocal community leadership.

1. Provision of more gay-friendly venues and events

The importance of gay-affirming events for the formation of an out and proud identity cannot be underestimated. For people who are usually born into predominantly heterosexual families, the emergence of a less mainstream identity can be traumatic. While recent human rights changes have made this 'coming out' process much smoother, the individual journey can still be lonely and frightening. Opportunities to gather with others, to mix with role models and explore new identities are crucial to the wellbeing of GLBTIF people.

As legal discrimination has reduced over the past two decades, many people have found their lives more acceptable to mainstream culture and ironically, this has potentially undermined the viability of many rainbow-focused businesses. Given the population of Christchurch, it seems unlikely that there will be a large enough rainbow community to support a wide range of venues and businesses who focus predominantly on rainbow people. It is therefore difficult to make specific recommendations based on this issue. However, the improved promotion of existing groups, networks and information provision eg Pink Pages, Uprising Trust, Q-topia, etc would be a good first step.

Proactive promotion of gay-affirming messages by civic authorities

The desire that Christchurch promote itself as a gay-friendly city recurred throughout the consultation, with suggestions for 'Welcome' signs at the airport and visible across the city. Having a 'gay mayor' was also suggested as a means to promoting wellbeing for the rainbow communities. Visibility and destigmatisation seem to be the underlying motivations behind these recurring themes.

It is worth speculating that raising a public debate about the role and value of the rainbow communities to civic and community life will result in an upturn in homophobic responses. Young, isolated or closeted people will feel the impact of this vocal homophobia most acutely and any public statements should seek to manage the damage this higher profile debate might inadvertently cause.

More prominent and vocal community leadership

While all communities of interest and identity rely on voluntary leadership and mentoring, articulate and visible role models are even more crucial within the rainbow communities since those coming out into a new identity require a visible community for support.

It is likely that the local rainbow communities face the same issues as many others across the city at this time – community leaders are tired and, faced with managing their own recovery issues, their time and energy to dedicate to community involvement is depleted. It is also possible that internalised homophobia may impact on the capacity of some with good leadership skills to contribute these to this community.