



Diversity and public engagement in planning: A case study of ethnic Chinese migrants in Christchurch

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ABSTRACT

Aotearoa New Zealand's population has grown rapidly from 3.85 million in 2000, to 5 million in 2020. Ethnic diversity has consequently increased. Territorial Authorities (TAs) undertaking statutory consultation and wider public engagement processes need to respond to increased diversity and foster inclusivity. Inclusivity is necessary to facilitate a greater understanding of TA statutory functions, as well as to encourage awareness and participation in annual planning processes, and resource management plans and consents. We examined perceptions, and experiences, of planning within the ethnic Chinese immigrant population of Christchurch. The Chinese ethnic group is a significant part of the city's population and is in itself derived from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. We surveyed 111 members of this community, via social media and in person, to identify environmental and planning issues of concern to them. We sought to ascertain their previous engagement with planning processes and to gauge their willingness for future involvement. We also undertook a small number of semi-structured interviews with Chinese immigrants to explore their experiences with planning in more detail. Results showed only 6% of respondents had been engaged in any planning processes, despite only 20% being unwilling to participate. We analysed these responses by gender, age, visa category, and length of time resident in Christchurch. Notwithstanding the low level of reported engagement, earthquake recovery (70% of respondents) along with water quality, transport, and air quality were the most important issues of concern. However, there was a general lack of awareness of the ability to make public submissions on these and other issues, and of the statutory responsibilities of TAs. We discuss possible explanations and provide several suggestions for TAs to increase awareness and to improve engagement. This includes further research to assist in identifying the nature of barriers as well as the effectiveness of trialling different solutions.

Keywords: Christchurch City, planning and public engagement, immigration, ethnic diversity, Chinese ethnicity

1. INTRODUCTION

Growing immigration and the associated ethnic or cultural diversity are significant factors of globalisation. Both bring opportunities and challenges for the settlement countries, which include the effects on the living and natural environments.

Significant immigration, as has occurred in New Zealand over the past 20 years (Figure 1), brings attendant challenges, both to the immigrants and to resident communities. For example, issues of unfairness, social exclusion, and environmental justice have to be addressed (Reeves, 2005).

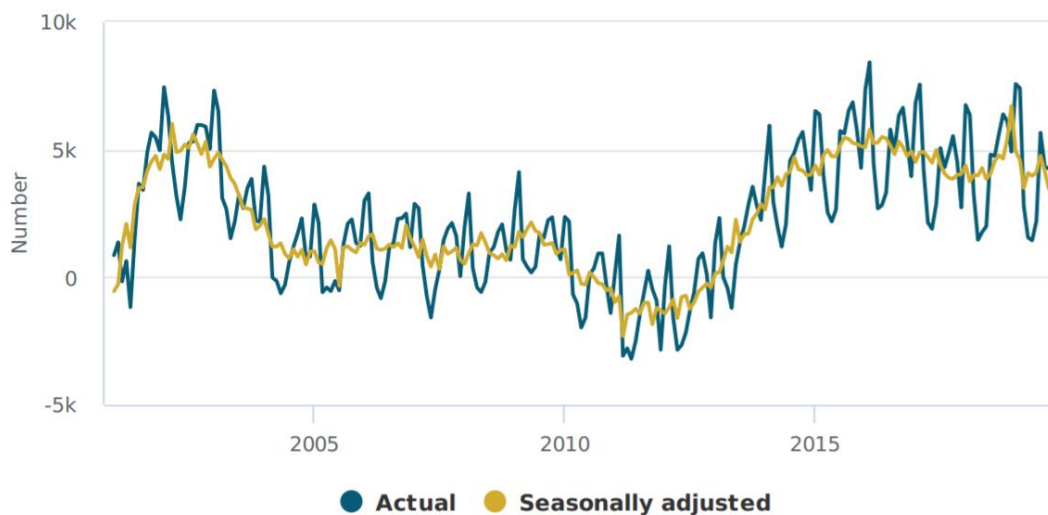


Figure 1: Seasonally adjusted monthly net migration, January 2001-September 2019

(Source: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/international-migration-september-2019>, licensed for re-use under the under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

New Zealand has relatively open immigration policies and is generally more accepting of multiculturalism compared to other countries around the world (Lyons, Madden, Chamberlain, & Carr, 2011). Multiculturalism is a global concept and is about diversity and acceptance (Fincher, Iveson, Leitner, & Preston, 2014). Christchurch has a large immigrant population (Figure 2). In 2017, Christchurch City Council (CCC) released

a multicultural strategy, which is a commitment to support and embrace the diversity of the people in the city (CCC, 2017a). The strategy responds to the increasing levels of ethnic diversity: “To be Multicultural requires great depth of understanding and acceptance of culture in its many unique manifestations, and the application of such acceptance” (CCC, 2017a, p10).

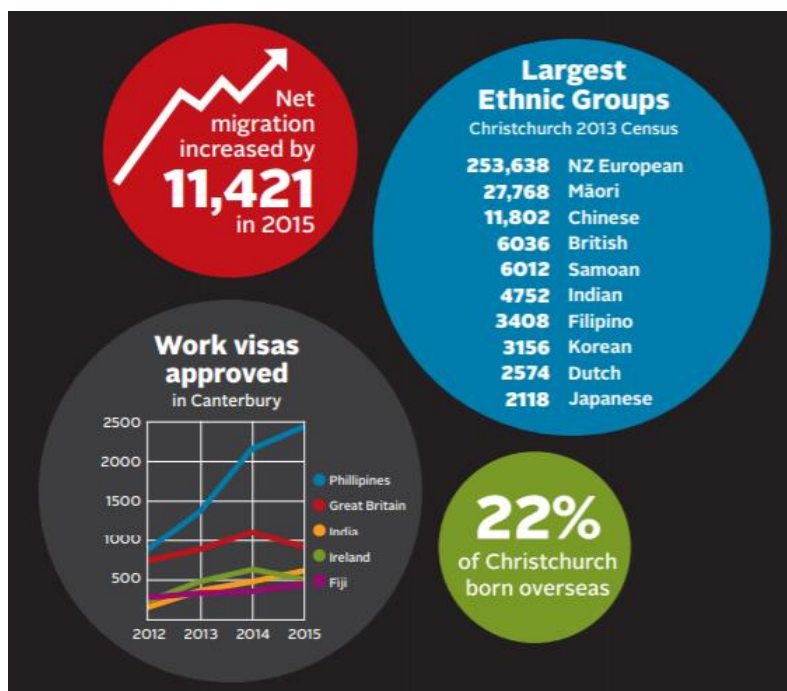


Figure 2: Christchurch multicultural demographics (source: CCC, 2017a, p22). Clockwise from the top left: net migration to the city in 2015 reflecting ongoing population recovery after the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes; ethnic composition from the 2013 census with residents identifying as Chinese being the third largest self-identifying ethnic group; the proportion of the population born overseas from the 2013 census; and the ethnic groups with the most work visas granted for the period 2012-2015. Image © Christchurch City Council.

Current worldwide planning approaches to deal with multiculturalism in, for example, urban areas include "...planning for the commodification of diversity in ethnically identified businesses, and planning for public spaces and encounter" (Fincher, et al., 2014, p3). Signifiers of ethnic diversity in public spaces are evident in Christchurch. For example, there are sister city gardens from China, South Korea and Canada in Halswell Quarry Park (CCC, 1999). The seismic events of 2010-2011 that resulted in the destruction of much of the central city and eastern suburbs, led to twenty-one streetlamps being gifted to

Christchurch by cities around the world as gestures of solidarity. Two of these streetlamps were from China (Figure 3). In the Central City Plan (CCC, 2011), Appendix A of the "Share An Idea" survey described some people's willingness to build a Chinatown in Christchurch for improving entertainment and celebrating ethnic diversity. The ideas for the Chinese-themed area included restaurants and markets (Duyndam, 2012). However, it is not currently mentioned in planning documents, and we have been unable to ascertain why this is the case.



Figure 3: Streetlamps gifted by the city of Wuhan (left) and by Gansu Province (right) by Hagley Park, Christchurch. This was part of artist Mischa Kuball's Solidarity Grid installed from 2013 to 2015: <https://www.scapepublicart.org.nz/solidarity-grid-about>. Photo taken by author (SCU)

The multicultural strategy has priority actions (such as building relationships and promoting engagement of all communities) to identify and remove barriers for ethnic groups to access Council processes, as well as facilities, events, and services (CCC, 2017a). There are many multicultural festivals and events throughout the year listed on CCC's website (such as the Chinese New Year Parade and the Night Noodle Festival). The funding of events is partly justified because financial support demonstrates the Council's positive attitude towards diversity activities. The outcomes Council anticipates include: increasing community spirit through bringing people

together; deepening understanding of different cultures within the city; and, celebrating Christchurch's diverse cultures (CCC, 2017b). It seems that over NZ\$5 million is allocated each year to support festivals and events (CCC, 2014). However, less well understood is the involvement of ethnic groups in statutory planning processes. As such, the extent of the Chinese ethnic community's involvement in CCC planning processes is the focus of our research.

2. CONTEXT

The planning decision-making process involves a series of factors: agenda setting;

problem definition; data collection; information analysis; options selection; legitimating decisions; implementation; and evaluation (Painter, 1992). Public participation, or engagement, is an important component of the modern planning process to ensure the political quality of planning (Lieske, Mullen, & Hamerlinck, 2009; Rowe & Frewer, 2005). Lane (2005) defines the role of public engagement by using planning models, task identification and planning contexts. He argues the degree of public engagement is dependent on problem identification, knowledge types, concepts and the decision-making environment in planning matters. Public engagement is a key to achieve a successful planning goal by promoting local community development through the decision-making process (Kirkhaug, 2013). However, rigorous assessments are largely lacking, and inhibited by confused terminology (Rowe & Frewer, 2005).

Modern planning processes usually engage the public through consultation. However, individual interests can be different and conflicting, so public engagement in planning processes should leave space for negotiation and debate rather than focusing solely on consulting (Lane, 2005). Moreover, collaboration may not achieve a good result if engagement is led by individual benefits and local residents lack motivation to contribute (Bodin, 2017). Additionally, low levels of obtaining information and the difficulty in understanding complex issues (e.g., environmental) are all barriers to effective public participation (Takacs-Santa, 2007).

The success of public participation can be ascertained through the lens of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation which categorises different forms of participation on a continuum from token to empowered (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). Drawing on Arnstein, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) has developed the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (Shiple & Utz, 2012), that has been used for both evaluating the effectiveness of public participation (Brown & Chin, 2013) and to guide councils in choosing particular public

participation processes (see, for instance, CCC, 2019).

The CCC multicultural strategy includes goals that all communities have equitable access to council services and resources, and that all residents are able to participate in Council decision-making (e.g., statutory planning processes). This means actively fostering the inclusivity of different groups in those processes. However, multiculturalism can make participation in planning more challenging since diversity requires planners to use appropriate approaches to achieve multicultural participation in planning processes (Uyesegi & Shipley, 2009). Specific approaches may include developing effective communication channels and using different languages to engage widely when formulating policies and plans (Reeves, 2005).

For Christchurch, the level of consultation or engagement in most council planning processes depends on whether the Council considers the issue sufficiently significant (CCC, 2019). For other statutory planning processes (e.g., the Christchurch District Plan), prescribed consultation requirements empower the community more and provide affected people with "relevant information in a manner and format that is appropriate to the preferences and needs of those persons" (Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 s.82(1)(a)).

Since 2015, Christchurch has undertaken a number of planning projects under the LGA and the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991 (for example, a Long-Term Plan, Annual Plans, and Regeneration Plans).

An important civic outcome sought through the City's Long Term Plan is 'Strong Communities' (CCC 2018, p. 59). The desired outcomes from this planning document include:

- Citizens have strong sense of belonging and are actively involved in the life of their city
- Our communities share a spirit of citizenship and participate in civic matters
- The community's goals and aspirations are reflected in council activities

Christchurch is therefore a good place to undertake a case study of immigrant

awareness and involvement in statutory planning. We selected the Chinese ethnic group for our study, as it is the third largest ethnic group in Christchurch and throughout New Zealand (see Box 1 for census data and definitions of immigrants and ethnicity for statistical purposes). In terms of the CCC's Significance and Engagement Policy, this is 'a community' because it is "a group of people with shared or common interest, identity, experience or values. For example, cultural, social...groups" (CCC 2019, Appendix 1). One would expect this community would be actively engaged in planning processes either through its own initiative or proactive CCC consultation processes.

In determining our questions, we distinguished between 'engagement' and 'consultation'. This is because the LGA requires each TA to establish a Significance and Engagement Policy and the CCC Policy has distinguished between 'engagement' and 'consultation'. Moreover, consultation has a strong case law and legislative basis. Engagement, on the other hand, is not defined in the LGA or the RMA. The Greater Christchurch Regeneration Act 2016 (s.24) notes that engagement on a regeneration plan requires, as a minimum, that the proponent publicly notifies where the draft plan can be inspected. It also must outline how, to whom, and by when written comments are to be received. This indicates that 'engagement' can have minimal public participation, falling well short of the consultative requirements set out in section 82 of the LGA (see above). However, CCC has chosen to adopt 'public engagement' as a synonym for 'public participation', specifically renaming the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation as the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Engagement (CCC 2019, Appendix 2). It then proceeds to define both (CCC 2019, Appendix 1):

Engagement: *"a term used to describe the process of establishing relationships, and seeking information from the community to inform and assist decision making. Engagement is an important part of participatory democracy within which there is a continuum of community involvement."*

Consultation: *"a subset of engagement; a formal process where people can present their views to the Council on a specific decision or matter that is proposed and made public."*

Box 1 Relevant definitions of immigration and ethnicity

Scholars interchangeably use the terms of "immigration" and "migration", and the line between the definitions are blurring (International Organization for Migration, 2017). For consistency, we use the term "immigrants" to describe the target group. International immigrants refer to individuals who have left their birth country and enter a destination country where they live their daily lives (United Nations, 1998, p.9). Immigrants can be further broken-down into long-term (resident for >12 months in the destination country), and short-term (resident >3 months and <12 months). Immigration excludes travellers who temporarily move for recreation, holiday, business, education, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage.

Statistics New Zealand applies the 12/16-Month Rule to identify long-term immigrants, which requires immigrants to stay in the country for at least 12 months in the preceding 16 months (Stats NZ, 2017). The rule is consistent with the UN definition. The 2018 census showed that approximately 27.4% of the population (~1.29 million people) were born outside of New Zealand (Stats NZ, 2019). In Christchurch, the Asian ethnic group is the third largest ethnic group (15.1%), compared to European (70.2%) and Māori (16.5%). The Chinese ethnicity is the largest of the Asian grouping, with a population of 231,837. This includes people born in mainland China, Taiwan, and South-East Asian regions. Stats NZ defines ethnicity as self-recognised: "ethnicity is the ethnic group or groups a person identifies with or has a sense of belonging to, and is independent of birthplace" (Stats NZ, 2019).

This would actually place engagement as "involve" on the IAP2 spectrum, slightly more empowering than consultation, but often used together. The Policy says that the IAP2 Spectrum will guide the approach to public

engagement. Given the criteria used in the Policy to assess significance, one would expect the community to have been consulted on a number of occasions and that relevant information would have been provided to the ethnically Chinese residents of Christchurch in a manner and format that is 'appropriate to their preferences and needs', as set out in the LGA.

The CCC's strategic goals include facilitating multicultural access to decision-making processes, so it is reasonable to expect this to be reflected in engagement and consultation with ethnic Chinese people in planning processes. However, such processes may only work if the community wishes to engage.

We focused on the Chinese community's awareness of, and participation in, making a submission in determining willingness to be engaged in statutory planning processes, to address the following:

1. What are the levels of awareness and participation of ethnic Chinese residents of plan making?
2. What are the key planning issues of concern to them?
3. What is the general willingness for engagement, and can we identify any barriers?

3. METHODS

To address these questions, we combined data from a survey and from interviews with selected individuals of Chinese ethnicity. The survey enabled us to gain a sense of scale and significance, and the interviews helped provide explanatory depth and context.

3.1 Survey

We developed a questionnaire (Appendix 1) comprising 14 questions which we translated into Chinese. We delivered the questionnaire by two methods: via a direct approach and by an on-line Chinese media platform which are explained in detail below.

For the direct approach, we identified an optimal location by using GIS to characterise the distribution of ethnic Chinese residents across the city from the 2013 census, which is the most recent census data available at the

time of writing. The aim was to identify where to focus survey efforts to get a robust sample size. We selected Riccarton as it had the highest density of ethnic Chinese (Figure 4), and the Church Corner Asian market area as the specific survey location. Locals have referred to it as Christchurch's 'China Town' (Duyndam, 2012). One of us (SW, of Chinese ethnicity and in mid-twenties) stood inside the carpark area and approached every third person. If someone demurred, the next passerby was then approached.

For the on-line survey, we used the WeChat app that includes the functions of messaging and survey (Hu, 2011). In 2019, WeChat reached 1.13 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2019). Although WeChat allows multiple languages, the main target users are people who speak or write in the Chinese language. Additionally, people who use this app are able to join groups categorised by where they live. We sent a link to the survey to groups labelled as located in Christchurch. We made it clear to participants that they could only participate once.

3.2 Interviews

To obtain a deeper perspective, five semi-structured interviews occurred after the survey. We designed the interviews for more specific discussion with ethnic Chinese individuals. We selected interviewees from local government, the public, and a journalist from a Chinese media organisation to elicit diverse understandings and ideas. They included a local government politician; a community leader; a social media journalist; a local resident; and a Chinese planner. After inquiring at councils and environmental consultancies, we were unable to identify a Christchurch-based ethnic Chinese planner, so the planner interviewed was the only interviewee not living in Christchurch. We sent the questions in advance through email and interview times ranged from thirty to sixty minutes. Notes or recordings were taken with consent. The research methods were approved by the Human Ethics Committee of Lincoln University.

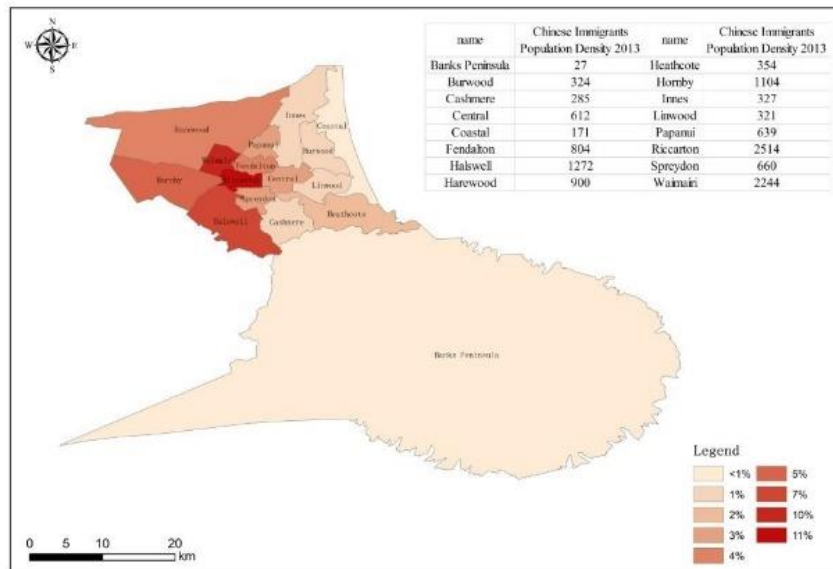


Figure 4: Population density of self-identified ethnic Chinese by Christchurch City Council electoral ward 2013 (Data source: <http://archive.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/ethnic-profiles.aspx>, licensed for re-use under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence).

4. RESULTS

We collected 111 survey responses, 52 from the direct approach at the market and 59 from the on-line survey. The gender split was 54% female and 46% male. Half of the participants had a permanent immigration status of either citizenship (14%), permanent residence (34%), or partnership visa (2%). Of these, 90% of respondents have lived in the country for more than one year, and 50% have lived in Christchurch from one to five years.

Most respondents (94%) had never made a submission or been consulted in any planning process. The majority (76%) were unaware that the right to make a submission is open to every resident, irrespective of immigration status. This should not be mistaken though for a lack of interest in planning issues, as the majority of respondents were interested in the earthquake recovery, and just under half were concerned with water quality and transport, and a third of respondents identified air quality as an environmental issue of concern (Table 1).

Table 2 shows that 38% of the female respondents and 29% of the male respondents were willing to be engaged in planning. Of the rest, approximately half of each gender indicated that they were not sure whether they wanted to be engaged in planning. There

may be many reasons for this, but the result does show potentially fertile ground for education and outreach leading to engagement. A minority of both genders clearly expressed an unwillingness for engagement at all (~1 in 5 respondents).

Table 1: Concern with local planning issues (n=111). Note, more than one issue could be expressed, so the percentages add up to >100%.

Planning issues of concern	Percentage (%)
Earthquake recovery	70
Water quality	49
Transport	44
Air quality	34
Land use & Subdivision	11
Biodiversity	11
Others	5

Table 2 Gender vs Willingness to engage with planning (n=111).

Gender	Willingness to be engaged	Unwillingness to be engaged	Not sure	Total (%)
Female	38	17	45	100
Male	29	22	49	100

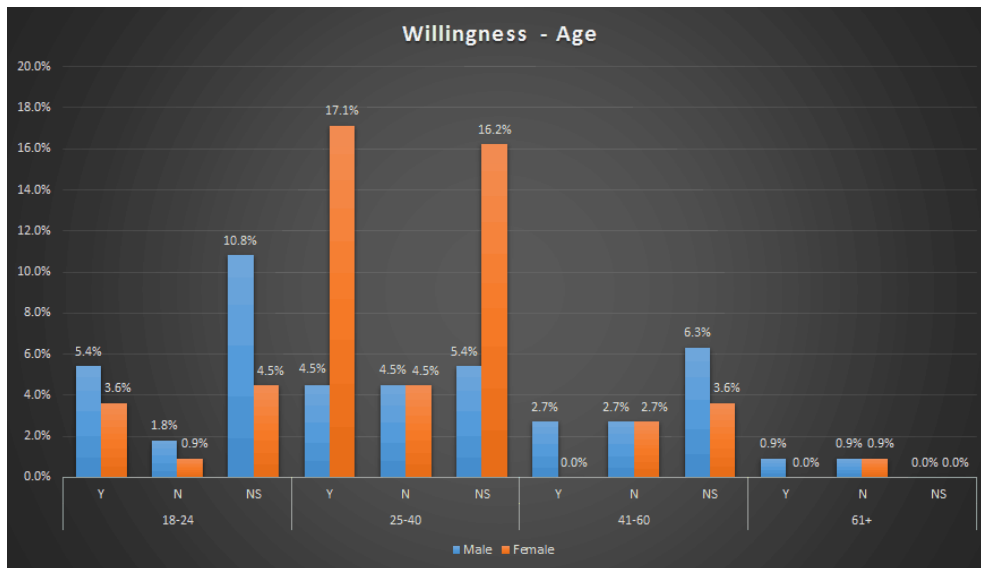


Figure 5: Survey participants' willingness to engage vs. self-identified age group by gender (n= 111).

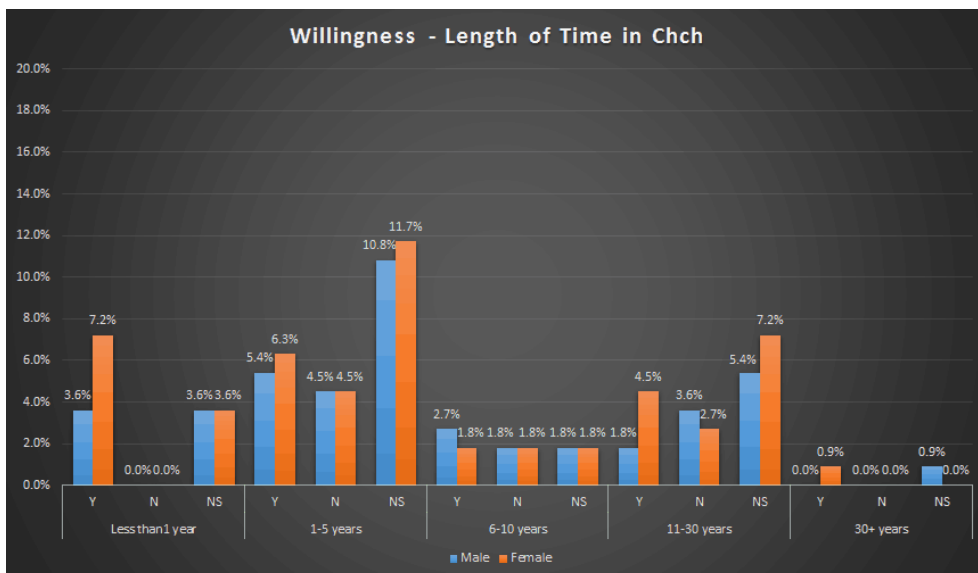


Figure 6: Willingness to be engaged in planning by age group and length of time resident in Christchurch (n=111)

To explore this further, the data were graphed to examine the differences in willingness by age groups, and length of time resident in Christchurch (Figures 5-6). In each of the graphs, the X-axis shows the willingness by Y=yes, N=no and NS-not sure; the Y-axis shows the percentage of survey participants who showed different levels of willingness.

Figure 5 shows that female participants aged between 25 and 40 had the highest willingness to be engaged in a planning process, but they were also the highest percentage that expressed uncertainty. Males

aged under 25 years had similar patterns of willingness and uncertainty; but between 25 and 40 years were just as likely to be unwilling as willing or unsure.

There were only 7 females and 12 males aged over 40 that responded (Figure 5), which is an insufficient sample size from that age group to draw any meaningful conclusion.

Figure 6 shows that it did not matter how long respondents of either gender had lived in Christchurch, in terms of their relatively high levels of uncertainty. The highest level of willingness to be engaged in planning issues

were respondents who had been in the city less than a year. After a year, there was little obvious difference between those who were willing or unwilling to engage when gender data were combined. Similar patterns were evident for the length of time respondents had been in the country (data not shown). An examination of willingness compared with visa category (data also not shown) revealed that female permanent residents (9.9%) and males on student visas (10.8%) were the most unsure.

Only 13% of respondents were satisfied with current engagement processes, although 41% were unsure. We also asked survey respondents whether translation into Chinese would be beneficial for engagement. The majority (73%) agreed that this could be useful, and could include oral translation at consultation meetings, written translations of public notices, and planning documents. There was also solid support for the use of Chinese social media for Council notices (56%).

5. DISCUSSION

Our results show that only 6% of the 111 respondents to our survey have ever made submissions on plans. This demonstrates a low level of engagement in local planning processes, despite a third of respondents expressing willingness to participate. It may be that the results are indicative of the level of involvement of the general public in planning processes in Christchurch. If the gap between the willingness to be involved and the actual level of involvement is the same among other ethnic groups, then it suggests the CCC has considerable scope to improve its engagement and consultation. A first step is to undertake targeted research with different ethnic groups to see if the results reported here are shared by other ethnic groups.

We do not have comparable data on other ethnic groups (including Pākehā) in Christchurch and the Council does not collect such data from participants in planning processes (CCC, 2013). However, in the CCC's 2013 Community Engagement Strategy, a demographic profile for the earthquake recovery "Share an Idea" process showed that 63% of participants were aged 49 or younger (CCC, 2013). This is

considerably more than the results of this study and is indicative of interest within the younger demographics. No gender or ethnicity data from the survey were reported by CCC.

Intriguingly, despite the low level of respondent's participation in planning found in our study, we also found low levels of satisfaction with current engagement processes. This suggests there might be reluctance to participate and/or barriers to participation. We put these findings to the selected interviewees, and several possible explanations were received, which included:

- General lack of awareness of the institutions and the scope of planning responsibilities
- The technical nature and length of the planning documents as a barrier to engagement
- English as a second language makes it more difficult to understand plans
- Few ethnically diverse CCC staff to raise awareness and encourage participation
- Ethnic groups may discuss issues on social media platforms, but Councils are not aware of these platforms or discussions.

Several people, who declined to take the survey, mentioned that they were worried about negative social judgments if they showed an interest in planning. This may reflect perceptions or experience of underlying or overt racism toward the Chinese community by dominant cultures in Christchurch or the CCC. Some researchers have highlighted the occurrence of institutional and casual racism in New Zealand (Ip, 2003, Yeung, 2012) and the Asian community is often the most targeted, which has been pointed out in accessible news media and online commentaries (e.g., Taonui, 2019). Further research would assist in identifying the nature of barriers as well as the effectiveness of trialling different solutions. Several interviewees suggested translation and the use of social media as means of better engagement with the Chinese community; and one person noted that local authorities in Christchurch have started to reach out to the Chinese language print media, but more needed to be done. Another interviewee stressed that participation is, in effect, a

partnership, and that efforts were needed from both local government and ethnic communities. He also suggested that leaders be identified in ethnic groups or communities. These could be 'engagement champions' that should have local planning knowledge and good language skills, so they can share information and help with communication and engagement.

The costs of engaging with particular ethnic communities (e.g., through translating high-level summaries of planning documents or key guidance) might seem prohibitive. However, when seen in the context of an increasing percentage of the community being Chinese and the overall outcomes sought by the Long Term Plan to strengthen its communities, such investment may be as valuable as celebrating multiculturalism through festivals and events. As a first step, CCC could consider collecting demographic data to better understand which sections of the community are responding to different issues and which different mechanisms can effectively engage them in planning processes. These mechanisms could also be targeted to different gender and age groups to maximise outreach and increase participation.

There are real implications for CCC of not actively seeking to improve engagement and participation. Civic life may be socially, culturally and intellectually impoverished by not having a vibrantly engaged polis. The CCC's Multicultural Strategy acknowledges the need to engage with an increasingly ethnically diverse population, but it needs to do more than hold a range of festivals however popular they may be. A sense of exclusion at worst, or tokenism at best as Arnstein (1969) points out, does not work to improve the democratic process. Importantly, it may also not improve environmental outcomes as quickly or inclusively as fostering an authentic sense of participation would likely lead to.

Interestingly, Yeung (2012) has noted that that the natural environment is a major factor in Chinese immigrants staying in New Zealand. Setting aside the recovery from the earthquakes, water, air and biodiversity were three of the most frequently mentioned concerns of respondents to our survey. This

suggests that not only are Chinese attracted to New Zealand because of its environment, they would be responsive to engagement in planning relating to these issues.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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8. APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. In what age group are you?

- a. 18 – 24
- b. 25 – 40
- c. 41 – 60
- d. 61 and over

2. Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Other

3. Which kind of visa type do you currently hold?

- a. Citizen
- b. Permanent residents/residents
- c. Student
- d. Work
- e. Others ____

4. How long have you been living in NZ?

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1 – 5 years
- c. 6 -10 years
- d. 11 – 30 years
- e. More than 30 years

5. How long have you been living in Christchurch?

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1 – 5 years
- c. 6 -10 years
- d. 11 – 30 years
- e. More than 30 years

6. Which environment issue below is the most important to you (could be multiple)?

- a. Earthquake recovery
- b. Air quality
- c. Water quality
- d. Land use and subdivision
- e. Transport
- f. Biodiversity
- g. Others ____

7. Which of these local authorities have you heard about?

- a. Christchurch City Council (CCC)
- b. Environment Canterbury (ECan)
- c. Ministry of Environment (MfE)
- d. Department of Conservation
- e. All of above

- 8. What is your knowledge about the environmental legislation/plans that relevant to Christchurch City (such as Resource Management 1991, Christchurch City Plan, etc.)?**
- a. Heard a little
 - b. Know a little
 - c. Know much
 - d. Not at all
- 9. How do you get relevant information from?**
- a. Newspaper
 - b. Facebook
 - c. Twitter
 - d. Friends/family
 - e. Others ____
- 10. How many times have you ever engaged in any planning process, such as making a submission?**
- a. Never
 - b. 1 – 5 times
 - c. 5 – 10 times
 - d. More than 10 times
- 11. Do you know anyone (not only citizens) in NZ can make a submission to councils about proposed plans, plan changes or variations that has been publicly notified?**
- a. I know
 - b. I don't know
 - c. I don't care
- 12. How satisfied do you feel about current planning engagement process?**
- a. Satisfied
 - b. Not satisfied
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Not sure
- 13. Are you willing to be involved in the planning process?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure
- 14. Which of the following method you believe could increase the efficiency of engagement (could be multiple)?**
- a. Dual language
 - b. Social media/app
 - c. Workshops
 - d. Others ____