

Urban Amenity

| Key Information | Why is this Useful? | What is Happening? |
|--|---|--|
| Residents' perceptions of local development. | Development in local neighbourhoods can impact on residents non-work and leisure-time quality of life. | ↓ The proportion of residents who perceive their local area to be worse as a result of new development has declined by 25 per cent between 1996 and 1999. |
| Problems with noise. | Changing urban densities and lifestyles can affect the level of noise in the local environment. Noise can have an impact on people's health and quality of life. | ● Around twenty per cent of residents found neighbourhood and traffic noise a problem in 1999. |
| Noise complaints. | Complaints not only provide a measure of increased noise problems, but also of residents' tolerance to local noise. | ↑ Residential noise complaints have increased by 170 per cent since 1991. |
| Residents' perceptions of City-wide development. | Changes to the City as a result of new development can impact on the feeling residents have about the City as a whole. | ~ The proportion of residents who believe new development had made the City worse has averaged 10 per cent since 1992. |
| Popularity of the Central City. | Christchurch needs a diverse, vibrant and attractive City Centre that will provide a social and commercial focus for the City. This provides a measure of how attractive the Central City is to Christchurch residents. | ↑ Between 1991 and 1999 the number of residents who made one or more non-work trips each week to the Central City increased by 72 per cent. |
| Residents' concern about litter. | Litter has an impact on visual amenity in an area. Large quantities of litter can also be a health risk depending on the content. | ● Eighteen per cent of residents were concerned or very concerned about neighbourhood litter in 1999. |

Other Related Sections: Population Growth, Profile of Christchurch Residents, Personal Safety, Land Use, Air Quality, Built Environment, Surface Water, Heritage, Transportation, Waste Management, Businesses, Employment and Unemployment, Central City.

Amenity values are defined in the Resource Management Act as *those natural and physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes*. Many of the physical aspects of the City are described in other sections of this report. Amenity values, however, relate to the quality and grouping of these elements. Individuals and the community assign values to these elements. Changes to the environment and community values may influence amenity.

The Christchurch City Council has used questions in its Annual Survey of Residents to find out residents' perceptions of various aspects of amenity in the City and associated pressures. Other information in this section also comes from surveys conducted to measure specific amenity issues relating to the urban environment, for example noise and litter.

New development is responsible for much of the pressure on amenity in Christchurch. New buildings replace older ones or they are built on previously undeveloped sites. Some development contrasts with the existing character of an area. This is especially the case where infill development results in increased residential densities and reduced outdoor living space around dwellings.

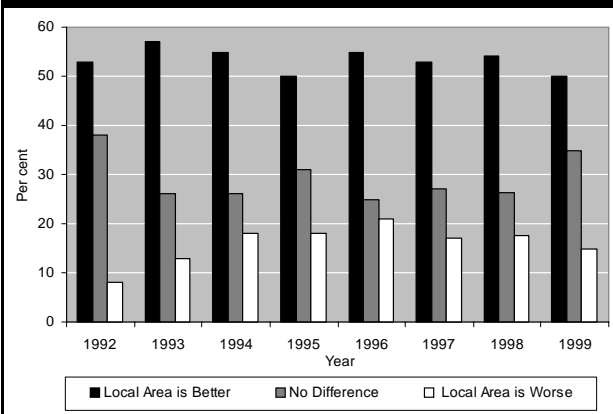
Generally, Christchurch rates highly as a place to live and work. The 1999 Annual Survey of Residents found 93 per cent of Christchurch residents were satisfied or very satisfied with the City as a place to live, work and spend their spare time. This percentage has remained the same since the question was first asked in the 1995 Annual Survey of Residents.

Local Neighbourhood Amenity

Residents invest a large portion of time and money in their local neighbourhoods. They choose to live in a particular part of the City due to a set of personal and environmental criteria. Many of these relate to the amenity value of an area. New development at this local scale can have a significant impact on residents' quality of life.

According to the 1999 Annual Survey of Residents, 54 per cent of respondents were aware of new residential building alterations, extensions or developments in their local area during the past 12 months. Of this group 50 per cent felt these changes had made their area *better* or *much better*. This level of satisfaction has fluctuated between 50 and 57 per cent since 1992 (Figure 2.29). The trend in residents who considered development had made their area *worse* or *much worse* increased from 1992 to peak at 20 per cent in 1996. After 1996 the proportion of residents who

Fig 2.29 Residents Views on Development in their Area



Source: Christchurch City Council.

disapproved of developments slowly decreased to 15 per cent in 1999.

Twenty two per cent of residents who were aware of local development felt there were examples of activity in their area which should not have been allowed. Most of these related to infill development, particularly the physical effects of increasing density such as small section sizes, building heights and the loss of gardens and trees. There were also a number of criticisms regarding design issues and the changing character of some streets and neighbourhoods.

In September and October 1999 the City Council carried out a survey of residents living in townhouses built since the notification of the City Plan in 1995⁴⁰. Preliminary results show that 95 per cent of residents living in recently-built townhouses were satisfied with this form of dwelling, and 83 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the outdoor area. The most popular reasons for choosing to live in townhouses relate to the ease of living in a modern house on a low maintenance section. However, the survey also found a number of common concerns such as small sections, a lack of privacy, shared driveways and noise.

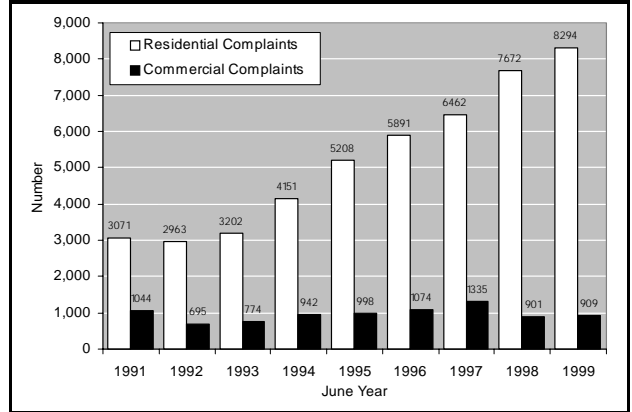
Noise

Increasing population, higher density living in many residential areas, changing lifestyles and new technology all influence the level of noise within the City. Controlling noise is an important aspect of environmental management in the urban area because of the major impact noise can have on public health and well-being. High levels of noise over prolonged periods can damage hearing, while low levels of environmental noise affect well-being by interfering with activities such as sleep and communication. Noise control is the responsibility of the City Council. As part of its function the Council receives and investigates noise pollution complaints.

As Figure 2.30 shows, residential complaints make up the largest number of noise complaints. In 1999

⁴⁰ Christchurch City Council, Townhouse Survey 1999. <http://www.ccc.govt.nz/reports/2000/townhousesurvey>

Fig 2.30 Noise Complaints



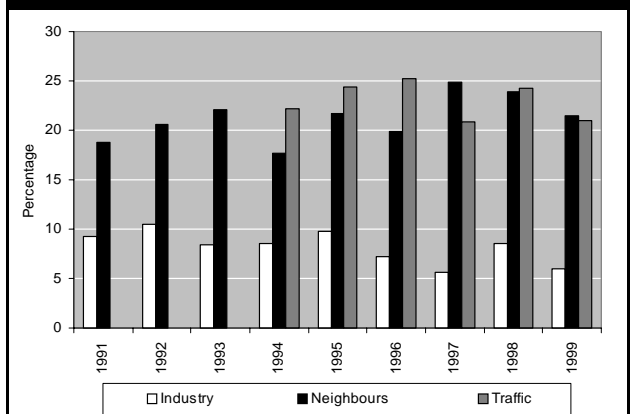
Source: Christchurch City Council.

residential complaints accounted for 90 per cent of all complaints, compared with 75 per cent in 1991. Throughout the 1990s commercial complaints averaged 960 per year. Although there was an increasing trend between 1992 and 1997, these complaints reduced to around 900 in 1998 and 1999. After 1993 residential complaints increased at a constant rate of around 850 new complaints each year. Between 1991 and 1999, the number of residential complaints increased by 170 per cent.

Music and music-related activities continue to be the major source of annoyance in both residential and commercial premises. In 1999 this source accounted for 72 per cent (5,957) of residential noise complaints and 50 per cent of industrial/commercial noise complaints (492). Music-related activities dominated complaints but seizures of musical equipment occurred in less than 1 per cent of cases in the 1999 year. A total of 65 seizures were carried out where amicable compliance could not be achieved.

Although the number of recorded noise complaints has increased, most residents do not find noise from neighbours, industry/commerce or traffic a problem, according to the Annual Survey of Residents. Figure 2.31 shows that the proportion of residents who experienced problems with various types of noise remained relatively low between 1994 and 1999. Just

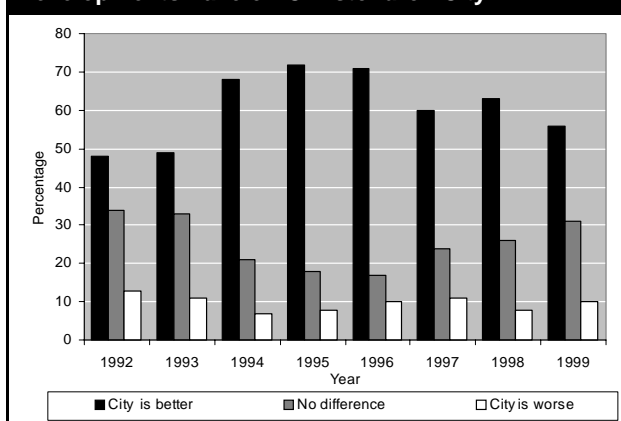
Fig 2.31 Percentages of Residents Who Have Had Problems with Noise



Source: Christchurch City Council.

PART 2. THE CITY'S NATURAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Fig. 2.32 Residents Views on the Effects New Developments have on Christchurch City



Source: Christchurch City Council.

over 20 per cent of residents had a problem with either neighbourhood or traffic noise.

The percentage of residents experiencing problems with industrial and commercial noise has been slowly decreasing since 1991. However, the trends for traffic and neighbourhood noise showed an apparent increase to 1996 and 1997 respectively, before starting to decrease again.

City-Wide Amenity

The Annual Survey of Residents asked citizens about the impact new development had on the wider City. Most respondents (56 per cent) thought that new developments during the 12 months to April 1999 had made Christchurch a *better* or *much better* place to live. Only 10 per cent believed new developments had made living in the City *worse* or *much worse*.

Figure 2.32 shows that the level of approval has been declining since a peak in 1995. However, this has been offset by an increase in those who believe that new development has made no difference to the City. The proportion of residents who disapproved of City-wide development remained around 10 per cent between 1992 and 1999. Of the 10 per cent of residents who believed in 1999 that the City looked worse as a result of new developments, many were concerned with the demolition of historic buildings, and the impact this had had on the character of the City. Cathedral Square was a concern for many residents. However, at the time of the survey the Square was still being redeveloped.

Location of Shops

Respondents were asked in the Annual Survey of Residents whether there had been any improvement in the location of shops during the year to April 1999. Most believed the location of shops were *more or much more convenient* (40 per cent) or that it was *unchanged* (54 per cent). Only 6 per cent indicated that shops had become less convenient.

Respondents who believed that shops were more convenient cited the improvement or upgrading of

shopping malls, the handy location of shops, the number of shops and malls and access to parking as the main reasons.

Litter

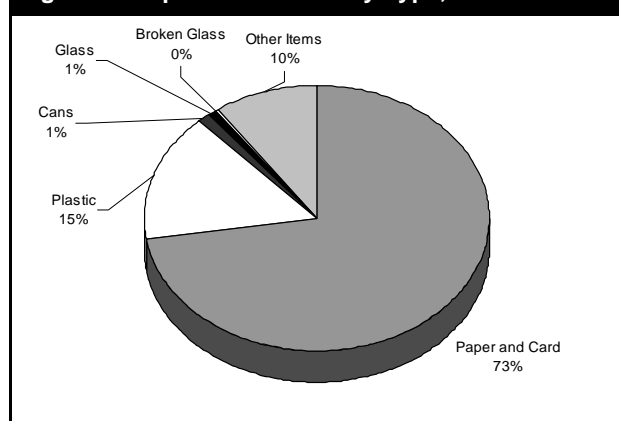
The Keep Christchurch Beautiful campaign counts litter at 111 sites throughout the City. This has normally been carried out twice yearly, in the summer and the winter. Between December 1990 (when counting began) and July 1997, the total amount of litter recorded decreased by 66 per cent. Unfortunately recent staff changes since July 1997, has resulted in information that cannot be compared with these earlier surveys. Figure 2.33 shows the breakdown of litter by type from the January 2000 survey. Seventy three per cent of the litter counted was paper and cardboard, with plastic contributing 15 per cent of the total. Glass and cans each contributed only 1 per cent of the total.

The Annual Survey of Residents asks whether litter in neighbourhood streets has been a concern to residents during the previous 12 months. The 1999 results show 55 per cent of respondents were *not at all concerned* or stated *there is no problem*; 27 per cent were *a little concerned*; while 18 per cent were *concerned* or *very concerned* about neighbourhood litter. These proportions have not changed significantly since this question was first asked in 1994.

Amenity of Rivers and Streams

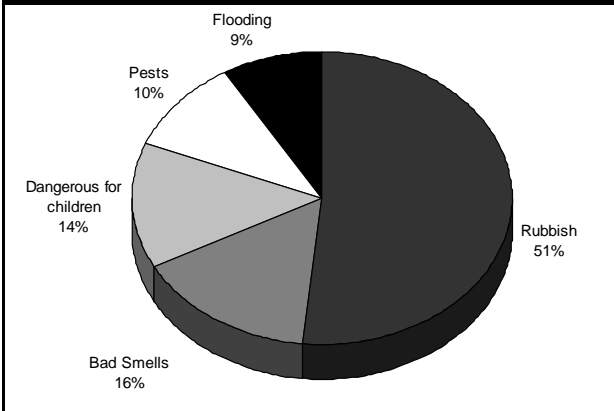
In 1999 the Annual Survey of Residents asked whether residents had noticed any problems of flooding, rubbish, bad smells, pests, or dangers to children near streams, rivers or open waterways during the previous 12 months. Of the respondents who had been near the City's waterways, 45 per cent had not noticed any problems. Figure 2.34 shows the proportion of problems observed in waterways in the 12 months to April 1999. Of these, rubbish accounted for 51 per cent of the total sightings. Overall, observations of each problem have not changed significantly over recent years, but rubbish in or near waterways has remained comparatively high⁴¹.

Fig 2.33 Proportion of Litter by Type, 2000



Source: Keep Christchurch Beautiful.

Fig 2.34 Observed Problems Near Streams, Rivers and Open Waterways, 1999



Source: Christchurch City Council.

Overhead Power Lines

Throughout the City, visual amenity is continually being improved through converting infrastructure such as overhead power lines to underground cables. Currently in the City 64 per cent of power cables are buried underground. This has been increasing at a rate of 0.5 per cent or 25 kilometres per year during the last four years.

Central City Amenity

According to the 1999 Annual Survey of Residents, the Central City remains a popular place for residents to visit. Nearly all residents (96 per cent) had visited the Central City some time during the year. Ninety seven per cent of those working in the Central City had visited for non-work purposes. Ninety three per cent of residents who did not work in the Central City had also visited the City Centre.

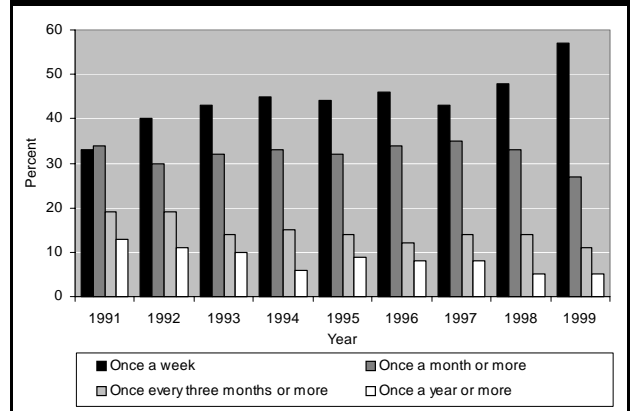
The frequency of non-work visits to the City Centre was also high with 57 per cent visiting *once a week or more* and a further 27 per cent visiting *once a month or more*. Between 1991 and 1999 there was a 72 per cent increase in the number of respondents who come to the Central City once or more a week for non-work reasons (Figure 2.35).

Two thirds of respondents (65 per cent) were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with the range of things to do in the Central City during the previous 12 months. Only 11 per cent expressed any level of dissatisfaction with the range of opportunities available. In 1998 residents were asked the main reasons for visiting the Central City. Responses were shopping (40 per cent), then socialising or meeting friends (21 per cent).

Central City Parking

Respondents who travelled to the Central City for work purposes by car were asked about ease of parking in the Central City. Responses to this question were evenly split with 40 per cent of respondents finding parking *easy or very easy* on work trips and the same

Fig 2.35 Frequency of Non-Work Visits to the Central City



Source: Christchurch City Council

proportion finding it *hard or very hard*. This may highlight the difference between workers who are either supplied with or are willing to pay for car parking, and those looking for free car parking. It may also indicate a lack of car parking in some areas of the City.

⁴¹ More information on water quality of the City's waterways is in the Surface Water section.