

# How are Your Men?

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## Summary of a Survey of Health and Social Workers in Canterbury, August 2011

By

**Donald Pettitt, Manager, Canterbury Men's Centre**

### **Summary:**

The earthquakes of 2010/2011 and the on-going rebuild process occurred in the context of existing social challenges for men in Canterbury. Men already going through transitions prior to the earthquakes were mentioned as a point of concern; those retiring, entering the workforce, entering fatherhood, enduring separation.

Information and social support were very common needs, with some indication that though these issues already existed they were heightened by the displacement caused by the earthquakes.

Some vulnerable groups of men were not mentioned by the respondents, though they are mentioned in community and health worker settings. These would be; Maori men, Pacific Island men, men with on-going mental health issues, survivors of sexual abuse, Asian men.

### **Background:**

Canterbury New Zealand is dealing with on-going earthquakes and the loss associated with this. Social workers and health workers have been remarking that they are both celebrating the work that men are doing both as volunteers and as workers, while at the same time they are stating anecdotally that men have special needs in the current situation.

We created a simple form and asked for feedback to capture a snapshot of the perceived need to formulate a plan.

The results that you are reading are the result of limited focus by us and we hope you will accept that we understand this report does not claim to follow the rigour that would normally be applied to research.

## Methodology:

We sent the form to the 500 people on our database. The bulk of them are social and health workers in Canterbury with approx. 75% of them being female. 26 responded which, in the current context some say is a typical response in the current environment.

The questionnaire was kept brief with awareness of the pressures people currently feel.

The questionnaire was also meant to be vague, allowing people to decide for themselves whether the key question was comparative (compared with pre-quake) or actual.

The Questions contained in the on-line form were;

1. How are your men?
2. What should be happening for them that isn't?
3. Your Name
4. Do you want to remain anonymous?
5. Any further comments please.

## Results:

Many of the responses were stories by the workers about the men personally close to them and due to this we felt it would be inappropriate to publish the raw information, even though many of them didn't choose to ask for anonymity at the end of the form.

Many of the respondents also expressed gratitude for being allowed to comment, expressing pressing need to help the men they knew and worked with.

Only one of the respondents compared men's reactions/responses/current situation with women's.

### *How are your men?*

5 respondents said "Fine". Stuff has happened and the men they know seem to be just getting on with it, while acknowledging that there are many men that aren't in this situation due to their situations.

3 respondents focussed on young men, saying that the already existing recession had been difficult for them, more so than for young women. One commented that leaving the age of "youth" without an employment record meant things were harder for them and there were fewer options.

A common theme were reflections that many men felt powerless in the light of all the loss, and that they are doing a lot of waiting; young men for jobs that haven't started yet, business owners for projects that can't start yet, home owners for repairs and rebuilds.

There were reflections that some men were too busy, due to their workplaces, families and home lives placing demands on them.

Loss and frustration were common themes, and isolation as a result of displacement from home/work settings.

3 mentioned that men’s masculinity is challenged by this situation as they think they should be coping better than they are.

Older men were also mentioned as a vulnerable grouping with 3 respondents referring to this.

*What should be happening for them that isn't?*

# of Respondents	Theme
5	Men’s health/social info
4	Men’s groups
3	Men’s sheds
3	More Support/Counselling
3	Alcohol Messages
2	Networking Groups
2	Help for men to set up projects
2	Training for young men
2	Something to “cross the gap” for older men (denying need)

One respondent referred to each of the following; Stress Management info/workshop, Budgeting and Financial info, Respite out of town, Spiritual self-care, Coaching to be better fathers, Focus on families (not just the individual), Mentoring between young and old, more community events.

*Do you want to remain anonymous?*

13 of the 26 respondents wished to remain anonymous. Many comments from respondents that didn’t ask for anonymity were very intimate about family and friends.

Given this, and given that the report is not intended to be submitted to any publication we will not disclose the raw data.

*Any further comments please*

Comments were entered into this column relevant to the first two questions, and as such the data was included in their relevant area. Three of the respondents expressed their gratitude for a focus being made on men.