

INTRODUCTION

Kia ora Koutou,

Aotearoa New Zealand has experienced an unprecedented two years in 2020 & 2021 in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. This has led to border closures, the implementation of the alert level system, and countrywide lockdowns, of the scale of which has never taken place within New Zealand before. During this time, day to day life for most New Zealanders differed from normal, and the impact on rangatahi in particular is predicted to be extensive.

The Rapid Evidence and Policy Brief: COVID-19 Youth Recovery plan 2020-2022¹ is a crucial document to inform the All-of-Government response to COVID-19, specifically in the area of youth recovery. This policy brief, in drawing on natural disasters from the past, asserts that young people may be disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic/lockdowns. For some cohorts of young people, this situation is predicted to further amplify distress and inequities that existed prior to the pandemic. A 'disaster' at this scale and disruption to normal systems is associated with increased mental health problems, feelings of loneliness and anxiety, disruption to school and social interaction², and psychological and social trauma³. Whilst young people are believed to be a particular at-risk population⁴, this cohort has also shown resilience in past disasters with the right support systems⁵.

Before the pandemic, national key insights into rangatahi Wellbeing in Aotearoa could be drawn from the Youth2000 and Youth19 series of health & Wellbeing Surveys, carried out by the Adolescent Health Research Group. The latest survey (Youth19) was conducted in 2019 in the Auckland, Northland & Waikato regions, where 7,700 rangatahi aged Year 9-13 were interviewed. More than two-thirds of students reported good wellbeing, but an increasing number reported high levels of distress and worsened mental health.

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INTRODUCTION

Whilst these findings give key insights into rangatahi wellbeing at a national level, they were created before the pandemic, and more research is required to assess the impact of COVID-19 on youth wellbeing locally.

At the end of 2020, the need for a snapshot survey of rangatahi insights was identified through consultation and engagement with local rangatahi, youth and health organisations. The purpose of Rangatahi Wellbeing and Aspirations Survey was to measure the impact to which COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 had played upon rangatahi wellbeing and aspirations here in Te Taihu (Marlborough, Nelson and Tasman Regions).

Local Insights

The Rangatahi Wellbeing and Aspirations Survey follows on from a number of youth engagement events and insights that have been captured by local agencies across Te Taihu. This includes the TOSIF (Top of the South Interagency Forum) Youth Hui that took place in the region before the pandemic (2018 - 2019)⁶ and more recent insights following the pandemic, including the Sport Tasman led TOSIF Youth Hui that took place in Marlborough & Nelson in 2021, and The Young Change Makers Hui (held annually during 2019-2020) presented by Nelson Youth Events/Volunteer Nelson.

The recent TOSIF Youth Hui 2020 identified important issues for youth including:

- Mental Health
- Cultural Growth
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Transition from School to Employment
- Environment

INTRODUCTION – WHY?

The Young Change Makers Hui identified the following issues in 2020:

- Under representation of Youth (Political);
- Cost of Housing (Economic);
- Need for youth spaces (Social);
- Environmental projects to combat Climate Change (Environment).

Methodology

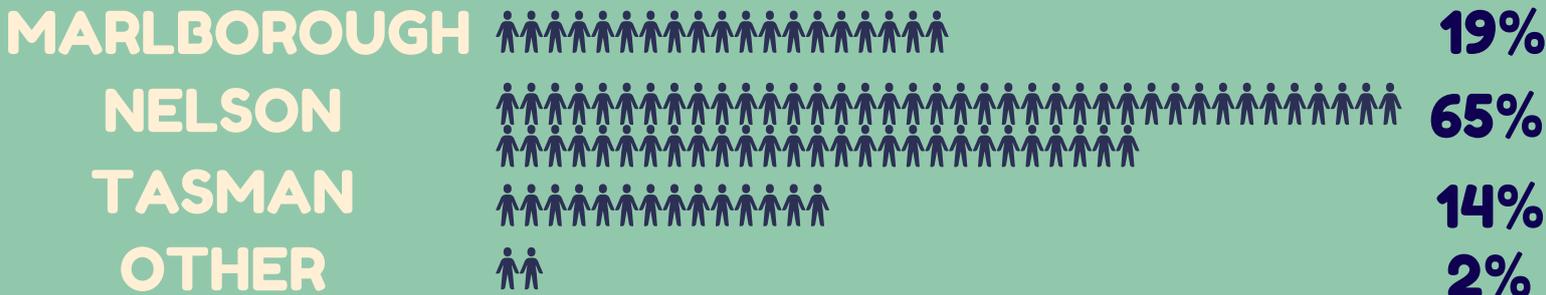
This survey was created alongside rangatahi feedback and inputted into an online survey portal. This meant the survey was accessible to youth even if there were alert level changes during the time of collection. An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all aspects of the youth sector in Te Taihu. The data collection period took place across three weeks, between 10th February and 3rd March 2021. Prizes were drawn to incentivise greater participation.

The survey contained a mix of question types. The initial four questions were closed and sought to gain an insight into the demographics of our survey group. Questions 5 - 11 were open ended. Question 8 required participants to identify what they considered to be the most important issues for rangatahi. Qualitative analysis was performed to identify main themes and sub-themes. Due to the great variety of responses given, not all data is presented in this report as some themes were only from a small number of participants; only the top 5 main themes and sub-themes from each open-ended question are primarily discussed in this report. A separate appendix showing all the results is available upon request. Quotes from open-ended comments have been included in this report.

RESULTS:

235 responses from across Te Tau Ihu (Top of the South)

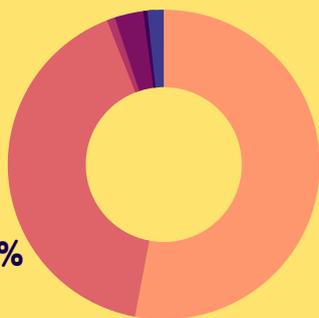
REGION:



AGE: 49% of those who responded were 12-15 years of age



NON-BINARY/GENDER VARIANT 3%



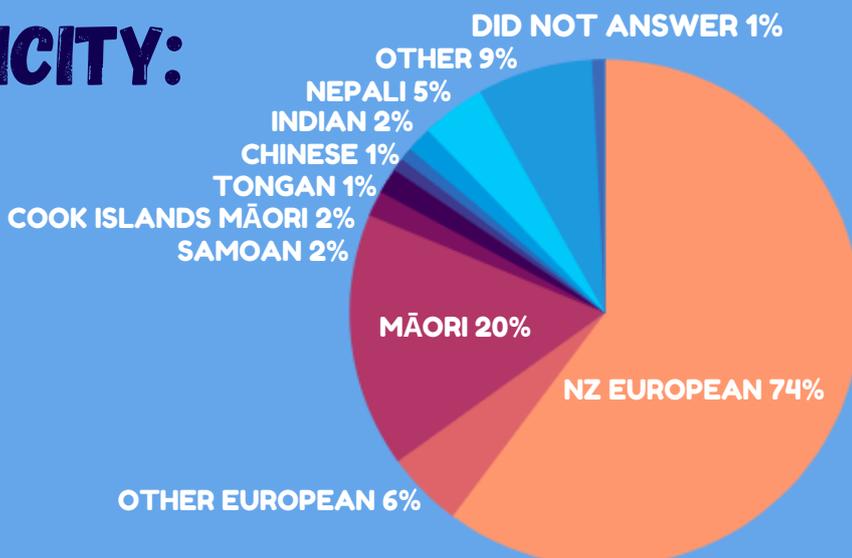
FEMALE 53%

MALE 41%

GENDER:

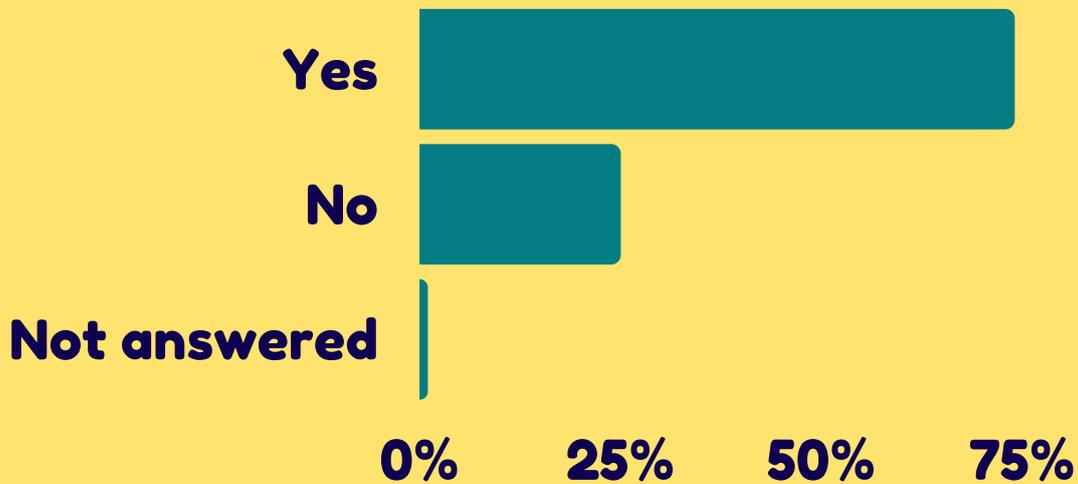


ETHNICITY:



SENSE OF WHO YOU ARE?

Q5. Do you have a strong sense of who you are? (Culture, values, beliefs, attributes, goals, etc.)



The majority of our rangatahi (74%) identified that they do have a strong sense of identity. Some of the key attributes that they identified in open-ended responses included:

1. Sense of culture (12 responses)
2. Sense of beliefs (9 responses)
3. Sense of goals (9 responses)
4. Sense of ambition (8 responses)
5. Sense of values (6 responses)

64 open-ended responses were linked to the main theme 'Yes – sense of identity'. Other youth identified that sense of faith, heritage and Maori culture were also important to them, with some giving suggestions for cultural development.

QUOTES:

"Culture is very important to me and I think it shows what people believe and where they come from. Values are something everyone has. It means what you appreciate or think is important on this earth. I value my family, friends and my culture."

SENSE OF WHO YOU ARE?

Q5. Do you have a strong sense of who you are? (Culture, values, beliefs, attributes, goals, etc.)

QUOTES:

"I have just started to have an interest and passion in my Māori culture and whakapapa.... but I have found it hard where to start and the resources to use etc. I was just thinking the other day, it would be a fab idea to have something that the school system could provide will all the resources to help rangatahi reconnect with their Māori side beyond what they already have - this is something the government could fund for - showing their priority to the tangata whenua. I feel my culture, Māori history and tangata whenua voices are constantly being suppressed by society and I feel if we had such an organisation put in school it would create awareness and show appreciation for our beautiful culture, encourage rangatahi Māori to learn their culture and whakapapa and overall would 100% help preserve Māori culture, the reo and the whakapapa."

"I believe in myself and what I want in life I have many goals that I want to achieve in the next 5 years I know I can achieve them."

"I have a strong sense of who I am as an individual, but I often feel I lack a sense of connection to my heritage because even though I'm entirely descended to Europeans, I feel no sense of connection to Europe and instead feel connected to New Zealand."

24% of rangatahi identified that they did not have a sense of who they are, with some highlighting that they are still figuring it out, don't know, have some or no cultural identity, or are willing to learn.

QUOTES:

"I don't think I do, just as I don't truly know who I am."

"I grew up in a country that didn't have much information about my heritage and background so I wasn't learning much about myself until I moved to NZ."

"Don't really have a culture as such & still just trying to find who I am and what I enjoy and what I want to do with my life."

KEY WELLBEING ISSUES

Q6. What are the key issues impacting the wellbeing of you & other young people around you right now?

Results show the top 5 main themes identified by youth, and the top sub-themes relating to these:

Mental health appeared to be the top wellbeing issue for our rangatahi, with 61 responses identifying this as a main theme in open-ended answers. From this, stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders and lack of mental health services and support appeared to be the top sub-themes identified. School pressure and stress were also associated with this, although school also stood out as a main wellbeing issue. In fact, other interconnected well-being issues also included COVID-19, social media and bullying. COVID-19 was an important well-being issue for our rangatahi (34 responses). The impact of lockdown, not being able to see friends and family, uncertainty and the impact on school work were some of the key themes identified from the open-ended questions.

Other well-being issues not listed included drugs, family pressures, friendship issues, youth employment and finding work, and economic factors such as rising house prices.

QUOTES:

"I think one of the main causes of poor mental health in youth is caused by school. The stress and overwhelming fear of failing a class can badly effect a student's mental health."

"Covid-19 has affected all the people close to me. It has increased the use of social media which has increased young people to interact with others face to face as well as self-doubt. Social media has increased teens to compare with others which can lead to depression."

"For me, it's more around how my parents don't fully understand that being a teenager means we need more freedom than when we were kids. I understand we should be careful but all my life I have been taught to be careful, what to do and what not to do."

"Being so uncertain about the future. In many areas, environmental, housing prices, the virus, stress, jobs. There's alot."

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Q7. Have things changed since lockdown? How have these issues been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?



48 Responses identified Nothing has changed, 159 responses identified Yes things have changed

Three overarching themes were identified from this question, with open-ended responses relating to: Lockdown, post-lockdown, or the pandemic in general. Within these, results show the top 5 main themes identified by youth, and the top sub-themes relating to these.

Across these three themes: Mental health, Social interaction, School, and activities were all common main themes.

The COVID-19 pandemic and government imposed lockdown of 2020, meant that our rangatahi had to stay at home, do online learning, and stay within their household bubbles. The pandemic has had clear implications on social interaction where youth could not socialise and felt alone during lockdown. Post-lockdown, some youth appreciated being able to socialise again, whilst others found it hard and experienced social awkwardness.

A bulk of responses also related to worsened mental health during lockdown, post-lockdown and the pandemic in general, although some youth did notice improvements.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Q7. Have things changed since lockdown? How have these issues been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Some rangatahi highlighted that the pandemic led to limited travel, and study opportunities abroad, and limited activities and things to do locally both during lockdown and post-lockdown. Many identified that their school work/online learning was also more stressful during lockdown, whereas others found this easier. Many also found that school after lockdown had changed e.g. they had to catch up, felt increased pressure and workload. For some youth, the pandemic also led to increased social media use.

Also for some, their household circumstances changed for better or worse during lockdown e.g. had more time with whānau, or they were stuck in a bad environment. Youth employment was identified by youth as an issue post-lockdown with youth finding it harder to find work, or deal with job losses, and they also identified economic issues such as rising house prices and money woes.

QUOTES:

"I think the pandemic had a really mixed effect on mental health, it allowed many people to get more in touch with who they are and recognise aspects of themselves they hadn't seen before, which is great. But lockdown also would have created feelings of isolation and loneliness for some youth. For some social media would have helped, but for others, it could have been detrimental to their mental health."

"They have dramatically changed because we had to change our learning style for lockdown last year. The requirements to pass NCEA last year were much easier but now the credit requirements are back to normal and people are struggling to convert back to normal working styles even though the pandemic is still happening."

"I think the pandemic had a really mixed effect on mental health, it allowed many people to get more in touch with who they are and recognise aspects of themselves they hadn't seen before, which is great. But lockdown also would have created feelings of isolation and loneliness for some youth. For some social media would have helped, but for others, it could have been detrimental to their mental health."

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Q7. How have these issues been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

SOCIAL INTERACTION

STUCK INSIDE

FEELING ISOLATED/ALONE

SOCIAL INTERACTION

CAN'T SEE FAMILY

CAN'T SOCIALISE/SEE FRIENDS

LOCKDOWN

MENTAL HEALTH

BETTER DURING LOCKDOWN

DEPRESSION

**INCREASED STRESS
IMPROVED WELLBEING**

WORSENERD MENTAL HEALTH

MENTAL HEALTH

INCREASED ANXIETY

DEVELOPED EATING DISORDER

ACTIVITIES

UNABLE TO GO TO CHURCH

CAN'T PLAY SPORTS

EVENTS WERE CANCELLED

UNABLE TO GO OUTSIDE

ACTIVITIES

NOTHING TO DO

NOT BEING ABLE TO ATTEND FUNERALS

NOT ABLE TO DO NORMAL ACTIVITIES/ROUTINE

SCHOOL

HOME LEARNING WAS GOOD

HARD TO BE MOTIVATED

ONLINE LEARNING WAS DIFFERENT

MORE STRESSFUL

TIME MANAGEMENT DIFFICULT

ENJOYED IT

LESS PRESSURE

SCHOOL

EXAM REQUIREMENTS EASIER

MORE RELAXED

DIDN'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH CLASSMATE DRAMA

HOUSEHOLD CIRCUMSTANCES

STUCK IN BAD ENVIRONMENT

HOUSEHOLD CIRCUMSTANCES

MORE TIME WITH WHANAU

GOOD TO BE AWAY FROM OTHER PARENT

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Q7. How have these issues been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

POST LOCKDOWN

MENTAL HEALTH

IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH
YOUTH NOT REACHING OUT FOR HELP
WORSENERD WELLBEING
WORSENERD MENTAL HEALTH
MENTAL HEALTH
LESS STRESSFUL
LONG WAITING LISTS
FEELING DOWN
SERVICES OVERWHELMED
INCREASED STRESS
FEELING VICTIMISED
WORSENERD SELF-ESTEEM
INCREASED ANXIETY

ECONOMY

STRESSED ABOUT MONEY
LESS MONEY
RISING HOUSE PRICES
ECONOMY
NOT ENOUGH MONEY TO DO ACTIVITIES
FUNDING AND PERSONNEL DECREASED

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH IN SUPERMARKETS
LOW MINIMUM WAGE
HARDER TO FIND WORK
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
JOB LOSSES

SCHOOL

SOCIAL DISTANCING RESTRICTIONS
FEELING OVERWHELMED
INCREASED WORKLOAD
AFFECTED EXAM RESULTS
SCHOOL
FEAR OF FAILURE
STRUGGLE TO RETURN TO NORMAL
HARD TO STAY ON TASK

SOCIAL INTERACTION

INCREASED PEER PRESSURE
ENJOYED SEEING FRIENDS AND FAMILY AGAIN
SOCIALLY THINGS HAVE WORSENERD
SOCIAL INTERACTION
HARDER TO FIND THE COURAGE TO SOCIALISE
PEOPLE HAVE FORGOTTEN HOW TO ACT PROPERLY
CAN HANG OUT WITH FRIENDS AGAIN
SOCIAL AWKWARDNESS

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Q7. How have these issues been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

MENTAL HEALTH

SUPPORT FOR SERVICES HAS GROWN

LOW SELF-WORTH

INCREASED STRESS

MENTAL HEALTH

WORSENERD MENTAL HEALTH

INCREASED SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

BETTER AWARENESS OF ISSUES

INCREASED SENSE OF FEELING LOST

PANDEMIC

SCHOOL

WORRIED ABOUT ONLINE LEARNING

GRADES DROPPED

LACK OF HELP FROM TEACHERS

INCREASED PRESSURE

SHIFT TO ONLINE LEARNING EASIER FUTURE LOCKDOWNS WOULD MEAN EXAM RESULTS WOULD BE AFFECTED

AFFECTED SCHOOLING MAJORLY

SCHOOL

FORCED TO WORK HARDER

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT HARDER

CHANGE IN EXAM REQUIREMENTS HAVE MADE PASSING EASIER

SOCIAL MEDIA

HELPED STAY IN CONTACT

INCREASED SOCIAL MEDIA USE

SOCIAL MEDIA

CONSPIRACY THEORIES AFFECT YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

VAST INFORMATION AFFECT YOUTH PERCEPTIONS

ADVOCATING FOR SOCIAL ISSUES

SOCIAL INTERACTION

MISS FRIENDS, FAMILY AND CULTURE ABROAD

LOST FRIENDS

MORE TIME SPENT INDOORS

NOT BEING ABLE TO EXPRESS YOURSELF IN FRONT OF OTHERS

SOCIAL INTERACTION

CAN'T SEE FAMILY

ACTIVITIES

LESS VEHICLE USE - CARS, PLANES, BOATS ETC.

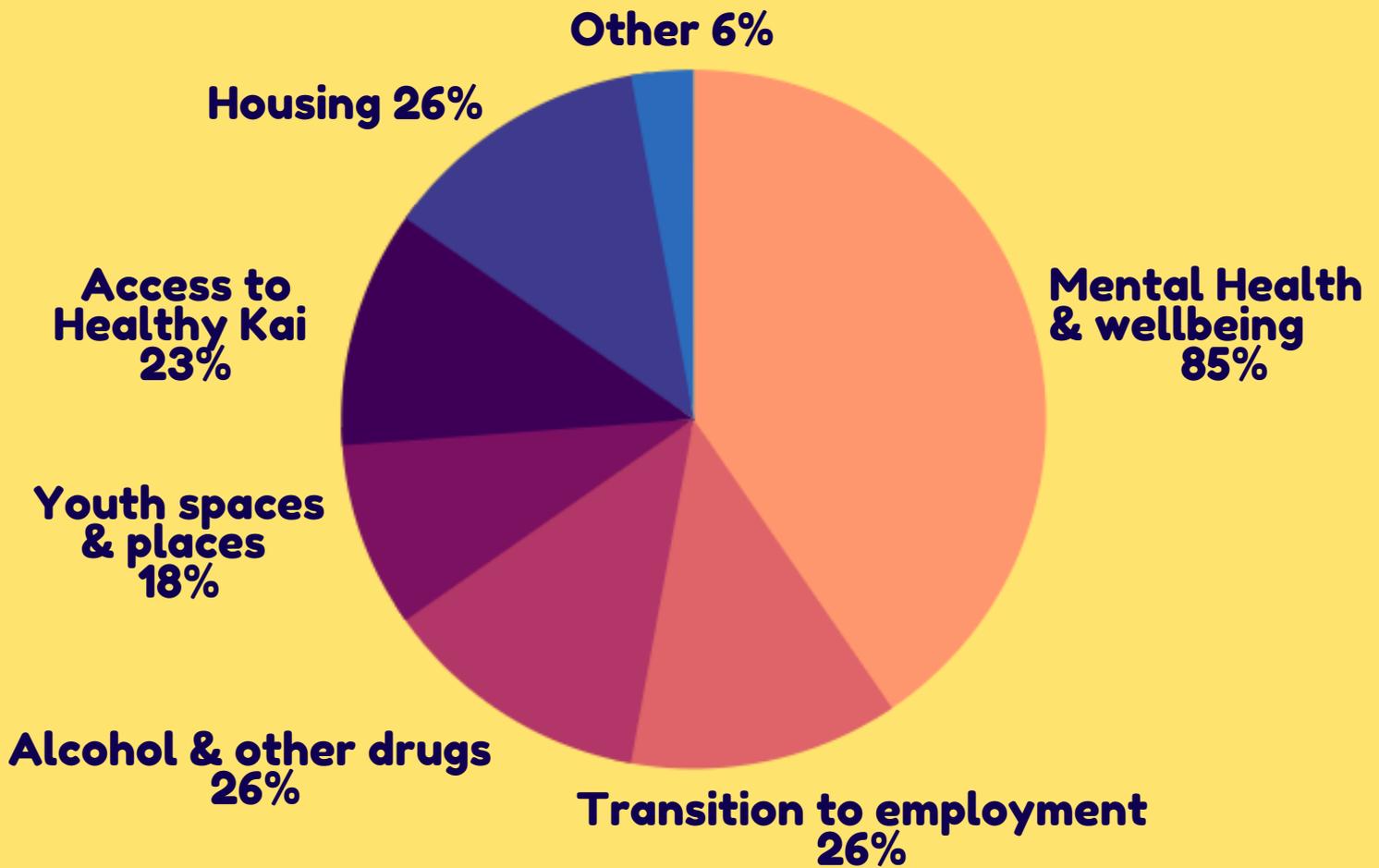
CAN'T STUDY ABROAD

ACTIVITIES

CAN'T TRAVEL

MOST IMPORTANT AREAS

Q8. Tick the top 2 most important areas of need for young people? (or add in other)



From the options given, 85% of rangatahi identified 'Mental Health & Wellbeing' as the top area of need for young people, followed by 'Transition to employment', 'Alcohol & other drugs', 'Housing' (26% respectively).

ORGANISATIONS IN YOUR REGION

Q9. What organisations in your region offer support and opportunities for young people?

YOUTH ORGANISATIONS/YOUTH GROUPS

TASMAN YOUTH COUNCIL
GRAHAM DINGLE FOUNDATION
YOUTH SERVICE - PSUSI FAMILY WORKS
NELSON YOUTH COUNCIL
MARLBOROUGH YOUTH TRUST - MYSpace
YOUTH GROUPS
WHANAKE YOUTH
MULTICULTURAL YOUTH NELSON TASMAN
SPORT TASMAN KOHINE MAIA

SCHOOL/EDUCATION PROVIDERS

SCHOOL GUIDANCE
NELSON MARLBOROUGH INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
SCHOOL
SCHOOL COUNSELLING
NELSON YOUNG PARENT SCHOOL
WAIMEA COLLEGE

HEALTH PROVIDERS/COUNSELLING/SUPPORT SERVICES

WELLBEING PRACTITIONERS
NELSON MARLBOROUGH HEALTH
CAMHS
TE PIKI ORANGA
YOUTH LINE



COMMUNITY SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS/SERVICES

COMMUNITY GROUPS
ORANGA TAMARIKI - FAMILY START
REDCROSS
WORK & INCOME - MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
SUPPORTING FAMILIES

SPORTS CLUBS/ACTIVITIES/RECREATION PROVIDERS

SPORTS CLUBS
SPORT TASMAN
STADIUM 2000
SPORTS EVENTS

1. YOUTH ORGANISATIONS/YOUTH GROUPS (106 RESPONSES)

- Youth groups
- Marlborough Youth Trust – Myspace
- Whanake Youth
- Nelson Youth Council
- Youth Service – PSUSI Family works
- Multicultural Youth Nelson Tasman
- Graham Dingle Foundation
- Sport Tasman Kohine Maia

ORGANISATIONS IN YOUR REGION

Q9. What organisations in your region offer support and opportunities for young people?

2. SCHOOL/EDUCATION PROVIDERS (67 RESPONSES)

- School
- School Counselling
- Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology
- School guidance
- Waimea College

3. COMMUNITY SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS (35 RESPONSES)

- Redcross
- Oranga Tamariki - Family start
- Work & income - MSD
- Community Groups
- Supporting families

4. HEALTH PROVIDERS/COUNSELLING/SUPPORT SERVICES (28 RESPONSES)

- Children Adolescent Mental Health service
- Te Piki Oranga
- Nelson Marlborough Health
- Youth Line
- Wellbeing practitioners

5. SPORTS CLUBS/ACTIVITIES/RECREATION PROVIDERS (19 RESPONSES)

- Sport Tasman
- Sports Clubs
- Stadium 2000
- Sports Events

WHAT IS MISSING?

Q10. What is missing for young people in our region? How do we make Top of the South a better place to live in?

ACTIVITIES

BETTER ADVERTISING OF YOUTH ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE

MORE YOUTH GROUPS

YOUTH CENTRES
MORE LGBTQIA+ EVENTS
MORE EVENING YOUTH ACTIVITIES

MORE EVENTS

LARGE ADVENTURE PARK
MORE FUN ACTIVITIES

MORE SPORT OPPORTUNITIES

MORE YOUTH ACTIVITIES

YOUTH HANG OUT SPACES

FREE ACTIVITIES

BETTER MOUNTAIN BIKE PARKS
WATER ACTIVITIES

NOTHING TO DO FOR YOUTH

MORE PUBLIC YOUTH AREAS

MENTAL HEALTH

IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

BETTER EDUCATION AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

REMOVING STIGMA

FREE YOUTH COUNSELLING

MORE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

BETTER ADVERTISING OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE

DROP IN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

EASY ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

YOUTH SUPPORT

ADDRESS BULLYING

SAFE/CONFIDENTIAL PLACE FOR YOUTH TO TALK

MORE YOUTH SUPPORT

FREE/CHEAPER KAI

BETTER ADVERTISING OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE

YOUTH EDUCATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

BETTER ACTIVE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

MORE COMMUNITY RECREATION SPACES

BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPTIONS

COMMUNITY HUB FOR EVERYONE

COMMUNITY

MORE ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

LESS PRESSURE TO HAVE TO DO SOMETHING STRAIGHT AWAY AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL

BETTER TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

TEACHING HOW TO TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD

BETTER EDUCATION

EDUCATION ON MANAGING FINANCES



Results show the top five main themes identified by youth, and the top sub-themes relating to these.

84 responses identified that youth wanted more activities in the region, with some giving examples of activities they would ideally like to see. This appeared to be the main issue that was missing for rangatahi, with youth wanting more hang out spaces as well and fun things to do. More/improved youth and mental health support, community engagement and improved youth education opportunities also appeared in the top 5 main themes from the open-ended responses.

Other suggestions, not listed, included more youth engagement opportunities, improved awareness around drugs/alcohol/smoking/ and vaping, having more employment opportunities and help finding work, improving the environment and housing affordability.

WHAT IS MISSING?

Q10. What is missing for young people in our region? How do we make Top of the South a better place to live in?

1. ACTIVITIES

BETTER ADVERTISING OF YOUTH ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE
MORE YOUTH GROUPS
YOUTH CENTRES
MORE LGBTQIA + EVENTS
MORE EVENING YOUTH ACTIVITIES
MORE EVENTS
LARGE ADVENTURE PARK
GAMING ACTIVITIES
MORE SPORT OPPORTUNITIES
MORE FUN ACTIVITIES
MORE YOUTH ACTIVITIES
YOUTH HANG OUT SPACES
FREE ACTIVITIES
BETTER MOUNTAIN BIKE PARKS
WATER ACTIVITIES
NOTHING TO DO FOR YOUTH
MORE PUBLIC YOUTH AREAS

84 responses identified Activities as a main theme

"Accessible youth spaces that are monitored/supervised. We spend all day in education and when we need somewhere safe to meet up its closed. Have better and more accessible events, make them cheaper or free, a designated cafe for youth and perhaps even youth lead. We need more activities outside of school."

2. YOUTH SUPPORT

ADDRESS BULLYING
SAFE/CONFIDENTIAL PLACE FOR YOUTH TO TALK
MORE YOUTH SUPPORT
FREE/CHEAPER KAI
BETTER ADVERTISING OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE

29 responses identified Youth Support as a main theme

"More places for young people who are struggling to go to relax and get away from the rough world. A study place for people to go to learn"

"I think there's a huge target and support systems in place for younger age groups but lacks in the 19-24 age bracket"

WHAT IS MISSING?

Q10. What is missing for young people in our region? How do we make Top of the South a better place to live in?

3. MENTAL HEALTH

IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

BETTER EDUCATION AROUND MENTAL HEALTH

REMOVING STIGMA

FREE YOUTH COUNSELLING

MORE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

BETTER ADVERTISING OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE

DROP IN MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

EASY ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

20 responses identified Mental Health as a main theme

"Making mental health a bit more public, almost like trying to take away the stigma and normalising it. more sessions about it and personal experiences in class so people understand and learn to speak out. Normalising mental health will make a lot of people way more comfortable to be in their own skin."

4. YOUTH EDUCATION

MORE ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

LESS PRESSURE TO HAVE TO DO SOMETHING STRAIGHT AWAY AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL

BETTER TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

TEACHING HOW TO TRANSITION INTO ADULTHOOD

BETTER EDUCATION

EDUCATION ON MANAGING FINANCES

16 responses identified Youth Education as a main theme

"I feel like in the top of the south a thing missing for young people in our region is more like helpful people for us young ones who struggle in school and need the help unlike like in the north Island where there is a lot more people where us young people can easily find help with school work"

WHAT IS MISSING?

Q10. What is missing for young people in our region? How do we make Top of the South a better place to live in?

5. COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**BETTER ACTIVE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE
MORE COMMUNITY RECREATION SPACES
BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPTIONS
COMMUNITY HUB FOR EVERYONE**

12 responses identified Community as a main theme

"A greater sense of community, I think people have got lost in what it means to have and sustain meaningful relationships with others. People also don't want to engage with others for some reason, or at least they think the don't."

WHAT ROLE CAN YOUNG PEOPLE PLAY

Q11. How can young people be part of the solution? What role could you/young people play?

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

REPRESENTATION AT ORGANISATIONS
ADULTS SHOULD LISTEN TO YOUTH
PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
SPEAK OUT MORE **BE INVOLVED** **HELP PLAN**
BE PART OF THE SOLUTION
LET YOUTH HAVE A VOICE
RAISE ISSUES WITH COUNCIL
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SCHOOLS
PROVIDE IDEAS
SPREAD AWARENESS

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH ORGANISATIONS
ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO ATTEND ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP THEM
BRING FRIENDS TO GROUPS
YOUTH GROUPS OR CLUBS
YOUTH ORGANISE AND PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES/EVENTS
YOUTH HANG OUT SPACE
DEVELOP A RANGATAHI COUNCIL
HELP ADVERTISE YOUTH EVENTS
YOUTH BOARDS AND COMMITTEES



YOUTH SUPPORT

MENTOR OTHER YOUTH
HELP AND SUPPORT PEOPLE
SUPPORT OTHER YOUTH
HELP THOSE IN NEED
MAKE FRIENDS

YOUTH BEHAVIOUR

HANG OUT WITH THOSE THAT ARE A GOOD INFLUENCE
CALL PEOPLE OUT
BE BETTER
BE RESPECTFUL
BE NICER TO OTHERS
DON'T MAKE JUDGEMENTS

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

BE PART OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
HELP WITH COMMUNITY EVENTS
HELP WHANAU **VOLUNTEER**
HELP COMMUNITY
ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY
FUNDRAISING

Results show the top five main themes identified by youth, and the top sub-themes relating to these.

Rangatahi identified that young people can mainly be part of the solution through youth engagement opportunities (54 responses were related to this main theme). Suggestions included letting youth have a voice and provide ideas by offering opportunities for youth engagement through youth representation at councils and other organisations. Other key themes identified included: youth supporting others, including other youth; opportunity to be part of the solution through youth activities, groups, and councils; changing youth behaviour and attributes, such as being more respectful and kinder to others; and providing support to the community through examples such as volunteering.

Other suggestions not listed included, youth providing advice and mental health support, youth having leadership opportunities, and looking after the environment.

WHAT ROLE CAN YOUNG PEOPLE PLAY

Q11. How can young people be part of the solution? What role could you/young people play?

1. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

REPRESENTATION AT ORGANISATIONS
ADULTS SHOULD LISTEN TO YOUTH
PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT
SPEAK OUT MORE **BE INVOLVED** HELP PLAN
BE PART OF THE SOLUTION
LET YOUTH HAVE A VOICE
RAISE ISSUES WITH COUNCIL
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SCHOOLS
PROVIDE IDEAS
SPREAD AWARENESS

"We are good at: Advocacy and activism. It's important that adults let us have our voice and deeply understand what we have to say. Let us lead projects to do with rangatahi. We can really do anything to be a part of the solution as long as we are involved and the adults value and appreciate our perspective."

"We're the future, we're the next generation. We have so much to learn and we should be given more chances to be heard and offer suggestions for change."

2. SUPPORT OTHERS

MENTOR OTHER YOUTH
HELP AND SUPPORT PEOPLE
SUPPORT OTHER YOUTH
HELP THOSE IN NEED
MAKE FRIENDS

"Young people can be a great support for their peers as they could be going through the same thing currently or have in the past."

WHAT ROLE CAN YOUNG PEOPLE PLAY

Q11. How can young people be part of the solution? What role could you/young people play?

3. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

*PARTICIPATION IN YOUTH ORGANISATIONS
ENCOURAGE YOUTH TO ATTEND ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP THEM*

**BRING FRIENDS TO GROUPS
YOUTH GROUPS OR CLUBS**

YOUTH ORGANISE AND PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

YOUTH HANG OUT SPACE

DEVELOP A RANGATAHI COUNCIL

HELP ADVERTISE YOUTH EVENTS

YOUTH BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

"Have a rangatahi council and talk about issues for engagement into the hapori (community)."

"A youth council would be amazing to get the ball rolling and make things happen for marlborough youth. There are currently a few youth groups in the district but they are often church lead and that isn't for everyone due to the religious factor."

4. YOUTH BEHAVIOUR

HANG OUT WITH THOSE THAT ARE A GOOD INFLUENCE

CALL PEOPLE OUT

BE BETTER

BE RESPECTFUL

BE NICER TO OTHERS

DON'T MAKE JUDGEMENTS

"Well first be nicer to each other and create bonds with people that actually mean something. And be a part of organisations that put events on for youth giving us something 'different' to do."

"Be a bit more open and understanding. Respecting that other people may not be as fortunate as you."

WHAT ROLE CAN YOUNG PEOPLE PLAY

Q11. How can young people be part of the solution? What role could you/young people play?

5. COMMUNITY SUPPORT

BE PART OF COMMUNITY INITIATIVES
HELP WITH COMMUNITY EVENTS
HELP WHANAU **VOLUNTEER**
HELP COMMUNITY
ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY
FUNDRAISING

"Help get involved the community, volunteer, suggest events they want running and help with the organisation process."

"Be a bit more open and understanding. respecting that other people may not be as fortunate as you."

DISCUSSION

The Rangatahi Wellbeing and Aspirations Survey gives crucial insights into the key wellbeing issues of youth across Te Taihū, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic & lockdown of 2020. The survey had a fantastic response with 235 respondents. The majority of respondents were aged between 12 and 18 (82%). 65% of respondents were from the Nelson region, with 19% residing in Marlborough and 14% in Tasman. Respondents were from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds including NZ European (74%), Māori (20%), Samoan, Cook Islands Māori, Tongan, Nepali, Chinese and Indian.

The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, with the continued threat still exists with further community transmission events and alert level changes happening across 2021-2022. Given the threat of new virus variants, the risk of COVID-19 within the community still exists, and New Zealand's strategy to eliminate COVID-19 means that future lockdowns could happen.

The restrictions from the pandemic pose significant costs to the economic and mental wellbeing of New Zealanders, including reduced family and social interaction; limited recreation opportunities; job losses and financial insecurity; and disruption to education. The findings from this survey, as well as national and local insights, suggest that these economic and social costs have hit our rangatahi particularly hard.

Following from the COVID-19 pandemic, young people in Aotearoa are: facing financial instability and employment insecurity; craving a return to normalcy in education; missing physical connection; and feeling distressed¹. The pandemic has led to reduced socialisation opportunities for youth, particularly during lockdown. Nationally, younger New Zealanders aged 18-24 years are more likely to feel lonely than older adults during the pandemic, from June 2020 to March 2021 quarters⁷.

Face-to-face socialising and activities are important for youth in making connections and personal development, with social exclusion affecting their mental health.⁸ Social media can help with online social interaction, but can also have negative consequences¹ such for mental health and bullying.⁹

Research has shown that during the lockdown, young people in New Zealand experienced greater psychological distress, suicidal thoughts, anxiety and depression and were classified as a vulnerable/at risk groups for worsened mental health from the pandemic.¹⁰⁻¹¹ Globally, academic delays and the negative impact on academic progression from COVID-19 due to school closures and changes in the way education is delivered, can have an adverse effect on student's mental health.¹²⁻¹⁴

Aligning with these findings, the key wellbeing issues identified from the Rangatahi Wellbeing and Aspirations Survey were:

- **Mental Health and Youth support:** This was a common theme throughout the responses. Rangatahi in our region appear to be struggling with mental health issues, exacerbated by challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, school and social media. Rangatahi highlighted that accessible, free, and improved mental health and youth support is needed.
- **COVID-19:** The pandemic has had a profound effect on our youth in the region causing feelings of isolation and uncertainty, worsened mental health and wellbeing, disruption to education, youth opportunities and employment, with these effects experienced not only during lockdown but post-lockdown as well as New Zealand continues its COVID-19 elimination strategy.

- **Youth Education:** Many youth highlighted that they find school stressful, noticing increased workload, particularly after lockdown, and feelings of being overwhelmed and increased pressure. However, some youth noted that during lockdown, there was less pressure and online learning was easier.
- **Youth Activities:** Our rangatahi highlighted that whilst they have access to youth organisations across the region (question 9), many youth suggested that they wanted more youth activities, events, accessible hang out spaces and youth groups.
- **Youth Engagement:** Rangatahi want to have a voice, be part of the solution to youth issues by providing youth representation and engagement at councils and other organisations. They also want to be able to support other youth, organise their own events and be part of and support the community.
- **Other key wellbeing issues:** Climate change, employment, alcohol and other drugs, bullying, social media use, the economy and housing but many more themes were identified.

These wellbeing issues align with the Local Insights section of this report, which covers past work in this space by local agencies. Insights can also be taken from Te Taihu Intergenerational Strategy⁵, a long term economic development strategy convened by the Wakatu Incorporation with the 8 iwi of Te Taihu rohe, local and central government and business groups.

The strategy focuses on a reset following COVID-19, concentrating on the gaps in equity that may have worsened in our region, the threat of climate change, and how we can be Tūpuna Pono (Good Ancestors) for the current and future generations. Consultations with rangatahi as part of the strategy, identified the need:

- **To restore and value connection to the natural world**
- **Be part of an inclusive society where no one is left behind**
- **Have a resilient sustainable economy**

The Te Taihu Intergenerational Strategy should be considered when identifying solutions to improve rangatahi wellbeing within the region. At a national level, the COVID-19 Youth Recovery plan 2020-2021¹ has also identified the following changes required to support young people in New Zealand:

- **Aligning and coordinating recovery activities, and proactively identifying opportunities for collaboration;**
- **Establishing and/or enhancing systems that value and embed youth voice;**
- **Ensuring sustainability of key youth help seeking services;**
- **Supporting young people to understand their role(s) in the recovery process;**
- **Promoting the value and impact of connectedness;**
- **Continuing to improve education, training, retraining and job creation opportunities;**
- **Developing and improving mechanisms that focus on protective factors.**

The survey findings, along with national and local insights, collectively represent the Youth Voice of Te Taihu, which should sit at the forefront of decision making, informing policy and practice as we aim to make Te Taihu a better place for rangatahi to grow up and flourish into Rangatira (Leaders).

CONCLUSION

Nga mihi to the rangatahi that gave their time and energy to complete this survey and a big thank you to the supporting organisations that helped disperse the survey. The purpose of the survey was to measure the impact to which COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020 had played upon rangatahi wellbeing and aspirations in Te Taihū.

It was positive that the majority of youth agreed they had a sense of who they are, including culture, goals and ambition, and understood how positive youth behaviour can influence change. However, it is clear that our rangatahi have faced many challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, including worsened mental health, school stress, and reduced social interaction. There is work to be done to find solutions to these issues, but rangatahi suggested improved mental health advice and support, more opportunities for youth activities and events, and allowing youth engagement within the community, to name a few.

We have heard from a representation of youth voices across Te Taihū, and the next steps from this survey will involve the findings being dispersed out to all aspects of the youth sector across the region, and further engagement will continue with rangatahi, schools, youth organisations, local agencies and central government, as well as internally within Nelson Marlborough Health to improve rangatahi wellbeing.

This Rangatahi Wellbeing and Aspirations Survey was created and analysed by Reuben Molnar - Public Health service/Health Promoter and Dr Grace George - Public Health Analyst. Any questions on the process and findings, or to access the full data, please contact:

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