



WHAT MAKES A GOOD LIFE? TAMARIKI AND RANGATAHI MĀORI MAI WORLD COHORT SUMMARY REPORT

A summary report in the *What Makes a Good Life?: Children and Young People's views on wellbeing series*. Office of the Children's Commissioner, November 2019



[Read the full report on our website](#)



In October and November 2018, the Office of the Children's Commissioner's Mai World team and Oranga Tamariki's Voices of Children and Young People team, engaged with more than 6,000 children and young people, to hear their views on what makes a good life. Of the 423 children and young people we spoke to face-to-face, 175 of these were tamariki and rangatahi Māori.

The original [What Makes a Good Life?](#) report was done to inform the *Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy)*, which has been designed and implemented to drive government action on child wellbeing. The Children's Act 2014, which underpinned the development of the Strategy, includes an obligation to consult with children and young people.

This cohort summary report presents some of the key messages we heard from 175 tamariki and rangatahi Māori who participated in this engagement. Through this we heard how tamariki and rangatahi Māori envisaged a good life for themselves and their whānau, and about the barriers they face to experiencing this good life. This document aims to share the voices of tamariki and rangatahi Māori heard during the [What Makes a Good Life?](#) engagement, so that they can inform policy and practice development for services to tamariki and rangatahi Māori.

The views presented here should not be taken to speak for all tamariki and rangatahi Māori. The original engagement targeted children and young people more likely to be facing challenges in their lives. As a result, many of the tamariki and rangatahi Māori we heard from through these engagements were also experiencing poverty, had contact with Oranga Tamariki, or had greater needs.



Acceptance: We want the opportunity to be our true and best selves as Māori

Throughout the *What Makes a Good Life?* engagement tamariki and rangatahi Māori talked about racism. Many felt as though they were often stereotyped and pre-judged by others. We heard from tamariki and rangatahi Māori that experiencing racism was a barrier to them feeling proud to be Māori. They wanted to be their best and true selves without judgement.

Some tamariki and rangatahi also talked about wanting to be heard, and listened to, in their daily lives. This included feeling that their thoughts and views were not valued by adults and that their advice or views had not been acted on. Not being listened to prevented them from feeling like they could be who they are, and who they want to be, in their day-to-day lives.

“discrimination, racism we are treated different and unfairly.”

– Rangatahi from Taupō

We heard from many tamariki and rangatahi that stigma and stereotypes were a barrier to them being able to have their own identity and be their best selves as Māori.

“Things that get in the way is the stigma that comes with being in the system. People thinking you are an out of control teen who is always doing something bad and can’t be trusted. So, getting rid of that stereotype and showing more of the kids who have come out of care on top.”

– Rangatahi in OT care in Christchurch

Many tamariki and rangatahi talked about the tokenistic approach taken by some schools. They wanted te ao Māori to be celebrated, with enough support and opportunities to fully explore their culture. We heard a desire for Māori culture to be incorporated authentically into the school curriculum and that inclusion of te reo Māori is central to this authentic approach.

“see ourselves – cultures being embraced and celebrated.”

– Rangatahi from Taupō

Many tamariki and rangatahi talked about wanting to know and learn about their whakapapa, but had not had the opportunity to do so.

Education: We want the education system to work for us

We heard that education was very important to many tamariki and rangatahi Māori, particularly in achieving their goals. However, some tamariki and rangatahi told us that school was not working for them. The lack of te reo Māori and Māori culture at school made it even harder to relate to.

The subjects being taught in school did not relate to the interests or life experiences for many. Tamariki and rangatahi talked about wanting to learn about subjects that would help get them into jobs and teach them about real life.

“school is unfair. They use us, they use our spaces, our culture but don’t respect it”

– Rangatahi from Taupō

“Having a school system based on teaching by strengths and not high grades and a lot of credits.”

– Rangatahi from the East Coast

Many of the tamariki and rangatahi we heard from felt they needed more support and wanted their schools to feel and act like a community. They wanted their schools and communities to be safe spaces they could enjoy together and where they could be supported to be who they are. Friendship, and having good friends around, was mentioned as important.

“we go to school having a bad as morning, we can’t talk to them about it because they don’t care and then you get kicked out.”

– Rangatahi from Rotorua

We heard that the relationships between tamariki and rangatahi and their teachers makes a difference to how they feel about school. Tamariki and rangatahi talked about teachers not understanding who they are as people and not meeting their individual needs. We heard that good teachers supported tamariki and rangatahi in their learning and made subjects interesting and relevant. The low expectations that some teachers had of tamariki and rangatahi made them feel demotivated and unsupported.



Safety: We want safe, clean and supportive communities

Some tamariki and rangatahi Māori we spoke with talked about the barriers that prevented them from feeling safe. These included having safe places to go to and play or hang out with their friends, as well as wanting to live in communities that are clean, free of rubbish and with streetlights.

“I think what kids need is safe place and safe surroundings and a safe home ... Supportive people, positive people, caring people.”

– Postcards

“the location of things cause most of the support or fun things is outside of our community. We can't afford to go there.”

– Rangatahi from Gisborne

We heard about structural issues that were a barrier to feeling safe. Some tamariki and rangatahi talked about police presence and how it made them feel scared. For some, their personal experience had led to distrust of systems and organisations that were supposed to keep them safe. A few tamariki and rangatahi who shared their personal experiences said that police used physical force and would turn up with a large group of officers, despite them being alone or in a small group. Some tamariki and rangatahi felt the 'brown' police understood them better.

“They arrest us for nothing. They pull up with millions of cop cars and there's only one of us they have a warrant for, but they come up, straight up and smashed me. Kneeing me, telling me to put my hands towards my back but I couldn't because he had my hand. They are racist as.”

– Rangatahi male in contact with the youth justice system

Tamariki and rangatahi wanted their communities to be places where they could enjoy their time and where there were activities to do. They talked about wanting strong communities that they not only felt safe walking down the street in, but where they could thrive.

Whānau: We need our whānau to be supported so they can support us

Throughout the engagements tamariki and rangatahi Māori emphasised the importance of spending time with their whānau, and feeling supported by them which contributed to having a good life.

“when we do things with our family and friends, that's when I feel like I can do better and achieve my goals because I see us all doing it.”

– Rangatahi from Tūranganui-a-Kiwa

Many tamariki and rangatahi talked about having a stable home and access to the basics as being vital to a good life. Access to more money was seen by most as a solution so parents could spend time with family and pay their bills, without the need to work so many hours, or multiple jobs. Some also talked about how their whānau struggled and needed help with everyday needs, such as food or household bills. Many tamariki and rangatahi focused on the immediate and basic needs of their whānau and communities when asked what they needed to have a good life. Very few tamariki and rangatahi discussed their own individual aspirations.

“Lower petrol prices so that familys have enough petrol to get from here to there. Raising income for students/ young parents so they get on there feet a bit faster. The struggle is real.”

– Rangatahi from Te Whanganui-a-Tara

When we asked tamariki and rangatahi what the barriers were that prevented them from experiencing the good life some told us they did not know where they could access supports for their whānau. Many felt responsible for the happiness of their whānau and carried the weight of that responsibility with them.

“Pay rise for parents. Letting parents have more time for and with whānau.”

– Rangatahi from Taupō

“If the parents are good the kids are good”

– Rangatahi from Rotorua



Conclusion

Through our engagements with tamariki and rangatahi Māori, we heard about *What Makes a Good Life?* for them, including the barriers they were facing. Feeling accepted for who they are, having an education system that supported them, and feeling safe in their communities would contribute to tamariki and rangatahi Māori living a 'good life'.

We also heard about how tamariki and rangatahi needed the support of their whānau, but also how their whānau needed support. It's clear that racism and the systemic barriers that prevent authentic prioritisation of te ao Māori must be addressed to realise change.

We hope the insights shared in this report will inform policy and practice development for services to support tamariki and rangatahi Māori. We also hope the voices shared in this report will encourage further thinking about important questions to ask tamariki and rangatahi Māori about issues that affect them.

"For my voice and others to be heard we need people like you to listen and take in the things we say not just in one ear and out the other. Not making promises you know you can't keep but being honest with us."

– Rangatahi from Ōtautahi