

# WHAT MAKES A GOOD LIFE?

Children and young people's views on wellbeing



February 2019



**ORANGA TAMARIKI**  
Ministry for Children



MANAAKITIA Ā TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's  
Commissioner**

## About us

This report was a collaboration between the [Office of the Children's Commissioner](#) and [Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children](#), supported by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet asked the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki to gather information from children and young people to ensure their voices were heard in the development of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, consistent with obligations under the Children's Act 2014.

Both the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki share a mutual aim of ensuring children and young people have their views heard on matters that affect them. The project team was made up of staff from the Office of the Children's Commissioner's Strategy, Rights and Advice - Mai World team and the Oranga Tamariki Voices of Children and Young People team. Although our organisations have different roles, we have come together in order to hear the views of children and young people and share those views to affect positive change in New Zealand.

## Acknowledgements

A number of people and organisations contributed to making this report possible. This includes the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the almost 100 schools from around the country that helped with the survey, the Office of the Children's Commissioner community partners and Oranga Tamariki sites. Most of all we are grateful to the children and young people who participated in the project for their time, wisdom and insights. Ngā mihi nui and thank you to everyone who was involved.



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# Contents page

|   |    |
|---|----|
| At a glance .....                                 | 2  |
| Section One: Our approach .....                   | 10 |
| Section Two: Survey findings .....                | 15 |
| Section Three: Face to face insights .....        | 25 |
| Section Four: Messages to the Prime Minister..... | 49 |
| Section Five: What did we learn overall? .....    | 56 |
| Appendix One: Detailed methodology .....          | 60 |
| Appendix Two: Survey results.....                 | 68 |

# At a glance

## *We sought children and young people's views to inform the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy*

In October and November 2018, the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) asked for the views of children and young people on what wellbeing means to them.

Their views were sought in order to inform the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy), which is designed to drive government action on child wellbeing. The Children's Act 2014, which underpins the development of the Strategy, includes an obligation to consult with children and young people. This is also in line with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that children and young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

Children and young people have valuable ideas. Their views can inform not only the Strategy but also inform practitioners and communities who want to make a difference for children and young people.

Dear Prime Minister,

I think the one thing that children and young people need to have good lives, now and in the future is...

**HELLO** (P.S. please make petrol cheaper here in auckland, my mum requested that. It is SOOO EXPENSIVE) THANKS.

**WHY DO I HAVE TO ACT LIKE SOMEONE ELSE IN FRONT OF OTHERS? PLS TEACH PROFESSIONALS, TEACHERS THAT WE SHOULD BE OURSELVES ANYTIME WE WANT. THANKS.**

**child & youth wellbeing**

To:  
Prime Minister  
Jacinda Ardern

Tell us about yourself:

0 - 10 years old  
 11 - 17 years old  
 18+ years old

Māori  
 NZ European / Pākehā  
 Pacific  
 Asian  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***We heard from more than 6,000 children and young people***

An online survey was completed by 5,631 children and young people and 423 children and young people were spoken with face to face, through a series of focus groups, one on one and paired interviews. The survey, interviews and focus groups all asked for children and young people's views on having a good life. The face to face conversations explored in more depth what it means to have a good life, what gets in the way and what helps. All were asked what they thought would make things better for children and young people now, and for their future.

The survey reached a diverse group of children and young people across New Zealand, with a mix of urban/rural, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and age characteristics. We targeted our face to face conversations to ensure we heard from those we knew would be more likely to be experiencing challenges in their lives. These included children and young people living in poverty, living in state care, with a disability, from rural and isolated areas, aged under three years, with refugee backgrounds, who identify as LGBTIQ+, who are recent migrants, or who have received a mental health diagnosis. The majority of children and young people we spoke to in focus groups and interviews were Māori.

This report provides a broad overview of what children and young people told us. It encompasses the views of all children and young people we heard from.

## ***In our surveys the majority of children and young people told us they are doing well, but a significant number face challenges***

The survey asked children and young people for their views on their own wellbeing, what a good life is and what they thought were the most important areas to focus on to make things better for all children and young people.

The survey asked children and young people to respond to a series of 17 statements relating to their wellbeing such as "I have a warm, dry place to live", "I feel safe in my neighbourhood" and "I can cope when life gets hard". The majority of responses to all 17 statements were positive, indicating that most children and young people are doing okay.

However, some children and young people indicated they were facing challenges. Around 10% responded negatively to four or more of the 17 statements and around 2% responded negatively to ten or more statements. This group is likely to be growing up in very challenging circumstances.

Children and young people told us what it means to them to have a good life. When asked an open-ended question about what a good life means, the most common responses related to having fun and feeling contented, having supportive family and friends and having basic needs met. Other responses related to being healthy (including mentally healthy), feeling safe, having a good education and feeling valued and respected.

*"Being with your family, even if they're annoying the heck out of you. They are immediate, speed dial no.1."* Rangatahi from Matamata

*"Being surrounded by loved ones and friends that support me and provide me with opportunities."* 17 year old New Zealand European, Māori

*"Money may not be the key to happiness but it is the key to living and I know many people who struggle."* 17 year old girl

Figure 1 below shows the themes from responses to this question, as well as how the themes related to each other.

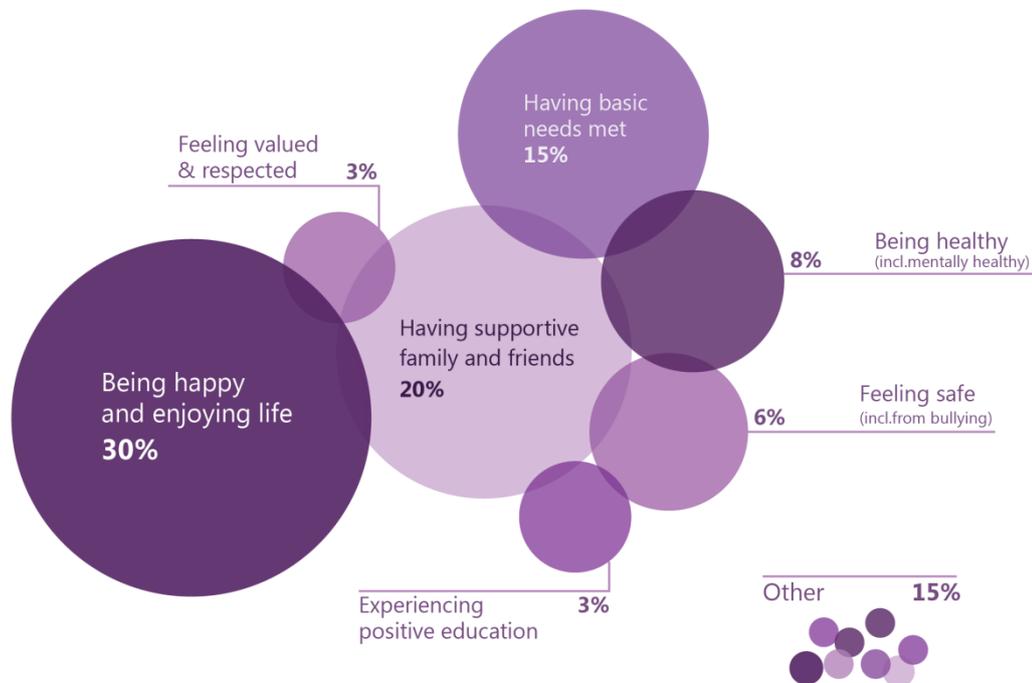


Figure 1: Clusters of key themes from: "what makes a good life?"

When asked what they saw as the top three most important things for children and young people to have a good life, the items most frequently selected (from a defined list) were:

- Parents or caregivers have enough money for basic stuff like food, clothes and a good house to live in.
- Children and young people have good relationships with family and friends.
- Children and young people are kept safe from bullying, violence or accidents.
- Children and young people are valued and respected for who they are.

The face to face interviews and focus groups were an opportunity to explore these issues in depth, with a group of children and young people we knew were more likely to be facing challenges.

## ***In our focus groups and interviews children and young people talked about the challenges they face***

From the children and young people we met in person we heard five key messages:

### **1) Accept us for who we are and who we want to be**

Children and young people told us that they want to be accepted, valued, believed in and they want people to support their hopes for the future.

*"To be accepted. To be understood and taken seriously. It's important because it gives you confidence in your uniqueness."* Young person from Whangārei

### **2) Life is really hard for some of us**

Many children and young people face significant challenges, such as racism, bullying, discrimination, judgement, violence, drugs and a feeling of continually being let down.

*"At our school people find mocking Māori culture to be a joke. 'Māoris go to prison', or 'Māoris do drugs.'"* Rangatahi from Auckland

*"Something I always have to deal with at school is the stigma. When people find out you're a foster kid they're like 'oh you're an orphan, whose house did you burn down.'" 16 year old girl living in state care*

### **3) To help us, help our whānau and our support crew**

Whānau are a critical factor in children and young people's wellbeing. In general, for children and young people to be well, their whānau, friends and communities must also be well. Wellbeing is about relationships, not just about having things.

*"If the parents are good then the kids are good."* Rangatahi from Rotorua

### **4) We all deserve more than just the basics**

Children and young people want 'the basics', such as a home, an education and a safe community. But they want more than just a minimum standard of living, and they want the systems that support them to be inclusive, accessible, and affordable.

*"Enough for the basics, plus a little bit more"* Young person from Dunedin

## 5) How you support us matters just as much as what you do

Efforts to support children and young people will not be effective if the sole focus is on what needs to be delivered. How supports are delivered matters just as much. Services must accept children and young people for who they are and respect their critical relationships with their whānau and communities.

*"Having a good life isn't necessarily about the materialistic things. I think having strong friendships/relationships with people who genuinely care about you contributes better to a good life."* Rangatahi from Taumarunui

Tēnā koe Pirimia,

Ko te mea kotahi e hiahiaatia ana e nga tamariki mokopuna kia whai oranga pai ināianeī me ngā wā kei te heke mai ko te...

**Hello! My name is**  **and I'm writing to ask you for more and larger houses to keep families together, healthy and safe. I would also like there to be more confidential places youth can go to help and to be open.**

**child & youth wellbeing**

To:  
Prime Minister  
Jacinda Ardern

Tell us about yourself:

0 - 10 years old

11 - 17 years old

18+ years old

Māori

NZ European / Pākehā

Pacific

Asian

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Messages to the Prime Minister

We asked all participating children and young people what was the one thing they wanted to tell the Prime Minister that children and young people need to live good lives. This was a final open-ended question on the survey. Those we met with face to face completed this question on a postcard at the end of the session. We received a total of 3,330 responses. Most of the issues that children and young people raised reflect the barriers they identified for a good life.

Figure 2 below shows the key themes from the messages to the Prime Minister, as well as how the themes relate to each other.

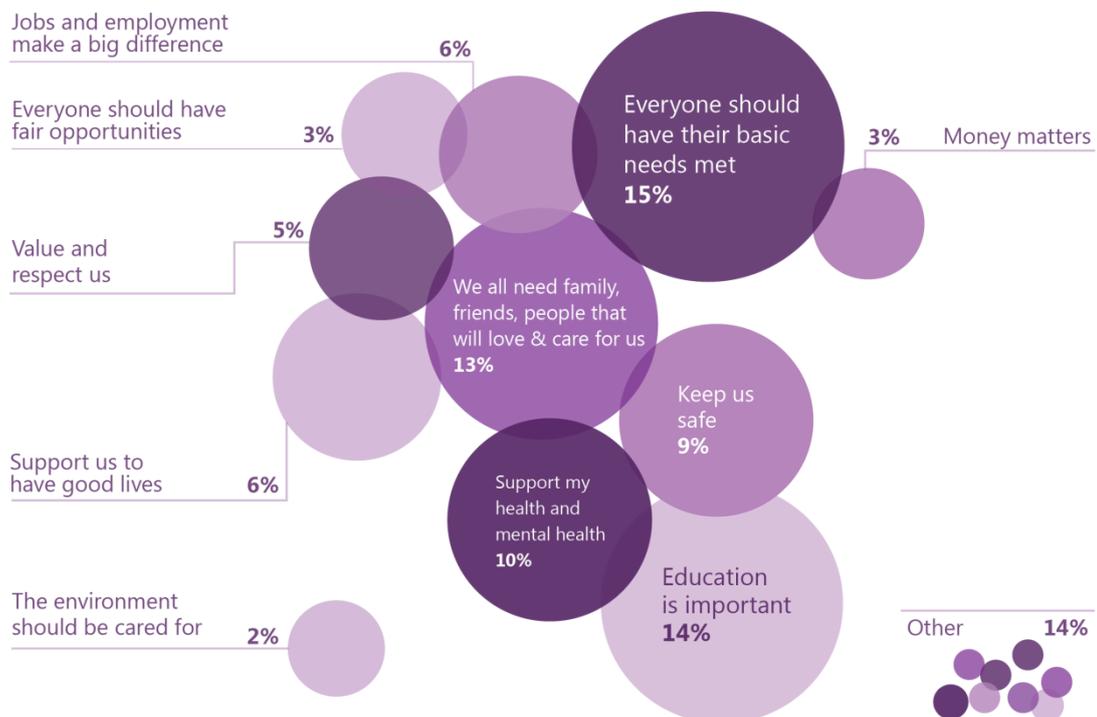


Figure 2: Clusters of key themes from messages to the Prime Minister

*"I think the prime minister should make public transport for kids free so then kids can look forward to going to school instead of staying home cause they don't have any money to get to school. Also I think that the government should give out free food to all school students so they don't have to worry about food and get hungry at school."* 14 year old Tongan boy

## ***Overall, we learned that change is needed in order to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people***

The feedback we were given through the survey, the focus groups and the interviews highlight a number of things that need to be considered if we want to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people in New Zealand.

### **Change is needed**

The majority of children and young people are doing well, but some are facing significant challenges. Almost everyone who shared their views, including those who said that they were doing well, could point to something that needed to change if all children and young people are to have a good life.

### **Family and whānau are crucial**

Children and young people told us that families must be well in order for children to be well, and families must be involved in making things better.

### **Providing the basics is important, but not enough on its own**

Intrinsic things such as feeling accepted, valued and respected are just as important as children and young people's material needs. Children and young people want more than just a minimum standard of living.

### **Children and young people have valuable insights**

Government initiatives should respond to children and young people's needs, wants and aspirations. Listening to children and young people's views regularly and meaningfully is the best way to achieve this.

Efforts to support children and young people need to focus on more than just what services are needed. Support systems need to accept children and young people for who they are, respect their critical relationships and support the people they care about to also be well. Children and young people have told us that they want the basics, plus a little bit more. We think they deserve a lot more.

# Section One:

## Our approach

This section discusses how we sought children and young people's views and how we have presented them. It is intended as a brief overview, a full methodology is contained in Appendix One.

### ***We used online surveys, face to face interviews and focus groups to hear from children and young people***

The surveys reached 5,631 children and young people in almost 100 primary, intermediate and secondary schools and alternative education providers. It was also shared on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website. We heard from children with a mix of urban/rural, socio-economic status, ethnicity and age characteristics. Detail on the characteristics of survey participants is provided in the graphics on the following pages, with further detail contained in Appendix Two.

Our surveys asked children and young people what having a good life means to them, whether they are experiencing a good life right now, and what could be done to help all children and young people in New Zealand to have a good life.

We used interviews and focus groups to hear from children and young people who we knew would be more likely to have faced, or be facing, challenges in their lives. These included children and young people living in poverty, living in state care, with a disability, from rural areas, aged under three years, with refugee backgrounds, who identify as LGBTIQ+, who are recent migrants or who have received a mental health diagnosis.

In the interviews and focus groups we asked children and young people for their views on what it means to have a good life. We asked what having a good life means to them, what helps with having a good life and what gets in the way. Prompting questions encouraged children and young people to think about what having a good life means to them personally, what it means for the people around them and what it means in relation to the places and communities they are a part of.

Conversations with children and young people were organised through the Office of the Children's Commissioner's community partners (mostly NGOs, including alternative education providers and iwi social services) and Oranga Tamariki sites. Community

partners and Oranga Tamariki sites were involved from the outset, supporting us to engage with each group of children and young people in a way that would work for them.

Throughout this report we have used children and young people’s own words as much as possible. Some of the quotes contain grammar or spelling mistakes. Where the intent of the quote can be understood we have left these unedited. Where quotes are used we reference the young person’s age, gender and any other characteristics they identified themselves. Participants aged 0-12 years we refer to as ‘children’ or ‘tamariki’ if they identified as Māori. Those aged 13 and over we refer to as ‘young people’ or ‘rangatahi’ if they identified as Māori. Where we refer to young mums, they are under the age of 18.

Dear Prime Minister,

I think the one thing that children and young people need to have good lives, now and in the future is...

Kia ora Jacinda My name is

I am currently 14 Years of age... In My Mind I think, for our Young children & Young people you need to lower the prices for alot of ~~things~~ things ETC, Gas, diesel, even food I grew up in a poor family in Kaitaia. we would spend money on gas & then have no money for food. But other than I have no problems- Thank you...

(But now we always have food & supplies now my brothers are at school)

Instagram -@

**child & youth wellbeing**

To:  
Prime Minister  
Jacinda Ardern

Tell us about yourself:

0 - 10 years old

11 - 17 years old

18+ years old

Māori

NZ European / Pākehā

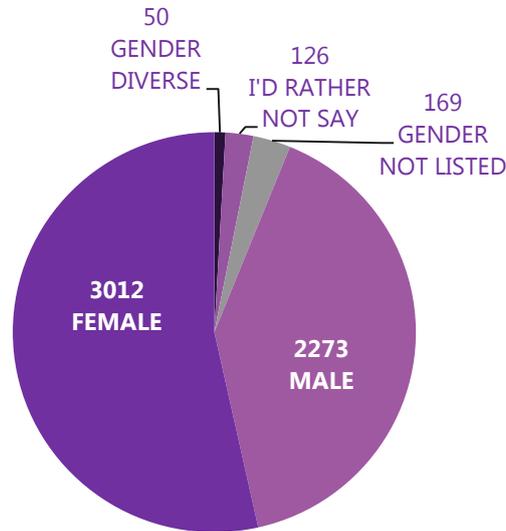
Pacific

Asian

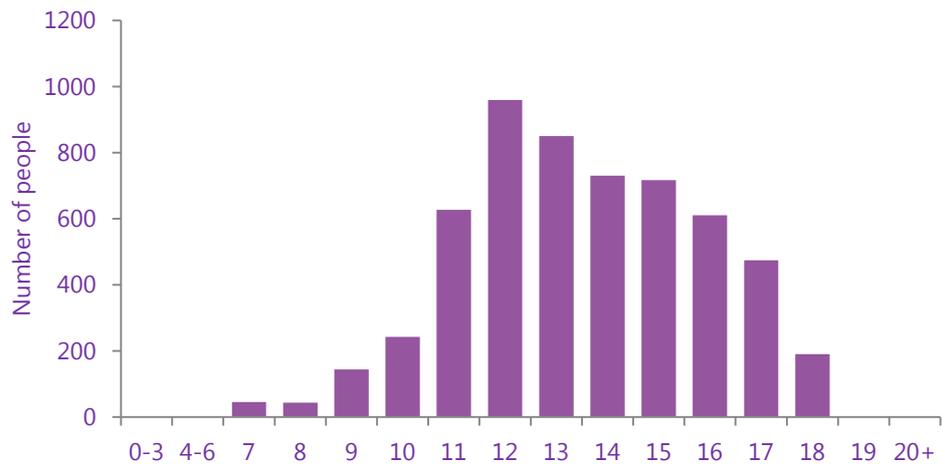
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Demographics for the 5,631 survey respondents

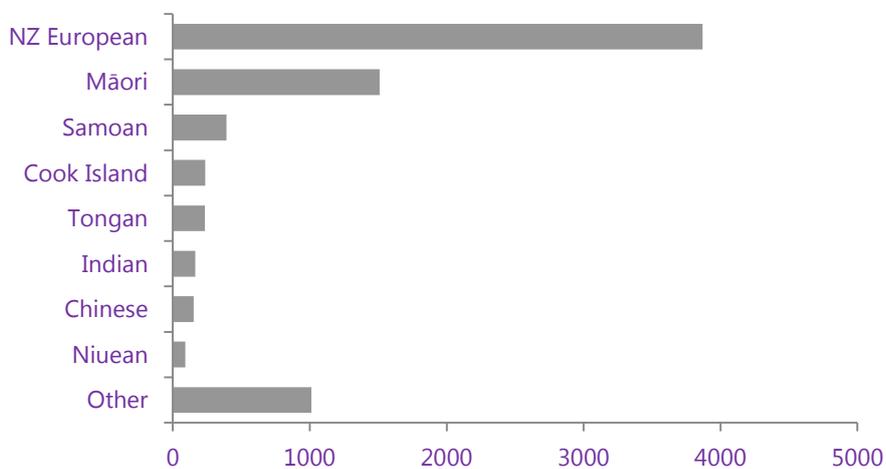
### Gender



### Age

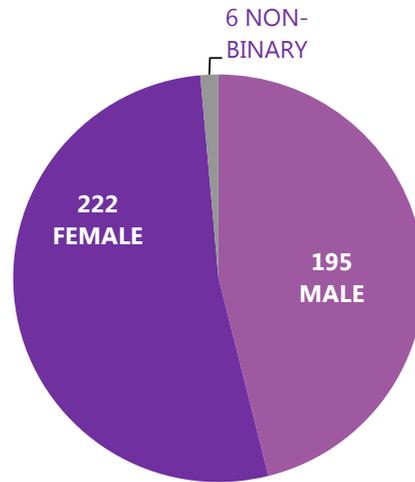


### Ethnicity

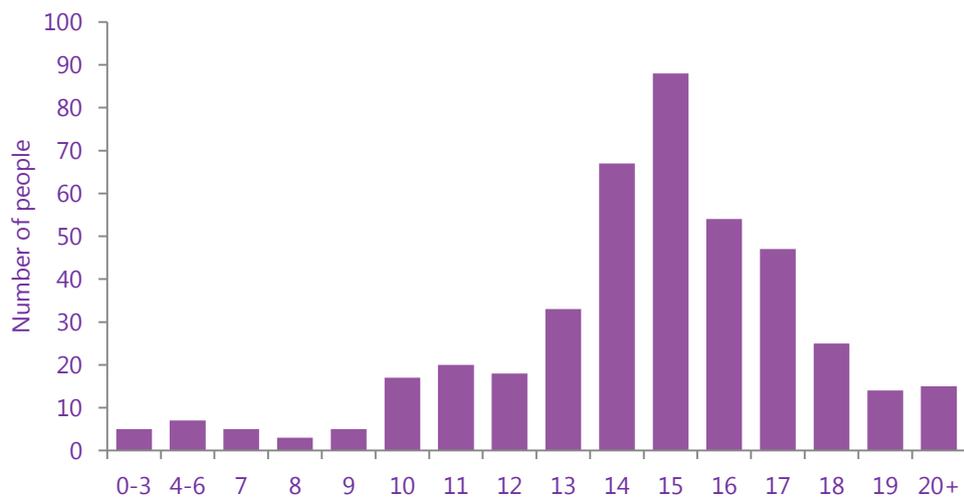


## Demographics for the 423 face to face participants

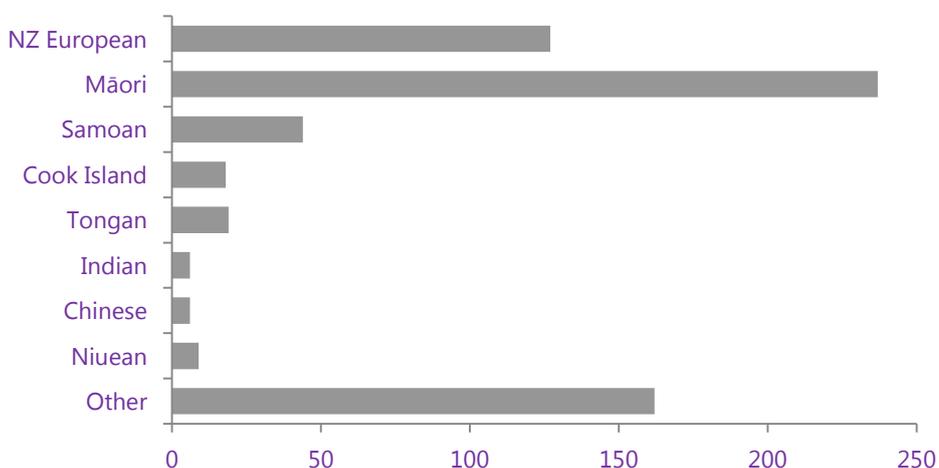
### Gender



### Age



### Ethnicity



Note: As all questions were voluntary, age and gender may not equal total response numbers.

## ***Children and young people from across New Zealand took part***

The map below shows the 19 towns and cities where focus groups and interviews occurred (see Figure 3). The survey was completed by children and young people from all regions.



Figure 3: *Locations of focus groups and interviews*

## Section Two: Survey findings

### *The survey was completed by a diverse group of children and young people*

In total 5,631 children and young people from across the country completed an online survey. They included children and young people with a mix of characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity, and school decile. Other characteristics are included below in Figure 4.

| <i>Do any of the following describe you?</i> | <b>Number</b> | <b>% of all</b> |
|--|---------------|-----------------|
| I have a disability                          | 451           | 8%              |
| I am LGBTQI+ and/or part of this community   | 540           | 10%             |
| I live in a rural part of New Zealand        | 1,650         | 29%             |
| I am a refugee                               | 238           | 4%              |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>5,631</b>  | <b>100%</b>     |

Figure 4: *Self-identified characteristics of survey respondents*

When asked which option best describes their current living arrangement, 83% of the children and young people answering the question indicated they lived with immediate family/whānau. About 1% indicated a living situation consistent with being in the care of Oranga Tamariki: with a foster family, in a care and protection residence, in a group home or in a youth justice residence. A further 5% indicated they were living with extended family/whānau. Further detail on the survey results is included in Appendix Two.

## ***Children and young people told us about happiness, family, friends, safety, health, education and feeling valued***

Children and young people were asked an open-ended question about what having a good life means to them. A broad range of topics were identified. Using text analysis software we grouped responses into clusters of common themes. Where a response addressed more than one theme, it was clustered with the theme it most strongly reflected in word frequency, association and similarity. The graphic below demonstrates how some themes are closely related.

Half of all responses to this question were positive, with a focus on the importance of being happy and enjoying life, and having supportive family and friends. The other half of the comments focused on things needed to enable a good life. See Figure 5.

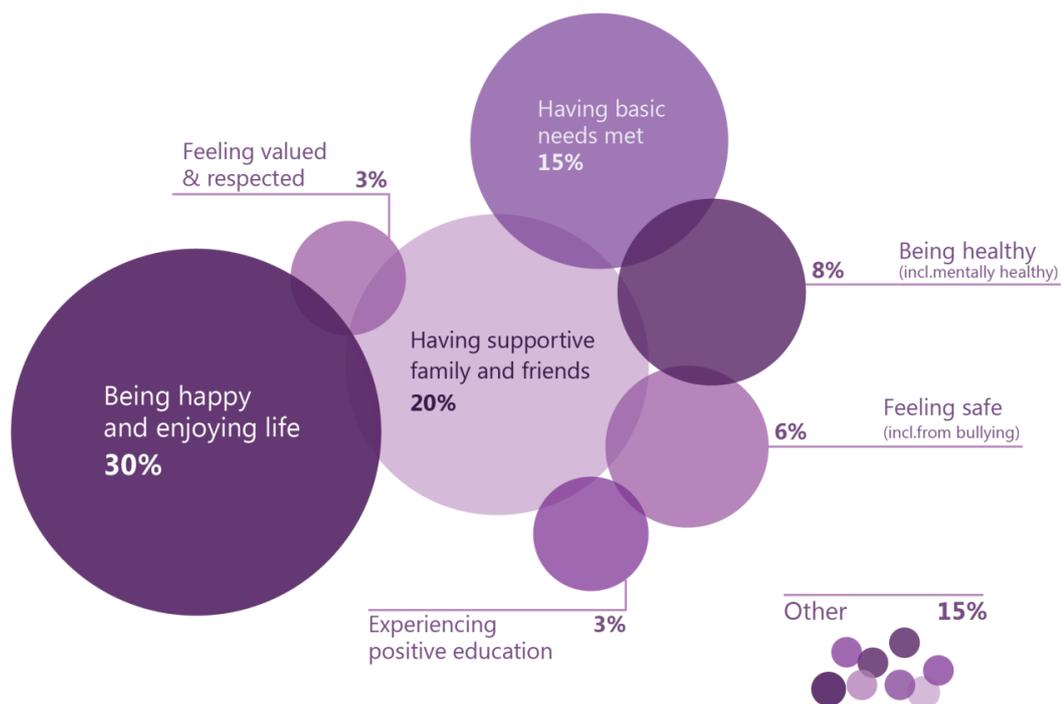


Figure 5: What having a good life means to the children and young people we surveyed

Around 15% of the responses did not cluster into themes. These were responses which had no clearly identifiable theme, such as *“there is really no such thing as a good life because everyone has their ups and their downs.”*

## Being happy and enjoying life

Children and young people wrote about how a good life means having fun and feeling happy, being able to spend their life enjoying what they are doing. This included having hopes and aspirations for the future.

*"Being happy and proud of what life is."* 16 year old Māori girl

*"Being happy, having good resources, and having a sense of accomplishment."*  
14 year old girl

*"Having a good life to me means that you should have somewhat of a happy attitude and that you should have your path in life decided by yourself and that you should go and follow it."* 13 year old Tongan boy

## Having supportive family and friends

Children and young people mentioned the important role family and friends play in having a good life. This theme was all about the importance of positive relationships with family, whānau and friends.

*"Being with your family, even if they're annoying the heck out of you. They are immediate, speed dial no.1."* 15 year old Māori female

*"Being surrounded by loved ones and friends that support me and provide me with opportunities."* 17 year old New Zealand European, Māori

## Having basic needs met

Ensuring children and young people have the basics was raised by around one in seven participants. These responses mentioned having the basics covered, having a place to live, having enough food and having enough money. Some wrote about having enough money left to have a treat occasionally, or to be able to do non-essential activities.

*"It means that all my needs are met and that I am able to have access to some of my wants. It also means that I have people who can care for me and that I can explore my interests and passions."* 15 year old non-binary gender

*"Having enough money to get by with enough for treat occasionally."*  
16 year old boy

*"Living in comfortable conditions e.g. household that has enough money for the basics (at least)."* 16 year old New Zealand European, Māori boy

### Being healthy (including mentally healthy)

Health and mental health featured in responses from children and young people about what having a good life means. They highlighted that health is a combination of both physical and mental health. They wrote about the need for accessible and affordable mental health treatment options.

*"Access to facilities to keep me healthy (physically and mentally) and the ability to achieve my goals in life."* 16 year old New Zealand European boy

*"Having a good life for me means to be happy and healthy both mentally and physically."* 14 year old NZ European girl

*"A good life also means living mentally and physically healthy, or if not, having access to medical help (that you can afford)."* 15 year old Samoan girl

### Feeling safe (including from bullying)

In their responses about what a good life means, children and young people highlighted the importance of feeling safe at home, at school and out in public. Safety meant not only physical safety but also feeling safe to express their individuality.

*"Being in a place of acceptance and to feel safe where ever you go."*  
15 year old young person

*"Living in a safe environment where everyone is treated how they want to be treated, having a trusted adult, friend or sibling to talk to when you need help with something or if you are being bullied."* 16 year old boy

### Experiencing positive education

Children and young people wrote about wanting to attend schools where students are supported to learn in a way that suits them. Feeling like they belong at school was commonly discussed. Some young people wrote about how school should be a place where they are being adequately prepared for their future.

*"To ensure all children have equal opportunities to get quality education."*  
18 year old Māori girl

*"Fix the exams ...we always have phones to look up the answer so why do we have to memorise it's the education system is still in the 90s."*  
15 year old New Zealand European, Māori boy

## Feeling valued and respected

Young people wrote about feeling valued and respected. They mentioned religion, culture, belonging and acceptance as important aspects of this.

*"Being able to be me without fear of being abandoned or disowned."*

14 year old gender diverse young person

*"Trust God as he is the one to give us better days."*

16 year old boy, Samoan, Cook Islands Māori

*"Whaanau and whakapapa. Knowing where you come from builds confidence."*

15 year old Māori girl

## Different patterns of responses

There were some variations in the way that different groups of children and young people responded to the question about what a good life means to them. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but there were a few notable differences:

- Primary and intermediate-aged children were more likely to mention the importance of family, friends and other people that support them. They were also more likely to mention their safety, particularly in regards to bullying.
- Secondary aged young people were more likely to mention the importance of fun, happiness, opportunities, goals and dreams, money and employment, and good mental health.
- Children and young people with a disability, as well as those who indicated their gender was other than male or female, were more likely to say that identity and belonging were important for a good life.
- Those identifying as LGBTIQ+ were more likely than the overall group to mention safety as well as freedom, dreams and goals.

## The majority of children and young people told us they are doing well, but a significant number face challenges

Children and young people were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements to gauge how they are currently experiencing wellbeing. The statements were chosen to broadly cover aspects of the draft Strategy. Overall, these responses paint a positive picture, where the majority of children and young people agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements. See Figure 6.

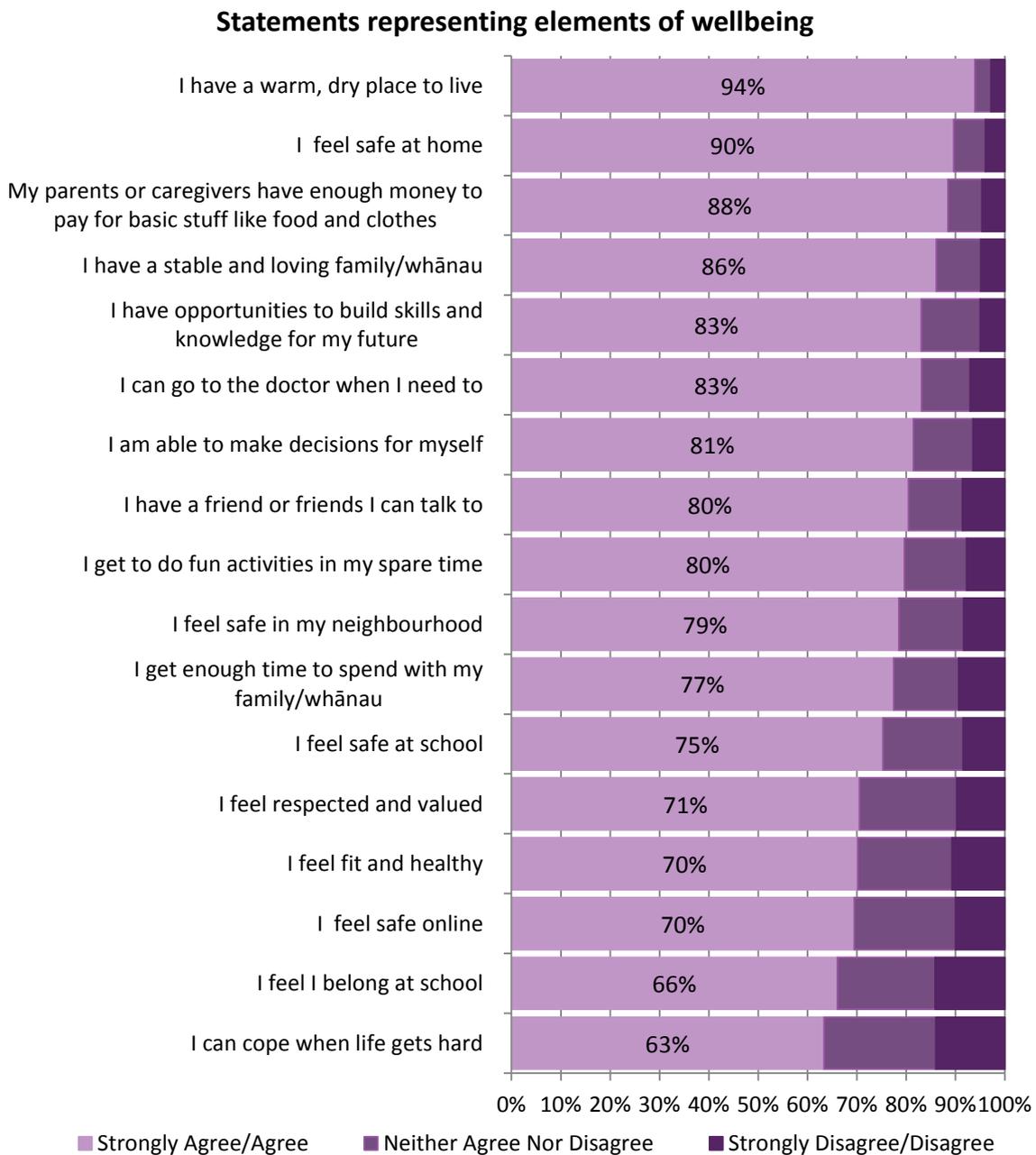


Figure 6: Children and young people’s current experiences of selected elements of wellbeing

We analysed the data to see if there were any patterns apparent for the groups of children and young people that strongly agreed/agreed or strongly disagreed/disagreed with the statements. We found that:

- Around one in three of the children and young people strongly agreed or agreed with 16 or 17 of the 17 statements.
- Around one in ten of children and young people strongly disagreed or disagreed with four or more of the statements. We take this to mean that these children and young people are facing multiple challenges in their lives.
- Around one in five of those facing multiple challenges – 2% of all responses – disagreed or strongly disagreed with ten or more of the wellbeing statements. This small group of children and young people are not experiencing the lives we want for all children in New Zealand and are likely to be growing up in difficult social, economic and physical environments.

### ***Having the basics, relationships with family and friends, feeling safe and feeling valued were all seen as important***

We asked all the children and young people completing the survey to choose, from a defined list, what they saw as the top three most important things for children and young people to have a good life.<sup>1</sup> The listed suggestions were selected to cover draft domains and descriptors in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, developed by DPMC, describing what all children need to achieve wellbeing. The items most frequently selected as most important were:

- Parents or caregivers have enough money for basic stuff like food, clothes and a good house to live in
- Children and young people have good relationships with family and friends
- Children and young people are kept safe from bullying, violence or accidents
- Children and young people are valued and respected for who they are.

We asked the secondary school students completing the survey an additional question on priorities. They were asked how much attention the government should place on a list of different areas to improve child and youth wellbeing. Possible responses were:

- No additional government action is needed
- Additional government efforts would help, as there is room for improvement
- Government effort is urgently needed.

Figure 7 shows the percentage of young people in secondary schools who thought urgent action was needed for each of the selected issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The difference between this question and the question described earlier was that this one asked children and young people to select responses from a defined list, whereas the earlier question was open-ended. See Appendix Two for details.

**Responses indicating the percentage of children and young people (C&YP) who thought urgent action is needed for each issue**

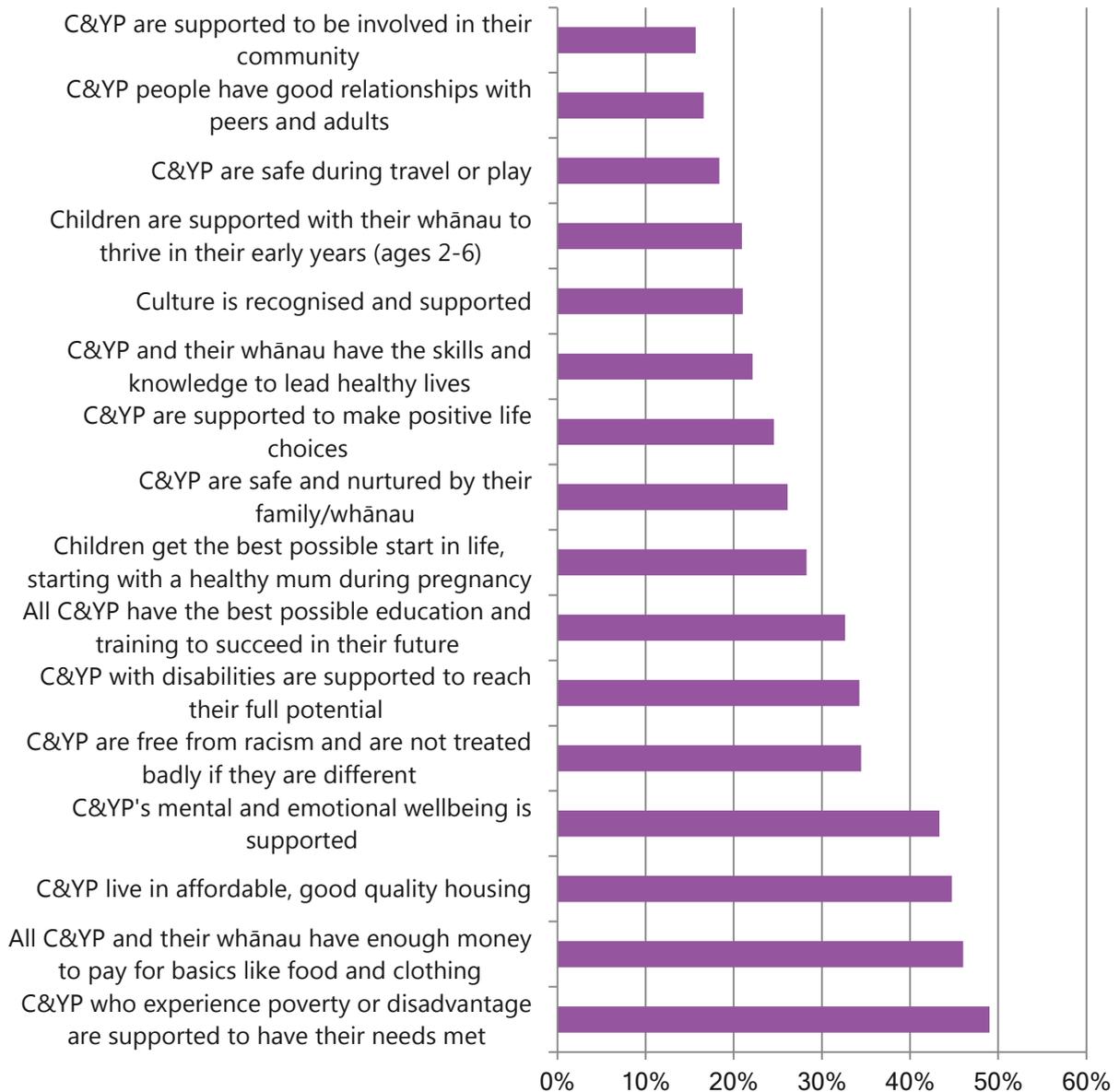


Figure 7: Which issues children and young people think need urgent attention

The issues most commonly identified as needing urgent government effort were:

- Children and young people who experience poverty or disadvantage are supported to have their needs met
- All children and young people and their whānau have enough money to pay for basics like food and clothing
- Children and young people live in affordable, good quality housing
- Children and young people's mental and emotional wellbeing is supported.

The responses to this survey question are consistent with what children and young people mentioned in the earlier, open-ended survey question. Having the basics was a common response to several different questions within the survey, as was the importance of family and friends. Feeling safe and feeling valued were also mentioned frequently. These responses indicate that there are a handful of issues that children and young people consistently see as important.

### ***The voices of those facing challenges need to be heard***

Although the majority of children and young people indicated that overall they are doing well, some groups of children and young people are struggling. Around 10% of those who responded to the questions about elements of wellbeing indicated that they were facing multiple challenges. While the survey results provide insights into the extent and type of challenges faced by some children and young people, they do not provide in-depth insights in to *how* those challenges are experienced.

Understanding the lived experience of these children and young people is critical to providing supports and services that will better meet their needs.

We met with groups of children and young people that we knew were likely to be facing challenges, to better understand their experiences and to seek their views on what needs to change. The following section describes what we heard in those conversations.

## Section Three: Face to face insights

Our survey included a broad range of children and young people in order to cover the breadth of circumstances children and young people in New Zealand are faced with. The focus groups and interviews were more targeted towards children and young people we knew would be more likely to facing challenges. Although this section is focused primarily on those face to face conversations, it also includes quotes from survey participants, where they indicated that they were facing challenges.

From the children and young people we met in person we identified five key insights. The insights do not quantify how many children and young people were experiencing the challenges described; instead they provide an in-depth understanding of how children and young people experience those challenges and what impact that has. A more detailed description of how we arrived at the insights is contained in Appendix One.

### ***Insight 1: Accept us for who we are and who we want to be***

Acceptance is crucial. Children and young people told us they want to be accepted for who they are, supported in their identity, respected, listened to and believed in. They wanted choices and freedom. They want the important adults in their lives to help them build their confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, so they can realise their hopes and dreams.

#### **Accept me for who I am and celebrate my identity**

*"To be accepted. To be understood and taken seriously. It's important because it gives you confidence in your uniqueness."* Young person from Whangārei

Acceptance was mentioned by almost all of the children and young people we spoke with. Children and young people wanted to be accepted by their family, their friends and their communities. They spoke about the need to educate people, teach empathy and to support young people as they explore their identity. We heard about acceptance in relation to culture, ethnicity, gender, mental health and being in state care.

There were differences in the way different groups of young people spoke about educating others as a way to promote acceptance. Young people who were recent

migrants, for example, spoke about raising awareness of the unique issues they face, which they felt were completely unknown to some people. Young people who identified as part of the LGBTIQ+ community also spoke about the need for raising awareness of their unique challenges.

*“Teach acceptance more... Just so that people can learn to accept other cultures, because I feel like what’s happened in the past is that people have been taught it’s okay to just think within your one culture, and that’s it for your whole life. But then the thing is the world is such a vast place.”* Young person from Wellington

When Māori and Pacific young people spoke about educating others they spoke less about raising awareness and more about empathy. To these young people, the problem wasn’t necessarily that others didn’t have information about the challenges that they face, it was that people weren’t empathetic in response to those issues.

Sexuality and gender identity were mentioned frequently by those who identified as part of the LGBTIQ+ community. This included using people’s preferred pronouns, having trans-accessible toilets and educating the public about LGBTIQ+ issues. This group of young people spoke about wanting to have their identity acknowledged regardless of their gender; they didn’t want to be put in a box.

Young people who identified as part of the LGBTIQ+ community also spoke about the need for safe spaces where they could explore their identity. They wanted others to accept their *whole* identity. Some young people felt they could embrace their identity in some contexts but not others. For example, a small group of Pacific young people who identified as part of the LGBTIQ+ community felt that they could explore their sexual identity more openly in a school context, but could not do this as openly at home.

*“Children of all ages, and even adults really, should be given the knowledge of accepting everyone and telling them that look, there are people who are different from you. They have different opinions but you still have to accept them... not just telling them that, but really practicing it around them, you know?”*

Young person from Wellington

Children and young people spoke about the need for professionals to be accepting, including teachers, police officers, social workers and health workers. Children and young people with a disability spoke about the need for disability-accessible public transport.

One young person spoke about the importance of having empathetic and non-judgmental police officers. They wanted professionals to understand children and young people's individual needs and circumstances.

*"I think more people, people with depression and anxiety, I think they need like, accepting and welcoming communities."* Young person from Christchurch

### **Acknowledge my culture and help me learn more about it**

*"Māori language week shouldn't just be one week. It should be the kaupapa for everyday life. The community should see our Māori culture."* Rangatahi from Taupō

Acceptance included celebrating children and young people's cultures. This was particularly the case for tamariki and rangatahi Māori. They spoke about wanting others to embrace Māori culture and wanting to hear te reo Māori used by everyone. Children and young people spoke about wanting opportunities specifically for people of their own culture. Some recognised their lack of knowledge about their culture; they wanted to be able to learn more and share that with others.

*"Whaanau and whakapapa. Knowing where you come from builds confidence."*  
15 year old rangatahi

Some children and young people spoke about culture on a more personal level. One young person spoke about wanting to feel connected to Papatūānuku. Others spoke about Māori concepts such as mana and aroha. Some mentioned having specific prayers that they wanted to be part of their day-to-day lives.

### **Believe in me and help me build my confidence**

*"That's the most important thing. That kids feel that there are people in their corner and they'll always be in their corner."*

Māori mum of three month old baby from Kaikohe

Children and young people want to believe in themselves and have others believe in them. They spoke about having positive role models who could help with this. Young people talked about having people who inspired them, so they could show their true potential.

The children and young people we met also talked about having a positive sense of self-worth and self-esteem. One young person summed this up as, *"being loved and showing love"*. They wanted others to help them build their confidence in themselves.

*"Really just people who really believe in you is the most essential thing to having a good life. And people who support you no matter what."*

Young person from Wellington

When asked what helps them achieve a good life, some children and young people said "me". This group of children and young people saw their own actions and motivations as the key to achieving their aspirations. Some spoke about self-motivation and pushing themselves. They spoke about having a positive attitude, improving their own behaviours and making good choices. This included having opportunities to learn from their mistakes.

### Respect me and listen to me

Almost all of the children and young people we spoke with mentioned respect. They wanted adults to respect children and young people and they wanted children and young people to respect each other. They spoke about being expected to show adults respect but not being shown any respect in return. Children and young people wanted to be treated fairly.

A fundamental part of being respected was being listened to. Children and young people felt adults often didn't listen to them. For some young people, not having a say in what happens to them can be one of the things that gets in the way of a good life. Young people talked about the frustration of not having the power to change things.

*"We need to be included in conversations with adults instead of being told we're too young."* Young person who belongs to the LGBTIQ+ community

Children and young people spoke specifically about the contexts in which they wanted to be listened to. They said that children and young people should have more of a say in what happens in schools. Children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki said they wanted to have more of a say in where they live and who their social worker is. Young people also mentioned having a say in government decisions.

A 12 year old boy shared a story of feeling hopeless, as though no-one could do anything to help him. He told us how no one listens when he shares how unhappy he is at home with his step-dad: *"I don't think there's much that can help, it wouldn't do anything. People don't listen to me because they can't do anything about it. I can't do anything about it."*

Being listened to was often mentioned as one of the things that could help young people have a good life. It helps young people to be involved in decisions and it can

make them feel more included. One young person said having a say is important because it helps challenge adults' assumptions about them.

Some of the children and young people we met said it was the first time they had ever been asked for their opinion on these sorts of issues by a group of adults. There were no major demographic differences in regards to this type of comment: children and young people across all ages, genders and ethnicities said that being asked for their views in this way was rare. They appreciated the opportunity to share what they thought and they said that it should happen more often.

### Provide me with choices and help me realise my hopes for the future

*"I feel like the best life for young people is to have the opportunity to do what you love and to follow the things that inspire you and interest you."*

19 year old young person with a disability from Wellington

The children and young people we heard from wanted choices. They wanted all children and young people to have the same opportunities as everyone else. Having choices and options was an important part of having a good life, but isn't possible for many children and young people right now. One young person from Christchurch described it this way:

*"Some people have no choice but to stay in the struggle."* Rangatahi from Christchurch

The desire for more choices and a greater sense of freedom was especially common for children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki. These children and young people spoke about not having as many choices because of their care status. Some felt as though their caregivers were more controlling of them than they were of their own children.

*"The big message is give kids a choice."*

Young person from Dunedin, currently in state care

Children and young people talked about wanting help to make the right choices. For some young people, that meant needing more information in order to make better choices. Young people also mentioned the need for adults to realise that sometimes they will make the wrong choices and they need support to be able to learn and grow from those experiences.

Children and young people also wanted to know they have opportunities, both now and in the future. They spoke about opportunity in a general sense (i.e. having the

same opportunities as everyone else) and a specific sense (i.e. having opportunities to do courses, sports, work experience). Children and young people wanted to have the chance to reach their potential and excel.

*"A good life to me is having the same opportunities as everyone else."*

Young person in state care from Christchurch

The children and young people we spoke with told us about their hopes and dreams for the future. Some spoke about the importance of being hopeful and aspirational. Some mentioned looking forward to the future and being able to be more independent. Others mentioned specific things they were looking forward to in their future, such as getting married, having a job or having kids. Some said they just wanted to be happy.

While most children and young people were positive about their sense of hope for the future, a small number of young people stood out to the facilitators as being less hopeful, and more despondent, about their future opportunities. Two groups of young people who had been in contact with the youth justice system were examples of this. These young people said they had been *"written off"* by the adults in their lives.

Tēnā koe Prime Minister,

I think the one thing children and young people need to have good lives, now and in the future is... *A safe communities and environment. A lot of support for mental health people, as well with parents who can't handle stress as well with their anger. Lots of counselling at school and at home for young people. We need to break the cycle by providing these needs. I want a safe place for everyone to feel free to voice their opinion. Give young generation to have the chance to have a lot of great experience with education but they should have great meal to start the day off and have motivation to aim higher for their career path.*

**child & youth wellbeing**

To:  
Prime Minister  
Jacinda Ardern

Tell us about yourself:

0 - 10 years old  
 11 - 17 years old  
 18+ years old

Māori  
 NZ European / Pākehā  
 Pacific  
 Asian  
 Other: *Niuean*

## ***Insight 2: Life is really hard for some of us***

We learned from the survey that the majority of children and young people are doing well. However, some are facing major challenges, which get in the way of them living a good life. Children and young people shared with us the impact that racism, being poor and being bullied can have on their lives. We heard about their experiences of discrimination, judgement and the pressure of expectations. These children and young people feel a sense of being continually let down, by both individuals and 'the system'. Violence and drugs can have a major negative impact on their lives. However, for some children and young people, drugs were seen as something that helps them cope and manage the pressures of life.

### **I miss out on doing things because my family can't afford it**

*"Not being able to afford things - like sports or activities. People try to help us to make it easier but it's shameful." Child from Gisborne*

The children and young people we spoke with in person talked about being poor, or, as one young person put it, "living hard". We heard about not having enough money for food, bills and petrol. About not being able to afford healthcare, and about living in overcrowded housing. They talked about missing out on opportunities because they didn't have the money to pay for them. Girls spoke about period poverty.

*"Money may not be the key to happiness but it is the key to living and I know many people who struggle." 17 year old girl*

Children and young people told us about their parents being in insecure work, which can mean going from work to the benefit (and having times with no money in between). They talked about their parents being embarrassed when they can't pay for stuff. Children and young people see the stress this puts on their parents. Some said their parents have to work two jobs and don't have any time for anything else. Young parents told us how hard it is to make ends meet.

*"Sometimes you can't afford what you need. Can't afford experiences - camps and school trips, education, food - like if you have bad health because you can only afford the bad stuff, you're never gonna get healthy." Young person from Whangārei*

Some young people told us about their experiences of being homeless, or how not having money can lead them to committing crimes. Many talked about being stuck in a cycle and said they don't want their kids to do what they've had to do to get by.

Young people with disabilities sometimes spoke about their families not having enough money because of their disability. They spoke about how families can't always cover the costs of the extra supports that they might need to have a good life. As a result, the family may not be able to afford things that they otherwise would.

### People are racist to me

*"At our school people find mocking Māori culture to be a joke. 'Māoris go to prison', or 'Māoris do drugs.'"* Rangatahi from Auckland

Children and young people spoke about the impact that racism has on their lives. They gave examples of experiencing racism at school, in jobs and in their community. Many children and young people talked about how racism is common in their everyday life. Racism was mentioned by children and young people from refugee backgrounds, recent migrants, tamariki and rangatahi Māori and Pacific children and young people.

*"Stereotypes of being Māori – crackheads, drug dealers, crime, black power, domestic violence, hood rats, window washers, pohara, hori, gangs, alcoholic parents."* Rangatahi from Auckland

Some young people talked about colonisation and a lack of respect for Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Some said they feel stuck between two different cultures and not accepted by either. New migrants and young people from refugee backgrounds often felt they were subjected to stereotypes and a lack of ethnic and cultural acceptance.

Tamariki and rangatahi Māori spoke about tokenism – one young person said that adults were happy to listen to rangatahi when those adults needed them to do a whaikōrero or pōwhiri, but would not listen otherwise. Tokenism was closely linked to racism for these young people.

### People bully me

*"Bullying is hurtful, you feel like nothing inside."* Pacific child from Auckland

Children and young people said bullying gets in the way of a good life. Bullying at school and online were the most common examples, but some children also spoke about bullying within their family or their homes. Online bullying was also mentioned.

*"It is very different today now because you can be bullied in your own bedroom on the phone. That is a big thing we should be careful of. There is cyber bullying."*  
17 year old Pākehā boy who has a mental health diagnosis

Bullying was an issue that was experienced in different ways for different groups. Young people who identified as a part of the LGBTIQ+ community frequently mentioned online bullying. Tamariki and rangatahi Māori often linked bullying to racism. Children and young people with disabilities spoke about being made to feel different because of their appearance. One group of young people with disabilities said that they feel safe within the classroom, but because of bullying they don't feel safe in the rest of the school. We observed that for some children and young people, bullying was so prevalent in their lives that it had started to become normalised.

### **I am judged and discriminated against**

*"Something I always have to deal with at school is the stigma. When people find out you're a foster kid they're like 'oh you're an orphan, whose house did you burn down.'" 16 year old girl living in state care*

We heard from children and young people about how they aren't given the same opportunities as others, such as sports and activities. They felt that people judged them as less capable than others and as a result they were not offered equal opportunities. Stigma was mentioned frequently by children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki, who spoke about the negative impact of being labeled "a CYFS kid".

Young people talked about not being listened to at home, at school and by society. They said adults make assumptions about what they can or can't do and what they want. One young person talked about how his school compared him to every other 'bad lad', saying to him, "you're just like [x]." He didn't feel as though his teachers ever gave him a chance. There was a difference in the way children and young people in rural areas spoke about this: they felt that "everyone knows everyone else" in small towns, which could mean they were more likely to be labeled by adults.

Young people with disabilities mentioned how people won't employ them or give them the same opportunities as others. One young person re-iterated that she did not choose to have a disability. Another told us about the impact discrimination has had on him personally:

*"If you were a young disabled person in a wheelchair and there wasn't a ramp at the front of a building, [you would have to] go around the back entrance just to get in. As much as you have the accessibility it's almost dehumanising to be forced to go through that back entrance." Young person with a disability from Auckland*

A lot of young people talked about discrimination and exclusion. Some young people from the LGBTIQ+ community felt as though people made assumptions about them because of their sexuality. Some said they are excluded by the use of binary pronouns. We heard from females who are recent migrants who felt that their own culture discriminates against them because of their gender.

### People's expectations of me are too high, or too low

*"Sometimes family can put you down or not support you enough. Or over-control us; control us to do something we don't wanna do."* Rangatahi Māori, Pacific

Children and young people spoke about the pressure of high expectations. One group of young people spoke about their parents scraping together bus money to send their children to school across Auckland every day, so that they will be able to go on to higher education and get well-paying jobs. Young people know their parents make these sacrifices and feel a lot of pressure to get high grades and pursue the career that their parents want for them.

Pacific children, as well as recent migrants and former refugees, mentioned the pressure of family expectations. Children and young people living in poverty spoke about the pressure of looking after their siblings, due to their parents having to work long hours. Some young people spoke about the compounding pressure of high expectations from lots of different sources. Pacific children, for example, might have high expectations from their parents, their community and their church.

In contrast, some young people are experiencing the opposite. These young people feel as though no one expects anything of them, or worse, everyone expects them to make bad choices and to fail. Young people who had been in contact with the youth justice system, for example, sometimes spoke about giving up on others, because so many others had given up on them. They told us about how they are not being given the chance to step up.

*"Expectations – no role models, no inspirations, no goals."*  
Young person from Palmerston North

## I don't feel safe

*"When I go home I'm getting ready to battle the devil."*

Young girl from South Auckland

Children and young people talked about feeling physically and emotionally unsafe. They described the physical and emotional trauma caused by past events, such as the pain of being separated from their parents, living in a 'broken home', or experiencing violence in their home.

A small number of young people told us about suicidal thoughts. They talked about how deep conversations with them are not valued and how they feel rejected. Young people talked about how they couldn't express themselves because they don't have any safe spaces where they feel like they belong. They talked about stigma and unsupportive community contributing to feeling unsafe.

*"Feeling safe in their company and being able to fully open up around them, without being scared of them judging you."* Young person from Whangārei

Children told us about how parks aren't always safe at night. They want playgrounds to be able to be used by children. They want children to be able to play on the street. Young people talked about the presence of gangs and drugs as impacting on how safe they feel in their community.

*"Playgrounds being used by drunks, alcoholics, drug use – kids can't play in them."* Tamariki from South Auckland

Children and young people with disabilities sometimes spoke about feeling unsafe in ways that were unique to them. One young person who was blind said that it makes him feel unsafe when people smoke cigarettes around him, because it interferes with his other senses (which he relies on more than other young people do). Another young person with a physical disability said that stairs without railings are what makes him feel unsafe. Children and young people's sense of safety was affected by their own unique circumstances.

## Drugs and alcohol are a big part of my life

*"The drugs help me deal with depressions, helps me forget about it, escape, get away."* Rangatahi male from Auckland

Children and young people told us about how drugs can play good and bad roles in their life. For some, they are a bad habit that connects them to gangs or violence. However, they can also be a way to cope with life. Alcohol can be a way for some young people to escape from reality and have a good time, although most acknowledged that alcohol abuse can have negative impacts on them, their family and their friends. One young person spoke of how he regularly had to look after his younger siblings. He found this stressful, so would smoke pot to help him be more patient.

Young people talked about the pressure to fit in, which could mean drinking, smoking, doing drugs or self-harming. For some of the children and young people we spoke to, drug and alcohol abuse is a normal part of life in both their family and their community.

## 'The system sucks' and people keep letting me down

Children and young people talked about how 'the system' can get in the way of a good life. The system usually meant Oranga Tamariki, Police, their school, the health system or WINZ. Young people in state care talked about how they didn't know what support they were eligible for and only learned about financial supports when other young people they knew got them. One young person told us about Police targeting his friends.

*"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

One young person told us about the impact of being uplifted by Oranga Tamariki. The Police and Oranga Tamariki had shown up to her house and uplifted her, her twin sister and another sibling without giving them or their whānau any notice. The whānau who were at home at the time fought against the police officer and social workers doing the uplift and some were arrested. This meant the young person remained in state care longer than she should have. It wasn't the only time this had happened; the Police and Oranga Tamariki had also uplifted them in this way from school. The young person told us, *"if they wanna go to war, we will go to war."*

Children talked about how they didn't always feel welcome at school and how the school culture meant they were being set up to fail and drop out. Some young people talked about how they don't feel their GP understands them. They talked about the frustration of delayed medical appointments and how they don't understand what is being said when they finally get the appointments.

Children and young people also talked about feeling let down. They mentioned their parents, relatives, friends, social workers, teachers and other professionals failing to support them. Children and young people in state care said that they had been let down in the past by their social workers.

*"I've done all of these things, but nothing changes. Will all of Oranga Tamariki make a change? No little white lies."* Pacific young person in state care

Children and young people talked about the need to have parents or caregivers who are there for them and believe in them. For children and young people in state care, having trusting relationships with their caregivers had a big impact on how comfortable they felt in their placement. For young people in the LGBTIQ+ community, having supportive and accepting parents was very important.

*"What helps? People who will stay in your life."* Young person in state care

We met some incredible young mums who told us they are constantly let down by the systems designed to support them. One young mum told us about how she is not eligible for the Young Parent Payment because she is 15 years old and the payment is only for 16-19 year olds. She is a sole parent, committed to completing her schooling as well as providing for her baby. Her aunty receives a payment for having them in her care, which she then passes on – but there is no requirement for her aunty to do this. The system does not recognise this young mum.

As we spoke, one of her friends began to cry. She told us that until recently she had been living in a car with her baby daughter. She is now living in a transition home, but there are lots of strangers who come and go. She is separated from her younger siblings (who are currently in state care).

One young mum told us that when she was giving birth to her child a social worker was already waiting at the hospital. Afterwards she had to prove that she would be able to care for her child. Right after giving birth, she felt as though she was being watched and scrutinised, rather than supported.

### ***Insight 3: To help us, help our whānau and our support crew***

A recurring theme was the importance of whānau. Children and young people wanted support for their parents as well as for their wider whānau. They also spoke about their friends, the trusted adults in their lives and the community in general. Having a good life means that the people children and young people care about are also well. Wellbeing is about relationships, not just about having things.

#### **I need support for me and my whānau**

*“A better environment for the whānau/parents creates a positive and better environment for our children.”* Young person from Gisborne

Children and young people talked about the support they receive from their whānau and, in some cases, how they wished their whānau could support them more. They recognised that their whānau unit needed to be well in order for the children to be well. Some wanted their whānau to be better supported by their community and by professional support services. One group of young people who are recent migrants spoke about their families facing extra challenges because they were not always eligible for services.

Children and young people wanted support for their parents and for their wider whānau so that the whānau could then support the children. Māori and Pacific children and young people often placed a stronger emphasis on wider whānau than other children and young people (although this was not to say that wider family wasn't important for others). Some children and young people also talked about their own role in supporting their whānau.

*“Good relationship with family and friends. Also being able to work and earn my own money to supply my own things, taking pressure of my parents.”*  
16 year old young person

There was a strong emphasis on supports for parents, especially from children and young people living in sole parent families. They talked about the stress and pressures their parents were under. They talked about how they wanted parents to be able to be the best parents they could be and how sometimes that meant needing services like counselling or addiction support, or support to make better choices.

*“If the parents are good then the kids are good.”* Rangatahi from Rotorua

Children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki particularly emphasised the importance of support for their parents. Without this support, their parents might not be able to take care of them anymore, which would impact on them.

*“A better environment for our whānau and parents creates a positive and better environment for our children.”* Young person from Gisborne

Whānau are a major influence on children and young people’s wellbeing, but not always in a positive way. Sometimes whānau could be a barrier to having a good life when, for example, they were not accepting of the child or young person’s identity, or when whānau were the source of violence and drugs.

### **I want to spend time with my whānau**

*“When my parents don’t have to work all the time then they can spend more time with me.”* Child from Gisborne

Children and young people wanted to be able to spend more time with whānau. They wanted to live with their whānau and not be separated from them (particularly children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki). Children told us about how they want to be able to cook and have kai with their whānau, play with their cousins, see their grandparents and just be with their families.

*“Why do they have to separate family?”*  
Māori young person in state care from Christchurch

Young people talked about how important it was to keep spending time with their whānau as they grew older and how time with their whānau helped young people to be confident in who they are, especially in terms of their culture. One group talked about family traditions.

### **Friends are an important part of my life**

*“I feel like I just need someone to be by my side, not be alone. Because the worst feeling ever for me is to be alone.”* Young person aged 16

Children and young people spoke about having friends they could talk to and trust. One young mum had specific hopes for her daughter that she would have a small number of really close friends. She talked about how important it was to have strong relationships with people who will accept and forgive you. One young person talked

about “*true friends*” who are loyal and trustworthy. They spoke about having friends who would help them to make good choices, and the support they get from their friends at school.

*“Real close mates. The real close mates are your second family.”*

Young person in contact with youth justice

Friendships could have an impact for better or for worse. Friendships could be a crucial source of support, and the majority of young people spoke about friendships positively, but some also acknowledged the impact of negative peer pressure from “*bad friends*.”

The importance of friendships was emphasised more by older young people than it was by younger ones. Children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki said that it was difficult to make friends because they were often moving.

### Trusted adults help me out

Children and young people told us about the trusted adults in their lives. They talked about their parents, caregivers, teachers, friends’ parents, older siblings, cousins, youth workers and other professionals. One young person described the need for having one strong constant adult they could trust in their life. Another talked about knowing 100% that someone has your back.

*“I know I can trust someone, I can talk to someone and I know they will always have my back.”* 16 year old boy from Wellington

Some children and young people spoke about how having adults they trust and respect gives them the confidence to seek out opportunities and be themselves. Those trusted adults help children and young people to feel heard and support them to achieve their goals. Children and young people spoke about having trusted adults they could look up to as role models.

Children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki spoke specifically about being able to trust their social worker. One group of young people in state care said that unless they trust their social worker they are unlikely to actually open up with them.

*“When you connect with someone like your social worker you are more likely to tell them what’s going on.”* Rangatahi in state care from Christchurch

Some young people told us about the bad elements of gangs but how at the end of the day, their brothers and sisters in the gang were family. One boy told us that his brother is a gang member and although there are bad things about the gang, he's still his brother and he loves him. For some young people, gangs connect them to adults that have their back and support them. As one young person put it, *"having contacts in the gang means you have back up. Because you have people on your side."*

### I want to feel connected to my community

*"If people in the community are caring and are respectful for each other and the environment, everyone would have a happy life because they would feel respected and that is a big thing."* 15 year old girl

Children and young people wanted to live in communities with a sense of connectedness and togetherness. They talked about feeling welcomed and accepted in spaces within their community, and about having spaces in their community where they could have some peace and quiet. Some children talked about having fun in their community.

Young people talked about the value of community spaces where they feel comfortable. They wanted to have events for young people and spaces that they could drop in to for a kōrero. They also talked about how they enjoyed festivals and events that celebrated their culture in their community.

*"If you are not plugged into the community you think there is no-one else like you and that leaves you feeling like you are a bit of a freak."*

Rangatahi from Wellington who belongs to the LGBTIQ+ community

The way children and young people spoke about community sometimes differed depending on where they lived. For instance, for some young people in urban areas there was less of a sense of community than there was for those in smaller towns. Sometimes the location affected particular groups. For example, Pacific children and young people living outside of South Auckland often felt like there were no spaces for them. Those in South Auckland did not have the same issue, because there were many other young people like them around.

### ***Insight 4: We all deserve more than just the basics***

Children and young people spoke a lot about the stuff they need to live a good life. They spoke about material things such as a home, an education and a safe community, but they wanted more than just a minimum standard of living. They wanted “*enough for the basics, plus a little bit more*”, as one young person described it.

#### **I want to have enough money for the basics, plus a little bit more**

Children and young people rarely wanted luxuries. When they described what it means to have a good life they spoke about having enough money to meet their basic needs, plus a little bit more. Basic needs were things like health, eating lunch, having healthy food choices, getting good sleep and ‘extras’ were things like being able to go on holiday with family.

*“Knowing that there’s money coming keeps you well mentally.”*

Young person in state care from Dunedin

Children and young people in contact with Oranga Tamariki sometimes mentioned that they deserved more than just the bare basics from caregivers. Sometimes this was a comment on their past experiences; one young person talked about feeling as though his caregiver provided for their own children in the house better than they provided for him. He said he deserved better than that.

Young people told us about the stress caused when they weren’t sure they were going to be able to afford basic living costs. They spoke about the mental relief of knowing they had enough money and a place to stay. These young people wanted stability, which is helped by regular income. Children and young people didn’t want to be a burden on their families; many were aware of the pressure this could cause.

*“My parents and family are stressed because of everything they have to pay for and things just get harder. I don’t want to be extra stress”* Tamariki from Gisborne

Parents of new babies talked about the impact that financial stresses can have on their babies. One new mum told us about how she relied on benefits, and would not have been able to survive without family support as well. *“It’s such a stressful and hard time and then money is just a huge added stress. And you physically can’t work – you can’t take your baby to work, but then you physically can’t live on what they give you. They rely on you having a partner or family support. But I think that’s just not reflecting life today – I think if they looked at the stats of single mums they’d see that’s just not a fair assumption anymore.”*

### **I want a safe warm home where I can be with my whānau**

Children and young people we spoke with talked about wanting a home, which was more than just a house. Many wanted housing that has room for their whole whānau.

*"Nine people in my home and my nan had her own room. I feel bad because my brother is sleeping in the lounge."* Pacific young mum from Auckland

### **I want an education that is inclusive, affordable and relevant**

Children and young people told us over and over again about the importance of learning. They know that education can help to set them up for success in life and help them achieve their aspirations. The education system is not currently serving all of them well.

*"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 of school."*

Rangatahi in alternative education

We heard about what makes a good teacher. They told us about kind, helpful teachers who cared about them. Young people talked about how teachers who are the same ethnicity as them are more likely to connect and talk with them. Young people with disabilities talked about how they want teachers to be more patient in order to help them learn.

Children and young people told us that education needs to be cheaper. Some told us they can't afford school uniforms, supplies and lunches, and that they miss out on school regularly because they don't have any transport or bus money. Young people suggested that all schools should have equal resources and facilities and that people could make donations for school uniforms for those who can't afford them.

*"School uniforms are so expensive. Sometimes my little brother goes to school with no jacket."* 16 year old rangatahi in state care

The children and young people we spoke with wanted to learn stuff that is relevant to them. They talked about doing more preparation at school for the career that they would like to pursue. Some want more te reo Māori classes in school. One young person suggested that education should include going to the marae and learning from their elders about how to be a leader.

Some young people talked about how the culture of their school needs to change. They said that it needs to be okay to fail and that they want schools to be more

accepting and respectful. A child with a disability spoke about how it is really important that kids get to go to a school that they like and are supported to stay in a mainstream school.

Young people from a refugee background talked about how important language is to them and their family. They see getting good at English as crucial to having a good life.

Young people talked about needing support to learn 'life skills'. They saw this as an important part of helping them to become an adult and get a job. They wanted to learn more about interpersonal skills, budgeting, making good choices, managing their anger and knowing how to access housing.

Although some young people we spoke with had had negative education experiences, the vast majority of them were still enthusiastic about learning. Young people in alternative education, for example, often spoke negatively about their past education experiences, but they still really wanted to learn. Those young people spoke much more positively about their current education experiences in alternative education settings than about their experiences of mainstream schooling.

### **I want to have job opportunities**

*"Without sort of being scared that they are going to apply to this work and just be rejected based on the fact that they've got this physical disability."*

Young person with a disability from Auckland

Young people talked about not being able to get experience in order to qualify for jobs. They talked about how few jobs are available; this was especially relevant for young people in rural areas. Young people also spoke about wanting to be able to work towards doing a job that they loved.

Some young people told us about how they can't work yet as they are too young. They see that as a barrier because their age stops them from being able to gain work experience and then be successful in applying for jobs once they are old enough.

*"No job opportunities ... I ain't ever had a job in my life – I don't have any experience with anything, so there's like nothing, no opportunities."*

17 year old mum from Kaikohe

### **I want to be part of a safe, clean community**

Children and young people talked about the physical community spaces needed to have a good life. They wanted to feel safe in their community. We observed that safe

communities were mentioned more often by children and young people living in poorer areas.

Children and young people also talked about a lack of care for the environment; how some people leave rubbish, vandalise and pollute the environment. Not having a clean environment can get in the way of having a good life.

*"Clean environment, plastic free, respect the environment, no pollution, no littering."* Young person from Mt Maunganui

Some children talked about wanting to have playgrounds with working equipment. Some young people talked about having recreational activities and free community pools or hang out spaces in their local area. Like many other things, communities should reflect their unique needs; one young person with a disability talked about how daunting it can be to not have physical access to buildings.

### **I need services that are appropriate, accepting and visible**

The young people we spoke to wanted services they could relate to. They wanted young youth workers who could understand them and they wanted the professionals in their life to respect them. LGBTIQ+ young people talked about how they wanted health services to have greater awareness of issues unique to their community and be accepting of those.

Some young people talked about making services more visible. These young people said they know that services are available, but they don't know where to go to find them or how to access them. This was especially the case for mental health services.

*"Having access to stuff, like services. Our mental health system is s\*\*t."*  
Young person from Wellington

*"Everyone in mainstream schools we know there is a therapist but we are not encouraged to talk to them. Just remind us now and again that they are there to help us."* 15 year old young person from Wellington

We heard from mums of children under three about their health system experiences while pregnant and in the early days of their child's life. A young mum from Kaikohe talked about the period following the birth of her little girl.

[Did your daughter stay in hospital for a little while?] *"Yeah two months, we both did. It was hard, I couldn't imagine me doing it now... it was really hard. The hospital were good, but they weren't so good to my partner. They only do accommodation for the mothers, not for partners. I got transferred to Auckland, she couldn't be in Whangārei. He had to find somewhere to stay, he had to go in a motel. It was pretty stink because the hospital should have let him stay."*

17 year old Māori mum from Kaikohe

Another new mum of a 5 month old baby reflected on the potential impact on her baby's wellbeing of the pressure she was put under to leave the hospital.

*"Towards the end I was getting moved out they were ready to clear the room. I was pressured to leave, but he was a small jaundiced baby and my first baby. There could have been more support going home – I'm lucky I had the family I had. The first three weeks, when I was doing three hourly feeds and assisted feeds using a syringe and that sort of stuff – that's enough to break a person."*

There was a difference between the way children and young people in rural areas spoke about services, compared with those in urban areas. Although children and young people in urban areas still had a lot to say about how services could be improved, those in rural areas often said that services did not exist at all. There were also secondary impacts for young people living in rural areas; such as not being able to access services because there is no public transport.

## ***Insight 5: How you support us matters just as much as what you do***

Children and young people told us that they want to be accepted for who they are and have their critical relationships with their whānau and communities recognised. Without this as the starting point, efforts to support children and young people will not be effective. The children and young people we spoke with told us that it is not just *what* is done, but *how* it is done that makes the difference.

*“Having a good life isn't necessarily about the materialistic things. I think having strong friendships/relationships with people who genuinely care about you contributes better to a good life.”* 17 year old rangatahi

Every child or young person we spoke with was unique and so too were the challenges they were facing. They told us about the impact of drugs and alcohol, experiencing racism, being let down by the system and feeling unsafe in their communities. These things can all get in the way of having a good life.

*“Better job opportunities and higher minimum wage so my parents have more time to spend with me, my brothers, and sister. And stop schools from being racist and assuming bad things because I come from Otara. Less school!!!! More places to get away from all the bad stuff that happens in school and at home.”*

13 year old boy from Ōtara

Children and young people also told us about what helps. We heard that relationships are central to what makes a good life. Children and young people's relationships with whānau are usually the most important. They wanted whānau involved in efforts to help them and for whānau to be supported to be well themselves.

*“Families are the most basic social unit of society, and with better more concrete support from the start, children would feel more included, loved, and hence valued.”* Pacific young person from Papakura

The material things children and young people told us about were not sufficient on their own. Children and young people spoke about housing, but this was not all they spoke about. They wanted a house which was big enough for their whole whānau, they wanted to be able to spend time with them and they didn't want to have to keep moving. When they spoke about their community, they didn't just want things to do; they wanted to feel welcome and safe.

"Home is where the heart is some may say so in saying that a child's home determines a child's wellbeing. Suicide and neglect is huge within our Pacific Island and Māori community and creating more safer and positive households will prevent these issues. A child needs to be brought up feeling loved and wanted. This increases their chances in growing up to being healthy physically and mentally. A strong tree grows in good soil. With the right foundation we all could have brighter days." 18 year old young person from Ōtāhuhu

Dear Prime Minister,

I think the one thing that children and young people need to have good lives, now and in the future is...

~~to~~  
to have the support they need to absolutely 100%. Without doubt believe in their inherent value as human beings, that they know are important, that they feel safe. ~~that~~ that they feel like they belong in their communities and have the support to be themselves, ~~not~~ in every aspect of their hauora.

child & youth wellbeing

To:  
Prime Minister  
Jacinda Ardern

Tell us about yourself:

0 - 10 years old  
 11 - 17 years old  
18+ years old

Māori  
 NZ European / Pākehā  
Pacific  
Asian  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section Four: Messages to the Prime Minister

***“What is the one thing that you want to tell the Prime Minister that children and young people need to have good lives now and in the future?”***

*“Young people need [to] feel proud of who they are, have access to quality education, opportunities to do what they love and they need to feel loved and safe.”* 12 year old New Zealand European girl

We asked all participating children and young people - what was the one thing they wanted to tell the Prime Minister that children and young people need to live good lives. This was a final open-ended question on the survey. Those we met with face to face completed this question on a postcard at the end of the session. We received a total of 3,338 responses. See Figure 8.

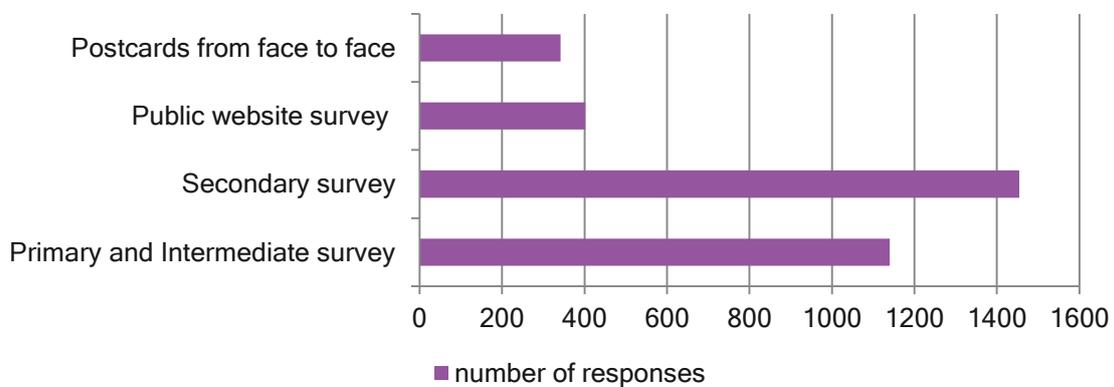


Figure 8: Messages to the Prime Minister responses by source

Children and young people’s responses to this question were creative, considered and wide ranging. Using text analysis software, we were able to group responses according to common themes. Some responses related to more than one theme. While responses are grouped by the most dominant theme in the clusters below (see Figure 9), they are positioned to show other closely related themes.

For most of the children and young people answering this question, it was their final opportunity to share their views. In the focus groups and interviews this activity was framed as the one thing they needed the Prime Minister to know.

## Themes in messages to the Prime Minister

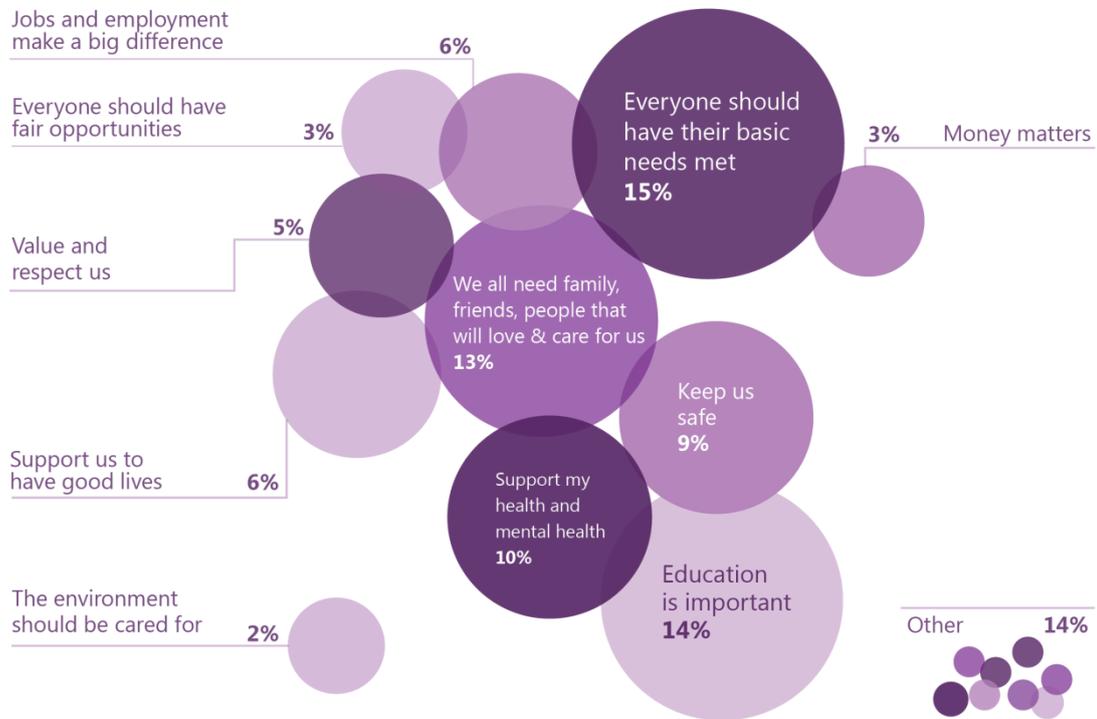


Figure 9: Themes in messages to the Prime Minister

### Everyone should have their basic needs met

Children and young people wrote about everyone getting their basic needs met. Food and having a good house were frequently mentioned. Children and young people talked about families having enough money to buy food and to get to school (transportation specifically).

*“That their parents can provide the basic essentials for a good life eg. food, water, shelter etc.”* 11 year old New Zealand European boy

*“I think that it is incredibly important that families have enough money to be able to pay for basic things like food, clothing, bills and other necessities. When children go to school hungry or without enough warm clothing it impacts their ability to learn, communicate and participate in class. Without being able to do these basic things, it can impact their future career, and most importantly their wellbeing.”* 15 year old New Zealand European girl

### Education is important

Education was raised as an issue children and young people wanted to tell the Prime Minister about. They talked about how it is important for the future. They talked about

the stress that school can cause in their lives and specifically mentioned the NCEA system as not being helpful and being very stressful. Children and young people talked about the way children learn best and called for more one on one support. What children and young people learn at school was frequently mentioned. They called for more life skills to be taught at school. Some responses specifically asked for food to be provided at school.

*"Give me more one to one support in my learning."*

10 year old New Zealand European, Māori, Tongan boy

*"Children need a strong base whether that be family, friends etc. and also should be taught more life skills in school eg. how to help a friend when they are going through hardship, how to manage money better, healthy relationships etc."*

14 year old New Zealand European girl

*"Not to have so much pressure on our NCEA results."*

17 year old New Zealand European, Samoan girl

### **We all need family, friends, people that will love and care for us**

Children and young people talked about having family, friends, and other people who love and care for them, and wanting that for all other children and young people too.

*"Strong relationships with family and friends, so they feel comfortable and confident with who they are as a person."* 14 year old New Zealand European girl

*"The children need to be loved and cared for in a nice environment, they should also feel as though they have a sense of belonging whether its with friends or family."* 15 year old New Zealand European, Māori boy

*"Loving families, support and LOVE."* 12 year old Māori, Samoan girl

### **Support my health and mental health**

Children and young people shared their views about better supports for physical, mental and sexual health. This included wanting better education about health issues. Young people mentioned mental health specifically, commenting on stress, anxiety and depression explicitly. They called for more counselors, especially in schools. Young people asked for better supports for those with a disability, and wanted children and young people to be able to go to the doctor or the dentist when they need to.

*"Better mental, physical and sexual health and support in and out of schools."*

17 year old New Zealand European girl

*"More support for disabilities or special needs kids."*

15 year old New Zealand European boy

*"Assistance with mental health issues like anxiety and depression."*

16 year old New Zealand European boy

### Keep us safe

Safety was mentioned in regards to home and in the community. Children and young people wanted New Zealand to have no abuse and others talked about ending bullying – including online bullying.

*"A safe and respectful environment to grow up in. A safe home with loving parents or caregivers, a safe school, a safe community filled with people who care for the successes of the young and support them in times of need."*

17 year old New Zealand European girl

*"That they need to keep bullying away from little kids and people and abuse needs to stop NOW!!!"* 11 year old Māori girl

### Jobs and employment make a big difference

Children and young people told the Prime Minister they wanted well-paid jobs and careers for themselves and their family. They wrote about how important it is that children have good opportunities for the future, and about how their families need jobs. Some young people mentioned discrimination and wanting all people to have the same opportunities to get jobs.

*"A future that allows all children/ youth from every ethnic background to have a promising future. As a young muslim wearing a headscarf (hijab)... If we could find a way to change systematic discrimination, it would be beneficial towards all muslim women. Thank you."* Young person (11 to 17 year old)

*"Adults need an opportunity to get well paid jobs to help their Whanau."*

11 year old New Zealand European, Tongan girl

### Support us to have good lives

Children and young people wrote about wanting support when they need it. They mentioned how everyone needs help sometimes, and called for better help for those that are struggling. They talked about how everyone needs love and support. These comments also mentioned the role of their family, friends and other support networks.

*"Some young people need stability in their lives, not everyone is able to create a safe, positive environment for his/herself and need a little more support from those around them."* 17 year old Māori girl

*"To find a love for learning and to be supported by the people around them, both their whanau and their government. To never have to live with a lack of love."*  
17 year old New Zealand European girl

### Value and respect us

Children and young people wrote that they wanted to be valued and have their voice heard. They wanted respect and to be listened to and taken seriously. They didn't want to be judged and wanted to get rid of discrimination because of culture or beliefs.

*"The ability to be heard and taken seriously on what they have to say"*  
13 year old New Zealand European boy

*"That children should be accepted for who they are so they wont be judged..."*  
13 year old Samoan, Tongan, Niuean girl

*"I think we should all treat people the same even if there different they should be respected."* 11 year old girl

### Everyone should have fair opportunities

Fairness was a theme that we heard about from children and young people. They wanted everyone to have equal chances and fair opportunities. Discrimination in relation to lack of equal opportunities was mentioned frequently.

*"I think all children need to start on the same platform, all with strong family relationships, food, shelter and necessities, as well as being able to go to school feeling happy and safe. If all children have this same platform then they are getting a better start to life and adulthood. I also believe that not all schools allow the same opportunities - I strongly believe that all children in New Zealand need to be offered the same opportunities so they have an equal and fair chance of being successful. I think if all children have the same skills and knowledge then they will be better supported for the future."* 18 year old Samoan girl

*"Equal opportunities, not based on wealth, ethnicity or gender."*  
12 year old New Zealand European girl

## Money matters

Young people wanted to tell the Prime Minister they needed more money. Money was talked about as a means of getting the things they needed. They talked about being financially secure and stable and their family having enough money, meaning they would have a more stable future.

*"I think that all children should have a good financial start in life."*

12 year old Chinese girl

*"We need more money."* 12 year old New Zealand European boy

## The environment should be cared for

Some children and young people shared their views on the importance of caring for the environment and doing a better job to look after it. They wanted a cleaner environment, fewer plastics and for climate change to be recognised as an issue.

*"Help them learn how to take good care of the environment."*

12 year old New Zealand European boy

## Other comments not included in the themes

Other miscellaneous responses to the 'Tell the Prime Minister' question (10%) talked about wanting spaces, facilities and support for play and recreation, including basketball courts and gaming. The activities and facilities that children and young people called for varied depending on their age. Children and young people also mentioned political views and gave their opinions on how well the Prime Minister is doing her job. Children wanted cheaper transport. Some talked about topics such as wanting a family pet.

*"Hi I am [X] and can you put a bball court on [X] street and lower fuel cost plss. And make sure it has a net plss".* 11 to 17 year old rangatahi

*"To have a playground with everything in it like: A basketball court, rugby field, soccer goals, skate park, and heap of other fun playground things. Thank you from [X]."* 0-10 year old tamariki

*"The one thing that I think would help children and young people have good lives now and in the future is for the government to actually care about the people in New Zealand and other unfortunate suburbs in this country."*

13 year old Samoan, Tongan girl

## Some patterns and differences

There were some differences in what children and young people wanted to tell the Prime Minister, based on where they responded to the question:

- Children and young people who completed the postcards in person were more likely to comment on themes related to education, jobs and support for a good life. They were less likely to comment on themes related to basic needs and family and friends but tended to have discussed those ideas in other parts of the session.
- Children and young people that responded to the survey through the public website link were more likely to comment on themes related to education, support for health and mental health, and wanting to be valued and respected.

We were specifically asking about what could make life better for them and other children and young people. This made it personal, about their day to day lives in their families, schools, and communities. Because we did not ask questions about wider issues in the country or world, we did not have as many responses about the economy or environment as we have had in other projects.

Dear Prime Minister, keep up the good work, though !!

I think the one thing that children and young people need to have good lives, now and in the future is...

Education, in all of its forms.

Cultural education = to ensure that people are more self-aware of New Zealand's diversity, and to promote cultural awareness.

Mental health education = to help those suffering/living with mental illness, or those with in association, to know how to deal/cope with it, and to be more empathetic.

Family-centered education =

Families are the most basic ~~un~~social unit of society, and with better more concrete support from the start, children would feel more included, loved, and hence valued.

(P.S: I follow you on Instagram, my name's @ [redacted])

**child & youth wellbeing**

To:  
Prime Minister  
Jacinda Ardern

My name is [redacted]

Tell us about yourself:

0 - 10 years old

11 - 17 years old

18+ years old

Māori

NZ European / Pākehā

Pacific

Asian

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section Five:

# What did we learn overall?

There were a number of messages from children and young people that came through in both the survey and in the interviews and focus groups. This section describes those common threads and discusses some of the areas of difference. It also describes some of the observations of those who facilitated the focus groups and interviews. These observations relate to things that the project team felt formed an important part of the overall picture of what children and young people communicated. This section concludes by discussing some of the implications of what we have heard: for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, for government and community organisations working with children and for society in general.

### ***What are the common threads?***

#### **Change is needed**

Almost every child and young person could name something that needs to be improved for children and young people in New Zealand. This was not limited to those who said they were currently struggling – those who indicated that their needs were being met still said that change was needed to help others. They want government to take action to make this happen.

#### **Family and whānau are crucial**

The role of whānau and family is vital in improving children and young people's wellbeing. Children do not exist in isolation. Their whānau, friends and other support people are critical to, and interwoven with, their wellbeing. Their relationships with these people are crucial to both what wellbeing means, and how wellbeing is achieved. If children and young people's support people aren't well, children and young people themselves can't be well.

#### **The bare basics are not enough**

Children and young people told us they want to be accepted, valued and respected. They want to feel safe in their homes and communities. They want to be with people who care about them. The children and young people we spoke with recognised their need for basic things, but they were hopeful that their future would include more than that. A minimum standard of living is not enough.

### **Schools have a significant impact**

Children and young people spend a lot of time at school and the ones we spoke with told us how important their education is to future opportunities. Schools can have a major impact on children and young people's wellbeing, for better or for worse.

### **Communities have a part to play**

Actions taken by government will be more effective if they recognise the important role of communities. Children and young people very rarely mentioned services when they described what having a good life is. They talked about government services as barriers or enablers. Government services can enable the conditions through which children and young people's families and communities can support them.

## ***What are the points of difference among the children and young people we heard from?***

### **Some children and young people are worse off than others**

Most children and young people are doing well. These children and young people said they have a dry and warm place to sleep, a stable and loving whānau, they get to spend time with their family and they feel respected and valued. However, there were some who indicated that they do not have all of these things. This group of children and young people are experiencing significant challenges.

### **Children and young people can experience similar issues in different ways**

The challenges children and young people face can play out in different ways depending on where they live, their socioeconomic status, whether they have a disability, their culture, their gender, or any other facet of their life. For some, the challenges in their life can compound – some children and young people are living at the intersection of multiple challenges. An example of this is the challenges faced by tamariki and rangatahi Māori. The majority of children and young people we spoke to were facing challenges to their wellbeing, but these challenges were often exacerbated for tamariki and rangatahi.

### **Some children and young people are more focused on their immediate needs**

Comments about fun and happiness were common in survey responses but were not talked about as much by the children and young people we spoke with in person. These groups spoke more about the challenges they faced in their lives than about fun or happiness.

## What else did we observe?

### Most children and young people are hopeful, but some are just getting by

Most of the children and young people we spoke with, including those facing significant challenges, were positive that their lives would improve over time. However, some had lost hope that things would get better. These young people were just coping with each day as it came. Of note, those that were less hopeful were more positive when it came to talking about their brothers and sisters. They described the opportunities they would like to see for their siblings in the future, even if they did not have the same sense of hope for themselves.

### Children and young people appreciate being listened to

The children and young people we met talked about how they were grateful that we were asking them their opinion, they appreciated being listened to and many said this was the first time they had been asked for their opinion like this.

Tēnā koe Prime Minister,

I think the one thing children and young people need to have good lives, now and in the future is...

*better job opportunities and Higher minimum wage so my parents have more time to spend with me, my brothers, and sisters. and stop schools from being racist and assuming bad things because i come from Otara, less school!!!. More places to get away from all the bad stuff that happens in school and at home.*

**child & youth wellbeing**

To:  
Prime Minister  
Jacinda Ardern

Tell us about yourself:

0 - 10 years old  
 11 - 17 years old  
 18+ years old

Māori  
 NZ European / Pākehā  
 Pacific  
 Asian  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***So what needs to be done?***

### **Government initiatives should reflect children's aspirations**

An overwhelming message we heard was that children and young people want to be accepted, valued and respected. They want their place within their whānau and community to be recognised and respected.

Government initiatives should reflect these aspirations. Initiatives aimed at improving children and young people's wellbeing sometimes reflect how services are currently delivered, rather than what children and young people have told us about their lives as a whole. Children and young people's needs do not exist within neatly-defined categories and government strategies should not either. The development of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is an opportunity to change this.

### **Adults should listen to children's views**

Listening to children and young people's views regularly and meaningfully will lead to more effective government policy. Hearing children and young people's stories and valuing their lived experience is the only way to truly understand their individual circumstances. This report was made possible because the legislation underpinning the Strategy embeds an obligation to listen to children and young people's views. It has created an opportunity for children to be heard, and future government initiatives should follow suit.

### **Children and young people deserve more**

Being aspirational means being willing to radically reshape the ways children and young people are supported when they say current approaches aren't working. Efforts to support children and young people will not be effective if the sole focus is on what services and supports need to be delivered. How supports are delivered matters just as much. Services need to accept children and young people for who they are and recognise their critical relationships. Children and young people have told us that they want the basics, plus a little bit more. We think they all deserve a lot more.

# Appendix One:

## Detailed methodology

The focus of this project was on ensuring that children and young people were able to share their views and influence the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. To achieve this, we committed to:

- Maintaining a strong and uncompromising commitment to upholding the rights of children and young people.
- Building on existing knowledge and past conversations with children and young people.
- Bringing together a strong team with child and youth engagement expertise, trusting relationships with communities, research experience, proficient communication and writing skills and strong cultural knowledge. We also ensured that we had a gender balance in the team.

### ***Our project planning processes enabled children and young people to share their views meaningfully and ethically***

#### **Scoping the project**

The purpose of this project was two-fold:

1. To hear and share the views of a diverse group of children and young people on wellbeing.
2. To support children and young people's views being heard in the development of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

In preparation for the project we asked the following questions:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- Who should we be hearing from?
- Have children and young people been asked these questions before?
- Who can best support them to share their views?
- Which engagement method will best support children and young people to share their views?
- How can we ensure their voices are heard and have influence?

## Defining who we would engage with

The legislation underpinning the Strategy identifies four priority groups: children and young people living in poverty; children and young people in the care of, or at risk of entering the care of, Oranga Tamariki; children and young people with greater need; and all children and young people. Our engagement was designed to ensure we had broad coverage across all four groups.

The survey reached a diverse group of children and young people across New Zealand, with a mix of urban/rural, socio-economic status, ethnicity and age characteristics. We targeted our face to face conversations to ensure we heard from those we knew would be more likely to be experiencing challenges in their lives. These included children and young people living in poverty, living in state care, with a disability, from rural and isolated areas, aged under three years, with refugee backgrounds, who identify as LGBTIQ+, who are recent migrants, or who have received a mental health diagnosis. The majority of children and young people we spoke to in focus groups and interviews were Māori.

## Defining our areas of enquiry

We wanted to know, from a child's perspective, what wellbeing means to them and what children and young people need to improve their wellbeing. In July 2018 we surveyed around 200 children and young people and spoke with two groups of children. We asked them to describe wellbeing in their own words. The word wellbeing did not resonate with these children and young people. They used the phrase 'having a good life' to reframe the conversation. As a result, we decided that 'having a good life' would form the basis of our enquiry, rather than specifically referring to wellbeing. Our key questions in relation to having a good life were:

1. What does a good life mean for children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand?
2. What gets in the way of children and young people having a good life?
3. What helps children and young people to have a good life?

In most face to face discussions, additional prompting questions were asked, which encouraged children and young people to think about 'You, People and Places' – i.e. what having a good life means to them, what having a good life means for the people around them, and what having a good life means in relation to the places and communities they are a part of. Prompting questions also encouraged children and young people to elaborate on their answers if they were comfortable doing so, for

example, asking “can you help me understand that better?” or “can you tell me more about that?”

### **Ethics and informed consent**

Our proposed approach for focus groups and interviews was submitted to an ethics committee comprised of members of both the Office of the Children’s Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki, as well as independent members with expertise in child and youth engagement. Our team was able to test thinking and identify and mitigate any potential risks to children.

Some considerations in the ethical approval process included:

- Confirming that our informed assent and consent processes are appropriate for the children and young people taking part.
- Testing our engagement approaches.
- Agreeing on the appropriate gifts and koha for participants and community partners.
- Confirming appropriate data storage and data sharing processes.
- Confirming confidentiality processes, including if and when to break confidentiality.

We developed clear guidelines for facilitators around ascertaining informed consent and ensuring that children and young people understand what’s happening. For both the surveys and face to face engagements we sought ethical guidance from the project team. Further guidance on informed consent can be found on the [Office of the Children’s Commissioner](#) website.

## ***We designed an approach which would enable a broad range of children and young people to be heard***

### **Online surveys**

An online survey was developed for secondary students. Testing was then done on what changes would be needed for primary and intermediate students. As a result we changed the wording in one question about culture (younger children did not consistently understand that concept) and shortened the survey by removing one complex question regarding government priorities. This shorter survey was then also made publicly available on the DPMC website.

The surveys were developed by staff from the Office of the Children’s Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki – these members of our project team had experience in

constructing surveys that are appropriate for children and young people. We started by defining the key areas of enquiry and checking if questions were already asked in other surveys both nationally and internationally. Question types included closed questions with defined choices (age, ethnicity, etc.), open ended free-text questions, questions that asked participants to rank from a list and questions that required participants to indicate their level of agreement with statements. Where questions required participants to select a response, the order of the responses was randomised. All questions were pre-tested with a range of children and young people to ensure they were appropriate for the target age group.

The surveys were made available to children and young people through two main channels: the publicly accessible link on the DPMC website; and the Office of the Children's Commissioner's Mai World network – a network of schools whose students regularly complete similar surveys. School sites include alternative education providers.

### Face to face engagement

The facilitation team for the focus groups and interviews comprised skilled engagement specialists from the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki. Each facilitator took a positive child and youth development approach during face to face engagements, which meant focusing on the child or young person's strengths and supporting them to share their views in a way that suited them best. Engagements were informed by Laura Lundy's 'Voice is Not Enough' model of child participation.

Facilitators were encouraged to use a range of engagement techniques, and to incorporate their own style and expertise where appropriate. Focus groups and interviews included verbal discussion, drawing, performing arts and activity-based engagements. Facilitators were encouraged to be adaptable and facilitate engagements that enabled genuine and meaningful interaction and discussion between them and the participants. This approach enabled many more children and young people to have their views heard than a more rigid approach would have allowed.

As the final activity in all face to face engagement, an A5-size postcard was handed out by the facilitator. These postcards were addressed to the Prime Minister and prompted the young people to share their thoughts with the message, *"I think the one thing that children and young people need to have good lives now and in the future is..."* This provided an opportunity for those we engaged with to share any final messages they weren't able to tell us, or expand on any thoughts they had already shared. The cards were printed in both English and te reo Māori. This question was also asked in the surveys.

## Working in partnership

We utilised the Office of the Children's Commissioner's existing relationships with community organisations to reach the cohorts of children and young people we wanted to talk with. We were supported by many organisations, including iwi social services, alternative education providers, health clinics, youth centres and learning support units. In total we worked with 60 community organisations. We also worked with seven Oranga Tamariki sites across the country to enable us to talk with children and young people in state care. Practitioners at the sites played a similar role to the community providers, supporting us throughout the engagements. Staff from both Oranga Tamariki and the community organisations also helped facilitate some of the sessions with children, with guidance from our team.

We also created a [Child and Youth Engagement toolkit](#), which was designed to enable community organisations throughout the country to organise their own focus groups with children and young people. The toolkit described our approach and provided resources for others to use. It included the recording templates used in the focus groups we organised, so that focus groups run using the toolkit could still be analysed along with the rest of the data.

The community organisations and the Oranga Tamariki sites we worked with played a crucial role in supporting us to obtain consent from children, young people and their caregivers, providing venues, supporting the children and young people to attend the sessions and, where required, providing any follow up care required for the children and young people. They were also essential in helping to put participants at ease. These were the trusted adults for the children and young people we met with, and their support of the project was an important part of helping children and young people feel comfortable enough to share their views with us.

We have reported back to all community partners and Oranga Tamariki sites. The Office of the Children's Commissioner maintains ongoing relationships with the community partners.

## ***Our recording, analysis and write-up processes ensured that children and young people's views could reach a wide audience***

### **Survey analysis**

Basic descriptive analysis and cross-tabulation was carried out on the survey data. There were two open-ended questions that required a different approach. We used Text Ferret software to analyse these questions. We also analysed the postcards completed at the end of the face to face interviews and focus groups in this way. The Text Ferret software identifies keywords of interest and uses statistical techniques (principal component analysis, clustering) to divide responses into like groups. The final themes are based on these groups, with some human judgment applied.

A further thorough statistical analysis on this data set is being planned.

### **Recording what we heard**

A consistent recording process throughout the project was essential to effectively and accurately record what we heard from children and young people. We designed a recording template to ensure children's voices were captured accurately and recorded in a uniform way. The facilitators were required to fill out the recording template either during, or directly after, each engagement, which required data input such as:

- The details of the child or young person(s) involved in the session.
- Verbatim quotes under each area of enquiry.
- Insights from the facilitator during the engagement, and how they drew those insights.

All information was recorded and stored securely and was not shared beyond the project team. All quotes were referenced in a way that ensured anonymity for the children and young people. Although the process was time-intensive for facilitators, it was necessary to ensure the original meaning of what the children and young people said was preserved.

### **Analysing what we heard**

The outputs from focus groups and interviews were considered as part of a two-day analysis hui. This involved 20 people in total: the core project team, the additional facilitators from across the country and a small number of extra people who had not been involved in the project until that point. Those who had facilitated engagements were asked to think about both what was written in the recording templates and what

stuck out for them as facilitators. Those who had not previously been involved were there to provide a critical and objective perspective on the information and discussions.

The focus of the workshop was to manually code the recording templates, identify key themes and come to a consensus on what the overarching themes were for the focus groups and interviews. Subsequent meetings took place after the workshop with the core project team, to further refine the key insights. However, the two-day analysis hui was essential in accurately capturing and articulating what we heard from children and young people, particularly given the large number of engagements.

The insights identified did not quantify how many children and young people were experiencing the challenges described. Instead they provided an in-depth understanding of how children and young people experience those challenges and what impact that has.

### **Communicating what we heard**

A great engagement process will have little impact if the information is not able to be utilised to influence decision-makers.

Key insights from the focus groups and interviews formed the basis of an interim report provided to the Prime Minister, Minister for Children and DPMC in December 2018: *'What makes a good life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing'*. While an initial analysis of the survey results was included in the interim report, the primary focus of that report was the face to face engagements.

This second report includes both survey and face to face findings. Ensuring that the voices of the children and young people we spoke with could be shared publicly was an important part of the initial agreement with DPMC to undertake this project. A media plan was developed jointly between the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Oranga Tamariki to ensure that the messages from children and young people could be shared with a wide audience and communicated in a way that would have the greatest impact possible.

## ***As with any project, there were limitations to our approach***

### *Limited time and resources:*

- The project was completed relatively quickly due to the timeframe for the development of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. This had an impact on the amount of time we had to work with Office of the Children's Commissioner community partners and Oranga Tamariki sites to 'set the scene' and adapt each engagement to each group of children and young people.
- The limited timeframe and the limited number of people we had available to facilitate the focus groups and interviews placed a lot of pressure on facilitators. Our facilitators often had long days on the road, for a number of weeks in a row.

### *Survey variations:*

- We had some variation in the survey questions, depending on whether it was for secondary aged respondents, primary and intermediate aged respondents, or respondents from the public link. This meant that there were slight variations in some questions. Our analysis took this into consideration and we only reported combined results from different surveys where the questions asked were identical.

### *Survey method and survey distribution:*

- Distributing the survey through schools means the results may be skewed against children and young people who are not engaged in education. Targeting the focus groups towards children and young people more likely to be facing challenges was one way to mitigate this.
- The online survey mechanism excludes children and young people without access to the internet, young children, or those that do not have the reading level required to complete the survey.

## Appendix Two: Survey results

Online surveys were completed by children and young people through three channels:

- primary and intermediate schools (58 schools)
- secondary schools and alternative education facilities (29 schools), and
- through a publicly accessible link on the DPMC website

The survey results from a total of 5,631 children and young people are reported here. Not all questions were completed by all respondents; therefore totals reflect the numbers responding to each question.

This is the raw survey data. No weighting has been applied to make it representative of general population of children and young people. Caution should be used in interpreting cells with small numbers of respondents.

### Description of respondents

| Age (years) | Public link |      | Primary/Int sch |      | Secondary sch |      | Total all surveys |      |
|-------------|-------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|
|             | number      | %    | number          | %    | number        | %    | number            | %    |
| 7           | 20          | 2%   | 25              | 1%   | 0             | 0%   | 45                | 1%   |
| 8           | 17          | 2%   | 26              | 1%   | 0             | 0%   | 43                | 1%   |
| 9           | 13          | 1%   | 131             | 6%   | 0             | 0%   | 144               | 3%   |
| 10          | 32          | 3%   | 210             | 10%  | 0             | 0%   | 242               | 4%   |
| 11          | 52          | 5%   | 492             | 23%  | 83            | 3%   | 627               | 11%  |
| 12          | 55          | 5%   | 784             | 37%  | 120           | 5%   | 959               | 17%  |
| 13          | 152         | 15%  | 462             | 22%  | 236           | 10%  | 850               | 15%  |
| 14          | 324         | 31%  | 2               | 0%   | 404           | 16%  | 730               | 13%  |
| 15          | 197         | 19%  | 10              | 0%   | 510           | 21%  | 717               | 13%  |
| 16          | 86          | 8%   | 0               | 0%   | 524           | 21%  | 610               | 11%  |
| 17          | 60          | 6%   | 0               | 0%   | 414           | 17%  | 474               | 8%   |
| 18          | 24          | 2%   | 0               | 0%   | 166           | 7%   | 190               | 3%   |
| Total       | 1032        | 100% | 2142            | 100% | 2457          | 100% | 5631              | 100% |

**Description of respondents (continued)**

| <b>Gender</b>  |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Female         | 579         | 56%         | 1039        | 49%         | 1394        | 57%         | 3012        | 53%         |
| Male           | 382         | 37%         | 971         | 45%         | 920         | 37%         | 2273        | 40%         |
| Gender diverse | 8           | 1%          | 15          | 1%          | 27          | 1%          | 50          | 1%          |
| Rather not say | 19          | 2%          | 64          | 3%          | 43          | 2%          | 126         | 2%          |
| Not listed     | 41          | 4%          | 48          | 2%          | 80          | 3%          | 169         | 3%          |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>1029</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>2137</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>2464</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>5630</b> | <b>100%</b> |

| <b>Do any of the following describe you? (select all that apply)</b> |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |             |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| I have a disability  | 83          | 8%          | 212         | 10%         | 156         | 6%          | 451         | 8%          |
| I am LGBTQI+ and/or part of this community                           | 119         | 12%         | 167         | 8%          | 254         | 10%         | 540         | 10%         |
| I live in a rural part of NZ   | 159         | 15%         | 785         | 37%         | 706         | 29%         | 1650        | 29%         |
| I am a refugee   | 29          | 3%          | 125         | 6%          | 84*         | 3%          | 238*        | 4%          |
| I have recently arrived in NZ  | 51          | 5%          | 175         | 8%          |             |             |             |             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>1032</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>2142</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>2457</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>5631</b> | <b>100%</b> |

\*The secondary school survey combined this question as "I am a refugee or have recently moved to NZ". Other surveys asked it separately.

Respondents were asked what ethnic group, or groups, they belong to. They could select more than one response, therefore percentage of responses add up to more than 100%. The categories are based on Statistics New Zealand protocols.

| <b>Ethnicity</b>         | <b>Public link</b> |             | <b>Primary/Int sch</b> |             | <b>Secondary sch</b> |             | <b>Total all surveys</b> |             |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-------------|
|                          | number             | %           | number                 | %           | number               | %           | number                   | %           |
| NZ European              | 733                | 71%         | 1332                   | 62%         | 1804                 | 73%         | 3869                     | 69%         |
| Māori                    | 173                | 17%         | 728                    | 34%         | 608                  | 25%         | 1509                     | 27%         |
| Samoan                   | 93                 | 9%          | 167                    | 8%          | 131                  | 5%          | 391                      | 7%          |
| Cook Island              | 38                 | 4%          | 117                    | 5%          | 81                   | 3%          | 236                      | 4%          |
| Tongan                   | 56                 | 5%          | 108                    | 5%          | 70                   | 3%          | 234                      | 4%          |
| Indian                   | 20                 | 2%          | 37                     | 2%          | 33                   | 1%          | 90                       | 2%          |
| Chinese                  | 37                 | 4%          | 53                     | 2%          | 61                   | 2%          | 151                      | 3%          |
| Niuean                   | 43                 | 4%          | 53                     | 2%          | 67                   | 3%          | 163                      | 3%          |
| Other eg Dutch, Japanese | 192                | 19%         | 431                    | 20%         | 388                  | 16%         | 1011                     | 18%         |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>1026</b>        | <b>135%</b> | <b>2144</b>            | <b>141%</b> | <b>2465</b>          | <b>132%</b> | <b>5635</b>              | <b>136%</b> |

## Living arrangements

**Question:** *Which of the following best describes your current living arrangement?*

Respondents were asked about their living arrangements with the following options.

| Living arrangement  | number | %    |
|---|--------|------|
| With immediate family/whānau (Mum, Dad, step-parent)                    | 3988   | 83%  |
| With extended family/whānau (grandparent, aunt)                         | 234    | 5%   |
| With friends/flatmates  | 30     | 1%   |
| Boarding at school  | 63     | 1%   |
| With someone else's family (eg, friends, boyfriend/girlfriend's family) | 28     | 1%   |
| With a foster family*   | 26     | 1%   |
| In a Care and Protection residence*                                     | 15     | 0%   |
| In group home care*   | 14     | 0%   |
| In a Youth Justice residence*   | 3      | 0%   |
| Living alone  | 18     | 0%   |
| Other arrangement   | 385    | 8%   |
| Total   | 4804   | 100% |

## Own view of wellbeing

**Question:** *What does having a good life mean to you?*

This open-ended question was analysed using Text Ferret data analysis software to cluster in themes. Each response allocated to one theme. Residual responses not fitting clusters allocated to an 'other' category.

| Themes of clustered responses              | Number in cluster | %    |
|--|-------------------|------|
| Being happy and enjoying life              | 755               | 30%  |
| Having supportive family and friends       | 514               | 20%  |
| Having basic needs met                     | 376               | 15%  |
| Being healthy (including mentally healthy) | 195               | 8%   |
| Feeling safe (including from bullying)     | 141               | 6%   |
| Feeling valued and respected               | 67                | 3%   |
| School and education                       | 81                | 3%   |
| Other                                      | 401               | 15%  |
| Total                                      | 2530              | 100% |

## Elements of wellbeing

**Question:** How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

|  | Public link |      | Primary/Int sch |      | Secondary sch |      | Total all surveys |      |
|--|-------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|
|  | number      | %    | number          | %    | number        | %    | number            | %    |
| <b>I feel safe at home</b>             |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree                      | 17          | 2%   | 43              | 2%   | 47            | 2%   | 107               | 2%   |
| Disagree                               | 15          | 2%   | 26              | 1%   | 52            | 2%   | 93                | 2%   |
| Neither                                | 57          | 6%   | 116             | 6%   | 155           | 7%   | 328               | 6%   |
| Agree                                  | 278         | 29%  | 467             | 23%  | 633           | 29%  | 1378              | 27%  |
| Strongly agree                         | 589         | 62%  | 1350            | 67%  | 1308          | 60%  | 3247              | 63%  |
| Total                                  | 956         | 100% | 2002            | 100% | 2195          | 100% | 5153              | 100% |
| <b>I feel safe online</b>              |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree                      | 27          | 3%   | 114             | 6%   | 68            | 3%   | 209               | 4%   |
| Disagree                               | 55          | 6%   | 124             | 6%   | 114           | 5%   | 293               | 6%   |
| Neither                                | 191         | 20%  | 372             | 19%  | 469           | 21%  | 1032              | 20%  |
| Agree                                  | 397         | 42%  | 718             | 36%  | 954           | 43%  | 2069              | 40%  |
| Strongly agree                         | 282         | 30%  | 658             | 33%  | 591           | 27%  | 1531              | 30%  |
| Total                                  | 952         | 100% | 1986            | 100% | 2196          | 100% | 5134              | 100% |
| <b>I feel safe at school</b>           |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree                      | 33          | 3%   | 72              | 4%   | 85            | 4%   | 190               | 4%   |
| Disagree                               | 41          | 4%   | 87              | 4%   | 105           | 5%   | 233               | 5%   |
| Neither                                | 156         | 16%  | 264             | 13%  | 400           | 18%  | 820               | 16%  |
| Agree                                  | 413         | 44%  | 772             | 39%  | 958           | 44%  | 2143              | 42%  |
| Strongly agree                         | 305         | 32%  | 798             | 40%  | 644           | 29%  | 1747              | 34%  |
| Total                                  | 948         | 100% | 1993            | 100% | 2192          | 100% | 5133              | 100% |
| <b>I feel safe in my neighbourhood</b> |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree                      | 27          | 3%   | 79              | 4%   | 59            | 3%   | 165               | 3%   |
| Disagree                               | 37          | 4%   | 112             | 6%   | 99            | 5%   | 248               | 5%   |
| Neither                                | 125         | 13%  | 239             | 12%  | 307           | 14%  | 671               | 13%  |
| Agree                                  | 385         | 40%  | 701             | 35%  | 862           | 39%  | 1948              | 38%  |
| Strongly agree                         | 385         | 40%  | 870             | 43%  | 863           | 39%  | 2118              | 41%  |
| Total                                  | 959         | 100% | 2001            | 100% | 2190          | 100% | 5150              | 100% |

|  | Public link |      | Primary/Int sch |      | Secondary sch |      | Total all surveys |      |
|--|-------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|
|  | number      | %    | number          | %    | number        | %    | number            | %    |
| <b>I have a stable and loving family/whānau</b>  |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 24          | 3%   | 40              | 2%   | 61            | 3%   | 125               | 2%   |
| Disagree   | 22          | 2%   | 31              | 2%   | 75            | 3%   | 128               | 2%   |
| Neither  | 93          | 10%  | 144             | 7%   | 238           | 11%  | 475               | 9%   |
| Agree  | 269         | 28%  | 427             | 21%  | 657           | 30%  | 1353              | 26%  |
| Strongly agree   | 550         | 57%  | 1367            | 68%  | 1171          | 53%  | 3088              | 60%  |
| total  | 958         | 100% | 2009            | 100% | 2202          | 100% | 5169              | 100% |
| <b>My parents or caregivers have enough money to pay for basic stuff like food and clothes</b> |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 19          | 2%   | 44              | 2%   | 42            | 2%   | 105               | 2%   |
| Disagree   | 23          | 2%   | 49              | 2%   | 62            | 3%   | 134               | 3%   |
| Neither  | 68          | 7%   | 128             | 6%   | 159           | 7%   | 355               | 7%   |
| Agree  | 252         | 26%  | 500             | 25%  | 695           | 32%  | 1447              | 28%  |
| Strongly agree   | 594         | 62%  | 1293            | 64%  | 1245          | 57%  | 3132              | 61%  |
| Total  | 956         | 100% | 2014            | 100% | 2203          | 100% | 5173              | 100% |
| <b>I have a warm, dry place to live</b>  |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 13          | 1%   | 28              | 1%   | 36            | 2%   | 77                | 1%   |
| Disagree   | 7           | 1%   | 26              | 1%   | 31            | 1%   | 64                | 1%   |
| Neither  | 24          | 3%   | 59              | 3%   | 83            | 4%   | 166               | 3%   |
| Agree  | 247         | 26%  | 405             | 20%  | 558           | 25%  | 1210              | 23%  |
| Strongly agree   | 664         | 70%  | 1482            | 74%  | 1488          | 68%  | 3634              | 71%  |
| Total  | 955         | 100% | 2000            | 100% | 2196          | 100% | 5151              | 100% |
| <b>I can go to the doctor when I need to</b>   |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 23          | 2%   | 56              | 3%   | 59            | 3%   | 138               | 3%   |
| Disagree   | 27          | 3%   | 90              | 4%   | 96            | 4%   | 213               | 4%   |
| Neither  | 68          | 7%   | 200             | 10%  | 215           | 10%  | 483               | 9%   |
| Agree  | 358         | 37%  | 645             | 32%  | 849           | 39%  | 1852              | 36%  |
| Strongly agree   | 479         | 50%  | 1010            | 50%  | 977           | 44%  | 2466              | 48%  |
| Total  | 955         | 100% | 2001            | 100% | 2196          | 100% | 5152              | 100% |

|   | Public link |      | Primary/Int sch |      | Secondary sch |      | Total all surveys |      |
|---|-------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|
|   | number      | %    | number          | %    | number        | %    | number            | %    |
| <b>I am able to make decisions for myself</b>                                       |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree   | 19          | 2%   | 70              | 4%   | 48            | 2%   | 137               | 3%   |
| Disagree  | 24          | 3%   | 101             | 5%   | 61            | 3%   | 186               | 4%   |
| Neither   | 106         | 11%  | 249             | 12%  | 252           | 11%  | 607               | 12%  |
| Agree   | 416         | 44%  | 761             | 38%  | 968           | 44%  | 2145              | 42%  |
| Strongly agree  | 388         | 41%  | 819             | 41%  | 873           | 40%  | 2080              | 40%  |
| Total   | 953         | 100% | 2000            | 100% | 2202          | 100% | 5155              | 100% |
| <b>I have a friend or friends that I can talk to about things that matter to me</b> |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree   | 30          | 3%   | 73              | 4%   | 90            | 4%   | 193               | 4%   |
| Disagree  | 49          | 5%   | 101             | 5%   | 103           | 5%   | 253               | 5%   |
| Neither   | 113         | 12%  | 210             | 10%  | 246           | 11%  | 569               | 11%  |
| Agree   | 308         | 32%  | 565             | 28%  | 780           | 35%  | 1653              | 32%  |
| Strongly agree  | 457         | 48%  | 1061            | 53%  | 985           | 45%  | 2503              | 48%  |
| Total   | 957         | 100% | 2010            | 100% | 2204          | 100% | 5171              | 100% |
| <b>I feel I belong at school</b>  |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree   | 63          | 7%   | 119             | 6%   | 149           | 7%   | 331               | 6%   |
| Disagree  | 77          | 8%   | 106             | 5%   | 211           | 10%  | 394               | 8%   |
| Neither   | 180         | 19%  | 337             | 17%  | 490           | 22%  | 1007              | 20%  |
| Agree   | 376         | 40%  | 732             | 37%  | 836           | 38%  | 1944              | 38%  |
| Strongly agree  | 251         | 27%  | 697             | 35%  | 503           | 23%  | 1451              | 28%  |
| Total   | 947         | 100% | 1991            | 100% | 2189          | 100% | 5127              | 100% |
| <b>I feel fit and healthy</b>   |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree   | 39          | 4%   | 71              | 4%   | 102           | 5%   | 212               | 4%   |
| Disagree  | 58          | 6%   | 91              | 5%   | 181           | 8%   | 330               | 6%   |
| Neither   | 179         | 19%  | 310             | 16%  | 490           | 22%  | 979               | 19%  |
| Agree   | 374         | 39%  | 720             | 36%  | 891           | 41%  | 1985              | 39%  |
| Strongly agree  | 304         | 32%  | 796             | 40%  | 531           | 24%  | 1631              | 32%  |
| Total   | 954         | 100% | 1988            | 100% | 2195          | 100% | 5137              | 100% |
| <b>I can cope when life gets hard</b>   |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree   | 39          | 4%   | 96              | 5%   | 125           | 6%   | 260               | 5%   |
| Disagree  | 67          | 7%   | 154             | 8%   | 219           | 10%  | 440               | 9%   |
| Neither   | 218         | 23%  | 439             | 22%  | 505           | 23%  | 1162              | 23%  |
| Agree   | 389         | 41%  | 761             | 38%  | 826           | 38%  | 1976              | 38%  |
| Strongly agree  | 244         | 25%  | 550             | 28%  | 519           | 24%  | 1313              | 25%  |
| Total   | 957         | 100% | 2000            | 100% | 2194          | 100% | 5151              | 100% |

|  | Public link |      | Primary/Int sch |      | Secondary sch |      | Total all surveys |      |
|--|-------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|
|  | number      | %    | number          | %    | number        | %    | number            | %    |
| <b>I feel respected and valued</b>   |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 34          | 4%   | 63              | 3%   | 75            | 3%   | 172               | 3%   |
| Disagree   | 50          | 5%   | 121             | 6%   | 161           | 7%   | 332               | 6%   |
| Neither  | 186         | 19%  | 338             | 17%  | 474           | 22%  | 998               | 19%  |
| Agree  | 388         | 41%  | 806             | 40%  | 926           | 42%  | 2120              | 41%  |
| Strongly agree   | 298         | 31%  | 670             | 34%  | 558           | 25%  | 1526              | 30%  |
| Total  | 956         | 100% | 1998            | 100% | 2194          | 100% | 5148              | 100% |
| <b>I have opportunities to build skills and knowledge for my future</b>                      |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 21          | 2%   | 46              | 2%   | 50            | 2%   | 117               | 2%   |
| Disagree   | 25          | 3%   | 49              | 2%   | 59            | 3%   | 133               | 3%   |
| Neither  | 99          | 10%  | 233             | 12%  | 268           | 12%  | 600               | 12%  |
| Agree  | 396         | 41%  | 834             | 42%  | 977           | 44%  | 2207              | 43%  |
| Strongly agree   | 416         | 43%  | 846             | 42%  | 847           | 38%  | 2109              | 41%  |
| Total  | 957         | 100% | 2008            | 100% | 2201          | 100% | 5166              | 100% |
| <b>I get to do fun activities in my spare time</b>   |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 24          | 3%   | 64              | 3%   | 70            | 3%   | 158               | 3%   |
| Disagree   | 28          | 3%   | 70              | 3%   | 127           | 6%   | 225               | 4%   |
| Neither  | 119         | 12%  | 210             | 10%  | 312           | 14%  | 641               | 12%  |
| Agree  | 349         | 36%  | 680             | 34%  | 868           | 39%  | 1897              | 37%  |
| Strongly agree   | 437         | 46%  | 982             | 49%  | 824           | 37%  | 2243              | 43%  |
| Total  | 957         | 100% | 2006            | 100% | 2201          | 100% | 5164              | 100% |
| <b>I get enough time to spend with my family/whānau</b>                                      |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 33          | 3%   | 55              | 3%   | 83            | 4%   | 171               | 3%   |
| Disagree   | 49          | 5%   | 115             | 6%   | 140           | 6%   | 304               | 6%   |
| Neither  | 118         | 12%  | 225             | 11%  | 331           | 15%  | 674               | 13%  |
| Agree  | 351         | 37%  | 639             | 32%  | 836           | 38%  | 1826              | 35%  |
| Strongly agree   | 401         | 42%  | 976             | 49%  | 812           | 37%  | 2189              | 42%  |
| Total  | 952         | 100% | 2010            | 100% | 2202          | 100% | 5164              | 100% |
| <b>I am proud of who I am</b> (asked on public link and primary/intermediate school surveys) |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly disagree  | 35          | 4%   | 72              | 4%   |               |      |                   |      |
| Disagree   | 40          | 4%   | 76              | 4%   |               |      |                   |      |
| Neither  | 163         | 17%  | 184             | 9%   |               |      |                   |      |
| Agree  | 323         | 34%  | 557             | 28%  |               |      |                   |      |
| Strongly agree   | 392         | 41%  | 1109            | 56%  |               |      |                   |      |
| Total  | 953         | 100% | 1998            | 100% |               |      |                   |      |

|  | Public link |   | Primary/Int sch |   | Secondary sch |      | Total all surveys |   |
|--|-------------|---|-----------------|---|---------------|------|-------------------|---|
|  | number      | % | number          | % | number        | %    | number            | % |
| <b>I am proud of my culture</b> (asked on secondary school survey) |             |   |                 |   |               |      |                   |   |
| Strongly disagree  |             |   |                 |   | 70            | 3%   |                   |   |
| Disagree   |             |   |                 |   | 59            | 3%   |                   |   |
| Neither  |             |   |                 |   | 389           | 18%  |                   |   |
| Agree  |             |   |                 |   | 714           | 32%  |                   |   |
| Strongly agree   |             |   |                 |   | 970           | 44%  |                   |   |
| Total  |             |   |                 |   | 2202          | 100% |                   |   |

### What children and young people need to have a good life

**Question:** *The next two questions ask about things that might make it easier for children and young people to have a good life.*

Frequency of selection in the 'top three' children and young people selected as 'most important' (children and young people abbreviated to C&YP)

|  | Public link |      | Primary/Int sch |      | Secondary sch |      | Total all surveys |      |
|--|-------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|
|  | number      | %    | number          | %    | number        | %    | number            | %    |
| <b>List 1</b>  |             |      |                 |      |               |      |                   |      |
| C&YP have good relationships with family and friends           | 564         | 61%  | 1189            | 61%  | 1359          | 65%  | 3112              | 63%  |
| Young people have job opportunities when they leave school     | 415         | 45%  | 781             | 40%  | 929           | 45%  | 2125              | 43%  |
| C&YP are valued and respected for who they are                 | 498         | 54%  | 1091            | 56%  | 1240          | 59%  | 2829              | 57%  |
| C&YP know their family's history (whakapapa) and their culture | 179         | 19%  | 517             | 26%  | 344           | 16%  | 1040              | 21%  |
| C&YP with health conditions are supported to live good lives   | 458         | 50%  | 1093            | 56%  | 967           | 46%  | 2518              | 51%  |
| The environment is looked after                                | 343         | 37%  | 777             | 40%  | 692           | 33%  | 1812              | 37%  |
| C&YP enjoy school and build skills and knowledge for life      | 425         | 46%  | 838             | 43%  | 963           | 46%  | 2226              | 45%  |
| Total respondents  | 918         | 100% | 1953            | 100% | 2087          | 100% | 4958              | 100% |

|  | Public link |     | Primary/Int sch |     | Secondary sch |     | Total all surveys |     |
|--|-------------|-----|-----------------|-----|---------------|-----|-------------------|-----|
|  | number      | %   | number          | %   | number        | %   | number            | %   |
| <b>List 2</b>  |             |     |                 |     |               |     |                   |     |
| Parents have time to spend with and help their children  | 320         | 35% | 923             | 48% | 851           | 41% | 2094              | 42% |
| C&YP are kept safe from bullying, violence or accidents  | 566         | 62% | 1139            | 59% | 1213          | 63% | 2918              | 59% |
| Parents or caregivers have enough money for basic stuff like food, clothes and a good house to live in | 675         | 74% | 1298            | 67% | 1529          | 79% | 3502              | 71% |
| C&YP are able to share their views on important issues   | 293         | 32% | 567             | 29% | 634           | 33% | 1494              | 30% |
| C&YP have family, whānau, and people in their community and school they can trust and rely on          | 420         | 46% | 908             | 47% | 970           | 50% | 2298              | 47% |
| Babies get a good start to life, so they grow up happy and healthy                                     | 401         | 44% | 946             | 49% | 847           | 44% | 2194              | 44% |
| Children and young people have opportunities to do fun activities in their spare time                  | 225         | 25% | 545             | 28% | 530           | 27% | 1300              | 26% |
| <b>Total respondents</b>   | <b>914</b>  |     | <b>1933</b>     |     | <b>2084</b>   |     | <b>4931</b>       |     |

## What children and young people need to have a good life – government priorities

**Question:** We want to know how much attention you think the government should place on each of the following issues for children and young people. Select either:

- No additional government action is needed
- Additional government efforts would help, as there is room for improvement
- Government effort is urgently needed

(asked only in the secondary school survey, children and young people abbreviated to C&YP)

|  | no<br>action | Some<br>effort | urgent<br>action | Total |      |
|--|--------------|----------------|------------------|-------|------|
|  | %            | %              | %                | n     | %    |
| C&YP who experience poverty or disadvantage are supported to have their needs met          | 7%           | 44%            | 49%              | 1965  | 100% |
| All C&YP and their whānau have enough money to pay for basics like food and clothing       | 8%           | 46%            | 46%              | 1953  | 100% |
| C&YP live in affordable, good quality housing  | 7%           | 48%            | 45%              | 1953  | 100% |
| C&YP's mental and emotional wellbeing is supported   | 10%          | 47%            | 43%              | 1959  | 100% |
| C&YP are free from racism and are not treated badly if they are different                  | 14%          | 52%            | 34%              | 1959  | 100% |
| C&YP with disabilities are supported to reach their full potential                         | 13%          | 53%            | 34%              | 1956  | 100% |
| All C&YP have the best possible education and training to succeed in their future          | 10%          | 57%            | 33%              | 1957  | 100% |
| Children get the best possible start in life, starting with a healthy mum during pregnancy | 8%           | 33%            | 58%              | 1953  | 100% |
| C&YP are safe and nurtured by their family/whānau  | 16%          | 58%            | 26%              | 1953  | 100% |
| C&YP are supported to make positive life choices   | 17%          | 59%            | 25%              | 1954  | 100% |
| C&YP and their whānau have the skills and knowledge to lead healthy lives                  | 15%          | 63%            | 22%              | 1945  | 100% |
| Culture is recognised and supported  | 27%          | 52%            | 21%              | 1955  | 100% |
| Children are supported with their whānau to thrive in their early years (ages 2-6)         | 20%          | 59%            | 21%              | 1950  | 100% |
| C&YP are safe during travel or play  | 26%          | 56%            | 18%              | 1952  | 100% |
| C&YP people have good relationships with peers and adults                                  | 24%          | 60%            | 17%              | 1954  | 100% |
| C&YP are supported to be involved in their community                                       | 24%          | 61%            | 16%              | 1952  | 100% |

## Tell the Prime Minister

**Question:** *What is the one thing you want to the Prime Minister that children and young people need to have good lives, now and in their future?*

This open-ended question was analysed using Text Ferret data analysis software to cluster in themes. Each response allocated to one theme. Residual responses not fitting clusters allocated to an 'other' category.

| Themes of clustered responses                                      | Number in cluster | %    |
|--|-------------------|------|
| Everyone should have their basic needs met                         | 510               | 15%  |
| Education is important   | 456               | 14%  |
| We all need family, friends, people that will love and care for us | 427               | 13%  |
| Support my health and mental health                                | 343               | 10%  |
| Keep us safe   | 314               | 9%   |
| Jobs and employment make a big difference                          | 208               | 6%   |
| Support us to have good lives                                      | 199               | 6%   |
| Value and respect us   | 174               | 5%   |
| Money matters  | 91                | 3%   |
| Opportunities  | 108               | 3%   |
| The environment should be cared for                                | 57                | 2%   |
| Other  | 451               | 14%  |
| Total  | 3338              | 100% |



