



# TAIOHI Insights 22

Data-driven perspectives to  
support rangatahi to thrive



Vodafone  
Aotearoa  
Foundation



- Data Navigator -



# FOREWORD

## What will we stand for?

The latest data release of OHI Data Navigator bringing together 2021 data from our sources, tells us that one in five rangatahi continue to experience disadvantage and exclusion in Aotearoa in 2021<sup>1</sup>.

For us at Te Rourou, Vodafone Aotearoa Foundation, this is unacceptable.

It is intolerable to think we, as a nation, would accept any level of exclusion and disadvantage. We have a responsibility to this generation and generations to come to address the systems which perpetuate exclusion and disadvantage for our rangatahi; for our mokopuna. This will ensure that we can work towards an Aotearoa we are proud of, one where all rangatahi have the resources they need to realise their aspirations.

In 2021 we released our first annual report, the Data Driven Perspectives report<sup>2</sup>. That report pulled together years of research and sector engagement for the work that became OHI Data Navigator. In that report, we highlighted some high-level data points which we again explore in this report. Adding to that work, we have listened to the voices of rangatahi to broaden our understanding of their experiences in relation to the data and themes explored throughout.

This report also highlights the start of a longer-term view in what the data are telling us, building on previous years observations. With this view in mind, we envision seeing patterns and trends emerge which are the direct result of the work happening at grassroots to alleviate the exclusion and disadvantage by rangatahi in Aotearoa.

To establish this year's report, we first reflect on the changes in the data and the impact this has had in the narratives and trends we're now seeing in the data. This is addressed in the next section.

1. Data from OHI Data Navigator and research-based definitions developed
2. <https://www.datanavigator.nz/data-driven-perspective-report-2020-21/>

## The data is more stable

The largest source data used in OHI Data Navigator comes from the Integrated Data Infrastructure, or IDI, a large research database which brings together government administrative data to an anonymised individual level about people in Aotearoa. Work continues to strengthen the systems and processes that guide the work of the IDI. As a result, in the 2021 data we saw some significant changes which have impacted what the data tells us. There are three key findings worth highlighting.

### **This is more robust data.**

After an investigation by our team, we determined that the data is more robust using definitions and parameters developed over 2021/22 which we believe better reflects the experiences of rangatahi in Aotearoa.

### **The narrative has changed.**

Whilst the data is more robust, some data points and our overall observation of exclusion and disadvantage in Aotearoa has shifted. In 2021, when we released our first report, based on 2020 data, showed that the experience of exclusion and disadvantage for rangatahi was getting worse, year on year. However, with the changes mentioned above, the 2021 data is showing a downward or stabilising trend in levels of exclusion and disadvantage.

### **The data is more stable.**

The bulk of what we believe to be improvements to the systems, in the IDI, has now been completed. Any work that does occur to further improve those data systems will be welcomed. We do not expect to see the data or narrative change due to significant updates to systems and processes as has happened in 2021. We do wish, however, to see future data which illustrate meaningful and positive shifts in the experiences of rangatahi.

While the aforementioned trends in the 2021 data for rangatahi is great, we should remember that in 2021, one in five rangatahi experience exclusion and disadvantage.

Is this an inequity that we should tolerate? No.

For more detailed information about the 2021 data updates, see <https://www.datanavigator.nz/2021-data-refresh-what-you-need-to-know/>

# The Data: What is it telling us?

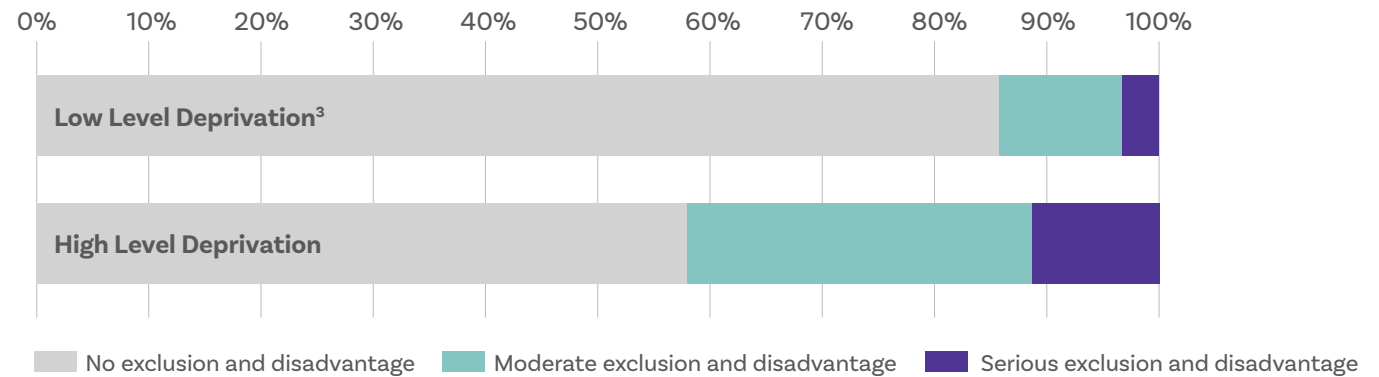
Data Year on Year - What has changed.

# 1. Income inequality is a significant factor in exclusion and disadvantage

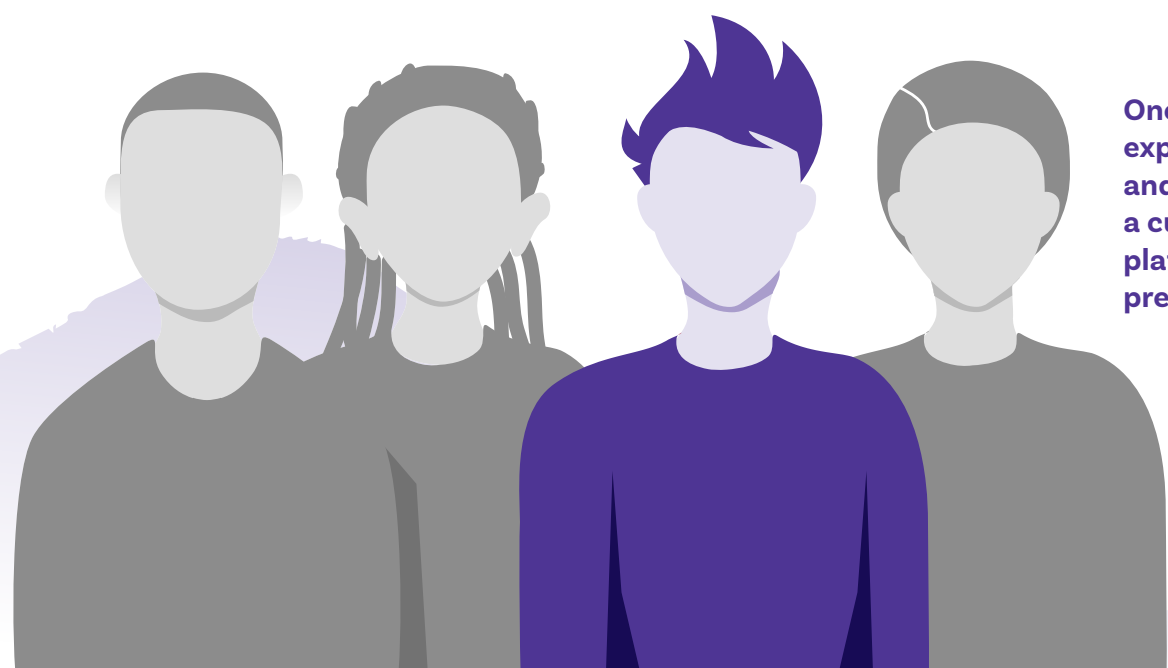
## Living with high levels of material deprivation

One in three rangatahi living in areas with high levels of material deprivation are experiencing exclusion and disadvantage. Those living with high levels of material deprivation are more than twice as likely to experience exclusion and disadvantage compared with those who live in low deprivation areas. This indicates that income inequality is a factor in the prevalence of exclusion and disadvantage.

Experiences of deprivation for rangatahi in 2021.



3. High level of deprivation for this report is considered 8-10 on the Deprivation Index.

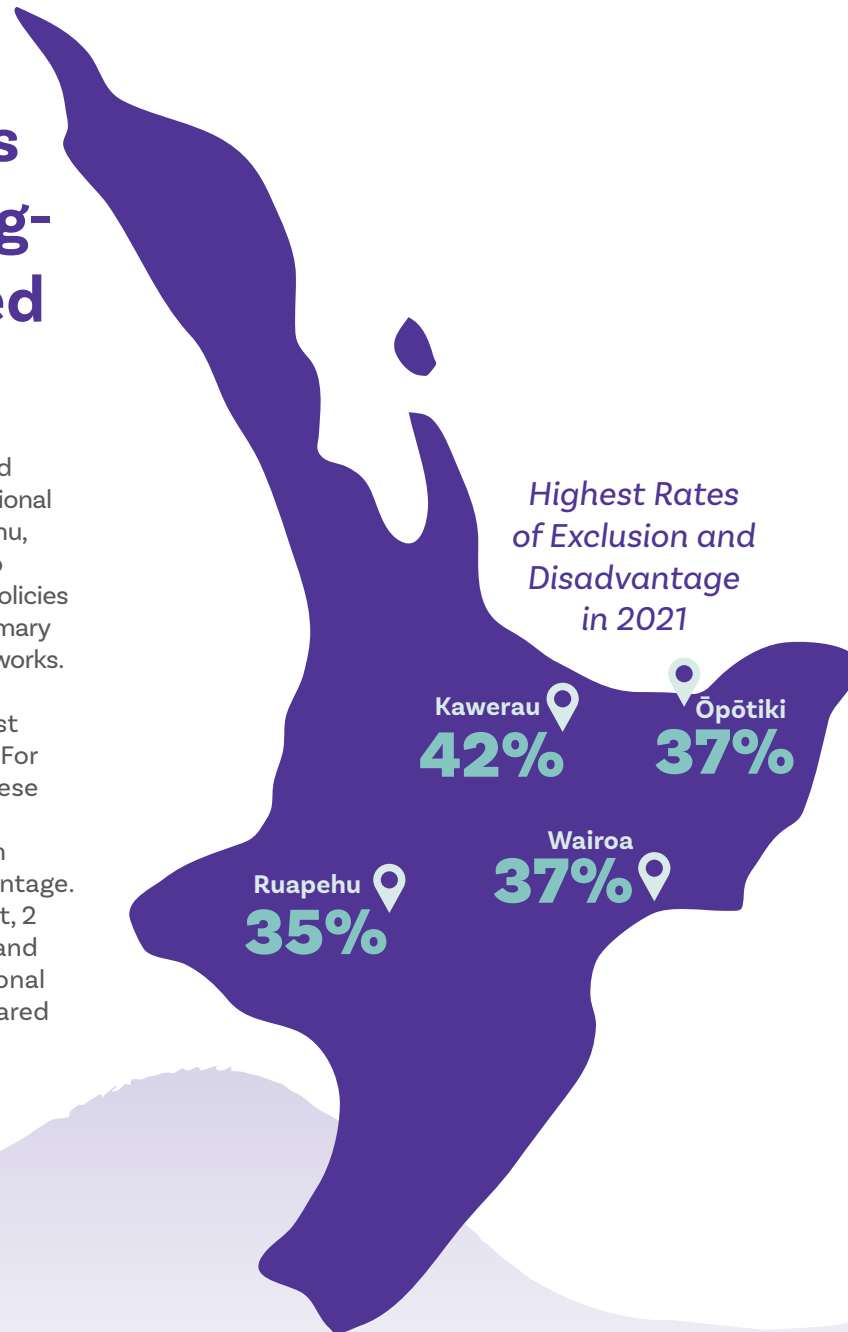


One in four young people experiencing exclusion and disadvantage are on a current year benefit, a plateauing trend on the previous two years.

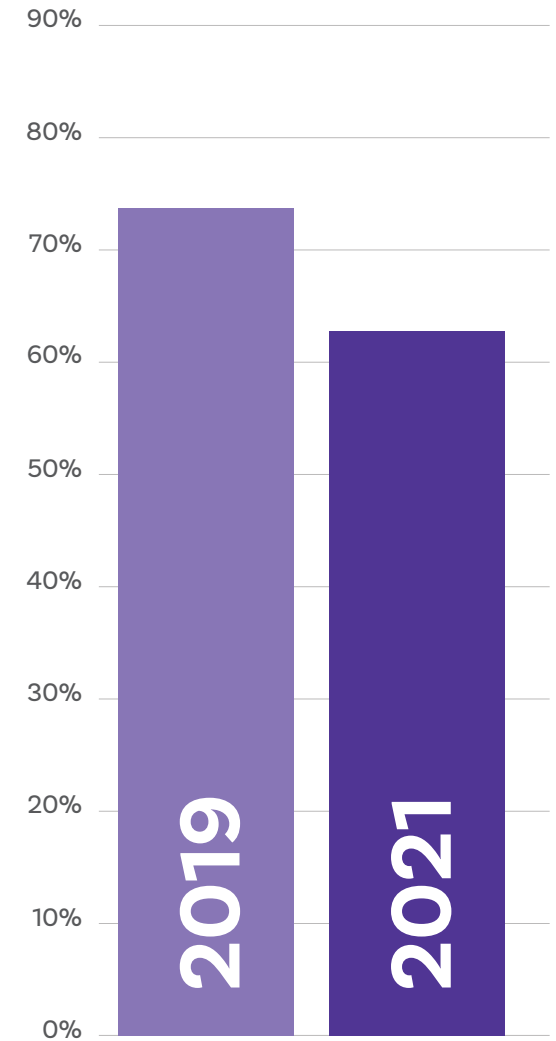
## 2. Economic policy decisions can result in long-term unintended consequences

Population data demonstrates continued and sustained impact year on year in regional centres such as Kawerau, Wairoa, Ruapehu, and Ōpōtiki. These are communities who experienced radical shifts in economic policies in previous years such as a closure of primary industries such as forestry and freezing works.

The impacts of these changes are most visible in employment and education. For 19-25 year olds, significant shifts in these experiences are found in Wairoa with an 11% drop between 2019 and 2021 in educational and employment disadvantage. While this is a significant improvement, 2 in 3 rangatahi experiencing exclusion and disadvantage are affected by educational and employment disadvantage compared with 1 in 3 across Aotearoa.



*Wairoa Education and Employment disadvantage in 2019 and 2021*



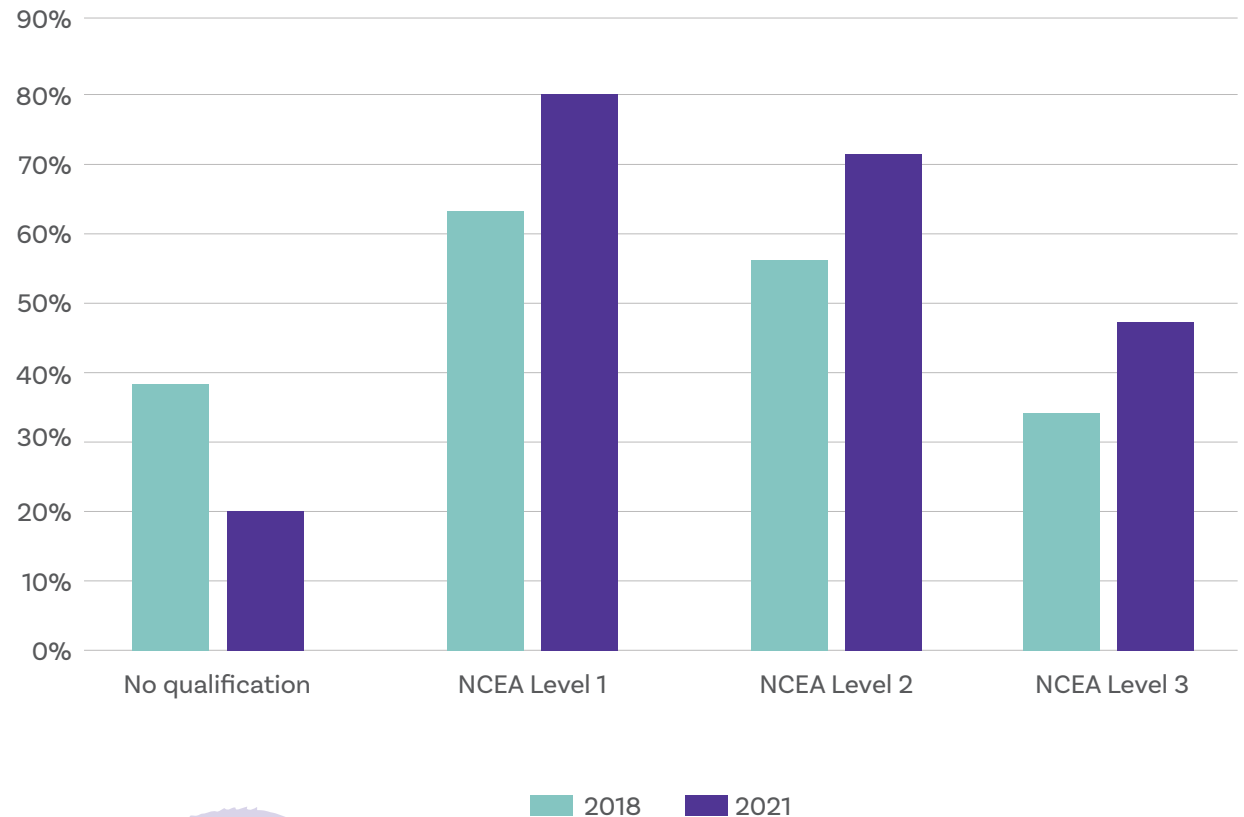
### 3. Education Matters

Year on year, we are seeing steady increases in young people leaving school with NCEA Level 3, however, when young people are experiencing exclusion and disadvantage, fewer are going on to complete further education in their early twenties. Young people not experiencing exclusion and disadvantage are more likely to leave school with a qualification and go on to complete a degree or post-secondary education.

For Māori, educational outcomes are improving. More rangatahi Māori left school with NCEA level 3 in 2021 (47%) compared to 2018 (35%). Rangatahi Māori, who are 19-25 years old, are attaining more qualifications. Numbers of those without qualifications dropped drastically by 18% from 2018 (38%) to 2021 (20%).

*“Education and employment is a huge factor for us, sometimes we just don’t have the chance to change things. We get stuck.”*

NCEA Achievement for 19-25 year old Rangatahi Māori in 2018 and 2021

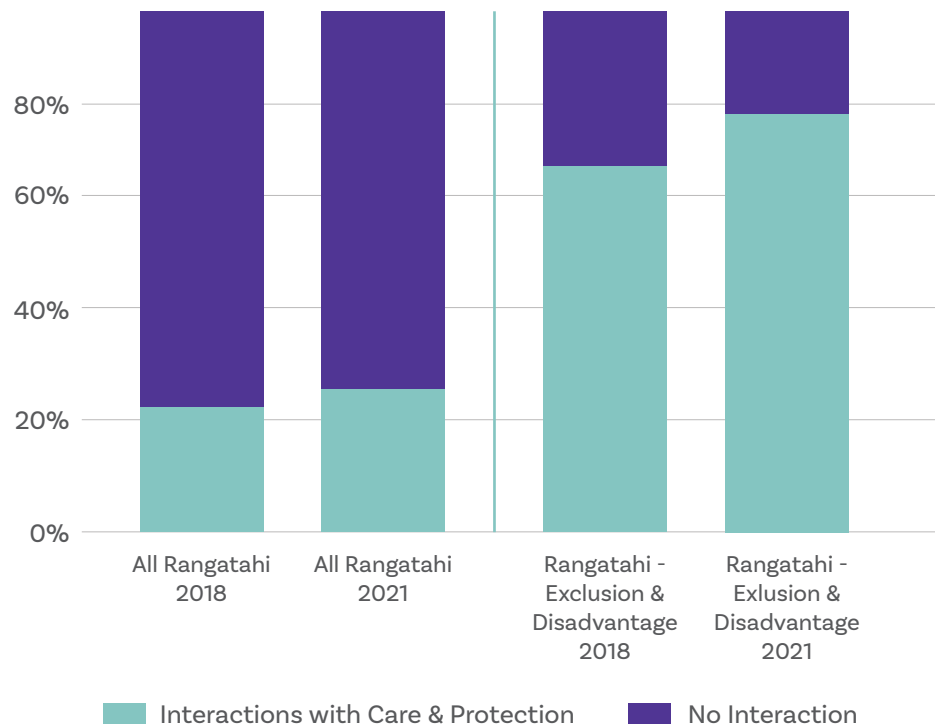


## 4. Safety is critical

Just over 1 in 5 rangatahi have had interactions with the Care and Protection system, a trend that has remained steady since 2018. We are increasingly seeing the effect this experience has on exclusion and disadvantage. Young people within the excluded and disadvantaged population, who have interacted with Care and Protection, has grown by 12% between 2018 (66%) and 2021 (78%).

Rangatahi experiencing exclusion and disadvantage are over 4.5 times more likely to experience a high-level interaction with the Care and Protection system.

*Care and Protection Interactions for all Rangatahi compared to excluded and disadvantage Rangatahi in 2018 and 2021*

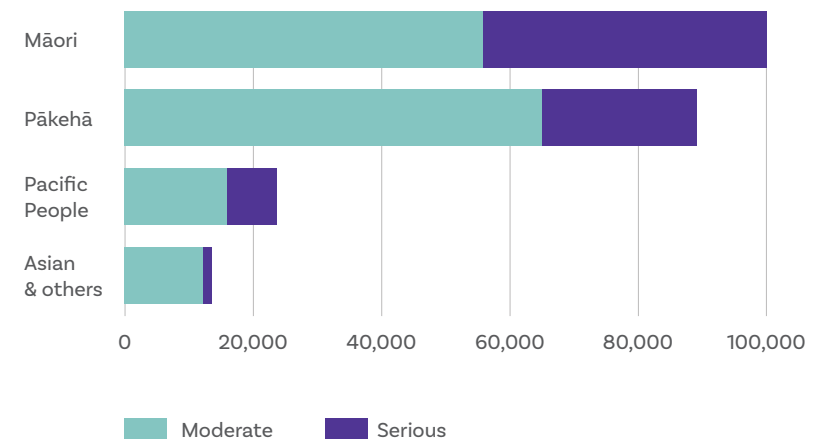


## 5. Structural inequities underpin exclusion and disadvantage

Māori continue to experience disproportionate rates of exclusion and disadvantage compared with non-Māori rangatahi. In 2021, 38% of rangatahi Māori experienced exclusion and disadvantage compared with 14% of Pākehā.

Despite the efforts of many, there has been little to no shift in these numbers demonstrating that the failures of the system for these rangatahi are not being addressed.

A proactive approach in system design, one that centres on the needs and aspirations of rangatahi Māori, is urgently required to address these disparities.





# What should we be prioritising in 2022? Youth Voice

## Wellbeing, connectedness, and future aspirations

Over the past 8 months, we have engaged with rangatahi, and organisations who work with rangatahi, to build a picture of what young people are considering as important to them. We asked:

- ▶ What issues are on top for rangatahi?
- ▶ What are the biggest challenges for rangatahi in 2022?
- ▶ What do you see as priorities for rangatahi in the coming year?

Three broad themes emerged: wellbeing, social connectedness, and aspirations for the future. From these three themes, each unveiled a range of kōrero (stories) and experiences which contribute in helpful and not so helpful ways to the realities experienced by rangatahi.



## WELLBEING n.

**A feeling of accessing one's culture and identity. Experiences which contribute to our happiness and connectedness.**

*"There is strength in family and getting energy from others."*

*"Perpetual ingrained racism from white people unwilling to give up power. Power should be given back to the people so they can change things."*

*"Kōrero is important for understanding, even accessing te reo Māori, this contributes to identity and therefore wellbeing."*

*"...the reassurance for rangatahi that they are important, seen, heard, also caters to their wellbeing"*

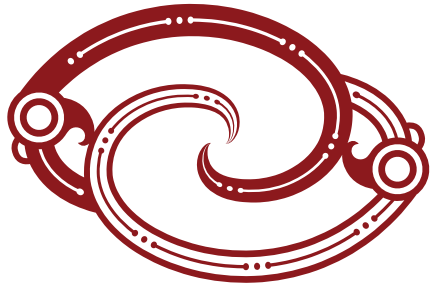
## Mana motuhake and wellbeing

Overall, rangatahi want safe spaces to express their culture and identity. Being themselves and not being judged or discriminated against contributes to rangatahi wellbeing. We need to recognise rangatahi mana motuhake to determine what contributes to their wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around them.

Through dialogue and kōrero, we can better understand the aspirations of rangatahi and the challenges they face. When we act on these, the impact is more meaningful for rangatahi. If there is no tangible and transparent response to our engagement with rangatahi, we are not honouring the kōrero shared with us. We need to make our engagement with rangatahi count.

Experiences contributing to wellbeing are not limited to culture and identity, it is also important for rangatahi to be at the centre of any policy or programme development. Rangatahi told us their mental wellbeing, physical health, and their environment contributes to their overall wellbeing.





## CONNECTEDNESS n.

**Connection to land which fosters connection beyond into iwi/hapū/whānau/hapori, therefore creating safe spaces, places, and people to connect with, who understand and accept who we are as rangatahi.**

*“Having places where I belong and feel safe whether that’s online or in my community.”*

*“Some people are just really angry and use social media to troll others.”*

*“Kapa haka impacts whānau. We come together, embrace cultures, [there is] happiness, enjoy the moment together, one big whānau.”*

## Connections to whenua, people and community is important

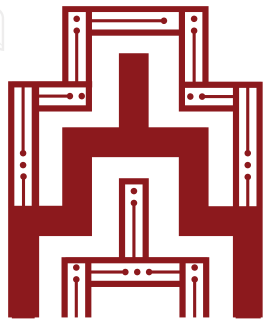
Intergenerational connections are important, as is being seen and heard by those in their community. Having meaningful ways to contribute to the community. Rangatahi told us that whānau/family is what grounds them. Many rangatahi we spoke to know where they're from and the land they connect to; this is a source of wellbeing for them.

Connectedness also goes beyond familial or community connections, it is about how young people are engaging in and are perceived or treated in online spaces and in their communities.

Having safe, accessible places which are engaging is fundamental to young people feeling connected. The digital world can be such a place. Access is a starting point with important device equity programmes like Toitū te Toki<sup>4</sup>, a pilot of the Foundation's work, then building on that to foster positive engagement with the technology and online spaces.

*“Technology - it sucks, but it's great. I want kids to know other ways of using [tech], I want them to expand it, to help communicate with the world.”*

4. Toitū te Toki is a digital equity programme being piloted in Murihiku, to get devices into all decile 1-2 schools in Aotearoa.



## ASPIRATIONS n.

**The ability to envision a future where rangatahi can pursue their dreams and are resourced to face life's challenges, whether that is for us, our taiao, or in the spaces in which we live.**

*“More resources and exposure to what’s out there to help us set or achieve our goals.”*

*“The ability to envision a future in which we can live freely and give back to our environment. A future in which political leaders put our taiao first.”*

*“All this raru in the world. There needs to be a trusted voice. 10-20 years ago, kids weren’t exposed to that stuff. Kids are like, “I don’t have the skills and tools to change this”. Navigating that is tricky. America is scary.”*

*“Seeing other peoples’ successes makes me strive. If they can do it, I can too.”*

## Rangatahi Aspirations for the Future

Despite this being the age of information at our fingertips, many rangatahi feel they are missing out and are not able to access information that will help them see the opportunities for their future. For example, rangatahi told us that might be in the form of limited access to subjects in school that interest them. Rangatahi also told us that feeling heard by teachers and communities about their aspirations would also go a long way to supporting them to achieve their goals. Being in environments that celebrate and unleash their talents and interests is crucial to a future where they feel enabled to thrive.

Rangatahi are hungry to give back to the community and contribute in meaningful ways but do not always feel like they have the power to. Some rangatahi find that the conditions imposed are too heavy and do not centre their own goals and aspirations. For many, those aspirations are not for self, but for their communities now, and for future generations to come.

# Call to Action

In our 2021 report, we made seven recommendations for key areas where action is needed to address the inequities experienced by our rangatahi.

The systems, that are meant to support and provide opportunities for a thriving Aotearoa, are broken. Successive governments have failed to provide for the needs and aspirations of our mokopuna, as demonstrated by the data and voices of rangatahi in this report. We've provided a summary below of our recommendations which remain unchanged from 2021. More importantly, these are recommendations that many before us have highlighted and that our rangatahi continue to tell us.

# 1. Centre Te Tiriti o Waitangi

**Placing Te Tiriti o Waitangi as central to systemic reform will mean delivering sustained transfer of power to iwi and community-led organisations.**

We are not the first to say this, and we will not be the last. We have seen a generation of Māori leaders before us paving the way for their mokopuna and future generations reiterating the same wero (challenge) to Aotearoa. It is communities and tangata whenua who understand the long-term outlook and carry an intergenerational focus. Te Tiriti o Waitangi needs to be centred in any systemic reform.

**“Take a step back to take a step forward, looking to the past to help with our futures”**

Rangatahi told us that whatever the solutions are, they should be iwi, hapū, and whānau led. Solutions for Māori, by Māori. Solutions for and by communities. Many iwi, hapū, and whānau have intergenerational goals spanning 10, 20, 50 years and beyond. They understand what is needed for systemic, intergenerational impact.

**“We want a seat at the table in the United Nations, for youth and indigenous. This needs to be genuine.”**

It could be said it is a bold step to take, but we believe differently. It is our collective responsibility and obligation under Te Tiriti o Waitangi that urgent action is taken to address the ongoing impacts of colonisation.

Whether it is a seat at the table in the United Nations, or a board table for a charity set up to support rangatahi. Our engagement needs to be genuine.



## 2. Decolonise the data that informs our decisions

*Ensure the data we use to tell stories, identify patterns, and make decisions is examined for biases and takes into account principles of Māori data sovereignty.*

Much of the data we still work with is derived from deficit-based data. It speaks to narratives that seek to box people into predetermined outcomes and takes the human out of the equation. Challenging the systems which bring us this data is important. We can do this by centring lived experience. For us this means speaking to rangatahi and enabling them to articulate what a data narrative feels like to them, and how they want to be represented in the data.

If we care about the needs of rangatahi, then we need to centre their voices by looking beyond the data to shape the decisions we make.

*“Government cares about how the world perceives us. Live up to this. Make this happen.”*

*“Political parties: why are you not all engaging with rangatahi Māori? Why are we not moving past this?”*

*“There is so much invested in infrastructure like roads, but no investment in rangatahi.”*

## 3. Increase income levels through benefits and wages

*All of the data and research points to income inequality and material deprivation as a key driver for exclusion and disadvantage*

It is easy to celebrate when data shifts in a positive direction. This is great for rangatahi, even in some data points we've shared in this report. However, we should not forget one in five rangatahi are experiencing disadvantage in Aotearoa. Or that one in two rangatahi Māori experiencing exclusion and disadvantage are experiencing high levels of material hardship. This is unacceptable. It is intolerable.

Incremental income rises, half-price public transport fares, petrol excise tax relief, winter power payments and cost-of-living payments are policies which favour a majority, many for whom basic needs are already being met. For those experiencing material hardship, the short-term relief will remain that: short-term. The government needs to take immediate action that alleviates present need and looks long-term beyond election cycles.

## 4. Listen and enact whakaaro of lived-experience

*To create the conditions for systemic reform, we must welcome and listen to the voices of those with lived experience of exclusion and disadvantage, and genuinely promote their expertise into positions of power and influence at the decision-making tables of government, philanthropy and service providers.*

*“We want purposeful positions in communities. Kaitiaki as positions of power”*

We can, and must, in government, philanthropy, and service, be guided by the needs and aspirations of our communities.

This requires a proactive approach: engagement with community and following up in meaningful and tangible ways. Community engagement in the form of meetings and surveys is not enough. You must be willing to let the voices of rangatahi and those with lived experience not just influence but be the basis for your decision-making and be accountable to them in the ways you've actioned their feedback.

For government, philanthropy, and service providers, taking this a step further means deliberately and actively shifting the demographics of those at the decision-making table or influencing the decisions. It is also not a lone voice invited. It is a long-term, sustained commitment.

## 5. Business on the hook for championing social change

*Change is not just a job for the government, the social sector or Māori. The private sector also has a role to play in creating a more equitable, thriving society for children and young people.*

Funding, gifts in-kind, fundraisers and other forms of traditional corporate social responsibility are still important, but these acts of public philanthropy are only the tip of the iceberg for what can be done to champion social change.

Embedding progressive, empowering policies into your business can enable a foundation for shifting experiences of exclusion and disadvantage. By paying employees well, prioritising wellbeing through leave provisions and other benefits, we can build a productive, valued workforce which has flow on effects for rangatahi, whānau and our communities.

Government can also encourage business in this way by lifting the bar for employment relations.

## 6. Empower and resource communities to lead change

*Communities must be resourced to lead systemic change for themselves.*

*“Treat our communities as the centre of what we do”*

Enabling communities to lead change for themselves goes hand in hand with the ways in which government, philanthropy and business can champion social change. By listening and acting on the advice of experts with lived-experience, and divesting decisions away from those with power to communities most affected, we will start to see activation in the community with community-led responses.



## 7. Lean into what makes us unique

*To create a more equitable, thriving society for tamariki and rangatahi, we must embrace our national identity and build the systems and structures that will help us meet our aspirations.*

While looking to the past for learning, we must look to the future and the solutions which are within reach from our own communities. Our formative years, since the dawn of colonisation, have many lessons on what will stifle aspirations. However, we have it within our own communities and the leaders of tomorrow, our rangatahi, mokopuna and future generations to pave a path where rangatahi thrive, and where our foundations are centred in our collective aspirations for an equitable Aotearoa.



## Kuputaka **Glossary**

Mokopuna **grandchild, descendant**

Rangatahi **young person**

Whānau **extended familial group or family**

Mana Motuhake **self-determination, determination of one's aspirations for the future**

Tangata whenua **Māori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa**

Kōrero **stories, conversations**

Whakaaro **thought, opinion**

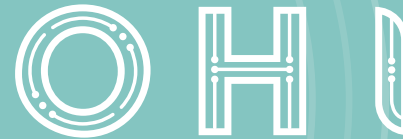
***We don't need to fix  
our young people.  
We need to fix the systems  
that view them through  
a deficit lens - systems  
which consistently exclude  
them from opportunities.***

*Action is required now if we're to secure a future for rangatahi where they have opportunities to realise their aspirations. Through prioritising wellbeing, connectedness, and the future aspirations of rangatahi, we can create an Aotearoa where we all thrive. This is not bold action.*

**It is all our responsibility to work in ways that make meaningful difference to future generations.**



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