



YOUTH 2022

WESTERN BAY OF PLENTY

VitalSigns®





The Acorn Foundation has been working in the Western Bay of Plenty region since 2003, connecting generous people who care with causes that matter. We are building a charitable fund that will cater for the current and future needs of our region - forever. Donations are pooled and invested and the investment income is used to support local charities and community groups, according to the donors' wishes. The capital remains intact. To date, Acorn has distributed over \$10million in annual grants, awards and scholarships.

Acorn is constantly evolving and learning from the innovators, community leaders, and most importantly, the people we live and work amongst.

Vital Signs® is a key resource for us. It takes a snapshot of the health and vitality of our region across key indicators and lets us know where we need to focus our annual distributions. Acorn's role is to use the insights gained from the Vital Signs® report to help inspire and support those people who will help build a vibrant and thriving community in the Western Bay of Plenty region. We strive to be a catalyst for strengthening community well-being, now and for future generations, by promoting generosity, creating partnerships and supporting diverse charitable organisations that are truly making a difference.

Vital Signs® Youth 2022 is the culmination of many months' work. We hope this report will help charities, other foundations and not-for-profit organisations, policy advisors and our local communities to identify how best we can deliver the resources our youth need to live lives that they value. They are our future.

This Western Bay of Plenty Vital Signs® Youth 2022 report provides a rich insight into the quality of life, sense of belonging, prospects for a successful transition from education into employment, health and aspirations of our youth aged 14-24. It builds on the Acorn Foundation's earlier Vital Signs® reports in 2015, 2018 and Vital Update 2020.

This report was produced using data collected and analysed by the Acorn Foundation and Growth Development Ltd.

As you read this report, we also hope it will inspire you to consider how you can make your own personal contribution to our place – the Western Bay of Plenty.

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.

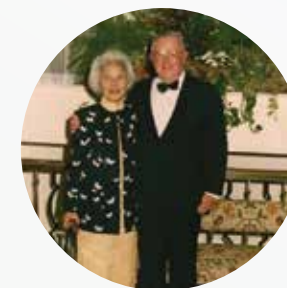
Franklin Roosevelt





**THE TERM 'YOUTH'
THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT,
INCLUDES YOUNG PEOPLE
AGED 14 TO 24 YEARS,
UNLESS OTHERWISE
STATED.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



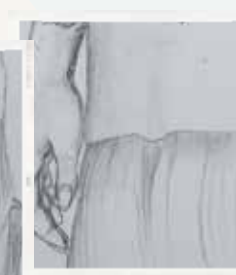
The generosity of Acorn Foundation donors, including people such as Roy and Mary McGowan, has provided a substantial pool of funds each year that is targeted at supporting our youth of the Western Bay of Plenty to thrive.

A local aspiring youth Graphic Designer Jordan Williams, designed the global, national and local icons featured throughout this report.



We are honoured to feature the artists Lizzie Newton (left), Ruby Wills (below left) and Riley Jamieson (below right). These very talented youth offered the use of their amazing work for this report.

We also would like to acknowledge and thank the youth who provided feedback on their thoughts on what this report should look like.



VitalSigns® is a community check-up conducted by foundations around the world that measures the vitality of our communities and identifies significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Vital Signs is coordinated internationally by Community Foundations of Canada. The Vital Signs trademark is used with permission from Community Foundations of Canada.



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Western Bay of Plenty Vital Signs® Youth 2022 is a youth-focused literature review compiling various insights, data and research to help inform solutions for our youth in the Western Bay of Plenty region. Vital Signs® is a tool that is used to understand the social, cultural, health, environmental and economic needs of communities. The Focus Areas identified in this report reflect the key areas emerging through the comprehensive research undertaken, as well as the initial findings of an explorative hui held by Acorn Foundation in October 2021.

It should be noted that although much of this content references national and international studies and reports, the need to capture and reflect the perspective and experience of our local community, where possible, has been a priority. In reading the report, locate the icons below to navigate the global, national and local insights gathered.



Whilst Acorn Foundation and the researchers from Growth Development have made every effort to locate as many existing insights as possible, we stress that we are well aware that there will be more out there we haven't uncovered, particularly in the local space. On that note, if you have key insights that have not been featured please contact insights@growthdevelopment.co.nz.

YOUTH THOUGHTS ON THIS REPORT...



THE BIG PICTURE

For those that like a snapshot read!

The BIG 'Stuff'

Mental health ranked as the most common topic in all Focus Areas of this report. Studies highlight that Aotearoa has ongoing, deep struggles with youth suicide.¹ We continue to have one of the highest youth suicide rates today, more than double that of the average developed country.² Locally, providers, young people and whānau identify an urgent need for improved access to acute mental health services, counselling and community upskilling.

Not surprisingly, the impact of Covid-19 also features. Yet it is global challenges, that are also seeing the current youth generation lead the way, bringing back the values of contribution, collectivity and kaitiakitanga.

However, the research highlights that if ongoing, deeply engrained societal challenges are not put front and centre, we will struggle to make the big picture gains needed. Key to this is the need to support communities to come together and work together on solutions. It is highlighted that solutions must be youth-led. Yet local insights also give us clues that the expertise of service providers at the frontline, is foundational to successfully build our youth for the future.

The Quick Wins

- 1 Investment in mentorship based programmes, especially those with a mental and holistic wellness focus, as well as life skill development.
- 2 Training made available to existing youth services in further understanding mental health vulnerabilities and how to work with these.
- 3 Improve access to support, programmes, services, recreational activities and events for youth through investment in targeted transportation initiatives, especially for rural communities.

Key Considerations

- Safe housing for youth is identified as as one of the biggest challenges locally.
- We don't know enough. We need further insights from our local youth about what they want and need to thrive in our region. We then need to respond as a community. For example, some past community investment in youth events has seen low youth engagement, despite youth wanting more events.³ Solutions need to put youth views at the centre, as well as look to frontline youth workers (many who hold the expertise around breaking down engagement barriers) to better understand what is needed.
- Youth having spaces that are theirs, to belong and to access support and services, are a top priority across the entire region. It is highlighted that it is not just about investing in youth activities, we must ensure that our diverse youth populations are involved in coming up with ideas and designing solutions. Opportunities need to reflect the future orientated values our youth hold.
- There are clear themes that marginalised groups, including Māori, Pasifika, rainbow, migrant and disabled youth populations, are subjected to poorer outcomes. There must also be a commitment to explore and understand more of the unique needs of smaller and rural communities. For example, there are limited formal insights available for Katikati youth and the surrounding communities.

THE REPORT FOCUS AREAS



HEALTH & WELLBEING

Physical, social, spiritual, mental and emotional wellbeing

What's important?

- Mental Health
- Holistic Wellness
- Covid-19 Impact
- Reducing Obesity
- Cultural Responsiveness
- Whānau & Community

COVID'S IMPACT ON YOUTH EDUCATION, YOUTH WELLBEING AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT - COMBINED WITH INCREASINGLY UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING AND RISING FOOD COSTS - ALL POINT TO POORER YOUTH OUTCOMES. ACTIONS NEED TO BE TAKEN TO BETTER SUPPORT YOUTH AND REVERSE THESE TRENDS.¹¹

Globally, there is growing awareness of the link between youth mental health and income inequalities, poverty, poor education and the accessibility of health services.¹

There is a call for schools to be involved in addressing the mental health stigma.^{4,5}

Social media is affecting the wellbeing of youth worldwide, impacting their social, mental and emotional health.⁶⁻⁸

There is a need for health-related services that address youth mental health, drug & alcohol abuse and healthy eating.^{5,9}

Youth with mental health challenges such as depression or anxiety are less likely to receive support than youth with more visible challenges (such as being disruptive or aggressive).¹⁰

The Māori suicide rate is much higher than the non-Māori suicide rate and we know Māori need targeted suicide prevention initiatives.²

In Aotearoa, mental and emotional health is one of the most pressing issues for our youth, whānau and communities. Over the last decade, we have consistently had one of the highest youth suicide rates in the developed world. Whilst we are making some gains, our youth continue to be twice as likely to take their lives, compared to the average country in the developed world. These rates reflect our struggle as a nation to meet the overall wellbeing needs of our youth.^{1,2,12-16} Symptoms of depression and rates of suicide attempts are higher among youth living in lower income communities.¹⁷

Another pressing issue is our child obesity rate, which is the second highest in the developed world.¹ Poverty is also identified as leading to poorer youth health outcomes across the board, with one key issue being the poverty related barriers to healthcare access.¹

Sexual activity among young people has reduced, along with teen abortion rates. This trend has been linked to increased sexual health awareness through education and the emphasis placed on the use of contraception, although STI rates still remain high.¹⁸

There have been declines in cigarette smoking and binge drinking among youth, however vaping and gaming have emerged as new issues.^{19,20}

The health-related priorities identified by attendees at the Acorn Hui October 2021 reflect a range of concerns across our region.²¹

- An urgent need for improved access to mental health support.
- Service providers' call for access to more face-to-face support.
- Counselling with no wait times and 24/7 access.
- Youth centres or drop-in spaces that include health services.
- Youth-led initiatives, and the inclusion of a youth voice at local, regional and national levels.
- More education for community supports to recognise mental health vulnerabilities.
- Solutions that include Māori practices, traditional healing, knowledge, beliefs, values and experiences.

Additionally, poor oral health in children and young people is a priority for Midland and BOP regions. Māori have the highest admission rates for dental treatment locally.²²

Talking about mental health and reaching out for support should be the norm from an early age.²²

TOP PRIORITIES

1

A drastic increase in accessibility to local mental health, suicide prevention and addictions support.

2

To understand how to respond as a whole community to the broader barriers impacting youth wellbeing, including the impact of Covid-19.

3

To ensure our youth are actively involved in naming their wellbeing needs, as well as ideas for solutions.

4

Easier access to health initiatives, with a focus on youth nutrition and holistic wellbeing.

Tauranga Vital Update 2020³

Six out of ten youth would consult a doctor (61%), family or a friend (59%) or Google (59%) if they need information about health and wellbeing.



Three quarters consider exercise, healthy eating, social contact with friends and family, and mental health to be important factors for health and wellbeing.

HOUSING

A safe, stable environment to call home

What's important?

- Stability
- Affordability
- Safety
- Equity and Income
- Whānau
- Access

Young people face a variety of challenges when wanting to live independently, which impacts their ability to learn the foundational knowledge needed to become an adult.²³

The global trend of youth finding it hard to secure safe and affordable housing (further impacted by Covid-19), can delay a young person's decision to move out of their parent's home.¹¹

In Aotearoa our young people say they need housing that is...

- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Suited to their needs
- ✓ Close to public transport
- ✓ Close to education and training facilities
- ✓ Has supported living options for young people with disabilities, mental health issues or addiction ²⁴

RAINBOW SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO REPORT HOUSING DEPRIVATION (38%) THAN THEIR NON-RAINBOW PEERS (28%).²⁵

If a young person grows up in an insecure and unsafe home here in Aotearoa, they are more likely to live in an insecure and unsafe home as an adult.²⁶ It is estimated that over half of the homeless population in Aotearoa are youth under the age of 25 years old.^{27,28}

An instability in housing also increases the likelihood of youth being exposed to violence and discrimination.²⁴

Rangatahi Māori talk about having a stable home and access to the basics as being vital to a good life. Access to more money was a common solution to whānau wellbeing, as then parents could spend time with whānau and pay their bills, without the need to work long hours or have multiple jobs.²⁹

Quality, affordable and secure housing enables improved outcomes for youth in other areas.²⁶

IT IS WELL RECOGNISED COVID FURTHER IMPACTED YOUNG PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THOSE UNDER 18 YEARS OLD AS THEY WERE UNABLE TO SIGN FOR EMERGENCY HOUSING.^{13,27}

Youth are more likely to live with their parents, especially if they are studying. However, for some young people, living with their parents may not be in their best interests.^{3,21,30}

There is a need for safe houses that are accessible, secure, and meet the diverse needs of all youth, where they can be supported while studying or working.^{21,30}

There is an urgent need for affordable housing and better support for youth and their whānau to have access to safe, healthy, and warm homes. The additional needs of those in emergency housing must also be considered.^{21,20,31}

TOP PRIORITIES

1

Ensure that resources are supporting safe and healthy home environments for young people and their whānau.

2

A solid strategy to reduce the housing needs of homeless youth, particularly those under 18 years old.

3

Safe, supportive and affordable pathways to support youth into independent living.

4

Further local research into youth homelessness and what our community can do to support them.

TE PUKE YOUTH FORUM 2021³⁰

YOUTH IDENTIFIED

A pathway to affordable housing of a good standard

YOUTH & SERVICE PROVIDERS IDENTIFIED

Support networks for housing and homelessness

ENVIRONMENT

Physical and immediate surroundings, including whenua

What's important?

- Transport
- Sustainability
- Safe Spaces
- Kaitiakitanga
- Equitable Access
- Covid-19 Impact

Youth can't receive help if they can't access it.

As seen in global trends, youth in Aotearoa are also increasingly aware of the devastating effects of climate change and environmental destruction. The urgency of these issues is leading youth to develop a strong sense of meaning and commitment to being the ones to influence change (kaitiakitanga).³⁶⁻³⁸

Young people are also identified to be more at risk due to environmental factors such as lack of internet and/or remote physical location, creating barriers to digital access and transport.^{39,40,41}

Connection to the land (whenua), especially for rangatahi Māori, is recognised as important to holistic wellbeing, with its intrinsic link to whānau and whakapapa.^{24,36,42}

Across the globe youth are becoming the new leaders of change. They are more aware of the environment they live in, and how such things as climate change are directly linked to the stability of their future.^{4,32,33}

Whilst some youth are concerned about having gone beyond the point of no return, the majority of youth are optimistic that people's personal commitment to addressing environmental and climate issues will be greater post-pandemic.⁴

Environmental factors, such as a lack of transport or the distance between home and education/training, are associated with increased disconnection and poorer life outcomes.³⁴

Solution-orientated research recognises that whilst the issues are complex, the solutions don't have to be.⁶

In a national study, Bay of Plenty in particular, had participants report that there were spots where there was no cell phone coverage. This meant they were unable to access the Internet. The same study identified Māori & Pasifika youth as one of the groups most at risk of digital exclusion.^{40,41}

Access to transport for youth is a persistent theme across the Western Bay of Plenty.

Where youth are physically located in our region affects their ability to access support and services. Young people who live in rural areas, or outside of the main centres, have more barriers and higher needs for local solutions.^{3,31,46}

Creating safe spaces and environments that support youth belonging and encourage them to engage is an identified need in our region.^{21,30}

Solution-orientated conversations involve Youth Centres, drop-in spaces or 'One Stop Shop' services that provide wrap around support from physical health through to education and employment.^{21,30}

LIVING TOO FAR AWAY TOPPED THE LIST OF 'REASONS TO HAVE LESS CONTACT' AT 49% FOR MALES AND 56% OF FEMALES.³

"I WAS GOING TO A COURSE AT THE POLYTECH, BUT IT GOT HARD COS I DON'T HAVE A CAR AND COULDN'T GET A RIDE IN. I GOT BEHIND, SO I LEFT."
FEMALE, 17 YEARS LIVES IN PAENGAROA.⁴⁶

TOP PRIORITIES

- 1 **Transport solutions to improve access to training, employment, recreational activities and wellbeing services. Especially for those outside of the main centres and in rural areas.**
- 2 **More broadly, ensure we consider how the unique physical makeup of our region, impacts our youth.**
- 3 **Ensure we have safe youth spaces and environments that meet the needs of youth across the region, such as Youth Centres and 'One Stop Shops' that provide wrap around services.**
- 4 **Development and support for youth initiatives that look to engage youth through kaitiakitanga to preserve our natural environment.**

SAFETY

Having safe spaces to engage with others, develop skills and seek support when needed

What's important?

- Safe Spaces & Environments
- Safe Housing
- Support Networks
- Addressing Bullying
- Reducing Crime
- Healthy Relationships

ONLY
19%
FEEL THAT
CYBERBULLYING CAN BE
ADDRESSED BY EXISTING
ANTI-BULLYING MEASURES.⁴⁸

Youth are particularly concerned about issues such as bullying, hate crime and antisocial behaviour.^{9,47}

In particular, young people were concerned about how these issues often go unreported and the effect this can have on young people's physical and mental wellbeing.⁹

A significant relationship between lower income neighbourhoods and safety is highlighted.¹¹



The estimated incidence of cyberbullying in New Zealand is the third highest of the 29 countries surveyed.⁴⁸

Risk taking behaviour has been declining since 2001.⁴⁹ This is due to youth learning from their mistakes, more parental involvement, more open discussions and more education around risk taking behaviour (such as smoking and drinking alcohol).

With the increased use of technology among young people, cyberbullying has increased along with it. Our disabled community are more at risk of experiencing cyberbullying and young Māori females are more likely to experience bullying through text messages.⁵⁰⁻⁵³

Youth are more likely to experience violence than any other age group. Boys and girls are equally likely to experience teen dating violence, but males are more likely to experience physical violence and females more likely to experience sexual violence.^{54,55}

Rainbow youth are more likely to feel unsafe at school and at home, indicating that more education to promote understanding and inclusion is needed.⁵⁶

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL/COURSE TO MAKE IT BETTER, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Sixty-five participants involved with Oranga Tamariki answered this question. Their responses showed needs for basic rights such as fairness, inclusion and safety, as well as for material essentials such as food and warmth.¹⁵

Youth in Tauranga are twice as likely to experience family harm than any other age groups.³



Spaces where youth feel safe are essential. We need to look to local youth for answers and hear what they need these spaces to look like.³⁰

Vital Update Tauranga 2020³

Responses indicate 25% of our youth do not feel safe at home during the night. This proportion is considerably higher than other age groups in Tauranga.

18% of young people reported experiencing crimes committed against them in the last 18 months.

The city centre is perceived to be the least safe area both during the day and during the night by young people aged 16-24 years.

Overall perceptions of safety were lowest among people residing in Tauranga South, city centre, Sulphur Point, Gate Pā [Pukehinahina] and Merivale [Parkvale].

TOP PRIORITIES

1

To understand why our youth don't feel safe, what they need to feel safe and how we can respond as a community.

2

Ensure development and rollout initiatives that address the cause, impact and flow-on effects of cyberbullying for youth.

3

Provide our youth with safe places and ensure that all youth have equitable access to these.

4

Using targeted approaches that provide extra support to our young people who have lived experience of family violence.

5

Include whānau in improving the lives of their young people, otherwise, there will continue to be a significant impact on youth potential and development, regardless of the effectiveness of any programmes or interventions.

BELONGING & ENGAGEMENT

A sense of security and acceptance, connection and participation

What's important?

- Mental Wellbeing
- Whānau, Hapū and Iwi
- Youth-Led
- Mental Health
- Activities, Events & Youth Spaces
- Community Participation

FOR MY VOICE AND OTHERS TO BE HEARD. WE NEED PEOPLE LIKE YOU TO LISTEN AND TAKE IN THE THINGS WE SAY, NOT JUST IN ONE EAR AND OUT THE OTHER.²⁹

Globally, there is a lot of talk about increasing youth belonging. This is critical to young people's mental wellbeing; youth need this to have positive outcomes.⁵⁷⁻⁶⁰

Belonging is improved through connection to friends, family and the wider community.⁶¹

Young people want to be involved and engaged in decision making that impacts them and it is important for their future and their world.⁴

A study in the UK found that 69% of young people feel like they belong in their community,⁹ compared to 46% in Tauranga between ages 16-24, with 26% of this age group 'feeling alone often or all the time'.³

Rangatahi Māori focused on the immediate and basic needs of their whānau and communities. When asked what they needed to have a good life, very few discussed their own individual aspirations.²⁹

Government plans have a greater commitment to promoting youth voice and collaboration amongst agencies and readily acting upon feedback as part of the Covid-19 recovery.

Participating in community and sustainability can help young people develop a sense of purpose. This helps them to feel valued and optimistic about the future.⁶²

I'M QUITE YOUNG AND STRUGGLE TO FIND OTHER PEOPLE MY AGE IN TAURANGA.³

Creating environments that enhance youth belonging and encourage engagement is a strong theme in our region.^{3,21,63}

Local insights identify key actions to strengthen youth belonging:

- More engagement opportunities that capture a diverse range of youth voices.
- Addressing key focus areas, such as enabling youth-led initiatives, creating equity of opportunity, improving access to sports and recreation, providing role models/mentoring, as well as supporting whānau and engaging youth in education.

Belonging determines engagement¹⁶

TOP PRIORITIES

1

Increase the sense of belonging for youth across the region.

2

Ensure that the development and delivery of recreational activities, events and youth spaces are youth-led.

3

For rangatahi Māori, we must focus on strengthening the links between their whānau and wider supports, as well as connecting to local iwi and hapū.

4

More local insights are needed to capture the diverse youth needs in the space of belonging and engagement. These must consider the unique needs of ethnic minorities, as well as our rainbow, immigrant and disabled youth.

Vital Update Tauranga 2020³

74% OF YOUTH ARE NOT INTERESTED IN THE TYPES OF THE EVENTS CURRENTLY ON OFFER IN TAURANGA, WITH 56% NEVER OR RARELY ATTENDING CURRENT TAURANGA EVENTS. HOWEVER, THIS WAS THE HIGHEST AREA OF INTEREST FOR IMPROVING TAURANGA FOR THE FUTURE AT 25% OF THOSE SURVEYED, ALONGSIDE ACTIVITIES.

RANGATAHI MĀORI FEEL MORE CONNECTED WITH THE WIDER COMMUNITY (53%) THAN YOUTH IN TAURANGA OVERALL (46%).

EDUCATION

Formal and informal learning, including life skill development

What's important?

- Covid-19 Impact
- Diversity
- Holistic Wellbeing
- Life Skill Development
- Educational Pathways
- Systemic Bias

Across the globe, lockdowns forced schools to close and move to virtual education. This posed challenges for youth and teachers alike.^{65,66}

Research highlights that vulnerable youth will be most impacted. Students from privileged backgrounds, who are supported by their parents and eager and able to learn, could find their way to alternative learning opportunities.¹¹

Removing barriers so that all youth have the same opportunities (e.g digital access, educational pathways, addressing racism) is key to ensuring positive outcomes for all.^{68,69}

Systemic bias is evidenced in the increased rates of Māori students being stood-down, expelled or streamed into lower-level classes and the low expectations of Māori to achieve.⁷⁰

Fewer than 1% of excluded and disadvantaged young people go on to complete tertiary study in their early twenties.⁷¹

Young people with mental health struggles are less likely to fully engage in school, making them a priority area to ensure responsiveness. Affordable housing, a healthy home, a stable income and a connection to whenua and whakapapa are all major drivers of educational achievement.⁷¹

Education outcomes for rangatahi Māori and Pasifika have been improving over recent years. Recent government initiatives further acknowledge the need to continue strengthening the diverse needs of youth.^{72,73}

Youth who are not in education or employment for a lengthy period of time become burnt out by the 'system' and are less likely to take necessary risks to upskill.⁷⁴

There is a growing call to ensure what is being taught in schools is relevant to young people and will teach them about the real world. Intervention programmes are not 'one-size-fits-all' and we need to recognise they do not always create lasting change.^{29,75}

A key local message is that as a community we need to work together to find ways to keep all youth, whatever their circumstances, engaged in some form of education or training.²¹

Local providers highlight a need to ensure youth are able to gain clear career pathways and have access to programmes that will lead to employment.^{30,46}

There is a real need to ensure youth get the practical support they need to set them up for their future.^{21,30}

All support needs to be underpinned by a focus on relationships. Mentoring support is highlighted as a key means to addressing engagement gaps.^{21,30,46,64,76}

TOP PRIORITIES

1

A targeted approach to address the longer term Covid-19 impacts for our most vulnerable youth.

2

A targeted approach to alternative educational pathways for youth impacted by mental health challenges.

3

Ensure digital learning access for all of our youth across the region.

4

Empower our youth to participate in the development of their own future educational pathways.

5

Ensure community programmes are responsive and accessible to all youth.

6

Ensure all of our youth have opportunity for life and soft skill development.

TATAI ARORANGI Youth Engagement Programme⁶⁴

EDITED EXTRACT: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

Build on established relationships

- Provide mentoring and peer support
- Maintained weekly contact
- Created a safe environment for rangatahi to be themselves and share their experiences

Support in seeking summer employment

- Supported those to gain summer employment

Set goals for the 2022 academic year

- Each of our rangatahi set goals to achieve their dreams
- Academic and personal goals



EMPLOYMENT

The right support to have a job and future career

What's important?

- Opportunities
- Income
- Stability
- Meaningful Work
- Work Readiness
- Community

In Aotearoa, unemployment has been highlighted as further impacting the mental health of young people. Poor mental health can also be a barrier to gaining work, which can create a challenging cycle.⁸¹

There is a need for long-term work opportunities.⁷⁴ The government is taking practical steps and has focussed on a more holistic approach (e.g increasing driver licencing uptake via our Youth Employment Action Plan).⁸¹

The longer a young person remains out of education or employment, the more likely they are to become 'burnt out by the system' and the less likely they are to take the required steps to upskill.⁷⁴

YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND CHRONIC HEALTH CONDITIONS HAVE A HARDER TIME FINDING JOBS.⁸²

Globally, youth want to see an intentional shift in issues such as business leadership, culture and responsibility for the planet, all of which contribute to their confidence and outlook towards employment and the stability of their future.⁴

Overall, young people believe there are more career opportunities in areas that are important to them. There is a shared concern among youth and employers about young people's ability to access these opportunities and thrive.^{77,78}

Employers and young people agree more needs to be done to ensure youth are 'work ready' when entering employment.^{79,80}

EDITED EXTRACT: CATCHING THE TIDE, 2020⁷⁴

The pandemic is magnifying generational trends of increasingly limited employment for young people. Stories that older New Zealanders like to tell of leaving school early to work in the local post office or butchery are a far cry from young people's reality today. Pathways to work are more limited, competitive, and fragmentary. The employment crisis will especially impact those young people already trapped in patterns of Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET). Since 2014, between 70,000 to 90,000 young New Zealanders have been NEET in a given year. Of those, around 10 percent are long-term NEET—having been disengaged for six months or longer. In June 2020 alone, the proportion of people aged 15–24 years who were NEET increased by 2 percent. Māori and Pasifika youth are over-represented in these NEET statistics, with clusters in regional and urban centers. COVID-19 risks compounding established patterns of social inequality.

Communities and providers around the region are becoming increasingly invested in bridging gaps to employment.^{21,30,64,76}

There is a call for effective collaborative approaches from social services, educators and the work industry to create a community wrap around approach that:

- Links available work opportunities in the region to youth seeking employment
- Provides mentoring in work behaviour and work ethics
- Provides pathways to engaging in meaningful employment
- Meets holistic wellbeing needs
- Provides in-work youth mentoring initiatives²¹

TOP PRIORITIES

- 1 **Increase mentoring opportunities for work readiness and on the job training.**
- 2 **Provide ongoing support to young people who are out of employment, via community services that are local, accessible and approachable.**
- 3 **Wrapping around invested providers, employers and the broader community to enhance collaboration and remove barriers.**
- 4 **Focus on forward planning to create pathways to where the jobs are in the region.**
- 5 **Strengthen relationships with local employers, service providers and youth to ensure secure, supported employment opportunities.**



Matapihi based Training & Work programme⁷⁴

The programme succeeded where the government's array of social policy has failed in large part because of "the whānaungatanga of work"—the relationships that come from shared experiences which provides people with a sense of belonging... Matapihi and Tio Faulkner show that resilient communities who hold out hope and aroha for their young people and their futures are well placed to do the difficult job of getting our young people engaged with learning and work.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Security in sense of self through who you are and where you belong

What's important?

- Belonging and Acceptance
- Whakapapa
- Systemic Bias and Discrimination
- Social Connection
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Future Focus

Each aspect of our identity can shape how the world treats us, how others see us, and how we see ourselves...

Many aspects of identity affect how we belong and connect, our life experiences, the opportunities afforded us and challenges we face.⁸²

Cultural differences are often linked to ethnicity or race, which are the most common causes for discrimination. Yet it is highlighted there are other reasons that groups of youth are discriminated against including family income, physical or mental disability, lifestyles, beliefs, sexuality and gender identification.^{4,83}



Migrant and ethnic youth balance pressures for the maintenance of their heritage culture and the challenges posed in connection with their participation in Aotearoa society.⁸⁴

There is a momentum behind strengthening youth culture, and acceptance.^{45,82,84} Discrimination and systemic bias are factors our young people today are continuing to be faced with. Despite young people acknowledging efforts are being made, there is a sense more still needs to be done.⁸⁵

Global issues threatening their future have led this generation to strongly identify with the values of contribution, collectivity and kaitiakitanga.^{24,38}

There is an increasing focus on recognising vulnerable and minority groups. How they are included and integrated into communities. The tension between enhancing connection to our society and cultural losses is highlighted. For Māori, such losses have occurred over generations, diminishing the Māori cultural identity. The journey of restoration for today's rangatahi Māori continues, including emphasis on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the effects of colonisation. Rangatahi Māori want to explore their culture and have a desire for Māori culture to be incorporated authentically. A focus on Māori language and culture is recognised as protective factors that enhance rangatahi Māori success.⁸⁶⁻⁸⁸

EDITED EXTRACT: YOUTH 19 NEGOTIATING MULTIPLE IDENTITIES⁸²

All of us have multiple aspects of identity, who we are and how we connect with others. A student might be young, for example, as well as Māori and a school leader. They might have several iwi affiliations as well as other ethnic identities, such as Samoan, Scottish or German. In other settings, the fact that they are the child of a particular family or belong to a particular marae will be more important. And this doesn't even touch on other aspects of identity – their gender or sexual identity, whether they have a disability, their religious affiliation or beliefs, their family income, whether they were born in the 2000s, the styles of music or popular culture they identify with, and so on.

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE A MORE DIVERSE CITY, ENCOURAGING MĀORI CULTURE AND YOUNG PEOPLE.³

Our local region is made up of a lot of youth cultures. There is a call to strengthen identity through more youth and cultural events to build connection and embrace diversity.^{3,31}

Youth being physically distanced throughout our region influences who they spend most of their time with and how their own sense of identity to their culture is influenced.^{3,31}

The majority of our young representatives of ethnic communities and newcomers feel safe to express their cultural identity, however stressing that they would feel more comfortable if there were more cultural events.³

We have some effective, culturally responsive programmes across the region and can look to these to learn more to build foundations needed that incorporate belonging, identity, te ao Māori and whakapapa.^{64,74,76}

TOP PRIORITIES

1

More local insights into our diverse youth communities specifically rainbow, Pasifika and other ethnic groups.

2

Ensure we continue to build on culturally responsive and youth-led activities that strengthen our diverse youth identities.

3

More needs to be done on youth discrimination, to enable our region to celebrate our youth and grow our leaders of the future. Our young people need to be included in this work.



Toi Kai Rawa - Māori Economic Development Strategy⁷⁶

- Deploy the He Rangatahi He Anamata Long Term Māori Youth Strategy action plan across the wider BOP
- Navigate and connect Māori, Industry and government to realise potential
- Build fit for purpose projects that cater to the gaps in our region
- Build a network of Young Māori leaders across the wider BOP
- Strengthen pathways for rangatahi into high value education, training and employment opportunities

EMERGING LOCAL SOLUTIONS

52 representatives from 21 local youth provider organisations, as well as some young people associated with those organisations, met in October 2021. They shared their insights into what’s working well in the local youth sector, where there are gaps, and what opportunities there are to improve outcomes for young people.

ACORN FOUNDATION HUI 2021²¹

Investment/projects should be youth-led

To enable youth to live the life they value we need more youth-led initiatives and increased youth voice in decision-making.

Community Collaboration is essential

Raising our young people as a community village - enabling and encouraging collaboration across community providers, and across the wider community including industry, business, and education is key.

Equity of opportunity is needed

Equity of opportunity is essential for all youth, no matter their circumstances or where they live in the WBOP region.



LESS ADULT-CENTRIC DECISION-MAKING.
MORE YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES. INCREASE OF
ADULT/YOUTH PARTNERSHIP IN DECISION-MAKING.

In researching the Western Bay of Plenty VitalSigns® Youth 2022, another local forum with a similar explorative focus was identified. This Forum took the step to identify the similarities and differences between that of youth and youth service providers. These insights give us clues that youth led solutions enabled by the expertise of service providers at the frontline, is foundational to successfully build our youth for the future.

TE PUKE MAKETU YOUTH SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 2021³⁰

Extract

Identified by Young People only	Identified by Providers only	Identified by both parties
Support for those in hardship – shelter and food	Help for young people to learn to be resilient and use initiative	Support with mental health services, counsellors etc
Feelings of having met goals and self respect	Teacher aide in every classroom	Life skills such as: Driver licensing support Financial literacy
Financial support for business and education pathways, eg kickstart finance and scholarships to create equal opportunity	Real world education opportunities that help whānau and community	Cultural, sport and health events after school and on the weekends

WE WANT TO STRESS THAT THERE ARE ALSO SEVERAL ESTABLISHED YOUTH PROVIDER NETWORKS ACROSS OUR REGION WHO ARE INVOLVED IN ONGOING COLLABORATIVE MAHI, WHICH DUE TO THE NATURE OF THIS REPORT WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CAPTURE.

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THE RESEARCH

All data provided in this report has been sourced via freely available local, national and international sources. All information is considered accurate as of March 2022. The information included here should be considered a snapshot, only presenting a limited amount of the available data.

For the purposes of this report, we have used the age bracket of 14-24 years old as a guideline. Where possible any data drawn upon locally, nationally and/or internationally has been, to the best of our ability, obtained using this age bracket.

It is important to note, this research and top priorities identified, did not encompass a stocktake of services available to young people in the Western Bay of Plenty, nor initiatives that might be already underway to meet these priorities. We would like to acknowledge any featured services as those who have published insights freely available, and that these are a mere reflection of the many available services throughout the region doing awesome mahi alongside our youth.



NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US.

YOUTH CENTRE THAT OFFERS
ACTIVITIES LIKE KARAOKE,
'ONE STOP SHOP'

ACCEPTANCE OF MĀORI CULTURE AND YOUNG
PEOPLE. MARKETING MESSAGING AROUND THESE
TWO THINGS, PROMOTE POSITIVE OUTLOOKS AND
DO NOT ENGAGE IN NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

THERAPY SESSIONS
PROVIDED VIA SCHOOLS

GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE OUT AND ABOUT
MEETING EACH OTHER. SPORTS,
CONCERTS, BBQS, BEACH DAYS, MARKETS
AND SO ON.

