



Matada Research

The \$7 cabbage dilemma: Pacific peoples & New Zealand's COVID-19 response

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Introduction

"...just because of the increase of the cost of living that we're experiencing right now you know, we get money, but that money I'm finding, we're gonna, like, we're finding that we have to stretch it a lot more post COVID..."

Pacific peoples and communities have been key to Aotearoa New Zealand's COVID-19 response but have also suffered inequity throughout it. As the nation shifts its COVID response, it is more urgent than ever that we consider Pacific peoples' aspirations and challenges for the future. This white paper offers an opportunity to hear from Pacific peoples to build an understanding of what matters to them. To create this paper, we hosted group talanoa with Pacific peoples about their aspirations for their future, what concerns they had moving forward, and if they could identify any solutions to remediate their worries and meet their goals.

There are many compounding issues at play for Pacific communities when we begin to consider their future aspirations. Overall, Pacific peoples were already experiencing significant disadvantages in health, housing, and the economy, and have been further disadvantaged throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. There are also significant disruptions to be expected in the future, such as the effects of climate change, that Pacific peoples will bear the brunt of in Aotearoa New Zealand. These exclusions and disadvantages feed into each other.

The 2018 census recorded approximately 381,600 people living in Aotearoa New Zealand who identified as Pacific, comprising around 8% of the country's total population(1). Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand are a particularly young population, with a median age of 23.4 years, compared to a median age of 37.4 years for the total population(2)

“I think there's a lot... everyone's going through a different experience is what I'm saying...you know it's like, whatever your situation was before COVID lot came along... it feels like it's it really kind of made it much bigger. You had some of those struggles before, but now those struggles have just kinda blown up.”

Pacific peoples and Aotearoa New Zealand

Pacific Peoples have a complex and rich history, both within Aotearoa New Zealand and with the New Zealand state. New Zealand officially colonised Samoa from 1920–62, the Cook Islands from 1901–65, Niue from 1901–74, and Tokelau from 1926 to the present, with Niue and the Cook Islands remaining protectorates of New Zealand (3). This colonial history had significant ramifications for Pacific populations, such as the 1918 influenza pandemic in Samoa, in which 8,500 people—22-25% of the Samoan population—died after New Zealand officials allowed sick passengers to disembark from the SS Talune (4). The New Zealand government also responded with excessive force to a peaceful protest by the Mau movement (5) on Black Saturday (December 28, 1929), when they opened fire on the protestors and murdered 11 Samoans (4). In Niue, three young men murdered New Zealand High Commissioner Cecil Larsen in 1953 after accusations of serious mistreatment and abuse of power (6). New Zealand has also had a significant role to play in creating Pacific nations curriculum in ways that advantage New Zealand (7). This colonial history continues to shape Pacific peoples' engagement with the New Zealand state today.

Pacific peoples in Aotearoa arrived in four different migration waves. The first wave of migration was approximately 1200 years ago when Eastern Pacific peoples explored and settled in Aotearoa to become tangata whenua. This whakapapa cemented Pacific peoples as extended family to Māori, and created bonds and relationships through culture and genealogy across Te Moana Nui a Kiwa (greater Oceania kinship connections) (3). 150 years ago, Pacific peoples arrived in Aotearoa as trainee teachers, missionaries, sailors, and whalers in the second wave of migration. The third wave followed 70 years later when Pacific peoples who had either served the colonial government as civil servants within the 'Pacific territories' or in the colonial armed forces were permitted to relocate to New Zealand (10). The fourth wave of migration, which occurred only 50 years ago, was perhaps the most significant and is the migration story that most people are familiar with today. Pacific peoples migrated for economic reasons and found work primarily in the manufacturing and service sectors in post-war Aotearoa New Zealand (3). This fourth wave is associated with the Dawn Raids, where Pacific peoples were unjustly targeted in 'Operation Pot Black' (11).



“And now with my dad, I care for him the way I saw him care for me, but not only for me, for my siblings and for the community, you know, we will go out and get seafood and everything, and my dad's giving it out... ..What did that teach me? Feed someone else, help someone else, you know, and the rewards come back. You know, it's just, I suppose, it's the word, faith, you have faith that, you know, that God's blessed you with the food you've gone and now bless someone else.”

Aspirations

"Yeah, so just, you know, trying to teach her (daughter) to grow her own food and I guess just worldly stuff, you know, how to survive when you've got no money. And, and of course theres all of the other stuff, which is, you know, ensuring security, financial security for yourself by being in a good job or education."

In our talanoa, Pacific people outlined their aspirations for the future. These aspirations included living in stable homes, a brighter economic future, sustainable futures and thriving Pacific language and culture. These aspirations build on the Ministry of Pacific Peoples' Lalanga Fou report (12) by deepening our understanding of why housing is important for Pacific peoples and why Pacific peoples desire a brighter economic future. Notably, the aspiration for sustainable futures opens a conversation regarding specifically how Pacific peoples wish to build this kind of future here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Stable homes

Pacific peoples want access to stable homes for the benefit of their families. This paper builds our understanding of Pacific desires for housing by connecting it to the idea of a 'homestead'—a home that family can always return to regardless of what is happening in their lives. As outlined by the Lalanga Fou, affordable, adequate, and suitable housing is a major indicator of socio-economic well-being, and Pacific peoples are frustrated by the inaccessible cost of quality housing (12).

Pacific people in this project confirmed that they want to live in stable homes. However, they also identified many contributing factors that make this aspiration seem impossible for some.

“

....my aspirations for my family is, that they get somewhere in life, that they have a home and that they're settled and well and healthy and their education continues. They get good jobs, find great relationships. Oh boy, they better, but I, I just want them to thrive and even if they didn't, I'll always be there for them... if I can.”

”



"I'd like to be a homeowner, which probably wouldn't even happen, but I'd like that."

"I don't know how other people can afford to, just the way things are. I just couldn't do it. There's no intentions of me buying a home, <Laugh> there's no way I could afford it."

Quality housing was seen as an essential element in making sure that family felt settled or that there was somewhere safe and welcoming for family to come back to in times of trouble.

"So people can, you know, feel secure, feel safe, have a roof over their home, making sure that your family is settled."

"And just to know that they feel secure, you know, they a [have] place to call home, they're settled and they don't have to, from, to they've actually got a base to call home. That to me is, that really outweighs a lot of things."

"That's just a goal that I wanna accomplish, and I want something to leave my kids when I die. Like a homestead."

"Just so you know, they've always got somewhere to go to, like if they, you know, were stranded or homeless or, you know, got no money or get kicked out of their house or something, they've always got somewhere, you know, that they can just go back to whenever they need."

Overall, stable and quality housing is a crucial aspect of Pacific peoples' aspirations for their futures, as it provides a grounding point for their communities. However, they also make it clear that there is some progress to be made before those aspirations are imaginable or reality.

Brighter economic futures

Pacific people saw building an economic base as a means of providing something for their children in the future. There was a clear desire to ensure that their children experienced the same intergenerational wealth that other communities have access to. Our findings build on Lalanga Fou, where Pacific peoples expressed a desire to see Pacific youth supported into the labour market and to experience the successes of doing so, such as buying their first homes (12).

"I wanna leave them something like when they're ready to step out into their own shoes. So I want them to be able to, either if they want to be a Sparky, then yeah. Jump on the company and I'll teach you how to be a Sparky and run the company. But if they want to go out around the world or to any college, university or whatever, then yeah. I wanna be able to help them get into that."

"I guess it would be nice to see a change from what we, or what I go through for my family, right. Cause they're, they're our means and, you know, they're our life, you know, they're who we live for really. So, you know, just hope it improves."

It is an important insight that for Pacific peoples, a brighter economic future is about building intergenerational wealth specifically so that their children—the people "who we live for"—have the freedom to choose what employment they engage with and achieve in it.

Sustainable futures

Pacific people frequently spoke about the importance of teaching their children about sustainable living, often in relation to the rising costs of living.

"I guess, passing on or trying to teach for her future about sustainable living. Yeah, so just, you know, trying to teach her to grow her own food."

This important new insight enables us to understand the role of sustainable living for urban-based Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Thriving language and culture

Pacific people repeatedly identified the importance of their language and culture in their aspirations for the future. Importantly, Pacific people who did not have their language wanted their children to have access to their languages. This finding builds on those in Lalanga Fou, (12) reiterating that Pacific peoples value their languages as a core element of their cultures and well-being.

"I would want them to know our language and for our culture to be carried through more generations to come because at the moment it's dying."

"We weren't brought up to know our language or the ins and outs of our culture. But we, for me being a mum, I would love to have my kid, my daughter grow up knowing her culture and being able to speak it. And yeah, just grow within our culture and blossom."

Pacific peoples see their language and culture as vital to future generations.



Pacific peoples Reality

Unfortunately, the gap between Pacific peoples aspirations and their reality is significant. Historical and contemporary structural bias impacts Pacific peoples daily. As a result, Pacific peoples experience inequitable outcomes in health, education, housing, the economy and future urban climate change issues.

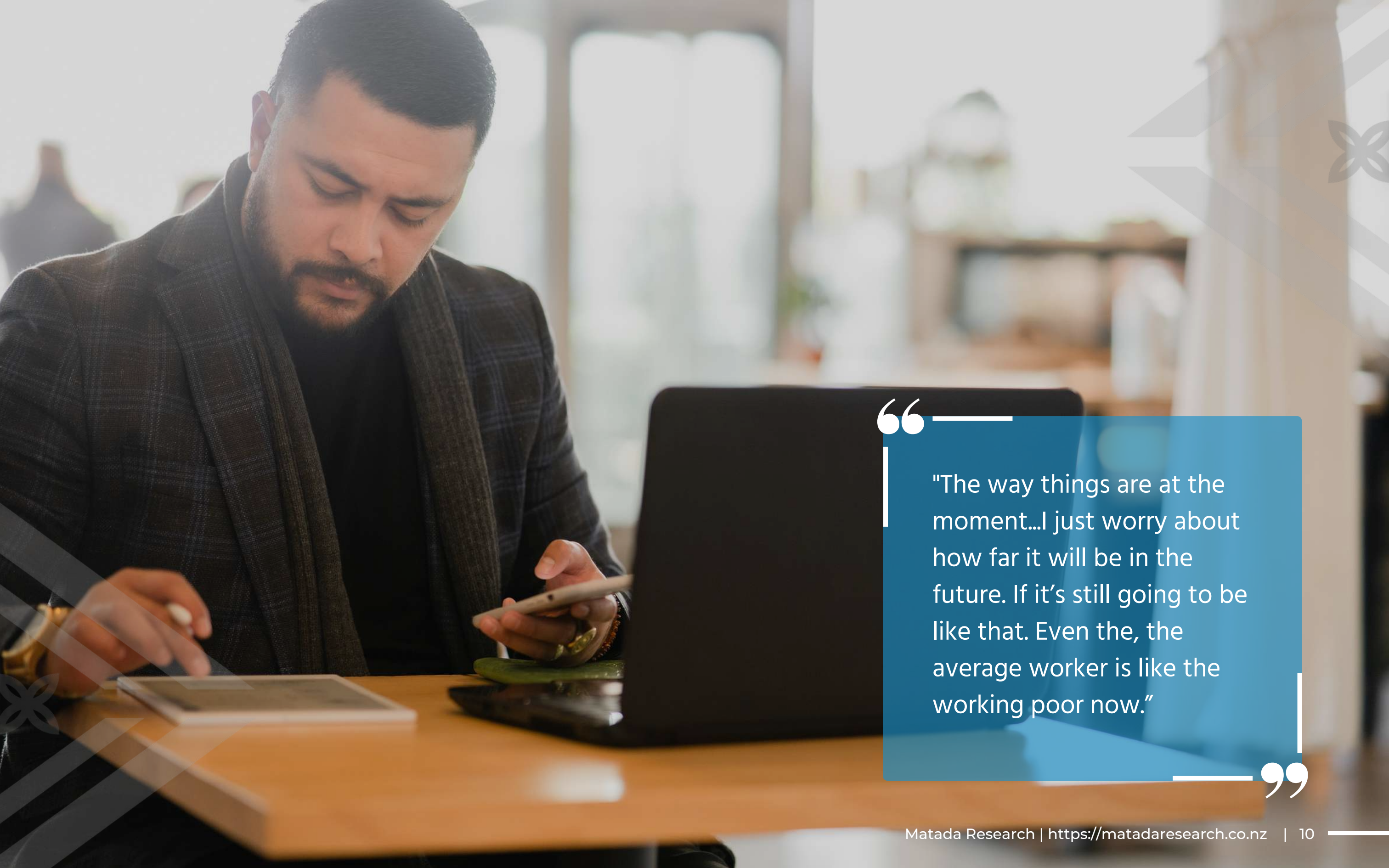
Pacific peoples and urban climate change

Climate change will exacerbate existing social inequalities (13). In Aotearoa New Zealand, Pacific peoples are disproportionately likely to face harm from climate change-related risk factors due to being a primarily low socio-economic and urban population (14). Pacific peoples have significantly lower median annual incomes than the total population and a higher unemployment rate (1). These existing inequalities faced by Pacific peoples increase their exposure to the harms of climate change, subsequently increasing their susceptibility to these hazards whilst simultaneously decreasing their ability to adapt to and recover from them (13). Likely threats, such as increased temperature and disease prevalence, will worsen existing health inequities faced by Pacific peoples (15). Further, being low socio-economic limits Pacific peoples' abilities to afford the costs associated with predicted infrastructural damage, adaptation, and possible relocation (15).

Additionally, while 51.2% of the total Aotearoa New Zealand population resides in major urban areas, 75.7% of Pacific peoples live in major urban areas (14). Urban areas are uniquely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, owing to their population density and likelihood of being located in coastal or low-lying areas (16) as well as generally higher temperatures (17). Further, low socio-economic groups within urban areas are likely to be most affected by the strains climate change places on infrastructure and access to goods and services (16). The majority of Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand live in Auckland (18) particularly in its Southern and Western local board areas (19). Concerningly, Auckland Council research into climate change vulnerability has identified these particular locales as amongst the most exposed and sensitive to climate change, but also as those with the least adaptive capacity.



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Pacific individuals and businesses contribute **\$8 billion** annually to the country's Gross Domestic Product.



Pacific peoples also contribute through unpaid labour, providing **27,000 hours** per week each year of voluntary service.



Pacific peoples continue to experience significant socio-economic inequities despite such contributions to national financial well-being.



Pacific people have a median annual income of **\$24,300**, significantly lower than the median annual income of the total Aotearoa New Zealand population at **\$31,800**.

Pacific peoples and the economy

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Today, Pacific peoples make a significant economic contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand. Pacific individuals and businesses contribute \$8 billion annually to the country's Gross Domestic Product (21). Pacific peoples also contribute through unpaid labour, providing 27,000 hours per week each year of voluntary service (21). However, Pacific peoples continue to experience significant socio-economic inequities despite such contributions to national financial well-being. Pacific people have a median annual income of \$24,300, significantly lower than the median annual income of the total Aotearoa New Zealand population at \$31,800 (22). Pacific peoples experience a significant pay gap (22) and are the least likely ethnic group in Aotearoa New Zealand to own their own homes (9). At 7.1%, Pacific peoples have a higher unemployment rate than the total population of Aotearoa New Zealand at 4% (1).

Pacific peoples' progress in occupational advancement since the global financial crisis has been slow (23) and COVID-19 has further entrenched and exacerbated this problem. A study of Pacific peoples in South Auckland found that the pandemic had caused around 20% of Pacific households to lose at least half of their usual income, 35% of Pacific households contained somebody who had experienced reduced pay or hours and 38% had struggled to meet their basic household costs, and that 66% of Pacific peoples who had lost their jobs had not been able to find a replacement job (24). The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment have noted that COVID-19 is "magnifying existing disparities in economic outcomes" (23). Occupations with high Pacific representation are being adversely impacted, and the pandemic continues to interrupt Pacific business continuity, particularly for sole traders and within the construction sector (23).

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Pacific peoples and health

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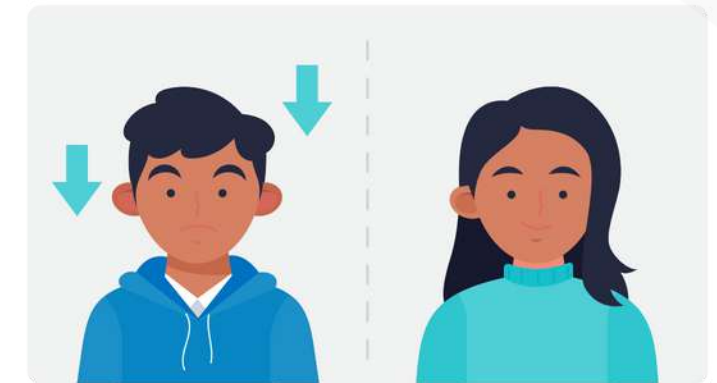
Socio-economic inequities experienced by Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand contribute to poor health outcomes (9). On average, life expectancy for Pacific peoples is six years lower than that of non-Māori non-Pacific peoples (9) and is slightly lower for Pacific males than Pacific females (25). Chronic and mostly preventable illnesses which are traceable to lower levels of socio-economic well-being, namely cardiovascular disease and diabetes, are major contributors to this gap in life expectancy (26). Pacific peoples experience these long-term conditions at a younger age compared to the country's total population (25). Pacific adults experience disproportionately high rates of health risk factors such as obesity, smoking, alcohol consumption, less physical activity and mental illness (25).

These inequities persist despite a high level of enrolment with primary healthcare services amongst Pacific peoples (25). Besides socio-economic indicators of health, Pacific peoples also experience multiple other barriers to accessing and using healthcare: finding it difficult to understand health jargon or communicate with health workers, struggling to book appointments at a feasible time (including finding transport and taking time off work to attend), inability to afford fees and medication, and experiences of racism and discrimination which put Pacific peoples off seeking care (25).

COVID-19 has heightened these existing inequities (27). Since August 17, 2021, approximately 300 people per 1000 Pacific peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand have reported a COVID-19 infection (28). Although Pacific peoples comprise only 10% of all recorded COVID-19 cases since August 16, 2021, Pacific peoples represent 26% of all hospitalised cases over the same period (29)—a pattern consistent with that seen in Aotearoa New Zealand's first wave of COVID-19 in early 2020 (30). Research suggests that Pacific peoples are three times more likely to be hospitalised than other ethnic groups and spend around five days longer in hospital than NZ European/Other peoples (31).

Pacific peoples living in deprived households are severely overrepresented amongst Pacific cases of COVID-19 (28). Research has connected Pacific peoples' increased likelihood of living in crowded or low-income households during national lockdowns with increased mental distress, particularly stress and loneliness linked to having poorer internet and telehealth access and less personal space (32). Approximately three in ten Pacific people living in South Auckland who attempted to access mental health support during the national lockdowns in 2020, and almost three in ten who needed general healthcare, felt they were unable to access this support (24).

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Pacific peoples and housing

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Pacific peoples' low home ownership rates, poor housing conditions, rising rental costs, and crowded housing has resulted in a Pacific housing crises. At 21% ownership, Pacific peoples are the least likely ethnic group in Aotearoa New Zealand to own their own home, compared to 57.9% of European peoples (33). Low and decreasing homeownership rates amongst Pacific people prevent the ability for generational wealth transfer, a major goal of Pacific peoples (9). Although home ownership has decreased across the country's total population since the 1990s, this decline has been significantly faster and more notable for Māori and Pacific peoples (33). Pacific peoples are among the most likely to report that their housing is unaffordable (33). 79% of Pacific peoples live in a home they do not own (including those renting), compared to 48.3% of the total population (18). In Auckland and Wellington, where 64% and 11% of Pacific people reside respectively, rents have risen faster than wages since 2007 (18 & 33). Despite the introduction of healthy homes requirements, rental houses are more likely to be in poor interior and exterior condition than owner-occupied houses (33).

Pacific peoples are the most likely ethnic group in Aotearoa New Zealand to live in neighbourhoods facing high deprivation (25). They are among the least likely demographics to be satisfied with their house and neighbourhood (33). Pacific people are especially likely to live in a house with no outdoor area (33). 40% of Pacific peoples live in homes that are always cold compared to 18% of European peoples (25). 45.9% of Pacific peoples live in damp homes, compared to 24.2% of Aotearoa New Zealand's total population. Further, 41.8% of Pacific people live in homes with severe mould as opposed to 16.7% of European peoples (33).

The 2018 census recorded approximately 40% of Pacific peoples living in a crowded house, compared to around 10% of the total population (34). The rate of crowding for Pacific peoples is highest amongst Pacific children and young people, and Pacific peoples living in crowded housing are most likely to live with two or more families (34). Crowded housing is associated with preventable health issues (34) and can be connected to 25% of annual Pacific hospital admissions for infectious diseases (35). Crowded housing also has negative impacts on mental health (32). Research suggests that the negative effects of crowded housing are exacerbated when the neighbourhood is perceived as undesirable (32).



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Further, **41.8%** of Pacific people live in homes with severe mould as opposed to **16.7%** of European peoples.



Pacific peoples concerns

Pacific people had several concerns regarding moving forward. Their most immediate and looming worry was the rapidly rising cost of living. Pacific people were also concerned about access to healthcare, increased anxiety levels, intergenerational trauma, and transparency and accountability for community providers.

Cost of living

The most immediate concern for Pacific people was the increasing cost of living. This worry is unsurprising, given that the Pacific median income of \$24,300 results in a weekly take-home income of \$383.86. Under the government's own cost of living calculator, Pacific peoples have a weekly -\$417.14 deficit (36), which becomes -\$446.04 when adjusted for 2022's Q1 inflation (37). This trend echoes Minister for Pacific Peoples Aupito William Sio's point that "Pacific communities are always among the hardest hit whenever there's an economic downturn" (38).

"I guess, passing on or trying to teach for her future about sustainable living. Yeah, so just, you know, trying to teach her to grow her own food." "The increase of the cost of living that we're experiencing right now you know, we get money, but that money we're finding that we have to stretch it a lot more post-COVID."

The increased cost of living has impacted many families.

"I am worried because bills are ever-incoming and expensive. I am grateful the kids are young because teenagers are harder to feed and clothe."

"[The cost of living] for the whānau that are out there, and, you know, it actually saddens me to know that it's just gotten worse than when my whānau was going through it."

"It's just trying to maintain, like, make sure everything's paid and make sure mom's all good and not having to worry about anything, but yeah, that's really why I just tried do as much as I can. My sister works pretty much... ..about the same amount of times that I do, like 12 hour shifts as well."

The increased cost of petrol is changing how Pacific people go about their daily lives, including being unable to visit family.

"I mean, I used to travel up north fortnightly. Oh wow. To see my daughter. Yeah. And now... ..I rang my mum the other day. I said, I miss you. I miss my daughter. I feel like I haven't seen you. And I haven't, it's, it's like, who's gonna come and visit? Who are you gonna come to Auckland and visit me? Or am I gonna come up there and visit you? Whose turn is it now? That's what it's like, that's what it's got like with us. Cause you just can't do it."

"It also gives you it gives you cause to pause ,before when, you know, it was just easier to jump in a car and do whatever you want. Yeah. For me, it's like, I now have to factor in, okay, so what is it that I have to do? How far do I have to go? And can I fit in more in this travel? Like I'm not travelling every day, you know, like there's none of the spur of the moment stuff. It's like, I'm planning more of where I'm going in order to make, I guess, the gas last longer. Yeah. Also, the impact of actually having to return to work days a week, full time as opposed to working from home. So, you know, all of that gets factored into it as well."

Pacific people also reflected on how the rising cost of living was making housing difficult.

"I see a lot of homelessness and I know the rough sleepers, I just want them to, you know, to have somewhere for them to stay. And like I said to call home."

"It's like a, it's like a, a lose lose situation because you know, like you get an increase of \$20 and your rent goes up \$30. It makes no sense."

Some Pacific people had relocated as a result of increased housing costs, but this had a significant impact on the finite resource of time.

"I had to move from the North Shore where I work to Mangere because of rising rents, now it takes two and half hours to travel from work home, and on Sundays and public holidays when I work there is no accessible public transport for me."

"I work the night shift at McDonald's even though I'm at school to pay for our wifi at home. We moved from a house with my Aunties and cousins near where I worked to West Auckland because of rent, and now I catch the bus from Mt Wellington to West Auckland at 7am and it takes two hours to get home."

The cost of food was a prominent concern for Pacific people.

"Cuz I think, you know it's so easy just to buy takeaways like these days, because it's so expensive to buy veggies."

"Even the veggie shops are still quite expensive... ..You know, affording these kind of things like daily vegetables of fruit, you know, it's really expensive buying a cabbage at \$7 aye, it's pretty expensive ...and even pumpkins is pretty, pretty expensive too... .. potatoes, potatoes, you know, they used to be on like growing up, you know, like we still always have, you know, like meat and mash potatoes or something, you know, like for dinner, but now it's just like, you can't even afford the potatoes."

"But yeah, no, so everything, you know, even, even the cost of the shopping, you know, I budget every week just to try and get just the basics, you know, and just some healthy things. I can't even afford that most of the time, you know, it's pretty, yeah."

Pacific people spoke about how families were forced to use buy-now pay-later schemes for groceries.

"But also with the line of business that I'm in, what I've noticed is families tending to use after pay, those buy-now pay-later schemes, to bulk-buy meat and supplies at say Cracker Jack. Yeah. And then pay it off because yeah, it's more financially easier than for them to budget the lesser amount, but walk away with a whole heap of product at the same time."

Pacific people also connected the high cost of food with poor health outcomes in our communities.

"It means that our price of food is shocking and that people aren't surviving and that's why our nutrition rates are down as well because they're not eating nutritious meals cause they can't afford to do it."

Pacific people noted that they were relying on internationally located families to support them in their day-to-day living.

"My son works in Oz within one month. It's he earns more than men, whose dad make, than we make in one month. Yeah. And he sends me money just to get by living in New Zealand and his starting rate is 35 dollars."

Ultimately, the increased cost of living was impacting Pacific people's lives in multiple different areas, and many shared that they had to make difficult choices with their money or go into debt to get by.

"Like, it's just harder these days. Putting me back into debt. Like I'm always just either missing payments or putting something back, like, and prioritising other stuff just to like, you know, eat for one week or put in gas, especially gas, that I think that's the most expensive thing right now...."

"With COVID happening now, I talk to a lot of people every day where they thought they could make it, but there's you know, they've tried to catch up with their bills, but at the same time, forgot about some of the important bills they've left it behind. Now, it's catching up on them, which means by the time they catch up on this, the next bill will catch up again. So at, yeah, with, with this COVID going on, you never know what's gonna happen next."

"I am working with a budgeter, but even then it just, no, doesn't cover everything that is necessary for us."

Pacific people reflected on how the increased cost of living was impacting their overall family well-being.

"Automatically puts a stress on your life or just, you know, financially it's, it's doesn't sound like much it's \$10, but practically you know, why that \$10 like could go and the effect that it has on you and your family." [1]

"I'm working full time. My partner works full time, but you know, regardless there's still like, like, like you're saying costs have gone up everywhere, not just in rent, but with, with most things. And so it's definitely putting a strain on our family."

"It's hard, you know, it's just the extra stress, you know, and it kind of does take the happy outta everything <laugh> you know what I mean? Yeah. It's I just don't see it improving to be honest. <Laugh>"
Highlight this in a text box

"You know, affording these kind of things like daily vegetables or fruit, you know, it's really expensive buying a cabbage at \$7 aye"

The increasing cost of living in Aotearoa New Zealand negatively impacts Pacific communities. For Pacific communities, these increased costs are not about adjusting menial habits, such as making a coffee at home rather than buying it, but about making choices about eating, paying bills, and seeing family. Pacific people are relocating due to excessive rent but are unable to find housing near their places of work—or at all. Traditionally, Aotearoa New Zealand based Pacific peoples have sent remittances to the Pacific (39), but now, Pacific people in Aotearoa are relying on family located in Australia to meet their living costs. Notably, many Pacific people are going into debt to survive, and this struggle negatively impacts their overall well-being, including their mental health.

Access to healthcare

Pacific people raised concerns about access to healthcare. Pacific families have found enrolling in medical centres and being able to see a doctor more of a significant challenge than affording the access to that care. This provides an explanation for why there might be high primary healthcare enrolment but poor healthcare access in Pacific communities (25).

"The worst one I've come across is, is the like the, the medical and that like, just from experience with my kids, like just trying to get them into the doctors to get seen when they're really, really sick. It's a nightmare. Like it's a nightmare to get them seen. But I understand it's cause of the COVID and stuff, but like as a last resort I have to take the kids to the hospital, and then you get there and you wait like five hours just to get seen. And then you always get questioned by the doctor, by the ED. Like why did you come here? Why didn't you just go to your doctors? And you're like, I've been trying for four days."

"There's a Pacific provider in Mangere that I was able to enrol in but you can't make an appointment, you just go and wait for three hours then see the doctor for five minutes. It's not enough time."

"I think what you're both getting at is that sort of quality of care that COVID is interrupted <laugh> and, and how are we now going to get back to that? Can I go see a doctor when I'm sick?"

Some Pacific participants did share difficulties in enrolling in primary healthcare providers.

"So yeah. Keep getting told they're full of capacity and stuff like that. So I think it was like 12 doctors that I had to apply across and there was like the last one I've finally got in."



Pacific peoples face significant health challenges despite high enrolments in primary providers. The stories from our talanoa similarly indicate that Pacific peoples' troubles with accessing healthcare are not solely about being enrolled with a provider, but also about being able to see a medical professional. In desperation, Pacific people are instead going to hospitals, or questioning if they can still visit a doctor when sick.

"It's not often that they come down and see what these organisations do for the community. It's not until you probably hear that there's an election going on."

Pacific people recognise that they have providers who do crucial work in their communities but would like others to recognise this too. They also have concerns about who is delivering some of these programmes and would like transparency and accountability built into the contracts of the people and organisations who provide care to their communities.

Accountability & transparency

Pacific people expressed concern about how funding targeted at Pacific peoples was being spent. While they recognised that valuable work was being done in their communities, they were also worried that money was not being spent directly or effectively on communities or that those who directly received grants were not being transparent with their financing.

Pacific people wanted to see a form of accountability and transparency regarding who was receiving money and specifically how and where it was being spent.

"They give it to the bigger, bigger charity corporations that from my experience and my wife's experience who work for them, they, show a lot of boxes that they tick, like we've taken on all these kids and all that, but they don't show any evidence to how they've actually helped them... ..It's just coming in for the money. I mean, even though they're a, not for profit, the guy at the top still making a couple hundred grand... ..But then there's a lot of people that show face put on the, you know, put on the business suit and say, we're gonna do a great job, but they don't do it. So I think main, the main thing that needs to happen is someone needs to follow up all these programmes that they pay a lot of money into and make sure they're actually getting results."

"It just makes me angry. You know, by the time you get the funding, three mil's gone in your pocket, aye, by the time it comes down through the filter, it's, so really the transparency of those receiving huge funding from the government needs to be transparent. It needs to be truly on record, you know, where they declare it." [1]
Highlight this in a blue box

Pacific people wanted wider recognition of the work that grassroots community actors do. They also noted that, for some, the only time they see their local or central government representatives is when there is an upcoming election.

"100%. I think it's from a national level, like it's not often that they come down and see what these organisations do for the community. It's not until you probably hear that there's election going on."

"You know, if they were to see their own eyes, like where their money's being used."

"But [community-run arts collective] it's really one of the only places that kind of allows young creatives to be in a space without asking for any money otherwise, you know, there's really no other support from the government. So I kind of agree with having that transparency and funding, and trying to get the government to also like really reinvest back into the community because what these kids are doing is really incredible and kind of something the whole, I feel like all of New Zealand needs to see."

Uncertainty

Pacific people reflected on how COVID-19 has had long-lasting impacts on their anxiety, and the anxiety levels of those around them.

"So with, it's, it's such an uncertain time, like you don't know what's gonna happen next."

"There's such an uncertain time with COVID and you don't know what's going to happen. The moment you get, you think you are ahead and you've beat that whatever's gonna happen in the COVID something else. Like I was reading the news and I'm reading right now, there there's some kind of new variant which has been detected. And I'm like, when it's, it's just like, you know, when will this variant thing end? Like how many more variants gonna be there?"

"Because it's makes me real paranoid and anxiety and yeah, I just don't want, 'em see [family] to get sick. Yeah. I do get worried."

Pacific people expressed concern for those who had lost their jobs due to economic downturn and the impact this had had on anxiety levels.

"I used to work, you know, I had a job, but then we got shut down. The company got shut down. And then a few months later down the road, I ended up on the benefit cause being paid out and there wasn't much wasn't much that we got made redundant anyway, just being on the benefit... ..and it's at the moment I, I haven't worked since, you know, since I left my job, I got made redundant. I'm in a pretty difficult, like what it anxiety, I've, I've got anxiety now. So, I put it on weight, [had] to be 90, 95 kgs. Now I'm at 103."

"I graduated in hospitality, just before the first lockdown and wasn't able to find a job like after that first lockdown, I was just like, my mental health was, like my confidence and all that."

Pacific people reflected on how they needed to support their wider families in navigating health information and anxieties.

"But all this, you know, my dad was so scared cuz he had to wear a mask everywhere and he'll come and he wouldn't leave his house. So that's what happened. Where today, like now moving forward. He gets his reassurance for me. He'll come to my home and he'll say, oh, did you hear about the <laugh>? Did you hear about the monkey pox? I said, don't worry about it, dad. You know what I mean? So I'm sort of trying and be proactive for our elderly."

"I always talk to my mom about it, cause it really is just me, my mom and my sister that live at home. So yeah, she's, we're always talking about it. She's always worried. She doesn't go out much. So she's currently not working. We just tell her to stay home so we can work for her. But yeah, so she, she doesn't really go out much just cuz she's unsure of like what to do. Like there are places that require her to wear a mask, but she struggles to breathe in it. So, you know yeah. She just stays home a lot."

"She's (mother) always worried. She doesn't go out much. So she's currently not working. We just tell her to stay home so we can work for her."

The combined uncertainty created by the pandemic and rising cost of living has impacted Pacific people's anxiety levels. Moving forward we need to plan for increased access to mental health support particularly important as during COVID19. Approximately three in ten Pacific people living in South Auckland who attempted to access mental health support during the national lockdowns in 2020, and almost three in ten who needed general healthcare, felt they were unable to access this support (24). This issue must be addressed to prevent long-term complications for Pacific peoples' well-being.



Intergenerational trauma impacts Pacific peoples and they desire to interrupt these patterns. However, there is limited discussion on how we interrupt intergenerational trauma within Pacific communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Intergenerational trauma

Pacific people reflected on the intergenerational trauma their communities had experienced. Pacific people noted that intergenerational trauma had shaped how parents raised their children.

"A hundred percent agree with what xxx was saying, but yeah, it's just like breaking the generational. Yeah, like she, how she was saying with the bad parenting and like passing it down. It's just like when you get to a certain point and you, you have your kids and you just wanna change that for them as well."

"They didn't really know how to raise their children in a new setting and environment and sometimes some bad habits have, in some cases I'm passed on to the next generation. And so my concern for our Pacifica, people who have come here and struggled and then who have passed on generations. My because what I'm talking, talking about is violence and substance abuse that is in my family. And it, it, it's a generational thing because it was, there was, it's just topics like it's hard for Pacific Islanders to communicate their emotions and, and discipline their children in a way of communication."

Pacific people expressed a desire to ensure that their children did not experience the same trauma.

"Just because you don't want it to carry on, you know, like with the, with, with us showing how our parents like parented us, we can't, we don't wanna do that to our kids because then we'll just keep carrying on through their next generations and nothing will change."

Solutions

This paper reflects the widely held position that Pacific peoples need to drive, inform and deliver solutions to the above-mentioned problems to ensure that interventions are successful and appropriate to need. Several solutions were proposed within our talanoa. However, this paper focuses on three—Pacific-based parental support, economic-based solutions and sustainable futures.



“

"These types of services exist because they are birthed from pain... ..So you know, there, these organisations who found that there was a need for people who don't have clothes... so, yeah...I feel like the people who run these initiatives are people who work alongside the community hence why they understand what the needs are."

”

Pacific-based parental support

Pacific people expressed the need for Pacific-specific family services that focus on bringing Pacific children up to be strong in their culture within an uplifting and supportive family. It is essential that this solution is Pacific-based, as recent reports highlight how mainstream services for Pacific families can fail Pacific communities (40).

"One of the things that I would like for our community is for there to be parental advice, parental classes, like education, sorry for parents on how to communicate verbally to their children for discipline. Because it's, it's just, honestly, it's not known one and you can't do it if you don't know how to do it, or you can't do it if you weren't raised like that. So just education on that for parents will be great especially, especially for our Pacifica culture."

"I think I really like that idea of that parental advice and education on how do we communicate in ways that uplift our children whilst also disciplining them. We don't wanna raise kids who do whatever they want, but we also want them to feel loved and uplifted and still understand their limitations."

Economy based solutions

Pacific people wanted to see an increase in the minimum wage, benefits and fiscal support for purchasing first homes. However, they were also aware that Aotearoa New Zealand has a small tax base which can limit the possibilities of government intervention which means strategic use of limited resources is necessary.

"Like actually give you like a lump sum for a deposit on a house and maybe increase the minimum wage and benefits and all that kind of stuff, working for families and yeah."

"I agree that the, the minimum wage in this country definitely needs to be lifted. It is very, it is quite low in comparison to maybe other countries... ..But I don't know, we, we're not a big country either. I mean, if you think of the population we don't have, I guess, you know, we're not that big, so there's that, there's the argument, I guess, that as a country, as small as we are, you know, maybe the minimum wage to reflect that as opposed to the actual cost of living."

Regarding benefits, Pacific people would also like to see the amount that they can earn before being penalised increased.

Sustainable futures

Pacific people were particularly invested in the idea of sustainable future solutions. This notion is an important solution to focus on, as urban-based, low socio-economic Pacific peoples will be severely impacted by climate change. For Pacific peoples there was a desire to grow their own gardens but they were significantly hindered by cost. Pacific people identified current sustainable solutions that were successful, including charities that built garden beds and gardens in schools. These solutions are particularly important as Pacific peoples are especially likely to live in a house with no outdoor area (33).

"I don't have any gardens, but I would love to be able to, to do that, you know."

"If I can try and help myself by coming up with alternative ways of getting food then I'm all for it. So, I think what's helped is that I've, there's community groups out there who offer services to build garden beds within south Auckland that I'm aware of. I know with, the a lot of the schools are teaching their kids to, to grow, to grow their own, they've got a lot of little plots around the school and, and they, yeah, they gain from it too, cuz they make them soups, whatever, when the, the kai is ready, you know, the veggie is ready, they make them a, a meal for the class. And I have got the space for a garden too. And that's only because of that service that offered to build a garden bed for free."

Pacific peoples also mentioned a wider use of community gardens, urban foraging and intentional planting.

"What do you think of like that sort of wider community gardens where you have like Housing New Zealand flats and then they, instead of having like a car park thing, you could convert that to a large community garden, or you can convert part of a park into edible plants. Like that's not planting anything unless it's a native tree, tree. So creating that ability to, they call it urban foraging in some ways."

"I remember my partner and I went for a walk during lockdown and we just walked different way that we usually would. And we came across the park, which is probably, I don't know, like a kilometer from our house and it's a, it's a, I don't know the name for it, but it's like a communal garden, community garden. And so there was just like growing veggies and stuff there. Oh, wonder. Yeah. And I didn't see any information, but I could see everything was there and they were like setting up some new ones and it was just in the middle of the path. They thought that was a great idea."

Some Pacific people had also grown their own gardens and noted that it meant they were not as aware of increased food costs.

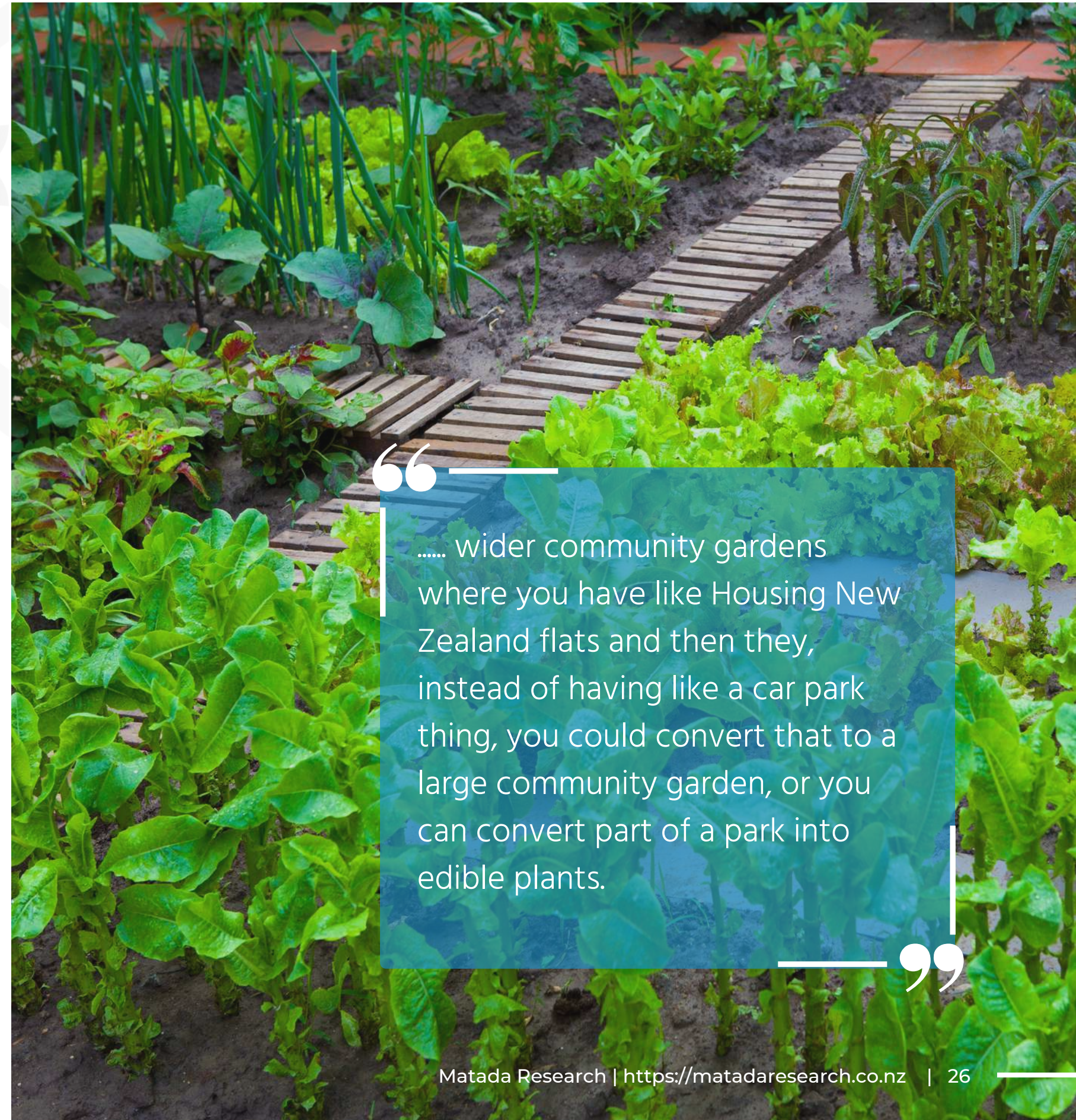
"Yeah. Look at the moment, yeah, growing our own garden has like proven to be really helpful financially. I, I don't even know what the cost of like lettuce is at the moment or a salad bag."

Pacific people also identified that the temporary imposition of free public transport in Auckland due to the high cost of petrol had led to them catching public transport when they usually would not, which had been better for their overall well-being and financial stability.

"I'm not using my car to drive into work, but making the most of that three month, the public transport thing that's happening in Auckland where the costs are reduced by half. So I, so I'd probably be spending usually about 60 plus dollars to put into my car every week. Now the bus is costing me \$15 a week. So that's a, oh wow. That's a significant difference. That's a, yeah, it's a, it's a bit of a difference. So, but in, but by doing that, I'm able to kind of put something aside, which helps to kind of ease, provide me that financial security as well."

"I get to spend instead of, you know, half an hour driving now, I get to spend that similar amount of time. It's actually a bit, it's actually a bit quicker on the bus cuz there's a bus lane. So I skip a lot of the traffic, which is nice. But I also get to spend that time for myself as opposed to concentrating on the road. So I'll, I'll, I'll use that time doing whatever needs to be done. Or if I have some free time, then I'll listen to a podcast or read a book or do something like that. So I get to spend more time with myself, which is really, really nice."

In order to deliver on a more sustainable future for Pacific communities, we need to enable community-led solutions like the development of personal and communal gardens and support initiatives like reduced-cost and accessible public transport.



..... wider community gardens where you have like Housing New Zealand flats and then they, instead of having like a car park thing, you could convert that to a large community garden, or you can convert part of a park into edible plants.



Moving forward

Pacific peoples desire a future where their communities thrive. This future is one that recognises what Pacific peoples contribute to Aotearoa New Zealand. Ultimately, Pacific peoples desire a home base to which their families can return, access to intergenerational wealth, access to sustainable living and overall well-being. Unfortunately, there remains a complex web of concerns for Pacific peoples. This web includes pre-existing concerns that have worsened with the recent economic downturn and increased costs of living, such as healthcare access and economic engagement. However, increased community anxiety and uncertainty over providers is a relatively new insight and one that should be taken seriously. Given that Pacific peoples are disproportionately likely to face harm from climate change we must take Pacific peoples' aspiration for a sustainable future into consideration as we address the overall housing and climate crises. Pacific peoples have identified some clear solutions, including supporting existing community organisations, but also note the importance of building upon what is currently offered. Overall, if we wish to deliver on our commitments to the Pacific community, we must address the inequities and concerns outlined in this paper to ensure that every Pacific person benefits from the Aotearoa New Zealand to which they contribute so greatly.

Authors

Gerald Naepi

Director

Partnered with his extensive background in health Gerald has used his Pacific values to guide his career into the service of helping Pacific communities become happy and healthy. Gerald is a qualified Physiotherapist who also holds a BSc and PGDipSci from the University of Auckland.

Coming from a family of health professionals and entrepreneurs Gerald has always sought ways on how to best serve Pacific people for better health, education and socioeconomic outcomes. Gerald has been involved with international research projects where community voice was centered and drove the research project. Gerald's careful relationships management and ability to communicate between key stakeholders has meant that community research projects are successful and meet key outcomes for both community and research funders.

Matada Research Group Ltd was born from the need for Pacific Research to be led by Pacific Institutions with the goal of better outcomes for future Pacific generations. Matada Research Group Ltd. aims to create brighter futures for Pacific individuals, families and communities through research driven practice.

Dr. Sereana Naepi

Research consultant

Dr. Sereana Naepi graduated with her BA, and Honours from the University of Auckland (UoA), and in 2018 completed her PhD in Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Canada. Dr. Naepi is a highly qualified and experienced researcher with both national and international research experience. She has been involved in indigenous projects that have helped see a change in education and well being.

Dr. Naepi has worked with the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education on province-wide equity approach to learning in schools that sought to increase indigenous student achievement (BC Equity Scheme). Dr Sereana Naepi is experienced in Pacific research methodologies and has both quantitative and qualitative research expertise.

Through her work Dr. Naepi has been involved in advocating for change in Universities for Māori and Pacific academics to see more involvement in higher education positions, Lecturers, Professors, Pro Vice Chancellors etc. Dr Naepi has also led Indigenous research development projects overseas such as Knowledge Makers and All My Relations.

Dr. Naepi has been featured in a variety of news outlets including TV Ones Breakfast, Radio New Zealand and e- Tangata, bringing the spotlight on the issues of inequity in the tertiary sector

Kate Jack

Research Assistant

Kate (they/she) is a masters student in sociology at the University of Auckland currently researching the impact of the neoliberalisation of New Zealand's universities on Aotearoa's marginalised communities. They graduated with a BA in Sociology and Development Studies from Victoria University of Wellington in 2020 and received the Jim Robb Memorial Prize in Sociology, and their BA (Hons, First Class) in 2021 from the University of Auckland.

Kate's research expertise is primarily in queer theory and higher education, particularly as each applies to critiques of neoliberalism. They have experience with both quantitative and qualitative research methods, and enjoy using innovative, queer re-workings of existing qualitative research methodologies to centre community experiences in their research.



Matada Research Group (MRG) Ltd. is a social enterprise specialising in transformative research, consultation and program development to positively impact legislation, policy and practices to help improve Pacific peoples health and well being. Matada Research seeks to create solutions that enhance the wellbeing of individuals, communities and society.

As an independent social enterprise Matada Research is backed by highly qualified and experienced researchers that have both international and domestic experience in research. Matada Research leads with core Pacific values that shape our goals and vision; we believe that good research engages meaningfully with the communities that utilise the targeted service. Our values of relationships, reciprocity, respect and family are core pillars in our research approach.

Matada Research wishes to thank our Matada community for raising their voices to bring attention to Pacific peoples experiences and aspirations for our shared future.

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