# Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

## 2023-24 Community Wellbeing

North Island Weather Events/Cyclone Gabrielle focus

| SIL Research

April 2024

Contact: Dr Virgil Troy 06 834 1996 or virgiltroy@silresearch.co.nz

Research is undertaken to the highest possible standards and in accord with the principles detailed in the RANZ Code of Practice which is based on the ESOMAR Code of Conduct for Market Research. All research processes, methodologies, technologies and intellectual properties pertaining to our services are copyright and remain the property of SIL Research.

Disclaimer: This report was prepared by SIL Research for the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand and the All Sorts campaign, funded by Health New Zealand - Te Whatu Ora. The Auckland element of this research is funded by MSD through the Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office.

The views presented in the report do not necessarily represent the views of SIL Research, the Mental Health Foundation or Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office. The information in this report is accurate to the best of the knowledge and belief of SIL Research.

While SIL Research has exercised all reasonable skill and care in the preparation of information in this report, SIL Research accepts no liability in contract, tort, or otherwise for any loss, damage, injury or expense, whether direct, indirect, or consequential, arising out of the provision of information in this report.

# CONTENTS


4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

9. METHODOLOGY

14. WELLBEING OVERVIEW

15. WELLBEING

34. WELLBEING KNOWLEDGE OVERVIEW

35. WELLBEING KNOWLEDGE

46. EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS OVERVIEW

48. EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

60. PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

70. IN-DEPTH FINDINGS

136. QUESTIONNAIRE

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main aim of this research was to gain insight into the wellbeing of communities affected by the North Island Weather Events/Cyclone Gabrielle. The research began with quantitative data collection to establish baseline wellbeing measurements. This was followed up with qualitative methods to explore the nuances and context behind the quantitative findings.

The survey was undertaken between 12 December 2023 and 29 February 2024. Multiple data collection channels were utilised to ensure representation, including: postal surveys (a total of 6,000 copies), computer-assisted telephone interviews, social media advertising, online panel and other online/web-based (available via Mental Health Foundation and Auckland Council channels). A total of n=1,524 surveys were used in the final analysis. Weighting (post-stratification) was applied to the collected survey data to reflect the actual proportions of sub-group populations (e.g. by age, gender and ethnicity) in the regions (Hawke's Bay, Gisborne and Auckland), as determined by Statistics New Zealand's 2018 Census data.

In addition to the main survey, focus groups, targeted interviews, community meetings, and hui, were designed and conducted (up till end-March 2024) to obtain more in-depth, qualitative feedback, supporting and providing additional details to the overall quantitative findings. The in-depth sample included n=54 participants.

The main findings related to specific objectives of the research included the following:

## Impacts of 2023 weather events

- The 2023 extreme weather events had a strong, diverse and widespread impact on local communities across multiple regions: 6-in-10 respondents (59%) reported experiencing a direct negative impact on themselves or their families; including physical and community impacts (63%, e.g. property damage, flooding, content damage, evacuation, loss of power and communication, impact on work, etc.), mental/emotional impacts (43%, e.g. stress, weather anxiety, feeling unsafe, etc.), and other personal/health impacts (46%).
- Primary negative impacts were particularly pronounced in Wairoa (76%), Northland (75%), Hastings (69%), Gisborne (67%), and Napier (66%).
- As expected, specific impacts differed across regions and within communities depending on local conditions, highlighting the diverse array of challenges faced by different communities even within the same region. Generally, rural respondents were more likely to experience property damage, travel disruptions, physical and social isolation (with loss of communications), work disruption and related financial impacts.
- Across regions, property damage and flooding concerns were more pronounced in Hastings (especially rurally) and

Auckland; Gisborne and Northland residents emphasised infrastructure (roading/bridge) issues leading to travel disruptions and isolation; emotional impacts were more prevalent in both Gisborne and Wairoa; Napier residents were more likely to be impacted by power loss.

- The consequences of the weather events were apparent even among those experiencing no direct impact; 7-in-10 (70%) of these respondents (or 28% of the total sample) reported indirect secondary impacts or stressors, particularly empathetic distress for others (49%) or the local environment (32%).
- Extreme weather events had a clear and substantial negative impact on residents' wellbeing, measured across multiple indicators: wellbeing scores, mental health wellbeing, perceived loneliness, reported health, life satisfaction and income adequacy. Greater effects (less positive outcomes) were measured among people more heavily affected by events - particularly by primary negative impacts.
- While secondary stressors also had a notable effect on mental wellbeing, feeling less safe, feeling lonely and neighbourhood perceptions, little effect was found on overall wellbeing or other attributes.
- Overall, Northland residents indicated the highest mental distress and lowest wellbeing scores regardless of reported weather impacts.

## Psychosocial supports and resilience factors

- In the face of disruption and loss presented by Cyclone Gabrielle and other weather events, many positive factors came into effect to unite people, focus relief efforts, and provide a sense of resilience through difficult times – despite significant challenges posed by flooding, communication issues, and perceived slow responses from authorities.
- Social connections remained high among respondents regardless of the impacts and provided valuable and effective support networks aiding communities in the aftermath of weather events. Psychosocial support networks were a crucial source of strength, practical assistance and coping. Specific support was most readily provided from knowing one's neighbours and/or having family or friends on hand to help each other; volunteers performing essential tasks and assistance; local community groups, marae, churches and businesses providing support and resources; core services provided by a range of key agencies, including councils, civil defence, central government, police and emergency services; provision of central hubs, evacuation centres and hui; critical communications, media and information sources; social media enabling community information sharing; in addition to residents' own personal resilience, preparation and adjusting to the changing situation.
- The hardest hit regions were heavily dependent on support, with some differences in emphasis; for example, in Hawke's Bay (general community support and neighbours/family) and Gisborne (communication channels, donations of

resources, and key agencies and services). Rural residents were appreciative of both community support generally and resource donations specifically; while also more likely to point to rely on personal resilience, preparation or adaptation as coping strategies.

- Most respondents (64%) identified multiple things they now do differently as a result of the 2023 weather events and felt better prepared generally for future emergencies and weather events. Many had assembled or updated emergency supplies, especially food, water and other supplies including torches, radios, cooking equipment (BBQs, cookers, gas supplies), and power supplies such as generators, batteries, power banks or solar power.
- Behavioural changes were higher among those reporting primary negative impacts (71%) or secondary stressors (59%); however, half (45%) of unaffected respondents also reported some changes. Patterns of change also differed across regions in response to specific community experiences.
- Respondents dealing with negative impacts were more likely to be better prepared for travel, aware of weather forecasts/warnings, made changes to regular routines, and either moved house or considered moving. In contrast, those experiencing more positive outcomes were more likely to have purchased back-up power supplies and maintained a positive mindset or community engagement.

## Wellbeing measurement and benchmarks

- Several indicators proved effective as measures of community wellbeing and resilience, providing insights into regions affected by the 2023 weather events with the ability to distinguish between local communities based on their perceived level of impact. These indicators were related to and reinforced each other in expected ways, and together provide a valuable benchmarking and diagnostic toolkit to identify areas of psychosocial strength, needs and opportunities.
- Overall, wellbeing is a multidimensional concept that reflects the balance and integration of various aspects of life. Wellbeing is influenced by numerous factors, including physical health, mental health, social connections, financial security, and other social and cultural factors.
- The survey identified moderately strong community wellbeing, with variations observed by region and key demographics.
- Life satisfaction (self-rated): 6-in-10 respondents (61%) reported satisfaction with their life as a whole; but lower in Gisborne (52%) and Northland (54%). Also varied by age, gender, income, and employment status. Influenced by various factors, particularly self-reported personal health, mental distress, and sense of loneliness.
- Wellbeing Index (WHO-5): The average wellbeing index score was 52.5 out of 100; with 46% of respondents defined as low (0-50), including 22% very low (below 29) (indicative of depression), 31% as moderate, and 24% as high (76-100) scores. The wellbeing index was highly correlated with life satisfaction, with the strongest predictors being self-

reported personal health, mental distress, sense of loneliness, income adequacy, and social connections. Wairoa (46.3), Northland (45.3) and younger adults (18-39) exhibited a lower wellbeing index, on average.

- Mental distress (PHQ-4): While half of respondents (47%) showed no distress on the PHQ-4 scale, 29% had mild, 14% moderate and 9% severe distress scores. Key factors associated with mental wellbeing were overall wellbeing index, sense of loneliness, cultural identity, personal health, and income adequacy. Higher distress was measured in Northland, by age (among younger respondents), income (lower income), ethnicity (Pacific Peoples) and employment status (unemployed, beneficiaries, casual employment).
- Personal health: 85% rated their personal health as fair or good, with half (50%) stating it was good. Health perceptions were greatly impacted by mental distress (particularly feeling down or depressed), and income adequacy - both of greater concern in Gisborne and Northland, where health was more likely to be rated as poor (23% and 25%, respectively); also the case for Māori (25%), Pacific Peoples (23%), and beneficiaries (51%).
- Social Connections: Overall, social connections were strong across all regions (77.7 out of 100), with a moderate positive association with overall wellbeing and mental health. While 4-in-5 (83%) knew they have friends / relatives they can count on in times of trouble, fewer agreed they spend enough time with loved ones (69%; 57% of those living alone) or know people in their community take care of one another (67%). Social connections were stronger among older respondents (65+), particularly compared to those aged under 40.
- Sense of loneliness: 4-in-10 respondents (40%) felt lonely at least some of the time (in the past two weeks). Sense of loneliness was most associated with mental wellbeing, overall wellbeing and cultural identity, rather than social connections. This was especially the case in Northland and among younger adults (18-39), where higher loneliness was observed (47% and 52%, respectively).
- Cultural identity: Two-thirds (65%) of respondents agreed it is easy to be themselves in the area where they live. Cultural identity moderately associated with sense of loneliness, mental wellbeing, overall safety perceptions, and consideration of neighbourhood as a good place to live. As such, older adults (65+) were more likely to find it easy to be themselves (77%), while Wairoa (28%) and Northland (26%) residents found this harder. Half (48%) of respondents reported personally experiencing, or seeing others experiencing, prejudice or intolerance (mostly based on ethnicity) – more likely for those finding it hard to be themselves (81%). Reported discrimination was higher in Northland (75%) and Gisborne (61%), for adults aged under 65 (52% on average), Māori (62%) and Pacific Peoples (61%).

## Wellbeing literacy

- Wellbeing literacy (knowledge and personal expression of wellbeing) plays an important role in the way people see themselves and their own health, and how they respond to unexpected or stressful events such as the 2023 weather events.
- Measured over six self-rated statements, the Wellbeing Literacy score indicated that subjective knowledge about wellbeing was high overall (average 77.1 out of 100). Most feel they have the skills to understand wellbeing information (80%), express themselves (74%) and improve their wellbeing (75%).
- Those with higher wellbeing literacy tend to have broader understandings of the concept than those with low scores, in relation to physical health, social connectedness, holistic/balanced wellbeing, and spiritual health.
- Wellbeing literacy was reportedly higher in Northland (84.3), among females (80.2), those aged 40+ (79 on average), postgraduate education (83.2), but lower among beneficiaries (67.6).
- 'Wellbeing' is a broad term with a wide variety of meanings and definitions for respondents. While some see this in general terms (feeling good, happy or satisfied with life; a state of health or feeling healthy), most typically wellbeing definitions encompass a range of specific dimensions: especially physical (37%) and mental or emotional health (41%); and often spiritual, social, economic or financial health, connection to the environment or nature, and personal resilience; or a holistic concept balancing all dimensions. Females typically have a broader understanding of the concept than males; rural residents have a greater sense of personal resilience; Māori and Pacific peoples see this concept as more holistic overall (i.e. Te Whare Tapa Whā model), with social connection highly valued.
- Talking to friends or family (62%) or conducting an online search (60%) were by far the most preferred methods to search for wellbeing information, with clear preferences for older and younger adults respectively.
- Most respondents (62%) experienced no barriers to finding information about wellbeing, with personal time or motivation, confusion/misinformation, financial/funding limitations or social stigma the most pertinent issues for small numbers of residents. Respondents with less positive mental health, or rating themselves in 'poor health', were more likely to identify barriers; as were younger adults (18-39).
- Providing more community-based events or activities, increased communication of wellbeing-related information, improving access or reducing barriers to support and services, or provision of more affordable (or free) assistance (counselling, health-related courses, support groups, etc.) were considered viable options to improve wellbeing awareness, increase community spirit and facilitate connection to others generally.

# METHODOLOGY

## RESEARCH GOAL

In 2023, storms and severe weather events devastated large parts of the North Island. In January of that year, regions across the upper North Island of New Zealand experienced widespread catastrophic floods caused by heavy rainfall, with Auckland being the most significantly affected during the Auckland Anniversary holiday weekend.

Shortly afterward in February, Cyclone Gabrielle - a severe tropical cyclone - impacted various areas of the North Island.

As a leading charity promoting mental health and wellbeing, the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (MHF) commissioned SIL Research to conduct research into the community-wide outcomes of these weather events.

The main aim of this research was to gain insight into the wellbeing of communities affected by the North Island Weather Events/Cyclone Gabrielle. Specifically:

- Highlight specific secondary stressors for each region/community and understand the impact of these, including rain and weather-related anxiety.
- Identify levels of 'wellbeing literacy' and the language that various communities use (or don't use) around this.
- Attempt to identify key psychosocial supports that can be built on (i.e. community strengths, assets, identities, culture).
- Establish a baseline of wellbeing measurement using a validated population wellbeing instrument.

Research findings were designed to inform development of future resources, messaging and campaigns; to inform recovery stakeholders including Te Whatu Ora and other government agencies and assist advocacy for affected communities; to support psychosocial recovery through listening and reflecting back to communities.

## QUESTIONNAIRE AND PROJECT SPECIFICS

The research began with quantitative data collection (community survey) to establish baseline wellbeing measurements.

This was followed up with qualitative methods (focus groups, in-depth interviews, community meetings) to explore the nuances and context behind quantitative findings.

In November-December 2023, SIL Research together with MHF developed a Community Wellbeing questionnaire. The initial draft was based on international research conducted to assess flood impacts and community flood resilience and wellbeing, as well as SIL Research's previous post-cyclone community surveys.

The questionnaire was tested prior to full scale data collection to ensure the survey was fit for purpose.

Given the sensitivity of the topic, all surveys included additional information about the support available to the affected communities, such as free helplines, wellbeing tips, resources and tools, and post-cyclone regional assistance.

SIL used a multi-layered random sampling technique to ensure a representative spread of respondents by targeted areas, with a combination of simple random sampling, stratification, and quota sampling.

The targeted population was people aged 18 years and over from communities affected by the North Island Weather Events/Cyclone Gabrielle (particularly Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, and Auckland).

To introduce a statistically robust sampling methodology, SIL Research set a minimum sample size of n=1,100, based on the Statistics New Zealand 2018 Census data (with minimum n=450 in Hawke's Bay, n=150 in Gisborne, and n=500 in Auckland).

In addition, n=160 response targets across other affected areas (Northland, Wairarapa, Tararua, and Coromandel) were used.

## DATA COLLECTION

Survey data collection:

The survey was undertaken between 12 December 2023 and 29 February 2024.

Multiple data collection channels were utilised to ensure people were well-represented. The mixed-channels approach included:

(1) Postal survey. A total of n=4,000 freepost return survey forms were delivered to randomly selected households within Hawke's Bay and Gisborne territorial units. In addition, n=2,000 survey forms were delivered to the Auckland Council for distribution.

(2) Telephone survey. Respondents were randomly selected from the publicly available telephone directories within each territorial units;

(3) Social media (available via SIL Research social media platforms, such as Facebook, TikTok). The invitation advertisement was randomly promoted to residents aged 18+ within territorial units;

(4) Online/web based (available via Mental Health Foundation and Auckland Council channels). Surveys were advertised to increase survey awareness.

(5) Online panel. The survey invitations were sent to a randomly selected sample of online panel respondents in Hawke's Bay, Gisborne and Auckland.

The survey included a prize draw to win one of three $200 Prezzy Cards.

A total of n=1,524 surveys were used in the final analysis.

*Table 1 Number of responses by area*

| Area | n= | % |
|---|---|---|
| Hawke's Bay | 539 | 35% |
| *Central HB* | *57* | *11%* |
| *Hastings* | *228* | *42%* |
| *Napier* | *210* | *39%* |
| *Wairoa* | *44* | *8%* |
| Gisborne | 152 | 10% |
| Auckland | 644 | 42% |
| Northland | 57 | 4% |
| Other areas* | 132 | 9% |

**Including Wairarapa, Tararua and Coromandel districts.*

SIL Research ensured quality control during the fieldwork period.

Further checks included, but were not limited to, removal of incomplete responses, duplicate responses (e.g. prize draw entries, IP-addresses) and responses coming from outside of the required areas. The final

dataset was checked for speeding, copy-paste answers, gibberish, straight-lining, etc.

For online responses, SIL conducted a quality control check using follow-up calls across a random selection of respondents to verify the key responses.

Focus groups, in-depth interviews and community meetings:

In addition to the main survey, focus groups, targeted interviews, community meetings, and hui were designed and conducted to obtain more in-depth, qualitative feedback, supporting and providing additional details to the overall quantitative findings. Fieldwork for focus groups, in-depth interviews and community meetings concluded end-March 2024.

The in-depth sample included n=54 participants.

Focus groups comprised participants recruited from the main survey across Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, and Auckland. In total, 8 focus groups were conducted online on different days and times. Each focus group participant received a $50 Prezzy Card for their time.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders. Interviews were carried out online and face-to-face with representatives from the Napier City Council, Hastings District Council, Central Hawke's Bay District Council, Wairoa District Council, Gisborne District Council, Auckland Council, and Te Whatu Ora Te Matau a Māui, Hawke's Bay actively engaged in community response initiatives.

Other community meetings/interviews utilised purposive sampling to target specific demographic groups within Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, and Auckland (through marae, Te Whatu Ora boards, community groups, churches, and online).

## DATA ANALYSIS

Weighting (post-stratification) was applied to the collected survey data to reflect the actual proportions of sub-group populations (e.g. by age, gender and ethnicity) in the regions (mainly Hawke's Bay, Gisborne and Auckland), as determined by Statistics New Zealand's 2018 Census data. SIL used this technique to minimise discrepancies between population parameters and the collected sample distribution.

The main demographic groups analysed in this report were: region, location (rural vs. urban), age, gender, ethnicity, living situation and annual income. During the analysis stage of this report, two sets of statistical testing were employed while reviewing data findings. Chi-square tests were used when comparing group results in tables, and ANOVA tests were used when comparing statement averages across groups. The threshold for reporting any statistically significant differences was a p-value of 0.05. Where differences were outside this threshold (less than 95%), no comments were made; where differences were within this threshold, comments have been made within the context of their practical relevance to MHF.

Open-ended (free-text) responses were also collected and analysed. SIL Research used a content analysis approach to determine certain themes, concepts or issues within this feedback. This represents a 'bottom up' data driven approach where identified themes are derived purely from the collective respondent feedback, rather than fitting responses into pre-determined categories. Results for reported themes may not add to 100% as several themes could be mentioned by a given respondent.

Examples of open-ended comments are provided verbatim, without editing.

The focus groups, interviews and community meetings were recorded; these recordings, and additional qualitative feedback, were then summarised (reader friendly, non-verbatim), processed (content/theme analysis) and included as part of the report as summary transcripts. These transcripts provide a summarised version of the focus group discussions, highlighting the main points, themes, and conclusions.

## NOTES ON REPORTING

Due to rounding, figures with percentages may not add to 100%. Reported percentages were calculated on actual results not rounded values.

Where results are reported by some smaller sub-groups of residents, estimates of results may not be statistically reliable due to the high margins of error (small sample sizes).

Overall '*satisfaction*'/'*agreement*' percentages presented in this report are aggregated responses of 4-5 on a 1-5 rating scale.

New Zealand-wide anecdotal comparisons are indicated with the icon, and provided (where applicable) using the following sources: Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand), Ipsos 2021 Wellbeing among New Zealanders, Office of the European Commission 2021 Living, working and COVID-19 (WHO-5 comparison by country).

The regression and correlation analysis were used for key driver (relative importance) analysis and data relationship assessment. These statistical methods investigate the relationships between potential influential factors (e.g. predictors) and residents' overall perceptions (e.g. subjective wellbeing). Identified key drivers are factors that have a greater improvement potential.

Where research-validated wellbeing scales were employed in the study, these are elucidated in the main text of the report.

Overall results are reported with margins of error at a 95% confidence level.

*Table 2 Margins of error*

| | Reported percentages | |
|---|---|---|
| Responses n= | 50% | 80% or 20% |
| Hawke's Bay: | +/-4.2% | +/-3.4% |
| Central HB | +/-13.0% | +/-10.4% |
| Hastings | +/-6.5% | +/-5.2% |
| Napier | +/-6.8% | +/-5.4% |
| Wairoa | +/-13.0% | +/-10.4% |
| Gisborne | +/-7.9% | +/-6.3% |
| Auckland | +/-3.9% | +/-3.1% |
| Northland | +/-13.0% | +/-10.4% |
| Other areas: | +/-8.5% | +/-6.8% |
| Tararua | +/-15.9% | +/-12.7% |
| Coromandel | +/-13.3% | +/-10.7% |
| Wairarapa | +/-15.5% | +/-12.4% |
| Total results | +/-2.5% | +/-2.0% |

The maximum likely error margin occurs when a reported percentage is close to 50%.

## RESPONSES AS USED IN THE ANALYSIS*

*Table 2 Responses by age*

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 18-39 | 525 | 34% |
| 40-64 | 657 | 43% |
| 65+ | 343 | 22% |
| Total | 1,524 | 100% |

*Table 3 Responses by gender*

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 839 | 55% |
| Male | 676 | 44% |
| Another gender | 9 | 0.6% |
| Total | 1,524 | 100% |

*Table 4 Responses by ethnicity*

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| NZ European | 1,004 | 66% |
| European | 149 | 10% |
| Māori | 297 | 20% |
| Pacific Peoples | 64 | 4% |
| Asian | 182 | 12% |
| Middle Eastern/Latin American/African | 24 | 2% |
| Other | 59 | 4% |
| No answer | 1 | 0% |
| Total | 1,524 | 100% |

*Table 5 Responses by aggregated income*

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Below 70,000 | 616 | 40% |
| Above 70,000 | 698 | 46% |
| Refused, other or no answer | 210 | 14% |
| Total | 1,524 | 100% |

*Note: *final dataset was statistically weighted to increase accuracy of the reported results. The target was based on 2018 New Zealand Census information. Respondents can select more than one ethnic group; therefore, ethnicity totals add to more than 100%.*

# WELLBEING OVERVIEW

**Wellbeing 52.5** out of 100
*encompasses a holistic, multifaceted measure that integrates various aspects of respondents' lives in a balanced manner.*

**Mental distress 3.5** (mild)
*a screening for self-reported anxiety and depression.*

**Social connections 77.7** out of 100
*Knowing neighbours, having friends or relatives to count on, knowing people in the community help one another, spending time with people you love*

**85%** rated their personal health as fair or good

**76%** felt safe overall

**65%** found it easy to be themselves

**64%** employment rate

**61%** were satisfied with their life

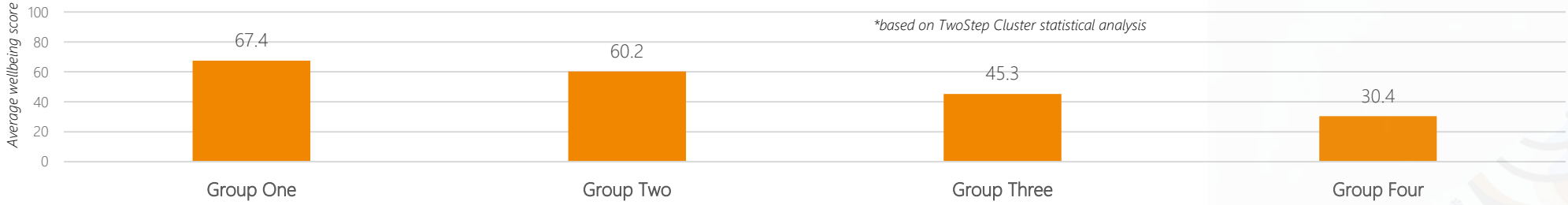
**56%** agreed they have enough money to meet everyday needs

**51%** felt safe after dark in their neighbourhood

**48%** experienced or saw prejudice or intolerance

**40%** experienced loneliness at least some of the time in the past two weeks

Key demographic groups based on wellbeing score*



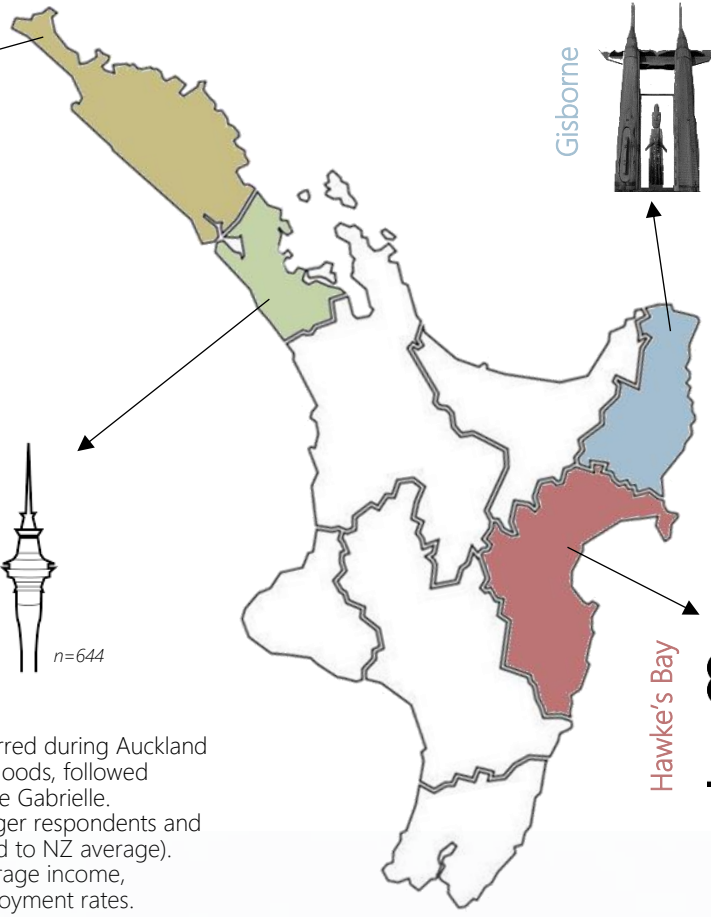

*based on TwoStep Cluster statistical analysis

- Highest wellbeing score
- No mental distress (1.8)
- High social connections score (84)
- Mainly 40-64 (fewer other age groups)
- Employed
- In good health
- Income adequacy highest
- Mostly no sense of loneliness
- Income skewed to $100k+

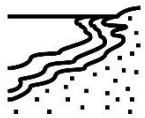
- High wellbeing score
- Low mental distress (2.9)
- High social connections score (82)
- Mainly 65+
- Retired
- Mixed health but skewed towards good
- Income adequacy high
- Mixed sense of loneliness
- Income mainly ranges between $20k-$50k

- Lower wellbeing score
- Mild mental distress (4.1)
- Lower social connections score (75)
- 18-64
- Employed, parenting, other status
- Fair health
- Income adequacy varies
- Some sense of loneliness
- Income skewed to $70+

- Lowest wellbeing score
- Moderate mental distress (7.0)
- Lowest social connections score (69)
- 18-64
- Unemployed, beneficiaries, casual employment
- Poor health
- Income adequacy low
- Some sense of loneliness
- Lower income skewed to below $70k



## Northland



*n=57 (additional area sample*

Higher than average 2023 rainfall, area affected by Auckland Anniversary Floods, Cyclone Gabrielle, and Whangārei floods later in the year.
Higher unemployment rates, lower average income.

- Wellbeing score 45.3
- Mental distress 4.7
- Good personal health 49%
- Overall safety feelings 72%
- Social connections 76.9
- Easy to be yourself 58%
- 5-year retention 63%

## Auckland

*n=644*

Main damage occurred during Auckland Anniversary Floods, followed by Cyclone Gabrielle.
Greater % of younger respondents and Asian (compared to NZ average).
Higher average income, higher employment rates.

- Wellbeing score 53.2
- Mental distress 3.3
- Good personal health 50%
- Overall safety feelings 79%
- Social connections 76
- Easy to be yourself 63%
- 5-year retention 62%

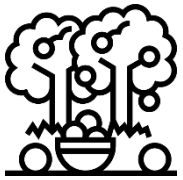
## Gisborne

*n=152*

Higher than average 2023 rainfall, area affected by Cyclone Hale, Cyclone Gabrielle, with additional weather events later in the year.
Higher unemployment rates, greater % of Māori respondents.

- Wellbeing score 51.4
- Mental distress 4.0
- Good personal health 39%
- Overall safety feelings 66%
- Social connections 75.1
- Easy to be yourself 64%
- 5-year retention 52%

## Hawke's Bay



*n=539*

Main damage occurred during Cyclone Gabrielle.
*Wairoa (W) different profile – lower average income, lower employment rates, greater % of Māori respondents.

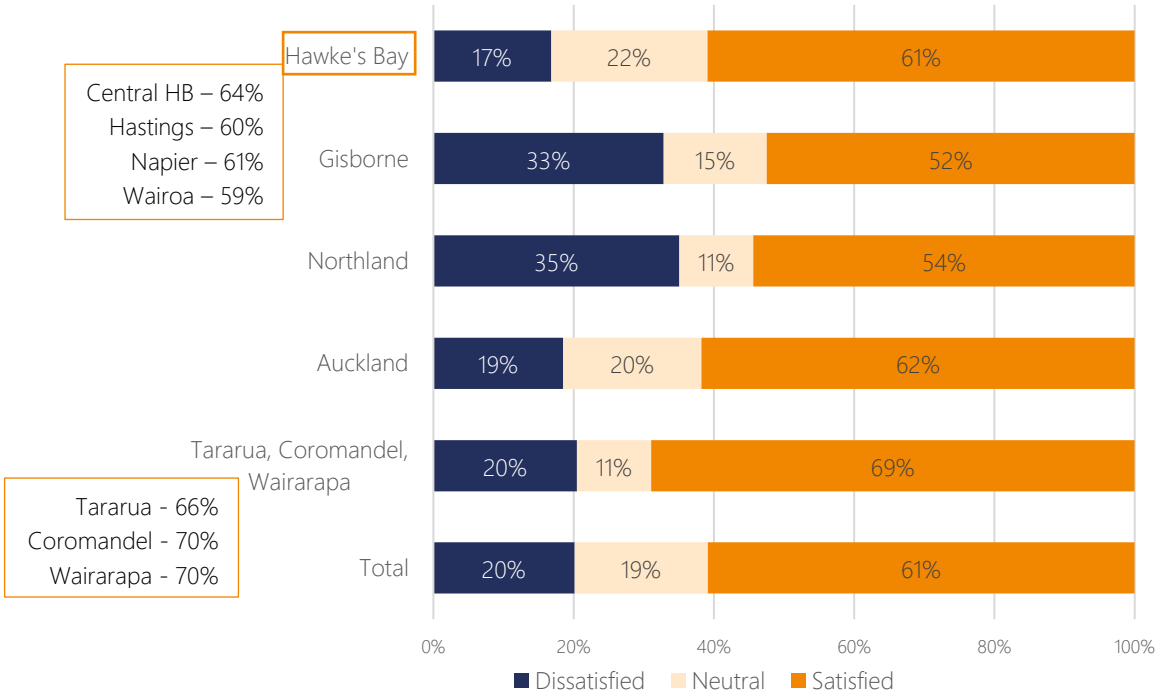
- Wellbeing score 52.4 (46.3 W)
- Mental distress 3.6 (3.6 W)
- Good personal health 52% (46% W)
- Overall safety feelings 73% (62% W)
- Social connections 79.5 (77.0 W)
- Easy to be yourself 67% (51% W)
- 5-year retention 69% (66% W)

# WELLBEING – subjective wellbeing overall

According to Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand, **81%** of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over rated their life satisfaction highly (April-August 2021).

In September 2021, the COVID-19 Health and Wellbeing Survey showed that **75%** of New Zealanders reported being satisfied with their life.

- Overall, 6-in-10 respondents (61%) were satisfied with their life as a whole.
- Life satisfaction was influenced by various factors; however, the key associated variables were reported personal health, mental distress (particularly feelings of being down or depressed, and having little interest in life), and a sense of loneliness.
- Life satisfaction also varied by area, age, gender, average income, and current employment.
- Life satisfaction was lower in Gisborne (52%) and Northland (54%).
- The respondent group most satisfied with life was aged 65+, retirees, with an average household income $70,000+ (95%). Those aged 65+ were also generally more satisfied regardless of income or whether they were still employed.
- The least satisfied groups (life satisfaction 20% and under) were those aged 18-39, unemployed (including beneficiaries), with an average income below $70,000, followed by respondents aged 40-64 (also unemployed or beneficiaries).




| | | % Satisfied |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 56% |
| | 40-64 | 57% |
| | 65+ | 76% |
| Gender | Female | 65% |
| | Male | 56% |
| Location | Urban | 61% |
| | Rural | 60% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 53% |
| | Above $70,000 | 70% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 63% |
| | Casual | 43% |
| | Unemployed | 27% |
| | Parenting | 73% |
| | Retired | 75% |
| | Beneficiary | 26% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 62% |
| | Māori | 59% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 62% |
| | Asian | 58% |
| | Other | 52% |

*All respondents were asked: "Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life as a whole at the moment?"*

# WELLBEING – wellbeing index (WHO-5)

Ipsos WHO-5 index in New Zealand was 63.6 in 2021.

In 2020-21, the WHO-5 index in major European countries post-covid was 59 out of 100.

- There was a strong correlation between the wellbeing index (WHO-5) and subjective wellbeing (life satisfaction). Overall wellbeing index resulted in an average score of 52.5 out of 100; 46% were defined as low (0-50, including 22% very low below 29), 31% as moderate, and 24% as high (76-100) scores.
- Similar to subjective wellbeing, the index varied by area, age, and current employment. Perceived income adequacy was a stronger predictor than income.
- The strongest predictors of wellbeing index were reported personal health, mental distress, sense of loneliness, income adequacy, and social connections.
- Wairoa (46.3) and Northland (45.3), on average, exhibited a lower wellbeing index. Younger respondents (18-39), and particularly those who disagreed they have enough money to meet their everyday needs (40.0), showed lower wellbeing index
- Beneficiaries, and those in casual employment, followed by parents and unemployed respondents, showed higher percentage of very low wellbeing scores.

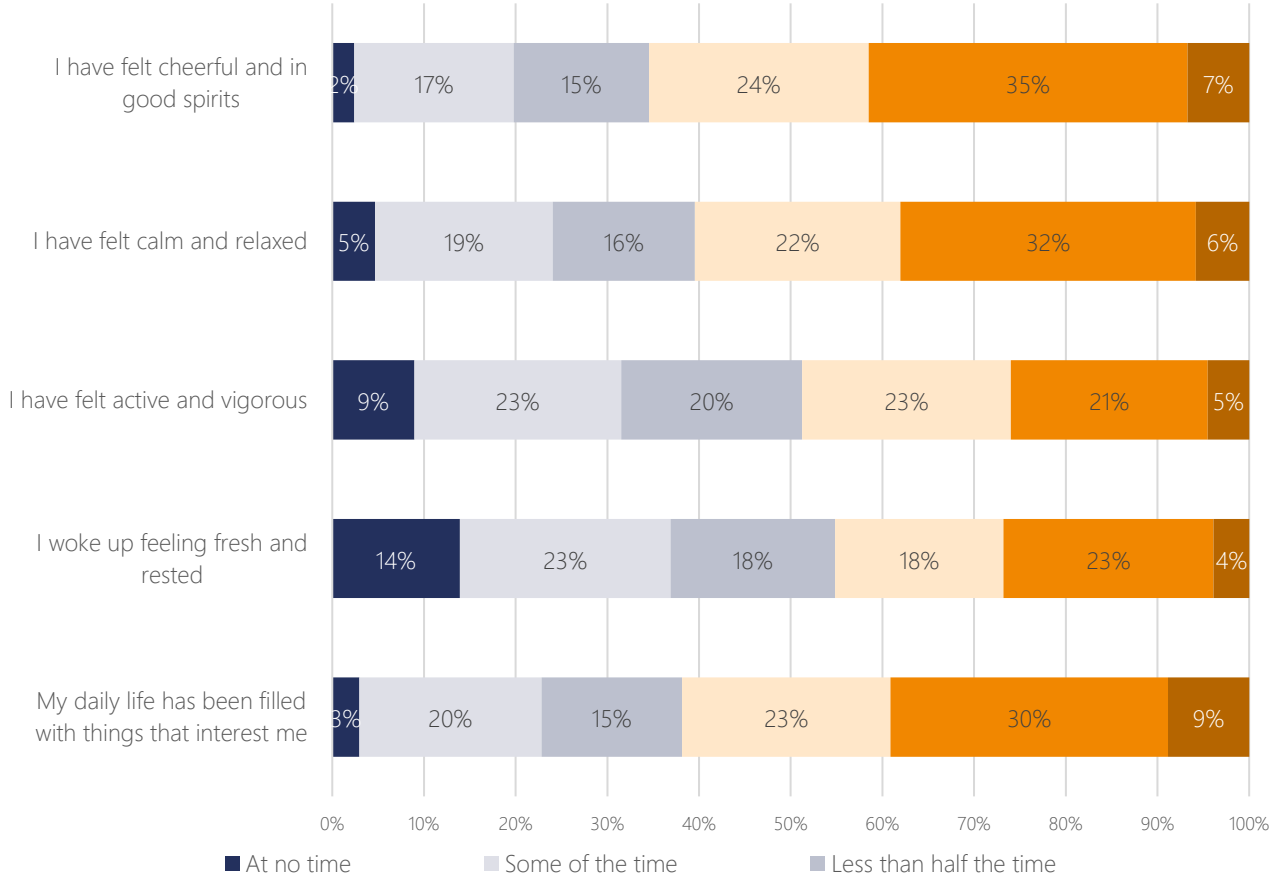
*The World Health Organisation Wellbeing Index is a short (5 questions) self-administered measure of wellbeing.*

*Note: higher scores indicate greater wellbeing (out of 100).*

| | | Index | Very low % | High % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 48.5 | 27% | 19% |
| | 40-64 | 51.8 | 22% | 20% |
| | 65+ | 59.9 | 16% | 38% |
| Gender | Female | 50.1 | 26% | 20% |
| | Male | 55.5 | 17% | 28% |
| Location | Urban | 53.0 | 22% | 25% |
| | Rural | 50.4 | 26% | 18% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 48.8 | 28% | 19% |
| | Above $70,000 | 55.7 | 16% | 26% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 53.7 | 19% | 23% |
| | Casual | 45.5 | 42% | 18% |
| | Unemployed | 42.1 | 39% | 13% |
| | Parenting | 42.3 | 40% | 8% |
| | Retired | 59.7 | 16% | 35% |
| | Beneficiary | 37.0 | 42% | 12% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 52.3 | 22% | 23% |
| | Māori | 52.6 | 24% | 22% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 51.1 | 25% | 29% |
| | Asian | 53.6 | 22% | 27% |
| | Other | 52.0 | 25% | 23% |

*All respondents were asked: "Please indicate for each of the five statements which is closest to how you have been feeling over the past two weeks". The WHO-5 Wellbeing Index was used to assess respondents' wellbeing overall. The 5-item World Health Organisation Wellbeing Index (WHO-5) is among the most widely used questionnaires assessing subjective psychological wellbeing, based on five simple non-invasive questions. The score is calculated by totalling the figures of the five answers and multiplying it by 4. The obtained score ranges from 0 (worst possible result) to 100 (best possible result). A very low score of 0-28 is indicative of depression.*

WHO-5 statements - overall




Fewer respondents reported waking up feeling fresh and rested.

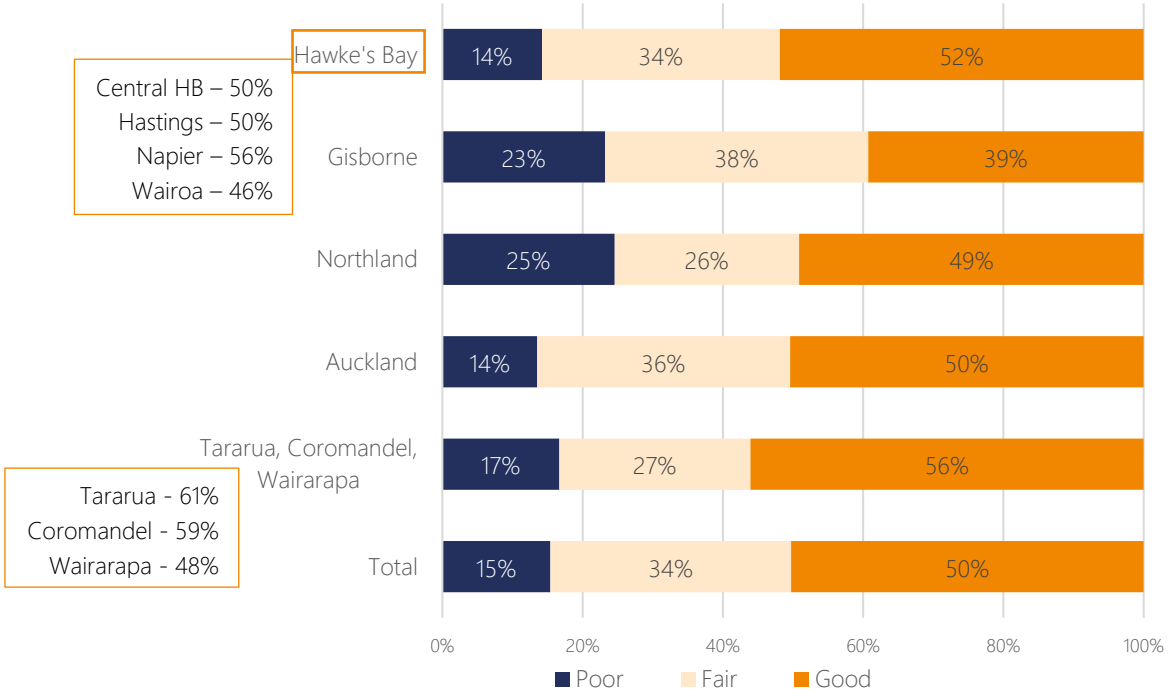
Larger proportions of Gisborne (19%) and Northland (23%) respondents stated they never feel fresh and rested when waking up.

Respondents aged 18-39 (39%) and 40-64 (31%), who were not currently employed (including beneficiaries), were more likely to state they never feel fresh and rested when waking up.

# WELLBEING – personal health

According to Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand, **86%** of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over reported having good health (comparable to % Good + Fair)

- Overall, 85% of respondents rated their personal health as fair or good, with half (50%) stating it was good.
- Respondents from Gisborne (23%) and Northland (25%) were more likely to rate their health as poor.
- Health perceptions were greatly impacted by mental distress (particularly feeling down or depressed), and income adequacy - both of greater concern in Gisborne and Northland.
- Respondents of lower income (21%), Māori (25%), Pacific Peoples (23%), and beneficiaries (51%, note this includes disability allowance, supported living, or ACC payments), were more likely to report their health was poor.



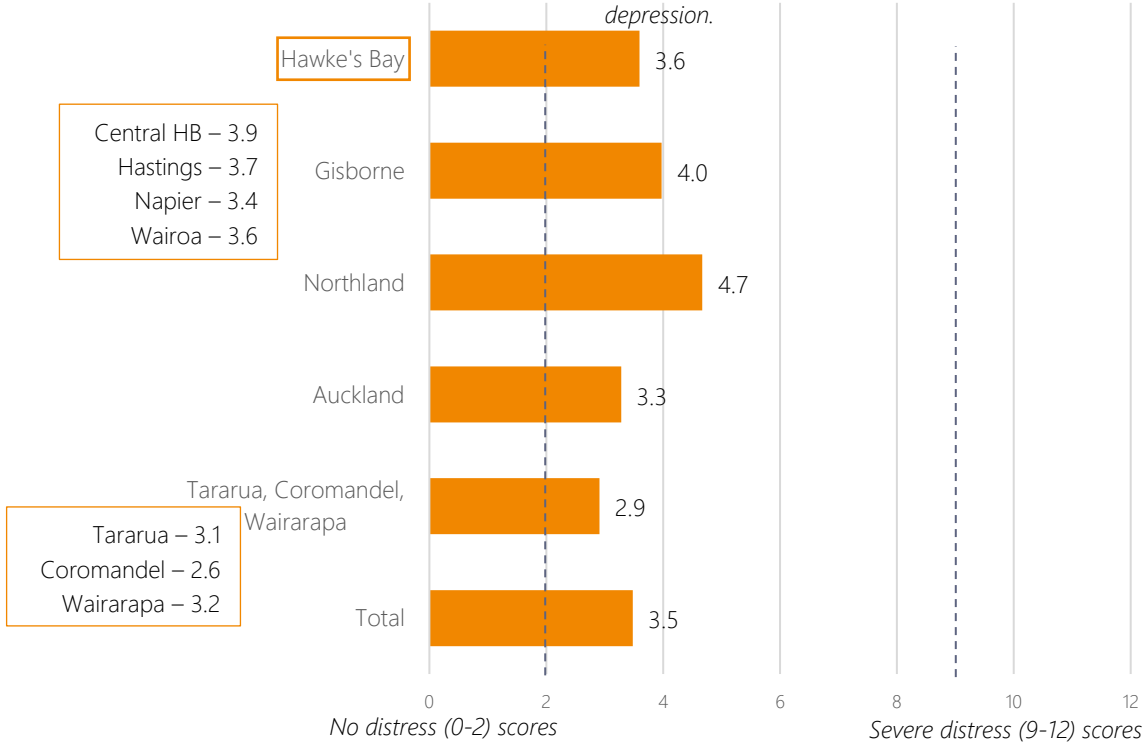

| | | % Good + Fair |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 83% |
| | 40-64 | 84% |
| | 65+ | 88% |
| Gender | Female | 84% |
| | Male | 86% |
| Location | Urban | 85% |
| | Rural | 81% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 79% |
| | Above $70,000 | 89% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 88% |
| | Casual | 81% |
| | Unemployed | 69% |
| | Parenting | 95% |
| | Retired | 88% |
| | Beneficiary | 49% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 85% |
| | Māori | 75% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 77% |
| | Asian | 87% |
| | Other | 77% |

*All respondents were asked: "How would you rate your own personal health at the moment?"*

# WELLBEING – mental distress (PHQ-4)

- Based on PHQ-4, there was a mild mental distress in the community (3.5), which was higher in Northland (4.7).
- While half (47%) showed no distress, 29% had mild, 14% moderate and 9% severe distress scores.
- Mental distress varied by age (with higher distress among younger respondents), income (lower income resulting in higher distress), employment situation (with unemployed individuals, beneficiaries, and those in casual employment exhibiting higher distress), and ethnicity (with Pacific Peoples exhibiting the highest distress).
- Tararua, Coromandel and Wairarapa, on average, resulted in a normal mental distress score (2.9, particularly Coromandel area).
- Key factors associated with mental distress were overall wellbeing score (strongest association), sense of loneliness, cultural identity, personal health, and income adequacy.
- However, a combination of income, age and employment were the strongest predictors of mental distress. Thus, respondents aged 18-39 (6.2) and 40-64 (6.3), not currently employed, particularly with lower income households were the most vulnerable groups.

*The Patient Health Questionnaire (4 questions) is a brief self-screening scale for anxiety and depression.*

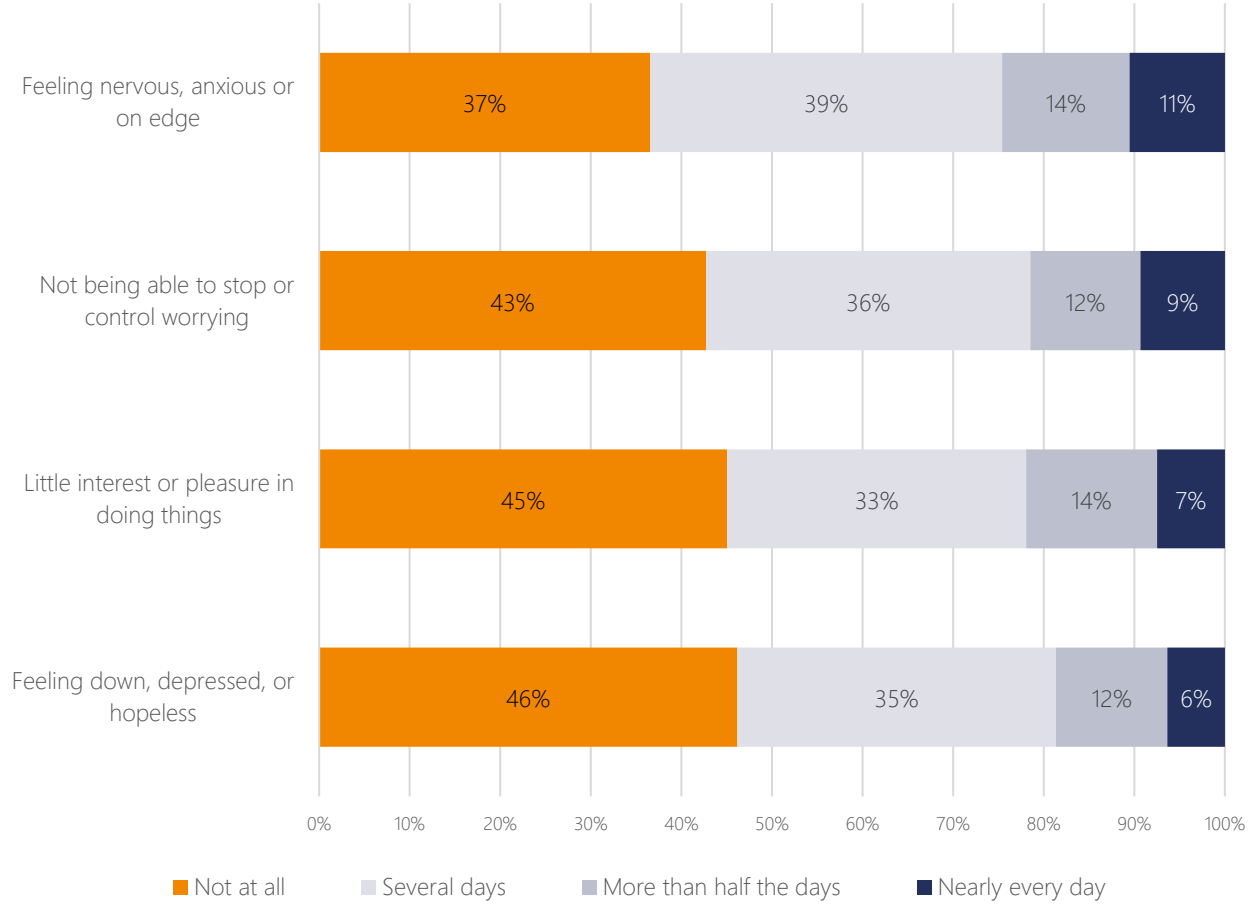



*Note: higher scores indicate greater mental distress (out of 12)*

| | | Score | No distress % | Severe % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 4.2 | 34% | 11% |
| | 40-64 | 3.6 | 47% | 10% |
| | 65+ | 2.2 | 66% | 5% |
| Gender | Female | 3.7 | 45% | 11% |
| | Male | 3.2 | 49% | 8% |
| Location | Urban | 3.4 | 48% | 9% |
| | Rural | 3.7 | 42% | 12% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 4.1 | 41% | 14% |
| | Above $70,000 | 2.9 | 51% | 5% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 3.2 | 48% | 7% |
| | Casual | 5.2 | 33% | 8% |
| | Unemployed | 5.9 | 24% | 28% |
| | Parenting | 3.5 | 38% | 8% |
| | Retired | 2.4 | 64% | 5% |
| | Beneficiary | 6.4 | 20% | 31% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 3.4 | 49% | 9% |
| | Māori | 3.9 | 37% | 10% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 4.2 | 44% | 16% |
| | Asian | 3.7 | 40% | 8% |
| | Other | 4.0 | 41% | 16% |

*All respondents were asked: "Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?". The PHQ-4 framework, an efficient four-questions tool for identifying individuals who may be suffering from anxiety and depression, was used to assess respondents' mental health wellbeing. The score is calculated by totalling the figures of the four answers. Scores are rated as normal (0-2), mild (3-5), moderate (6-8), and severe (9-12). Total score ≥3 for first 2 questions suggests anxiety. Total score ≥3 for last 2 questions suggests depression.*

PHQ-4 statements - overall




Respondents were generally more likely to report feeling nervous, anxious or on edge (63%).

Self-reported anxiety was higher in Gisborne (72%) and Northland (75%), and among younger respondents (78%).

About half of respondents agreed they had little interest or pleasure in doing things (55%) or feeling down or depressed (54%).

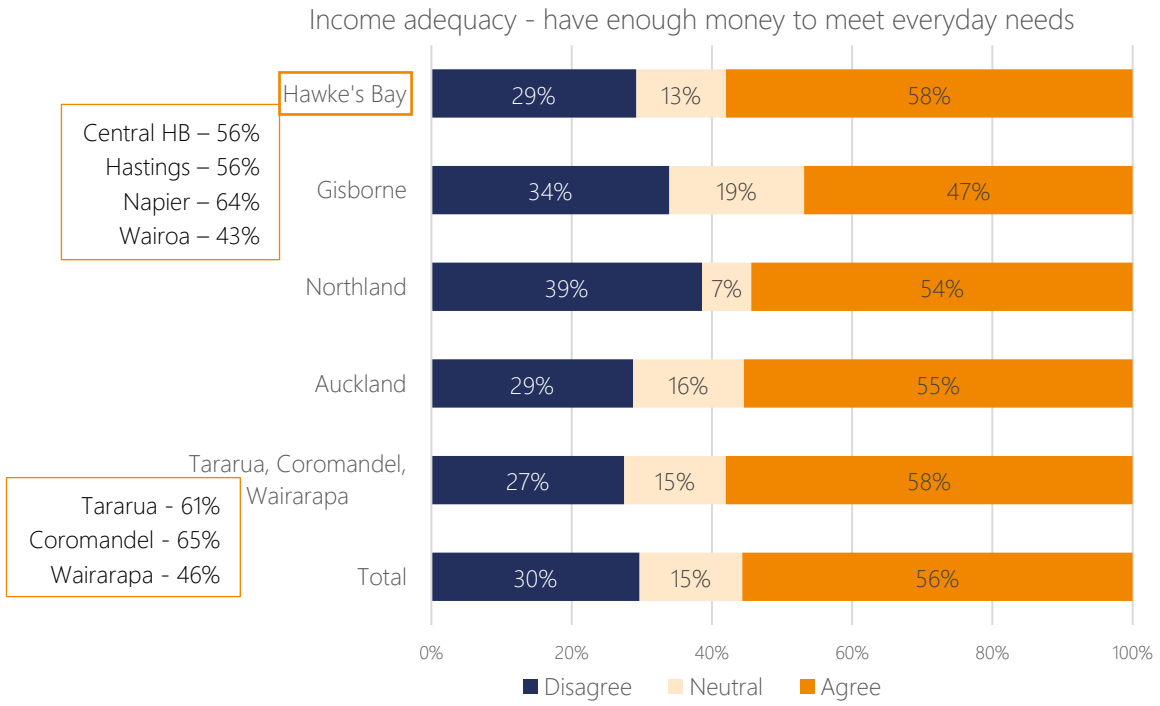
Attributes associated with depression showed higher distress in Northland (65% had little interest and 61% felt down or depressed).

Again, younger respondents (particularly with lower household income) were more likely to report having little interest or pleasure in doing things or feeling down.

# WELLBEING – education, work and income

According to Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand, **64%** of New Zealand households felt their household income was enough or more than enough to meet their everyday needs in 2023.

- Overall, 56% of respondents believed they had enough money to meet everyday needs.
- Income adequacy perceptions were lower in Gisborne (47%) and Wairoa (43%), followed by Northland (largest percentage of those who '*disagreed*').
- Income adequacy exhibited a strong contribution towards wellbeing overall. Age, household income and employment status had significant impact on income adequacy perceptions.
- Respondents aged 18-39 with annual income below $70,000 (34%), followed by those aged 40-64 with lower income, had lower perceptions of income adequacy.
- Income adequacy was also low among unemployed respondents (23%) and beneficiaries (19%). Respondents aged 65+ (regardless of income) were generally more likely to agree they have enough money.




| | | % Agree |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 48% |
| | 40-64 | 55% |
| | 65+ | 69% |
| Gender | Female | 55% |
| | Male | 56% |
| Location | Urban | 56% |
| | Rural | 56% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 45% |
| | Above $70,000 | 67% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 60% |
| | Casual | 40% |
| | Unemployed | 23% |
| | Parenting | 54% |
| | Retired | 66% |
| | Beneficiary | 19% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 60% |
| | Māori | 48% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 40% |
| | Asian | 41% |
| | Other | 53% |

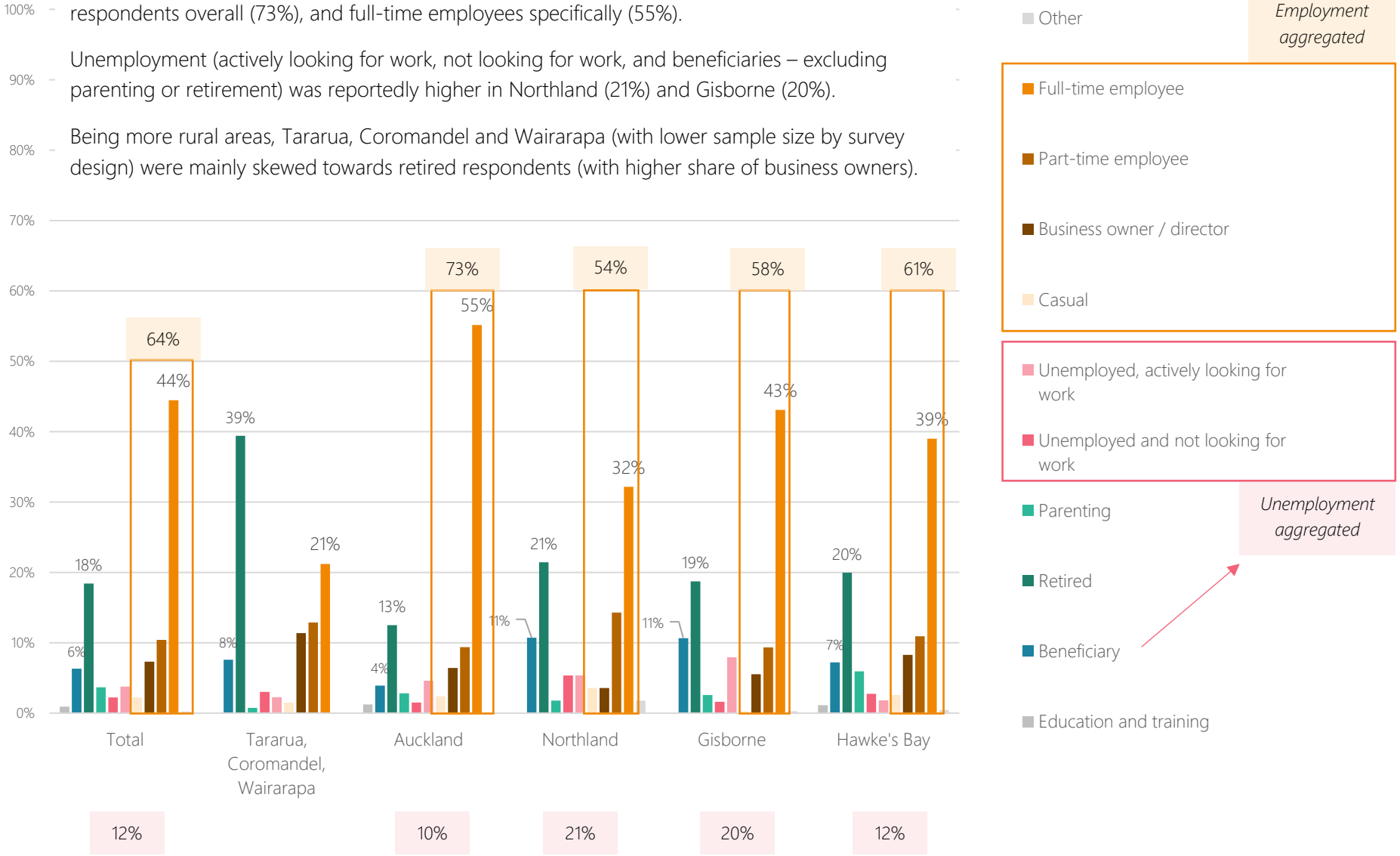
*All respondents were asked about their highest academic qualification, current employment situation, household's annual income before tax, and wherever they agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have enough money to meet everyday needs".*

Employment situation by region

Employment differed significantly in Auckland with a greater concentration of employed respondents overall (73%), and full-time employees specifically (55%).

Unemployment (actively looking for work, not looking for work, and beneficiaries – excluding parenting or retirement) was reportedly higher in Northland (21%) and Gisborne (20%).

Being more rural areas, Tararua, Coromandel and Wairarapa (with lower sample size by survey design) were mainly skewed towards retired respondents (with higher share of business owners).



Household annual income by region

Again, Auckland exhibited a distinct profile, with higher average income.

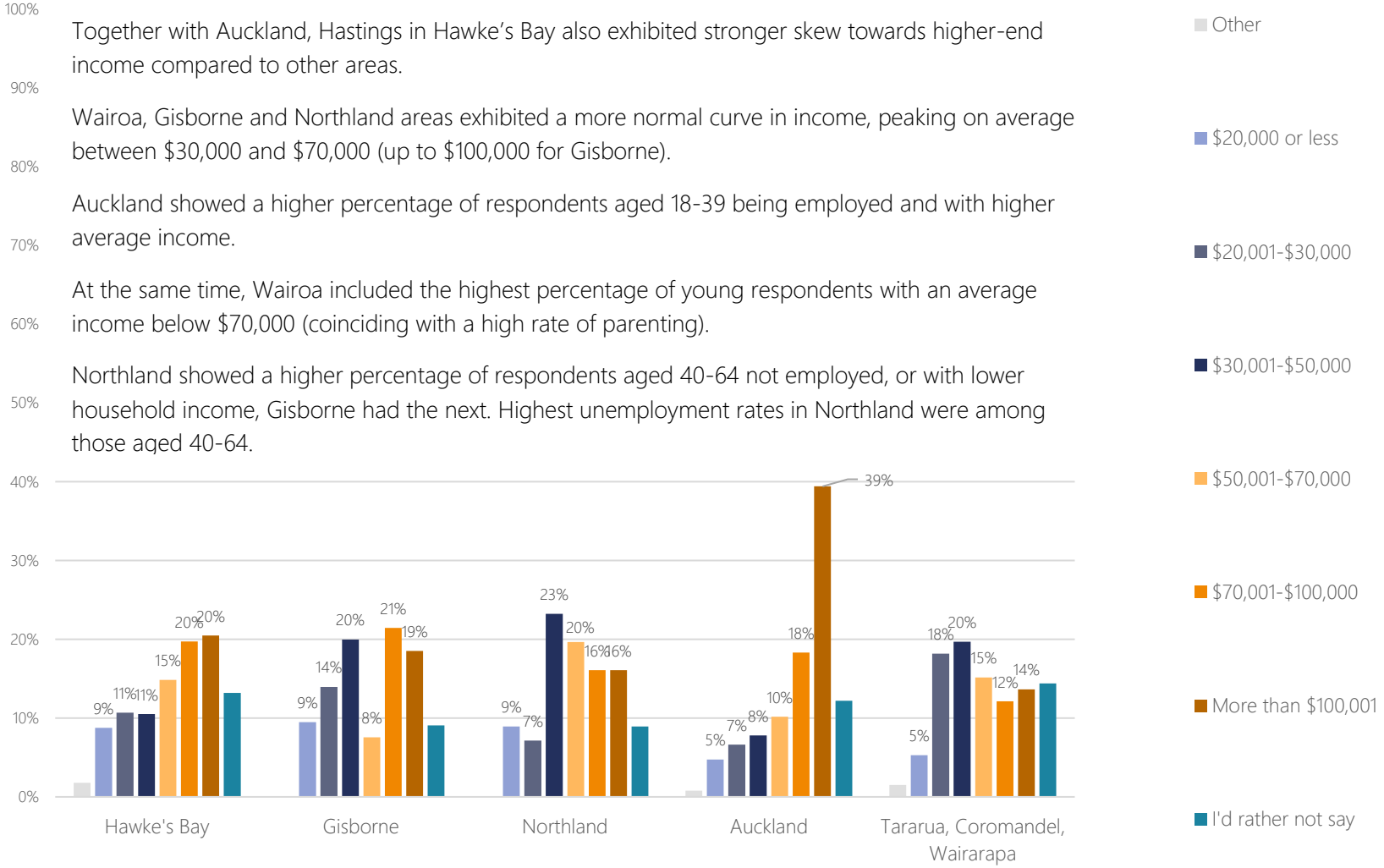
Together with Auckland, Hastings in Hawke's Bay also exhibited stronger skew towards higher-end income compared to other areas.

Wairoa, Gisborne and Northland areas exhibited a more normal curve in income, peaking on average between $30,000 and $70,000 (up to $100,000 for Gisborne).

Auckland showed a higher percentage of respondents aged 18-39 being employed and with higher average income.

At the same time, Wairoa included the highest percentage of young respondents with an average income below $70,000 (coinciding with a high rate of parenting).

Northland showed a higher percentage of respondents aged 40-64 not employed, or with lower household income, Gisborne had the next. Highest unemployment rates in Northland were among those aged 40-64.

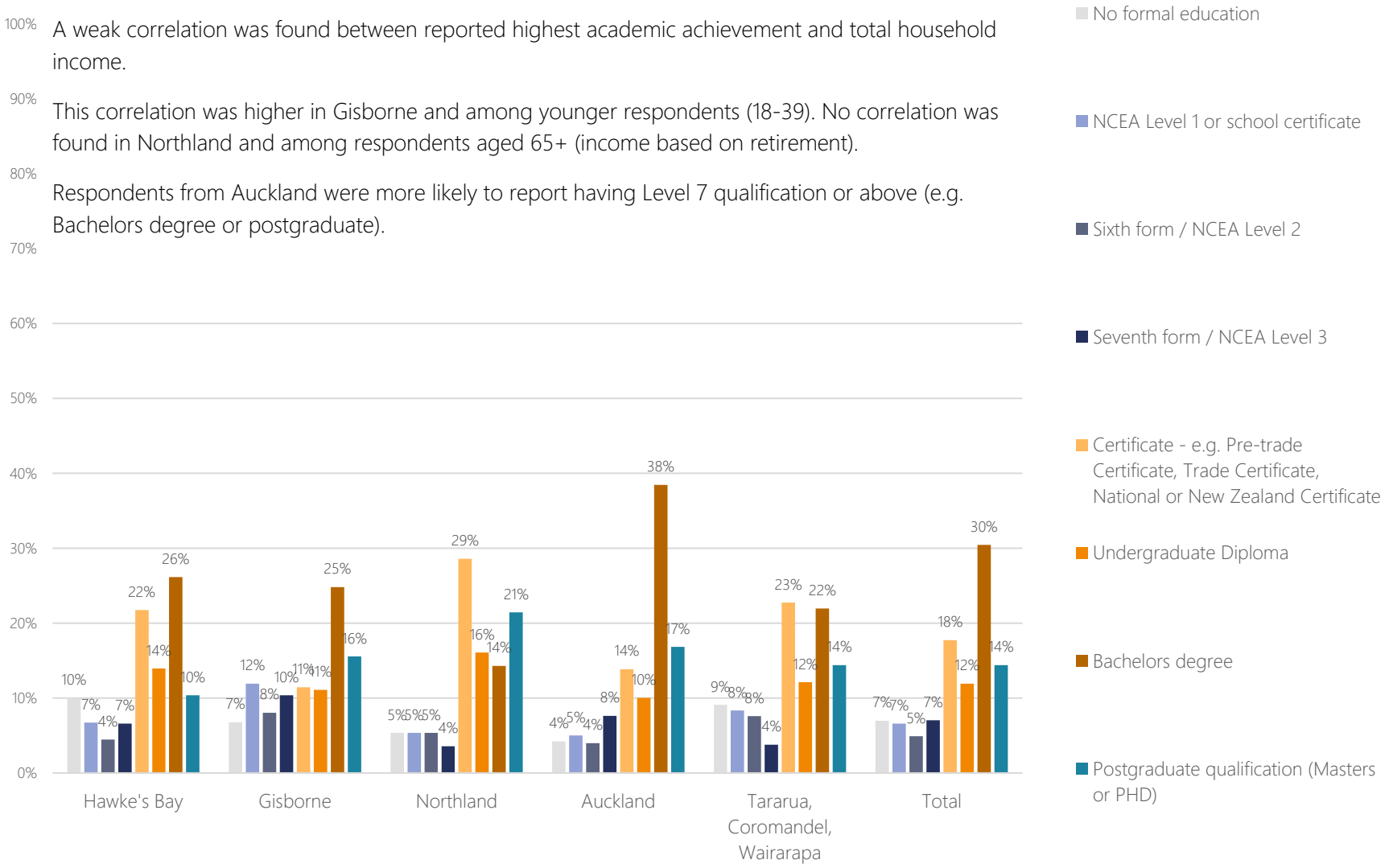


Highest academic achievement by region

A weak correlation was found between reported highest academic achievement and total household income.

This correlation was higher in Gisborne and among younger respondents (18-39). No correlation was found in Northland and among respondents aged 65+ (income based on retirement).

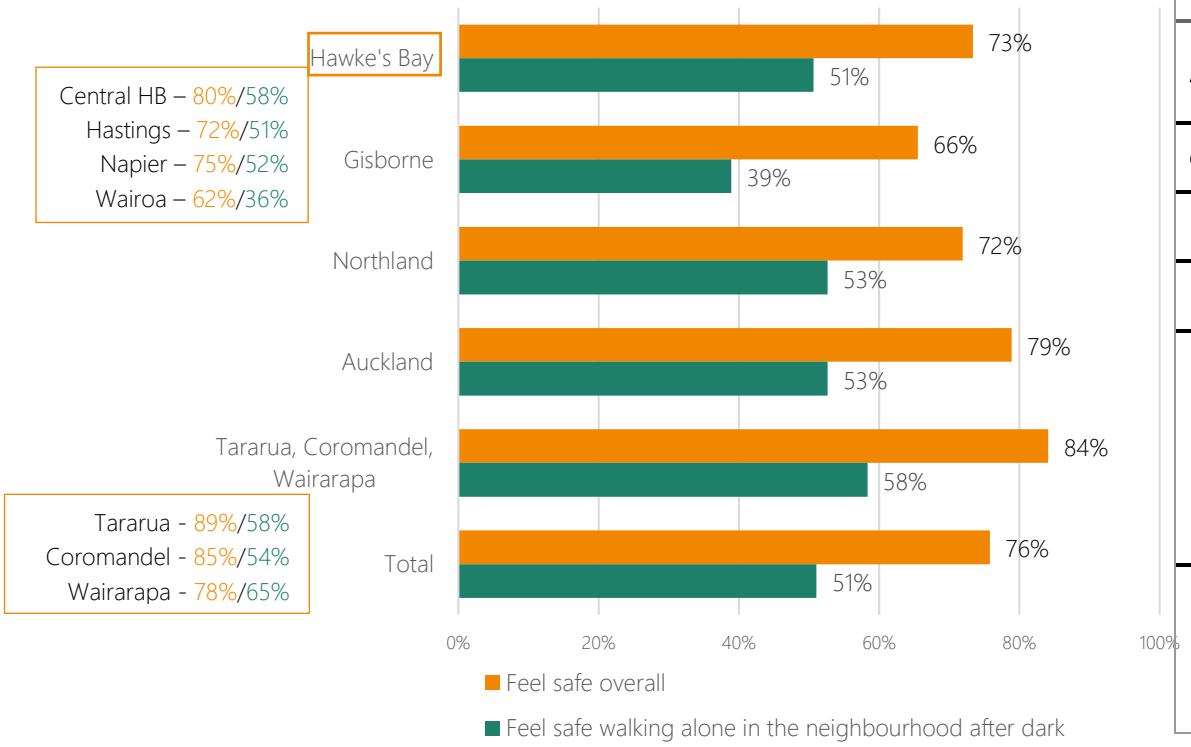
Respondents from Auckland were more likely to report having Level 7 qualification or above (e.g. Bachelors degree or postgraduate).



# WELLBEING – perceived safety

According to Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand, **60%** of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over felt safe or very safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark in 2021.

- Overall, 76% of respondents indicated feeling safe in the area they live. Fewer respondents felt safe in their neighbourhood after dark (51%).
- Safety perceptions (both overall and after dark) were lower in Gisborne (66% and 39% respectively) and Wairoa (62% and 36%).
- Safety perceptions after dark were significantly lower among female respondents (39%) compared to male respondents (65%), and in urban locations (49%) compared to rural (60%).
- In addition, safety perceptions had a positive impact on respondents considering their neighbourhood as a good place to live.

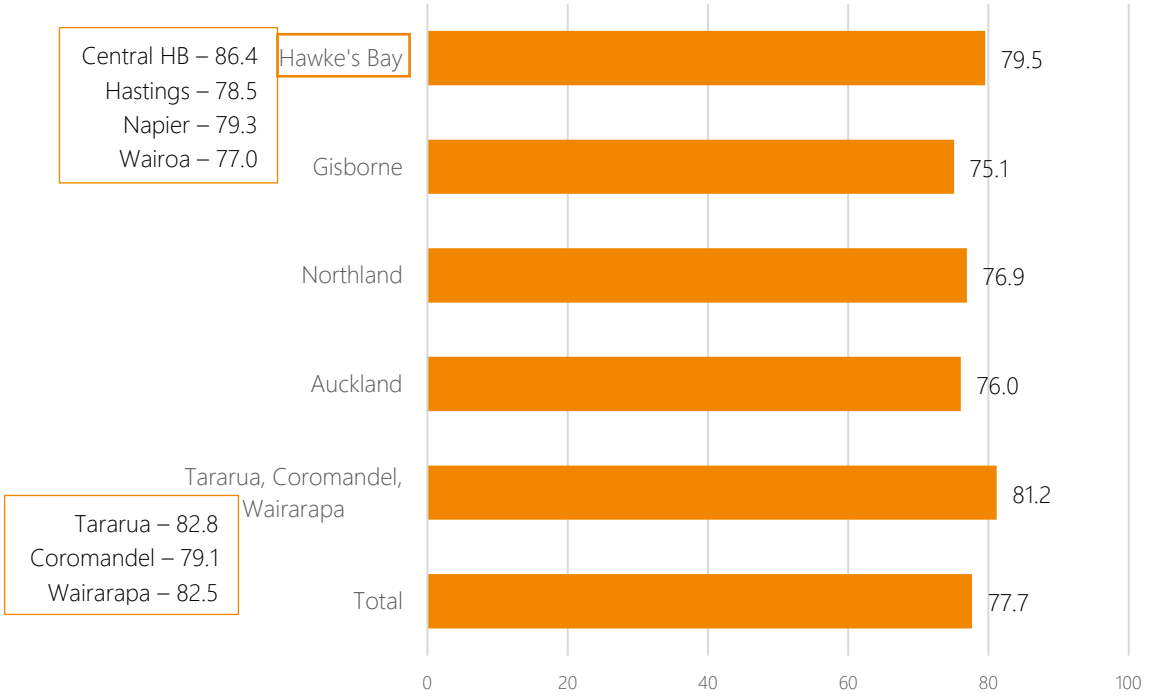



| | | Overall | After dark |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 74% | 50% |
| | 40-64 | 75% | 53% |
| | 65+ | 80% | 48% |
| Gender | Female | 73% | 39% |
| | Male | 79% | 65% |
| Location | Urban | 75% | 49% |
| | Rural | 81% | 60% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 71% | 45% |
| | Above $70,000 | 81% | 59% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 78% | 55% |
| | Casual | 66% | 50% |
| | Unemployed | 60% | 45% |
| | Parenting | 70% | 37% |
| | Retired | 82% | 50% |
| | Beneficiary | 61% | 30% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 78% | 51% |
| | Māori | 73% | 50% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 78% | 55% |
| | Asian | 76% | 54% |
| | Other | 70% | 43% |

*All respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements: "Overall, I feel safe in the area I live" and "I feel safe walking alone in my neighbourhood after dark".*

# WELLBEING – social connections

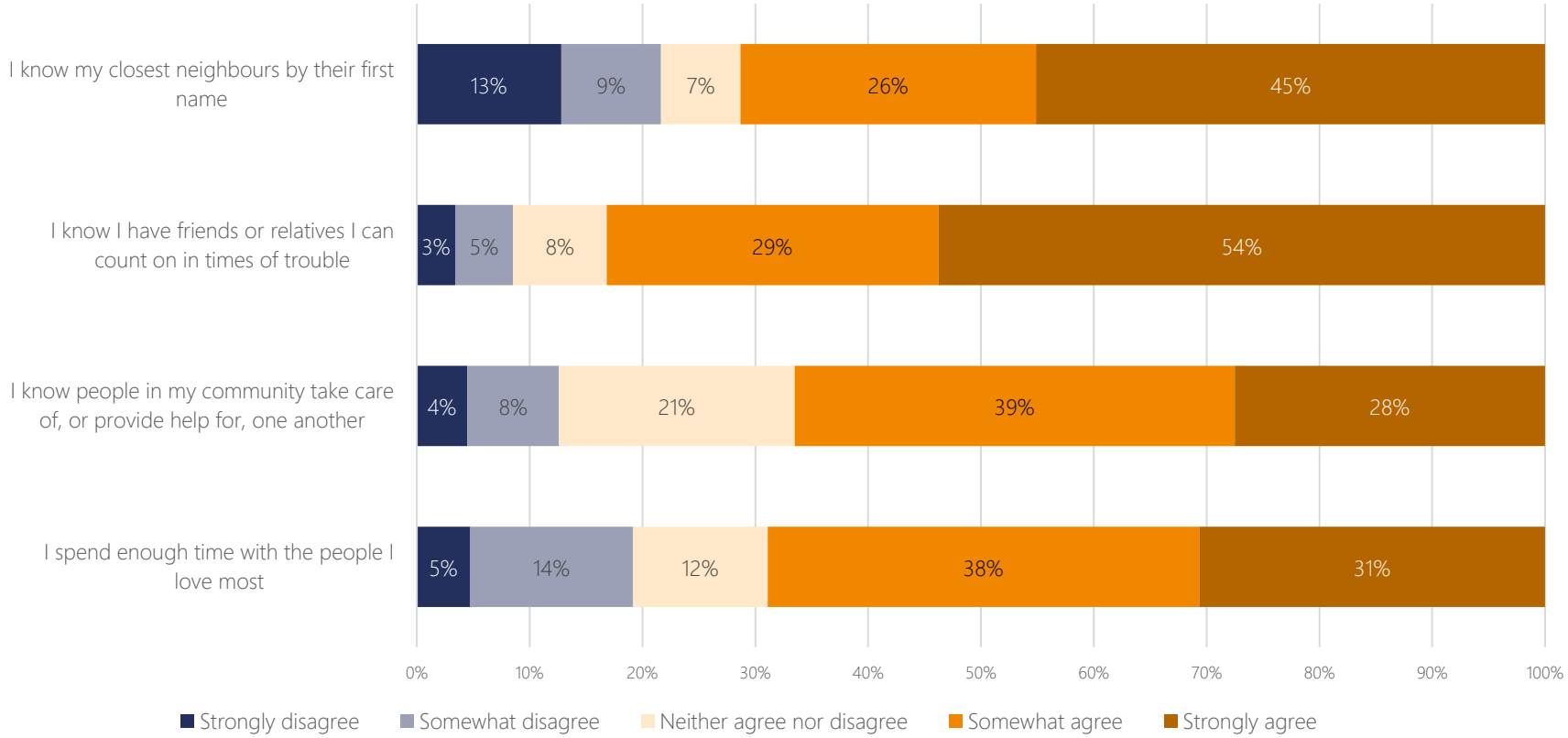
- Overall, social connections were strong across all regions (77.7 out of 100), and had a moderate positive association with overall wellbeing and mental health.
- Social connections were stronger among older respondents (65+), particularly compared to those aged under 40
- Respondents with high life satisfaction (81.6) and/or in good health (82.1) had greater social conncections than those dissatisfied with life or in poor health.




| | | Score |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 74.0 |
| | 40-64 | 78.5 |
| | 65+ | 81.6 |
| Gender | Female | 78.5 |
| | Male | 76.7 |
| Location | Urban | 77.0 |
| | Rural | 80.5 |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 75.8 |
| | Above $70,000 | 78.9 |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 77.9 |
| | Casual | 72.0 |
| | Unemployed | 71.8 |
| | Parenting | 76.3 |
| | Retired | 81.7 |
| | Beneficiary | 71.1 |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 78.7 |
| | Māori | 77.1 |
| | Pacific Peoples | 72.5 |
| | Asian | 73.7 |
| | Other | 77.1 |

*All respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements: "I know my closest neighbours by their first name", "I know I have friends or relatives I can count on in times of trouble", "I know people in my community take care of, or provide help for, one another", "I spend enough time with the people I love most". The four statements were combined into a social connection score by totalling the figures of the four answers and multiplying it by 5. The obtained score ranges from 0 (worst possible result) to 100 (best possible result).*

Social connections statements - overall




Over 8-in-10 respondents (83%) agreed they know they have friends or relatives they can count on in times of trouble. Fewer respondents agreed they spend enough time with the people they love (69%) or know people in their community take care of one another (67%). The greatest difference by age was observed for knowing neighbours; just over half of those aged 18-39 (56%) agreed they know their neighbours.

Connections with neighbours were also lower in Gisborne (64%) and Auckland (67%), among Pacific Peoples (50%) and Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (48%), and those living as flatmates (41%). Respondents living as flatmates were also less likely to agree their community take care of one another (58%).

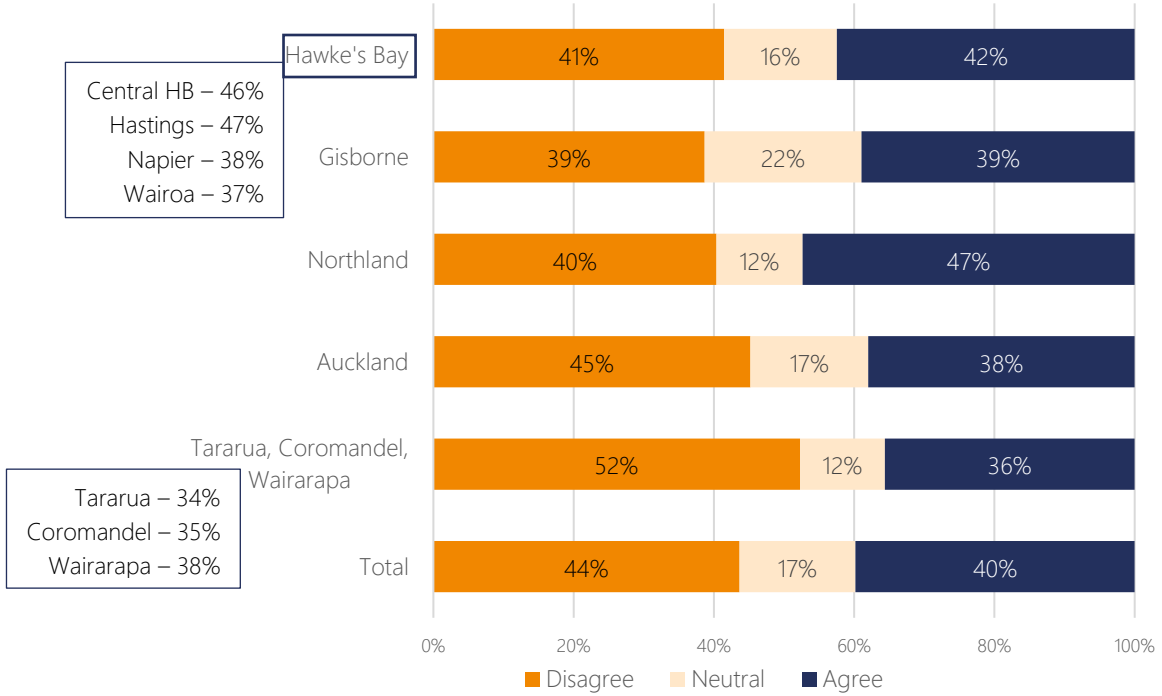
People living alone were less likely to agree they spend enough time with people they love (57%).

However, knowing neighbours had the weakest association with overall wellbeing, whereas spending time with loved ones and having relatives and friends to count on had the strongest association.

# WELLBEING – experienced loneliness

According to Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand, **18%** of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over reported feeling lonely at least some of the time in the last four weeks in 2021.

- 4-in-10 respondents (40%) agreed they felt lonely at least some of the time in the past two weeks.
- Sense of loneliness was more likely to be associated with mental distress, overall wellbeing, cultural identity, than social connections.
- Particularly strong relationships were observed between sense of loneliness, wellbeing and mental health in Northland. At the same time, there was stronger association between sense of loneliness and mental distress among younger respondents.
- As a result, sense of loneliness was generally higher in Northland (47%), and among younger respondents (52%)
- Respondents living alone (49%) or flatmates (52%), casually employed (65%) or unemployed (57%) tended to report experiencing loneliness more.



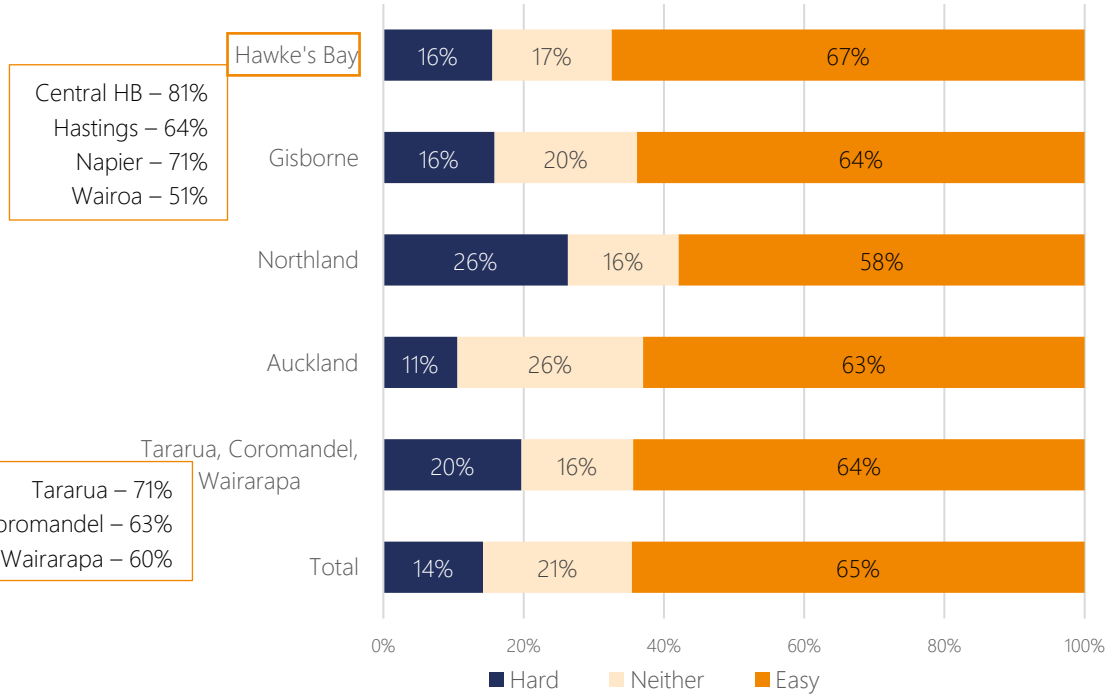

| | | % Felt lonely |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 52% |
| | 40-64 | 36% |
| | 65+ | 29% |
| Gender | Female | 43% |
| | Male | 36% |
| Location | Urban | 40% |
| | Rural | 40% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 47% |
| | Above $70,000 | 35% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 39% |
| | Casual | 65% |
| | Unemployed | 57% |
| | Parenting | 41% |
| | Retired | 32% |
| | Beneficiary | 47% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 39% |
| | Māori | 41% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 34% |
| | Asian | 46% |
| | Other | 42% |

*All respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: "I have felt lonely at least some of the time in the past two weeks".*

# WELLBEING – cultural identity

According to Indicators Aotearoa New Zealand, **80%** of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over reported that it was easy or very easy to be themselves in 2021.

- Two-thirds of respondents (65%) agreed it is easy to be themselves in the area they live; 14% found it hard.
- A slightly higher percentage of respondents in Wairoa (28%) and Northland (26%) found it hard to be themselves.
- Cultural identity moderately associated with sense of loneliness, mental distress, overall safety perceptions, and consideration of neighbourhood as a good place to live.
- Older respondents (65+) were more likely to find it easy to be themselves (77%).
- Respondents aged 18-39 (25%), 40-64 (32%), and Pacific Peoples (67%) found it harder to be themselves in Northland.
- Asian respondents (56%) found it harder to be themselves in Gisborne.



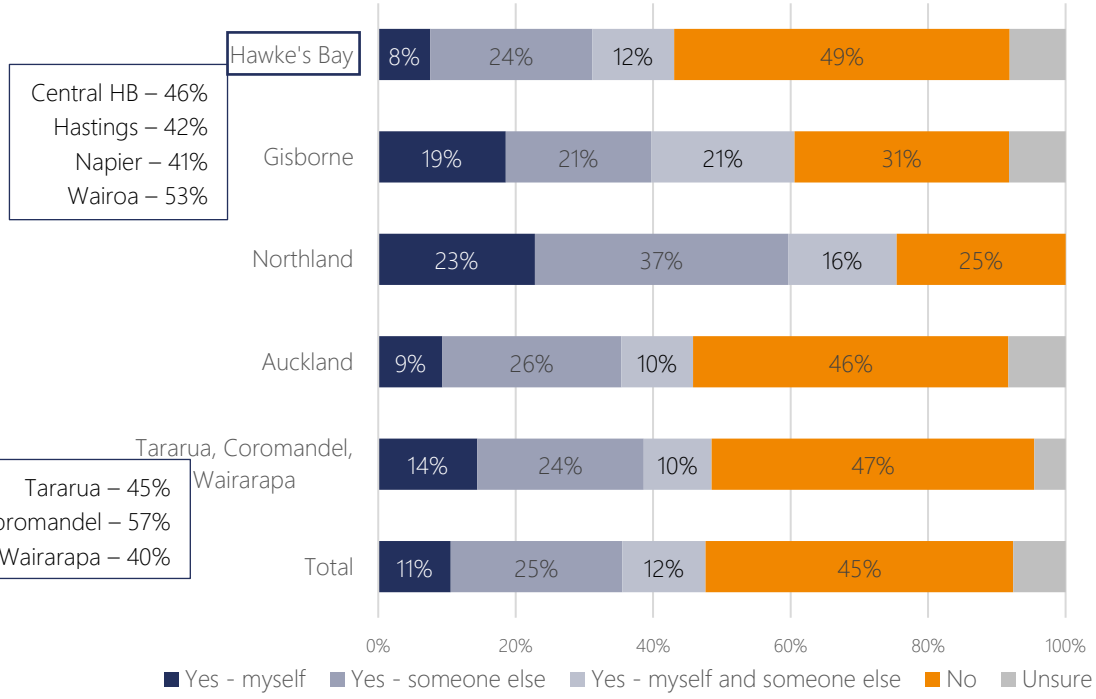

| | | % Easy |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 56% |
| | 40-64 | 65% |
| | 65+ | 77% |
| Gender | Female | 66% |
| | Male | 63% |
| Location | Urban | 65% |
| | Rural | 64% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 61% |
| | Above $70,000 | 68% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 65% |
| | Casual | 54% |
| | Unemployed | 43% |
| | Parenting | 53% |
| | Retired | 75% |
| | Beneficiary | 54% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 67% |
| | Māori | 62% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 53% |
| | Asian | 59% |
| | Other | 56% |

*All respondents were asked: "People in New Zealand have different lifestyles, cultures and beliefs, that express who they are. How easy or hard is it for you to be yourself in the area you live in?"*

# WELLBEING – discrimination

According to Statistics New Zealand, **21%** of New Zealanders aged 15 years and older reported being personally subjected to some form of discrimination in 2021.

- Just under half of respondents (48%) reported personally experiencing, or seeing someone else experiencing, prejudice or intolerance. Respondents were more likely to observe someone else (37%) being treated unfairly than experiencing it themselves (23%).
- Respondents who found it hard to be themselves were more likely to report perceived discrimination (81%).
- Respondents in Northland (75%) and Gisborne (61%), aged under 65 (52% on average), Māori (62%) and Pacific Peoples (61%) were more likely to report perceived discrimination.
- Ethnicity was cited as the main reason for experienced prejudice or intolerance, with high levels reported among respondents of all ethnic groups, notably higher among Asian, Pacific Peoples and Middle Eastern/African ethnicities, and among younger respondents.



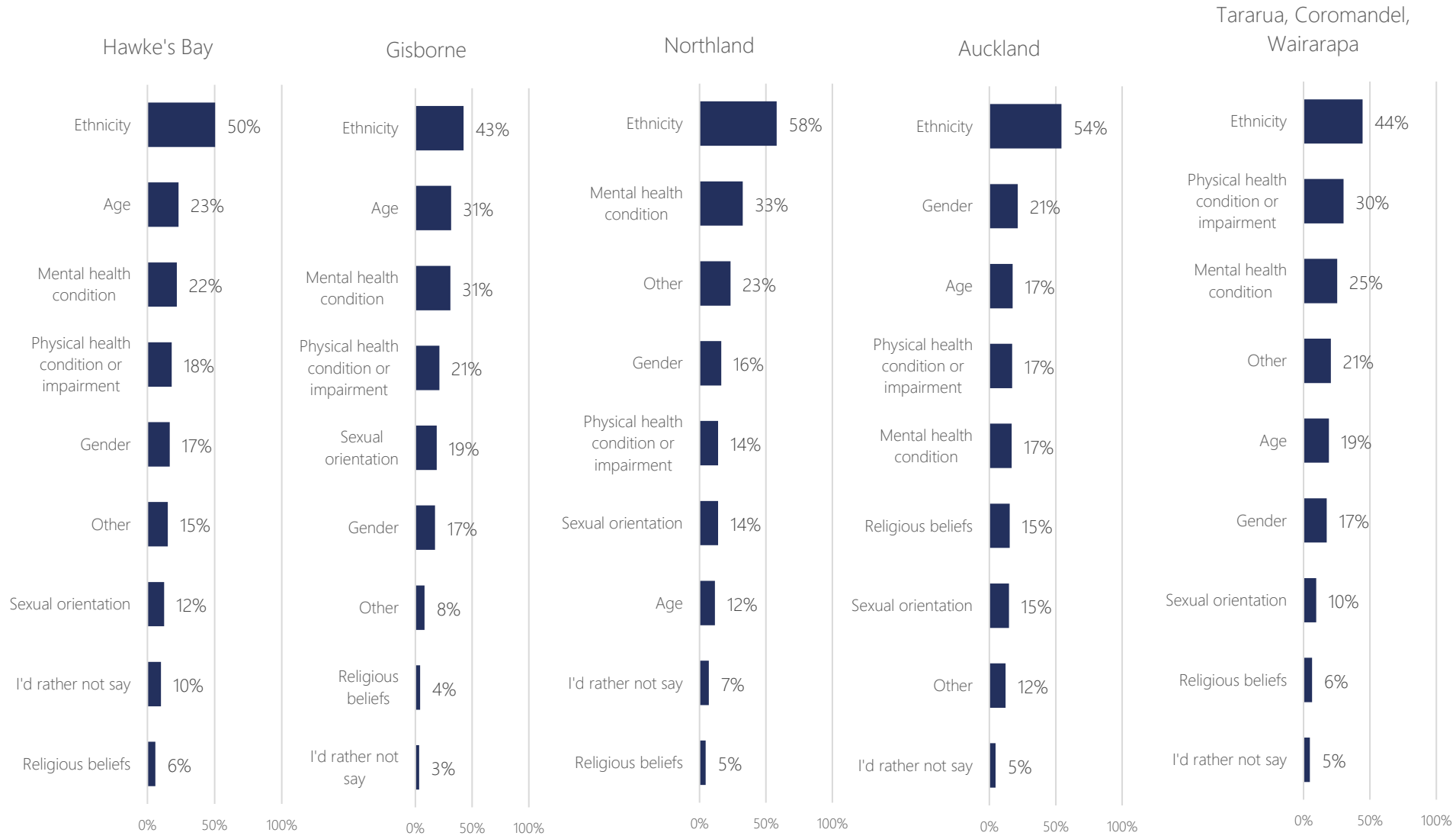

| | | % Yes |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 54% |
| | 40-64 | 50% |
| | 65+ | 33% |
| Gender | Female | 51% |
| | Male | 43% |
| Location | Urban | 47% |
| | Rural | 49% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 49% |
| | Above $70,000 | 49% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 50% |
| | Casual | 52% |
| | Unemployed | 61% |
| | Parenting | 44% |
| | Retired | 31% |
| | Beneficiary | 60% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 46% |
| | Māori | 62% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 61% |
| | Asian | 41% |
| | Other | 47% |

*All respondents were asked: "In the last three months, have you personally experienced, or seen someone else experience, prejudice or intolerance, being treated unfairly or excluded?"*

Key highlights by area

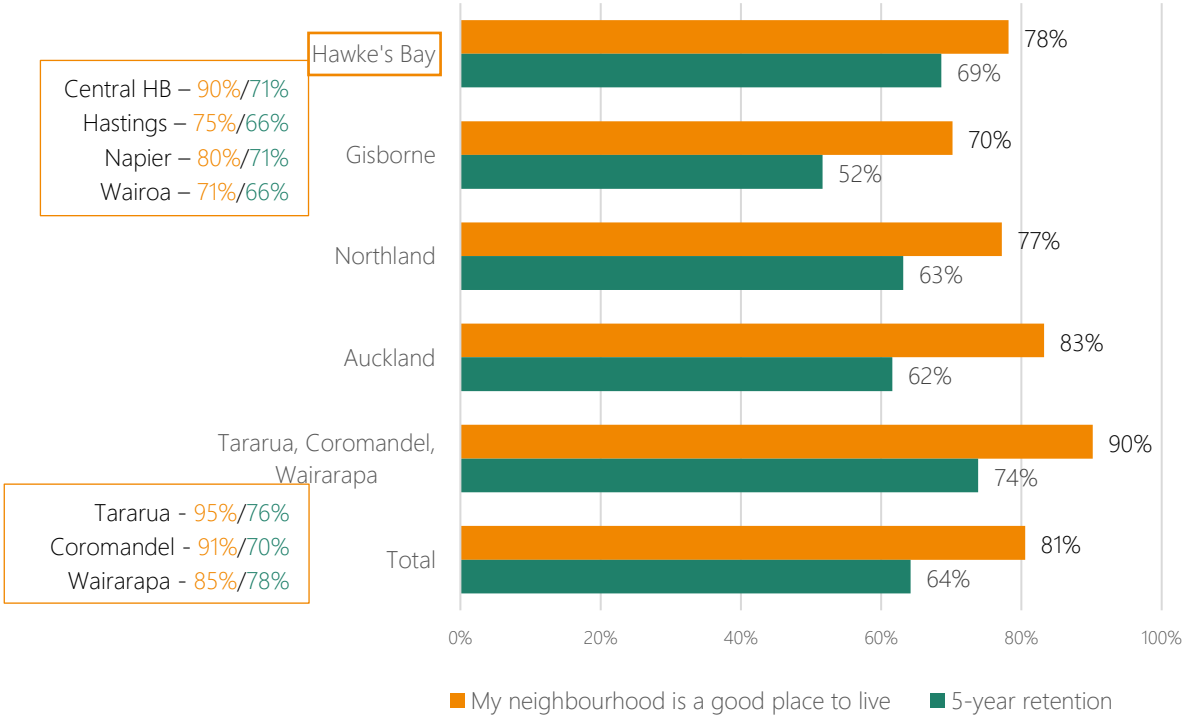
| Hawke's Bay: | Gisborne: | Northland: | Auckland: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Māori – 61% | 18-39 – 76%<br>Pacific Peoples – 100%<br>Asian – 74% | 18-64 – 77%<br>Māori – 79%<br>NZ European - 76%<br>Females – 80% | Pacific Peoples – 65% |

Basis of experienced prejudice or intolerance - overall



# WELLBEING – place attachment

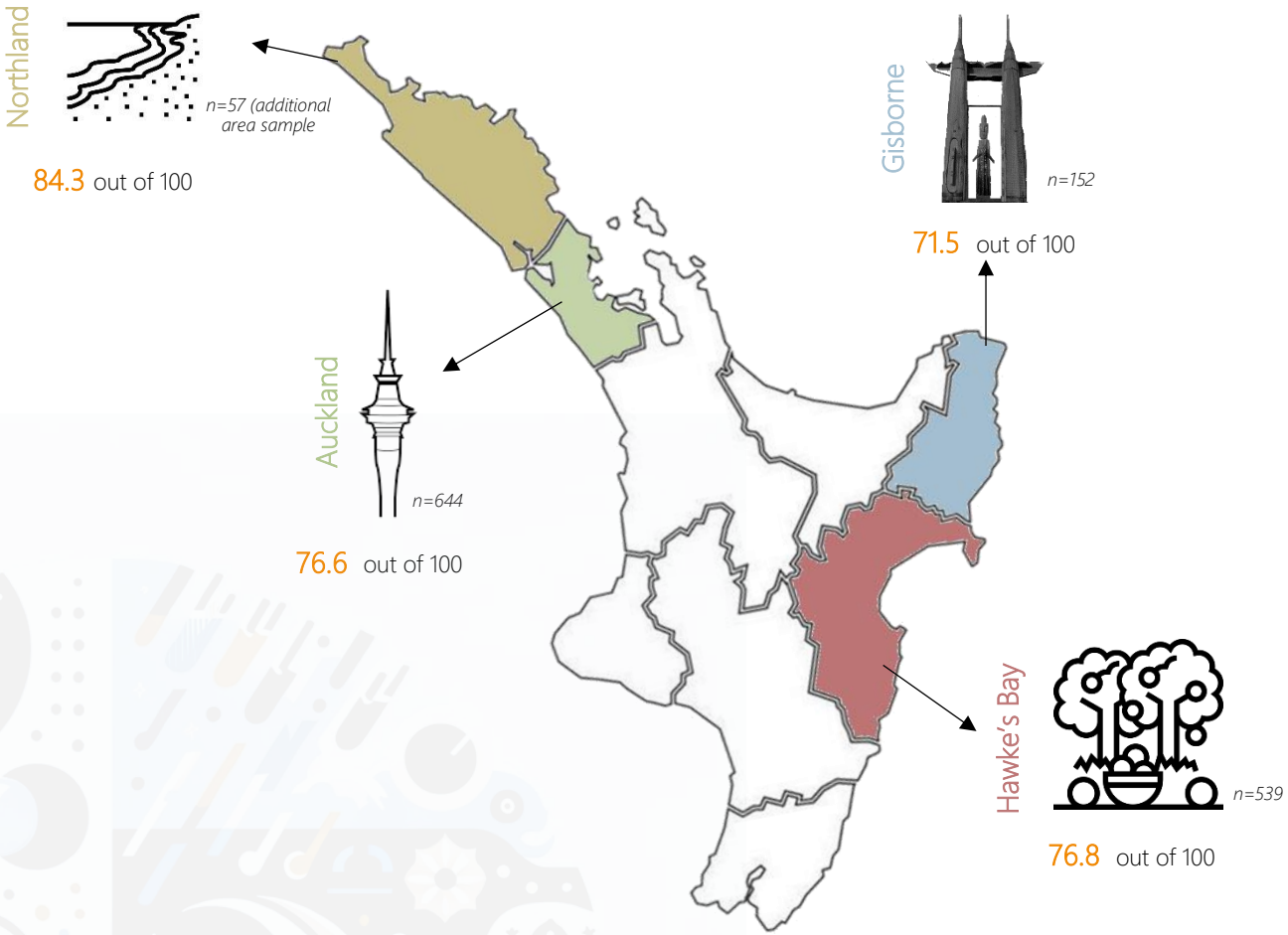
- 8-in-10 respondents (81%) considered their neighbourhood as a good place to live, and just under two-thirds (64%) saw themselves still living in the area in the next 5 years.
- Overall, retention was influenced by many factors; the strongest association was found with neighbourhood perceptions, social connections, age, employment status and mental distress.
- Retention perceptions were lower in Gisborne (52%). Four influencing factors in Gisborne were neighbourhood, safety perceptions, employment and age.
- Younger respondents (54%), and those in casual employment (43%), were more likely to consider moving out of their area. Together, neighbourhood perceptions, mental distress and wellbeing exhibited strong impact on younger respondents' retention perceptions.




| | | Neighbourhood | Retention |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 76% | 54% |
| | 40-64 | 80% | 66% |
| | 65+ | 88% | 75% |
| Gender | Female | 80% | 64% |
| | Male | 81% | 65% |
| Location | Urban | 80% | 64% |
| | Rural | 83% | 66% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 75% | 63% |
| | Above $70,000 | 87% | 66% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 82% | 63% |
| | Casual | 73% | 43% |
| | Unemployed | 67% | 57% |
| | Parenting | 79% | 58% |
| | Retired | 89% | 77% |
| | Beneficiary | 57% | 63% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 84% | 66% |
| | Māori | 74% | 62% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 77% | 53% |
| | Asian | 78% | 50% |
| | Other | 64% | 65% |

*All respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements: "My neighbourhood is a good place to live" and "I see myself living in the area in the next 5 years".*

# WELLBEING KNOWLEDGE OVERVIEW




Mental/emotional health and physical health/fitness were the top-named wellbeing definitions

Wellbeing literacy 77 out of 100
*e.g. having many words to communicate about wellbeing, knowledge, knowing how to improve wellbeing, having skills to understand information and express themselves.*

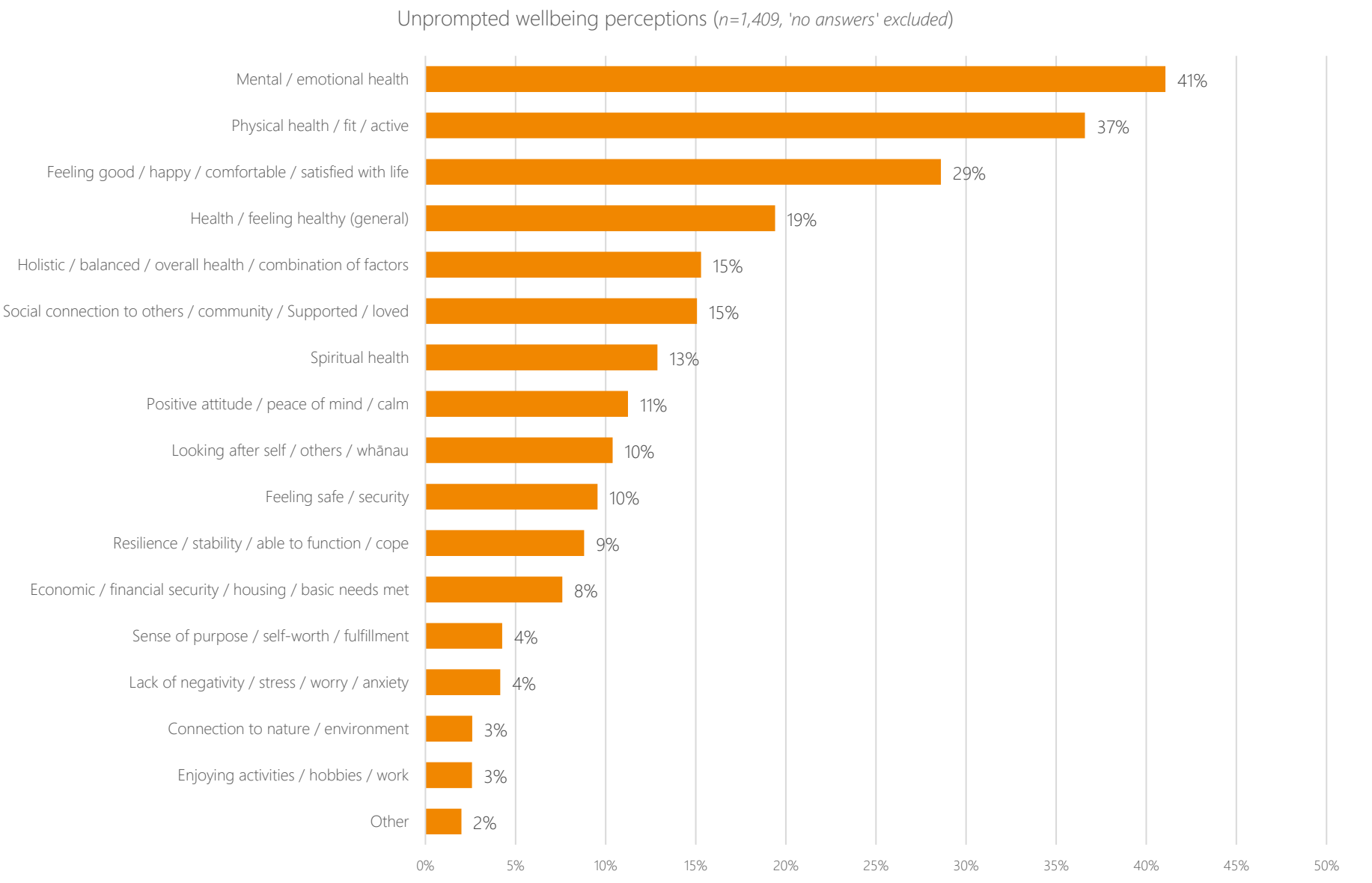
Talking to a friend or searching online were the main help-seeking approaches

62% had no barriers to access information about wellbeing

Community events/activities/spirit were the main suggested improvements for community wellbeing

# WELLBEING KNOWLEDGE – understanding wellbeing

- On an unprompted basis, respondents were asked to define or describe what '*wellbeing*' means to them. '*Wellbeing*' is a broad term with a wide variety of meanings and definitions for respondents. Some saw this in general terms as simply feeling good, happy or satisfied with life; or as a state of health or feeling healthy. Most typically, respondents defined wellbeing as encompassing a range of more specific dimensions, especially physical (37%) and mental or emotional health (41%); with others adding additional dimensions including spiritual health, social health (connection to others and their community), economic or financial health (meeting basic needs, access to housing, employment, etc.), and connection to the environment or nature. Some respondents specifically perceived wellbeing as a holistic concept of overall health that balances all of the above dimensions. For other respondents, wellbeing was about having a positive mindset or peace of mind, feeling safe and secure, or looking after self or others. Personal resilience, or being able to function in life or cope with life's changes and challenges, were necessary components of wellbeing for some people.
- Different understandings of wellbeing were apparent across key groups. Females were more likely than males to associate wellbeing with several aspects, including mental/emotional health, physical health, holistic or balanced, social connections, spiritual wellbeing, feeling safe, and personal resilience or stability.
- Resilience was also a greater factor for rural than for urban residents.
- Pacific Peoples were most likely to attribute wellbeing to both mental/emotional and physical health specifically. Both Māori and Pacific Peoples respondents also saw this concept as more holistic or balanced overall (i.e. Te Whare Tapa Whā model), with social connection also highly valued by Māori. In this context, Māori were less likely than NZ Europeans to identify wellbeing as more generally feeling good or happy or having a positive attitude.
- Possibly reflecting their cultural context, Northland residents were particularly likely to identify wellbeing with social connections.
- There were few differences in interpretations of wellbeing across the survey's health-related segments, particularly for the most common definitions. Those who rated themselves with 'good' personal health were more likely than those with 'poor' health to relate to social connectedness (18% vs 10%), but less likely to attribute wellbeing to personal resilience (8% vs 15%).
- Respondents who experienced 'negative impacts' from weather events were more likely than those feeling 'no impact' to associate wellbeing with holistic/balanced health (18% vs 10%), social connection (18% vs 11%), feeling safe (12% vs 6%) and personal resilience or stability (11% vs 5%).




*All respondents were asked: "In your own words, what does 'wellbeing' mean?" Open-ended comments sorted into categories. Totals may exceed 100% owing to multiple responses for each respondent.*

Verbatim comments about wellbeing

*"Total happiness. All around. Mind, body, spirit, family"*

*"Being healthy in your body and mind and in your environment"*

*"Your state of being and the state of support and environment needed for you to be who we are whilst building and sustainable lives. There are multiple elements or pillars required for our wellbeing or hauora. Hauora is a big word for me with the word wellbeing - I think this is important for all Kiwis. A humble form of selfishness"*

*"Emotionally, physically holding it together"*

*"Feeling mentally, spiritually, emotionally & physically sound"*

*"Happy in mind, healthy in body"*

*"Your overall sense of doing well in your self and body"*

*"Physical and mental health"*

*"Feeling good in all domains of life, physical, spiritual, mental and emotional, being connected to the things and people that matter to you"*

*"People being able to thrive and enjoy life, feeling they have hope and a purpose in life, not having to struggle emotionally and physically with trying to maintain the basic necessities of life (food, housing, a livelihood etc ) and cope with whatever life throws at them with support."*

*"wellbeing means that your healthy physically and mentally, feel safe and happy"*

*"Your mental health and feelings"*

*"The wellness of every aspect of your being"*

*"Wellness balance physical, emotional, spiritual, family, community"*

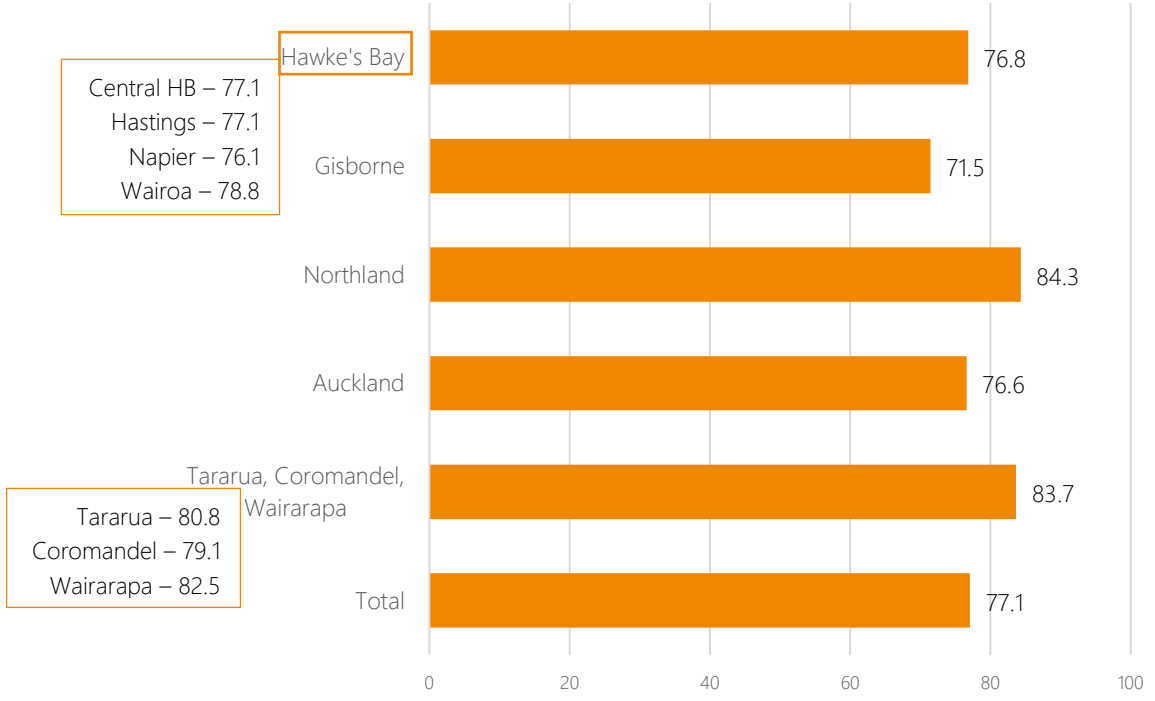
*"Your ability to function and cope with all normal aspects of your life"*

*"The feeling of happiness and contentment in life"*

*"Whole body and mind health"*

# WELLBEING KNOWLEDGE – wellbeing literacy score

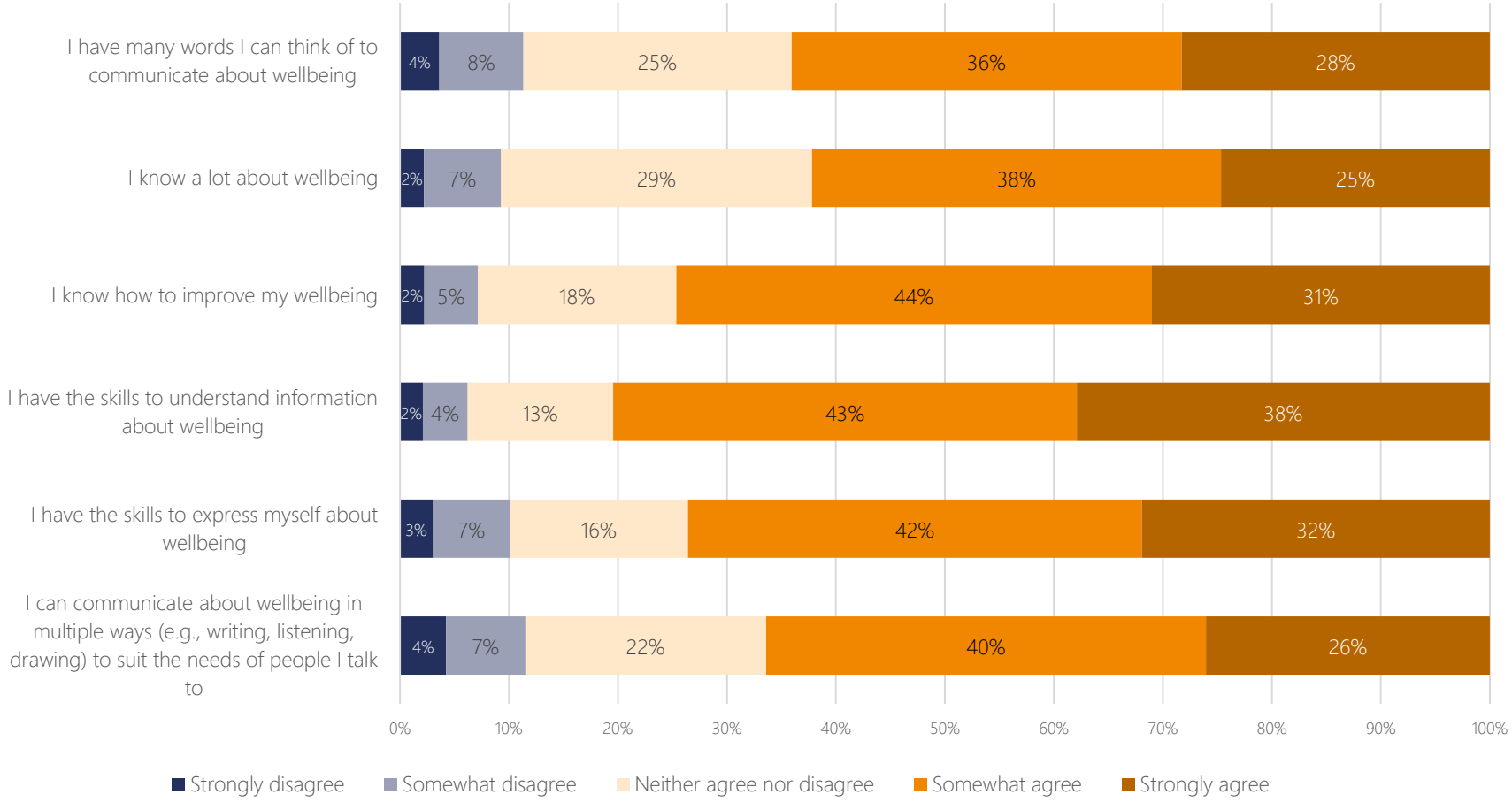
- Respondents' subjective knowledge about wellbeing was typically high, with the overall wellbeing literacy score at 77.1 out of 100; over half (53%) had scores over 80.
- Wellbeing literacy was reportedly higher in Northland (84.3), among females (80.2), those aged 40+ (79 on average), postgraduate education (83.2), and lower among beneficiaries (67.6).
- There were generally only subtle variations between demographic groups, with no group scoring below 60 on average.
- Those with higher wellbeing literacy scores tended to have a broader understanding of the concept than those with low scores, in relation to physical health, social connectedness, holistic/balanced wellbeing, and spiritual health.




| | | Score |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 73.5 |
| | 40-64 | 79.1 |
| | 65+ | 78.8 |
| Gender | Female | 80.2 |
| | Male | 73.2 |
| Location | Urban | 76.2 |
| | Rural | 80.7 |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 75.0 |
| | Above $70,000 | 79.0 |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 77.7 |
| | Casual | 70.7 |
| | Unemployed | 77.2 |
| | Parenting | 79.7 |
| | Retired | 78.0 |
| | Beneficiary | 67.6 |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 77.9 |
| | Māori | 78.0 |
| | Pacific Peoples | 77.6 |
| | Asian | 70.9 |
| | Other | 76.0 |

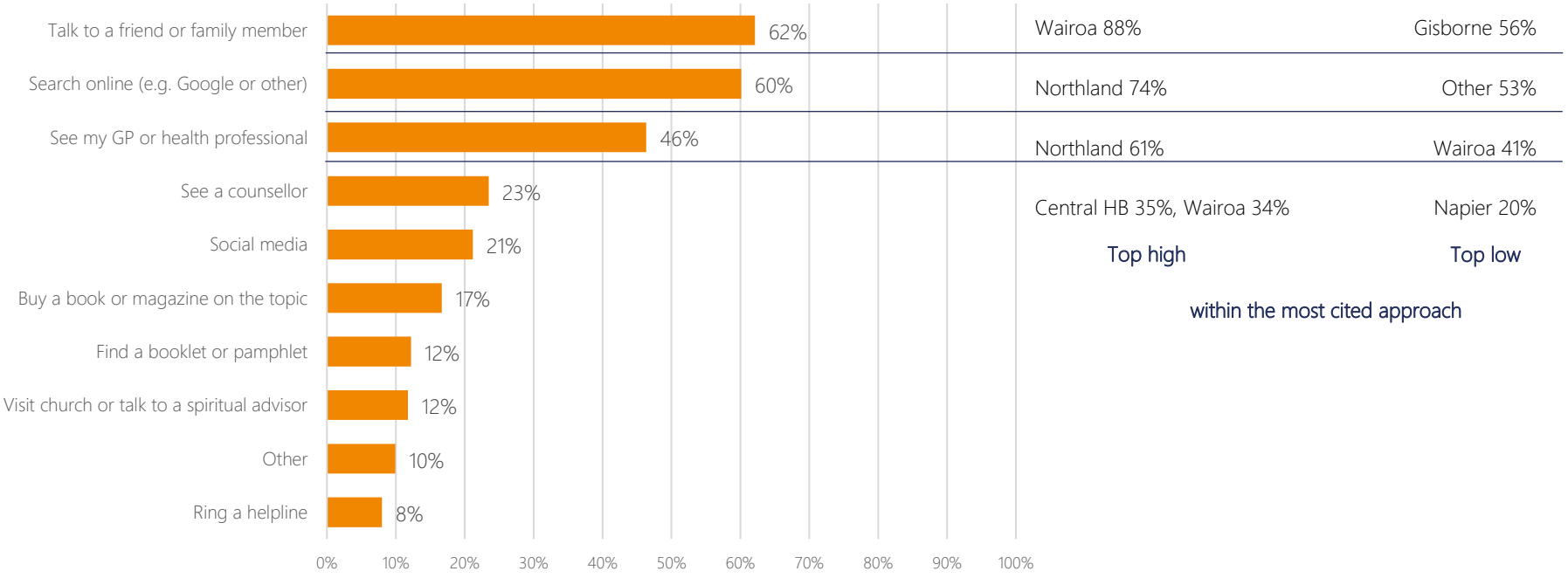
*All respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the following statements: "I have many words I can think of to communicate about wellbeing", "I know a lot about wellbeing", "I know how to improve my wellbeing", "I have the skills to understand information about wellbeing", "I have the skills to express myself about wellbeing", and "I can communicate about wellbeing in multiple ways (e.g., writing, listening, drawing) to suit the needs of people I talk to". The six statements were combined into a wellbeing literacy score by totalling the figures of the six answers and multiplying it by 3.33. The obtained score ranges from 0 (lowest possible result) to 100 (highest possible result).*

Wellbeing literacy statements - overall



# WELLBEING KNOWLEDGE – help-seeking approach

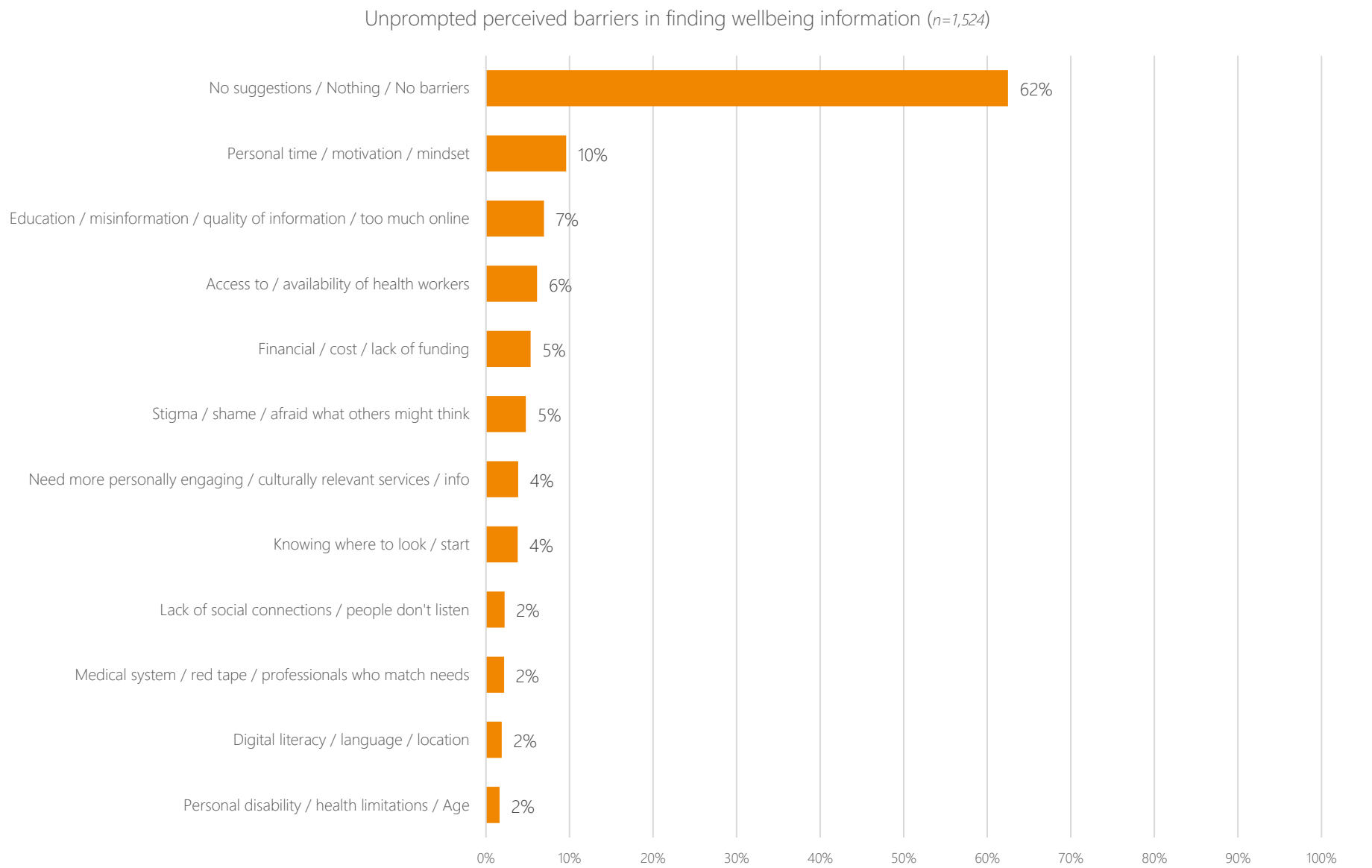
- Talking to a friend or family member (62%) or conducting an online search (60%) were by far the most preferred methods to search for wellbeing information.
- Respondents with higher wellbeing literacy scores (above 80 out of 100) were more likely to talk to a friend or family member (70%), compared to those with lower scores below 50 (35%).
- Respondents with lower wellbeing literacy scores were also less likely to see their GP (33%), buy a book (4%), or find a booklet/pamphlet (6%).
- Younger respondents (18-39) were more likely to search online, or look up information on social media.
- Older respondents (65+) showed a greater preference for talking to a friend or family member or consulting a health professional.




*All respondents were asked: "How do you prefer to seek information about wellbeing?" Note: multichoice.*

# WELLBEING KNOWLEDGE – named barriers

- A large proportion of respondents (62%) indicated that they experienced no barriers to finding information about wellbeing. For those perceiving barriers of some kind, none stood out as particularly notable for more than 1-in-10 respondents.
- Most typically, basic lack of personal time or motivation was to blame. A degree of confusion or misinformation was a relevant concern for some, with the sheer amount of information (particularly online) being overwhelming or causing people to doubt the quality, reliability or currency of any given source. Financial limitations were also a barrier, with respondents unable to find free resources or lacking funds to access the specific information or services they desire; including access to or availability of health workers. Social stigma or personal shame remained a salient issue for a small number of residents who were afraid of what others may think if they seek certain resources or support. The availability of more personally engaging or culturally relevant services may be a means to address some of these concerns.
- Females were more likely than males to identify barriers in accessing wellbeing information, with particular concerns around education, misinformation or quality of information and access to health workers.
- Clear age differences were apparent in access to wellbeing information. Younger adults perceived more barriers than older adults (51% 18-39, 35% 40-64, 21% 65+). More specifically, those aged 18-39 were more likely to feel limited by personal time/motivation, education/quality of information, stigma or shame, financial barriers, knowing where to look, and lack of social connections.
- Differences in perceived barriers were observed across multiple wellbeing-related measures. Respondents rating themselves in 'poor health' were more likely to identify some barriers (55% vs 31% in 'good health'); with personal time/motivation, financial barriers and concerns about the medical system the biggest differences. To a similar extent, this reflected the results for those with low life satisfaction, residents who experienced negative impacts from weather events, and those who felt their life was worse than before the weather events (all as correlated factors).
- Both wellbeing and mental distress scores differentiated between information access. Barriers became less apparent with increasing (more positive) wellbeing scores. Those with low scores were more likely to identify personal time/motivation, access to health workers, and financial barriers as concerns.
- Similarly, experience of barriers became greater with increased mental distress. Those with severe scores were more likely to indicate personal time/motivation, stigma/shame and financial issues as barriers.




*All respondents were asked: "Are there any barriers you face in finding information about wellbeing?" and "In your opinion, what could be done to improve awareness of wellbeing in your community?". Open-ended comments sorted into categories. Totals may exceed 100% owing to multiple responses for each respondent.*

Verbatim comments about perceived barriers in finding wellbeing information

*"Acknowledging that I sometimes have problems with my wellbeing"*

*"Financial. Time. Overwhelmed by too much going on  Can struggle with decisions."*

*"I think it's there if you look for it. However, when people are feeling low, they often don't have the energy to do that."*

*"I am too busy to do so"*

*"Myself, its like I know what to do to improve but can't bring myself to do it."*

*"Would like to ask the doctors,  they don't offer any help for free"*

*"For me in my demographic there's lots out there. For young men not so much. Would like to see publicity for initiatives like Tuch Grass (Phaedra Boyd). For older men  the information is there but the barrier is getting them to use it."*

*"Time to research, money to spend on medical expenses, rifling through the misinformation and contradictory information, overwhelm caused by so much information available."*

*"What's reputable. Following the cyclone a lot of people came out as life coaches or health improvement people but not registered with proper professional agencies. Feel it's making it harder for the right info to be shared"*

*"Barriers exist because there is no comprehensive and total directory"*

*"Wait times for medical help"*

*"Vulnerability in sharing my thoughts and feelings"*

*"Time constraints and filling my brain with other more pressing thoughts"*

*"Time and money to explore these things"*

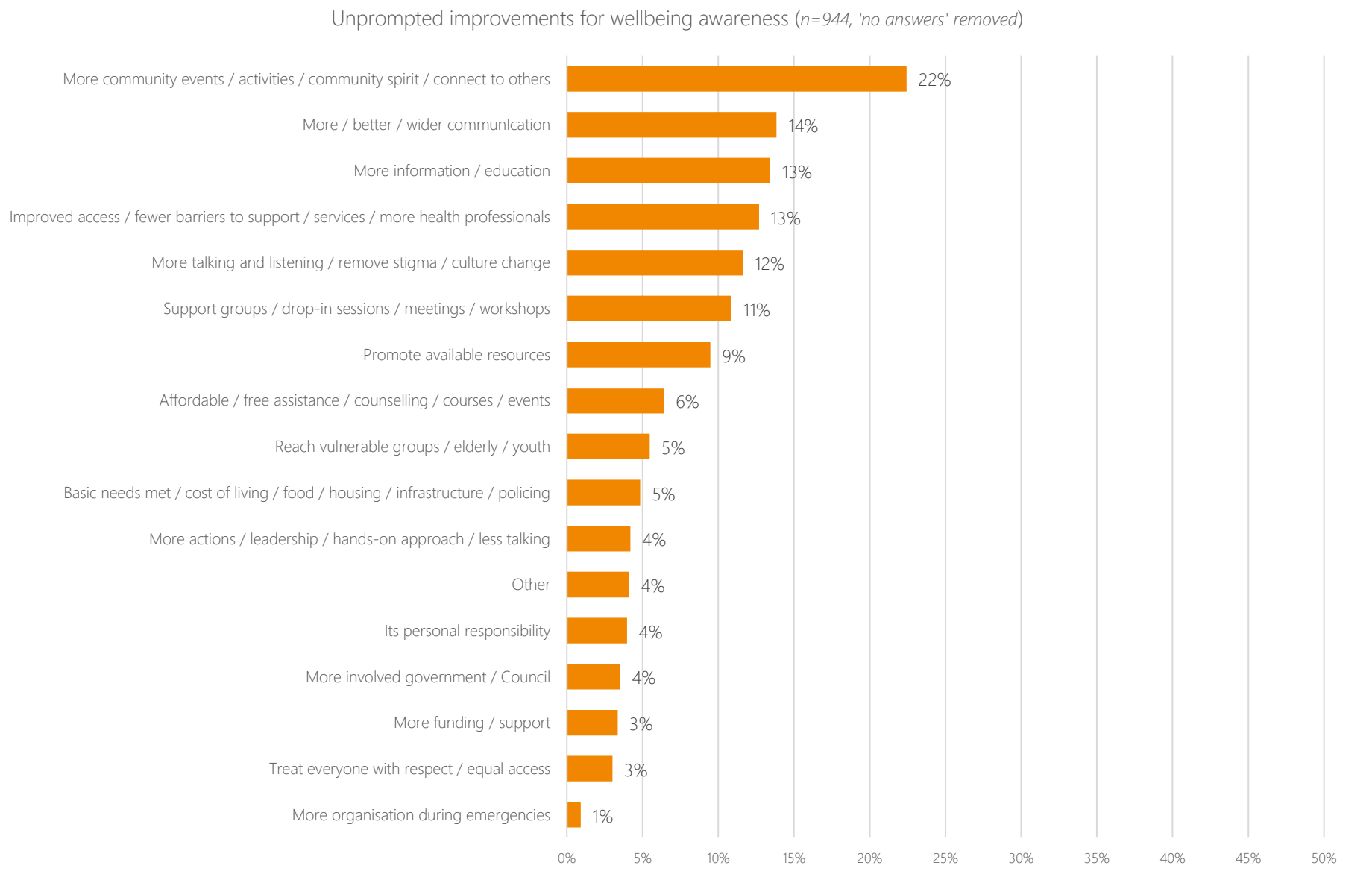
*"There is too much information from people trying to sell something - its hard to tell what is real"*

*"Shame, guilt, self barrier"*

*"Not all support is fitting to each individual. Finding the right support for your own situation is difficult and overwhelming for some. Everybody's idea of wellbeing is totally different depending on the life they are living."*

# WELLBEING KNOWLEDGE – suggested improvements

- Respondents provide a wide range of suggestions (62%) to improve awareness of wellbeing in their community though, again, no single suggestion was noted by a large proportion of residents. Providing more community-based events or activities (22%) was considered a viable option to increase community spirit and facilitate connection to others generally. Improving communication of wellbeing-related information (providing more, better or more widely available information) was considered necessary. Similarly, improving access or reducing barriers to support and services generally was desirable; more specifically this could be achieved through the community interactions noted above; through support groups, drop-in sessions or related workshops; or provision of more affordable (or free) assistance, including counselling sessions or health-related courses.
- There were relatively few differences in these suggestions across subgroups. Females were more likely than males to call for improved access to health services and professionals, more talking/listening and removing stigma, and additional support groups or community meetings.
- Residents who felt their life was better now than before the weather events were most likely to suggest community events or social connections would improve community spirit and wellbeing.
- Those with high wellbeing scores felt that more promotion of available resources was needed. Those with high wellbeing literacy scores were most likely to suggest improved access to services and professionals, more talking/listening and removing stigma, and community support groups, meetings and drop-in sessions.




*All respondents were asked: "Are there any barriers you face in finding information about wellbeing?" and "In your opinion, what could be done to improve awareness of wellbeing in your community?". Open-ended comments sorted into categories. Totals may exceed 100% owing to multiple responses for each respondent.*

Verbatim comments about improvements for wellbeing awareness

*"Activities and parties conducted in a neighbourhood to help people maintain contact and good relations."*

*"Facility for people to get together and actually TALK."*

*"More free events where people can connect"*

*"Bringing back a sense of community through community centres, etc. Running events that are relevant for different cultures."*

*"Local wellbeing activities (no cost to participant) that make people feel worthwhile and gives them a skill or thing to take away."*

*"More volunteer groups available to support all age groups to do activities together. For those people who do not have family or friends there does not seem to be much offered as a community to interact and meet with people."*

*"Everybody needs a friend Foster friendship/hobbies groups."*

*"Looking after each other."*

*"People need to get together, things like Men Shed. Giving people interaction."*

*"Wellbeing shared dinners or picnics"*

*"Wellbeing Talk sheds for children elderly women and men. You just drop in no pressure and be with others"*

*"Use of the arts, music and creativity in communities Community events and projects at the neighbourhood level"*

*"To keep talking about it. Encouraging the conversation surrounding wellbeing."*

*"TV programmes about how to be resilient and cope with the pressures in today's communities, Information and workshops at local community centres...more easier accessibility to counselling"*

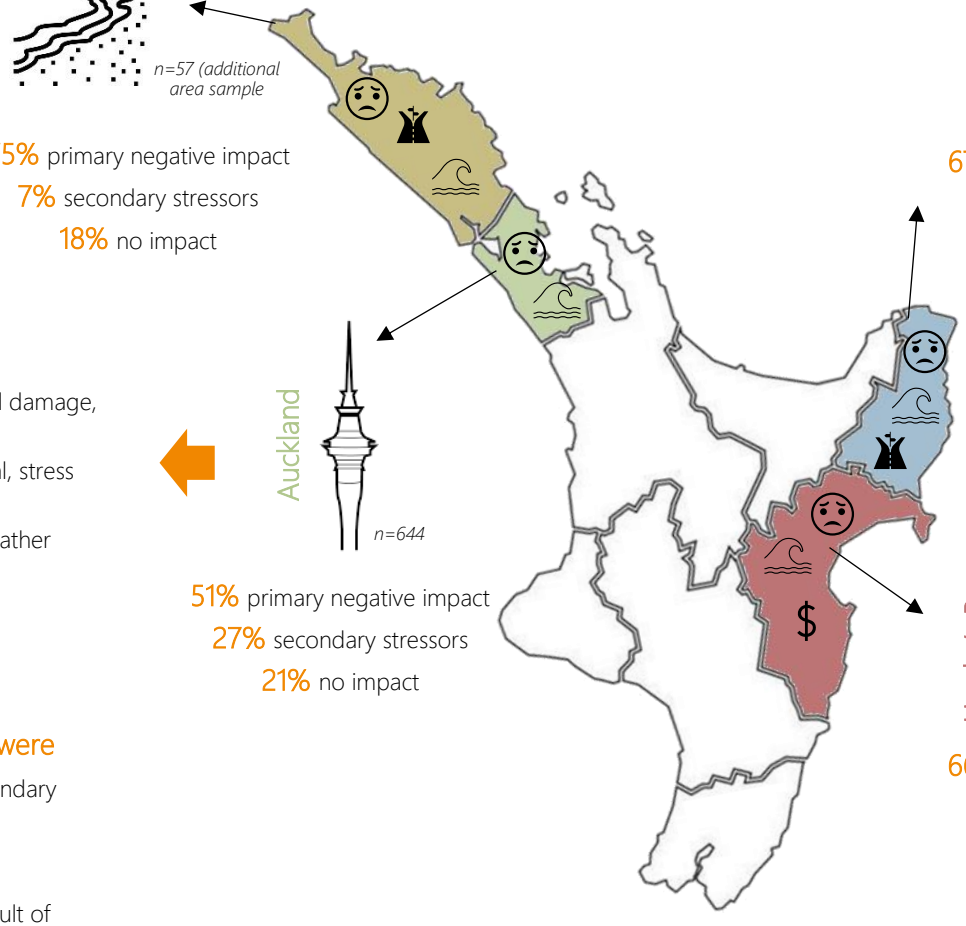
*"Old fashioned value of know your neighbours"*

*"Talking to someone you trust"*

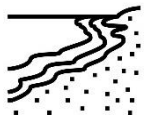
*"Provide more activities & opportunities at community level for people to participate in"*

*"Open conversation and communication through the community"*

# EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS OVERVIEW



## Northland



n=57 (additional area sample)

75% primary negative impact
7% secondary stressors
18% no impact

Mental, emotional, stress impacts
Roading, travel disruptions
Property, physical damage, flooding

## Auckland



n=644

51% primary negative impact
27% secondary stressors
21% no impact

Property, physical damage, flooding
Mental, emotional, stress impacts
Anxiety about weather

## Gisborne

n=152

67% primary negative impact
28% secondary stressors
5% no impact

Mental, emotional, stress impacts
Property, physical damage, flooding
Roading, travel disruptions

## Hawke's Bay

n=539

66% primary negative impact
30% secondary stressors
4% no impact

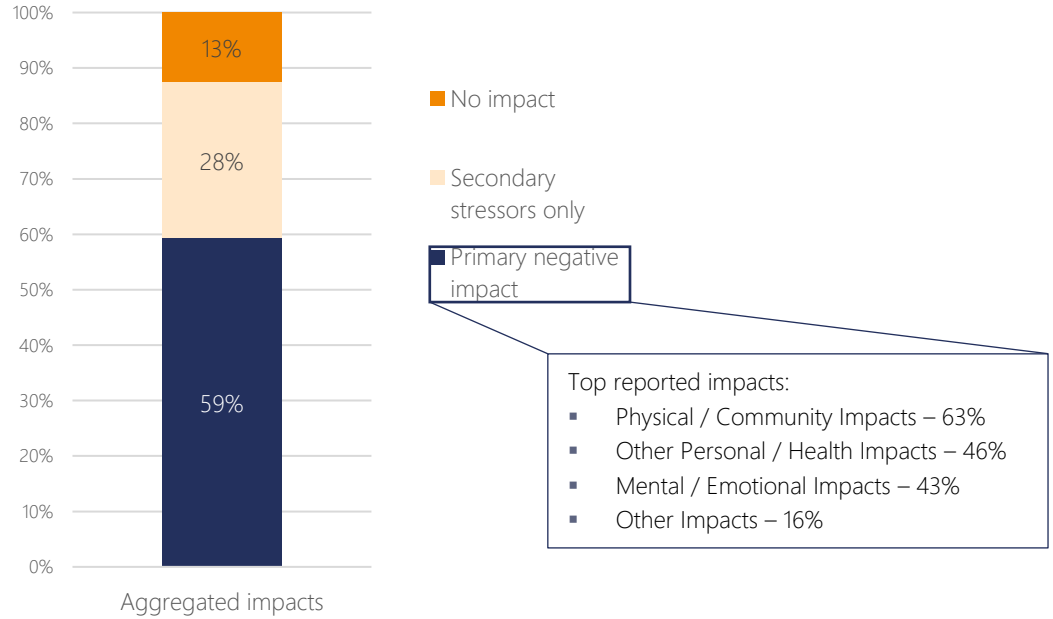
Mental, emotional, stress impacts
Property, physical damage, flooding
Financial impact

**Feeling sad because others were affected** was the most cited secondary stressor

**64%** felt better prepared as a result of 2023 weather events

# EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS – impacts overall

- Just 13% of respondents were unable to recall any impacts from the extreme weather events in 2023, suggesting widespread implications across various regions.
- 6-in-10 respondents (59%) reported experiencing a direct negative impact on themselves or their families. This encompassed physical and community impacts (63%, e.g. property damage, flooding, content damage, evacuation, loss of power and communication, impact on work, etc.), other personal/health impacts (46%), mental/emotional impacts (43%, e.g. stress, weather anxiety, feeling unsafe, etc.), and other impacts (16%, e.g. future, environment concerns, concerns about government or agency response).
- Those stating no direct impact were prompted with a list of potential worries and concerns; 28% of respondents reported experiencing indirect secondary impacts or stressors.
- More Auckland respondents reported no impact (21%).
- Primary negative impacts were particularly pronounced in Wairoa (76%), Northland (75%), followed closely by Hastings (69%), Gisborne (67%), and Napier (66%).
- Moreover, secondary stressors were reportedly more prevalent in areas surrounding highly affected regions, notably in Central Hawke's Bay and other adjacent areas (e.g. Tararua, Wairarapa).

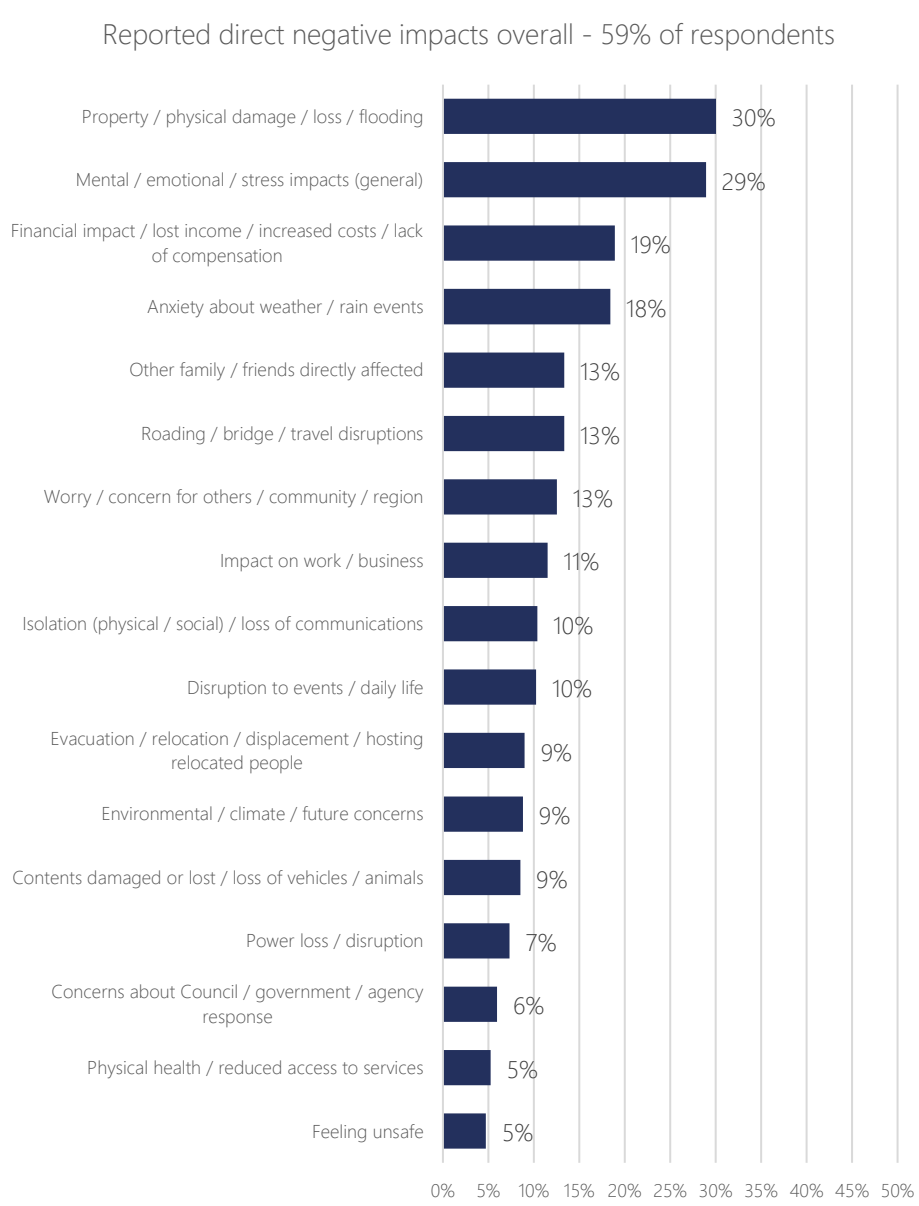



| | Primary negative impact | Secondary stressors | No impact |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hawke's Bay | 66% | 30% | 4% |
| *Central HB* | *51%* | *46%* | *3%* |
| *Hastings* | *69%* | *26%* | *5%* |
| *Napier* | *66%* | *31%* | *3%* |
| *Wairoa* | *76%* | *24%* | *0%* |
| Gisborne | 67% | 28% | 5% |
| Northland | 75% | 7% | 18% |
| Auckland | 51% | 27% | 21% |
| Other areas | 55% | 33% | 12% |
| *Tararua* | *47%* | *45%* | *8%* |
| *Coromandel* | *72%* | *15%* | *13%* |
| *Wairarapa* | *38%* | *48%* | *15%* |

*Note: survey methodology included oversampling in the most affected areas – resulting in potentially higher reported direct negative impacts.*

# EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS – primary impacts

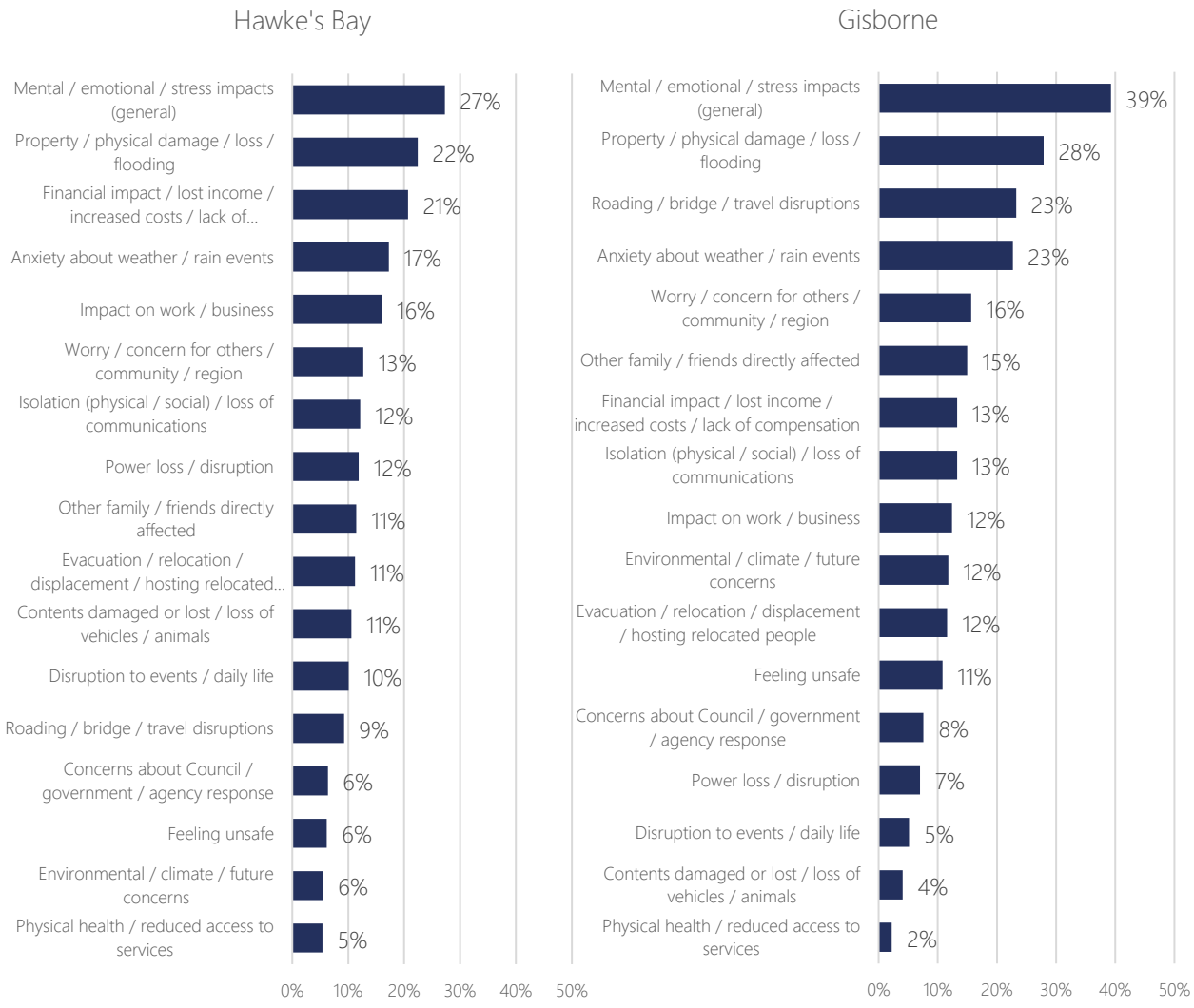
- 6-in-10 respondents (59%) reported experiencing a primary negative impact from the extreme weather events, and 84% of them specified the type of impact, with many reporting multiple impacts.
- Most substantial was the physical damage to, or loss of, property and homes as a direct result of flooding; in addition to lost or damaged contents, vehicles or animals (pets and stock). A large proportion of respondents experienced effects to themselves personally, particularly stress, mental health and emotional responses or generally feeling unsafe; with some continuing to feel anxiety about subsequent weather and rain long after the cyclone.
- Even among those not directly affected there was widespread concern for local regions and others in the community generally, including those who knew family or friends directly affected – particularly those evacuated or relocated, or hosting relocated residents. Normal life was disrupted in various ways, notably travel within and between regions through roading blockages and bridge damage; the resulting isolation, both physical and social (with loss of communications); power loss (for days or weeks in some cases); impacts on work life, including closure of businesses, loss of work, or increase in workload for those in essential industries; financial impacts through income loss or increased costs, lack of compensation or insurance cover; and other disruptions to daily life or events.
- Despite these largely negative impacts, a small proportion of residents noted more positive experiences, particularly the community coming together to support each other in the midst of crisis.
- Self-reported (unprompted) impacts of any kind were most likely for females (65% vs 53% males), those aged 40-64 (64%), Māori (64%) and Other ethnicities (64%), rural residents (75% vs 56% urban), and parents (76%). Females were more likely than males to identify all types of impacts; however, females were more likely to participate in a survey on behalf of their household.
- Respondents aged under 65 were more likely to feel mental / emotional and other personal / health related impacts, particularly financial concerns and travel difficulties (often related to work/business disruption), in addition to general concerns about the region / community, weather-related anxiety and emotional stress generally.
- As expected, more rural than urban respondents reported a range of impacts including property damage, travel disruptions, physical and social isolation (with loss of communications), work disruption and related financial impacts.
- The relationship between general wellbeing and experiences of the weather events was evident. Respondents with low wellbeing scores or moderate-to-severe mental distress were more likely to report mental/emotional reactions, weather-related anxiety, financial impacts, physical/social isolation, and disruption to daily life.
- One-in-ten (9%) of those with 'very low' wellbeing scores (under 29 out of 100) had experienced evacuation or other displacement - three-times more than other respondents; one-in-four (24%) reported mental/emotional reactions; and 17% experienced financial impacts.




| | | % Negative impacts |
|---|---|---|
| Age | 18-39 | 60% |
| | 40-64 | 64% |
| | 65+ | 50% |
| Gender | Female | 65% |
| | Male | 53% |
| Location | Urban | 56% |
| | Rural | 75% |
| Income | Below $70,000 | 56% |
| | Above $70,000 | 63% |
| Employment | Employee / business owner | 62% |
| | Casual | 57% |
| | Unemployed | 56% |
| | Parenting | 76% |
| | Retired | 47% |
| | Beneficiary | 66% |
| Ethnicity | NZ European | 61% |
| | Māori | 64% |
| | Pacific Peoples | 50% |
| | Asian | 53% |
| | Other | 64% |

*All respondents were asked: "Overall, what impact, if any, have extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle) had on you (or your family)?" Open-ended comments sorted into categories. Totals may exceed 100% owing to multiple responses for each respondent*

Type of negative impact – by area



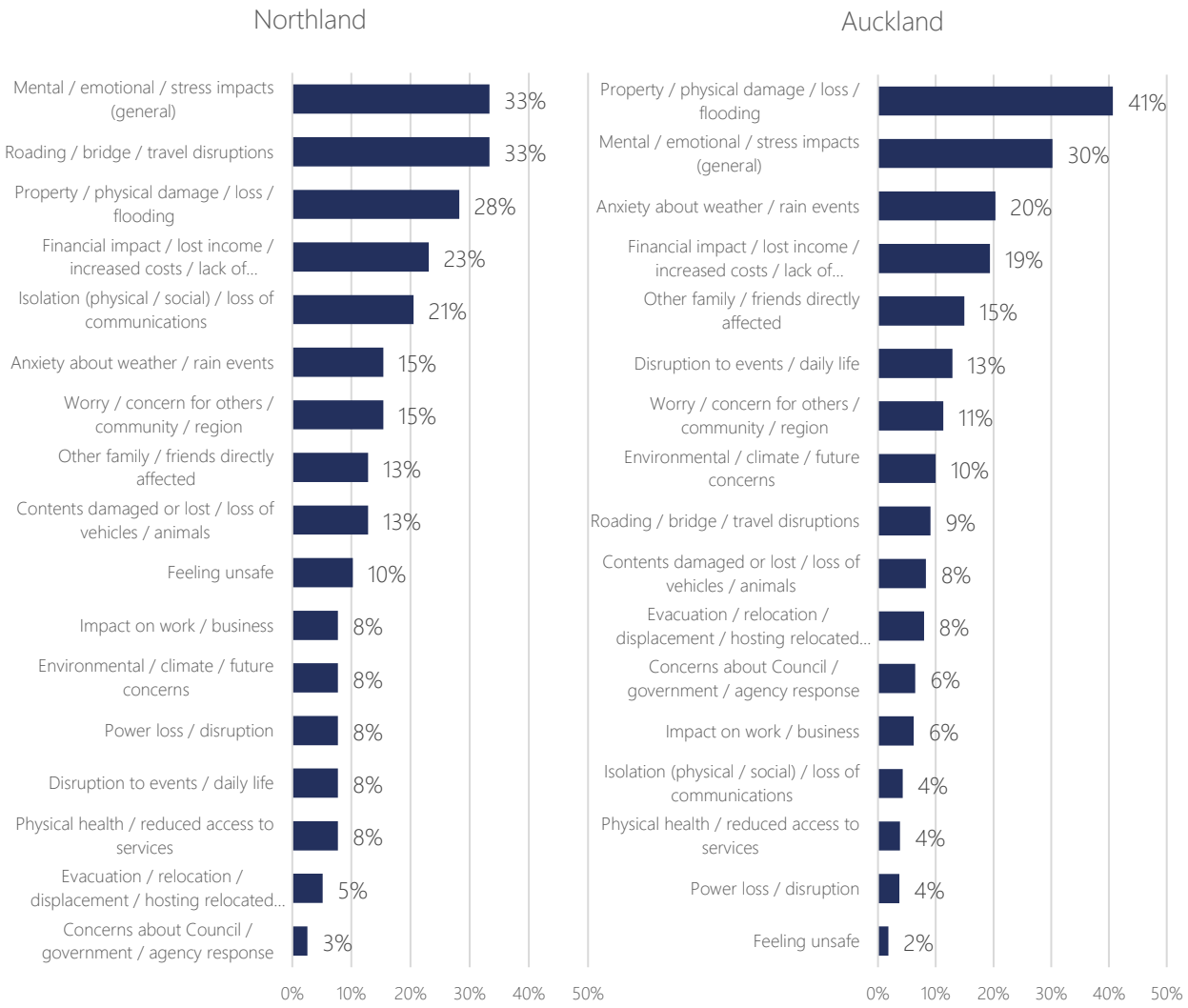

Despite common trends in reported impacts on the community, it is evident that certain types of impacts were more pronounced in specific geographical areas. For instance, emotional impacts were notably more prevalent in Gisborne, and Wairoa within Hawke's Bay.

Furthermore, respondents from Wairoa demonstrated a slightly higher propensity to report financial impacts, as well as disruptions to events and daily life. This, together with wellbeing and demographic profile of this area, highlights the economic vulnerabilities within this community and underscores the need for robust assistance programmes and contingency plans.

Property damage emerged as a more significant concern in Hastings district (particularly rural areas), whereas respondents from Napier were more likely to cite power loss as a notable impact. These findings underscored the diverse array of challenges faced by different communities within the same region during a crisis.

Moreover, the notable impact of travel disruptions within and between regions due to roading blockages and bridge damage in Gisborne emphasised the critical role of infrastructure resilience in facilitating post-disaster recovery efforts.

Type of negative impact – by area




Property damage and flooding were significant concerns among Auckland respondents. However, it is essential to consider a sample design that deliberately targeted the most affected areas to obtain insights from affected communities. This approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges faced by those directly impacted by the weather events.

Roading and travel disruptions were heavily emphasised by Northland respondents, leading to a heightened sense of isolation, both physically and socially. These findings underscore the critical importance of maintaining resilient transportation infrastructure in remote regions to ensure connectivity and access to essential services during emergencies.

Verbatim comments about Cyclone Gabrielle impacts

*"A lot of anxiety, worry - for personal safety, safety of the house I was living in, safety of the business I manage."*

*"Anxious about the next weather event. Our land was flooded."*

*"Sadness, fear, anxiety, stress. Related to the community in general and to our property in regards to future worry. Financial impacts of increase in insurance premiums. Concern for friends who lost their house. No power for a week. Parents without power or water for several weeks. Dealing with so much loss in the community."*

*"Our house and property were damaged in the cyclone and floods, as were our families homes. We were also out of work and still have not financially recovered from damage repairs and loss of work."*

*"Road closures to the far north have increased costs of cartage of food, fuel, and these cost hikes have been passed on to our community making food and petrol very expensive."*

*"Well, I'm worried I will get flooded again. It wasn't a huge amount but I can't afford to replace everything if it happens again. I also worry about getting stranded in this area with a baby. I've been thinking about moving."*

*"Worrying its going to happen again, don't want to live in the region anymore"*

*"Whether or not real help is out there if something goes wrong and the length of time it takes to get help"*

*"Trees fell on house. Fences taken out by slips. Bridge washed out isolating community. Evacuated out of community then went back in as missed home."*

*"Significant land damage, we had to move out of our home for 4 months while immediate repairs were made"*

*"Part of our home flooded and we lost some contents. We felt quite unsafe for a long time in our home after it happened due to the looting and other criminal activities going on"*

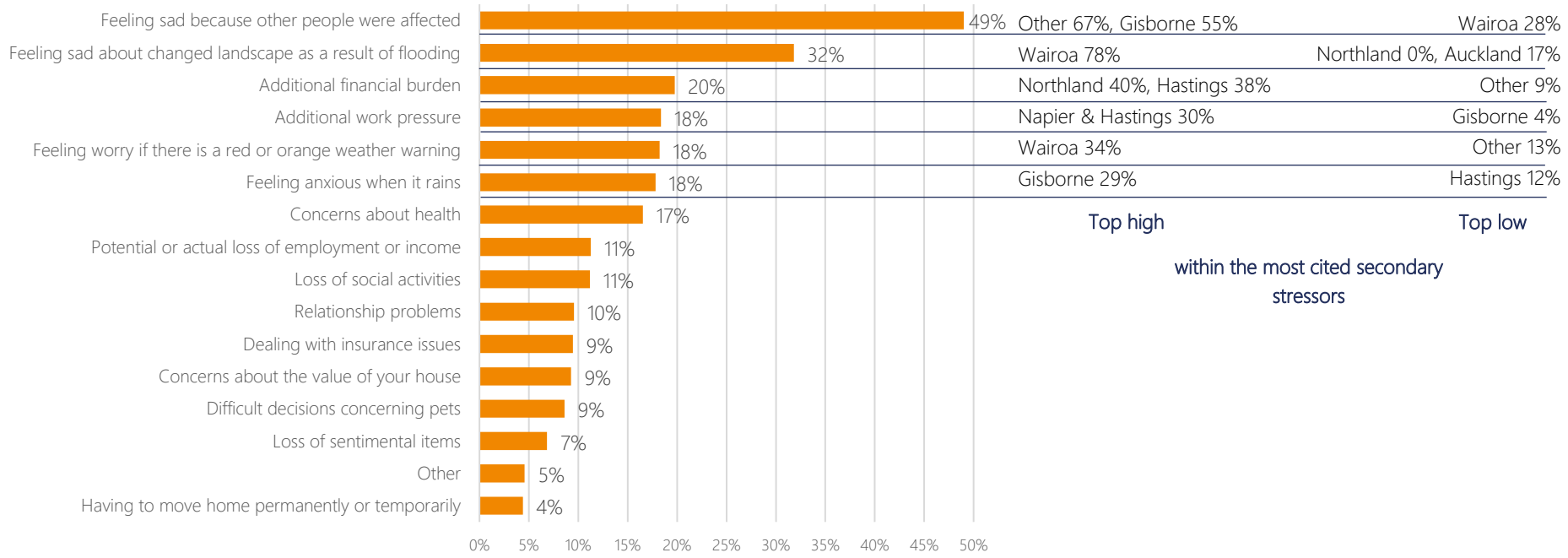
*"People are still walking around in a fog, with many decisions still to make, and come to terms with. Loss of home, land, orchard, or crops with little compensation to enable us to move forward for a reasonable retirement."*

*"Severe flooding downstairs (garage, bedroom, bathroom). The bedroom and bathroom are still not usable a year on. The cleanup was extremely difficult emotionally and physically. We rent and the property manager was slow to organise support and did not assist with the clean up. It was an unhealthy environment and has taken 12 months to resolve."*

*"Our property was flooded and due to location had significant amounts of sand wash down to our property, which covered a large portion of it and is a couple metres deep, causing over $100,000 in land and property damage. We are still in the process of clearing this and waiting for insurance money to come through. We had to self evacuate during the night of the cyclone, however we were cut off in all directions due to floods and fallen trees. Our only option was to evacuate up a steep driveway opposite us and stay in our cars to wait it out. It was extremely terrifying for everyone"*

# EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS – secondary stressors

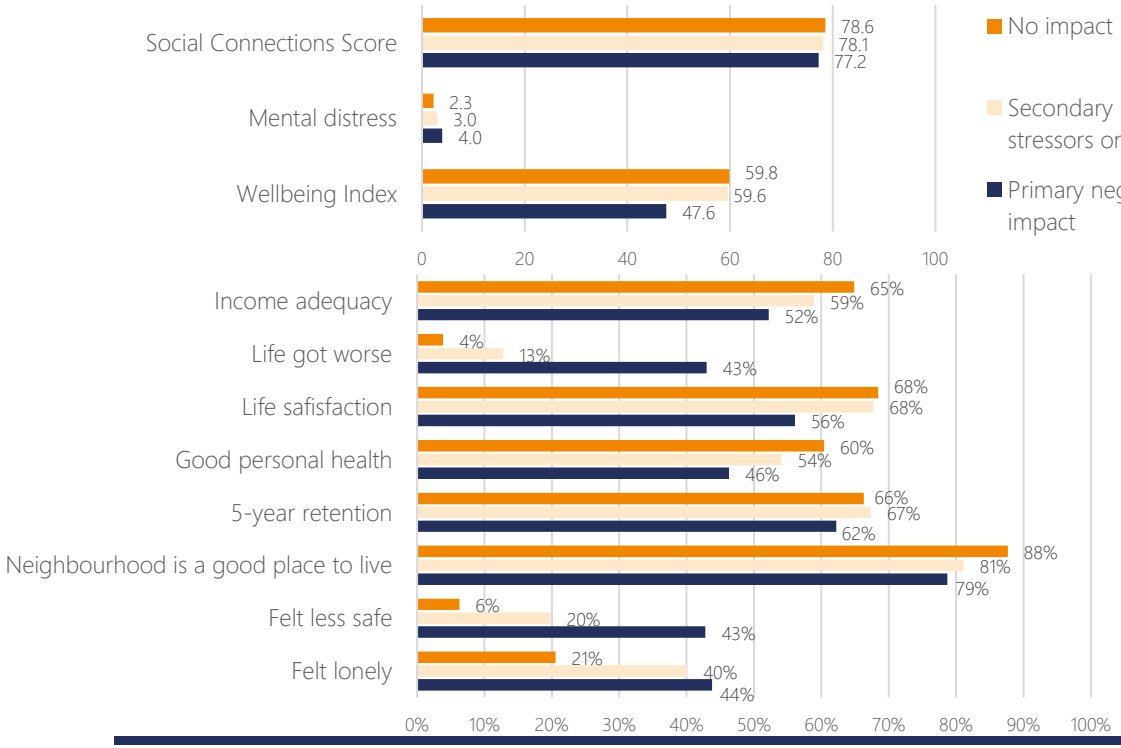
- 7-in-10 respondents (70%) not reporting any negative impacts as a result of extreme weather events in 2023 were still subject to secondary stressors (28% of the total sample).
- The most cited secondary stressor was empathetic distress, where people report feelings of sadness, discomfort, or emotional impact as a result of witnessing the challenges faced by others (49%), followed by feeling sad about changed landscape as a result of flooding (32%).
- Empathetic distress for others affected was particularly high in other areas (Tararua, Coromandel, Wairarapa), but lower among younger respondents (18-39).
- Northland respondents were more likely to report relationship problems (60% - top concern for the area), and financial burden (40%). Younger respondents (18-39) were also more likely to report financial burden (34%).
- Wairoa respondents expressed greater concerns about red or orange weather warnings (34%).




*All respondents were asked: "After the extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle), have you or someone in your household experienced any of the following?" Note: 'multichoice.*

# EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS – and wellbeing

- 2023 extreme weather events had a profound effect on respondents in many aspects of their lives. Particularly, impacted respondents were more likely to feel less safe (43% vs. 6% of those with no impact), feel their life got worse (43% vs. 4%), with declined mental health (4.0 vs. 2.3) and overall wellbeing (47.6 vs. 59.8).
- Social connections remained high among respondents regardless of the impacts.
- Secondary stressors had a notable effect on mental distress, feeling less safe, feeling lonely and neighbourhood perceptions.
- However, little effect was found of secondary stressors on overall wellbeing or other attributes.
- Northland area showed high mental distress and low wellbeing scores regardless of reported weather impacts.
- Other affected areas generally showed a clear difference in mental distress and overall wellbeing between respondents reporting primary negative impacts and no impacts, with secondary impacts showing a more subtle difference.

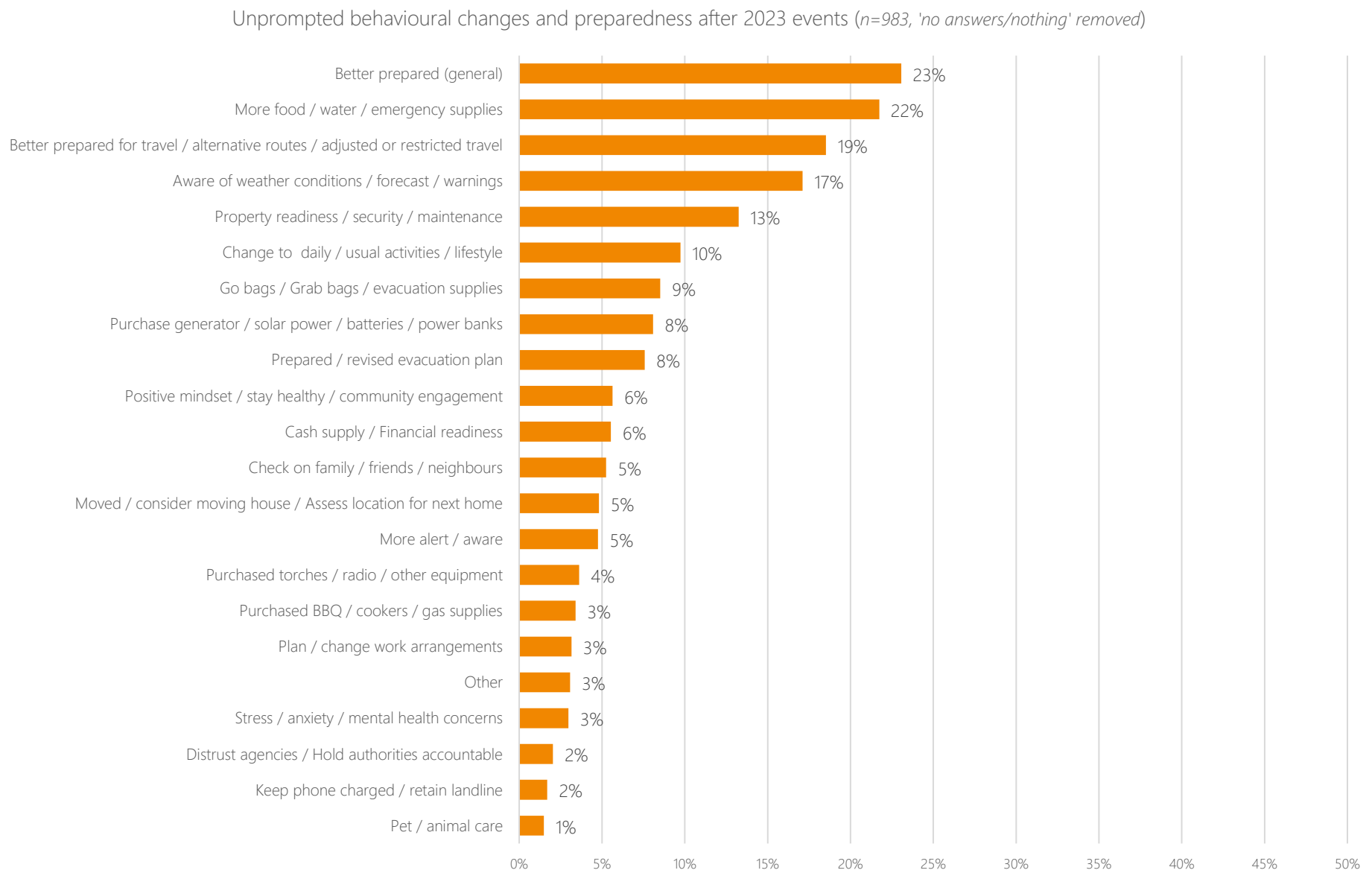



| | Wellbeing index | Mental distress |
|---|---|---|
| | Primary negative impacts | |
| Hawke's Bay | 47.2 | 4.0 |
| Gisborne | 45.2 | 4.8 |
| Northland* | 46.2 | 4.5 |
| Auckland | 49.1 | 3.8 |
| Other* | 47.3 | 3.5 |
| | Secondary stressors only | |
| Hawke's Bay | 63.4 | 2.9 |
| Gisborne | 64.2 | 2.7 |
| Northland* | 31.0 | 5.0 |
| Auckland | 55.6 | 3.3 |
| Other* | 60.8 | 2.3 |
| | No impact | |
| Hawke's Bay | 60.4 | 2.5 |
| Gisborne | 65.4 | 0.9 |
| Northland* | 46.8 | 5.3 |
| Auckland | 60.1 | 2.1 |
| Other* | 62.3 | 2.0 |

** Small samples for the areas, results should be treated with caution.*

# EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS – behavioural changes

- A large proportion of respondents (64%) identified multiple things they now do differently as a result of the 2023 weather events.
- Most pertinently, many now felt they were now better prepared generally for future emergencies and weather events (23%). More specifically, 22% had assembled or updated emergency supplies, especially food, water and other supplies including torches, radios, cooking equipment (BBQs, cookers, gas supplies), and power supplies such as generators, batteries, power banks or solar power. Awareness of weather conditions, forecasts and warnings had been heightened (17%). Travel preparations (19%) had been adjusted or trips restricted, alternative routes planned and/or cars kept in a ready state; evacuation plans prepared or revised; and grab bags or evacuation supplies prepared for urgent use. Many residents had made immediate or ongoing changes to daily life, activity or lifestyle in response to their experiences, including regular checks on family or friends, planning for or changing work arrangements, being financially prepared or keeping a ready cash supply on hand. In some cases, property readiness and maintenance were a priority to enhance future protection, although some had already moved (or considered moving) home to a safer location; or were at least assessing a new location for their next home to mitigate future impacts.
- Respondents' experience of weather events had a linear impact on consequent behavioural changes. Those reporting a primary negative impact were most likely to make additional changes in their preparedness (71%), followed by 59% of respondents experiencing only secondary stressors. Fewer unaffected respondents reported some type of changes; nevertheless, half of them (45%) were also more prepared now.
- In addition, the exact pattern of changes varied. Respondents dealing with negative impacts were more likely to be better prepared for travel, aware of weather forecasts/warnings, made changes to regular routines, and either moved house or considered moving. In contrast, those experiencing more positive outcomes were more likely to have purchased back-up power supplies and maintained a positive mindset or community engagement.
- Respondents with low wellbeing scores typically made more changes than those with high scores; specifically, they were more likely to have greater awareness of weather conditions, better prepared for travel, and made changes to daily activities.




*All respondents were asked: "Thinking about things you do differently as a result of the extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle), what, if anything, do you do differently?" Open-ended comments sorted into categories. Totals may exceed 100% owing to multiple responses for each respondent.*

Verbatim comments about behavioural changes and preparedness after 2023 events

*"A bit more prepared when it rains  Have more emergency supplies.  Try to make sure always petrol in the car.  Moving the animals inside when it rains."*

*"Ensuring my property is prepared for future extreme weather events."*

*"Check weather forecasts regularly, where possible have removed storage of items where flooding is likely to occur, park cars on the highest point of property, have extra backup of emergency and 'camping' supplies, have an evacuation carry bag with important documents and spare clothes."*

*"Being more prepared for emergencies - purchased necessary items. Much more thought about what to do if we needed to evacuate."*

*"More prepared by purchasing a generator. Petrol cans filled, gas bottles filled, cash on hand. Storage of non perishable food, water, sanitation products."*

*"We've become more isolated.  Plan any travel around our road access."*

*"Always have extra food and water and charged up phones."*

*"Will not consider to buy the house in the flood plain"*

*"We keep more supplies on hand in the house in the event we cannot leave the neighbourhood due to flood waters. We also keep power banks charged regularly in the event we lose power for days on end like last time. We need to be contactable in case our families need help."*

*"We are much more cautious about the weather and have precautions in place if anything significant were to happen again. We work more and spend less money."*

*"Trying to have more non perishable food, water, medication, keeping cash on hand but worried about security of it."*

*"Watch weather closely. Constantly feel the need to have emergency supplies built up inc food, gas bottles, always charging power banks. Feeling a little apprehensive if the car is low on ga"*

*"Very aware of bad weather, very careful about my house and garden to ensure no flooding can happen here. Cautious on roads"*

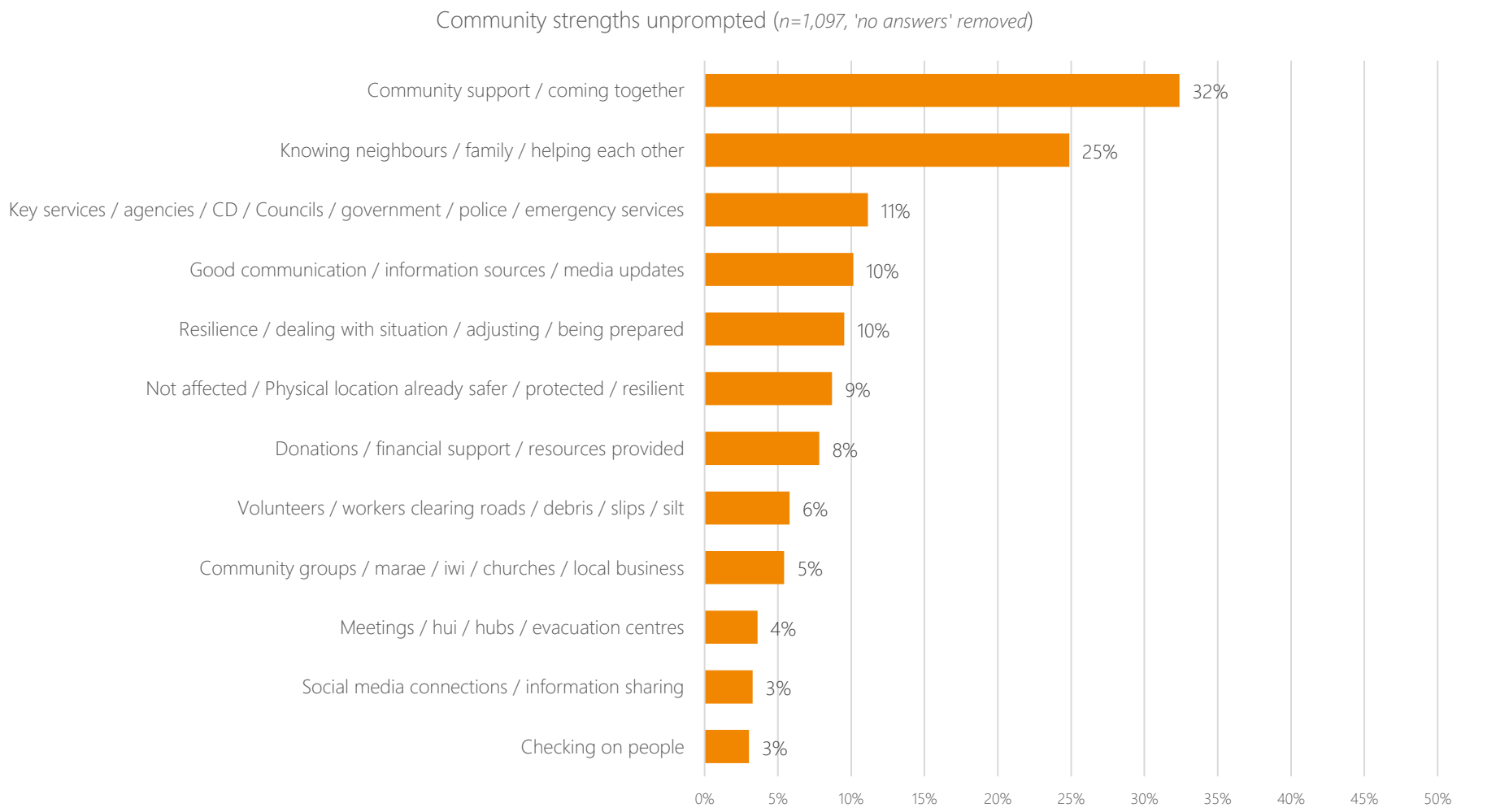
*"Thinking about how we would manage in future. Checking our emergency grab bags. Storing water. Keeping cupboards and petrol tank topped up. Keep some cash at home."*

Behavioural changes – highlights by demographic groups.

- Behavioural changes of any kind were more likely to be made by Wairoa (90%), Northland (77%) and Hastings (71%) respondents, compared to Auckland (60%) and Napier (61%).
- Only 17% of unaffected Gisborne respondents reported making any future preparations, whereas around half of unaffected respondents in other areas made some changes.
- Females (72% vs 55% males), those aged under 65 (66% vs 57% of 65+), Māori (76%), rural residents (72% vs 63% urban) were more likely to report some behavioural changes.
- Females were most likely to spontaneously report stocking up on emergency supplies, becoming better prepared for travel (or adjusted to travel restrictions), and more aware of weather conditions. Females were also five-times more likely than males to have created or upgraded evacuation 'grab bags', two-times more likely to have prepared or revised evacuation plans, and twice as likely to have made some change to their daily activities or lifestyle.
- Pasifika, Māori and Asian peoples were most likely to feel 'better prepared' generally. Māori were more likely to have prepared more emergency supplies, adjusted or restricted their travel plans, purchased a generator or other power supplies, or increased their financial readiness or on-hand cash supply.
- In addition to being 'better prepared' generally, Gisborne residents were more likely to have increased their financial readiness / cash supply; and, together with Northland residents, become better prepared for travel or related restrictions. Northland residents were also most likely to have prepared evacuation supplies/grab bags, while Hawkes Bay residents were most likely to have purchased generators/power supplies or made changes to regular routines. Auckland residents were typically least likely to have made any specific changes, especially increasing their emergency supplies – but most likely to have improved their property readiness or maintenance.
- While retired (54%) and unemployed (53%) respondents were less likely to have made any behavioural changes, parents (84%) were more likely to report some preparedness.

# PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT – community strengths

- Communities relied on multiple sources of strength and assistance to help them cope with the 2023 weather events (72%). Of most notable significance were the networks and ties within the community itself: community support and people coming together was most frequently cited as a coping tool. Similarly, knowing one's neighbours and/or having family or friends on hand to help each other was of great importance; together with volunteers who performed essential tasks and assistance, and local community groups, marae, churches and businesses who provided support and resources in so many ways. Key services provided by a range of agencies, including councils, civil defence, central government, police and emergency services were also essential, together with provision of central hubs, evacuation centres and hui. At a time when many communications systems had faltered, reliable communications, media and information sources were considered critical, with social media also helpful to enable community information sharing. Despite these social support systems, some residents also felt personal resilience, preparation and adjusting to the changing situation were essential skills that got them through their challenging circumstances.
- Females were more likely than males to indicate community coping factors, including community support generally, knowing neighbours and/or family helping each other, good communication and information sources, and community groups/marae. In contrast, males were twice as likely to suggest personal resilience/preparation or indicate they had not been affected.
- While younger adults (under 65) were more likely to identify community coming together for support, older adults suggested that knowing neighbours or family was particularly beneficial.
- Rural residents were particularly appreciative of both community support generally and resource donations specifically; however, they were also twice as likely to point to personal resilience, preparation or adaptation as coping strategies.
- The hardest hit regions were also heavily dependent on support provided, with some differences in emphasis. Hawke's Bay residents were more likely to rely on general community support and neighbours/family helping each other. Gisborne residents were especially reliant on communication and information channels and donations of resources; both Gisborne and Other area residents saw key agencies and services (Councils, civil defence, etc.) as important sources of support. Respondents living alone were particularly dependent on communication channels, and lower income households (under $70k) drew more on support from neighbours and family.
- Those most negatively impacted by the weather events were unsurprisingly more likely to rely on community support to get through. As expected, respondents with high social connections scores were more likely to be connected with neighbours and/or family helping out.




*All respondents were asked: "What do you believe are the key factors that helped?" Open-ended comments sorted into categories. Totals may exceed 100% owing to multiple responses for each respondent.*

Verbatim comments about community strengths

*"Staying connected as a community and sharing a common frustration with the Council and those responsible for restoring roads and other infrastructure."*

*"Amazing people coming together to help each other out when they realised that Civil Defence is not really a 'thing' that will come to help."*

*"Working together. Street whats app page. Checking in on each other."*

*"Everyone coming together."*

*"Strangers coming together to help their fellow humans."*

*"Readiness to jump in and help."*

*"Working together to help all"*

*"When cut off, meeting together at the river for supplies, having a BBQ and connecting. Helping each other. Getting to know each other more."*

*"We have marae, whakapapa: shared whānau, hapu connections and relationships that mean we look after ourselves to look after each other."*

*"We pulled together and helped"*

*"We helped each other, those with generators opened their homes for showers, cooking and preservation of food"*

*"The sense of community"*

*"The way the local and NZ community came together and helped each other. The hubs the food sharing electricity."*

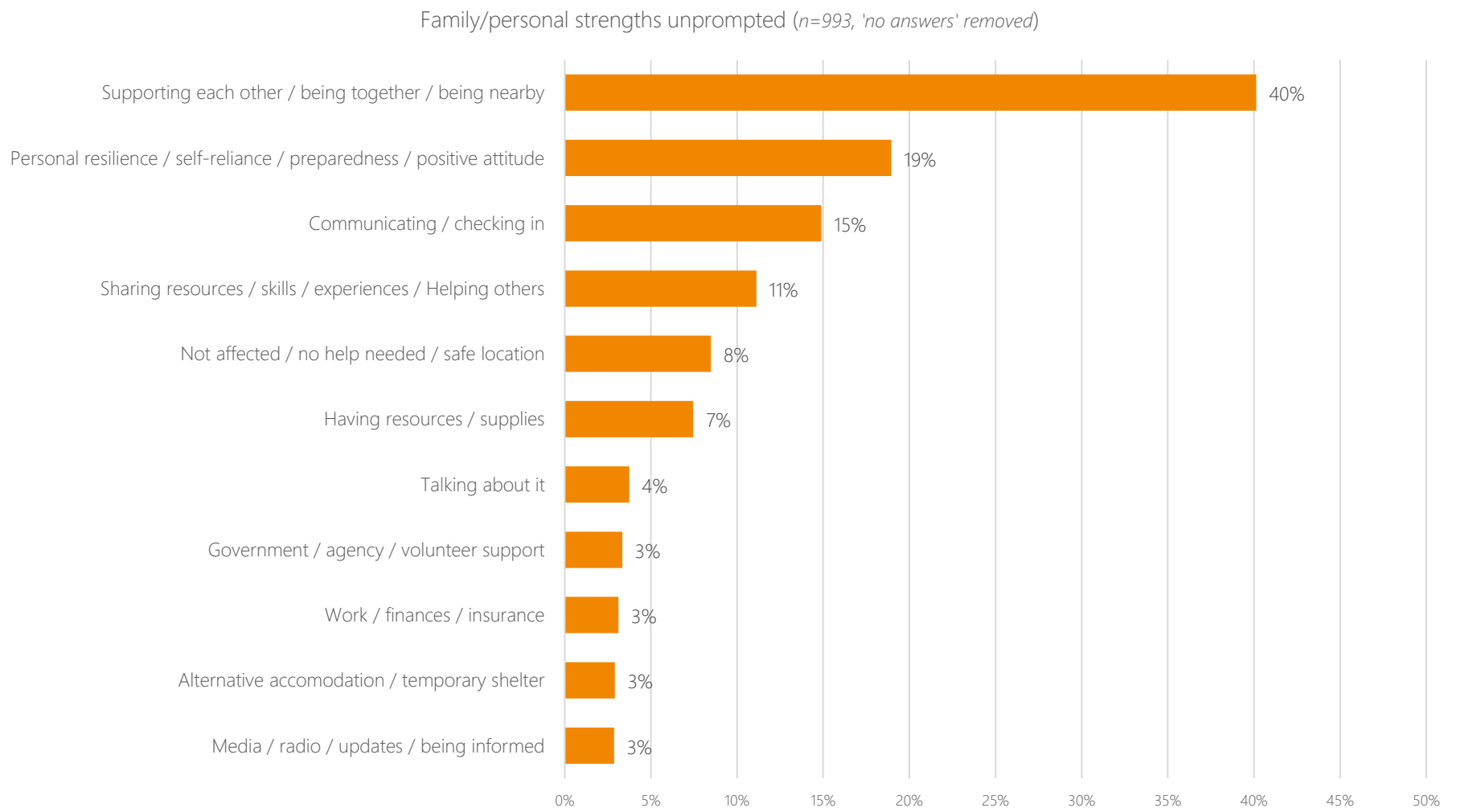
*"The wider community were supportive and helpful"*

*"Support from other community members during time of need, everyone really banded together to help those who were badly affected"*

*"The kindness and generosity of the community"*

# PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT – family/personal strengths

- 65% of respondents cited family/personal strengths helping them during the 2023 extreme weather events.
- In terms of what helped individuals or their whānau, just being together and supporting each other was critical; sharing resources, skills and experiences to help others, communicating or checking in with others or providing opportunities to talk about the situation; and providing alternative accommodation or temporary shelter arrangements for those displaced. Again, personal resilience and preparedness was considered a critical skill, with a positive attitude essential for many residents.
- The above factors were common across respondents, with few differences by subgroups. However, supporting each other/being together was of particular importance for Hawke's Bay residents. Rural residents and Pacific peoples were most likely to draw on personal resilience, self-reliance or preparedness.
- Communicating and checking in on others was especially important for older adults (65+), people living alone and multigenerational households.
- Respondents who experienced only impact from the weather events, whether negative or positive, were more likely to draw support from each other and being together than those experiencing no impacts. This was also the case for those with moderate or high social connections scores, compared to those with low scores. People with high life satisfaction were twice as likely as those currently dissatisfied with life to have benefitted from communicating/checking in with others. Again, this was also true for those with high social connections scores or high wellbeing scores.




*All respondents were asked: "What do you believe are the key factors that helped?" Open-ended comments sorted into categories. Totals may exceed 100% owing to multiple responses for each respondent.*

Verbatim comments about personal/family strengths

*"Being supportive for each other."*

*"Emotional support from friends who would help if needed."*

*"Sticking together and looking out for one another."*

*"Close ties,  helping and sharing. Being occupied in immediate time. Feeling helpful, making new relationships, being focused. Being prepared with emergency supplies was great,  made us feel secure.*

*"Forms of manaakitanga by different parts of our communities."*

*"That we had a good close group of friends. People came to our house to cook on our BBQ and gas hobs every night which felt like a sense of community as we were all together."*

*"Having people to lean on in a stressful time, share struggles and help where possible."*

*"We were together, safe and we've done plenty of camping so viewed it much like a camping trip."*

*"To have emergency supplies at hand for family"*

*"Support from family and friends and at work, each other - our colleagues."*

*"Reliance on family support"*

*"Staying calm and making sure the kids were safe"*

*"Good kiwi people who get on with things"*

*"Knowing we had a plan + looking after each other as we were out helping our community"*

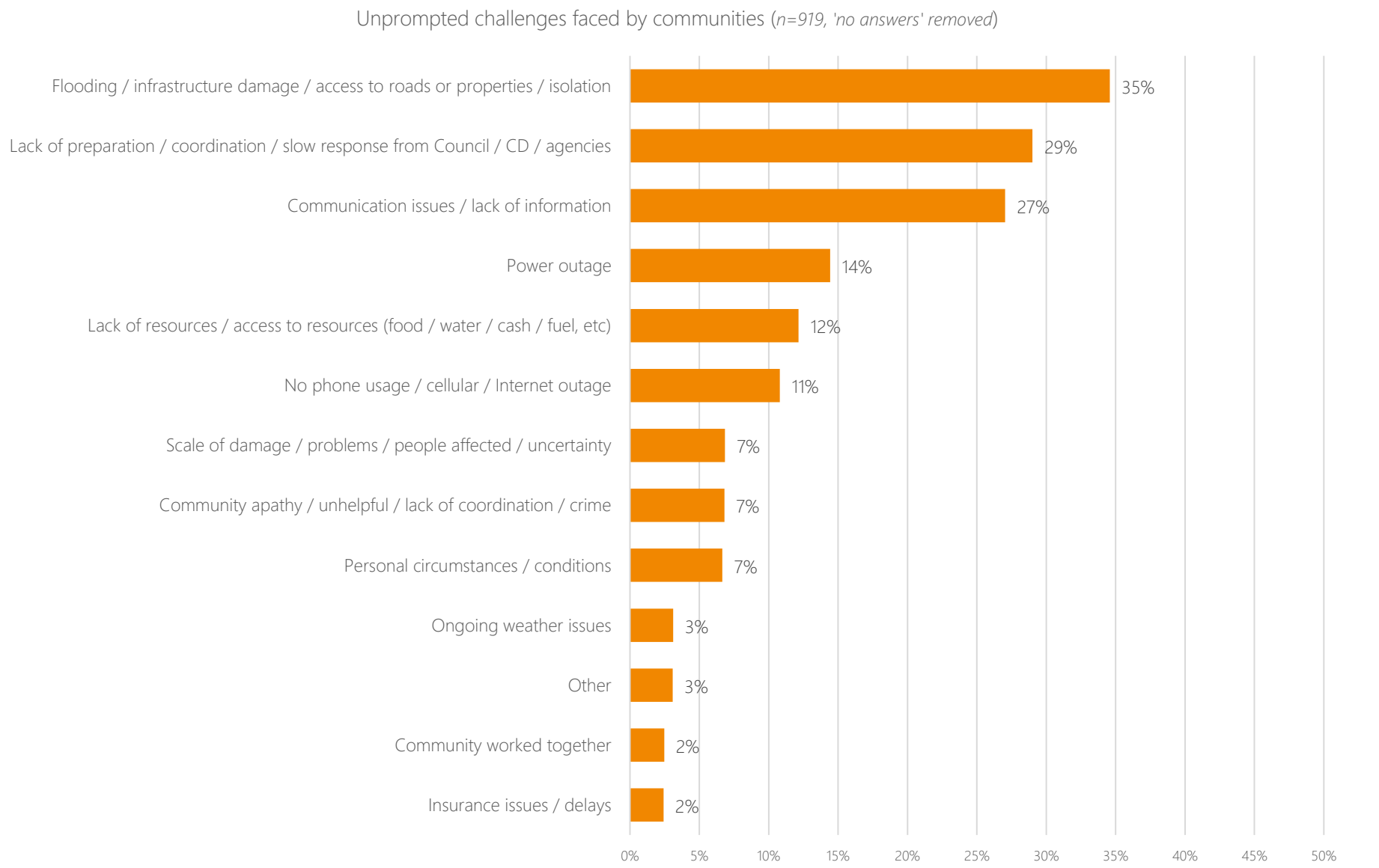
*"Family support. Talking about it. Spending time together."*

*"Keeping calm for my son, being prepared with supplies as much as I can"*

*"We were able to stay together as a family"*

# PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT – perceived challenges

- Several key challenges (for 60%) impacted on residents' ability to respond to the extreme weather events, particularly Cyclone Gabrielle. Flooding itself, with the resultant infrastructure damage to roads and bridges, was considered a significant issue restricting access to roads and properties and causing isolation of many homes and communities. Communication issues were a significant and ongoing barrier for many residents, with power outages and loss of cellular and internet coverage contributing to the widespread sense of isolation. Respondents pointed to a lack of preparation for weather/flooding events hindering their own or the community response, in particular the perceived slow response or coordination from Council, civil defence or other support agencies. Lack of necessary resources (e.g. food, water, cash, fuel) or access to resources was a significant concern for some.
- Many differences in challenges were apparent between subgroups, with distinct barriers across regions in particular. Flooding and infrastructure/access issues were most noteworthy for Gisborne (50%) and Tararua/Coromandel/Wairarapa residents (65%) (compared to 25% in Hawke's Bay and 33% in Auckland), while lack of preparation, coordination and/or slow response from key agencies was a greater concern in Hawke's Bay (35%) and Auckland (30%) (compared to 17% Gisborne, 11% Northland). A range of issues affected both Hawke's Bay and Gisborne residents most keenly, including communication generally (36%), loss of internet and cellular networks specifically (15% & 23%), power outages (24% & 15%), and lack of resources (13% & 18%, also 19% in Northland). Across regions, rural residents were more likely than urban residents to express concerns about flooding and access issues and lack of preparation or response from key agencies.
- Females were more likely than males to identify concerns with communication issues, lack of resources or access to resources, and internet/cellular outages.
- Adults aged 40-64 were more likely than younger adults to feel challenged by flooding and access issues and communication issues generally.
- Higher income households ($70k+) were more likely than lower income households to identify lack of preparation and response, while lower income households were more likely to feel affected by power outages.
- As expected, those experiencing negative impacts from weather events were substantially more likely than those feeling no impact overall to identify many challenges and barriers, including: lack of preparation and slow agency response, and communication issues generally.
- Respondents with very low wellbeing scores were more likely than those with high scores to feel limited by personal circumstances or conditions, community apathy or lack of help, and the scale of damage and people affected. Similar patterns were observed for those with severe mental distress scores.




*All respondents were asked: "And what, if anything, made it challenging or difficult for your community to respond to the extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle)?" Open-ended comments sorted into categories. Totals may exceed 100% owing to multiple responses for each respondent.*

Verbatim comments about challenges faced by communities

*"Would have been good to have received emergency warnings on cellphones like we did for Covid lockdowns. I was working during the morning of the cyclone so wasn't aware of how high our river was rising of the need for us to evacuate until a Fireman knocked on our front door and said we should leave in the next 10 minutes."*

*"We were cut off from flooding and slips but the community did pull together amazing"*

*"Landslips, roading network being cut off with the community becoming isolated."*

*"Loss of roading and feeling of isolation"*

*"Gisborne's isolation made it difficult, with roads in and out closed, flooding, slips and bridges swept away. Some rural communities were completely cut off for weeks."*

*"Unpreparedness in high places. Civil defence etc were brilliant, but we learned a lot as this was bigger than anyone had imagined previously. Loss of communication was huge. Loss of bridges was huge. Fear [...]. People saw the public aggression, violence, looting and were scared to go out."*

*"The scale of the damage, especially in the rural areas"*

*"We have never experienced anything like it before"*

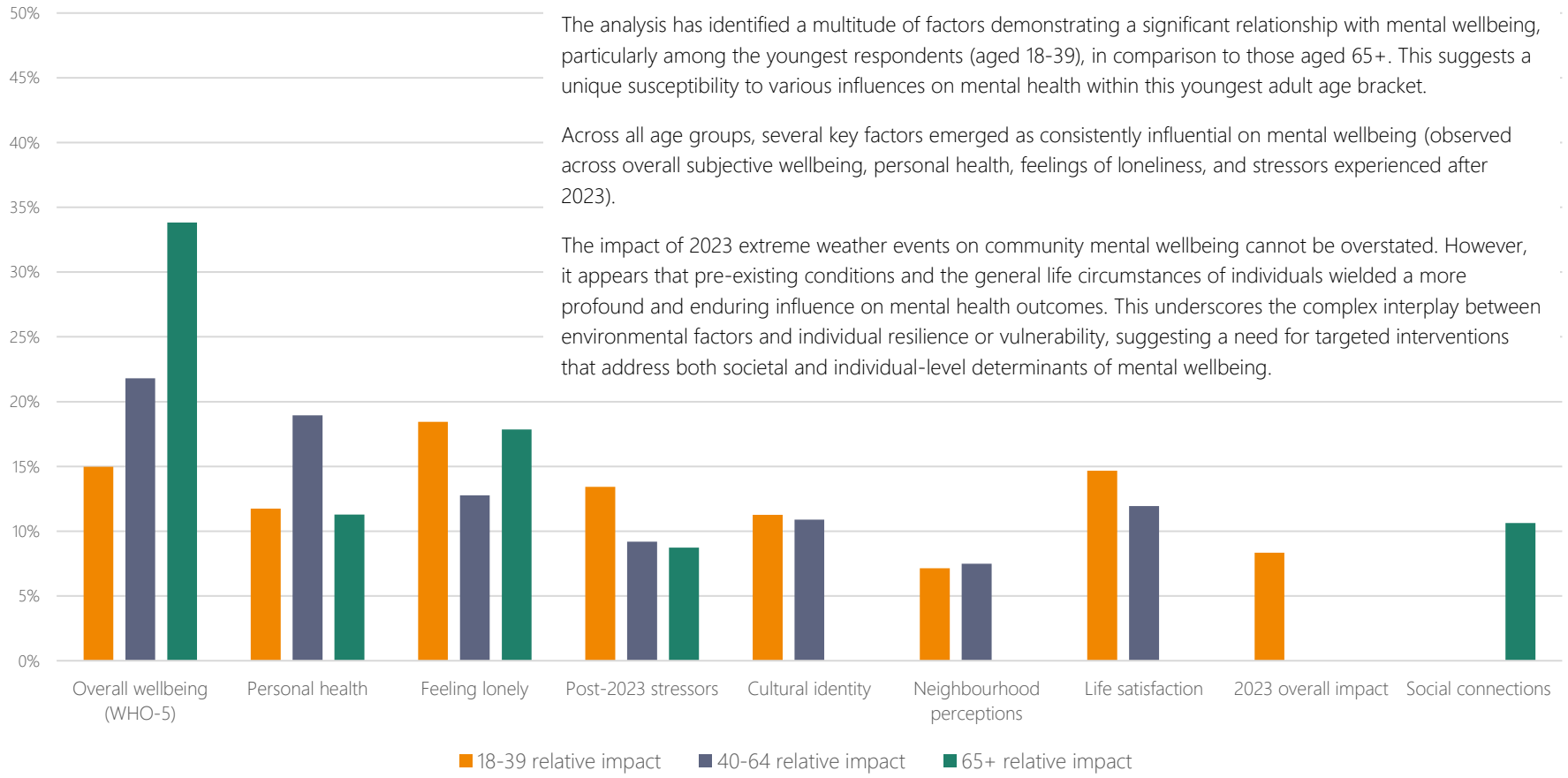
*"Road closures, flooding, isolations, loss of power affecting water and sewage"*

*"Not being well prepared for road damage and communication loss"*

*"No warning of danger of imminent river bank failure.. . No phone text alert EVER received. No loudhailers or radio warnings. Our home was flooded mid afternoon of 14th Feb, we did not get any warning to evacuate. Road block was set up by police to keep people out of area but no one came to check / help. No houses on our road were ever checked or cleared by civil defence - feel forgotten"*

*"When the mobile networks got knocked out - many considered this worse than the loss of power as it felt isolating for many people that others didn't know what was going on or could help us, or to check on family and friends in the worst effected regions. Loss of power - people lost food, couldn't work, couldn't charge phones or devices Access to petrol - supplies were very low and limited Access to money - modern society is largely cashless in many areas People were physically cut off due to the damaged roads and infrastructure like bridges I think people now pay more attention to severe weather warnings and understand what they mean or could look like"*

# PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT – key drivers




The analysis has identified a multitude of factors demonstrating a significant relationship with mental wellbeing, particularly among the youngest respondents (aged 18-39), in comparison to those aged 65+. This suggests a unique susceptibility to various influences on mental health within this youngest adult age bracket.

Across all age groups, several key factors emerged as consistently influential on mental wellbeing (observed across overall subjective wellbeing, personal health, feelings of loneliness, and stressors experienced after 2023).

The impact of 2023 extreme weather events on community mental wellbeing cannot be overstated. However, it appears that pre-existing conditions and the general life circumstances of individuals wielded a more profound and enduring influence on mental health outcomes. This underscores the complex interplay between environmental factors and individual resilience or vulnerability, suggesting a need for targeted interventions that address both societal and individual-level determinants of mental wellbeing.

*Influencing factors (key drivers) identified as most plausible to contribute towards key measured outcomes (mental wellbeing). Assessment of influencing factors is based on statistical modelling. The chart above presents the recalibrated results of a regression analysis (strength of impact) used to determine which factors influence mental wellbeing (PHQ-4) scores within each age group. Only statistically significant factors are shown.*

# IN-DEPTH FINDINGS

## Contents


FOCUS GROUPS ..... 73

Participant 1: A Community's Journey Through Cyclone Recovery ..... 74

Participant 2: A Wairoa Resident's Reflections on Cyclone Survival and Community Spirit ..... 75

Participant 3: Recovery and Community in Napier: A Personal Journey ..... 77

Participant 4: Art and Community: Navigating Cyclone Gabrielle's Aftermath ..... 78

Participant 5: Empathy Amidst the Storm: A Citizens Advice Bureau Volunteer's Insight into Cyclone Support ..... 79

Participant 6: A Story of Flood Resilience, Community Support, and Renewal ..... 80

Participant 7: Unveiling the Power of Community Resilience and Mental Health Support ..... 81

Participant 8: A Journey of Loss, Resilience, and Community in the Wake of Flood ..... 83

Participant 9: A Tale of Survival, Guilt, and Recovery in Maraekakaho ..... 84

Participant 10: A Councillor's Journey Through Cyclone Gabrielle's Wrath and Community Solidarity ..... 85

Participant 11: Navigating the Floods of Kohupatiki with Family and Community ..... 86

Participant 12: A Family's Struggle for Safety, Unity, and Recovery in Pakowhai Road ..... 87

Participant 13: A Tale of Preparedness, Resilience, and Community Amidst Napier's Challenges ..... 88

Participant 14: A Clive Resident's Journey Through Crisis, Community, and the Quest for Cohesion ..... 89

Participant 15: An Immigrant's Encounter with Cyclone Challenges in Hawke's Bay ..... 90

Participant 16: A Journey of Resilience, Community Aid, and Reflections in Hawke's Bay ..... 91

Participant 17: A Family's Journey and a Community's United Response ..... 92

Participant 18: Navigating Natural Disasters Through Community, Culture, and Ancestral Strength in Gisborne ..... 94
Participant 19: Harnessing Community Strength in the Aftermath of Dual Cyclones ..... 95
Participant 20: Navigating Flood Relief and Resilience in Gisborne ..... 96
Participant 21: A Tale of Forethought, Stranded Safety, and Returning to Resilience in Gisborne ..... 97
Participant 22: A Story of Preparedness, Community Spirit, and Resilience in Gisborne ..... 98
Participant 23: Impact of Natural Disasters in a Smaller Rural Community ..... 100
Participant 24: Experiencing and Responding to Flooding in Auckland ..... 101
Participant 25: Personal and Community Resilience in Crisis ..... 103
Participant 26: Coping with Crisis: Personal and Professional Perspectives from Kaipara Harbour ..... 104
Participant 27: Personal and Professional Impact of the Auckland Emergency ..... 105
Participant 28: Reflections on the Auckland Weather Event: Personal Experiences and Insights ..... 106
Participant 29: Coping with Flood Impact: A Teacher's Reflection ..... 107
Participant 30: Reflections on Flood Impact: A Learning Support Coordinator's Perspective ..... 108
Participant 31: Navigating the Aftermath of a Cyclone: A Personal Journey in Karikari ..... 109
Participant 32: Navigating Flood Aftermath: A Resident's Experience in Mairangi Bay ..... 110
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS ..... 111
Participant 33: Anne Bradbury Napier City Council ..... 111
Participant 34: Rebekah Dinwoodie Hastings District Council ..... 113
Participant 35: Abbie Taylor - Wairoa District Council ..... 114
Participant 36: Dennise Ellers – Central Hawke's Bay Council ..... 115
Participant 37: Michele Grigg Napier City Council ..... 116
Participant 38: Dallas Haynes Gisborne District Council ..... 117
Participant 39: Linda Greenalgh Auckland Council ..... 118

Participant 40: Tofilau Talalelei Taufale hui ..... 119
Participant 41: Natasha Hanara Omāhu Marae hui ..... 120
Participant 42: Barbara Williams Kindred Family Services ..... 121
COMMUNITY MEETINGS / INTERVIEWS ..... 122
Participant 43: Auckland Māori ..... 122
Participant 44: Gisborne Māori ..... 124
Participant 45: Gisborne Māori ..... 125
Participant 46: Auckland Māori ..... 127
Participant 47: Auckland Māori ..... 128
Participant 48: Auckland Māori ..... 129
Participant 49: Auckland Pasifika ..... 130
Participant 50: Auckland Māori ..... 131
Participant 51: Auckland Māori ..... 132
Participant 52: Auckland Māori ..... 133
Participant 53: Auckland Māori ..... 134
Participant 54: Auckland Māori ..... 135

# FOCUS GROUPS

## IN-DEPTH FINDINGS - Wairoa focus groups

The interviews with respondents from the Wairoa area, following the cyclone's devastation, reveal a profound narrative of resilience, community strength, and the challenges of disaster recovery. The narratives, although unique in their perspectives and experiences, share common themes of immediate impact, community response, challenges with authorities, and reflections on recovery.

### Main issues raised:

- Immediate Impact and Response: Both respondents experienced the cyclone's immediate effects, with travel disruptions, isolation, and direct encounters with the cyclone's damage being prominent. The lack of early warning systems and the confusion around the severity of the situation were highlighted.
- Community Response and Support: A strong theme of community solidarity emerges from both accounts. Communities banded together to clear roads, support each other with resources, and maintain morale through gatherings and shared meals. The importance of local marae and community centres as hubs of support was underscored.
- Challenges and Difficulties: The respondents faced significant challenges, including loss and grief, resource struggles, and isolation. Environmental concerns, particularly related to forestry and the impact on local ecosystems, were also raised. The emotional and psychological toll of the cyclone, including stress and anxiety about future events, was acknowledged.
- Experiences with Authorities and External Support: Both narratives shared experiences of feeling neglected or poorly supported by authorities. There were criticisms of the timing and approach of support agencies, and interactions with civil defence were sometimes described as insensitive. However, there was also gratitude for external support and the crucial role of personal preparedness.
- Reflections on Recovery: Reflecting on the recovery process, both respondents highlighted the strength found within their communities and the lessons learned about resilience and survival. The need for authorities to listen to and understand community-specific needs was stressed, along with the importance of environmental stewardship.

### Summary:

The experiences shared by Wairoa respondents paint a picture of a community tested by natural disaster but bound together by a shared determination to recover. The narratives underscore the importance of local solidarity, preparedness, and the need for sensitive, community-focused support from authorities. Environmental concerns and the emotional toll of such events call for ongoing attention and action. The stories of resilience amid ruin serve as a powerful reminder of the human spirit's capacity to endure and rebuild, highlighting the indispensable value of community bonds and mutual support in the face of adversity.

## Participant 1: A Community's Journey Through Cyclone Recovery

### Immediate Impact of the Cyclone

- Travel Disruption: The respondent experienced prolonged travel times due to the aftermath of the cyclone.
- Location and Initial Impact: They lived in Putorino, near a significantly damaged bridge; however, their house was relatively untouched.
- Preparation and Response: The respondent prepared by moving animals closer to the house and felt they initially managed the situation well.

### Isolation and Community Response

- Cut-off from Outside World: The respondent faced complete isolation with no power, phone, or cell coverage, compounded by landslides and bridge destruction.
- Community Efforts: After a few days, the community banded together, with locals clearing roads and establishing makeshift communication methods.

### Challenges and Difficulties

- Loss and Grief: The respondent lost a neighbour to a landslide, adding to the emotional toll.
- Resource Struggles: They relied on donations; had no power for 23 days and limited internet access.
- Feeling Forgotten: The respondent felt neglected by broader relief efforts, especially as attention was focused on other areas.

### Negative Experiences with Authorities

- Civil Defence Interactions: Interactions with civil defence were described as insensitive and restrictive.
- Security Concerns: The respondent faced fears of unrest and threats to property, leading to heightened security measures.

### Emotional and Psychological Impact

- Increasing Stress: Initially, the respondent felt resilient but acknowledged a growing emotional burden over time.
- Workplace Support: They received practical support from their employer.
- Community Solidarity: The respondent found solace in community gatherings, like the gin club, BBQs, and concerts.

### Reflections on Community and Recovery

- Strength in Community: The incredible community response and newfound connections were emphasised.
- Critical View of Support Agencies: The respondent felt disillusioned by the timing and approach of support agencies' involvement.
- Survival and Resilience: They gained a sense of resilience and survival skills, though questioned some long-held beliefs (e.g., about freezers in power cuts).

### Final Thoughts

- Appreciation for Community Bonds: The positive aspect of the cyclone in bringing the community closer was acknowledged.
- Importance of Listening to Communities: The need for authorities to understand and respond to community-specific needs was stressed.

*"Isolation, not being able to help people, not being able to let people know that we were safe, that we're okay."*

## Participant 2: A Wairoa Resident's Reflections on Cyclone Survival and Community Spirit

### Immediate Impact and Response

- **Proximity to Hazard**: The respondent lived close to the river in Wairoa and observed its alarming rise firsthand.
- **Emergency Awareness**: The absence of emergency sirens led to confusion and a delayed grasp of the situation's severity.
- **Personal Investigation**: The respondent decided to personally investigate after noticing unusual activity in the street.

### Observations of River and Silt Buildup

- **River Conditions**: They noted the significant flow of the river and its highest level of shallowness, attributed to silt buildup.
- **Historical Context**: Recalled the impact of a previous natural disaster (Bowler) on the local area.
- **Ongoing Environmental Issues**: Acknowledged the persistent issue of silt affecting the river's depth.

### Personal Connections to Those Affected

- **Community Ties**: Knew several individuals in North Clyde, severely impacted by the cyclone.
- **Direct Encounters**: Had a personal encounter with a victim, bringing the disaster's impact closer to home.

### Forestry and Environmental Concerns

- **Environmental Impact**: Discussed the cyclone's impact in relation to forestry issues, including slash on beaches and road stability concerns.
- **Tree Removal and Environmental Effects**: Highlighted the removal of pine trees and their role in supporting roads, raising environmental concerns.

### Community Support and Volunteer Efforts

- **Volunteerism**: Observed widespread volunteer efforts, including support at marae and community centres.
- **Community Feeding**: Participated in food preparation for the community, involving donated meat.

### Financial Preparedness and Community Feeding

- **Emergency Cash**: Emphasised the importance of cash during emergencies, with power outages rendering electronic transactions impossible.
- **Meal Provision**: Community centres and marae played a crucial role in feeding those in need at set times.

### Personal Preparedness and Communication Challenges

- **Stockpiling Essentials**: Learned to maintain a stock of essential supplies, a lesson from previous lockdowns.
- **Communication Blackout**: Faced a lack of communication options, leading to isolation and safety concerns.

### Weather Monitoring and Anxiety

- **Vigilance**: Uses the Winter Gap as a guide to monitor weather patterns closely.
- **Community Anxiety**: Expressed heightened community anxiety about future weather events, indicating increased vigilance.

### External Help and Mental Health Resources

- **External Support**: Acknowledged support from individuals outside Wairoa, including wellness checks on residents.
- **Mental Health Resource Uncertainty**: Expressed uncertainty about the availability of mental health resources in Wairoa beyond general practitioners.

### Gratitude for Survival

**Survival and Thankfulness**: Expressed relief and gratitude for the community's survival following the cyclone.

> *"[help] came from everywhere, they helped out at the marae, they were even having turns at doing meals at the community centres and that."*

# IN-DEPTH FINDINGS – Napier focus groups

The interviews from the Napier area, conducted with individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences, collectively shed light on the community's resilience, challenges, and recovery following significant flood and cyclone events. Common themes emerged across the narratives, emphasising the importance of community support, the psychological impact of natural disasters, the role of communication and preparedness, and the value of local knowledge and volunteer efforts.

Main issues raised:

- Community Support and Connection: Across the interviews, the critical role of community support during crises was highlighted. Respondents appreciated the evacuation assistance, shared resources, and the emotional support from neighbours, churches, and community groups. This sense of belonging and mutual aid was crucial in coping with the immediate aftermath and ongoing recovery.
- Challenges of Communication and Preparedness: Many respondents pointed out the difficulties faced due to inadequate communication and lack of preparedness. Issues such as uncertainty during evacuations, reliance on technology for information, and the need for better awareness and readiness at a local level were recurrent themes.
- Psychological Impact and Mental Health Concerns: The interviews revealed significant emotional and psychological effects post-disaster, including heightened anxiety, PTSD, and the collective emotional toll on communities. The importance of acknowledging and addressing these long-term mental health concerns was emphasised, along with the benefits of support groups and mental health services.
- Role of Local Knowledge and Volunteerism: The value of local insights in disaster response and recovery efforts was underscored. Respondents highlighted the contributions of local companies, the effectiveness of community self-organisation, and the significant impact of volunteer efforts in rebuilding and supporting affected individuals.
- Resilience and Positive Outlook: Despite the hardships faced, a common thread in the interviews was the resilience of individuals and communities. Many respondents expressed gratitude for the support received, the strength found in community connections, and a positive outlook towards future preparedness and mental health awareness.

Summary:

The interviews from Napier provide a compelling narrative of resilience, recovery, and community spirit in the face of natural disasters. They underline the importance of effective communication, preparedness, and community support networks in navigating the challenges posed by such events. Furthermore, they call attention to the need for acknowledging and addressing the psychological impacts of disasters, advocating for increased mental health support and the integration of local knowledge and volunteer efforts in recovery and rebuilding initiatives.

## Participant 3: Recovery and Community in Napier: A Personal Journey

### Evacuation and Community Support

- **Flooding Incident**: The respondent describes the flooding near the golf course in Napier last year.
- **Community Evacuation**: An old age home and others in the community were evacuated as the river expanded and broke its banks.
- **Evacuation Experience**: The respondent highlights the panic and uncertainty during the evacuation, spending three nights in a church. They were fortunate that their house wasn't flooded, although the garden was.

### Challenges and Emotional Experience

- **Evacuation Challenges**: Emphasises the challenges of not knowing where to go, compounded by being new to Napier.
- **Emotional Struggles**: Describes emotional experiences of lack of communication and the struggle to help others.

### Preparedness and Community Connection

- **Building Connections**: Stresses the importance of getting to know neighbours and being aware of evacuation centres.
- **Community and Preparedness**: The experience led to a sense of preparedness and a stronger community connection.

### Ongoing Effects and PTSD

- **Heightened Awareness**: Mentions ongoing effects, including heightened awareness of rain and a continuous noise resembling a fan motor.
- **Investigation Need**: Expresses uncertainty about the noise's cause and the need for further investigation.

*"Not having the communication and not knowing what was going on around us. I think that was the worst issue."*

.

### Communication and Information

- **Technology Reliance**: Discusses reliance on technology, especially Facebook, for information.
- **Communication Needs**: Calls for better communication regarding support from organisations, churches, and alternative groups.

### Mental Health and PTSD Collective Experience

- **Collective PTSD**: Reflects on potential PTSD as a collective experience after the flood.
- **Mental Health Effects**: Highlights the importance of acknowledging and addressing long-term mental health effects.

### Seeking Knowledge and Support

- **Knowledge and Crisis Support**: Expresses the need for more knowledge on where to turn in a crisis.
- **Support Group Advocacy**: Advocates for sharing information about support groups, churches, and organisations.

### Positive Impact of Support Groups

- **Support Group Benefits**: Shares positive experiences with support groups, like Engage.
- **Mental Health Openness**: Encourages openness about mental health and connecting with others who share similar experiences.

### Positive Outlook and Gratitude

- **Gratitude for Surveys**: Expresses gratitude for ongoing surveys addressing long-term effects.
- **Community Awareness**: Positive outlook on the community's awareness and care for mental health.

The respondent's interview reflects the challenges faced during the flood, the importance of community support, ongoing effects on mental health, and the need for better communication about available resources.

## Participant 4: Art and Community: Navigating Cyclone Gabrielle's Aftermath

Art Course Interruption:

- Course Commencement: The respondent started an art course the day before Cyclone Gabrielle struck, with around 20 participants eager for the first day.
- Material Preparation: Prepared art materials for the project.

Evacuation Decision:

- Flooding Warning: Received a police notification about potential flooding near the river and Tutaekuri.
- Initial Decision: Chose not to evacuate initially, observing others going to St. Joseph's school across the road.
- Vigilant Waiting: Waited cautiously, staying tuned to the radio for updates.

Survival Amidst Challenges:

- Power Outage: Survived eight days without power, relying on candles and gas.
- Safe Location: Located at the far end of Murphy Road, backing onto the Tutaekuri river, avoiding direct impact from the water.

Community Support and Sharing:

- Resource Sharing: Shared resources with neighbours, including cooking a "long-standing chicken" for communal meals.
- Neighbour's Support: Received reassurance from a neighbour during a police visit, offering support.
- Cleanup Efforts: Participated in community cleanup efforts through church involvement.

Reflections on Resilience:

- Resilience Factors: Minimal impact on personal resilience due to prior life experiences.
- Acknowledgment of Privilege: Acknowledges the privilege of being in a less affected area.
- Gratitude for Protection Measures: Expresses gratitude for the council's efforts in reinforcing the area's protective measures.

Church and Community Connection:

- Church Group Involvement: Actively involved in church groups, including one focused on mental health and addiction.
- Community Connection Importance: Highlights the importance of community connections for mental wellbeing.
- Support Group Advocacy: Recommends community groups for support, emphasising the need for in-person interactions.

Media and Communication During Crisis:

- Facebook Safety Check: Utilised Facebook's safety check feature to assure family and friends of wellbeing.
- Communication Limitations: Recognises the limitations of online communication compared to face-to-face interactions.

Post-Crisis Reflection:

- Preparedness and Resilience: Feels neither more prepared nor less resilient post-Cyclone Gabrielle.
- Community Support Value: Believes in the importance of encouraging people to connect with church or community groups for support.
- Church Group Mention: Mentions the name of his church group, "Engage," located at Pirimai Plaza.

The respondent's account highlights the interplay between personal preparedness, community support, and the significant role of faith and community connections in overcoming the challenges posed by Cyclone Gabrielle. Their emphasis on social bonds underscores the critical importance of community in times of crisis

*"I am aware that a lot of people have other communities that they form for themselves like a club or an interest group that they're part of. I think we, as human beings, we're designed to need that."*

.

## Participant 5: Empathy Amidst the Storm: A Citizens Advice Bureau Volunteer's Insight into Cyclone Support

### Limited Personal Impact

- **Initial Uncertainty**: The respondent was not directly affected by the cyclone, leading to initial uncertainty about her participation in the discussion.
- **Indirect Experience**: Experienced the cyclone's impact indirectly through a fellow volunteer and clients at the Citizens Advice Bureau.

### Role at Citizens Advice Bureau

- **Support Role**: Responded to various queries and provided support to those affected by the cyclone.
- **Empathy and Sympathy**: Emphasised the importance of empathy and sympathy in dealing with clients during crises.

### Guidance and Information Provision

- **Support and Queries**: Assisted people with practical and emotional support needs, including insurance and housing queries.
- **Information Resource**: The Bureau was well-equipped with updated information, enabling effective guidance for those in need.

### Local Unawareness and Surprise

- **Surprise at Unawareness**: Expressed surprise at the lack of immediate awareness of the cyclone's severity in the area.
- **Comparative Awareness**: Noted that people in Wellington were more informed about the situation than locals in Marewa.
- **Need for Preparedness**: Acknowledged the need for better preparedness and awareness in the community.

### Community Potential and Awareness

- **Contribution Potential**: Suggested that unaffected areas like Marewa could have contributed more to relief efforts.
- **Community Support Potential**: Realised the potential of local communities to provide additional support during disasters.
- **Disaster Awareness**: Heightened awareness about natural disasters and their impact following the cyclone.

### Reflections on Natural Disasters

- **Personal Experience**: Recognised the cyclone as one of the first major natural disasters the respondent has consciously experienced.
- **Observation of Power**: Observed the transformative power of a normally benign river into a destructive force.

### Volunteer Feedback and Learning

- **Volunteer Survey**: Citizens Advice Bureau conducted a survey to understand volunteers' experiences and information gaps.
- **Effectiveness Evaluation**: Aimed to evaluate how effectively volunteers supported clients post-cyclone.
- **Client Assistance**: Over 140 clients sought help from the Bureau as survivors of the cyclone.

Despite not being directly affected by the cyclone, the respondent played a crucial support role at the Citizens Advice Bureau, offering empathy and practical assistance to those impacted. This experience highlighted the importance of preparedness, community support potential, and the transformative power of natural disasters, leading to a reflection on personal and collective responses to crises.

*"It's certainly a hell of a wake up call to being prepared."*

## Participant 6: A Story of Flood Resilience, Community Support, and Renewal

### Initial Response and Family Evacuation

- **Flooding Awareness**: Awoke to flooding in Greenmeadows, initially unaware of the severity in nearby areas.
- **Family Communication**: Respondent's son shared photos of flooded roads, highlighting the extent of the situation.
- **Safety Measures**: Family members living near the river in Taradale evacuated to her place for safety.

### Challenges with Communication and Power

- **Isolation from Outages**: Experienced power outages and lack of telephone communication, leading to a sense of isolation.
- **Family Concerns**: Felt safe at home but was concerned about family members unable to contact her.
- **Community Information**: Assisted in distributing pamphlets about potential tsunamis and emergency contacts.

### Psychological Aid and Community Support

- **Red Cross Involvement**: Involved in psychological first aid with the Red Cross, aiding people in taking control post-disaster.
- **Support for the Affected**: Supported a woman in Esk Valley dealing with the emotional loss of her home.
- **Community Visits**: Acted as a support system, providing food and conversation.

### Waste Management and Community Efforts

- **Food Waste Initiative**: Participated in distributing plastic bags for food waste from spoiled deep freezes.
- **Composting Challenges**: The initiative faced timing issues, despite being well-intentioned.
- **Community Spirit**: Noted the strong community spirit, with people helping and talking to each other.

*"Everybody seemed to just get on."*

### Personal Anxiety and Empathy

- **Apprehension and Loss**: Felt apprehensive about crossing bridges and deeply saddened by the losses faced by Esk Valley residents.
- **Emotional Impact**: Compared the emotional impact of seeing damaged houses to experiencing a divorce.

### Insurance Challenges and Mental Wellbeing

- **Insurance Issues**: Highlighted issues with insurance companies not fully compensating for damages.
- **Mental Wellbeing Concerns**: Concerned about the mental wellbeing of those disputing insurance coverage.

### Local Knowledge and Road Reconstruction

- **Local Frustrations**: Noted frustration among Esk Valley men regarding road reconstruction decisions.
- **Value of Local Insight**: Emphasised the importance of considering local knowledge in infrastructure planning.

### Recognition of Local Companies and Community Support

- **Acknowledging Contributions**: Suggested acknowledging local companies and farmers for their crisis contributions.
- **Donation Distribution**: Shared experiences of distributing donations, including beanies from Nelson.

### Volunteer Efforts and Youth Engagement

- **Volunteer Acknowledgment**: Acknowledged the efforts of a volunteer from Auckland dedicating a year to rebuilding and youth activities.
- **Youth Engagement**: Emphasised the importance of engaging youth and providing alternative focuses post-disaster.

### Conclusion

**Gratitude for Sharing**: Expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share and discuss her experiences.

## Participant 7: Unveiling the Power of Community Resilience and Mental Health Support

Initial Unawareness and Community Response

- Oblivious to Crisis: Initially unaware of the crisis's extent due to minor impacts at home.
- Surprise at Severity: Surprised by the severe situation nearby, with significant losses for others.
- Mental Health Support: Involved in mental health support, especially in Eskdale and Bayview, from the early stages.

Community Self-Organisation and Frustration with Authorities

- Self-Organising Communities: Observed effective self-organisation by communities before official intervention.
- Authority Frustration: Frustrated and angry when authorities tried to take over community-led initiatives.
- Anger and Grief: Natural feelings of anger and grief among those who suffered significant losses.

Emotional Impact and Anxiety

- Emotional Impact: Personal emotional response, including tears and devastation, while assisting affected individuals.
- Anxiety during Rains: Increased anxiety during heavy rains, empathising with those affected.
- Admiration for Resilience: Admired the strength of spirit and resilience in the community.

Mental Health Concerns and Support

- Mental Health Work: Working in mental health provided good supervision and debriefing opportunities.
- Concern for Unreached: Concerned that those most in need might not seek help.
- Community Mental Health Support: Efforts to reach out informally for mental health support.

Evacuation and Preparedness Challenges

- Evacuation Fear: Described fear and uncertainty during evacuation alarms.
- Preparedness Challenges: Challenged by what to take during an emergency evacuation.

Heightened Awareness and Weather Monitoring

- Vigilance Post-Cyclone: Increased vigilance regarding weather events and heightened awareness post-cyclone.
- Mindful of Weather Impact: More mindful of storm tracking and potential weather impacts.

Access to Help and Outreach Efforts

- Help Availability Belief: Belief in ample help and services availability, with GPs as the first point of contact.
- Outreach Concerns: Concern that some may not seek needed help.
- Community Outreach Commitment: Committed to community outreach and checking on wellbeing.

Community Strength and Support

- Strong Bonds in Miani: Observed strong community bonds, with residents supporting each other through meetings and shared resources.
- Power of Community: Emphasised the community's power in enhancing mental health during crises.

Concerns About Crime and Positive Community Spirit

- Crime Concerns: Acknowledged valid concerns about increased crime post-crisis.
- Positive Community Spirit: Focused on the positive aspect of community spirit and support that persisted.

Initially unaware of the crisis's extent, the individual was surprised by the severe impact on nearby areas and engaged in mental health support, witnessing community self-organisation and experiencing frustration with authorities. The situation emphasised the emotional impact of the crisis, the importance of preparedness, and the community's resilience.

# IN-DEPTH FINDINGS - Hastings focus groups

The interviews from the Hastings area present a rich tapestry of personal experiences, resilience, community support, and challenges in the wake of severe flooding and Cyclone Gabrielle. Individuals from various walks of life shared their journeys of loss, survival, recovery, and the unyielding spirit of community solidarity that emerged in the face of adversity.

Main issues raised:

- Community Support and Solidarity: A recurring theme across the narratives is the profound impact of community support. Respondents recounted the invaluable assistance and emotional sustenance received from neighbours, local groups, and wider community networks, highlighting the role of marae and civil defence in offering immediate aid and resources.
- Emotional and Psychological Impact: Many interviews touched on the emotional toll and psychological aftermath of the disasters. Feelings of loss, guilt, and trauma were common, with several individuals discussing their struggles with mental health, the impact on family members, and the challenges in accessing consistent and effective counselling services.
- Challenges in Communication and Preparedness: The interviews revealed significant issues with communication during the crisis, including misinformation, lack of updates, and the need for more targeted and effective dissemination of information. Respondents also emphasised the importance of preparedness, expressing a desire for better awareness and education on disaster readiness, particularly for newcomers and vulnerable communities.
- Resilience and Recovery: Despite the hardships faced, respondents spoke of resilience both personal and communal. There was a strong sense of determination to rebuild, recover, and learn from the experiences. Many highlighted the importance of having a plan for future emergencies and the need for community-centric approaches to disaster management and recovery.
- Infrastructure and Systemic Responses: Critiques of infrastructure resilience, council responses, and systemic preparedness were evident. Some respondents detailed their frustrations with bureaucratic processes and the need for more proactive, efficient, and empathetic approaches to disaster response and management.
- Role of Social Media and Technology: The use of social media platforms like Facebook for coordinating aid, sharing information, and fostering community connections was noted as crucial. However, the reliance on digital communication also underscored the digital divide and the need for inclusive strategies that reach all community members.

Summary:

Hastings interviews underscore the critical role of community, the emotional breadth of disaster impact, and the challenges inherent in communication, preparedness, and systemic responses. These narratives illuminate the strength found in solidarity and the collective desire for improved disaster readiness and support systems. They call for a holistic approach to disaster management that encompasses effective communication, community empowerment, mental health support, and inclusivity in planning and response strategies. The resilience and community spirit demonstrated by the respondents offer valuable insights into fostering a more cohesive and prepared society in the face of natural disasters.

## Participant 8: A Journey of Loss, Resilience, and Community in the Wake of Flood

Traumatic Experience and Loss:

- Rescue and Loss: The respondent recounts the traumatic experience of being rescued from the roof of their house during a flood and the distress of leaving their dog behind.
- Aftermath of Loss: They express the emotional impact of losing everything, including their home, and the challenges faced in the aftermath.

Accepting the Buyout Offer:

- Decision to Accept: The respondent and their spouse were among the first to accept a buyout offer from the council.
- Influences on Decision: This decision was influenced by the exhaustion of waiting for conversations, calls, and the feeling of losing control over their lives.

Community Support and Emotional Impact:

- Support Received: Highlights the overwhelming community support received, which helped rebuild long-term friendships.
- Emotional Journey: The experience led to a mix of emotions and a renewed understanding of what's truly important in life.

Challenges in Rebuilding Life:

- Finding Stability: Discusses the ongoing difficulty in finding a new home and establishing a sense of stability after living in their previous home for 21 years.
- Adjusting Needs: The challenge is compounded by their different needs at this stage of life, such as the spouse's desire for a space for hobbies.

. *"Every now and then you have that feeling of not being able to believe what happened."*

Gratitude and Reflection:

- Feeling Grateful: Despite the hardships, feels grateful for the support received, noting such support might not have been possible in other countries.
- Reflecting on Experience: Reflects on the surreal experience and the surprising resilience shown by their community.

Navigating the System and Seeking Support:

- Interactions with Council: Recounts interactions with council representatives and the complexities of receiving help.
- Approach to Recovery: Discusses reluctance and mixed feelings towards counselling offered through work, opting for a step-by-step approach to recovery.

Hope for Better Preparedness and Communication:

- Improvements for Future: Expresses hope that authorities will learn from this disaster to improve communication and emergency response.
- Critical Incident: Shares a critical incident where poor communication nearly led to dire consequences, emphasising the need for better systems in place for future emergencies.

Following a traumatic rescue during a flood and the loss of their home and dog, the respondent and their spouse accepted a council buyout, influenced by the desire to regain control over their lives. Amidst rebuilding challenges and adjusting to new needs, they found solace in community support and personal resilience, expressing hope for improved emergency preparedness and communication by authorities in the future.

*"Being rescued off the roof gives you a sense of what's important and so losing the house and everything in it is huge and it's probably more now that we're trying to rebuild."*

## Participant 9: A Tale of Survival, Guilt, and Recovery in Maraekakaho

### Personal Experiences During the Event

- Location and Initial Impact: Based in Maraekakaho, the respondent felt relatively fortunate as their direct impact was limited compared to others.
- Home and Surroundings: Their house, situated on slightly elevated ground, remained safe, though nearby paddocks were flooded, and the road washed out.
- Loss of Utilities: They experienced a loss of power, water, and internet for about a week.

### Emotional Responses

- Feelings of Guilt: They felt guilt for their relatively lesser suffering, likening it to survivor's guilt.
- Struggle with Inconveniences: They felt it was ridiculous to be inconvenienced by the loss of utilities and comforts.
- Empathy for Loss: Deeply affected by the loss of animal life on their property, especially the cattle in flooded lands.

### Physical and Mental Health

- Aging and Helplessness: At mid-40s, they felt a sense of helplessness due to physical limitations.
- Post-Event Lethargy: They experienced lethargy and difficulty re-engaging with work and normal life post-event.

### Reflections and Recovery

- Current State: Now, they feel more empathetic towards others' experiences rather than being personally affected.
- Support Systems: Had access to employer-provided support but did not utilise it; was unaware of community support options.
- Coping Mechanism: Adopted a 'harden up' attitude, though they don't recommend it.

### Community and Empathy

- Listening to Others: Found value and connection in listening to others' stories.
- Well-Wishes for Another: Expressed hope and good wishes for another participant in finding a new home.

Based in Maraekakaho, the respondent experienced limited direct impact from the event, with their home safe but the loss of utilities for a week. They navigated a range of emotions from guilt and empathy for the loss of life to physical and mental challenges post-event, reflecting on the importance of community connection and support even as they adopted a 'harden up' approach to coping.

*"It takes me back to one of the feelings I remember having at the time was guilt."*

## Participant 10: A Councillor's Journey Through Cyclone Gabrielle's Wrath and Community Solidarity

### Personal Experiences During the Event

- Location and Initial Impact: The respondent, based in Maraekakaho, initially didn't think they were badly impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle, given their beachfront property's slight elevation.
- Environmental Loss: Woke up to find 16 of their 40-year-old trees downed, a loss deeply felt beyond the flooding and material damage.

### Emotional Responses and Family Impact

- Family Struggles: The flooding particularly affected the respondent's son, who has mental health issues, exacerbating the family's distress.
- Council Duties and Personal Loss: As a Councillor, balancing council responsibilities with personal recovery efforts was challenging, especially feeling the emotional weight of the lost trees.

### Community Criticism and Support

- Facing Criticism: Encountered blame for not assisting at a local hall due to being stranded, underscoring misunderstandings and heightened emotions within the community.
- Community Resilience: Praised the outstanding community response, especially from local marae, despite some facing minimal impact voicing the loudest complaints.

### Health Concerns and Recovery

- Health and Resilience: Mentioned an increase in health-related symptoms post-cyclone, attributing it to stress but highlighting a resilient attitude towards seeking help.
- Ongoing Recovery: A year later, the sense of recovery remains ongoing, with weather events triggering concern for reoccurrence.

### Community Response and Reflections

- Incredible Community Response: Admired the community's resilience and the proactive response from local marae, setting a high standard for disaster preparedness and support.
- Reflection on Impact: The broad emotional and physical toll of the cyclone, alongside the powerful community solidarity, leaves a lasting impression on the respondent.

The respondent from Maraekakaho faced the emotional and environmental toll of Cyclone Gabrielle, losing significant trees and grappling with family and council duties amidst the disaster. Despite personal and community challenges, including health concerns and criticism, the remarkable resilience and support of the local community, particularly from marae, underscored the ongoing journey of recovery and reflection on the event's broad impact.

## Participant 11: Navigating the Floods of Kohupatiki with Family and Community

Initial Warning and Urgency to Move:

- Evacuation Alert: Received an unexpected call from a friend, advising them to prepare to evacuate their home in Kohupatiki, situated between two rivers.
- Rapid Preparation: Had to quickly pack their belongings following a warning about the potential breach of stock banks.

Relocation and Family Gathering:

- Family Refuge: Moved to their son's house, where a total of 11 family members, including the respondent, their spouse, and their brother-in-law, gathered.
- Civil Defence Assistance: Their son, employed in the health department, also assisted civil defence.

Concerns Over Brother-in-Law and Potential Looters:

- Reluctance to Leave: Their brother-in-law, in his late 70s, initially refused to evacuate due to his proximity to the river.
- Security Measures: A nephew noticed strangers in the area, suspected to be looters, and confronted them, ensuring their departure.

Challenges During the Flood:

- Power Loss: Lost power and were concerned about perishable items like meat without access to a generator.
- Information Void: Struggled with the lack of news and updates about the situation in their area, particularly regarding when it would be safe to return home.

Mixed Messages and Travel Difficulties:

- Conflicting Reports: Received conflicting information about the state of bridges and roads.
- Access Issues: Faced challenges in accessing necessities like insulin and withdrawing cash due to ATM outages.

.

*"We weren't getting any news."*

Gratitude and Learning:

- Relief and Lessons: Felt blessed that their homes were ultimately safe and not directly affected by the floodwaters. Learned valuable lessons from the experience, despite the anxieties and uncertainties faced.

Community Support and Emergency Response:

- Food Deliveries: The son's involvement in delivering food to marae in affected areas highlighted.
- Emergency Services Praise: Acknowledged the effective work of civil emergency services and firms in providing necessary aid.

Personal Wellbeing and Services:

- Limited Need for Services: Did not require extensive services as their family was relatively unscathed.
- Service Efficiency: Praised the efficiency of services that provided immediate financial support for lost food and septic tank issues.

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Targeted News Broadcasts: Recommended more targeted and area-specific news broadcasts during emergencies for better local condition information.
- Broadcasting Assistance Locations: Suggested broadcasting locations for assistance and support, especially for those who were alone.

Following an unexpected evacuation alert in Kohupatiki, the respondent and their family swiftly relocated to their son's house, facing challenges including power loss and concerns over potential looters. Despite difficulties accessing necessities and conflicting reports, they expressed gratitude for their homes' safety, praised emergency services' effectiveness, and offered suggestions for targeted news broadcasts and assistance locations for future emergencies

## Participant 12: A Family's Struggle for Safety, Unity, and Recovery in Pakowhai Road

Family and Animal Safety Concerns:

- Family Priorities: The family included the respondent (pregnant at the time), her husband, two young children (four and seven years old), and three pets.
- Stress and Uncertainty: Faced high levels of stress and uncertainty while trying to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

Evacuation and Community Gathering:

- Seeking Refuge: Assumed bridges had collapsed and sought shelter at a neighbour's, eventually gathering at Pakowhai Hall with other community members and the police.
- Communication Aids: Her husband, working in forestry, had emergency equipment which aided them in maintaining communication.

Dire Circumstances and Rescue Efforts:

- Evacuation Preparations: Received a message about the stop banks failing and prepared for evacuation.
- Alarming Observations: Witnessed scenes like sheep and logs floating down roads, with police urging people to evacuate.
- Rescue Challenges: Experienced a harrowing moment when a vehicle in their convoy was swept away, carrying children.

Breaking into the Enliven Centre:

- Safety Decision: Made a crucial decision to break into the Enliven Centre for safety.
- Survival vs. Property: Faced a dilemma about causing damage to property for survival, but recognised the necessity given the situation.

Separation and Reunion:

- Evacuation by Boat: Evacuated by boat, leading to temporary separation from her husband who stayed back.
- Stressful Separation: Endured stressful hours not knowing each other's whereabouts until reunion the next day.

Post-Event Challenges:

- Security Concerns: Faced fears of looting and stayed at her father's house for safety.
- Pet Concerns: Had to leave their cat behind initially but managed to rescue her later.

Impact on Housing and Employment:

- Property Damage: The rental property on the orchard was damaged, leading to temporary accommodation in cramped conditions.
- Employment Loss: Her husband lost his job due to the flood, adding to the stress.

Community Support and Resources:

- Volunteer Aid: Received aid from volunteers and community centres for essentials like food and clothing.
- Necessity of Actions: Initially felt certain actions were dramatic but later realised their necessity.

Mental Health and Counselling Services:

- Seeking Support: Sought counselling for their children and her husband due to trauma and nightmares.
- Counselling Challenges: Faced challenges with counselling services, such as inconsistency and availability.

Reflections on Community and Personal Impact:

- Community Guilt: Felt a sense of guilt among those less affected.
- Awareness of Others: Recognised their own struggles while being aware that others had it worse.
- Mixed Feelings: Expressed a mixture of relief and empathy for the broader community's experiences.

Amidst high stress and uncertainty, the respondent's family, including young children and pets, sought refuge at Pakowhai Hall during the flood, facing dire circumstances and separation during evacuation. Despite challenges like property damage and employment loss, they received vital community support and sought counselling for trauma, reflecting on their experiences with a mix of relief and empathy for others affected.

## Participant 13: A Tale of Preparedness, Resilience, and Community Amidst Napier's Challenges

Initial Context and Previous Experience:

- Napier Incident Recall: Was in Napier at the time of the incident, recalling the 2020 flooding in Latham Road and their nervousness due to that previous experience.

Property Concerns in Auckland and Napier:

- Auckland Apartment: Owned an apartment in Auckland that was affected by a flood, noting significant damage in the area.
- Napier Property Relief: Worried about their property in Napier during the new event but found only minor issues like a power outage.

Family Communication Challenges:

- Communication Disruptions: Faced difficulties in communicating with their children, especially their son in Ongaonga, due to disrupted communications.
- Successful Contact: Managed to make contact using a government company phone.

Preparedness and Response:

- Perceived Unpreparedness: Felt unprepared despite thinking being well-prepared.
- Relocation Decision: Temporarily relocated to Palmerston North for a week for better conditions.

Impact on Work and Community:

- Comparative Impact: Not personally as severely affected as others; their boss lost his house, and a friend nearly lost everything.
- Professional Involvement: Involved in work requiring encounters with areas and people heavily affected by the disaster.

Discovery of Community Resources:

- Resource Awareness: Learned about various support services available in Napier, including counselling, through conversations at Pak'n'Save and work-related meetings.
- Communication of Resources: Emphasised the importance of these resources but noted their communication was not effective.

Civil Defence and Communication Issues:

- Civil Defence Critique: Attended meetings discussing issues with Civil Defence, highlighting coordination and information dissemination problems.
- Public Uninformed: Felt that community members and organisations were often as uninformed as the general public.

Community Spirit and Resourcefulness:

- Bonding and Sharing: Witnessed community bonding, such as people sharing resources and cooking for neighbours.
- Post-Event Preparations: Spent money on emergency gear post-event, something previously unconsidered.

Critique of Systemic Issues and Community Connection:

- Systemic Urgency: Urged the system to address known issues proactively rather than delaying.
- Community Support Contrast: Discussed the lack of community feeling and support, contrasting with those who had stronger community bonds.
- Ongoing Recovery Challenges: Highlighted ongoing recovery challenges, including boss's need to rebuild his house.

Closing Remarks on Flood Management:

- Flood-Prone Building Critique: Criticised decisions to build in known flood-prone areas and called for proactive disaster prevention measures.

Despite experiencing flooding in Auckland and recalling previous incidents in Napier, the respondent found their Napier property relatively unscathed but faced communication challenges with their children. While perceiving themselves as unprepared, they discovered community resources and critiqued communication issues within civil defence, highlighting the importance of proactive disaster prevention measures and stronger community connections in flood management.

*"I thought I was well-prepared, but I didn't feel that way when everything hit."*

## Participant 14: A Clive Resident's Journey Through Crisis, Community, and the Quest for Cohesion

Observations During Crisis:

- Property Concerns: The property was okay, but there were concerns about a nearby rising creek.
- War Zone Likeness: Felt uncertainty and observed constant helicopter activity, likening the atmosphere to a war zone.

Professional Role and Response:

- Mental Health Services Role: Works in mental health services for Corrections at the national office.
- Community Support: Received support from work to help the community as needed.

Concerns About the Prison:

- Prison Worries: Worried about the situation at Hawke's Bay prison, especially for inmates in flooding conditions.
- Prison Visit: Offered help at the prison but found they were managing amidst confusion and chaos.

Community Engagement:

- Crisis Intervention Offer: Went to the Clive community hall, offering crisis intervention services.
- Volunteering Challenges: Attempted to volunteer with the local crisis team but received no response.

Feelings of Helplessness:

- Uncertain Helpfulness: Felt capable but unsure how to contribute in the mental health space during the crisis.
- Aiding the Distressed: Encountered an elderly man distressed by extreme conditions and a personal tragedy.

> *"The biggest thing was a feeling that I had the ability to help people. But I didn't know how to help and I didn't know what to do to help."*

Unreported Tragedy and Information Gaps:

- Unreported Incident: Troubled by an unreported incident of a deceased person found in a tree.
- Misinformation Concerns: Questions about misinformation and a lack of news coverage on certain events.

Reflections on Chaos and Lack of Information:

- Chaos Recognition: Recognised chaos and confusion stemming from a lack of information.
- Organisational Improvements: Believes better organisation could improve future crisis responses.

Emotional Impact and Collective Sadness:

- Collective Grief: Described a lasting collective sadness and emotional triggers from damaged local landmarks.

Support Systems and Opportunities for Improvement:

- Employee Assistance: Acknowledged the availability of an employee assistance programme.
- Agency Critique: Critiqued government agencies like Te Whatu Ora for working in silos.
- Community Practice Suggestion: Suggested creating communities of practice for a better crisis response involving various agencies.

Amid concerns about nearby flooding and a war zone-like atmosphere, the respondent, working in mental health services for Corrections, felt uncertain but received support to aid the community during the crisis. Despite challenges in engaging with local crisis teams, they reflected on the chaos, information gaps, and collective grief, suggesting organisational improvements and community practice initiatives for future crisis responses.

## Participant 15: An Immigrant's Encounter with Cyclone Challenges in Hawke's Bay

### Background and Relocation to New Zealand

- Journey to New Zealand: The respondent, a mechanical engineer from Zimbabwe, had moved to New Zealand 18 months prior to the cyclone. Initially residing in Taupo, they relocated to Hawke's Bay a month before the cyclone hit.

### Experience During the Cyclone

- Settling and Impact: Living in Tutira, severely affected by the cyclone, while commuting to work in Napier, the respondent faced overwhelming stress and concerns for their safety due to the cyclone.
- Evacuation and Loss: Had to evacuate in the middle of the night to a neighbour's house on higher ground, leaving behind most of their belongings, including a new car which was partially submerged.

### Community and Support

- Challenges in Isolation: The small community in Tutira faced communication challenges and isolation, worsening during the cyclone.
- Support Within the Community: The family they lived with had prepared ample food supplies, which proved vital during the crisis.

*"It was a shock to me. So, yeah. My stress level was on another level"*

### Post-Cyclone Recovery and Support

- Work and Psychological Support: Could not attend work for two weeks post-cyclone; the company arranged accommodation in Hastings and provided sessions with a psychologist to cope with the trauma.
- Reassuring Family Abroad: The support received helped reassure their concerned family in Zimbabwe about their safety.

### Insights on Preparedness and Awareness

- Contrast in Preparedness: Noted a lack of preparedness and awareness among the African community in Hawke's Bay, contrasting with the preparedness for different threats in Zimbabwe.
- Need for Education on Disaster Preparedness: Highlighted the need for more education and support for immigrants regarding disaster preparedness in New Zealand.

Having moved from Zimbabwe to New Zealand 18 months before the cyclone, the respondent experienced overwhelming stress and had to evacuate to higher ground in Tutira, leaving behind most belongings. Despite challenges, support from the community and their employer helped them cope with the trauma, prompting reflections on the need for disaster preparedness education, particularly for immigrants, in New Zealand.

## Participant 16: A Journey of Resilience, Community Aid, and Reflections in Hawke's Bay

### Initial Impact and Response to Weather Event

- **Experience**: Residing in Havelock North, Hawke's Bay, the respondent described the initial impact of a significant weather event in their hilly area, affecting 46 properties with silt, debris, and water damage. Despite minimal damage to the property, they were actively involved in assisting others who were trapped without power or telecommunications.
- **Commitment to Community**: Her husband, serving as a CFO, drove to Palmerston to ensure payroll operations for a thousand employees, highlighting their dedication to community support during the crisis.

### Role in Cyclone Recovery and Community Support

- **Recovery Assistance**: Took on a temporary role with local MP to aid in cyclone recovery, a position initially intended for eight weeks but extended to nine months.
- **Charitable Coordination**: Previously, coordinated operations for a charitable trust at a racecourse, directly engaging with those who lost everything and managing donations and volunteer efforts.

### Personal Reflections and Community Challenges

- **Health Challenges and Influences**: Reflects on personal health challenges, including a transplant and cancer treatment, and how these experiences shaped their response to the weather event.
- **Career Abruptness**: Discusses the challenge of losing the job with Parliamentary Services post-election, amidst the stress of recovery efforts.

### Local Community's Response and Fragmentation

- **Fragmented Community Response**: Observed the community's fragmented response, attempting to coordinate efforts through various channels, including Facebook, amidst telecommunications challenges.

### Awareness and Preparedness for Weather Events

- **Preparedness Importance**: Emphasises the significance of taking weather warnings seriously and the necessity of being prepared with essentials.
- **Influence of Australian Background**: Her Australian background, accustomed to preparing for natural disasters like bushfires, influenced her approach in New Zealand.

### Access to Mental Health and Support Services

- **Service Gaps**: Identified gaps in the availability and accessibility of mental health and support services, noting variability in awareness of these resources.
- **Initiative Highlights**: Highlighted initiatives like Community Connectors and Rural Support Trusts but noted not everyone is aware of these services.

### Future Considerations and Recommendations

- **Infrastructure and Career Pathways**: Suggests the need for improved telecommunications infrastructure and enhanced career pathways in psychology and social work.
- **Innovative Degree Suggestion**: Discusses her daughter's idea for a degree in "weather event management," indicating a comprehensive approach to crisis management.

### Closing Remarks

- **Preparation and Community Role**: Appreciates the importance of preparedness and the community's role in responding to and learning from such events.

Residing in Havelock North, Hawke's Bay, the respondent details their active involvement in assisting others during a significant weather event, with their husband also contributing to community support. Reflecting on personal challenges and observing fragmented community responses, they stress the importance of weather preparedness and advocate for improved access to mental health services and infrastructure enhancements for future crises

## Participant 17: A Family's Journey and a Community's United Response

Personal and Family Impact

- Family's Direct Involvement: The respondent's house was relatively unaffected, but her husband, employed by a drainage company, played a crucial role in rescue and recovery operations.
- Husband's Traumatic Experience: His work, involving searching houses, supporting fuel supply for helicopters, and road clearing, left a lasting traumatic impact, particularly marked by the distressing task of finding deceased individuals.

Community and Work Perspective

- Work Reassignment: The respondent was reassigned to various roles during the crisis, observing inefficiencies in funding allocation that frustrated ground workers, including her husband.
- Insights into Decision-making: Her role provided a vantage point on the complexities of decision-making and the operational challenges encountered.

Mental Health and Support Services

- Trauma and Support Services: Despite experiencing continuous trauma, her husband did not pursue personal counselling, even with support services like EAP and MATES being available.
- Counselling Service Challenges: The high demand and perceived inadequacies of counselling services posed barriers, both in terms of access and financial costs.

Community Response and Volunteering

- Community Solidarity: The community's involvement, through donations and volunteering at evacuation centres, underscored a strong collective response.
- Social Media's Role: Social media platforms, especially Facebook, were pivotal in coordinating support and managing the influx of community aid.

*"People who were on the ground didn't have a say in how decisions were made"*

- Donation Management: Distinguishing between urgent needs and general volunteer contributions presented logistical challenges.

Cultural and Language Support

- Diverse Community Support: Highlighted the necessity for cultural and language support, particularly for Pacific Peoples communities and RSE workers, with a Pacific librarian playing a crucial role in communication at evacuation centres.
- Communication Effectiveness: Recognised the critical importance of having individuals capable of effectively communicating with diverse community segments.

Challenges and Learning Experiences

- Learning Curve: The crisis served as a significant learning experience, particularly in understanding and meeting the varied needs of different community groups.
- Information and Communication Difficulties: Encountered difficulties included navigating insurance processes, addressing medical needs, and facilitating communication with families abroad.
- Complexity of Crisis Management: The overarching challenge was managing the multifaceted and often simultaneous demands of the crisis situation.

The respondent's husband work in rescue operations left a lasting traumatic impact, contrasting their relatively unaffected home, while her role revealed funding inefficiencies and decision-making complexities during the crisis. Despite available support services, her husband didn't seek counselling, highlighting barriers to mental health assistance, but the community's solidarity and social media coordination were pivotal in managing donations and volunteer efforts.

# IN-DEPTH FINDINGS - Gisborne focus groups

The interviews from the Gisborne area offer compelling insights into the experiences of individuals and communities navigating the aftermath of natural disasters, particularly cyclones and floods. These narratives underscore themes of resilience, community support, cultural strength, preparedness, and the psychological impact of such events.

Main issues raised:

- Community and Cultural Strength: A strong sense of community support and cultural resilience permeates the narratives. Respondents highlighted the critical role of neighbours, marae, and local heroes in providing aid and emotional support. The importance of cultural and ancestral stories in fostering resilience was also emphasised, illustrating the deep connection between personal strength and collective history.
- Challenges of Preparedness and Resource Scarcity: The interviews revealed concerns about preparedness for natural disasters, with individuals taking proactive steps to secure their homes and communities. However, challenges such as resource scarcity, especially in terms of counsellors and practical aid, were noted. The need for better education on disaster preparedness and more accessible information on available resources was highlighted.
- Psychological Impact and Mental Health: The emotional and psychological toll of experiencing and recovering from natural disasters was a recurring theme. Respondents spoke of anxiety related to weather changes, the stress of isolation, and the frustration with the narrative of inherent resilience. The importance of mental health initiatives and the therapeutic value of sharing experiences were underscored.
- Role of Civil Defence and Community Organisations: The effectiveness and engagement of civil defence and community organisations, including marae, in disaster response efforts were praised. However, calls for improved coordination and communication, as well as for marae to take a leading role in relief efforts, were made.
- Personal Reflections and Future Concerns: Individuals reflected on their experiences with a focus on the lasting impact of the disasters, the ongoing process of recovery, and concerns for future events. The narratives included considerations of relocating for better support networks and the critical need for community solidarity and preparedness initiatives.

Summary:

Gisborne interviews paint a vivid picture of resilience, community cohesion, and the enduring spirit of individuals in the face of natural disasters. They highlight the essential role of cultural and ancestral strengths, the critical need for prepared community response frameworks, and the importance of acknowledging and addressing the psychological aftermath of such events. These stories underscore the importance of solidarity, preparedness, and support systems in building resilient communities capable of navigating the challenges posed by natural disasters, emphasising the need for collective efforts in recovery and future disaster management strategies.

## Participant 18: Navigating Natural Disasters Through Community, Culture, and Ancestral Strength in Gisborne

### Impact of the Cyclone

- Immediate Effects and Location: Situated in Gisborne, close to the river, the respondent's house narrowly avoided flooding, but the property suffered extensive silt damage, reminiscent of Rotorua mud pools.
- Utility Challenges: Faced with the loss of power, water, and internet, mirroring the broader community's struggles.

### Community and Neighbourhood Support

- Supportive Neighbours: Highlighted the crucial role neighbours played in silt removal and crisis management.
- Observations on Resilience: Noted that visitors from the Netherlands were particularly taken aback by the cyclone's devastation, contrasting with the relative resilience displayed by New Zealanders accustomed to natural disasters.

### Personal Reflections and Coping

- Emotional Realisation: The emotional burden of the cyclone's aftermath became fully apparent during a trip to Napier, underscoring the significant psychological impact.
- Cultural Stoicism and Self-reliance: Spoke of a deeply ingrained stoicism, attributing it to her Scottish heritage and familial tales of endurance.
- Drawing on Internal Strength: Relied on internal resilience and the motivational legacy of her grandmother's stories, eschewing external assistance.

### Role in Civil Defence

- Civil Defence Engagement: Actively participated in civil defence efforts through her role with the Council, contributing to the response activities post-cyclone.

### Importance of Storytelling and Legacy

- Legacy of Ancestral Stories: Emphasised the enduring value of ancestral stories, such as those from her grandmother, in fostering strength and offering perspective amidst adversity.
- Therapeutic Value of Sharing: Found emotional solace and value in sharing her cyclone experiences, underscoring the therapeutic aspect of storytelling.

The respondent's home in Gisborne narrowly escaped flooding but suffered significant silt damage, akin to Rotorua mud pools. Loss of power, water, and internet mirrored broader community struggles post-cyclone, highlighting shared utility challenges. Neighbours played a vital role in silt removal and crisis management, showcasing the strength of community support. Reflecting on the cyclone's impact, the respondent drew on cultural stoicism and familial resilience, finding solace in ancestral stories and internal strength.

*"All of a sudden I realised I'd been carrying quite a load on my shoulders, relatively small to others, but it still was"*

## Participant 19: Harnessing Community Strength in the Aftermath of Dual Cyclones

### Experiencing the Cyclones

- Facing Nature's Fury: The respondent's area was hit by two consecutive cyclones - Hale and Gabrielle, highlighting the initial shock and subsequent challenges faced.
- Geographical Advantage: Residing in a remote area on a hill, away from the river, afforded them some protection, though their farm sustained significant damage.

### Resilience and Adaptation

- Survival Strategies: Utilised a wood stove and generator to overcome power outages, demonstrating self-sufficiency.
- Praise for Civil Defence: Lauded the civil defence team's exceptional efforts in providing support and ensuring communication.

### Community Response and Support

- Local Heroes: The pivotal role of the civil defence team and notable community members who offered aid was emphasised.
- Strengthening Bonds: The crisis led to heightened community engagement and cooperation, especially in addressing food shortages and isolation.

### Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing

- Weather Sensitivity: The cyclones left a lasting sense of anxiety towards changing weather conditions and the threat of future natural disasters.
- Mental Fortitude: Despite the challenges, felt mentally resilient, bolstered by strong community ties.

### Physical Wellbeing and Support

- Health and Wellbeing: Received ample physical support from various organisations, contributing to their wellbeing.
- Social Support Events: Valued community gatherings for providing both social interaction and practical aid.

### Reflections on Changes and Preparedness

- Altered Lives: Life's reality has changed, underscored by a newfound vigilance against disasters.
- Importance of Self-Sustainability: Stressed the critical need for community self-reliance, particularly in terms of food security.

### Personal Outlook and Community Involvement

- Community Project Participation: Engaged in community projects and efforts to reconnect with the marae, illustrating a proactive approach to recovery.
- Recognising Community Trauma: While acknowledging the community's trauma, also highlighted the enduring strength of community bonds.

### Final Thoughts

- Gratitude for Community Resilience: Expressed appreciation for the collective endurance and shared experiences that have deeply impacted the community.
- Advocating for Preparedness: Emphasised ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing disaster preparedness and fostering community solidarity.

The respondent faced the fury of consecutive cyclones, finding refuge in their remote hillside location but still enduring significant farm damage. Despite challenges, they lauded the community's resilience, emphasised the need for self-sustainability, and advocated for ongoing preparedness initiatives to strengthen community bonds and resilience against future disasters.

*"Everybody's doing something"*

## Participant 20: Navigating Flood Relief and Resilience in Gisborne

Minimal Personal Impact:

- Property Unaffected: The respondent, living in central Gisborne, reported no direct property damage from the floods but experienced disruptions in power, water, and sewage services.

Family Involvement and Community Efforts:

- Daughter's Active Role: Their daughter, working at Pak'n'Save, played a significant part in the aftermath, particularly in supporting the marae with meal preparations and distribution efforts.

Role of Marae in Community Support:

- Relief Hub: The marae served as a central point for relief, offering shelter and necessities, notably to a group of Fijian visitors involved in community support.
- Volunteer Efforts: Volunteers, including their daughter and the Fijian group, were instrumental in relief activities across various marae and communities.

Professional Challenges:

- Work Impact: Employed by an educational institute, the respondent faced difficulties in the role due to marae closures and infrastructure damage, threatening job security.

Road and Infrastructure Challenges:

- Access Restrictions: Major roads such as State Highway 35 and State Highway 2 were closed, complicating travel and aid distribution.

Observations on Community Interaction and Resilience:

- Increased Solidarity: Noted a surge in community interaction and solidarity, especially in shared efforts and communication during the crisis.

Awareness of Services and Resource Sharing:

- Informed of Services: Awareness of services was heightened through daughter's marae activities, leading to shared resources like food.

Communication Challenges:

- Need for Improved Coordination: Critiqued the communication efforts and called for better resource utilisation, including helicopters for information and supply distribution.

Call for Better Civil Defence Engagement:

- Marae Collaboration: Advocated for enhanced collaboration between civil defence and marae, or for marae to lead in relief efforts, underscoring their vital role in community support.

The respondent experienced minimal personal impact from the floods in central Gisborne but noted disruptions in essential services. Their daughter played a crucial role in community support efforts, particularly at the marae, highlighting the importance of collaboration between civil defence and local institutions for effective relief efforts and improved communication.

*"We all get in behind and support each other"*

## Participant 21: A Tale of Forethought, Stranded Safety, and Returning to Resilience in Gisborne

Forewarning and Decision to Leave:

- Proactive Departure: Felt fortunate compared to those in Gisborne and Hawke's Bay, having monitored the cyclone via an app and leaving for a birthday party in Te Awamutu before the cyclone hit.

Experience During the Cyclone:

- Unexpected Safety: Became stranded in Taupo, which, fortuitously, was less affected by the severe weather, despite initial plans to leave the area.

Concern for Home and Family:

- Anxiety from Afar: While in Taupo, remained informed but anxious about the devastation back home, worrying about the state of their property, loved ones, and animals in Gisborne.

Return and Observation of Devastation:

- Delayed Return: Spent a week in Taupo before managing to navigate back home, encountering widespread destruction and mud-covered roads en route.

Personal Impact and Relief:

- Home Intact: Found their home, positioned 10 meters above high tide, undamaged, in contrast to the fate of some neighbours.
- Community Assistance: Participated in clean-up efforts, aiding neighbours in the aftermath.

Awareness of Limited Resources:

- Resource Scarcity Recognition: Noted the limited availability of resources and counsellors in Gisborne, opting not to use services to leave them available for those in more dire need.

Critique of Resilience Narrative:

- Resilience Criticism: Voiced frustration with the bureaucratic portrayal of the community as inherently resilient, arguing that it overlooks the varied individual capacities for resilience and does little to support mental recovery.

Personal Reflection:

- Lasting Effects: Confided that the ordeal continues to affect her deeply, nearly a year later.

The respondent proactively left their area before the cyclone, but anxiety about their home and loved ones persisted while stranded in Taupo. Despite finding their home intact upon return, they critiqued the narrative of community resilience and highlighted ongoing personal struggles in the aftermath.

*"You just knew that it had been absolutely devastating"*

## Participant 22: A Story of Preparedness, Community Spirit, and Resilience in Gisborne

### Preparation for Weather Event

- **Early Warnings Heeded**: The respondent, residing near Gisborne City, took early warnings seriously, preparing for the severe weather event based on forecasts by Ken Ring. Together with her surfer husband, they stocked up on essentials, ensuring their home was secure against the expected conditions, despite scepticism from others.

### Community Response and Support

- **Vital Role at Retirement Village**: Employed at a retirement village, was instrumental in the aftermath, supporting workers, managing power outages, and aiding residents. Creative communication methods, like newsletters produced with a vintage typewriter, kept the community informed and connected during power and communication failures.

### Challenges and Volunteer Work

- **Family and Work Strains**: Isolation from her family and stress from workplace changes compounded challenges. She actively participated in volunteer efforts, including demolition work, and sought counselling to cope with accumulated stress.

### Mental Health Initiatives

- **Supporting Community Resilience**: Highlighted the impact of the event on mental health and the importance of community initiatives, such as "Care for You" and "Frocks on Friday," in fostering a sense of solidarity and support within the community.

### Personal Reflections and Future Concerns

- **Contemplating Preparedness**: Despite being prepared for this event, the respondent voiced concerns about future isolation and the ongoing impact of weather events combined with COVID-19 on community resilience. The possibility of relocating for better access to family was considered, underscoring the importance of connections and support networks.

### Telecommunication and Mental Health Coordination

- **Communication and Access to Services**: The need for improved telecommunication and better coordination among mental health services was emphasised. The respondent suggested making information on available resources more accessible and highlighted the importance of education on disaster preparedness.

### Emphasis on Preparedness and Mental Health

- **The Value of Being Prepared**: Drawing parallels with childbirth preparation classes, the respondent stressed the significance of readiness for climate-related events, noting that practical preparedness can greatly enhance mental wellbeing by providing a sense of control over unpredictable situations.

The respondent residing near Gisborne, took early warnings seriously, preparing for the weather event despite scepticism. As a vital member of a retirement village, she supported residents and managed challenges, highlighting the importance of community initiatives for mental health and resilience amidst ongoing concerns about future isolation and weather events.

*"It does affect everyone mentally. It's been a really difficult year and people still talk about it and there's a whole weather anxiety every time it's going to rain."*

# IN-DEPTH FINDINGS - Auckland focus groups

The interviews from the Auckland area offer compelling insights into the experiences of disaster impact, resilience, and recovery. The accounts from individuals in the Auckland region, including Kaipara and Ōtara, following recent natural disasters, bring to light the profound challenges faced by communities, the resilience displayed, and the journey towards recovery.

Professional and Personal Challenges:

- Health professionals at the medical centre faced both the immediate impact of the crisis and the emotional toll of supporting the community, compounded by personal losses and direct impacts on their families and infrastructure. The tragedies experienced, particularly those close to Muriwai, underscored the profound emotional burden borne by healthcare providers and residents alike.

Community Resilience and Support:

- Despite the hardships, a common thread of community solidarity emerged. In Kaipara, medical staff and residents extended their support beyond the confines of conventional roles, reaching out to affected areas, including Muriwai, despite overwhelming stress and logistical challenges. The importance of community hubs, such as marae and schools, in offering shelter and essentials, was highlighted, illustrating the central role of local networks in crisis response.

Communication and Isolation Challenges:

- The lack of connectivity posed significant hurdles, isolating communities at a time when communication was crucial. Efforts to maintain contact through local visits and the use of any available networks were essential in bridging this gap, demonstrating the importance of physical presence and local infrastructure in fostering resilience.

Long-Term Effects and Recovery:

- Reflecting on the aftermath, individuals noted the lasting effects of the disasters on mental health and community cohesion. The increased reliance on medication, the psychological toll of ongoing uncertainties regarding homes and properties, and the challenges in accessing professional help pointed to a need for comprehensive support systems. Despite these challenges, the strengthening of community bonds and improved preparedness for future emergencies were cited as positive outcomes.

Personal and Community Resilience in Crisis:

- The narratives from Ōtara, South Auckland, added another layer to the mosaic of experiences, highlighting the emotional impact on families and the broader community. The strong Pacific community response, including the setup of support stations and the role of churches and local organisations, underscored the importance of cultural and social structures in resilience and recovery.

Observations on Social Media and Access to Services:

- The dual role of social media as a tool for rapid information dissemination and a potential source of stress was noted. Barriers to accessing professional help, including financial and logistical challenges, were identified as areas needing improvement to enhance disaster resilience and mental health support.

Summary:

The consolidated narratives from Auckland and surrounding areas underscore the multifaceted nature of disaster impact and recovery, highlighting the crucial roles of community resilience, professional and personal challenges, and the need for effective communication and support systems. Through these accounts, the enduring spirit of affected communities shines through, offering valuable insights into strengthening resilience and support networks for the future.

## Participant 23: Impact of Natural Disasters in a Smaller Rural Community

### Personal and Community Challenges

- The respondent highlights their experience of being impacted more significantly by a cyclone than by the Auckland Anniversary floods, mentioning that their small town was cut off due to flooding, fallen power poles, and landslides.
- Loss of essential services like power, Wi-Fi, and water due to reliance on electric pumps was emphasised, underscoring the devastation within the community.
- The local dairy, a key community hub, nearly faced destruction due to a landslide, and several residents from low-lying areas were forced to evacuate.

### Adaptation and Support

- The marae and the kura (school) served as crucial support centres, offering shelter and necessities to the affected individuals.
- Despite personal mobility challenges due to a broken leg and ankle, the respondent notes community solidarity and the rapid organisation of support, particularly praising the efforts led by the local hauora (health) centre and the resilience and quick action of the Māori community.

### Community Response and Recovery

- Discussion around the establishment of a community hub and the activation of support mechanisms, including the provision of laundry facilities, showers, gas cookers, and food boxes to aid those affected.
- The respondent points out the proactive measures taken by the community and the council to ensure quicker access to funds for marae in future emergencies, indicating a positive step towards improving disaster response efficiency.

### Personal Reflections and Recovery

- The respondent shares their struggle with anxiety and stress following the cyclone, exacerbated by the damage to their property and the challenges of securing repairs in a timely and affordable manner.
- The community's collective trauma and the burden of empathetically carrying others' emotional and physical distresses contributed to the respondent's depression and eventual decision to seek medication.

### Social and Cultural Insights

- A notable improvement in Māori and Pākehā relations within the community is mentioned, driven by shared disaster response efforts and continued collaboration on community projects.
- Personal growth and coping strategies, including the importance of taking time for recovery and the use of social media for mental distraction and support, are highlighted.

The input outlines the profound impact of a cyclone on a small town, emphasising the immediate challenges, community support mechanisms, and long-term emotional and social repercussions. The respondent's narrative provides insight into the resilience and solidarity of the affected community, the importance of effective disaster response planning, and the personal journey towards recovery and mental health management post-disaster.

*"It was pretty devastating for our community."*

*"I guess, Māori know how to all come together quickly."*

## Participant 24: Experiencing and Responding to Flooding in Auckland

### Immediate Impact and Personal Experiences

- The respondent recounts how they and their wife were affected by flooding, emphasising the disruption to their daily commute from Papakura to work locations via the southwestern motorway.
- The wife's work vehicle was lost to the floods, causing significant distress and logistical challenges, including being stranded and the emotional turmoil experienced during the flood.
- The respondent's workplace was proactive, enabling remote work, while the wife faced immediate challenges at her residential service job.

### Support and Insurance Response

- Insurance support was notably efficient, providing not only prompt service but also additional support like counselling, highlighting a comprehensive approach to the victims' wellbeing.
- The need for alternative accommodations for some family members was met through the support of friends and family in West Auckland, reflecting the importance of community networks during crises.

### Long-Term Psychological Impact

- The flooding left lasting psychological effects, particularly on the respondent's wife, who experienced a loss of confidence in self-transportation, indicating the deep emotional impact beyond the initial physical damages.
- The respondent mentions the effort required to rebuild confidence and adapt to new circumstances post-event.

### Community and Professional Engagement

- Community groups like Papakura Cares and local marae (Papakura Marae and Manurewa Marae) played crucial roles in providing immediate relief, including housing, food packs, and other essentials.
- The active involvement of community organisations and the increased solidarity among residents were highlighted, drawing parallels to the communal support experienced during COVID-19 lockdowns.

### Workplace Adaptations and Responses

- Employers took steps to ensure continuity of operations and care for staff affected by the floods, such as arranging transport for those who lost vehicles, showcasing adaptability and care in professional settings.
- The respondent's professional connections to educational and substance abuse prevention programs underscored the role of external agencies and community groups in crisis response and recovery.

### Personal and Family Reflections

- The narrative touches on the difficulties in emotional regulation and communication within the family unit following the flooding, particularly for the respondent's wife and father.
- The father's experience of second-hand emotional strain while engaged in relief work in affected areas illustrates the broader psychological toll of disaster response on individuals, leading to significant personal reflections and decisions about life priorities and mental health.

### Health and Wellbeing

- The respondent's father faced compounded challenges due to his health condition (post-double kidney transplant) and the emotional aftermath of participating in relief efforts, highlighting the intersection of personal health vulnerabilities and external crises.

### Social Media's Dual Role

- The power of social media was underscored as both a tool for rapid information sharing and support mobilisation and as a source of constant exposure to disaster-related stressors, illustrating the complex role of digital platforms in modern crisis response and mental health management.

### Challenges in Accessing Professional Help

- Identifiable barriers to accessing professional help post-disaster include cost, transportation, and extended wait lists, along with a general lack of awareness about available services, pointing to the need for improved information dissemination and accessibility.

*"Comforting thing was it felt like a bit of a throwback to COVID, all of a sudden everyone had time for each other and everyone was responsive for each other."*

This summary outlines the direct impact of flooding on the respondent and their family, emphasising the emotional, logistical, and professional challenges faced. It highlights the vital role of community support, the efficacy of insurance responses, and the lasting psychological effects of such disasters. The narrative also sheds light on broader themes of community solidarity, the importance of mental health support, and the challenges in accessing post-disaster professional services, offering insights into the multifaceted nature of disaster response and recovery.

## Participant 25: Personal and Community Resilience in Crisis

### Family Dynamics and Emotional Impact

- The respondent recounts living in Ōtara, South Auckland, with their elderly father during a period of intense weather. The events triggered traumatic memories for the father, reminiscent of tsunamis experienced in Samoa during his youth, causing significant distress and fear within the family.
- Despite the physical safety of their home not being compromised by flooding, the emotional atmosphere was fraught with tension, anxiety, and distress, exacerbated by media consumption.
- Efforts to manage the situation included hospital visits to ensure the father's wellbeing, highlighting challenges in managing mental health during crises.

### Community Support and Engagement

- The strong Pacific community in Ōtara rallied together, setting up support stations and utilising social media platforms to coordinate aid distribution, such as food, water, and blankets, showcasing a robust communal response to crisis situations.
- Churches and local organisations played key roles in providing pastoral care and support, especially to those in more affected areas, underlining the importance of local networks and social cohesion during difficult times.

### Insights on Preparedness

- The experience served as a wake-up call regarding emergency preparedness. The respondent acknowledges a lack of readiness in terms of having essential supplies and a plan for action in crisis situations.
- Discussions within the household on emergency planning highlighted the need for a comprehensive strategy that considers the diverse needs of their multi-generational family, from children to the elderly.

### Mental Health Awareness and Support

- The events triggered anxiety and a heightened sense of vulnerability, not just in the respondent but across family members, leading to a deeper understanding of the importance of mental wellness and support systems.
- The respondent, who works in a primary school and is involved in mental health first aid, reflects on the application of these skills within their family context, emphasising the value of mental health education and support in real-life scenarios.

### Community Solidarity and Future Directions

- The narrative highlights the solidarity within the Ōtara community and broader Pacific communities in South Auckland, demonstrating how social media and local networks facilitated effective support and resource sharing.

### Personal and Community Growth

- The respondent shares personal growth through the crisis, acknowledging moments of anxiety and the need for self-care and support for support workers. This reflection points to an understanding of the continuous nature of resilience, both personally and within the community.
- The emphasis on learning from the experience and seeking ways to better support each other in future crises reflects a forward-looking perspective, aiming to strengthen individual and community preparedness and wellbeing.

This summary illustrates the profound impact of such events on individuals' mental health and the community's collective response. It brings to light the challenges of emergency preparedness in multi-generational households. The narrative underscores the resilience of the Pacific community in Ōtara and highlights the importance of solidarity, preparedness, and mental health support in building stronger, more resilient communities.

## Participant 26: Coping with Crisis: Personal and Professional Perspectives from Kaipara Harbour

### Professional Role and Challenges

- The respondent is a health improvement practitioner at Medical Centre in Helensville, focusing on providing free mental health support.
- The community faced significant challenges due to its proximity to Muriwai, where there were casualties among local volunteer firemen, adding to the emotional burden of the staff at Medical Centre.

### Personal Connections and Impact

- Personal ties to the tragedies were highlighted, with the respondent's daughter knowing one of the first victims. The respondent's family was directly affected by the trauma of losing community members and helping those grieving.
- Living in a non-floodplain area, the respondent experienced logistical challenges such as being cut off due to surrounding floods, living without power for 11 days, and relying on a generator for electricity.

### Community Resilience and Support

- Despite the hardships, the respondent witnessed community solidarity, with neighbours and local farmers actively assisting each other through the floods.
- The medical centre staff ventured into the community, including Muriwai, to offer support and connect people with necessary services, though the effectiveness of these efforts in the face of overwhelming stress was questioned.

### Communication and Isolation Challenges

- A significant issue during the crisis was the lack of Wi-Fi and telecoms connectivity, which isolated the community from external communication, forcing reliance on those few with service for updates and check-ins.
- The disruption highlighted the importance of local hubs and personal visits for maintaining contact and offering support within the community.

### Long-Term Effects and Observations

- The respondent reflects on the ongoing trauma and stress experienced by those still awaiting decisions on their homes, emphasising the financial and emotional toll of paying both mortgages and rent on uninhabitable properties.
- Observations were made on the long-term mental health impact, including the increased need for medication among community members and the challenges faced by families separated by the disaster.

### Preparedness and Community Cohesion

- Personal preparedness and the support within the community, including checking on neighbours and sharing resources, were seen as positive outcomes, strengthening community bonds.
- The crisis underscored the importance of being prepared for emergencies, both in terms of physical supplies and mental health support, and the need for better community infrastructure to handle such crises.

This summary outlines the experiences and insights shared by a health improvement practitioner, focusing on the personal and professional challenges faced during a crisis that affected the Helensville area and surrounding communities. It highlights the emotional toll on individuals and families directly and indirectly involved, the community's efforts to support each other, and the challenges posed by isolation and lack of communication infrastructure. The narrative also reflects on the long-term implications of such events on mental health, community cohesion, and the need for improved preparedness and support mechanisms.

*"What you do is you manage the best you can until you're in a better place to cope."*

## Participant 27: Personal and Professional Impact of the Auckland Emergency

### Initial Underestimation and Subsequent Realisation

- The respondent initially underestimated the severity of the weather, realising its seriousness only after receiving a message from someone overseas and noticing Auckland's state of emergency. This led to the cancellation of client meetings and the need to navigate alternative routes to work due to cleanup efforts.

### Disruptions to Personal Plans and Family Impact

- Plans with a visiting friend were disrupted, particularly the inability to visit Piha due to closures. Additionally, the respondent's brother had to temporarily move out of his house in Remuera due to the floods, highlighting the broad but indirect effects on the respondent's family and social life.

### Professional and Financial Consequences

- The flood had a significant impact on the respondent's profession in sales, with several clients losing their businesses, affecting the respondent's salary and targets. This represents the most substantial effect of the flood on their personal and professional life.

### Perception of the Event and Government Response

- Despite the disruptions, the respondent perceives the event as a rare occurrence and expresses trust in the government's capacity to learn from the situation and improve infrastructure and emergency preparedness for future events. There is an optimistic view that the experience will lead to better planning and response strategies.

### Concerns Over Mental Health Support

- While the respondent has confidence in the government's ability to improve physical infrastructure, there is a notable criticism of the current state of mental health support. The respondent and others feel that government-provided mental health resources are insufficient and inadequately executed, highlighting a need for significant improvements in this area.

This summary reflects the experiences and views of an Auckland resident affected by severe weather conditions, focusing on the personal inconveniences and professional challenges encountered. While direct impacts like flooding did not affect the respondent's home, the broader effects on work, family, and social plans were significant. Despite these challenges, the respondent trusts the government to improve infrastructure and preparedness for future crises. However, there is a critical view of the mental health support provided by the government, suggesting a gap in resources and accessibility that needs to be addressed.

*"I would also rather turn to family or friends or community groups than trust whatever the government offers in terms of mental health."*

## Participant 28: Reflections on the Auckland Weather Event: Personal Experiences and Insights

### Initial Reactions and Personal Impact

- The respondent shares their initial underestimation of the weather event, which changed upon realising Auckland was in a state of emergency. This shift in perspective was driven by the physical impact on their surroundings and the direct challenges faced, such as navigating floodwaters at home.

### Community and Environmental Observations

- Observations of the environment and community highlight the visible devastation, including landslides and damaged infrastructure. The respondent notes a public walkway's destruction, emphasising the financial and logistical challenges in restoration efforts.

### Emotional and Psychological Responses

- The event served as a wake-up call to the unpredictability of natural disasters and their capacity to disrupt perceived stability. It stirred discussions on values, emphasising the importance of health, preparedness, and self-reliance over material possessions.

### Adapting to New Realities

- The respondent discusses becoming more proactive about local issues such as drainage and water use, highlighting the practical steps taken to mitigate future risks. This shift towards a more engaged and prepared mindset reflects a broader awareness of environmental and infrastructural vulnerabilities.

### Insights on Public Services and Family Support

- Experiences during the weather event led to a greater appreciation and utilisation of available public services, such as the Citizen Advice Bureau. However, there was criticism of the city officials' handling of crisis situations, underscoring the need for better planning and communication.

### Mental Health Considerations

- The respondent expresses concern over the mental health support available, especially in the context of their son who is under the care of mental health services. The lack of proactive support for vulnerable populations during the crisis highlighted systemic shortcomings in addressing mental health needs adequately.

This summary encapsulates the personal experiences and reflections of an Auckland resident in the aftermath of a severe weather event. It covers the initial reactions, the impact on the community and environment, and the emotional and psychological responses elicited by the crisis. The narrative reveals a journey towards increased awareness and preparedness, criticism of public service responses, and concern for mental health support. Through these insights, the respondent shares a nuanced perspective on living through and learning from natural disasters, emphasising the importance of resilience, community support, and the need for improved systemic responses to mental health.

*"I've certainly heard more of taking better care of your health, be more prepared for your own, relying more on yourself."*

## Participant 29: Coping with Flood Impact: A Teacher's Reflection

### Impact on Early Childhood Education

- The respondent, an early childhood teacher, describes the operational challenges faced during the floods, including moving premises and losing resources due to vehicles being flooded. This period also saw temporary closures of their centre, significantly impacting families who relied on their services.

### Personal and Social Disruptions

- Plans for a special holiday with overseas visitors in the Bay of Islands were ruined due to the event, underscoring the emotional toll of disrupted personal connections. Additionally, a neighbour's tragic loss in a slip next to the respondent's son's flatting situation brought home the immediacy and severity of the disaster's potential personal impact.

### Heightened Awareness and Preparedness

- The experience led to an increased consciousness about the fragility of life and the importance of emergency preparedness. It fostered a realisation of the need for practical measures at both the workplace and home, such as maintaining emergency kits and ensuring readiness for future events.

### Community and Government Support Perspectives

- While the respondent values community support highly, they express scepticism about the efficacy of government and public health responses to mental wellbeing needs. Personal experiences with inadequate support services have led to a preference for relying on community and friends for assistance.

### Reflections on Vulnerability and Support Needs

- The floods highlighted concerns for those with disabilities or requiring daily assistance, underscoring the lack of targeted support during crises. The respondent stresses the importance of inclusive planning and response strategies to ensure all community members receive necessary aid.

This narrative offers insights into the multifaceted impact of flooding on an early childhood teacher's professional and personal life. It illustrates the disruptions to daily routines, the emotional toll of lost opportunities for connection, and the stark confrontations with disaster's immediate dangers. The experience has catalysed a deeper understanding of vulnerability and the importance of preparedness and resilience. While community support emerges as a crucial resource, there's a clear call for improved governmental and institutional responses, especially in supporting mental wellbeing and ensuring inclusivity in emergency preparedness.

*"And it causes some anxiety, certainly in your everyday living."*

## Participant 30: Reflections on Flood Impact: A Learning Support Coordinator's Perspective

### Professional and Personal Challenges

- The respondent, a learning support coordinator in a secondary school, describes the flood's impact on students with learning differences and disabilities, emphasising the added layer of difficulty in ensuring their understanding and wellbeing. Personally, flooding nearly reached their home, and they experienced significant losses, including gardening efforts and stored mementos.

### Concern for Vulnerable Students

- The psychological impact on students is highlighted, with instances of heightened anxiety during heavy rain and the prolonged effect of such events on their sense of security and routine. The story illustrates broader concerns about preparedness, especially among students in wheelchairs or with specific vulnerabilities during flooding.

### Community Support and Lack of Resources

- While personal and iwi-based support played a crucial role in recovery, the respondent notes a lack of governmental or organisational assistance for their situation and the students they support. The absence of effective mental health services for individuals with disabilities is particularly emphasised, underscoring a systemic shortfall.

### Reflections on Preparedness and Resilience

- Discussions about emergency preparedness and the reality of needing such measures resonate personally and professionally. The respondent points out the necessity of having practical plans in place, both at home and within educational settings, to ensure safety and continuity in the face of natural disasters.

### Hope for Improved Response and Support

- Expressing a desire for better disaster preparedness and inclusivity in future planning, the respondent hopes for a shift in how support is provided, especially for those on the margins of society or with special needs. The narrative calls for a more comprehensive and considerate approach to disaster response and mental health support.

This summary encapsulates the insights of a learning support coordinator affected by flooding in Auckland, focusing on the dual challenges of managing personal losses and supporting vulnerable students through the crisis. It brings to light the heightened anxieties and specific needs of students with learning differences during such events, the community's role in recovery, and the glaring lack of adequate mental health and disaster support services for those with disabilities. Through this reflection, a call is made for greater preparedness, inclusivity, and a proactive approach to ensuring the wellbeing of all community members in the face of future natural disasters.

*"There hasn't been mental health support, effective mental health support or readily available mental health support, particularly [for] people with disabilities."*

## Participant 31: Navigating the Aftermath of a Cyclone: A Personal Journey in Karikari

### Immediate Impact and Response

- The respondent, residing in Karikari, recounts the terrifying night a landslide occurred due to the cyclone, nearly impacting their home and completely destroying a neighbour's house. This event led to the displacement of their family and pets, requiring them to navigate through landslides to reach safety. The community faced severe isolation, with food being helicoptered in due to impassable roads.

### Long-term Consequences and Decisions

- Their property received a yellow sticker, indicating it was unsafe for habitation, which forced them to seek alternative accommodation. The emotional toll was significant, particularly for the respondent's daughter, who decided against returning to the area. The physical and emotional stability of the land and home remain in question, adding to the stress and uncertainty of their future there.

### Financial and Emotional Strain

- The financial implications of repairing or potentially selling their home under these circumstances are daunting. The loss in property value and the cost of restoration pose significant challenges, compounding the already difficult emotional recovery from the disaster.

### Increased Proactiveness and Awareness

- The experience has led to a heightened sense of proactiveness, particularly in dealing with potential flooding issues in new living situations. This proactive stance extends to engaging with council services to prevent future disasters.

*"There's quite a lot of long-term kind of repercussions."*

### Community Support and Mental Health

- Working in mental health, the respondent emphasises the importance of community and peer support, especially for those displaced or severely affected by the cyclone. They note the usefulness of resources developed in response to previous disasters like the Christchurch earthquakes but also highlight the need for more accessible counselling and mental health services to assist those impacted.

### Call for Comprehensive Support Systems

- Reflecting on the broader implications, there is a clear call for increased mental health awareness, innovative approaches to support, and better preparedness within vulnerable communities. The respondent argues for an investment in the population's wellbeing as a necessary step to ensure resilience and recovery in the face of future natural disasters.

This summary outlines the challenging experiences of a Karikari resident who faced the immediate and long-term impacts of a cyclone-triggered landslide. The narrative covers the emergency response, the struggle with displacement and housing instability, and the financial and emotional challenges that ensued. It also highlights the importance of community support, the need for improved mental health services, and a call for proactive and comprehensive disaster preparedness and recovery strategies. Through this personal account, the broader needs for resilience, support, and innovation in facing natural disasters are brought to the forefront.

*"We need more of the mental health awareness, but also promotion and boots on the ground work, and innovative kind of approaches as well, and preferredness within vulnerable communities."*

## Participant 32: Navigating Flood Aftermath: A Resident's Experience in Mairangi Bay

### Local Impact and Community Response

- The respondent from Mairangi Bay, North Shore, Auckland, discusses the flooding that hit their area, notably affecting the local supermarket and causing it to be knee-deep in water. This led to a positive outcome of a new supermarket but also the closure of several local shops, including a longtime bookstore, due to insurance challenges.

### Personal Efforts and Neighbourly Concerns

- On a personal level, the respondent managed to prevent major damage to their home through immediate action, like digging trenches. However, the broader issue of inadequate stormwater infrastructure and the impact of nearby construction exacerbating flooding concerns for neighbours is highlighted.

### Frustration with Policy Focus

- The respondent expresses frustration with the government's focus on climate change policies over preparedness and infrastructure to handle such flooding events. There's a sentiment that more practical measures are needed to prevent and mitigate the damage from natural disasters.

*"A huge problem in mental health in New Zealand. Massive problem. The service provision is just nowhere near good enough."*

### Mental Health and Community Support

- Reflecting on the broader picture, the respondent, who owns a mental health software platform, notes an uptick in platform usage following the floods, underscoring the mental health impact of such events. The discussion turns to the inadequacy of mental health services in New Zealand and the potential of technology and community support to fill these gaps.

This narrative from a Mairangi Bay resident details the immediate and ongoing impacts of flooding on the local community, infrastructure challenges, and personal experiences of navigating the aftermath. It brings to light concerns over policy priorities, the need for better preparedness and infrastructure to deal with such events, and the mental health implications for those affected. Through their professional lens in mental health, the respondent advocates for leveraging technology and community networks to improve mental health support, moving beyond awareness to actual service delivery.

*"Locally, personally at the time, just an amazing sense of community."*

# STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

## IN-DEPTH FINDINGS – stakeholder interviews

Note: All respondents in this section provided their consent for their names to be published. All summaries of stakeholder interviews were confirmed by the interviewees themselves to be correct.

### Participant 33: Anne Bradbury Napier City Council

Napier City Council Manager Community Strategies

**Engagement in Recovery Process:**

- Anne Bradbury was overseas when the cyclone hit and returned to work in the third week after the event.
- Initially involved in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and later transitioned to recovery management.
- Experienced a shift from intense, around-the-clock work to a more structured 10 to 12-hour workday.
- Engaged with communities directly, particularly during the formulation of the locality plan, despite some communities not being fully prepared to discuss long-term recovery strategies.
- Noted differences in community responses, with some being more organised and vocal while others were quieter but appreciative.

**Impact on Anne Bradbury and her Team:**

- Acknowledged personal fatigue from the ongoing efforts, balancing between community needs and personal wellbeing.
- Encouraged team members to take leave as needed, observed signs of burnout among staff, and facilitated access to counselling services.
- Recognised the different coping mechanisms within her team, with some seeking commemoration events while others preferred personal reflection or time off.

**Community Response and Support Services:**

- Acknowledged the varied responses from the community, noting instances where individuals may have been reluctant to seek help due to perceptions of relative hardship.
- Highlighted community-led support initiatives, such as monthly meetings resembling support groups, and emphasised the importance of community connections in accessing resources.
- Promoted available counselling services and community support networks, recognising the role of both formal services and informal support structures.

**Reflections and Ongoing Challenges:**

- Reflecting on the past year, Anne Bradbury expressed a sense of fulfilment in assisting the community despite the challenges and fatigue.
- Anticipated ongoing challenges, particularly in supporting staff wellbeing and navigating policy changes affecting recovery efforts.
- Noted lingering anxieties among staff and the community, indicating ongoing emotional and psychological impacts from the event.

Final Thoughts:

- Anne Bradbury concluded with hopes for a better year ahead while acknowledging the enduring impact of the cyclone and associated recovery efforts on individuals and communities.

.

- Overall, Anne Bradbury's engagement underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by both recovery professionals and affected communities in the aftermath of natural disasters, highlighting the importance of resilience, community support, and ongoing commitment to recovery efforts.

## Participant 34: Rebekah Dinwoodie Hastings District Council

Hastings District Council Group Manager: Community Wellbeing & Services

### Overview of Community Wellbeing Post-Cyclone:

- Discussing the impact of Cyclone Gabrielle on the wellbeing of North Island communities.
- Identified strong community spirit and social connections as key positive outcomes.
- Highlighted mental and emotional stress, property damage, flooding, and financial impact as primary concerns.
- Noted empathetic stress among those indirectly affected by the cyclone.

### Challenges Faced in Hastings:

- Focused on the immediate response to the cyclone, highlighting communication difficulties.
- Mentioned the strain on staff, with some leaving due to stress from the front-facing response.
- Emphasised the emotional toll on staff untrained in handling crisis situations.

### Difficulties with Community Expectations:

- Addressed the challenge of meeting community expectations with limited resources.
- Described the frustration and abuse faced by council staff from affluent communities.
- Noted the disparity in community response, with poorer communities being more welcoming and self-reliant.

### Long-term Impact and Staff Support:

- Discussed the ongoing impact of the cyclone, including voluntary buyouts and legal actions against the council.
- Mentioned the provision of group and individual supervision for council staff.
- Observed different coping mechanisms among staff, with some being more resilient than others.

### Community Relationships and Response:

- Highlighted the strained relationship between council staff and the community.
- Reported incidents of staff facing hostility and abuse from the public.
- Discussed the challenges in recruiting and retaining staff due to the negative perception of council work.

### Emergency Preparedness and Community Planning:

- Addressed the improvement in emergency preparedness and community resilience planning post-cyclone.
- Described initiatives for setting up emergency hubs and community committees for future emergencies.
- Discussed the need for communities to take more responsibility for their emergency preparedness.

### Mental Health and Support Accessibility:

- Touched on the availability of mental health support and services.
- Expressed concern over the lack of resources for serious mental health and addiction issues.
- Noted the need for greater resilience and coping skills in younger generations and the general public.

## Participant 35: Abbie Taylor - Wairoa District Council

Wairoa District Council Social and Wellbeing Pou

### Impact on Community:

- Details how the unexpected heavy rain led to flooding and power outages in Mahia.
- Highlights the isolation and challenges faced by the community due to damaged roads and communication breakdowns.
- Emphasises the role of Starlink in providing essential communication during the crisis.

### Community Response:

- Talks about rallying together with the community to support each other, sharing resources, and establishing a makeshift internet cafe.
- Describes challenges faced in reaching out to isolated areas, especially concerning the hospital's communication breakdown.

### Recovery Efforts:

- Discusses the immediate aftermath, focusing on emergency response and community resilience.
- Details the efforts to provide temporary housing, support services, and silt removal.
- Expresses the struggles with long-term recovery and the ongoing challenges, including insurance issues and housing reconstruction.

### Personal and Emotional Impact:

- Shares personal experiences and challenges faced by her family, including the loss of a colleague and a family member's stroke.
- Acknowledges the emotional toll on the community and the need for mental health support.

### Community Division and Outreach:

- Discusses the divide between different parts of the community, those affected and those not, and the efforts to bridge the gap.
- Describes initiatives to rebuild community connections and resilience, such as organising events and offering counselling services.

### Barriers to Mental Health Support:

- Highlights the stigma and reluctance towards seeking mental health support in the community.
- Discusses efforts to introduce consistent and accessible counselling services to overcome this barrier.

### Challenges in Housing and Recovery:

- Details the struggles in addressing housing issues, including limited funding and the extensive time required for reconstruction.
- Describes the ongoing challenges faced by residents, with many still not back in their homes after a year.

### Conclusion:

- Expresses frustration with the slow progress in recovery efforts.
- Emphasises the need for sustained support, both in terms of mental health services and housing reconstruction.
- Acknowledges the importance of community unity and resilience in facing ongoing challenges.

## Participant 36: Dennise Ellers – Central Hawke's Bay Council

Central Hawke's Bay Council Group Manager Community Partnerships

### Initial Response to the Cyclone:

- Lived in Clive and was not directly affected, but nearby areas were.
- Acted as a response manager for a brief period and then supported welfare components in Waipawa.
- Involved in pre-planning and immediate response efforts, with a focus on welfare.

### Impact on Communities:

- Porongahau and Waipawa Flooding: Significant flooding in both areas, with homes stickered and communities heavily affected.
- Ongoing Uncertainty: Residents in Porongahau faced prolonged uncertainty about the status of their properties.
- Comparison of Impact: Acknowledged different levels of impact compared to areas like Hastings, with no loss of life but substantial property damage and disruptions.

### Community-Led Responses:

- Porongahau's Initiative: The response in Porongahau was primarily community-led, with locals initially evacuating to the hall and then to the rugby club rooms.
- Waipawa's Situation: The response in Waipawa was more council-driven, but still involved community members.

### Volunteering and Support:

- Spontaneous Volunteering: Saw a surge in spontaneous volunteering and donations from neighbouring areas.
- Long-term Recovery Efforts: Discussed the transition from immediate response to long-term recovery, including community meetings and dealing with organisational burnout.

### Financial and Infrastructure Challenges:

- Funding for Repairs: Highlighted concerns about funding for repairs and the resulting rate increases.
- Balancing Community Needs: Discussed the challenges of balancing different community needs and ongoing weather events.

### Psychological Impact and Support:

- Mental Wellbeing Concerns: Recognised the mental strain on communities, especially in Porongahau, due to ongoing uncertainty.
- Support Systems: Noted the presence of trained support personnel in community hubs but uncertain about the extent of their use.

### Reflections on Community Resilience:

- Community Strength: Praised the community's ability to stand up and provide support, highlighting the delivery of essentials like blankets and food.
- Comparisons to Past Events: Viewed the cyclone as a significant natural event in her lifetime, comparing it to previous events like Cyclone Bola.

### Personal Reflections and Outlook

- Kiwi Attitude: Discussed the typical Kiwi attitude of downplaying one's own needs and focusing on others.
- Future Challenges: Anticipated future challenges due to the low-rate base and ongoing weather events affecting mental wellbeing.
- Dennise Ellers' account provides insights into the complexities of managing a natural disaster response, the resilience of communities, and the ongoing challenges in recovery and preparedness. Her narrative highlights the importance of community-led initiatives, the psychological impact on affected individuals, and the need for adequate funding and support in disaster recovery.

## Participant 37: Michele Grigg Napier City Council

Napier City Council Senior Advisor Policy

### Preparation and Initial Response:

- Michele Grigg was called to serve as a Welfare Manager, a role she had been trained for but had previously acted as 2IC Welfare Manager. She was called into this role due to the departure of experienced welfare managers.
- Reported to the Incident Management Team IMT at Cape View to monitor the cyclone's approach and initiated pre-contact with community organisations for potential evacuations.
- Ensured readiness of key community centres like Pukemokimoki Marae and Kennedy Park for evacuations, assessing their capacity to host people.

### Operational Challenges:

- Infrastructure and Communications: Faced challenges with the chosen operation centre at Cape View lacking backup power, leading to a relocation to the Central Post Office building. Communication breakdowns occurred as the power and communication lines went down.
- Resource Mobilisation: Worked closely with the logistics team to mobilise resources and personnel for welfare needs, including securing accommodations, food, and other essentials for evacuees.

### Welfare Management:

- Scope of Welfare Role: Covered a broad range of welfare needs including shelter, food, medical supplies, pet welfare, and coordination with emergency services for missing persons.
- Adaptation and Scaling: As the cyclone's impact became apparent, Michele's role expanded to include more strategic planning around management of civil defence and community-led evacuation centres and ensuring all civil defence functions were fully able to support their safe operation. They were properly equipped and operated safely.

### Staffing and Emotional Impact:

- Emotional and Physical Demands: The crisis placed significant stress on staff, including Michele, who had to manage not only the logistics of the response but also the emotional toll on both staff and affected community members.
- Training and Support Concerns: Highlighted the need for better training and support for staff, many of whom were not prepared for the demands of emergency response, and the importance of a well-thought-out shift and rostering system to prevent burnout.

### Reflections on Community and Personal Impact:

- Community Resilience and Challenges: Acknowledged the resilience of the community and the various ways in which different sectors came together to support the response effort.
- Personal Reflections: Michele shared the emotional stress and the sense of responsibility felt during and after the cyclone, emphasising the widespread impact on the community and the importance of support and acknowledgment of the psychological effects of such events.

### Key Takeaways:

- The experience underscored the need for comprehensive training and preparedness at all levels of emergency response to ensure both the physical and emotional wellbeing of the community and responders.
- Highlighted the strength of community collaboration and the critical role of local organisations, marae and volunteers in disaster response.
- Stressed the importance of providing adequate emotional and psychological support to both responders and affected individuals to manage the long-term impacts of such traumatic events.

## Participant 38: Dallas Haynes Gisborne District Council

Emergency Management Advisor & Group Welfare Manager - CDEM

### Dallas's Personal and Professional Challenges During Cyclone Gabrielle:

- Rapid Succession of Weather Events: Dallas's tenure began with Cyclone Hale, followed by deployment to Auckland for flood response, and then back to Tairāwhiti to face Cyclone Gabrielle, marking a continuous state of high alert and stress.
- Lack of Preparedness and Systems: At the onset of Cyclone Gabrielle, Dallas identified a lack of established systems and processes for welfare response, which led to a reliance on improvised solutions amidst chaos and darkness.
- Emotional Toll and Empathy: Dallas's natural empathy added to the emotional toll, highlighting the challenge of maintaining personal wellbeing while managing a crisis.

### Community Response and Dynamics:

- Rural vs. Urban Community Behaviours: Rural communities in Tairāwhiti, accustomed to weather challenges, showed resilience and independence, while urban areas displayed a range of behaviours from cooperation to frustration and even exploitation.
- Importance of Marae: Urban marae like Te Poho-o-Rāwiri played crucial roles as hubs for community support, showcasing the strength and utility of traditional gathering places in times of crisis.

### Psychosocial Support Initiatives:

- Establishing Psychosocial Support: Recognising a gap in psychosocial support, Dallas leveraged relationships within the health sector to mobilise mental health teams for frontline support, overcoming initial resistance from health authorities.
- Creating a Lasting Support Framework: The experiences from Gabrielle led to the formation of a more robust psychosocial support network, preparing the community for future disasters with improved readiness and resource allocation.

### Overcoming Barriers and Learning from Crisis:

- Navigational Challenges Within the System: Dallas faced significant barriers, notably from health authorities, in securing the necessary psychosocial support, necessitating direct action to ensure community needs were met.
- Reflections on Crisis Management: Despite the hardships brought by Cyclone Gabrielle, Dallas sees it as a learning opportunity that galvanised the community and authorities into better preparation and cooperation for future emergencies.
- This summary encapsulates Dallas's insights into the profound challenges and breakthroughs experienced during Cyclone Gabrielle in Tairāwhiti. It underscores the importance of community resilience, the pivotal role of marae, the critical need for psychosocial support, and the lessons learned for future disaster preparedness.

## Participant 39: Linda Greenalgh Auckland Council

Group Community & Social Recovery Lead Tāmaki Makaurau Recovery Office

### Immediate Impact and Personal Involvement

- Unexpected Involvement: Linda, formerly with local government, found herself unexpectedly volunteering for Auckland Emergency Management during the Auckland Anniversary floods, despite not having worked for the council for two years.
- Direct Experience with the Flood: Shortly after returning from Ireland, Linda and her family witnessed first-hand the severe flooding in Henderson, which escalated quickly, marking the beginning of a significant crisis in Auckland.

### Professional Response Amidst Personal Concerns

- Stepping into Action: Despite her initial hesitation, Linda volunteered her weekend to support the emergency response, stepping into a chaotic situation without a clear role but ready to assist in any way possible.
- Balancing Personal and Professional Roles: Even as Linda geared up to support the emergency efforts, she received distressing voice messages from friends in Waimauku, leading to immediate actions to ensure their safety, blending her professional and personal concerns.

### Challenges in Emergency Management

- Overwhelming Scale of Response: Linda described the initial triage efforts as a blur, with an impossible backlog of calls and the task of setting up welfare centres and needs assessment processes amid escalating needs.
- Intense and Extended Commitment: Initially volunteering for what she thought would be a two-week stint, Linda's involvement extended as she took on the role of group welfare manager, coordinating a wide range of support services amidst the chaos.

### Reflections on Community and Wellbeing

- Community-led Responses: Linda highlighted the invaluable role of librarians and community-led centres in supporting affected individuals, despite insufficient recognition and support from Auckland Emergency Management.
- Mental Wellbeing and Recovery Efforts: Linda expressed concern over the mental wellbeing of both community members and responders, noting the need for better post-event debriefing and acknowledging the long-term impacts of such crises on individuals' mental health.

### Insights on Adaptation and Future Preparedness

- Adapting to a New Reality: Linda underscored the need for systems that can handle the constant cycle of response and recovery, emphasising community adaptation and preparedness for future events.
- Unaddressed Mental Wellbeing: She raised concerns that the full mental health impacts of the events have yet to manifest, pointing out the delayed trauma responses among those affected and the necessity for continued support and resilience-building in the community.

Linda Greenalgh's narrative paints a vivid picture of the immediate and enduring challenges faced by Auckland's communities and emergency responders during and after catastrophic weather events, highlighting the importance of adaptability, support, and community-led initiatives in navigating the path from crisis to recovery.

## Participant 40: Tofilau Talalelei Taufale hui

Pacific Health Manager for Te Whatu Ora Te Matau a Māui, Hawke's Bay

Pacific Community Support During Cyclone Gabrielle

### Community Mobilisation and Shelter Provision

- Shelter Activation: Local Pacific community halls, including the Cook Islands Community Hall and King's Church, Ascend Church, Congregational Chirstian Church of Samoa, Flaxmere were quickly turned into emergency shelters. These facilities were instrumental in providing immediate refuge and safety to the displaced individuals from the Pacific community and others affected by the cyclone.
- Community Coordination: The Pacific community leaders were proactive in their response, facilitating effective communication and coordination, which was crucial for efficient crisis management and support distribution.

### Support and Counselling at Shelters

- Inclusive Support Services: At King's Church and other shelters, there was a concerted effort to welcome and support not just the Pacific community but all locals affected by the cyclone. This approach highlighted the inclusive nature of the community's response efforts.
- Counselling and Spiritual Support: Church-based support played a vital role in providing not just physical shelter but also emotional and spiritual care. The churches counselled workers, leveraging the strong faith-based networks within the Pacific community to spiritual and emotional support during this traumatic time.

### Cultural Sensitivity and Community Safety

- Cultural Cohesion and Safety: Recognising the diverse needs of the Pacific peoples, the response efforts were culturally sensitive, allowing different groups within the community to receive support in culturally familiar settings and by people who spoke their languages. This approach was vital in ensuring that all members felt safe and supported in a culturally respectful manner.
- Community-Led Initiatives: The response was characterised by a strong community-led approach, with Pacific leaders and community members stepping up to manage the situation effectively, showcasing resilience and the capacity to self-organise in times of crisis.

### Long-Term Community Impact and Recovery

- Continued Support and Recovery: The initial crisis response seamlessly transitioned into longer-term recovery efforts, with ongoing support to ensure the displaced individuals could return to their daily lives while maintaining access to necessary resources.
- Strengthening Community Ties: The disaster also served as an impetus to further strengthen community ties and resilience, fostering a deeper sense of unity and cooperation among the Pacific community and wider regional populations.

These facets of the response and support framework illustrate how the Pacific community in Hawke's Bay dealt with the disaster through strong community bonds, effective use of local resources, and a culturally attuned approach to crisis management.

### Community Preparedness and Immediate Action

- Proactive Measures Before the Flood: The Respondent, initially planning to return to Wellington, stayed due to inclement weather. This decision led to witnessing and responding to the flood's onset.
- Rapid Community Mobilisation: Immediately following the flood, the Respondent and the community quickly established a response, creating disposal sites and mobilising resources with minimal initial support from official agencies.

### Cultural Strengths and Community Support

- Ancestral Resilience: The community's response was deeply rooted in the resilience passed down through generations, reflecting a strong connection to ancestral wisdom and practices.
- Unified Community Effort: Utilising the marae as a central hub, the community effectively coordinated relief efforts, providing essentials, accommodation, and emotional support. The marae's role exemplified the community's inherent capability to nurture and protect its members.

### Navigating Trauma and Healing

- Ongoing Grief and Recovery: The flood's impact was profound, with lasting effects on mental wellbeing. Efforts to maintain community cohesion and spirit were crucial for collective healing.
- Cultural Practices as a Foundation for Recovery: Regular community gatherings, cultural practices, and karakia played a significant role in the community's healing process, emphasising the importance of cultural identity in overcoming trauma.

### Barriers and Challenges

- Cultural and Financial Barriers to Mental Health Support: The stigma surrounding mental health within cultural contexts and financial constraints were significant barriers to seeking and accessing necessary support.
- Official Response and Learning Opportunities: The initial lack of a coordinated response from civil defence highlighted areas for improvement. The community's efficient, culturally grounded response provided valuable lessons for future emergency preparedness and highlighted the need for better integration of marae-based initiatives with official disaster response plans.

### Looking Forward: Strengths, Opportunities, and Needs

- Recognising Central Role of marae: The flood underscored the marae's critical role in disaster response, advocating for resource allocation that leverages marae's capacity to offer immediate and culturally resonant support.
- Future Preparedness: Emphasising the need for resources like generators, sandbags, and satellite communication to enhance marae's readiness for future emergencies. Collaboration between marae, civil defence, and local councils is crucial for developing effective response strategies.

This summary highlights the Omāhu community's remarkable resilience, cultural strength, and the crucial role of marae in responding to and recovering from the devastating flood. It reflects on the community's capacity to rally together, drawing on ancestral wisdom and unity, to navigate the challenges posed by natural disasters.

## Participant 42: Barbara Williams Kindred Family Services

### Engagement and Support Through Crisis

- Adapting Services for Unprecedented Challenges: Kindred Family Services played a crucial role during and after a significant crisis, providing counselling and support despite the respondent not being there from the beginning.
- Identifying Gaps in Mainstream Systems: The crisis revealed limitations in existing systems to address unique and unprecedented challenges, highlighting the importance of adaptable and heart-led support mechanisms.

### Counselling and Community Support

- The Evolution of Counselling: Counselling has become more normalised, encouraging more people to seek help. However, there's a recognition that real healing and resilience-building often occur in group settings, where individuals can find strength in community connections.
- Barriers to Accessing Support: Noted were challenges in accessing services due to traditional working hours, suggesting a need for more flexible service delivery that includes evenings and weekends.

### Cultural Insights and Future Directions

- Understanding Individual Resilience: Insights were shared about personal resilience and adaptation, using examples like the diverse reactions to blindness, to underscore the variability of coping strategies among individuals.
- The Power of Group Dynamics: Emphasised was the synergy found in group work for healing, suggesting a move towards community-based support systems that encourage social interaction and shared experiences.
- Innovation in Service Delivery: Mentioned were professionals who are breaking traditional moulds to offer services in more accessible and innovative ways, including those working internationally or in specialised fields.

### Community Integration and Sustainable Support

- Advocating for Community Presence: The need for services to be delivered within communities rather than from distant locations was highlighted, to overcome barriers and maintain a level of anonymity for individuals seeking support.
- The Role of Cultural and Familial Structures: Acknowledged was the intrinsic value of cultural norms, protocols, and the influence of key community figures in facilitating healing and support within a structured yet hidden framework.

Kindred Family Services is navigating the continuum from crisis to community wellbeing, recognising the limitations of conventional systems and the transformative potential of communal support and innovative service delivery.

# IN-DEPTH FINDINGS – community meetings/interviews

## Participant 43: Auckland Māori

### Facing Multiple Disasters:

- The respondent's experience spans across Auckland and Tokomaru Bay, Tairāwhiti, where both her home and her ancestral village were severely affected by floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. In Auckland, the floodwaters inundated the back of her house, while in Tokomaru Bay, the community faced isolation due to destroyed bridges.
- In the wake of these disasters, the respondent was torn between managing her own home's damage and fulfilling her role as a community worker in West Auckland, and also rushing to aid her family and community on the East Coast.

### Community and Family Response:

- The respondent highlights the rapid communal response, including the reliance on marae for support and the collective efforts to aid those in affected areas. This response was critical in providing immediate relief and shelter.
- The Armed Forces' involvement in delivering essentials and aiding in recovery efforts in Tokomaru Bay demonstrated a vital support network for the isolated communities, emphasising the importance of external assistance in times of crisis.

### Resilience Amidst Adversity:

- Amidst the physical and emotional toll, the respondent reflects on the resilience of her elders and the community, drawing from past experiences like Cyclone Bola. These moments were teaching and unifying, showcasing the strength found in shared knowledge and communal effort.
- The struggle with agencies and NGOs that promised but did not deliver aid exposed a gap in disaster response and support, emphasising the need for more direct and effective assistance mechanisms.

### Insurance and Practical Support:

- The ability to secure insurance for her Auckland property allowed the respondent and her family to find temporary accommodation quickly, demonstrating the importance of prepared insurance and support systems for those affected.
- Her proactive measures in preparing for evacuations and engaging with service providers like Vodafone, which offered essential communication support, underline the critical need for access to services in disaster recovery efforts.

Cultural Strength and Community Projects:

- The recount of rebuilding efforts and the emergence of community projects, like tiny houses and the rejuvenation of the Waima Rugby Club, illustrate the inventive and spirited recovery paths taken by communities. These efforts not only address immediate needs but also foster long-term community spirit and resilience.
- Cultural expressions of healing through haka and songs at events like Matatini and Pasifika festivals highlight the deep-seated resilience and the use of cultural practices as a means of coping and healing from the traumas of natural disasters.

Navigating Loss and Looking Forward:

- Discussions around the challenges of rebuilding, especially in farming communities and for those deeply connected to their land, bring to light the profound psychological and economic impacts of such disasters. The stories of loss, from livestock to ancestral lands, underscore the enduring heartaches that communities face.
- The respondent's active involvement in network building, resource mobilisation, and fostering cultural connections as means of recovery and resilience offers insights into the power of community and kinship in facing adversities.

Conclusion:

- Through personal stories of loss, resilience, and community solidarity, the respondent paints a vivid picture of the hardships and triumphs faced by her family and wider community in the aftermath of floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. The narrative is a testament to the strength found in collective action, cultural identity, and the enduring spirit of aroha and unity amidst the challenges posed by natural disasters.

## Participant 44: Gisborne Māori

### Navigating Disaster from Afar:

- The respondent found herself in Wellington for work during Cyclone Gabrielle, while her home in Manutūkē, Gisborne, and her elderly father were directly in the cyclone's path. This distance created a sense of helplessness and anxiety, especially concerning communication and ensuring the safety of her father.

### Community Preparedness and Response:

- Despite fears of extensive damage, Manutūkē was relatively unscathed, a testament to the community's resilience and preparedness. The respondent underscores the importance of local knowledge and connections, developed during COVID, which were instrumental in the community's swift and inclusive response to the cyclone.
- The emphasis on looking out for the vulnerable, such as the elderly and those with disabilities, was highlighted. The respondent took proactive steps to ensure her father's safety, allowing her to assist others in the community.

### Reflections on Regional Resilience:

- Travelling back to Gisborne and then to Napier, the respondent witnessed the extensive damage first-hand. The experiences underscored the varying impacts of the cyclone across different regions and the stark reality of communities worse off.
- The cyclone reinforced existing community bonds, showing a natural inclination towards inclusivity in times of crisis. The rebuilding of Māhu Marae as a community hub exemplified how adversity led to growth and strengthened community infrastructure.

### Insights on Insurance and External Support:

- The respondent observes that anxiety for many in the affected areas was exacerbated by external factors such as insurance companies and council responses, rather than the immediate aftermath of the cyclone itself.
- However, the collective community efforts, including food distribution by various cultural groups and the swift adaptation to emergency situations, showcased a high level of communal resilience and support.

### Cultural Perspective and Mental Health:

- Despite the challenging circumstances, there was a significant cultural response, with communities coming together to share food, support, and rebuild. This collective effort was crucial in maintaining mental health and wellbeing during the recovery phase.
- Celebrations one year after the cyclone highlighted the progress made in recovery and rebuilding, focusing on positive community outcomes rather than dwelling on the negative aspects of the disaster.

### Conclusion:

- The respondent's narrative provides a powerful insight into the resilience of the communities in Gisborne and Hawke's Bay in the face of Cyclone Gabrielle. The emphasis on community unity, preparedness, and the cultural strength in navigating the aftermath of the cyclone highlights the indomitable spirit of the regions' inhabitants.

## Participant 45: Gisborne Māori

### Preparation and Immediate Response:

- As the iwi civil defence manager for Te Rūnanga o Tūranganui ā Kiwa, the respondent was intricately involved in the preparation and response efforts for Cyclone Gabrielle, working closely with civil defence from the early warnings. This preparation included ensuring community links were strong and that marae were equipped with generators, anticipating the loss of power.
- Communication breakdowns became a significant challenge when the entire region lost power. The respondent highlighted the importance of physical presence and direct communication, as she became a key information carrier among communities, especially when online communication failed.

### Community and Marae Involvement:

- The marae played a crucial role in the crisis, opening their doors to everyone regardless of race, embodying the principle of manaakitanga. The pre-existing initiative to resource marae with generators proved invaluable, allowing them to become hubs of support and activity despite the widespread power outages.
- The respondent personally focused on areas most affected, like Te Karaka, driving back and forth multiple times a day to relay needs and updates to the Gisborne District Council, ensuring the community's immediate needs were communicated and met.

### Cultural Strength and Resilience:

- A key aspect of the response was the community's inherent resilience and the cultural strength of manaakitanga, which ensured inclusivity in aid and support. This crisis reinforced the connections within urban communities as well, as seen with the multicultural outreach from Te Poho-o-Rāwiri Marae, which helped alleviate panic and foster a sense of unity among diverse residents.
- The respondent's role involved not just logistical support but also emotional and psychological reassurance, particularly focusing on communities like Manutūkē which benefited from having established community leaders and infrastructure such as the local fire station.

### Long-term Effects and Recovery:

- Even months after Cyclone Gabrielle, the effects lingered, with children in the affected areas showing signs of anxiety, especially during rainfall. The establishment of the Mana Ake programme aimed to address these ongoing psychological impacts, providing strategies for coping with anxiety among tamariki.
- Some Rūnanga staff members were deeply affected, witnessing firsthand the damage to their relatives' homes and communities. The cyclone's impact led to a noticeable withdrawal from civil defence training among some staff, highlighting the psychological toll and the need for continuous support and resilience-building within the community.

Insurance Challenges and Home Damage:

- The respondent shared personal challenges, including unnoticed damage to her home and a high power bill due to a cyclone-induced issue, illustrating the varied and sometimes delayed realisations of damage. This situation underscored the importance of thorough checks post-disaster and the need for patience and understanding from insurance companies.
- Efforts to ensure all marae and communities had access to resources like Starlink satellites highlighted the adaptation to new technologies for better preparedness in the future, earning the region the nickname "Starlink City".

Conclusion:

- The story of Tairāwhiti's response to Cyclone Gabrielle is a testament to the power of community, cultural values of manaakitanga, and the critical role of preparedness and resilience. The shared experiences, from immediate crisis management to long-term recovery and the embrace of new technologies, reflect a community united in the face of adversity, ready to support one another with aroha and strength.

## Participant 46: Auckland Māori

### Impact on Home and Heart:

- The respondent's mother, residing in Puhoi, was forced to evacuate her home due to a landslide, initiating a period of significant stress for the family. Despite living on a hill, the precarious position above a valley led to their home being red-stickered and subsequently burgled, exacerbating their distress.
- Both the respondent and their mother have faced deteriorating mental health as a result of the ordeal. The constant worry about the possibility of future rain-related incidents has particularly affected the respondent, who also struggles with OCD, linking rain with impending disaster.

### Financial Strains and Emotional Support:

- Financially, the situation has been burdensome, with the respondent's mother having to juggle mortgage payments while renting elsewhere, placing further stress on the family's wellbeing.
- The absence of extensive family support has left them reliant on community assistance and work-provided counselling sessions. However, these resources have been limited, with funded counselling sessions ceasing after a while, leaving gaps in much-needed emotional support.

### Community Aid and the Path to Recovery:

- The local community and friends have offered support through invitations for meals and social care, showing a silver lining of communal solidarity in times of hardship.
- Efforts to obtain grants for essentials like food and furniture for their temporary rental accommodation have been partially successful, providing some relief from the financial and logistical pressures of starting over.

### Preparedness for the Future:

- The repeated experiences of landslides and the ongoing threat posed by rain have led to a heightened state of preparedness. The respondent has taken practical steps to be ready for future emergencies, including assembling a grab bag for themselves and their new puppy, indicating a proactive approach to dealing with potential natural disasters.

### Reflections on Resilience and Anxiety:

- Despite the passage of time, the impact of the landslide and the associated upheavals remain a source of anxiety for the respondent, especially during rainy weather. This enduring worry highlights the lasting effects of natural disasters on individuals' mental health and their perception of safety.
- The journey through the aftermath of the landslide has been a testament to the family's resilience, underscoring the importance of community support, mental health resources, and personal preparedness in navigating the challenges posed by natural disasters.

## Participant 47: Auckland Māori

### Anxiety and Vigilance Amidst Weather Events:

- The respondent experienced significant anxiety due to the rising waters, fearing direct impact on their property. This led to a night of minimal sleep, constant monitoring, and efforts to prevent water intrusion, despite the property ultimately remaining safe.
- An unexpected leak in the roof discovered months later, caused by displaced tiles during strong winds, heightened the respondent's anxiety towards weather events, fostering a vigilant attitude towards home maintenance and weather forecasts.

### Family Support and Community Coordination:

- The flooding significantly affected the respondent's parents, prompting a family-wide response to assist with cleanup and repairs. This situation brought the respondent closer geographically to their parents, intensifying their involvement in their parents' recovery and resilience strategies.
- The respondent played a key role in monitoring and supporting their extended family and friends, including financial guidance and physical help, demonstrating a heightened sense of responsibility and community coordination.

### Preparedness and Long-term Concerns:

- Following the initial flood, the respondent and their family took proactive steps to enhance their preparedness for future weather events, including sourcing additional sandbags. This readiness reflects a broader anxiety and awareness around the implications of climate change and its unpredictable nature.
- The parents' decision to keep sandbags in place, partly out of convenience and partly as a precaution, illustrates a resigned acceptance of recurring weather threats and the practical adjustments families make to cope with these challenges.

### Navigating Financial and Emotional Recovery:

- Despite the availability of financial support from institutions and insurance claims, the respondent observed a reluctance within their family to pursue these avenues fully. This hesitance was attributed to the perceived hassle of administrative processes and a preference to manage independently unless absolutely necessary.
- This situation highlights a broader theme of resilience and self-reliance, even in the face of significant challenges, and raises questions about the balance between seeking external assistance and relying on personal resources to recover from natural disasters.

### Reflections on Community and Personal Resilience:

- The respondent's experiences with flooding, both personally and within their wider network, underscore the ongoing stress and logistical challenges of recovery, particularly in terms of insurance and repair work. Such experiences reflect a shared vulnerability within the community and a collective endeavour to rebuild and prepare for future uncertainties.
- Personal and community resilience emerges as a central theme, with a focus on the importance of preparedness, support networks, and the ability to adapt to and overcome the challenges posed by increasingly unpredictable weather patterns.

## Participant 48: Auckland Māori

### Challenges Faced by Family and Community:

- The respondent recounts minor flooding in her garage, juxtaposed with her family's more severe experience of flooding down the coast, which highlighted financial struggles, especially under the constraints of receiving a benefit.
- The family's ordeal is situated within a broader community context affected by recent weather events, which disrupted normal life and infrastructure, particularly noting the vulnerability of roads to rain damage and the creation of potholes.

### Community Response and Resilience:

- The marae played a crucial role in sheltering both locals and visitors stranded by the weather, illustrating the strength and adaptability of the community in times of need. The respondent praises the community's functional solidarity under pressure, with around ten marae in the township stepping up to support.
- Despite diverse backgrounds, the community's inclusive attitude ensured that everyone received support, reinforcing bonds and mutual respect among residents.

### Personal Reflections on Community Ties:

- The respondent experiences a sense of being an outsider when returning home due to her relocation, which has altered her access to familiar community support like doctor visits, highlighting the nuances of belonging and distance in community relationships.
- Anticipation for a 150-year school reunion provides a positive focal point for the respondent and others to reconnect with their roots and celebrate community history, offering a respite from recent adversities.

### Impact of Flooding on Personal Space:

- The respondent details the immediate impact of flooding on her living space, including water intrusion into her garage and near her room, underscoring the tangible disruptions caused by such events on personal environments and belongings.
- The response to property damage, including insurance delays and remediation efforts, sheds light on the logistical and emotional challenges of recovering from flood damage.

### Ongoing Concerns and Support Networks:

- The narrative reveals ongoing anxiety related to rain, shared between the respondent and her landlady, highlighting a communal sense of vulnerability to weather events and the importance of supportive relationships in navigating these anxieties.
- The conversation with the mental health professional underscores the widespread and perhaps under-recognised emotional toll of natural disasters, prompting a reflection on the need for broader awareness and support for affected individuals.

### Conclusion:

- The respondent's story weaves together themes of personal and community resilience, the challenges of physical and emotional recovery from natural disasters, and the importance of support networks in fostering a sense of safety and normalcy amidst ongoing vulnerabilities.

## Participant 49: Auckland Pasifika

### Personal and Community Experience

- The respondent resides in Rānui, Auckland, which experienced significant flooding. The area's geography, with a creek running through and a dip in the landscape, contributed to the severity of the flooding, particularly affecting the respondent's auntie's home at the lowest point.

### Family and Housing Challenges

- The respondent faced a uniquely challenging year due to their house burning down during the last Auckland lockdown, preceding the flooding. The rebuilding process was slow, taking three years, with the family only returning home in October of the previous year. The flooding added to the stress and sense of hopelessness, especially as insurance and rebuilding efforts were already strained.

### Community Response

- Despite personal losses, the community's solidarity was evident, with neighbours, family, and local organisations coming together to support each other. The floods brought the community closer, emphasising the importance of collective resilience and mutual aid.

### Insurance and Financial Struggles

- Dealing with insurance was a major challenge, with delays and complications in claims processing. The flooding exacerbated these difficulties, adding to the financial and emotional toll on affected families.

### Mental Health and Support Networks

- The respondent highlighted the importance of mental health support during such crises. While their immediate network provided significant support, there was a recognition of the need for broader community and professional mental health resources to help cope with the aftermath of such events.

### Reflections on Preparedness and Resilience

- The experience has led to a greater awareness of disaster preparedness and the need for community support mechanisms. The respondent expressed gratitude for the support received and emphasised the resilience shown by their children and the wider community in facing these challenges.

### Conclusions:

- This summary captures the experiences of a resident in Rānui, Auckland, who navigated the aftermath of significant flooding in their community. Amid personal challenges, including recovering from a house fire, the respondent and their family faced additional trials due to the floods. The narrative underscores the community's collective effort to overcome adversity, the critical role of support networks, and the importance of mental health resources in rebuilding and healing. It also reflects on the lessons learned about preparedness, resilience, and the value of community solidarity in times of crisis.

## Participant 50: Auckland Māori

### Experiencing Multiple Floods

#### Sequence of Flood Events

- The respondent mentioned experiencing a series of flood events, not just two but around four or five, leading to a non-existent summer. The significant floods noted were Cyclone Gabrielle and another shortly after Christmas, marking a period of continuous struggle against water damage.

#### Impact on Home and Neighbourhood

- The respondent's home and street turned into a river due to the floods, with the backyard resembling a flowing water body. Despite being situated on a slight slope, which theoretically could have offered some protection, the surrounding area was heavily affected, with neighbours' trees falling down, although, fortunately, none caused direct damage to the respondent's property.

#### Emotional and Physical Toll

- The continuous flooding caused immense stress and a feeling of shock among the respondent and their family. Efforts to organise and protect the property were challenging amidst the chaos. Debris was a notable issue, though the respondent's property miraculously escaped major damage thanks to its positioning between two taller houses with larger trees.

#### Garden and Outdoor Areas Destroyed

- The respondent's recreational garden and vegetable garden, including tomatoes and pot plants, were completely destroyed, with only the netting remaining. This loss contributed to the overall sense of shock and devastation felt by the family.

#### Family Response and Coping Strategies

- Three generations of the respondent's extended family were present during the floods, with measures taken to protect the home and provide emotional support to the younger family members. Despite the terrifying conditions, including the loud noise of the storm and the family dog's distress, the respondent tried to maintain a brave front, engaging in activities to distract and comfort the family.

#### Observations and Concerns About Water Management

- The respondent expressed concern over the management of surface water and the impact of housing and building consents on water flow. They highlighted the need for better planning to accommodate the increased volume of water due to construction and urban development.

#### Reflections and Future Preparedness

- The experience has led the respondent to pay more attention to weather forecasts and take preparatory measures against future floods. There is a resigned anticipation that flooding may worsen, prompting a shift in focus from aesthetics to securing the property against potential water damage.

#### Community and Government Response

- While the respondent and their family did not seek external assistance, they emphasised the importance of community support, particularly for older and vulnerable neighbours. Post-flood, there has been an increase in communication and preparedness within the community, including sharing phone numbers and discussing protective measures.

#### Personal and Community Recovery

- The conversation reflects a journey from immediate crisis response through recovery and towards a cautious eye on the future. Despite the personal and communal challenges faced, there is a sense of resilience and a commitment to better preparedness for whatever weather-related challenges may come next.

## Participant 51: Auckland Māori

### Initial Experience with Flooding

- The respondent and their family experienced significant flooding in their home during the first flood event. Despite their efforts to mitigate the damage by redirecting water, the flooding reached knee height, causing stress and loss of property.

### Repeated Flooding and Preparedness

- With subsequent flooding events, the respondent's family became more prepared by setting up sandbags and pumps. Although they managed to reduce damage, the repeated incidents led to mental fatigue and a sense of dread with every forecast of rain.

### Community Response and Assistance

- The local community banded together during the floods, with neighbours assisting each other. Despite this, emergency services were overwhelmed, and the family struggled to receive timely help. A neighbour played a crucial role in securing grants for damaged goods.

### Insurance and Financial Strain

- The process of claiming insurance was lengthy and complicated, taking almost a year to settle. The financial burden of repairs and replacements was significant, even with insurance coverage.

### Mental Health Concerns

- The repeated flooding events took a toll on the respondent's mental health, leading to a desire for support. However, accessing mental health services proved challenging, with the system overwhelmed and not prioritising their situation as urgent.

### Call for Better Mental Health Support

- The respondent emphasises the importance of mental health support over financial assistance, expressing a preference for online resources for ease of access. The lack of focused mental health support during the crisis was a significant gap.

### Conclusions

- This summary outlines the experiences of a family in Auckland affected by multiple flooding events. It highlights the challenges of preparing for and recovering from such disasters, the community's role in providing immediate assistance, and the financial and emotional impact of the floods. The respondent's narrative underscores the critical need for accessible mental health support during natural disasters, pointing out the shortcomings in the current system and expressing a need for services that cater to the modern preference for online access.

## Participant 52: Auckland Māori

### Initial Experience and Immediate Response

- The respondent was away at a festival when their home in Kelston, Auckland, was flooded during the Auckland Anniversary flood. Despite being out of town, they faced the distress of knowing their home was affected while their children dealt with the situation.
- The flooding damaged the lower level of their two-story house, affecting bedrooms, a kitchenette, the lounge area, and the garage. Efforts by the respondent's family to divert water were unsuccessful, leading to significant damage.

### Family and Community Effort

- The respondent's family, consisting of young and adult children, worked together to mitigate the flooding impact, using bricks to divert water and protect the house as much as possible. Personal items and parts of the house were damaged or destroyed, prompting a focus on salvage and cleanup.

### Insurance Challenges and Property Loss

- The flood led to a lengthy and frustrating insurance claim process, compounded by the need to document damaged items and wait for available resources, like skip bins, for disposal. The bureaucratic hurdles added to the stress of recovery.

### Displacement and Housing Challenges

- One of the respondent's sons was displaced due to the flood damage, leading to months of inconvenience and adjustment. Eventually, the family received a short-notice eviction from their rental property due to required repairs, exacerbating the difficulty of finding new accommodation amidst widespread displacement.

### Mental and Emotional Toll

- The flood events and subsequent challenges, including an eviction notice and the loss of a family member, took a significant mental and emotional toll on the respondent. The process of recovery was marred by dissatisfaction with the local government's response and a sense of lingering injustice for those affected.

### Community Support and Preparedness for Future Events

- In the aftermath, the respondent's family became more prepared for potential future floods, ensuring they had necessary supplies and plans, especially for their pets. Despite moving to a new home, concerns about flooding persist due to previous experiences and knowledge of the area's vulnerability.

### Conclusion

- This narrative provides a detailed account of the challenges faced by a family in Kelston, Auckland, following significant flooding events. It highlights the physical damage to their home, the emotional strain of dealing with displacement and insurance, and the broader implications of community and governmental response to such disasters. The story underscores the resilience of the affected individuals and the importance of support networks in overcoming the adversities presented by natural disasters.

## Participant 53: Auckland Māori

### Impact on Local Community

- The respondent was not directly affected but shared stories from friends in the Bay of Plenty area, describing the significant emotional and physical damage caused by flooding. The whole community, including marae and local townships, rallied together to support those affected.

### Response and Assistance

- Utilising their professional network, the respondent coordinated with civil engineering contacts to provide assistance in the region, highlighting the collective effort of the whānau community. Recovery was ongoing, with notable improvements a month prior to the conversation, yet considerable cleanup work remained.

### Challenges with Insurance

- A major concern for the affected residents was dealing with insurance companies, particularly the difficulty in claims processing and the subsequent spike in premiums. The structural damage and loss of household items compounded the financial strain on the families.

.

### Community Solidarity

- The solidarity extended beyond individual efforts, involving local businesses, marae, and the broader community in the recovery process. Friends, family, and even MPs contributed to the relief efforts, underscoring the collective approach to overcoming the challenges posed by the flooding.

### Conclusion

- This summary captures the efforts and challenges faced by the Bay of Plenty community in the wake of significant flooding. Through the accounts shared by the respondent, the narrative reflects a strong sense of community resilience, with various groups and individuals coming together to aid those impacted. While the physical and emotional toll was evident, the unified response highlighted the community's determination to rebuild and recover. Insurance-related difficulties emerged as a critical concern, underscoring the need for more supportive measures in the aftermath of natural disasters.

## Participant 54: Auckland Māori

### Respondent's Role and Initial Observations

- The respondent, involved with Māori wardens, detailed their experience assisting the community during Cyclone Gabrielle, focusing on mental health and wellbeing.
- They noted the profound despair and loss of hope among community members, some of whom lost everything.

### Personal and Family Challenges

- Concurrently, the respondent managed personal grief with the passing of their mother, alongside coordinating with the New Zealand Army and police for safe travel arrangements due to the cyclone's impact.
- This period was marked by heightened anxiety and mental health struggles, both personally and across the community.

### Mental Health Struggles and Support

- The respondent emphasised the varied impacts of mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety, exacerbated by the cyclone's aftermath.
- Their work with Te Whatu Ora and as a Māori warden highlighted the importance of early departure from work to ensure safety and manage stress.

### Observations on Community and Housing Impact

- Despite the respondent's household being relatively unaffected due to its elevated location, the devastation in nearby areas and the broader community was shocking, especially as viewed through social media.

### Historical Context and Mental Health Concerns

- The respondent compared Cyclone Gabrielle's impact to their childhood experience of Cyclone Bola in 1987, noting the significant difference in perception and impact on mental health today.
- They stressed the issues surrounding mental distress in the community, exacerbated by natural disasters and societal pressures.

### Training and Emotional Management

- Highlighting their training with the Auckland Emergency Management Team, the respondent shared how preparedness helped them manage their emotional response while supporting others in distress.
- They also discussed the challenges of maintaining emotional strength when facing personal and communal struggles, including financial stress and the psychological impact on their children.

### Support Systems and Community Efforts

- The respondent detailed their efforts to support not only their immediate family but also the wider community, including vulnerable elders and those directly affected by the floods.
- They advocated for community unity and the importance of self-preparation and mutual assistance in times of crisis, emphasising the value of knowledge sharing for future resilience.

### Reflections on Training, Support, and Future Preparedness

- The respondent's involvement in emergency response and mental health support showcases a deep commitment to community welfare, despite the personal toll.
- They underscored the necessity of ongoing training, community collaboration, and a proactive approach to disaster preparedness and mental health support, aiming for a stronger, more resilient community fabric.

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Introduction

Mā te whakarongo, ka mōhio. Mā te mōhio, ka mātau. Mā te mātau, ka ora.

Through listening comes awareness, through awareness comes understanding, through understanding comes knowledge, through knowledge comes life and wellbeing.

Welcome to the Community Wellbeing Survey!

We appreciate your participation in this important survey conducted by SIL Research on behalf of the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand.

This research is about community wellbeing, particularly in the aftermath of the extreme weather events in 2023. It explores challenges faced by communities, factors contributing to community resilience, and various other aspects. Additionally, the study highlights communities' inherent strengths and their perspectives on community recovery.

This survey takes approximately 10-15 minutes. As a token of our appreciation for your participation, at the end of the survey, you have the option to enter a draw to win one of three $200 Prezzy cards.

The survey is anonymous, and you won't be personally identified in any feedback or results presented. SIL Research is a Napier based research company and, as a member of the Research Association of New Zealand, we strictly adhere to industry privacy and confidentiality practices.

## About you

This short initial set of questions provides us with some demographic information about you. We collect this to make sure we survey a range of people from different backgrounds.

1. What area do you live in? (select from list)
2. You mentioned you live in {{Q1}}, which suburb (or township if rural) do you live in? (please type in response)
3. Which of the following age groups do you fit into? (please select your answer)
    - 18-24
    - 25-39
    - 40-54
    - 55-64
    - 65+
4. I am a… (please select your answer)
    - Female
    - Male
    - Another gender
5. Which ethnic group(s) do you identify with (select all that apply)
    - NZ European/ Pākehā
    - European
    - Māori
    - Pacific Peoples
    - Asian
    - Middle Eastern/Latin American/African
    - Other (please specify)
6. Which best describes your household? (please select your answer)
    - Live alone
    - Couple no children
    - Parent(s) children at home
    - Other family members
    - Flatmates
    - Empty nesters
    - Other (please specify)

## Your community

7. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about you and your community? (please rate each)

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I know my closest neighbours by their first name | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I know I have friends or relatives I can count on in times of trouble | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I know people in my community take care of, or provide help for, one another | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I spend enough time with the people I love most | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have felt lonely at least some of the time in the past two weeks | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8. People in New Zealand have different lifestyles, cultures and beliefs, that express who they are. How easy or hard is it for you to be yourself in the area you live in? (please select your answer)

| Very hard | Somewhat hard | Neither hard nor easy | Somewhat easy | Very easy |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## Your safety

9. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about safety? (please rate each)

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall, I feel safe in the area I live | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel safe walking alone in my neighbourhood after dark | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

10. Compared to before the extreme weather events in 2023, how do you now feel? (please select your answer)

| Definitely less safe | Somewhat less safe | About the same | Somewhat more safe | Definitely more safe |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## The place you live in

11. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (please rate each)

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My neighbourhood is a good place to live | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I see myself living in the area in the next 5 year | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

12. In the last three months, have you personally experienced, or seen someone else experience, prejudice or intolerance, being treated unfairly or excluded? (for example, when online or out and about in the area you live) (select one)
    - Yes – myself
    - Yes – someone else
    - Yes – myself and someone else
    - No – not experienced or seen this
    - Unsure
13. [If Yes], You mentioned you and/or someone else have experienced prejudice or intolerance. Was this because of… ? (select all that apply)
    - Gender
    - Age
    - Ethnicity
    - Physical health condition or impairment
    - Mental health condition
    - Religious beliefs
    - Sexual orientation
    - Or something else (please specify) _____
    - Prefer not to say

## Your health

14. How would you rate your own personal health at the moment? (please select your answer)

| Very poor | Poor | Fair | Good | Very good |
|---|---|---|---|---|

15. Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems? (please rate each)

| | Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not being able to stop or control worrying | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Little interest or pleasure in doing things | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |

## 2023 extreme weather events and Cyclone Gabrielle

16. Overall, what impact, if any, have extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle) had on you (or your family)? (please select your answer)

| Very negative | Somewhat negative | No impact | Somewhat positive | Very positive |
|---|---|---|---|---|

17. If negative or positive, if you feel OK with talking about it, what was that? (please type your response)

18. After the extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle), have you or someone in your household experienced any of the following? (please select all that apply)

| | |
|---|---|
| Potential or actual loss of employment or income | ☐ |
| Additional work pressure | ☐ |
| Additional financial burden | ☐ |
| Loss of sentimental items | ☐ |
| Concerns about health | ☐ |
| Feeling worry if there is a red or orange weather warning | ☐ |
| Feeling anxious when it rains | ☐ |
| Dealing with insurance issues | ☐ |
| Having to move home permanently or temporarily | ☐ |
| Relationship problems (eg arguing with partner/friends/children) | ☐ |
| Loss of social activities | ☐ |
| Concerns about the value of your house | ☐ |
| Difficult decisions concerning pets | ☐ |
| Feeling sad about changed landscape as a result of flooding | ☐ |
| Feeling sad because other people were affected | ☐ |
| None of the above | ☐ |

Or something else (please specify)

19. Thinking about things you do differently as a result of the extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle), what, if anything, do you do differently? (please type your response) *Note: for example, being more prepared for emergencies, adjusting your daily routines, modifying travel plans, or any other adaptation you've made*.

20. What do you believe are the key factors that helped (please type your response)
    - your community cope with the extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle)?
    - yourself or your family/ whānau?
21. And what, if anything, made it challenging or difficult for your community to respond to the extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle)? (please type your response)

## Your wellbeing

22. In your own words, what does 'wellbeing' mean? (please type your response)
23. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (please rate each)

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have many words I can think of to communicate about wellbeing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I know a lot about wellbeing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I know how to improve my wellbeing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have the skills to understand information about wellbeing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have the skills to express myself about wellbeing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I can communicate about wellbeing in multiple ways (e.g., writing, listening, drawing) to suit the needs of people I talk to | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

24. How do you prefer to seek information about wellbeing? (select all that apply)
    - Search online (e.g. google or other)
    - Talk to a friend or family member
    - See my GP or health professional
    - See a counsellor
    - Ring a helpline
    - Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or other)
    - Buy a book or magazine on the topic
    - Find a booklet or pamphlet
    - Visit church or talk to a spiritual advisor
    - Other (please specify)
25. Are there any barriers you face in finding information about wellbeing? (please type your response)
26. In your opinion, what could be done to improve awareness of wellbeing in your community? (please type your response)

## Your life overall

28. , how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your life as a whole at the moment? (please select your answer)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very dissatisfied | Somewhat dissatisfied | Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | Somewhat satisfied | Very satisfied |

29. Would you say your life is better or worse than before the extreme weather events in 2023 (including Cyclone Gabrielle)? (please select your answer)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Much worse | Somewhat worse | No change | Somewhat better | Much better |

30. Please indicate for each of the five statements which is closest to how you have been feeling over the past two weeks? (please rate each)

| | At no time | Some of the time | Less than half the time | More than half the time | Most of the time | All of the time |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have felt cheerful and in good spirits | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have felt calm and relaxed | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have felt active and vigorous | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I woke up feeling fresh and rested | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| My daily life has been filled with things that interest me | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

27. Overall

## Your education and work

31. Which of the following best describes your highest academic qualification? (please select your answer)
    - No formal education
    - NCEA Level 1 or school certificate
    - Sixth form / NCEA Level 2
    - Seventh form / NCEA Level 3
    - Certificate - e.g. Pre-trade Certificate, Trade Certificate, National or New Zealand Certificate
    - Undergraduate Diploma
    - Bachelors degree
    - Postgraduate qualification (Masters or PHD)
32. What is your current employment situation? (please select your answer)
    - Full-time employee
    - Part-time employee
    - Business owner / director
    - Casual
    - Unemployed, actively looking for work
    - Unemployed and not looking for work
    - Parenting
    - Retired
    - Beneficiary
    - Education and training
    - Other (please specify)

33. Which of the following best describes your household's annual income before tax? (please select your answer)
    - $20,000 or less
    - $20,001-$30,000
    - $30,001-$50,000
    - $50,001-$70,000
    - $70,001-$100,000
    - More than $100,001
    - I'd rather not say
    - Other (please specify)

34. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (please rate each)

| | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Somewhat agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have enough money to meet everyday needs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Survey end

In January 2024, we will host a series of online meetings to discuss the impacts of extreme weather events on communities and overall wellbeing. Our goal is to explore how the Mental Health Foundation can contribute to recovery by actively listening to and reflecting the experiences of New Zealanders. All selected focus group participants will receive a $50 Visa Prezzy card for participating. Are you interested in attending one of these meetings?

- No
- Yes (please provide your name and email address) _____

Would you like to go to the draw to win 1 of 3 $200 Prezzy cards for completing this survey?

- No
- Yes* (please provide your name and a phone number) _____

For quality control purposes you may get a call from us to check some of the details collected are accurate, is this ok?

- No
- Yes* (please provide your name and a phone number) _____

*Note: Your personal information is protected by privacy legislation (Privacy Act 2020) and the Unsolicited Electronic Messages Act 2007.

Your information is also protected under the Code of Practice of the European Society for Opinion and Market Research (ESOMAR).

This information (e.g. name and contact number) is collected for quality control and/or prize draw only. As soon as these processes are completed, we will remove your name and contact details from your personal survey/interview results.

If you choose not to enter your contact information, we might be unable to include your response in the analysis.

Your personal information is kept confidential. It is not released to our clients or to third parties.

If you have any questions, please contact us at nataliya.rik@silresearch.co.nz, or 068341996, or PO Box 264, Napier.

Thank you for completing the survey.

The survey is anonymous. All responses will be aggregated, and you won't be personally identified in any feedback or results presented. SIL Research is a Napier based research company and member of the Research Association of New Zealand; we strictly adhere to industry privacy and confidentiality practices.

If you would like to contact someone at Mental Health Foundation regarding this survey, please contact Tihana Babic, at tihana.babic@mentalhealth.org.nz.