

Pathways to Equity and Wellbeing: Taking Action for Systemic Change.

Complex Community Concern:
Financial Health and Employment
Part 1—2024

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Whakatauki

I orea te tuatara ka puta
ki waho.

A problem is solved by continuing to find solutions.

This whakatauki refers to the need for creative thinking, adaptability and perseverance. In order to solve a problem you need to have all of these. When it comes to addressing these Complex Community Concerns, we need to continue to find solutions with our communities.

Our Manutaki



This design is based around the manutaki, the lead bird that guides the flock in a triangle formation during migration, the manutaki is supported and protected by rest of the flock.

This represents working together in unison for a common purpose.

Above the manu is the design known as manaia which can be used as a human form side profile of a face this represents unity of two people coming together, this forms koruru/wheku a face, this represents being transparent.

The design above the manaia/koruru is a design known as paakura it symbolises the rae of spiritual essence or spiritual belief it also represents the footprint of pukeko and is about being cautious knowing your surroundings, your environment before making decisions.

On the side of the bird's wings are two more manaia in a bird form this relates to interconnectedness our relationship with each other.

Next to this is a design known as whakarare this represents change and a new direction.

The harakeke/weave is about intergenerational relationships, it also symbolises binding of the kōrero or kaupapa.

At the bottom of the wing is a design known as pikopiko/koru this represents new beginnings and also represents nga tangata people/community.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi—Our Commitments

The Impact Collective is committed to being responsive to Māori as tangata whenua and recognise Te Tiriti o Waitangi as Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document. The principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as articulated by the Waitangi Tribunal and the New Zealand Courts provides a framework for how we are to fulfil our obligations under Te Tiriti on a daily basis. More recently, as outlined by the Ministry of Health, in 2019, the Hauora Report articulated five principles for primary care that are applicable to not only the wider health care system, but also to any person, organisation or Crown Agency working with Māori in our communities.

These principles are articulated as:

- **Tino rangatiratanga:** The guarantee of tino rangatiratanga, which provides for Māori self-determination and mana motuhake in the design, delivery, and monitoring of community services.
- **Equity:** The principle of equity, which requires the Crown to commit to achieving equitable outcomes for Māori. This is achieved through breaking down barriers and enabling equity of access to ensure equality of outcomes.
- **Active protection:** The principle of active protection, which requires the Crown to act, to the fullest extent practicable, to achieve equitable outcomes for Māori. This includes ensuring that it, its agents, and its Treaty partner, are well informed on the extent and nature of both Māori wellbeing outcomes and efforts to achieve Māori wellbeing equity.
- **Options:** The principle of options, which requires the Crown to provide for and properly resource kaupapa Māori services. Furthermore, the Crown is obliged to ensure that all services are provided in a culturally appropriate way that recognises and supports the expression of Te Ao Māori models of service delivery.

- **Partnership:** The principle of partnership, which requires the Crown and Māori to work in partnership in the governance, design, delivery, and monitoring of community services. This includes enabling Māori to express Tino Rangatiratanga over participation in governance, design, delivery, and monitoring of community services.

For the members of the Impact Collective, it is important that we enable the principles to guide our mahi. The purpose of the current mahi is to provide community level insights and intelligence to enable communities to partner on the development of services to create positive impacts for the people throughout the community. These services should focus on addressing equity of access to services in a manner that is consistent with tino rangatiratanga, active protection in the co-design, provide options to ensure culturally appropriate services and developed through a solutions focused, community-led partnership approach.

Acknowledgements

We've been privileged to collaborate with a number of individuals, organisations, and partners who have informed and supported the mahi of the Impact Collective. We extend our heartfelt thanks to each of them below:

Community Organisations

We engaged with over 400 individuals, representing approximately 130 organisations across four regions. These interactions have been crucial in ensuring that our work is grounded in the community voice and reflects the real, everyday experiences of those within each community. Their willingness to share their stories, challenges, and successes has not only enriched our understanding but has also underscored the importance of our collective efforts towards improving equity and wellbeing for all.

DOT Loves Data

Our data partner, DOT Loves Data, boasts an incredibly talented team of data scientists and data engineers specialising in building simple, smart, and beautiful data visualisation tools. They have been instrumental in creating the Community Compass Data Dashboard, allowing us to have a single source of truth to gather data insights for various communities across Aotearoa. They have also played an integral role in supporting and advising our team as we endeavour to bring together the data insights with stories from the community.

The Impact Collective Charitable Trust

The Impact Collective established the Impact Collective (2020) Charitable Trust in November 2022. We would like to thank those that stood up as trustees, and those who continue to support the mahi through leadership, advice and significant funding contributions. The Impact Collective maintains its charitable kaupapa by continuing to provide these essential community level intelligence reports, free of charge, to the communities that have allowed us to share the taonga of their stories.

Blindspot New Zealand

Blindspot New Zealand Limited is a specialist consulting company that was established in 2021. Blindspot Consulting continues to work closely with the Impact Collective to ensure the delivery of community level intelligence reports through systems strategy, community engagement, governance and thematic analysis support. We would like to thank the team from Blindspot New Zealand Limited for your continued dedication to enabling a better informed Aotearoa New Zealand.

“[We] will be successful if everyone hops on the same waka, has the same focus and paddles in the same direction. We all want to be in the same waka. We don’t want people going down a whirlpool or having one waka capsize. We want to be on a cruise ship, all going in the same direction. That is success.

Workshop Participant.





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Definitions and Acronyms

ABI – Apprenticeship Boost (ABI).

ACC – Accident Compensation Corporation.

AEWV – Accredited Employer Work Visa.

Aotearoa – Te Reo Māori for ‘New Zealand’.

CEO – Chief Executive Officer.

Complex Community Concerns – Also known as systemic challenges, systemic issues, wicked problems etc.

COVID-19 – An acute disease in humans caused by a coronavirus, which is characterised mainly by fever and cough and is capable of progressing to pneumonia, respiratory and renal failure, blood coagulation abnormalities, and death, esp. in the elderly and people with underlying health conditions. Also: the coronavirus that causes this disease.

CV – Curriculum Vitae, a document detailing one’s professional and academic history.

EAP – Employee Assistance Programmes.

ECE – Early Childhood Education.

EPOA – Enduring Power of Attorney.

Equity – In Aotearoa New Zealand, people have differences in economic, social and environmental outcomes that are not only avoidable but unfair and unjust. Equity recognises different people with different levels of advantage require different approaches and resources to get equitable economic, social or environmental outcomes.

GDP – Gross Domestic Product, the total value of goods produced and services provided in a country during one year.

Good Mahi – Te Reo Māori for ‘good work’.

Hapū – Te Reo Māori for ‘Sub-tribe’.

HCR – Human Rights Commission.

HIP – Health Improvement Practitioner.

IRD – Inland Revenue Department.

IT – Information Technology.

Iwi – Te Reo Māori for ‘Tribe’.

Kainga – Te Reo Māori for ‘home’.

Kaupapa – Te Reo Māori for ‘purpose’.

LAWA – Land Air Water Aotearoa.

Mahi – Te Reo Māori for ‘work, do, perform, make, accomplish’.

Mana motuhake – Te Reo Māori for ‘Self-determination, autonomy’.

Manu Taki – Manu means bird. Taki means to entice, to lead, to bring along. Here the term Manu Taki is used as the general term for leadership. We are using the term Manu Taki to refer to our leaders who have stepped up to take a leadership role in catalysing the Impact Collective – Rangitīkei, Ruapehu, South Taranaki and Whanganui into action. It symbolises leadership, uplift and succession. Our Manu Taki are not alone if we share the load, together we will go further. This further applies to our movement, where the combined efforts of many are needed to achieve our targets.

Māori – Indigenous person of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Marae – Te Reo Māori for ‘symbols of tribal identity that are considered to be tūrangawaewae – a standing place, a place of belonging. Most marae include a meeting house (wharenuī) and a dining hall (wharekai). These are used for important events like funerals, tribal celebrations and educational workshops’.

Maturity-based system – Any structured framework or methodology that evaluates and categorises entities, such as organisations, processes, technologies, or individuals, based on their level of development, sophistication, or effectiveness in specific areas. These systems often use predefined criteria to assess maturity and are designed to help in identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

Mature job-seekers – Individuals aged 40 and above.

MSD – Ministry of Social Development.

MTFJ – Mayors Taskforce for Jobs.

NEET – Not in Education, Employment, or Training.

NGO – Non-Government Organisation.

Pākehā – Te Reo Māori for ‘English, foreign, European, exotic - introduced from or originating in a foreign country’.

PPP – Purchasing Power Parity, which is an economic theory and a method used to determine the relative value of currencies.

PSGE – Post Settlement Governance Entity.

Rangatahi – Te Reo Māori for ‘younger generation, youth’.

R.E.A.P – Rural Education Activities Programme.

Rohe – Te Reo Māori for the ‘territory or boundaries of Iwi.’

RNZ – Radio New Zealand.

RSE – Recognised Seasonal Employer, a scheme in New Zealand that allows the horticulture and viticulture industries to recruit workers from overseas for seasonal work when there are not enough New Zealand workers.

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals - Part of the United Nations 2030 Global Agenda.

Socioeconomic – The interaction between the social and economic habits of a group of people.

SSVs – Skill Shortage Vacancies.

Tangata whenua – Te Reo Māori for ‘the Iwi or Hapū, that holds mana whenua over that area’.

Te Ao Māori – Māori world view.

Te Reo / Te Reo Māori – Māori language.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi – New Zealand’s founding document.

TLS – Treasury Living Standards.

Tūrangawaewae – Te Reo Māori for ‘where one has the right to stand’.

USD – United States Dollar.

VET – Dual Vocational Education and Training System.

Wage theft – Situations where employees are not paid for the work they have done.

Whakapapa – Te Reo Māori for ‘a line of descent from one’s ancestors’.

Whakatauki – Te Reo Māori for ‘proverb, significant saying’.

Whānau – Te Reo Māori for ‘family’.

YG – European Youth Guarantee.

The Impact Collective Operational Team



Tēnā koutou katoa
Ko Kōtirana te whakapaparanga mai engari
Ko Ahuriri te whenua tupu
Ko Ahuriri te kāinga
Kei Te Awahou au e noho ana
Ko Steve Carey tōku ingoa
Tēnā tatou katoa

Steve Carey Executive Director

A compelling sense of commitment to the community, to inspire, to acknowledge, to enable has driven the Impact Collective to support the removal of organisational and territorial boundaries to ensure positive impact for change is made possible. Bringing extensive experience in community engagement, authentic co-design principles has enabled the Impact Collective to deliver the presentation of data and people insights in a way that is mana enhancing for the people throughout the rohe.

Having worked in both public and private sector, I understand the importance of enabling those with lived experience and those who reside in the community to have a voice and be supported to remove the power imbalance in decision making. Only then can we enable communities to thrive.



Ko Ruahine te Pai Maunga
Ko Rangitikei te Awa
Ko Tākitimu te Waka
Ko Ngāti Hauiti tōku Iwi
No Whanganui ahau

Caleb Kingi Creative Director

I'm a cinematographer based in Whanganui. My craft has allowed me to travel over Aotearoa and the world shooting for a range of govt organisations, SME's, NGO's, brands and individuals.

I have a passion for telling stories that bring positive change to people, communities and organisations. I love the place I call home, it's my place of belonging and I feel privileged being connected to the whenua and the people.



Ko Whakarara te Maunga
Ko Wainui te Moana
Ko Mataatua te Waka
Ko Ngāpuhi tōku Iwi
No Whakatāne ahau

Briar Goldie

Senior Systems Strategist

I am a community researcher and strategist, but above all, a listener. My professional journey began in design. However, after experiencing first hand through my own mental health journey the power of holding space for others, my focus shifted. Now, my work and heart lie in creating spaces for people to share their stories and experiences.



Ko Ruapehu te Maunga
Ko Whanganui te Awa
Ko Aotea te Waka
Ko Te Āti Haunui a Pāpārangī rāua ko
Ngā Rauru Kiitahi ōku Iwi
No Whanganui ahau

Dayna Stevenson

Systems Strategist

As an experienced researcher with a passion for community engagement, I am privileged to use community voices and lived experiences to shape the transformative work we do at the Impact Collective.

By actively listening to the community and their needs in all aspects of my work, I am able to provide valuable insights, strategies, and outcomes. These contributions not only align with my personal values but also resonate with the collective goals of our team.

Dedication to equity and well-being is at the heart of what we do, guiding us as we strive to create empowering, meaningful and sustainable impact in the communities we serve.

The Impact Collective Operational Team



Tēnā koutou katoa
Ko Aerana te whakapaparanga mai engari
Ko Te Papaioea te kāinga
Kei Te Papaioea au e noho ana
Ko Josh Ace tōku ingoa
Tēnā tatou katoa

Josh Ace Senior Designer

I am an experienced graphic designer based in Palmerston North with 10 years in the industry. I enjoy the challenge of telling stories visually and have been lucky enough to have undertaken a wide scope of work with various companies throughout Aotearoa.

All of the skills learnt from those endeavours will serve me well in the exciting future opportunities and mahi with the Impact Collective Team.

“Employment isn’t just about earning a living; it’s about dignity, purpose, and the ability to contribute meaningfully to society. Addressing systemic barriers to employment, such as discrimination and inadequate support, is crucial for fostering equitable opportunities and ensuring that everyone can achieve their full potential.

Steve Carey
Executive Director
Impact Collective





Our Kaupapa

For our people, our whenua and our communities. Working together to gather data and people insights across our region to inform and support the best actions to improve equity and wellbeing for all of our people.

Our Principles

Unite together

Breaking down silos and developing genuine and enduring relationships between communities and organisations.

Listen together

Listening and emphasising to ensure everybody within our communities have an opportunity to share their knowledge and lived experiences.

Act together

Working collaboratively to uncover and take action on collective insights, knowledge and experiences.

Our Promises

1 We strive to create equity and wellbeing for all - Through breaking down traditional organisational and territorial boundaries and focusing on our communities holistically, the Impact Collective strives to enrich foundational data with people's lived experiences in order to support the co-design of pathways and initiatives across our region that will create positive and enduring impact for all.

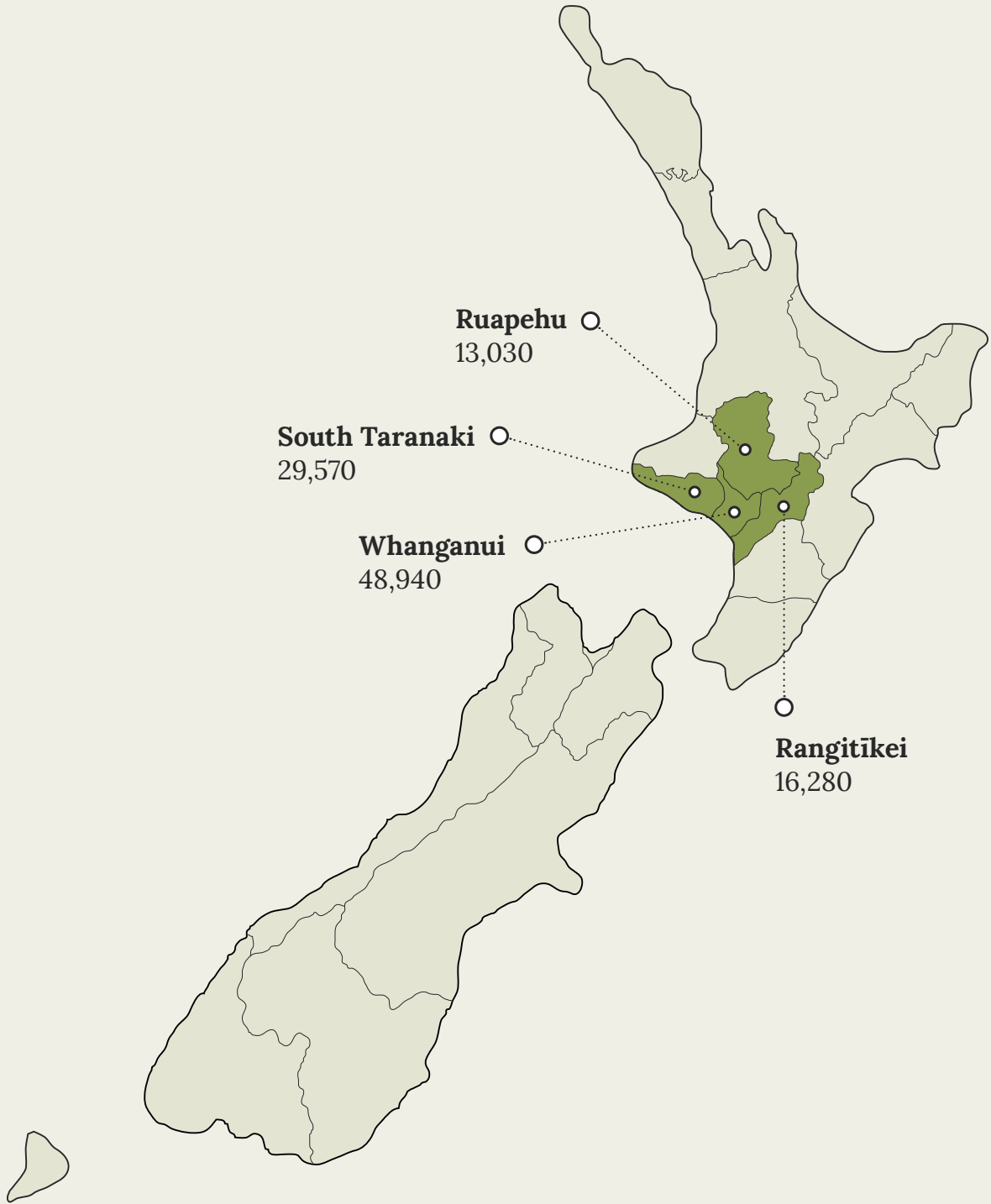
We seek to shift from viewing our communities solely in terms of health, wealth, access, or vulnerability, to viewing it in terms of the whole person and their whānau – a mana-enhancing approach.

- 2 We serve our people, our whenua and our communities** - We are for all individuals, communities and organisations, should they be tangata whenua, tūrangawaewae to the region, or align to the purpose of the Impact Collective.
- 3 We utilise a collective response** - In response to the goals and aspirations of our communities, the Impact Collective will seek not only the data, but also the real-life stories and lived experiences that sit behind it. The data is just our starting point – the stories will provide us with a wealth of insight and the 'why'.

Together, these provide the foundation for us to craft truly collective insights representative of what matters most to our communities.

Our Communities

On the facing page, we highlight the communities across Aotearoa New Zealand where we've had the opportunity to engage deeply and complete comprehensive Equity and Wellbeing Profiles. These profiles represent our ongoing commitment to understanding and capturing the unique strengths and opportunities of each community. As we move forward, our aim is to expand this valuable work, creating profiles for more communities throughout Aotearoa to enrich our collective understanding.



Source: Dot Loves Data, Community Compass Dashboard.

Figure 1 - Snapshot of Communities Engaged by Impact Collective.

Executive Summary

The “Pathways to Equity and Wellbeing: Taking Action for Systemic Change” report, authored by the Impact Collective in collaboration with Blindspot New Zealand Limited, delves into the intricate issue of financial health and employment within Aotearoa New Zealand communities. This comprehensive report underscores the need for systemic transformation to foster equitable employment opportunities and financial stability for all citizens. This is part one of two, focusing on the employment concerns, part two will focus on the financial health concerns.

The report identifies employment as a critical factor affecting socio-economic stability, mental health, and overall community wellbeing. It highlights the multifaceted barriers to employment, including systemic discrimination, inadequate educational preparation, and insufficient support for marginalised groups such as Māori, women, and people with disabilities. The impact of these barriers is further compounded by historical and ongoing colonisation effects, particularly on Māori communities.

Emphasising an integrative approach grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles, the report advocates for policies and interventions that promote tino rangatiratanga (self-determination), equity, active protection, options, and partnership. The dual-phased methodology employed in the report combines data-driven insights with community narratives to create a holistic understanding of employment challenges and opportunities.

The report’s core strategy involves leveraging global frameworks, national policies, and local knowledge to develop co-designed solutions that are sustainable and community-focused. By engaging with diverse community voices and utilising robust data analysis, the report provides a comprehensive roadmap for addressing employment-related disparities. It emphasises the importance of community-led initiatives and continuous evaluation to ensure these efforts effectively enhance financial health and employment outcomes.

Ultimately, the report calls for a collaborative effort across all sectors to dismantle the systemic barriers hindering equitable employment. It envisions a future where empowered communities actively contribute to a more just and prosperous society, underpinned by principles of equity and partnership.

Whaowhia te kete mātauranga.
Fill your basket of knowledge.

Disclaimer and Acknowledgement of Research Scope

As we navigate the complexities of employment, it is crucial to acknowledge that this report serves merely as an entry point into a much broader conversation. While we strive for accuracy and depth, we acknowledge our role as facilitators of conversation rather than experts in the field. This report, derived from a high-level analysis of data, literature and community insights, underscores the need for further research and deeper investigation. Such efforts are essential to fully comprehend the complexity of the issue and to develop effective, informed actions for addressing employment-related disparities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We therefore invite our readers to approach this report not just as a collection of insights, but as an open call for further inquiry, discussion, and action.



Context Framing



Our Equity and Wellbeing Framework



Figure 2 — Impact Collective Equity and Wellbeing Framework.

Think global, align national, act local.

In order to identify opportunities and measure outcomes within our communities, we have developed a three-tier framework encompassing global, national, and local equity and wellbeing frameworks.

Together, these provide us with over 150 individual indicators with which we can measure equity and wellbeing – acting as a benchmarking tool to begin to explore data insights within our region and identify priority areas that we will seek to understand in much more detail.

The purpose of this combination of global, national, and local frameworks is to ensure that we encompass all elements of equity and wellbeing. While the goals of each can be individually interpreted, each goal has a relationship with all other elements - as such, we have designed the framework to represent the most logical alignments.

Whānau Ora Goals

Whānau Ora is an innovative approach to improving whānau wellbeing that puts whānau at the centre of decision making. The Whānau Ora approach focuses on the whānau as a whole and addresses individual needs within the context of the whānau. Whilst this is a National Framework, the focus on individuals and whānau as its core tenant has inspired the Impact Collective to place these goals at the heart of our framework.

Whānau are supported to identify the aspirations they have to improve their lives and build their capacity to achieve their goals. Iwi and the Crown have agreed to a shared Whānau Ora Outcomes Framework to guide their work to improve outcomes for whānau.

The Outcomes Framework confirms that Whānau Ora is achieved when whānau are self-managing, living healthy lifestyles, participating fully in society, confidently participating in Te Ao Māori, economically secure and successfully involved in wealth creation, cohesive, resilient and nurturing and responsible stewards of their natural and living environments.

Treasury Living Standards

The Living Standards Framework (LSF) represents a perspective on what matters for New Zealanders' wellbeing, now and into the future. It is a flexible framework that prompts our thinking about policy impacts across the different dimensions of wellbeing, as well as the long-term and distributional issues and implications.

Updated in October 2021, the LSF consists of three levels - Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand, Our Institutions and Governance and Our Individual and Collective Wellbeing. Level One, Our Individual and Collective Wellbeing, includes 12 domains that have been shown to be important for the wellbeing of both individuals and collectives, such as families, whānau and communities of place, identity and interest. Level Two, Our Institutions and Governance, refers to formal rules, informal norms, and the formal and informal organisations those rules and norms are embedded within.

Institutions are often nested in complex relationships. Level Three, outlines the four categories of Wealth of Aotearoa New Zealand; natural environment, financial and physical capital, social cohesion and human capability. These categories recognise that wealth generation in Aotearoa New Zealand is not limited to the historical categorisation of 'GDP', but rather the wider determinants of wealth creation - including our people and our environment.

United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling environmental and climate concerns and working to preserve our oceans and forests.



Our Methods



A Dual-phased Approach

1



Seek the data

Collating and analysing the data insights through the lens of our frameworks.

2



Understand through stories

Engaging with communities and organisations within our rohe to ensure the insights are understood through a lived experience lens.

3



Identify insights and priorities

Bringing together the stats and stories to determine what matters the most to our rohe.

Phase One

In Phase One, we gather and present community level insights through Equity and Wellbeing profiles, which represent the collective strengths, barriers, and opportunities of specific regions. Phase One includes steps 1, 2, and 3 of our methodology.

To date, we have completed four Equity and Wellbeing profiles, dedicated to highlighting the unique characteristics of the Whanganui, Rangitīkei, Ruapehu, and South Taranaki communities.

4



Bridging to Pathways

Explore complex community concerns across systemic, national, and local contexts, highlighting their nature and identifying opportunities for communities to drive meaningful change.

5



Supporting Pathways

Supporting communities and organisations within our rohe to collectively co-design pathways/ initiatives that have a positive and enduring impact.

6



Evaluating Impact

Evaluate the impact of initiatives through our Impact Assessment Reports, using before-and-after data comparisons and community insights, to validate their effectiveness.

Phase Two

In Phase Two, we help empower community organisations, Iwi, and government agencies to leverage insights from our Equity and Wellbeing profiles so that they can pinpoint opportunities for community-led initiatives that aim to respond directly to community needs. The Impact Collective can assist by working alongside changemakers to bring community members together for the co-design of these initiatives. Covering steps 4, 5, and 6 of our dual-phased approach, Phase Two is where action begins to take shape.

Alongside this, the Impact Collective intends to conduct an Impact Assessment Report to demonstrate the impact various initiatives have had on addressing the strengths, barriers, and opportunities of each community. While we understand that initiatives can take time to demonstrate impact, by leveraging a maturity-based system, we will be able to monitor and support these new initiatives, helping to validate the effectiveness of their efforts through data and insights gathered from people at the community level.

The aim of the Impact Collective's work is to continue on an ongoing basis, following a continuous cycle of the two phases and their respective steps for the regions we serve.

Phase One—Delivery of the Equity and Wellbeing Profiles

Phase One commences upon request, with the aim to meet the evolving needs of our communities on a continuous basis.

This phase encompasses the initial three steps of our process, tailored to gather deep insights from the unique perspectives within our communities. These steps include:

- 1 Seeking the data.
- 2 Understanding through stories.
- 3 Identifying insights and priorities.

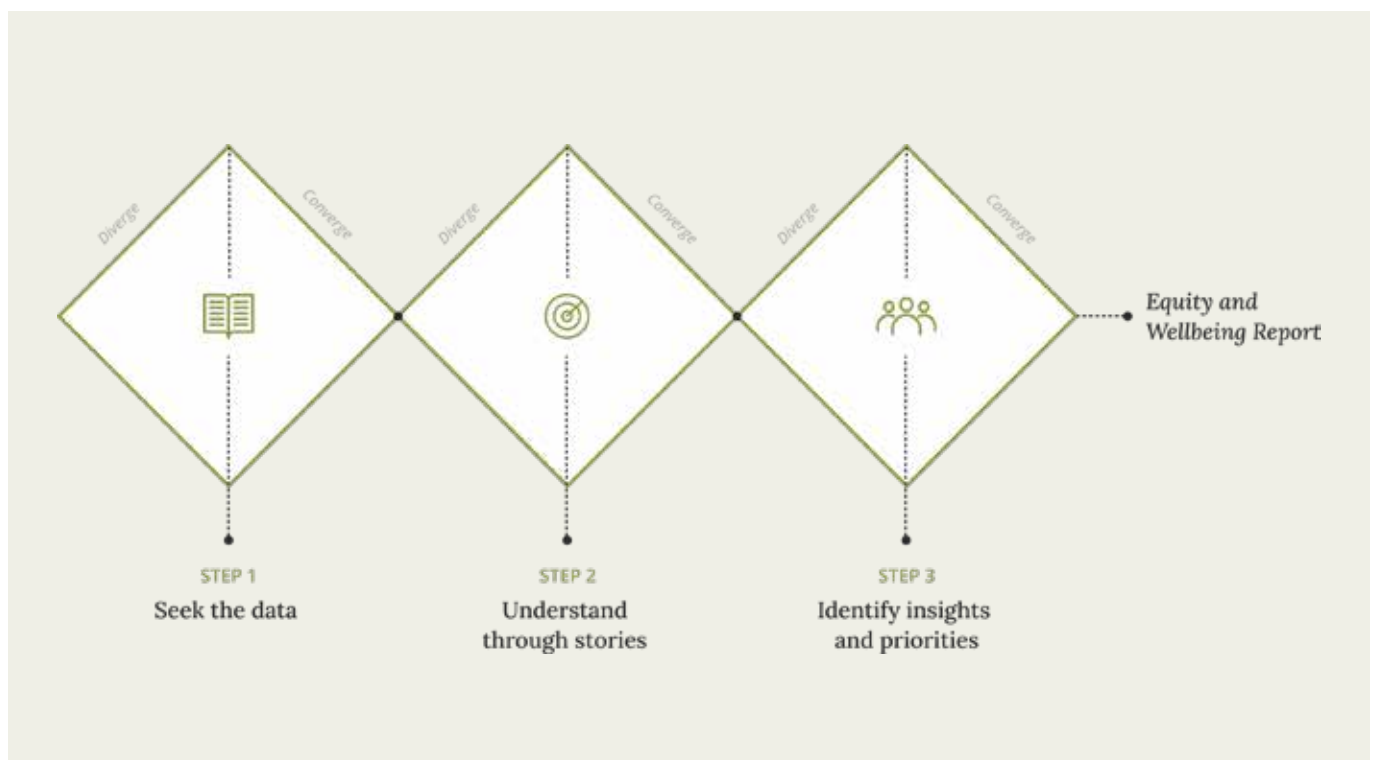


Figure 3 - Phase One of the Impact Collective Process.

Step 1—Seeking the Data.

This step involves collating and analysing data insights through the lenses of our frameworks. Central to this is the Community Compass Dashboard, which pulls up-to-date data from over 100 data sources to measure how communities within Aotearoa New Zealand are tracking. These include over 150 individual indicators that we are able to measure against.

This provides us with a tool to explore data insights with members of our community, and identify areas that require a deeper understanding through their lived experiences.

Tasks included in this step:

- Collate, analyse, and cleanse data.
- Identify key areas for further exploration through community workshops.

The Community Compass Dashboard

This dashboard has been developed by our data partner, DOT Loves Data, which has an incredibly talented team of data scientists and data engineers specialising in building simple, smart, and beautiful data visualisation tools.

The dashboard itself is a leading tool in New Zealand that achieves as close to real-time and collective data representation of equity and wellbeing across our communities as possible, unlocking the potential to track and measure the impact of certain initiatives within our communities across the systems they exist within.

It brings together cross-sector statistics to understand the components and dynamics of community wellbeing from multiple perspectives. While it provides a means to measure progress towards wellbeing objectives, this data is most valuable when contextualised alongside community stories and experiences. This dashboard is innovative in measuring wellbeing at the sub-national and local levels and also highlights current data gaps in understanding wellbeing for Māori.

Data sources

The Community Compass dashboard draws from many validated national and regional data sources to ensure comprehensive coverage across all frameworks and indicators. It was important for the Impact Collective to present data from these validated sources to ensure that, when working with our communities and agencies, the data presented reflects the information held by the government. This will better enable the data to be used by communities when developing community-led services. The primary data sources are listed below:

- NZ Census of Populations and Dwellings (Statistics NZ)
- Ministry of Social Development
- Tenancy Services
- ACC
- Statistics NZ
- Statistics NZ - Child poverty data
- Statistics NZ - New Zealand business demography statistics
- Eftpos NZ
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
- NZ Police
- DOT Loves Data
- Dynamic Deprivation Index: DOT Loves Data product
- Bizmomento - DOT Loves Data product
- Waka Kotahi
- NZ Transport Agency
- NZ Transport Agency Motor Vehicle Register
- Education Counts
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Health - Health survey
- Water New Zealand - National Performance Review
- Open Street Maps
- Electricity Authority
- HealthSpace
- Infometrics
- Chorus
- Tūao Aotearoa
- LAWA

Data gaps and limitations

Throughout the process of data collation, it has become evident that across Aotearoa New Zealand, there are areas where data collection is lacking or non-existent. For example, data can only be provided at a national level, or the intervals between data updates are slow. The significance of this cannot be understated, as it indicates a fundamental lack of quantitative data available to support communities in addressing issues that may be impacting them. Government agencies involved in these areas must support more regionalised and timely access to data to enable communities to design services to ensure a positive impact in the future.

It was also further identified that while ethnicity data is beginning to be collected more frequently, there is still a significant gap in what is being measured and how that impacts Māori communities and Māori service development. Throughout this report, we have ensured that the narratives of Māori participants are portrayed as authentically as they were gifted to us, and that where possible, Māori data is presented.



Step 2—Understanding Through Stories.

By gathering stories through engaging with individuals, groups, and organisations across diverse communities, we ensure the insights collected are understood through the lens of lived experiences. This ensures our insights remain genuine and reflective of the community's voice and prevents assumptions from being made.

We cannot understate the importance of this step. Without it, we risk relying on assumptions and potentially targeting the wrong issues, disconnected from the real needs of the community members who are most impacted.

Tasks included in this step:

- Facilitate Equity and Wellbeing Workshops with community organisations.
- Conduct in-depth Good Mahi Stories, and podcasts with inspiring individuals and groups across the community.

Equity and Wellbeing Workshops

The purpose of these workshops is to gather stories and lived experiences from communities across Aotearoa, directly from those actively working in and belonging to these communities.

The key objectives of these workshops:

- To understand their kaupapa (purpose) and why they exist.
- To identify the specific needs their organisation or group aims to address.
- To determine who their organisation or group partners with to meet these needs.
- To look beyond their day-to-day mahi (work) to identify and discuss broader community needs, challenges, strengths, and opportunities.
- To discuss current data insights from their community and identify whether they align with or differ from the lived experiences.

Over the course of our research, we have run approximately 94 workshops with over 400 individuals from across four regions, representing 130 organisations. Please see relevant Equity and Wellbeing profiles for individual acknowledgements.

‘Good Mahi’ Stories

In parallel with the workshops, we identified and captured success stories, known as Good Mahi Stories, of individuals, groups, or organisations contributing positively to their community. This allowed us to engage in one-on-one discussions with many local heroes, delving deeper into the needs they aim to address within the community.

Throughout our research, we gathered Good Mahi Stories from approximately 50 individuals, groups, or organisations. Each inspirational story is available on the Impact Collective website in the ‘Our Work’ section; please take a look when you have the time.

Qualitative Data Gaps and Limitations

While we aim to capture a diverse range of lived experiences to accurately reflect the strengths and opportunities of each region, we can face numerous challenges and gaps in gathering qualitative data. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to capturing and incorporating a wide array of lived experiences into our findings to ensure they accurately represent each region.





Step 3—Identifying Insights and Priorities.

In this step, we bring together the wealth of narratives collected through our research, alongside statistics, to pinpoint the areas that matter most to each community. These insights form the foundation of our Equity and Wellbeing Profiles, which aim to capture the collective strengths, challenges, and opportunities of each community.

Tasks within this step include:

- Synthesise stories from community engagements.
- Conduct thematic analysis to unearth insights.
- Validate and refine initial themes with community input.
- Identify systemic connections within our frameworks.
- Compile comprehensive Equity and Wellbeing reports.
- Present findings to stakeholders and the wider community.

Process Overview

Our Systems Strategists undertake a rigorous process to develop each Equity and Wellbeing profile. This begins with capturing the wealth of lived experiences shared during workshops and Good Mahi Stories. To achieve this, each narrative is meticulously transcribed and summarised as anonymised statements, utilising voice transcription tools for precision. A thorough thematic analysis follows, grouping and examining stories to uncover key insights that represent the community.

This initial analysis leads to a set of core themes, which are subsequently validated with the community to ensure that our findings accurately reflect the community's experiences. Feedback and additional narratives are then integrated, further refining these themes into their final iteration (see figure 4). At this stage, data is incorporated to enhance the analysis and a Community Systems Map is formed to articulate the interconnected nature of each theme. This comprehensive approach results in a detailed profile that showcases each community's unique strengths, challenges, opportunities, and success stories.

Goals of each Equity and Wellbeing Profile:

- To accurately reflect each community's voice and experience.
- To provide a holistic overview that merges lived experiences with data.
- To spotlight the invaluable contributions of community members and organisations.
- To identify and present the strengths, challenges, and opportunities of each region, inspiring community-led action that enhance existing strengths or overcome current barriers.

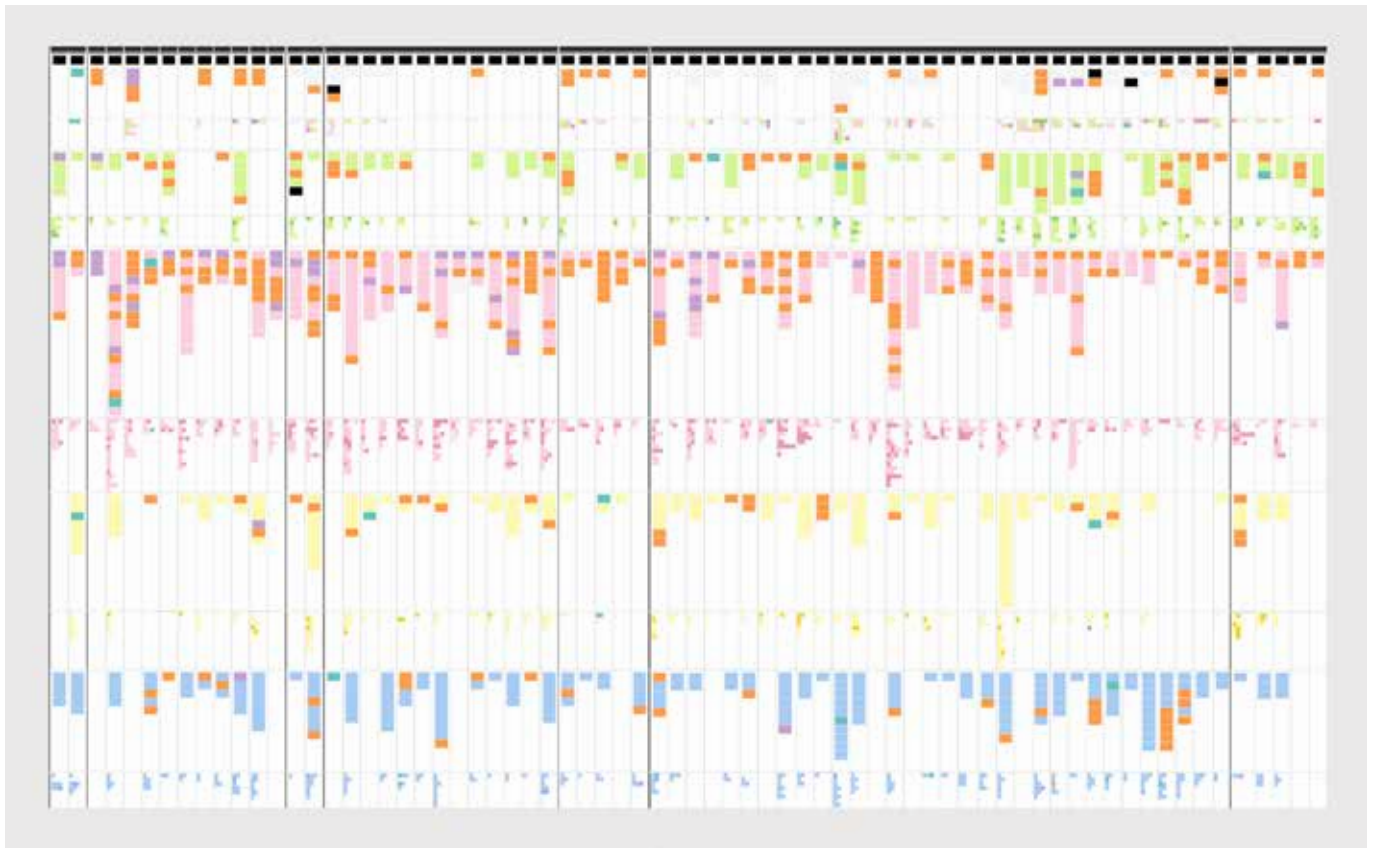


Figure 4 - Comprehensive Insights Map: Final Step in the Insights Process.

Engagement and Presentation:

We are prepared to present or discuss the Equity and Wellbeing Profiles' insights, either in person or online, to help you gain a deeper understanding of the findings nuances. For those interested in a more detailed discussion, we invite you to contact us directly to arrange a session.

Phase Two—Supporting Collective Action

Following the completion of the Equity and Wellbeing Profiles in Phase One, Phase Two initiates a strategic shift towards turning insights into community actions and initiatives.

This phase encompasses the remaining three steps of our process, designed to foster a collective approach to addressing the needs and opportunities within our communities. These steps include:

- 1 Bridging to Pathways.
- 2 Supporting Pathways.
- 3 Evaluating Impact.

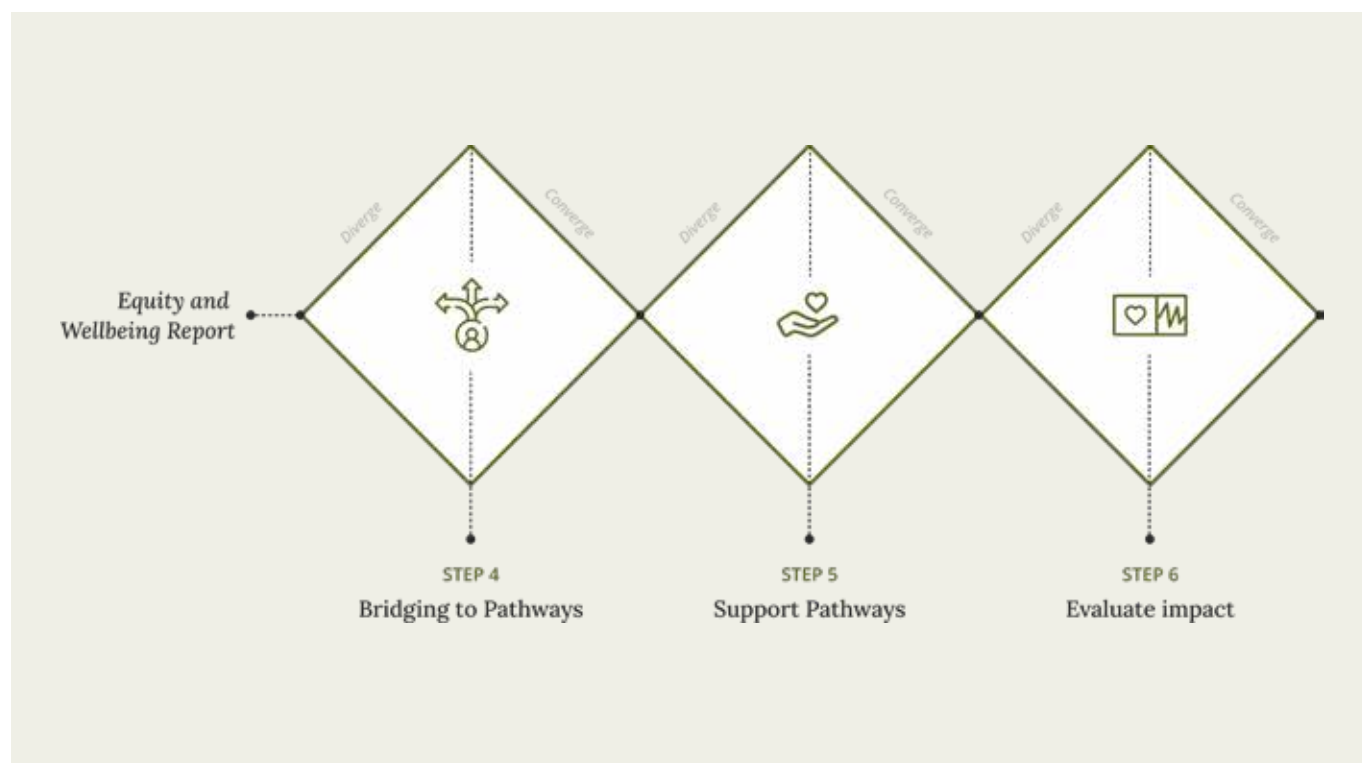


Figure 5 - Phase Two of the Impact Collective Process.

Step 4—Bridging to Pathways

This step serves as a bridge from understanding community needs to taking action to address them.

Here, we delve into specific complex community concerns, highlighting their nature across systemic, national, and local contexts and pinpointing opportunities for individuals, groups, and organisations to initiate meaningful change.

The Impact Collective does not intend to prescribe specific actions. Instead, this step aims to equip people with the knowledge and insights they need to forge their own pathways (with or without our support) towards greater equity and wellbeing.

Tasks included in this step:

- Perform high-level thematic analysis to identify key community concerns.
- Collate statistics to enhance our understanding of each concern.
- Review national literature and media to contextualise data and community findings.
- Understand community-specific concerns through a detailed review of local stories.
- Gather and document opportunities identified by the community.
- Highlight examples of successful organisations, models and interventions.

High-level Thematic Analysis

We begin with an expansive review of community findings to identify the most pressing concerns, referred to in this report as The Big Five. This step is conducted at a high-level, aiming to identify concerns that have widespread impact across different areas related to equity and wellbeing.

National Literature and Media Review

Following this, we compile national literature and media reports to underscore the significance of each complex community concern at a national scale. This review helps contextualise the data and community voices collected, ensuring that our analysis also resonates with the national discourse on these issues.

Local Findings Analysis

In parallel with the National Literature and Media Review, we gather stories from communities within Aotearoa New Zealand to identify and delve deeper into each complex community concern at a local level. This approach allows us to understand the key findings specific to each issue according to the community, enriching our insights and ensuring they are grounded in both data and the community's lived experiences.

Further enriching this analysis we re-engaged with organisations who are actively working to address specific concerns within their community. These discussions offer in-depth insights into the challenges and outcomes of specific issues, providing perspectives from experts in the field. These discussions aim to:

- Explore the contributing factors of social issues within communities.
- Understand the short-term and long-term impacts of these issues.
- Highlight broader challenges exacerbating these issues.
- Discuss successful local, national, and international interventions.
- Highlight specific individuals, groups, or organisations making a positive impact.
- Identify necessary short-term and long-term strategies for effectively addressing each concern.

In recognition of their contributions, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to each service provider willing to share their expertise and experience with us for this report. Special thanks to:

- MTFJ Whai Mahi (Mayors Taskforce for Jobs)
- Workbridge Whanganui

Considering the sensitive nature of many complex community concerns, we ensure the safety and sensitivity of those by focusing our discussions on those indirectly involved, such as industry experts and service providers, rather than direct engagement with affected individuals.

Opportunities from the Community

With insights in hand, we shift towards action-oriented strategies, starting with an extensive collection of community-identified opportunities, ideas, and pathways. These are articulated as clear opportunity statements, inviting readers to explore and engage with each further.

Success Stories and Local Good Mahi

We highlight the impactful work of various models, interventions, and organisations that have made a significant difference in addressing complex community concerns, drawing from both national and international examples.

Here, we also pay tribute to the Good Mahi undertaken by groups and organisations within Aotearoa New Zealand's communities. By featuring their dedicated efforts, we shine a light on the initiatives that are tackling complex community concerns head-on and highlight their invaluable contributions to fostering wellbeing at the community level.

Step 5—Supporting Pathways

This step marks the transition from gathering and analysing insights to enabling communities to take action.

The primary aim here is to support communities and organisations in collaboratively co-designing pathways and/or initiatives that will have a positive and enduring impact on equity and wellbeing. This involves building on the community-identified strengths and opportunities and translating these into tangible actions.

Tasks to support in this step:

- Present insights by sharing detailed findings from regional Equity and Wellbeing Profiles, offering an in-depth understanding of local needs and opportunities.
- Validate pathways and initiatives by collaborating with the community to evaluate the potential impact of proposed pathways and initiatives, ensuring they align with the insights previously identified.
- Co-facilitate sessions that bring diverse community voices together to collaboratively design interventions, initiatives, or services.
- Connect community groups with essential resources, such as funding opportunities, expert advice, and potential partnerships, to actualise co-designed plans.

Role of the Impact Collective

Our role at The Impact Collective is to facilitate and empower others to take action. By leveraging our expertise and the insights we've gathered, we aim to support and empower communities in discovering and implementing interventions, programmes, and services that drive positive change.

The Impact Collective will walk alongside the community to support the co-design process, bringing together community members, local leaders, and stakeholders to envision, plan, and enact further programmes of work, from exploratory research to implementing new services.

Step 6—Evaluating Impact

With many initiatives facing the common challenge of quantifying their impact to secure continued support or funding, this step is dedicated to understanding and measuring the impact of initiatives at the community level.

Through our Impact Assessment Reports, we evaluate the impact of initiatives through a before-and-after comparison of data and community insights. This comparative analysis not only validates the effectiveness of their efforts, but also surfaces new strengths and opportunities emerging within the community.

Additionally, we assess the impact of these initiatives in relation to the Impact Collective framework and the larger system they exist within, using community narratives as a guide.

This evaluation equips communities and service providers with the vital information needed to refine existing services or, if necessary, create new ones, ensuring that interventions remain effective and aligned with the needs of the communities they serve.

Tasks to support in this step:

- Gathering the latest data insights through the Community Compass dashboard.
- Collecting fresh community narratives through workshops, interviews, and Good Mahi Stories.
- Measuring change in both data and community perspectives.



Key Concerns



The Big Five

Drawing on insights gathered from our Equity and Wellbeing profiles and the latest data, we introduce The Big Five. These focus areas encompass the top five complex community concerns within the community. Not only do these concerns highlight key systemic challenges, but they also serve as the foundation for our series of Pathways to Equity and Wellbeing reports. In these reports, we will delve into each concern in more detail, aiming to understand their impacts and connections, with the ultimate goal of inspiring community-led action and fostering change where it is most needed.

Secondary Education

While education is a cornerstone of equity and wellbeing, schools grapple with a myriad of challenges that impact access to and quality of learning for many. Overpopulated schools, a one-size-fits-all curriculum, and prevalent bullying are among the critical challenges. These issues not only affect academic achievement but also student wellbeing and engagement, leading to an array of downstream impacts, such as low achievement rates and increased dropouts. Addressing these concerns includes, but is not limited to, tailoring curricula to diverse learning needs and fostering inclusive, safe learning environments to ensure every child can thrive in their educational setting.

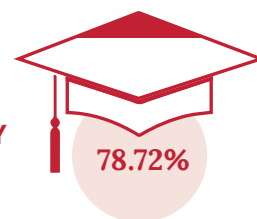
IN 2022, 52.64% OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND GRADUATED WITH NCEA LEVEL 3 AS THEIR HIGHEST QUALIFICATION.

Dot Loves Data, Community Compass Dashboard.



IN 2022, 78.72% OF NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WERE 17 YEARS OR OLDER WHEN THEY COMPLETED HIGH SCHOOL.

Dot Loves Data, Community Compass Dashboard.



Financial Health and Employment

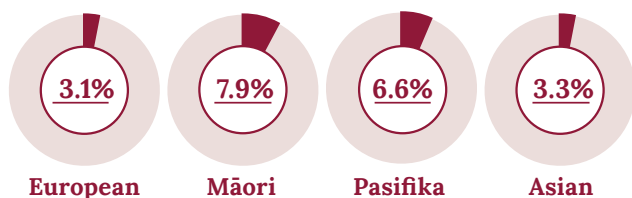
The economic landscape within our regions reveals a complex interplay of unemployment and financial insecurity that underpins community equity and wellbeing. Financial health and stable employment are foundational to the prosperity of individuals, families, and communities. Yet, current economic challenges, including high unemployment rates, the escalating cost of living, and increasing levels of debt, not only exacerbate financial strain but also contribute to a cascade of related social issues, such as substance abuse, family harm, and mental health struggles, ultimately perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Addressing this concern is undoubtedly complex; however, by ensuring communities have access to the opportunities and support they need, we can pave the way for a more prosperous future where families can thrive.

AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024,
**THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD
 INCOME IN NEW ZEALAND
 STANDS AT \$99,424.**

Source: Dot Loves Data, Community
 Compass Dashboard.

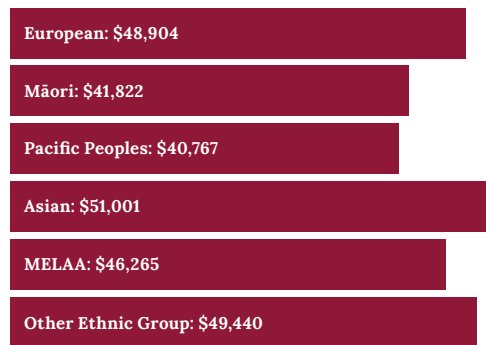


IN DECEMBER 2023, THE **UNEMPLOYMENT RATES
 ACROSS DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS** WERE AS
 FOLLOWS:



Dot Loves Data, Community Compass Dashboard.

**THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD EQUIVALISED
 DISPOSABLE INCOME**, WHICH IS CALCULATED AS
 HOUSEHOLD INCOME MINUS HOUSEHOLD COSTS,
STANDS AT \$47,534. HERE IS THE BREAKDOWN BY
 ETHNICITY:



Dot Loves Data, Community Compass Dashboard.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and trauma are widespread, significantly affecting the quality of life and wellbeing of individuals and their families. The causes of mental health concerns are multifaceted, including factors such as isolation and economic stress, and can lead to various downstream effects like family harm and suicide. Barriers to accessing care, including long waiting times, high costs, and insufficient crisis support, exacerbate these challenges. The widespread impact of mental health concerns underscores the urgent need not only to address immediate needs but also to tackle the deeper factors contributing to mental distress. By ensuring that mental health support is accessible, inclusive, and effective, we can create a supportive environment where everyone has access to the resources they need.

THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WITH POOR MENTAL WELLBEING, IS UP FROM 22 PERCENT IN 2018 TO 28 PERCENT IN 2021.

General Social Survey, Statistics New Zealand, 2022.

1 IN 5 ADULTS AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER ARE DIAGNOSED WITH A MOOD AND/OR ANXIETY DISORDER.

Ministry of Health, 2019.



IN 2022, 58% OF YOUNG PEOPLE REPORTED HAVING GOOD TO EXCELLENT MENTAL HEALTH, WHILE 28% SAID THEY HAD EXPERIENCED SERIOUS DISTRESS.

Ministry of Social Development, Youth Health and Wellbeing Survey (2022).

DEMAND FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES IS INCREASING. OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ACCESSING SECONDARY MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES HAS INCREASED BY 10 PERCENT.

Ministry of Health, 2021.



Rental and Emergency Housing

Across Aotearoa New Zealand, secure and affordable housing remains an elusive goal for many. The apparent housing crisis, characterised by a critical shortage of affordable, secure, and quality homes, stands as a significant barrier to equity and wellbeing. This crisis leads to devastating downstream impacts, including homelessness, housing insecurity, and compromised health, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable in our society, such as low-income families, single households, and those with disabilities. Addressing this crisis requires a comprehensive approach to ensure that everyone in our community has access to their fundamental right: a safe, affordable home. By tackling the housing crisis, we can pave the way towards a more equitable and healthy future for all residents.

THE MEDIAN RENTAL PRICE IN NEW ZEALAND AS OF JANUARY 2024 IS \$554.11.

Dot Loves Data, Community Compass Dashboard.



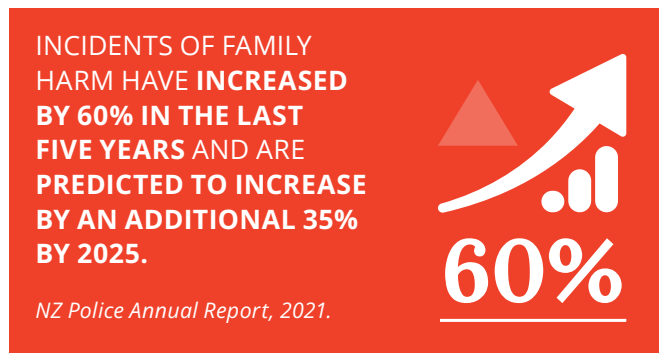
ON AVERAGE, NEW ZEALAND HOUSEHOLDS SPEND 28.98% OF THEIR INCOME ON RENT EXPENSES.

Dot Loves Data, Community Compass Dashboard.



Family Harm

Family harm, a critical symptom of broader societal issues deeply entrenched within our communities, has devastating impacts on individuals and their families. Perpetuated by factors including economic stress, substance abuse, and trauma, the prevalence and severity of family harm, described by some as an epidemic, leads to long-term psychological, physical, and social consequences for those directly and indirectly involved. The significance of these impacts underscores the necessity for intervention, including improved support services and community awareness, to break the cycle of harm and ensure safety and support for individuals and their families so that they can thrive across generations.



INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE STANDS AS THE LEADING CAUSE OF FEMALE HOMICIDE DEATHS AND REMAINS THE MOST PREVALENT FORM OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN.

Professor Julia Gerrard/Dr Ian Lambie, Every 4 minutes: A discussion paper on preventing family violence in New Zealand, Office of the Prime Minister, 2018.



A Closer Look: Financial Health and Employment: Part 1



To pave the way for meaningful action, it's essential to first gain a deeper understanding of the concerns that prevent us from achieving equity and wellbeing. "A Closer Look" is dedicated to this purpose by delving into the complex community concern of Financial Health and Employment. This report represents part one of a two-part series aimed at understanding this concern through systemic, national, and local lenses, utilising quantitative data, and community narratives.

Given the broad scope of this complex community concern, we are initially focusing on employment due to its fundamental role in financial wellbeing. Within this section, we examine the barriers to employment in Aotearoa New Zealand and identify strengths within the employment landscape. By pinpointing these barriers and strengths, we aim to highlight where attention is required to improve employment-related disparities and, ultimately, enhance the financial health of all.

What's in this Section:

- **Problem Statement:** This foundational summary, serving as the cornerstone of our exploration, outlines the employment landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand. It sets the scene for the report and helps the reader grasp the intricacies of the issue.
- **Framework Alignment:** In this section, we revisit the Impact Collective Framework and how the topic of employment aligns with global, national, and local frameworks, demonstrating its wider impact on equity and wellbeing.
- **System Map:** This visual representation captures the complex ecosystem of employment. This tool is instrumental in capturing the web of factors that influence and are influenced by the topic.
- **Systemic Context:** Using data, national research, and community insights, this section provides a baseline understanding of the employment landscape, highlighting foundational themes that shape and add context to the topic.
- **National Context:** Drawing from national research, literature, and media reports, this section situates our findings within the broader context of Aotearoa New Zealand.
- **Local Context:** Anchored in lived experiences, this section captures the employment landscape from the community's perspective, translating findings into relatable human stories.

Problem Statement

Financial health and employment are fundamental pillars of equity and wellbeing for individuals, families, and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. Employment, or more precisely, unemployment, significantly impacts socio-economic stability, mental and physical wellbeing, and overall quality of life. The employment landscape is shaped by various factors, including job availability, workforce skills, and educational attainment, as well as systemic barriers that disproportionately affect certain demographics, such as Māori, women, youth, and those with disabilities. Despite efforts to improve employment rates and job quality, unemployment remains a persistent issue that can perpetuate financial instability and other downstream concerns.

To improve equity and wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is essential to support people, particularly those from marginalised groups, in accessing, gaining, and maintaining meaningful employment—employment that offers purpose, opportunities for skill development, and a sustainable wage. By addressing employment-related issues and leveraging the existing strengths within our communities, we have the potential to tackle underlying issues contributing to inequity and work towards a better future for everyone.

Framework Alignment

In this section, we circle back to the Impact Collective Framework, an essential tool that ties together global, national, and local perspectives through the lenses of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Living Standards Framework, and Whānau Ora Goals. This framework enables us to systematically assess how employment touches on critical areas of the human experience, highlighting its extensive impact on equity and wellbeing at various levels.

The visual representation provided (see figure 6) is designed to clearly illustrate the various touchpoints of employment across global, national, and local contexts. These encompass Sustainable Development Goals, such as Decent Work and Economic Growth, Industry Innovation and Infrastructure, Gender Equality, Quality Education, Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities and Communities, No Poverty.

To navigate the visual representation effectively:

- Full-coloured segments indicate areas most impacted by employment, highlighting where the employment has significant influence in equity and wellbeing.
- Half-coloured segments highlight areas partially impacted by employment, suggesting a moderate influence on equity and wellbeing.
- Grey segments represent areas not directly impacted by employment, highlighting its limited influence.

This framework alignment not only highlights the multidimensional nature of employment in Aotearoa New Zealand but also showcases how addressing this topic has the potential of positively impacting diverse aspects of equity and wellbeing.



Figure 6 - Impact Collective Equity and Wellbeing Framework: The Impact of Employment on Equity and Wellbeing.

Understanding the Employment Ecosystem

Community System Map

Before diving into the Employment Ecosystem, let's first examine the landscape of interconnected social issues as shown in the Community System Map from previous Equity and Wellbeing profiles. These maps showcase the complex interplay between themes such as employment, education, and crime, demonstrating their impact on specific communities, such as the South Taranaki district (see Figure 7).

The Community Systems Map not only highlights the complexity of and relationships between these themes but also sets the stage for a more focused exploration surrounding employment. For a detailed view of the Community System Map, refer to the 'Snapshot of the Community' section within our Equity and Wellbeing Profiles.

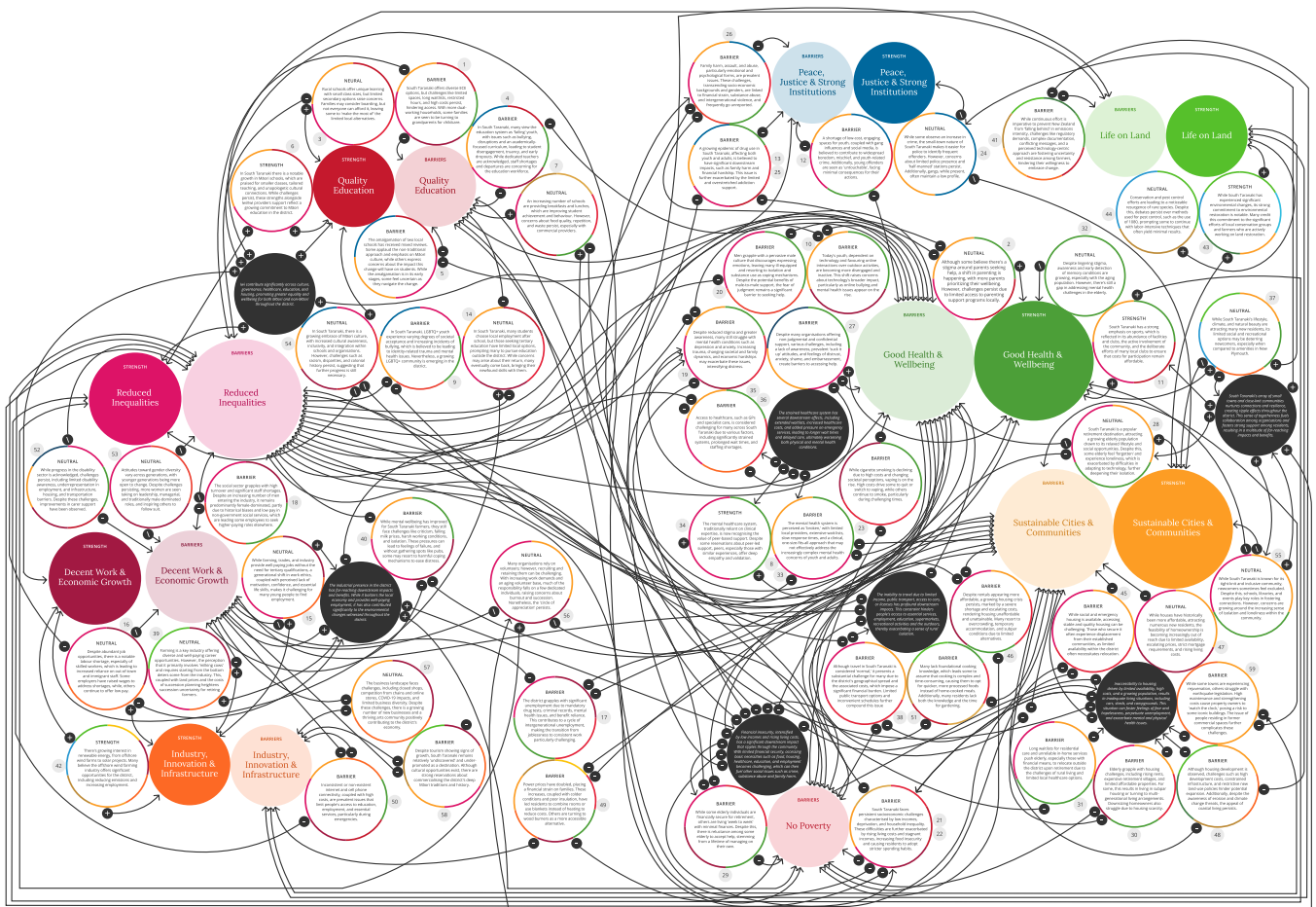


Figure 7 - Example of Community Systems Map: South Taranaki District.

As we shift our focus from the broader landscape captured by the Community System Map, we zoom in on the topic of employment (see figure 8). This closer perspective allows us to uncover the specific themes, and their relationships, that uniquely contribute to this concern.

On the next page, there's a visual representation called the Employment Ecosystem (see figure 9). This visualisation combines findings from both local and national levels to illustrate the complex interactions of causes, effects, and influences related to employment. It provides an overview of the factors impacting employment in Aotearoa New Zealand. Further details on many aspects of this map will be discussed in the subsequent sections of the report.

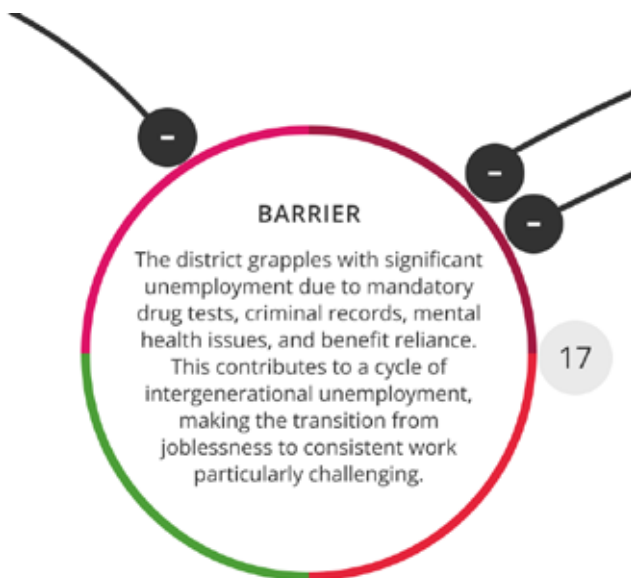


Figure 8 - Example of Community Systems Map: Focusing on Employment in South Taranaki.

Employment Ecosystem

KEY

- Barriers that impact employment directly or indirectly
- Strengths that support employment directly or indirectly
- Neutrals that can both impact and support employment
- + Positive impact
- Negative impact
- ↘ Neutral impact
- Direction and connection

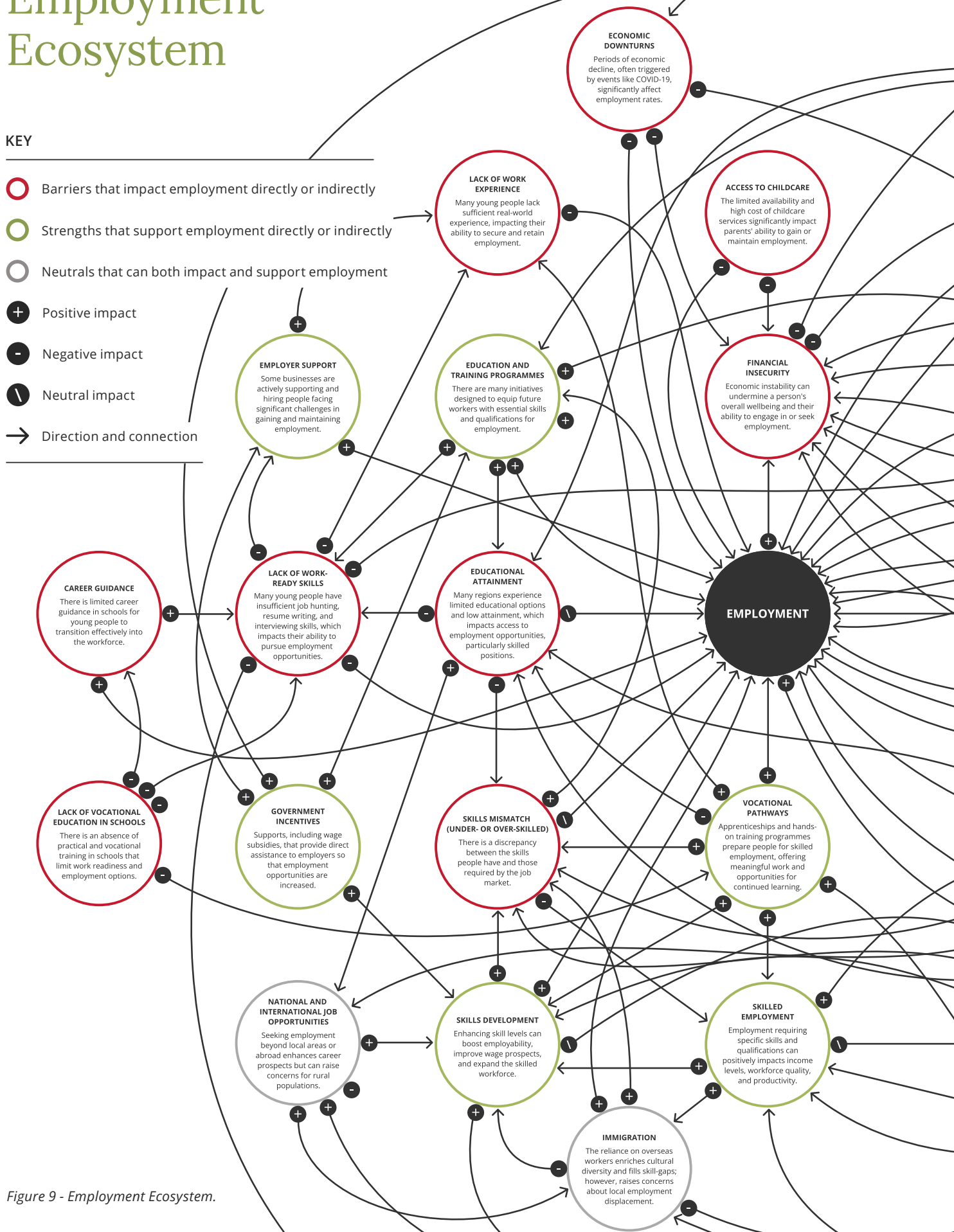
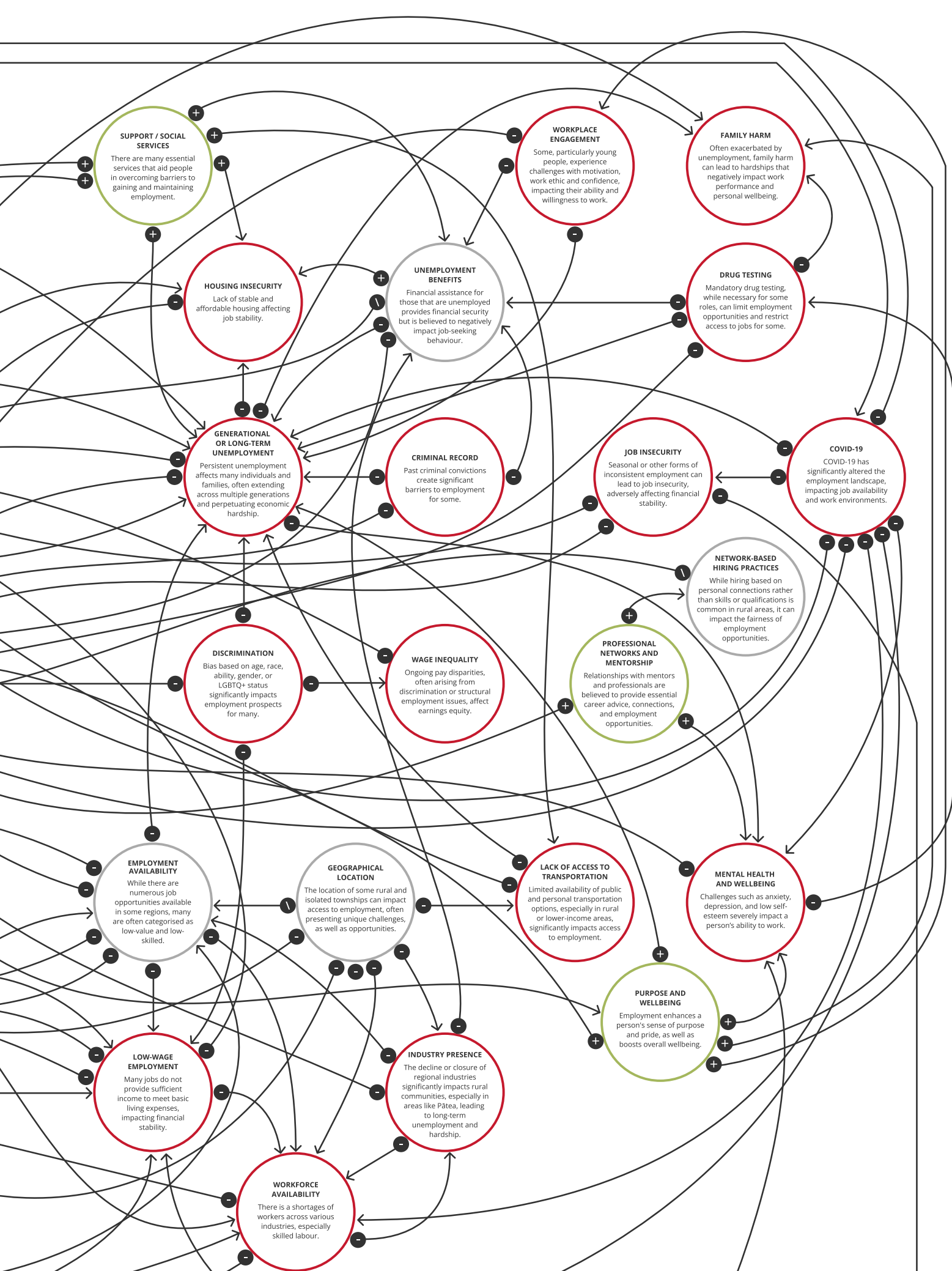


Figure 9 - Employment Ecosystem.



Systemic Context

Foundational insights

This section highlights foundational insights focused on systemic issues, such as age, gender, and cultural factors, that are deeply embedded within the employment landscape. By using data, national research, and local stories, this section provides a broad perspective of the systemic challenges at play, laying the groundwork for more detailed analyses in the National and Local Contexts sections.

Age

Research highlights several barriers faced by mature job-seekers, defined as individuals aged 40 and above. Employers' attitudes towards older workers and ageism emerge as prominent obstacles, with many older individuals identifying age discrimination as a key issue preventing them from participating in the workforce (Davey, 2003; Ministry of Social Development, 2006). Additionally, pay expectations, obsolete skills, and a lack of up-to-date credentials among mature employees create further employment barriers (Davey, 2003), indicating the need for more inclusive and supportive employment practices for mature job-seekers.

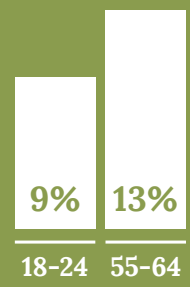
“Perceived barriers were explored at two levels - general and personal. At a general level mature job-seekers clearly identify ageism as a significant barrier” (Ministry of Social Development, 2006, p. 36).

“Age discrimination is often cited as a barrier to participation in work” (Davey, 2003, p. 162).

“Employers' attitudes to lack of flexibility about work conditions because of other commitments, experience in previous jobs and expectation of salary” (Ministry of Social Development, 2006, p. 32).

“Obsolete skills and lack of credentials can limit older workers' employability, while opportunities for retraining are often insufficient” (Davey, 2003, p. 161).

IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND,
9% OF YOUNG ADULTS AGED
18-24 RECEIVE A BENEFIT.
THIS INCREASES TO 11% FOR
THOSE AGED 25-39, 10% FOR
THOSE AGED 40-54, AND 13%
FOR PEOPLE AGED 55-64.



Ministry of Social Development, Benefit Fact Sheets, March 2024.

APPROXIMATELY 42% OF JOB SEEKERS AGED 55 AND OLDER BELIEVE THEIR JOB APPLICATIONS WERE REJECTED DUE TO THEIR AGE.

42%



Massey University (2021).

27% OF JOB SEEKERS AGED 55 AND OLDER ADMIT TO ALTERING THEIR JOB APPLICATIONS TO AVOID AGE-BASED DISCRIMINATION.

27%



Massey University (2021).

Gender

Many within the community believe there has been a significant increase in female leadership, both locally and nationally, setting a strong example for more women to step into leadership roles. This representation is evident in various sectors, including farming, council, and Iwi, where more women are stepping into management and leadership. Despite this progress, research highlights that the glass ceiling effect and stereotypical concepts of female leadership present significant barriers for women, often stalling their progress at middle management. Combined with the difficulty of breaking into the 'old boys club' and the fact that men still hold the majority of leadership roles in some sectors, this suggests there is still a long way to go (Kuntz & Livingston, 2023).

“There is a lot of women leadership, but there is a very heavy old boys club in this town. And it’s almost impossible to break into.

“Mokai Patea is led by a woman, Taihape Health Centre, the manager is a woman, Work and Income, the managers are women. The R.E.A.P manager is a woman. In Taihape, we are far more progressive.

“Even though people don’t like Jacinda and what she did, I think she was a really good strong woman role model, and that helps with gender equality—as much as people picked on her. Even looking back at Helen Clark. That helps.

“It’s only the first term that we’ve had such significant

female representation, with so many women. So it’s exciting. I believe that is leading the way for more women to come through.

“In the PSGE (post settlement governance entity) space that I work in, we have eight Taranaki Iwi, and the three southern Iwi, which we consider the Aotea collective, are all women CEOs. All the other five are men.

“There are definitely more women in council now compared to when I started.

“Council at one stage was 70% female, and it’s probably still the same. When I first started, it was like that. I came from the military prior to going to council, where we did have women in leadership roles. But when I came to council, I was the only guy on our team of nine, and in our wider group.

“We were female-heavy in our top-tier management for a number of years. Kōkiri, women; Ngāti Rangī, women; the high school, women.

“I know there are a lot of women in management in the Iwi organisations, there are quite a lot.

“I would have put women higher than that here in Taihape. Two of our major businesses in town are run by women. There are two industries that employ over 40 employees each and are female-led.

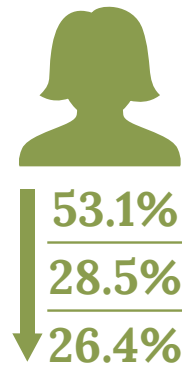
“Women in leadership roles are becoming more common, and it’s good.

“In the social sector, in the social service side of it, it’s predominantly more women. But in the leadership side of it, I’d still say the majority are male.

“Accounts of glass ceiling effect suggest that women are at a significant disadvantage with regards to upward mobility in an organisation, and their ascent often stalls at the middle management level.” (Kuntz & Livingston, 2023, p. 36).

“Despite the growing number of New Zealand organisations allocating resources to improve diversity management, and the mounting evidence suggesting that diversity-friendly environments are associated with higher perceptions of leadership efficacy and career potential, our findings reveal that stereotypical conceptions of female leaders are still pervasive, and negatively impact women’s careers and leadership advancement.” (Kuntz & Livingston, 2023, p. 43).

IN NEW ZEALAND, WOMEN HOLD 53.1% OF PUBLIC SECTOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE ROLES. HOWEVER, THEY REPRESENT ONLY 28.5% OF ALL DIRECTOR POSITIONS AND 26.4% OF EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN COMPANIES LISTED ON THE NZX.



Ministry for Women (2022).

Community insights and academic research highlights that significant pay disparities persist despite efforts to close the gender pay gap, especially within traditionally female-dominated sectors like social services. While there has been progress in gender equality in employment, men are believed to earn more than women regardless of similar experience or qualifications, indicating that there is still significant work to be done to address these disparities comprehensively (Kuntz & Livingston, 2023).

“One positive development is the pay equality that is starting to be rolled out. A lot of our MSD and Oranga Tamariki contracts are now providing funding to properly pay social workers because now a social worker is a registered title.

“I remember fighting for pay parity and saying to my boss, ‘Hey, why aren’t I worth as much? I do the same job.’ It’s just been women plugging away. It wasn’t a big deal, but it just slowly happened. Women are more appreciated, and men see that now.

“Gender equality. There are a lot of women in these kinds of roles (social services). But I still know that men are paid more, regardless of their level of experience, education, or qualification. I mean, men are still paid more.

“We’ve been part of the care and support workers’ pay equity process, which was initiated because of the gender pay gap. Although there might be some promising statistics, there are still concerning gender pay gap statistics. We certainly see that in our sector.

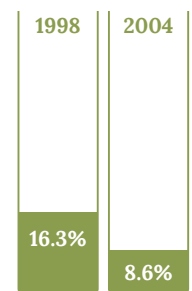
“I don’t think we perform well in terms of gender equality, especially regarding opportunities or pay.

“The quantitative results reveal that despite efforts to achieve gender parity, significant pay disparities persist, especially in traditionally female-dominated sectors such as social services.” (Kuntz & Livingston, 2023, p. 43).

“The findings indicate that men continue to earn more than women regardless of similar experience or qualifications, underscoring systemic issues that need addressing (Kuntz & Livingston, 2023, p. 44).

“While there has been notable progress in achieving gender equality in various employment sectors, many respondents feel that there is still significant work to be done to address these disparities comprehensively.” (Kuntz & Livingston, 2023, p. 43)

THE GENDER PAY GAP IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND HAS STEADILY DECREASED FROM 16.3% IN 1998 TO 8.6% TODAY. HOWEVER, WĀHINE MĀORI, PACIFIC, ASIAN WOMEN, AND DISABLED WOMEN FACE A MUCH LARGER PAY GAP THAN THE OVERALL AVERAGE.



Ministry for Women, The Gender Pay Gap (2023).

THE MEDIAN HOURLY WAGE FOR WOMEN IS \$30.15, WHILE FOR MEN, IT IS \$33.00.



Ministry for Women, The Gender Pay Gap (2023).

Ethnicity

Research highlights that Māori and Pasifika workers face higher-than-average unemployment rates compared to other cultural groups (Maré, 2022; Theodore et al., 2018). Some community voices attribute this to systemic racism and unconscious bias, which hinder Māori from gaining employment and achieving equal representation in the workplace. For some, this leads to the perception that certain regions ‘don’t have a workforce reflective of the people they are serving,’ especially in teaching and healthcare.

“From the conversations I have had, people do experience barriers to employment due to the colour of their skin.”

“It’s really sad and frustrating to see. We’re all the same, we should be on the same level platform, but we’re not.”

“There has been a big shift, but that is not to say there isn’t still a lot of racism, both conscious and unconscious.”

“There is definitely a conscious bias in Whanganui toward Māori, putting them down.”

“Lots of people are really frightened that there are lots of Māori involved in business, doing a lot of good things, and the publicity about them is increasing quite a lot.”

“When the chips are down, and you need workers, and you know you can only afford a certain amount, would you hire a group of Māori, or would you hire your own?”

“We don’t have a workforce reflective of the people we are serving, as Māori are underrepresented in teaching and health care roles.”

“Māori are under-represented in all medical practitioner employment categories, particularly for specialists (1.9% in 2004–05) and medical officers (1.6% in 2004–05)” (Theodore et al., 2018, p. 541).

“Young workers as well as Māori and Pasifika ethnic groups still face relatively high unemployment rates” (Maré, 2022, p. 2).

“Sharp and sustained increases in unemployment were also experienced by Maori and Pasifika—groups with historically higher than average unemployment rates, related in part to their relative youthfulness and lower average qualifications.” (Maré, 2022, p. 5).

THE JOBSEEKER SUPPORT RATE IN NEW ZEALAND IS 3.8% FOR EUROPEAN NEW ZEALANDERS, 14% FOR MĀORI, 8.7% FOR PASIFIKA, AND 3.7% FOR OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS.



Ministry of Social Development, Benefits Fact Sheet, March 2024.

DURING A DOWNTURN IN THE LABOUR MARKET, UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG EUROPEANS INCREASES BY AN AVERAGE OF 1.3 PERCENTAGE POINTS. IN CONTRAST, MĀORI UNEMPLOYMENT RISES BY 6.9 PERCENTAGE POINTS, AND PASIFIKA UNEMPLOYMENT INCREASES BY 11.7 PERCENTAGE POINTS.



+1.3% Europeans

+6.9% Māori

+11.7% Pasifika

Reserve Bank of New Zealand, Labour Market Cycles Across Different Groups - Part I - Ethnicity (2022).

Disability

Many perceive that people with disabilities are significantly underrepresented in the workforce, with a higher unemployment rate compared to other demographics. Despite evidence showing that people with disabilities can be loyal, responsible, and productive employees, stigma, misconceptions about abilities—such as equating disability solely with physical impairments—and biases, both conscious and unconscious, create various employment barriers. With numerous challenges and knock-backs, those with disabilities can struggle to find opportunities despite the diverse nature of their abilities (Upson, McIntosh, & Gillovic, 2021).

“I’m talking about disability in particular. It is probably one of the most underutilised pockets of people out there who are unemployed. The percentage of disabled people who are unemployed is a lot higher compared to every other demographic.”

“Disabled people are underrepresented in the workforce. They are among the poorest New Zealanders because they are underrepresented in the workforce.”

“Income is always going to be an issue because if you’re in a situation where you’re not able to work, or work full-time, you are benefit dependent. There are limited opportunities to get above the poverty line.”

“There’s always going to be a sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious bias with regards to individuals that are ‘different’.”

“I don’t think there is equal opportunity. There are barriers that individuals face, especially with disabilities, but that’s going to be everywhere.”

“It’s an education piece. Employers will think that because you’ve got a disability, they automatically think, “Oh, you’re in a wheelchair,” when disability could be anything. It could be mental health.”

“They automatically think there will be some form of ‘issue’, with health and safety being the main one, which is so untrue.”

“People will say, “What is wrong with them?” They are scared to disclose health conditions for fear that they will be put in the ‘no’ pile.”

“They face so many knock-backs. They think they have no skills and nobody believes in them.”

“I still come back to the stigma. There’s still a bit of stigma around disabilities and what that actually means, as sometimes the perceptions are not accurate.”

“A number of challenges and barriers to the employment of people with disabilities were found, mostly related to prejudice and discrimination by human resource managers, general management and existing employees” (Upson, McIntosh, & Gillovic, 2021, p. 4).

“Others in the organisation often (mis)perceived that people with disabilities are costly to accommodate. In fact, the opposite has been found to be true” (Upson, McIntosh, & Gillovic, 2021, p. 4).

“In 2020, it was estimated that only 22.5% of people with disabilities were in full-time employment, in comparison to 69.3% of people without disabilities” (Upson, McIntosh, & Gillovic, 2021, p. 3).

“People with disabilities were found to be loyal employees; it has been shown that they are committed to their employing organisation, minimising their likelihood of leaving, and thus reducing the rate of staff turnover” (Upson, McIntosh, & Gillovic, 2021, p. 3).

“People with disabilities were also found to be engaged employees; it has been shown that employing people with disabilities increases the level of productivity, efficiency and creativity within the workplace” (Upson, McIntosh, & Gillovic, 2021, p. 3).

THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AGED 15-64 IS 10.7%, WHILE IT’S ONLY 3.5% FOR ABLE-BODIED INDIVIDUALS.



10.7%

Stats NZ, Labour market statistics (disability): June 2023 quarter.

Prevalence & Interconnection

Research indicates that unemployment remains high (Craigie, Gillmore, & Groshenny, 2012; Maré, 2022), a sentiment echoed by community observations noting significant unemployment across various regions. This unemployment can have substantial downstream impacts on areas of wellbeing such as health, education and productivity, suggesting that everything is deeply interconnected with employment.

“If you’re not working, you’re financially struggling, and then your health is impacted, as well as your feeling of being productive, worthy, and contributing. All those sorts of things. And your access to anything else, like education, can be impacted. Your health could be impacting your work, or if you’re not working, your health might suffer.”

“I don’t think one thing sits alone out of all those key points. They are all very much connected in some shape or form. One thing links to the other.”

“We have more jobs available per capita in New Zealand than anywhere else. But that’s not necessarily ideal... You’d think it would be, but it’s not. [People] are either on drugs... or they don’t care.”

“In our rohe, there are a lot of people who aren’t working. I’m just scanning my family while I’m thinking. There are a lot of people not working.”

“There is a lot of unemployment here, and case managers have massive caseloads.”

“Everything’s interlinked: employment, health, everything.”

“Long-term unemployment (i.e. six months or more) remains high at around 30% of total unemployment” (Maré, 2022, p. 2).

“New Zealand’s unemployment rate rose sharply from the beginning of 2008 to mid-2009 and has remained high ever since.” (Craigie, Gillmore, & Groshenny, 2012, p. 3).

IN MARCH 2024, **8.11%**
OF WORKING-AGE NEW
ZEALANDERS WERE
RECEIVING A BENEFIT.

*Ministry of Social Development,
Benefits Fact Sheet, March 2024.*



National Context

National Literature Review

In this section, we examine a diverse array of research materials, including scholarly articles, meta-analyses, theses, reports, discussion papers, and book chapters, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the employment landscape from a national perspective. Each source provides unique insights and evidence, enriching our understanding of the factors influencing employment across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Please note that while we examine a diverse array of materials, this review captures high-level research and is not intended to be a comprehensive study. Instead, it aims to build on subsequent sections of this report and provide additional perspectives and considerations relevant to employment in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Educational Disparities

According to research, educational attainment and employment prospects are deeply interconnected. Within the education system significant variability in student performance. This high dispersion in performance suggests that many students, especially those from disadvantaged groups, are not reaching their full potential and face considerable obstacles in achieving educational success. These challenges result in higher dropout rates and increased unemployment, limiting their future life chances (Bibbee, 2013).

These findings highlight the need for better quality teaching and catering to the different needs and learning styles of students in order to help them stay in school and succeed academically (Bibbee, 2013).

“Average PISA [Programme for International Student Assessment] results are among the OECD’s highest, but the dispersion of performance is also high, indicating a sizable group of underachievers... Those in disadvantaged groups tend to have poor scholastic outcomes. These initial educational handicaps show up in higher drop-out rates and youth joblessness, greatly limiting these youths’ future life chances” ((Bibbee, 2013, p. 2).

“Better teaching quality is needed, with more attention devoted to diversity of student needs and learning approaches to keep children in school” ((Bibbee, 2013, p. 2).

Education vs. Employment

Research indicates that education alone does not strongly predict successful employment outcomes. Merely possessing a classroom-based education along with a standard secondary school qualification does not adequately prepare students for the real-world workforce (Sanders et al., 2020). Findings highlight the importance of addressing an individual's educational needs and helping them identify the types of education most likely to lead to secure employment.

Additionally, Dalziel (2015) demonstrates that career offices in secondary and tertiary education institutions play a crucial role in bridging this gap between education and employment. These offices are well-equipped with existing networks, familiar with career resources, and actively engaged with both students and employers, thus helping to deliver positive outcomes for educators and students.

“Education was not a strong factor in predicting successful employment outcomes... careful attention therefore needs to be paid to identifying the particular educational needs of individual youth, supporting them to identify the types of education that are most likely to provide them with access to secure work, and providing consistent material and emotional support to them during their post-school years.” (Sanders et al., 2020, p.11).

“Classroom-based experience combined with a generic secondary school-level qualification does not appear to be an adequate substitute for work experience” (Sanders et al., 2020, p. 12).

“Career offices in New Zealand secondary and tertiary education organisations regarded as key actors for three reasons: i. They are professional people in their field with existing networks of support and familiar with the Careers New Zealand resources; ii. They are already engaged with students and employers in their normal day-to-day activities of service provision; and iii. They are able to engage with educators within their organisation to help educators deliver good outcomes to their students.” (Dalziel, 2015, p. 62).

Vocational Skills Demand

New Zealand's labour market shows a notable trend: while there has been an increase in university-qualified workers, particularly in sectors like finance, banking, insurance, and education, the majority of the workforce still holds high school and vocational qualifications. This indicates that despite the rising demand for higher education, a significant portion of jobs still rely heavily on vocational skills (Razzak & Timmins, 2007).

Despite the reliance on vocational skills, research highlights the growing need for young New Zealanders to continue pursuing higher education and developing skills that are increasingly valued in today's job market. This is particularly important as technology advances, which is likely to favour high-skilled workers. By doing so, individuals can enhance their employment prospects and keep up with the demands of the evolving labour market (Carey, 2017).

“Although the share of university-qualified workers in total employment has been increasing, especially in the services industries such as finance, banking, insurance, and education, the shares of workers with a high school and vocational qualification are larger in comparison” (Razzak & Timmins, 2007, p. 2).

“Young New Zealanders will need to continue their education to higher levels than in the past and acquire skills that are more highly valued in the labour market.” (Carey, 2017, p. 3).

“Given ongoing technical progress that is likely to favour high-skilled workers...young people will need to continue their initial education to higher levels than in the past and in fields that are in demand to have good job prospects” (Carey, 2017, p. 22).

Skills Mismatch

Despite significant public investment in education, there is a notable mismatch between the skills taught and those required by employers, which affects productivity and earnings negatively (Yeo & Maani, 2017). For instance, degree-qualified workers in 2017 earned a median hourly wage of NZ\$30.60, which was significantly higher than that of workers without qualifications. However, this wage premium has decreased from 73% in 2000 to 52% in 2017 (Maré, 2018). Furthermore, over-education can reduce earnings by 3-4% per year compared to having the required level of education. This suggests that while higher education generally leads to higher earnings, the benefits are diminishing (Yeo & Maani, 2017).

These findings highlight the importance of aligning educational outcomes with job requirements. Although public spending on education is valuable, better alignment is needed to enhance productivity and earnings. This can be achieved by ensuring that individuals are employed in roles that match their qualifications (Yeo & Maani, 2017).

“Mismatch of educational skills in the labour market is an emerging topic in the field of labour economics, partly due to its link to labour productivity.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 28).

“Despite high levels of public spending on education, the low productivity levels suggest a misalignment between education and job requirements.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 28).

“The median hourly wage for degree-qualified workers was NZ\$30.60 in 2017, 52% above the median for workers with no qualifications... This premium has declined since 2000, when it stood at 73%” (Maré, 2018, p. 9).

“Each year of over-education results in lower returns by 3-4% compared to required education, highlighting the economic cost of educational mismatches.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 42).

“Public spending on education is not wasteful, but better alignment of education and job requirements is necessary to maximize productivity benefits.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 28).

“Educational mismatch is a persistent occurrence in the labour market due to inefficient job allocation, which in turn affects productivity and earnings negatively.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 42).

Job-Education Mismatch

Research highlights significant challenges in Aotearoa New Zealand’s job market, with a high percentage of both men (60%) and women (76%) working in jobs that do not match their education levels. These mismatches often lead to higher job turnover and lower job satisfaction for both over-educated and under-educated workers (Yeo & Maani, 2017; Carey, 2017).

While under-education is more common than over-education, both are prevalent and problematic. Over-educated workers often feel unmotivated because their skills are not fully used. In contrast, under-educated workers typically earn about 4.5% less each year compared to those with the right level of education (Yeo & Maani, 2017).

These mismatches can create inefficiencies in the labour market, hindering both individual and overall economic performance and productivity. To address this issue, research suggests that better aligning workers’ skills with job requirements could significantly boost productivity and wages across the country. By ensuring that workers are in jobs that match their education and skills, New Zealand could see substantial improvements in both economic performance and individual job satisfaction (Yeo & Maani, 2017).

“Close to 60% of men and 76% of women are in jobs that can be categorized as mismatched, indicating significant challenges in finding suitable employment.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 34).

“Our results show that, for both men and women, under-education is more prevalent than over-education, but both are prominent.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 34).

“Workers in mismatched jobs may experience higher job turnover and lower job satisfaction.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 35).

“Individuals who are over-educated for their jobs may be demotivated when working in a job that does not fully utilize their educational investment and skill set.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 29).

“Under-education is associated with significant earnings penalties in New Zealand of around 4.5% for each year of under-education compared to the required level for the job.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 42).

“Educational mismatches contribute to inefficiencies in the labor market, affecting both individual and overall economic performance.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 43).

“The results indicate that loss of productivity is potentially greater when workers are employed in jobs that require significantly less (or more) education than they have.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 43).

“Better allocation of workers to jobs may be needed to increase overall labor productivity.” (Yeo & Maani, 2017, p. 28).

“Reducing New Zealand’s high rates of qualification and skills mismatches would boost both wages and productivity.” (Carey, 2017, p. 3).

Youth Employment Barriers

Research highlights that youth often face greater challenges in finding employment, with the lack of work experience being a significant barrier, especially for those who leave school with little or no formal qualifications or come from disadvantaged family backgrounds. Early engagement in the workforce can have a positive long-term impact on the employment prospects of these youth. Providing them with early and meaningful work experiences can help develop confidence in their abilities and gain essential employment skills. This, in turn, improves their chances of securing stable and fulfilling jobs in the future (McGirr, 2019; Earle, 2019).

“Lack of work experience stands out as a major employment barrier for young people who leave school with low or no qualifications, and for young people who come from family backgrounds of limited social capital”(McGirr, 2019, p. 12).

“Early engagement in work has a positive impact on the long-term employment prospects of vulnerable youth” (Earle, 2019, p. 4).

“Providing vulnerable youth with early exposure to meaningful labour market experiences and multiple opportunities to engage in work is likely to increase their confidence and belief in their abilities, and improve their employment skills” (Earle, 2019, p. 5).

Non-Cognitive Skills

Research indicates that non-cognitive skills, such as teamwork, communication, and self-management, play a crucial role in employability, and their absence further hinders some youth from gaining employment. Programmes that focus on building employment skills and setting career goals have been shown to be effective in improving job prospects for these young people as they compensate for the lack of educational credentials and foster an active job-seeker mindset (Earle & McGirr, 2019; Earle & McGirr, 2019, p. 5).

“Non-cognitive skills are a key employability factor that matters for all job seekers, while standing out as a key barrier for young people who have a greater risk of limited employment” (Earle & McGirr, 2019, p. 10).

“Employment skills-building and goal-setting activities have been found to improve the employment prospects of vulnerable youth because these programme components compensate for missing educational credentials and help build confidence and a hopeful outlook which facilitates active job searching” (Earle & McGirr, 2019, p. 5).

Apprenticeships & Training

Research highlights the potential apprenticeships and industry training programmes have in boosting skill levels among young people and better aligning them with the needs of the economy. These programmes offer achievable and clearly mapped opportunities for progression, making them well-suited to young people seeking practical career paths. However, a common challenge for many young people is the lack of knowledge about how or where to begin when it comes to connecting with these training opportunities (McGirr & Earle, 2019). (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008).

One of the most frequently suggested solutions from Lobo & Wilkinson (2008) was for the government to offer tax breaks to employers to encourage them to hire and train apprentices.

“A greater role for youth apprenticeships could help to raise skill levels while aligning them better to the economy’s needs” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 2).

“Apprenticeships or industry training may be well suited to these young people. It may provide them with achievable and clearly mapped opportunities for progression” (McGirr & Earle, 2019, p. 20).

“Anecdotal evidence suggests that many would not know how or where to get started to connect to a particular, or any, industry training opportunity” (McGirr & Earle, 2019, p. 20).

“The top response recorded (eight participants) was the need for government to provide incentives to employers to take on apprentices. The main incentive expected was providing tax breaks for providing support and training for such apprentices.” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 48).

Supportive Relationships

Research indicates that, to meet the employment needs of young people today, establishing a far wider range of working relationships both inside and outside of school is necessary (Vaughan & O'Neil, 2010). This highlights the critical role of supportive relationships in helping young people navigate their way into employment (Sanders et al., 2020). These relationships, especially with adults outside the family, can reduce anxiety and provide emotional support, making it easier for young people to handle the challenges of job hunting, including dealing with rejections. Such interpersonal relationships are valuable because they can also provide access to networks rich in employment opportunities and offer essential knowledge on how to leverage these networks effectively (Sanders et al., 2020).

Additionally, research suggests that community-based programmes with strong ties to employers can be particularly beneficial for youth who may not have extensive personal networks. These initiatives can bridge the gap by connecting young people to job opportunities and providing the support needed to succeed in the workforce (Sanders et al., 2020).

“Supportive relationships with positive non-familial adults can also facilitate pathways into employment by reducing anxiety and buffering the negative impact of issues such as rejection by potential employers” (Sanders et al., 2020, p. 6).

“Interpersonal relationships can also give access to, and knowledge about how to use the employment-rich networks critical to finding and maintaining a job” (Sanders et al., 2020, p. 6).

“Vaughan and O'Neil strongly supported the development of these networks. They observed that meeting the needs of young people today now involves establishing a far wider range of working relationships inside and outside of the school. The activity of networking allows a community of practice to be built across schools, education sectors, and community organisations (including employers and industry) on a regional and national basis.” (Vaughan & O'Neil, 2010, p. 60).

“Community-based initiatives that have strong connections to employers may play an important role in compensating for the limited networks available to vulnerable youth” (Sanders et al., 2020, p. 6).

Inability to Fill Vacancies

Research indicates that employers face restricted labour choices due to the limited availability of skilled workers. This issue is pervasive, with nearly a third of businesses struggling to fill vacancies that require specific skills, qualifications, or experience. The coexistence of internal and external skill gaps compounds this problem, as businesses not only find it difficult to hire skilled workers but also struggle with existing staff lacking necessary skills.

To mitigate these challenges, some industries, such as construction, have turned to strategies such as increasing wages and reformatting training requirements. However, even organisations that offer higher wages are not immune to skill shortages, indicating that financial incentives alone are insufficient to resolve the issue (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008; Mok et al., 2012).

“Restricted choice in the selection of skilled labour” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 44).

“More than a third experience difficulties in finding workers with the required skills, qualifications or experience they need” (Mok et al., 2012, p. ii).

“Businesses can experience skill shortages internally or externally. A shortage in the skills it requires can manifest itself: (a) in terms of the ability of its existing staff to do their job; or (b) in terms of its ability to find appropriately skilled workers through recruitment. We have found evidence that these two phenomena co-exist.” (Mok et al., 2012, p. ii).

“Businesses experiencing internal skill gaps are also more likely to have skill shortage vacancies” (Mok et al., 2012, p. iii).

“Businesses that pay higher wages than others in the same industry and region are actually more likely to experience SSVs [skill shortage vacancies]” (Mok et al., 2012, p. iv).

“New Zealand currently uses a variety of techniques to tackle construction industry skills shortages, such as increased wages, overseas recruitment and reformatting training requirements” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 42).

Skills Shortage

New Zealand is facing a significant skills shortage, spanning industries from construction to IT. Research indicates that this issue arises from a lack of coordinated and sustained efforts by the government, industry, and educational institutions. This disjointed approach is contributing to challenges in building a skilled local workforce, making it difficult to address the skills shortage through domestic hiring alone (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008; Maré, 2022).

As an immediate solution, many industries have turned to skilled immigration as a recruitment strategy, leveraging New Zealand's skill-focused immigration policies. This approach has been particularly successful in filling high-demand roles, such as project managers and quantity surveyors, and has contributed to raising the overall skill level of the workforce (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008; Maré, 2022).

For long-term solutions, research suggests that collaboration between industry, education, and government is essential to develop a skilled workforce for both current roles and those forecast for 2030-2035 (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008; Maré, 2022).

“There was a lack of a coordinated and sustained effort by Government, industry and education to address construction skills shortages” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 42).

“There is also a very low level of investment in the development of IT staff in New Zealand organisations. Less than 10 percent of large organisations and Government agency training was spent on digital technology upskilling” (Digital Skills Aotearoa, 2021, p. 10).

“The proposed best solution is for a government coordinated council where industry, education and government meet to ensure that all sectors are working together to solve construction skills shortage” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 50).

“The other most popular short-term strategy was skilled immigration” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 47).

“Consultants, local authorities, utilities, and contractors were all using this [skilled immigration] as a recruitment strategy. In particular demand were quantity surveyors and project managers” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 46).

“Due to New Zealand's skill-focused immigration policies, net immigration has served to raise the country's average level of skills” (Maré, 2022, p. 3).

“Migration flows influence the quality, variety and quantity of workers' skills available on the local labour market” (Maré, 2022, p. 10).

“This is a system wide challenge that demands collaboration between industry, education and Government. A collaborative approach will help ensure the best skilled people are being developed for current roles and those forecast for 2030-2035” (Lobo & Wilkinson, 2008, p. 71).

COVID-19 Impact

Research on the impact of COVID-19 in New Zealand reveals significant economic and social challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted employment, affecting job security, satisfaction, and outcomes across various demographics. The national GDP decreased, highlighting the pandemic's economic toll on employment (OECD, 2020).

Job security fluctuated with the changing alert levels, decreasing during Level 4 and recovering as restrictions eased. Younger workers (18-29 years) faced lower job satisfaction during the pandemic, while older workers (50+ years) faced significant challenges, with job loss impacting their likelihood of re-employment in a competitive job market (Wilson et al., 2020).

Gender and ethnic discrimination surged, particularly impacting women, Māori, Pacific, Asian, and other non-European ethnic groups. These groups reported experiencing poorer employment and financial outcomes, facing severe financial setbacks due to job losses, exacerbating pre-existing disparities for some demographics (Poulton et al., 2020).

The New Zealand government made efforts to mitigate these effects through implemented labour market policies, including wage subsidies and support packages, to maintain employment and income levels during the pandemic. In response to this, the government introduced a comprehensive support package that included a broad wage subsidy to help maintain employment and incomes during the initial lockdown (Wilson et al., 2020).

“The first year of COVID-19 resulted in a decrease in GDP per capita in most New Zealand regions. Taranaki, a region with a GDP per capita 11% above the national average (43 332 vs. 39 166 USD PPP), experienced the largest decrease in GDP among New Zealand regions, of approximately -8%” (OECD, 2020, p. 1).

“Participants felt less secure in their jobs at Alert Level 4... Job security tended to rebound across Alert Levels” (Wilson et al., 2020, pp. 69-70).

“Younger participants (18-29 years) also reported even lower job satisfaction at Alert Level 2” (Wilson et al., 2020, p. 86).

“A particularly heavy impact of job loss on adults aged 50+ years can be expected, as there will be less likelihood of new employment in a highly competitive job market.” (Poulton et al., 2020, p. 11).

“Women reported elevated rates of gender-based discrimination... Māori and those who identified as Pacific, Asian, or another ethnic minority reported increases in ethnic-based discrimination” (Wilson et al., 2020, p. 87).

“Women and participants with a health condition, disability or mental health diagnosis reported poorer employment and financial outcomes” (Wilson et al., 2020, p. 86).

“Compared to European respondents, people identifying as Pacific, Asian or another non-Māori ethnic group felt less valued by their organisation at Alert Level 2” (Wilson et al., 2020, p. 86).

“In terms of employment impacts, whānau Māori have already been hit hard financially, with significant job losses to date and more jobs hanging in the balance for many wāhine and tāne (women and men).” (Poulton et al., 2020, p. 9).

“Pre-existing high unemployment rates will be exacerbated by the secondary stressor of job loss and contribute to already disproportionately high levels of mental distress for Pacific adults.” (Poulton et al., 2020, p. 10).

“The policy response to the pandemic was strongly focused on the labour market, ‘to support New Zealanders and their jobs from the global impact of Covid-19’” (p. 5). “On March 17, 2020, before the initial lockdown, the government announced a support package that included a broad wage subsidy, initially for 12 weeks, to keep people employed and maintain incomes while people were not able to work” (Wilson et al., 2020, p. 5).

Economic Downturns

Research shows that New Zealand has faced significant challenges in its labour market since the economic downturn that began in 2008. The country's unemployment rate saw a sharp increase from early 2008 to mid-2009 and has remained high since then. One of the critical issues contributing to persistent unemployment is the inefficiency in matching job seekers with available vacancies. This mismatch has worsened over time, with the ease of matching workers to jobs hitting a new low, even worse than when the unemployment rate was at its peak (McLaren et al., 2020).

Moreover, people who have lost their jobs often face long-term financial difficulties. They are more likely to rely on government benefits, with benefit recipients being 6-11% higher after one year and 3-4% higher after five years. Their total income drops significantly, by about 30% in the first year and still 20% lower after five years (McLaren et al., 2020). Unemployment also affects the mental and emotional health of mature job-seekers in New Zealand, due to the societal stigma attached to joblessness, in a country where paid work is highly valued (Walsh, 2020).

“New Zealand's unemployment rate rose sharply from the beginning of 2008 to mid-2009 and has remained high ever since.” (McLaren et al., 2020, p.3).

“Matching efficiency is affected by the alignment between vacancies and workers' characteristics (i.e. the skills required/possessed and geographical location)...the ease with which job seekers are matched to job vacancies has varied considerably over time...After reaching a peak around mid-2010, this measure of matching efficiency has been continuously deteriorating and is currently at a new record low. The implication of this measure is that the labour market is doing as bad a job at matching workers to vacancies as at any time over the past 15 years – even worse than at the peak of the cycle when the unemployment rate was only 3.5 percent.” (McLaren et al., 2020, p.8).

“Benefit receipt was 6-11% and 3-4% higher after one and five years. However, displaced workers' total income was about 30% lower in the first year after displacement and still 20% lower five years after” (McLaren et al., 2020, p.3).

“Unemployment has a powerful influence on the emotional wellbeing of... job-seekers. A stigma attaches to joblessness in New Zealand society where paid work is valued” (p. 56).

“Unemployment tends to make people more emotionally unstable than they were previous to unemployment” (Fergusson et al., 2001, p.359).

Unemployment & Mental Health

Research shows that job loss and unemployment significantly impact mental health and overall wellbeing. When people lose their jobs, their mental health scores drop, and their feelings of distress increase. Men and women are both affected, with the likelihood of experiencing serious distress nearly tripling. Older workers, particularly older Māori men, are especially vulnerable to depression after job loss. Young people are also at higher risk, with those facing unemployment for six months or more being more likely to develop mental health problems (Frasquilho et al., 2016; Keefe & Ormsby, 2008; Fergusson, Horwood, & Lynskey, 2002).

However, the impact of unemployment extends beyond mental distress. For those who are made redundant, the risk of serious self-harm doubles compared to those who remain employed. Unemployment is also linked to higher risks of suicide, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive mental health and social support to mitigate the negative effects of unemployment (Keefe & Ormsby, 2008; Frasquilho et al., 2016).

“Job loss decreased MH (SF-36) in 1.34 points (95% CI -1.85 to -0.82) and increased mental distress in 0.50 points (95% CI 0.34 to 0.67)” (Frasquilho et al., 2016, p. 21).

“Job loss increased risk of distress for men (OR= 3.15; 95% CI: 2.50–3.98) and women (OR= 2.60; 95% CI: 1.97–3.43)” (Frasquilho et al., 2016, p. 21).

“Researchers found that there was double the risk of serious self-harm for those made redundant compared with workers at the nearby Tomoana plant that did not close” (Keefe & Ormsby, 2008, p. 17).

“Some ex-workers suffered from mental illness, with older Māori men being particularly vulnerable to depression. Older men were described as having ‘lost that glint in their eye’” (Keefe & Ormsby, 2008, p. 19).

“Young people exposed to six months or greater unemployment in any given year had rates of mental health problems... that were between 1.4 and 8.4 times higher than their non-unemployed peers” (Fergusson et al., 2002, p. 312).

“Unemployment was associated with increasing risks of suicidal thoughts, crime and substance use” (Frasquilho et al., 2016, p. 316).

“Blakely et al (2003) and Beautrais et al (1998) found unemployment to be strongly associated with suicide and suicide attempts” (Frasquilho et al., 2016, p. 5).

Family Wellbeing

Job loss and unemployment in New Zealand have far-reaching impacts on the wellbeing of both individuals and their families. The stress resulting from job loss often puts immense pressure on family dynamics. According to research, this can lead to increased incidents of family harm and relationship breakdowns (Keefe & Ormsby, 2008).

Additionally, research indicates that unemployed individuals are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol and drug use, as well as criminal activity, highlighting the extended influence unemployment has on both individual and family health and wellbeing (Fergusson et al., 2001).

“The pressure on families led to increases in domestic violence” (Keefe & Ormsby, 2008, p. 48).

“Unemployed people are more likely to have high-risk health behaviours such as smoking, and using alcohol and drugs” (Keefe et al., 2002, p. 3).

“Unemployment was associated with increasing risks of... crime and substance use” (Fergusson et al., 2001, p. 316).

Benefits of Employment

According to research, paid employment is essential for physical, social, and psychological wellbeing, offering much more than just financial stability. For many, especially older workers, having a job sets a positive example for their children and provides a sense of purpose and usefulness. Job satisfaction, the challenge of work, job security, and feeling needed are all crucial elements that contribute to the overall benefits of employment (McGregor & Gray, 2001).

Employment is particularly beneficial for individuals with mental illness. Beyond financial gains, employment offers non-monetary benefits such as improved social status, heightened self-esteem, increased physical and mental activity, and a stronger sense of purpose. These factors significantly enhance mental health, providing advantages that welfare support, while essential for preventing extreme poverty, cannot fully replicate (Clemens et al., 2021).

To maximise mental health and wellbeing outcomes, research suggests that employment support should be an integral part of health treatments, including therapy and medication, with employment status serving as a key performance indicator for these services (Thompson & Stowell, 2020).

“Paid employment is linked to physical, social, and psychological well-being as well as material success.” (McGregor & Gray, 2001, p. 47).

“For job-seekers present, paid employment was seen as desirable for older workers as they wanted to provide a good example to their children.” (McGregor & Gray, 2001, p. 47).

“Job satisfaction, challenge of job, sense of security, having a sense of purpose, and being useful were among the important factors surrounding work.” (Thompson & Stowell, 2020, p. 15).

“There is robust literature about the benefits of employment for those with a mental illness, including New Zealand data, particularly among young people.” (Thompson & Stowell, 2020, p. 15).

“Financial support through the unemployment benefit, though it may prevent extreme poverty, cannot compensate for the wide range of non-monetary benefits of being employed. Individuals who are able to draw on personal and social resources or have alternative job skills may find other employment more quickly or experience fewer adverse effects.” (Clemens et al., 2021, p. 5).

“Being without the non-financial benefits of employment such as social status, self-esteem, physical and mental activity, and feeling purposeful also contribute to poor mental health.” (Clemens et al., 2021, p. 5).

“Employment support should be routinely available alongside all other health treatments, i.e., talking therapies and medications, with employment status used as a performance indicator for mental health and addiction services.” (Thompson & Stowell, 2020, p. 15).

Snapshot of National Media

This analysis provides an in-depth review of media coverage relating to employment in Aotearoa New Zealand. The goal of this review is to highlight the public discourse surrounding employment and provide a current snapshot of how employment-related issues are portrayed in the media. This ensures our understanding of the employment landscape stays informed by the latest discussions and developments.

Overview of Media Coverage

Our examination includes 248 articles published in the last 12 months, dating back to May 2023, contributed by prominent New Zealand media sources. Below (see figure 10), we indicate the frequency of media reports by month, highlighting increases and decreases in discussions during specific periods.

In addition to visualising the frequency of media coverage, we identified the common themes across all articles. These key themes are:

1. Reports of Job Cuts
2. Pay Inequities and Labour Conditions
3. Strikes Over Pay and Working Conditions Across Industries
4. Unemployment and Policy Responses
5. Struggles of Migrant Workers
6. Workplace Safety and Wellbeing

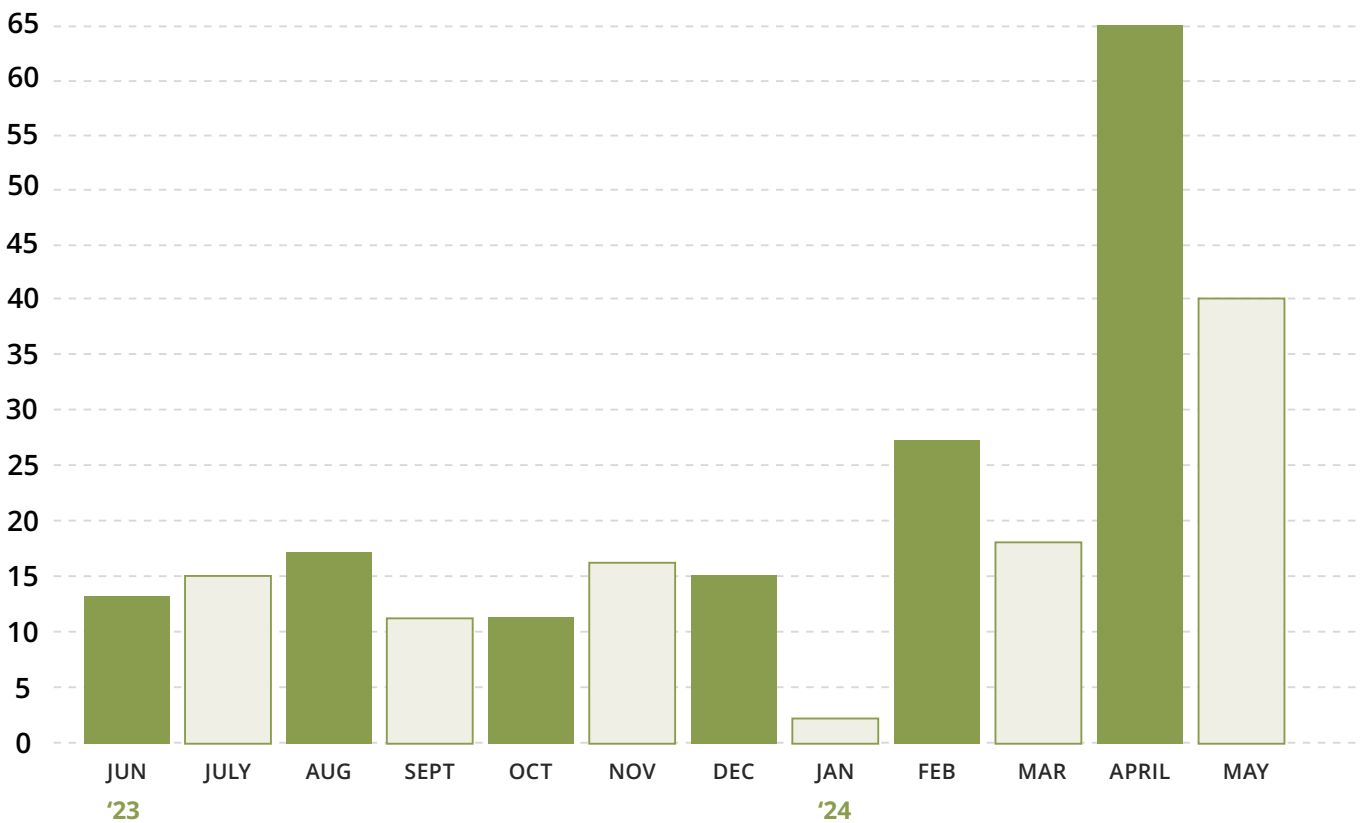


Figure 10 - Monthly Frequency of Media Publications on Employment.

Reports of Job Cuts

The majority of media reports highlight job cuts in various sectors across New Zealand, especially in the public service sector. These articles emphasise how these job cuts are significantly impacting employment stability and having broader economic effects, such as reduced public service efficiency and increased unemployment rates.

“There are now about 5000 public sector jobs already gone, or proposed to be cut.” (RNZ, 2024).



23 MAY 2024

Ministry of Social Development job losses top 700 after more cuts announced.

The Ministry of Social Development's workforce is set to drop by more than 700 now, and the Department of Conservation has confirmed it's cutting 124 jobs.

RNZ (2024)

Pay Inequities and Labour Conditions

Many articles highlight widespread dissatisfaction with pay and working conditions in various sectors across New Zealand. Common issues include low pay offers, gender pay gaps, wage theft, and debates over appropriate minimum wage levels, with a recurring focus on the need for fair compensation and better labour conditions to address the cost of living and ensure equitable treatment for all workers.

“But as long as there's any gap, women can't stop advocating. Any gap is unacceptable.” (RNZ, 2023).



30 NOV 2023

Govt called to close 'unacceptable' gender pay gap.

Women in New Zealand are effectively working for free until the end of the year, from 2.38pm today.

RNZ (2023)

Strikes Over Pay and Working Conditions Across Industries

Media coverage extensively reports on the many strikes occurring in various industries, such as education, transport, media, and especially medical institutions across Aotearoa New Zealand. According to the media, these strikes are due to worker dissatisfaction and employer inaction regarding fair pay, understaffing, heavy workloads, and lack of resources, all of which impact service quality and employee wellbeing.

“Low salaries and the high cost of living were driving away health professionals. ‘I worked in Australia as a junior doctor, and I knew I was taking a \$100,000 pay cut to move back to New Zealand as a senior medical officer.’” (RNZ, 2023).



21 SEPT 2023

'Utterly demoralising' - doctors strike over pay and conditions

Thousands of senior hospital doctors and dentists have walked off the job today for the third time over stalled pay talks.

RNZ (2023)

Unemployment and Policy Responses

Several articles highlight problems in New Zealand's labour market, including rising unemployment rates, fewer job openings or listings, and the implementation of compulsory work seminars for jobseekers. Coupled with differing political responses to the current employment landscape, showcase the challenges faced in tackling employment and welfare support during a tightening job market and uncertain economy.

“Labour finance spokesperson and Mana MP Barbara Edmonds told reporters the government's approach was contradictory given the number of jobs being axed across the public service. ‘They're trying to bring down jobs - but at the same time telling people to go find a job in a really tight labour market.’” (RNZ, 2024).



9 MAY 2024

Government to introduce compulsory work seminar for job-seeking beneficiaries.

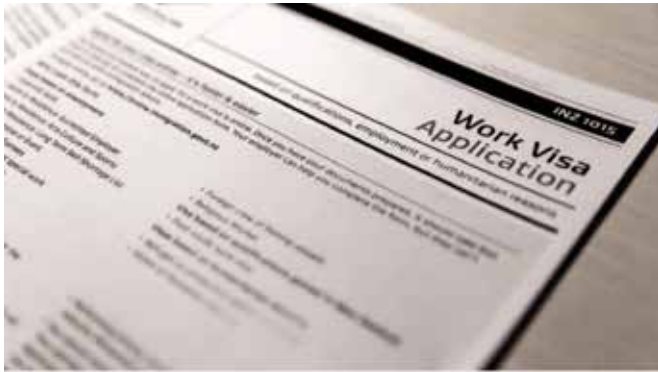
New jobseeker beneficiaries will now have to attend a work seminar within two weeks of starting on welfare under new requirements unveiled by the coalition.

RNZ (2024)

Struggles of Migrant Workers

Many articles highlight the exploitation and uncertain working conditions faced by migrant employees in Aotearoa New Zealand, especially under the Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV) scheme. According to the media, workers from countries like India, Philippines, and China often pay large sums for visas, only to end up jobless or dismissed shortly after their arrival to the country. As a result, more are calling for tighter regulations, government intervention, and increased support from unions and community organisations to address these issues.

“Dozens of Chinese migrant workers are being left jobless and out-of-pocket after paying thousands of dollars for work visas, only to be given no work or dismissed by their employer shortly after they arrive in New Zealand.” (RNZ, 2023).



14 JUL 2023

Migrant workers pay thousands for visas, only to be left without jobs.

Dozens of Chinese migrant workers are being left jobless and out-of-pocket after paying thousands of dollars for work visas, only to be given no work or dismissed by their employer shortly after they arrive in New Zealand.

RNZ (2023)

Workplace Safety and Wellbeing

Numerous media articles address workplace safety and wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand, highlighting widespread issues such as harassment, bullying, and injuries. According to these articles, these problems result in significant economic costs and disproportionately affect certain ethnic groups, as well as underscore the importance of enhancing safety standards and fostering supportive workplace cultures to improve employee wellbeing and reduce incidents.

“Harassment in the workplace costs New Zealand employers around \$1.5 billion a year, according to a report published by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and KPMG... The commission’s 2023 report showed that Asian employees were disproportionately affected by bullying and harassment in the workplace... ‘Ending bullying and harassment in the workplace is vital because it harms us as people and stands in the way of all of us living healthy lives and contributing to our workplaces in the ways we aspire to.’” (RNZ, 2024).



27 MAY 2024

Waking up to harassment at work.

New Zealand workplaces have been urged to speak out against harassment on the back of a new study that shows its financial impact on businesses.

RNZ (2024)

Local Context

Summary of Community Insights

In this section, we delve into the lived experiences of the communities we engaged with, drawing on insights from our Equity and Wellbeing profiles and discussions with industry experts. Our focus is on identifying themes that reflect the main concerns from the community's perspective within the employment landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Although we have aimed to capture the primary concerns, we acknowledge that we likely haven't heard everything. What we share here aims to shine a light on what these communities deemed important, providing a foundation for understanding the employment landscape from the communities perspective.

Educational Gaps

Although some believe education is evolving to better prepare students for the workforce, many perceive that schools are still not adequately equipping students with vocational skills and relevant qualifications, leaving many young people unprepared for the transition from school to employment.

“Education doesn't prepare you with relevant skills for the workplace.

“Education is shifting with regards to meaningful employment. I have seen a shift within schools where they are preparing students for the workforce and are looking at education beyond just the core subjects like English, Science, and Maths.

“Kids are leaving without vocationally relevant skills and qualifications.

“They're leaving with NCEA Level Three, but those are not vocational skills.

“Sometimes with education, the schools aren't thinking about the needs that are out there. I don't know if the dots are being joined around what's needed in the community and with tertiary education. Are we putting people in the best place possible to fulfil the needs of employers?

“Our young people are not ready for work; they are not ready for life. It goes back to the support they might be able to gain at schools, healthy relationships, resilience, all of that. If these are not being modelled to them, how do they learn it?

“We are missing that step between children leaving school and going into work.

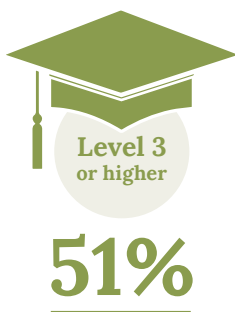
“They're leaving with NCEA Level Three, but those are not vocational skills.

IN 2022, 36.5% OF ALL NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL LEAVERS ENROLLED IN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER. ANOTHER 25% ENROLLED IN A LEVEL 3-7 CERTIFICATE, AND 3% ENROLLED IN A LEVEL 1-2 CERTIFICATE.



Education Counts, School Leaver Destinations.

51% OF NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL LEAVERS ACHIEVE NCEA LEVEL 3 OR HIGHER. MEANWHILE, 23% ACHIEVE NCEA LEVEL 2, 14% ACHIEVE NCEA LEVEL 1, AND 15% DO NOT RECEIVE ANY NCEA QUALIFICATIONS.



*Education Counts, NCEA Attainment (2022).
Office of the Prime Minister, 2018.*

Early Workforce Entry

Some believe the abundance of job opportunities leads many students to leave school early without completing their qualifications, driven by the need or desire to earn an income rather than pursue further education. However, there are concerns that youth may be shortchanging themselves by taking low-skilled jobs that do not require additional training, especially when it's at the expense of their education.

"Sometimes getting qualifications isn't as important as getting a job."

"At 17, if I got offered \$50k a year, I'm out there earning the big bucks!"

"Coming back, it's quite surprising how many people have stayed without [going] to university. They've ended up getting a job out of high school and staying there without the need for tertiary qualifications."

"A lot of them do that because there are opportunities to make money, so why would they stay at school when they could be earning good money."

"If you have a household where you don't earn enough money to survive, and you have an eldest child who can leave school, not get their qualifications but go out and earn money for the household."

"The motivation is to get out of school and have their own income. So they will run to McDonald's. As soon as they turn 15, they can start going there and leaving school."

“A large number of students are also having to leave school early to find a job... which is alarming.

“With a tight labour market, there’s always going to be the challenge of kids exiting school early because they can get a job.

“It’s actually a really difficult space when the labour market is tight because there are jobs available and they are not just exiting to nothing.

“We’ve got three sawmills here, so there are avenues of employment. Children get to 15 and find a pathway, and that’s why we only have half a dozen Year 13 students here at the school.

“They’ll leave as soon as they turn 16 to get a low-skilled job. By that, I mean a job that doesn’t require training. They get 20 hours a week and think that’s enough, but they are shortchanging themselves.

“There are more options; we can go out and get a job straight away on a farm or in a trade. There are just more options apart from tertiary education, and you get life skills straight away.

IN 2022, 35% OF NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL LEAVERS DID NOT ENROL IN ANY FORMAL TRAINING OR APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME.

Education Counts, School Leaver Destinations

Limited Career Guidance

Some people observe that although there is designated funding for career advisers, it is minimal, with schools perceived primarily as information disseminators, distributing brochures from universities and training organisations. This limited resource means schools are unable to provide sustained career counselling, leaving students without meaningful guidance and support to navigate their future career paths.

“[There is] a lack of guidance, direction, and support for youth entering the workforce.

“There is designated funding for career advisers, but it’s minimal. It works out to about one or two hours a week.

“Most of the schools I have been to are information disseminators. They just get brochures from the universities or training organisations and give those out. That’s really all they can manage. They can’t provide any sustained career counselling or advice.

“[There is] a lack of career guidance, hand-holding, support, and direction.

Vocational Pathways

While some observe a rise in advertising for vocational pathways and apprenticeships, with trade skills increasingly sought after over university degrees, there is a concern that schools might not be promoting these pathways enough, or conversely, pushing students into them too often, potentially sidelining traditional academic options. Additionally, despite the availability of apprenticeship opportunities and the push towards these pathways, some companies struggle to fill these positions.

“The people that everybody is looking for now are not university-trained people; they are trades skills.”

“I’ve certainly noticed a lot more advertising about vocational pathways on social media and television lately.”

“It’s also been proven over the past few years that if you do an apprenticeship, rather than a tertiary qualification, later in life you end up better off.”

“None of my kids went to university and they all ended up in really good jobs.”

“They are putting apprenticeships back. People have woken up to the fact that they actually [that’s what they need to do].”

“There’s not enough promotion of what’s available in the schools.”

“They have [apprenticeship] programmes in place but maybe it’s not promoted enough in schools.”

“Of course we want all children to either go into training or employment when they leave school. But to know the range of options is important. We’ve done a lot of work in vocational pathways... I just hope it’s not been at the expense of traditional academic pathways or whare wānanga.”

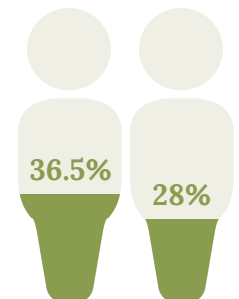
“I think when we were there, if you weren’t taking those classes, you were never encouraged to go into a trade. It seems like it’s very siloed now, like it’s siloing them into the working class. That’s what it feels like.”

“We see a lot of children being guided into vocational pathways. It could be a teaching issue; as soon as there is an issue, they are guided into a vocational pathway.”

“They had four apprenticeships last year in different trades, and they really struggled. They really struggled to fill their positions for youth that want to do it.”

“In Fonterra, you can do a whole range of apprenticeships... but a lot of them don’t [do them]; a lot of them stay at a factory level.”

OF ALL NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL LEAVERS IN 2022, **36.5%** ENROLLED IN A BACHELOR’S DEGREE OR ABOVE, WHILE **28%** ENROLLED IN A LEVEL 1-7 VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATE.



Education Counts, School Leaver Destinations.

IN 2023, THERE WERE 139,120 TRAINEES AND APPRENTICES IN NEW ZEALAND, A 12% DECREASE FROM 2022. THE NUMBER OF TRAINEES DROPPED BY 17% TO 62,455, AND APPRENTICES DECREASED BY 8.1% TO 77,490.

2022-23

TRAINEES

▼ 17%

APPRENTICES

▼ 8.1%

Education Counts, New Zealand’s Workplace-based Learners.

Career Decision Pressure

Some believe young people face significant pressure to make long-term career decisions at an early age. As they are still forming their identities, they can feel overwhelmed by the vast array of employment possibilities and lack a clear understanding of the job landscape. This challenge is further compounded by cultural factors, limited local employment opportunities, and minimal parental guidance. These obstacles can hinder their ambitions and aspirations, making it difficult for them to aim higher than the examples they see around them.

“There is a lot of pressure to figure out who you are and what you want to do when students are still forming their identity.

“From a psychological development perspective, they are still in their later stages of identity formation and yet have to decide what they’re going to do for the rest of their life.

“Youth are overloaded with choice, pressure to succeed, and lack confidence.

“People change careers all the time, so it’s not necessarily something you need to solve by the time you’re 18.

“When I was leaving high school, everyone said, “What do you want to do?” as though you know what the options are and really understand the full landscape of employment and possibilities.

“You don’t know what you don’t know.

“For Māori and Pasifika children, to do something better than your parents is not really part of their culture, so encouraging them to aim high is really hard to do.

“The huge mills and meatworks are the only role models of jobs these children could get into, and they don’t set their sights any higher because the parents don’t know how to encourage them.

“The upbringing will hold them back: their attitude to work, their attitude to taking instruction, and then you get into the competence and literacy.

Confidence Issues

Some believe many young people lack confidence and self-esteem, which hinders them from seizing available employment opportunities. It’s suggested that increasing anxiety, a lack of vocational skills, and insufficient support from home or peers contribute to their hesitation and diminished resilience, with many focusing more on potential barriers like application processes or interviews rather than the opportunities themselves.

“There are so many opportunities out there for rangatahi [youth]. Communities are sometimes even dangling them like a carrot, and no one steps forward to take advantage of those opportunities.

“I think a lot of it comes down to confidence in themselves and their self-esteem.

“But statistics are showing us that kids are coming through now with more anxiety and less confidence. So that’s a challenge for us in terms of how to get them into work and how to give them the ability and surety again.

“Youth may not be confident or motivated as they may not have support from home or their peers.

“Youth are... lacking confidence.

“Young people lack resilience, confidence, and hustle. Maybe coming out of COVID, there’s a lack of confidence to go and explore pathways elsewhere.

“He’s been down there for three months now, but he’s got a bit of pep in him, he’s got some get-up-and-go, he’s a hard worker. But, unfortunately, there are not a lot of youth like that. Some of them just aren’t sure, they lack the confidence.

“The rangatahi quite often see the barriers before they see what the opportunity really is. So they might see an opportunity, and it might be an application process, or they might have to have an interview, and it puts them off from doing something.

Work Preferences

Some observe that young people today have a different outlook on employment, often avoiding traditional shift work and demanding roles due to long, irregular hours. While some interpret this as a lack of motivation and willingness to work hard, others believe the younger generation is seeking more work-life balance and meaningful employment. However, the scarcity of meaningful employment opportunities exacerbates the problem, as young people struggle to find fulfilling jobs that offer both purpose and adequate income.

“But how much do you need to do for them, or can they actually learn to be self-motivated? We don’t have self-motivated youth; they have their hand out waiting for work.”

“I’ve been working with young people for 8 years and it still amazes me. They are tired from working 16 hours a week, which they consider full-time.”

“There is help with training, tertiary education, and farm training happening in the town, but motivation and attitude are the issues.”

“Young people say, “Well, I don’t want to go work there because it’s too hard, I have to get up too early, and it doesn’t pay much.”

“On the outside, it looks like they are unmotivated and lazy, but that’s how we see it because we grew up in a different generation.”

“The way that young people see jobs, employment, or their future is just so different from how we were brought up. They are not looking to do a nine-to-five job, they’re not looking at shift work. They just view employment way differently than we do.”

“If you talk to employers, it seems that young people don’t want to work hard, they don’t want the shift work, they want more life balance, they don’t want to work on the weekends, they don’t want to do nights.”

“Is it realistic having your employees work 12-14 hour shifts? We struggle to get truck drivers because the young people coming through don’t want to work long hours. They have families and want to be there for their kids.”

“I didn’t want to do something meaningless, and there were slim pickings for even meaningless work.”

“Breaking into meaningful work for a young person is huge.”

“She approached us saying, “I don’t want to work at McDonald’s or Countdown because I want to do something meaningful.”

“That’s increasingly common with people in their late 20s, early 30s. They want to be doing something meaningful with their lives and then need some paid work on the side. But there’s still just not that much.”

“There is a lack of meaningful work in our society, meaningful enough to earn enough money for some of the enjoyable things.”

“I have definitely seen that switch in youth going into the workforce where they are more demanding. They do want to have the weekends off and don’t want to work as many nights. So again, in the hospitality industry, that is a struggle.”

Unrealistic Expectations

Some believe that young people seeking employment today often expect to step directly into high-level or dream jobs without first doing entry-level work, which poses a significant challenge for many employers. This unrealistic expectation about pay and roles often leads to short-lived employment, as youths are unwilling to start at the bottom and work their way up.

“They just have no idea. “What do you mean I have to sweep the floor?” They have no clue.

“We’re constantly battling with it. There are lots of jobs if you are willing to get on the floor and work your way up. But often they’re not lasting more than a week or two because, in their minds, they want to be, I don’t know, a digital content creator.

“Some of our younger jobseekers come in thinking they’re going to get straight into some sort of high-level job and that they won’t have to do the hard yards at the bottom first and work their way up.

“Kids today also just want to step straight into their dream job; they aren’t prepared to put the hard work in.

“They do expect to be walking into their dream job. They don’t get that they need to start at the bottom and work their way up, and that their pay will reflect entry-level.

“Sometimes, it’s really hard when you have somebody come in and their expectations [are high]. They think the first job they ever get is going to be as a manager of something.

Skill Gaps

Many believe young people lack essential employment skills, such as creating resumes and preparing for interviews. This lack of experience and knowledge poses a significant barrier to their confidence and ability to apply for jobs. Some believe that without addressing these skill gaps, efforts to increase employment rates may not be successful.

“Youth have little to zero skill and [work] experience.

“25% confirmed they had never prepared a CV, 50% confirmed they needed assistance building a CV, and over 90% claimed they had never been taught how to prepare a CV. This tells me, Mr. Speaker, that the youth of the Whanganui electorate don’t know how to prepare a CV. They don’t know what a CV includes; some don’t even know what a CV is.

“The issue that I identified was that youth don’t know how to prepare a CV, and they don’t know how to prepare for an interview.

“In policy at the moment, they’re trying to increase employment, but how can they increase employment when youth don’t have the skills to actually be confident in applying for a job?

“You can’t expect a young person to hit the ground running; they lack the experience and need nurturing, which means time and money.

“What was identified is there is a huge component missing with regards to CVs, interview skills, job seeking, etc., in order to compete with adults that have experience.

“The skillset of youth needs working on.

Employer Support

While some employers are eager to support young people transitioning into the workforce, not all are youth-ready or willing due to the extensive pastoral care required. Employers often need to act as ‘the trainer, the mother, [and] the father’ to help young people gain job-related and basic life skills. For some, this can lead to poor experiences or a preference for hiring more settled, reliable, and motivated employees.

“Now, the employer has to be the trainer, the mother, the father. So if we can address all that before they get past training and into employment, that’s half the battle.”

“Sometimes you just have to work on a person, work on their confidence, but workplaces don’t have time to do that.”

“We do have great support from our local employers who are really wanting to engage with 100% Sweet to help young people transition.”

“From that perspective, there’s a lot of interest from employers to actually engage with 100% Sweet and Youth to Work to help with that transition.”

“When I say support, it could be in filling vacancies, participating in mock interviews, offering work experience opportunities, factory tours, or doing careers events.”

“One of the things it seems to be tracking currently is that employers are quite reluctant to take on young people between 16 to 24.”

“The pastoral care needed with some of these young people to integrate them into a work environment isn’t what you would normally expect. You employ someone to do the job. It takes time and admin.”

“How to talk to people, how to talk to colleagues—she (a 19-year-old staff member) approaches it very much as if they’re teenage mates and she can talk to them like that, but it’s not really appropriate.”

“Businesses that invest in providing youth with a good experience have good kids come through; however, not all are youth-ready.”

“We’d employed a couple of youth and that was a huge mistake. We prefer to employ settled people who will turn up for work because they want to work.”

Dependence of Large Employer

Many across the represented regions have noted the abundance of well-paying employment opportunities, often connected to the rural sector, that allow people to start working straight out of school and gain skills. However, there are concerns about the dependence on a few large, mono-skilled employers, as the lack of job diversity and transferable skills could lead to difficulties for both individuals and townships if these employers leave or close.

“It’s like golden handcuffs. You get in and get this money. Then you want to leave, but you’re not sure what else to do because you’re not skilled for any other job, and you get paid too much, so you can’t leave because you need that money.”

“Well, as much as anything, just the fact that there is a lot of employment here now. There is an awful lot of employment available here.”

“We have these big employers who pay well, and that’s the thing. They can come out of school and go straight into pretty good money. So it is a really noticeable feature for South Taranaki and has been so for a long time.”

“A lot of that town would be employed by, or their employment would be connected to, the rural sector in some shape or form.”

“That [the rural sector] provides a lot of employment for people in our community, but also the trickle-down effect.”

“We’ve got these few very big employers and a very narrow sphere of activity, so we are highly dependent on them. If one of those decides to pick up and go, we have a problem. It might be unlikely, but Silver Ferns has threatened it in the past.”

“People continue to do it because it pays really well. But when that employment dries up in these towns, and you don’t have as much in the way of transferable skills.”

“The industry is down there. So, there are not a whole lot of corporate jobs where you’re making money through investments and banking. It’s all through production. At least a lot of it is through production, which really only pays so much.”

Low Wages

Some believe that while a few large employers across the represented regions offer well-paying jobs, rural areas tend to have significantly lower wages compared to the national average. This is attributed to the scarcity of 'high-value' businesses and the dominance of low-skilled, low-paying jobs with limited career advancement. These low wages are believed to lead to poverty and hardship, with low-income earners struggling to afford basic living costs, especially on single incomes, highlighting a stark contrast between rural and urban regions.

“There’s a lot of low-paid, low-skilled labour here, but they don’t lead to any kind of professionalisation or any real improvement in the standard of living.

“Coming from Tauranga to here, the wages were half.

“My personal experience coming from Auckland, getting paid for urban planning consultancy roles, and then coming to Whanganui where I got an incredible pay cut.

“You’ve got to either accept that you’re going to make just over minimum wage unless you want to start your own business or work three jobs.

“A lot of our people in the north are manual labourers, getting between \$25-\$30 an hour. You’re not getting that \$50-\$60 an hour for trades, and we don’t have the businesses where you would be getting that top-level \$100,000 plus. It’s just the type of businesses and work in the area.

“Our businesses aren’t as high-value. We have supermarkets and some shops, but we don’t have many businesses that are in the higher bracket for wages.

“I even think that we’re below the average hourly rate here. I reckon the hourly rate here in the district is probably below the New Zealand average hourly rate.

“We have a higher proportion than any other area of central government workers on higher wages in Rangitīkei - we have roughly 2000 residents working for the central government. But is it enough to pull the bottom up?

“Low-wage jobs lead to poverty and hardship.

“Very few families now can raise a family on one income. No matter who is earning it, they don’t earn enough.

“We have a lot of people on low wages who are still unable to afford the cost of living and need more support.

THE MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN NEW ZEALAND IN MARCH 2024 WAS \$99,938. THE HIGHEST INCOMES ARE IN THE METROPOLITAN AREAS OF WELLINGTON, AUCKLAND, QUEENSTOWN, AND CHRISTCHURCH, **WHILE PROVINCIAL AREAS HAVE INCOMES BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE.**



Community Compass Median Inflation-adjusted Median Household Income, Dot Loves Data.

Seasonal Work Challenges

While common among the represented regions, some believe seasonal and shift work lacks security, as families struggle with irregular employment hours and income patterns. Many observe that the temporary nature of seasonal work means people often face periods of unemployment and financial instability, pushing some into debt or benefits during off-seasons.

This landscape is further challenged by the perception that many seasonal jobs are filled by international workers, adding to the economic and social complexities faced by local workers.

“Even though we have those big employers, there is still space for improvement. What I hear from people is that, yes, there are high unemployment rates, but part of that is because people are employed for short periods of time.”

“There is a lot of seasonal work around here.”

“I noticed a lot when I was working in Ohakune and Raetihi. Many people are self-employed or are seasonal workers.”

“If you want to live here, you have three opportunities because if you get sick of one, you have to find another one. So again, that’s the seasonal change they’ve got to adapt to.”

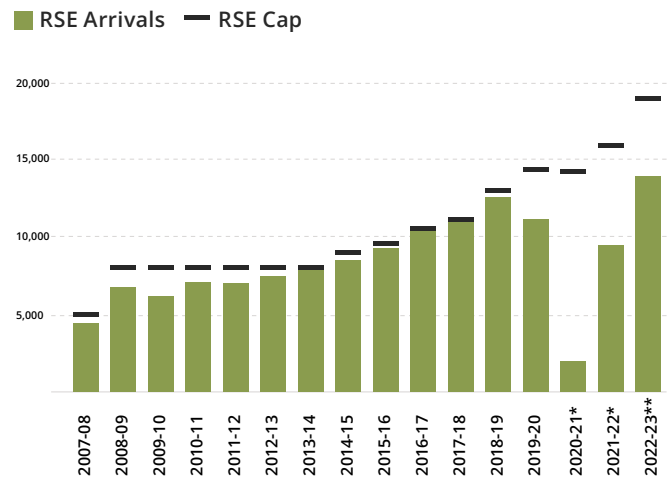
“Meatworks workers struggle and get into debt over the shutdown period.”

“Seasonal work and distribution of wages may be causing behaviours of getting into debt.”

“There is a lot of seasonal work, and seasonal work has become an issue as well. Either we get people in from out of the region to do the seasonal work, or for half the year, our rangatahi or any of our community are on the benefit. It makes it hard when we are all just struggling a little bit. If we could lift that deprivation, then we would be so much better off.”

“The majority of our work is shift work. When you’re doing shift work, it’s not a good environment, especially if you’ve got mum and dad working. It’s not a good environment for families and the interaction of families. The families that I’ve worked with, I think it actually drives separating them.”

RSE ARRIVALS AND ANNUAL RSE CAP, 2007-23



*RSE arrivals in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 years negatively impacted by COVID-related travel restrictions.

**Estimated RSE arrivals to 30 June 2023 (actual arrivals were 12,445 to 1 May 2023)

Howes, 2023.

Brain Drain

Some believe that gaining experience and skills outside of rural regions and returning offers a valuable global perspective; however, most believe that leaving to pursue employment is necessary due to limited local career paths. Many are compelled to move to more urban areas or even overseas for better employment and careers, leading to the perception that many, including the best and the brightest, leave. This ongoing trend contributes to the challenges these rural communities face in attracting and retaining talent.

“I could also argue that leaving the region and picking up skills elsewhere, then bringing them back, is as good, if not better, because they gain a more global perspective.”

“Sometimes it means linking people to opportunities outside our region, especially when it’s the right job for the person. Being in a small rural community, people, especially young people, tend to think there’s nothing here for them.”

“What would keep them here? There aren’t the jobs to keep the best and brightest.”

“There are no jobs for the young. That’s easy. There’s nothing for them.”

“It’s very much understood that you have to leave town if you want to have a career.”

“There are no jobs, basically. So I left. I grew up around here, and when I left high school, there wasn’t a career path in Taumarunui to support anything.”

“I would suspect that half will leave town, but there are still limited job opportunities for the rest.”

“There is a real risk for us now with the brain drain, particularly younger people going overseas for their careers.”

“I’m hearing of a few people looking at going overseas, which will affect the shortage even more. And of course, it’s the lifestyle and the money that draw them.”

“It’s very much understood that you have to leave town if you want to have a career. You can’t just stay and expect to get one.”

“It’s harder to get a job here in this region. It’s only a small community with nothing big to entice people, so they have to go out of the area to seek work.”

“It’s either meatworks or move out of town. And if you’re going to uni, you’re leaving as well.”

“There is no future here for our children.”

“We know students often leave for academic opportunities and don’t return because we don’t have the employment opportunities here.”

“Certainly, there are some employment opportunities that won’t be available in the Rangitikei.”

Labour Shortages

Some perceive a significant labour shortage across various industries, particularly in large factories, leading to a growing dependence on international workers. While some view this reliance as a 'lost opportunity' for local unemployed populations, others argue it is essential when local employment falls short. Additionally, the influx of immigrant labour has not only met workforce needs but also culturally enriched rural communities.

"Now we're a district that, like everywhere else, is madly searching for people to work."

"We've got high unemployment, and we still have people that we can put into jobs and train that are New Zealanders, and more specifically, New Zealand Māori. It's such a lost opportunity if we don't do it now."

"We can't find the people at the mid-level that you need to grow the workforce."

"There are people screaming out for employees, from multiple organisations. Especially big factory places. They are over 100 staff short. That's quite a few - AFFCO, etc."

"Not only do we have Fonterra, but we also have Silver Fern Farms. We get a lot of workers from the islands because local people don't apply for the jobs down there. It's sad. Is it just that people don't want to work in these places, or it's just not the right job for them?"

"We're getting migrants to cover the shortage in our factories. We're heavy in factories: Fonterra, ANZCO, and beef exporting. There's a huge amount of work available if you want it."

"Yes, there is a reliance on immigrant labour, but a lot of those immigrants have brought communities with them as well and actually strengthened rural communities, particularly in the dairy sector."

"The Filipino community is quite big in Taranaki, and the Fijian Indian community is as well. So this point is positive culturally as well."

IN THE YEAR LEADING UP TO MARCH 2024, **NEW ZEALAND'S NET MIGRATION INCREASED BY 111,100 PEOPLE.**

Stats NZ, International Migration to March 2024.



BETWEEN JULY 1, 2007, AND JUNE 30, 2022, NEW ZEALAND ISSUED A TOTAL OF 103,821 LIMITED-PURPOSE RSE VISAS FOR SEASONAL WORK TO PEOPLE FROM NINE PACIFIC COUNTRIES: FIJI, KIRIBATI, NAURU, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, SAMOA, SOLOMON ISLANDS, TONGA, TUVALU, AND VANUATU.

Bedford and Bedford (2023).



Skilled Worker Shortages

While there are numerous skilled job opportunities available across some regions, there is a significant shortage of qualified individuals to fill these roles, particularly in trades, early childhood education, and social work. This shortage is believed to be due to the unattractive living conditions and limited services of some rural regions, compounded by the impacts of COVID-19, which together make it difficult to attract and retain skilled workers.

“There are heaps of skilled jobs here, but not the skilled people to fill them.

“I don't think there are limited skilled employment opportunities, particularly in the trades. People are desperate; there is a huge shortage of builders and electricians, which are skilled jobs.

“We've got heaps of jobs, but we can't fill them due to a lack of skilled employees. They need specific skills, and we don't have them.

“Every counselling space we speak to, there is just not enough. No one can get a social worker or a counsellor for love or money.

“There is a skills shortage across the board, particularly early childhood education teachers. I have advertised, and I just get nothing.

“In trades, there's definitely a skill shortage for electricians, welders, and engineers. Employers are really struggling to attract the skills in.

“I talked to a lot of industry people, tradies, builders, manufacturing, and the labour market, as opposed to admin, is really stretched.

“Regional Council, District Council—there are always these environmental, waste management jobs that all require degrees, and they are very seldom sourced locally.

“There are a lot of unskilled workers here, which affects our district. It all comes back to being stuck in a cycle of poverty, and they can't get out.

“The term unskilled workers comes across as unfair, but they haven't had the chance to grow skills, and some of them are stuck and don't have the means to move out of town.

“There's not a lot for skilled workers, except in places like the Council and the hospital, but again, not a lot of skilled labour is needed in town.

“The jobs aren't here, so you won't get the high incomes. I thought it might change as we have learned to work remotely with COVID-19, but maybe not. It's not an attractive place to work remotely.

“How are we going to get the engineers and the managers to town if we don't have healthcare? If we don't have schools or housing? Housing is a massive issue.

“There have definitely been big moments of catalyst and change through the years, like the regionalisation of key services, for example. If you take professional jobs out of rural areas, the professional people leave, and then straight away your scales of economy shift.

High Expectations, Low Pay

It is perceived that some employers have high expectations of their employees regarding qualifications and job responsibilities while offering only the minimum wage. This is believed to be forcing employees to look outside their regions for better opportunities, further contributing to the local skill shortage experienced in some regions.

“Employers want people to come in with all the qualifications in the world. They don’t want to train them or pay to train them, and they want to pay them as little money as possible. That’s got to change!”

“Most businesses, you see them advertising for positions, and it’s like, are you serious? You’re asking for all that, and you’re going to pay the minimum wage? We still see ads in the paper offering between \$20 and \$25 an hour. \$20 isn’t even minimum wage.”

“The expectations of employers are long hours, minimal pay, and that you should be grateful to have employment.”

“The skill shortage is tied to salary. In healthcare, skilled workers, and teaching, it’s about the salary to pay for these professionals. If you offer a better salary, you might get a better source of employees.”

Relationship-Based Hiring

Some hold the view that personal connections are crucial in securing employment, often suggesting that ‘who you know’ is more important than ‘what you know.’ While the emphasis on relationships over skills or qualifications is viewed by some as disadvantageous, others believe this relationship-based hiring can be beneficial.

“The reality is, whether it’s Māori or non-Māori, Ruapehu is a place where you get employment by who you know, not what you know. Often it’s shoulder tapping or family connections. Rather than seeing that as a negative, I think it needs to be embraced and fostered because it is the way it is.”

“Some of them were family members of other people who work here, so that’s always a good recommendation for us. People don’t recommend someone if they’re going to reflect badly on them.”

“When I think about it, in some of the bigger industries, it’s never about what you can do, it’s about who you know to get in. Once you’re in, you’re in.”

“It’s not what you know, it’s who you know in South Taranaki.”

“I know there’s a process to follow, but there’s still backyard, shoulder tapping, and all of that relationship-building that gets people jobs in places that are usually hard to get into. It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.”

“It is difficult. When I first came here, I remember thinking, ‘That’s ridiculous. It’s just nepotism.’ You know, you should employ outside your nieces, your nephews, your whatever. But actually, that is a style of employment in this district.”

“There is a bias by employers in the region. I used to say that was true, but now I’ve completely changed my view and started to see that as a strength.”

“For some of the smaller communities, it can be who you know, not what you know.”

“Definitely for the job seeker, it is a big deal—who you know, not what you know... It can be really tough for people who have just moved here or don’t have those connections.”

Industry Decline

Many believe that the decline in major industries and reluctance of new ones to move to rural areas has left some smaller townships struggling. This reduction in significant employers has limited employment opportunities and, in cases like the closure of the freezing works in Pātea, contributed significantly to the economic challenges and widespread unemployment experienced by these communities.

“If you study when all the meatworks shut down and what happened to those communities, it was like the heart was gone.

“It is more about what we miss out on. If we were to talk about it, we had a fully-fledged railway, we had a lot of roading paths, and we had a top freezing works here. But because of our location and the cost of travel to get things where they need to go, we were opted out of the market.

“We had one of the best-operating freezing works here. It employed over 400-500 people, plus attachments, and was one of the most successful ones. We didn't get closed down because we were unsuccessful; we got closed down because we were in the wrong place.

“In Pātea, the primary industry was the freezing works, which closed in the late 80s. Hundreds of people lost their jobs, and we had a really high level of unemployment for a long time. There is this learned helplessness, which is an intergenerational issue.

“When it closed, there was huge trauma. There was a complete lack of capacity for people to cope and find a new path for themselves, and it's taken multiple generations to change it.

“We had a significant amount of staff on the railways, but we have lost that now too. They only have a very small number of permanent staff now. We have lost a lot of those industries that provided those jobs.

49% OF THE PĀTEA POPULATION IS NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE, COMPARED TO 33% FOR THE REST OF SOUTH TARANAKI.

Stats NZ Census 2018.



Generational Unemployment

Some observe that generational unemployment is prevalent in certain areas, where people have become accustomed to relying on benefits, perpetuating a cycle that discourages seeking employment. It's perceived that this mindset and lifestyle are often learned behaviours passed down through generations, making it difficult for young people to break the cycle and pursue different aspirations to what is exposed to them.

“You repeat the cycle, the cycle repeats. So in terms of being on a benefit, that repeats and then it repeats to the next generation, that's my experience anyway.

“The people in Eltham are happy to be unemployed; they are second, third generation. They know how to work the system.

“Generational unemployment, some of that in Marton is a lifestyle.

“I can definitely agree to that. I used to fall by the wayside when it comes to employment. I mean, I grew up in a family where most of them were on the benefit outside of Tamarunui. They just said, 'Oh, don't worry about getting a job, just jump on the benefit, Auntie Cindy got you,' and stuff like that.

“And that mindset sticks with you as a young, impressionable teenager or young adult. It's hard to break from that.

“It's learned behaviour. If you grow up in a household where you don't have any incentive to follow your dreams and aspirations in another direction, you're more than likely just going to follow the same pattern.

IN THE 2018 CENSUS, 18% OF NEW ZEALANDERS REPORTED HAVING NO FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS.

Stats NZ Census 2018.



Welfare vs. Employment

Many believe that transitioning from unemployment is challenging because employment, especially low-income employment, does not always outweigh the benefits of welfare support. With the loss of wrap-around support and the unpredictability of income, it can be easier for some people to remain on benefits rather than seek work. Coupled with the associated costs of working, such as travel and childcare, and the perceived ease of not working, unemployment can be the preferred option for some.

“Making sure that transition is good is important for us. If we don’t get it right and they get wobbly because the income isn’t the same or there’s a variation from one week to the next, it becomes a challenge.”

“If you start going into a pay scale where you’re not getting any support, you’re actually at a disadvantage more than those who are getting government support funding.”

“Some are quite content to stay on a benefit because it’s consistent. They know what’s coming in. They rely on that and the lifestyle, with no interruptions. So for some, it probably is just that predictable income.”

“Some of them are in Housing New Zealand homes, so once they start getting an income, that automatically affects them. It’s quite a scary process for them, going from being on MSD payments to working.”

“In order for them to find meaningful work where they can build skills, the walls and barriers are huge. It’s easy for them to stay on unemployment benefits.”

“What I was getting paid, somebody on the unemployment benefit with the low-energy payment got paid more than I did. So what’s your incentive to go out and get a degree? Why would I? When I could stay at home and make more money than you. I can’t fight that.”

“Is it actually worth working when you weigh it up? If I went to work, I’d get however much extra, but then I’m paying for fuel to get to work. Is it worth the stress?”

“Many are concluding that they don’t want to work 40-50 hours a week to only gain an extra \$50-100 a week.”

“Probably because we don’t have a lot of places paying above the board wages, so if you’re going to go to work and not earn as much as the benefit, then the benefit is the more attractive side of things.”

“Then you have added costs, like travel costs, groceries because you have to change the way you do your meals, and of course childcare. It almost costs them more to work than not to work.”

“I could have stayed working in hospitality with the support I got from the government, working for families, and I was no better off than starting a government job. You have to make that choice. Do you want to stay in that position and be who you are, or do you want to take the leap and make a sacrifice, knowing you’re not going to gain any monetary value but you’re going to gain personal development?”

“When you are employed, you don’t have those support services wrapped around you, so actually, people stay on the benefit because of those support systems.”

“Those are some of the issues where they don’t have wrap-around support. If you’re on minimum wage, you may still come up against things like not being able to pay your power bills, and so forth, and they don’t get support. So they go back on the benefit.”

“You’ll always get people who, for whatever reason, don’t want to work, and it’s quite easy to stay on a benefit.”

“Why go to work when I can just stay at home and relax? There is that bit of attitude here.”

“Jobseeker support and Single Parent benefit, that would be in the Eltham entrapment. They’ll do what they can to keep the benefit and won’t push themselves unless they are pushed.”

IN MARCH 2024, **269,376 NEW ZEALANDERS**, OR 6.3% OF THE WORKING-AGE POPULATION, **HAD BEEN RECEIVING A MAIN BENEFIT FOR ONE YEAR OR LONGER.**

Ministry of Social Development, Benefit Fact Sheets, March 2024.



6.3%

Benefits of Employment

Some feel that transitioning from unemployment to employment can be immensely transformative, enhancing a person's individual and household wellbeing by ensuring access to essentials like food, healthcare, and internet. It's also observed by some that securing full-time employment instils a sense of pride, particularly for those who are the first in their families to achieve such a milestone.

“When somebody goes from not being employed at all to having a well-paid job, it is absolutely transformative for their household. They can have a real meal, which is number one. Number two is being able to afford food, power, and all those utilities they haven't been able to have, including phone and internet, which other people take for granted.”

“Employment is how people develop better opportunities and better lifestyles.”

“I just about cried because he got to this place where he was strong enough to articulate and value himself and get a better job for himself. I'm exiting him as we speak because it's now been six months. He's thriving. I talked to the employer on Friday, and they love him. He's working, proving himself, contributing to his family, and doing better things. Life is better.”

“That's the thing, the pride they often feel in terms of being one of the few in the family who's got a full-time job or some training. Even real basic things like getting their boots, it's just really cool to see.”

Drug Use and Employment

Many believe drug use is directly linked to unemployment, as mandatory drug testing, required by many major employers to ensure workplace safety and maintain business reputations, can be a significant obstacle to gaining employment. Despite this, many potential employees are noted for their honesty during interviews, openly admitting drug use when pre-employment drug testing is mentioned.

“Most of the people that come through the doors for support, I'd probably say more than half of them would not pass a drug test.”

“We've certainly found people pretty honest. That's a question we ask: 'We do pre-employment drug testing, is that going to be an issue?' and often people say 'Yeah, that will be.' So they are pretty honest and we can stop it right there.”

“People don't pass drug tests. Simple. If you talk to employers about it, you'll hear that they just can't get people to pass drug tests.”

“I believe the struggle to find work due to factors like mandatory drug testing is a good thing because otherwise, those people would just take their issues with them to another job.”

“There are plenty of jobs, but many of them, out at the Mill and so forth, all require drug testing, and they are not passing drug tests. That's one of the reasons why unemployment is so high, because they can't get a job where there's drug testing.”

CANNABIS IS THE MOST COMMONLY USED ILLICIT DRUG IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND. ACCORDING TO THE NZ HEALTH SURVEY, OVER 597,000 ADULTS USED CANNABIS IN THE PAST YEAR, WITH 199,000 USING IT AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK. ADDITIONALLY, 3.6% OF THE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER (ABOUT 152,000 PEOPLE) USED MDMA, 1.1% (AROUND 47,000 PEOPLE) USED AMPHETAMINES, AND 0.4% (APPROXIMATELY 18,000 PEOPLE) USED OPIOIDS.

New Zealand Drug Foundation (2024).

597,000  **199,000**
USED IN THE LAST YEAR AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK

Criminal Record

Some believe that people with criminal records face significant barriers to employment as they are often judged by their past actions and struggle to find support or opportunities for reintegration. Strict employment policies and reluctance to hire people with records mean that those with convictions often 'don't get a second chance,' despite their desire for employment, even years after their offences.

"I've worked in the justice field for many, many, many years, and they don't get a second chance."

"Sometimes it's not just the positive disclosure around the disability; it's the positive disclosure around the criminal convictions. How do I tell them and prove I am not that person anymore?"

"They are judged automatically. You need a crim check, and people won't give you a chance, especially when you're next to someone with the same skills but no convictions."

"There is a seven-year clean slate, but if someone has done a burglary or an armed robbery 15 years ago, there are a lot of things that don't come with a clean slate, especially the higher-end risk factors."

"It's incredibly difficult to get employment if you've got a record. If you've done enough to go into prison, you've got a big record."

"I know a few people in that situation who really struggled to get the support to return. They want to do the right thing, they want employment, but it just doesn't quite cross that line. The barriers are really tough."

"I was in a job in Whanganui looking for staff and suggested taking a punt on somebody who was coming out of the criminal justice system, and they weren't as open to it as I expected. It's a higher risk, and we don't have the capacity to hold somebody accountable if they are making mistakes."

A SURVEY FOUND THAT **HAVING A PRISON SENTENCE IN ONE'S HISTORY NEGATIVELY IMPACTS EMPLOYABILITY: 16.8% OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WOULD NOT HIRE SOMEONE WITH A PRISON RECORD**, 29.2% SAID THEY WOULD BE MUCH LESS LIKELY TO HIRE THEM, AND ONLY 17.2% (36 PEOPLE) SAID THEY WOULD TREAT THEM THE SAME AS OTHER APPLICANTS.



Gilbert, Elley, and Best (n.d.)

Childcare Challenges

Many working parents are believed to face significant financial and logistical barriers when navigating childcare and employment due to the high cost and limited operating hours of early childhood education. These high costs can make it difficult for parents to justify working, as a significant portion of their income goes towards childcare. As a result, many families are forced to choose between working and paying for daycare, relying on extended family for childcare support, or staying home with their children.

“Of my 30 or so hours of work a week, at least half of that was going to childcare. It’s like the privilege of going to work.”

“Because a lot of our [community members] here are shift workers, it doesn’t work for single parents because they need daycare, and [they] don’t run 24/7.”

“For me personally, kōhanga reo did not work. I worked full time, and my husband worked full time, and kōhanga reo was from nine till three. That’s certainly why I didn’t choose kōhanga.”

“My partner is thinking of leaving work because it’s cheaper to have kids out of daycare than it is to have them in there.”

“The cost is terrible. I’ve got two in ECE, and it’s costing me \$480 a week.”

“I’m actually amazed at the childcare prices that parents are paying. It’s more than their wage sometimes.”

“You are definitely doing the maths, figuring out how much more you need to work, and balancing what you pay versus what you earn.”

“The rising cost of living means parents have to have two incomes and have to look at going back to work, but then you end up paying for the childcare so that you can go to work.”

“Over the last decade, more and more, it’s the grandparents who are bringing the children. When you talk to them, it’s the grandparents who have the children most of the time because both parents are working, and childcare is expensive.”

“I’ve got aunties and uncles who aren’t at retirement age, but they moved back to Pātea where it is cheaper to live. They’re just not working and are helping raise mokopuna so that the kids can go to work, and the kids contribute to the household.”

“There are low to no options for early childhood education for parents who work outside of the typical 9 to 5 work hours. Coupled with the pressures of being charged late fees if they cannot pick up their children on time, these working parents are forced to come up with their own ways to access (or not access) childcare.”

“I don’t have any personal knowledge of that other than knowing that it does happen. And I guess I’m an example of that. I’m not working so that I can look after my granddaughter.”

“I have a daughter who’s a chartered accountant, so [she’s] on a fairly good wage, and even she finds the cost really difficult. Really, is it worth working, or is it worth not working? The cost is exorbitant.”

“We send our youngest to daycare. Cost is probably a big prohibitor. Our daughter’s two and a half, so we have to pay for that, and by the time my partner works, a big portion of her salary goes to pay the daycare. I can imagine that would put a lot of families off.”

“We see the tension it causes the parents: Do I work and send the children to childcare, or do I sacrifice income to stay with the children?”

“Childcare commitments, you know, only being able to work within a certain timeframe, whether it be school hours. This really narrows that person’s ability to find a job.”

“For some of those people that are in the middle-[income bracket], that don’t qualify for subsidies, you know, you’re kind of working just to put your child into daycare.”

IN JUNE 2022, 71% OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) AGED CHILDREN IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND WERE ENROLLED IN AN EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICE.

Education Counts, Ministry of Education



Transportation Barriers

Some believe that the lack of transportation significantly hinders employment opportunities, particularly for those without personal vehicles or licences. Some believe the lack of reliable public transport and the high cost of travel, such as fuel and bus fares, creates substantial barriers to accessing employment, especially for those experiencing financial hardship, making transportation a major barrier to employment.

“Travel is a huge problem in South Taranaki and has a significant impact on employment. A lot of it is transportation. Many don’t have cars or licences. They just get around somehow. I don’t actually know how they manage.”

“We can definitely talk about youth unemployment. It’s due to accessibility. The bus system is terrible. Yeah. Non-existent, not accessible.”

“A lot of the farm jobs around here too, you need transport, and there is no bus service around here that people can use to get to work.”

“The other issue is transport. We don’t have public transport. So if you don’t have a car or a way to get around, you can’t get to work.”

“[We need to] help people just get around. Because transport is limited. That’s a major barrier for us.”

“The access issue, no public transport, just makes it too difficult. No one is taking them. This is yet another barrier to overcome.”

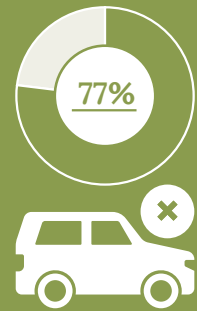
“There are families that can’t afford to or don’t have the resources to get to work opportunities.”

“The general issues we see are transport as a big problem, not having access to transport or not having a licence.”

“Not having access to a vehicle for transport. I mean, things are so expensive these days.”

“Whether they have access to a vehicle or not, and quite often not having a licence, you know, they don’t have the driver’s licence.”

77% OF LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE REPORTED THAT LIMITED MOBILITY, SUCH AS LACK OF ACCESS TO A VEHICLE, PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION, OR A DRIVER’S LICENCE, WAS THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO FINDING AND TAKING UP WORK. THIS WAS THE MOST COMMONLY MENTIONED BARRIER.



Ministry of Social Development, Barriers to Employment among Long-term Beneficiaries: A review of recent international evidence, 2003.

Housing Insecurity

Some believe the lack of housing is a significant barrier to employment in some regions, with people living out of their cars unable to maintain jobs and employers unable to hire due to the housing shortage, further contributing to a skills shortage.

“We had one chap here who was living in his car. And it was that whole dilemma: What’s my priority? Is it finding a house or finding a job? Well, I can’t find a house because I can’t afford it, so I need the job first. But he’s living in his car. So it’s, oh, my goodness.”

“Housing too. We have stories of people who can’t keep jobs because they can’t find a house. They’re living out of their car, and that’s no way to live every day.”

“Housing is the biggest barrier to employment in the district.”

“I know employers with space for ten more employees, but there are no houses, so they can’t hire them.”

“The barrier to finding skilled employees is the lack of housing. There is career progression, but it’s hindered by the lack of housing.”

“For some people, they just can’t even think about finding a job while they’re not secure in their living situation.”



Pathways Forward: Opportunities for Addressing Employment- Related Disparities



With a solid understanding of the employment landscape, we now focus on identifying pathways for progress. The “Pathways Forward: Opportunities for Improving Employment Outcomes” section highlights opportunities identified by the community and showcases successful methods, interventions, and organisations from around the world and Aotearoa New Zealand. With this, our goal is to inspire and empower people at all levels to start or strengthen their efforts toward better employment outcomes.

What’s in this Section:

- **Opportunities From the Community:** This is an expansive collection of potential ideas and initiatives, derived from community insights and perspectives, intended to inspire action. See page 120 for the featured opportunity.
- **Good Mahi in the Community:** Celebrates the commitment of local organisations working diligently to address employment disparities within their communities, highlighting what they do and why they do it.
- **Models and Interventions:** Offers a review of effective frameworks and interventions from across the globe, presenting evidence-based approaches to addressing various aspects of employment.

“We have an urgency to support people into paid employment with all of the benefits that come with being employed, the income, all the different impacts on my life, my whānau and their life, my sense of community, my choices, all of the things that can support me.

Workshop Participant.

Opportunities From the Community

This section presents a comprehensive collection of opportunities, ideas, and pathways emerging directly from the community's lived experience. While some opportunities are directly linked to employment, others may have more indirect connections. This shows the importance of adopting a broader perspective when addressing complex community issues—a perspective that considers both the immediate factors as well as the wider ecosystem influencing the topic. For a deeper insight into the many connections associated with employment, refer to the Employment Ecosystem on page 60.

Alongside this collection of community-identified opportunities, we expand on one select opportunity mentioned numerous times by the community. This featured opportunity offers insight into pathways with significant potential for positive impact. Jump to page 120 to read more.

Engaging Early

Engaging and preparing young people from an early age, such as in primary school, by discussing their future aspirations and monitoring their progress throughout their school years into adulthood.

“Having those conversations, preparing them, building capacity, right back then asking them what they want to do when they grow up, those sorts of conversations, and then monitoring those all the way through to the high school level and into the adult level as well.

Role Models

Ensuring young people are well supported with role models and mentors, such as local retired professionals and community members in schools, to provide them with practical insights into various careers and inspire them to explore their interests more deeply.

“We are missing the cohesiveness between teachers in schools to join together a child’s interests. Teachers do some role modelling, but they need real people from the community to show some of those jobs.

“Role models are important, particularly male role models. They should bring in grandfathers and grandmothers because there are lots of older people out there with lots of time and wisdom.

“They need to invite people from various workplaces to come into schools and talk to the kids. Give the children a range of what’s out there and what might be interesting for them.

“They [job coaches] are around everywhere, in every community, because you’ve got retired people. We’ve got retired builders, retired electricians, retired truck drivers, etc.

“Having the confidence to step out of comfort zones and having some mentors to do that.

Work-Ready Skills

Introducing work-ready skills into the education system to prepare students with essential life skills, such as budgeting, CV writing, and career guidance, easing their transition from education to employment by enhancing their employability and work-readiness.

“Teaching people basic skills when they leave school will solve many problems for future employers.

“Learning these so-called ‘soft skills’ is actually a priority, no less than hard skills. Unless children learn how to adapt, learn how to problem-solve, and develop resilience, they will suffer. That will take away options as much as not having a particular qualification.

“I know the school hasn’t got the capacity to do it. But actually, we need to look at our children and say, they have to do this. They have to do budgeting. They need to understand that going on the benefit is not the right thing to do. You should be getting your CV done and finding work.

“The education system needs to ensure that our rangatahi are prepared for their future job applications, easing the transition between education and the workforce, strengthening the link between qualification and employment, because employment for youth secures their future. Employment for youth secures New Zealand’s future.

“Home economics needs to come back, budgeting needs to come back, and understanding simple things like needing a will by the time you’re 18 and an EPOA (Enduring Power of Attorney) in place.

“They should bring in some of the work-ready skills, like CV writing, that can be incorporated into the English curriculum.

“Why are they not upskilling our high school kids who want to go into that space? You know, if you want to join the policy and development team, this is what you need to consider at school.

“Some of this potentially starts at school with career guidance. You’ve probably got one career guidance person for a school of 1000 people. How do you interact with other students and support them to have a career pathway?

Increasing Pathways Awareness

Increasing visibility and awareness of different educational and career paths to young people, ensuring they are equipped with options as they transition out of school. This can help them move beyond the limitations of their current environments and upbringings.

“It’s about creating options and showing children their options so they aren’t leaving school shortchanged.”

“Giving a child a look at what they could head towards, a different type of life to what they have, they need to be able to see that to move toward it because at the moment they can only see their parents getting drunk.”

“It’s all about creating options. I don’t care where children go; leaving school to a low-skilled job might be the right thing to do, as long as they have options to do other things if they don’t want to do that, so that they aren’t leaving school shortchanged.”

Gaining Early Work Experience

Introducing youth to work at an earlier age offers them an opportunity to foster a sense of pride in earning and contributing, positively shaping their attitude towards work.

“It starts with youth being able to work from a younger age. That is the golden opportunity age, to get them into that mindset and build that pride of earning money.”

“Kids are bored. They need to get into work so that they are contributing. That will set them up for their future to be more engaging and contributing to their family, so that they feel like they can pay their own way.”

Introducing a Youth Wage

Introducing a ‘minimum youth wage’ for those aged 14 to 17 to help engage young people in employment and foster a strong work ethic.

“We need to have a minimum youth wage, to keep kids off the street and get them money, and give them those [opportunities] because they’re growing up entitled.”

Improving Self-Belief

Fostering self-belief and confidence in young people to enable them to believe in their capabilities, and with the right support, achieve their aspirations and undertake employment opportunities that are available.

“Those opportunities are out there and they are waiting for rangatahi to be taken. So feel confident to do something, and motivate yourself to do something.”

“Sometimes you just have to work on a person, work on their confidence, but workplaces don’t have time to do that.”

“It’s just knowing that you can take that leap of faith, you can do it on your own, and you can be confident in yourself to do it.”

“Kids just need to believe in themselves. If our young families could just believe that they can do it, that would be just a big step forward. We can do it. We can help you.”

“Kids think that they can’t do things, and yet, they just need that confidence and that push a little bit, it would be really cool.”

“Most people do need some practice and some confidence-building around the interview process.”

Preventative Measures

Implementing preventative measures to reduce the likelihood of young people becoming another 'unemployment statistic' and to enhance their long-term job security.

“As much as it’s about placing young ones into employment, it’s also about preventing them from becoming that unemployment statistic.”

“When you hear the stories, it seems more and more that it’s fine to get one person into work, [but] what would you do if you were working on the prevention rather than outcomes.”

“It’s amazing to work with getting one person into work, that’s a good achievement because you’ve changed someone’s life. But what would you do if you were working further on the prevention rather than the outcomes?”

Promoting Apprenticeships

Promoting apprenticeships and hands-on work as valuable career paths, especially in light of their essential role during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Encouraging that it’s okay to do apprenticeships. When COVID-19 came along, it wasn’t us “intelligent people” going to work, it was the essential workers, they call them essential workers for a reason.”

“We need to celebrate that it’s okay to have hands [on work] as such.”

“The school system needs a big overhaul to get people into the trades, swinging a hammer around, or doing something creative.”

Incentivising Employment

Allocating 'a pocket of money' to businesses to incentivise them to provide employment and training opportunities for youth.

“There needs to be a pocket of money to support businesses in employing youth.”

“They [employers] need to be willing to take on people and train them.”

Youth-Ready Workplaces

Supporting businesses to create more 'youth-ready' workplaces by fostering inclusive and supportive environments, ensuring young people are not discouraged in the early stages of their employment.

“It is about meeting in the middle, youth getting much more work-ready, but how do businesses become more youth-ready? There’s nothing really supporting that side in our district.”

“For businesses, how inclusive is their environment, how do they support pathways, and how do they show someone, a young person, that an entry-level job has pathways so that they don’t get put off in the early stages?”

University Work Experience

Incorporating work experience into university degrees to ensure graduates leave education and enter the workforce with real-life experience.

“A big move for universities now would be to incorporate work experience into their degrees, because people who get degrees and have no work experience are looking for jobs and competing with those without degrees and three years work experience.”

Work-ready Skills Prep

Increasing support for CV creation and interview preparation, alongside improving literacy and numeracy skills to empower people with the confidence and self-belief necessary to become work-ready.

“They’ll always need support with CVs, they’ll always need support with interviews, they’ll always need support with building their confidence and self-belief.”

“Around literacy and numeracy, some of our mahi feels a little bit like hand-holding. But what we want is to empower people, not enable people to continue with a lifestyle that doesn’t suit them.”

“Life skills that contribute to those work-ready skills are key.”

“More support for CV creation is needed because that’s a barrier when people don’t know how to create a CV properly or don’t have that assistance readily at hand.”

“So literacy and numeracy have come up quite a bit, not just through our providers, but sometimes it’s just nerves with sitting a licence. Sometimes they need someone to sit next to them in case they need someone to read to them. And then sometimes they’ll come out and say, you know what, I don’t need that person.”

Increasing Rural Retention

Offering incentives to attract and retain young people in more rural regions, providing them with viable employment opportunities so that their skills and knowledge remain local.

“That’s why we need to develop industries so that we can attract young people back to a job.”

“Once you have gotten a tertiary education, and I wonder, on a national level, whether there are some incentives we need to have in order to be able to keep them here.”

“What employment can we offer them so that they come back?”

“What’s going to attract them back? They’re not putting down those strong roots.”

Offering Employment Packages

Encouraging businesses to expand their employment strategies beyond salary increases, such as offering comprehensive packages to attract and retain talent.

“It’s not as simple as “you need to pay them more”; it’s offering a lot more of the package with regards to employability. I think employers would then hopefully be able to attract more talent to the workplace.”

“I think they [employers] forget that recruiting is a two-way thing. People will choose not to work for an organisation that has a bad reputation, or they know nothing about the organisation because they don’t sell themselves. So they need to market themselves more effectively in order to attract people, and they kind of forget that.”

Improving Work-Life Balance

Changing work structures, such as shift patterns and long hours, to ensure employees have a better work-life balance and ample time off.

“It’s going to have to go further than just targeting and recruiting. They are going to have to change the way they are doing work, e.g., shift patterns, long hours. There has to be a work-life balance. So even if they have shift work, make it so that they have a work-life balance with a decent amount of time off. Not five days of shift work, two days off.”

Developing Industry Presence

Increasing industry presence in some regions to offer more high-value job opportunities that foster skill development and create meaningful employment, enhancing the local economy and job availability.

“We need industry here. Our people need work. Some industries where our people can build necessary skills, provide meaningful employment that brings money into our local economy.”

“Government throwing money into getting some of those manufacturing industries into the area and providing incentives would help.”

“We need to grow job availability and that skill base. What this statistic is telling me is that our jobs are at the bottom end of the pecking order. So, with these new jobs, the capability and skill base overall in the district will increase.”

“[The offshore wind farm] would be a massive turnaround in terms of employment and opportunities for our people.”

“Even the tier one jobs, around accommodation and hospitality for the people who need to build the turbines, would be big for Pātea, and it'll probably flow over into our Waverley community too.”

Fly-in Fly-out Hubs

Leveraging rural regions, such as Ruapehu, as fly-in-fly-out hubs for specialised expertise, particularly in education and health, to address shortages in these fields.

“I think that is an opportunity around looking at Ruapehu as a fly-in-fly-out area for speciality skill sets. Fly-in-fly-out for education; if you can't attract high-level science teachers, the Ministry can provide fly-in-fly-out teachers to fulfil those qualifications.”

Increasing Remote Work

Implementing remote work models in the more rural regions to allow government departments and other organisations to operate effectively, leveraging lower living costs and quality of life benefits while maintaining connectivity with urban offices.

“That model could be done here, and you could put government departments that work remotely. That would make a difference.”

“I think working from home or remote work is also helping South Taranaki. I know plenty of people who live in South Taranaki and have jobs elsewhere, and they can just go up to Auckland once a month or go up to the New Plymouth office once a fortnight and things like that. They reap the benefits of the lower cost of living and being at the beach.”

Supporting Quick Transitions

Transitioning people into paid employment as quickly as possible to improve the overall wellbeing of themselves, their families, and their communities.

“We have an urgency to support people into paid employment with all of the benefits that come with being employed, the income, all the different impacts on my life, my whānau and their life, my sense of community, my choices, all of the things that can support me.”

“It's about the evidence and the approach being to support people into real jobs for real pay as quickly as possible. That was the opposite of what we used to do many years ago, which is ‘one day when you're better you can’.”

Integrating Housing Support

Integrating employment support with housing services to provide comprehensive assistance by addressing both needs together rather than in isolation.

“So in South Taranaki, we have an employment consultant integrated with the specialist mental health services, and that’s how it should be everywhere, right... in a way, that’s how it should work between housing and employment services.

“So that level of integration, so what we see internationally existing and emerging is best practice. You would not [provide] housing support or solutions for homelessness... without integrating employment support as part of that solution. It makes no sense whatsoever, not to.

Offering Transport Solutions

Providing more transport services and employer-supported transport options to ensure better and more affordable access to employment for people within the community.

“Definitely some more transport services and what that looks like... I know we’ve had feasibility studies done on taxi services and things like that, but definitely more of our people helping our own people, however that might look.

“So then it’s about us trying to find other employers that have transport available.

Providing Individual Support

Focusing on individual employment needs and aspirations to ensure those seeking employment find meaningful work that aligns with their career goals and desires.

“I think it’s important for us to focus on the needs of people, which is also, you know, having a conversation around, what does employment look like for me? How will it work? Has this been something that I’ve always wanted to pursue as a career?”

“Some job seekers, that’s what they want, “I just want any job as my first stepping stone, while I look for the job that is meaningful.”

“It is about not putting a square peg in a round hole. We certainly don’t want people to feel like, ‘here’s a job,’ even though it’s not suited to you. It is very much about that person’s aspirations and what they want to do.

“It’s about finding employment opportunities that are going to fit what they need, and the employer being accommodating or flexible around some of those things too.

Improving Māori Outcomes

Improving educational and employment outcomes for Māori, as this often underpins a number of negative downstream issues.

“I oversee an education and employment portfolio. So, the data that we got in the livability study, etc., highlights clearly a historical need for improvement in educational outcomes and employment outcomes for Māori.

Increasing Disability Representation

Increasing the representation of people with disabilities in the workforce, especially in leadership roles, so that future generations are empowered and inspired to achieve similar success.

“It’s the same as seeing women in roles [in] corporate and business. Young people can see that [those with disabilities] and aspire to that, so that’s what we hope in our organisation.”

Improving Disability Awareness

Promoting better awareness and education around disabilities to recognise the diversity and value that people with disabilities bring to the workplace.

“I just hope that people come to recognise diversity and the value that it has. It would impact everything: employment, education, everything.”

“Better awareness and education, especially in our space, around disability, health conditions, and those sorts of things.”

“It’s about trying to turn some of those attitudes around and potentially educate the employers.”

“The real challenge for us is creating the education and awareness out there around diversity and actually looking at people for what they’re able to contribute and the value that they bring.”

“We need to focus more on what they bring to the workplace.”

“We need to ensure we look at each person as an individual: “You tell us what will work for you, or what hasn’t worked, and then we can work together to figure it out.”

Offering Second Chances

Providing people with criminal records and mental health issues a ‘second chance’ by reducing employer judgement and bias.

“I think that as far as people with criminal records, I believe that everybody should be allowed to have a second chance, they shouldn’t be judged. Same with mental health. They shouldn’t be judged on past experiences. Everyone deserves a second chance, and that and I think some employers still sit in that judgmental role.”

We now direct our attention to a singular opportunity that resonated strongly within our communities. In this opportunity, we will examine its potential impact on employment before asking a thought-provoking question aimed at sparking further reflection and exploration into how we can collectively translate these insights into actionable pathways.

Supporting Employment Transitions

With many people, from youth to adults, facing significant barriers to employment—particularly those entrenched in multi-generational unemployment—the need for comprehensive, one-to-one, wrap-around support in transitioning to employment is paramount. This support is crucial not only for facilitating a smooth entry into the workforce but also for sustaining long-term employment.

A comprehensive support system may include pastoral care and practical assistance, such as securing transportation and interview clothes, as well as equipping people with essential qualifications and life skills, like obtaining a driver's licence. However, the journey doesn't end there; ongoing support throughout the transition period is essential, as many navigate the complexities of moving from benefits to stable employment.

This opportunity aims to create a support system that addresses both the practical and personal needs of individual job seekers. By providing holistic and ongoing support, we aim to empower people to overcome barriers and achieve sustained employment success.

Community Insights

“It’s really important for us to get that transition right because some of them have been unemployed for quite a while.”

“So what can we do when it is multi-generational unemployment? They need extra wrap-around support.”

“A lot of the younger ones just need that maintenance around moving them into work first. So pastoral care is the hardest thing, whereas the training, if they are pono for what they do, that’ll come easy.”

“It becomes an intergenerational cycle of poverty and not being able to step outside of their own experience.”

“We need to change expectations, hopes, and goals to break out of intergenerational patterns.”

“There is a lot of pastoral care. For example, I had a client who came to me very poorly presented, so I had a conversation with him about improving his personal appearance to be more employable and marketable.”

“For young people, everyone is different, so it’s all very well saying, ‘Oh, you know I can give you a job,’ and you go off into a job. But actually, [asking] have you got a licence to get there? Have you got the tools you need for it? So through Whai Mahi, we’re able to resource and support all those things in an ongoing way.”

“Now, the employer has to be the trainer, the mother, the father. So if we can push all that out before they get past training and into employment, that’s half the battle.”

“I always allow for a three-month transition. I always say to the case managers, please don’t just flip them straight off right now. Give them this chance to transition. Because I’ve had a couple of clients just go, ‘Actually, I’m not going to work because it was too hard for me.’”

“Navigating some of that transition to work stuff; whether I need interview clothes, new transport, or how do I survive for those couple of weeks between coming off the benefit until I get my first pay packet?”

“Having somebody there to support through some of that transition, being there as a sounding board, just providing those additional supports where they’re needed for that person.”

“MSD obviously has case managers, but they’re so busy, they have such big caseloads, they don’t always have the resources to provide that really important one-on-one support that a person needs.”

“It’s almost 1:1 support that is required, and on top of that, they need mental health support too.”

“It’s about helping them navigate some of those processes because sometimes you have to jump through hoops and do this, that, and the next thing, and it becomes too hard. People just go, “It’s too hard.””

Envisioned Impact

“Supporting Employment Transitions” holds significant potential to transform how support is provided for people facing substantial barriers to employment, particularly those affected by multi-generational unemployment. By establishing a comprehensive, one-to-one, wrap-around support system, it has the potential to facilitate a smooth transition into the workforce and sustain long-term employment by addressing the critical need for personalised, ongoing assistance.

By focusing on both practical needs and personal development, such as building confidence and resilience, as well as obtaining licences and clothing, this opportunity aims to break the cycle of unemployment, foster economic stability, and exponentially improve the immediate and long-term wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities.



How might we support the employment transition through comprehensive, one-to-one, wrap-around support in order to enhance the immediate and long-term wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities?

Learning from Success

In the Learning from Success section, we showcase various methods, interventions, and organisations from New Zealand and around the world that are making significant progress in the employment sector. This includes spotlighting Good Mahi in the Community and examining Models and Interventions that have contributed to the topic at local, national, and global levels. Our goal is to celebrate community excellence and leverage the lessons from these successes to inform and inspire ongoing and future efforts to improve employment outcomes.

Good Mahi in the Community

Here, we highlight various local organisations featured in our Equity and Wellbeing Profiles and celebrated for their exceptional contributions to their communities. Many of these organisations address not only employment directly but also tackle broader issues that impact someone's ability to gain and maintain employment.

In this report, we showcase the remarkable efforts of four initiatives from the Whanganui, Ruapehu, and South Taranaki regions, whose dedication to their communities deserves special recognition:

- Whanganui City College
- 100% Sweet
- Central King Country R.E.A.P
- MTFJ Whai Mahi (Mayors Taskforce for Jobs)

The stories of these initiatives continue on the next page, providing deeper insights into the vital work they are committed to, in support of their communities.

Whanganui City College



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“There are obviously children or young adults going to school who don’t want to be stuck in a classroom all day. They want to get into the trades, and this is a gateway for them to get into the trades. Whether they come here and do the building course, and then go off and be a plumber or an electrician, you know, the trades are screaming out for people.”

Whanganui City College, known for its dedication to academic excellence and student success (Whanganui City College, n.d), launched a house-building programme for its senior students. This unique initiative, the first of its kind in Whanganui, is the result of a collaborative partnership between Whanganui City College, AGC Training, and Brittons Housemovers. It aimed to engage Year 12 and 13 students in constructing a house while earning NCEA Level 2 and 3 credits, and opened doors for some students to gain apprenticeships and career opportunities with local builders (NZ Herald, 2024).

“The kids and the whānau here are the most important things. The other vital cog in the wheel is the staff.”

“Our whānau, they have a say at this place. The things that are important to them need to be known by us and they are a big part of who we are and what we’re doing right here.”

“Tūhonohono is the word that I’m barking around here. If you can make the connection with the kids, the kids can understand that you are a teacher that cares for them. The more you know about them, what they need, and what they want from them and the family, you’re onto a winner.”

“What I’m hearing from whānau here in Whanganui City College, with what we’re doing in our curriculum, [is that] things are working. The curriculum that we are used to and what parents are used to is a curriculum designed to send kids off to university. But university is an aspiration, but the reality for some, and they will tell you, “I’m not really into university, Matua, I just want to be this, I want to do that.”

“You’ve got to set up what you do at the school in line with the direction that these kids are going to go in.”

“There are obviously children or young adults going to school who don’t want to be stuck in a classroom all day. They want to get into the trades, and this is a gateway for them to get into the trades. Whether they come here and do the building course, and then go off and be a plumber or an electrician, you know, the trades are screaming out for people.”

“The kids are getting an early introduction to what could happen to them in the next 18 months [to] two years. Actually going into the building and construction side of things, and actually building a house at kura, that’s really cool. It’s changed their outlook on a destination and, not only that, they’re getting qualifications and credits towards their level two and level three.”

“It’s pretty satisfying. I remember last week, we had no frames up because we were waiting for the floor, but then we put them up and everyone was buzzed out at how far they’d got.”

“I love building. I want to look at getting me an apprenticeship next year, hopefully somewhere in Auckland, and just stick to building, the rest of my life.”

“I don’t want my kids leaving school and going to nothing, man. If they’re leaving school because they just want to leave school, that’s not good enough for me.”

“If we’re doing our job right as teachers here, and I’m a whānau teacher and I’m tracking my kid from year nine to year 13, hopefully, I’ll know what the destination is.”

“This is the start. It’s a start for getting them enthused in this particular mahi. They’re screaming out for workers to hop into the space and I’d really love for a house to go to a whānau here in Whanganui, that’d be so cool.”

“I think what we need to do here is continue to love our kids. Continue to find out more about our kids, not only here and in schools, but in primary schools, secondary, wherever.”

100% Sweet Whanganui



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“Some kids transition quite easily, and some need a little bit more hand-holding and support. We’re able to provide that by supporting them and catching them before they fall.”

100% SWEET is an initiative dedicated to ensuring young people are actively engaged in employment, education, or training. They aid secondary schools in planning vocational pathways and connect rangatahi (young people) with potential employers by organising and facilitating work experience opportunities. Through their Work-Ready Passport programme, 100% SWEET supports vocational pathways in local schools, focusing on building connections to industries and offering work experience and employment opportunities for students in Years 12 and 13.

“100% Sweet was born from industry getting together and saying, “We need [to get] young people that are work-ready into employment, but we’re having difficulty recruiting them.”

“We cover big achievements, teamwork, communication, mock interviews, and CVs. All those life skills that will help them transition easier into the world of work.

“It’s kind of learnt, giving them the skills and the tools to be able to then face the reality of what it is to be an adult and actually be in the big wide world and compete with everybody else in the workplace.

“If they’re not aware of the tools, you don’t know what you don’t know. So, if you give them the tools, you can see them thrive.

“They’ll always need support with CVs, they’ll always need support with interviews, they’ll always need support with building their confidence and self-belief.

“Some kids transition quite easily, and some need a little bit more hand-holding and support. We’re able to provide that by supporting them and catching them before they fall.

“The Youth to Work programme is exactly the same but targeted at NEETs, young people not in employment, education, or training. So they’ve already left school, their benefits. NEETs generally have more complex barriers to finding work.

“Mental health and anxiety are big issues that young people suffer through, and it seems to be more complicated nowadays than when I was a young girl.

“We’ve also got a database of past school leavers that we keep in touch with every year, just to track their progress through life.

“It’s fantastic to be able to give something back and to be able to then see young people thrive and actually see that light-bulb moment that goes on. I’ve actually witnessed that quite a few times in the last couple of weeks. To be able to see them have that ‘green light’ moment where they think, “This does make sense now.”

“What that future looks like [is] difficult to tell because it’s all down to the funding, but it would be nice to be able to be aspirational, to be able to expand out and grow the team and support more young people than we do already.

“We want all our young people to have the ability to thrive and to move into employment, sustainable employment, not just a casual job.

Central King Country R.E.A.P.



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“We have a programme called Mayor’s Taskforce for Jobs. [So for] anyone in search of employment, we make sure that they’re work-ready, and any training that’s required of them to transition into mahi a little bit easier, we can provide that.”

Central King Country R.E.A.P. was established to provide education and practical services to the community of Taumarunui and the King Country, aiming to upskill residents and help them thrive. As an education and service provider, Central King Country R.E.A.P. offers a variety of community services, including employment workshops in partnership with the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ), driver licensing, and school attendance assistance. Their vision is to create an educated, resourceful, and thriving region by promoting lifelong learning opportunities.

“ Central King Country R.E.A.P is part of R.E.A.P Aotearoa, so we are one of thirteen R.E.A.Ps across the rohe who provide education services to the community. That might be through different learning avenues, how we deliver them, how they’re received, but mostly mātauranga; how it is provided to the community and how we can best cater for our whānau in our communities.

“ [Central King Country R.E.A.P] has played a huge role in our community for many years. They are an organisation that knows their community and all the services, which has been a tremendous help to the community in knowing what is available to people when they want to enquire about something.

“ With supporting rangatahi [young people], we have a programme called Mayor’s Taskforce for Jobs. [So for] anyone in search of employment, we make sure that they’re work-ready, and any training that’s required of them to transition into mahi a little bit easier, we can provide that.

“ I’d like to say there is tonnes and tonnes of opportunity, and there is, but we have to work with our young people.

“ You can get a job and can get into employment, but actually, the support you need behind you, and the things you might need in order to get and keep those jobs, are the people that surround you that care.

“ We provide a space where you can come to kōrero, it’s a safe space, and we are there to listen and provide those things you need. If you need someone to listen, we are there.

“ [Central King Country R.E.A.P] provides the tools for our whānau to cope in moving forward, that’s the beauty of this kaupapa.

“ I used to see a lot of our young ones over at the courthouse. But now that we [Maniapoto Training Agency] are working with R.E.A.P, we don’t have that anymore. A lot of the learners now go on towards a full licence...it’s quite good because that might be the first achievement that they’ve ever done...that’s the advantage of working with R.E.A.P, because they understand our type of learner, they don’t move back from them, they just continue to support them.

“ The Safe to Go driving programme is a free programme available to anyone, our priority is our rangatahi who are going for their restricted driver’s licence, just so they have that kind of security, or the ID licence for mahi, but they are also getting the on-road skills that they require to be safe drivers on the road.

“ It’s the coolest thing in the world... when you see that [rangatahi gaining their driver’s licence]. Once they get there, they get a sound sense of empowerment, and then they start moving forward.

MTFJ Whai Mahi (Mayors Taskforce for Jobs) South Taranaki



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“We had a goal last year through [the] Mayors Taskforce for Jobs programme and the Ministry for Social Development to put 50 people into work. Well, we actually achieved 70 here in South Taranaki.”

The Mayors Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ) is a network of New Zealand Mayors committed to ensuring that all young people aged 16-24 are engaged in employment, education, training, or other positive activities such as volunteering, community service, and skill development programmes. Their mission is to create opportunities that benefit youth, employers, and communities, with a particular focus on supporting vulnerable youth and providing culturally relevant assistance for Māori and Pasifika youth.

“Whai Mahi was set up to provide opportunities, employment, and training with our local businesses; those who are seeking employment. We have an open-door policy.

“We have networks with local providers such as MSD, health providers, [and] Iwi. They refer a lot of their people to us, their clients, and then we bring them in, have the conversations around what they’re wanting to do in employment or a career, [and] also provide pathways for training to help them in the employment and career space.

“That’s one of the real advantages of being able to do this away from government agencies really, is that we’re able to look at the whole person. So when somebody comes in, Tina and Alan are able to see all of the issues that need addressing, or need some support.

“We can support them in areas such as financial or if they’re needing their licences, or they’re needing PPE gear to move into work, for the trades. Financial support as well, which is a big barrier for all of our people coming in here. So we’re trying to again, make it a seamless transition, not only for the client coming in, but the employer as well.

“It’s whānau and family, brothers and sisters, who may need work as well, or they might need some help with transport. So the wraparound services that we can offer are a bit different, really. [We provide] lots of support, it’s really good... It’s nice to see kids respond to that, where there is a bit more love and less of a number, less of a statistic.

“Some of them come in, especially our rangatahi, they come not knowing where to go or what to do. So it’s having those conversations, putting them around what we have available for them, who are the people we can connect them to, the businesses or industries, and try to provide that pathway for them so they can seamlessly move into those jobs that are available.

“We had a goal last year through [the] Mayors Taskforce for Jobs programme and the Ministry for Social Development to put 50 people into work. Well, we actually achieved 70 here in South Taranaki.

“The pride that they often feel in terms of being one of the few in the family who’s got a full-time job or got some training. It’s a good thing for the whole family. Everybody is proud of that.

“Employers are fabulous. I think there’s a real desire by our local employers to see kids stay here.

“I think that there’s just so much opportunity and feel-good about South Taranaki, and that’s what I really enjoy about it. I think we’ve got a real positive future for us here, that’s for sure.





Models and Interventions

Over the years, a diverse range of innovative employment models and interventions have been developed, each addressing the unique cultural, social, and legal challenges of their specific areas. This report highlights several key models, including:

- Dual Vocational Education and Training (VET) System
- European Youth Guarantee (YG)
- Mana in Mahi (Strength in Work)
- Flexi-wage Programme
- Apprenticeship Boost (ABI)

Each of these models and interventions provides a comprehensive framework for addressing employment-related disparities. They offer valuable insights and best practices that can help inform and inspire similar efforts in different regions.

By examining these models in detail, it becomes clear that in order to make significant shifts within the employment landscape a multifaceted approach is required. This approach involves combining efforts from various stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organisations, employers, and educational institutions, to address different aspects of employment and achieve better outcomes.

Dual Vocational Education and Training (VET) System

Location: Germany.

Year Implemented: 1969.

What it is: Germany's Dual Vocational Education and Training (VET) system is globally recognised for combining classroom-based theoretical education with practical hands-on training in real-world work environments. This dual system offers an excellent approach to skill development, encompassing initial vocational education and training, further vocational education and training, career development, employability, occupational competence, and identity formation. With approximately 50 percent of all school-leavers undergoing vocational training provided by companies that consider the VET system the best way to acquire skilled staff, the typical age range for VET participants is 16 to 19 years old; however, there is no upper age restriction (BMBF, n.d; Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2015).

“Germany's dual vocational education and training system combines theoretical education in vocational schools with practical training in companies” (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2015, p. 3).

“The German dual system offers an excellent approach to skill development, covering initial vocational education and training, further vocational education and training, careers, employability, occupational competence and identity. Thanks to the dual system, Germany enjoys low youth unemployment and high skill levels.” (BMBF, n.d.).

“In Germany, about 50 percent of all school-leavers undergo vocational training provided by companies which consider the dual system the best way to acquire skilled staff.” (BMBF, n.d.).

Purpose: Vocational Education and Training (VET) is designed to develop both technical and social skills necessary for qualified employment, ensuring smooth transitions from education to the workforce. This approach reduces youth unemployment, increases the availability of qualified skilled staff, and fosters sustainable economic and social development, both locally and in partner countries (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2015).

Impact: The Dual Vocational Education and Training (VET) System in Germany has been instrumental in achieving low youth unemployment and high skill levels. This system has also gained international recognition, with numerous European countries showing increased interest in collaborating with Germany to integrate elements of the VET system into their own training programmes (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2015).

“The international community's high regard for German vocational training was reaffirmed in 2014 in current EU and OECD political initiatives to introduce an apprenticeship system and work-based learning in other countries” (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2015, p.3)

“Renewed strong demand from partner countries in Europe and beyond for training policy cooperative ventures with Germany aimed at transferring components of the dual system into their own systems” (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2015, p.3)

“Germany is the world's biggest donor in the area of vocational training cooperation with developing countries” (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2015, p.3)

“Thanks to the dual system, Germany enjoys low youth unemployment and high skill levels.” (BMBF, n.d.)

European Youth Guarantee (YG)

Location: Countries of the European Union.

Year Implemented: The European Youth Guarantee (YG) model was officially adopted by the European Council in April 2013, inspired by successful youth guarantee programmes from the 1980s and 1990s in Nordic countries like Sweden and Finland (Escudero and López Mourelo, 2017).

What it is: The European Youth Guarantee (YG) is an initiative designed to improve the labour market by supporting young people under 25 into employment, training, or further education. Its objective is to ensure that within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, young people are enrolled in continued education, or receive a quality offer of employment, an apprenticeship, or a traineeship (Escudero and López Mourelo, 2017).

The YG includes various measures, such as:

- Education and training programmes for employment.
- Remedial education for early school leavers.
- Labour market intermediation or services that help match job seekers with job opportunities.
- Active labour market policies to increase labour demand, like creating direct employment, providing hiring subsidies, and offering start-up incentives.

“Today, the European YG is a commitment by Member States to guarantee that all young people under the age of 25 receive, within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, a good quality work offer to match their skills and experience; or the chance to continue their studies or undertake an apprenticeship or professional traineeship.” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 1).

“Another feature of the YG is the wide variety of measures it includes, namely: i) education and training for employment programmes; ii) remedial education school dropout measures; iii) labour market intermediation services; and iv) active labour market policies (ALMPs) aimed to affect labour demand, such as direct employment creation, hiring subsidies, and start-up incentives.” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 1).

Purpose: The purpose of the European Youth Guarantee (YG) model is to ensure that young people under the age of 25 receive adequate support and opportunities to secure employment or further their education. The model aims to address youth unemployment, enhance skills and employability, and promote social inclusion by integrating young people into the labour market effectively (Escudero and López Mourelo, 2017).

“The European YG programme...aims to tackle youth unemployment, provide skills and employability, and promote social inclusion by helping young people transition from school to work” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 6).

“The YG arrived at a moment when an urgent and radical response was needed. In 2013, the unemployment rate in EU-28 for people aged 15 to 24 reached 23.6 %, and exceeded 50 % in some countries – such as Greece (58.3 %) and Spain (55.5 %).” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 1).

Impact: The impact of the European Youth Guarantee (YG) model has been mixed. Initial evaluations indicate that the YG model has helped many young people transition into employment, education, or training, with countries like Denmark, Norway, and England having seen excellent short- and long-term employment results. However, many countries face significant difficulties in providing systematic early intervention due to resource limitations and challenges in reaching more vulnerable groups, such as those with low educational attainment and challenging family circumstances (Escudero and López Mourelo, 2017).

“Three years later, European countries have already made encouraging progress in the implementation of their national YG schemes. Given new information available on the enactment of these plans to date (EC, 2016b), we are able to assess preliminary outcomes of this implementation by October 2016 (latest information available).” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 10).

“Youth programmes such as those implemented in Denmark, Norway and England are noteworthy in this regard, as they are praised for having had excellent results in terms of employment and activation, in the short and the long terms.” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 8).

“Empirical evidence from countries with a long experience on the implementation of youth guarantees (e.g. the Nordic countries) suggests that these interventions are an effective way of responding to youth unemployment, provided they are designed and implemented properly, as they can produce significant effects at a modest cost.” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 10).

“However, available data on the monitoring of the European YG suggest that most countries are facing challenges when meeting the objective of early intervention.” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 13).

“Issues that deserve particular attention include, the lack of sufficient resources and the inability to provide systematically an early intervention.” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 12).

“Importantly, reaching this group [NEET] – usually characterized by having a low educational attainment, caring responsibilities and difficult family circumstances – has become one of the most acute challenges that countries are facing in meeting the guidelines of the EC’s recommendation.” (Escudero & López Mourelo, 2017, p. 21).

Mana in Mahi - Strength in Work

Location: New Zealand.

Year Implemented: 2018.

What it is: Mana in Mahi is a government initiative from Aotearoa New Zealand aimed at supporting young people, particularly those who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), into sustainable employment. The initiative combines paid work with industry training and supports young people to achieve recognised qualifications while employed. Key components of the initiative include a wage subsidy for employers, financial incentives for participants, pre-employment training and ongoing pastoral care (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020).

“The main aim of the Mana in Mahi programme in Phase One was to provide all young people with sustainable employment outcomes by facilitating entry into the workforce and an industry training qualification pathway.” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.3).

“Key components of the prototype (that is, Phase One) included: a wage subsidy paid to the employer by MSD to offset some of the initial costs and risks associated with undertaking the programme; financial payments to clients to incentivise them to stay in work and recognise their achievements for long-term success; pre-employment and/or ‘on-the-job training’ for the clients; and pastoral support services for clients from their employer and MSD to support and enable clients to achieve successful enrolment and participation in an industry qualification.” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.3).

“In July 2019 Mana in Mahi progressed to Phase Two of its implementation. The aim for Phase Two is to ‘provide apprenticeships and an industry training pathway leading to sustainable employment for young people who are at-risk of long-term benefit receipt.’” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.4).

Purpose: The overall purpose of Mana in Mahi is to provide young people, particularly those who are not in education, employment, or training, with long-term employment opportunities. By facilitating their transition into sustainable employment through a combination of paid work, industry-specific training, and comprehensive support, the initiative aims to enhance the employability of young people and address the national skills shortage (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020).

“The main aim of the Mana in Mahi programme in Phase One was to provide young people with sustainable employment outcomes by facilitating entry into the workforce and an industry training qualification pathway.” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.3).

“A secondary aim is to address the national skills shortage.” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.3).

Impact: Mana in Mahi has significantly impacted both young people and employers in New Zealand. In 2019, it provided sustainable employment and skill development opportunities for young people, with 61% of participants remaining in the programme, 20% exiting to alternative pathways, and 19% returning to benefits. This highlights how Mana in Mahi has been crucial in helping many young people obtain the skills and qualifications necessary for employment. Employers have also benefited from the programme, particularly due to the wage subsidy, despite some concerns about the timing of payments and the retention of subsidised employees (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020).

Additionally, in 2019, the government allocated an extra \$49.9 million to the programme. This funding increased the potential employment opportunities from 150 to nearly 2,000 over four years, demonstrating the government’s commitment to expanding the programme’s reach and impact (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020).

“61% remained on the programme, while 20% had exited to an alternative pathway (not on a benefit) and 19% had returned to benefit.” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.4)

“For many young people, access to effective in-work support from their employer and MSD was critical to support them to learn job skills and obtain qualifications.” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.4).

“Employers were supportive of the wage subsidy but raised issues related to the timing of the payment, and concerns about what happens if a subsidised employee leaves their workplace.” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.5).

“In the 2019 budget, the Mana in Mahi programme received an additional \$49.9 million which increased the number of possible opportunities from 150 to close to 2,000 across four years.” (Aikman, Frost-Kruse, MacDonald, & Preval, 2020, p.3).

Flexi-wage Programme

Location: New Zealand.

Year Implemented: 2006.

What it is: The Flexi-wage programme is a job placement initiative that includes a wage subsidy for employers. It aims to encourage employers to hire individuals that face barriers to employment by offsetting some of the associated employment costs (Ministry of Social Development, 2022).

“Flexi-wage is a wage subsidy programme aimed at helping people who are disadvantaged in the labour market into sustainable employment” (Ministry of Social Development, 2022, p. 22).

“Flexi-wage helps you hire staff and get them the skills needed to do the job. You get a wage contribution, while they get training and ongoing support.” (Work and Income, n.d.).

Purpose: The purpose of the Flexi-wage programme is to individuals who face multiple barriers into sustainable employment by providing a wage subsidy to employers. This initiative is designed to encourage employers to hire individuals who might otherwise struggle to secure employment, such as young people, Māori, Pacific peoples, women, and older workers and aims to create a win-win situation where employers gain valuable employees, and individuals receive essential work experience and skills. By targeting individuals who face multiple barriers to employment, the programme aims to reduce long-term dependence on benefits, promote job retention and progression, and support a more inclusive job market (Ministry of Social Development, 2022).

“The purpose of Flexi-wage is to support sustainable employment for job seekers who face barriers to employment by providing a wage subsidy to employers” (Ministry of Social Development, 2022, p. 22).

“The programme is designed to encourage employers to hire job seekers who face multiple barriers to employment, such as young people, Māori, Pacific peoples, women, and older workers” (Ministry of Social Development, 2022, p. 22).

“Flexi-wage targets groups with higher unemployment rates and aims to reduce the long-term dependence on benefits by promoting job retention and progression” (Ministry of Social Development, 2022, p. 24).

Impact: The Flexi-wage programme has demonstrated positive impacts on employment and earning for Māori, Pacific peoples, women, older workers, young people, and those receiving Jobseeker Support with health conditions or disabilities. On average, people in the programme earn \$7,761 more per year, which shows its effectiveness in boosting financial stability (Ministry of Social Development, 2022).

However, the programme has also been linked to negative impacts on educational outcomes, particularly for Māori, women, and young people, who have experienced a decline in their qualifications. This suggests that while the programme helps people secure employment, indicating a potential trade-off between immediate employment benefits and long-term educational achievements (Ministry of Social Development, 2022).

“The programme has shown positive employment outcomes for Māori, Pacific peoples, women, older workers, young people, and JS-HCD recipients” (Ministry of Social Development, 2022, p. 23).

“Participants in the Flexi-wage programme achieve an average earnings difference of \$7,761 per year” (Ministry of Social Development, 2022, p. 23).

“The programme has been associated with a negative impact on study outcomes overall, and specifically for Māori, women, and young people. Young people aged 20-24 experienced a negative impact on their qualifications” (Ministry of Social Development, 2022, .p. 23).

“I think it’s important for us to focus on the needs of people, which is also, you know, having a conversation around, what does employment look like for me? How will it work? Has this been something that I’ve always wanted to pursue as a career?”

Workshop Participant.

Apprenticeship Boost Initiative (ABI)

Location: New Zealand.

Year Implemented: 2020.

What it is: The Apprenticeship Boost programme is a government initiative that provides financial assistance to employers, enabling them to maintain and hire new apprentices. It functions as a key component of the broader Apprenticeship Support Programme, a cross-agency effort designed to help employers support their workers in formal training and apprenticeships amongst the challenges of COVID-19. The programme focuses on helping apprentices continue their employment and training, ensuring they gain the necessary skills to become proficient in their respective fields (Tertiary Education Commission, n.d.).

“Apprenticeship Boost provides support for employers to retain and take on new apprentices as the economy recovers from the impacts of COVID-19. It aims to help apprentices to continue to earn and learn so they become skilled practitioners in their chosen industry.” (Tertiary Education Commission, n.d.).

“The Apprenticeship Boost is part of the Government’s wider Apprenticeship Support Programme — a cross-agency response to help employers support their employees in formal training including apprenticeships, while dealing with the effects of COVID-19.” (Tertiary Education Commission, n.d.).

Purpose: The Apprenticeship Boost Initiative (ABI) aims to enhance the skills and employment landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand by expanding apprenticeship opportunities. This initiative supports people in gaining meaningful employment and assists businesses in filling critical skill gaps, particularly those exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also responds to the increasing demand for skilled tradespeople, a crucial component for national economic growth. Ultimately, ABI endeavours to cultivate a strong workforce that will propel ongoing progress and development throughout the country (New Zealand Government, 2023).

“Our priority has been to invest in our people and their futures by providing them with opportunities for meaningful employment.” (New Zealand Government, 2023).

“We purposefully set out to increase the number of apprentices, support businesses, fill skill shortages and retrain those who lost work as a result of COVID-19” (New Zealand Government, 2023).

“Apprenticeship Boost is helping to meet the strong demand for skills in Aotearoa New Zealand right now and supporting employers to train the next generation of tradespeople.” (New Zealand Government, 2023).

“Apprenticeship Boost is helping us to deliver key infrastructure projects, increase our housing stock and supply, and build the workforce needed to take us forward”. (New Zealand Government, 2023).

Impact: The Apprenticeship Boost Initiative (ABI) has made significant strides in supporting apprentices across Aotearoa New Zealand, helping over 50,000 apprentices to stay employed and in training towards their qualification. With the extension of ABI through the end of 2024, backed by a budget allocation of \$77.1 million, the initiative aims to assist an additional 30,000 apprentices during challenging economic times. This extension reaffirms the government’s commitment to fostering a strong pipeline of skilled workers across key industries, ensuring continued support for apprenticeships (Ministry of Education, 2023; New Zealand Government, 2023).

“The Apprenticeship Boost Initiative (ABI) has reached a milestone this year, with over 50,000 apprentices supported to stay employed and in training towards their qualification...Of the 50,000 apprentices, 19% identify as Māori and 8% identify as Pacific people and 17% are female apprentices.” (Ministry of Education, 2023).

“Apprenticeship Boost provides subsidies to employers of first- and second-year apprentices, to support those apprentices while working toward a qualification. As of March 2023, 57,040 apprentices have been supported through the initiative.” (New Zealand Government, 2023).

“Budget 2023 extends the Apprenticeship Boost initiative to the end of 2024, at an expected cost of \$77.1 million, including new funding of \$17.1 million.” (New Zealand Government, 2023).

“The extension will enable an estimated 30,000 apprentices to start or continue being supported during challenging economic times. It continues the Government’s focus on apprenticeships and ensuring a strong pipeline of skilled workers for key industries.” (New Zealand Government, 2023).



Bridging Insights to Action



As we conclude this report, we shift from exploring various aspects of employment to offering practical steps forward. In this final segment, we present high-level recommendations and key considerations that individuals and organisations can utilise to help them address employment-related disparities within their communities, regardless of their current stage in the process.

What's in this Section:

- **Recommendations:** We present three strategic recommendations to turn the insights from this report into concrete actions. These include deepening research methodologies, initiating community-led actions, and fostering ongoing learning—all of which can be supported by the Impact Collective by facilitating the collection of additional insights.
- **Considerations:** We identify key considerations in addressing complex community concerns, such as cultural sensitivity, ethical practices, and adaptable strategies, to ensure actions meet diverse community needs. These considerations are essential for guiding the development of initiatives and ensuring any actions effectively implemented.

Recommendations

This section outlines three high-level recommendations designed to guide efforts in addressing employment-related disparities. Each recommendation represents an important component in the broader Impact Collective co-design process (see Figure 11), from initial understanding through to the implementation and subsequent evaluation of solutions.

These recommendations are intentionally broad to avoid prescribing specific actions, instead they offer flexibility for individuals or organisations to adapt them based on their current stage in the journey toward an employment landscape that fosters equity and wellbeing.

The recommendations include:

- **Deepen Research:** Invest in comprehensive research to enhance the understanding of the current employment landscape. This research will lay the groundwork for informed, community and data-driven actions.
- **Establish Community-Led Initiatives:** Develop and implement community-led initiatives through the ideation and co-design of interventions with active participation from the community.
- **Engage in Continuous Learning:** Evaluate and adapt implemented solutions to ensure they remain effective, responsive, and aligned with evolving community needs.

Whether you are just beginning to gather knowledge, are in the process of developing and testing ideas, or are evaluating and evolving existing interventions, these recommendations aim to provide a non-linear roadmap for addressing employment-related disparities.

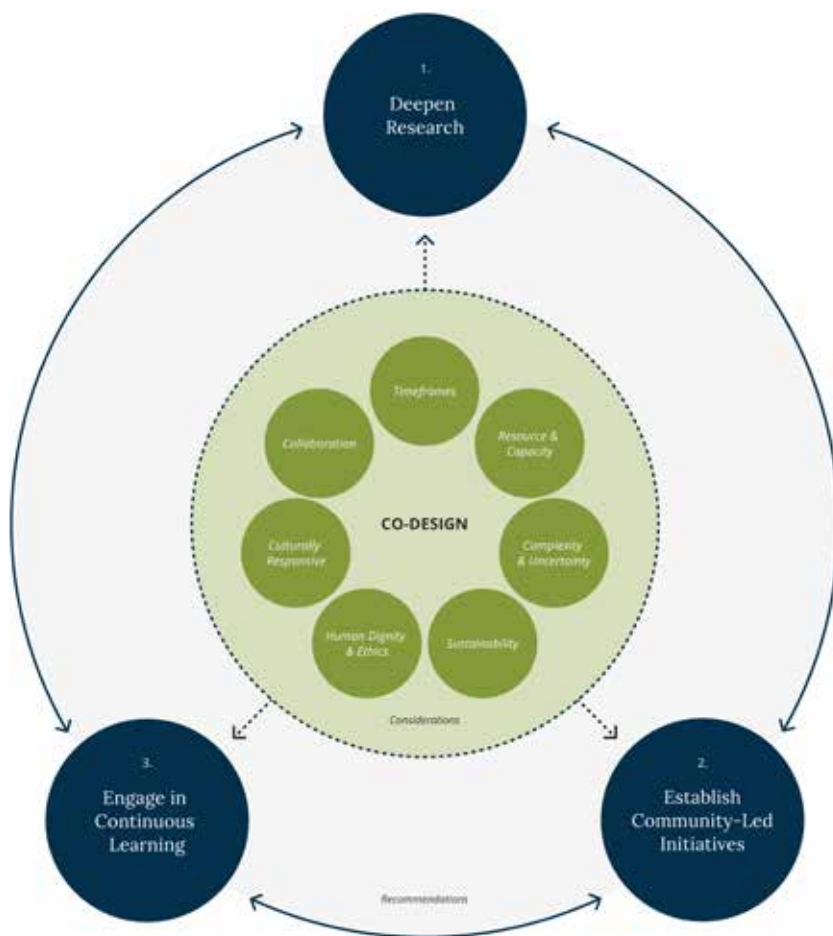


Figure 11 - High-level Impact Collective Co-Design Process.

Deepen Research

While this report provides an introductory view into the employment landscape at systemic, national, and individual levels, it represents just a 'window' into the wider topic. To comprehensively understand the myriad factors contributing to employment and its diverse manifestations across different communities, we recommend undertaking further in-depth research. This is crucial because employment is influenced by a multitude of socio-economic, cultural, and personal factors, which are often interlinked. Additional research is necessary to fully grasp these complexities, ultimately ensuring that interventions are effectively tailored and responsive to the actual needs they aim to address.

Considerations:

- **Diverse Stakeholder Involvement:** It is essential to involve a broad range of stakeholders, including employees, employers, and support service providers. This diverse engagement helps to capture an array of perspectives and deepens insights, ultimately avoiding one-sided or biased perspectives.
- **Inclusive Research Design:** Ensure the research methodologies include both qualitative (data) and quantitative (personal narratives and experiences) to enhance the validity of research.

Potential Action Steps:

- **Conduct Focus Groups and Discussions:** Conduct focus groups and one-on-one discussions with diverse stakeholders to capture in-depth qualitative insights.
- **Partner with Support Programmes:** Partner with established support programmes, such as Mana in Mahi or Flexi-wage programme, to gain insight into their on-the-ground experiences.
- **Engage with National Experts:** Working with the Impact Collective, bring together experts from various fields to discuss their knowledge on the latest research, findings and best practices through engagement forums.

Establish Community-Led Initiatives

Building on the insights and opportunities identified through this report and further research, we strongly recommend initiating further community-led co-design processes to examine options for improving employment outcomes. This process serves as a crucial bridge from research to practical application, ensuring solutions are not only grounded in the community's actual needs but also driven by their direct involvement. By embedding the voices and priorities of those facing employment barriers into every stage, we enhance the solutions' relevance and ensure they address real needs.

Active participation and ongoing collaboration with these key people from the outset are crucial. Their involvement not only improves the solutions' effectiveness but also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the outcomes. By empowering participants to have a significant role in shaping the interventions that will impact their lives, community-led initiatives dramatically increase the likelihood of long-term success and sustainability.

The outputs from this co-design process can vary widely, ranging from policy changes and service enhancements to community awareness campaigns. However, what matters most is that outputs respond to and directly address the authentic needs of the community.

Considerations:

- **Diverse Representation:** Ensure the co-design process includes a broad and diverse representation of community members, especially those who are often marginalised or underrepresented.
- **Building Local Capacity:** Building capacity within the community is important for effective participation in the co-design process. This can empower them to not only contribute more but also sustain and evolve the initiatives independently over time.
- **Supportive Facilitation:** Effective facilitation is key to managing the co-design process. Facilitators should be adept in conflict resolution and encouraging productive discussions to ensure every participant feels heard and valued.
- **Design with Adaptability in Mind:** Design interventions with flexibility in mind, allowing for adjustments and pivots as new feedback is received. This adaptability is key to responding to the complex and ever-changing nature of complex community concerns.

Potential Action Steps:

- **Identify Areas for Intervention:** Utilise the insights from research to identify specific areas for potential interventions, focusing on those with the highest potential for addressing community needs.
- **Identify and Engage Key Stakeholders:** Identify and engage a diverse group of stakeholders who represent all facets of employment within the community. Ensure that all voices, especially those less heard, are included in the co-design process.
- **Facilitate Co-design Workshops:** Conduct workshops that bring together the identified stakeholders to collaboratively define problems, brainstorm solutions, and design interventions.
- **Prototyping and Testing Solutions:** Pilot the co-designed solutions in controlled settings or real-world contexts to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. Iterate and adjust the solutions based on both stakeholder and community feedback and observed outcomes.
- **Share Successes with the Community:** Communicate the successes and lessons learned with the broader community to maintain trust, support, and engagement with those directly and indirectly involved.

Engage in Continuous Learning

As interventions addressing complex community concerns, such as employment, are implemented, their initial effectiveness must remain relevant over time. This relevance can only be sustained if interventions continuously evolve to meet the changing needs and dynamics within the communities they serve. Therefore, we recommend establishing a cycle of continuous learning where stakeholders can actively participate in a dynamic process of reflection and adaptation. This ongoing cycle is crucial for assessing what is working, what could be improved, identifying new challenges, and integrating lessons along the way.

The importance of continuous evolution cannot be overstated—it ensures interventions remain responsive to the changing landscape of complex community concerns, preventing them from becoming outdated as needs shift. By using a process of continuous learning, interventions can adapt to new challenges and opportunities, thereby enhancing their long-term impact and relevance. This adaptive approach not only prevents stagnation but also ensures that solutions continuously align with the evolving needs of the community.

Considerations:

- **Support a Learning Culture:** It is important to cultivate a culture that values learning and adaptation, where stakeholders are encouraged to view adaptations as opportunities for improvement rather than failures.
- **Inclusive Research Design:** Gathering feedback through both qualitative and quantitative methods is essential. This dual approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of interventions.
- **Assessing and Allocating Resources:** Assigning adequate resources for the continuous learning process is essential to ensure sufficient funds, personnel, and time are dedicated to effectively support the iterative process of feedback collection, analysis, and implementation of changes.

Potential Action Steps:

- **Implement Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish continuous feedback mechanisms to gather regular feedback and monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This can involve digital tools, feedback forms, and community meetings.
- **Conduct Reviews and Impact Evaluations:** Schedule regular review sessions and impact evaluations to assess the effectiveness of interventions in achieving desired outcomes.
- **Facilitate Reflective Workshops:** Conduct workshops where stakeholders can reflect on their experiences, share successes, and discuss challenges, enabling them to collaborate on effective practices and areas needing adjustment.

Considerations

When addressing complex community concerns, it is crucial to identify and understand the key factors that can influence the success of interventions. This section summarises these factors, explaining their relevance and significance in effectively addressing community issues.

By considering these factors, stakeholders can better address root causes and maintain positive outcomes in both the short and long term. Moreover, taking these factors into account ensures that interventions are culturally sensitive, ethically sound, and responsive to the unique dynamics within the communities they aim to serve.

Following are a list of considerations to guide decision-making and action-taking processes.

Timeframes

When addressing complex community concerns, it is important to set clear and realistic timelines for achieving milestones and objectives. Recognising that some goals may require extended periods to accomplish is essential. Additionally, maintaining flexibility to accommodate the evolving complexities of these challenges ensures that responses can adapt as situations change.

Resource and Capacity

It is essential to evaluate the availability and adequacy of resources—financial, human, and material—to determine if current resources meet the needs of employment interventions. This evaluation will help ascertain whether additional funding is required, if staffing levels are adequate, or if there is a need to expand collaborations to effectively support and sustain initiatives.

Complexity and Uncertainty

Acknowledging the intricate and ever-evolving nature of complex community concerns is crucial to avoid oversimplification. These problems, often characterised by complexity, uncertainty, and intersectionality, cannot be effectively addressed with simple, isolated, one-size-fits-all solutions. Instead, they require continual learning, flexible approaches, and more nuanced and tailored interventions.

Sustainability

It is vital to adopt a long-term perspective when addressing complex community concerns is vital to ensure approaches are resilient, responsive, and capable of adapting to and withstanding evolving conditions over time. With this approach, interventions are more likely to contribute to lasting benefits rather than providing temporary relief.

Human Dignity and Ethics

When addressing complex community issues, it is important to respect and uphold the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of everyone involved. Discussing topics such as family harm or mental health can be particularly sensitive, especially for vulnerable people. Therefore, adopting this approach is vital for creating safe, inclusive, and trusted environments, and supporting the development of long-term, positive change within communities.

Culturally Responsive

With some populations disproportionately affected by complex community concerns, it is essential to understand and respect the cultural backgrounds and specific needs of the community being served. Cultural sensitivity is key to ensuring that approaches are culturally reflective and appropriately tailored. This involves aligning interventions with the diverse values, traditions, and challenges of varied communities to ensure effectiveness and acceptance.

Collaboration

Fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders—including healthcare providers, law enforcement, social services, and community organisations—is important when addressing complex community concerns. This collaboration ensures that individuals receive holistic support, addressing various aspects of their wellbeing comprehensively. By working together, interventions can significantly enhance their impact, providing more integrated and effective solutions for the community.

Conclusion

As we delve into the recommendations arising from our research into employment, it is paramount to acknowledge the pervasive and multifaceted nature of this societal issue. Throughout this report, we have explored how employment impacted by systemic discrimination, inadequate educational preparation, and insufficient support, transcends socio-economic, cultural, and gender boundaries, affecting individuals, families, and communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. Despite growing awareness and efforts, the challenge persists, deeply embedded in a complex interplay of cultural, societal, and individual factors. The urgency to address employment-related disparities requires not only immediate interventions but also a strategic focus on long-term preventative measures that consider the lived experiences of those affected.

In concluding our exploration, we reaffirm the purpose of this report—to highlight the path towards effective and sustainable interventions. We extend an invitation to organisations and funders to join the Impact Collective in a united effort to address these issues. By leveraging the foundational insights and opportunities identified throughout this report, together, we can pursue impactful community-led initiatives. The Impact Collective is committed to supporting this collaboration by facilitating the ongoing collection and analysis of data. This endeavour is not only crucial for measuring the effectiveness of current interventions but also for uncovering deeper insights that will inform the continuous development of tailored strategies.

Together, let us seize this opportunity to create a significant, positive impact on our communities, guided by the knowledge we have gained from our partnerships within these communities.

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