

# Vulnerable customer experiences of receiving social services in South Auckland

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for Te Whiringa Research Group



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## Overview

- The research – purpose, questions
- Methodology
- The families and whānau
- Findings





## The research

### The issue

Social service system is not working well for vulnerable customers

### Social investment approach

100 at-risk families and whānau

### Purpose

To describe the *stories* and *experiences* of customers

### Intended use

To inform the design and improvement of services.

# 'At risk' characteristics – screening criteria



## Research questions



1. **What works** in the interactions of at-risk families and whānau with government, and government-funded, social services?
2. **What's not working?**
3. **What can government build upon** to better meet the needs of at-risk families?

Where relevant:

4. What was/were the cause(s) of their transient experience?
5. How does the experience of transience impact upon their experience of service receipt?

Methodology:  
who we are & what we did

# We prepared for complexity

- A team with the capability to work in this context



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- Located the research within:
  - Kaupapa Māori research
  - Pacific research frameworks
  - Western science traditions
- Te Whiringa – weaving together stories for change

## Project stages and methods

First (pilot) phase	Second phase
	Literature scan
Interviews with 21 families/whānau + questionnaire	Interviews with 22 families/whānau+ questionnaire
Engagement with 25 service providers and interviews with three	In-depth interviews with four service providers
Thematic analysis (including transience)	Further thematic analysis and abductive analysis
Video messages to the Minister of Finance from whānau	Two case studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turuki Health Care</li> <li>• Housing New Zealand, WINZ, Te Puea marae</li> </ul>
Pilot report including discussion re proof of method	Final report.

\*Completed in hard copy, entered online

Methodology:  
what we affirmed, learnt,  
managed

# 1. Changing focus of the research

- **From** a single research project interviewing 100 families and whānau to a two-phase project with additional transience focus, and case studies focused on service delivery
- Overall increase in size and scope; fixed budget
- What we did
  - Go/no go decision
  - Regular and open communication with project manager
- What matters
  - Actively involve researchers in redesign conversations early
  - Be realistic and fair – if add to project, increase budget or reduce scope





## 2. Recruitment

- Original recruitment strategy based on whanaungatanga; changed requirement to recruit via third party agency
- Recruitment was more difficult

### Providers/agencies

- Cautious
- Duty of care to clients
- Didn't know their customers' fit with screening criteria
- Additional work

### Issues for research team

- Additional work
- Credibility and ethical issue
  - time and resource commitment (unfunded)

### 3. 'Translation' layers

- Data-gathering
  - Interviews conducted in customers' first language
  - Translation of interview notes/ transcriptions into English
- Analysis
  - Interpretation of cultural assumptions, concepts in sense-making
  - Cultural review of coding
- Reporting
  - Accurate capture of family/whānau 'voice'
  - Translation of cultural issues and concepts back into English policy voice, for reporting

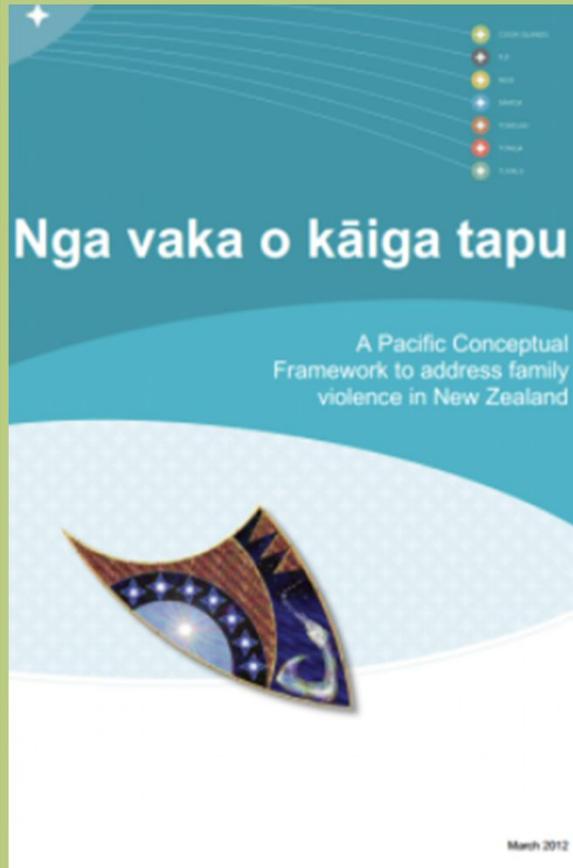




## 4. Cultural framing

- **Whakamana Whānau** – a firm intent to acknowledge, and affirm the strengths of whānau
- **Tikanga ā Iwi** – acknowledgement of cultural practices and different worldviews
- **Nga uaratanga** – understanding values and beliefs
- **Manaaki tangata** – appreciating the value of taking good care of people
- **Rangatiratanga** – treating people as if they are all chiefly beings

# The cultural weave



The history of Western science confirms the aphorism that the great menace to progress is not ignorance but the illusion of knowledge.

(Daniel J. Boorstin)

izquotes.com

# The families and whānau

## The families and whānau



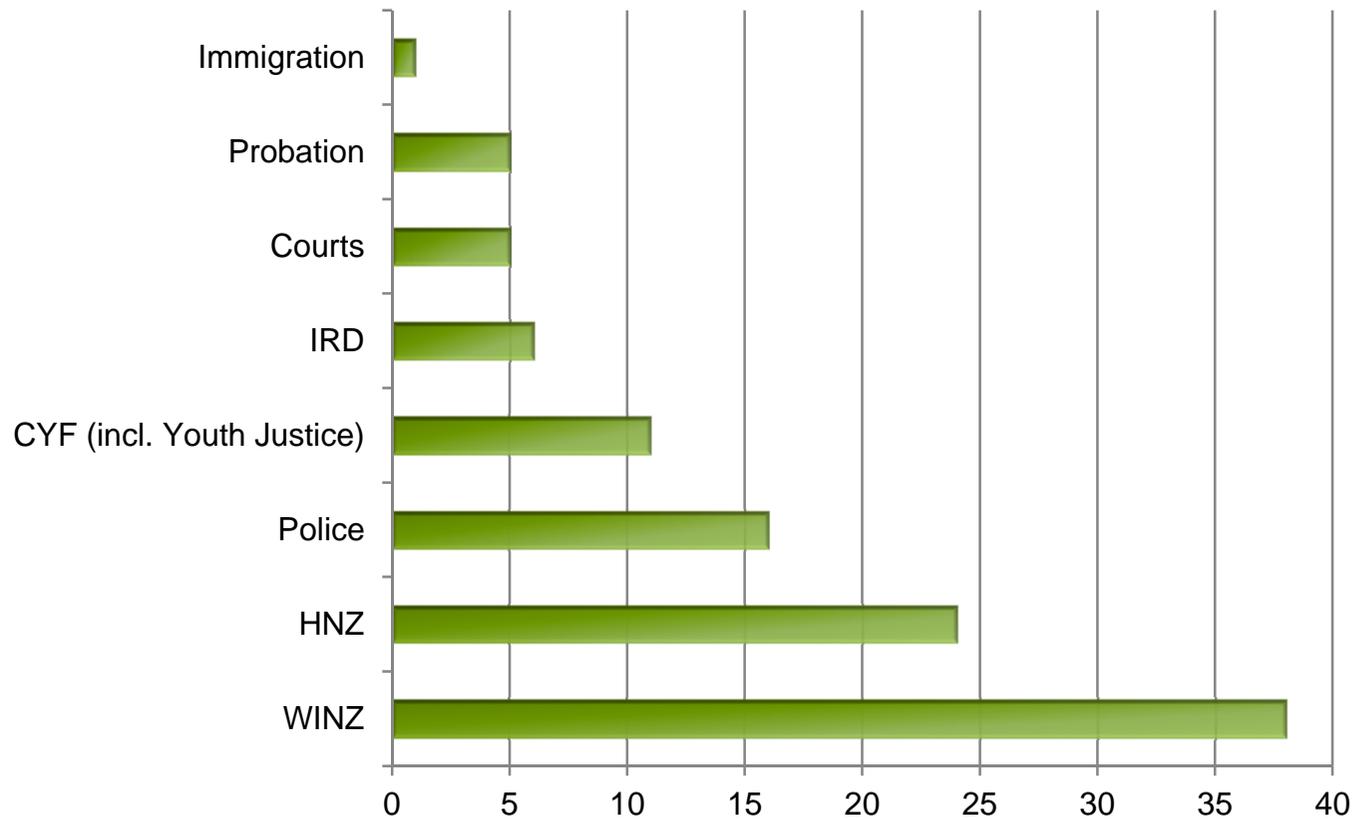
- Mostly large families, or single parent families, living in large households
- Either long-term South Auckland residents – with a sense of belonging and connectedness
- Or were transient and/or had multiple agency involvement
- Literacy was an issue in a number of whānau with some members:
  - Speaking English as a second language
  - Speaking very little English or no English at all
- Mixed level of resilience across participant families and whānau

## The numbers – families and whānau

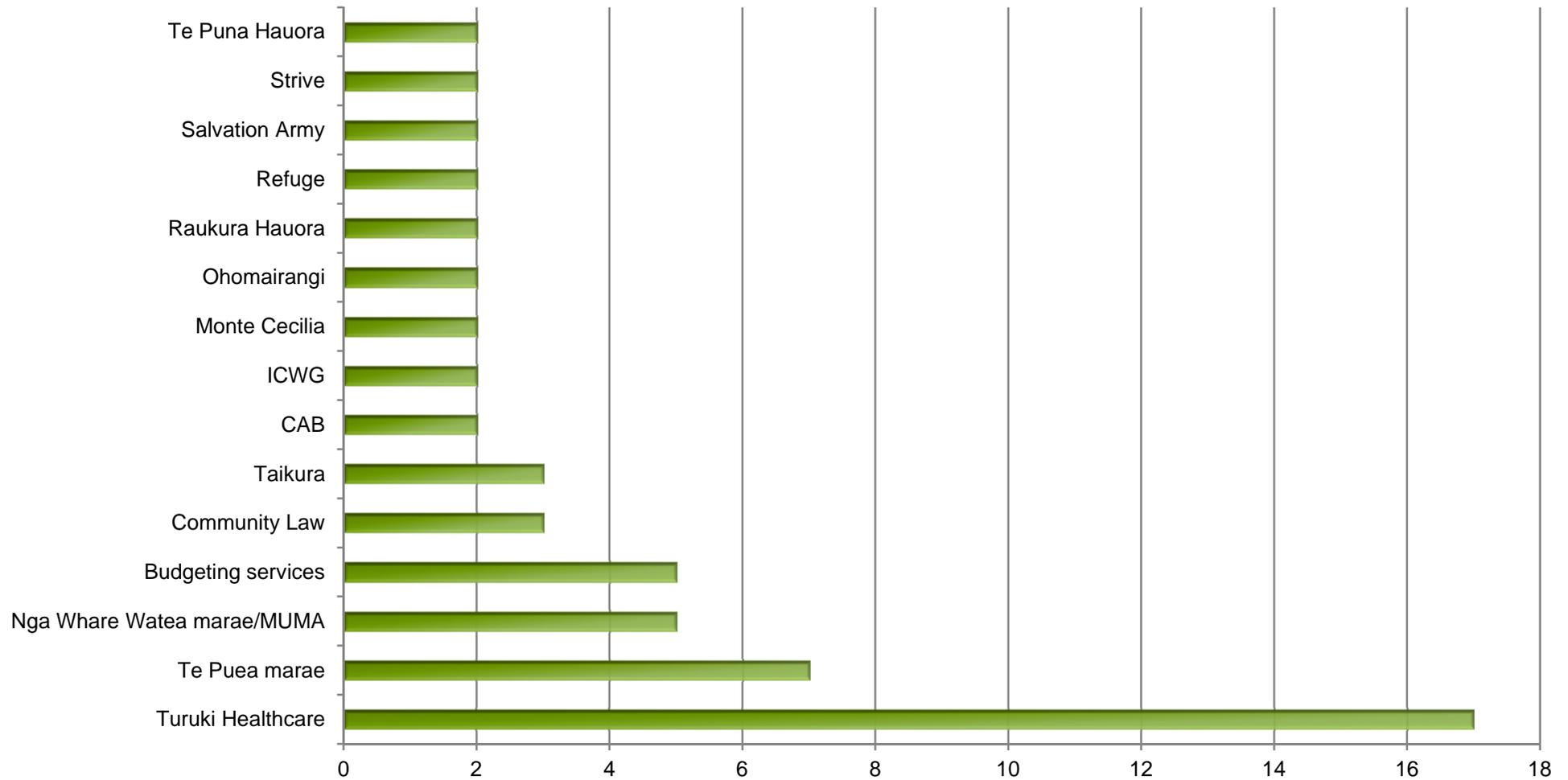
- 43 families and whanau, mostly from Mangere
- Family type
  - More than half had 7+ people
  - 17/43 (43%) were led by women on their own
- Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Number	% of research	2013 census data for Mangere %
Pacific	21	50	55
Maori	17	40	15
Pākehā/European	2	5	18
Middle Eastern	1	2.5	1
Asian	1	2.5	16

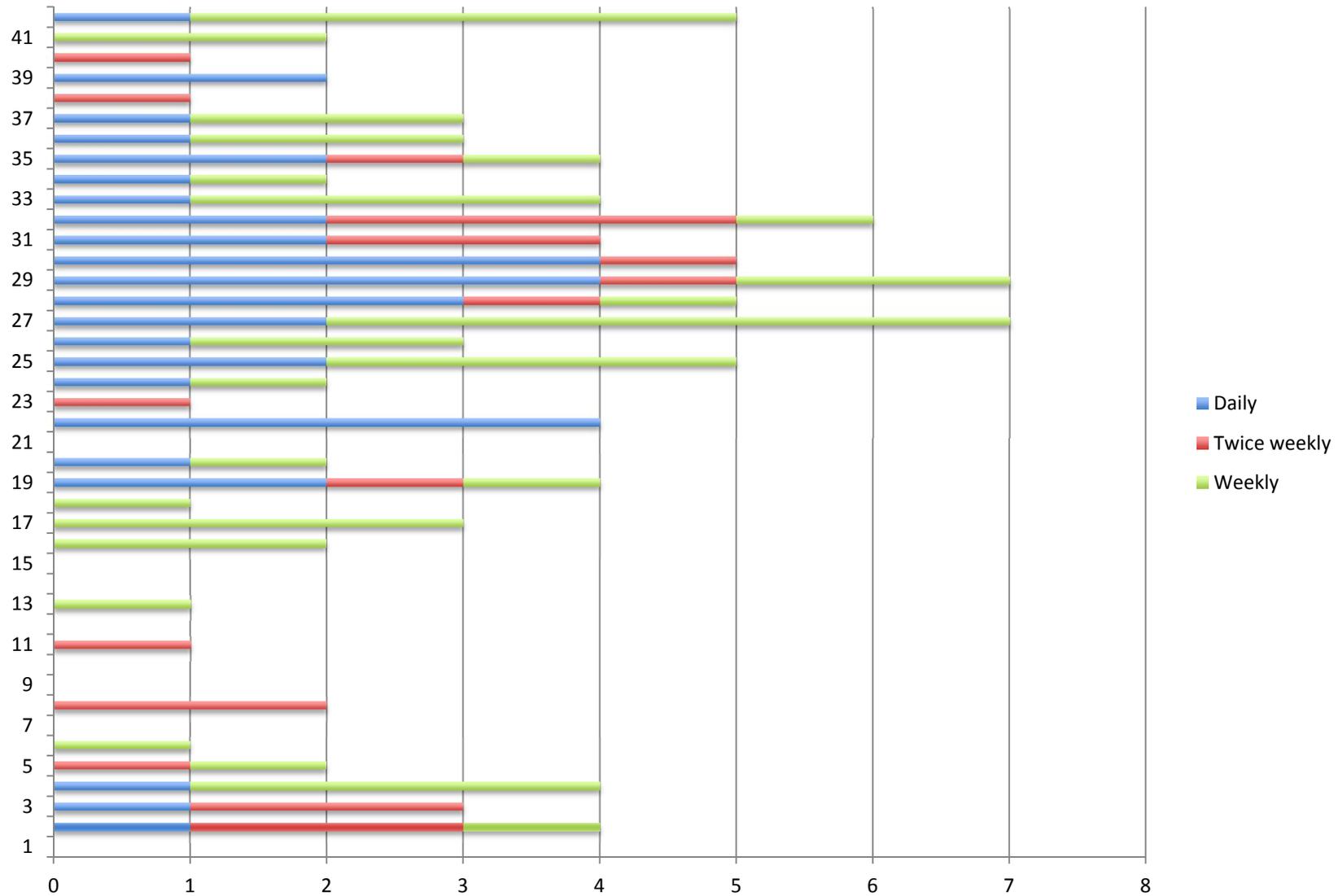
## 8 government services accessed



# NGOs accessed by at least 2 families/whanau



# Frequency of use of social services



The findings

We found...

a group of resilient, resourceful and courageous families and whānau with complicated and sometimes chaotic lives, who are trying to build a better life

Some are at the beginning of their journey toward an improved life or quality of life while others were well into their journey...

# Pilot phase findings

What doesn't work for families and whānau	What works	What could be improved
Being treated disrespectfully and not believed	Being respected, treated well and listened to	Treat people well
Inadequate responses and lack of follow-through by staff	Helpfulness, thoroughness, straightforwardness & follow-through	Begin at the beginning – deal with immediate needs first
Misuse and abuse of power and authority	Support to access, understand and navigate the system	Shift the burden of navigating the system OFF families and whānau
Conflicting government policies that impact negatively on them	Flexible, practical support that comes to the family or whānau or is in one site	Place 'family/whānau' rather than 'system' needs at the centre
		Ensure policies lead to congruent outcomes.

## Pilot findings were confirmed in Stage 2

- Generally families and whānau were treated poorly by government services and better by government-funded services (NGOs)
- For some whānau, the experience of receiving government services worsened their situation
- Mostly families and whānau are asking to be treated better.

# Key themes

What matters	What works	What doesn't work
<b>Whānau get the results they need</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical support and information</li> <li>• Being results-focused</li> <li>• Whānau get what they are entitled to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No or poor support</li> <li>• Not getting entitlements</li> <li>• Unmet need – safety of children and whānau</li> <li>• Whānau are let down with broken promises</li> </ul>
<b>The system works for whānau</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whānau are understood</li> <li>• Access to services</li> <li>• Quality information</li> <li>• Can navigate the system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No follow through or delays</li> <li>• Whānau burdened with navigating the system</li> <li>• Rigid/inflexible application of rules</li> </ul>
<b>Supportive, caring services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being respected, treated well and listened to</li> <li>• Meeting cultural needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...ism, being judged</li> <li>• Power and control</li> <li>• Unmet need – safety, broken promises</li> </ul>
<b>Service offers hope and realises potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirming strengths</li> <li>• Acknowledging whānau values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deficit focus</li> </ul>

Last words from whānau



# Te Whiringa Research team

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