



COVID-19 Hauora Wellbeing Survey

of the tangata whenua,
community & voluntary sector

2021



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Researchers

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The final report was prepared by Volunteering New Zealand and Hui E! Community Aotearoa.

Foreword

Foreword: Volunteering New Zealand

Michelle Kitney – Kaihautū Chief Executive, Volunteering New Zealand

I am pleased to introduce this *Hauora wellbeing survey of the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector*. Volunteering New Zealand believes up-to-date research is essential to enable government, funders and peak bodies to understand and respond to the needs of the sector.

The wellbeing of paid workers and volunteers in the sector has been affected by the pandemic in many ways. However, people responded in generous, collaborative and innovative ways. It's exciting to hear of new connections and partnerships springing up to meet the needs of communities.

While volunteer numbers initially fell at the start of the global pandemic, younger volunteers stepped up to fill the gap. Some organisations found it challenging to engage well with younger volunteers – they are looking for different things and need to be managed in different ways. Volunteers of migrant and refugee background communities are experiencing particular stresses and isolation and need support. The new volunteering environment was stressful for some volunteers, including mastering technology.

The hau or vitality of volunteers is linked to that of their organisations and the communities they serve. When our organisations and our communities are well and flourishing, so are our volunteers. We need to ensure that volunteers' mahi aroha is met with good management, training and wellbeing support when their organisations are under increased pressure.

There are many opportunities surfacing from this report – for greater support, funding and strategic thinking. Volunteering New Zealand will play our part as kaitiaki of mahi aroha, empowering volunteers to enrich Aotearoa, and advocating for the vital role of the community and voluntary sector.

Foreword: Hui E! Community Aotearoa

Rochelle Stewart-Allen – Pou Kaiārahi (General Manager), Hui E! Community Aotearoa

The goal of this survey, and the survey carried out in 2020, was to check in with organisations in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector. We knew that was important, because we knew many community groups were on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response. They still are.

We particularly wanted to seek out the voices of those working with Māori, Pasifika, and Ethnic communities and people with disabilities. It's well-known now that this pandemic has not hit all communities equally and we think it's important to amplify the voices of those hit hardest.

The results are what we expected – in the last year, demand for services has increased but funding and resourcing has not kept pace.

Though the passion of leaders, kaimahi and volunteers in these organisations was evident in their day-to-day work, so too is the struggle – the need to balance self-care with community care is going to be vital going forward.

Despite the challenges, community organisations have stepped up, facing the demand with perseverance, flexibility and a demonstrable commitment to the communities they serve and the issues they seek to address.

Collaboration between organisations has also allowed them to respond to needs more effectively, and the survey shows whakawhanaungatanga has boosted resilience in many ways.

The tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector contributes \$12.1b to Aotearoa New Zealand's GDP. There are 115,000 non-profits, with more than 150,000 paid staff and 159 million volunteer hours per annum, who have an incredible impact on the wellbeing of Aotearoa's communities.

We think they're worth supporting, and would like to see the government and other funders take up the challenge of strengthening them properly.

Executive summary

Introduction

In 2020 Hui E! Community Aotearoa and Volunteering New Zealand partnered with Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy New Zealand to survey the impact of COVID-19 on the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector. Hui E! and Volunteering New Zealand revisited that research this year. We wanted to see how things had or hadn't changed. We wanted to go deeper into organisational hauora, or wellbeing. We commissioned a follow-up survey, supplemented with focus groups. We particularly sought out the voices of organisations caring for Māori, Pasifika, migrant and refugee background, and disabled communities. We know that these voices are often not well heard.

The surveys and focus groups were completed just before Aotearoa New Zealand went into its second national lockdown in August 2021. Our thanks to those who generously shared their experiences, insight and wisdom in these busy and pressured times. As you read this report, we ask that you honour those who shared their experiences by reflecting and taking action to better support the hauora, or wellbeing of the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector and the communities they serve.

Māori Community Organisations and Tangata Whenua

We expanded the 2020 Māori community organisations category this year to seek different tangata whenua perspectives and experiences from 'formal' organisations such as government health or welfare providers and large voluntary community organisations, and 'informal' kin-based organisations, such as Marae Komiti (committees). Tangata whenua organisations, as well as many others in the community and voluntary sector, have embraced Whakawhanaungatanga, using pre-established kinship relationships to deliver services and provide support to one-another. This was often extended to non-kin defined networks such as urban marae or locally based families.

How the sector is doing

Our sector has rallied to continue its mahi tahi, labours of love. As with the general population of Aotearoa New Zealand, the wellbeing of paid workers and volunteers in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector has been challenged by the pandemic in multiple ways, and to varying degrees. Nonetheless, our research has revealed a huge wellspring of effective leadership, energy, tenacity, skills, knowledge, wisdom, love, respect, kindness, and compassion. Paid workers and volunteers have worked hard to continue their mahi tahi, their labours of love. They have continued to rally. They have continued to innovate. They have remained fiercely committed. They have found energy and enrichment in the new connections and partnerships they have started and sustained across their communities since the pandemic began. They continue to receive greater appreciation for and recognition of their work. And they remain generally optimistic about their futures.

Pandemic pressures are taking their toll

Despite this, the ongoing pressures of a pandemic environment are understandably starting to take their toll on personal and organisational wellbeing. They have never been more wanted, but our sector is continuing to do even more with less. For the vast majority, funding has largely stayed the same or declined, while demand has increased. Staff and volunteers have observed and are being affected by the growing needs, disparities and challenges in the communities they serve. They report that work hours and work pressures are affecting physical and emotional health. The labour of love is starting to feel, for some, like hard toil.

The sector has found a source of wellness in whakawhanaungatanga

In response, people in the sector have sought strength and energy from each other. Whakawhanaungatanga is cited as a key to keeping well – building close, trusted and supportive relationships with others, closer collaboration and keeping connected are important counters to the pressures people feel they are under. The sector has found it refreshing and enriching to step away for a moment from competitive models of funding. Pre-established kinship relationships have expanded to embrace non-kin networks. These networks are playing an increasing role in meeting community need. Collective visions for shaping the future appear to be centred on the strength of whānau and community grassroots and flax-roots networks. The stories we have been told prove that despite increasing pressures on paid workers and volunteers, the people in our sector would do anything for us.

What the sector needs

Our sector needs help and support from the government, philanthropy and our communities.

There are three things that would make the biggest difference for those working in the sector and the people they care for:

1. They see a better future in closer connectedness and collaboration, in harnessing their kin and non-kin-based relationships. Incentives for collaboration, and provision of places and spaces to support this.
2. They want competitive funding models removed in favour of trust-based models that respond to local need. This means respecting the ability of hapū, iwi and local communities to lead, and supporting locally led planning and resourcing.
3. They need resourcing for wellbeing and salaries, not only projects.

Why this matters

All things are connected. The hau, or vitality of the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector becomes the hau, or vitality of our communities. When we strengthen the hauora or wellbeing of the sector, we strengthen the hauora of communities. When we compromise the hauora or wellbeing of the sector, we compromise the ability of our communities to survive, flourish and thrive.

Ki te kotahi te kakaho ka whati, ki te kapuia, e kore e whati

When we stand alone we are vulnerable but together we are unbreakable

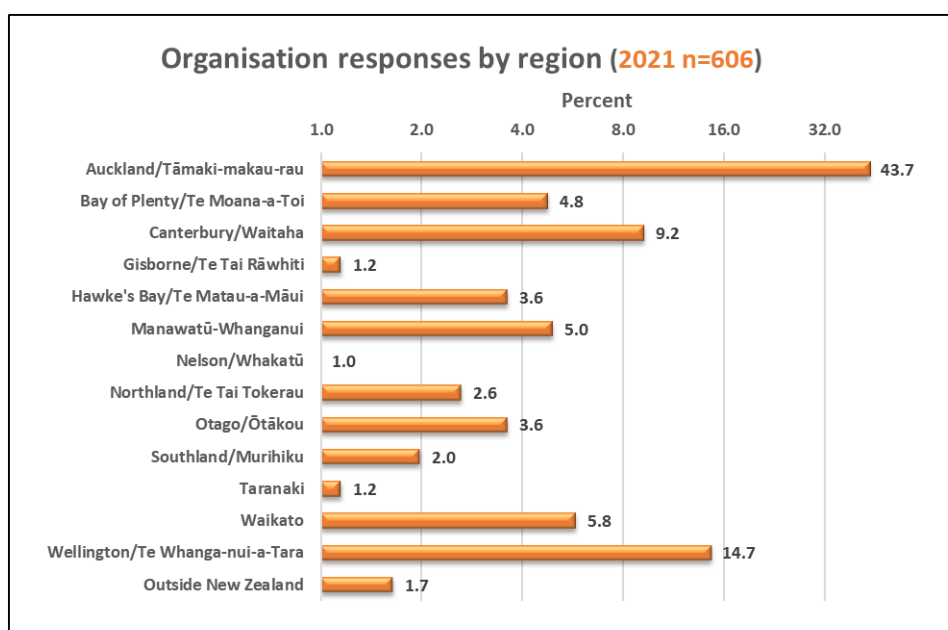
Research approach

Research population recruitment methods

This research is focused on the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector, and the organisations surveyed and interviewed, although mostly flax-roots and small, included some large organisations. The organisations ranged from community support groups offering legal advice, counselling, housing, and food provision; child and family services; women's refuges; health and disability services; education providers; human rights groups; creative art and music community hubs; organisations serving specific ethnicities such as Māori, Pasifika, Chinese, South Asian, and other minority communities; migrant and refugee background support groups; and university student volunteer associations.

Our online survey population was initially recruited from the Hui E! Community Aotearoa and Volunteering New Zealand membership/ contact databases. Further recruitment was via word of mouth and pānui posted in community organisation newsletters and posted on social media sites by staff and volunteers from our funder organisations. Further recruitment came via whānau and colleagues of our research team members. The resulting population was a combination of organisations who had participated in the 2020 Time to Shine survey and a body of new respondents that might amplify the discussion concerning the multidimensional variability of experience within the community and voluntary sector. The response rate for our survey was 606 organisations. The 'regional locations' of our respondents were calculated using (as a proxy) the IP address of their online survey response (Petrescu 2014).

Figure 1. Distribution of survey respondents by regions



Focus group participants were selected from (a) a list of people who volunteered to take part (in a focus group) in our online survey; and (b) people known through our organisational and personal/professional networks whose voices are less often heard in this kind of research. Eight focus groups were held in which 35 people participated.

Key informant interviewees were recruited from community and voluntary umbrella organisations including: one person from an active Pasifika community organisation and one key informant known for their organisation's experiences within the Māori and Pasifika urban community pre, during and post COVID-19 lockdowns.

Pasifika fono participants were recruited through our Pasifika research team member's connections and the organisation that hosted our fono. Approximately 50 people participated in the fono.

Commentary and discussions written around the direct voices of our participants within the report are paraphrases of what our respondents told us in the focus groups, interviews, and other communications. The writers of this report have carefully interpreted the knowledge incorporated in the large amount of quantitative and qualitative data collected in this Hauora/Wellbeing research project to honour the participation of our many informants and participants.

Whāia te mātauranga hei oranga mō koutou
Seek knowledge for the sake of your wellbeing

Research instrument design

Online survey: The 2021 Hauora/wellbeing survey of the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector was created with three interconnected goals. One was to monitor changes to the community and voluntary organisations/sector, 12 months on from the Time to Shine survey of 2020 and 16 months on from COVID-19 arriving in Aotearoa. The second was to seek out and amplify the voices (and experiences) of Māori, Pasifika, Disability and Migrant and Refugee background community and voluntary organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand. The third was to evaluate (in greater depth) the experiences and levels of organisational hauora or wellbeing of the people who work within all volunteer and community organisations.

Consequently, we replicated the basic 'mainstream organisational' structure and themes from the Time to Shine 2020 survey to allow for comparison across time. This basic structure was augmented with new themes and questions that allowed for a more culturally and structurally nuanced understanding of the community and voluntary sector. The survey contained 32 questions distributed within nine thematic sections. Each of these sections used multiple dimensions/ questions to investigate a single theme (Tolich and Davidson, 2011).

The survey used the mixed method, a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions. Qualitative questions responses were not allocated a word limit. This allowed respondents unlimited space for statements and or stories about their experiences and observations. We used a number of qualitative question types. For categorical based questions such as income level, we used single response/multiple choice and for assessment of multiple dimensions of a phenomenon such as reasons behind income level we used multiple response option questions. We also used agreement/attitudinal Likert scales to provide a gradational assessment of respondents' thoughts about our research areas. The survey instrument went through multiple internal and external assessment for readability and was tested for statistical robustness logic. It

was beta-tested using multiple respondents. It was created and published using the Survey Monkey platform and was live for six weeks.

Focus groups: We ran eight focus groups for this project. Each group used a script containing central/mainstream themes for discussion, and subject areas unique to each organisation type i.e., Māori, Pasifika, Disability, et al. These themes were developed using preliminary findings from the online survey and consultation with sector key informants and representatives from the Māori, Pasifika and disability sector/communities (Marshall 2014). While focus groups and key informant interviews are ideally held face to face, we conducted a considerable proportion of these via Zoom. We used this approach for practical reasons that included: geographical distance between researchers and respondents; scheduling and locational convenience for our respondents, and COVID-19 concerns. Where possible, focus groups were facilitated by a 'voice/culturally specific-community member' with backup from our research team. Where possible these were audio recorded on personal phone devices or when online, captured using the recording function on Zoom software. All focus group audio were transcribed using otter software then checked/corrected for accuracy and anonymised by one of the research team.

Key informant interviews: The interviews were conducted online by our researchers using the key questions developed for the focus groups. We also used Zoom software for interviewing and recording. The interviews were (on average), 60 minutes long. We used the same processes for transcription and quality control as noted above.

Pasifika fono: was held in a community/council facility to accommodate the 50 plus attendees. Ten focus groups of Pasifika community organisations were asked to give us feedback on some of the key themes investigated within this research (Vaiotei 2006, Naufahu 2018, Aporosa 2021). Each focus group was provided with a single large sheet of paper with key themes written on it. Groups were then asked to brainstorm around these themes and write their thoughts as bullet-points on their paper sheet. These findings were workshopped further when our Pasifika facilitator/MC asked each group to speak to the larger assembly with key findings. These were often elaborated upon with the larger assembly. Fortunately, our research mahi dovetailed into a question-and-answer session between representatives of five funding agencies (names removed) and our Pasifika respondents. This allowed for a lively debate about funding availability, processes and connections between the community and said funders. Our research lead recorded all audio for this session and gathered the focus group workshopping paper sheets. The fono was also recorded by the resident Pasifika videographer. The focus group sheets were photographed by a community member. The fono was approximately 120 minutes long. We used the same processes for transcription and quality control as noted above.

Tools used for analysis

Researchers conducted a proportional analysis of each quantitative question in our online survey. We then created graphs/tables to reflect the findings of each question/variable (De Vaus 2014). The 'visual representations' of these findings are shown below. The responses to qualitative/text-based questions were also examined. The qualitative response 'dataset' underwent a deeper content analysis. As an analytic method, content analysis is very flexible, providing a systematic way of synthesising a wide range of data. It can be a useful way of analysing longitudinal data to

demonstrate change over time and is nonintrusive because it is applied to data already collected or existing text (Bryman 2008, Curtis 2011, Schreier 2020). The narrative of this report mirrors the thematic structure of our online survey. The order of our themes is: (1) The demographic details of our organisations; (2) Geo locations in which organisations operate; (3) Ethnic groups with whom organisations work; (4) The subjective wellbeing of staff and volunteers in the sector; (5) Impact of COVID-19 on organisational funding; (6) Impact of COVID-19 on service delivery; (7) Organisations' collective visions of shaping the future; (8) Looking ahead/strategies for change.

While the overall response totals were 606 for the 2021 survey and 961 for the 2020 survey, the response rate varied from question to question. This variability is not uncommon in survey research. Reasons include too much effort, refusal to answer, a sensitive topic or cannot supply the required data (among other reasons) (Bryman 2008). Response rate is indicated as (n = response rate) within the body of the graphs/tables. All analyses are conducted using these counts.

Several the survey questions allow for multiple responses. The total number of answer choices selected for these questions is often greater than the number of respondents that answered the question. This can cause the total response percentages to be greater than 100% (Bryman 2008).

Ethical considerations

Appropriate care was taken to assure the wellbeing of those who participated in our research project. People were informed of the kaupapa and goals of the project (and their rights as participations) via pānui, survey introductions and participant information sheets. Focus group participants completed and returned consent forms. All respondent and organisation names/ identifiers were anonymised in the data cleaning/ quality control process.

Methodology

This research follows a bricolage/mixed methods approach in that it has employed multiple qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure robustness in its results (Creswell and Clark, 2018). Furthermore, it reflects the kaupapa of the research goals. Central to these goals was to give voice to the mainstream and multiple, lesser heard voices extant in the community and voluntary organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand. The qualitative methodology we have used here (in combination with the quantitative approach) is particularly useful to understand subjective experiences. It allows the researcher to be able to listen to the voices of those who are “silenced, othered, and marginalised by a dominant social order” (Hesse-Bieber, 2005:28; Denzin, 2008), as qualitative methods ask participants to explain things, and to express their feelings and experiences in their own words (Barbour, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Daly, 2007; Liamputtong, 2007; Padgett, 2016). As well as including and attending to the concerns of lesser heard participants (Liamputtong, 2007), our focus groups and interviews actively sought out participants from Māori and Pasifika community organisations.

For these voices to be heard, we followed a kaupapa Māori research process in that we actively involved mainstream, Māori, Pasifika, Disability, and Migrant and Refugee background sectors in the research design/questions, methods development and implementation (Smith, 2012;

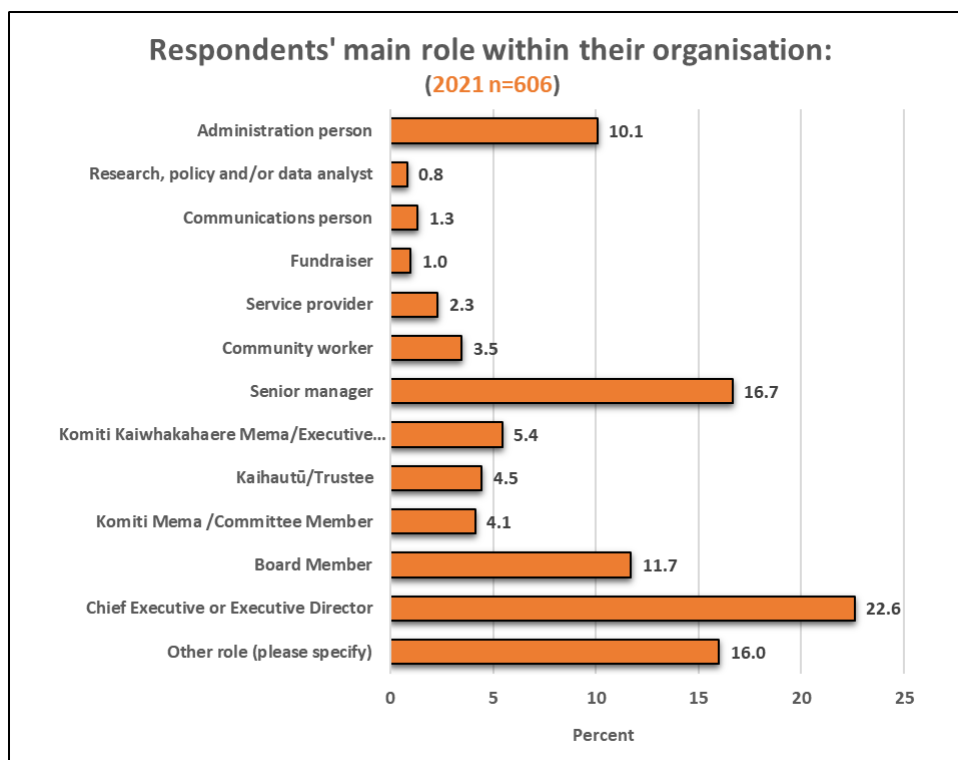
Kawharu, 2014; Tane, 2018). The resulting 'Research toolbox' is a nuanced combination of western statistical and qualitative approaches woven together with other cultural approaches and methods that helped us to ask the right questions, in the right way, in the appropriate environment. Data was gathered using the following methods; a nationwide online survey; focus groups; Pasifika fono and key informant interviews.

Participant profiles – respondents and organisations

Organisational roles

While the workforce and number of volunteers vary considerably between organisations, the types and range of roles within them are often similar. Each of these roles are integral to the efficient functioning of said organisations. That considered, and as we can see in Figure 2 below, the greatest proportion of our survey responses (51%), were completed by senior managers, Chief Executive officers or Board members. While the remaining 49% of our respondents were not equally distributed among our role categories, it was important that these voices and perspectives were represented.

Figure 2. Respondents' main role within their organisation



Organisation types

As seen in Figure 3 below, Charitable Trusts, Incorporated societies, and voluntary organisations made up the largest proportion (78.1%) of respondents' organisations. The expansion of the 2020 Māori organisations category this year has allowed greater understating of the differing perspectives and experiences between 'formal' organisations such as health providers and kinship-based organisations such as Marae Komiti (Committees)

Figure 3. Respondent organisation types

Organisation Type (2021)	(n=606)	Percent
Charitable Trust		46.2
Incorporated society		23.6
Voluntary organisation		8.3
Marae Komiti		0.7
Māori Health Provider		0.7
Māori Social Services Provider		0.5
Iwi Authority		0.7
Māori Organisation (undefined)		0.5
Pasifika organisation		1.5
Disability organisation		2.3
Faith based organisation		5.1
Migrant and Refugee background organisation		1.0
Philanthropic funder		1.3
Other		7.8
Total		100%

Organisation sizes

People are the backbone of the tāngata whenua, community and voluntary organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand. By proxy, we can say that the workforce/volunteer force size is (among other factors) reflective of organisation size. Our research shows us that the ratio of paid workers/contractors to volunteers within an organisation varies considerably. That considered, and as shown in Figure 4 below, almost one third (30.5%) of our respondent population had no paid staff/operated solely on voluntary labour/no labour. A further (35.9%) of our respondent organisations employed between 1–5 people and had between 0–50 volunteers. A further 10.5% of our organisations employed between 6–10 people and had between 0–50 volunteers. These figures tell us that more than three quarters (76.9%) of our respondent organisations operated using volunteers and between 0–10 paid staff. The most common 'organisational workforce types/profiles' were either no paid people and 6–10 volunteers (8.8%) or 1–5 paid people and 6–10 volunteers (9.2%).

Figure 4. Organisation workforce profiles (paid worker count/voluntary worker count) as proportions of total respondent population: 2021

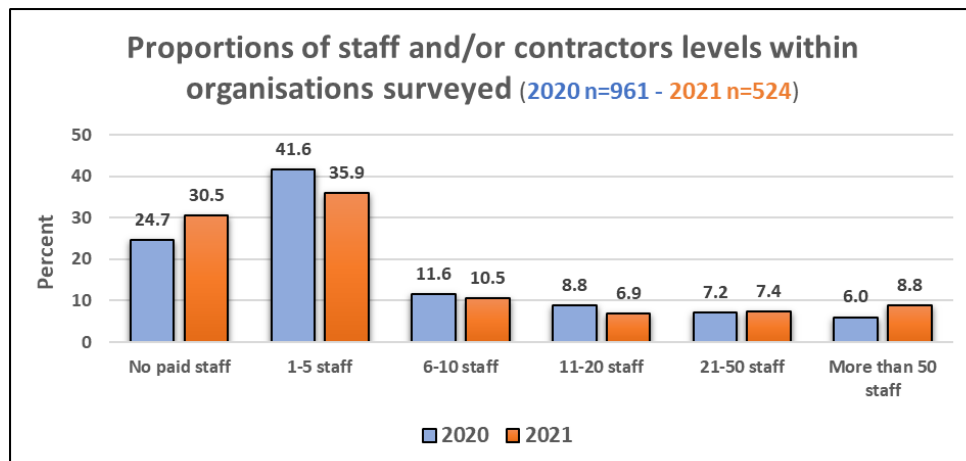
2021 N=524*	No volunteers	1–5 volunteer s	6–10 volunteer s	11–20 volunteers	21–50 volunteers	More than 50 volunteers	Total (Percent)
No paid people	1.5	7.6	<u>8.8</u>	5.3	5.7	1.5	30.5
1–5 people	1.9	5.5	<u>9.2</u>	5.9	7.4	5.9	35.9
6–10 people	0.8	2.3	2.1	2.1	1.7	1.5	10.5
11–20 people	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.3	0.4	1.7	6.9
21–30 people	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.6	1.1	3.8
31–40 people	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.6	0.6	0.0	1.5
41–50 people	0.4	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.8	2.1
More than 50 people	2.9	0.4	0.0	1.1	0.2	4.2	8.8
Total	9.2	18.3	21.9	16.8	17.0	16.8	100.0%

*Cells equal the crosstabulation of categories divided by the N of survey respondents

Paid staff sizes in organisations

As we can see in Figure 5 below, there is a similar distribution of paid staff sizes in respondent organisations in 2020 and 2021. As is also similar to 2020, a significant proportion of our respondent organisations in 2021 had either no paid staff (30.5%), or between one and five paid workers (35.9%). Interestingly, the proportion of respondent organisations with no paid staff increased by almost six percent in the 12-month period while the proportion of those with 1–5 staff decreased over the same period.

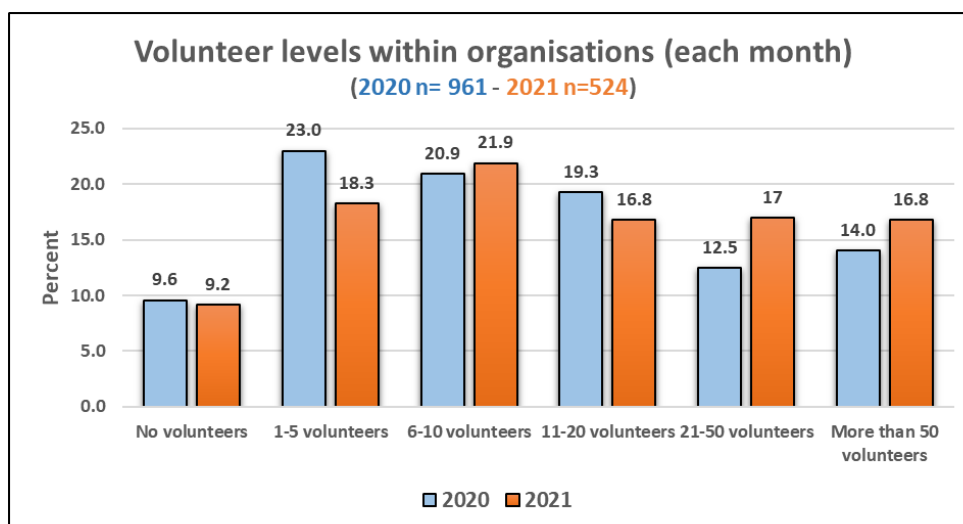
Figure 5. Proportions of survey population by ‘count categories’ of paid staff including contractors (2020 –2021)



Volunteer numbers and profiles

Community and voluntary sector organisations are often reliant on the mahi of volunteers to function. As we can see in Figure 6 below, the basic ‘shape’ or proportional distribution of volunteer levels per organisations surveyed is similar in 2020 and 2021. However, there was a 4.7% decline in (1–5 volunteer) respondent organisations, a 4.5% increase in 21–50 volunteer respondent organisations and a 2.8% increase in respondent organisations with more than 50 volunteers.

Figure 6. Proportional distribution of survey population by ‘count categories’ of volunteers (2020–2021)

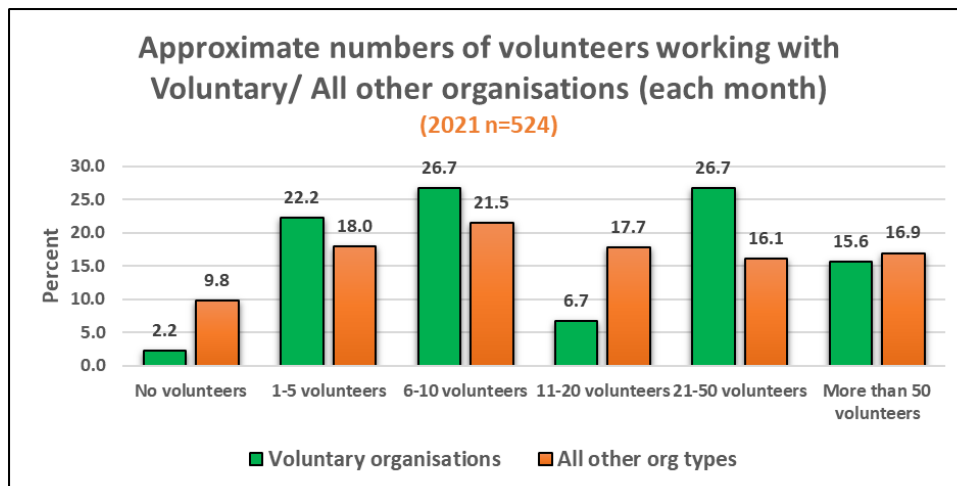


Volunteer numbers and profiles in voluntary organisations

As was shown in the previous section, approximately two thirds of voluntary organisations surveyed reported having no paid staff. By default, and or design these organisations rely of a body of volunteers to do their work. We can see in Figure 7 below a variance of ‘volunteer level

categories' in our survey population. Approximately half (48.9%) of voluntary organisations held a volunteer force that was between one and ten people in size. In comparison, 39.5% of all other community organisation types held this volunteer number profile. As was shown and discussed in Figure 4, sector organisations have multiple paid staff and volunteer size profiles. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of these held modest human capital. That considered, and as is seen in Figure 7, 42.2% of voluntary organisations and 33% of all other organisation types reported that between 21 and 50 plus volunteers worked with them each month.

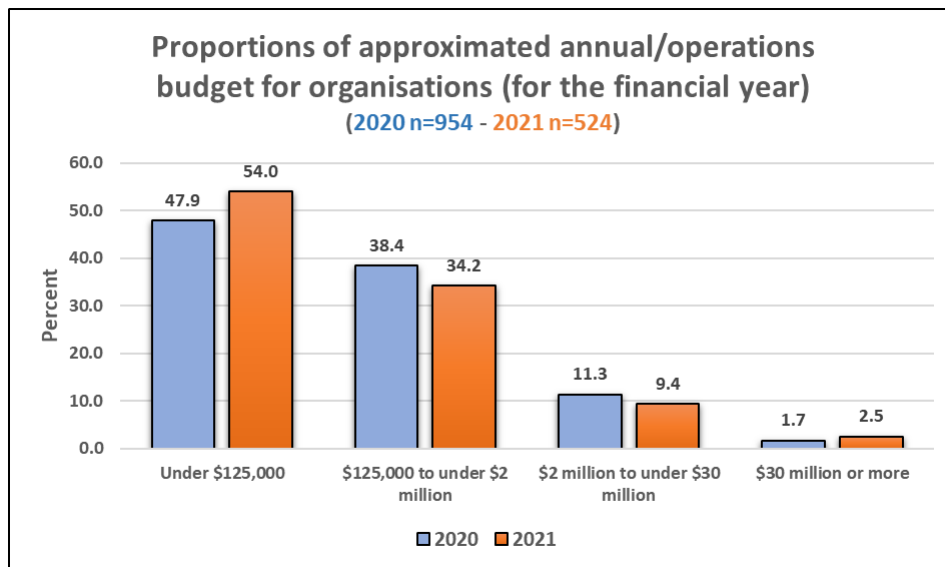
Figure 7. Comparison of volunteer levels within voluntary organisations and all other organisation types: 2021



Funding levels for operation

While community and voluntary organisations' functioning and survival is heavily dependent on their kaupapa, goodwill and the labour and expertise of volunteers, they also need financial resources to operate. The survey has shown us that approximately half of our respondent organisations operated with a less than \$125,000 budget in both 2020 and 2021 (See Figure 8 below). We can also see that the proportion of respondent organisations who are operating at this financial capacity has grown by 6.1% in the 2020–2021 period.

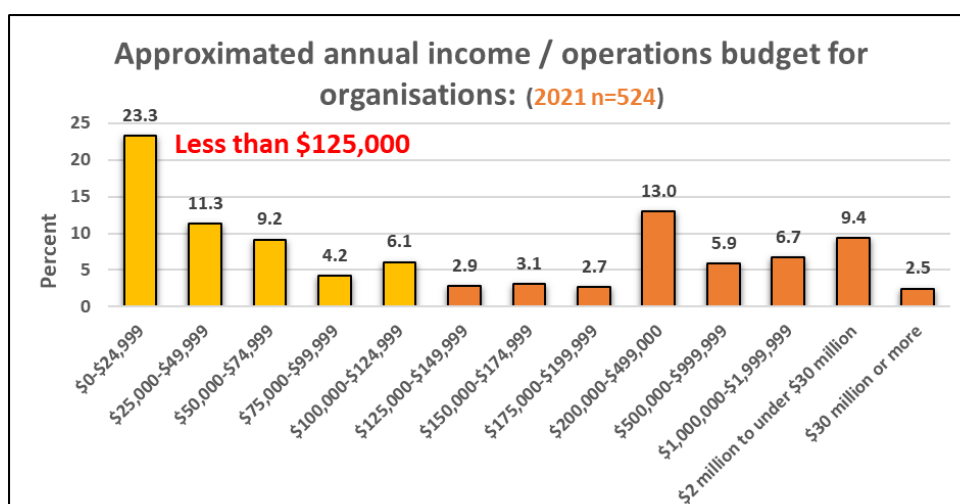
Figure 8. Approximated annual income / operations budgets (for the last financial year) for organisations surveyed.



Organisations with 'low' annual incomes/operations budgets in 2021

While it was not possible to disaggregate our 2020 'Under \$125,000' category data, the redesign of the approximated annual income question (within our 2021 survey) has given us more fine-grained data. This helps to calculate and understand the economic 'circumstances' within which more than half of our organisations are working. Figure 9 below highlights this disaggregation, showing us that approximately a quarter (23.3%) of our total respondent organisations in 2021 had an operations budget of between zero income and \$25,000. A further 30.8% of our organisations were working with (between) \$25,000 and \$124,999.

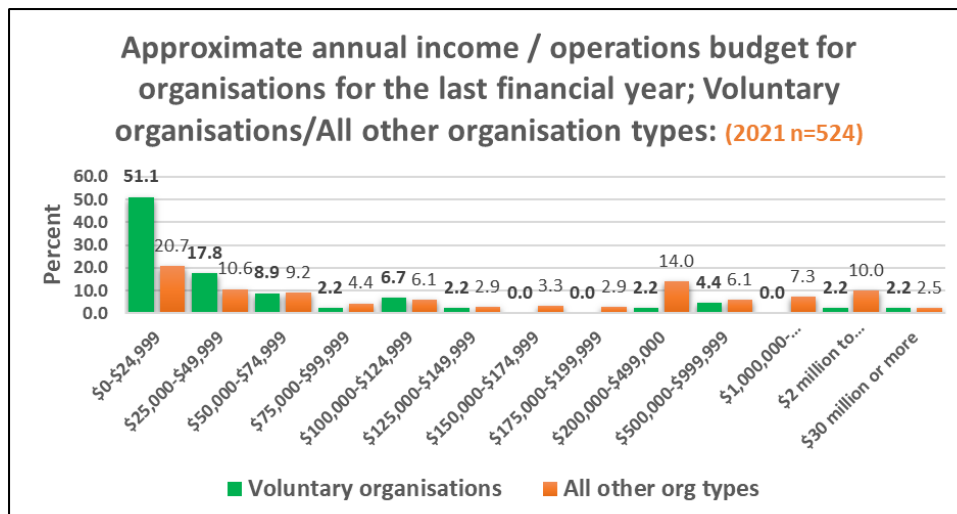
Figure 9. Disaggregated approximated annual income / operations budgets (for the last financial year) for organisations surveyed in 2021



Voluntary organisations operations/budget levels

Figure 10 below shows us that approximately half, (51.1%) of the voluntary organisations in our survey had an annual income/operations budget of less than \$25,000 in the preceding year and that a further quarter, (26.7%) budget was between \$25,000 and \$74,999. In comparison, the distribution of 'all other organisation types' with our 13 operating budget categories was reasonably even (save the 20.7% in the \$0–\$24,999 bracket)

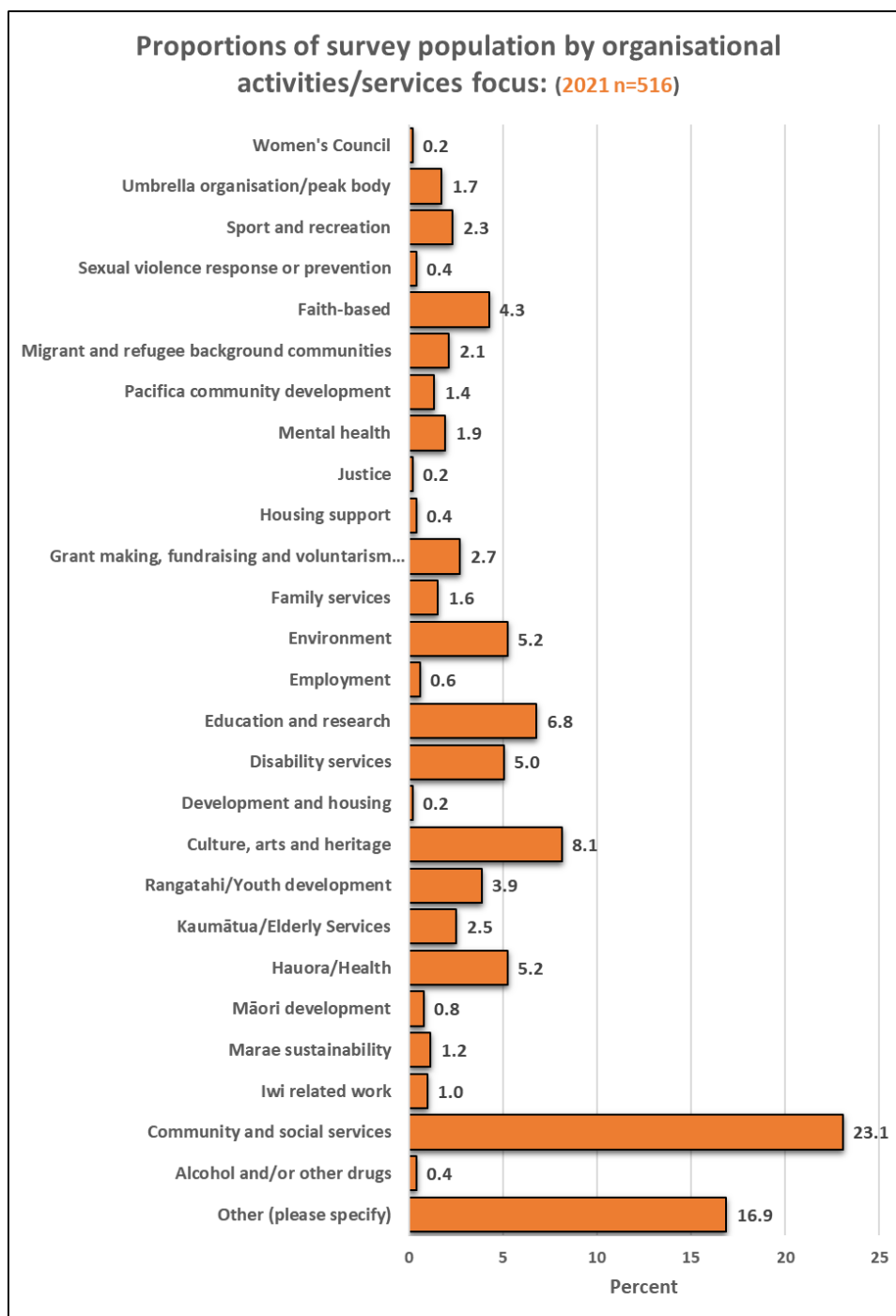
Figure 10. Comparison of annual income / operations budget in voluntary organisations/All other organisation types: 2021



Scope of organisational activities and services focus

The scope of 'activities and services focus' of community and voluntary organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand is wide. Our survey used 28 categories to ascertain the focus of our survey population. We expanded our 'categorical range' from last year to (among other things) create a finer grained representation and understanding of Māori organisational data. As we can see in Figure 11, almost a quarter of our respondent population (23.1%) were community and social services organisations. Other notable response proportions were culture arts and heritage (8.1%), education and research (6.8%) and environment (5.2%). Importantly for our research kaupapa, the 'under-represented' voices of disability services, Pasifika community development, iwi services, Māori development and marae sustainability are present here, albeit in lesser proportions. As stated in the methodology, these voices of 'characteristically low response' groups are amplified through our use of focus groups, key interviews and Pasifika fono.

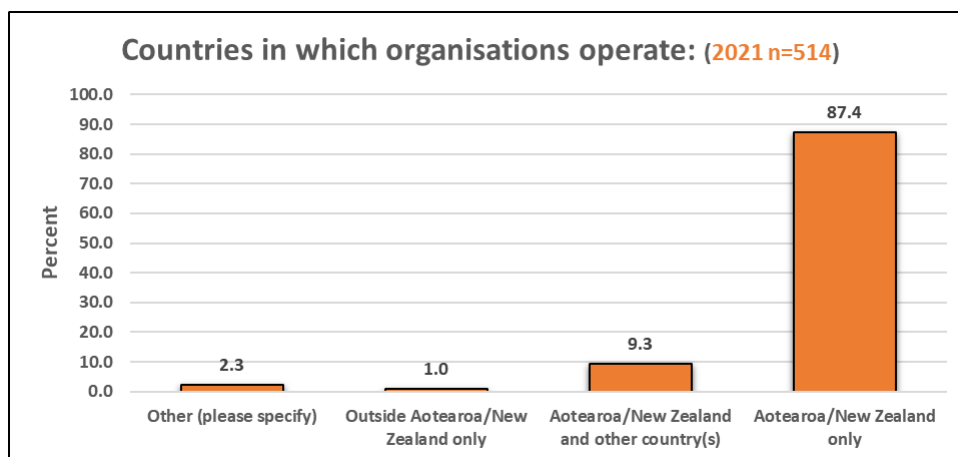
Figure 11. Survey population by organisational activities/services focus 2021



Geo locations where organisations operate

Because of the tightly focused participant recruitment of this project, the majority of our respondent organisations (87.4%) indicated they provide services in Aotearoa New Zealand only. A further 9.3% operate in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally. (See Figure 12 below).

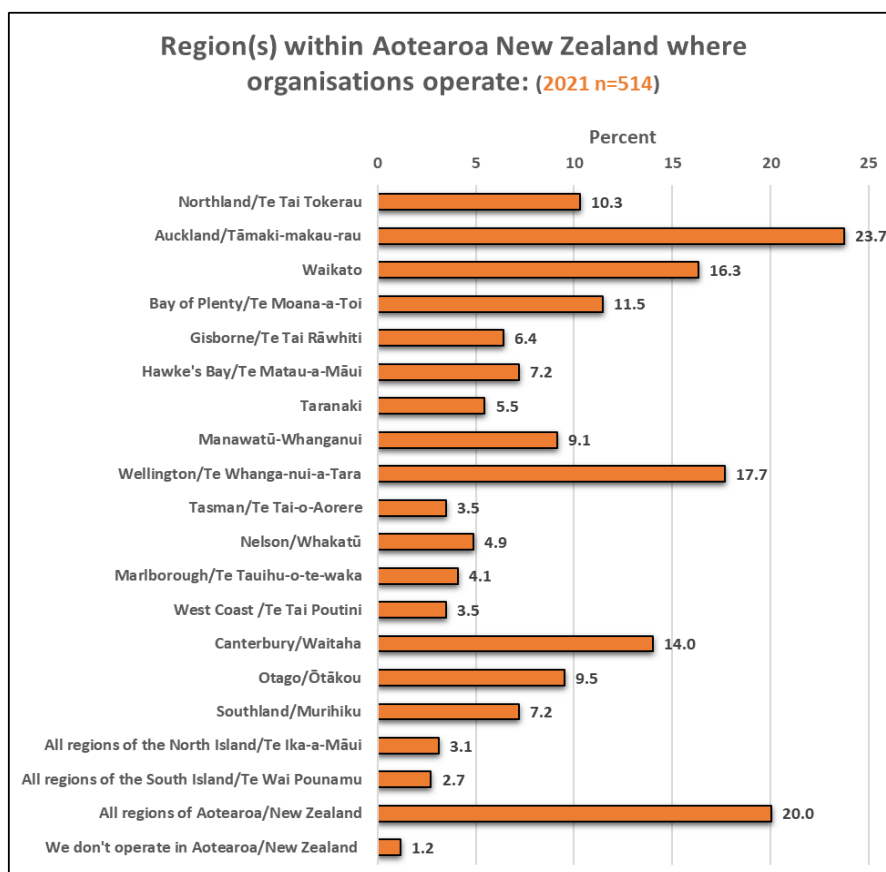
Figure 12. Countries in which organisations operate 2021



Regional foci of services

While many of our respondent organisations work with/within their local community, other organisations work across multiple geographical regions. Case in point, 20% of the 514 respondents to this question operated in all regions of Aotearoa New Zealand. Figure 13 below shows this. While it is partially reflective of our survey respondent's primary location of operation, the most common 'sites of service' are Tamaki Makaurau Auckland (23.7%) Wellington Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara (17.7%) and Canterbury Waitaha (14%).

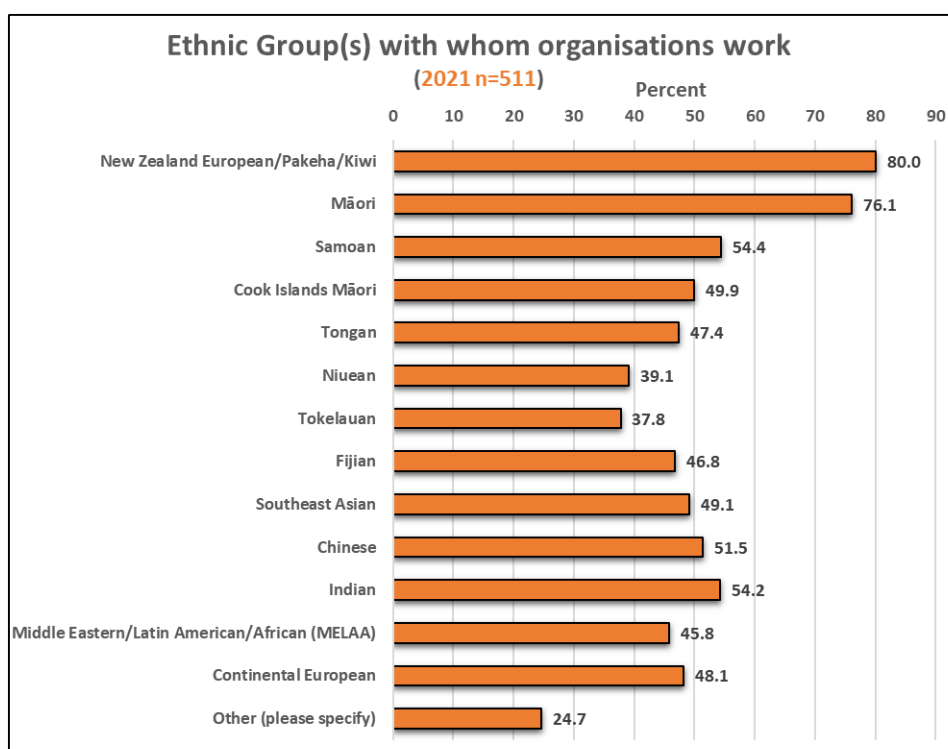
Figure 13. Region(s) within Aotearoa New Zealand where organisations operate 2021



Ethnicities of groups with whom organisations work

Just as our respondent organisations often work across multiple geographical regions, many, but not all, work with a population of multiple ethnic groups. Figure 14 below is reflective of this incidence. We can see that 80% of our 511 respondents to this question worked with New Zealand European/Pakeha/Kiwi (among other ethnicities). In addition, 76.1% of our organisations work with Māori. While a small number of our respondents (n=14) worked with Māori exclusively and (n=5) organisations worked with individual or groupings of Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, Tokelauan, Fijian and Solomon Islands communities, the majority of our respondent organisations worked with more than one ethnic group.

Figure 14. Ethnic group(s) with whom organisations work 2021



WELLBEING – tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector

Wellbeing: staff and volunteers in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector

As with the general population of Aotearoa New Zealand, the wellbeing of the paid workers and volunteers of our respondent populations since the beginning of COVID-19 has been challenged in multiple ways, and to varying degrees. The pandemic has also surfaced the natural struggles and tensions between self-care and community care.

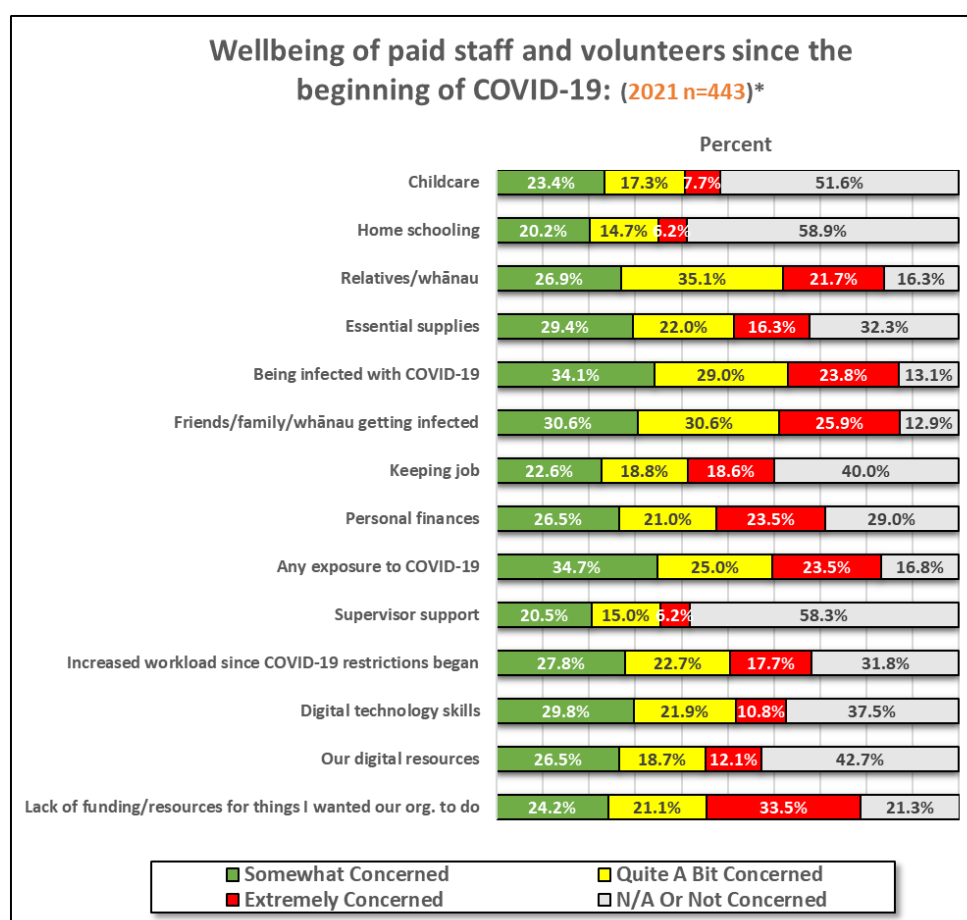
Our survey asked respondents to rate their level of concern across 14 dimensions of wellbeing. While the responses are affected by the size and level of resources of organisations within which people work (among other factors), the collective, subjective perceptions of people's situations are a useful assessment of team wellbeing.

Some aspects of wellbeing are of greater concern than others. As is shown in Figure 15, a high proportion of our respondents (83.7%), indicated they were either somewhat, quite a bit or extremely concerned about the general wellbeing of their relatives/whānau. Similarly, 87.1% of our respondents were concerned about the risk/consequences of friends/family/whānau catching COVID-19 while 86.9% were concerned about being infected by the virus themselves.

While some challenges to wellbeing are not experienced by everyone, significant proportions of our respondents were either *somewhat concerned, quite a bit or extremely concerned* about the effect of the pandemic on the delivery of quality childcare (48.4%) and/or home schooling (41.1%).

The majority of our community organisations report an increase in emotional challenges and difficulties, in clients and in the organisational staff and volunteers as well. The wellbeing of paid staff and volunteers was affected by several factors including stress and anxiety, fatigue and workload, and funding and service pressures.

Figure 15. Wellbeing of the paid staff and volunteer teams since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic across 14 indicators in 2021



*(N=443) Equals the average question response of the 14 variables.

Note: Although the responses are affected by the size and level of resources of organisations within which people work (among other factors), the collective subjective perceptions of staff and volunteers are important, as they influence organisational wellbeing.

Stress and anxiety

More than two thirds (68.2%) of our respondent organisations expressed some level of concern of increased workload of their paid staff and or volunteers since the COVID 19 restrictions began. There are many despairing stories of experiencing high levels of stress resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. One respondent tersely informed us: “[m]ore vulnerable people and snowball effect from COVID still today in finances, hauora, mental, emotional, spiritual, physical health” (Respondent 423). As another respondent poignantly told us, inequities present before the COVID-19 pandemic arrived have persisted and worsened throughout this period, and “overall, those in the vulnerable communities are more excluded and disempowered ... while resilient, the heaviness is still sitting with families” (Respondent 604).

Respondent 333 told us:

“Wellbeing is our biggest issue for our organisation. Emotions and stress levels are at an all-time high, staff are irrational, people are leaving, staff are blaming each other and the want to go back into lockdown is incredibly high. If they cannot regulate and self-reason, then what does that mean for the rest of the organisation?”

Many staff and volunteers of community organisations have suffered detrimental effects from the uncertainty and fear brought by COVID-19. Providing service delivery for vulnerable people is stressful, as they could become ill or die if they catch the virus, and staff and volunteers have been worried that they will catch the virus and infect the service users. Media stories made it worse, as there is so much negative reporting, which creates a sense of fear and unease.

Although many community organisations report continuing good relationships with service users, some clients became frustrated with the lockdowns and pandemic, and hence, becoming more demanding. This also increased the stress and anxiety for staff and volunteers. As one respondent told us, “I think the entire country is more stressed than usual and it can be seen with how scratchy people are with each other when normally they would be kinder” (Respondent 16). There are so many difficulties for so many people – staff, volunteers, and service users – that “it is hard to focus on one story ... and we are still having issues” (Respondent 149).

Staff and volunteers often have family and friends overseas, where there have been many deaths and illnesses due to COVID-19, so some felt they had no choice but to return home. It has been hard for those unable to travel and visit their relatives. A respondent from a community organisation working with people from refugee backgrounds reports:

“Overseas travel limits have increased isolation and anxiety and most of the family is left behind. Covid situation back in their [new refugees’] country is a worry too.” (Respondent 42).

Burnout for staff and volunteers is ever-present; staff and volunteers were as tired mid-year as they have formerly been at the end of the year; in 2020 they looked forward to holidays, but instead the reality was that “they hit the ground running” (Respondent 590, Q29) in 2021 and still have not stopped.

Staff and volunteers report feeling extremely stressed and in bad shape. As one respondent states, “The stress had been horrific this past 10 weeks. I cry often. The people I serve are in crisis. I am struggling not to bring work home. I am worried about suicide and other really serious consequences for the disabled people I serve” (Respondent 485).

A reduced workforce means more stress and effort for those people remaining at work, with associated problems in physical and mental health. However, there have been valiant attempts by most community organisations to look after staff and volunteers, and to keep morale high.

The stress made some service providers question their commitment to volunteer work, as they felt undervalued and unsupported, as the mental health toll was so extreme. They say this pace is unsustainable. Staff and volunteers have also observed growing mental health problems and suicidality in the communities of people they assist.

Organisations representing people with disabilities and neurodiversity told us that isolation and mental health are huge problems for their clients, and sometimes for themselves as service providers. Furthermore, access problems and inequities have grown since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Mental health as well as physical health is a growing concern in the population of people with disabilities and neurodiversity. Often the health of people with disabilities is vulnerable so people cannot go out when there is a possibility of contracting COVID-19.

For people with disabilities who cannot access information online, perhaps due to learning difficulties or simply not having access to a computer, there is a much greater sense of isolation. Many clients live alone, which means not only that isolation is increased, but also that there is nobody to help with self-care or shopping:

“I think, from my perspective, one of the biggest barriers is the ability to both have digital literacy ... also help during a pandemic, is like people who have high levels can just sort of get on and just rough it out. But the people who don’t have a good understanding of what this means, are stuck further in a sense of vulnerability and isolation.” (Facilitator).

In a pandemic, supermarkets are not safe places for people with compromised immune systems, but if people live alone, shopping for groceries or other goods becomes difficult. Online delivery slots book out fast. Isolation results in mental health problems, and if you are a person with a disability or neurodiversity who has to self-isolate due to COVID close contacts, how can this be done, if the person is unable to perform self-care?

Our respondents argued that many systems, whether governmental or commercial, such as supermarkets, are dysfunctional and are not coping, and for people with disabilities and neurodiversity there are layers upon layers of problems that physically abled and neurotypical people do not have to consider. Volunteers working for a community organisation have had to contact clients with disabilities and neurodiversity outside work hours, to make sure they are OK. This takes time away from volunteers’ own families and again leads to deeper wellbeing issues.

We were told that the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than creating new problems, is making existing problems worse for disabled people. It is exacerbating people’s vulnerabilities and making things even less accessible than they were before the pandemic. The biggest vulnerabilities are “isolation, mental health ... [and] access, the inequities have grown” (Speaker 4). This becomes a further psychological burden and adds to mental health problems. There is not much recognition of different disabilities and neurodiversity. Many people in the disability community are losing

perspective and looking inward more, as they are in their bubble and in survival mode, which means the bigger world out there can be outside of their awareness.

Staff and volunteers working for Māori community organisations have experienced strains on mental health and wellbeing from trying to balance the needs of the community and whānau who have health conditions, especially if they are not fully vaccinated, and this had to be rationalised. There is a keen sense of responsibility to the community, but the priority was the safety of whānau and their own health, and also their colleagues' health.

Our participants from community organisations in a small rural town told us that social isolation has been a serious issue since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Many older people, especially, are lonely. They can experience alienation when face-to-face interaction is prohibited due to COVID-19 lockdowns, and social connections become mediated through electronic devices that are not usually part of people's lives. The vital power of whakawhānaungatanga, relationship, kinship, sense of family connection, and building a relationship through shared experiences and working together, which provides people with a sense of belonging, is described as an essential aspect of cultural identity for Māori, and a poignant evocation of the changes in lived experience in small town Aotearoa New Zealand.

Our Māori informant told us that all sorts of aspects of wellbeing have suffered, and volunteers and staff working for community organisations as well as their clients have suffered from serious emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. Some people living in the community have just come out of prison, some have lost their children, some are solo parents, and life is hard enough without the added concerns and fears of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a two-way communication process:

“I’ve learned heaps actually. I’ve learned more about myself. I’ve learned more stuff about opening up because you’re hearing from everybody else. Maybe I need to be a bit more open. And sharing... alright, I need to do the same thing. But because you’re working with the vulnerable, you don’t want to be vulnerable in front of them. But the time will come where I’ll share like some of my lived experience. Yeah, but it depends on where they are at in terms of their own wellbeing.” (Māori KI).

In the Pasifika fono, there were participants representing a variety of Pasifika community organisations and funding bodies. We were told that mental health problems caused by stress since the COVID-19 pandemic began is a deep concern. Pasifika community are finding it very difficult isolating from their community, and it is emotionally upsetting having to avoid large gatherings such as church services and family gatherings:

“What’s not working. We had online church services, you know how we go to church, we are so set in our ways, but going through that was a bit of a challenge. Community gatherings, of family and community, were very hard

to do and also it affected our mental health. We were going all mental [shared laughter].” (Speaker 7 from Pasifika community)

Pasifika community told us that it is stressful having to fill in so many complicated forms when trying to apply for wage subsidies or similar COVID-19 related grants. People working in community organisations, who are trying to help clients and often failing to do so due to the load of systemic processes, report that the stress creates challenges for staff and volunteers. For example, it is stressful having to fill in so many complicated forms when trying to apply for wage subsidies or COVID-19 related grants. “Some forms are twenty-one pages long, and ... they are difficult to fill in.” (Speaker 14 from Pasifika community).

Several participants from Pasifika community discussed the difficulties of having to navigate a complex process when applying for financial assistance, and there are hopes that in the future this can be simplified. The application process is tiring and confusing:

“This is creating mental health [problems], let alone trying to service our wonderful [Pasifika] communities...Constantly, we’re not satisfied. And that’s why a lot of communities, even the smaller ones, who are asking for \$1,000 or \$2,000 has no energy to go through this...Simplify, simplify. Simplify the listing of all the types of funding, look 40 different fundings. How many of us understand that?” (Speaker 17 from Pasifika community).

Isolation is stressful, agreed our respondents. People of migrant and refugee backgrounds who have moved to Aotearoa New Zealand to escape war have a further level of stress along with the social isolation, as they are worrying about their family left behind:

“Well, I guess the challenges, with COVID, plus the war that is happening back home, both of them just made it very hard for the [refugee background] community to go forward. Because you’d hear of, the young people would tell me, their mothers and fathers are sometimes crying all day because someone might have died, or they haven’t been in contact for like two months. They’re alone in their house, they’re not going anywhere. It just becomes even more hard, makes it more lonelier.” (Speaker 1 from migrant and refugee background community).

Stress levels are increasing for everyone working and volunteering with community organisations. The wellbeing of migrant people worried about visas and residency situations is fragile, and staff and volunteers who are migrants also have these problems, along with the community they are trying to serve:

“Well, it affects us because you know people come to me all the time. I really can’t cope now.” (Speaker 3)

Some people from migrant and refugee backgrounds could try group counselling, but as they cannot meet in person, it has to be on Zoom, which is not as useful for a culture used to face-to-face interaction, and many people want to talk in private, not in a group. One organisation signed up to EAP Services, an Employee Assistance Programme, which provides an anonymous counselling service through an 0800 number, but most people do not want to use it.

For voluntary organisations, it was stressful and time-consuming to move to cloud-based IT systems, as well as the other stress brought about by living and working in a pandemic, and there was a lot of burnout in volunteers.

As wellbeing is often not funded, some organisations are using budgets they already have, originally intended for other purposes. As well as needing more support for staff and volunteers, there is recognition that there are also wellbeing challenges for people running charities and community organisations. In government or business there are mentors or coaches for people at the top three tiers of management levels, and managers go away for conferences, performance development programmes, and other support, but the community sector does not have the resources for this.

People running community organisations are very stretched, and there needs to be more support at the Chief Executive (CE) level. As the staff and volunteers also have more needs, as they are doing more with less, they reach out to the CE who is then under even more strain. The CE is under pressure from staff, volunteers, the community, and the Board of Trustees, whose members are voluntary and who may be working full time in other roles.

Participants reported damaging their health, and some people working as Chief Executives reported very high stress levels.

Fatigue and workload

The workload of able-bodied staff and volunteers has enormously increased, as they have taken on extra roles due to the health vulnerabilities of others working for community organisations. Some people resigned as they could not cope with the exhaustion and stress:

“... sitting at zoom meetings for hours on end was bad for my physical wellbeing as I was sitting at my desk for long periods of time, forgetting to take a break.” (Respondent 422)

“Zooming does my head in,” is a sentiment echoed by many other respondents, who reported that there is such a profound lack of human connection. Digital technology is an amazing tool but it should not be an alternative to social interaction. It should not rule our lives. “I think we're creating an environment that in one way might be helpful but in other ways it's got a lot of downsides in terms of well-being” (Speaker 2).

A combination of staff and volunteers needing more support, and having to do more with less, was mentioned as putting particular pressure on Chief Executives. It was noted that Chief Executives in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector do not have the same mentoring and professional development supports as managers in government or business.

Chief Executives and managers of community organisations reported that they simply could not take a long break, even if annual or sick leave is owed, as stress in the workplace is so high that staff and volunteers cannot cope without their manager present. Most managers report feeling extremely responsible for staff and volunteers, putting their needs before their own, providing a lot of extra emotional support as well as organisational skills.

Funding impact on wellbeing

Funding was cited as one of the biggest pressures on organisations. Given that people are intellectually, culturally and or emotionally invested in community and voluntary sector organisations, it is unsurprising that 33.5% of our respondents were extremely concerned at the lack of funding and resources for things they wanted their organisation to do. Losing funding was and is an unfortunately widespread problem, and many organisations have needed to cut back on staff and service delivery due to this issue. While funding is always a pressure for the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector, there was a sense from responses that the competitive, complex and inflexible funding models and long-winded forms are adding unnecessary strain in an already pressured environment. As are short-term contracts that don't allow for forward planning or consistent staffing.

Summary - wellbeing matters

On a positive note, the pandemic brought several positive outcomes. First, many community organisations have adapted to new and difficult situations, built close, trusted and supportive relationships, and developed innovative services when social distancing changed the way they formerly operated. Social circles using online tools, especially Zoom and social media, and contact via mobile phones, were created. Baking circles delivered fresh food safely to many delighted recipients, and food parcels and care packs were secured and delivered. “We implemented a wraparound service to support all whānau in our community. Whatever was identified the need was met. No holds barred we operate under a multi structure it was natural for us to manaaki all people no matter where they came from kai was the centre of our structure” (Respondent 310).

Second, although it was challenging to teach people, especially elderly or youth, how to use online tools during lockdowns, there has been success in developing online proficiency within communities. Building connections and developing social networks increased collaboration between different organisations, and many staff and volunteers were extremely resilient despite the increase in workload and the transition to remote working. “Members have found levels of kindness and a willingness to help which assisted in the wellbeing of their communities” (Respondent 247). Some people have a lot more resilience than others, as not everyone comes from a family unit where they grew up loved and respected, and in stressful situations they sometimes cannot cope. As Speaker 3, a Chief Executive, said:

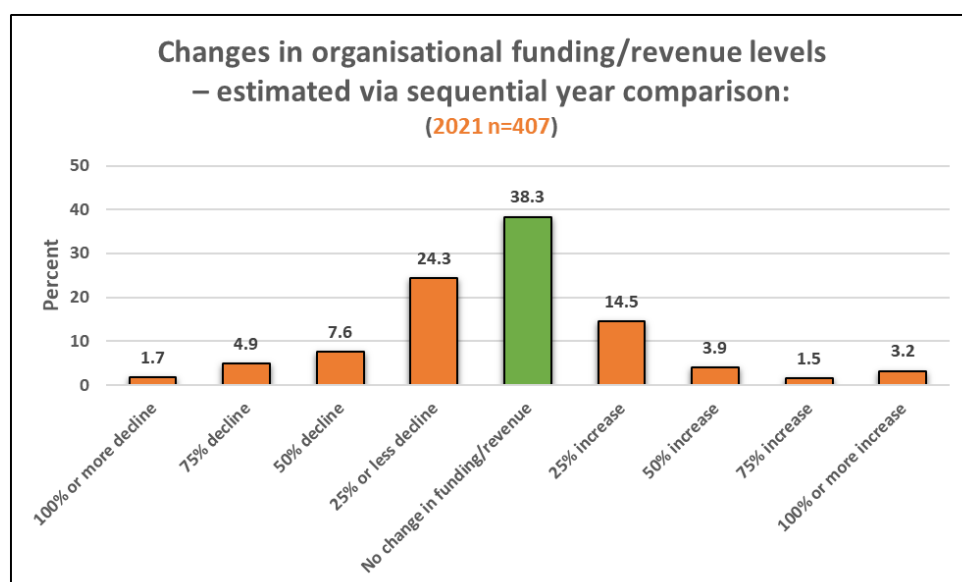
“I have, personally a huge amount of resilience. But the challenges on this COVID campaign is understanding that not everyone has grown up in that way, with those networks, and seeing the different levels of resilience in your staff and volunteers, and how they actually are just not able to cope, in what I would consider a relatively normal way to cope.”

Third, communities became more resilient. Although it was stressful, they tried to ensure that staff and volunteers were well-supported. One key informant informed us that the Pasifika community is very resilient, and quick to adapt to changing environments. People working in community organisations learned valuable lessons from the COVID-19 lockdowns in early 2020. The same happened with the disability community where Zoom quickly became the major avenue for communication and for service coordination.

FUNDING – COVID-19 impacts on organisational funding

Our respondents were asked to express and estimate (in real dollar terms) funding/revenue amounts for two sequential years. We calculated these amounts to determine degrees of increases, decreases or continuity for each respondent organisation. We then mapped this for our respondent population. As is shown in Figure 17 below, the funding/revenue barometer varied drastically for individual organisations over the two-year period. Importantly, this experience of increase/ decrease varies considerable within the larger respondent population. More than a third of our respondents (38.3%), reported no change in funding/revenue levels. A further 23.1% reported an increase in levels. That considered, 36.8% experienced a serious decline (25%–75%) in funding/revenue. A further 1.7% of respondents experienced 100% or more decline.

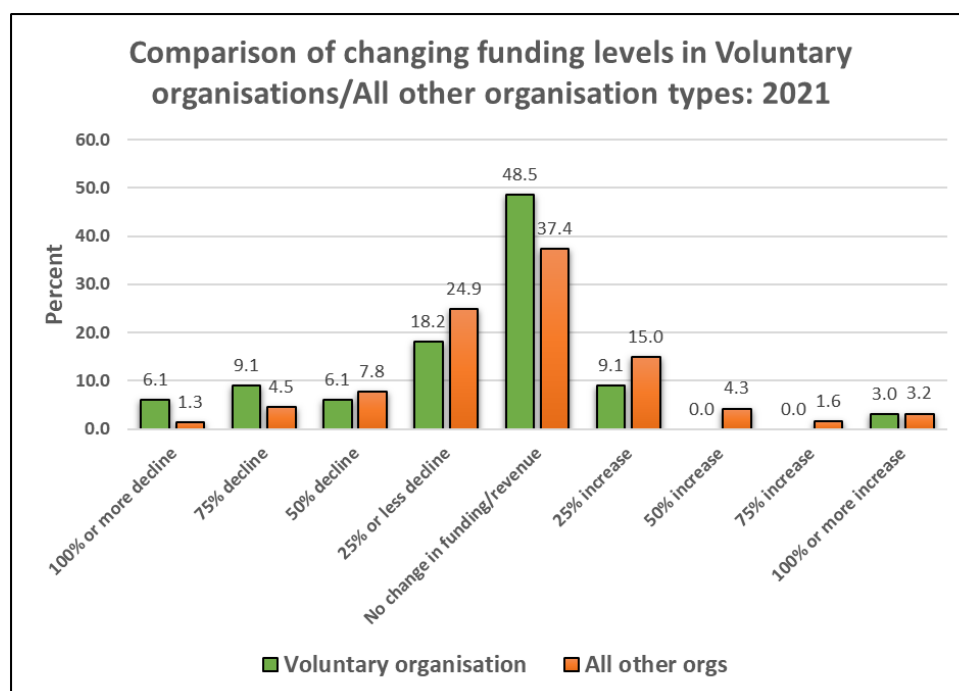
Figure 17. Changes in organisational funding/revenue levels – estimated via sequential year comparison 2021



Changing funding levels for voluntary organisations

Reported changes to (and stability of) levels of funding are noticeably different between voluntary organisations and all other organisational types in our survey. As is seen in Figure 18 below, approximately half (48.5%) of voluntary organisations showed no change to level of funding/revenue from the previous year. This figure is nominally higher than the 37.4% of the other organisations category. While a smaller proportion, (12.1%) of the voluntary organisations did see some increase in funding, 39.4% reported a decline in funding/revenue. In comparison, 24.1% of All other organisation types reported increased levels of funding while 38.5% reported a decline. Of note, 6.1% of voluntary organisations and 1.3% of all other organisation types recorded a 100% or more decline in organisational funding/revenue levels.

Figure 18. Comparison of changing funding levels in voluntary organisations/All other organisation types: 2021



Our respondents connect under-funding to service delivery and to the wellbeing of volunteers and staff of community organisations. They reported that funding was an issue for all their community organisations, not only with government funding applications, but also due to the major problem of public donations having reduced since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several factors contribute to the impact of COVID-19 on organisational funding. These include complex and rigid funding processes, competitive process, short term funding, salaries and other overheads not being funded, and frequent changes to funding criteria.

Complex and rigid funding processes

Participants responding about funding issues report that the community and voluntary sectors are under-resourced, and that it is often difficult to access funding, especially continuity of funding, because there are “too many hoops to jump through” (Respondent 66).

Filling out application forms for funding is described by one respondent as a “game” (Respondent 146) and they argue that there is a lack of transparency over how funding is distributed in the sector. Funding and grant opportunities are often hard to find, as well as difficult to apply for, with complex forms to fill in. However, some organisations report that they have become more ‘creative and nimble’ in new ways of working, increasing digital capabilities, and paying more attention to staff wellbeing. The struggles to obtain funding has resulted in more collaboration and partnership with other organisations, which may help to diminish competitiveness over resources in the future.

Respondents reported that it is frustrating applying for funding, as the same old business models keep getting rolled out:

“I think the frustration we’ve got right through, since April last year, is this sense that people, government, and central and local government, people sit in their desks and have an opportunity to write more expectations, they haven’t been doing a good job, we’re getting more demands, more micromanagement, more expectations than we’ve ever had before pushing back on that.” (Speaker 5)

Our respondent from a child and family support organisation in Tāmaki Makaurau said the COVID-19 funding contracts and application process could be chaotic:

“...it’s about funding, the government’s throwing a lot of money around in COVID response funding. And what that’s done, it’s quite archaic or something, it creates people fighting, just chaos. Yeah, people coming from left field, no networks, just putting their hand up and getting the \$5,000 to \$50,000 and think they can be providers or connectors. And so, I guess COVID means that you have to continually challenge relationships and challenge ... organisations.” (Speaker 5)

Another participant went on to say that the government structures are nannyng community organisations, demanding things that they know how to deliver better than government procedures do, but they want to oversee all steps community organisations make:

“And I just hope we don’t succumb totally to the demands that there is a government that on one hand is throwing up the money, but that money is still subject to this incredible sort of bureaucratic sort of judgement. And, yeah, I think each of us knows what we really need to do and how to do it. And I think that more trust needs to be invested in us to do that.” (Speaker 4)

The representative from the global organisation that participated in the focus group is not government funded, on principle, and does not want to ask supporters for more money, as everyone is struggling right now. The organisation used to hold fundraising events, but so many are cancelled now, due to social distancing and lockdowns. However, there are more people willing to volunteer at present; our respondent believes that activism is healing and people have improved mental and emotional health when helping others.

A respondent from a participating Chinese community organisation said they have not applied for government funding in years. It was not possible to fulfil the task list requested by the government, and reach out to meet the community’s needs, as there was a mismatch. Funding is always targeted, and this can be inappropriate; the community organisations should be trusted to

know where best to spend the funding, not be driven by a government official in Wellington. The person / service user who needs help has no say in asking for what they actually need, as the process is all very top-down. Funding is aimed at a specific outcome, and this was a problem before COVID-19 arrived, but since the pandemic this is even more of an issue.

Disability community organisations reported that a lot of people in the disability support community have lost their jobs, for example teacher aides working in closed-down schools that cater for students living with disabilities and neurodiversity. Some clients are unable to articulate their needs, so miss out on extra support or COVID-19 assistance from the government. There is funding around, but often it is targeted to a specific area or outcome so not everyone who needs it can get it. The information around funding and assistance for clients with disabilities who are unable to leave their home is sometimes unclear:

“I think information is, I don’t know how, there’s too many, the information has been so unclear from my perspective. And [the government] ... announced ... that help was available, and I had about six people ping me saying, for food to get food into your house. So, they all thought that what he was saying was, if you didn’t have food, and you’re a close-contact isolating, you could ring this number and it would help you get that physical food into your house. So, I got a bit excited [and] rang up and it was WINZ who told me it was only financial if you had hardship. That’s embarrassing, because I was ringing up thinking that all my problems had been solved ... the information and the communication, understanding, comprehending [is confusing].” (Speaker 4)

Many different Pasifika community organisations were emphatic in telling us that the funding providers often make it unnecessarily complicated to apply; “it’s too wordy” (Speaker 2), and there should be a language translation for different Pacific Peoples. Several times, participants asked why should groups have to convince funders how the money is needed? Surely the funders could have a responsibility to know what is needed.

Some specific COVID-19 funding was easy to apply for, but it was not available early enough. It is important to talk to people and to understand Pacific ways of knowing and communicating, said many participants. Funding awareness is important, but people need to be educated in this area, and this means that it is important to include Pacific people in the design of the funding models and programmes. The elders need to be included as well.

There are a lot of missed opportunities for funding, as sometimes funds are only available within certain timeframes, and these can be unclear. There was interest in developing an application process for funding that does not need to be written: informants told us that some people in their communities are not used to writing in English, but they could do it visually such as in a video or in-person. In other words, their ideas are good, but they cannot translate them onto paper. There are funding workshops, but these sorts of spaces are not comfortable for people unused to them.

There are also workshops aimed at young people. However, the basic problem remains the same: the design of the funding processes, and of the workshops to learn how to apply for the funding, are not designed with Pasifika cultural sensibilities in mind.

Another participant from the local community board said: all applications are online, wherever you live, and it has to be a written form. This respondent knows that it is difficult as they helped their relative to fill an online form. It is a written system; you could invite a member of the local board to a Pasifika function and then it would be possible to match applications to faces. The applications often are too wordy and long “I think there's like 25 pages that you have to scroll through. And, you know, how do we make it simpler?” (Speaker 11, from a Pasifika community organisation). There are digital applications, but these are really hard to do, and the funders investigate the social media pages of applicants to see if they really do what you say you do. Often a digital [video] application is subject to misinterpretation, but a written application has more clarity “this is what you want, this is what we see.” (Speaker 12, from a Pasifika community organisation):

“When it comes to reporting, the one that gives us the \$5,000 as opposed to the \$20,000 and you’re still expected to do the same reporting. So, listen to the smaller ones that ask for funding and change the aspect of reporting, and do either a visual, can it be more of a show what they have done and give more funding to smaller ones.” (Speaker 4, from a Pasifika community organisation).

As our informant told us, all organisations and the people they support need funding to survive. Funding “is the number one request” (Pasifika KI). However, it is vital to have someone to help funding applicants navigate how to fill in the lengthy forms required.

“Yes, so it’s not just the person to write the proposal, but then it’s also the financial expert to provide the accounts, the budgets, and the financial compliance components to it, which I think a lot of our organisations fail in, is having a good accountant. That’s what’s helped our organisation is having an accountant who provides our reports, when we need them and ask for them.” (Pasifika KI).

“Why is getting funding such a big barrier for Pasifika communities?” (Speaker 17 from a Pasifika community organisation). All participants in this meeting, including funders said they want to help the community, but getting the funding is still a huge barrier:

“Looking for a home to move a homeless family, what are you trying to do about that? This is creating mental health, let alone trying to service our wonderful communities. Because you have been providing this sort of platform over and over again. Constantly, we’re not satisfied. And that’s why a lot of communities even the smaller ones, who are asking for \$1,000 or \$2,000 has no energy to go through this. That creates a mental health

***[problem] in our Pasifika communities [as the] paperwork, systems that you're using is a large component of mental health [problems]."* (Speaker 17, from a Pasifika community)**

When funders advocate for a group applying for a grant, their reputations are at stake. There needs to be standards of proof, and the written part is a legal obligation to make sure they're accountable for the funding. There is a gap that needs to be bridged between the many different Pasifika groups applying for funding and the strict criteria that the funder must adhere to:

***"I'm just being real about how, us Pasifik[a] in the middle, having to advocate for our people up here at the palagi end, and then trying to service our community people, and wanting to do right by them. So, ...we need to make it easier. But I think that could be something possibly, if there was an interagency government thing, where we could actually have people dedicated to sitting alongside people to do this stuff."* (Speaker 14, from a Pasifika community)**

Our informant from Pasifika communities told us that community organisations set up networks between different regions (for example between Auckland and Wellington) when COVID-19 hit and were able to collaborate in applying for funding:

***"For Pasifika, that has probably increased our budget from \$100,000 to, I think, going on to three to four times that now. Which has meant that we've been able to deliver more quality programmes and services for Pasifika. We've also had a lot of requests from community groups asking for assistance around their funding applications, setting up as legal entities. And so that's something that we've done just as a labour of love. So, there is no funding for that. But we know it's needed, so that they can be sustainable, and tap into the multiple streams of funding that's available."* (Pasifika KI)**

Before the pandemic, the organisation was working with around ten Pasifika groups, and now it is around thirty, in Auckland and Wellington. It was then possible to significantly increase the help given to individuals and families. There were also welfare packs available, and then some help from Ministry of Social Development for secure food funding. Over the last two years there have been community organisations and networks collaborating to put together a secure food plan. But the most important thing was to build up resilience and educate people in life skills, so the focus has always been long-term. There is a collaborative programme teaching people how to grow their own food and use healthy recipes; another partnership with a business owner of a skincare range; and these are just examples as there are many more. "We collaborate and work in partnership. And then the challenge is how do we scale it up so that more people benefit from it" (Pasifika KI). There are always some people in the community who will need ongoing support, so the secure food funding will help them. The community organisation that our key informant

represents has had to be “responsive to the needs, but at the same time, hold true to our goals” (Pasifika KI).

The strength of networks has been important, and even between cities this organisation has been able to assist with the delivery of welfare boxes in lockdowns. The life skills workshops had to move online, but most people prefer face-to-face meetings. But the organisation was able to be flexible and put time and resources into what was available short-term while simultaneously building relationships with key stakeholders, which is important long term.

Navigating the system

Although COVID-19 resources and wage subsidies were offered, a lot of the Māori and Pasifika communities were not accessing these, even though they were qualified to do so. Participants told our key informant that people often do not have the confidence to apply, and it was particularly difficult to claim wage subsidies as the criteria kept changing. The community organisation’s leader told us he was able to navigate the system and communicate how it worked, and give people the confidence to apply, because they were fully entitled to the assistance. The Chief Executive did not take no for an answer, and even drove from Wellington to Auckland to challenge the authority when they refused to pay, and successfully got the resources to the people who needed them. “Because what the key driver for me was, just the injustice in the access to services that we know affects our Pasifika and Māori.” (Pasifika KI). When some of the government policies and subsidies were first published, translation into Pasifika languages was disappointingly slow (although that has improved now), but that was partly why so many people missed out in the early days of the pandemic. Our informant pointed out that with a determined and knowledgeable advocate helping people navigate the system it was possible to get the wage subsidy, but it was more difficult than it needed to be.

Our key informant told us that lot of support agencies did not get information about wage subsidies, assistance to small businesses and entrepreneurs fast enough in the beginning of the lockdowns in 2020. Lockdowns happened so quickly that many families didn’t have any money to buy food but needed to fill out needs assessment forms to even get just a food pack – so many questions online, and many people didn’t take advantage of this. As the organisation understood the system it was able to help people get help. It wasn’t always easy: one time when asking for financial support “one of the questions was, and I think I’ll always remember it, is ‘But, do they really need it?’” (Pasifika KI). The manager effectively became a liaison between the welfare system and the people who needed the help.

Our Pasifika key informant claimed that there seems to be low trust from the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) towards the organisation which was already helping the Pasifika community. They told us they applied for a community fund, but the DIA said they were not sure they could help with this, and local councils responded in similar fashion. Funding is never guaranteed, it is never enough, and it is not sustainable:

“So, we’ve just seen it time and time again, you know, when community groups ask for funding towards a programme, they will ask, for example,

\$1,000 programme, they'll get, you know, \$200 for it and still be expected to deliver. And I'm like, 'No, you're setting us up to fail.' So yeah, we overcome though that barrier by just tapping into our social capital, which is our networks, and then we are able repurpose some of the other funding." (Pasifika KI)

A respondent commented that government has complicated systems, and they always cause problems, so their organisation learned how to play the system:

"So, there's a policy in the emergency local emergency, where if you've spent any money on welfare packs, you can actually get it reimbursed. And, so, that's what we did. Any funding that we received, we were able to double it by getting it reimbursed. And then it just went straight back into more welfare packs, more help for our families. So, yeah, it's about understanding the system and making it work to our advantage and to benefit our people at the end of the day as well." (Pasifika KI)

Migrant and refugee background respondents told us that their community organisations, which work with families from refugee backgrounds, were able to obtain some funding for laptops. This was a challenge, as some of the families had several children, and all of the children as well as the parents needed laptops to be able to do schoolwork and language learning. A community organisation also managed to get support from a telecommunication company, which provided affordable internet to the families. Funding was mentioned by respondents as a huge challenge; they say paying people to work in community organisations is difficult, because that is the kind of thing people do not want to do for fun - there is an expectation that everyone should work for free. Because there are not many staff who are waged, organisations say those staff end up working flat out in many different roles simultaneously.

Another respondent from a migrant and refugee background organisation told us that a lot of ethnic communities ask about funding, and organisations do what they can to help, but the application forms are complicated and the criteria is very narrow, with no flexibility. Sometimes funding is focused on particular ethnic minorities, for example. It is often difficult to help people access funding, as well, because when trying to assist people filling in forms there are a lot of unknowns; for example, how does a service user know if there is something they are missing out on? The respondent noted that government forms often ask people "is there anything that you're missing out on?" But as one of our respondents said:

"...if you don't know there is something that you can get help for, well, then you're not really missing anything? Are you? And this just from the little that I know. There's a lot of stuff that they don't know, they can get help for. They don't know where to go and ask" (Speaker 1, from a migrant and refugee background organisation).

Our respondents also reported that there is a lot of stress around funding. The process is complicated and confusing. New initiatives require funding before they can be implemented, and a new project called Connector, which employs someone to assist anyone in the community who has a problem learning about available resources, has been funded by the Ministry for Social Development. However, it is a big challenge to obtain ongoing funding.

We were told by our key informants from several community organisations that some community groups (in Kāpiti Coast area) built up a lot of trust with other groups and with the Council during the first lockdowns; this collaboration has not only resulted in working together on shared issues, but also helps with funding, as the groups are not contesting each other for the funding, as they are now working together. Some community groups experienced a reduction in funding and an increase in needs. Some community groups have had problems with their Board of Trustees, who have not been prepared to look at new ways of doing things, as trying something new means funding issues. As with many of our flax-roots and grassroots level respondents, there is a desire to help the community, but with the rapid social and economic changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, some people more removed from the communities, and in positions of power regarding policy changes and funding arrangements, have not readily adapted to new challenges.

Our informant from a voluntary organisation told us that collaboration between different community organisations who previously competed for funding has been very helpful. This comment referred to those located in Southland, but this observation reflects that of many others: collaboration rather than competition over funding is working. The respondent noted that there has been a lot of hui, and a lot of sharing of information so that everyone knows when funding opportunities arise, and how to apply.

The community organisation noted above is growing, and this likely means more funding, although this has not yet been confirmed. As such, other organisations are interacting with and observing to see what the organisation is able to deliver. This organisation wants to be seen as part of the solution in responding to and supporting the community and voluntary sector, but even for a peak organisation there are difficulties with acquiring consistent funding.

Competitive process for funding

There is a lot of competition for funding; small organisations which fail to be awarded funding sometimes lose out to bigger organisations operating in the same geographical area, even if they provide a good quality service. Even when supported by local businesses and fundraising activities, this may lead to small organisations giving up and closing down if larger competitive organisations are awarded all the funding available for the community.

Respondents noted that the problems faced were not only about obtaining funding, but also the competitiveness of the process, and the way the community sector has become so bound to a top-down process. Our respondent from a community art space told us:

“We’re just constantly sort of put under-pressure to deliver KPIs, and we are still in a competitive funding regime and each of us knows our own business really well. And years ago, because I’ve been working in this area now for nearly 40 years, we had governments through Department of Internal Affairs, would actually say ‘you know what to do with the funding, you do it, you know, you do it, and we will fund you for doing what you know better than we know what to do, because that’s the area that you work in.’ And that sort of turned on its head, to having bureaucracy dictate outcomes that they have very little knowledge about. That’s my observation.” (Speaker 4)

Respondents reported that there is competition between organisations for funding, because the way that philanthropic funding works is similar to government funding, and they say this has built competition in the sector. They believe this is unsustainable, but community organisations have become wiser in their operations and have developed more collaboration so that competitiveness is reduced. They say COVID has opened up space where conversations about collaboration can occur, and this is not only about money, but also about networks, providing support, and relationships. It is obviously important to still have core decision-makers, core government areas, businesses, and philanthropic funders, but this level can support a group of advocates so that they can bring more support into their own sector.

Short term funding

A lot of organisations reported putting money towards wellbeing support for volunteers, but it is difficult to access extra funding for this. Our key informant told us (as did many other key informants and respondents) that it helps to have multi-year funding so that organisations can make plans for the longer term. One-year funding means that an organisation always has to work towards getting it and proving it was used for the specific objective. As our key informant told us, this kind of churn is stressful, as well as inefficient. Multi-year funding gives an organisation space for innovation. But with targeted funding, everyone has to think more strategically, as the funding is usually provided for a specific objective and outcome; if an organisation wants to do something different with the money, they cannot.

A major problem reported by community organisations is recruiting and holding onto staff, as they say funding is always restricted, so people have to be employed on fixed-term, part-time contracts. They say employees, even in the community sector, are looking for full-time work, and preferably not fixed-term, as it is difficult to survive on a short-term or part-time salary.

Salaries and other overheads are generally not funded

Some community organisations have managed to establish small but secure funding contracts, but as lockdowns ended other fundraising opportunities, they have lost momentum. The foreseeable future is so uncertain that “only the very resilient are able to thrive in the current environment” (Respondent 426). Organisations continually advocating for government funding describe the process as a battle, and seeing funding suddenly appear for wage subsidies and

grants during COVID-19 lockdowns, although appreciated at the time, means that other funding sources have reduced, and as it seems obvious that the money available for some applicants in emergency lockdown situations is not sustainable, the future seems even more uncertain.

Many community organisations applying for funding reported that they are mostly not able to apply for income to cover salaries or wages, and this may result in the closing of the organisations desperately needed to protect vulnerable communities. As one respondent put it, if funding bodies would provide opportunities for organisations to pay staff wages, this would enable more opportunities:

“[It would] provide the opportunity to offer more part-time employment in the community, working to support the community and in turn developing skills that benefit their future employment, and allow their confidence and self-worth to remain.” (Respondent 439)

Respondents noted that Chief Executives (CE) of charities need more wellbeing support, and as there is such limited funding for infrastructure needs such as salaries and overheads for any kind of service delivery, CEs are under a huge amount of pressure to deliver with ever-fewer resources. This is unsustainable.

Everyone has had to manage with reduced donations, and a smaller delivery team as staff had to be cut due to a lack of funding to pay wages. As one respondent said, the America’s Cup could be funded, but community organisations are in the back rows, so what is the priority?

“You know, the America’s Cup was a good example, they were able to justify a 42 cent in the dollar investment return, but for us, as [community] organisations, they want \$10 or \$12 or \$15 return on every dollar. And we were writing more reports and the new legislation for incorporated societies, for charitable trusts, is increasing.” (Speaker 5)

Māori community organisations from a rural area reported there is some funding, but not enough to pay an extra employee full-time; this means for the Chief Executive running the organisation there are multiple roles to perform, and it is difficult to take on strategic planning for the future, as there is so much to do in the present. They believe government agencies such as the social services sector are not very good at forward planning, either even though they have the staffing and the money: when COVID first hit and the country went into Level 4 lockdown, 500 boxes of COVID response kits and kai boxes were delivered to a community trust, but there had not been any planning about how to deliver the kits to other towns around the rural East Coast. There were only five or six volunteers available to deliver the boxes, so it took over four weeks to do this.

A respondent from a migrant and refugee background community organisation told us that working in the community sector is better defined as a calling rather than a job, as the pay is so low, but staff still need to be able to pay their bills. They report that there is a lot of stress. Prices

are all going up, and they say community organisations have no capacity to increase salaries; and this is not sustainable in the long term:

“And yet, you know, so how do we manage that on a long-term basis? We got those top ups through MSD, which was absolutely fantastic, I thought they were really good initiatives. [However] It’s not ongoing, it’s a one off. So, we can’t employ people knowing that we may not be able to pay them in 12 months’ time. So, those are the biggest challenges, I think, for us as an organisation, and probably for the whole sector is around ongoing viability in an economy where we are just getting left behind.” (Speaker 4)

Our respondents from migrant and refugee background and ex-prisoners emphasised that as things are changing all the time it is difficult to keep up with all the alterations in application criteria, and often the evidence of need requirements is hard for applicants to find, as their previous jobs were casual, or varied hours, or they are too stressed and busy to find the evidence quickly enough. They say that some people are shy or ashamed to be asking for financial help, as well, especially on the phone, and it is often impossible to meet face-to-face due to COVID-19 restrictions on meetings and social gatherings. There are workshops being planned to help people, but as volunteer numbers have dropped it is difficult to set things up. It would help a lot if access to funding was simpler.

Non-cash funding and assistance

Māori community organisations told us that it is not always cash funding that is needed or asked for; sometimes it is simply food and similar resources. Some community members do not want to ask for funding for food. In the first lockdown in 2020 there was already a Māori community network in an area of Tāmaki Makaurau, and everyone collaborated and distributed information on social media and websites, and there was information gathered from flax-roots and grassroots groups. Knowledge of what was needed, and which resources were available were rapidly discovered, and the community was very resourceful. In 2021, this collaboration is still in place, and a local marae has a wraparound service that can respond to people’s needs in 24 hours. The government was quick to make use of this network, and as it had a good name in the community, came straight to the marae in the 2021 lockdowns:

“They came straight to us. ‘What’s the need?’ We were able to give the information and they were able to provide resources so that we could actually ride through the lockdown, provide kai and essential needs, because we had the funding. So that was our good relationship with other agencies, that put us in a good position to receive funding and resources to then distribute, yeah.” (Speaker 5, from a Māori community organisation)

The respondent went on to tell us that there were problems with online order queues with the large supermarket chain, so their community organisation developed a very good relationship with a small food chain,

“And the manager was fantastic to work with. So, we were able to get food boxes made up through the shop because we didn’t have the space to do it. And it was specific, really healthy kai, so that we made sure that they [our service users] were getting good produce. And that, you know, in this lockdown, that contact is still there ... And because that food chain wants to help the community, they’ve [carried on] right through after COVID-19, have donated stuff to us to give out as well. So, you know, the relationship wasn’t just in COVID it’s continued.” (Speaker 5)

Participants also spoke about the formalisation of their kinship networks to establish a new branch of Māori Wardens. With this structure, they were then able to operationalise, restrict outside traffic into their community, and navigate food deliveries to elders more effectively, throughout and following the COVID-19 lockdowns. As all Māori participants told us, making use of the principle of whānaungatanga is an effective response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our Māori key informant told us that flax-roots / grassroots community and whānau networks have proved to be the best safety net for people needing food and other assistance since the COVID-19 pandemic began. There are trusted kaitiaki who know how to best serve their community, and many are well-connected with business backgrounds. They talked of an innovative system developed pre-COVID-19 called The Generator (funded by the Ministry of Social Development), which enables entrepreneurial micro-enterprises to be set up at grassroots level. These are not led by organisations, but by ‘community champions’ who are kaitiaki within their communities, with their own small hubs, some at marae, and some based in places like local libraries. This means that communities are not dependent on an organisation or anyone else. The concept was a pilot project before the COVID-19 pandemic and only trialled in ten areas of Aotearoa New Zealand. However, this concept quickly expanded.

“But what was neat was all these multi-million dollar businesses had to come to our grassroots, that’s what I saw, wow Oh, look they still have to come back to the grassroots. And those were our ... [micro-enterprises run by grass-roots community entrepreneurs] generators, who were like more of an entrepreneur because they knew the struggles, and they knew what needed to be distributed. So, that’s, that’s where the unbalanced I find, like, ‘man you’re a multimillionaire, you know, you’ve got all this income coming in, but Covid hit now, so what the heck do they do now?’ So, they come back, to pretty much, our Māori Pasifik[a] to say, scratch their heads and go, actually, we need you guys back again.” (Māori KI)

As the Māori focus group participants had also told us, it is not always funding that has been needed or offered: it has often been as simple as finding businesses which will donate food to hungry individuals and communities:

“...so in terms of funding no increase in funding, we still had to try and chug along with what, what, we had. So, then that’s why sort of the model changed because of COVID. And then we went to community champs actually... our kaitiaki within that community. It’s not dependent by an organisation or anyone else, because they know how to better serve the community and where they’re really at, but they also came with business backgrounds, and they were well connected and well trusted in their community.” (Māori KI)

The community and the organisation also reached out to local market gardeners. “So first it was whānau-lead, started with the whānau, then we just got a whole community to come in to help distribute all this kai of veggies, like pallets.” (KI). Formal organisations like the Māori Women’s Welfare League helped to organise and distribute the food, using pre-established informal kinship networks to deliver services. They contacted local community organisations, and there was a big push to get rangatahi to take over and distribute the kai, as there were thousands of vegetable supplies to manage.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, respondents said that the big businesses and community organisations have realised they need Māori and Pasifika in positions of leadership, as they understand what it means to work with mana whenua. They say The Generator, though, is helping to fulfil many of the community’s needs. As well as the project now getting funded, it provides emotional support from the kaitiaki and also from other people who are on the same journey:

“So many of our participants that come on, their backgrounds are like, huge, some have just come out of prison. Some may have lost their children. Some are solo parents. So, we’ve got like, all the data, all around that, but many of them [have lost] their own self-confidence, it’s just like trying to pull a rock really, but for the first time, this is why I love The Generator. Man, it honestly fulfils the needs of their wellbeing. And it’s not that, it’s not even about the funding, that they receive, it’s the support that they get from others, like from the team, from other [people] on the journey.” (Māori KI)

Connecting with trusted people within the communities was a powerful means of service delivery. These individuals, referred to here as ‘generators’, possess their own whānaungatanga networks, and became conduits for the Māori organisations’ outreach. In some cases, these leaders had their own resources or connections, for example with food suppliers, and these networks could be leveraged to meet other needs of struggling whānau as well.

The local Sikh community was also very supportive, although their food provision service became overwhelmed with requests for help. There were other connections with local growers after the farmers’ market closed down,

“...but from that, there was a group of people set up a little veggie company and they took online orders or phone orders, and for the over 65s, I think, they made like just a \$5 box to make it affordable, and you didn’t know what was going to be in the box, didn’t matter, it was a couple of potatoes, a pumpkin or some cabbage or whatever, depending on how many you had in your household. So, that’s happened again this time around.” (Speaker 6)

As other respondents informed us, it is the whānaungtanga, the community connections and the networking and communication that was particularly beneficial, and these relationships are continuing to expand and strengthen.

Summary of funding issues

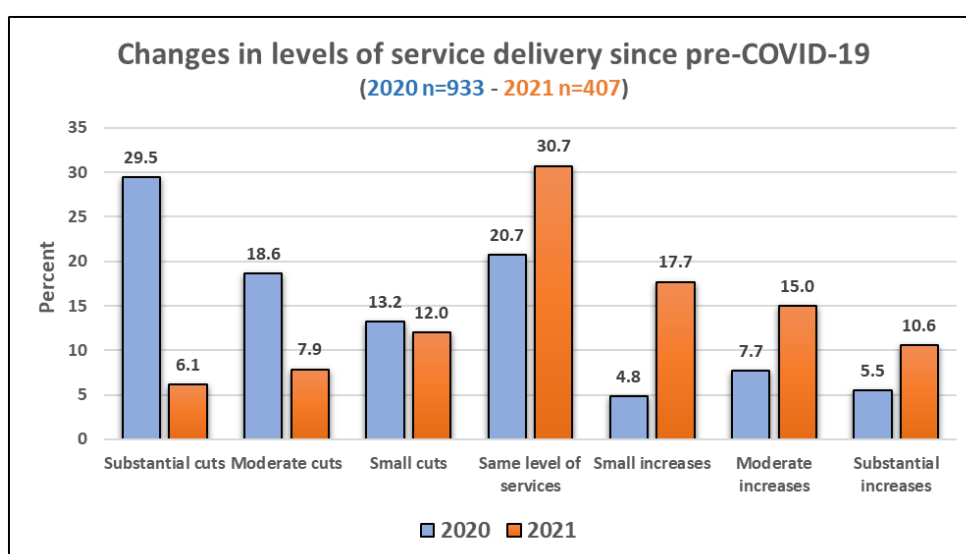
Respondents noted a wide range of problems and difficulties with getting funding. While there are some funding organisations that worked hard to understand community needs before awarding grants, and therefore did their best to work alongside rather than ‘above’ community organisations, many funders still do not primarily consider this issue.

However, the pandemic has created the conditions for a more collaborative and less competitive approach to funding. Organisations have been trusted to collectively know their own communities and determine where funds are most needed. Criteria have been broadened. Flexibility has meant organisations have been able to adjust their mahi to what’s needed at the time. The sector would like to see these less competitive funding models retained.

SERVICE DELIVERY and impact(s) of COVID-19

As is shown in Figure 19 below, the levels of service delivery changed considerably between 2020 and 2021 period when compared to pre COVID levels. Service delivery became more stable or increased for a considerable proportion of the respondent organisations. In 2020, 20.7% of respondents reported no change in levels of service delivery. This increased to 30.7% in 2021. Importantly, the proportion of organisations who reported increases in service delivery levels more than doubled-from 18% in 2020 to 43.3% in 2021. Correspondingly, in 2020, 61.3% of respondent organisations experienced cuts of some level. In 2021 only 26.0% of respondents reported cuts to service delivery.

Figure 19. Changes in levels of organisational service delivery since pre-COVID-19 (2020-2021)



Increasing demand for services relative to available funding and volunteers

Some respondents reported that there was no change to their organisation's ability to deliver services, even with changes in the ways of achieving this process. However, many more told us that there is an increased demand for services, but with a drop in income and more stress for staff and volunteers; there is a drop in volunteer numbers as well as problems in affording volunteer training, with associated loss of ability to deliver services; some have seen deliveries slow down due to lockdowns and COVID-19 protocols; some have lost their fundraising abilities, as face-to-face events have been repeatedly cancelled although sometimes government funding has replaced the lost income. Many told us that their organisations have experienced an enormously increased demand for services, and they simply cannot keep up. Once again, the interlinked issues of funding, paying staff and supporting volunteers, and the ability to deliver services are emphasised:

“Zero income last year meant we had little reserves to push on with and resulted in the loss of our paid administrator. Increased compliance and

costs, further loss of experienced volunteers due to age and/or personal financial stress means we cannot hope to provide our services to anywhere near our previous levels.” (Respondent 276)

Often the community’s demand for food is the most vital need and is sometimes at crisis point; and one respondent told us that “we have seen a growth of 73% at our charity for the distribution of food” (Respondent 319). As participants in our focus groups also told us, there are many donations of food and other consumables rather than of cash, and the online respondents reported the same thing: “we have been receiving increased donations of food and consumables since March 2020, this has allowed the foodbank to deliver the same level of service even with a decrease in funding” (Respondent 564). For organisations working with students at school, there are problems in helping students with remote online learning, as well as other issues, although the following respondent is hopeful about the future:

“What has changed for us is that the schools are having huge issues with students since covid, so I guess the stress on whānau is coming out at schools. This has increased our workload in the schools. For us to cope we are training up the tutors in the schools to know how to work with angry students. This in the long run will cut back our workload and benefit the school and students.” (Respondent 251)

Young people are increasingly referred to community organisations: “needs – pure and simple – have grown in the community we work in. We are seeing younger referrals, which means also working more closely with whānau (our services are focused on 11- to 18-year-olds with multiple needs)” (Respondent 304). Working with older people, who are more vulnerable to COVID-19, is still difficult a year after the pandemic arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand: “work with the elderly continued isolation, confusion over information, e.g. COVID-19 injections, difficulty with IT (Respondent 262).

According to our participants representing people living with disabilities and neurodiversity, due to the health vulnerabilities of people with disabilities, service delivery has mostly moved online. There are positives and negatives to this. There is a lot of extra work in coordinating appointments, and it is very difficult to make appointments for things that cannot be achieved over Zoom, such as psychological assessments or orthotics, and often the bookings get moved back due to many factors, especially if COVID-19 lockdowns move up through the levels:

“I find all the after-school activities that [kids with disabilities usually attend], not all of them, not horse riding and not CrossFit, but the other ones have gone on to zoom pretty quickly. And that makes a big difference, because [kids] still get the ability to connect through Girl Guides and musical theatre, and stuff like that. But it’s a real balance.” (Speaker 4)

There is an assumption that everything can move online, but our informants told us that many people are phobic about technology, and fatigue is commonplace after using Zoom a lot. There are many different kinds and levels of disability, and many families are overwhelmed by current events. Disability organisations work with people in palliative care, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, neurodiversity, and many other forms of disability, as well as with different ages and genders, and managing service delivery to such a huge range of people is challenging. In the short term, it may be possible, even if services are reduced, but many staff and volunteers working in this field have many different roles. As one respondent said:

“Yep. I think it’s going to be relying a lot on coaching now, which is the way that a lot of the things are going. But our families, as a mum, that kind of service sucks, to be quite honest. Because where do you get to be a mum between the physio and the teacher, and the orthotic and the OT, you know? So, I think it’s going to be doing a disservice in the long run to the people we support.” (Speaker 5)

Our respondent reported that service delivery challenges are immense and there is not enough support, and the information provided is inconsistent, and even working as a nurse in the health service, where one would think things are under control, the system is not coping, asserts one of our participants.

Our participants from Māori community reported there was widespread agreement that in 2020, just before the first lockdown, a lot of Māori whānau moved in together, rather than do the lockdown alone but in the same city. Also, some whānau moved from other areas in Aotearoa New Zealand into Tāmaki Makaurau to be with more whānau, so often there were two or three families of several generations, all in a small house, and reports of over seventeen people to feed and do washing for. So, the service delivery had to change, as there were so many more people living in a single small residence.

Small organisations are more flexible and are able to make changes rapidly:

“I think small organisations have better ability just to make a change... we’re a very flat structure, you know, and we mobilise quickly.” (Speaker 7)

Here is a personal communication from another participant, outlining what they describe as a ‘balancing act’ between helping clients with the most needs and the increased expense of providing more one-on-one assistance:

“We have had to become more strategic about who we engage with, so that we can work more with groups of people where possible. However, this is an ongoing balancing act, because those with the greatest needs often require more of an input of time and energy and struggle to work in groups, so they need more one-on-one times — but this is more expensive for us in

terms of paying our tutors, and these people are often least able to afford to contribute to the tutor costs.” (Email)

One of our participants from a rural community told us that community organisations operate through interaction with humans, and during lockdowns everyone had to adapt. Many used Facebook and other social media. A volunteer from an animal shelter told us that looking after the animals was difficult as they have to be fed and cleaned, but the human volunteers had to avoid all contact with each other unless they could become part of each other’s bubble. All the social interaction disappeared; all day-to-day things disappeared; everyone had to use a device, which was difficult to use, and felt unsafe to many people, and could not replace the social connections that were lost. Now everyone can do almost everything online – order food, and no need to be going to the supermarket. “And so, we have all of these ones up the top, that are Facebookie and you know, social media, and then we have our kuia, who now we’re trying to teach how to do banking without a bank.” (Speaker 1).

Our participants from rural communities told us that community organisations want to have more of a sustainable, commercial focus, but it is difficult because everyone is a volunteer. They would need funding to pay someone to run the daily operations and work front-of-house, but as many other respondents have told us, small organisations cannot afford to pay wages, as funders are reluctant to fund wages. Trustees on boards end up being too focussed on the operations, when they should really be thinking about strategic issues. Organisations are often totally reliant on volunteers, but this might not be a sustainable model into the future.

Possible solutions

Although funding is important to deal with complex social problems, the community quickly realised that helping each other and as a collective was often more useful than relying on money, contracts, and the social services sector. The following quote explains the kind of networking involved in delivering food to hundreds of clients, and how challenging the process was. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, there were not enough volunteers working for community organisations to enable this kind of dissemination of resources, so our respondent told us that they realised that a lot of things that help keep people well and happy are when a community is kind, when people are connected as whānau, and doing simple things like giving fruit to neighbours:

“So, from a community perspective ... ‘is there something here for us that we could do around pulling those that are interested in voluntary service, that really care about our community, is there a role for us in that space?’ And that’s kind of been our journey for about the last year, aye. And the sense that in our town that, lots of the complex issues, and there are a lot of complex issues in our town, are best resolved with money and contracts. And actually, a lot of the things that keep us well, or keep us connected as whānau, as members of a community, don’t require contracts or anything like that, you know, they’re about being kind to each other, they’re about

being in each other's lives, you know, simple things around social connections, and I think it's very easy to become overwhelmed with the big problems and that disconnects people from saying, 'what are the things that are, you know, I've got some fruit on the back, on my back tree.'
(Speaker 6)

When COVID hit, community leaders stepped up; they were able to organise volunteers, provide food for people in need, and get it to the elderly in remote locations, although this varied between urban and rural areas, where it was more difficult to access good quality supplies of food, including animal food.

Our respondent from Pasifika community told us that their organisation's budget has increased from around \$100,000 to three or four times that since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In the short-term, the organisation was simply "supporting families with welfare care packs and just seeing the inequities in the system mobilised us to help some of those families who weren't registered with organisations that were missing out" (Pasifika KI).

Changes to service delivery

Service delivery has changed, as there are now many more individuals and families who need help, sometimes just for welfare care packs, but also for referrals to government agencies:

"Because it's outside of our scope, but these were other times if the need was urgent that we responded straight away, then, I guess, because life skills is where, we believe, is the key for a lot of our communities to try and help themselves build up their skills and resilience. So, our focus was not on the short term... So, we've tapped into some funding with MSD, around food secure funding, and over two years, we're working with our networks to put together a food secure project plan. And so, we were just taking the lessons from COVID." (Pasifika KI)

In common with all other respondents, participants from community organisations representing people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and ex-prisoners reported that they delivered more remote online and phone services after the COVID-19 pandemic began, but with less funding, which has direct impact on the amount and quality of service delivery that is provided, and the organisations' ability to properly support staff and volunteers. For volunteers working with clients from migrant and refugee backgrounds, there are many challenges and little funding to pay for support and training:

"There was more need of support in different ways. And, you know, funding is just a huge challenge. And [one of] the big issues is that when you're working in an organisation, working in the refugee background settlement sector, you have staff that are doing a lot of the work like, you know,

***community development roles and navigator roles and things like, and your admin, and even a GM role, you are all working flat out, but there's actually no funding to support those roles. But if those roles aren't there, then nothing's going to happen."* (Speaker 2)**

One regional volunteer support organisation was deemed an essential service and worked with the government emergency response in packing and delivering essential supplies when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. This organisation "is now on three local Civil Defence Emergency Welfare Groups, because we have four territorial authority areas that we cover ... so, we'll be in there next time right at the beginning, instead of people trying to flounder to start with, to find volunteers to do it" (Speaker 1). However, there is an ongoing concerns about succession planning for volunteers and finding younger people to take on these roles:

***"Because a lot of the services that did need to continue for the likes of Meals on Wheels, or getting people to...Hospital...so they could have their radiotherapy or things like that. The people that have been volunteering were over the age of 65 majority of them and were not able to go out to work. So, that was another issue that has been highlighted through COVID. And we are still trying to work as a community on solving that as well."* (Speaker 1)**

Our respondents from migrant and refugee backgrounds and ex-prisoners told us that there have been changes in service delivery, most of which involved switching to remote online working. However, many clients cannot afford digital technology, so this meant finding solutions that could work for people on low incomes. One participant told us that they used cloud-based technology before the lockdowns began, but they upgraded their website so it was more user-friendly and contained a lot of hyperlinks to important information:

***"So, previously, it was just about using the services we provide, our website now is more heavily around, this is how you do this, and this is how you do this, so that people can go to the information and then hook into any links that will take them to other places that they can go to."* (Speaker 4)**

As another participant informed us, service delivery is very much centred around the needs of their clients, and this has led to a greater sense of autonomy for service users. Working with people coming out of prison brings immediate problems that have to be dealt with, such as arranging benefit payments.

The work done by these volunteers resulted in a change in government policy, and this has led to further beneficial transformations:

“We’re simply not seeing people coming in as much, it’s now a trickle instead of a flood. So, we’re seeing a real change and demand for some of our services. I think it’s probably the best way to describe rather than are we doing things differently, what we’re doing is responding to client need differently. So, that’s been really interesting.” (Speaker 4)

Another voluntary organisation reported that they have also had changes in terms of service delivery. The organisation is now networking with many more strategic development forums, and although workloads have increased there have been positive experiences with their online services:

“We have had an increased involvement with community development and strategic development at the request of the councils we work with. So, we’re involved in a whole heap of different networking forums and strategic development forums, which has meant that our workload has increased. And as a result, we have had to increase [a staff member’s] hours over this period of time, what I mean as a permanent change in-house because the workload is not going to drop off.” (Speaker 1)

Community connections strengthen

Volunteers working for community organisations reported that community connections have strengthened and expanded since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Community hubs have a list of people who want to join, partly because of the support provided from other organisation, but also for economic reasons. Two key networks were set up in the Waikato region:

“One was a collaboration between a whole lot of key organisations to create the website here to help you. So that people who were needing accommodation, or food, or clothing or whatever they might need, could go to one portal. And the other one is a group of mostly food providers, whether it’s groups that provided meals or groups that provided food parcels, getting together to just make sure that that was done in a collaborative way, because they found some people were getting food parcels from multiple places and other people were missing out.” (Speaker 3)

Another respondent from a voluntary organisation commented that a lot of trust has been built up between community groups and the council, and collaboration between different groups has been key.

“I think we were just really humming post-COVID, a lot of, there was a group that was set out, which was a COVID Welfare Response Group that

***was quite active when it needed to be. But then what happened from that is it built up... a really good trust between a lot of local community groups and with the council. And from that, a number of other kind of focus areas came up that where there's a shared issue that we need to work on together."* (Speaker 5)**

However, not all organisations remained in collaborative relationships once lockdowns ended. These collaborations and networks only remained embedded if organisations worked together for enough time to change their styles and ways of working. As a participant told us:

***"The Council allocated a designated organisation volunteer cell to lead the voluntary response. Once that happened, then things worked a lot better. We also found that during lockdown, every organisation was working really well together, sharing resources and building partnerships. The moment alert level two happened, those relationships that were built, virtually disappeared. So, we're now in a space where we saw amazing collaboration, but now everyone is back in their isolated silos."* (Speaker 2)**

The move to online training, interviews, and meetings, though, is now very well established nationwide. Some community organisations report keeping all service deliveries online, even though pre-pandemic everything was face-to-face; attracting participants from a large geographical area is easier if everyone can attend training online. For this respondent, their organisation now runs around half of its services face-to-face and the other half online:

***"We did all of our training face-to-face. So, we would do maybe three workshops a year... then we have another... couple of different directions. And for us, when we had to change to doing them online, we kind of went, 'why weren't we doing this sooner?' because the... region is geographically large. So yeah, and the advantage of doing our workshops online, is that people can come from anywhere."* (Speaker 3)**

Some services were completely stopped

Some organisations had to stop providing services completely:

***"We stopped service delivery altogether. Firstly, because it would have been impossible to gather youth together with artists, creatives, transport team, and coordinators in the same room during lockdown. Then post-lockdown it seemed too hard to overcome the logistics of the operation with COVID."* (Respondent 528)**

Another respondent from a different community organisation confirmed that their experience was similar. This means that there is a lack of service continuity going in and out of lockdowns:

“So, through discussions with some of the organisations working with former refugees and new migrants, we ended up forming a collaboration with three of them in particular that we're looking at building on that we will provide an outreach for former refugees and new migrants getting involved in volunteering. So that that's ended up a collaboration as a result of COVID ... we're working together as a response to COVID. However, that has that dissipated, since ... we haven't managed to be able to do that. So, my concern is that quite a group was formed and was doing some great work. And if we go back to lockdown again, or to the different levels, unfortunately, that bit of work that was that was built and put together hasn't got that continuity happening ... So that is a concern.” (Speaker 6)

In terms of delivering services, the main changes were to do with moving previously face-to-face work to online work, whether this is interviewing or training. Networking events also had to change to online meetings. Some community organisations returned to face-to-face contacts once lockdowns ended, but some have retained online contact or a mixture of in-person and online contacts. Online training for volunteers can be enjoyable, and one reason for that is the removal of the necessity to travel somewhere, as people can simply remain at home. However, keeping some face-to-face events is important for social solidarity:

“What we have noticed quite significantly is the decline in people registering for face-to-face training for event-based training ... I think people have enjoyed the online training. It's often, it's a lot more easy for them to put that into the into their day as opposed to having to travel somewhere. But I think it would be a real shame if we don't, if we can't go back to that, because of the networking and what happens in those face-to-face events. I still think it's a really important thing and I'd hate to us to lose that side of the work we do.” (Speaker 6)

It is possible that the decline in face-to-face attendance is also due to more people working remotely, and also there are risks with setting up live events, as so many have to be rescheduled due to COVID-19 level changes. There needs to be research into this question, and our respondent says that there is a survey in process at present to discover people's reasons for preferring online contacts, meetings, and conferences.

Increased demand led to innovative ideas

Respondent told us that although they could not invite people to face-to-face creative events, they were able to innovate:

“During the Shutdowns instead of welcoming people into our creative space we switched over service to delivering materials to people so that they could be creative in their own spaces. There were more people than we regularly saw come in who took advantage of this service and in this way our organisation gained in popularity. For many, even overseas, the posts on our Facebook page became the thing that kept them going.”
(Respondent 548)

Another respondent reported that their organisation has been forced to repeatedly relocate to enable social distancing:

“The main change is when there are changes to alert levels to 2 or higher, we need to change location of venue as our usual venue wouldn’t provide enough social distancing. This means an increase in admin work and increase in fees to be paid for new venue. If we can’t provide an alternative venue, then our service would need to be cancelled. So far, we have managed to relocate to cater for alert level requirements and avoid cancellations.” (Respondent 142)

There are still many communities which do not have Wi-Fi; also, some organisations need to work directly with their clients, as on-screen meetings do not provide enough information:

“Our service relies on entering people’s homes, holding meetings and connecting with the community ... We also experienced a loss of committee members due to various factors including stress, financial concerns and impacts to hauora [health and wellbeing].” (Respondent 237)

Our respondent from a community arts organisation management position said that acting quickly and recognising opportunities as well as difficulties was key. Although there were some initial problems, having the opportunity to change things due to the crisis eventually paid off, providing long-term benefits for the organisation. However, although most things could be quickly transferred online there were complications. An online art gallery is relatively easy to set up, but selling the work is not as straightforward:

“One [key thing], was ‘how do we maintain our services to provide meaningful work for the team?’ And secondly, ‘how do we hold the team together?’ So, we’re fortunately able, for each of our areas of operation, the key ones like the galleries, the studio, recording studio, and our employment support programme, we’re able to bring in innovations there that work... So that maintained that service as well as meaningful work for them.” (Speaker 2)

The new online model mostly worked well, and the art organisation was able to maintain a good sense of community amongst the team by having creative Zoom meetings where everyone wore a hat, or something else on other meetings. A major restructuring of the art galleries, which had been running at a deficit for some time, resulted:

“But this pushed us to a different place. And so, we undertook a major restructuring as a consequence of COVID-19, which was implemented at the end of last year, and is now working well, and has resulted in a reduction of the costs that we were facing last year and moving into a less loss area. So, that was a positive outcome of all that. It had been planned for some time but was not being progressed because of the pressure of other things. But COVID really pushed us into doing that.” (Speaker 4)

Some Pasifika organisations are also running life skills programmes, as one important way to help communities is to teach them how to grow vegetables and cook healthy food:

“And also, with the life skills programme where we have to grow your own food, you know, make your own keyhole garden. Make your own healthy recipes from the food that you grow. Those are the sorts of programmes we really want to encourage and tap into funding for, but it’s, yeah, it’s a big ask because you know, our people, we’ve already been conditioned to just, instant, instead of being patient and waiting for something, we want to just go to the supermarket and buy it straight away.” (Pasifika KI)

Another participant from a migrant and refugee background community organisation reported running workshops to support community resilience and strength:

“Yeah, we have had to diversify on social activities to support people during this lockdown, during this situation. We have had some workshops to support especially the women and the parents who are affected, as you can imagine. We have had some workshops to support the whole communities so we can learn how to build resilience and strength during unprecedented times. We also run some workshops to develop leadership to inspire.” (Speaker 3)

There are also potluck dinners when not in lockdown, and sometimes as many as two hundred people join in, unless lockdowns limit the size of gatherings. The workshops have strengthened community connections, and people have learned about what resources are available, and are also getting to know more people in their community. With funding provided by the Ministry of Social Development, “we’re [also] starting a new project now, what we call Connector. We employ someone from time to time to have this empowering and...community to assist anyone who has a problem. So, we are doing a lot of things at the moment” (Speaker 3).

Taking advantage of technology

Participants from all community organisations reported that upgrading technology, especially online connectivity, has been a vital part of managing service delivery since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The new technologies are sometimes difficult for older people to master, and as many volunteers are elderly, this has necessitated a lot of support and training. In-person events keep getting cancelled due to lockdowns, or because many people are worried about their vulnerability to catching COVID, so there is now a preference to communicate by Zoom or other online technologies. Several participants told us that there always has to be a 'Plan B' in place to be able to manage proposed in-person events, as lockdowns can be suddenly called and plans so often have to be abandoned.

The learning gained from 2020 saw many organisations revisit their entire operating model and organisational structure to bring about more collaborative, flexible ways of working and more empowerment for the team of staff and volunteers. There are positives to this remodelling; but effectively a new delivery model using more technology is managed by a smaller team, and this can increase stress.

A participant based in South Auckland told us that many people have a mistaken belief that everyone in Tāmaki Makaurau is able to get online, but the move to online technology has been challenging in some areas. They say some local areas have low connectivity to the internet, with only around 50% of people with Wi-Fi connectivity in their homes, and personal devices such as computers, laptops, and iPads; most people have mobile phones and pay-as-they-go for mobile data, which often runs out as people cannot afford to top up.

Although the organisation itself was well set up technologically, staff and volunteers had to go back to older methods such as phoning people to effectively communicate with most of the community they work with:

The disability sector getting delivery was a major issue because supermarkets ran out quite quickly. And so, we had to set up relationships with specialists, suppliers, which means waking them up and redefining them as essential services. And breaking down some of the barriers that ... had been put in place. Those are the sort of adjustments we did ... to go back to the old school relationship, like using phones.” (Speaker 5)

Another charity, working with terminally ill children, upgraded all of their technology to desktop computers a year before the pandemic, and when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived the desktops were useless; the first challenge then was to get everyone laptops so that staff and volunteers could work away from the office. The Chief Executive and leadership team grappled with issues around communication, leadership, and values, and what was critically important and what was not.

Digital technology has become an invaluable tool for connecting communities and for teaching and learning, and volunteers have adapted to using Zoom and other online tools and are becoming more technologically savvy. For example, as one participant explained in detail:

“We have an education strand that operates through schools and also a health strand that provides daily health services in schools every day. Of course, they all moved online, but the education strand was already a digital strategy... So, the teachers last year, introduced their classes to Google Meet and it operates as you know, just like Zoom or Teams.”
(Speaker 7)

The move to remote teaching and learning from home was relatively simple, and for those who had a digital device in the home it worked well. However, it is important to note that not everyone has a digital device, apart from a mobile phone, which is not suitable for online studies.

Our informant from a Māori community told us that in the area where their organisation operates in South Auckland, health services were also provided online, contracted through marae. Medication was delivered to whānau, so even if there was not an actual medical examination in person, the results were checked by clinicians and follow-ups provided.

The community organisation discussed here usually ran face-to face workshops on various topics, but moved to online delivery, contracting education providers which provided other community benefits:

“And in the whānau strand ... we have two workshops, which we teach parents, how to use Google, how to gmail, how to do online shopping properly, you know, avoiding scamming, that kind of thing. And both of those are actually contracted out to other organisations.” ***(Speaker 7)***

Our informant from Māori community told us that access to Wi-Fi and devices is a big issue for Māori and Pasifika. The move to remote learning and teaching in the education system is difficult for many clients; if they do not have Wi-Fi or digital devices many whanau are simply teaching life skills, for example, cooking, or building things. Not everything is negative though, and although the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic was a massive reset, for many people this has led to creative solutions. Informal community groups and whānau came together to gather and deliver food, and then looked at different service providers who were already working with Māori and Pasifika that were vulnerable. However, it is sometimes difficult to find volunteers prepared to lead the initiatives, as older people are more worried about catching the virus; there has been an attempt to bring young people into the organisation, but there is a lot of food to distribute, so this is a big undertaking to organise:

“So, I was getting them to come in to actually distribute the kai to all the families, so the project could have carried on, just no one wanted to lead it in the end, we were trying to get the youth, the rangatahi, to take over, but

the amount of veggies, to have an actual space to distribute that many was quite a lot because it ended up being like 1,000s, 1,000 a week in veggies.”
(Māori KI)

Our participants from a Pasifika community told us that tertiary students in South Auckland have been helping elderly Pasifika people learn how to use online technology, as there is an increased use of digital technologies since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and some people really struggle with IT, especially elders. However, online communication has become a vital part of the way community organisations reach out to those in need and sharing knowledge. There have been innovations using digital technology, such as delivering church sermons online on Zoom, although a lot of people in the community do not like that, as it is nothing like being in church in person. In terms of the way funding organisations are changing the way they deliver their services to community groups in South Auckland, after the COVID-19 pandemic began, a speaker from a trust foundation told us that they are changing the way they distribute their funding and grants with more intentional focus on equity, especially aiming to support Pasifika, Māori, and South Auckland initiatives.

Summary – service delivery

At present, everyone, whether Chief Executive, staff, or volunteers, are doing more with less, carried through by passion for their communities and a commitment to continue delivering services to clients who they define as vulnerable. Long term, this will not be sustainable.

However, increased service demand has strengthened community connections; more community groups and organisations are collaborating, and the networks have become stronger as social capital has grown. Having access to more information gained through these networks, and sharing it further, has resulted in some organisations developing more sustainable business models.

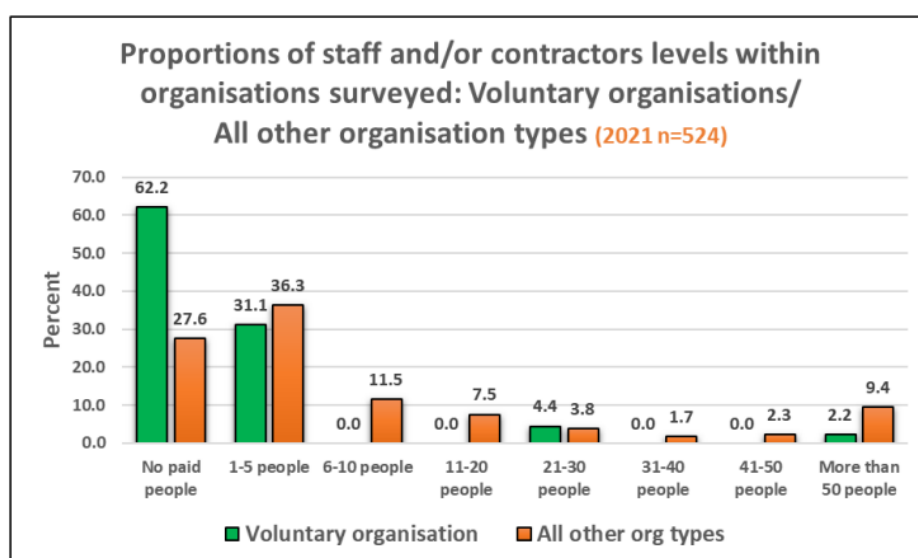
Through necessity, some community organisations have thrived, and have been able to adapt and to “...be more responsive to the needs, but at the same time, hold true to our goals...We may not have money or financial means, but we have our families, we have our culture. Our values, and I love that we were able to just mobilise and work together to help each other” (Pasifika KI).

Many Māori organisations reported the only way service delivery has been maintained is due to collaboration and networking, between whānau, hapū and building whānaungatanga.

VOLUNTEERS – volunteering and impact(s) of COVID-19

Many organisations in the community and voluntary sector rely on a body of volunteers to do their work. Around two thirds of these organisations have no paid staff or up to a maximum of only five paid staff, so reliance on the kaupapa, goodwill, labour, and expertise of volunteers is fundamental both to organisational survival and to the continuation of service delivery to clients. Volunteer levels per organisation are very similar in 2020 and 2021. However, organisations with smaller volunteer base have less volunteers than last year. As seen in the Figure 20, almost one third (30.5%) of our respondents had no paid staff/operated solely on voluntary labour/no labour. For voluntary organisations surveyed, this figure goes up to 62.2%. So, almost two thirds of voluntary organisations reported having no paid staff. More than three quarters (76.9%) of our respondent organisations operated using volunteers and between 0–10 paid staff.

Figure 20. Comparison of levels of paid staff and/or contractors within voluntary organisations/All other organisation types: 2021



Impact of COVID-19 on volunteers - changes in volunteering landscape

There was a decrease in the number of people wanting to volunteer when the COVID-19 pandemic began. It was not possible for older people to volunteer in person when COVID-19 restrictions advised people over 65 to stay home. The challenge for community organisations has been to increase youth volunteering, as this results in a more sustainable volunteer sector. However, the difficulty was that the community needs grew simultaneously with reductions in funding, so just when more support for volunteers and staff was needed, it became more difficult to provide this. For some, this is improving:

“And also, we noticed, again, learnings over COVID, was there was one [rural] area ... that was really hard to get connected and get volunteers roles and people involved. And so, we identified those two areas that that we want as a challenge to try and support volunteering. And so, we’ve managed to get some funding for that as well this year. So, that’s been a good goal to work towards.” (Speaker 5)

As the pandemic remained an emergency health issue throughout 2020 and 2021, some organisations reported “a reduction in the number of actual volunteers.” For some there was an increased workload for fewer volunteers, which increased burnout, “and some organisations were feeling more stretched than they had in previous years [pre-COVID-19]” (KI1). As other participants representing community organisations also told us, the volunteer demographic has also changed from the kind of people who volunteered pre-COVID-19:

“As we move forward, I think organisations have to kind of engaged differently, and better to get youth engaged in their kaupapa, young people do amazing stuff and are committed, and they’re possibly not engaging and supporting organisations that don’t create an environment or culture or mission that they want to engage with.” (KI1)

By mid-2021, in some places the volunteer figures had gone up, and people were prepared to join face-to-face meetings. Our respondent believes that many people are tired of Zoom and want to meet and connect with people face-to-face. Many volunteers are now younger, rather than retirees:

“We went from quite a lot of retirees looking for volunteer opportunities prior to lockdown, to 71% of the people looking for opportunities at the moment from May, end of May, are under the age of 30, and either in full or part time employment, or seeking employment. So, it has been a significant shift, and only about 9% of the people looking for volunteer opportunities are over the age of 60. So, we don’t know for sure that whether or not that’s because of COVID or not, but certainly earlier in the year, we’ve definitely had some anecdotal evidence that that was the reason.” (Speaker 7)

Increased demand for services

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased demand for services, but with a drop in income and more stress for staff and volunteers. The interlinked issues of funding, paying staff and supporting volunteers have impacted the ability to deliver services.

Some organisations reported fewer volunteers and older volunteers needed support to become familiar with online technology:

“So, [before COVID-19] we had so many offers of volunteers, particularly straight after the Christchurch [terrorist attack], we had a big, big lot of people getting in touch wanting to volunteer. And then a month later that dropped and then there was COVID. So, our volunteers were not able to go and work with people, some of them did online. But yeah, once again, that was a challenge, sometimes for the volunteers because of the generation they are from, because a lot of them weren’t used to using the technology. And so, bringing them back together was really, really challenging.”
(Speaker 2)

Service delivery is inextricably tied to funding and to wellbeing issues, as our respondents reported that volunteers work harder with less:

“We have never been more busy, more needed. Many rely on our services, and we rely on others for kindness. Daily people donate, fabric, food, and encouragement. Actual money not so much so I am often doing sewing jobs and mending machines for extra Koha. I like to do these things, but it is on top of 50-hour weeks – full on running the place with preparation and clean up, etc., and I fear burnout, so I try to say ‘no’ more often but then need calls louder. What to do?” (Respondent 548)

Despite the issues noted above, the sector was adaptive in the way community organisations restructured and innovated service delivery and staff and volunteer training since the pandemic began.

Isolation and stress

While we heard that there was community support and volunteers worked hard, lockdowns and restrictions still increased isolation to levels that had not previously been experienced by everyone, including volunteers. The possibility of catching the virus affected people’s emotional wellbeing, especially if staff or volunteers had immune-compromised small children. Despite the anxiety, though, the volunteer team is supportive of each other’s wellbeing, and has strengthened in commitment since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic:

“So, we have done quite a bit of work on our cultural and team values. And also, we’re working on a strategic well-being, we’re working on a well-being strategy at the moment ... what my staff has been telling me, ... I think a lot of people are really have that real sense of fatigue, emotionally and mentally and physically. So, the more we can do and supporting their well-being, I think, is probably, you know, up the top of the priority list really now.” (Speaker 7)

Migrant volunteers especially reported being stressed out because many have family and friends overseas, where there have been many deaths and illnesses due to COVID-19:

“Overseas travel limits has increased isolation and anxiety and most of their family is left behind. Covid situation back in their country is a worry too.” (Respondent 42)

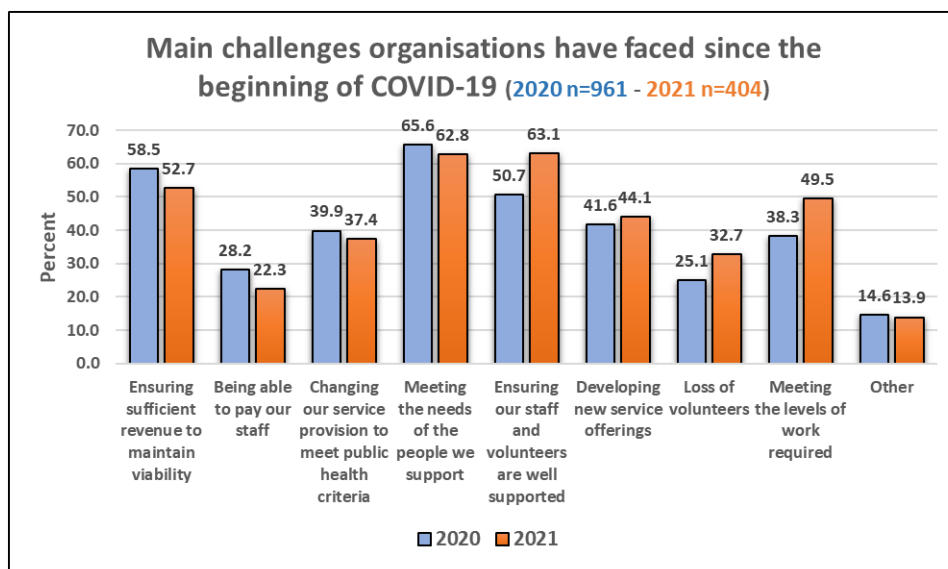
Summary – volunteering and volunteers

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers have been carried through by a fierce loyalty to their communities and a commitment to continue delivering services to clients who they define as vulnerable. Volunteers were extremely resilient despite the reported increase in workload and the transition to remote working. Volunteers have been working hard to build resilience and empower their organisations' service users, and the programmes set up during 2020 have strengthened the community. Engaging with younger volunteers in different ways has been an important outcome for community organisations.

CHALLENGES of COVID-19 for community organisations

As is shown in Figure 21, the distribution of 'stated occurrence/importance level' of challenges facing organisations have remained relatively consistent over time.

Figure 21. The main 'challenges' that organisations have faced-since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021)

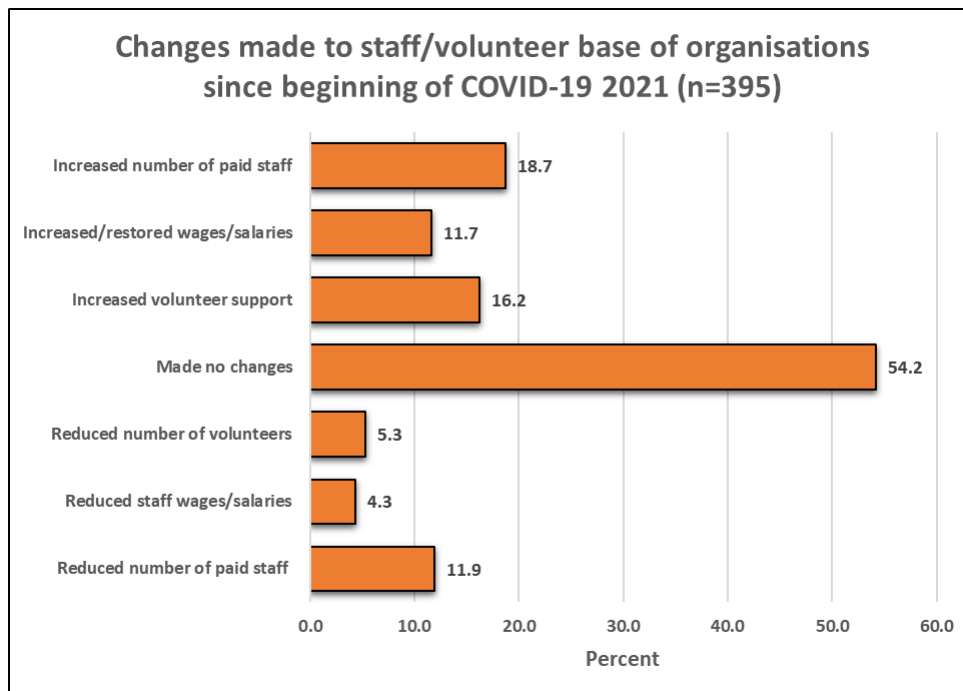


In both 2020 and 2021, a considerable two thirds of organisations still faced the challenges of 'Meeting the needs of the people they support.' In addition, the challenge of 'Ensuring staff and volunteers are/were well supported' grew from 50.7% in 2020 to 63.1% in 2021. Other challenges have also increased in frequency in 2021. Approximately half of respondent organisations (49.5%) stated their organisations faced the challenge of 'Meeting the levels of work required.' unsurprisingly, more than half of our organisations (52.7%) continue to be challenged with 'ensuring sufficient revenue to maintain viability' in 2021-a slight improvement in the 58.5% figure of 2020.

The challenges for the community and voluntary organisation workforce

Understandably, the community and voluntary sector workforce has changed shape and size since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. On the whole however, it has remained resilient. Figure 22 below shows us that more than half (54.2%) of our respondent organisations made no changes over the time period. In addition, 16.2% experienced increased volunteer support and 18.7% increased their number of paid staff. In contrast, 11.9% of our respondents reduced their number of paid staff while 5.3% experienced a reduction in their volunteer workforce.

Figure 22. Changes made to paid staff and/or volunteer base(s) in organisations, since COVID-19 began 2021



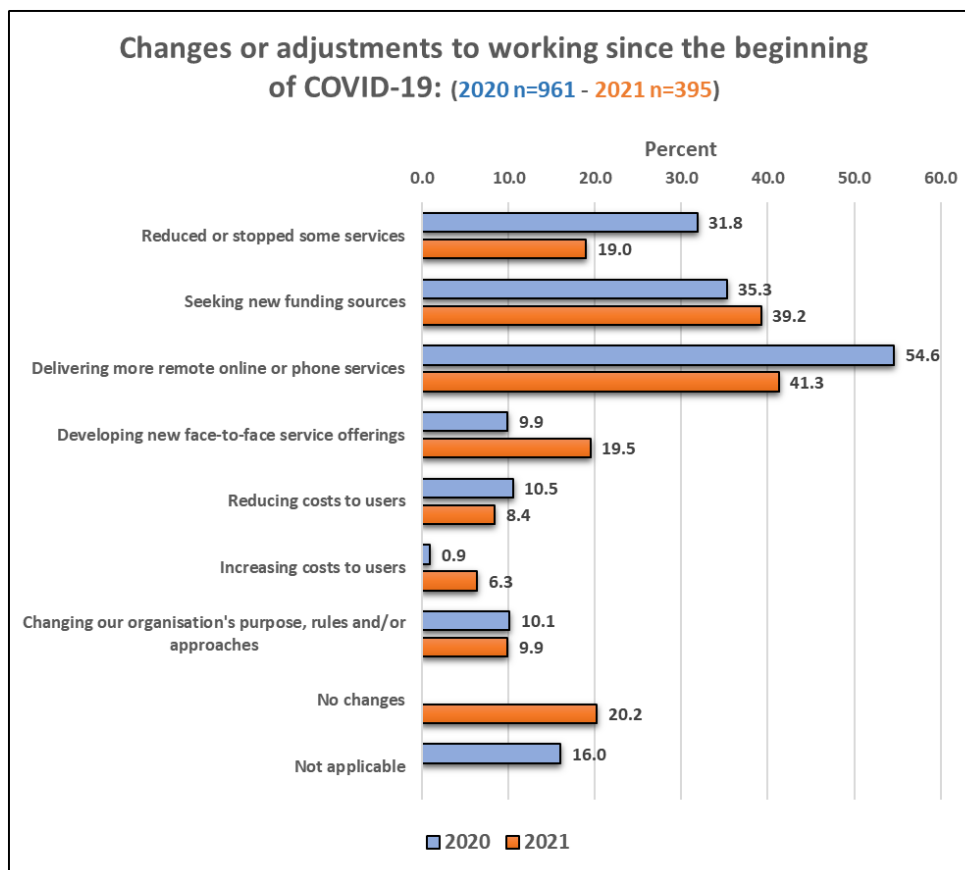
Note: No direct comparison with 2020 data possible as 2021 added 'Made no changes' category).

Changes to operations

While 20% of our respondents in 2021 stated that they had made no changes in the way they operated, many positive innovations have occurred since the 2020 research. The 2021 survey has shown us that the methods of delivering service continue to evolve over time. As we can see in Figure 23, 41.3% of our respondents stated they were delivering more services online or by phone. While this is a decline from the 54.6% in 2020, it is likely that 2021 figure is building on the capacity established in the previous year. The level of face-to-face methodologies more than doubled over the period, growing from 9.9% in 2020 to 19.5% in 2021.

A further 'positive' strategy developed to meet the increased demand for services from our respondents' communities, is the seeking of new funding sources. This grew from 35% in 2020 to 39.2% in 2021. That considered, 19% of our organisations had to reduce or stop some services in 2021. While this figure is significant, it is less than the 31.8% recorded in 2020.

Figure 23. Changes or adjustments to organisational ‘ways of operating/ways of working’ since COVID-19 began 2020–2021

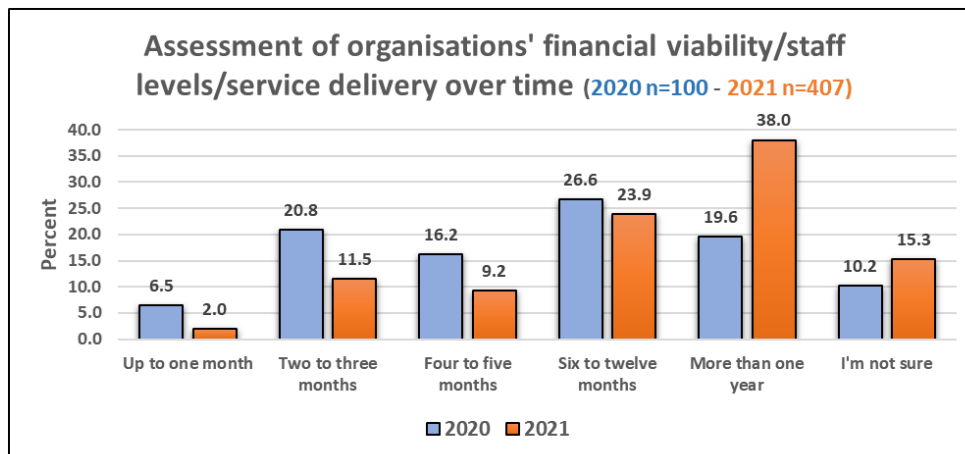


Note: missing data in some dimensions (in 2020 and 2021) are the result of restructuring of questions in 2021 survey.

The impact on the perceived longevity of our organisations

Given the ongoing social, financial and cultural need for community and volunteer organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is concerning that their level of uncertainty about their survival is so high. While the perceived survival rate has generally improved 2020 to 2021, only 38% of said organisations in 2021 thought they would be ‘still viable’ after 12 months. By default, 62% stated they were unsure or only had the reserves to function for less than that period (see Figure 24).

Figure 24. Based on present financial reserves, how long organisations might maintain their current levels of staff and/or service delivery (2020–2021)

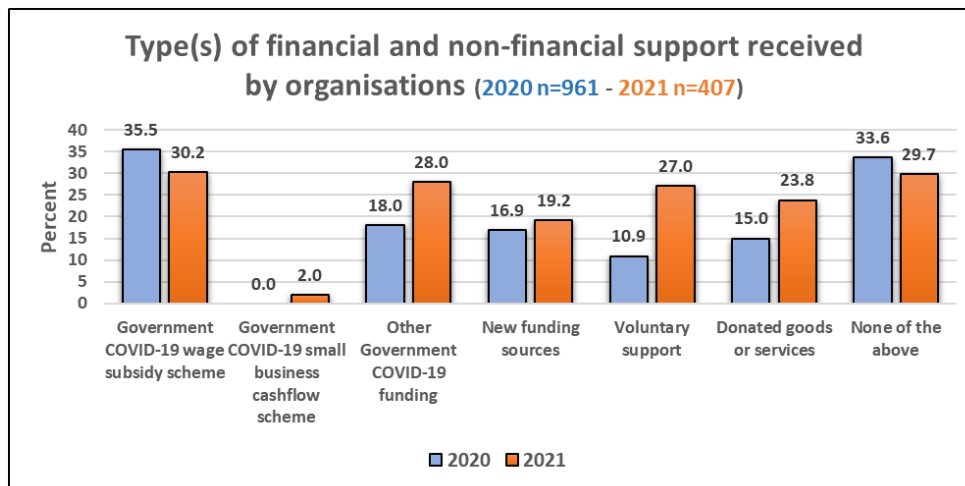


Financial and non-financial support to relieve COVID-19 challenges

The general health of many community and volunteer organisations is dependent in part on financial and non-financial support and is often drawn from multiple sources. While approximately one third of our respondents (33.6% in 2020 / 29.7% in 2021) did not access government/non-government support, two thirds accessed or received financial and/or non-financial support in 2020 and 2021 (see Figure 25 below). Generally speaking, greater proportions of our respondent organisation accessed support in 2021 than in 2020.

During and after the COVID-19 lockdowns, the government made available several financial assistance streams. As we can see in Figure 25, approximately one third of our respondents (35.5% in 2020 / 30.2% in 2021) accessed the COVID-19 wage scheme. This was considered vitally important for organisations with small staff numbers. In addition, more than a quarter of our organisations (28%) accessed other government funding in 2021 – a 10% increase from the 18% of 2020. Our respondent organisations were more slightly active in finding new (non-government funding) sources in 2021 than in 2020 – 16.9% and 19.2% respectively. Importantly, levels of voluntary support more than doubled, growing from 10.9% in 2020 to 27% in 2021. Levels of donated goods or services also increased from 15% in 2020 to 23.8% in 2021.

Figure 25. Type(s) of financial/non-financial support received by organisations since the beginning of COVID-19 2020–2021

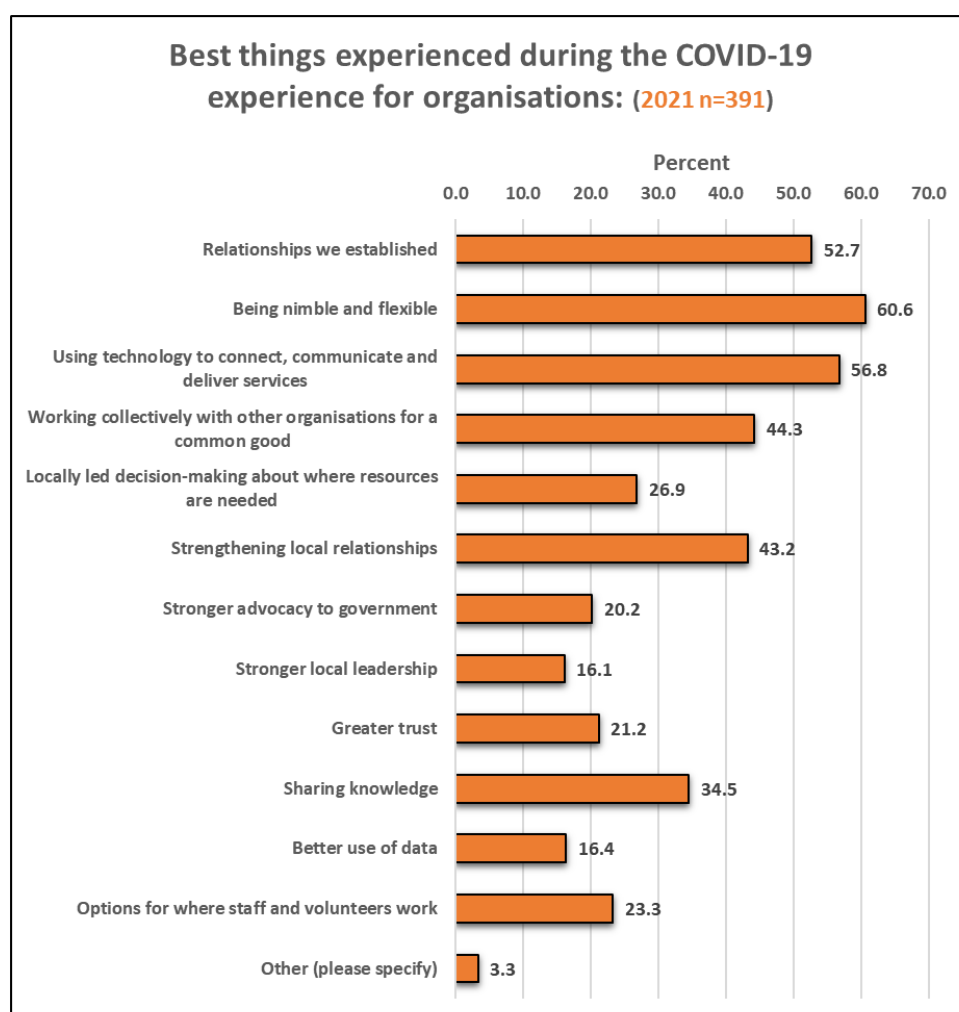


Positive innovations and outcomes resulting from COVID-19 challenges

Our survey has told us that the challenges throw up by the pandemic were met by the strength and spirit of innovation of the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector. More importantly, these responses to difficult conditions developed into strategies for improved organisational functioning and longevity. Figure 26 for example, shows us that more than half of our respondent organisations (56.8%) made more frequent (or first) use of technology to connect and deliver services. In addition, almost two thirds of our respondents (60.6%) thought that their organisations had developed more nimble and flexible ways of working.

Whether by circumstance or design, individual organisations became more connected with their communities and other similar organisations over the COVID-19 timespan. For example, 43.2% of respondents stated they had strengthened local relationships, 52% had established (new) relationships and 44.3% had worked collectively with other organisations toward a common good. In line with collaborative thinking, 34.5% of our respondents stated they had shared knowledge.

Figure 26. The best things from the COVID-19 experience that will help to maintain organisations 2021



Summary – challenges for community organisations

Given the ongoing social, financial and cultural need for tangata whenua, community and volunteer organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand, it is concerning that their level of uncertainty about their survival is so high. While the perceived survival rate has generally improved 2020 to 2021, only 38% of said organisations in 2021 thought they would be 'still viable' after 12 months. This demonstrates the ongoing fragility that many community organisations operate under.

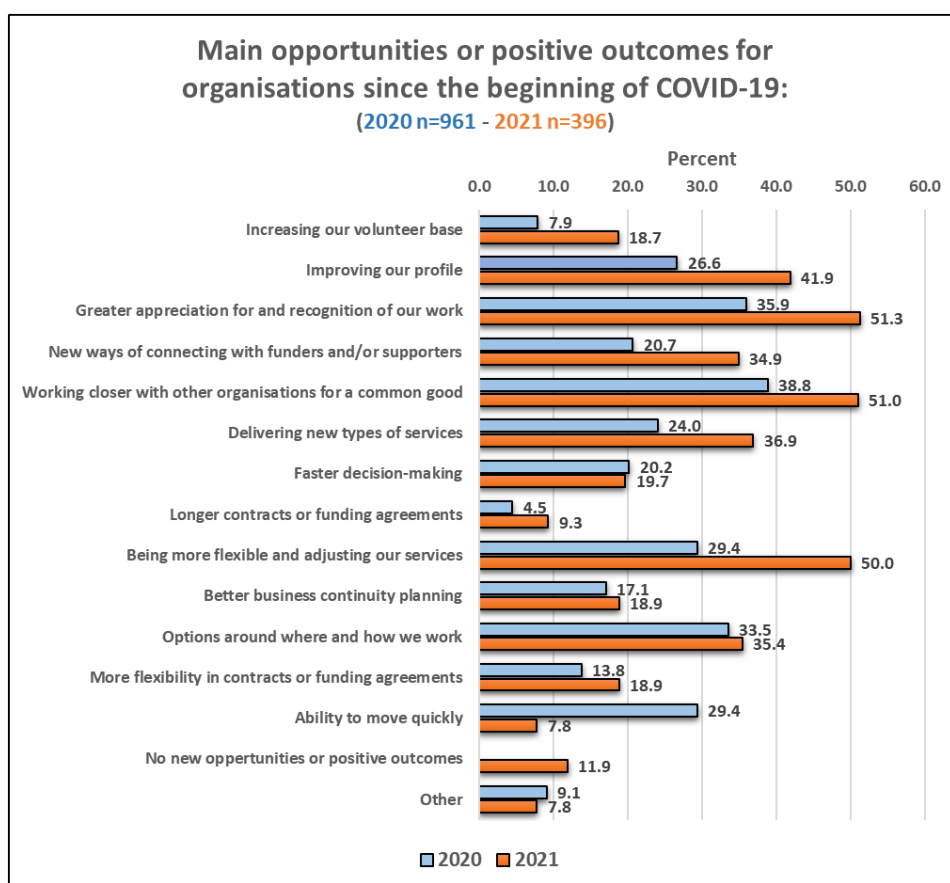
Our survey has told us that the challenges throw up by the pandemic were met by the fortitude and spirit of innovation of the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector. More importantly, these responses to adverse conditions developed into strategies for improved organisational functioning and longevity.

Whether by circumstance or design, individual organisations became more connected with their communities and other similar organisations over the COVID-19 timespan.

SHAPING THE FUTURE – collective visions of organisations

While the COVID-19 pandemic placed multiple pressures and challenges on our organisations, many have taken up the gauntlet and seized the opportunity for improvements and innovation in among, other things, organisational functioning and service delivery. In addition, they have made deeper connections with their communities and similar organisations within the sector. As we can see in Figure 27, this capitalizing on, or creating of opportunities and positive outcomes increased across multiple dimensions in the 2020–2021 period. For example, the percentage of respondents that stated they were receiving ‘greater appreciation for and recognition of their work’ rose from 35.9% in 2020 to 51.3% in 2021. In addition, the proportion of organisations reporting they were ‘delivering new types of services’ grew from 24% in 2020 to 36.9% in 2021.

Figure 27. The main ‘opportunities or positive outcomes’ that have happened for organisations since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2021)



Note: missing data in some dimensions (in 2020 and 2021) are the result of restructuring of questions in 2021 survey.

Opportunities and positive outcomes for the sector's future

Funding

Unsurprisingly, there is still a great deal of focus on current key concerns and thinking about ways of shaping the future that are often couched in idealistic rather than practical terms. Many respondents are concerned about keeping funding already in place and sourcing sustainable funding for new projects. There are calls for health sector reforms, maintaining volunteers, supporting and empowering service users, and keeping people safe. One respondent says, “our main vision is to empower people to make positive choices” (Respondent 76) and another one tells us that:

“Our priorities are to continue to provide support to victims of crime and trauma. On top of this we are looking at the future for our organisation e.g. what will we look like in 10 years’ time and how will we get there including developing a larger funding base.” (Respondent 20)

The most frequent concern for the future, though, is around sustainable funding:

“[W]e have a new strategic plan and intend on developing our services we provide our organisations and how we communicate with our volunteers. Concerns we have are around future funding. Without multi funding opportunities we will struggle to maintain our services and potentially lose staff to more financially stable employment.” (Respondent 361)

There is a strong feeling that the current procedures around funding need to change, and that the COVID-19 pandemic has given everyone a chance to breathe and do something different:

“The lockdown sort of re-instituted some of the vision and some of the values that are part of our lives but have been subjected or subsumed under the sort of need for all the fiscal requirements that government has put on us. And I think there’s a lot to have been learned through what we’re doing. And I just hope we don’t succumb totally to the demands that there is a government that on one hand is throwing up the money, but that money is still subject to this incredible sort of bureaucratic sort of judgement. And I think each of us knows what we really need to do and how to do it. And I think that more trust needs to be invested in us to do that.” (Speaker 4)

Funding and the way the system operates and often does not meet the needs of the community the organisation works with was stated as a concern for many organisations. They felt the funding may not be targeted at the service the community actually needs, and the service users have no say in the process, as the communication is solely between the funder and the organisation and does not include the service user community. This is something to address in the future:

“I found the funding because it’s come from the government, from the top, the funding receivers couldn’t reach out to meet the community’s needs, but fulfil the government task list ... And also, I’m really concerned about the accountability, usually is the organisation, the funding receivers, do the accountability report, not the service user. The service receivers, they are not included in the outcome accountability report.” (Speaker 7)

It is clear that people are worried that the kinds of financial assistance offered during the COVID-19 pandemic will not be available in the near future.

One respondent said that their organisation has made strategic changes to funding, which is now more intentional and focused and working towards future equity:

“We know historically [our funder] hasn’t funded many Pasifika, Māori, or South Auckland initiatives in the past. This is the focus for us now, within our focus, three key focus areas we’ve got. One is regenerating the environment. And second one is social inclusion. And the last one, which we’re seeing a lot of, is increasing equity...That includes initiatives that highlight or look to build thriving families [and] cultural identity.” (Speaker 13)

The COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in a different environment, and some of the support networks formerly in place have broken down:

“You know, we have a lot of communities coming to us asking about funding and we can offer some support. But yeah, there is a lot of unknown and a lot of funding, the criteria is just so tight ... the minority communities, or the Māori or Pasifik[a] communities, ... that doesn’t allow for any flexibility ... And there is just no flexibility. We’re looking at workshops for people to teach them how to do that and collaborating with us to do that.” (Speaker 2)

Connection, collaboration, and co-operation

There is a plea for co-operation and collaboration, a hope that support gained during the COVID-19 pandemic will not disappear, and a desire for:

“Ensuring system shifts that happened during COVID aren’t totally lost and that central and local govt organisations remain proactively open to changing how they work with communities and what/how they invest and work as enablers. While politicians may want transformation, we’re not seeing lots of examples of this in practice = bureaucracies are holding on to power and control. We want to join up with others working nationally in

the systems change space so we're collectively maximising impact and effort." (Respondent 241)

Participants all agreed that looking towards the future, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be powerful, and it is important not to fall back into old ways of behaving around funding and organisational survival, but rather to become more aligned to the values all community organisations have as their missions:.

"I think COVID has shaken us at both the macro and micro area. I think the greatest challenge that any organisation faces in the near future is 'how do we remain connected and guided in all of our decisions and the direction of our organisations to what is our vision and our mission?' which is the founding document that relates to who we are, and why we are here and our raison d'être. And I think there's huge pressures from so many directions, whether financial, or community or survivability, that really puts pressure on honouring and living out our vision and our mission. I think that's a fundamental challenge we face." (Speaker 2)

Our participants agree that the lines of communication established since the COVID-19 pandemic began have remained in place: people help each other, and know each other, and talk things through. These are local community connections, although there are alliances with larger organisations in city centres, which can provide more expensive items such as modems for children to get connected to Wi-Fi to be able to study at home. Although some things are provided for cash, there is also a thriving network supplying donations of clothes and food.

Respondents representing the disabled community noted that there are opportunities that arise in times of crisis, when people who have been ignored and marginalised may be finally listened to, if they are astute enough to realise that this is a good time to push for change and seize their chance:

"Like, for example, when a crisis happens, it's usually the voices of difference that chime out, it's like an opportunity for people who are on the fringes of society to be like, use this as an opportunity to push for change. And we've seen that with the Māori and Pasifika communities. During the COVID response last year, they were like, 'oh, finally, this is an opportunity for us to create the changes within the healthcare system that we really have been fighting for, for decades." (Speaker 3)

The power of collaboration, of whānau, of the physical experience of community is regarded as vital, and this rural town is doing well in this regard:

"So, I wonder if there's something in our town that says being part of [this rural town] is about helping each other, whatever that looks like it doesn't

you know, have to be kind of hugely transformational, but there's something about giving, you know, giving, they say the thing in the mental health space, if you are feeling low level of anxiety and depression which is basically one in three New Zealanders, once a week, the best thing that you can do is actually give a little of your time to someone else.” (Speaker 6)

As mentioned earlier, grassroots community and whānau networks have proved to be the best safety net for people needing food and other assistance since the COVID-19 pandemic began. As our informant told us, as a collective vision of shaping the future, the innovative system developed pre-COVID-19 called ‘The Generator’, which are entrepreneurial micro-enterprises and led by ‘community champs’ who are kaitiaki within their communities, with their own little hubs, some at marae, and some based in places like local libraries, means that communities are not dependent on any big organisation outside the local space. After the success of ten pilot programmes, the community generators have rapidly expanded nationwide.

Māori communities were very quick to build on whānau and hapū connections, and our respondents report innovations in many fields by strengthening these networks: in education, in digital technology, and in collecting and distributing food. The ‘community champs’ are not dependent on any outside organisation and are able to organise and advocate, using principles of whānaungatanga and manaakitanga to help the community. Innovation and creativity are linked, and rather than using government business plans, the ideas have been changed to suit local needs:

“So, we modify it [the government plans], and we modify it with the whānau to say, ‘hey, do you even understand this?’ You know, like, nah it’s the language, so alright, we’ll just change it out. That’s why we’ve been playing around with all the different business plans because they’re massive, like for some of them you’ve got to be pretty much university students to [understand] all of them in order to get [them running]. So yeah, every barrier we simplify it so that our people can understand. So, that’s what we’ve done with two other business plans.” (Māori KI)

Building whakawhānaungatanga and kotahitanga and extending manaakitanga to others is a way forward by using knowledge from the past that is alive today in many communities. There is emphasis on community networks in the Pasifika fono too. It is clear from listening to our respondents, whether they represent community organisations or funding organisations, that there is a powerful impetus to work closely together in the future.

Our informants emphasised that in Pasifika communities, as for Māori communities, networking and community connections are key, and being able to pass on information and knowledge to others. There have been valuable lessons on how vital it is to be prepared for emergencies. Social capital has increased, and Pasifika values, culture, and families have helped communities to work together, even though there is not always much money or financial means. Pre-COVID,

the organisation our respondent represents was working with around ten Pasifika community groups, and now there are over thirty involved:

“...just seeing the inequities in the system, mobilised us to help some of those families who weren't registered with organisations that were missing out. We're able to tap into our networks... So, I thought that was quite effective. I think COVID has also, in terms of our organisational capability, and capacity, has been quite positive for us ... which has meant that we've been able to deliver more quality programmes and services for Pasifika.”
(Pasifika KI)

Although the COVID-19 pandemic meant that remote online work became normalised, the sense of community has become strengthened:

“So, while we may not be continuing to connect on a regular basis, I think, as an organisation, we've got a greater sense of connectedness and the resources that are out there and available and quite a confidence that if we got ourselves in a similar situation that support would be there.” (Speaker 4)

Our representatives from the voluntary sector told us that collaboration between different community organisations has provided huge benefits, as has the strength of a community hub, which has seen many more organisations join. Indeed, there is now a waiting list to join the hub, which shows how important it has become. What worked well in 2020 is carrying on into the future, and collaboration and networking are two of the practices that have proved invaluable. As one of our respondents told us, the changes forced by the COVID-19 pandemic have been very useful in long-term planning, not just for short-term emergency fixes.

This has not been the same for all community organisations, as building partnerships takes time, and some groups that shared resources during lockdown split again once levels changed. However, recognising that collaboration takes commitment and time to develop is a significant learning which is helping to establish more enduring relationships between organisations. Many respondents told us that they are prioritising forming collaborative networks, which will help to shape the future in more positive ways.

Community development

The changes made during the first period of the COVID-19 pandemic will be useful, moving into the future, for example the increased digital connectivity and skills, and the setting up of beginners' courses in digital skills, has built a foundation that helps to upskill service users. Similarly for English language skills and devising ways of communicating with migrants and people from refugee backgrounds. On a positive note, there are many new community connections, but many problematic situations such as overcrowded housing and mental health issues are ongoing and need solutions.

How these visions will be made tangible is not mentioned. Another respondent is concerned that some small community organisations will disappear:

“Concerns are that there is a push to amalgamate/merge some orgs to become one, which makes sense on paper, but can be challenging for smaller Māori and Pasifika orgs who provide unique services. Simply merging will lose the key essence of how they work and the nuances that they have. Concerns that big organisations are hogging all of the big contracts and responses as they have all the flash marketing and staff to do their fundraising and coms, etc., meanwhile the small orgs are doing it hard on the ground.” (Respondent 146)

One of the positive outcomes of the pandemic for the disability community was a shift in the people’s thoughts about this community. All of a sudden people became more aware of the impacts of vulnerabilities, restrictions and limitations on their own lives, and on the lives of people around them. People with disabilities are no longer seen simply as an 'individual in the wheelchair' that is often used as a symbol for everyone in this community:

“It’s about everybody who may be experiencing vulnerabilities and may need more thought built into the future programme, like that old cliché ‘build back better.’ Like we’re not going back to normal because normal wasn’t particularly good to begin with.” (Facilitator)

Another innovation that began during the early days of the pandemic is community organisations advocating for their clients who have difficulties with service providers, and this will continue in the future. For Māori organisations the support derives from whānau. For example, more kura have joined their local community cluster, and this means there is now a more widespread support system for digital capability, devices and training teachers to use the technology. There has also been more awareness over problems with literacy:

“It is a powerful resource. And the intel on the ground, we’ve continued to get the information so that we could change ... the whānau, through one of the lockdowns, realising that power was an issue. And they developed a power programme, understanding what happened in COVID-19. So, some families didn’t realise that their power supplier hadn’t put a limit on how much power they could use. So, they had \$900 bills. And so, the whānau were able to teach them about ringing...how to talk to the companies with the questions, ... that came out of the learnings. And that was the whānau that set up that little workshop.” (Speaker 5)

However, respondents report that the old inequities are still there. For example, working on Zoom means that the other people in the online meeting cannot see if a person is in a wheelchair, and some in the disability community are saying that they have more job opportunities because of

this. The appalling fact that we live in a society where people are judged by the way they look or if they are in a wheelchair or not is still reality. “So, they can look completely equal. And it shouldn’t take Zoom working to make that.” (Facilitator).

Our informants agreed that IT provides a lot of assistance in the community, and the systems set up during lockdown mean that people now know how to order groceries online, for example, so are able to keep safe. Social and community networks have provided resilience and strength in the community, and maximising social interaction is regarded as a solution to isolation and mental distress:

“The things that keep us well, in the mental health space, are the things that are about human connection, that whakawhānaungatanga, you know, that meeting people, because humans are fundamentally social.” (Speaker 6)

Calling for changes in policy and practice

Our participants believed modifying government policy is like trying to change course in an enormous ship: the process moves very slowly. It is unresponsive to people at the grassroots level, while simultaneously creating more paperwork to keep hold of the minimal amount of funding any small community organisation already has:

“It’s the craziest environment that we’re living in ... just feel like we’re victims of a system that doesn’t really... the agencies, we work with the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Auckland Council, Ministry of Social Development, and we’re just at the mercy of the dictates of the paradigm that they have sort of supplanted on us. It has very little to do with what the needs we have identified with look like and what we’re able to serve ... and wellbeing, both our wellbeing as well as people who are representing the people we work with and the agencies we work with, as well as just the whole sort of societal wellbeing.” (Speaker 4)

There are challenges with vaccinations, as some parents are anti-vaccination, and large gatherings of people cannot be arranged, as they may cause harm:

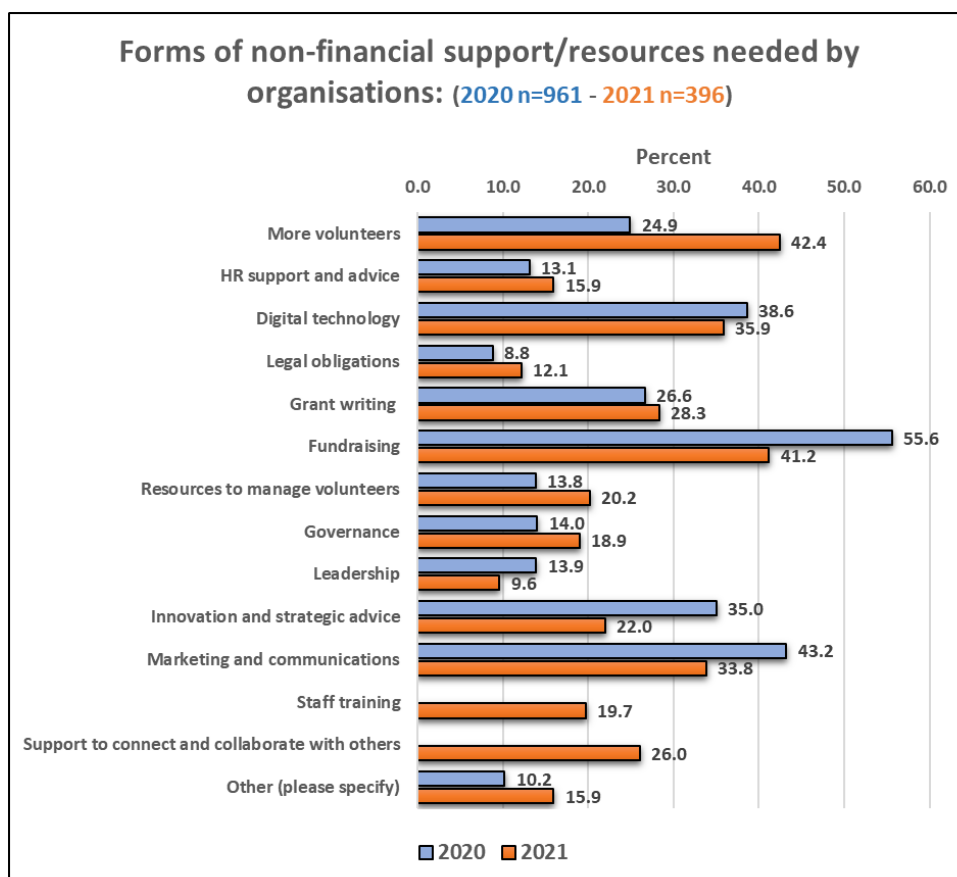
“Which means a lot of careful navigation of values-based discussions. It’s tricky when you’ve got junior staff who aren’t used to having those conversations. So, we just [have to get] more clarity [so] we can get about where we stand and why we stand in a certain place.” (Speaker 3)

Respondents felt that the environment that the community organisations work within has not responded quickly enough to changing needs. There were more reports to write, and new legislation was increasing, making the whole process more complicated.

Non-financial support needed for future

The provision of non-financial support can vary over time as do the level of needs. Further, these needs will likely vary by organisation type, size and access to financial assistance. Some of these factors are reflected in Figure 28. For example, the need for volunteers changed considerably between our two survey points, growing from 24.9% in 2020 to 42.4% in 2021. We can also see a partial decline in the (still significant) need for fundraising support. This shifted from 55.6% in 2020 to 41.2% in 2021. Interestingly, the need for Digital Technology support remains constant with 38.6% in 2020 and 35.9% in 2021. We added two new 'non-financial support' variables to our 2021 survey. These prove to be relevant to our respondents. More than a quarter (26.0%) of respondents need support to 'Connect and collaborate with other organisations' while 19.7% wanted support in staff training.

Figure 28. Forms of non-financial support/resource(s) currently needed by organisations 2020-2021



Summary for shaping our future

In order to shape the future in a positive way, community organisations need more funding to support and manage volunteer run programmes that assist their diverse service users. As many service users are disadvantaged communities, the kinds of whānau and aiga relationships that work so well for Māori and Pasifika communities should be expanded to bring communities

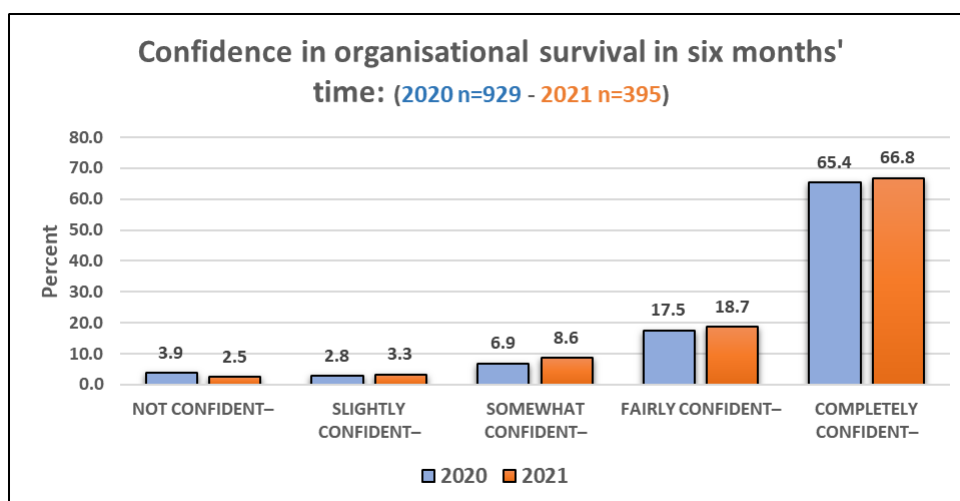
together. Volunteer infrastructure like the regional volunteer centre network can be a vital asset to be utilised to implement these sorts of initiatives.

To adapt to the future, the sector needs more innovation and strategic planning. However, it is still difficult for organisations to do strategic planning for the future. For example, a three-year plan needs ongoing funding, which is mostly unavailable and limited to resources for one year only. With more collaboration, though, comes sharing of knowledge and information, and this will be useful for future funding applications as well as other matters. Persuading government or philanthropic funders to listen to the grassroots needs for long-term funding requires strategic thinking. This organisational collaboration provides potential for the vision for the future.

Moving forward; strategies for change

When asked to express levels of confidence in their organisational survival (in six months), our 2021 respondents' (proportional distribution of) answers mirrored those from our Time to Shine survey in 2020. Organisations remain generally optimistic in 2021. As is shown in Figure 29, 85.5% of respondents who answered this question in 2021 were either completely confident or fairly confident in the longevity of their organisations. Just 14.4% of our respondents were either somewhat confident, slightly confident or not confident about their survival in six months' time.

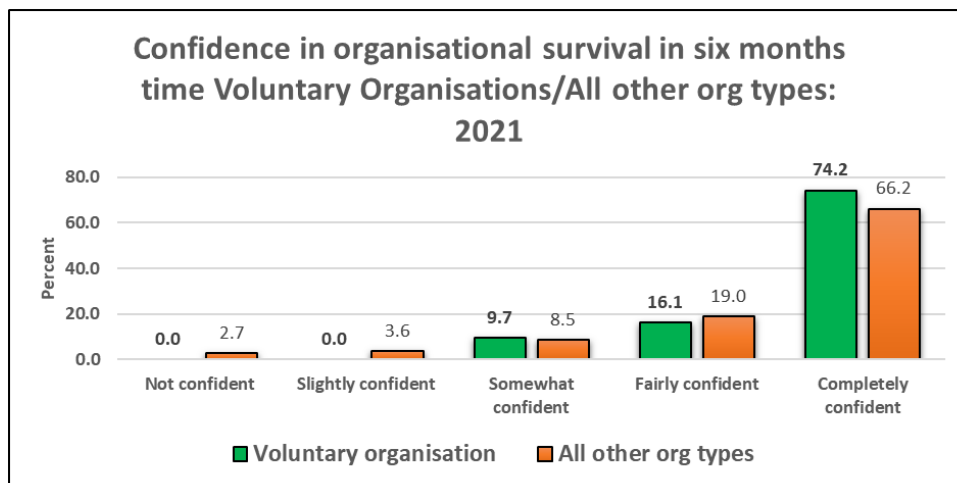
Figure 29. Confidence that organisation(s) will be still operating in six months 2020 2021



While the levels of optimism in organisational survival are very high for those in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector, Figure 30 below shows us that voluntary organisations reported slightly higher levels of confidence in their continued operation than all other organisational types. Approximately three quarters (74.2%) of voluntary organisations were

completely confident in survival in six months while two thirds (66.2%) of all other organisation types held the same level of confidence.

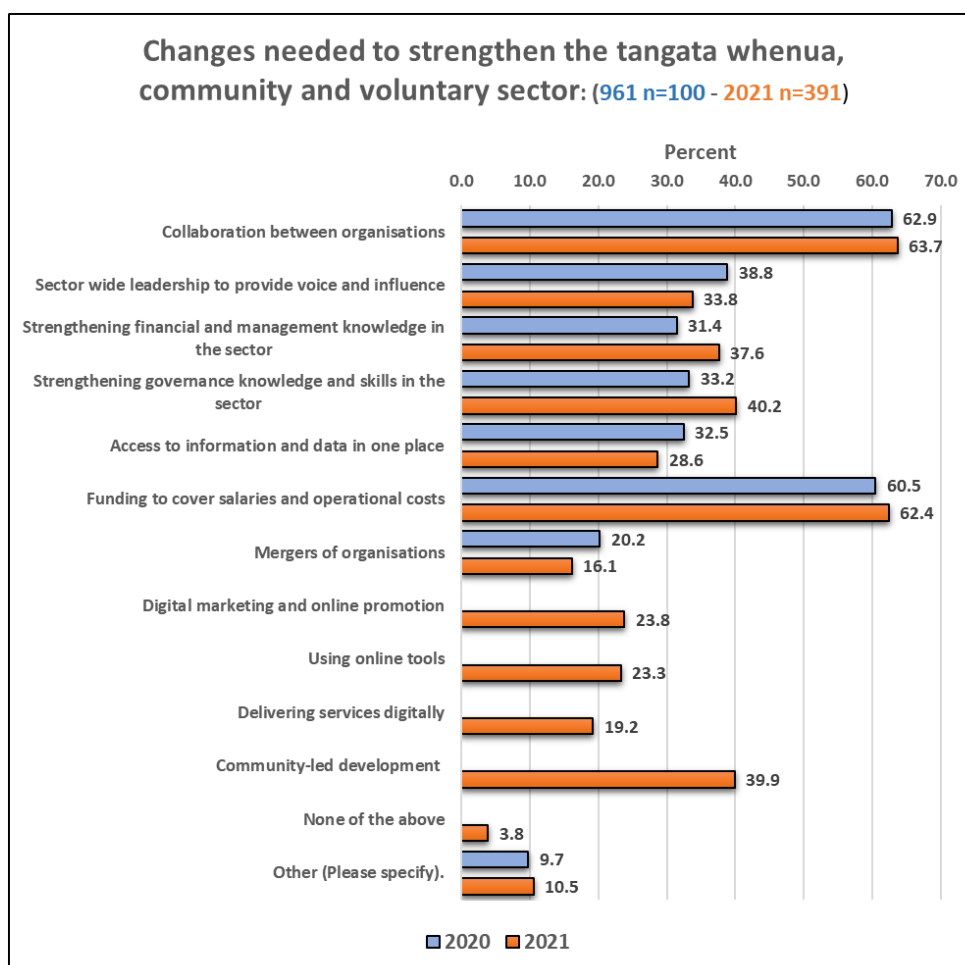
Figure 30. Comparison of levels of confidence in general survival for Voluntary organisations/ All other organisation types: 2021



The multiple actions needed for change in the sector

As it was in 2020, the 'foci of needs for change' for our respondent organisations in 2021 was multi-dimensional and followed a similar distribution pattern. As we can see in Figure 31, approximately two thirds of our respondents in 2020 (62.9%) and 2021 (63.7%) reported that collaboration between organisations was important for the sector (in the future). As noted throughout this research report, finding/getting funding for salaries and operations costs are a constant concern. In 2020 and 2021, more than 60% of respondents indicated funding was/is an ongoing 'problem' in need of (strategies for) change. As it was in 2020, capacity development building and upskilling in finance knowledge systems remains important for organisations in 2021. Interestingly, approximately one third (33.2%) of respondent organisations in 2021 argued for changes in/for sector wide leadership to provide voice and influence.

Figure 31. Changes needed to strengthen the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector in the future 2020–2021.



Note: missing data in several dimensions (in 2020) are the result of new questions added in 2021 survey.

Strategies for change

Our participants suggested various strategies to implement the changes required in the sector. Here are a summary of the proposed strategies:

Collaboration: Community and collaboration between organisation, groups, and individuals is vitally important. Experiences since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic have emphasised not only how useful collaboration is, but also how enriching it is to step away from competitiveness. Māori and Pasifika communities, in particular, have shown how powerful grassroots co-operation using whānau and aiga networks can be, and other minority ethnic and cultural groups also predominantly connect through these avenues. A large percent of Western Pākehā organisational structures – although certainly not all – are likely to be more individualised, competitive, and ‘top-down’ in their decision making and service delivery processes.

Working with youth, children, and families: Our participant from a community group in Tāmaki Makaurau working young children and families also emphasises the importance of relationships rather than competition:

“And COVID-19 really challenges us to think about ‘how can we create a different way of being community?’ ‘How can we be an intentional community not a competitive community?... And also stop claiming the noisy space without providing the service and relationships ... The value of the alternative relationships, the value of whakapapa, the value of the environment, the value of the land really becomes challenged, and be prepared to just sit back and nurture those around you. I guess that’s where we as an organisation, and then our place in the community.”
(Speaker 5)

Strengthening the links forged during the pandemic:

“...maintain the community resilience and I guess, don’t opt back into the old ways of doing stuff, or being dependent on Big Brother. We’ve got to force community groups to talk together and work together and find local solutions. Not regional solutions.” (Speaker 5)

Finding solutions that address systemic inequities rather than merely paying lip service.

“There is an absolute disconnect between the conversation around equity and values and what is actually valued. We have had a widening gap in terms of the haves and the have nots in New Zealand, and being Māori, we’re at the bottom of the heap in pretty much everything, and that’s a known fact. And yet the solutions are not actually going to the heart of addressing those facts. And that comes down to a value decision about what’s important in the scheme of things.” (Speaker 3)

Using the COVID-19 lockdowns as an opportunity to reset:

“Yeah, and I think we are in a time ... in the creative sector, which I think has been incredibly marginalised in terms of its sort of community development perspective. I think that’s a really, really important opportunity for us to start reframing our future, and re-evaluating what we do and re-evaluating the values that we operate under and reviewing the paradigm.”
(Speaker 4)

Raising the voice of marginalised communities: All of the participants emphasised that everyone is working under what feels like crisis conditions, therefore, this is a good time to put pressure on community organisations and other work environments, including government

institutions. This time can be seen as an opportunity where people in power are listening to communities and individuals who are usually marginalised and who have been speaking about their problems for years.

Starting to think about a nationwide community: The public health crisis brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic has created a widespread hope that everyone is starting to realise that they are part of a bigger nationwide community. Many of our participants believe that society as a whole is understanding the importance of this: we are not simply all individuals with rights, we are embedded in a web of relationships with others, and we have communal responsibilities as well as rights.

Feeling responsible for the wellbeing of others: Representatives from Maōri community organisations told us that everyone feels more responsible for the wellbeing and the behaviour of others in their organisations:

“This is our priority; our first priority is to ourselves and our whānau. Second priority is to our colleagues, and we’re doing that via [Google] Meet, and also delivering groceries and pharmaceuticals for people who have health conditions. And the third priority is to our community, but that’s through a referral. Self, colleagues and then community.” (Speaker 7)

Self-care and taking responsibility: A respondent emphasised the importance of self-care and responsibility for others:

“Yeah, so this time around, being responsible, myself ..., that’s being strategic around keeping myself, my family safe. And then doing the same with all our colleagues. You know, we’ve got volunteers and sending a regular message of stay home if you’re not vaccinated, consider it, because there are some who are choosing not to, but I think they’re our responsibility. So, how we’ve done it is online, on our kōtuitui [connect], we’ve been keeping up with one another.” (Speaker 5)

Planning for the future: our participants agree that whatever the ‘new normal’ will be in the future has not been addressed and relying on the government to sustain people is unrealistic. The community and its organisations are building resilience, and creating support, and are better prepared for the future:

“I think one of the blessings and the curses that we’ve had with COVID-19 is we haven’t even begun to think about what COVID-19 looks like when it arrives, how do we develop a responsive model for the ongoing next phase of what COVID looks like?” (Speaker 6)

Changing the leadership style: collective visions for shaping the future are centred on whānau

and community grassroots and flax-roots networks, which have provided the best support so far. The future needs to have a change in leadership from that enshrined in governmental top-down ways of working:

“...now we need a Māori, indigenous and Pasifik[a] all in these lead roles, where they should have had ages ago ... they need them because they understand what it means when you’re working with mana whenua, like those that have started from [our suburb] to look at all of that. With systems now, it’s like, actually, let’s go to the top before even starting at the bottom ... We need our Māori and Pasifik[a] to help work with us again.”
(Māori KI)

The power of the aforementioned community generators and the ‘community champs’ in many different community hubs is sure to increase and spread further throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. The ‘community champs’ assist others in the community, and *“become the advocates in terms of ‘Hey, we can support you here’. So, it’s not just organised. It’s not just the generator leading it. It’s all pretty much led by the [people].”*
(Māori KI)

Changing funding application procedures: As with Māori respondents, the leaders of Pasifika community organisations and staff and volunteers want to have more power over decisions made in sectors, especially funding, which are mostly dominated by Pākehā, and require overly-long and complex funding applications written in English language which are not designed to complement let alone fulfil the diverse needs of Pasifika communities and aiga. Meeting in person, where possible, would reduce some of the written requirements for Pasifika funding applicants:

“The process, by making it a bit more simplistic, [as] we find it quite literally lengthy, quite wordy. We also think maybe there should be a language translation for us [into Pacific languages]. And, also if there was a way [that] we could get information a bit more categorised, and so that it’s channelled through, so we’re not just constantly reading a lot. And so, from our end, we find, trying to apply, we’re trying to convince funders why we need funding, where we actually probably think the funder should have a responsibility to know what we’re trying to apply for, as it’s always like trying to convince [them that we need it]. So, can we please improve information [and] language.”
(Speaker 2)

Enhancing the community network: Community networks have proven useful since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is these connections, which have strengthened and grown, that will continue working in the future:

“We’re able to tap into our networks. And then also work together with local management, emergency management, ... in terms of our organisational capability and capacity, has been quite positive for us. So, we’ve been able to tap into funding, specifically as an impact of COVID ... We’ve also had a lot of requests from community groups asking for assistance around their funding applications, setting up as legal entities ... we know it’s needed, so that they can be sustainable, and tap into the multiple streams of funding that’s available.” (Pasifika KI)

Understanding the lived experiences of service users: Pasifika organisations have thrived throughout the pandemic, working collaboratively with other organisations, and a key part of their success and resilience is that they understand the lived experiences of their service users:

“Where ordinary people just, you know, give up, we’ll just keep ringing and talking until we get what we need. Because what the key driver for me was, just the injustice in the access to services that we know affects our Pasifika and Māori.” (Pasifika KI)

As our respondent also pointed out, in their experience, government organisations do not trust Pasifika organisations to know what they are doing, and this results in less financial support from government agencies. Changing the community organisation’s constitution and strategic planning, and building a new kind of leadership based on Pasifika social capital and networks, should enable more funding opportunities.

Communications should be available in multiple languages: It works better to have information available in many different languages, and on social media as well, so that people can share it through community Messenger and WhatsApp groups. Because there are so many different cultures, faiths, and ethnicities in migrant and refugee background communities, it is very difficult to share important information with everyone who needs it. Receiving communications provided only in English language makes it difficult to provide factual information to service users who do not speak English. For example, looking ahead to moving out of lockdowns and increasing the number of people receiving the COVID-19 vaccinations, “there should be someone from the community that gets briefed on the information, so they can distribute it to the rest of the community because most of them either don’t speak any English, or are not good enough to really understand what’s happening, what changes are coming up, and stuff.” (Speaker 1)

Developing IT training programmes: Learning about digital connectivity, and how to use Zoom and mobile phones, brought communities together and helped support people through isolating and lonely times when they could not meet each other in person. This technological knowledge will grow further in the future, as IT training programmes develop.

Increased availability of counselling services: The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the stress levels and emotional wellbeing of many people who work or volunteer in community organisations, as well as that of the service users they assist. Staff and volunteers

support clients, particularly those with a migrant or refugee background, who may be isolated and fearful, worried about their visas and residency applications, and concerned about families stuck overseas in dangerous situations. There is a need for increased availability of counselling services for community staff and volunteers. It seems likely that we will continue to live in emotional and challenging times, and looking ahead, this kind of support continues to be necessary.

Summary – Strategies for Change

There is a lot of community cohesion and connections, and a growth in knowledge and social capital. Trusted community leaders are recognised by local Māori community groups, and, increasingly by nationwide organisations such as urban marae, as possessing their own whānaungatanga networks, and therefore as vital conduits for the outreach of Māori organisations. In the future, these pre-established kinship relationships, which now extend into non-kin-defined networks in other rural and urban areas, will play an increasing role in meeting the needs of whānau who may be struggling.

CONCLUSIONS

The individuals who participated in our online survey, focus groups, and interviews mostly represent small tangata whenua, community, and voluntary organisations which are heavily reliant on volunteers for their functional continuity. Around two thirds of these organisations have no paid staff or up to a maximum of only five paid staff, so reliance on the kaupapa, goodwill, labour, and expertise of volunteers is fundamental both to organisational survival and to the continuation of service delivery to clients. However, over half of these organisations operated with an annual budget of under \$125,000, and approximately a quarter of the total had an operational budget of between zero and \$25,000.

As our participants repeatedly informed us, to operate successfully, to support and train volunteers, to provide much-needed wellbeing sustenance to Chief Executives, staff, and volunteers alike, requires sufficient and sustainable funding. This is rarely available. Most funding bodies often do not want to pay wages; most do not want to supply open-ended funding in which an organisation can decide how to use the budget, preferring rather to choose the target and outcome themselves. Rarely is funding awarded for more than one year at a time.

Our respondents described a lack of trust on the part of the funding bodies, and an overly complicated application process that pits community organisations against each other to win financial resources. As a participant told us, “Under-funding of community services is endemic [and] provision of service [runs] on the ‘smell of an oily rag.’ The mental strain is huge and the amount of work just to keep our heads afloat is leading to burnout and depression and a loss of staff who are looking for job security. Money is the panacea but access to it is extremely limited.” (Respondent 8).

The resilience, determination, commitment, and inventiveness of under-funded tangata whenua, community, and voluntary organisations throughout Aotearoa New Zealand is remarkable, especially throughout a year of unprecedented hardship and fear for many, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A key principle that our respondents see as critical in responding to the challenges of COVID-19 and creating a fairer and more effective post-pandemic society, is collaboration. Tangata whenua, community, and voluntary organisations working in a full and equal partnership with central and local government and philanthropic funding bodies will mean less mental strain, better service delivery, and an improvement of the hau or vitality of organisations and of the communities they serve.

Our respondents repeatedly call for solidarity in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary organisation sector, and abandonment of competitive funding models in favour of collaboration and strong and equal relationships. Over the last year and a half, when community groups needed to innovate new strategies and tactics in order to continue to support their communities, they often turned to networks of people they already knew rather than to perceived distant government or philanthropic bodies. The grassroots or flax-roots presence was considered more effective than a remote response.

The principle that best encapsulates these relational connections is whanaungatanga, and many Māori organisations highlighted the role of kinship networks in their operational success in continuing to deliver care and services to their hapū. Whakawhanaungatanga cuts across non-kin-based networks as an operational response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a way to better deliver support. Our Māori and Pasifika respondents repeatedly emphasised the vital role of communal responses, cultural awareness, and the importance of respected and trusted leaders in their communities, such as the 'community champs' and 'generators' who have long-established whanaungatanga networks of their own.

The fortitude of the tangata whenua, community, and voluntary organisations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic is inspiring, and the community support they provided and continue to provide is, we were told, "amazing". Our respondents told us that the best things they experienced during the pandemic so far are relationships established and strengthened, being nimble and flexible when faced with challenges at work, working collectively, using technology to connect, communicate, and deliver services, and sharing knowledge. There is a lot of optimism for the future, a desire for collaboration and advocacy towards the common good, and a greater awareness of what other organisations offer, which will be a positive resource in the future. The impressive response of the tangata whenua, community, and voluntary sector during the pandemic clearly shows the desire to 'give back' and to make a difference in society, and our research has revealed a huge wellspring of effective leadership, energy, tenacity, skills, knowledge, wisdom, love, respect, kindness, and compassion.

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